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An Experimental Study on the Use of Music and the Performing Arts in EFL Teaching

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ABSTRACT

The present dissertation is the result of an experimental study examining the use of music and the performing arts in English Foreign Language teaching, thus referring to English being taught in non-English-speaking countries. In particular, song and drama are explored as pedagogical tools to enhance EFL acquisition basing on a practical teaching experiment conducted in an Italian high school. Within the framework of Action Research, existing literature on the subject is critically analyzed in light of the data gathered during the in-class teaching experiment, which took place at IIS P. Scalcerle, a high school in Padua, Italy, and was conducted with 26 first-year students. The theories arguing for a pedagogical use of art-based authentic materials and song- and drama-related activities in EFL teaching settings are backed up by the data gathered during in-class practical experience, which indicate that song and drama enhanced EFL acquisition during the unit. This theory-practice congruency confirms that EFL pedagogy based on drama and singing can produce beneficial effects in motivational, behavioral and cognitive terms. As a consequence, EFL teachers are encouraged to include art training in their curricula, thus sustaining and enhancing English Foreign Language acquisition.

Keywords: EFL teaching, drama, drama pedagogy, music, song, performing arts, authentic materials, social learning.

ABSTRACT (Italiano)

Questa tesi è il risultato di uno studio sperimentale che esamina l'uso della musica e delle arti performative nell'insegnamento dell'Inglese Lingua Straniera, con riferimento all'insegnamento dell'inglese in Paesi non anglofoni. In particolare, il canto e il teatro vengono proposti come strumenti didattici per migliorare l'acquisizione dell'Inglese Lingua Straniera partendo dai dati raccolti durante un esperimento didattico condotto in un liceo linguistico italiano. Nell'ambito della Ricerca Azione, la letteratura esistente sull'argomento viene analizzata criticamente alla luce dei dati raccolti durante l'esperimento didattico in classe, svoltosi presso il liceo linguistico l'IIS P. Scalcerle di Padova con 26 studenti del primo anno. Le teorie che sostengono l'uso glottodidattico di materiali autentici di tipo artistico in attività legate al canto e al teatro sono supportate dai dati raccolti durante l'esperienza pratica in classe, che indicano che le arti performative hanno favorito l'acquisizione dell'Inglese Lingua Straniera durante l'unità. Questa corrispondenza tra teoria e pratica conferma che la didattica dell'inglese basata sul teatro e sul canto può produrre effetti positivi in termini motivazionali, comportamentali e cognitivi. Di conseguenza, questa tesi incoraggia gli insegnanti di Inglese Lingua Straniera a includere la formazione artistica nei loro programmi, sostenendo e migliorando così l'acquisizione linguistica.

Parole chiave: Insegnamento dell'Inglese Lingua Straniera, glottodidattica, teatro, pedagogia teatrale, musica, canto, arti performative, materiali autentici, apprendimento sociale.

"Mary arose and went with haste" (Lk, 1:39).

"'Cause tramps like us, baby we were born to run" (Bruce Springsteen).

To my grandfather Roberto, whom I would have loved to have here with me today.

To my parents Stefano and Giovanna, who taught me what unconditioned love is.

To my sister Francesca, a rock to hold onto in bureaucratic storms.

To my American Star.

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INTRODUCTION

The present dissertation is the (partial) result of my (still-on-going) research on the use of music and the performing arts in English Foreign Language teaching. Although the various theories and practices described in the following chapters could be easily adapted to most languages and FL/SL-learning contexts, my research focuses on English Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition, thus referring to English being taught in non-English-speaking countries. My research experiment took place at *IIS P. Scalcerle*, a high school in Padua, Italy, and was conducted with 26 first-year students. Nevertheless, a consistent amount of literature referring to other language learning contexts is included, so as to explore whether and how the pedagogical use of the performing arts can be adapted to various teaching settings. Of the three performing arts (acting, singing, and dancing), this dissertation mainly focuses on acting and singing. Body-centered learning will be discussed as a valid tool to foster informal, inclusive, and collaborative learning environments. Though, a full examination of the possible advantages of using dancing training techniques in EFL teaching is not included and would be worth further investigation. On the other hand, this dissertation provides a thorough description of how using acting and singing training techniques in EFL pedagogy can produce beneficial effects in motivational, behavioral and cognitive terms. Within the framework of Action Research, existing literature on the subject will be critically examined in light of first-hand teaching experience. As a result, I provide a tentative answer to my research question on the possible beneficial effects of music and the performing arts on EFL learning.

This thesis consists of 4 chapters. Chapters 1-2 constitute the theoretical part of the present dissertation, while my practical experiment is thoroughly described in chapters 3 and 4. In chapter 1-2, I describe, critically analyze and interrelate existing literature and theories to the purpose of outlining possible beneficial effects of the use of the performing arts and music-related authentic materials in EFL curricula. More into detail, Chapter 1 starts with an overview of the main advantages of using authentic materials in EFL teaching. This chapter draws on Halliday's SFL (Systemic Functional linguistics) to explain how authentic materials can provide meaningful communicative contexts, thus allowing students to explore language in its three metafunctions (ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function). Moreover, it is proposed that well-selected authentic texts can be powerful pedagogical tools to link the EFL classroom to the real world, thus meeting students' interests and their existential and communicative needs in real-life settings. In particular, section 1.3 proposes that using full-length authentic texts (e.g., full movies, novels, plays, etc.) in EFL teaching might come with significant advantages at motivational and cognitive levels, thus enhancing English acquisition. Calling upon Laufer et al.'s Involvement Load Theory, this section explores authentic materials' potential to increase students' levels of involvement in its three declinations of Need, Search, and Evaluation. Furthermore, section 1.4 explains how authentic texts can promote a discovery-based inductive approach to grammar. This section remarks the importance of emphasizing a descriptive (rather than prescriptive) understanding of grammar, through which grammar structures can be wholly learned not only in their formal dimension, but also considering their meaning and use in authentic communicative contexts. Chapter 1 concludes with section 1.5, in which authentic materials are analyzed in function of their pedagogical role in guaranteeing input variedness and a multimodal learning experience. Studying into greater detail Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory and Fleming's VAKT model, this concluding section shows through practical exemplifications that performative language activities based on acting and singing can address all different intelligences and stimulate all sensory channels, thus providing an inclusive learning environment.

Chapter 2 further expands on such results and fully focuses on the advantages of using acting and singing as pedagogical strategies in EFL teaching. In this chapter, art-based authentic materials and related performative activities are proposed as effective tools to engage students in authentic communicative contexts and in task-based learning activities. In particular, section 2.2 focuses on

drama. This section proposes that drama pedagogy can promote social learning by providing meaningful communicative contexts in which students can freely experiment with language by actively collaborating in creative group tasks. Moreover, this section explores drama's potential to promote inclusive and multimodal EFL teaching. Section 2.3, on the other hand, focuses on music. This section utilizes the 5 elements of Posner et al.'s Arts Theory as a theoretical framework to explore how the pedagogical use of music can enhance EFL acquisition in both cognitive and motivational terms. In a nutshell, by critically interconnecting existing literature on the subject, this section aims to demonstrate that: 1) music and language are processed in the same areas of the brain; 2) music is widely appreciated due to a general factor of interest for the arts; 3) being appreciated, music is a source of motivation that positively affects human relations; 4) being motivating, music enhances attention; 5) by enhancing attention, music improves cognitive processes strictly functional to language acquisition. More specifically, music has been showed to favor syntax, prosody and pronunciation learning in the target language, as well as enhancing students' long-term recalling of the language learned through music thanks to its emotional load. After providing a number of reasons why music and drama should be extensively used to teach English as a Foreign Language, chapter 2 concludes proposing an innovative understanding of English students as performers. Consistently, the EFL teacher is proposed as a "theater or movie director" in the EFL process. In particular, section 2.4 shows that there seem to be interesting parallels between EFL learning and training in acting and singing. As a consequence, this section provides insights on how EFL students can "exploit" art-training techniques to better acquire English Foreign Language. Chapter 2 concludes with section 2.5, in which the role of the director in movie productions is thoroughly compared to the role of the teacher in the EFL classroom. Basing on a comparative analysis of directing coach Weston's considerations, excerpted from her work "Directing Actors" (1996), this section shows how directing techniques and principles can be implemented by EFL teachers to promote a non-threatening and liberating learning environment, thus enhancing EFL acquisition.

Chapters 3-4 represent the stage in my research at which all the theories and hypotheses formulated during my theoretical studies are tested, confirmed or challenged through real-life practice. In these chapters, I thoroughly relate about the experimental part of my research, which took place at *IIS P. Scalcerle*, a high school in Padua, Italy, from February 2 to March 23, 2023. During this period, I worked as an English trainee teacher and I taught one curricular unit to 26 first-year learners using "The Prom", a *Netflix* musical movie, as primary authentic material. Most of my teaching centered around music and the performing arts and required students' active participation in creative and performative workshops. It was my intention, while planning my thesis, to strictly interconnect theory and practice. To do so, I made 2 choices. On the one hand, I decided to include only theories and hypotheses in chapters 1-2 whose correctness and reliability I could verify during my practical experiment. On the other hand, I made constant references to the theory contained in chapters 1-2 while exposing my experimental unit, so as to show continuity between theories and their practical applications in real teaching contexts. The validity of such theories is measured in light of the data I systematically collected on the field before, during, and after the session.

Chapter 3, on the whole, presents a detailed description of the pre-session procedures, as well as providing preliminary information needed to fully understand the context in which the experiment was conducted. Specifically, section 3.2 provides a description of the general context in which the teaching experiment took place. Section 3.3 consists of a summary table about my unit titled "The Prom", outlining linguistic and non-linguistic objectives, methodologies, materials and describing the target group my unit was meant for. Section 3.4 offers a focus on the research methodology utilized to conduct this experiment. In particular, I explain that my research methodology reflects Action Research in at least five of its core elements: 1) the strong theory-practice link; 2) a self-reflective approach; 3) situational research; 4) ethnographic and qualitative research (more specifically,

referring to this fourth element, I explain how I used typical ethnographic research tools – e.g., the diary, anecdotal sheets, observation sheets, interviews – to gather my observation data); 5) Systematic study. After proposing the full version of the pre-session questionnaire my students were asked to fill in before the unit, Chapter 3 concludes with section 3.5, containing a full description of my observation period (February 6-15, 2023). This section includes the transcript of the interview with the teacher and data analysis of my pre-session observation of both teacher and students. The data are analyzed in this section by critically interrelating them with students' answers to the pre-session questionnaire.

Chapter 4 provides a step-by-step description of my unit "The Prom". In this detailed presentation of my unit, all teaching materials (slides, quizzes, home assignments, authentic materials, assessment grids etc.) are included to provide a comprehensive report of my experiment. Every lesson, home assignment or workshop is presented in chronological order and precise dates are provided. I dedicate one section to each relevant step, be it a lesson, a home assignment or a workshop session. In particular, sections 4.2 to 4.14 thoroughly describe each of my unit's lessons, including take-home assignments submissions and the 2 workshop sessions on music theatre (4.11 and 4.14). Section 4.15 provides a detailed description of the final test, i.e., the stage performance of each group's original script. Each of the aforementioned sections consists of 2 parts. In part 1, I relate about the specific activities carried out and provide relating materials. In part 2, I report the diary I kept during the unit, integrating its contents (e.g., field notes, general thoughts, after-class considerations or specific anecdotes) with my in-progress analysis of the data I gathered as the unit proceeded. Consistently with the principles of Action Research, I analyze my practice-derived data making punctual references to the theories and hypotheses formulated in Chapters 1 and 2, so as to measure their validity in light of my in-class experience. This chapter ends with a section dedicated to final marks (4.16) and one last section (4.17) containing a detailed post-unit questionnaire analysis in which I compare students' answers in the pre- and post-questionnaire to draw some conclusions on my unit's effectiveness.

This dissertation ends with a concluding remarks paragraph. In this paragraph, I wrap up the key concepts of my analysis drawing conclusions on my study in light of all the theories, hypotheses and praxis-based data presented and analyzed in the 4 chapters. Eventually, I provide a tentative answer to my research question on the possible beneficial effects of the use of music and the performing arts in EFL teaching.

Before diving into Chapter 1, I would like to make the reader aware that I did not carry out my experiment following the principles of Applied Research. I rather let myself be inspired by the guidelines of Action Research, whose roots are to be found in Lewin's social studies about ethnic minorities in the USA during the Forties. Although my data were rigorously and systematically collected, the deriving results are to be interpreted in the framework of a self-reflective study carried out by a passionate teacher to be who is doing research to try to put into practice to the best of his abilities what he has studied so far. In other words, I can state without any difficulty that my research has produced revealing results on the potentially beneficial effect of music and the performing arts on EFL learning, and I hope such results can be helpful or somehow inspirational to other teachers. Nevertheless, it is not the purpose of my thesis to propose a generalized and foolproof teaching paradigm that is supposed to generate the same exact results I obtained in other environments. On the contrary, it is my pleasure to share my research with other researcher-teachers, hoping to offer meaningful points of reflection and raise new research questions to be answered in further research.

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CHAPTER 1

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1.1 Introduction

This first chapter focuses on the use of authentic materials in EFL teaching settings. Drawing on Halliday's SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics), authentic materials are proposed to provide relevant contexts of situation, thus allowing students to explore specific linguistic structures in relation to their functions and meaning potential. Moreover, well-selected authentic texts are discussed as effective pedagogical tools to tailor language curricula to students' needs, thus motivating them. In particular, section 1.3 introduces Laufer et al.'s Involvement Load Theory to critically reflect on the potential advantages in motivational and cognitive terms of using lengthier authentic texts (e.g., novels, full movies, etc.) in EFL teaching. Furthermore, section 1.4 shows how an extensive use of authentic texts can promote an inductive approach to grammar in the EFL classroom. Chapter 1 concludes with section 1.5, in which Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory and Fleming's VAKT model are called upon to explore the pedagogical role of authentic texts in guaranteeing input variedness and a multimodal learning experience.

1.2 Why use authentic materials in EFL teaching?

> *"We do not experience language in isolation, but always in relation to a scenario, some background of persons and actions and events from which the things which are said derive their meaning. This is referred to as the 'situation', so language is said to function in 'contexts of situation' and any account of language which fails to build in the situation as an essential ingredient is likely to be artificial and unrewarding".* (Halliday, 1978, pp. 28-29)

According to Halliday (1970), language performs "three metafunctions:

— Ideational function: used for the expression of content;
— Interpersonal function: used to maintain and establish social relations;
— Textual function: used to provide cohesive relations within spoken or written texts" (p.143).

He goes on to argue that one's choice of register is influenced by social context, which includes "three situational variables:

— Field: an ongoing social activity or a subject matter of a text;
— Tenor: the relations among the participants;
— Mode: physical medium adopted for communication including the channel and the rhetorical mode". (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p.12)

Halliday's theoretical framework (Halliday, 1978, 1985; Halliday & Hasan, 1985) proposes that "language is a socially constructed system. Viewing language in a social semiotic way, he suggests that it is essential to bring contexts of situation into focus in order to understand the functions of specific linguistic structures and examine meaning potential" (Chang, 2012, p.9). Accepting Halliday's understanding of language implies questioning the traditional definition of literacy as the mere ability to read and write. As noticed by Chang (2012), "the danger here […] is that, if we regard language merely as a body of skills to be mastered and deployed, then we are likely to divorce language exercises from context" (Winston, 2012, p.8). Although learning the detail of how texts are written is "crucial to children's educational and personal development" (Cameron, 2001, p.125), it should not be considered as the only aspect when teaching a language:

"Being literate is a more complex concept which goes far beyond the acquisition of a set of decontextualized coding and decoding skills. It involves the ability to produce and interpret texts in a given context where the realization of meaning potential deeply depends upon one's social and cultural identity. […] On the subject of second language learning, teachers [should] take account of contextual considerations in teaching children. As a result, the context of a situation should not be separated from literacy teaching". (Chang, 2012, p.9)

This seems to contrast with the way language is normally taught in traditional EFL teaching. In most EFL textbooks, language structures are presented deductively through decontextualized and artificial grammar exercises. That the risk of "divorcing language exercises from context" is real seems to be testified by Zyzik and Polio, who observe that "traditionally, grammar and vocabulary are taught (and presented in textbooks) as two separate domains" (2017, p.661). Calling upon Halliday's Lexico-Grammar (Halliday, 1978, 1985; Halliday & Hasan, 1985), they point out that in natural communicative contexts, grammar and vocabulary are strictly connected to each other:

"Grammar and vocabulary are interrelated. […] One example of this is that knowing how to use a word correctly involves some degree of grammatical knowledge, such as knowing its part of speech and what other words it can appear with (collocations). Consider the word *diet*: learners of English might learn the basic meaning of this word and yet still use it incorrectly if they don't know the common phrase *to go on a diet* or *to be on a diet* […]. By including attention to nuances of meaning and collocation patterns, the focus of grammar instruction [should necessarily be] much broader than in a traditional approach" (p.661).

Although textbooks are different from one another, research on ESL/EFL textbooks has shown that overemphasis on grammar presented in decontextualized and artificial sample sentences often results in mismatches between textbooks and natural language use. Goodall (2010) noted that textbooks often provide students with a distorted view of grammar in which some structures ore overemphasized while others are barely taken into consideration. Moreover, "textbooks generally present little information about pragmatically appropriate language use. Speech acts (e.g., giving advice, expressing agreement, making suggestions), as presented in textbooks, may differ quite dramatically from how they are realized in real-life conversations" (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p.303). A study carried out by Eisenchlas (2011) seems to confirm Zyzik and Polio's point. She compared several intermediate Spanish books to analyze the phrases they proposed for advice-giving. She found that "textbooks seriously underrepresented the range of linguistic resources that Spanish-speakers use to give advice and gave no information regarding the pragmatic norms that underlie such interactions in the target culture" (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p.303). Besides and because of the linguistic flaws exposed so far, a textbook-driven teaching approach can have negative effects on the motivational level as well. Traditional teaching in which "teacher and textbook are seen as authoritative sources of knowledge" (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998, p.102) can easily be "monotonous, [and] students are not given comprehensive learning experiences with little room to think, explore and create" (Education Commission 2000, p.6). To overcome this situation, researchers who study second language pragmatics have argued strongly for "authentic texts as a way of providing learners with models of language that exemplify social, cultural, and discourse conventions [while] integrating language and content and form and meaning" (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p.310). According to Buzarna-Tihenea and Nădrag (2018), "authentic language […] can provide students with a wide range of both vocabulary and grammar structures needed to improve their skills" (p.145). The authors add that "when being taught language or grammar, students are more likely to remember a new language structure or a grammar issue if it was encountered in a context they found interesting" (p.147), indicating that authentic texts can provide such relevant contexts, thus sustaining learners' motivation and language

retention throughout the EFL learning process. Other scholars emphasize the role of authentic materials in developing learners' cultural and intercultural awareness. For example, Erkaya (2005) proposes that authentic materials can be seen as authentic stretches of language highly representative of the culture in which they are created and used, i.e., the target culture, in the case of EFL teaching. From this perspective, not only do authentic materials allow for contextualized language and grammar analysis, but they also offer relevant insights on the target culture. As a result, authentic texts might play a pivotal role in enhancing EFL students' cultural and intercultural awareness. This would be particularly convenient for EFL learners, especially considering that "increased cultural awareness can help [learners] to achieve cultural empathy and sensitivity. It can also facilitate language acquisition, as being positive, empathetic and inquisitive can contribute to one of the optimal conditions for language acquisition: motivated exposure to language in use" (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2004, p.7). Before diving into a detailed analysis of the advantages of using authentic materials in EFL learning contexts, I present some scholars' attempts to provide a comprehensive definition of authentic material. According to Novello (2022), "authentic materials include all materials designed for a real audience, are not created for educational purposes, but are released for multiple purposes related to daily life and to a target audience without language-communication difficulties" (pp.82-83). McDonough and Shaw (1993, p.43) describe authenticity as "a term which loosely implies as close an approximation as possible to the world outside the classroom, in the selection both of language material and of the activities and methods used for practice in the classroom." As reported by Ruiz and Molinero (2003), "Hammer (1991) defines authentic texts – either written or spoken – as those which are designed for native speakers; i.e., they are real texts created not for language students but for the speakers of the language in question." (p.183). Similarly, Nunan (1989), considers authentic material as "that which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching" (p.183). Widowson (1990) defines authentic materials as "materials designed for native speakers of English used in the classroom in a way similar to the one they were was designed for", adding that, "by supporting the use of authentic material, researchers reject the teaching material designed to highlight some selected structures that are often artificial and never representative of the use of the language in the real world." (p.183). Gilmore (2007, p.98) defines authentic materials as "a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort". Criticizing Gilmore's definition in that "real language" could also potentially include teacher-talk in the classroom, Zyzik and Polio (2017, p.196) propose a modified version: "authentic materials are those created for some real-world purpose other than language learning, and often, but not always, provided by native speakers for native speakers". They add that "authentic texts comprise both spoken and written language samples. For example, newspaper articles, short stories, advice columns, magazine ads, and graphic novels are commonly used authentic written texts. Spoken texts include but are not limited to, television commercials, movies, radio broadcasts, lectures, songs, podcasts and conversations or service encounters among native speakers" (p.211). By providing this definition, they remark that it is not their intention "to argue that non-authentic materials (i.e., those created for language learning purposes) are without merit, but rather that authentic materials are essential and can be used much more broadly than most teachers might envision." (p.204). After providing some definitions of authentic materials, I now dedicate some space to the exploration of the advantages of authentic materials in EFL learning, drawing examples and theories from existing literature on the subject. As pointed out by Ellis and Johnson (1994), opposingly to decontextualized language samples often provided in EFL textbooks, "authentic texts will include the type of language which the learner may need to be exposed to, to develop skills for understanding and possibly even produce" (Ellis and

Johnson, 1994, p.157). Moreover, authentic materials are instances of the particular register to which they belong, implying the use of appropriate language for that register:

> "[Authentic materials imply the use of] appropriate terminology, expressions, grammar structures and tone, in other words, [they] promote language awareness […]. Besides, students will have the opportunity of acquiring useful rhetorical functions, grammar applications – e.g., passive voice versus active voice, compound nouns versus noun strings, acronyms, abbreviations, false friends, connectives – and coherence and cohesion – transitional markers, references, substitution and ellipsis. They will also familiarize with the conventions and structure of information in their particular areas of interest according to different types of documents." (Ruiz and Molinero, 2003, p. 185)

Hence, a systematic use of authentic texts in the EFL classroom may allow learners to make generalizations about grammar, vocabulary and language usage. Authentic-material-based activities are to be understood as a propaedeutic tool that trains students to real interactions in natural communicative contexts. By keeping students and teachers updated about what is happening in the world, authentic texts can function as a link between the language classroom and the real world. This seems to be confirmed by Ellis and Johnson (1994), who indicate that, when using authentic texts, "the information conveyed is likely to be more accurate and to have high credibility, and will probably be more up-to-date" (p.158). Moreover, authentic materials can play a pivotal role in enhancing EFL students' motivation. Hinting at the role of authentic texts as potential motivation boosters, Ruiz and Molinero explain that "these authentic sources, especially if learners are asked to contribute to the selection of topics, may assist to the creation of a more positive attitude toward learning, since students are gaining knowledge of what really interests them and understand more and more of the authentic discourse" (Ruiz and Molinero, 2003, p.186). Zyzik and Polio (2017) further expand on the role of authentic materials in boosting learners' motivation by stating that "students have various reasons for studying a language (including satisfying a requirement), but the majority of students ultimately want to be able to communicate with native speakers, either locally or abroad. Accordingly, authentic texts may bring students closer to this goal by giving them a tangible sense of how language is used in concrete situations" (p.284). The importance of designing updated, relevant and student-tailored EFL teaching curricula is at the center of Santipolo's BLT (Bespoke Language Teaching) model (2017). According to Santipolo (2017), teaching English today is not an easy task, especially considering that English has become a "global phenomenon" (p.243) subject to constant change:

> "To cut a long story short, the big challenges English language teachers have to face today may be summed up as follows:
> 1) English as a global phenomenon (like all other language, but probably even more than any other) changes today faster than ever before (cf. the role the Internet plays on such changes);
> 2) globalisation of English: English teaching as a whole should involve teaching learners to grow variety-aware, to be ready for huge difference and variability;
> 3) teachers themselves (especially, but not exclusively, if non-native speakers) must keep up with points 1 and 2 above and should adopt strategies to work on them in the classroom." (Santipolo, 2017, pp.243-244)

As already mentioned, Ellis and Johnson (1994) point out that authentic materials can bring up-to-date language to the EFL classroom, thus helping teachers keep up with the constant and fast-paced changes English and its varieties are subject to. Provided that English is a dynamic, ever-evolving, and varied language, Santipolo's BLT model (2017) aims at answering the following key question:

"So, eventually, what English should be taught?" (p.244). Proposing an answer to this question, Santipolo (2017) borrows and adapts two concepts from computer sciences: "utility and usability" (p.245). In his view, students should be taught the language they need and are more likely to use accordingly to the communicative contexts in which they (will) operate. As observed by Matteo Santipolo (2017), "utility will be determined by analysing the learners' present and/or future needs, motivations and aspirations (not just in relation to language learning) and may consequently change a lot from one student/group of students to another" (p.247). Further exploring the concept of "usability" (p.245), on the other hand, Santipolo (2017) calls upon the 5 quality components normally used to assess "how easy user interfaces are to use", i.e., "*learnability*", "*efficiency*", "*memorability*", "*errors*", and "*satisfaction*" (p.245). Santipolo (2017) proposes that these 5 components "can easily be read and re-interpreted having language teaching in mind" (p.246):

> "1. Learnability is connected to how easy it is to turn the linguistic input into intake and, at last, into output.
> 2. Efficiency is defined by the relation between the effort (which includes time as a variable) necessary to learn something and the targets actually reached in terms of communicative competence acquired, especially from a pragmatic viewpoint.
> 3. Memorability: the more meaningful what is learnt is for the student, the more he/she will remember it.
> 4. Errors and mistakes are an essential part of the language learning process (cf. Corder, 1981, p. 11).
> 5. Satisfaction lies at the basis of any learning process and language learning is no exception. Therefore, it goes without saying, that the more a student is satisfied with what he/she has learnt, the more he/she will be willing to carry on learning, little affected by how demanding that might be." (p.246)

As a result of such reflections, Santipolo (2017) proposes a definition of "*Sociolinguistic Usability*" as the "degree of correspondence that there is between the learner's current or future actual needs, features and interests and the answers to them that the language course he/she is attending can and does provide" (p.246). From this perspective, language learning is not seen as a teacher-driven standardized process, but rather as a student-tailored learning path through which learners have the chance to internalize and develop sociolinguistic skills directly functional to the achievement of their personal and professional life goals. As a consequence, in this language learning process, "the varieties of English [learners] are to be presented with will be selected on the basis of what is useful and usable to them" (p.246). As concluded by Santipolo (2017), "the added value of such a strategy will be not only to provide learners with what they may feel to be more relevant to them, but also to help them grow more variety-aware" (p.246). At operational level, it is possible to realize what Santipolo (2017) calls the "*Teaching variety*" (p.246) by following 3 criteria:

> "1. Teaching what is useful before what is not useful. Utility will be determined by analysing the learners' present and/or future needs, motivations and aspirations (not just in relation to language learning) and may consequently change a lot from one student/group of students to another;
> 2. Teaching what is more widespread (both in terms of grammar and vocabulary and of actual sociolinguistic use) before what is less so or not even used (anymore) at all. This is again extremely variable, depending on the type of language to be taught and the specific purpose and context of the course;

3. From this, it entices that it will not always be possible to teach what is easier before what is more complicated, but the advantages deriving from learning something that is perceived as useful and usable will be rewarding thus triggering off new motivation to carry on working and learning" (p.247).

Following these 3 principles, i.e., adapting teaching curricula to what students find more useful and usable, "corresponds to building student-tailored courses and will eventually turn language teaching into *Bespoke Language Teaching* (BLT)" (Santipolo, 2017, p.247). As previously mentioned, especially when authentic texts are selected taking account of students' needs and interests, "these authentic sources […] may assist to the creation of a more positive attitude toward learning, since students are gaining knowledge of what really interests them" (Ruiz and Molinero, 2003, p.186). Novello (2022) adds that "to the purpose of designing motivating language curricula, it is always useful to take into consideration learners' interests and tastes. […] As with any pedagogical choice, the selection of authentic materials must be based on a careful examination of learners' needs" (pp. 63, 83). From this perspective, it seems that, when carefully selected according to students' needs, authentic materials can contribute to increase language lessons' levels of utility and usability, thus enabling Santipolo's BLT. Ruiz and Molinero (2003) seem to confirm this hypothesis:

> "Authentic material has been demonstrated to essentially meet the students' needs within their scope, involving them in the real world of the English usage within the context of their studies and carrier objectives […]. The language will be employed as an instrument for the purpose of expressing themselves, as well as for gathering information; e.g., for the further completion of their degree, as a support in their final project work or in their future area of specialization. Thus, the use of authentic material in the EST classroom should not be considered as a choice but as a need in itself. In some occasions, it constitutes a useful model and in others it is considered as a very profitable source of information" (p.184).

Keeping in mind Santipolo's BLT model (2017) and within the framework of a use-and-meaning-focused teaching approach, it is crucial to consider that authentic texts lend themselves for form-focused instruction as well. As proposed by Spada (1997), grammar instruction can consist of "pedagogical events which occur within meaning-based approaches to L2 instruction but in which a focus on language is provided in either spontaneous or predetermined ways" (p.73). As further explored in 1.4, specific analysis of language form (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.) should never take place in isolation from meaningful and contextualized language use. In this sense, "authentic texts encourage a focus on meaning (e.g., understanding a message for real-world purpose), but teachers can intervene in various ways to provide the much-needed attention to language form" (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p.316). That authentic materials promote meaning-focused analysis of language used for "real-world purpose" in communicative contexts seems to be confirmed by Peacock (1997) and Nunan (2004). Peacock defines authentic materials as "materials that have been produced to fulfil some special purpose in the language community" (p.145), while Noonan (2004) considers authentic texts as the ones "produced for purposes of communication" (p.49). To sum up, authentic texts are ultimately created to communicate – i.e., to effectively exchange meaningful messages so as to fulfil specific purposes within the language community. From this perspective, it can be assumed that, by working with authentic texts, students can explore language in relation to its meanings and communicative purposes in real-life communication, while at the same time having the chance to study the grammatical structures contained in such texts. Although authentic texts can be effective tools to provide students with contextualized language while motivating them, Zyzik and Polio (2017) warn their readers that "the relationship between authenticity and motivation is not a straightforward

one as we might assume"(p.284). In their book, titled "Authentic Materials – Myths. Applying Second Language Research to Classroom Teaching", they provide 4 criteria to be considered when selecting authentic materials for the EFL classroom: length, topic familiarity, text structure and the linguistic complexity of the text:

— **Length**

Length is one of the most debated criteria among teachers and scholars when it comes to selecting authentic materials for teaching purposes. While many might argue against the use of lengthier texts in class due to time concerns and complexity, Zyzik and Polio (2017) encourage the use of full-length authentic texts. A broader analysis of the advantages of the use of lengthier texts is provided in 1.3. While leaning for the use of longer authentic sources, the authors specify that "the key observation is that lengthier texts will need to be divided up into smaller sections. [For example,] if you want to work with an entire film, realize that you will need to break it up into viewable chunks (e.g., ten-minute segments)" (p.537). In other words, the authentic material presented to the class should always be manageable in terms of duration, so as to realize activities that fit in the lesson and that are not perceived as overwhelming by learners.

— **Topic familiarity**

The authors remind their readers of that the less familiar the topic is, the more pre-reading is needed. In other words, in order for the text to be enjoyable, students should feel familiar with the topic. If the topic of the text is perceived as "foreign" (p.544), they will probably have a hard time penetrating it and working on it. To prevent this from happening, the teacher should plan a pre-reading activity, which could be potentially time-consuming. The authors suggest that the teacher considers time investment when choosing a text whose background is alien to students. In more practical terms, if the available amount of weekly lesson hours is restricted, the teacher might want to opt for a text dealing with a familiar topic, so as not to devote "too much" time to pre-reading. As reported in "Authentic Materials", Maxim's study (2002) is a good example of how to make authentic texts accessible to beginners. The soup opera genre he chose "was considered culturally familiar to the learners. In other words, learners were assumed to have the appropriate cultural schema […] for understanding the texts, which means that the sociocultural situations in the texts are not totally foreign to the reader/viewer". As a result, "the learner has the advantage of being able to identify with the characters and generate the right expectations" (p.467).

— **Text structure**

There are various ways of introducing ideas in a text which are culture-dependent and/or can vary across disciplines and genres. While texts with a non-chronological presentation of events might fit advanced students, "with beginners, it is probably best to limit yourself to texts that have a conventional narrative structure. You can anticipate that flashbacks and unconventional narrative structures will likely confuse the beginning-level learner" (p.544). This is in line with Alptekin and Erçetin (2011), who explain that a "coherent narrative with a well-developed storyline demands less attentional resources than other types of texts. […] On this view, narrative texts are easier to process because they have a close correspondence to daily events in contextually specific situations" (p. 244).

— **Linguistic complexity of the text**

As Zyzik and Polio (2017) claim, "we cannot be motivated by texts that we don't understand" (p.290). According to Harmer (2015), "authentic material which has been carelessly chosen can be extremely demotivating for students since they will not understand it" (p.306). In a previous publication, the same author observes that "authentic materials may contain culturally-bound words and notions that are difficult to comprehend […] and therefore the students might be burdened with unnecessary vocabulary which might not be relevant for their immediate needs." The resulting "demoralization would undermine the very reasons for giving students [authentic] material" (Harmer, 1983, p. 186). From Harmer's considerations (1983, 2015), it can be drawn that teachers should carefully select authentic materials basing on their students' interests and language levels, while at the same time keeping in mind their own teaching goals. This is confirmed by Spelleri (2002), according to whom "it is the teacher's responsibility to filter materials through selection of the learning objectives […] and to identify the items [basing on] their adaptability" (p.17). Consistently, Buzarna-Tihenea and Nădrag (2018) argue that "not being designed for EFL students, the authentic materials may differ in the degree of difficulty and accessibility and that is why they require a careful selection on the behalf of the teacher in accordance with the purpose of the lesson" (p.146). Nevertheless, it should also be considered that how difficult students perceive a text mainly depends upon the activity they are asked to carry out basing on that same text. As indicated by Buzarna-Tihenea and Nădrag (2018), "the same piece of material may be used for different levels because it is not the text the one which should be altered, but the task should be designed so that it should meet the requirements and necessities of the students." (p.146). If the teacher demands full word-by-word comprehension of "texts with challenging vocabulary and long, complex sentences", beginner students might get frustrated and perceive the task as "impossible" (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p.290). If, on the other hand, the same text is approached globally and the teacher asks their student to come up with key concepts and general ideas, students would probably perceive the task as more affordable and possibly rewarding. This being said, when working with beginners, the authors' recommendation is to "select materials in which at least some of the vocabulary will be familiar to students. […] Not only will this make the text more accessible, but it provides repeated exposure to the vocabulary they are learning, thus allowing them to consolidate knowledge of newly or partially learned words" (p.557). As Gilmore (2007) explains, "the success of any particular set of authentic materials […] depends on how appropriate they are for the subjects in question, how they are exploited in class (the tasks) and how effectively the teacher is able to mediate between the materials and the students" (p.107). When evaluating the linguistic complexity of an authentic text, teachers should always keep in mind Krashen's input hypothesis (1982), according to which acquisition can only occur when learners are exposed to *comprehensible input*. "If such input contains structures and forms just beyond the learner's current level of competence in the language (this is called *i+1* by Krashen), then both understanding and acquisition will occur" (Kempston, 2012, p. 98). According to Krashen, second language learners "acquire language as they are exposed to samples of the second language which they understand". (Spada and Lightbown, 1999, p.38)

After reviewing length, topic familiarity, text structure and the linguistic complexity of the text as the main criteria to take into consideration when selecting appropriate authentic texts, it is important to remark that, as already hinted at, the success or failure of an activity based on an authentic text mainly relies on the teacher's ability to effectively mediate between learners and the text. In other words, "it is not a matter of whether or not authentic materials should be used, but what combination of authentic

[and] simulated materials [or activities] provide learners with optimal learning opportunities" (Nunan, 2004, p.49). As already mentioned, "it is not the text the one which should be altered, but the task should be designed so that it should meet the requirements and necessities of the students" (Buzarna-Tihenea and Nădrag, 2018, p.146). Perhaps, the key point here is that "learners do not have to understand everything in order to get something out of a particular text [...]. The success or failure of working with authentic materials, especially with beginners, will depend on the teacher's ability to create the right kind of task" (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p.557). To sum up, "there is scarcely a right or wrong text for a particular learning level, but there are definitely right or wrong tasks". (Swaffar and Arens, 2005, p.61)

1.3 Why use longer authentic texts?

In the selection of authentic texts for teaching purposes, full-length authentic texts (e.g., movies, theater plays, novels) are often discarded because it is common belief they are too complex and unmanageable in the EFL classroom. Although some valid reasons backing up this view could be intuitively mentioned, research has shown that "the complexity of the text is not a function of its overall length but rather determined by features within the text such as informational density and layered messages" (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p.911). A clear example to support this thesis can be the movie vs movie trailer comparison. Although movie trailers are short, they often do not work well for teaching:

> "[Movie trailers] are full of cultural information presented without any plot build up to help the students understand the situation. The discourse is often choppy as the trailer jumps quickly from one scene to the next, giving students little context for the language being used. Ironically, it is likely that the students in the class could have understood a good part of the full-length movies, but they struggle to catch the colloquial language where the full context was not clear". (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p.898)

As explained in this example, informational density and lack of background, rather than length, can make a text difficult. In other words, any text, be it short or long, can be complex in qualitative terms. In line with this view, the Common Core State Standards in English language Arts and Literacy (www.corestandards.org) identifies four elements in the definition of text complexity:

— Levels of meaning or purpose;
— Text structure;
— Language conventionality and clarity;
— Knowledge demands placed on the reader.

Crucially, in this conceptualization of complexity, text length is not mentioned. As noted by Bunch, Walqui, and Pearson (2014), "difficulty ultimately emerges from interactions among the reader, task and available supports" (p.536). Bunch et al.'s idea of complexity (2014) confirms that the teacher plays a crucial role in making a text accessible by planning reasonable tasks and providing students with adequate resources to access it. After proposing some points of reflection on the non-straightforward relation between text length and complexity, it is now worth mentioning that research has highlighted advantages of using longer authentic texts in terms of vocabulary retention and motivation. I provide insights on this hypothesis drawing on Laufer and Hulstijn's Involvement Load Theory (2001). This theory proposes a hypothesis of "task-induced involvement" (p.2) in which *involvement* is perceived as a "motivational-cognitive construct which can explain and predict

learners' success in the retention of hitherto unfamiliar words." (p.14). Involvement consists of three dimensions: need, search and evaluation. *Involvement load* is defined as "the combination of the presence or absence of the involvement factors Need, Search, and Evaluation." (p.15). As a result, "words which are processed with higher involvement load will be retained better than words which are processed with lower involvement load" (p.15). Here below, I interrelate existing studies to show how an extensive use of longer authentic materials in EFL teaching can guarantee high involvement load in its three dimensions of need, search and evaluation.

— **Need**

As remarked by Laufer and Hulstijn, (2001), "human beings […] are not just information-processing devices, but they also possess motives and emotions, and they are integrated in a socio-cultural environment. Motivation, emotion, and socio-cultural factor may affect the way in which humans process information." (p.6). In light of this, the two authors propose that cognition should not only be studied in terms of implicit or explicit memory and learning, but also in a broader sense, "as influenced by motivations, attitudes, and social and cultural environments. […] Therefore, we decided to include at least one aspect of motivation, namely 'need' in our construct of task-induced involvement load" (p.6). According to the two scholars, "the *need* component is the motivational, non-cognitive dimension of involvement [and] it is concerned with the *need to achieve.* We interpret this notion not in its negative sense, but in its positive sense, based on a drive to comply with the task requirements, whereby the task requirements can be either externally imposed or self-imposed" (p.14). As explained in Laufer and Hulstijn's paper (2001), need can be moderate or strong: "need is moderate when it is imposed by an external agent, e.g., the need to use a word in a sentence which the teacher has asked the learner to produce. Need is strong when imposed on the learner by him- or herself" (p.14). As hinted at in 1.2 and further discussed in 1.4, by promoting student-centered, discovery-based and inductive tasks, the use of longer authentic texts in EFL teaching can result in high levels of involvement in its need dimension. By independently working on the inductive analysis of naturally-occurring authentic language, students' task requirements are self-imposed, resulting in learners perceiving a "strong" need to fulfill them. Further exploring this motivational component of need, it should be remarked that authentic texts, when well selected, can meet students' academic needs and personal interests, thus being perceived as relevant and motivating. In particular, lengthier authentic texts share a feature other types of materials may not have: *thematic continuity* (cf. Maxim, 2002). As observed by Schmitt and Carter (2000), "following a storyline is ultimately what keeps us turning the pages of a good novel or draws us into watching a television series" (p.8). In other words, thematic continuity means that "there is an opportunity for background knowledge to build cumulatively as the text unfolds" (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p. 1007). Rodgers (2013) confirms the effectiveness of thematic continuity in a large-scale study with Japanese EFL learners who watched full-length episodes of an American TV series:

> "Participants watched ten successive episodes of *Chuck* over the course of a semester, for a total viewing time of approximately seven hours (each episode lasted an average of 42 minutes). Rodgers documented significant comprehension gains from the first to the tenth episode, which he attributed to the gradual accumulation of background information. Rodger proposes that, as learners continue viewing, the previous episodes function as advance organizers. In this way, thematic continuity reduces the burden on learners, allowing them to comprehend more as they build knowledge of the text". (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p.1013)

In line with Rodger (2013), Yang (2001) states that thanks to thematic continuity, students "free themselves from the need to struggle through background knowledge each time they pick up a new piece" (p.454). To sum up, "lengthier texts may be more cohesive and, hence, more interesting for learners" (Allen, Bernhardt, Berry, and Demel, 1988, p.170). After explaining how full-length authentic texts can enhance students' motivation, I now explore the second and third dimensions of involvement: Search and Evaluation.

— **Search and Evaluation**
According to Laufer and Hulstijn (2001), "*search* and *evaluation* are the two cognitive (information processing) dimensions of involvement, contingent upon noticing and deliberately allocating attention to the form-meaning relationship." (p.14). In particular, "*search* is the attempt to find the meaning of an unknown L2 word or trying to find the L2 word from expressing a concept". Laufer and Hulstijn's understanding of *evaluation* is described here below:

> "Evaluation entails a comparison of a given word with other words, a specific meaning of a word with its other meanings, or combining the word with other words in order to assess whether a word (i.e., a from-meaning pair) does or does not fit its context. If, for example, during a reading task, a word that is looked up is a homonym, a decision has to be made about its meaning by comparing all its meanings against the specific context and choosing the one that fits best". (2001, pp.14-15)

As can be read, Laufer and Hulstijn's model (2001) implies students' active search and choice-making rather than deductive teacher-instruction when it comes to acquiring new vocabulary. In other words, when acquiring new vocabulary, learners are supposed to actively engage in independent search and evaluation processes to "find out" meaning and use of new words encountered in authentic texts. As more deeply looked into in 1.4, a discovery-based approach is crucial in effective EFL acquisition. Along with the idea of students as active researchers of knowledge, it is worth considering Ellis's findings (cf. 1994b, 1994c), according to which perceptual aspects of new words are learnt implicitly as a result of frequent exposure. Besides fostering discovery-based and inductive learning processes, longer authentic texts provide students with "frequent exposure" to new contextualized vocabulary (also known as "vocabulary recycling"), thus allowing them to implicitly acquire it. Zyzik and Polio (2017) are in line with Ellis's studies (1994, 1995):

> "One of the primary ways in which longer texts can promote language acquisition, and vocabulary gains in particular, is through the repetition of lexical items. Learning a new word is crucially dependent on the number of encounters or exposures to that particular word. In general, the probability of learning a new word from context with a single exposure is low, but with multiple exposures (generally between 8 and 10), the learner has a reasonably good chance of learning a particular word […]. The idea is that L2 learners can pick up vocabulary (also known as incidental learning) from reading if the text provides enough opportunities to encounter the same words repeatedly. Longer texts, such as complete novels, are good candidates for meeting this basic condition of vocabulary recycling". (Zyzik and Polio, 2017, p.945)

Pellicer-Sánchez and Schmitt (2010) conducted a study aimed at investigating the role of incidental learning in vocabulary retention from the reading of an unmodified authentic novel (Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*). Advanced learners of English who read the novel for the first time participated in the study. As described by Zyzik and Polio (2017, p.952), "the results were favorable in terms of demonstrating a good rate of incidental learning: […] the authors found a much higher rate of learning for words that were frequently repeated (10-17 times) in the text. Participants were able to recognize the meaning of 84% of these words." Another operational model on how the use of lengthier authentic texts can favor incidental learning is provided by Buzarna-Tihenea and Nădrag (2018):

"[When approaching a new authentic text], the unknown words may be deduced from the context and once the meaning has been established, the students may take part in a communicative exercise such as a role play in which they could imagine different situations, such as a booking scene, a board meeting, a telephone conversation between a customer and an employee or between two business partners (see Maruntelu, 2006). In this way, besides acquiring new vocabulary, students are exposed to situations they may encounter in real life based on an authentic material. Also, by using authentic materials, such as newspaper and magazine articles and even songs, the teacher may create a friendly environment that could make the student feel at ease and thus acquire new language without being aware of the learning process". (Buzarna-Tihenea and Nădrag, 2018, p.147)

Some could argue the same amount of vocabulary recycling and incidental learning can be achieved by reading a number of shorter texts all centered around the same theme. Gardner (2008) seems to confirm this hypothesis, in that he demonstrates that a considerable amount of vocabulary recycling occurs in topic-related expository texts, for example. For example, Heitler (2005) describes how vocabulary recycling can take place when reading several topic-related articles:

"The more students read articles from a specific filed, the more acquainted they become with the vocabulary associated with the field in question […]. Authentic materials from a particular source, such as *The Economist*, tend to work in consistent areas of language, so, after a while, students who practice reading *The Economist* will become experts in reading English language business publications". (Heitler, 2005, p.6)

In other words, it seems that if students read different texts on the same topic, they will still benefit from numerous exposures to topic-specific words, thus incidentally acquiring them. Nevertheless, what students would lack in this latter case would be thematic continuity and its motivational and cognitive implications analyzed in the subsection above.

To sum up, full-length authentic texts have been shown to enhance students' search and evaluation skills in approaching new vocabulary, while at the same time exposing them to incidental learning in a motivating and gripping setting guaranteed by the text's thematic continuity. Although this might sound appealing to most EFL teachers, "the reality is such that teachers may have only three to five hours per week in the classroom with the students. This situation naturally disfavors the use of longer texts such complete novels and feature films" (Zyzik and Polio 2017, p.1026). As a response to this fair observation, I now introduce the technique known as *Intensive viewing,* consisting of detailed language analyses of short movie clips excerpted from one same movie. Through intensive viewing, teachers can still benefit from the movie's intrinsic thematic continuity while working with smaller

chunks that are easily manageable during curricular lessons. As a result, learners can still be motivated by the plot's gripping potential while having the chance to actively analyze affordable input without feeling overwhelmed or frustrated. This is in line with Kaiser (2011):

> "[Viewing movie clips] is akin to doing a close reading and has the following advantages: they can be replayed multiple times in class; the quantity of the language is manageable; they offer the instructor more options in terms of assignments; and they allow in-depth analysis of one scene. Moreover, film clips can be a valuable resource for the teacher who wishes to incorporate authentic cultural material that expands on the textbook's themes" (Kaiser, 2011, p. 234).

In addition, as noted by Zyzik and Polio (2017), movie clips can constitute an important component of pragmatics instruction: "film clips or short scenes from TV shows are used to promote pragmatic awareness, either through deductive or inductive teaching methods" (p.1053). One further argument for the use of movie clips in EFL curricula is that the use in class of such excerpts does not necessarily exclude that students access the full work in their free time or as a take-home assignment:

> "Using short film clips, which allows for intensive work with one scene, is not mutually exclusive with watching the entire film or episode. For example, Washburn (2001) describes a number of extension activities that students can do outside of class, including ongoing viewing of episodes of a particular sitcom. Even if time constraints prevent students from watching a feature film or a complete episode of a sitcom during class, this is a rather weak argument for avoiding longer texts altogether. Instead, teacher should find viable ways of incorporating longer texts for viewing/reading into the course structure and also provide pedagogical support to keep students on track" (p.1067).

In summary, a motivational-cognitive construct of involvement consisting of the three factors of Need, Search and Evaluation has been proposed, showing how tasks related to longer authentic texts can enhance new words retention by positively affecting students' motivation (need) and ability to actively discover the meaning of new words (search and evaluation.). Moreover, operational advice has been provided on how to deal with lengthier authentic texts despite the time constraints EFL teachers typically have to face. As a result, it is the teacher's responsibility to assign tasks that stimulate all of the three components of involvement. In more practical terms, let us suppose one EFL teacher decides to work with a clip from a movie perceived as relevant and gripping by the target group. In so doing, need, the first factor of involvement is being stimulated and students are motivated. If the teacher provides a glossary with all unknown terms before playing the movie, he/she is automatically neglecting the search and evaluation factors, thus jeopardizing the overall involvement load. If a fill-in-the blank activity with a word bank is assigned while watching the clip, some degree of critical evaluation is required while choosing which words to pick from the pool and which words should be excluded. Consequently, the involvement load will increase. If the same activity is assigned without providing a word bank, the involvement load will probably be at its highest. In this scenario, the student will be asked to actively search for the right term using external sources (e.g., online dictionaries) and critically evaluate the options proposed in the dictionary to pick the right one while working with a gripping, manageable and thus motivating authentic text. Consistently with this example, Laufer and Hulstijn, (2001) show through practical exemplifications how different task types may dramatically differ in the involvement load they generate:

"A real-life communicative situation, or a teacher-designed learning task can induce in one, two or all three of the components of involvement for each word: need, search and evaluation. A reading comprehension task which requires the learner to look up the meaning of a homonym in a dictionary, illustrates moderate need (since knowing the word's meaning is necessary for the successful completion of the comprehension task), search (since the meaning of the word is looked up), and evaluation (since different meanings of the word have to be compared and checked against the context before one is selected). If, however, the same task is simplified for the learner by the teacher's glosses for unknown words in the text margin, search and evaluation are no longer required. In the latter example, the task induces a weaker involvement in the word as only the need component is at work. […] Thus, we may say that tasks differ in the involvement load they generate". (Laufer and Hulstijn, 2001, p.15)

In line with this view, Zyzik and Polio (2017) also argue against teachers' glosses by pointing out that, although "many teachers pre-teach vocabulary related to specific reading or listening materials, pre-teaching words might not be helpful as a pre-listening [or pre-reading] activity because students do not have time to access the new word knowledge. […] Also, word lists with definitions do not show the word in context" (p.1213). As also pointed out by Hyland and Tse (2007), "by breaking into single words items which may be better learnt as wholes, vocabulary lists simultaneously misrepresent discipline-specific meanings and mislead students" (p.246). To conclude, it is the teacher's duty to design activities based on authentic materials that can generate a high involvement load in its three declinations of need, search and evaluation, keeping in mind that "teacher-designed tasks with a higher involvement load will be more effective for vocabulary retention than tasks with a lower involvement load". (Laufer and Hulstijn, 2001, p.17)

1.4 Using authentic texts to promote an inductive approach to grammar

As pointed out by Zyzik and Polio (2017), "authentic texts can be exploited effectively to teach grammar [and] are particularly well suited to an inductive approach" (p.596). Subscribing Ellis's view (2006, p.84), grammar-teaching is here broadly understood as "any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form". Nevertheless, before exploring how grammar can be taught, it is necessary to establish what grammar is. To the purpose of outlining how grammar is perceived in the vernacular, a review of "grammar" definitions from six popular online dictionaries is provided here below.

Online dictionary	Definition of "grammar"
Cambridge Dictionary *(From the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus © Cambridge University Press)*	"The study or use of the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to express meaning: - *She memorized the vocabulary but is having trouble with the grammar.*"
Oxford Learner's dictionaries *(From the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary)*	1. "[uncountable] the rules in a language for changing the form of words and joining them into sentences: - *the basic rules of grammar* - *the complexities of English grammar* 2. "[uncountable] a person's knowledge and use of a language: - *His grammar is appalling; - bad grammar* 3. [countable] a book containing a description of the rules of a language: - *A French grammar*"
Merriam – Webster Dictionary *(From Merriam Webster Dictionary & Thesaurus)*	1.a. "The study of the classes of words, their inflections, and their functions and relations in the sentence" 1.b. A study of what is to be preferred and what avoided in inflection and syntax.

	2.a. The characteristic system of inflections and syntax of a language 2.b. A system of rules that defines the grammatical structure of a language 3.a. A grammar textbook 3.b. Speech or writing evaluated according to its conformity to grammatical rules: *Appalled at the bad grammar of college students* 4. The principles or rules of an art, science, or technique: *A grammar of the theater* also: a set of such principles or rules. Examples of grammar in a Sentence: - *English grammar can be hard to master.* - *Comparing English and Japanese grammar* - *Comparing the grammars of English and Japanese* - *"Him and I went" is bad grammar.* - *I know some German, but my grammar isn't very good."*
Dictionary.com	*"Noun* 1. the study of the way the sentences of a language are constructed; morphology and syntax. 2. these features or constructions themselves: *English grammar.* 3. an account of these features; a set of rules accounting for these constructions: *A grammar of English.* 4. Generative Grammar. a device, as a body of rules, whose output is all of the sentences that are permissible in a given language, while excluding all those that are not permissible. 5. Prescriptive grammar. Knowledge or usage of the preferred or prescribed forms in speaking or writing: *She said his grammar was terrible.* 6. The elements of any science, art, or subject. 7. A book treating such elements."
Collins *(From Collins English Dictionary. Copyright © HarperCollins Publishers)*	"1. The branch of linguistics that deals with syntax and morphology, sometimes also phonology and semantics 2. The abstract system of rules in terms of which the mastery of one's native language can be explained 3. A systematic description of the grammatical facts of a language 4. A book containing an account of the grammatical facts of a language or recommendations as to rules for the proper use of a language 5.a. The use of language with regard to its correctness or social propriety. esp. in syntax: *the teacher told him to watch his grammar* 5.b. (As modifier) *A grammar book* 6. The elementary principles of a science or art *The grammar of drawing* 7. Grammar is the ways that words can be put together in order to make sentences: - *He doesn't have mastery of the basic rules of grammar.* - *...the difference between Sanskrit and English grammar.* Synonyms: syntax, rules of language 8. Someone's grammar is the way in which they obey or do not obey the rules of grammar when they write or speak: - *His vocabulary was sound and his grammar excellent.* - *...a deterioration in spelling and grammar among teenagers.* 9. A grammar is a book that describes the rules of a language: *...an advanced English grammar.* 10. A particular grammar is a particular theory that is intended to explain the rules of a language: *Transformational grammars are more restrictive."*
Longman *(From Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English)*	"1. [uncountable] the rules by which words change their forms and are combined into sentences, or the study or use of these rules: - *Check your spelling and grammar.* - *the rules of English grammar* 2. [countable] a particular description of grammar or a book that describes grammar rules - *A dictionary lists the words, a grammar states the rules."*

In the definitions of "grammar" proposed by the six online dictionaries mentioned above, the word "rule(s)" is repeated 23 times, while descriptive terms such as "account" or "description" occur 6 times. From this rough analysis, it could be hypothesized that, according to the definitions provided in these popular online dictionaries, a prescriptive (rather than descriptive) understanding of grammar is still dominant in the vernacular. To test the validity of this assumption, a more detailed comparative analysis of prescriptive vs descriptive language occurring in the definitions of "grammar" is provided here below:

Prescriptive language	Descriptive language
"A study of what is to be **preferred** and what **avoided** in inflection and syntax"	"A book containing a **description** of the rules of a language"
"Speech or writing **evaluated** according to its **conformity** to grammatical **rules**"	"*Comparing English and Japanese grammar*"
"*Appalled at the **bad** grammar of college students*"	"The branch of linguistics that **deals with** syntax and morphology, sometimes also phonology and semantics"
"*I know some German, but my grammar **isn't very good**"*	"A systematic **description** of the grammatical facts of a language"
"*'Him and I went' is **bad** grammar*"	"A grammar is a book that **describes** the rules of a language"
"A device, as a **body of rules**, whose output is all of the sentences that are **permissible** in a given language, while **excluding** all those that are **not permissible**"	"A particular **description** of grammar or a book that **describes** grammar rules"
"**Prescriptive** grammar. Knowledge or usage of the **preferred** or **prescribed** forms in speaking or writing: *She said his grammar was **terrible**"*	
"A book containing an account of the grammatical facts of a language or **recommendations** as to rules for the **proper** use of a language"	
"Someone's grammar is the way in which they **obey** or do **not obey** the **rules** of grammar when they write or speak"	
"The use of language with regard to its **correctness** or social **propriety**"	

As hypothesized, although some space is given to the idea of grammar as a systematic description of the use of a language, most definitions emphasize its prescriptive dimension. In other words, grammar seems to be commonly understood as a set of rules, a prescriptive code to obey. Interestingly, the moral dichotomy good vs evil is often called upon when referring to the degree of conformity of an individual to grammar prescriptions ("'Him and I went' is **bad** grammar"), hinting at an underlying interrelation between grammar accuracy and moral conformity. The idea that grammar is almost "biblically" understood as a pre-established code that draws a line between what is "permissible" or "proper" and what is "bad" and "not permissible" seems to be confirmed by the fact that, in common language, the concept of grammar often identifies with its physical representation as a (text)book (note that the word "(text)book" occurs 6 times in the examples provided). While grammar

prescriptive dimension plays a dominating role, some attempts to propose grammar as rather a description of how language is used can be recognized (the word "use" shows up 5 times in the definitions). Nevertheless, the grammar-meaning interrelation is almost absent: the conceptualization of grammar as an essential meaning-making tool is barely represented ("meaning" occurs just once and so does the noun "semantics", significantly preceded by a delimiting "sometimes"; see definition 3 under "Descriptive language"). Similarly, the role of grammar as a shared meaning-making system to allow effective interpersonal communication is not mentioned at all. In spite of that, the one single reference to "social propriety" can be interpreted as a glimmer of hope indicating that grammar does play a crucial role in effective interchange of information within social contexts. In line with the Curriculum Development Council and HKEAA (2007, p.75), the present dissertation proposes grammar "as a means to an end [which] is not taught as a system of rules or a stand-alone body of knowledge. For the learning of grammar to be effective, learners must be given ample opportunities to apply their knowledge in interaction and communication". In this view, the "end" is effective communication in which grammatical forms make sense because of their intrinsic connections to the broader communicative context. As suggested by Zyzik and Polio (2017), "in order to achieve this […], we have to share an understanding of grammar as more than forms, but rather as from-meaning relationships that exist at the discourse level". The authors back up this statement with a practical example on the preterit/imperfect distinction in Spanish grammar:

> "A case point is the example *tuve miedo* (preterit) versus *tenía miedo* (imperfect) […]. Both are grammatical, but the decision to use one over the other cannot be made at the sentence level. It is actually the surrounding discourse that determines whether the intended meaning is change of state (*tuve miedo*) or an emotional state that sets the scene (*tenía miedo*)" (p.587).

In other words, students can only learn and find meaningfulness in new grammar forms if they have the chance to observe the functioning of such forms in authentic language. In this view, grammar is no longer perceived as a "stand-alone body of knowledge" physically represented by the grammar book. On the contrary, it is understood as a shared system underlying the target language which students should be encouraged to inductively discover through the observation of authentic texts in which grammar forms only exist in function of the broader discourse and the communicative context in which they occur. The relevance of the teacher as a supporter in this discovery process is remarked by the Curriculum Development Council and HKEAA, according to which "learners should be helped to see the connection between form and functions and internalize the forms through meaningful […] use" (2007, p.75). Zyzik and Polio (2017) propose that "authentic texts are particularly well suited to an inductive approach in which learners are led to discover certain grammatical generalizations based on examples found in the input from the source text" (2017, p.602). Before exploring more into detail how authentic texts can promote an inductive approach to grammar in EFL contexts, a definition of inductive learning is provided by comparing it to its opposite: deductive learning. In the following quotation, pros and cons for both inductive and deductive learning are outlined.

> "There are two main approaches to teaching grammar: the deductive and the inductive approach. When teaching deductively, the teacher presents the grammatical structure explicitly at the onset of the lesson. The instruction usually involves a detailed explanation of the rules, forms and contexts where the newly presented grammar can be used. Harmer (2007) noted that many lessons are built using the PPP (present, practice and produce) lesson structure. The deductive approach is considered to be a traditional, teacher-centered focus-on-form instruction. This method has been widely used in many countries and most students with different backgrounds are familiar with this type of teaching. […] It is time-saving, easier to process, includes examples, is beneficial for adult learners with developed cognitive skills,

and learners know what to expect in the classroom. On the other hand, […] the deductive approach can affect younger learners negatively (e.g., difficult structures and terminology), teacher-centeredness of the method can decrease learners' involvement and interaction, and learners must rely significantly on their memory.

The inductive approach is the opposite. It can also be called rule-discovery learning. The teacher attempts to highlight grammatical rules implicitly by providing examples. The learners are encouraged to use critical thinking, previous language knowledge, and language-learning strategies to analyze the given examples and formulate a rule on their own. It is a learner-centered approach, where the teacher plays the role of facilitator and guide. This approach has several strengths and weaknesses as well. Widodo (2006) highlighted that the approach promotes learning autonomy, increases motivation, develops cognitive and problem-solving skills, and language related episodes allow for language practice. However, the approach is time-consuming, and demanding of the strategic lesson and curriculum planning, and there is a chance that learners may come up with the wrong concepts of the rule or be frustrated with the approach due to different learning styles and/or previous learning experiences." (Shirav and Nagai, 2022, pp.102-103)

In light of the promising advantages outlined by Shirav and Nagai (2022), an inductive approach seems to be well suited to EFL teaching contexts, especially considering the target groups in such contexts normally consist of young students. As for the flaws of inductive learning, it should not be underestimated that this approach can be time-consuming (both in the planning and during in-class realization) and requires a well-structured and carefully designed curriculum. Nevertheless, easy actions can be undertaken by teachers to overcome these criticalities. For example, section 1.3 of the present dissertation proposed practical teaching techniques (e.g., chunking and intensive viewing) to design inductive EFL curricula based on the analysis of long authentic texts that are sustainable for both students and teachers in terms of time-management and workload. Moreover, as explained in chapter 4, the risk that learners "come up with the wrong concepts of the rule" can be easily avoided by providing an end-of-process wrap-up activity. In such activities, the teacher discusses, compares and generalizes the hypotheses produced by learners during the inductive study of the text, thus providing definitive and shared concepts of the target rule. This is in line with the Curriculum Development Council and HKEAA, according to which "task-based learning does not preclude the [explicit] teaching of grammar" (2007, p.75). As also confirmed by Terrel (1991, p.58), "EGI [Explicit Grammar Instruction] can affect the acquisition process […] as a meaning-form focuser that aids the learner in establishing a meaning-form relationship for morphologically complex forms and by providing forms for monitoring, which, in turn, will be available for acquisition in the output". As for the risk that students can be "frustrated with the approach due to different learning styles", it can be argued that the same goes for the deductive approach, especially considering that it can often "decrease [the level of] involvement and interaction", thus "affect[ing] younger learners negatively". The issue of input and teaching-style variedness aimed at meeting learners' personal needs and individual learning styles will be further discussed in the next section within the framework of an integrated approach. In light of the main advantages of an inductive approach to grammar and after proposing practical solutions to overcome the criticalities of such approach, it is now time to explore how to effectively use authentic texts to teach grammar inductively. It should be recognized that in the more recent versions of EFL textbooks, more and more authentic texts are being included. Nevertheless, "authentic texts are typically chosen for their inherent (often literary) value, while grammar is taught separately, with descriptions and rules aimed at accuracy at the sentence level. […] In other words, […] grammar and authentic texts […] don't mix". (Zyzik and Polio, 2017 p.596). As

a result, grammar instruction "in textbooks is unreal and unnatural" (Day, 2003, pp.2-3). Similarly, Spelleri (2002) believes that "there is a gap between [language] competences as measured in textbook tasks and as needed by the adult who has to fulfill his role as employees, parents and community member" (p.16). Consistently, Nunan (2004) writes of grammar exercises in textbooks and specially written materials that they "do not adequately prepare learners for the challenge of coping with the language they hear and read in the real world outside the classroom" (Nunan, 2004, p.50). According to Zyzik and Polio (2017), there are at least four reasons why grammar is not introduced through the observation of authentic texts in most EFL textbooks:

1. First, "it is likely that textbooks reflect a view of grammar as knowledge of rules that account for accurate language at the sentence level" (p.623). As observed by the authors, in traditional approaches to grammar instruction, "the unit of focus is the sentence; students are given the opportunity to practice the target item in order to produce correct sentences." (p.623) Nevertheless, the ability to use grammar appropriately in communicative contexts goes far beyond the sentence level: "this view of grammar, which underscores the fact that grammar is about choices (for example, we choose the passive or the active voice depending on how much we want to focus on the agent), situates grammar at the level of the text. [...] In contrast to the traditional sentence-level approach, a view of grammar at the level of text requires us to consider how grammatical forms work in discourse" (p.623). The decisional nature of a text-based approach to grammar learning seems to be confirmed by Larsen-Freeman, who claim that "the grammatical system offers its users choices in how they wish to realize meanings and position themselves ideologically and socially". (Larsen-Freeman, 2015, p.272)

2. In addition to its focus on the sentence-level, "traditional approaches to grammar teaching tend to prioritize one dimension of grammar – form. For example, in learning the passive voice, textbook exercises may ask learners to transform active sentences into passive ones" (p.629). However, as also indicated by Larsen-Freeman (2003), "we can better understand grammar in terms of three dimensions: *form* (how is it formed?), *meaning* (what does it mean?), and *use* (when is it used versus another form that expresses a similar meaning?)" (p.8). Although normally teachers mainly focus on form rather than meaning and use, "it is not always form that poses the greatest learning challenge for L2 learners. Instead, many difficulties in grammar lie in the use dimension, which requires speakers to make choices depending on context, one's intended meaning, and pragmatic considerations" (p.629). Of course, the form dimension is pivotal in grammar learning. Nevertheless, "a complete picture of grammar comes into view only when we consider form in conjunction with meaning and use" (p.630). In short, textbooks and traditional grammar learning tend to focus on form, "but at the same time they tend to overlook the learning challenge of appropriate use (p.630).

3. According to Zyzik and Polio (2017), the third reason why textbooks tend to favor contrived sentences relies on that "it is generally quicker and easier to use invented examples than to search for authentic ones that are pedagogically appropriate. Related to the convenience factor, it is clear that contrived texts allow for many instances of the same structure or form, [while] authentic texts are generally more varied in terms of lexis and grammar because they were written with a communicative purpose rather than to illustrate a particular language form. In contrast, contrived texts written for pedagogical purposes often contain the target grammatical form in unnatural proportions" (p.661).

4. By teaching grammar using authentic texts, the teacher would be able to analyze grammar structures at the text level, allowing learners to access grammar in contextualized texts created for specific communicative purposes. By observing occurrences of the target grammar form in the authentic text, students would be able to get a full understanding of that structure by

critically analyzing the form-meaning relationship of the authentic language in use. Moreover, if appropriately selected, authentic materials can provide broad exposition to the target grammatical form while at the same time avoiding the exaggeratedly artificial repetition of the target structure in pedagogical texts. As a result, a careful and aware use of authentic materials in EFL teaching can aid inductive grammar acquisition. Consistently with this view, Frantzen (2013) argues in favor of using authentic texts as a source of comprehensible input to "demonstrate appropriate uses of particular grammatical rules as well as how grammar conveys meaning", concluding that authentic texts can serve as "a vehicle for inductive grammar presentation" (p.628). The experimental study carried out by Mojica-Díaz and Sánchez-López (2010) can serve as a case example to support Frantzen's argument (2013). In the study, the target grammar is the Spanish preterit/imperfect. Grammar is taught inductively basing on a literary text, although the authors explain that the same approach can be used with other types of authentic texts such as articles, songs and film reviews. To the purpose of providing an operational model of how authentic texts can be implemented to teach grammar inductively, a summary of the main phases of Mojica-Díaz and Sánchez-López's teaching experiment (2010) is provided here below:

— In the first global phase, students read the text for the first time focusing on the general meaning and answer general comprehension questions;
— After achieving a global understanding of the text, the analytical phase starts and the teacher asks students to underline all the verbs in the text;
— By observing the highlighted verbs, students realize that the story is narrated in the past;
— As a further step, students are asked to pick all the sentences in the preterit and in the imperfect. Working in groups, they compare the two categories discussing why the author used either the preterit or the imperfect depending on the context;
— They fill in a chart with the occurrences for both categories, comparing them, finding recurring patterns and hypothesizing the rule underlying the imperfect/preterit choice in Spanish;
— To the purpose of refining their initial hypotheses, they apply their findings to another authentic text;
— Only at the end of the inductive process, the instructor intervenes more actively by making revisions or corrections to students' charts.

Mojica-Díaz and Sánchez-López (2010) conclude that such "discovery-based learning […] allows the learner to be actively involved in the process by forming and testing hypotheses concerning the function and meaning of grammatical structures in a given context" (p.483). Note that even in this inductive exemplification, some degree of explicit grammar instruction is included as well. As also observed by Zyzik and Polio (2017), "it can be helpful to include some instruction on the target form and then have the students use the text for a grammar-focused activity" (p.2047). But, most importantly, teacher's instruction should first happen at the end of the inductive process, as a way to make sure everybody is on the same page and no wrong grammar rules are being memorized. Providing the rule at the beginning of the activity would deprive students of the need component, thus decreasing their level of involvement load (see 1.3). To conclude, it is important to remark that teachers should not be discouraged when bumping into difficulties or temporary frustration while using an inductive approach. Most students are not used to learn inductively because most school curricula still follow a mainly deductive approach. Students should be given some time to get used to this innovative teaching approach and to understand that their active commitment and engagement is

needed for such learning to produce good results. As also noted by Zyzik and Polio (2017), "in order for this approach to be successful, students must be willing to be active participants in the process of forming hypotheses about grammatical rules. […] The point is that what our learners expect from grammar instruction is likely related to the kind of grammar instruction they've had in the past. As a result, we need to prepare our learners to be receptive to an inductive approach, which they may ultimately find empowering and rewarding" (p.870).

1.5 Using authentic texts to guarantee input variedness and a multimodal learning experience.

> *"If we all had exactly the same kind of mind and there was only one kind of intelligence, then we could teach everybody the same thing in the same way and assess them in the same way and that would be fair. But once we realize that people have very different kinds of minds, different kinds of strengths – some people are good in thinking spatially, some in thinking language, others are very logical, other people need to be hands on and explore actively and try things out -- then education, which treats everybody the same way, is actually the most unfair education. Because it picks out one kind of mind, which I call the law professor mind -- somebody who's very linguistic and logical -- and says, if you think like that, great, if you don't think like that, there's no room on the train for you". (Gardner, 2006, p. 255)*

This section poses the problem that learners (and human beings) are all different from one another. If this statement is commonly recognized as obvious in theory, its practical realization in teaching settings shows to be more problematic, since human variedness is often underrepresented (or neglected) in schooling. As observed by Gardner (2006), an education that does not reflect such natural diversity among members of the target group "is actually the most unfair education" (p.255). Consistently, Novello (2022) argues that "talking of inclusion is talking of respect. Each member of the class group has the right to see their characteristics accepted and supported" (p. VII). According to Gardner (2006), traditional teaching tends to overemphasize linguistic and logical intelligences, actually favoring students with those types of intelligences at the expenses of other students. Provided that at the heart of education "lies the aspiration that all children and young people should be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors" (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.1), the inequality underlying the traditional teaching system can be interpreted as a big contradiction. As stated by Susan Bremner (2008), the target group, which can be defined as a "mixed-ability class [,] does not just consist of a range of abilities but also a range of learning styles and preferences. All pupils will show strengths at different times depending on the topic being studied and the learning style being used. When pupils are working outwith their preferred learning style, then they will not perform as well. All classes […] are mixed ability to a certain degree" (p.1). In light of these observations, it seems urgent to implement varied teaching techniques in the classroom, so as to tailor the pedagogical curriculum to students' features and needs:

> "Teaching a mixed ability class will work if all pupils are allowed to experience success and to learn as individuals. It is less likely to be successful if teachers insist on whole class teaching and teaching to the average child. It is unrealistic to expect any group of pupils whatever the ability to work through a body of work at exactly the same pace. Two thirds of pupils will be working out of their learning style unless the type of task is varied". (Bremner, 2008, p.2)

In other words, to allow *all* students to be successful learners, it is necessary to acknowledge their uniqueness and to design teaching curricula that are able to address learners' specificity in cognitive and pedagogical terms. As Tomlinson puts it, "children already come to us differentiated. It just makes

sense that we would differentiate our instruction in response to them" (Tomlinson, 1999, p.24). 1.5.1 and 1.5.2 aim at providing an in-depth description of learners' diversity by calling upon two theories in specific: Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory and Fleming's VARK model. Consequently, 1.5.3 explains how EFL curricula based on authentic materials can address the target group's variedness, rather understood as a mixed-ability class. In particular, art-based authentic materials and performative activities (singing and acting) will be proposed as potentially beneficial teaching tools that guarantee input variedness and a multimodal learning experience.

1.5.1 Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory

The theory of multiple intelligences was developed by psychologist Howard Gardner in the late 1970s and early 1980s. According to this theory, individuals possess 8 (or more) intelligences. Human beings draw on these intelligences to create products and/or solve relevant problems. Although MI theory initially included seven intelligences, later studies in the mid-1990s and early 2000s led Gardner to add 2 more intelligences: naturalistic intelligence and existential intelligence. The 9 identified intelligences are listed here below:

1. Linguistic intelligence;
2. Logical-mathematical intelligence;
3. Spatial intelligence;
4. Musical intelligence;
5. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence;
6. Interpersonal intelligence;
7. Intrapersonal intelligence;
8. Naturalistic intelligences;
9. Existential intelligence.

According to MI theory, "individuals who demonstrate a particular aptitude in one intelligence will not necessarily demonstrate a comparable aptitude in another intelligence" (Davis, Selder and Christodoulou, Gardner, 2011, p. 486 THE THEORY OF). For example, a high level of spatial intelligence might correspond to a moderate or low level of interpersonal intelligence or vice versa. On the other hand, it should also be remarked "MI theory conceives of individuals as possessing a profile of intelligences in which they demonstrate varying levels of strengths and weakness for each of the eight intelligences" (Davis et al., 2011, p. 488). Therefore, it would be a mistake "to characterize an individual as possessing 'no' capacity for a particular intelligence (Gardner, 1999). Individuals may certainly demonstrate low levels of a particular intelligence, but except in cases involving severe congenital or acquired brain damage, all individuals possess the full range of intelligences" (p.488). Nevertheless, it should be considered that the weakness-strength proportion for the 8 intelligences is unique to every human being, thus "no two individuals, not even identical twins, exhibit precisely the same profile of intellectual strengths and weaknesses" (p.489). A brief description for each of the 9 intelligences is provided in the chart below (Davis, Selder and Christodoulou, 2011, p. 488):

Gardner's Nine Intelligences

Intelligence	Description
Linguistic	An ability to analyze information and create products involving oral and written language such as speeches, books, and memos.
Logical-Mathematical	An ability to develop equations and proofs, make calculations, and solve abstract problems.
Spatial	An ability to recognize and manipulate large-scale and fine-grained spatial images.
Musical	An ability to produce, remember, and make meaning of different patterns of sound.
Naturalist	An ability to identify and distinguish among different types of plants, animals, and weather formations that are found in the natural world.
Bodily- Kinesthetic	An ability to use one's own body to create products or solve problems.
Interpersonal	An ability to recognize and understand other people's moods, desires, motivations, and intentions.
Intrapersonal	An ability to recognize and understand one's own moods, desires, motivations, and intentions.
Existential	An ability of to understand and contemplate philosophical topics relating to mankind's existence

In understanding intelligence as a multiple rather than unitary concept, MI theory "represents a departure from the traditional conceptions of intelligence first formulated in the early 20th century" (Davis et al., 2011, p. 486). A second key distinction concerns the origins of intelligence:

> "Many proponents of the concept of general intelligence conceive of intelligence as an innate trait with which one is born and which one can therefore do little to change (Eysenck, 1994; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1980 […]). In contrast, MI theory conceives of intelligence as a combination of heritable potentials and skills that can be developed in diverse ways through relevant experiences (Gardner, 1983). For example, one individual might be born with a high intellectual potential in the bodily-kinesthetic sphere that allows him or her to master the intricate steps of a ballet performance with relative ease. For another individual, achieving similar expertise in the domain of ballet requires many additional hours of study and practice. Both individuals are capable of becoming strong performers – experts – in a domain that draws on their bodily-kinesthetic intelligence; however, the pathways along which they travel to become strong performers may well differ quantitatively (in terms of speed) and perhaps qualitatively (in terms of process)." (Davis et al., 2011, p. 486)

Although Gardner (1983) did not initially plan for his theory to be applied to education, his greatest contribution to EFL research probably consists of MI theory's practical implications in pedagogical contexts. Firstly, that learners' potential can be developed through "relevant experiences" emphasizes the centrality of students' interests and invites teachers to center their activities around texts and topics students find meaningful and relevant. Secondly, the fact that "heritable potentials", i.e. talents, are to be interpreted along with "skills that can be developed in diverse ways through relevant experiences" is great news in terms of remarking the central role of training and education in individuals' full development and realization. Thirdly, by understanding intelligence as a multiple rather than unitary concept, Gardner's findings (2006) raise teachers' awareness on that all different cognitive styles should be acknowledged and valued in their classroom, so as to give *every* student

the concrete chance to develop their full potential. In particular, as also observed by Gardner, "only two intelligences – linguistic and logical mathematical – have been valued and tested for in modern secular schools" (Davis et al., 2011, p. 485), to the point that he often refers to the language-logic combination as "academic" or "scholarly intelligence". (Gardner, 1999) In line with Gardner, Shearer (2004) confirms that "logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences are most often associated with academic accomplishment" (p.4). Fogarty (2005) remarks the principle by which "all intelligences are as equally important", recognizing that "this is in great contrast to traditional education systems that typically place strong emphasis on the development and use of verbal and mathematical intelligences" (p.13). As a solution, he calls upon the theory of multiple intelligences stating that "educators should recognize and teach to a broader range of talents and skills" (Fogarty, 2005, p. 13). Two years earlier, Nolen (2003) had indicated a similar solution:

> "[It is up to the teachers] to adjust their instructional strategies in order to meet students' individual needs. […] Teachers should structure the presentation of material in a style, which engages all or most of the intelligences. When teachers center lessons on the students' needs, it optimizes learning for the whole class. Teachers who teach towards the Multiple Intelligences realize the benefits such as active learners and successful students. Each of the intelligences is potential in every learner and it is part of a teacher's job to nurture and help the children develop their own intelligences". (Nolen, 2003, p.140)

Of course, a transition from a verbal-logical approach to an MI-based teaching style does not come without difficulties and requires "administrative support, student choice in planning, patience and persistence in working through initial resistance to MI activities by both students and colleagues" (Shepard, 2004, p. 210). Moreover, it should also be taken into consideration that "it is impossible, as well as impractical, for a teacher to accommodate every lesson to all of the learning styles found within the classroom" (Fogarty, 2005, p. 13). While some teachers "isolate each intelligence into particular activities" (Hopper, 2000, p.27), other instructors opt for a more global approach in which more intelligences are stimulated in one same activity. In any case, Torresan (2010) recommends "a well-thought-out choice on how many and which intelligences to use on each occasion, based on the profiles present in the class, on the subject, and on the age of the students. This choice involves a well-informed alternation of stimuli and it must be based on common sense" (p.39). Guided by MI theory, Jennifer Borek (2003) wrote an article titled "Inclusion and the Multiple Intelligences: Creating a Student-Centered Curriculum" in which she tries to answer the following question:

"How can the classroom teacher committed to the personal growth and skill development of each of her students in a crowded classroom make practical use of [MI theory]?" (p.1)

Reflecting on a possible answer, she notes that "since all of our students have each intelligence, it makes sense to address as many of these intelligences as possible in our classrooms and in our lesson plans. All students want to frame their work in the best possible light and learn in the way that will 'stick'" (p.1). She adds that multimodal learning "fosters a collaborative classroom where students are comfortable experimenting and letting others experiment" (p.1). Ultimately, she provides a chart reporting specific "noticeable behaviors" and "learning strategies" (p.3) for each of Gardner's 9 intelligences (2000), drawing on previous studies and her own teaching experience. The results are summarized in the chart below:

Intelligence	Noticeable behavior	Learning strategies
Logical-Mathematical	- uses numbers, shapes and patterns - able to move from concrete to abstract easily - enjoys puzzles and computer games - organizes thoughts systematically	- *create outlines of books, plays or papers* - create own grammar board games - Venn diagrams/patterning/sorting - *story mapping* - create questions from given answers
Linguistic	- *appreciates subtleties of grammar and meaning* - *enjoys word games* - *understands jokes, puns, riddles* - *memorizes easily* - *enjoys sound and rhythm of language*	- *make books* - label diagrams - *create play or character sketch* - *creating analogies, palindromes,* - *collaborative writing*
Musical	- *enjoys listening* - *easily distracted by sounds* - *very aware of the sounds of people voices,* - *frequently excellent mimics* - *sensitive to melody and tone, even of speech* - *moves when music plays*	- *compose song, rap, jingle* - *put vocabulary words to a melody or rhythm pattern* - *listening to sound bites or other auditory language* - *retell a story/create outline by putting words to a familiar tune*
Spatial	- enjoys maps and charts - *thinks in three-dimensional terms and pictures, not words* - *draws and doodles*	- *story maps* - *comic strips for outline* - *posters and display boards*
Kinesthetic	- coordinated/neat handwriting - *wiggles, learns better when moving or tapping feet* - *uses body language, gestures* - *hands-on learner*	- *play game to practice content (catch or juggling, etc.)* - sign language - *create demonstrations* - *act out scenes* - *movement area of room*
Naturalistic	- feels comfortable outside - good with animals - green thumb/talks about nature and plants	- poetry picnic - bring nature into the classroom - *choose own writing topics*
Existential	- always asks the "why" questions - *needs to see big picture and create analogies*	- thematic teaching - in depth discussions - journaling responses to readings
Interpersonal	- *enjoys cooperative learning* - *understands others* - *has many friends/mediates conflicts* - *volunteers to help others*	- panel discussions or debates - *partner poems or group story writing* - *role playing* - *cooperative learning*
Intrapersonal	- daydreams - *insightful and reflective* - journals easily - comfortable being alone - knows own strengths and weaknesses	- create journal of literary characters - create mind maps for outline - *create personality inventory of characters* - *develop individual collage essays or multi-genre texts*

From Borek's chart (2003), it emerges that a variety of easily realizable activities is available to teachers who are willing to design MI-based teaching curricula. Unlike the traditional textbook-driven and teacher-centered taught class, MI learning strategies are the expression of a student-centered, inductive, task-based and collaborative learning approach in which students can express themselves and display their strengths while at the same time having multiple chances to work on their weaknesses from a cooperative and self-reflective perspective. In particular, analyzing the lists of both noticeable behaviors and learning strategies in Borek's chart (2003), a recurring pattern can be observed: most of the items are directly – or can be indirectly – linked to performative activities. More specifically, in the list of noticeable behaviors, 23 out of 36 behaviors (about 64%, marked in *italics* in the chart) are somehow related to performative activities such as drama, singing and/or dancing. A very similar trend can be observed in the third column, in which 23 of the 36 activities mentioned (about 64%, marked in *italics* in the chart) are directly related to the performing arts. Moreover, it can be noticed that the words in italics (representing performing-art-related behaviors or strategies) are not restricted to some areas but are evenly distributed for all types of intelligences. As an example, let us suppose a teacher assigns the following task:

Form groups of 4//5 people and write a short sketch to perform in class. Note that at least one song should be included.

Reading this assignment, one might conclude this task was planned to address mainly (1) interpersonal intelligence ("*enjoys cooperative learning*"), (2) linguistic intelligence ("*collaborative writing*") and (3) musical intelligence ("*compose song and/or retell a story/create outline by putting words to a familiar tune*"). Nevertheless, to come up with an original script, each group will have to (4) "*choose their own writing topic*" (naturalistic intelligence). Once the topic has been decided, an (5) "*outline of the play*" must be made (logical-mathematical intelligence) and a (6) "*personality inventory of each of the characters*" must be created (intrapersonal intelligence). When the script is ready, it is time to rehearse it. During rehearsals, students who take on the role of directors (7) "*need to see the big picture*" of the scene to give tips to the actors and make sure the overall narrative development is comprehensible to the audience (existential intelligence). Moreover, during the rehearsal period, some scenography - e.g., (8) "*posters, three-dimensional*" objects and "*drawings*" can be prepared and placed on stage (spatial intelligence). Lastly, during final performances, (9) "*body language*" and "*gestures*" are needed to "*act out the scene*" (kinesthetic intelligence). In other words, it seems that a pedagogical use of the performing arts can promote an MI-based teaching style, since, through such pedagogical techniques, no intelligence is left out. The advantages of using the performing arts in pedagogical contexts and, more specifically, in EFL teaching will be further explored in chapter 2.

1.5.2. Fleming's VA(R)K(T) Model

One of the most common and widely-used categorizations of the various learning styles is Fleming's VARK model (1995), an acronym for Visual, Auditory, Read&Write and Kinesthetic. Sometimes, the Tactile dimension is included as well. Fleming (1995) elaborated his model interrelating his studies with other psychologists' and child teaching specialists' such as Fernald, Keller, Orton, Gillingham, Stillman and Montessori. This model "provides the learners with a profile of their learning styles, based on the sensory modalities which are involved in taking in information. […] Learning styles classify different ways people learn and how they approach information. […] Some experts define different learning styles as the preferred processes students use when they learn." (Sree Nidhi S K and Chinyi Helena Tay, 2017, p. 18) Oxford (1995) and Kinsella (1995) offer a description of three main leaning styles:

"Visual learners prefer to learn via the visual channel. Therefore, they like to read a lot, which requires concentration and time spent alone. Visual learners need the visual stimulation of bulletin boards, video and movies. They must have written directions if they are to function well in the classroom. […] Auditory learners enjoy the oral-aural learning channel. Thus, they want to engage in discussions, conversations, and group work. These students typically require only oral directions". (Oxford, 1995, pp. 35, 36)

"Kinesthetic learners are those who imply total physical involvement with a learning environment such as taking a field trip, dramatizing, pantomiming, or interviewing, [while] tactile learners learn with one's hands through manipulation or resources, such as writing, drawing, building a model, or conducting a lab experiment". (Kinsella, 1995, p. 172)

According to the VAK model, "the students' learning styles are dependent on how they prefer to perceive/receive information. They may prefer a single mode, two modes (bimodal), or all three modes (tri-modal) of the information presentation" (Sree Nidhi et al., 2017, p.23). In other words, individuals tend to have a preferred learning style which may be, in some cases, a blend of 2 or 3 learning styles:

"Some people have a very strong preference while others have an even mixture of two or three styles. When an individual knows his or her preferred learning style(s), he or she is able to understand the type of learning that best suits him/her. This enables him/her to choose the types of learning that work best. Students will find it easier to learn in their preferred learning style, and will find learning easier if the conditions are present to allow them to use their learning style". (Sree Nidhi et al., 2017, p.18)

Consistently with this view, Kalin and McAvoy (1973) suggest that "allowing a student to learn in the sensory channel in which he thinks he learns most efficiently results in significantly higher learning rates than in channels unlike his choice" (p.1). In other words, "if a learner is placed in optimal sensory contact with instructional material, then he learns at his maximum rate of speed. This implies that the key to making learning effective is to match instructional methods to the optimal learning style of the individual" (p.3). Before diving into a detailed analysis of each sensory channel and respective learning style, it is important to state that VAK theory and MI theory, despite several similarities and touchpoints, are not the same:

"The understanding that intelligences operate on specific content can also help to distinguish them from sensory systems. Whereas sensory systems are the means through which the brain receives information from the outside world, the intelligences have been conceptualized as computational systems that make sense of that information once it has been received and irrespective of the means of reception. Thus, the senses and the intelligences are independent systems. The type and quality of the information received by a sensory system determines the intelligence, or set of intelligences, employed, not the sensory system itself. Thus, linguistic intelligence can operate equivalently on language that is perceived through eye, ear, or touch. Even musical intelligence, which is most closely linked to a specific sensory system (audition), may be fractionated into information that can be obtained via diverse transducers (e.g., rhythm, timbre)". (Davis, Selder, Christodoulou, Gardner, 2011, pp.491-492)

Although senses and intelligences are two independent systems, the conceptualizations of MI and VAK theory at the operational level in teaching can be constructively interrelated to remark that effective teaching activities should be designed basing on the ways learners perceive/receive and process the input. In line with this view, Gholami and Bagheri (2013) state that "the Visual-Auditory-

Kinesthetic learning style model does not overlay Gardner's multiple intelligences; […] rather the VAK model provides a different perspective for understanding and explaining a person's preferred or dominant thinking and learning style. […] Gardner's theory is one way of looking at learning styles and VAK [is] still [an]other way" (p.700). In their article, Sree Nidhi et al., (2017, pp.18-21) provide a detailed description of the VAKT (Visual, Auditory Kinesthetic and Tactile) learning styles, listing "characteristic patterns" (p.18), "suggested" (p.19) learning activities and "preferred test styles" (p.19) for each of the three learning styles. Similarly to the chart on multiple intelligences in 1.5.1, a summary table on the VAKT learning styles is provided here below:

Learning Style	Characteristic patterns	Suggested tasks	Preferred test style
Visual Learning	- *learns through seeing things* - *prefers to see information and instructions* - *may forget information that has only been heard* - *tends to see pictures and images when remembering things* - uses mind maps - *has a predisposition for writing, drawing, imagining* - prefers to create their own notes - sees a concept as whole - benefits from understanding the purpose of the session - *Relies heavily on their senses* - enjoys groupwork - *learns from non-verbal cues from colleagues* - *learns through role play* - *learns watching others perform or demonstrate a skill* - *tends to have good control over sign language* - *Prefers informal learning settings* - *can be distracted by movement of others* - *visualizes what they are hearing* - *is fascinated by color* - understands complex maps, graphs and charts	- *writing things down* - jotting down key points - copying what is on the board - *Watching videos* - Using flashcards - Using highlighters	- Essays - Maps - *Demonstrating a process*
Auditory Learning	- *learns through listening* - *depends on hearing and speaking* - *may struggle to understand unimodal written texts* - *gains full understanding when listening to the same text* - *follows verbal instructions* - *prefers to hear information rather than read it* - *is skill oriented* - *memorizes tasks well* - *is able to orally communicate efficiently* - may have difficulty communicating in written form - *is good at oral exams* - prefers oral presentations to written reports - *understands the true meaning of someone's words by listening to audible signals like change in tone* - *memorizes by speaking out loud information* - learns from discussion - *music helps learning better*	- *listening to audiotapes to learn languages* - participating in class discussions - *cooperative learning* - *Reading or singing out loud* - *Speaking or signing with closed eyes* - *putting information into rhythmic patterns such as a song or a poem*	- *oral performances*

Kinesthetic and Tactile learning	- *Learns by carrying out physical activities rather than passively receiving information* - *learns by experiencing, touching, moving or being active* - *is a natural discovery learner* - might have difficulty learning by reading or listening only. - needs few verbal or written instruction - *is confident in participating in hand-on activities* - *learns best in a lab or gymnasium* - *learns best in simulated or learn environments where active involvement is required.* - *enjoys art and acting* - *often listens to music when learning or studying* - *long-term memory is strengthened by the use of body movements*	- Creating a model - Demonstrating a principle - *Practicing a technique* - *Participating in simulations* - *Engage in hands-on activities* - *Learning in informal settings, not necessarily sitting on a chair.*	- *movement-based performances* - *theater sketches* - multiple-choice tests

Analyzing this chart, it can be observed that 37 of the 47 characteristic patterns (about 79%, marked in *italics*) hint at performative activities such acting and singing and/or suggest that multimodal authentic contexts such as songs, movies or theatre plays may enhance acquisition by simultaneously stimulating all sensory channels. Similarly, 11 of the 18 suggested tasks (about 61%, marked in *italics*) are performance-based. The same trend is recognizable in the preferred testing styles, 57% of which (4 out of 7, marked in *italics*) refer to art-based performances. To better understand how the performing arts and/or art-based authentic materials can enhance EFL acquisition, let us imagine the following EFL teaching scenario:

The teacher plays the videoclip with lyrics of a song three times. The first time, students are asked to listen to the song following the lyrics and the pictures in the video. After this first listening, the teacher asks their students general comprehension questions about the song (e.g., what is the song about? Who is the singing voice? What emotions are conveyed through music and lyrics?). The teacher plays the song a second time, asking their students to sing along trying to imitate the singer's English pronunciation as accurately as possible. The third time, students are asked to sing along again, feeling free to stand up, moving or dancing freely while the song goes.

This hypothetical case example represents a basic and easily realizable activity in which all sensory channels are stimulated. In this scenario, listening to the song while at the same time reading the lyrics and watching the images in the video would favor both visual and auditory learners. By requiring students' participation, kinesthetic learners, who learn best in active and practical settings, are also take into consideration. In addition, by allowing students to stand up and move/dance around the classroom, kinesthetic students have the chance to fix the lyrics to their physical movement thus strengthening their long-term memory; at the same time, visual learners can benefit from this unconventional setting since they tend to prefer informal learning settings. What is more, by listening and singing along to the same song several times, auditory learners, who tend to memorize by repeating out loud information, would be favored as well. In other words, it seems that even in the most basic performance-based task, it is possible to equally favor all different learning styles, thus allowing *all* students to perceive/receive new input information through their preferred sensory channel(s). As a result, the learning session would be a relevant and meaningful experience for all students, rather than for a restricted group only.

Sree Nidhi S K and Chinyi Helena Tay (2017) suggest that "teachers should assess the learning styles of their students and adapt their classroom methods to best fit each student's learning style, [since] a student will learn best if taught in a method deemed appropriate for [their] learning style" (p.23). As thoroughly demonstrated in 1.5.1 and 1.5.2, a good way to achieve that could be using art-based authentic materials and designing practical performative activities involving acting and/or singing, thus including all multiple intelligences and learning styles in the teaching curriculum. In particular, referring to the latter multimodal example (listening to a song while reading the lyrics), it should be mentioned that Blomert and Froyen (2010) found that multisensory learning is crucial even in the acquisition of competences that are commonly regarded as unimodal (e.g., reading). Consistently, Shams and Seitz (2008) remark the importance of multisensory practices in learning and memorizing of unimodal information:

> "Learning involves alteration of connections between modalities or the formation or alteration of multisensory representations, and the later presentation of unisensory stimuli will activate a wider, multisensory, network of brain regions […]. Dual coding reduces cognitive load because information from different modalities can be more easily chunked into short-term memory and used to build long term representations". (Shams and Seitz, 2008, pp.3,5)

As a result, "repetition of information with variations in different sign systems or media (e.g. oral, written, audiovisual, etc.) is a central technique of acquisition and preservation of knowledge" (Ojamaa et Torop, 2015 pp. 62-63). From this perspective, using art-based authentic materials could be crucial, especially when considering that "any artistic text not only exists at the intersection of the multiple languages of culture, but is also inseparable from its medium (so that the perception is affected by paratextual factors) and is intertextually connected to other texts (which can also be expressed in multiple modalities)" (Fadeev and Milyakina, 2021, p.5). Moreover, Ojamaa and Torop (2015) point out that popular artistic products are often reproposed in a variety of text forms, thus providing multimodal access to the same content: "the most popular stories are being constantly retold in books, films, paintings, TV series, comic strips and fan art. [Thus], any text may exist in a series of possible forms and interpretations, none of which is the ultimate or ideal one" (2015, p.64). Consequently, an EFL curriculum based on artistic texts and performative activities can "encourage students and teachers to step away from a logocentric and univocal understanding of cultural phenomena and embrace the versatility of cultural forms" (Fadeev and Milyakina, 2021, p.11). A deeper analysis of the use of artistic authentic materials in performance-based EFL teaching contexts is provided in chapters 2, 3, and 4.

In light of the theories exposed in this chapter, it can be concluded that an extensive use of authentic texts and, in particular, artistic authentic texts can enhance EFL acquisition on motivational and cognitive levels. Moreover, performance-based activities such as singing and acting were demonstrated to favor all learning styles and stimulate all multiple intelligences so as to allow every student's full cognitive, academic and personal development. To conclude, besides these relevant advantages, it should be noted that the multisensory and multimodal nature of such pedagogical materials and activities reflects the multimodality underlying all aspects of real-world communication. As pointed out by Fadeev and Milyakina (2021) one "significant reason for the growing use of multisensory practices in education is the multimodal nature of everyday reality and cultural environment. In other words, our 'meaning-making' ability often relies on the simultaneous use of multiple sensory channels" (p.3). As a result, the educational value of multisensory learning originates from the output that "it is likely that the human brain has evolved to develop, learn and operate optimally in multisensory environments". (Shams et Seitz, 2008, p.1) As observed by Fadeev and Milyakina (2021), "any act of communication could be considered multimodal" (p.4). Kress

(2003) adds that each of the modes "plays a discrete role in a communicative act and provides specific potentials […] for communication" (p.5). From this perspective, multimodality could be considered as a way to connect the EFL classroom to real-world communicative contexts. In line with this view, Fadeev and Milyakina (2021) propose that "an ability of culture to communicate its main texts across heterogeneous media platforms […] emphasizes the role of multisensory learning in the meaning-making in contemporary culture. […] As a result, learners' cultural background becomes an essential aspect of [in-class] meaning-making via multimodal representation, [thus] establishing a meaningful dialogue" (p.4) between EFL learning contents and real-world culture.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the performing arts. After remarking the importance of authenticity in EFL teaching (cf. chapter 1), art-based authentic materials and relating performative activities are proposed in this chapter as valid tools to engage students in task-based learning set in authentic communicative contexts. In particular, section 2.2 focuses on drama. This section explains how drama pedagogy can provide meaningful contexts to language analysis by promoting authentic communication in social learning contexts. Moreover, this section explores the role of drama in promoting inclusive and multimodal EFL teaching. Section 2.3, on the other hand, focuses on music. Drawing on Posner et al.'s Arts Theory, this section explores the benefits of the pedagogical use of music in motivational and cognitive terms. As a result of arguing for an extensive use of acting and singing in EFL teaching, chapter 2 concludes proposing an innovative understanding of English students as performers and, consistently, of the EFL teacher as a director. In particular, section 2.4 explores existing parallels between EFL learning and acting/singing training, explaining how EFL students can "exploit" art-training techniques to the purposes of English acquisition. Chapter 2 concludes with section 2.5, in which a thorough comparison is drawn between the role of the director and the EFL teacher. Basing on directing coach Weston's "Directing Actors" (1996), this section shows how directing techniques and principles can be implemented by EFL teachers to promote a non-threatening and liberating learning environment, thus enhancing EFL acquisition.

2.2 Acting: The use of drama in EFL teaching

Chapter 1 discussed the advantages of the pedagogical use of authentic materials in EFL curricula, explaining how authenticity might play a beneficial role in motivational terms. If well selected, authentic texts can be perceived as relevant and meaningful by students, thus engaging them more actively in discovery-based and student-centered learning activities. Moreover, it has been argued for authentic texts in light of their multimodal and multisensory nature. In particular, it has been suggested that art-based authentic texts (e.g., movies, musical movies, tv series, theater plays, songs, etc.) lend themselves to practical, laboratorial, and cooperative activities through which all multiple intelligences and learning styles are acknowledged and stimulated. In this section, drama is proposed as an inclusive pedagogical tool with the potential of fostering an informal learning environment in which authentic and meaningful language activities can take place. Maybe because of its beneficial effects, the pedagogical use of drama in EFL/ESL teaching settings is not an entirely new notion:

> "What some now refer to as 'Process Drama' started out in the UK as 'drama in education' mainly during the 1960s to 1980s. It was based primarily on the work of Brian Way, Dorothy Heathcote, and Gavin Bolton and developed further through the work of others, such as Jonathan Neelands (UK), Cecily O'Neill (UK/USA), David Booth (Canada), John O'Toole (Australia) and Peter O'Connor (New Zealand) and others. […] Over time, drama in education started to be referred to in various ways, for example, as 'Experiential Drama,', 'Drama for Learning,' and later as 'Process Drama'" (Baldwin and Galazka, 2022, p.8).

To the purpose of this dissertation, terms like 'Drama', 'Process Drama' or 'Drama Pedagogy" are used interchangeably to refer to a process-oriented (rather than performance-oriented) EFL teaching approach based on the pedagogical use of drama.

2.2.1 Drama to promote authentic communication in social learning contexts.

As observed by Joe Winston, (2012), "drama projects, […] when planned well, can bring the feeling of authenticity to the communication process because they provide contexts for language that are dynamic and that feel real." (p.3). One of the main advantages of drama is that "authenticity is imagined, and hence the possible range of tasks is expansive" (p.4). According to O'Neill (1994), such imagined authenticity can foster learners' engagement: "motivation comes from the opportunity to take on diverse roles in situations that are as authentic and dynamic as possible" (p.55). Interestingly, in her book titled "Directing Actors: Creating Memorable Performances for Film and Television" (1996), directing coach Judith Weston remarks the central role of actors' reciprocal listening to build credible dialogues within professional acting settings:

> "The very grave danger in asking actors for an attitude is that in attempting to do as you ask they may start 'playing attitude'. By 'playing attitude' I mean the difference between doing something and *showing* something. Playing attitude is playing at the character. Playing attitude is analogous to talking at someone rather than talking to someone. When actors play attitude, they are posturing, they are showing us their performance. They are not **listening** to each other. Nothing makes a performance look more amateurish than a failure to listen and engage with the other actors. The first thing a director should learn, and the first-last-and-always thing he should look for from his actors, is whether they are listening; that is, whether they are genuinely affecting each other **in the moment**, or whether they are just saying lines at each other, overlaying their words and movements with a predetermined, canned attitude or unction." (p.40)

Even though in this excerpt the author is clearly addressing professional directors (to be), it is interesting to note how easily and effectively Weston's statement (1996) can be applied to EFL teaching contexts as well. Using Weston's words, in traditional decontextualized oral exercises, students are "talking at" the teacher rather than "talking to" them. By reproducing artificial sample sentences to practice a specific grammar form, learners are "*showing*" something rather than "doing" something with the language. In other words, in traditional learning settings, learners and teachers are talking *at* each other with no communicative purposes. On the contrary, drama, because of its intrinsic dialogical nature, emphasizes the need for reciprocal listening by providing authentic communicative contexts in which one learner's utterance strongly depends on the classmate's previous utterance and is a direct response to it. This seems to be in line with O'Neill (1994), who proposes drama as a pedagogical tool to bring authenticity to the classroom discourse:

> "Classroom discourse, even when conducted in the students' native tongue, rarely offer opportunities for them to explore a range of complex language functions, since these functions arise from personal, sustained and intensive encounters. The role of adults in sustaining intensive interaction with students is central, and yet in the language classroom it is almost always restricted to narrow teacher/student interactions. Drama in education […] requires language to be used in meaningful, authentic situations where the focus is on problem-posing and the resolution of a purposeful task" (p.57)

As pointed out by O'Neill (1994), deep exploration of "complex language functions" is only possible when the target language is used for purposeful communication. By promoting a horizontal (student-student) rather than vertical (teacher-student) communicative dimension, drama allows for "personal, sustained and intensive encounters" in which purposeful language exchange takes place as a result of authentic reciprocal listening. Being able to listen to and effectively communicate with others are indispensable skills to be developed in order to build effective and peaceful interactions in the

intrinsically social setting of human experience. This is particularly true for language students, whose academic studies are supposed to train them to engage in meaningful cultural exchanges in which tolerance and deep understanding of the other play a crucial role. That drama has the potential to enhance purposeful communication and authentic listening could be a good reason to extensively use it in EFL teaching settings. As also indicated by O'Neill (1994), through drama, "students build social skills and become more sensitive listeners and effective conversationalists. They grow in their capacity to send and receive increasingly complex and mature verbal and nonverbal messages". (p.53) In short, drama stimulates learners' "desire to communicate" (Winston, 2012, p.I DRAMA). It can be argued that effective communication relies on empathic intelligence, understood as the ability of "feeling with" the other and discerning their thoughts and emotions. By playing "in the character's shoes", drama can encourage learners to adopt their characters' perspectives and emotions, thus contributing to develop empathy skills: "when working in role, students have the opportunity to 'walk in someone else's shoes for a while'. They can meet characters and situations that invite and encourage empathy".(Baldwin and Galazka, 2022, p.11) The role of drama in developing learners' empathy is at the center of Arnold's 1994 publication:

> "Process drama […] resonates with psychodynamic pedagogy, according to which an effective pedagogy engages thinking and feeling at inter-personal and intra-personal levels. In this sense, it has been argued that [drama] is a cornerstone of psychodynamic pedagogy, as it has the potential to enhance affective awareness through projection and identification in a role." (Arnold, 1994, p.21)

In a later study, Hughes and Arnold (2008) confirm that process drama "develops empathic intelligence and is rooted in the belief that the most effective learning occurs when cognition and affect are engaged in the service of learning" (Erika C. Piazzoli, 2012, p.135). Besides promoting listening, authentic communication and empathic attitudes, drama can be considered as an effective EFL teaching tool since its "social and interactive nature" reflects the "social and interactive nature" of language itself:

> "The social and interactive nature of drama resonates with a sociocultural view of language, a view that has been growing in significance in the field of Second Language Acquisition over recent years […]. Sociolinguistics holds that language is learned *through* interaction rather than experienced in isolation; and that it functions in relation to 'scenarios' or in 'contexts of situation'. Influenced greatly by the work of Halliday (1978), they hold that three dimensions – field, tenor, and mode – are actualized in three semantic components". (Cheng and Winston, 2012, p.105)

A summary table of Halliday's sociolinguistic model (1978) is provided here below to demonstrate how a text cannot be interpreted but in relation to the communicative context in which it is produced. As indicated by Halliday (1978), any stretch of text (written or oral) should be analyzed in relation to its field, tenor, and mode. The field realizes the ideational function, in which language is conceived "as about something". The tenor realizes the interpersonal metafunction, establishing the participants in the communication and the interpersonal relationships among them. The mode, on the other hand, realizes the textual metafunction, which analyzes language (e.g., oral, written, or written to be spoken texts) "in relation to the environment":

	SITUATIONAL	SEMANTIC	
Field	The ongoing activity Subject Matter	Language as about something Content function	**Ideational**
Tenor	The role relationships involved Levels of formality	Language as doing something Participatory function	**Interpersonal**
Mode	The symbolic or rhetorical channel Medium	Language in relation to the environment (Verbal and non-verbal) Enabling function	**Textual**

(Adapted from Cheng and Winston, 2012, p. 105)

From this perspective, planning cooperative drama activities in which pre-determined "scenarios" provide specific "contexts of situation" could be a good way to make authentic use of language by realizing its three sociolinguistic metafunctions: *What is the dialogue about?* (ideational metafunction); *Who are the participants?* (Interpersonal metafunction); *What language is being used in relation to the environment?* (Textual metafunction). Holding that "language is learned *through* interaction rather than experienced in isolation; and that it functions in relation to 'scenarios' or in 'contexts of situation'" (Arnold, 1994, p.21), drama-based cooperative activities in the EFL classroom can constitute the perfect environment for language acquisition. The advantages of drama in light of its social nature have been highlighted by Joe Winston (2012) as well:

> "One of the potential strengths of drama for language teachers is its social nature. Students being able and willing to work together, watch and listen to one another, talk through ideas and improvise together, shape material and present it in groups – such is the very stuff of the drama classroom. The spirit that characterizes such work at its best is that of the ensemble – where everyone supports everyone else for the benefit of the whole group. Such an atmosphere is necessarily founded on trust and co-operation and will, when achieved, encourage students to find their own voices, lose their inhibitions, contribute and speak out in class" (p.5).

Winston (2012) emphasizes the role of drama in creating an atmosphere of trust and reciprocal support in which students collaboratively experiment with language feeling free to express themselves and to take linguistic risks. Consistently with this view, Liu (2002) asserts that "students who are learning a new language through Process Drama are usually given the opportunity to discuss their options and plan their strategies in group before they act out. Therefore, students are highly motivated and directly involved in participation through risk-taking and practice" (p.7). Liu (2002) goes on to argue that in Process Drama, "students are playing themselves in exercising their roles. They are free to make decisions through trial and error, and, in doing so, to find the language needed to express themselves. Through a series of challenging and rewarding activities, Process Drama helps break down inhibition and form a group support network." (p.8). In her paper titled "Theatre, Language Learning and Identity – Empowering Additional Language Learners through Theatre in Education (1)", Hull (2012) relates about her research project on teaching English through drama and story. In her experiment,

she divided her class in small groups. She found that "working in small groups offered a number of benefits to the project" (p.39). Four of them are reported here below:

1. "It allowed the sessions to foster a culture of turn-taking, where every child got to have his or her say. […] This also had the residual benefit of building social skills such as patience and respect for others." (p.40)
2. "The small group dynamic meant that the children gained familiarity with one another quickly. This resulted in them talking more freely, taking greater risks with their suggestions and showing more initiative in posing questions than they reportedly did in class." (p.40)
3. "Working with such small numbers of pupils meant that children's needs were more visible and could be easily identified and addressed." (p.40)
4. "Because of the small numbers involved, children got to see the very real impact of their ideas and interactions on the story itself. This increased their sense of ownership over the material which in turn increased their levels of commitment and motivation". (p.40)

Hull's results (2012) indicate that performing drama-based activities in small groups can create an informal and relaxed learning environment where learners can freely experiment with language while socially constructing knowledge in the interaction with their peers and their instructor. Reading these results in light of the findings and the theories exposed so far in 2.2.1, it can be concluded that the pedagogical use of drama can promote authentic communication in social learning contexts, thus enhancing learners' EFL acquisition.

2.2.2 Using drama to provide meaningful contexts to language and grammar analysis

In chapter 1, it has been argued that acquisition of new grammatical forms is more likely to occur when such forms are inductively discovered through analytical observation of relevant authentic materials. In other words, learning grammar analyzing contextualized structures and their full functioning in terms of form, meaning and use is more effective than deductively receiving a grammatical rule and practicing it through artificial and decontextualized grammar exercises. Besides providing a cultural and communicative background to grammar learning, the importance of context in EFL teaching is to be understood in motivational terms as well. Dealing with materials and topics that are meaningful and relevant to students can result in learners' greater engagement and active participation in the learning process. It seems to be confirmed by Hughes (2001), according to whom "activities for young language learners will be more successful if they are contextualized and related to the learners. […] Furthermore, they should be purposeful and real, meaningfully repetitive, and recycle a great deal of language" (p.22). Drama seems to meet Hughes's (2001) requirements. Thanks to its potential to create fictional worlds, drama can provide such meaningful and relevant contexts in the EFL classroom:

> "[In] Process Drama, language [is] used in meaningful, authentic situations, where the focus is on posing questions and seeking answers to those questions. Teachers and students cocreate the dramatic 'elsewhere', a fictional world, for experiences, insights, interpretations, and understandings to occur. Process Drama in language classrooms usually starts with a pre-text to set a theme or situation that will engage and challenge the participants, and then gradually a series of episodes will be improvised or composed and rehearsed over a time span for elaboration." Liu (2002, p.6)

As can be read in the excerpt above, through drama, it is possible to "set a theme or situation that will engage and challenge the participants". Of course, it is mainly the teacher's responsibility to choose a situation that will be perceived as engaging and challenging by the target group. As discussed in

chapter 1, to achieve that, the teacher should tailor their curriculum to students' needs, interests and ambitions, so as to make sure they will feel motivated to actively engage during the sessions. In other words, a "lively pre-text" (O'Neill, 1995) is essential for drama to succeed as a pedagogical method:

> "Pre-text refers to the source or impulse for the drama process, and it also carries the meaning of a text that exists before the event. A pre-text gives a linguistically clear and emotionally engaging starting point for students to unfold the dramatic world […]. As seen, the pre-text immediately plunges the students into in imagined world, the details of which will emerge as the participants contribute to the development of the scene. The pre-text will determine the initial moments of action, establishing location, atmosphere, roles, and situations, providing the arc from which the full circle of action can be anticipated. The students' linguistic output triggered by curiosity and imagination will start from here." (Liu, 2002, p.9)

As indicated by O'Neill (1995), a pre-text can be initiated by "a word, a gesture, a location, a story, an idea, an object, or an image as well as by a character or a play script" (O'Neill, 1995, p.19). Once again, it is important to remark that the context should be selected by the teacher taking into consideration students' interests and inclinations. According to Liu (2002, p.8-9), the provided context can be of 3 types:

1. **Realistic situations**.
   Drama activities set in realistic situations have the advantage of providing students with fictional communicative contexts that feel authentic because they are very likely to happen in real-life settings. Through drama activities based on realistic contexts, students can acquire vocabulary and phrases they might need in future real-life communicative contexts. Despite these advantages, when choosing the right context, it should be also considered that "a context that is obviously far removed from everyday concerns can offer a light-hearted, playful atmosphere, in which exploration and enjoyment are the primary purposes and the lack of pressure to produce a 'correct' speech promotes confidence and fluency"
   (Kao and O'Neill, 1998, p. 24).
2. **Aspirational themes**.
   Aspirational themes such as "NBA players, TV shows such as Survivor and Who Wants to be a Millionaire" (p.8) can work as good contexts, especially if the aspirational theme chosen matches some of the students' actual ambitions in real life. As explained in chapter 4, informal talks with students (rather than impersonal and anonymous questionnaires) can be easily realizable effective tools for instructors to find out more about students' interests and life projects. By knowing students' ambitions and future plans, it will be easier to plan relevant and meaningful activities.
3. **Imaginary scenes**.
   As discussed above, providing imaginary contexts could be a good way to foster a light-hearted and playful learning environment where students are freed from real-life constraints. On the other hand, such contexts might lack authenticity and real-life relevance, which, under certain circumstances, might result in students' decreased motivation.

Besides valuing students' interests, according to Liu (2002), at least two more factors should be taken into consideration when selecting the context: "learners' linguistic skills" (p.8) – check Krashen's i+1 rule in 1.2 – and learners' "sociocultural backgrounds" (p. 8) – cf. 1.2 for the advantages of working with socio-culturally familiar authentic texts. As noticed by the British Council-Hornby Seminars in English Language Teaching (2006), "students often do not have a real reason to speak because the tasks do not motivate them or do not require them to say anything which they find meaningful". If this is the case, language-oriented superficial contexts only designed to practice language skills are

insufficient: "to break students' silence, then, teachers need to engage them emotionally; and within the context of drama, this means that teachers must make the dramatic situation *matter* to their students." (Chang, 2012, p.7). In other words, the success of language learning through drama depends on whether students "care enough about the problem in the drama to try and meet the challenges (including the language challenge) it offers. […] As human beings, we have a marked propensity to become absorbed in an 'as if' world, so that it begins to *feel real*: not real in the sense that it is actually happening, but real in the sense that the problems faced and the outcomes *matter* to the participant" (Byron, 1986, p.126-127). As a consequence, choosing contexts that "matter" to students will "build bridges between language teaching and the students' own experience." Moreover, "validating the students' own themes and ideas is fundamental to this way of working, and it gives them a measure of control over the content of the circumstances as well as a sense of empowerment" (O'Neill, 1994, p.55). While it has been remarked that teachers should not "divorce language exercises from context" (Winston, 2012, p.8), one should not forget the primary objective in any FL curriculum is language acquisition. In this sense, an appropriate context does not represent the end itself, but it must be seen *in function of* language acquisition, or, as a *means* to enhance FL learning. As a result, once a relevant context has been provided, it will be possible to work on the language embedded in such context through precise, purposeful and essentially generative language activities. In the long-standing *form vs meaning* debate, teachers have always been swinging along this continuum trying to come up with the right form/meaning ratio. Since both polarized options (form-focused and meaning-focused teaching styles) show several pitfalls, a third, integrated solution has been proposed: focus on *meaningful form*:

> "In second-/foreign-language classrooms, there are generally two options in teaching. One option is Focus on Forms, and the other is Focus on Meaning. Focus on Forms is considered a traditional approach in which course design starts with the language to be taught. The teacher and the textbook writer divide the second language into segments (e.g., phonemes, words, collocations, morphemes, or patterns) […]. Learners are to synthesize the parts for use in communication. Synthetic techniques often used include explicit grammar rules, repetition of models, memorization of short dialogues, linguistically simplified texts, transformation exercises, or explicit negative feedback. When the primary focus of teaching a language is on forms, lessons tend to be rather dry, consisting principally of work on linguistic items, which students are expected to master, often to native speaker levels, with anything less treated as 'error,' and little if any communicative second-language use. ." (Liu, 2002)

> Unlike Focus on Forms, the starting point of Focus on Meaning is not the language but the learner and learning processes. It is the learner, not the teacher or the textbook writer, who must analyze the second or foreign language. […] Second – or foreign-language learning is thought to be essentially similar to first-language acquisition […]. Lessons with focus on meaning, which are often interesting, relevant, and relatively successful, are purely communicative, and learners are presented with gestalt, comprehensible samples of communicative second-language use." (Liu, 2002, pp. 2,3)

As already argued in chapter 1, both options present flaws. In the "Focus on Form", for example, the motivational dimension is neglected: the learning material is artificial and decontextualized and learners' interests are not taken into consideration. Since no needs' analysis is carried out, the curriculum is normally standardized rather than designed in response of students' needs. As discussed in chapter 1, such teacher-centered and text-driven teaching approach favors linguistically and logical-mathematically intelligent students, while other types of intelligences are underrepresented. Being non-inclusive and monodirectional, this method often produces boring lessons, resulting in

declines in both motivation and attention. Although "Focus on Meaning" is more inclusive, student-centered and tailored to learners' communicative needs, a *pure* focus meaning is insufficient as well. In order for students to be able to effectively convey communicatively purposeful meanings, they must master underlying language structures. Although several studies have argued in favor of discovery-based and inductive learning processes, when it comes to grammar, and, in particular, complex grammatical structures, some EGI (Explicit Grammar Instruction) might be needed as well. Moreover, the implicit and incidental understanding of inductive language learning, if extremized, might lead to the misconception that FL students do not need guidance at all. On the contrary, a discovery-based approach to learn new structures in authentic and meaningful context can only succeed if the teacher overwatches, guides and supports the learning process. The role of the teacher is even more crucial at the end of the inductive process, when all the hypotheses formulated by students should be wrapped up, corrected and systematized in a shared format. If this passage is skipped – as it often happens in purely communicative and meaning-focused learning environments – learners might feel confused, frustrated, and possibly demotivated, thus inhibiting acquisition. As proposed by Liu (2002), an integrated approach is needed, in which meaningful contexts are functional to grammar acquisition and, mutually, language forms are functional to meaning-making:

> "In order to overcome the pitfalls of both options, a third option, Focus on Meaningful Form, has been recently advocated […]. The study of the form is based on meaningful contexts rather than a predetermined and decontextualized linguistic form. It involves briefly drawing students' attention to linguistic elements (words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, and so forth), in context, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication, the temporary shifts in focal attention being triggered by students' comprehension or production problems. […] In other words, to deal with the limitations of a pure focus on meaning, systematic provision is made in Focus on Meaningful Form for attention to language as object. Focus on Meaningful Form is learner-centered, and it respects the learner's internal syllabus and is under learner control." (Liu, 2002, pp. 3,4)

Although this third option, "Focus on Meaningful Form", can sound appealing in theory, "its implementation in second-/foreign-language classrooms is not an easy task". As pointed out by Liu (2002), "effective teaching methods with concrete techniques that engage language learners in a variety of communicative activities" are needed (p.4). Several studies (Maley & Duff, 1978; Di Pietro 1982; Kao & O'Neill, 1998) highlighted drama's potential to provide meaningful communicative contexts allowing for authentic interactions among students, while at the same time fostering contextualized and meaning-focused form analysis. In other words, it seems that well-planned drama-based activities can potentially embody the concept of "Focus on Meaningful Form":

> "Among those environment-enhancing activities, drama has shown itself through many years of research and practice a useful tool in engaging learners in constructing their own language growth, reflecting meaning in the fullest sense of personal and cultural relevance, matching individual levels of ability, and supporting self-initiated activity. […] Needless to say, drama worlds uncover a broad spectrum of drama activities useful in classrooms. In fact, dramatic worlds exist anywhere and at any level. […] Process Drama that starts with communicative activities and ends with reflections on experiences and linguistic expressions serves the purpose of the third option – Focus on Meaningful Form – attaining to both accuracy and fluency in language learning." (Liu, 2002, pp. 2-5)

Considering these results, and in light of the theories presented so far, it can be therefore concluded that drama can potentially play a relevant role in providing meaningful contexts to language and grammar analysis by "attaining to both accuracy and fluency in language learning".

2.2.3 The role of drama in promoting inclusiveness and multimodality in EFL teaching

As it has been hinted at in 2.2.2, major flaws in the traditional learning approach include its predominantly unimodal character and an overemphasis on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences. In parallel, 1.5.1 and 1.5.2 remarked the urgency to design more inclusive EFL curricula in which all of Gardner's multiple intelligences (2006) and all of Fleming's learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile) (1995) are evenly recognized, valued and stimulated. These two sections also suggested that a pedagogical use of the performing arts (acting, singing and dancing) can contribute to design more inclusive and multimodal language curricula in which more intelligences and learning styles are addressed simultaneously. More detailed analysis seems to confirm this view:

> "Drama is essentially a multimodal form of pedagogy, offering different points of entry for students' interests to be engaged […]. Drama […] offers visual and auditory signs for students to make sense of but the difference is that the multimodality of drama pedagogy largely depends upon the presence of live bodies; it is interactive, immediate and able to respond and adapt swiftly to student comments, questions and ideas. A teacher in role is able to […] improvise and make a range of multimodal responses in order to encourage […] students' use of the target language in much more direct, flexible and human ways than even the most advanced piece of technology. A visual aid in drama […] will have symbolic significance. […] In other words, visuals are far more engaging, more powerfully communicative, when used well in drama". (Winston, 2012, p.4)

In the excerpt above, Winston (2012) explains that the VAK learning styles can be addressed in engaging and powerful ways through drama. In line with this view, Chang (2012) asserts that "drama can stimulate the visual, kinesthetic and auditory aspects of learning and therefore allow more [learners] to feel confident as a variety of 'points of entry' are being addressed" (Chang, 2012, p.7). The inclusive nature of drama is underlined by Donnellan and Simpson (2015), who point out that drama-based EFL teaching "addresses all four macro-skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as well as a wide variety of teaching and learning styles through individual work and collaboration, critical analysis and affective sharing, artistic expression, reflection, […] and other modes of learning" (p.65). Another aspect pointed out by Winston (2012) in the extract is that the "live body", too often ignored in traditional linguistic/logical teaching, comes to play a crucial role in drama-based pedagogy. As noticed by Erika C. Piazzoli, "the intrinsic qualities of process drama can be beneficial to […] learning as they engage the body and the mind, not only to produce language, but also to express emotions and ideas through gesture, posture and facial expression". As a result, it helps to make "direct connections between visual/kinesthetic stimuli and […] oral production, facilitating creative thinking in the target language" (Piazzoli, 2012, p.135). This is in line with Winston (2012):

> "One of the key advantages that drama pedagogy can bring to the language classroom is its recognition of the centrality of the body in the learning process. Classrooms on the whole are still places founded on the Cartesian idea that the brain and the body are two distinct entities […]. Drama, on the other hand, seeks to channel and liberate the body's energies through playful, physical activity and – particularly significant for […] second language learning – it foregrounds the communicative potential of bodies through their uses of non-verbal

'paralinguistic' signs. Gestures, facial expressions, body language […]: all of these communicate meaning." (p.4).

As pointed out by Winston (2012), especially in language teaching, pragmatic features of language should not be underestimated, since non-verbal cues knowingly play a noteworthy role in modifying and connotating verbally conveyed meaning in oral utterances. From this perspective, drama can be a good tool to raise students' awareness of pragmatic features characterizing the target language and, more in general, human communication. The centrality of the body is realized through practical, dynamic, and performative activities, in which the EFL classroom is understood as an inclusive and informal laboratory where learners and teachers cooperate to construct knowledge. In this sense, drama structures can provide what Palechorou and Winston call "language into action" (Palechorou and Winston, 2012, p.45), as the language in the script results in real utterances and physical movements:

> "Many of the drama strategies, such as narrated action, [engage learners] in using their body language to express thoughts and ideas, creating a non-threatening environment for […] pupils, in which participation [is] not dependent solely upon linguistic skill. In being released from the constraints of language, […] learners [can] express their thoughts through their bodies and not solely in a language they [are] uncomfortable with. Most importantly, this physicality, different from traditional classroom activity, [provides] them with a simple way to join in, developing their confidence through gestures, posture and movement rather than through an insistence that they use the target language". (Palechorou and Winston, 2012, pp.49-50)

As can be read in the extract above, in the conceptualization of the target group as a mixed-ability class, all students have the chance to speak out and participate in process drama, including students with major language issues. Although the ultimate goal of any FL/SL teaching curriculum is language proficiency, students having a hard time expressing themselves in the target language are still allowed to join the dramatic discussion through body gestures, facial expressions and movement. Note that these students would be most likely excluded or marginalized in a traditional teaching setting calling upon linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences only. Drama's potential to include struggling students is confirmed by Liu (2002): assuming that learners' "creative ideas and thoughts are sometimes inhibited by their lack of linguistic expressions", she poses that "utilizing their body language stretches their imagination out of their linguistic boundaries". In short, according to Liu (2002), "drama […] encourages learners to utilize their nonverbal communication strategies to compensate for their linguistic deficiencies" (p.12). It is important to note that the advantages of the physical dimension of drama go far beyond the fact that it can aid students with low linguistic levels. As pointed out by Kempston (2012), "drama is a well-documented way in which individuals can inhabit a text and mine its layers of meaning beyond simple semantic decoding" (Kempston, 2012, p.94). In a section dedicated to the technique of script analysis, directing coach Weston (1996) poses that "the words on the page, the dialogue, and […] the stage directions are clues to a vast subworld of behavior and feeling which it is the duty and privilege of the director and actors to supply. This is the ninety percent of the iceberg that is below water. In order to understand the script, you need to be able to operate in the sub-world of these characters" (p.191). Significantly, Weston's "Directing Actors" (1996), a cornerstone in in big-/silver-screen and theater direction, suggests that sometimes the best way to access this sub-world, the underwater portion of the iceberg, is through a physical task:

"The simplest thing you could ask an actor to do would be a physical task. When the actor or actors are concentrating on a physical problem or task, their concentration can give the scene a sense of its emotional problem. A physical task takes the actor's concentration *off the lines*, because he lets the lines *come out of* the physical task. Concentration on the lines — on remembering them or on delivering them the 'right' way — makes a performance stiff, rehearsed-looking. Concentration on an imaginative task, such as a verb, fact, or image, takes the actor off the lines and into a created reality". (Weston, 1996, p.62)

Looked at from the EFL teaching perspective, the idea of loosening a "stiff" and "rehearsed-looking" exercise into a more credible performance reminds of Krashen's *rule of forgetting*, (Krashen and Terrel, 1983) according to which language learners better acquire a language when they "forget" they are actually studying it. When an actor is focusing too much on delivering the lines in the 'right' way, she/he is focusing more on "acting" itself rather than on conveying meaning and emotions. As a result, the performance is likely to be perceived as artificial and stiff. Though, if the actor "forgets" she/he is acting because their attention has been taken *off the lines* through a physical task (e.g., lifting a cardboard box, drinking a glass of water), the performance will suddenly be more fluent and credible. Similarly, a language student practicing with artificial, decontextualized and purely language-oriented grammar exercises is likely to be too self-conscious, which will result in stiff, rather mechanical (and often clumsy) linguistic performances. Nevertheless, if the same student "is distracted" by their primary goal (acquiring the language) through a more meaningful practical activity, language will suddenly be perceived as a means rather than an end, the student will not feel as self-conscious and their language performance is likely to improve. One further noteworthy aspect of drama, strictly connected to its physical nature, is the tactile dimension and its positive effect on memory. Very often, when acting, learners/actors necessarily have to interact with surrounding objects (e.g., stage equipment, scenography, scene objects, costumes, make-up toolkits, wigs, etc.). They touch them, perceive their shape, temperature, texture, weight, smell, color, etc. As observed by Hull (2012), objects can serve as "useful tools for recapping and revisiting moments of the narrative" (Hull, 2012, p.34). As students make "a visual association between the objects used and the events that have been played out or told within the story, they [are] more able to recall moments out of sequence […] using the artefacts as a prompt" (p.35). Besides favoring learners with a kinesthetic/tactile learning style - normally underrepresented in traditional teaching - it seems that drama-based activities involving tactile experiences and interaction with scene objects can have beneficial effects on memory for all students. Consistently with this view, Weston (1996) calls upon the acting technique referred to as "sense memory", indicating that actors' tactile and sensory experiences can aid memory and contribute to a successful and credible performance:

"Sense memory is the creation of imaginary objects via the memory of your five senses — what you see, hear, smell, taste and touch. In a sense memory exercise, the actor recalls physical sensation. She allows the memory to occur physically (in her body) rather than intellectually (in her mind). In a beginning sense memory exercise, a student holds in her hands an object, say a cup of hot coffee, and puts her attention on the sensory impressions it makes on her: the weight of the cup, its temperature, its contours; the sensation of steam against her face; the smell of the coffee, etc. The attention needs to be sensory, not intellectual. […] Adding sensory detail deepens and keeps fresh any actor's choice. The brilliance of sense memory as a technique is the understanding that it is the sensory life […] that recalls the emotional event far more vividly than pondering the emotion ("I felt frightened," etc.) or even the event ("My mother was screaming," or whatever)." (Weston, 1996, pp.167-177)

Drawing on the acting technique of "sense memory", it can be concluded that adding "sensory life" to language learning through meaningful and multisensory drama activities can be a good way to enhance learners' recalling of the language structures studied during such activities. One last aspect to be analyzed before concluding this section is drama's potential to create a playful and informal learning environment due to its practical and laboratorial nature:

> "Drama is based in play and, while learning in drama can be serious and seriously hard work, it also draws on our capacity for playfulness in the creation of the fictional worlds that our role-playing inhabits. Play is not normally part of the pedagogy in many international classrooms, and some students may resist drama activities because they do not understand that learning is taking place. Therefore, the reflection phase of each lesson is vital. This allows for teacher and students to identify the language learning that has taken place and helps to recognize that play and learning are not mutually exclusive" (Stinson, 2012, p. 80)

According to Stinson (2012), in other words, it is essential to understand that playing and having fun is NOT only "stuff for kids". On the contrary, as it will be broadly argued in chapter 4, playfulness can be functional to deep learning and authentic language acquisition, even when it comes to complex concepts or grammar structures. This is in line with the Vygotskyan view of play as *mediational,* - "a social means through which learners co-construct learning resources which, in turn, shape their understanding and promote further development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.12). That and informal and playful learning environment can enhance acquisition seems to be confirmed by Baldwin and Galazka (2022), who point out that "when a positive emotional environment is created in the language classroom, this encourages positive interactions and can provide students with an increased sense of competence and confidence, which helps learning to occur" (p.12). When students feel safe and "in a state of 'relaxed alertness' with 'high challenge and low threat', they are more likely to become deeply engaged in the language learning process, feel less anxious and be more inclined to speak" (p.12). These reflections are in line with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), according to which "the imaginary barrier of the effective filter prevents learners from acquiring language from the available input. A learner who is bored anxious or tense may put up a linguistic filter, thus blocking input" (Kempston, in Winston, 2012, p.101). Due to its playful, informal, and multisensory nature, it can be concluded that drama can promote an inclusive and multimodal EFL learning environment in which students can actively engage with language while familiarizing with non-verbal dimensions of human communication and sharpening their social skills through dynamic and cooperative activities.

2.3 Singing: The use of music in EFL teaching

"It can bring us to tears or to our feet, drive us into battle or lull us to sleep. Music is indeed remarkable in its power over all humankind. Perhaps for that very reason, no human culture on earth has ever lived without it: people making music predates agriculture and perhaps even language" (Leutwyler, 2001, p.1 BRAIN)

"A school without a choir is like a body without a soul" (John Rutter, The Importance of Choir)

After outlining the advantages of using drama in EFL teaching, this section explores the possible beneficial effects of music and song in EFL teaching curricula. Critically interrelating existing literature on the subject, 2.3 looks into the role of music in EFL teaching within the framework of Posner et al.'s *Arts Theory* (2008). The Arts Theory articulates in 5 elements, listed below:

1. "There are specific brain networks for different art forms;
2. There is a general factor of interest in the arts;
3. When this general factor of interest in the arts is high, training in an appropriate specific art form produces high interest or motivation;
4. This interest or motivation sustains attention;
5. High sustained attention in conflict-related tasks […] improves cognition" (Posner et al., 2008, p.3)

Integrating more theories and findings with the Arts Theory (Posner et al., 2008) through a critical step-by-step analysis of each of the 5 elements, this section aims at providing insights on whether and to what extent a pedagogical use of music can enhance language acquisition in EFL teaching settings.

2.3.1 Element 1: There are specific brain networks for different art forms

The Arts Theory (Posner et al., 2008) proposes that "each individual art form involves separate brain networks", with "brain networks" being described as "systems of connections between brain areas" (Posner et al., 2008, pp.1,3). At least in the case of music, however, more recent studies have shown that "music […] stimulates many areas in the brain, including regions normally involved in other kinds of thinking." (Leutwyler, 2001, p.1). In line with this view, Mark Judo Tramo, quoted in the same article, suggests there is "no grossly identifiable brain structure that works solely during music cognition. However, distinctive patterns of neural activity within the auditory cortex and other areas of the brain may imbue specificity to the processing of music." (Leutwyler, 2001, p.1). Crucially, neural activity involved in music processing has been shown to overlap with the processing of another domain: language. As an example of this overlapping, Leutwyler (2001) points to the left planum temporale: "this tiny brain region is critical to the golden musical gift of perfect pitch - the rare ability to recognize by ear a perfect middle C hit on the piano, or the E of a passing car horn. But the left planum temporale also plays an important role in language processing" (Leutwyler, 2001, p.1). This seems to be in line with Moreno's findings (2009):

> "Music and language seem to be unique in terms of resource sharing. A reasonable explanation for this is that resources provide a particular processing function needed in both domains […]. Musicians exhibit stronger activation than non-musicians in areas of the brain associated with language processing (Broca's and Wernicke's areas). This finding points out the overlapping network between music and language. Music and language share many features and elements, with one obvious example being that they are both auditory systems. Both music and language rely on the same four acoustic parameters: fundamental frequency (F0), spectral characteristics, intensity and duration." (pp.335,339)

To further investigate the "overlapping network between music and language", Moreno (2009) conducted a 6-month study aimed at analyzing "the effects of musical and painting lessons on pitch discrimination in language" (pp.336-337). They tried to find out whether musical training enhances pitch processing in language hypothesizing that "children with music lessons would be able to detect the weak pitch violation in language better than the children with painting lessons" (p.337). As expected, the results "clearly showed positive transfer effects in the music group, but not in the painting group" (p.337). That the results showed enhancement of "reading and pitch discrimination skills after musical training suggests "a positive transfer from music to language" (p.337). Similar studies on the subject (e.g., Marques et al, 2007, Wong et al., 2007, Kunert et al., 2015, etc.) observed a positive effect of music training on language processing and shared neural activity for music and language processing. In particular, Kunert et al. (2015), investigated the Broca's area as the potential "processing center" for both language syntax and musical syntax (harmony):

"Music and language are uniquely human abilities which, despite their obvious differences, appear to share more than just a common population of users. Specifically, it has been proposed that one overlapping aspect is found in syntactic processing. Syntactic processing—whether in language or in music—involves the integration of discrete elements (e.g., words, tones/chords) into higher order structures (e.g., sentences in language and harmonic sequences in music) according to a set of combinatorial principles that are implicitly understood by members of a culture. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), the present study aimed to find neural evidence for shared syntactic integration resources recruited by both music and language. […] Motivated by the hypothesis that Broca's area was a neural site of interaction between linguistic and musical syntactic processing, the present study specifically focused on the activation pattern of Broca's area and its right hemisphere homologue in response to structural manipulations of music and language" (Kunert et al., 2015, pp.1,3)

In this study, 19 native speakers of Dutch in an age range of 18-27 heard songs containing "either a syntactically easy construction […] (SR: subject-extracted relative clause) or a difficult construction […] (OR: object-extracted relative clause)" (p.3). The sentences were sung *a cappella* (no instrumental background) and "the critical word which disambiguated between these two linguistic options was either sung on a regular tone […] or on an irregular tone (out-of-key tone which is not easy to integrate harmonically). Thus, the time point of integration difficulty in music was aligned with the one in language." (p.3). Note that both types of sentences used in this study were fully grammatical: they just differed in syntactic complexity. Similarly, the use of an expected out-of-key tone in some of the musical melodies "increased their complexity in terms of tonal-harmonic structure, but such tones would not be considered 'errors' because they are common stylistic elements in tonal melodies." (p.3). The results of Kunert et al.'s study (2015) are briefly summarized here below:

"The present study aimed to provide brain-imaging support for the proposal that syntax processing in music and language interact in the human brain. […] We found a statistical interaction between music and language processing in Broca's area, corresponding to BA44 and BA45 in the left inferior frontal gyrus. […] This suggests that at least some of the neural resources in Broca's area that process syntactic relations between words in language are also sensitive to syntactic relations between tones in music, and that syntactic integration in language is not wholly independent of syntactic integration in music. […] Specifically, the interaction between music and language emerged when participants heard a stimulus containing a syntactically challenging sentence (object-extracted relative clause instead of subject-extracted relative clause) sung on a melody containing a syntactically challenging tone (out-of-key instead of in-key), with the tone located at the precise point in the melody where the linguistic syntactic integration difficulty occurred. In this case an interaction pattern emerged". (Kunert et al., 2015, p.11)

In other words, "the predicted interactive pattern between music and language demands was indeed found in this part of the brain. This is […] direct evidence which suggests that music and language syntactic processing interact in Broca's area." (p.13). In light of Leutwyler's (2001), Moreno's (2009), and Kunert et al.'s findings (2015), it can be concluded that brain areas involved in music processing are the same used to process language, and, crucially, that music training enhances and refines language processing. Such results, read form the language teaching perspective, suggests that music could serve as a powerful pedagogical tool to support and enhance language acquisition. This is in line with Lems (2018):

"Music offers special benefits for those learning a new language. […] In fact, learning a song or musical instrument is analogous in many ways to learning a language. We are required to produce and employ a repertoire of specific sounds, learn new patterns and rules, and master the 'syntax' of songs and compositions. As musicians become more proficient, they—like language learners—make ever-closer approximations of the target sounds until they reach a level of ease and enjoyment, or 'fluency'" (p.15).

As a result, findings on the beneficial effects of music on language processing "could be directly relevant to policies concerning the funding of music and foreign language education" (Moreno, 2009, p.338).

2.3.2 Element 2: There is a general factor of interest in the arts

Posner et al.'s Arts Theory (2008) suggests "the enthusiasm that many young people have for music, art, and performance" (p.3) can be interpreted in the framework of a more general "factor of interest", also referred to as "general aesthetic interest", which is typical in humans. In other words, they pose that humans, in general, tend to appreciate the arts. Consistently with this hypothesis, Lems (2018) observes that "music is universally pleasurable [and it is] part of our lives in ways both big and small. […] Young adults in particular listen to music almost nonstop, and their playlists form an important part of their identities. It only makes sense to use students' interest in music as a motivator for their English studies." (p.14). Similarly, Gray (2001) indicates that "human music-making may vary dramatically between cultures, but the fact that it is found in all cultures suggests that there is a deep human need to create, perform, and listen to music" (p.53). The reasons behind humans' appreciation for music seem to be deeply rooted in the history of mankind:

> "Some researchers are finding that listening to familiar music activates neural structures deep in the ancient primitive regions of the brain, the *cerebellar vermis*. For music so profoundly to affect this gateway to emotion, it must have some ancient and important function." (Daniel Levitin, cited in Leutwyler, 2001, p.4)

That the music-humans relationship is an "ancient" one is confirmed by Patricia Gray (2001), who explains that "our Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal ancestors were as fond of music as we are. The discovery of prehistoric flutes made of animal bone in France and Slovenia, ranging in age from 4000 to 53,000 years old, demonstrates that ancient civilizations devoted considerable time and skill to constructing complicated musical instruments. […] Given the sophistication of these 50,000-year-old instruments, it is quite possible that humans have been making music for several hundred thousand years" (p.53). Consistently with Gray's view (2001), Schulkin and Raglan (2014) state that "music is a fundamental part of our evolution", adding that "we probably sang before we spoke in syntactically guided sentences" (p.1). The hypothesis by which music precedes human syntax was first formulated by Darwin (1871/1874):

> "It is probable that the progenitors of man, either the males or females of both sexes before acquiring the power of expressing mutual love in articulate speech, endeavored to charm each other with musical notes and rhythm". (Darwin, 1871/1874)

While it is commonly agreed that music is a primitive feature of mankind, some researchers investigating the origins of music took one step further postulating that music might even predate humans. Among them, Patricia Gray (2001) found strong parallels between human music patterns and humpbacks' undersea songs:

"Music has been defined as patterns of sound varying in pitch and time produced for emotional, social, cultural, and cognitive purposes. […] Do other species show musical language and expression? […] The undersea songs of humpback whales are similar in structure to bird and human songs and prove that these marine mammals are inveterate composers. If songs can be defined as 'any rhythmic repeated utterance, whether by a bird, a frog, an insect, a whale or a human being', then humpback whale songs are constructed according to laws that are strikingly similar to those adopted by human composers. Singing humpbacks use rhythms similar to those in our own music, yet they could just as easily formulate free-form, arrhythmic sounds. They use phrases of a similar length to ours—a few seconds—and create themes out of several phrases before singing the next theme. Their songs could easily 'grow' organically without the need for repetition but, like human composers, these marine mammals prefer to reiterate their material. […] Most surprisingly, humpback songs contain repeating refrains that form rhymes. This suggests that whales use rhyme in the same way that we do: as a mnemonic device to help them remember complex material. The fact that whale and human music have so much in common even though our evolutionary paths have not intersected for 60 million years, suggests that music may predate humans— that rather than being the inventors of music, we are latecomers to the musical scene." (Gray, 2001, p.52)

Coming back to Levitin's beginning citation (in Leutwyler, 2001), "for music so profoundly to affect this gateway to emotion, it must have some *ancient* and *important* function". After briefly reviewing some studies on music in its chronological relation to mankind, the rest of this section attempts to provide insights on what Levitin defines an "*important* function" of music. To explain what in specific Levitin refers to, a good start point can be Darwin. Darwin (1859) posited that "musical sensibility is tied to our social instincts. […] Social instincts, including song, are the prelude for much of what governs our social evolution" (Schulkin and Raglan, 2014, p.1). Accepting the hypothesis by which song is a social instinct would explain why music is so intrinsically motivating for human beings. Taking a step forward, Dewey (1925/1989) argues that music can be seen as a biologically rooted human need:

"Underlying the behavior of what we might call a basic proclivity to sing and to express music are appetitive urges, consummatory expression, drive and satisfaction (Dewey, 1925/1989). Music, like food ingestion, is rooted in biology. Appetitive expression is the buildup of need, and consummatory experiences are its release and reward. Appetitive and consummatory musical experiences are embedded in culturally rich symbols of meaning. Music is linked to learning, and humans have a strong pedagogical predilection. Learning not only takes place in the development of direct musical skills, but in the connections between music and emotional experiences. (Schulkin and Raglan, 2014, p.1)

The citation above poses some crucial points to reflect on. Firstly, music is interpreted as a biological need: according to Dewey (1925/1989), humans need music the same way they need food. Our factor of interest for music builds up a biological need that is then released in the rewarding activity of consuming (or producing) music. Secondly, music fruition happens in "culturally rich" settings, meaning that through music, it possible to access a variety of cultural-specific symbols of meaning. Thirdly, according to Dewey (1925/1989), learning is strictly connected to music, in that it occurs "in the connections between music and emotional experiences". In short, considering that "there is a general factor of interest for the arts"; that music is deeply rooted in the history of mankind and might even predate humans; that music is a biological need through which learning can be enhanced thanks

to "emotional experiences", it can be concluded that "it only makes sense to use students' interest in music as a motivator for their English studies." (Lems, 2018, p.14).

2.3.3 Element 3: When the general factor of interest is high, art training produces high motivation

> *"In our time, it is hard to escape music and songs as it occupies ever more of the world around us: in operating theatres (for heart transplants and childbirth), restaurants and cafes, shopping malls, at sports events, in our cars and literally everywhere for those tuned in to a Walkman. It would seem that the only place music and song is slow to catch on is in schools".* (Murphey, 1992a)

This third element in Posner et al.'s *Arts Theory* (2008) "links training in appropriate arts with motivation." The researchers postulate that "children who have a high level of orienting sensitivity (openness) and at least normal interest in a particular art will have high motivation to receive training in that art" (pp.4-5). Since music and songs have been demonstrated to be deeply rooted in human history, and provided music is pervasive in young students' lives as it plays a crucial role in identity-making, this section proposes that music can be an "appropriate art" to sustain motivation in EFL curricula. Jones (2018) describes motivation as "the extent to which one intends to engage an activity" (p.5). In Jones's view, therefore, motivation precedes and enables engagement. Engagement is understood as "participating in an activity, either behaviorally (e.g., taking notes in a class) or cognitively (e.g., thinking about class ideas)" (Jones, 2020, p.6). According to Jones, learners' motivation and engagement are "affected by their perceptions of the class, which are influenced by external variables (i.e., variables that are outside students' bodies, such as teaching strategies, family, culture, etc.) and internal variables" (Jones, 2020, p.2). From this perspective the goal of the teacher is finding motivating teaching strategies that allow for students' engagement:

> "The goal of the instructor is to use teaching strategies that create conditions in the class to motivate students to engage in the learning activities. Through positive engagement in class over time, students are more likely to learn and perform at higher levels and to develop more productive cognition and affect related to the L2 and learning activities (e.g., 'I can learn to speak Spanish,' 'I like learning Spanish'). As a result, students are more likely to meet the course objectives and have a positive experience while doing so." (Jones, 2020, p.2)

Jones (2020) suggests that interest strategies should be used by teachers to "to engage students cognitively and affectively by creating enjoyable and interesting activities. Teachers can accomplish this by designing activities that grab students' attention, pique their curiosity about the content, and arouse them emotionally" (p.3). According to Tavadze et al. (2021), because of their emotional and cultural relevance for most teenagers, pop songs can be effective pedagogical tools to capture and sustain learners' motivation, thus enhancing EFL acquisition:

> "Songs can be used in a number of ways according to our aims and needs. They can be of some help introducing the new topic, practicing grammar structures or revising tenses, teaching and mastering new vocabulary together with rhythm, stress and pronunciation practice. Another thing that songs can be used for might be connected with fostering discussions, broadening the awareness of different cultures and knowledge about the world. On the whole, one of the greatest advantages of using songs in the classroom is that they change the class routine, provide variety as they are enjoyable and relaxing thus creating student-oriented environment." (Tavadze, Diasamidze, Katamadze, 2021, p.92).

Tavadze et al. (2021) propose that songs lend themselves to learn grammar, new vocabulary, pronunciation and raise students' cultural awareness. As explained in chapter 1, the use of topic-

related authentic materials (and, among, them, songs) can provide students with repeated exposition to semantically-related vocabulary, thus allowing for incidental learning of new vocabulary. Thanks to rhythmic patterning and rhyme scheming, musical material can empower incidental learning of new vocabulary and favor long-term recalling (see 2.3.5 for the advantages of music on long-term memorization). As also explained in chapter one, well-selected authentic materials can support inductive learning of grammar and pronunciation. In particular, chapter 4 explains how song-based language activities positively impacted students' pronunciation skills in the research project I conducted. Among its learning-friendly features, song was shown to be particularly effective in EFL teaching because of its potential to provide meaningful repetition. As emphasized by advocates of the pattern drilling methods, good levels of language acquisition often come with great amount of repetition. According to Kelly (2000), "one of the primary manners by which pronunciation is practiced in the classroom is through drilling." (p.16). Basuki (2018) states that "teaching English pronunciation is simple […] in that such teaching involves merely the drilling of students on the various sounds of English" (p.45). While good arguments can be found to support the hypothesis that English pronunciation is acquired through repetition, it should also be considered that drilling methods normally presented by teachers or in textbooks tend to be fairly monotonous and potentially boring. Calling upon Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), it should be kept into consideration that boredom inhibits acquisition by activating the affective filter, and is therefore to be avoided in teaching settings. Tavadze et al. (2021) propose song as a pedagogical tool that provides repetition of language structures while sustaining learners' interest and motivation:

> "Teachers often seek for the ways to make their students repeat the structures and sentences or new vocabulary and phrases they studied before they fade from their memory. Many course-books are not equipped with the right and meaningful repetition-oriented tasks and besides many students find them quite boring. The way out can be found in using meaningfully selected songs giving us a chance to increase repetition practice maintaining students' interest and involvement.". (Tavadze, Diasamidze, Katamadze, 2021, p.92)

In line with this view, Kumar et al. (2022) assert that "English also requires a significant amount of repetition to practice the sounds and structures; songs and music help to offer this opportunity as repetition is one of their significant features. Songs do not only offer language practice opportunities through repetition but also by developing listening skills, language association and assimilation skills, and phonological skills and provide an easygoing learning atmosphere" (p.2). As observed by Kumar et al. and Tavadze et al. (2001), one further noteworthy aspect of song is its potential to create relaxed, enjoyable and student-centered learning environments, which represent an adequate setting for FL acquisition to occur (cf. Krashen, 1982):

> "Learning processes causing negative feelings can be the direct way to demotivation. Teachers should make sure that learning process is based on motivation and encouragement, that there are no demotivating factors blocking the way to enthusiasm, involvement, trust, self-esteem, enjoyment and pleasure that learning can present. […] Creating positive atmosphere with motivational activities can be the huge step to success, reaching our aims and objectives. Thus, listening to English songs can be interesting and enjoyable at the same time. Students will find themselves full of stamina, less worried and involved in the learning process. Songs might feel like learning a language without too much effort and picking a language, concentrating not only on single words but the units of lexical items and authentic phrases 'intruding' and staying in our mental lexicon in a pretty painless way. Students develop and master their pronunciation concentrating on the sounds and the way they are chained together, they enrich their vocabulary, practice grammar structures, become aware of other cultures and values.

Actually, students learn implicitly and unconsciously giving the natural way to the development of their language awareness. […] As the things mentioned above testify, all the obstacles concerning students' fears can be solved simply and easily and listening to the songs can be of great value to foreign language teaching." (Tavadze et al., 2021, p.92)

Consistently with this view, Nadera (2015) claims that "perhaps the greatest benefit to using songs in the classroom is that they can be fun. Pleasure for its own sake is an important part of learning a language, something which is often overlooked by teachers, and songs can add interest to the classroom routine and potentially improve student motivation" (p.370). Besides supporting students' motivation through enjoyable and playful activities, Nadera (2015) suggests that music can contribute to create a nonthreatening and informal learning environment with reduced anxiety. As Nadera (2015) puts it, songs, and "in particular choral singing can help to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere that makes the classroom a nonthreatening environment. By reducing anxiety, songs can help increase student interest and motivate them to learn the target language. Students often think of songs as entertainment rather than study and therefore find learning English through songs fun and enjoyable" (p.370). The role of singing and choral singing in reducing classroom anxiety is confirmed by Owain Lewes. In the article describing his karaoke-based ESL lessons using *The Beatles* songs, Lewes reports his field notes taken after one teaching lesson:

"Because of the fun nature of the activity, my students realize that making mistakes, such as singing off key and skipping or mispronouncing a word or two, is not such a bad thing. After a few individual performances or a choral singing session involving the entire class, my students seem energized, less reserved, and more self-confident. Therefore, the simple act of singing a few songs at the beginning of my classes lowers the affective filter, thus reducing the stress of interacting in a foreign language". (Dalton and Lewes, 2015, p.33)

Besides its potential to lower down anxiety, song can also be a teaching strategy to create informal and student-centered learning environments in that it promotes and encourages social learning through groupwork and shared learning experiences. According to Schulkin and Raglan (2014), music's ability to promote social learning relies on its binding power:

"Music is a binding factor in our social milieu. [It] is typically something shared, something social […]. This draws us together and, as a social species, remains essential to us; a chorus of expression in being with others, that fundamental feature of our life and of our evolutionary ascent. […] Music is social in nature; we inherently feel the social value of reaching others in music or by moving others in song across the broad social milieu" (p.2)

In other words, provided music is a naturally social art, it can be a useful tool to promote meaningful and emotionally loaded interconnections among pupils, thus engaging them in informal, enjoyable and community-based language learning experiences. To sum up, music has been suggested as a valid pedagogical tool to sustain learners' motivation in that: it meets students' needs and interests; it enhances language structures acquisition through meaningful repetition; it creates relaxed and student-centered learning environments; it promotes social learning. Consequently, it can be concluded that the general factor of interest for music tends to be high and, thus, it can be an "adequate art" to sustain learners' motivation throughout EFL learning processes.

2.3.4 Element 4: Motivation sustains attention

According to Posner et al.'s Arts Theory (2008), "high levels of motivation [lead] to strong improvements in task performance, particularly when motivation [is] sustained for longer periods of time. […] Interest in the arts allows for sustained attention, providing an increased opportunity for

the training to be effective […] The enthusiasm that many young people have for music, art and performance could provide a context for paying close attention, […] which could then generalize to a range of cognitive skills" (pp.1,3). Accepting music as a source of sustained motivation leads to the hypothesis that music, thanks to its motivational power, can increase attention. This is in line with Kasuya-Ueba, Zhao and Toichi's study (2020), according to which "music interventions may have a positive impact on attention" (p.2). In their starting hypothesis, they propose that "music itself contains therapeutic factors that enhance attention skills; for example, rhythmic patterns drive attention focus, and musical elements such as rhythm, melody, and harmony provide multidimensional stimuli that facilitate switching attention" (p.2). They add that "the perception of rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, and dynamic patterns in music may influence the focus and organization of the flow of our attention". (p.2) Confirming that the intrinsic features of music (rhythm, melody, harmony and dynamic patterns) are functional to attention enhancement would be crucial to EFL teachers, especially considering that attention, a fundamental skill for good cognitive functioning, "is positively correlated with academic achievement" (p.2). In order to test the validity of such hypothesis, they conducted a study on the effect of a 30-minute music intervention on children's attention:

> "We […] examined the effect of a music intervention on children's attention. Thirty-five children, aged 6 to 9 years, participated in this study […]. A single 30-minute interactive music intervention was compared with a single 30-minute interactive video game intervention accompanied by computer-generated background music using a within-subjects repeated-measures design. Each intervention was implemented individually. Participants completed a standardized attention assessment, the Test of Everyday Attention for Children, before and after both interventions to assess changes in their attentional skills." (p.1)

In the video game intervention (control task), children were asked to play a bowling video game from Nintendo Wii Sports. On the other hand, the Musical Attention Control Training (MACT) was used for the musical intervention (experimental task). As indicated by Thaut and Gardiner (2014), the MACT involves "structured active or receptive musical exercises involving precomposed performance or improvisation in which musical elements cue different musical responses to practice attention functions" (p.257). Consistently, in this study, participants were supposed to play percussion instruments while the experimenter was singing, playing the keyboard or percussion:

> "During the first 10 min, the experimenter held a hand drum in each hand, […] and asked the participant to hit the drums held up alternately by the experimenter with the left and right hand, as the experimenter sang a simple, original 'Let's play the drum' song. In the next 10 min, the participant played three kinds of percussion instruments (congas, cymbal, and Remo Tubano) as follows: (1) played them freely while the experimenter played the keyboard; (2) played an appropriate one as the experimenter played high, middle, or low range on the keyboard, following instructions (e.g., asked to play the cymbal when hearing high notes); and (3) played by matching how the experimenter played on the keyboard […]. In the last 10 min, the experimenter and participant faced each other and imitated each other's rhythmic patterns while taking turns on the same percussion instruments set between them. These activities implemented in the music intervention were designed according to our participants' ages to easily produce rhythmic responses against a clear, steady beat" (pp.4-5)

During the music intervention, children were asked to play accordingly to the instructor's musical and visual cues. Therefore, during the experiment, it was necessary for children to "switch their attention auditorily and visually between the experimenter's singing or playing and their own playing while following the tempo, rhythm, and listening to the melody provided by the experimenter […]

When participants played three kinds of percussion instruments to music, they needed to shift their attention to play the instruments while following musical cues from the experimenter. The musical cues were multi-layered and changed randomly." (p.10). In addition, active music listening to play along also "required the participants to hold these instructions in working memory" (p.10). Referring to *attention control* as "the ability to exert effortful control in order to inhibit a dominant response, to hold in working memory newly relevant rules that require the suppression or activation of previously learned responses, and to shift attention between tasks" (Cornish and Wilding, 2010, p. 372), the structure of the experimental task of this study was considered to be adequate to test participants' attention control in that it required them to:

1. "Exert effortful control to inhibit steady continuous performance and follow and respond to musical cues that were changing over time;
2. hold in working memory new instructions on how to respond that were possibly different from their previous music experience, which allowed them to simply play along;
3. shift their attention rapidly between the experimenter/keyboard and their instruments" (p.10)

The results of Kasuya-Ueba et al.'s study (2020) are promising: they found that the music experimental task (unlike the control task) had short-term beneficial effects on children's attention control, implying that music-based training may enhance attention control:

> "Our results show that the music intervention significantly improved children's attention control/switching […] compared to the video game intervention. […] The results indicated significant improvement in attention control/switching following the music intervention after controlling for the children's intellectual abilities, while no such changes were observed following the video game intervention. This study provides the first evidence that music interventions may be more effective than video game interventions to improve attention control in children, and furthers our understanding of the importance of music interventions for children with attention control problems." (pp.1,10)

The results seem to confirm the initial hypothesis of Kasuya-Ueba et al.'s study (2020). Crucially, music has been demonstrated to enhance pupils' attention. Previous studies on the subject produced similar results (e.g., Thaut and Gardiner, 2014; Schlaug et al., 2005, 2009; Hyde et al., 2009). In light of such findings and consistently with Posner et al.'s Arts Theory, (2008), it can be concluded that music, thanks to its motivational power and its intrinsic features, can enhance learners' attention control. As a result, music and song can be seen as effective pedagogical tools in EFL teaching, especially considering that the enhanced attention they provide is functional to academic achievement.

2.3.5 Element 5: High sustained attention improves cognition

According to element 5 of *Arts Theory* (2008), "high-sustained attention in conflict-related tasks […] improves cognition […]. Attention training does, in fact, improve the underlying network that is involved in executive attention for effortful control of cognition and emotion" (Posner et al., 2018, pp.3,5). As attention enhancer, "training in the arts can have a persistent effect on a wide variety of cognitive processes" (p.3). In particular, the theories presented so far in 2.3 explain how music can function as an effective attention enhancer in EFL teaching settings. The advantages of music in EFL learning, however, do not seem to be limited to its potential to keep learners attentive and motivated. On the contrary, music was found to positively affect a number of cognitive processes that are crucial to language acquisition. As previously mentioned, Lems (2018) asserts that learning a song or musical instrument is analogous in many ways to learning a language. We are required to produce and employ

a repertoire of specific sounds, learn new patterns and rules, and master the "syntax" of songs and compositions. As musicians become more proficient, they — like language learners — make ever-closer approximations of the target sounds until they reach a level of ease and enjoyment, or 'fluency'" (p.15). This song-language parallel is in line with Jolly (1975), who states that "the close relationship between language and music is an easily recognizable one. Both entities have significant common elements and similarities. Songs might be looked upon as occupying the middle ground between the disciplines of linguistics and musicology, possessing both the communicative aspect of language and the entertainment aspect of music." (p.11). Jolly further supports the existence of a tight speech-song bond by proposing that speech and song are to be found at the two extreme ends of one same continuum in which human utterances are progressively "distorted" from plain speech to sung patterns:

> "We might consider songs as representing 'distortions' of the normal speech patterns of a language. This is not to imply anything derogatory, but to recognize that songs and normal speech are on the same continuum of vocally-produced human sounds. Both have rhythmic and melodic content, and represent forms of communication in a linguistic sense. In simplified graphic form, we might consider a linear scale depicting everyday 'speech' patterns at the left-side of a horizontal line with increasing degrees of 'distortion' or 'affectedness' toward the right. Moving along this imaginary line, we would have 'heightened speech' (such as in political speeches, sermons, or dramatic exaggerations) first in line as we moved to the right; next, 'dramatic speech' […]; 'chant' or 'auctioneering' further along; and finally, 'songs' on the far right […]. Songs, although quantitatively different from normal speech in terms of amounts of 'distortion' present, are qualitatively similar linguistically and therefore represent valid material for study within the broad framework of language learning. Songs not only represent material for study, but represent a 'method' of language study within themselves" (Jolly, 1975, pp.11-12)

Understanding human speech and song as the two extremes of one same continuum, Jolly (1975) concludes that songs represent "valid material for study within the broad framework of language learning". 40 years later, Dalton and Lewes (2015) confirm Jolly's view stating that "reading and singing song lyrics utilizing karaoke-style performances provides ESL teachers with an effective English language acquisition teaching tool" (p.32). The authors add that "singing the lyrics of popular songs provides ESL students with multiple exposures to essential foundational oral and written English vocabulary and grammatical structures. This practice develops students' familiarity with the pronunciation and spelling of high frequency sight words, thereby developing reading skills and oral language proficiency" (p.32). Moreover, as indicated by the authors, singing English song lyrics provides students with "a new genre of English language material for lifelong learning and enjoyment." (p.32). Chapter 1 (section 1.5) has emphasized the importance of designing inclusive and varied teaching curricula that match Gardner's multiple intelligences and equally address all sensory channels and learning styles. In the same article, titled "Utilizing Karaoke in the ESL Classroom: The Beatles", Dalton and Lewes (2015) point out that music-based activities such as karaoke simultaneously stimulate all sensory channels:

> "Karaoke allows the students to move, dance, and sing along with the performer, thereby incorporating kinesthetic and musical intelligences into the language acquisition process […]. Also, karaoke performance which involves singing, dancing, and handling a microphone provides students possessing bodily-kinesthetic intelligence with a unique opportunity to acquire language while utilizing their physical talents. […] Furthermore, word recognition for English language learners improves their oral proficiency due to the interrelatedness of oral

and written language […]. Providing students with multiple exposures to common English language sight words via reading and listening to song lyrics combines visual and auditory discrimination of these commonly used words utilizing a whole language approach."(p.33)

Among the several so-far-mentioned advantages of using music in EFL learning, this section draws on the language-music shared nature to explore:

1. the role of music in syntax learning;
2. the melody-prosody relation and the benefits of music on FL pronunciation;
3. the music-emotion-memory triangle.

The role of music in syntax learning

According to Dalton and Lewes (2015), "music plays a pivotal role in the foundational development of […] syntax" (p.33). Consistently, Schon et al. (2008) suggest "that learning a new language, especially in the first learning phase wherein one needs to segment [it in chunks], may largely benefit of the […] structuring properties of music in song" (p. 976). Scholars have been investigating the reasons for such beneficial relation for many years. Crucially, Levitin proposes that music can stimulate our innate drive to find patterns in the surrounding environment:

> "Our brain is constantly trying to make order out of disorder, and music is a fantastic pattern game for our higher cognitive centers. […] From our culture, we learn (even if unconsciously) about musical structures, tones and other ways of understanding music as it unfolds over time; and our brains are exercised by extracting different patterns and groupings from music's performance." (Daniel Levitin, cited in Leutwyler, 2001, p.4)

According to Levitin (in Leutwyler, 2001), pattern recognition is extremely important for human beings, since it is an indispensable way to make sense of the world around us. Levitin proposes that music is a "fantastic pattern game" which supports humans in meaning-making processes, since music itself follows and relies on precise patterns and structures. Crucially, neurological studies have shown that such "musical syntax" is processed in the same area — namely Broca's area — involved in language syntax processing. Considering that music and language syntax are processed in the same brain area, including music training in EFL teaching might favor syntax acquisition. Consistently, according to Maess et al. (2001), "it seems plausible that music, like language, has a syntax: both have a structure based on complex rules" (p.540). In their study, Maess at el. (2001) aimed to "localize the neural substrates that process music syntactic incongruities" (p.540):

> "[In previous studies], harmonic incongruities were interpreted as grammatical incongruity in music. It was shown that both musical and linguistic structural incongruities elicit positivities […] that are statistically indistinguishable. [In this study], participants (all 'non-musicians') were presented with directly succeeding chord sequences, each consisting of five chords. Sequences consisting exclusively of in-key chords (cadences) established a musical context toward the end of each sequence. […]. Besides the in-key chord sequences, however, some sequences contained harmonically unexpected chords: […] Compared to in-key chords, chords containing out-of-key ('non-diatonic') notes are, in music-theoretical terms, more distant from the tonal center, and therefore perceived as unexpected. As noted before, the ability of listeners to expect chords according to their harmonic relatedness to a preceding harmonic context has been proposed to reflect the existence of a musical syntax. […] Because of the musical context buildup, the harmonic expectancies of listeners were violated. Thus, a[n out-of-key] chord as presented here may be taken as 'music-syntactically' incongruous on the basis of both music-psychological (with respect to harmonic expectations) and music-

theoretical reasoning (with respect to harmonic chord functions and rules). [This] elicited […] a magnetic effect […] in both hemispheres in the inferior *pars opercularis*, known in the left hemisphere as Broca's area." (pp. 540-542)

That music incongruities processing occurs in Broca's area is noteworthy, considering that "Broca's area and its right homologue, particularly the inferior part of BA 44, are involved in the processing of syntactic aspects during language comprehension" (p.543). In other words, Maess et al. (2001) found that music processing activates the same neural networks involved in language syntax processing:

> "The present results indicate that Broca's area and its right-hemisphere homologue might *also* be involved in the processing of musical syntax, suggesting that these brain areas process considerably less domain-specific syntactic information than previously believed. Like syntactic information of language, which is fast and automatically processed in Broca's area and its right-hemisphere homologue, music-syntactic information processed in the same brain structures also seems to be processed automatically." (p.543)

Maess et al. (2001) conclude that Broca's area and its right-hemisphere homologue "process syntax in domain other than language": music (p.543). This "strong relationship between the processing of language and music" (p.543) is confirmed by Moreno (2009), according to whom "music and language share many characteristics […] at the level of syntax. (p.338). Several studies on the subject produced similar results (cf. Patel, 2008; Steinbeis and Koelsch 2008). Such results might have significant consequences in the EFL classroom. Taking advantage of the strong music-language relationship at the syntax processing level, teachers could design music-based activities to favor syntax learning of the target language.

The melody-prosody relation and the benefits of music on FL pronunciation

While a lot of attention is paid by teachers to grammar accuracy, coherence, and cohesiveness, pronunciation instruction tends to play a marginal role in EFL curricula. Contextually to the rise of the communicative method, while written correctness has kept a central role in EFL teaching, communicative effectiveness and overall "understandability" has been emphasized at the expenses of pronunciation and prosodic accuracy in oral production. In particular, the linguistic dimension of prosody is barely represented and the many EFL students willing to improve their prosodic skills are ultimately left to self-directed learning. Interestingly, several studies have revealed a strong melody-prosody relationship, suggesting that including music in EFL instruction might raise awareness on and favor the learning of prosodic features such as pitch and intonation in English spoken language. Prosodic training should play a role in EFL/ESL teaching, especially considering that when acquiring a language, "discourse intonation, the ordering of pitched sounds made by a human voice, is the first thing we learn". It is only later on and through interaction that humans gain familiarity not only with "the musicality of each language, but also [with] the necessary communication skills" (Fonseca-Mora, 2000, p.149). Moreover, that many EFL curricula based on communicative approach do not provide sufficient prosody instruction seems to be contradictory, especially when considering that "pitch contour of [a] word can change the meaning of [that] word – not only the nuance, but also the core meaning" (Yip, 2002, p.1). The relevance of pitch variations in effective communication are also emphasized by McCormack and Klopper (2016), who explain that pitch variations in non-tonal languages such as English add information to the spoken word conveying intention and expressions:

> "The speakers of non-tonal languages use 'variations in the shape of the pitch contour over a sentence to convey intentions and expressions' (Mang, 2001, p. 5). For instance, in English, a

declarative sentence has a falling contour, and a question has a rising contour. Through the examination of pitch contours within […] non-tonal languages, it is evident that contours within both music and speech are more interconnected than one assumes." (p.420)

In other words, in order to get full understanding of one's communicative intention, literal comprehension has to happen along with accurate prosodic interpretation. Describing speech pitch contours, McCormack and Klopper (2016) observe that "music and speech are more interconnected than one assumes". Consistently, Stevens et al. (2013) assert that "music and speech are auditory forms of communication that draw on common process[es]" (p.59). Consequently, musical dimensions (rhythm, pitch and melody) are pivotal in deciphering oral language:

"Rhythm, pitch and melody are dimensions that are expected to assist in defining music, and music and language present a number of resemblances in these particular aspects of prosody […] Stevens, Keller, and Tyler (2013) assert that one way to compare music and speech 'is to consider the aspects of speech that are analogous to melodic contour in music; that is, the shape of the melodic line' or pattern in the rise and fall of pitch (p. 59). Mang (2001) states that pitch in oral linguistics 'is used to describe certain characteristics of the articulations of morphemes, syllables, and sentences' (p. 5), thus supporting that music and oral language unmistakably converge" (McCormack and Klopper, 2016, p.419).

That music dimensions of rhythm, pitch and melody are central elements in oral language suggests that providing EFL students with music training could be a way to refine their skills to perceive and effectively reproduce rhythmic, tonal and melodic elements characterizing native speakers' oral productions, so as to achieve oral fluency. One more reason to promote the use of music in EFL teaching relies on that the songs and melodies produced in a specific culture seem to be directly influenced by the melodic features and the syllable stressed-unstressed pattern system of the language(s) spoken in that specific culture:

— The tonal characteristics within a culture's music are "related to the prosodic characteristics of its speech" (Han, Sundararajan, Bowling, Lake, & Purves, 2011, p. 1);
— There is strong correspondence "between the tonal melody of spoken words, and the musical melody of those words in song" (Schellenberg, 2009, p. 137);
— "The tonal contour of words determines the melodic contour of the music to which the words are sung" (Ekueme, 1974, cited in Schellenberg, 2009, p. 13).

As a result, studying the melodic patterns of English song could be a way to study the prosodic functioning of English itself. From this perspective, it can be concluded that extensive music training programs (e.g., language-oriented choral singing) should be integrated in EFL curricula to support students' discovery, analysis and aware reproduction of the prosodic features of English. As far as pronunciation is concerned, songs have been proved to be adequate authentic materials to improve learners' phonetic skills. As previously mentioned, songs allow for sustained meaningful repetition:

"The structure of a "song" enables several repetitions of words or phrases, assisting in the development of a child's linguistics. The arrangement and composition of a song make it easy to remember, and consequently, can enable a child to articulate words or phrases with minimal or no hesitation. […] Providing opportunities to explore the musical dimensions of pitch and rhythm through the use of song as the musical medium [enables learners] to consciously or unconsciously rehearse English words, phrases and their pronunciation within their minds and

thus enhance the production of their English-speaking abilities" McCormack and Klopper (2016, p.418)

Listening to and singing along to songs allows students to repeat the target sounds several times while emulating high quality language input (the singer's L1 singing) without getting bored (cf. 2.3.3), thus having a good chance to improve their pronunciation. Thain (2010) focuses on repetition as a way to train articulatory muscles and rehearse physical positions to achieve good pronunciation skills, explaining that singing can work "as warm-up for the task of speaking" (p.413):

> "Singing is a way for children to get a feel for the language through musical vibrations, imitation, experiencing new rhythms, and experimenting with making new sounds. New sounds means new mouth shapes and that requires the involvement of different muscles. I insist that you cannot make a 'new sound' with an 'old mouth shape'. In singing English songs, children are subconsciously experimenting with new mouth shapes and warming up the muscles they will eventually need for speech." (Thain, 2010, p.413)

In the same article, titled "Rhythm, music, and young learners: A winning combination", Thain (2010) provides teachers with advice on how to select songs that are particularly indicated for language learning purposes. She suggests that teachers pick songs with repetitive and easily predictable patterns, so as to favor students' engagement in purposeful and enjoyable repetition activities:

> "Think about patterns when you choose songs. Choose songs that repeat often and have short, easily remembered lines. Songs that make use of echoing, where the teacher sings a line and the children sing exactly the same thing in the next musical phrase, provide a safe and predictable way for children to join in. In addition, echoing provides students with an immediate pronunciation model. This, by the way, was one of the things that made it easy for the teacher-students, in the workshop that I mentioned at the start, to learn the song we sang together. Another pattern that works well in the language classroom is a "call and answer" pattern in a song—one group or perhaps the teacher will sing a question and the others will respond with the answer. Songs with simple predictable rhyming patterns are also important for young learners as rhymes act as cues in facilitating initial learning and function as mnemonics in recalling the song in the future." (Thain, 2010, p.414)

Through highly patterned songs, it is therefore possible to engage students in enjoyable activities that allow for an in-depth analysis of English sounds, thus improving students' receptive and productive phonetic skills. In line with this view, Leith (1979) poses that "there probably isn't a better or quicker way to teach phonetics than through songs" (p.540). Chapter 4 (cf. section 4.4) contains a detailed step-by-step description of how a karaoke-like singing activity served to realize a detailed analysis of English sounds using the IPA. As will be reported in chapter 4, this singing activity resulted in considerable enhancement in pupils' pronunciation skills. In light of what has been discussed so far, it can be concluded that using music in EFL learning settings can be an effective tool to enhance English learners' prosodic and pronunciation skills.

The music-emotion-memory triangle

> *"Because emotions enhance memory processes and music evokes strong emotions, music could be involved in forming memories, either about pieces of music or about episodes and information associated with particular music."* (Jäncke, 2008, p.1)

Several scholars have observed that songs seem to enhance memory thanks to the rhythmic and melodic repeated patterns it consists of. For example, Falioni (1993) observes that "many people

often remember rhyme, rhythm and/or melody better than ordinary speech", (cited in Fonseca-Mora et al., 2011, p. 105). This is in line with Murphy's reported experience (1992):

> "Many of us have experienced with amazement how quick students are at learning songs. It is also a common experience to forget nearly everything we learn in another language except the few songs that we learnt. For a variety of reasons songs stick in our minds and become parts of us, and lend themselves easily to exploitation in the classroom. [...] The 'song stuck in my head phenomenon' [...] seems to reinforce the idea that songs work on our short and long-term memory". (Murphy, 1992, cited in Tavadze et al., 2021, p.92)

Again, music's memory-enhancing property seems to be a cognitive "side-effect" of the close music-language relationship discussed in the previous sections. In particular, Jäncke (2008) explains that working memory for musical stimuli overlaps with verbal working memory:

> "Musical sounds, like all auditory signals, unfold over time. It is therefore necessary for the auditory system to integrate the sequentially ordered sounds into a coherent musical perception. This series-to-parallel transformation can be considered a mechanism of working memory, which temporarily stores auditory units and combines them into a single percept (such as a sound pattern, rhythm or melody). Interestingly, there seems to be a high degree of overlap between working memory for musical stimuli and for verbal stimuli. [...] One might thus conclude that a kind of positive transfer between musical performance and verbal memory functions takes place" (p.1)

In other words, music experience, by stimulating the same brain areas involved in verbal memory, seems to support verbal memory itself and, thus, Murphy's "song-stuck-in-my-head phenomenon" could be explained. From this perspective, it is not surprising that musicians tend to have better verbal working memory than non-musicians (cf. Schendel & Palmer, 2007). Besides such results, music positive effects on verbal memory are not limited to the activation of overlapping neural networks:

> "Music goes much deeper than that - below the outer layers of the auditory and visual cortex to the limbic system, which controls our emotions. The emotions generated there produce a number of well-known physiological responses. Sadness, for instance, automatically causes pulse to slow, blood pressure to rise, a drop in the skin's conductivity and a rise in temperature. Fear increases heart rate; happiness makes you breathe faster. By monitoring such physical reactions, Carol Krumhansl of Cornell University demonstrated that music directly elicits a range of emotions. Music with a quick tempo in a major key, she found, brought about all the physical changes associated with happiness in listeners. In contrast, a slow tempo and minor key led to sadness." (Leutwyler, 2001, p.2)

In other words, music raises emotions that result in specific physical sensations. As observed by (Jäncke, 2008), "although hearing music is closely associated with strong emotional feelings, and although music activates the entire limbic system, which is involved in processing of emotions and in controlling memory, most studies examining musical memory have not focused on the role of emotion in this form of memory" (p.1). Significantly, music-derived emotions might play a role in music memory, like common experience seems to confirm:

> "[Music] plays a tremendous role [...] in building our autobiographical memories. Emotional music we have heard at specific periods of our life is strongly linked to our autobiographical memory and thus is closely involved in forming our view about our own self". (Jäncke, 2008, p.4)

Some studies on the subject (e.g., Janata et al., 2007; Buchanan, 2007; Eschrich, Münte, and Altenmüller, 2008) were conducted to better explore the role of emotions in musical memories. The results are unanimous:

> "Enhanced recall is observed for both positively-valenced (intrinsically pleasant) and arousing (stimulating) events. Thus, positive emotions and high arousal levels that are associated with specific events act as a memory enhancer for these particular events. [In particular,] musical memory is strongly related to the rated attractiveness [of the musical piece]. Thus, emotion enhances not only memories for verbal […] material, […] but also for musical pieces." (Jäncke, 2008, p.4)

These studies show that music, thanks to its unique emotional load, can enhance memory skills. When it comes to EFL teaching, such results suggest that songs students perceive as "attractive" and emotionally meaningful can enhance their recalling skills. By selecting emotionally meaningful songs to carry out language-oriented activities, EFL teachers can "take advantage" of songs' memory-boosting potential not only in light of their repetitive and patterned structure, but also thanks to their emotional meaningfulness, thus facilitating learners' recalling of the language topics that are being taught through such songs. So why play songs in the language classroom?

> "In order to mark elements of language with emotion so that students will remember them". (DeCoursey, 2012, p.7)

Summing up the key concepts exposed so far in 2.3, it has been showed that:

— music and language are processed in the same areas of the brain;
— music is widely appreciated due to a general factor of interest for the arts;
— being appreciated, music is a source of motivation that positively affects human relations;
— being motivating, music enhances attention;
— by enhancing attention, music improves cognitive processes strictly functional to language acquisition.

As a result, it can be concluded that music and songs can enhance and support EFL learning at psychological, behavioral and cognitive levels. In practical terms, considering such results, the present dissertation aims at encouraging teachers to include singing and music-based activities in their EFL curricula.

2.4 Students as performers

> *"When working in role, [performers] 'walk in someone else's shoes for a while', […] simultaneously operating betwixt and between two worlds, i.e., real and imagined worlds. This 'in-betweenness' can be linked to [EFL students]: the ability to use a second language might also be seen as opening up another world for students, within which a different 'self' (including an emotional 'self') might be safely revealed and explored"* (Baldwin and Galazka, 2022, p.11)

Section 2.2 has showed the advantages of making extensive use of drama in the EFL classroom. Within the broader framework of the performing arts, Section 2.3 has provided evidence of the advantages of singing in English learning. While activities solely focusing on one performing art have shown to produce promising results (e.g., role plays or karaoke activities), a particular genre allows to simultaneously intercept both performing arts (and dancing as well): music theatre. Meaningfully

and authentically integrating the three performing arts (acting, singing, and dancing), a pedagogical use of music theatre in EFL teaching can promote a motivating, inclusive, multimodal, student-centered and cognitively enhancing learning environment. The experimental project described in chapter 4 shows how music-theatre-based authentic materials and relating performative activities can produce excellent results in terms of language acquisition, suggesting that extensive use of music theatre can enhance EFL learning. A mini-project, consisting of a 2-session after-class workshop, was specifically dedicated to music theatre training. Despite the shortage of budget, time, and theatre-specific skills (also on my behalf), students responded unexpectedly well to the training and very good results were achieved in terms of language acquisition (cf. 4.15). This little musical theatre experiment embedded in my research project is to be understood as the draft of a pilot study of an innovative language teaching approach extensively based on musical theatre and inspired by musical theatre training techniques. The extremely positive results registered in this low-scale initial experiment suggest that a better-structured program with adequate budget, institutional support and teaching staff (e.g., the EFL could strictly collaborate with a theater director, a singing coach, and a choreographer) could give birth to a new high-quality EFL teaching approach based on the performing arts. As a consequence of this new way of understanding EFL learning, it makes sense to see English learners not just as students, but also as performers. Moreover, as indicated in the initial quotation, speaking a foreign language could be itself understood as a performative act: when speaking another language, the student "opens up a new world […] within which a different 'self' [is] safely revealed and explored". According to Baldwin and Galazka (2022), this sense of "in-betweenness" is exactly what actors experience when they walk in their characters' shoes. Consistently with this view, Weston (1996) describes "acting as a kind of laboratory of the soul, a means to exploration and growth, a path. Acting can be a great act of love, a sharing of the most important things one knows and feels about life" (p.166). This definition of acting resonates with the way EFL learning is conceived in the present dissertation:

— "Exploration": 1.4 has shown how discovery-based (inductive) learning process are functional to effective language learning;
— "Laboratory": 2.2 has valued the laboratorial nature of art-based performative activities as a means to engage learners in multimodal, motivating and student-centered activities;
— A growing "path": as will be discussed in 2.4, 2.5 and chapter 4, EFL learning is aimed at promoting personal growth and provides students with tools to independently use from a lifelong learning perspective;
— "Sharing": in the present dissertation, (cf. 2.2) learning is conceived as a social experience in which students and teacher share skills and talents to cooperatively construct new knowledge;
— "Important": As indicated in chapter 1, EFL curricula are tailored to students' interests and needs. EFL teaching is conceived to provide students with relevant and emotionally meaningful opportunities to gain skills that are functional to personal goals achievement.

Thus, by literally replacing "acting" with "EFL learning" in the previous quotation, we would obtain a good definition of EFL learning as it is understood in this work: "EFL learning is a kind of laboratory of the soul, a means to exploration and growth, a path. EFL learning can be a great act of love, a sharing of the most important things one knows and feels about life". Significantly, both EFL and acting training aim at the same goal: fluency.

> "The very best actors make it look easy. Their technique is invisible, they seem to "become" the character, they seem to speak and move out of the character's impulses and needs, their feelings well up strong and apparently unbidden. They don't look rehearsed, they seem to be speaking their own words, they seem to be improvising. To the general public it probably

looks as though the actor must be just like the character and must not have had to do any work to play the role. To people knowledgeable about the demands of performing, such a seamless portrayal is a touch of the divine, a miracle." (Weston, 1996, p.20)

In the excerpt above, Weston (1996) describes the "perfect" performance of an actor who fully masters technique. Crucially, Weston's description of an excellent actor resembles the possible description of a perfectly fluent speaker of English. A fluent speaker "makes it look easy", you don't notice they are actively thinking about grammar and pronunciation accuracy, they just speak fluently, the same way a native speaker does. Also, fluent speakers do not look rehearsed: they naturally improvise in conversations producing perfect (or, at least, native-sounding) utterances. Ultimately, this section explores the actor-EFL student relationship. When using the term "performer", it can be interchangeably interpreted as both actor and singer. When explicitly using the term "actor", music theatre actors – and, thus, singing actors – are also implicitly included. More specifically, the touchpoints between acting and EFL learning will be outlined in relation to the four fundamental language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

2.4.1 Listening and speaking

The most basic realization of oracy is dialogue. Dialogue is at the basis of interpersonal communication and, thus, the most immediate communicative context in which language is used to convey meaning. Any dialogue builds on the basic skills of speaking and listening, which mutually influence each other in dialogic communication: dialogue is a form of shared discourse-building in which one speaker necessarily has to listen to what the interlocutor is saying, understand it, and adjust their response according to the interlocutor's utterance. In any authentic dialogue, such listen-to-speak and speak-to-be-listened-to dynamic is spontaneous, unrehearsed and here-and-now-dependent. In this sense, EFL students willing to improve their oracy skills must train their listening and speaking skills simultaneously through meaningful language activities based on dialogic communication. In light of its dialogic nature, Cecily O'Neill (1994) points to drama as the right pedagogical tool to enhance learners' oracy skills:

"We have known since the time of Socrates that effective teaching is likely to have the quality of a dialogue. Dialogue is at the heart of drama […] and also at the heart of every kind of language learning […]. In all human creativity with language, dialogue is central. Drama in education rests on the assumption that when students are involved in creating and maintaining a fictional dramatic world, significant learning can occur. […] When students create and sustain meaningful dialogue in fictional situations, significant language learning will occur. The power of drama arises from the access to and experience of other worlds that it affords" (p.52).

In other words, drama activities are not only functional to language learning because they provide enjoyable and informal language-practicing settings, but also (and most importantly) because drama and language share one fundamental nature: dialogue. In line with this view, Yi-Mei Cheng and Winston (2012) assert that "in a course where language is the object of study and the major means of instruction, drama pedagogy aptly brings out the dialogic nature of language and makes use of embodied and embedded ways of learning" (Yi-Mei Cheng and Winston, in Winston, 2012, p.115). Consequently, "to engage in drama requires an alertness, a quality of listening, verbal resourcefulness, and an immediate and active response. Both listening and talking skills of a high order are demanded and exercised" (O'Neill, 1994, p.53). That dramatic dialogue is functional to improve the basic language skills of listening and speaking is representative of the close EFL learning – acting training relationship. Consistently, this listening-to-speak attitude necessary to EFL learners to improve their

oracy skills also appears to be essential to professional actors willing to realize credible dramatic dialogues: according to Oscar-winner movie star Morgan Freeman, "if you have a talent for acting, it is the talent for listening" (Weston, 1996, p. 96). Drawing on Freeman's quote, Weston (1996) expands on the centrality of listening in dramatic dialogues:

> "Probably the most powerful and also the most readily available tool an actor has for staying in the moment is the other actor in the scene. Listening to the other person(s) in the scene gives an actor a simple task and a focus for his attention. *Listening* is the best technique an actor has for anchoring himself in the moment. It also keeps his choices from becoming mechanical or forced. Listening relaxes actors. It absolutely prevents overacting. It's what makes a performance look 'natural'. Listening allows the actors to affect each other and thus to create *moments* — tiny electric connections that make the emotional events of a scene. […] You might think listening would be automatic. The actors hear each other's lines — doesn't that mean that they are listening? But we are not talking about ordinary listening. It is a term of art. It's not just listening for your cue, for your turn to talk, it is a special attention paid to the other person. The actor is required to listen more deeply than we usually do in real life. In fact, Stanislavsky uses the term "communion" to describe what I am calling "listening." The term "communion" calls attention to the deepness of the experience as well as to the fact that listening makes the audience feel the actors are communicating with each other rather than delivering lines to each other." (Weston, 1996, pp.94-96)

The kind of listening Weston (1996) is referring to "is not ordinary listening. It is a term of art" or, using Stanislavsky's expression, it is a form of "communion", meaning that in dramatic dialogue, actors are actually exchanging effective messages, "rather than delivering lines to each other". In short, they are communicating. This is ultimately what language learners aim to be able to do when using the target language in oral communicative contexts. Through such listening, interlocutors influence each other and this reciprocal influence triggers specific reactions, precisely a verbal reaction in the form of a spoken answer. In this sense, speaking as it is conceived in dramatic dialogue is a direct reaction to authentic listening. Again, while the listening-to-speak attitude is a means through which actors convey credibility and spontaneousness when delivering their lines, it is also an indispensable for EFL learners to improve their speaking skills in authentic communicative contexts:

> "Paralinguistic vocal elements reinforce spoken messages by adding mood, personality, and atmosphere. Working in drama, students can incorporate a great many vocal elements to represent characters, create a mood, increase vocal dynamics or respond to different circumstances in the dramatic context. It also encourages clarity of articulation and diction when presenting work to their peers. Unlike the tedious dialogues in many second language textbooks which are normally read out in dull, monotonous voices, the dialogic texts derived from drama and embedded in stories have a better chance of engaging students' emotions and hence enhancing their vocal interpretations. In this way, drama can be one of the most suitable ways to help them to 'speak with more confidence, with better articulation and resonance (quality and volume)' and learn how to use voice 'to convey different emotions (inflexion, tone/pitch and intonation)' (Almond, 2005, p.64)". (Chang, 2012, p.12)

Through theatre (and singing) training, students/actors become familiar with their vocal instrument and learn how to regulate it and adjust it accordingly to their communicative needs and intentions. Moreover, Chang remarks the role of (musical) theatre training in focusing on diction and pronunciation. For actors, utterance clarity and phonetic accuracy are indispensable elements. Again, through drama training, EFL learners can "exploit" acting techniques for voice modulation and

diction, so as to achieve excellent speaking skills to be able to effectively communicate in real-life settings.

2.4.2 Reading and writing

Though not the only ones, reading and writing are essential elements in developing literacy (cf. 1.2). For this reason, together with oracy skills, they play a central role in any FL curriculum and any EFL student is constantly confronted with reading comprehension and writing activities. As previously mentioned, though, according to Chang, "being literate […] goes far beyond the acquisition of a set of decontextualized coding and decoding skills. It involves the ability to produce and interpret texts in a given context where the realization of meaning potential deeply depends upon one's […] identity." (Chang, in Winston, 2012, p.9). From this perspective, reading seems to be a way more complex activity than just decoding written language:

> "Reading is a multifaced and complicated process. Written texts differ from spoken language, which is normally accompanied by paralinguistic features and interpersonal exchanges that aid […] comprehension of the utterance. The reader needs to discover and construct the context embedded in the print on the page which is 'featureless and does nothing visually to capture the attention or involve the emotion […] There is loss and change in the transfer to print – loss of immediacy of relevance, loss of vividness, loss of support in the search for meaning' (Reid, 1991, p.73)" (Chang, 2012, p.10)

Once again, acting techniques can support EFL learners' "search for meaning" when reading a text. In particular, the situation described above reflects what actors are most likely to be confronted with during *script analysis*, i.e., the first approach to a script. Script analysis is nothing but a multi-layered reading comprehension in which actors analyze, understand, and interconnect written texts (e.g., parentheticals, scene settings, etc.) and written-to-be-spoken portions of text (dialogues) to progressively elaborate on what will be their physical and contextualized performance during the *rehearsal* phase. In other words, in *script analysis*, actors' comprehension of the script goes far beyond literal transcoding. It implies analyzing their lines in relation to the broader dramatic context, organically interrelating the explicit language contained in the script to get access to the sub-world of implied meanings whose full understanding will ultimately result in a credible, coherent, and emotionally loaded performance.

> "An actor when studying a script examines all the images in the text and makes sure he understands them. He puts them in the context of the facts of the script, of course, but he also makes them real to himself; that is, he relates them to his personal experience and observation and allows his imagination to weave through them and be captured by them. He does this in order to be sure he is talking *about* something, not just talking about words. This is an important cornerstone of a believable performance." (Weston, 1996, p.127)

While the actor's goal is a "believable performance", the EFL student's ultimate objective when reading is getting a full, detailed, and multilayered understanding of the target text, whose contents and language structures are functional to their learning path towards fluency. Since *script analysis* allows for such understanding, EFL students can "borrow" such technique from drama training and adjust it to their own purposes as language learners. Although *script analysis* is an indispensable tool to understand a script and its context, a full understanding only comes with the next step, *rehearsal*, in which actors can physically "inhabit a text and mine its layers beyond simple semantic decoding" (Kempston, 2012, p.94). It is during rehearsals that the ideas "bubbling up" form inside the actors are

translated into physical actions and acting choices. It is only when the actor is finally walking in their character's shoes that full and deep script comprehension is achieved:

> "The actor must start with himself, he must hear with his own ears, see with his own eyes, touch with his own skin, feel with his own feelings. Then from his study of the script, impulses and understandings start to bubble up from inside him. He makes the character his own. During a superior performance the actor often feels that he inhabits the character's skin, i.e., that he has "become" the character. The audience may feel that too. What this really means is that he is inhabiting his own skin, is "in the moment" but has brought choices and understandings to the role that create a sense of belief in the script." (Weston, 1996, p.69).

In other words, actors' script assimilation relies on both intellectual reading comprehension and practical-physical processes through which the intellectually understood text is embodied in physical actions, choices, and movements on stage. The idea that deep comprehension is only realized through the process by which the intellectually understood material translates into practical action can suggest that traditional EFL teaching settings, normally focusing solely on the intellectual dimension of reading comprehension, might be insufficient to provide students with skills to achieve full, deep, multilayered and contextualized understanding of written texts in the target language. According to Chang (in Winston, 2012), drama pedagogy can allow students to achieve such embodied comprehension of written material:

> "Drama makes the literary world more accessible […] because it permits […] to turn the abstract written words into concrete images and to construct meaning from the text through collective as well as individual experience. Through drama, [students] can be encouraged to enter a fictional world created by an author, physically taking on roles […]. This emotional engagement can motivate them to keep on reading and may well encourage them no longer to see the written text as dull and featureless print on paper but as the entry point into an enjoyable, lively, imaginary world." (Chang, in Winston, 2012, p.10)

As remarked by Weston (1996), this process of embodied reading comprehension is strictly connected to the actor's identity and self-awareness. As mentioned above, when analyzing a script, an actor relates the text "to his personal experience and observation" and, when rehearsing it, the actor "the actor must start with himself, he must hear with his own ears, see with his own eyes, touch with his own skin, feel with his own feelings" (Weston, 1996, pp.69,127). In this sense, discovering and understanding a text is also a means to self-discovery and self-understanding. This is in line with Kempston (in Winston, 2012), according to whom "drama […] has an important part to play not just in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language but in developing students' understanding of themselves, the texts with which they engage and the world in which they must interact" (Kempston, in Winston, 2012, p.101). This self-identity discovery process can be even more relevant when the texts to dramatize are self-written. As Cummins (2006) argues, self-written dramatic texts "hold a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back" (p.60). When such texts are shared with an audience, "they are likely to generate positive responses and affirm the creators" (p.60). This idea is supported by McGeoch (2012), who states that "personal narratives are strong forms of self-identification, which can serve as windows into our beliefs, values and culture. […] It follows that composing, sharing, shaping and reflecting on the stories we tell about ourselves, and those of others, would have the potential to foster both intracultural and intercultural awareness" (McGeoch, 2012, p.118). Although drama is normally (and fairly) associated with oral performance, drama pedagogy allows a space for written production as well. In particular, performative storytelling on behalf of the student-writer-actor seems to significantly support second/foreign language learning:

> "Crafting stories is a creative process that puts students in touch with the aesthetic dimensions of language and other semiotic modes. […] Students engage in aesthetic dimensions of language when they draw on different literary genres […] to create their own intertextual artefacts to be performed or shared with and audience. […] Creative language use is also a form of intuitive language awareness, […] something that allows learners to express their identities more fully. As […] storytelling gives rise to self-expression and creative language use, it can therefore support second language learning in important ways". (McGeoch, in Winston, 2012, p.119)

Writing original stories and perform them is a way for students to freely express themselves, to relate about themselves, and to reveal and share intimate aspects of their identities behind the protective power of the mask, i.e., the character they are playing. Free and creative self-expression, often neglected in traditional teaching settings, plays indeed a crucial role in one's own growing path. Plucker et al. (2004) defines creativity as "the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which and individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context" (p.90). As observed by Novello (2022), "such a definition proves to be extremely interesting in education as it brings out the importance of a learning environment conducive to the development of creativity" (p.81). Plucker et al. remark that creativity is not "an unconscious inspiration of the moment [but rather] the result of intensive work made up of intentional choices." (Novello, 2022, p.81). From this perspective, education can play a pivotal role in promoting and developing learners' creative skills. As pointed out by McGeoch (2012), one effective way of fostering students' creativity in educational settings is drama pedagogy. Besides fostering learners' creativity and allowing for self-expression, creative language use as it is conceived in drama pedagogy can also serve to work with different writing genres, exploring written language accuracy in relation to the contexts and the text genres within which language is produced. As pointed out by McGeoch, creative writing enhances intuitive language awareness and thus supports second/foreign language acquisition. This is in line with Chang, who states that drama can "make skill-based writing activities more purposeful":

> "[In drama-based settings], learners can practice writing in various registers and genres in accordance with the situation of context created in the imaginary world. […] Writing in drama can thus make skill-based language activities more purposeful. Different drama conventions can act as catalysts for various forms of writing […]. Freeze frames, for instance, lead to narrative writing; thought tracking supports writing in the reflective mode; […] hot seating can prompt news articles or magazines interviews […]. Composing within a dramatic frame involves thinking, listening, creating, and doing and engages learners' repertoire of strategies, and most importantly, gives them the freedom to use their whole being in meaning-making" (Chang, in Winston, 2012, p. 11)

In the research experiment described in chapter 4, students in the target group, split into groups, were asked to write original scripts to then perform them in front of their peers. Consistently with Chang's view (2012), chapter 4 will describe how writing a script and then performing it was a way to effectively work on specific aspects of language (grammar, i.e., past simple; English sounds and clothes vocabulary) through enjoyable and creative activities enhancing the 4 fundamental language skills:

1. Writing: While composing their scripts, students had to make sure the language used was formally and grammatically accurate (e.g., spelling, syntax, use of past simple, etc.) and appropriate to the communicative context in which their scene was taking place;
2. Reading: After writing the scripts, they had to read them, understand them, learn them by heart and, eventually "inhabit" them through appropriate acting choice and embodied physical movements during rehearsals;
3. Speaking: During final performances, students were assessed on their pronunciation skills on the target sounds for the unit. Moreover, they had to make appropriate use of voice volume, pitch and intonation, while simultaneously focusing on diction and clarity so as to allow their peers to understand what they were saying;
4. Listening: During final performances, students in the audience had to peer-assess their mates who were performing on very specific linguistic aspects by filling out an assessment grid (see 4.14). Therefore, listening skills of a high order were demanded to complete this task.

2.5 The teacher as a director

> *"Finally, you know, I consider that my profession as a director is not exactly like a supervisor. No. We are, simply, midwives. The actor has something inside himself but very often he doesn't realize what he has in mind, in his own heart, and you have to tell him. You have to help him find himself."* — Jean Renoir (cited in Weston, 1996, p.111)

Section 2.4 has proposed EFL students as performers. Following the same parallel, the present section explores the role of the language teacher as a director in the EFL language classroom. A good starting point to draw such comparison can be director Jean Renoir's quote carried here above. According to Renoir, directors act as midwives, in that their role mainly consists of "pulling out" of the actor that "something inside himself" he/she is not fully aware of. Significantly, this idea of "pulling out" underlies the concept of "education". The verb "to educate", a key-verb in the definition of teaching as a profession – from Latin *educĕre* – literally means "to lead out", "to pull out something that was previously inside". In other words, both teachers and directors' roles consist of taking out of their students/actors their very essence, their full potential, their truest self. In this almost "obstetrical" process, the teacher/director is a *helper,* and Renoir remarks it: "you have to *help* him find himself". From this perspective, rather than a dominating and undiscussable source of knowledge (and power), the role of the teacher is better understood as a helper, a supporter, or, as Novello (2022) puts it, as a "conscious director" (p.87) of learners' educational process. In line with this view, O'Neill (1994) remarks that "the teacher can no longer presume to dominate learning in a traditional way and must be prepared to function in a variety of roles [...] that include those of guide, counselor, consultant and coach, observer, evaluator, commentator, and discussion leader" (p.55). According to Weston (1996), the best way for directors to act as helpers is asking questions, raising doubts for actors to solve them, rather than providing pre-determined truths and undiscussable directions:

> "The very best way to direct is not by giving direction at all, but by asking questions. All the devices I have been discussing — verbs, facts, images, events, physical tasks — function best in the form of questions to the actor [...]. Sometimes 'I don't know' is the smartest thing a director can say to an actor. Sometimes very smart directors tell an actor 'I don't know' even when they do know. John Cassavetes was like that — notorious for refusing to tell actors how to play their roles — but not because he hadn't done his homework and didn't know and understand the characters inside and out himself. Rather because he wanted actors to find the

characters themselves, to make them their own. He wanted only fresh, unguarded, and emotionally honest work." (Weston, 1996, p. 63)

According to Weston, actors should not be told how to play their roles, since they should find their "characters themselves, to make them their own". Directors are supposed to guide their actors through their individual discovery processes by asking questions, so as to foster actors' critical thinking and problem-solving strategies. This resonates with inductive and discovery-based learning, thoroughly discussed in 1.4. In an inductive approach to language learning, students are left free to find their own ways to language mastery. Rather than passively receiving language rules, it is the students' responsibility to actively analyze authentic language and recognize recurring patterns from which to draw hypothetical conclusions to be shared, compared and peer-reviewed among students. Of course, in this collective and cooperative discovery process, the teacher assists students, guides them, and intervenes at the end of the process to integrate or correct students' hypotheses. Thus, the teacher moves "from being a drama facilitator to language facilitator" by making "appropriate suggestions and corrections" whenever needed (Kempston, in Winston, 2012, p.100). In this way, they can make sure all students eventually draw adequate and linguistically correct conclusions. In other words, the teacher is "cocreator of the dramatic world" (O'Neill, 1994, p.57), a "participant facilitator" (Liu, 2002, p.11) who wisely switches between "being active and passive", intervenes and steps back depending on the specific situation, overwatching and refining the learning process while keeping it fundamentally student-centered. Understanding teacher and students as knowledge cocreators is consistent with Novello (2022), who remarks that "the teacher […] must be able to create a flexible curriculum, within which students actively participate in the construction of knowledge, each with his or her own skills" (p.86). Similarly, Weston (1996) suggests that the director and the actor, even when disagreeing on some aspect, should actively collaborate, giving their best to each other. The deriving synthesis creates a new solution, most likely a better one than the 2 initial ones taken separately. In this scenario, the actor is not just obeying the director's instructions: they are both displaying their best resources to come up with the best possible synthetic solution. Likewise, the EFL classroom as it is conceived in this dissertation is a research environment where students actively collaborate with the teacher to the purpose of socially constructing new knowledge:

> "[…] At this point the actor and director can clash — or they can collaborate. I don't like to use the word "compromise" because that suggests that both of you are settling for something less than what you desire and believe in. It's more like a synthesis. Actor and director are thesis and antithesis; each prepares, each brings to the table his best understanding of the script and his own sovereign imagination; they face each other and give each other everything. Then something new comes out of that, ideas for the characterization that are perhaps better than either one of you thought of separately. The happiest response an actor can make to one of your directorial suggestions is, 'That gives me an idea for something to work on'" (Weston, 1996, p. 22)

From a lifelong learning perspective, while actors/students learn from the teacher/director's experience ad professionality, teachers/directors also get new insights on their own subject thanks to the constructive collaboration with their pupils. In such learning environment, "the traditional monodirectional teacher-student power relationship is broken" (Liu, 2002, p.11) and it comes to be "tacitly perceived as negotiable" (Bolton, 1984, p.3). As pointed out by Rothwell (2012), assessment is one of the most relevant elements in defining the teacher's degree of power over their pupils: "assessment is arguably the most powerful force in most school programs. Failure or low grades at assessment time can affect learners' long-term attitude to the subject and their overall self-esteem" (Rothwell, 2012, p.54). Students should not be seen as spoiled creatures who never accept criticism.

As pointed out by Weston (1996), actors "need freedom and permission to explore", but they also "want to be pushed, to grow and to learn. […] The highest praise an actor can give a director is to say, 'I learned from working with her', or 'he got me to do things I didn't know I could do'" (p.23). The same goes for students in EFL learning settings: while they need to be given the space to freely explore with language without feeling judged, they also want "to be pushed, to grow, to learn", or, using Krashen's terminology (1982), they are aware of that they mainly rely on their teacher to acquire that famous "+1" (cf. 1.2 for Krashen's i+1 rule), which is what will make them achieve English fluency. If they feel supported and respected by their teacher, if they know for sure their teacher is aware of that "they we are not dealing with chemistry formulas [but] with human beings" (Weston, 1996, p.22), then students will probably trust their teacher and accept their guidance, suggestions, critiques, and assessment. Final assessment is a particularly delicate phase in the teacher-student relationship and this is a crucial time for the teacher to show their students their faith is well founded. To sustain students' leap of faith during final testing and assessment, teachers can simultaneously enact 4 strategies:

1. **Acknowledging students' vulnerability.**

Students often perceive tests, and especially oral tests, as threatening and socially risky. During traditional oral tests, students normally feel – and are – exposed. In this scenario, students' affective filter is very likely to be activated. They feel overwhelmed by their peers' attention, fear the teacher's negative judgement and get extremely self-conscious, believing a bad performance will result in them losing their face in front of their mates. It is the teacher's responsibility to prevent this from happening, bringing their students "to that state of relaxation where their creative faculties are released" (Weston, 1996, p.64). In the research experiment described in chapter 4, group stage performances of original scripts were used as final oral test to break the traditional self-conscious-making setting. During the group performances, students still produced a good number of oral utterances, but in the more natural form of a dialogue and, most importantly, behind the protection of a mask – the role they were playing. Although several techniques can be displayed to prevent the affective filter from being activated, an unmissable condition is required: that the teacher does not ignore, deny or minimize students' difficulties and fears. On the contrary, the teacher should acknowledge and preserve their pupils' fragilities, patiently providing them with tools and strategies to recognize, control and eventually overcome – but never deny – them:

> "It is important for directors to understand how wildly frightening acting can be, how vulnerable you are when you're up there, how painful it is to hear criticism, how easy it is to doubt oneself. The actor's face, body, voice, thoughts, and feelings are exposed. His thirst for a core, existential reassurance and validation is nearly inexhaustible. He looks to the director for this. Honest praise is as necessary to him as water. And so is forthright, accurate, and constructive criticism." (Weston, 1996, pp.64)

Once again, Weston's reflections (1996) on directing are relevant for the EFL classroom reality as well. It is only when teachers understand how "wildly frightening" being tested can be that they understand their students' "thirst for a core, existential reassurance and validation". On the other hand, it is only when students feel validated, respected and understood that they will be able to receive and act on constructive criticism.

2. **Staying consistent**

Teacher's consistency is essential in a trustful and healthy teacher-student relationship. When it comes to final testing, the teacher should stay consistent with the teaching style adopted

throughout the unit. In other words, as also pointed out by Novello (2022) the tasks in the final test (be it written or oral) should reflect exactly the nature of the activities carried out during the unit both in terms of content and modality:

> "Being an integral part of the educational project, assessment must meet criteria that are in line with what has been proposed to the student. […] Not knowing the type of exercises included in the test can significantly affect the result. If the student, in fact, is required to take a test including unfamiliar tasks, he or she may be disoriented […] and make mistakes and/or have to spend more time due to not understanding the exercise. The data obtained, as a result, may not be a valid indicator of the skills to be observed. It is necessary, therefore, that the testing [modalities] are familiar to the student and, if possible, that they are simulated so as to resolve any doubts or criticalities. It is not recommended, therefore, to propose in the tests [...] types of exercises unfamiliar to students." (Novello, 2022, p.97)

Moreover, Novello (2022) remarks that "sharing assessment criteria with students is particularly effective as it allows them to understand what they need to focus on" (p.97) to succeed in the test. Consistently, during the practical experiment of this study, assessment grids were shared with students at the beginning of the unit, thus allowing them to plan their pre-test work knowing exactly on what parameters and in what ways they were going to be evaluated (cf. 4.6). Chapter 1 has described language accuracy as a wider concept than mere grammar accuracy. As previously remarked, language is to be understood as a complex and multilayered phenomenon strictly connected to the communicative needs of the participants and the context in which it is produced. If during the unit the teacher has promoted open activities, allowing students to freely experiment with different language registers, communicative contexts and authentic texts in personalized inductive processes, a final test consisting of standardized tasks and multiple-choice questions would be perceived as a contradiction by students. They would feel confused, frustrated, and potentially betrayed. As also pointed out by Rothwell, the language test is crucial in shaping students' perception on language itself:

> "Assessment has the power to influence what language is; if the assessment is based on decontextualized grammatical accuracy, then this is what learners will aim for, often to the detriment of their ability to take risks and negotiate meaning in a range of relationships and situations. Conversely, if assessment tasks are designed to assess the learner's capacity to *manipulate* the language they have learnt, to think about and *choose* language for specific situations and relationships, and to experiment with what they know about their own and other languages and cultures, then it is more likely they will be able to actually use language as a rich tool for engaging confidently and meaningfully with different communities at home and abroad" (Rothwell, in Winston, 2012, p.55).

Consistently with the language pedagogy proposed in this dissertation, final tests should be conceived as opportunities the student has to demonstrate their ability to manipulate, experiment with and make meaningful choices about the language they have acquired throughout the unit. Of course, language experimentation and manipulation during final assessment is only possible when students feel free to take risks when being tested. In order to stay consistent, the teacher should therefore recreate in the final test the same "no-penalty zone" (O'Neill, 1994, p.58) experienced by students during the in-process activities, so as to bring their students "to that state of relaxation where their creative faculties are released". According to Rothwell (2012), drama-based assessment can allow for it, in that "enrolment in the drama by students [encourages] risk taking and participation. […] The kinesthetic element of the drama [is] a motivation factor for the assessment work". As a result, as observed by Rothwell, "the dramatic enrolment [leads] students

to take all the tasks seriously, whether they [are] for formal grading or not" (Rothwell, in Winston, 2012, p.66). Considering that "you cannot learn a language without making mistakes" (Novello, 2022, p.97), it is important to provide students with mistake-friendly activities throughout all learning phases, including final testing. The potential of drama to foster "no-penalty" settings in which students feel free to take risks seems to be confirmed by Weston (1996), according to whom mistakes are indispensable elements in the dramatic process:

> "You [directors] have chosen a profession where mistakes are not always bad. For brain surgeons or airplane pilots, mistakes are nearly always a bad thing. But for those of us lucky enough, foolish enough, to follow our dreams […], a mistake can be a blessing in disguise; it can jolt our attention away from preconceived ideas and into the present; it can open us to a new creative path. Sometimes a mistake is our subconscious speaking, and we ought to listen to it. If anything, an artist needs to get kind of excited by mistakes. You *will* make mistakes. We are mistake-making creatures; we were built that way. What you as a director, the person in charge, must learn how to do is to bring creativity and a positive approach to mistakes, your own and others'" (Weston, 1996, p. 17)

According to Weston (1996), not only are mistakes unavoidable, but they can sometimes be revealing and open "a new creative path". Weston (1996) is explicitly addressing directors in the quotation above. Nevertheless, she could be easily referring to teachers as well. In the case of EFL teaching, not only are language mistakes unavoidable, but they can also provide revealing insights on the student's stage in their learning path. Mistakes reveal students' weaknesses. Sometimes, though, they are residual effects of a broader and accurate language experimentation the learner is performing by critically interconnecting the new acquired language. Rather than an undesirable and stigmatizing element, a mistake could be therefore validated as concrete proof of a generative linguistic process spontaneously enacted by the student, thus testifying a success, rather than a failure. This was the case in the experiment described in chapter 4. As a written test, students had to work in groups to write an original script in which they were explicitly asked to make large use of all past simple forms for both regular and irregular verbs. This was because past simple was the main grammar target for the unit. Although most of the occurrences were correct, some mistakes were identified. Among them, a "fake mistake" stood out: a past continuous form. Although the group had made large use of past simple in the script, when it came to describe a prolonged action in the past, they perceived for some reason past simple was not the right tense. So, they "took the risk" to "invent" a "new" tense that matched their communicative need, inductively discovering form, meaning and use of past continuous. The resulting sentence was completely accurate (cf. 4.12). Significantly, past continuous was the topic of the following unit. In other words, as a response, students decided to take the risk of making a mistake to meet a communicative need they came across with while writing the script. Taking this risk resulted in the inductive discovery and accurate use of a tense they had not covered in class yet. Crucially, this was only possible because final assessment was carried out in a trustful and meaningful setting through an open and highly personalized task. In a traditional standardized grammar test (e.g., a fill-in-the-gap exercise on past simple) there would not have been any space for past continuous, and any past continuous occurrence would have most likely be marked as a mistake. On the contrary, through an open task, it was possible to interpret what was an apparent transgression as rather concrete proof of a noteworthy linguistic achievement. According to Martin Scorsese, in the delicate phase of final shooting, "being allowed to make mistakes, […] to try things" is essential to get high-quality scenes (Scorsese, cited in Weston, 1996, p. 335). In light of mistakes' generative power, Weston (1996) as well seems to promote a mistake-friendly

atmosphere when it comes to final shooting, which she states should be "as an extension of rehearsal":

> "Shooting should be seen as an extension of rehearsal — that is, unpressured, exploratory, free — and better than rehearsal, a treat and an adventure. We want everybody's best energy and concentration. We want fresh, simple, honest, emotionally alive, moment-by-moment work. We don't want an actor who was great in rehearsal to start 'acting with a capital A' as soon as the camera rolls." (p.335)

"Shooting should be seen as an extension of rehearsals". Likewise, final testing should be seen as an extension of the unit lessons, so as to promote an "unpressured, exploratory, free" environment even when formal grading is taking place.

3. Peer Assessment

If the EFL classroom is a research environment in which all participants mutually sustain each other by sharing ideas, knowledge and giving advice to improve, the same attitude should be kept during final testing. Although it is traditionally the teacher who assesses students, including peer evaluation in final assessment would be a concrete act of shared responsibility on behalf of the teacher. Through peer assessment, all members of the learning community get to be collectively responsible for their peers' success, improvement and full development. According to Liu (2002), "even though the teacher's feedback is a useful source of information about students' learning, learners themselves are in the best position to examine their own learning through self-reflecting, peer-commenting, and discovering what happens in learning that might be unknown to the learner in the process" (p.14). According to Palechorou and Winston, drama pedagogy in EFL learning settings can favor peer assessment:

> "Reflecting on the drama can be an effective way for all students to become actively involved in their own learning. It is necessary to give [pupils] the opportunities to assess themselves and each other in order to understand how to improve. [At the end of our experiment, during final performances,] each group was asked to reflect and critically comment on the work on the former presenting group, based on criteria that had been discussed in advance, such as the language register, atmosphere and tone. The class also rehearsed how to make constructive comments without hurting people's feelings." (Palechorou and Winston, in Winston, 2012, pp. 51-52)

As described in 4.14, a similar peer-assessment pattern was used during the final performances of the research experiment. As will be further discussed, not only was peer assessment a way for the students in the audience to carefully follow the performance and learn new phrases and vocabulary from their peers' scripts. It was also a way for the teacher to show them consistency in understanding the EFL classroom as a research community in which members make constructive critiques to help each other improve, also – and especially – during formal grading.

4. Lifelong learning

> *"[Learners] cannot overcome blocks to learning if they have not learnt how to learn"* (Bremner, 2008, p.2)

As already hinted at and as will be further discussed in 4.8, unit contents in any EFL curriculum should be learnt from a lifelong learning perspective. That is, while teaching specific aspects of the English language, they should also dedicate an appropriate amount of time to metacognitive reflections, in which pupils are made aware of and have the possibility to critically think about

the teaching techniques utilized throughout the unit. Consistently, Liu (2022) asserts that "it is through reflection that much can be learned about learning":

> "It is through reflection that much can be learned about learning. For many language learners, the only source of feedback on their learning is their teacher. Even though the teacher's feedback is a useful source of information about students' learning, learners themselves are in the best position to examine their own learning through self-reflecting, peer-commenting, and discovering what happens in learning that might be unknown to the learner in the process. Although gaining experiences of learning […] is important, deeper learning occurs only when such experiences are critically examined and reflected." (p.14)

As can be read, Liu recognizes the importance of teacher feedback for learners. As also indicated by Bremner (2008), "pupils need to be taught learning techniques and how to be resourceful. The teacher should reflect on classroom practice, adopt a problem-solving approach to any difficulties identified and experiment with a range of approaches" (p.2). Nevertheless, she also remarks that "learners themselves are in the best position to examine their own learning". In this sense, both self-reflecting and peer-commenting can play a pivotal role in the development of lifelong learning skills. As a result, peer assessment, through which students learn, for example, how to make constructive comments, is to be understood in the broader framework of lifelong learning. By explicitly describing and critically analyzing the methodology of the learning process, students can understand what activities are most effective to them, thus gaining growing awareness of their own learning modes. In other words, through metacognitive reflection, learners have the chance to "learn how to learn". In this sense, schooling should not only provide knowledge and notions. It should also – and, most importantly – provide students with techniques for further independent learning, which they are going to use in their lifelong learning path. Since learning is *lifelong,* teachers themselves should be learners. According to Bremner (2008), "teachers need to accept their new role first of all as a learner themselves and a facilitator of learning" (p.3). As indicated by Liu (2002), students' observations and comments on teaching can help teachers improve their curricula and use teaching techniques the better fir their target groups:

> "Students' reflections can also trigger a deeper understanding of teaching. Such reflections involve examining teaching experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for change […]. Through reflections, teachers can understand why and how things are the way they are, what value systems they represent, what alternatives might be available, and what the limitations are of doing things one way as opposed to another. Reflection enables the teacher to be more confident in leading students to try different things in the Process Drama and assess their effects on learning, taking into consideration students' linguistic abilities and developmental stages" (pp.14-15)

In other words, by accepting students' constructive critiques and working on them to improve their teaching style, "teachers should act as role models for learning and teach pupils how to become independent and effective learners" (Bremner, 2008, pp.2-3). Moreover, fostering a lifelong-learning perspective in EFL curricula can contribute to lower students' levels of anxiety during final assessment. Shifting the focus on reflective learning and on the development of long-term abilities that will show their effects in students' future lives is a way to make students understand how they perform in school does not define them as people. Of course, the notions to be learnt to pass a test are very important in their learning path. Nevertheless, since real, deep learning is *lifelong*, succeeding or failing one single test will not make such a big difference. Keeping that it minds, students might approach the upcoming test with a broader perspective and a more lighthearted attitude, thus being able to focus on the task rather than on the fear to fail.

The two-way Theory-Practice Bridge

The theoretical part of the present dissertation has now concluded. In a nutshell, chapters 1 and 2 have proposed a theoretical framework suggesting that art-based authentic texts and related performative activities can enhance EFL acquisition. In particular, acting and singing have been proposed as effective English learning tools. Nevertheless, as also indicated in the general introduction, the theories exposed in these first two chapters are not to be interpreted in isolation, but in strict connection to the upcoming practical part, proposed in Chapters 3 and 4. By describing the experimental study carried out in a real EFL-teaching setting, Chapters 3 and 4 aim at testing whether and how principles and theories presented in chapters 1 and 2 can be translated into practical teaching actions. To sustain this strict theory-practice relationship, several references have been made in the theory section to the practical experiment. Likewise, a number of punctual references to specific theory concepts will be made in chapters 3 and 4 while describing specific language activities. Hopefully, this can facilitate a critical interpretation of theory in light of real-life practice. To favor a full understanding of the present dissertation as it was conceived by the author, the reader is therefore invited to read the following chapters critically relating them to the theory provided in chapters 1 and 2, i.e., diving into the detailed step-by-step analysis of the experiment while at the same time keeping in mind the theoretical framework it draws on. In line with the principles of Action Research and from a lifelong learning perspective, it is the hope of the author that the resulting reading will be an insightful one, capable of raising constructive criticism and offer further research questions on the use of music and the performing arts in EFL teaching.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Introduction

In chapters 3 and 4, I provide a detailed description of the experimental part of my study on the use of music and the performing arts in EFL teaching. During my experiment, I worked as an English trainee teacher at *IIS P. Scalcerle* high school in Padua, where I taught a unit to a first-year class. The purpose of this experiment was testing the validity of the theoretical hypotheses proposed in chapters 1 and 2 through a real-life EFL teaching experience. Chapter 3 starts with a description of the general context in which my teaching experiment took place. After a summary table containing an overview of my unit, I describe the research methodology I used to gather my data. Chapter 3 concludes with a detailed report of my pre-session observation.

3.2 General context

The *Istituto di Istruzione Superiore Pietro Scalcerle* is a renowned *liceo* located in *via delle cave 174, 35136, Padova,* Italy. This school offers two courses: foreign languages and a course for chemical-biological technicians. Hosting more than 1000 students, IIS P. Scalcerle is recognized to be a welcoming and open-minded institute that has always focused on the European dimension of education by participating in various EU programs which offer students a number of study or work opportunities abroad. As ex-student, I benefitted myself from these opportunities back in my high-school years, winning 2 scholarships, one for a three-month study experience in Germany and one for a one-month work experience in Spain. Coming back to my high school as a trainee teacher was an honor, and the way I was welcomed by both teachers and administrative staff was heartwarming. This favorable and open learning environment was the perfect context for my research experiment to take place, and I immediately felt supported and encouraged to realize it in the best of ways. I am particularly grateful to Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood, my tutor teacher who guided me throughout my traineeship. Being a native speaker and an experienced English teacher, she offered high-quality support contributing to the success of my experiment. Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood accepted to dedicate 10 hours of her curriculum to my unit, thus allowing me to freely conduct my experiment in a real-life EFL teaching context. My target group was one of her classes, in particular 1B, a first-year class from the Foreign Languages course. Further information about the target group is provided in the table below and in the observation section. In my traineeship, consisting of 82 hours, my net teaching hours in 1B (including observation, lessons, afternoon workshops and final test) were 18. During the remaining hours, I attended and observed Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood's lessons in 3B, 4B and 5B, and worked in the school Erasmus Office. I started my traineeship on February 6, and concluded it on March 23, 2023. Schedule wise, this was a rather thick and complex period of the school year. During the first week of my traineeship (February 6 -11, 2023), the school planned the so-called *pausa didattica*, a sort of grace period between the fall term and the spring term during which teachers are not allowed to introduce new topics or test students. It is a time in which teachers are asked to revise topics or plan out-of-class activities – e.g., cultural day trips to local theaters or museums – to revise or further expand on the topics covered throughout the fall term. This didactic break partially overlapped with my observation period. Moreover, lessons were suspended on February 20-22 because of Carnival break, resulting in a minor rescheduling or readjustment of the activities in my planning. Last but not least, I think it is important to remark that my unit was embedded in a broader EFL curriculum designed by another teacher. Content continuity and language consistency between Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood's curriculum and my unit was crucial for both of us. To come up with a coordinated plan, we had 2 preliminary meetings during which we shared opinions and made each other aware of our respective priorities to then agree on common and consistent objectives. As a consequence, the final version of my teaching unit was the result of a constructive confrontation with my tutor teacher, with the school administration, and with the general social context I got to be part of.

3.3 Unit "The Prom": a summary table

Target group	– 27 first-year Italian students (21 girls, 6 boys); – The students are 14-15 years old; – Because of health issues, one student never attended my lessons in person. Whenever possible, though, she joined us from remote through Zoom calls and submitted some online assignments; – Covid lockdown partially overlapped with their middle-school years. Therefore, most of the English lessons they had access to before high school were delivered online; – Despite covid-related issues, it is my impression that their overall English level is comparable to normal pre-covid standards for first-year students. While the majority of the class ranges around A2+ level according to the CEFR, 5 learners stand out as clearly independent users (B1/B1+). 3 students show an A1 level or lower; – According to the students' answers to the pre-unit questionnaire (see 3.4 for a full description and analysis of the questionnaire), 100% of the students like music and think of it as a potentially effective tool to learn foreign languages; – 1 student plays the piano, 2 students dance, 2 students sing and 1 student raps.
Teaching context	– English Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. Students' every-day life takes place in an Italian-speaking environment where English is never (or hardly ever) the vehicular language; – Interestingly, despite not living in an English-speaking environment, 89,5% of the students participating in the in the pre-unit questionnaire affirm that they use English in extra-school context sometimes, often or very often; – Although none of the students live in an English-speaking environment, the same percentage of students (89,5%) describe English as a means to communicate rather than a school subject.
Duration	– My unit consists of 18 hours, distributed as follows: – 4 hours of in-class observation spread over a ten-day period (February 6-15, 2023); – 8 teaching hours following my tutor's weekly schedule (lesson 1 took place on February 16, lesson 8 on March 6, 2023); – 2 hours for the final performances, which took place on March 20; – 4 hours for an afternoon workshop consisting of 2 two-hour modules (module 1 took place on March 7, while module 2 took place on March 16, 2023).
Language objectives	– Grammar: Past Simple of regular and irregular verbs in the affirmative, negative and interrogative form; – Phonology: The IPA - an introduction to (American) English sounds; – Vocabulary: prom-related terms and expressions; clothes vocabulary.

Functional language objectives	– Learning how to inductively derive basic grammar rules from a task-oriented observation of authentic language in context; – Knowing how and when to use past simple to relate about the past; – Improving the pronunciation of English sounds using the IPA as a tool to independently find out how English words are pronounced; – Using the target vocabulary appropriately in different communicative contexts; – Learning how to write a basic original script using the screenwriting software "Studiobinder". Free sign up available at: https://app.studiobinder.com/login.
Authentic materials	– "The Prom" (Murphy, 2020), a Netflix 2020 American musical comedy film directed by Ryan Murphy and adapted to the screen by Chad Beguelin and Bob Martin, from "The Prom" 2018 Broadway musical production; – "Emma and Alyssa's Love Story in Full | The Prom", YouTube video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xVI5qGpyMY; – "The Prom – Screenplay" (cut version), by Bob Martin and Chad Beguelin, based on the Broadway musical by Chad Begulin, Bob Martin and Matthew Sklar. – Just to have a general idea of what the movie is about, this musical deals with the love story of a homosexual couple during their last year of high school. As the 2 girls claim their right to participate in the school prom just like their schoolmates, they come up against the conservative and homophobic provincial mentality of their hometown.

3.4 Research methodology

Before diving into a detailed description and analysis of my unit, I state and briefly comment on the main principles that guided my data collection and analysis. Although it is hard to identify my approach with one single methodology in absolute terms, the methodological framework within which my experiment was conducted is Action Research. Action Research can be defined as a "small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention." (Cohen and Manion, 1984, p.41). Again, "Action Research is trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching, and learning. The result is improvement in what happens in the classroom and school, and better articulation and justification of the educational rationale of what goes on. Action research provides a way of working which links theory and practice into the one whole: ideas-in-action." (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982, in Nunan, 1990, p.63). When I first came across these 2 definitions during my studies, I was intrigued by the strict connection between theory and practice which underlies the concept of "ideas-in-action". The possibility of testing my own ideas through real actions to be closely examined without necessarily sticking to the rigid rules of Applied Research paved the way for further investigation on the subject. As a result, I have come up with a set of key concepts of Action Research that resonate with my way of understanding research on EFL teaching. Each of these key concepts is briefly examined here below:

The strong theory-practice link.

As summarized in the "ideas-in-action" formula, praxis plays a dominant role in Action Research. Consistently, the purpose of my research is mixing pre-existing knowledge with original ideas to design an effective teaching method that fits my personality and through which I can give my students my very best. In other words, I am studying to be a good teacher and to provide my students with high-quality education. Therefore, my research focuses on praxis and studies whose results are strictly connected to the language classroom reality. Consistently with this principle, chapters 1 and 2 of the present dissertation have only presented theories and hypotheses that are tested through in-class practice, as thoroughly accounted for in chapters 3 and 4.

A self-reflective approach.

"Action Research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. These participants can be teachers, students or principals and the process is most empowering when undertaken collaboratively, though sometimes it can be undertaken by individuals and sometimes in cooperation with outsiders." (Henry & Kemmis, 1985, p.2)

As already hinted at, the "self-reflective enquiry" aimed at improving one's own teaching practice is in line with my research approach. In other words, the research I am carrying out is tailored to my own needs and objectives, and the results it produces should not be interpreted as undiscussable truths. While the results of my experiment seem to show beneficial effects of music and the performing arts on EFL acquisition, I am not proposing this method as "the method". On the contrary, I could possibly come to the partial conclusion that teaching foreign languages through the performing arts has been effective in the teaching experience I am relating about, which took place in a specific period, with a specific target group and was explicitly designed considering my personal inclinations, skills and teaching objectives.

Situational research.

Action research is situational, meaning that the results it produces are strictly connected to the context in which it takes place and the participants involved in the process (learners, teachers, etc.). Therefore, action research cannot be generalized (cf. Coonan, 2000). Due to its situational nature and because it was not meant to produce generalizable results, my research does not include a control group. The lack of a control group, on the other hand, is also due to the above-mentioned praxis-oriented approach. In practical terms, creating a control group would have meant splitting the class into two and delivering my lessons with different approaches. At operational level, it would have been very complicated or almost impossible. Moreover, such a research approach would have undermined the authenticity and the spontaneity of the classroom environment, resulting in my students potentially feeling "like lab rats".

Ethnographic and qualitative research.

As indicated by Coonan (2000), "*la ricerca azione si chiama etnografica perché privilegia una modalità di indagine che è esplorativa, che è interessata a registrare quello che avviene, a notare i processi in corso in una data situazione. Per fare ciò usa strumenti quali il diario e le schede, ecc. e intervista le persone coinvolte nelle situazioni indagate. La modalità privilegiata*

di analisi e valutazione dei dati raccolti è di tipo qualitativo (proprio perché i dati stessi sono essenzialmente qualitativi) ed interpretativo. La modalità d'analisi interpretativa è ritenuta migliore per il fine che si prefigge un insegnante attraverso la ricerca azione – raggiungere una più penetrante comprensione della situazione nella quale opera e, allo stesso tempo e come conseguenza, crescere professionalmente." (pp.12-13)

(Action research is ethnographic because it privileges an exploratory mode of investigation, interested in recording what happens and noticing the processes going on in a given situation. To this purpose, action researchers make use of ethnographic tools such as diary, observation sheets, and interviews with the people involved in the teaching contexts. The privileged mode of analysis and evaluation of the collected data is qualitative (precisely because the data themselves are essentially qualitative) and interpretative. Interpretative analyis is considered to be more in line with the teacher's purpose - achieving a more penetrating understanding of the situation in which he/she operates and, at the same time, growing professionally). (pp.12-13)

Consistently with Action Research, I borrowed some observation tools from ethnography. Here below, I propose a review of the main tools I used to gather and interpret data during my unit:

— **Diary**
A diary can be defined as "a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events" (Nunan, 1989). During my experiment, I also kept a diary to gather data lesson by lesson. In Chapter 4, I provide detailed reports for each lesson, including in-process notes of recurring patterns I observed during the unit.

— **Anecdotal sheet**
Coonan (2000) argues that anecdotal sheets can be used "*per registrare quello che avviene nella classe oppure quello che dice o fa un individuo in una situazione particolare concreta*" (p.34) (to record what happens in the classroom or what an individual says or does in a particular concrete situation) (p.34). In at least two situations, I found myself noting on my laptop some student's behavior or statement in a specific learning context which I thought could be relevant to the purposes of my research. Such anecdotes are included in the detailed description of my experience (cf. 4.3 and 4.15).

— **Observation sheets**
An observation sheet is meant to capture a given situation in a specific context at a specific time. I found this tool very useful during my pre-unit observation, when I needed to observe a new reality trying to establish fixed criteria to allow for data analysis and interpretation. In particular, I used 2 observation sheets, one for the students, and one for the teacher. I opted for a rather basic structure since I wanted them to be immediately accessible and easily filled in whenever needed. I provide the two samples here below:

PRE-SESSION STUDENT OBSERVATION (FEBRUARY 6,9 and 15, 2023), 4H

How do the students behave in class? Are they motivated? Shy? Bored? Noisy? Passive? Well- or bad-behaved?

_____

What's their attitude towards their teacher? Do they look up to her/ respect her/follow her…?

_____

What is the students' English-speaking rate? Calculate it in terms of minutes!
_____
_____

FOCUS ON PAST SIMPLE

Do they use the past simple while talking in class?
_____
_____

Do you notice any recurring mistakes about past simple? (e.g., irregular verbs, affirmative/negative/interrogative forms, pronunciation difficulties etc.)
_____
_____

FOCUS ON PRONUNCIATION

Generally speaking, what's the students' level pronunciation wise?
_____
_____

Do you think they are doing their best in sounding non-Italians? Do you have the impression they are talking with an Italian accent because that's the best they can do or might there be any other reasons?
_____
_____

Do they distinguish between [i] and [ɪ]?
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Do they distinguish between [æ] and [ɛ]?
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Do they use the [bʌt] sound or tend to use the [a] sound?
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Do they distinguish between [o] and [ɔ]?
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Do they happen to realize flips like [ɾ] in words like "party"?
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Do you notice any spontaneous aspiration after voiceless plosives? [pʰ] in "possible"
NO / YES (If yes, in how many students?)

Do they apply schwas word finally? (very recurrent mistake among Italian English speakers)
NO / YES (If yes, in how many students don't?)

Do they pronounce the past forms of regular verbs correctly? Stopped → [stɑpt] and not [stɑped]
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Do the use the dark l [ɫ]?
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Do they pronounce a full "g" word-finally in ing-ending words? "Thing" →[θɪng] rather than [θɪŋ]
NO / YES (If yes, in how many students don't?)

Do they pronounce [θ] and [ð] accurately?
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Do they pronounce the [h] sounds or tend to omit them?
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Do they pronounce the English [r] sound accurately?
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Do they pronounce [ɚ] (unstressed) or [ɝ] accurately? Do they prefer the British variant with a schwa?
NO / YES (If yes, how many students do?)

Please note here any further recurring patterns you notice during the observation
_____
_____
_____

PRE-SESSION TEACHER OBSERVATION (FEBRUARY 6,9 and 15, 2023), 4H

How does the teacher behave in class? Is she motivating and involving?
_____
_____

What's her attitude towards her students? Does she respect them…?
_____
_____
_____

What is the teacher's English-speaking rate? Calculate it in terms of minutes!
_____
_____

What teaching methods is she using? (Lecturing, cooperative groups, etc.)
_____
_____
_____

Is she more deductive or inductive in her teaching style?

_____
_____

Does she use any technological devices in class?

_____
_____

What kind of activities is she proposing?

_____
_____

How much does she stick to the textbook? Is she using authentic material? Is the material updated and relevant for the students?

_____
_____

FOCUS ON PAST SIMPLE

On what aspects of Past simple is she insisting on? How is she presenting them?

_____
_____

FOCUS ON PRONUNCIATION

On what aspects of the English pronunciation is she insisting on? Is she presenting just the British allophones or also other varieties of English?

_____
_____

Does she refer to the IPA alphabet?

_____
_____

Please note here any further recurring patterns you notice during the observation

_____
_____
_____

— **Free and semi-structured interviews**.

When I first stepped into the language classroom and started to fill in my observation sheets, I immediately perceived it was not enough. While sheets and questionnaires are relevant tools to register data about students' language skills and behaviors, it is important to point out that you cannot get to know a human being through closed questions and lists of data. As described in chapter 1, authentic relationships are based on eye contact, informal conversations, real-life contexts in which two or more individuals feel free to share ideas,

dreams and fears without feeling tested or measured. For this reason, I started to realize free interviews by sticking around after class or during the breaks, progressively getting to know my target group through informal chats. Thanks to these conversations, which I decided to continue after the observation period until the very last day of my unit, I was able to create a trustful and open learning environment in which I had access to students' dreams, ambitions and thoughts, so as to better tailor my lessons to their needs. Moreover, I realized a semi-structured interview with my tutor teacher during the observation period. I established some topics I was willing to discuss with her, but led the interview as a rather spontaneous conversation, hoping the teacher could feel more comfortable and relaxed while answering my questions. To the same purpose, I took notes and typed down some direct quotes, but I did not record her. The main points of my semi-structured interview with Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood are reported here below:

> – **PRE-UNIT INTERVIEW WITH THE TEACHER**
> – How many students do you have in 1B?
> – Are there any students with disability, any sort of difficulty or any particular cases you think should be mentioned?
> – What kind of class is it character wise?
> – Do you think they like English? Are they motivated?
> – As far as you know, are there any students in class involved in musical and/or performative activities? (Acting, dancing, singing, playing an instrument etc.)
> – Are your students used to working with devices such as laptops and phones for didactic purposes?
> – What teaching methods and approaches do you normally use in class? Are your students used to in-group activities based on the Cooperative Learning principles? Do you believe in this method? How is your students' feedback about these activities? Do they enjoy working in group?
> – What are your didactic goals for this year in 1B?

— **Systematic study**

Ebbutt (1985) affirms that "Action Research is the systematic study of attempts to change and improve educational practice by groups of participants by means of their own practical actions and by means of their own reflections upon the effects of those actions" (p.34). Although my research does not meet the standards of Applied Research, it is still designed following the same systematicity and rigor *Action* Research is characterized by. While I privileged a qualitative approach in the interpretation of my data, I also decided to include quantitative analyses to be able to mathematically measure specific trends and patterns. In particular, to measure the effectiveness of my unit, I asked my students to fill out one pre-unit questionnaire and one post-unit questionnaire. I then analytically compared these two questionnaires backing up my considerations with percentages and mathematical data at hand. The samples of the 2 questionnaires, realized using Google Forms, are provided here below:

PRE-SESSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Hey there! Thank you for taking some time to fill out this form! All of your answers will be registered anonymously, meaning that your teacher will NOT be able to see them!

1. **Do you like English as a language?** *

   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

   ◯ 1 Not at all

   ◯ 2 Not really

   ◯ 3 I am neutral on it

   ◯ 4 I like it

   ◯ 5 I love it

2. **Do you like studying English at school?** *

   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

   ◯ 1 Not at all

   ◯ 2 Not really

   ◯ 3 I am neutral on it

   ◯ 4 I like it

   ◯ 5 I love it

3. **Do you normally use English out of class? (e.g. talking to foreign friends, listening to songs/podcasts in English, watching series or movie in English, writing songs/poems in English, videogaming etc.)Do you like studying English at school?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) 1 Never
- ( ) 2 Hardly ever
- ( ) 3 Sometimes
- ( ) 4 Often
- ( ) 5 Very often

4. **Mark the option that best describes your idea of English.** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) 1 English is a subject: I study it only because I want to get good grades at school
- ( ) 2 English is a set of grammar rules and vocabulary lists I need to study and learn by heart.
- ( ) 3 English is a language. It is a set of grammar rules and vocabulary lists that I need to study and memorize if I want to improve my language skills.
- ( ) 4 English is a language. It is a set of grammar rules and vocabulary lists that I need to study to improve my English and to communicate with people from other countries.
- ( ) 5 English is a means to communicate. I am learning English because I want to be able to travel and/or communicate with people from other countries without struggling.

5. **In general, how would you rate your English pronunciation skills?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) 1 I think I am very bad
- ( ) 2 I think I am bad
- ( ) 3 I think I am on average
- ( ) 4 I think I am good
- ( ) 5 I think I am excellent

6. **Would you like to improve your English pronunciation skills? Does the idea of sounding more like a native speaker attract you?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

( ) YES

( ) NO

7. **Do you think having good speaking skills and a good pronunciation is relevant for English students?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

( ) YES

( ) NO

( ) NO, as long as I am understood

8. **How good do you think you are at pronouncing the R sound in "Red"?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

( ) 1 I think I am very bad

( ) 2 I think I am bad

( ) 3 I think I am on average

( ) 4 I think I am good

( ) 5 I think I am excellent

9. **How good do you think you are at pronouncing the TH sound in "THink"?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

( ) 1 I think I am very bad

( ) 2 I think I am bad

( ) 3 I think I am on average

( ) 4 I think I am good

( ) 5 I think I am excellent

10. How good do you think you are at pronouncing the H sound in "Homeless"? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

○ 1 I think I am very bad

○ 2 I think I am bad

○ 3 I think I am on average

○ 4 I think I am good

○ 5 I think I am excellent

11. Do you think the vowel sound in "gig" and "sweet" is the same sound? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

○ YES

○ NO

12. Do you think the vowel sound in "but" and "bat" is the same sound? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

○ YES

○ NO

13. Would you pronounce a vowel sound between P and D in "stopped"? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

○ YES

○ NO

14. **Do you pronounce a vowel sound between N and D in "listened"?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

( ) YES

( ) NO

15. **Do you like music?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

( ) YES

( ) NO

16. **Do you play any instrument or do any activity related to the performing** *
    arts (NOT necessarily in English)? (singing, acting, dancing, etc.)

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

( ) YES

( ) NO

17. If you answered yes in the preceding question, type in here what's your
    performative activity.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

18. **Do you like musicals and musical movies?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) 1 Not at all
- ( ) 2 Not really
- ( ) 3 I am neutral on it
- ( ) 4 I like them
- ( ) 5 I love them

19. **Do you think music is a potentially effective tool to learn languages?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) I have no idea

20. **Would you like to try to use music and musical movies in the English classroom? Is the idea appealing to you?** *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) 1 Not at all
- ( ) 2 Not really
- ( ) 3 I am neutral on it
- ( ) 4 I would like to try
- ( ) 5 I would love it!

POST-SESSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Hey there! Thank you for taking some time to fill out this form! All of your answers will be registered anonymously, meaning that your teacher will NOT be able to see them!

* Indica una domanda obbligatoria

1. **Would you say your English pronunciation has improved thanks to the unit?** *

   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

   ◯ Yes, a lot!

   ◯ Yes, a bit

   ◯ Maybe

   ◯ Not really

   ◯ Absolutely not!

2. **Do you think the vowel sound in "gig" and "sweet" is the same sound?** *

   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

   ◯ YES

   ◯ NO

3. **Do you think the vowel sound in "but" and "bat" is the same sound?** *

   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

   ◯ YES

   ◯ NO

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4. Do you pronounce a vowel sound between N and D in "listened"? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

( ) YES

( ) NO

5. Do you now like musicals and musical movies MORE than you did before the unit? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

( ) 1 Not at all

( ) 2 Not really

( ) 3 I am neutral on it

( ) 4 I like them more

( ) 5 I love them now!

6. Think about our unit. Do you think singing and acting were effective tools to learn English? Would you recommend it to other students? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

( ) YES

( ) NO

7. What activities did you like the most? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. What activities did you like the least? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Did you like the movie and topic of the unit (the prom)? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes, I really did!

◯ Yes, I did

◯ I kind of liked it

◯ I didn't really

◯ I didn't like it at all!

10. What was your degree of motivation during the unit? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ very high

◯ high

◯ on average

◯ low

◯ very low

11. Did your degree of motivation increase or decrease throughout the unit? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ It increased

◯ It didn't change

◯ It decreased

12. Do you think music, singing and acting increased or decreased your motivation? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

○ Music increased my motivation

○ Music decreased my motivation

13. Do you think music, singing and acting helped you understand better the topics * of the unit (pronunciation, past simple and clothes vocabulary)?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

○ Yes, they did

○ No they didn't

14. Compare the teaching method I used to the traditional, book-based teaching * style. With what method do you think you learn more?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

○ You learn more with the traditional method

○ You learn more with Rob's method

15. Did you have fun during the activities? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

○ Yes, I did most of the time

○ Yes, I did but only sometimes

○ No, I didn't

16. Do you think having fun while learning makes you learn less or more? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Having fun while learning makes me learn more

◯ Having fun while learning is a distraction. Students should not have fun in class if they want to learn.

17. Did you get bored during the unit? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Most of the time

◯ sometimes

◯ never

18. Do you think being bored while learning makes you learn less or more? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ more

◯ less

19. In what activities did you personally have fun? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. In what activities did you personally feel you were learning the most? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. In what activities did you personally get bored? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. In what activities did you personally feel you were learning the least? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

23. In general, how difficult do you think this unit was? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Far too difficult for my English level

◯ A bit challenging but generally in line with my English level

◯ in line with my English level

◯ Easy for my English level

◯ Far too easy for my English level

24. In light of your learning experience during Roberto's unit, mark the *
option that best describes your idea of English.

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

⬭ English is a subject: I study it only because I want to get good grades at school

⬭ English is a set of grammar rules and vocabulary lists I need to study and learn by heart.

⬭ English is a language. It is a set of grammar rules and vocabulary lists that I need to study and memorize if I want to improve my language skills.

⬭ English is a language. It is a set of grammar rules and vocabulary lists that I need to study to improve my English and to communicate with people from other countries.

⬭ English is a means to communicate. I am learning English because I want to be able to travel and/or communicate with people from other countries without struggling.

⬭ Altro: _____

25. After Roberto's class, do you think you are going to use the IPA alphabet *
to check the pronunciation of a sound you are not sure about? In other words: do you think the IPA alphabet is a useful tool to make your pronunciation more accurate?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

⬭ Yes

⬭ No

26. **In light of what you have learnt with Roberto, how good do you think you** *
are at pronouncing the [r] sound?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) Very bad
- ( ) Bad
- ( ) On average
- ( ) Good
- ( ) Excellent

27. **In light of what you have learnt with Roberto, how good do you think you** *
are at pronouncing the [θ] sound?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) Very bad
- ( ) Bad
- ( ) On average
- ( ) Good
- ( ) Excellent

28. **In light of what you have learnt with Roberto, how good do you think you** *
are at pronouncing the [æ] sound?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) Very bad
- ( ) Bad
- ( ) On average
- ( ) Good
- ( ) Excellent

29. **In light of what you have learnt with Roberto, how good do you think you** *
    are at pronouncing the [ɾ] sound?

    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

    ( ) Very bad

    ( ) Bad

    ( ) On average

    ( ) Good

    ( ) Excellent

30. **What do you think is the right IPA transcription for "strong"?** *

    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

    ( ) [strɔŋ]

    ( ) [strɔng]

31. **What do you think is the right IPA transcription for "map"?** *

    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

    ( ) [mæp]

    ( ) [mɛp]

32. **What do you think is the right IPA transcription for "stopped"?** *

    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

    ( ) [stɑped]

    ( ) [stɑpt]

33. What do you think is the right IPA transcription for "bit"? *

    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

    ⬭ [brt]

    ⬭ [bit]

34. After these activities with Roberto, would you like to start any activity related to the performing arts?(playing an instrument, singing, acting, dancing, etc.) *

    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

    ⬭ yes

    ⬭ no

    ⬭ Maybe

35. Do you think finding examples on the Past simple in the movie extract was a useful way to see how Past simple is used in real language? *

    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

    ⬭ Yes

    ⬭ No

36. Do you think learning grammar rules by heart from your textbook is more effective than observing real language and trying to find out the grammar rules yourself? *

    Contrassegna solo un ovale.

    ⬭ Yes

    ⬭ No

37. Did you like working in your group? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ yes

◯ No

38. Think about how the groups were formed and how your group worked. What *
could have been improved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

39. After this unit, do you think working in groups can make you learn more than *
working individually?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes

◯ No

40. Do you think some of the topics, activities or whatever aspect of this unit could *
ever affect your life and change it to the better? Explain (If no, just type "no")

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

41. Would you say you now like English more than you did before the unit? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes

◯ No

42. Think of the way I designed the unit and the way I behaved in class. What do *
you think was at the center of the unit?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Your uniqueness as a student and human being

◯ The English language

◯ The marks

43. What did you have the impression was more important during the unit? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Marks and assessment

◯ The content of the unit

◯ The wellbeing of the students

44. Did you like peer assessment? Do you think observing and assessing *
your peers' performances can increase your awareness about your own
performance?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes

◯ No

3.5 Observation and pre-unit questionnaire (February 6-15, 2023)

After presenting my full observation toolkit, this next section is aimed at reporting, observing and analyzing the material I gathered during my pre-unit observation, including the answers to the pre-unit questionnaire presented in 3.3. During my observation hours, I came to terms with that fact that collecting data on a specific situation basing on questionnaires and observation sheets one creates before getting to know the specific target context is not always easy. I noticed that the reality of the language classroom included some elements I had not considered while creating my observation material. At the same time, I knew I had to stick as much as possible to the pre-established format, so as to be able to collect measurable and comparable data. As a result, I tried to fill in my observation sheets using common sense, thus sticking to my pre-designed structure while not ignoring relevant elements arising during in-class observation. While presenting my observation sheets, I also make reference to students' answers to the pre-unit questionnaire, sent out for pupils to fill out on February 9, 2023. Although unfortunately not all students were able to fill out the questionnaire, I believe these answers still offer interesting insights on learners' self-perception, especially when it comes to questions on specific pronunciation skills. Here below, I present the results of my observation.

3.5.1. Pre-unit interview with the teacher (February 6, 2023)

How many students do you have in 1B?
27 (21 girls, 6 boys)
Are there any students with disability, any sort of difficulty or any particular cases you think should be mentioned?
1 student has cognitive issues and the class also has 1 case of anorexia. One boy often skips class, he seems to be anxious about learning.
What kind of a class is it character wise? How is their English?
It is a lively and energetic mixed-ability class. They come out of the covid 19 years in middle school. Their English is at poor level because they just had English online due to the pandemic. She provides the *Piano di Lavoro* (Appendix A), a document containing teaching objectives for 1B's English curriculum. In its introduction, I read:

> *"SITUAZIONE DI PARTENZA*
> *Il livello linguistico della classe in ingresso rilevato dalla prova comune predisposta dal Dipartimento d'Inglese, dai primi interventi di produzione orale e da una breve produzione scritta svolta a casa, va da un livello generale elementare di sopravvivenza A2 a un livello intermedio di soglia B (solo per alcuni elementi). Il punteggio medio raggiunto nel test d'ingresso risulta 50,5/60 con 3 studenti che non hanno raggiunto la soglia minima fissata dal Dipartimento a 42 punti su 60. La maggior parte della classe sa scrivere e parlare della*

vita quotidiana, comprendere ed interagire su argomenti familiari con descrizioni semplici del proprio vissuto e ambiente, riferite a bisogni immediati e situazioni concrete. La partecipazione è vivace e gli studenti devono acquisire un metodo di studio adeguato A questo riguardo il Consiglio di Classe ha predisposto una programmazione comune per raggiungere obiettivi educativi e didattici trasversali." (p.1)

(STARTING SITUATION

The starting language level of the class derived from the common test prepared by the English Department, initial oral production tasks and a short written production written at home, ranges from a general elementary level of survival A2 to an intermediate level of threshold B (only for some students). The average score achieved in the placement test is 50.5/60 with 3 students failing to reach the minimum threshold set by the Department at 42 points out of 60. Most of the class can write and talk about everyday life, understand and interact on familiar topics with simple descriptions of their own experience and environment, referring to immediate needs and concrete situations. Participation is lively and students need to acquire an appropriate method of study. In this regard, the Class Council has prepared a common schedule to achieve cross-curricular educational objectives.)

Do you think they like English? Are they motivated?
Yes, as a class. One boy often skips class, he seems to be anxious about learning.

As far as you know, are there any students in class involved in musical and/or performative activities? (Acting, dancing, singing, playing an instrument etc.)
Some students play an instrument, some dance and one sings.

Are your students used to working with devices such as laptops and phones for didactic purposes?
Not yet. But the teacher is not against the use of phones in class.

What teaching methods and approaches do you normally use in class? Are your students used to in-group activities based on Cooperative Learning? Do you believe in this method? How is your students' feedback about these activities? Do they enjoy working in group?
The teacher makes broad use of Communicative Approach. She uses both group works and the talk and chalk approach. She uses a mixture of methods. She believes in cooperative learning, but the class is pretty noisy and loud, so she suggests that I should use it with moderation. According to the teacher, her students are not against any particular method. She adds that they might like the workshop method.

What are your didactic goals for this year in 1B?
She says her didactic goals for 1B include lifelong learning and the development of transversal skills (such as being able to talk in front of an audience.) For more detailed linguistic objectives, she suggests that I read 1B's *Piano di lavoro* (Appendix A)

3.5.2. Pre-session teacher observation (February 6,9 and 15, 2023), 4h

How does the teacher behave in class? Is she motivating and involving?
She is performative. She makes use of her body, hands and arms. She is standing most of the time. I notice she is also very active with her facial expressions. Moreover, she plays with voice volume to attract attention. Yes, I think she is motivating and involving. My impression seems to be confirmed by her students' satisfaction gradient summarized in the pie chart here below:

Do you like studying English at school?
19 risposte

- 1 Not at all
- 2 Not really
- 3 I am neutral on it
- 4 I like it
- 5 I love it

78,9%

15,8%
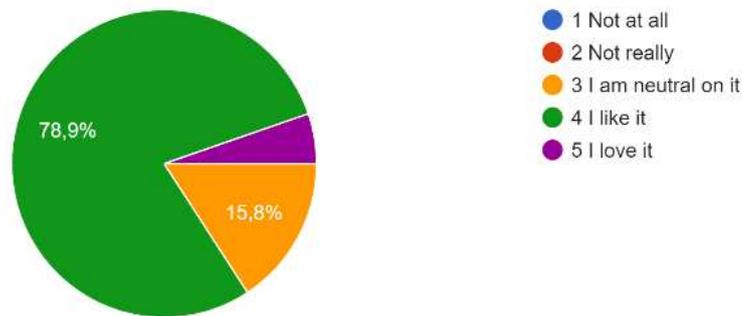
What's her attitude towards her students? Does she respect them?

She respects her students and never looks down on them. She never humiliates them and when there is background buzz, she authoritatively demands silence without screaming or getting mad. I notice that whenever a person is talking and struggling to find the right word, she asks the class to help them without blaming the student for their non-excellent performance.

What is the teacher's English-speaking rate? Calculate it in terms of minutes!

She speaks English 100% of the time. She sporadically uses some Italian when she reads official school communications in Italian or deals with bureaucracy.

What teaching methods is she using? (Lecturing, cooperative groups, etc.)

She often breaks out the class into groups. Nevertheless, the lesson is mostly delivered in the talk-and-chalk style, so I would not consider it as an example of Cooperative Learning. Especially when explaining the pronunciation of the past simple of regular verbs, she asks the class to repeat the verb out loud right after her several times, until she is satisfied with the result. I think this can be associated with the pattern drilling method. One of such method's biggest flaws is that it gets easily boring for students (cf. 2.3.3). Nevertheless, most students do not seem bored at all. They lively participate in the activity and they sound almost native in the production of these single verbs.

Is she more deductive or inductive in her teaching style?

I would say both, but dominantly inductive. For example, she relies on students' intuition to find out whether the ending of a past simple regular from is to be pronounced as /t/, /d/ or /id/. After providing a number of relevant examples, she guides her students to find patterns and to "build" the rule accordingly.

Does she use any technological devices in class?

Hardly ever.

What kind of activities is she proposing?

She is proposing a lot of teacher-driven activities on pronunciation.

How much does she stick to the textbook? Is she using authentic material? Is the material updated and relevant for her students?

In the overall planning of the units, she sticks to the textbook. While she teaches, she makes very little use of the book, mostly to correct homework or to read short texts from it. She has never used authentic materials so far. I do not think the material she uses is necessarily updated and relevant for her students, but I think she makes up for it with her lively and motivating personality and attitude.

FOCUS ON PAST SIMPLE

On what aspects of Past simple is she insisting on? How is she presenting them?
She is insisting on the pronunciation of the past tense of regular verbs and the spelling exceptions in the formation of past simple of regular verbs. In these days, she is focusing on form rather than use. I notice she does not refer to authentic examples of language in context to explain grammar. Nevertheless, the definition of English proposed by her students is very promising and makes me think she normally uses in-context language. As showed in the graph below, almost 90% of her students sees English as a means to communicate rather than a set of grammar rules and vocabulary lists (0%)

Mark the option that best describes your idea of English.
19 risposte
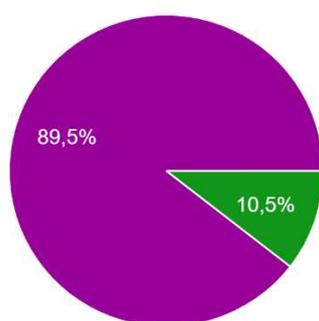
- 1 English is a subject: I study it only because I want to get good grades at…
- 2 English is a set of grammar rules and vocabulary lists I need to study and le…
- 3 English is a language. It is a set of grammar rules and vocabulary lists th…
- 4 English is a language. It is a set of grammar rules and vocabulary lists th…
- 5 English is a means to communicate. I am learning English because I want to…

FOCUS ON PRONUNCIATION

On what aspects of the English pronunciation is she insisting on? Is she presenting just the British allophones or also other varieties of English?
As already mentioned, she is focusing on the pronunciation of past simple of regular verbs. I am positively impressed by the fact that she highly values English varieties. For example, she shows different videos with different accents to explain the same pronunciation rule (pronunciation of regular verbs). She stops and focuses on the differences among the varieties of English. Consistently with the communicative approach, she does not correct rough pronunciation mistakes as long as the utterance is understandable. She does not correct clear interferences with Italian accent. As analyzed in Chapter 2, one possible flaw of communicative approach is that very little attention is paid to pronunciation (cf. 2.3.5). If privileging understandability over pronunciation accuracy can be recommendable for a number of reasons, I also think more attention should be paid to pronunciation accuracy, especially when the target group consists of students whose major is English and whose teacher is a native speaker herself. This is even more recommendable if, as indicated in the graph below, 100% of the students of the target group explicitly express their desire to learn how to sound more like a native speaker.

Would you like to improve your English pronunciation skills? Does the idea of sounding more like a native speaker attract you?

19 risposte

- YES
- NO

100%
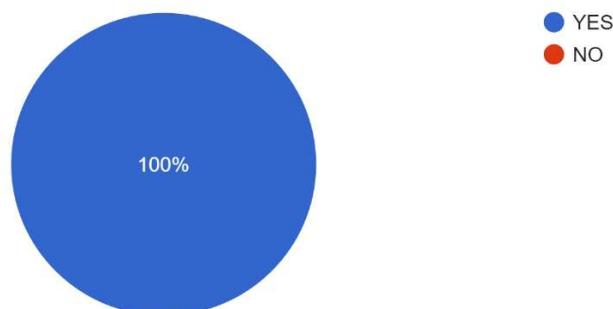
Does she use the IPA alphabet?
She doesn't directly mention IPA or refer to it as a broad and complex system functioning as a comprehensive inventory of human language sounds. Nevertheless, although she doesn't directly call them phonemes, she does make use of phonemes by writing them down on the blackboard to clarify the distinction between /t/, /d/ or /id/ (again, referring to the pronunciation of past simple of regular verbs).

3.5.3. February 6,9 and 15, 2023. Pre-session student observation, 4h

How do students behave in class? Are they motivated? Shy? Bored? Noisy? Passive? Well- or bad-behaved?
My observation confirms exactly what indicated by the teacher in the interview and in the *Piano di lavoro* about 1B's behavior and attitude in class: it is a lively, responsive and stimulating class that actively participates in the proposed activities. Although they can be a bit noisy sometimes, they easily return to silence whenever asked to do so. They respect each other and their teacher. I also feel very respected. I think this is a good group to work with.

What is their attitude towards their teacher? Do they look up to her/ respect her/follow her…?
They respect her and feel respected by her. I think her being a native speaker plays a role in this dimension of reciprocal respect. It is my impression they admire and look up to her because she is perceived to be very competent in her subject. I feel I am in a relaxed but vibrating learning environment.

What is the students' English-speaking rate?
When asked to, they use English. Because of the lesson type, their speaking rate in general is very low. But whenever talking, they use English most of the time.

FOCUS ON PAST SIMPLE

Do they use the past simple while talking in class? Do you notice any recurring mistakes about the past simple? (e.g. irregular verbs, affirmative/negative/interrogative forms, pronunciation difficulties etc.)
They do use past simple, and accurately most of the times, but only in closed tasks and hardly ever in free utterances. The activities I am observing are more form-oriented than context-oriented, so I cannot really observe them "in action" while independently using past simple in original sentences.

FOCUS ON PRONUNCIATION

Generally speaking, what is the students' level pronunciation wise?
Overall, the pronunciation is acceptable but I notice numerous, repeated and relevant mistakes with the exception of 3 or 4 students who show very good pronunciation skills. In particular, I notice numerous interferences with Italian. I have the impression they can significantly improve their pronunciation if systematically guided into a study to identify and classify nuances in the production of English sounds. Interestingly, my observation does not completely correspond to the students' self-perception on their pronunciation skills (see graph below). While I agree that the majority of the students is on average, I also think there is a number of students whose pronunciation presents significant flaws. Nevertheless, in the following self-reflective question, none of the students indicates she/he has a bad pronunciation.

In general, how would you rate your English pronunciation skills?
19 risposte

- 1 I think I am very bad
- 2 I think I am bad
- 3 I think I am on average
- 4 I think I am good
- 5 I think I am excellent

42,1%
57,9%
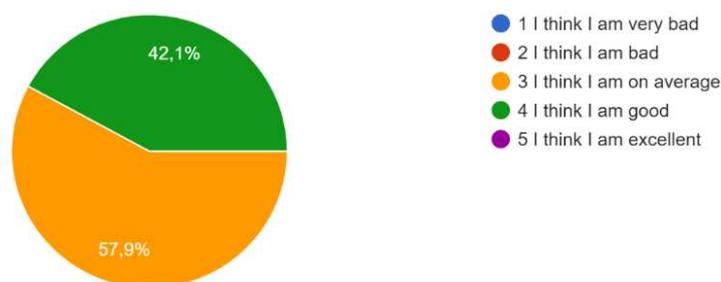
Do you think they are doing their best in sounding non-Italian? Do you have the impression they are talking with an Italian accent because that's the best they can do or might there be any other reasons?
Not at all. I do not see any particularly effort to sound less Italian than they do. Primarily, I think they do not give their best pronunciation because they are not asked to do so. Also, I sense it is a defense strategy not to be pointed at by other classmates as the one who wants to show off their pronunciation. Nevertheless, when students are explicitly asked to listen to and repeat the sounds as a group, the overall result is very good. This suggests that if stimulated, they can significantly improve their pronunciation.

Can they distinguish between /i/ and /ɪ/?
The majority cannot. It is my impression it is just because nobody has ever made them aware that they are 2 different sounds. They just use /i/ simply because it belongs to the Italian inventory. I find it rather concerning, especially considering that the variation between /i/ and /ɪ/ is phonemically relevant (/pʰi:tʃ/ and /pʰɪtʃ/ are very different in meaning). Some students make sporadic and probably unaware (and yet correct) use of /ɪ/. This seems to confirm it is just a problem of awareness rather than physical articulation of the sound. In addition, it is promising that more than 84% of the students intuitively think that the vowel sounds in "gig" and "sweet" are different (see graph below)

Do you think the vowel sound in "gig" and "sweet" is the same sound?
19 risposte
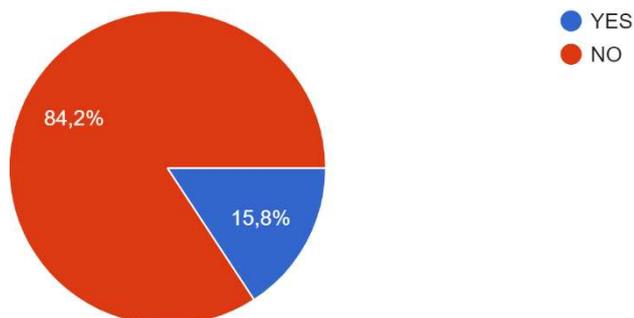
Can they distinguish between /æ/ and /ɛ/?
The majority cannot. It is my impression it is just because nobody has ever made them aware that they are 2 different sounds, not because they cannot articulatorily produce them. They just use /ɛ/ because it belongs to the Italian inventory. I find it rather concerning, especially considering that the variation between /æ/ and /ɛ/ is phonemically relevant (/bæt/ and /bɛt/ are very different in meaning). Some students make sporadic and probably unaware but correct use of /æ/. This seems to confirm it is just a problem of awareness rather than physical articulation of the sound.

Can they use the /bʌt/ sound or do they tend to use the /a/ sound instead?
With the exception of 1 or 2 students, nobody uses /ʌ/. Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood and I agree on that it is a very tricky sound for Italian students. It might imply articulatory issues because it requires a particular mouth position Italian speakers are not really used to. To overcome this problem, I will use an app, "AE Pronunciation", providing for each phoneme mouth gifs and a written description of how to pronounce it accurately.
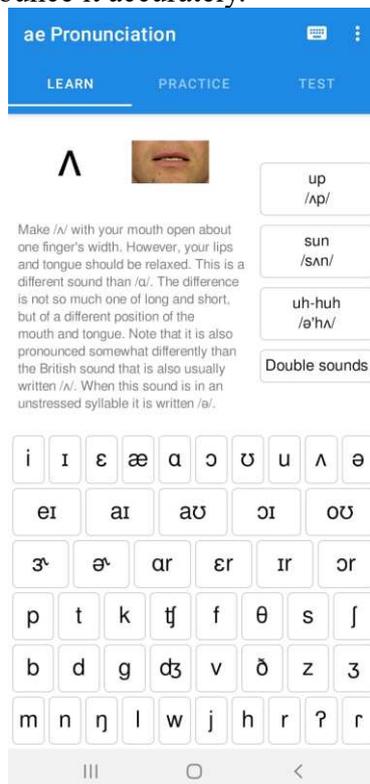
Can they distinguish between /o/ and /ɔ/?
Yes, most students can.

Do they happen to realize flips like /ɾ/ in words like "party"?
Yes, many students happen to realize spontaneous and unsystematic flips. This suggests that they have several out-of-class English inputs since their teacher is British and pronounces "party" as [pʰa:ti:] rather than [pʰaɾi]. Consistently with this assumption, more than 42% of the students affirms that they sometimes use English out of class; 31% use it often, and almost 16% of the students claim to use English out of class very often. Significantly, nobody answered "never" to the question "Do you normally use English out of class?" See the pie chart here below:

Do you normally use English out of class? (e.g. talking to foreign friends, listening to songs/podcasts in English, watching series or movi...aming etc.)Do you like studying English at school?
19 risposte

- 1 Never
- 2 Hardly ever
- 3 Sometimes
- 4 Often
- 5 Very often

31,6%   15,8%   10,5%   42,1%
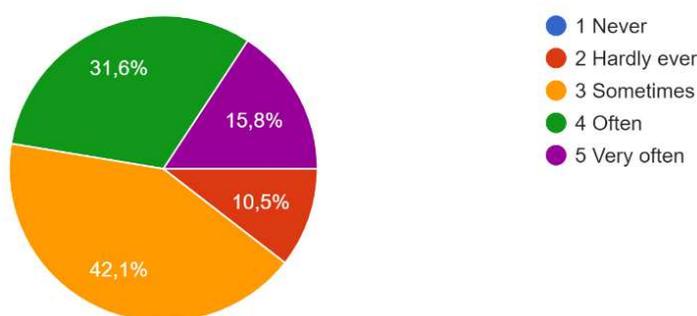
Do you notice any spontaneous aspiration after voiceless plosives? (/pʰ/ in "possible")
No, I do not. Nevertheless, when the teacher asks them to repeat a verb that accidentally contains [pʰ], [tʰ] or [kʰ], most students are very likely to pronounce aspiration likewise their teacher.

Do they pronounce schwas word finally? (Very recurrent mistake among Italian speakers of English)
They do, very much! I notice it has much to do with the typical up-lifting Italian tone, particularly marked in Veneto accent. The strict relation between word-final schwas and typically-Italian uplifting tone really fascinates me and would be worth further investigation.

Can they pronounce the past forms of regular verbs correctly? Stopped → /stɑpt/ and not /stɑped/
During the specific exercise on the pronunciation of regular forms of the past simple, they are excellent at it and, as observed by Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood, they almost sound native! Nevertheless, when the activity in not pronunciation-focused, at least 10 students happen to pronounce /stɑped/. Although this happens, this might be due to distraction or laziness, since 100% of the students participating in the questionnaire claims they would not pronounce a vowel sound between P and D in "stopped", as indicated in the chart below.

Would you pronounce a vowel sound between P and D in "stopped"?
19 risposte

- YES
- NO

100%
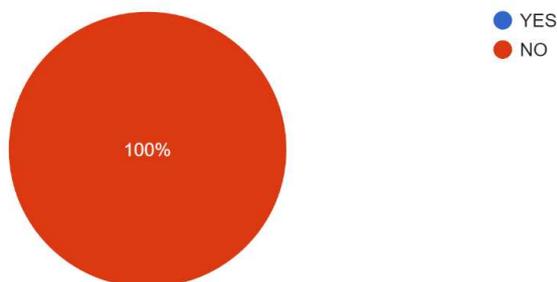
Do they use dark l [ɫ]?
Unexpectedly, most students do. It seems to me they do not do it completely unsystematically. Although not fully consistently, most of them seem to follow a sort of pattern.
Do they pronounce a full "g" word-finally in ing-ending words? ("Thing" →/θɪng/ rather than /θɪŋ/)
I perceive the class is split on it. About 50% does, while the second half does not.
Do they pronounce /θ/ and /ð/ accurately?
Overall, they can distinguish between voiceless and voiced version of this fricative. Articulatorily, this is a potentially tricky sound, but I notice they can produce it accurately. This might have to do with the fact that they also study Spanish (in Spanish, /θ/ is a very common phoneme). Nevertheless, I notice at least 20% of the learners occasionally substitute these phonemes with an easier /t/. My take on it is in line with the data collected in the pre-unit questionnaire, in which almost 95% of the participants believes to be on average, good or excellent at pronouncing /θ/. (Check the pie chart here below).

How good do you think you are at pronouncing the TH sound in "THink"?
19 risposte

- 1 I think I am very bad
- 2 I think I am bad
- 3 I think I am on average
- 4 I think I am good
- 5 I think I am excellent

68,4%   10,5%

15,8%
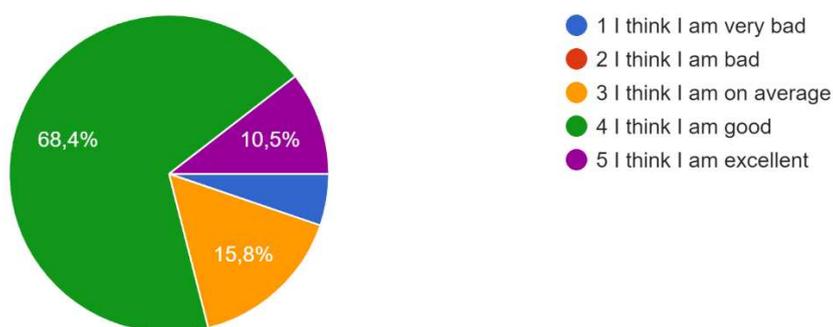
Do they pronounce the /h/ sounds or tend to omit them? (If yes, how many students do?)

They can perfectly pronounce it. Nevertheless, I notice at least 25% of the learners occasionally omit it, probably just for a matter of "laziness". Again, this is in line with the students' opinion. As

114

can be seen in the graph, 26% claims to be on average at pronouncing the/h/, while the remaining 73% think they are good.

How good do you think you are at pronouncing the H sound in "Homeless"?
19 risposte
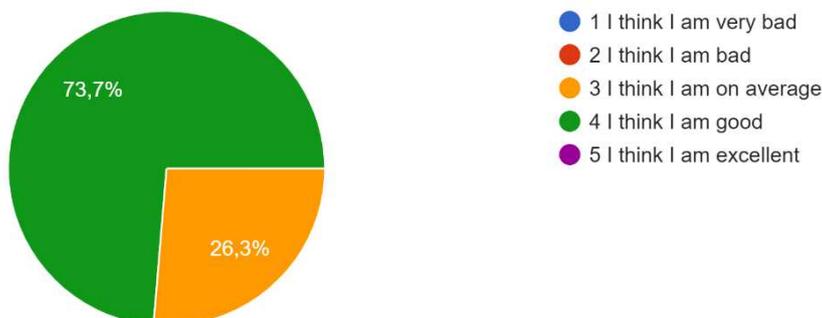
Do they pronounce the English /r/ sound accurately?
They can perfectly pronounce it. Nevertheless, I notice at least 20% of the learners occasionally roll it the Italian way, probably just for a matter of "laziness". Consistently with my impressions, nobody thinks they are "bad" or "very bad" at pronouncing /r/, as indicated in the graph below.

How good do you think you are at pronouncing the R sound in "Red"?
19 risposte
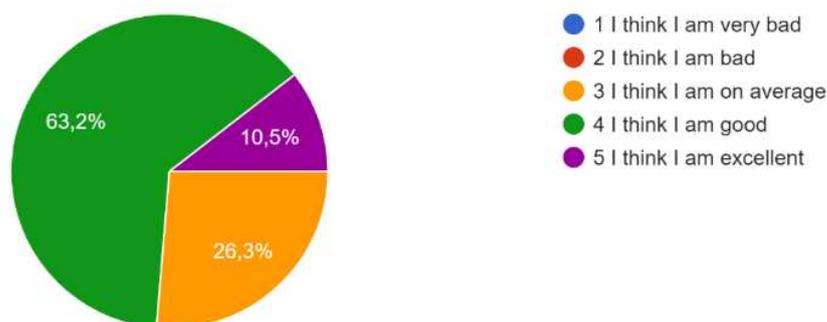
Do they pronounce /ɚ/ (unstressed) or /ɝ/ (stressed) accurately? Do they prefer the British variant with a schwa?
Let's take "her" as an example. 100% of the students lean for an American pronunciation rather than a British one (nobody said [hə]). Nevertheless, by the way they pronounce it, I am not sure they are aware "er" is pronounced as 1 single sound (/ɝ/). It seems they are producing something like /hɛr/.

3.5.4. 1B's relationship to music and the performing arts

In this study, I investigate whether and how music and the performing arts can enhance EFL acquisition in EFL teaching contexts. As proposed in Posner et al.'s *Arts Theory* (2008, cf. 2.3), music can be a beneficial tool in terms of motivation since most young people listen to music and/or play an instrument in their free time. In other words, it is hypothesized that music can serve as a link to connect teachers' learning objectives to students' private interests and needs. As can be seen in the 2 pie charts here below, this seems to be the case for 1B: not only do 100% of the participants declare that they love music, but they also show no hesitation in describing music as a "potentially effective tool to learn languages".

Do you like music?
19 risposte

100%

- YES
- NO

Do you think music is a potentially effective tool to learn languages?
19 risposte

100%

- YES
- NO
- I have no idea

The enthusiasm I cautiously derive from these answers seems to be confirmed by the fact that more than 73% of the participants would like (or love) to try to use music and musical movies in the English classroom, while only 10,5% state they would not like it. The remaining 15,8% of the participants is neutral on it (see pie chart below). In light of these results, I conclude that 1B is a good target group to carry out my experiment about teaching EFL through activities based on music and the performing arts.

Would you like to try to use music and musical movies in the English classroom? Is the idea appealing to you?

19 risposte

- 1 Not at all
- 2 Not really
- 3 I am neutral on it
- 4 I would like to try
- 5 I would love it!

21,1%

52,6%

10,5%

15,8%
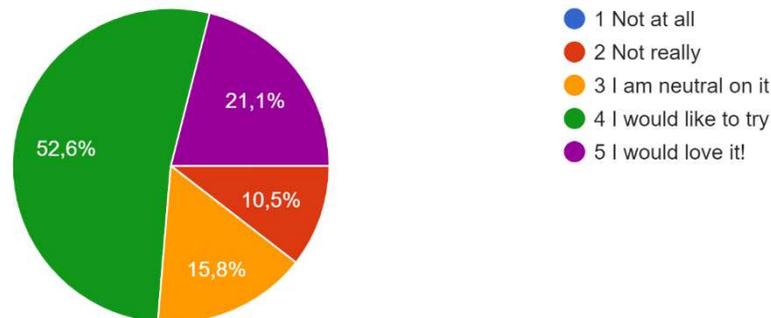
3.5.5. Finding patterns in my observation data

After triangulating 1B's context from 3 different perspectives (what I see, what Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood sees and what the learners see), I now draw some partial conclusions trying to recognize relevant patterns in the data I gathered. Overall, I found consistency between Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood's and my opinions especially about the students' behavior in class and their starting English level. Moreover, as the teacher told me, I was able to confirm that some students sing, dance or play an instrument through informal after-class chats with the students. This is a good sign, indicating that the teacher has at least basic knowledge of her students' interests and passions. Through this questionnaire, the teacher is now aware that her students would like to improve their pronunciation in order to sound more like native speakers. Hopefully, this will result in future activities specifically designed to further improve pronunciation of English sounds. The claim that students like to study English at school is confirmed by my observation: the teacher is very good at motivating learners and keeping their attention although she makes no use (as far as I was able to see) of authentic materials and often makes use of language out of context. In light of all the advantages of using authentic materials in EFL teaching as thoroughly described in Chapter 1, I am willing to include and make large use authentic materials in my unit. Especially considering 1B's curiosity and enthusiasm towards music and the performing arts, as showed in 3.4.4., I will use "The Prom" (Murphy, 2020), a Netflix music movie that offers a lot of links to music- and performing-art-related activities. Talking about past simple, it seems to me learners know at least how the past simple of regular verbs is formed and pronounced. Since it is my responsibility to teach them how to use all forms of past simple as agreed with the teacher, I will have to expand on it by introducing affirmative, negative and interrogative forms of both regular and irregular verbs. Since they worked a lot on form, I will also focus on past simple use in context by analyzing when and how the past simple is used in "The Prom". Since I noticed they have not had their chance yet to produce original sentences using the past simple, I will also plan activities where they can create communicative contexts for broad and spontaneous use of past simple. Pronunciation wise, I have the impression they think they are slightly better than I think they are. This element of optimism fascinates me and makes me think it is going to be easier and more rewarding to work with a group that think and know that they can become good to excellent speakers of English. In addition, the results of my observation suggest that learners mainly use inaccurate sounds when they are not made aware of it,

or when they are not really putting effort on sounding more native. Therefore, I exclude the presence of systematic articulatory or physical issues that might prevent them from pronouncing English sounds accurately. Sporadically and unsystematically, some students do reproduce accurate sounds without apparently following any particular pattern. This suggests that making them more aware of pronunciation nuances through a systematic observation of authentic language in context might be enough for them to significantly improve their pronunciation skills. All this considered, and in light of the promising results of my investigation on the learners' willingness to be taught an English unit using music and the performing arts, I conclude that 1B is the right group to realize my experimental study with.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter provides a step-by-step description of my unit "The Prom". In this detailed presentation of my unit, all teaching materials (slides, quizzes, home assignments, authentic materials, assessment grids etc.) are included to provide a comprehensive report of my experiment. Every lesson, home assignment or workshop is presented in chronological order and precise dates are provided. I dedicate one section to each relevant step, be it a lesson, a home assignment or a workshop session. Each section consists of 2 parts. In part 1, I relate about the specific activities carried out and provide relating materials. In part 2, I report the diary I kept during the unit, integrating its contents (e.g., field notes, general thoughts, after-class considerations or specific anecdotes containing) with my in-progress analysis of the data I gathered as the unit proceeded. I analyze my practice-derived data making punctual references to the theories and hypotheses formulated in Chapters 1 and 2, so as to measure their validity in light of my in-class experience. This chapter ends with a post-unit questionnaire analysis and with a final section dedicated to my concluding remarks. In this section, I wrap up the key concepts of my analysis drawing conclusions on my study in light of all the theories, hypotheses and praxis-based data presented and analyzed in the 4 chapters. Eventually, I provide a tentative answer to my research question on the possible beneficial effects of the use of music and the performing arts in EFL teaching.

4.2 February 12, Assignment 1: Carnival break assignment

Part 1: Detailed description

Since Assignment 1 is a rather big one and is due on February 21, I decide to assign it even before lesson 1, planned on February 16. As can be read below, it implies watching a full movie, answering some questions on a Word file and recording an audio message as a result of a "shadowing activity" of some movie extracts. Because of the complexity of the tasks, I want my students to have an appropriate amount of time (9 or 10 days) to complete them without feeling stressed or overwhelmed. I also keep in mind carnival break is on February 20-22: I want my students to be able to freely choose whether to do their assignment before or during the break, without making it difficult for those who planned a Carnival family trip, for example. Moreover, watching "The Prom" before the unit provides students with a shared context (knowledge of plot, main characters, songs, etc.) to build on throughout the lessons. This is in line with the concept of *thematic continuity*, which, as described in 1.3, is one of the advantages of using lengthier authentic materials in EFL learning contexts.

CARNIVAL BREAK ASSIGNMENT

Due Februay 21, 11:59 pm

- Watch the musical movie "The Prom" on Netflix **IN ENGLISH** (subtitles **in English** are admitted and encouraged. Subtitles in Italian are not allowed.)
- SHADOWING ACTIVITY (check TikTok reel):
  1) **Pick 3 short scenes from the movie (1 or 2 sentences each)** containing **English sounds** that you find **difficult** to **pronounce** and that you would like to improve. To identify these sounds you should ask yourself: "**What sounds are difficult for me?** What are some of the sounds in which I really sound non-native? What sounds would I like to produce more accurately in order to sound more like a native speaker?" Be sure you've **identified your target sounds before you start** the activity.
  2) **"Shadow" your 3 scenes: Repeat the actor's lines as accurately as possible**, trying to **imitate** their **intonation**, communicative **intention** and paying particular attention to the **pronunciation** of your **target sounds**. You can record yourself several times and listen back to your recordings.

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3) When you're satisfied with your shadowing, send **me 1 (and ONLY 1) WhatsApp audio message** in which I can hear both the 3 original lines from the movie and your own versions of them. Send me the audio message on WhatsApp + a **Word file** including the following information:

a) What three sentences are you going to repeat? Type them down.
b) What are your target sounds included in the 3 sentences? List them.
c) Why do you find them difficult? What is difficult with these sounds? (You should answer this question referring specifically to each of your target sounds.)
d) Do you think this activity was helpful? Do you feel your pronunciation of your target sounds has improved?
e) Why do you think Roberto has asked you to do this activity? How did you feel during this activity? What did you like? What didn't you like?

REMEMBER TO SEND ME YOUR **AUDIO MESSAGE** + A **WORD DOCUMENT** WITH THE REQUIRED INFORMATION ON OUR **WHATSAPP ENGLISH GROUP** AND NOT LATER THAN **FEBRUARY 21, 11.59 pm**

If you have any doubts or questions, I'll be happy to help you… just reach out!

Have fun! I am sure you will do great 😊

20 students submit the assignment before the deadline, 4 students submit it in a slight delay (less than 24 hours), while 3 students do not submit it at all (2 of which with valid justification). Here below I provide the submission of one of the students (Unfortunately, the audio messages cannot be played).
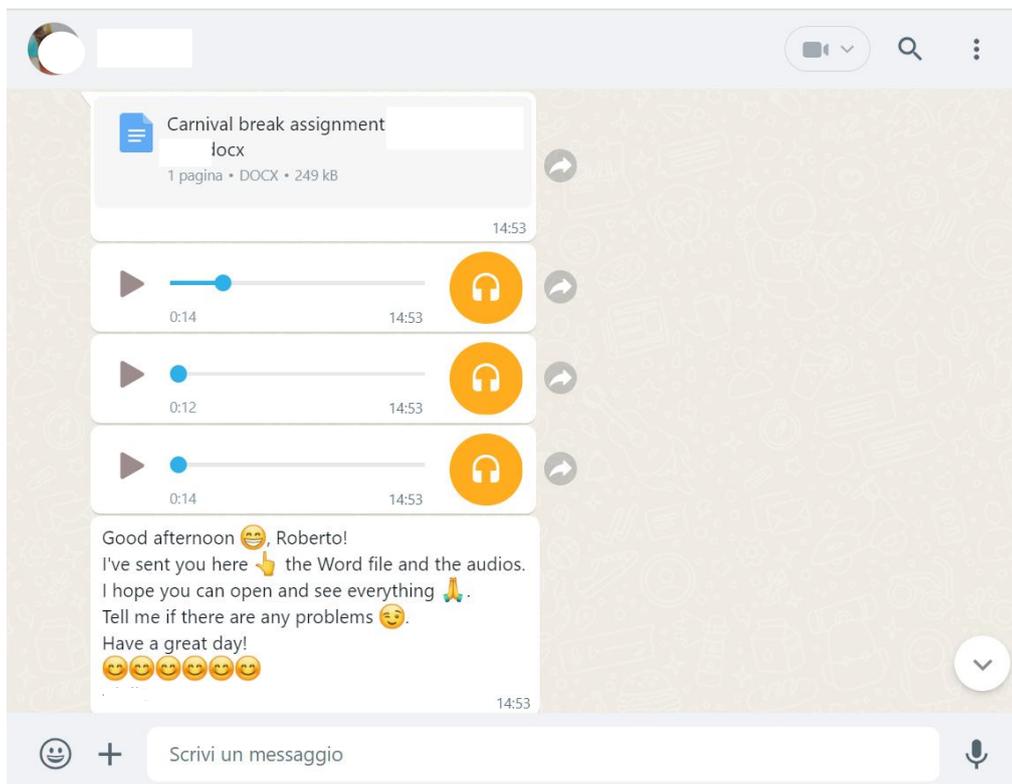
CARNIVAL BREAK ASSIGNMENT
(Working on sounds and pronunciation)

English is a particular language: most of the time you write a word in a way, but you pronounce it in a completely different one. There are also so many sounds that do not exist in Italian and that's where it gets complicated. Today I'm trying to improve the past tense regular verbs pronunciation, the /r/ sound

and the /-ing/ sound.
Let's start!

First scene:
- She's from Edgewater, Indiana. She's a lesbian. She wanted to take her girlfriend to the high school prom… and the PTA went apeshit, and they cancelled it.
- They cancelled prom? Are they allowed to do that?
- No.

I find them quite difficult because the pronunciation of the past tense regular verbs isn't always the same: the -ed can be pronounced with the /t/, the /d/ or the /id/ sound.

Second scene:
- You have two living parents that you'll never be nearer to than you are right now. I think you should call them.
- No, they threw me away!
- Well, did they really?

The English /r/ sound is very different than the Italian /r/ sound; that's why sometimes I have a hard time saying it well.

Third scene:
- Does every girl go through this?
- Yes, all across town, girls are spraying in their tans and whitening their teeth, trying lo look their best for the prom, but they're wasting their time because they don't have the glow that you have right now.

This is a tricky sound because we write it, but we don't highlight it that much when we say words ending with it and there isn't in Italian.

THOUGHTS AND CONSIDERATIONS:
I think this activity was really helpful because I got the opportunity to watch an American movie (and to listen and recognize the differences between the British and the American English) and to work on the pronunciation of the English sounds.
I've repeated lots of time the sounds I'm a bit insecure about and I think I've improved.
I presume Roberto asked me to do this activity because he wanted me to study and improve my English pronunciation by having fun.
I felt secure and focus on this activity. I particularly liked the part when I had to repeat multiple times the sentences I've chosen. I enjoyed it because I felt like an actress.

Part 2: Notes and in-process analysis

— As indicated in Chapter 1 (see section 1.3), full-length movies can be very effective teaching tools since their plot can contribute to motivate learners and provide them with an authentic language context in which vocabulary recycling can take place. Nevertheless, it was also remarked that movies can be functional to language acquisition as long as the teacher uses them properly. In my case, for example, I decide to assign the movie as a homework because it would take up too much time during my curricular teaching hours. Moreover, I am not expecting my first-year students to achieve a full word-by-word understanding of the movie. I rather make use of the movie to set a shared atmosphere, a communicative context and a general plot to base on as the unit proceeds. It is also my hope that the movie activates some emotions, whose beneficial effects on long-term memory have been analyzed in section 2.3.5. On the other hand, as discussed in chapter 1, full-length movies do not lend themselves to analytical and systematic form-focused observation, especially when working with first-year students. For this reason, specific language activities in class (see Lesson 1) will be carried out using a way shorter video excerpt (12 minutes) containing the most relevant dialogues and scenes of the movie (NOT a trailer: see 1.3 for the disadvantages of using movie trailers for pedagogical purposes). Just by observing the layout of this student's submission, it is my impression the movie did its job: she spontaneously chooses to write her assignment on a pink page and to include the movie logo, thus setting a very clear context and atmosphere, even in the submission of a take-home assignment.

— As discussed in section 2.3.3, pattern drilling methods and listen-and-repeat activities can be effective methods, although their practical realization often involves the students getting passive and potentially bored. Through the shadowing activity introduced with a Tik Tok reel, I am asking my students to actively choose an extract from the movie and shadow it until they are satisfied with the result. In other words, the resulting "drilling" is a self-imposed one: they spontaneously choose to listen to and repeat a specific line because they want to improve their performance until they feel ready to record themselves and send me the final audio message. Moreover, this task is student-tailored and highly contextualized: it is up to learners to decide which of the characters to shadow, trying to emulate pitch, intonation and communicative intention. As discussed in 2.3.5, such prosodic features are also neglected in standard EFL teaching settings. This shadowing activity is a concrete and easily realizable technique to bring prosodic reflection to the EFL classroom. The effectiveness of this activity seems to be confirmed by the student's final considerations: "I've repeated lots of time the sounds I'm a bit insecure about and I think I've improved. I presume Roberto asked me to do this activity because he wanted me to study and improve my English pronunciation by having fun. I felt secure and focused on this activity. I particularly liked the part when I had to repeat multiple times the sentences I've chosen. I enjoyed it because I felt like an actress."

— Santipolo's BLT (2017) model (see 1.2) remarks the importance of tailoring language activities to students' needs in terms of utility and usability. Consistently, this assignment can be seen as a highly personalized one: every student has the chance to tailor their assignment basing on their own need to improve in the pronunciation of a set of specific sounds. As a result, this assignment is not perceived as an impersonal task in which students must meet general standards arbitrarily set by the teacher. On the contrary, it can serve as a tool the teacher provides to help guide and support the student's personal learning process.

— In Chapter 2 (see 2.4), I propose that any teaching unit should transversally hint at lifelong learning as a long-term goal. In this assignment (check tasks 3 b,c,d), I train my students to develop self-assessment skills by asking them to critically reflect on their own pronunciation

flaws. Within the framework of lifelong learning, section 2.5 (point 4) has remarked that students should reflect on the teaching techniques utilized by their teachers, so as to become aware of their preferred learning modes. In this view, task 3e is a practical attempt to introduce learners to metacognitive thinking. By asking them why they think I proposed this activity, I want them to critically reflect on my methods and on my teaching choices to make them aware of where we stand in our acquisition process and where we want to get to.

4.3 February 16, Lesson 1

Part 1: Detailed description

I start my lesson introducing myself, explaining who I am, why I am bumping into their class and how long I am staying. I also dedicate some time to thank Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood for letting me in and helping me in the planning of the unit. I explain the time we are going to spend together is not be understood as a break or a "special event", but as a normal unit belonging to their official English curriculum. After asking them some questions about them and how they feel about this upcoming unit, I introduce the topic, although most students already know it because of Ass. 1.
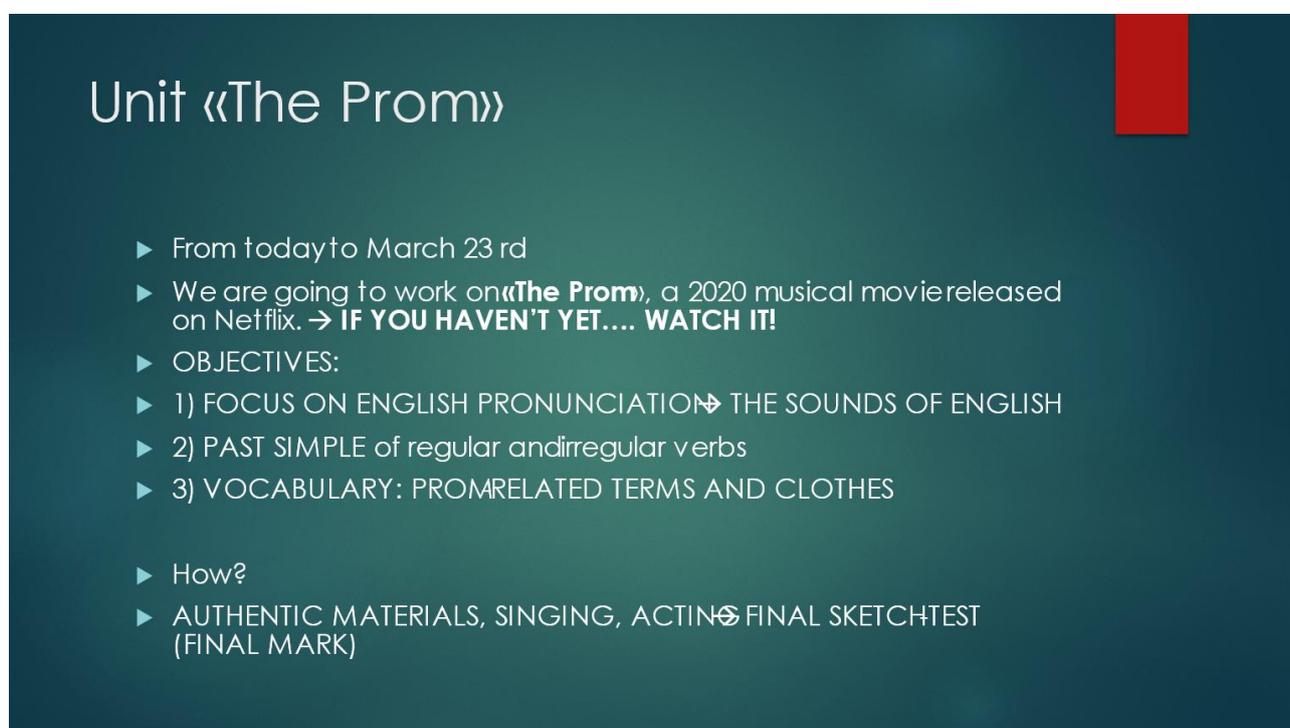
As can be seen in the slide above, I decide to mention objectives, methods and final testing immediately. I want my students to follow me, but I also want them to know exactly where I am taking them since the very first lesson. Since it is my intention to create a relaxed atmosphere of trust and reciprocal respect, I want them to feel there is no trick they should be afraid of. As a teacher, I am putting all my cards on the table to show them they can trust me and they can reach out to me if they need any help. After this brief introduction, we begin with the global phase. I play the 12-minute video (see slide below) we are going to work with the next couple of days, so students can familiarize with it. While playing the video is a way to review the plot of "The Prom", it is also a way to set a general context and an atmosphere for those who have not yet watched the movie. This immersive listening activity can sound overwhelming, but one should keep in mind most of the students have already watched the movie at home, so they have already seen the highlights contained in the video. Moreover, I am not requiring a full and detailed comprehensions of every line, but a general overview on the movie such as:

1. What is a prom?
2. Where is the movie set?
3. Who are the main characters? What is their names?
4. What is their objective?
5. What stands in between?

I verify the students got these key points through a quick brainstorming activity. Impressively, they are very responsive and add details not included in the video giving me proof that most of them have already watched the movie at home.

Emma and Alyssa's Love Story in Full | The Prom

▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xVI5qGpyMY
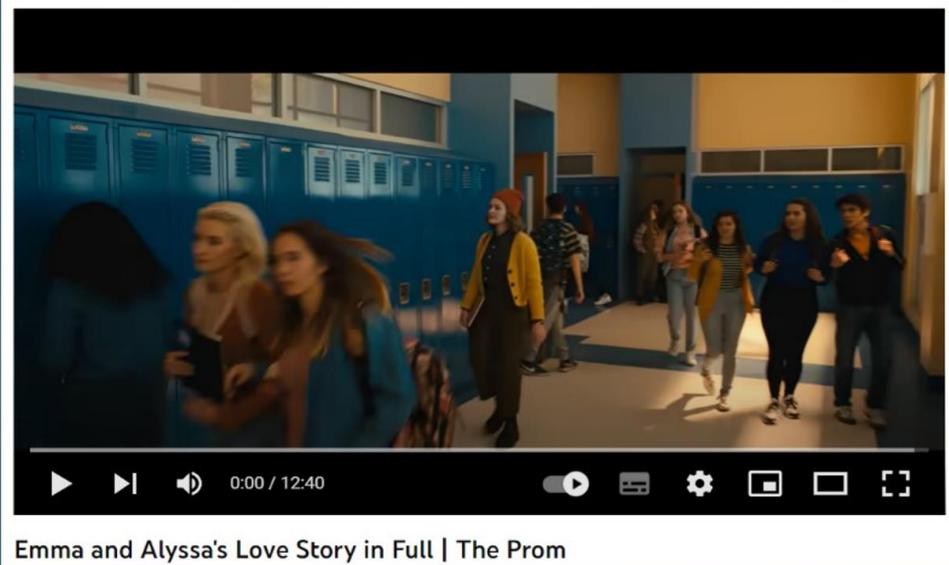
After this quick brainstorming activity, I then explain to my students that my unit includes a lot of group work and that the same groups should be kept throughout the unit. After breaking out into 6 groups of 4 or 5, I launch the slide below, asking each group to come up with a facilitator, a monitor, a time keeper and a devil's advocate.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING
Let's break out into groups!

▶ **LEADER/FACILITATOR**
"Thanks for your contribution, Bill. What do you think, Mary?"
"So, it appears that we are all agreed that …"

▶ **ARBITRATOR/MONITOR**
"We haven't heard much during our meeting from you, John. Do you have any thoughts?"
"I'm sensing a bit of tension among us over this decision; I think we should get our disagreements out into the open."

▶ **NOTETAKER/TIME KEEPER**
"We've spent about 15 of the 20 minutes we allocated to this topic, so we've got about 5 more minutes to sort it out."
"Guys, don't forget the assignment is due tomorrow!"

▶ **DEVIL'S ADVOCATE**
"Let's give Mike's idea a chance."

Once the groups are formed and the role of each member has been chosen, I challenge the class with a burn-in activity: I hand out an info sheet containing more detailed info about "The Prom" and ask them to answer the following questions in group, behaving accordingly to the role they have just decided to take on:

1. When was the movie released?
2. Who is the director?
3. Why was prom canceled?
4. Who are Dee Dee Allen and Berry Glickmann?

Here below is the movie info sheet.

THE PROM

Info Sheet

	MOVIE INFO **Directed by**: Ryan Murphy **Screenplay by**: Bob Martin and Chad Beguelin **Based on**: "The Prom" (musical) by Chad Beguelin, Bob Martin and Matthew Sklar **Music by**: Matthew Sklar and David Klotz **Distributed by**: Netflix **Release date**: December 11, 2020 **Running time**: 131 minutes **Country**: United States **Language**: English
OVERVIEW The Prom is a 2020 American musical comedy film directed by Ryan Murphy and adapted to the screen by Chad Beguelin and Bob Martin, from their and Matthew Sklar's 2018 Broadway musical of the same name. The film stars Jo Ellen Pellman, Meryl Streep, James Corden, Nicole Kidman, Keegan-Michael Key, Andrew Rannells, Ariana DeBose, and Kerry Washington. The Prom had a limited theatrical release on December 4, 2020, prior to streaming on Netflix on December 11, 2020.[2] The film received mixed reviews by critics, who praised the message, musical numbers and ensemble cast, but criticized the narrative and stereotypes, as well as Corden's performance.	**CAST** -**Meryl Streep** as Dee Dee Allen, a narcissistic two-time Tony award-winning Broadway actress. - **James Corden** as Barry Glickman, a narcissistic Broadway actor. - **Sam Pillow** as a young Barry Glickman - **Nicole Kidman** as Angie Dickinson, a chorus girl who has been unable to get a chance to portray Roxie Hart in *Chicago*. -**Keegan-Michael Key** as Principal Tom Hawkins, the principal of James Madison High School. - **Jo Ellen Pellman** as Emma Nolan, a lesbian 17-year-old girl. -**Ariana DeBose** as Alyssa Greene, a cheerleader who is Emma's closeted girlfriend. - **Kerry Washington** as Mrs. Greene, Alyssa's mother and the head of Edgewater's PTA. -**Tracey Ullman** as Vera Glickman, Barry's mother. -**Mary Kay Place** as Grandma Bea, Emma's supportive grandmother who raised her when Emma's parents kicked her out of their house for coming out to them. -**Logan Riley Hassel** as Kaylee and **Sofia Deler** as Shelby, Alyssa's cheerleader friends who disapprove of Emma taking a girl to prom.

I dedicate the last 5 or 10 minutes to Carnival break assignment, reminding students about the deadline, explaining it all over again so as to make sure everyone is on the same page and answering students' questions or doubts. Lesson 1 ends as the bell goes.

Part 2: After-class notes and in-process analysis

— As a first lesson, I am satisfied. The students are not shy, they lively participate in the activities, I feel they respect me and do their best to productively contribute to the success of the lesson. I am a bit skeptical about a group placed at the far end of the class in the right

corner. I feel they have not participated much during the lesson, and by their face expressions I suspect they did not have fun either, so I decide to approach them after class. I sit down close to them and start a very informal conversation with 2 of the guys, asking them whether they like English, how it feels to be in a new school and why they specifically chose a high school with a specialization in foreign languages. One of the guys tells me he loves English rap songs and he raps himself. The second guy tells me he "needs" to become fluent in English because he wants to move to the States for college as basketball player. While talking about their passions and future plans, their face expressions change and I see two big smiles showing up for the first time. I am impressed by their answers. Two of the students I was most skeptical about are the ones probably having the highest interest in learning English, because English is functional to the fulfillment of their dreams. And all it took to find it out was taking 2 steps towards them, sitting down next to them and asking them one simple question. This was the irrelevant price I had to pay to make them feel valued and to prevent myself from developing negative and counterproductive prejudices against them. (cf. 1.2 for the importance of informal students' needs analysis).

— During this lesson, I notice a very interesting pattern in students' attention rate, which I find to be:
- medium when I talk (I sometimes hear some background chattering and ask for silence or lift my hands to attract attention);
- high while playing the video (nobody is chatting, some make little comments on the scenes);
- very high during musical sections in the video (nobody is chatting, some waive their heads rhythmically, and I even hear someone singing along! During the extract of a melancholic ballad sung by one of the protagonists, a group of girls look at each other and while placing their hands on their heart and smiling). This seems to confirm the validity of Posner's et al.'s *Arts Theory* (2008), according to which "the enthusiasm that many young people have for music, art, and performance" (p.3) can be interpreted in the framework of a more general "factor of interest", also referred to as "general aesthetic interest", which is typical in humans.

— Keeping in mind Fleming's VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) model, thoroughly discussed in 1.5.2, I tried to provide the same information (i.e., the global introduction to the movie) through redundant multisensory inputs (visual, auditory and kinesthetic inputs) : while the short group reading comprehension on the movie info sheet was meant to test the functioning of the newly formed cooperative groups, it was also a way to provide every student with a written plot of the movie, thus evenly addressing visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners.

— A note on cooperative learning. Although music and drama-based activities have been showed to promote social learning (see 2.2.1 and 2.3.3), cooperative learning is knowingly a complex method whose practical realization can sometimes be problematic. While I am trying to plan group work in a cooperative perspective by dividing tasks and responsibilities in each group, I am aware we are not sticking exactly to cooperative learning principles and rules. For example, the teacher and I agreed on letting the class spontaneously form groups. I think this was not the best move, especially when the target group is not familiar with cooperative working. As a result, groups were formed mainly basing on friendships. In particular, I notice all the best students formed one group. One the one hand, this group will probably be able to work at a high level and consistently with their skills without getting bored. On the other hand, their contribution in other groups could be an important resource other students could benefit from. I am going to monitor the situation and, if needed, I am going to make some group changes.

4.4 February 23, Lesson 2

Part 1: Detailed description

Today's lesson is dedicated to IPA. Carnival break assignment was due 2 days ago, on February 21. I gathered all the target sounds my students referred to as "difficult" in assignment 1. This lesson addresses these same sounds. I start my lesson projecting the following slide:
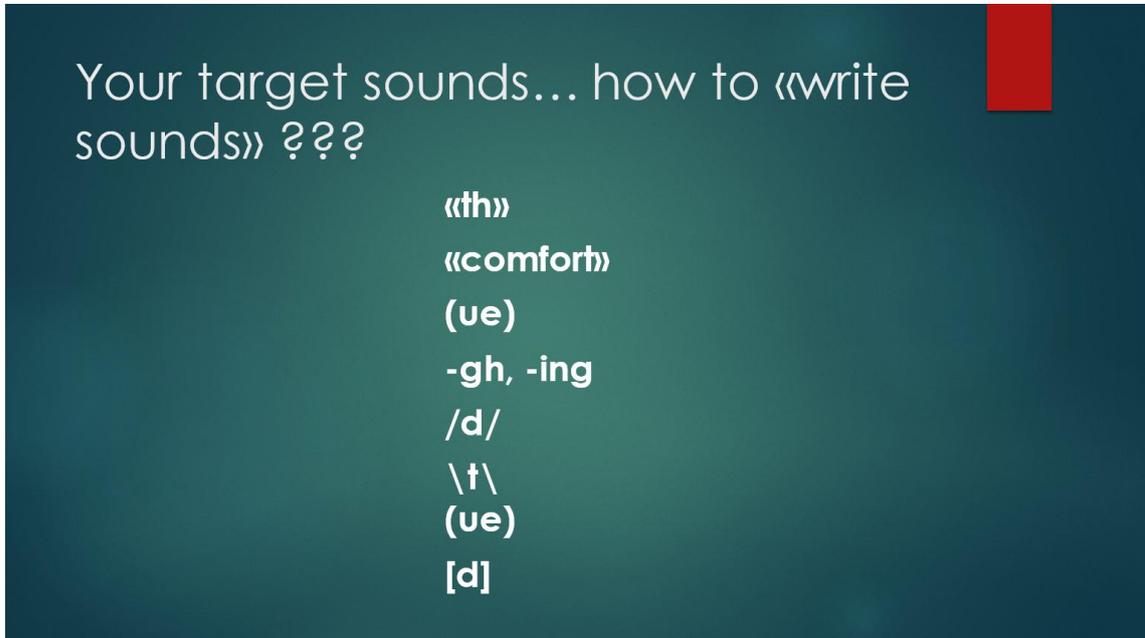
Through this slide I set the triggering "problem" for today's lesson: we do not know how to write down sounds. Each of us tried their best to find a strategy to indicate their target sounds, but each of us came up with a different solution. How can we talk about sounds if we can't base on a shared system? And there is the solution: we do have a shared system, and it is called IPA. In the slide here below, in which I provide some notions on IPA and define it as "standardized representation of speech sounds in written form", I also make the first reference to that they can use the IPA to improve their pronunciation, given that all of them stated in the pre-session questionnaire that they wanted to improve their pronunciation.

After providing some sources on IPA and some useful websites for reliable IPA transcriptions of both American and British English (toPhonetics, for example), I ask them to break out into their groups and take out their phones to download the App American English Pronunciation.

As showed in the screenshot here above, AE is an interactive and multisensory app containing written descriptions, mouth gifs and audios for each of the English phonemes. Lesson 2 consists of an online quiz on IPA. Members of each group have to cooperate to find the answer to the questions as fast as possible. All answers can be found in the app. In other words, the only way to answer the questions in the quiz is exploring the app (i.e., discovering the IPA in an active and playful learning context). I created the quiz presented here below making sure all answers could be found in the App or in the slides I have just presented. All the questions in the quiz are listed here below:

English sounds: The Quiz
1. What is the meaning of the acronym IPA?
2. When was the IPA created?
3. Who worked on the formation of the IPA?
4. What's the purpose of the IPA?
5. What's the difference between voiced and voiceless sounds?
6. What's the voiced version of /p/? (Check in the App!)
7. What's the voiced version of /t/? (Check in the App!)
8. What's the voiced version of /k/? (Check in the App!)
9. What's the voiced version of /θ/? (Check in the App!)
10. What consonants are aspirated when pronounced word-initially? (= At the beginning of a word?) 11.Check the consonants sounds in the App!
12. What do consonants /p/, /t/ and /k/ have in common?
13. What is the IPA symbol for an aspirated /p/? (Check in the App!)
14. In what word is /p/ aspirated?
15. What are the IPA transcriptions for "bad" and "bed" respectively? (check the /æ/ sound in the App!)
16. What are the IPA transcriptions of "bat" and "but" respectively?
17. In what words do you find the /æ/ vowel sound?
18. Listen to /ɑ/ and /ʌ/ in the App and look at the mouth. Are they the same sound?
19. What differences do you notice between /ɑ/ and /ʌ/? (Check the mouth in the App!)
20. In what words do you find the /ʌ/ sound? Tip: choose 3 sounds!
21. Are /i/ and /ɪ/ the same sound? (Check the /ɪ/ sound in the app!)

In the last 5 minutes, I assign assignment 2, which will serve as an ice breaker to lesson 3. Lesson ends as the bell goes.

Mini-Assignment on IPA

Due on Monday February 27 (in class)

1. Transcribe the name of your group into IPA! (Use https://ipa.typeit.org/full/ to type IPA symbols) ...SPECIAL PRICE for the best transcription! 😊

IPA TRANSCRIPTION OF THE GROUP NAME: _____

2. At-home rehearsals: Listen to and sing along to the song "Dance with you" (link to the song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKv4dKoEZ3Y) reading the lyrics here below. Pay particular attention to the highlighted sounds. (we played with most of them in the QUIZ)

We will sing this song in class and... SPECIAL PRICE for the BEST-SINGING group! 😊

Dance with you – The Prom

I don't want to start a riot
aɪ doʊn wɑnt tə stɑrt ə ˈraɪət

I don't want to blaze a trail
aɪ doʊn wɑnt tə bleɪz ə treɪl

I don't want to be a symbol
aɪ doʊn wɑnt tə bi ə ˈsɪmbəl

Or cautionary tale
ɔr kʰɔfə nɛri teɪl

I don't want to be a scapegoat
aɪ doʊn wɑnt tə bi ə ˈskeɪpˌgoʊt

For people to oppose
fər pʰipəl tu ə pouz

What I want is simple
wɑt aɪ wɑnt əz ˈsɪmpəl

As far as wanting goes
əz fɑr əz ˈwɑntɪŋ gouz

I just wanna dance with you
aɪ dʒʌst ˈwɑnə dæns wɪθ ju

Let the whole world melt away
lɛt ðə houl wɜrld mɛlt ə weɪ

And dance with you
ənd dæns wɪθ ju

Who cares what other people say?
hu kʰɛrz wɑt ʌðər pipəl seɪ?

And when we're through
ənd wɛn wər θru

No one can convince us we were wrong
nou wʌn kʰən kʰən'vɪns ʌs wi wər rɔŋ

All it takes is you and me
ɔl ɪtʰeɪks ɪz ju ənd mi

And a song
ənd ə sɔŋ

Part 2: Notes and in-process analysis

— After this lesson, I am very satisfied. My students had fun and the groups seem to work well despite the criticalities discussed in the previous section. The group at the far end of the class had a completely different attitude today, and they lively participated in the activity. The competition among groups and the playfulness of the activity made all students motivated and committed to the activity. In line with this first-hand experience, theories have been discussed in section 2.2.3 suggesting that playfulness can be functional to deep learning and authentic language acquisition. The vibe at the end of this lesson is almost festive. I sit back and realize this lesson was about phonemes, phonetic rules and notions…not the funniest of topics! Most likely, had I used the style of a taught lesson, my students would have got bored and demotivated, with high chances for affective filter to rise, thus inhibiting acquisition (cf. 2.2.3 for more on Krashen's Affective Filter Theory, 1982). That an informal and playful learning environment "saved" my notion-based lesson on IPA seems to be in line with the theories on playfulness as acquisition enhancer presented in Chapter 2 (see 2.2.3).

— During this lesson, notions were not deductively delivered in the traditional form of the taught lesson. On the contrary, through the quiz, students engaged in a discovery-based learning process in which students cooperatively worked to find the right answers. Students' observed attitude and lively participation in the activity seem to confirm the advantages of inductive learning discussed in 1.4.

— One further element that might have contributed to the success of this lesson is that the quiz activity offered an "excuse" to guide students finding the answers to their own questions. In other words, this activity was not a standardized lesson on IPA, but it provided students with a tool (the IPA) to independently solve their own pronunciation issues. As a consequence, there is a high chance students perceived this activity as *useful* and easily *usable*, since it was tailored to their own linguistic needs. From this perspective, it can be argued that this

activity can serve as a practical example of what Santipolo calls *Bespoke Language Teaching* (2017, cf. 1.2 for more on BLT).

— A quick disclaimer: the purpose of this lesson was not providing a comprehensive presentation of IPA. From a lifelong learning perspective (see 2.5), my aim was showing my students how knowing the IPA is a useful tool to work on pronunciation and to become more aware of English pronunciation nuances. Moreover, it was my intention to make my students more independent by providing them with resources to rely on in future (AE Pronunciation, ToPhonetics, etc.), whenever they do not know how to pronounce a word.

4.5 February 27, Lesson 3

Part 1: Detailed description

As preannounced in assignment 2, Lesson 3 starts with an icebreaker, meant to wrap up all the target sounds of this unit through listening to and singing along to the song "Dance with you" from "The Prom" (Murphy, 2020). After making students aware of the purpose of this activity, I project the following slide, play the song and encourage them to sing along to it while I also do.

Besides being one of the most famous songs from "The Prom" (Murphy, 2020), I chose it because lyrics are pronounced slowly and because they include almost all of the target sounds of this unit. As can be seen in the slide attached here above, I added the IPA transcription below the original lyrics highlighting the target phonemes and the spelled letters they correspond to. During the second listening, I encourage them to sing trying to read the IPA transcription only, so as to familiarize with the phonemes next activity is centered around. It is now time to dive into today's core activity. After breaking out into groups, I hand out a hard copy of the comprehensive list of our target sounds. (See the list below):

English sound	Words containing the sound Please, mark the letter/s corresponding to the target sound. (Check **ToPhonetics** if you have doubts about the pronunciation of a word)	When does this sound occur? To what letter/s does it correspond to? In what environment do we find it? (Between 2 vowels, in un/stressed syllables, word-initially, word-finally, next to specific sounds…) Type down any recurrent pattern you notice! You can also check the **æ App.**
CONSONANT SOUNDS		
[pʰ] (aspiration)	1) 2) 3)	
[tʰ] (aspiration)	1) 2) 3)	
[kʰ] (aspiration)	1) 2) 3)	
[ɾ] (Flap or tap. NOT r !!!)	1) 2) 3)	
/r/	1) 2) 3)	
[ɫ] (dark L)	1) 2) 3)	
/ŋ/	1) 2) 3)	
/θ/	1) 2) 3)	
/ð/	1) 2) 3)	
VOWEL SOUNDS		
/ɝ/	1) 2) 3)	
/ɚ/	1) 2) 3)	
/ə/ (schwa)	1) 2) 3)	
/ɛ/	1) 2) 3)	
/æ/	1) 2) 3)	
/ɑ/	1) 2) 3)	
/ʌ/	1) 2) 3)	
/i/	1) 2) 3)	
/ɪ/	1) 2) 3)	

I now explain they should fill in the chart while watching the same 12-minute video we used in lesson 1 they should now be familiar with. For each of the target sounds, they should find 3 examples in the video and write down the 3 words containing that sound in the first column. To guarantee a redundant and multimodal input (1.5.2), I also provide each group with the original movie screenplay in a cut version, in which I only kept the pages referring to the scenes included in the 12-minute video. While filling in the first column, they should note recurring patterns in the right column. Especially in such complicated tasks, a cooperative and well-planned understanding of groupwork is crucial. In each group, student 1 should play the video (and rewind it, when needed) with their phone, student 2 should follow on the script what is being said (or sung) in the video while trying to detect the target sounds, student 3 should carefully watch the video while trying to recognize as many target sounds as possible. Student 4 should write down the words detected by Student 1 and 2, while student 5 tries to recognize recurring patterns in the occurrence of the sounds and note them down in the third column. Of course, roles are interchangeable and students are free to carry out more task simultaneously. Since it is a demanding and time-consuming activity, I have not planned more activities for today, so I let them work until the lesson ends. As the bell goes, students hand in the result of their work. Here below, I attach the list of sounds by The Champions:

THE CHAMPIONS

Giul
Gevan

English sound	Words containing the sound. Please, mark the letter/s corresponding to the target sound. (Check **ToPhonetics** if you have doubts about the pronunciation of a word)	When does this sound occur? To what letter/s of the alphabet does it correspond to? In what environment do we find this sound? (Between 2 vowels, in un/stressed syllables, word-initially, word-finally, next to specific sounds...) Type down any recurrent pattern you notice! You can also check the æ App.
CONSONANT SOUNDS		
[pʰ] (aspiration)	1) pretty 2) from 3) privacy	[p] is aspirated when it's at the beginning of a word
[tʰ] (aspiration)	1) together 2) told 3) today	[t] is aspirated when it's at the beginning of a word
[kʰ] (aspiration)	1) kissing 2) kids 3) kept	[k] is aspirated when it's at the beginning of a word
[ɾ] (Flap or tap. NOT r !!!)	1) 2) 3)	
/r/	1) here 2) remember 3) her	/r/
[ɫ] (dark L)	1) betrayal 2) cruel 3) normal	[ɫ] when it's at the end of a word
/ŋ/	1) realizing 2) going 3) doing	/ŋ/ to highlight that we don't pronounce after this sound
/θ/	1) think 2) frank 3) thought	/θ/ the tongue lightly touches the bottom of the top teeth
/ð/	1) there 2) the 3) this	/ð/ is the same as the previous one, but is a voiced consonant
VOWEL SOUNDS		
/ɜ/	1) her 2) third 3) world	/ɜ/
/ɚ/	1) mother 2) enough 3)	
/ə/ (schwa)	1) 2) 3)	
/ɛ/	1) were 2) 3)	
/æ/	1) plan 2) hand 3) can	
/a/	1) prom 2) want 3)	
/ʌ/	1) 2) 3)	
/i/	1) 2) 3)	
/ɪ/	1) 2) 3)	

Part 2: After-class notes and in-process analysis

— I am aware today's lesson was challenging, especially for first-year students. Nevertheless, I am impressed by the way they responded: I observed them while working in groups and they effectively cooperated to complete the task. It was interesting to observe how each student chose their task accordingly to their English level and learning style. Significantly, this occurred in a very spontaneous way as a result of a relaxed mediation among group members while dividing the tasks. This activity is a practical example of how to design an inclusive activity in which more intelligences, learning styles and sensory channels are being simultaneously stimulated (see 1.5.1 and 1.5.2). The only major flaw in today's lesson was the lack of time. I noticed nobody was able to complete the task, meaning I should have devoted more time to this activity. To make up for it, I ask my students to complete the task at home.

— This language activity was designed to be multi-leveled and inclusive. It provided students with a wide range of sub-tasks simultaneously addressing different sensory channels, language skills and learning styles. It includes listening and transcoding tasks (oral → written and vice versa) while the video stimulates all sensory channels. The task of detecting words containing the target sounds values more analytical students, while global students might find their comfort zone in recognizing recurrent patterns in the data gathered by their classmates. This seems to be in line with Gardner's MI theory and Fleming's VAK model (see 1.5.1 and 1.5.2)

— What we did today in class was a rather refined exercise of inductive linguistics students excellently completed at an intuitive level. For example, as can be read in the submission here above, their analytical observation of authentic language led them to conclude that "/ð/ is the same sound as /θ/, but it is a voiced consonant". As it is normal, they also came up with wrong or partially wrong hypotheses, such as "/t/ is aspirated when it's at the beginning of a word". While it is true that aspiration often happens word-initially, it will be my duty to show them through further examples that /t/ → [tʰ] when followed by a stressed vowel. Today's lesson seems to confirm that, if properly guided and stimulated, even a first-year EFL class can function as a vibrant community of young researchers and linguists.

4.6 February 27, Lesson 4

Part 1: Detailed description

As the end-of-break bell goes, students go back to their seats ready to start lesson 4 about clothes and prom-related vocabulary. Mrs. Ni Mhuiris, 1B's language assistant, will also join us and will be the main moderator for this lesson. Thanks to Mrs. Ni Mhuiris's kindness and openness to give her active contribution to my unit, we were able to plan the lesson together, sharing materials and objectives. Activity 1 consists of a listening activity aimed at acquiring new clothes and prom-related vocabulary. Basically, students watch a video about a Vietnamese girl's preparation for her first prom in Canada in which a native speaker lists and explains some of the most recurring vocabulary and expressions during a prom (for the full video: "Learn Vocabulary About TheProm," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2aGJ0_EKxQ). While watching the video (4 minutes and 42 seconds), students are asked to do the following fill-in-the-blank exercise:

THE PROM – Vocabulary Activity

Fill in the blanks choosing among the words in the bank below.

……………………………….	A formal dance, especially one held by a class in high school or college at the end of the year," and classified as chiefly North American. The word prom is a shortening of promenade, a term of French origin that was used as early as the 16th century to mean a leisurely walk, as well as (in later years) the public space in which this kind of walk can take place.
……………………………….	A blend of prom and proposal. It is a recently popular word for an old tradition: asking someone to the prom, but with a little added theatricality and hubbub.
……………………………….	This is a little arrangement of flowers about the size of your fist, and traditionally a fella pins a corsage to his gal. A corsage is a bouquet's Mini-Me.
……………………………….	Showing up at the prom without a date. This term, because of its male history – a stag is a male deer -, originally referred to dudes going it alone, but these days anyone can go stag—except actual woodland critters.
……………………………….	Does a bunch of unsupervised teenagers sound like a good idea? That depends who you're asking, but if you're asking a principal, they'll say, "Nope." This is an adult who attends the prom (or another dance) to make sure nothing terrible happens, like someone spiking the punch or getting in a brawl over who has the best dance moves.
……………………………….	A professional driver, usually of a limousine. You can also use this word jokingly if you find yourself driving someone around, especially if they're sitting in the back seat.
……………………………….	This type of car is defined by one trait: length. It's a very is a very long car that's also quite expensive and fancy-schmancy. Rich people, including CEOs, actors, musicians, and athletes, tool around town in limousines. It is also part of prom tradition, and friends often chip in for a limo to share on prom night.
……………………………….	Also known as tux, it is a suit that incorporates satin, that is how it's different from a regular suit.
……………………………….	A woman's dress, usually with a close-fitting bodice and a long-flared skirt, often worn on formal occasions

prom	chaperone	gown	promposal
corsage			
limousine	to go stag	tuxedo	chauffer

After providing the key to this activity and wrapping up the new vocabulary, Mrs. Ni Mhuiris begins a conversation with students asking them about their outfits at past parties they attended. She also shares her prom experience adding more clothes vocabulary. I use the last 15 minutes talking about the final test. I want my students to feel properly instructed, well prepared and relaxed about it. I

explain every group will have to write a short script in which they show they can make proper use of the target topics of the unit (past simple, target sounds and prom-related vocabulary), to then perform it on stage in the school auditorium. I inform them that I have planned a 4-hour afternoon workshop to properly prepare and rehearse for the final test. As a result, they will get 1 mark for the written part (1 same mark for every group) and an individual oral mark for the final performance. While written scripts will be assessed by me only, stage performances will also include some peer assessment. To make sure everybody gets to know exactly what they need to do to get good marks, I decide to project and share with them the assessment grids for both written and oral test. I just have the time to tell them I will upload Assignment 3 on our WhatsApp group before the bell goes and lesson 4 is over.

Part 2: After-class notes and in-process analysis

—— While Mrs. Ni Mhuiris relates about her prom experience as she was a young girl, students excitedly interrupt her asking private questions to gossip about the teacher's teenage years. Consistently with Krashen's rule of forgetting (1983) presented in section 2.2.3, they are making extensive use of past simple interrogative forms without even realizing it. Students are "forgetting" language is the main target and are rather using it as the most immediate means to gossip and find out hidden stories about the teacher's teenage years. In addition, they are making spontaneous and possibly unaware use of prom-related and clothes vocabulary because the communicative context allows and is purposely designed for it.

—— Some might claim talking about final test and assessment grids in lesson 4 could be premature. Nevertheless, as showed in section 2.5, transparency and consistency in testing and grading system is crucial to build a relationship of trust and reciprocal respect with students, especially considering that assessment is one of the most relevant elements in defining the teacher's degree of power over their pupils (see section 2.5). In my opinion, sharing the assessment grid when the mark has already been given is rather pointless. I think it is fair and recommendable that students have the chance to plan their pre-test work knowing exactly on what parameters and in what ways they are going to be evaluated, thus preserving a healthy and trustful teacher-student relationship.

4.7 February 28, Assignment 3 on Past Simple

Part 1: Detailed description

Similarly to what we did in class with target sounds, I assign a home assignment consisting of an analytical work on past simple based on our 12-minute video we are now very familiar with. Students should watch the video and read the cut script while trying to identify as many sentences as possible containing the past simple. They should then fill in a chart I prepared for them, in which they can systematically categorize the gathered occurrences distinguishing affirmative, negative and interrogative forms of both regular and irregular words. For each category, a final box is provided in which students are encouraged to inductively reflect on past simple to come up with a proposed grammar rule which sums up the observed patterns. Since it is a rather time-consuming activity and I want my students to complete it without rushing, I decide to assign it today so they have couple of days to work on it. We are going to use this assignment in lesson 6 (March 2), which will draw conclusions on past simple. Here below, I provide one student's submission for Assignment 3.

Take-home assignment: THE PAST SIMPLE in THE PROM

Deadline: Wednesday March 1, 10 am

- Watch again the YouTube video "Emma and Alyssa's Love Story in Full | The Prom" while reading the edited script (uploaded on Classroom).
- Identify as many sentences containing the PAST SIMPLE as possible.
- Fill in the chart below following the instructions
- **Send me the chart on WhatsApp as soon as you have completed the task!**

Sentences containing THE PAST SIMPLE	Isolated form of the past simple	Base form of the verb	Pattern (e.g. Subject + didn't + base form of the verb)
AFFIRMATIVE FORM			
REGULAR VERBS (find at least 5!)			
Tonight **belonged** to them	belonged	belong	Subject + base form + ed + indirect object
The parents **organized** two proms!	organized	organize	Subject + base form + d + direct object
You **lied** to me	lied	lie	Subject pronoun + base form + d + indirect object
They **figured out**	figured out	figure out	Subject pronoun + base form + d
They **planned** the best way to hurt me	planned	plan	Subject pronoun + base form(+n) + ed + direct object + indirect object
You knew what **happened**	happened	happen	Subject + base form + ed
They **stopped** loving me	stopped	stop	Subject pronoun + base form (+p) + ed + direct object

PAST SIMPLE – AFFIRMATIVE FORM OF REGULAR VERBS **Finding patterns…** • Think about the communicative contexts of the sentences you have gathered. When do you use the PAST SIMPLE? To talk about what?

We use the PAST SIMPLE to talk about actions completely finished in the past.
_____
_____

- Do you notice any regularity in the list of patterns you found for the AFFIRMATIVE FORM of REGULAR VERBS? Are they similar to each other? Explain.

  __Yes, I've noticed some regularities: all the verbs end with -ed._
  _____

  But there are some irregularities, too: in fact when we have to create the Past Simple with verbs ending with -e (such as "organize", "lie", "figure out", "happen",...) we just add a "d". And when we find some monosyllabic verbs (such as "stop", "plan", …), we form the Past Simple by adding another consonant and then -ed.

- Looking at the data you have gathered, how do you think the PAST SIMPLE of REGULAR VERBS is formed? Type down your guess in the chart below!

Subject	➕	Base form	➕	-ed (or sometimes -ied, -d)

IRREGULAR VERBS (find at least 15!)			
The court **told** the PTA	told	tell	Subject + past form + object
You **did** it!	did	do	Subject + past form + object
We **had** to change venues	had	have	Subject + past form + object
There **was** some resistance	was	be	Subject + past form
The parents **met** without my knowledge	met	meet	Subject + past form + …
We **gave** her a prom	gave	give	Subject + past form + object
I **got** texts from kids at school	got	get	Subject + past form + object + …
Everybody **said** it	said	say	Subject + past form + object
It **was** here	was	be	Subject + past form + …
That **was** part of the plan	was	be	Subject + past form + …
They **met** in secret?	met	meet	Subject + past form + …
The whole town **kept** this from her?	kept	keep	Subject + past form + object + …

We **went** big	went	go	Subject + past form + …
I **had** no idea	had	have	Subject + past form + object
You **were** on the prom committee	were	be	Subject + past form + …
They **made** sure	made	make	Subject + past form + …
I **thought**	thought	think	Subject + past form
My parents **gave** me away	gave	give	Subject + past form + object + …
I **broke up** with my girlfriend	broke up	break up	Subject + past form + …
That **felt** worse	felt	feel	Subject + past form + …
You **knew**	knew	know	Subject + past form

Subject	⊕	*Past form of the Irregular verb*

NEGATIVE FORM

REGULAR VERBS (find at least 2!)

I **didn't walk** to school yesterday	didn't walk	walk	Subject + didn't + base form + complement
I **didn't cancel** prom	didn't cancel	cancel	Subject + didn't + base form + object
They **didn't want** me to tell you	didn't want	want	Subject + didn't + base form + object + complement

IRREGULAR VERBS (find at least 3!)

She **did not tell** me the truth	did not tell	tell	Subject + did not + base form
I **didn't find out**	didn't find out	find out	Subject + did not + base form
You **didn't come**	didn't come	come	Subject + did not + base form
You **didn't hold** my hand	didn't hold	hold	Subject + did not + base form + object
You **didn't take** me out of there	didn't take	take	Subject + did not + base form + object + …
I **couldn't**	couldn't	can	Subject + could + not

- Looking at the data you have gathered, how do you think the NEGATIVE FORM of the PAST SIMPLE of REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERBS is formed? Type down your guess in the chart below!

Subject	✚	Did + not (didn't)	✚	Base form of the verb

- Have a look at the behavior of the verb **TO BE** and modal verbs such as **CAN**. How do you form the NEGATIVE FORM of the PAST SIMPLE of these verbs? Type down your guess in the chart below!

Subject	✚	was / were / could (conjugated verbs)	✚	not

INTERROGATIVE FORM

REGULAR VERBS (already given)

Did you **lie** to me?	did [subj] lie	lie	did + subject + base form + indirect object +?
Did you **enjoy** the evening**?**	did [subj] enjoy	enjoy	did + subject + base form + direct object +?
What **didn't** they **like**?	didn't [subj] like	like	What + did + not + subject + base form + ?
How **did** she **end up** living with you?	did [subj] end up	end up	How + did + subject + base form + indirect object +?
Did you **walk** home?	did [subj] walk	walk	did + subject + base form + indirect object +?

IRREGULAR VERBS (already given)

What **did** you **do**?	did [subj.] do	do	What + did + subject + base form +?
Was it the hip hop?	was [subj]	be	was + subject + … +?
Could you sing **it?**	could [subj]	can	Could + subject + base form + object +?

Where did ever [subj] go?	did [subj] go	go	Where + did + subject + base form +
What **did** you **wear** to your prom?	did [subj] wear	wear	What + did + subject + base form + … + ?
How **did** you **know** my password?	did [subj] know	know	How + did + subject + base form + object + ?
What **did** she **say**?	did [subj] say	say	What + did + subject + base form + ?

PAST SIMPLE – INTERROGATIVE FORM OF REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERBS
Finding patterns…

- Do you notice any regularity in the list of patterns you found for the INTERROGATIVE FORM of REGULAR and IRREGULAR VERBS? Are they similar to each other? Explain.
  Yes, when we have to create the Interrogative form of the Past Simple with regular and irregular verbs, we use the same exact rule.
  _____
  _____

- Compare the past form of regular verbs with the past form of irregular verbs. Do you notice any differences?
  No, with both types of verbs, we create the Interrogative form with the auxiliary "did", then the subject and the "base form" of the verb we're reffering to.
  _____
  _____

- Looking at the data you have gathered, how do you think the INTERROGATIVE FORM of the PAST SIMPLE of REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERBS is formed? Type down your guess in the chart below!

Did (auxiliary)	✚	subject	✚	base form of the verb	？

the chart below!

Could	✚	Subject	✚	Base form of the verb	？

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Part 2: Considerations and in-process analysis

— I am very satisfied with my students' work on assignment 3. The majority submitted the assignment before the deadline, although I register 6 late submissions (while only 4 people late submitted assignment 1). Probably, I did not give them enough time. Nevertheless, most submissions (including late submissions) are very good to excellent and offer interesting considerations to work on in the next activities.

— I would like to remark the inductive nature of this exercise. Unlike most English textbooks suggest, I did not give my students a rule to learn by heart and some decontextualized language exercises to mechanically apply the rule. On the contrary, I asked them to observe naturally-occurring authentic language in context, gather data and critically observe them to the purpose of coming up with a hypothetical grammar rule to share, adjust and correct in class with my guidance. Moreover, note that I explicitly asked my students to write down the whole sentence in which the verb occurred, to focus their attention not only on form, but also and use and communicative contexts in which past simple is used. Once again, I remark that the communicative context I provide is at this point very familiar to students: the same authentic material was used to introduce plot and general setting (global/motivational phase) and for task-specific phonological and grammar reflections (analytical phase). This activity can be interpreted as practical proof of the validity of theories exposed in 1.4, according to which authentic texts can promote an inductive approach to grammar. Not only do authentic materials promote inductive learning, but they also allow for analysis of grammar structures at the text-level, thus favoring the exploration of grammar in its three dimensions of *meaning* and *use* dimensions and *form*.

— Consistently with the theories exposed in 1.4, by analyzing past simple occurrences in these authentic texts, it was possible to analyze grammar structures at the text level, allowing learners to access grammar in contextualized texts created for specific communicative purposes. By observing occurrences of the target grammar form in the authentic text, students could get a full understanding of past simple by critically analyzing the form-meaning relationship of the authentic language in use. Moreover, since the text was appropriately selected, it could provide broad (but meaningful) exposition to the target grammatical form while at the same time avoiding the exaggeratedly artificial repetition of the target structure in pedagogical texts. As a result, this activity on past simple seems to confirm that a careful and aware use of authentic materials in EFL teaching can aid inductive grammar acquisition.

Moreover, this activity seems to confirm that explicit grammar instruction can consist of "pedagogical events which occur within meaning-based approaches to L2 instruction but in which a focus on language is provided in either spontaneous or predetermined ways" (Spada, 1997, p.73).

4.8 March 1, Lesson 5

Part 1: Detailed description

In lesson 5 we wrap up all has been said so far about target sounds. Starting from the global and intuitive work done in carnival break assignment on "difficult" sounds contained in the movie, proceeding through the interactive notion-based quiz on IPA and an analytical group activity on inductive phonology, it is now time to synthesize and systematize the new-acquired information in a comprehensive and shared format. To do so, I project the final list of our target sounds and explain

the recurring patterns correcting and integrating with the hypotheses formulated by my students. The synthesis attached here below is the final result of our discussion:

English sound	Words containing the sound Please, mark the letter/s corresponding to the target sound. (Check **ToPhonetics** if you have doubts about the pronunciation of a word)	Observations To what letter/s of the alphabet does it correspond to? In what environment do we find this sound? (Between 2 vowels, in un/stressed syllables, word-initially, word-finally, next to specific sounds…) Type down any recurrent pattern you notice! You can also check the **æ App**
CONSONANT SOUNDS		
[pʰ] (aspiration)	1) parents 2) public 3) person 4) perfect 5) people 6) pass	Aspiration only happens with voiceless (plosive) consonants at the beginning of a word AND followed by a vowel.
[tʰ] (aspiration)	1) tale 2) texts 3) tell 4) told	
[kʰ] (aspiration)	1) cancel 2) cautionary tale 3) kids	
[ɾ] (Flap or tap. NOT r !!!)	1) better 2) pretty 3) putting 4) party 5) little 6) city	This tap can occur in American English when pronouncing the "t" "tt" or "rt" surrounded by vowels AND in UNSTRESSED syllables.
/r/	1) really 2) wrong 3) prom 4) swear 5) parents 6) resistance 7) truth	This corresponds to the normal r in English. It can occur wherever in the word. I noticed that the WR pattern is simply pronounced as an /r/
[ɫ] (dark L)	1) melt 2) cruel 3) awful 4) all 5) will 6) well 7) social 8) normal 9) PROMPOSAL	Dark L corresponds to L or LL, but only when they occur word-finally.
/ŋ/	1) saying 2) young 3) song 4) along 5) sing	It occurs word-finally in the VOWEL+NG pattern. For example with present continuous.
/θ/	1) thank you 2) thing 3) through 4) truth	It corresponds to the "th" pattern.
/ð/	1) there 2) this 3) they 4) mother 5) together	It also corresponds to the "th" pattern. But this is a voiced sound
VOWEL SOUNDS		
/ɝ/	1) her 2) sure 3) were 4) perfect 5) hurt	It can occur when U or E or I come before R. This symbol is used for one-syllable words or stressed syllables -It corresponds to schwa in British English

	6) third	
/ɚ/	1) over 2) together 3) enter 4) mister 5) matter	It can occur when U or E are next to R. This symbol is used for unstressed syllables
/ɛ/	1) Emma 2) self 3) when	This corresponds to "e". (It corresponds to Italian è). It can occur wherever in the word.
/æ/	1) plan 2) San Francisco 3) fan 4) that 5) have 6) had	- This sound corresponds to "a", but not always (WANT) - Note that /ɛ/ and /æ/ are 2 DIFFERENT sounds!
/ɑ/	1) laws 2) prom 3) want	This sound can also correspond to A, but it is a completely different sound. "Lower A"
/ə/ (schwa)	1) convince 2) riot 3) to 4) the 5) champions 6) about 7) wanna 8) another 9) obvious 10) hermit 11) gossip	- Schwa corresponds to "WEAK VOWELS" in <u>unstressed syllables.</u> (convince, about, wanna, hermit, gossip) - Hidden vowels "at the mercy" of a stronger and STRESSED vowel sound. (to, the) - Schwa corresponds to O in IO (champions) or in OU (obvious)
/ʌ/	1) much 2) but 3) us 4) up	This is the sound for U. Notice that it is DIFFERENT from Italian A!
/i/	1) freak out 2) be 3) me 4) bee	This sound is used to pronounce stressed "ea", "ee" or "e". It Corresponds to Italian I
/ɪ/	1) big 2) in 3) hit	This is the sound for "i". Notice that it is DIFFERENT from Italian I !

I conclude my lesson with a short reel on word-final schwas typically pronounced by Italian English speakers. In this video, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmR1W1toadw, Italian influencer Chiara Ferragni's English pronunciation is taken as case example. I choose this specific video because, as noticed during the observation, most students tend to pronounce word-final schwas.

Now that we have a definitive list of target sounds, I clarify that they should include all of these sounds in the final script and that the stage performance will be a way for them to show me they know how to pronounce these phonemes. As repeatedly remarked, they will be assessed on their pronunciation skills during final performances. I dedicate the last 5 minutes to answer final-test-related questions. Lesson 5 ends as the bell goes.

Part 2: After-class notes and in-process analysis

— I think this lesson was very useful for students because it gave them a sense of order and stability, functioning as a logical conclusion to a complex and varied process. Especially Italian students, who are normally used to very structured, static and book-based activities, might find experimental practice-based methods overwhelming and confusing. It is my belief what such experimental attempts often lack, at least in Italian schools, is a rigorous and systematic in-process collection of data to be eventually synthesized, simplified and generalized in a concluding lesson in which the teacher can make sure everybody is on the same page. In my unit, I tried to be as rigorous and consistent as possible so as to prevent my students from feeling lost and confused. Considering their relaxed faces and their active attitude in today's class, I think I succeeded.

— This lesson seems to perfectly exemplify the need for an integrated approach in (EFL) teaching. As discussed in Chaper 1, there are no right or wrong methods *a priori*: it all depends on how the teacher uses them. For example, while groupwork was proved to work well for creative and/or analytical tasks in my unit, it would have probably been problematic if implemented in concluding wrap-up lessons, where the taught lesson style is potentially preferrable.

4.9 March 2, Lesson 6

Part 1: Detailed description
Similarly, to what we did yesterday with target sounds, Lesson 6 concludes are discussions on past simple. The lesson starts with a fill-in-the-gap activity based on a song, "Unruly heart" from "The Prom". I chose this song because it contains more than 15 past simple forms.

Fill in the gaps using PAST SIMPLE while listening to the song "Unruly Heart" from "The Prom"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYqSWs8G9M4
Some hearts can conform
Fitting the norm
Flaunting their love for all to see
I _____ to change
Thinking how easy life _____ ____
I just ____ ___ failing
I guess that _____ a sign
That there _____ much hope
For this unruly heart of mine
Then, you _____ _____
And right or wrong
Feelings _____ to overflow
We _____ ___ hide
Thinking that no one else _____ _____
And not having you near me
_____ where I _____ the line
So, I _____ to conceal
This poor, unruly heart of mine
Hi, Emma
I _____ your video
Where do I start?
I think my parents always _____
I _____ so alone
Nothing _____ sense until him
She's the best thing in my life
The only good thing
But we're always hiding
You're not the only one
And though I don't know how or when
But somehow, I _____ to see
No matter what the world might say
This heart is the best part of me!
So, fears, all in the past
Fading so fast
I won't stay hidden anymore
I'm who I am
And I think that's worth fighting for
And nobody out there ever gets to define
The life I'm meant to lead
With this unruly heart of mine
And nobody out there ever gets to define
The life I'm meant to lead
With this unruly heart of mine

After the fill-in-the-gap activity, we start with our final wrap up on Assingment 3 and past simple. I project the comprehensive chart on past simple and review the grammar rules correcting and integrating with the hypotheses formulated by my students. The synthesis attached here below is the final result of our discussion:

Take-home assignment: THE PAST SIMPLE in THE PROM

- Watch again the YouTube video "Emma and Alyssa's Love Story in Full | The Prom" while reading the edited script (uploaded on Classroom).
- Identify as many sentences containing the PAST SIMPLE as possible.
- Fill in the chart below following the instructions

Sentences containing THE PAST SIMPLE	Isolated form of the past simple	Base form of the verb	Pattern (e.g. Subject + didn't + base form of the verb)
AFFIRMATIVE FORM			
REGULAR VERBS (find at least 5!)			
You **lied** to me	lied	lie	Subject + base form + d + complement
Tonight **belonged** to them	belonged	belong	Subject + base form + ed + complement
They **figured out** we were together	figured out	figure out	Subject + base form + d + object
My parents **rejected** me	rejected	reject	Subject + base form + ed + object
(My parents) **stopped** loving me	stopped	stop	Subject + base form + ped + complement
I am sorry about what **happened**	happened	happen	Subject + base form + ed
People got together and **planned** the best way to hurt me	planned	plan	Subject + base form + ned + object
You knew what **happened**	happened	happen	Subject + base form + ed

PAST SIMPLE – AFFIRMATIVE FORM OF REGULAR VERBS
Finding patterns…

- Think about the communicative contexts of the sentences you have gathered. When do you use the PAST SIMPLE? To talk about what?

The Past simple is used to describe situations, express actions and report episodes that started and finished in the past.

- Do you notice any regularity in the list of patterns you found for the AFFIRMATIVE FORM of REGULAR VERBS? Are they similar to each other? Explain.

Yes, I have noticed some regularities: all of the sentences follow the Subject + base form + ed pattern. For verbs ending with -e the past is simply formed by adding a "d" (lie → lied). For monosyllabic verbs ending with "n" or "p" we add a consonant before "ed" (plan →planned; stop → stopped)

- Looking at the data you have gathered, how do you think the PAST SIMPLE of REGULAR VERBS is formed? Type down your guess in the chart below!

SUBJECT -----------------	➕	BASE FORM -----------------	➕	-ED -----------------

IRREGULAR VERBS (find at least 15!)			
Your parents **did**	did	do (auxiliary)	Subject + past form
You **did** it	did	do	Subject + past form + object
It's like a love bomb **went off**	went off	go off	Subject + past form
In the last minute there **was** a problem	was	be	Subject + past form
We **had** to change venues	had	have	Subject + past form (auxiliary) + infinitive + object
The court **told** the PTA	told	tell	Subject + past form + object
They **had** to hold an inclusive prom	had	have	Subject + past form (auxiliary) + infinitive + object
The parents **met** without my knowledge	met	meet	Subject + past form + complement
We **gave** her a prom	gave	give	Subject + past form + object
Everybody **said** it was here	said	say	Subject + past form + object
We **went big**	went big	go big	Subject + past form
I swear, I **had** no idea	had	have	Subject + past form + object
You **were** on the prom committee	were	be	Subject + past form + complement
They **made sure** I didn't find out	made sure	make sure	Subject + past form + object
That **was** the plan, wasn't it?	was	be	Subject + past form + predicative
I **thought** that when my parents rejected me […] I would never feel any worse	thought	think	Subject + past form + object
I **was** afraid	was	be	Subject + past form + predicative
People **got together** and planned the best way to hurt me	got together	get together	Subject + past form
You didn't come even though you **knew** what happened	knew	know	Subject + past form + object
I **got** texts from kids at school	got	get	Subject + past form + object + complement
The whole town **kept** this from her?	kept	keep	Subject + past form + object + complement
I **broke up** with my girlfriend	broke up	break up	Subject + past form + complement
That **felt** worse Subject + past form + …	felt	feel	Subject + past form + …

PAST SIMPLE – AFFIRMATIVE FORM OF IRREGULAR VERBS
Finding patterns…

- Do you notice any regularity in the list of patterns you found for the AFFIRMATIVE FORM of IRREGULAR VERBS? Are they similar to each other? Explain.
  Yes, I do. All of the examples follow the Subject + past form pattern
- Compare the past form of regular verbs (base form + ED) with the past form of irregular verbs. What differences do you notice?
  With regular verbs, you form the Past Simple by adding -ed to the base form. On the other hand, with the irregular verbs you form it with a past form which is different for every single verb.
- Looking at the data you have gathered, how do you think the PAST SIMPLE of IRREGULAR VERBS is formed? Type down your guess in the chart below!

SUBJECT	⊕	PAST FORM
-----------------		-----------------

NEGATIVE FORM			
REGULAR VERBS (find at least 2!)			
I **didn't** cancel prom, your parents did	didn't cancel	cancel	Subject + didn't + base form + object
You **didn't try** to hold my hand	didn't try	try	Subject + didn't + base form
They **didn't want** me to tell you	didn't want	want	Subject + didn't + base form + object
IRREGULAR VERBS (find at least 2!)			
They made sure I **didn't find out**	didn't find out	find out	Subject + didn't + base form
But the worst part was that you **didn't come**	didn't come	come	Subject + didn't + base form
I **couldn't**, ok?	couldn't	can	Subject + past form + not
Emma **was not** at the prom	was not	be	Subject + past form + not
Alyssa's friends **weren't** nice to Emma	weren't	be	Subject + past form + not

PAST SIMPLE – NEGATIVE FORM OF REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERBS
Finding patterns…

- Do you notice any regularity in the list of patterns you found for the NEGATIVE FORM of REGULAR and IRREGULAR VERBS? Are they similar to each other? Explain.
  Yes, they are. All of the examples follow the Subject + didn't/did not + base form pattern

- Compare the past form of regular verbs with the past form of irregular verbs. Do you notice any differences?
  Not really. Regular and irregular verbs are very similar when it comes to creating the negative form of Past simple

- Looking at the data you have gathered, how do you think the NEGATIVE FORM of the PAST SIMPLE of REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERBS is formed? Type down your guess in the chart below!

SUBJECT	⊕	DIDN'T/ DID NOT	⊕	BASE FORM
-----------------		-----------------		-----------------

- Have a look at the behavior of the verb **TO BE** and modal verbs such as **CAN**. How do you form the NEGATIVE FORM of the PAST SIMPLE of these verbs? Type down your guess in the chart below!

SUBJECT	⊕	WAS/WERE or COULD	⊕	NOT
-----------------		-----------------		-----------------

INTERROGATIVE FORM			
REGULAR VERBS (already given)			
Did you **lie** to me?	did [subj] lie	lie	did + subject + base form + indirect object +?
What **didn't** they **like**?	didn't [subj] like	like	What + didn't + subject + base form +?
How **did** she **end up** living with you?	did [subj] end up	end up	How + did + subject + base form +?
Did you **walk** home?	did [subj] walk	walk	did + subject + base form +?
IRREGULAR VERBS (already given)			
What **did** you **do**?	did [subj.] do	do	What + did + subject + base form +?

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Was it the hip hop?	was	be	Past form + subject + predicative +?
Could you sing it?	could	can	Past form + subject + base form + object +?
Where did everybody go?	did [subj] go	go	Where + did + subject + base form+?
What did you wear to your prom?	did [subj] wear	wear	What + did + subject + base form + complement +?
How did you know my password?	did [subj] know	know	How + did + subject + base form + object +?
What did she say?	did [subj] say	say	What + did + subject + base form +?

PAST SIMPLE – INTERROGATIVE FORM OF REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERBS
Finding patterns…

- Do you notice any regularity in the list of patterns you found for the INTERROGATIVE FORM of REGULAR and IRREGULAR VERBS? Are they similar to each other? Explain.
  Yes, they are. The interrogative of both regular and irregular verbs follows the did+subject+base form pattern.
- Compare the past form of regular verbs with the past form of irregular verbs. Do you notice any differences?
  No, I don't. The exact same rule applies for both regular and irregular verbs.
- Looking at the data you have gathered, how do you think the INTERROGATIVE FORM of the PAST SIMPLE of REGULAR AND IRREGULAR VERBS is formed? Type down your guess in the chart below!

DID/ DIDN'T -------------	➕	SUBJECT ---------------	➕	BASE FORM ---------------	❓

- Have a look at the behavior of modal verbs such as **CAN**. How do you form the past simple of these verbs? Type down your guess in the chart below!

COULD/ COULDN'T	➕	YOU ---------------	➕	BASE FORM ---------------	❓

After reviewing some significant examples from the list of verbs and repeating together the past simple grammar rules for affirmative, negative and interrogative forms of both regular and irregular verbs, I challenge my students with some metacognitive thinking by asking them if our study on past simple was more deductive or inductive. While asking the question, I project the following slide without giving any more tips:

Let's draw conclusions from Assignment 3!
Inductive
OBSERVATION
GENERALIZATIONS
THEORY
VS
THEORY
PREDICTIONS
EXPERIMENT
Deductive
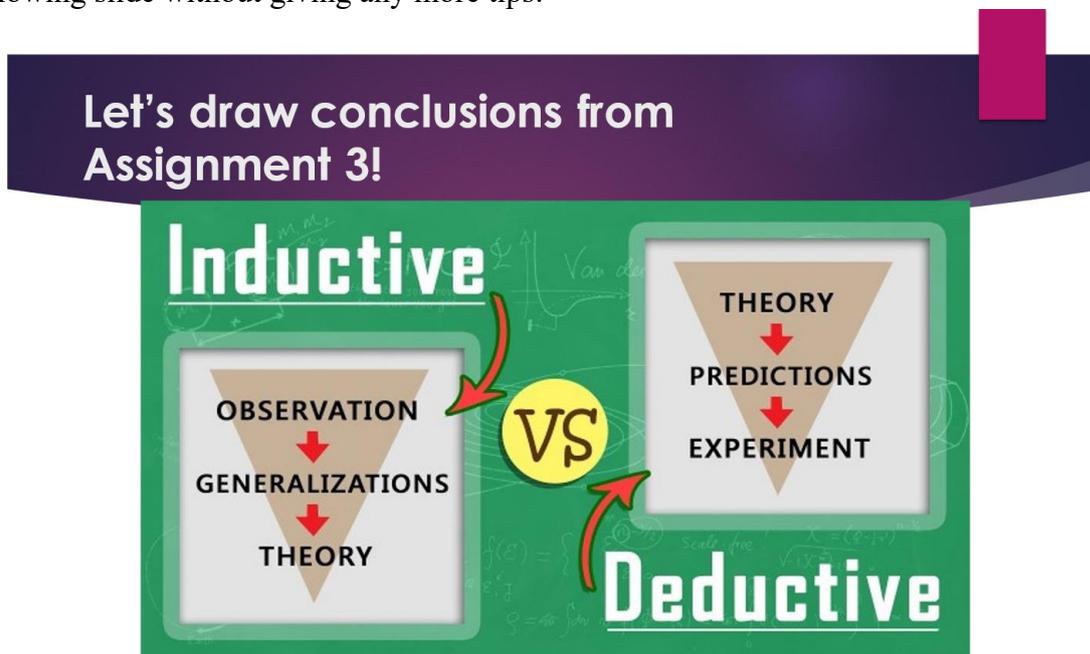
They unanimously answer "inductive!", so I ask my students if they remember what our observation phase consisted of, how we made our generalizations and how we got to the final theory. Once our wrap up on past simple is over, I remark that their final script should include 10 examples of past simple for each of the three studied categories. I conclude the lesson assigning Assignment 4, consisting on some mechanical exercises on past simple I took from their English workbook and a

sort of reading comprehension of the official invitation to the Screenwriting and Acting workshop I prepared for them (see Assignment 4 here below).

Assignment 4.
Due on Sunday, March 5 at 11:59 pm

PART 1: Exercises on Past Simple
1.1 Please do the following exercises on your English textbook:
- ex. 1B p.102
- ex. 2 p.102
- ex. 3 p.106
- ex. 3 p.226
1.2 Send me a **Word file** on **WhatsApp** (or pictures, but I prefer a Word file) with your answers. You can type your answers in THIS DOCUMENT and then send it back to me. PLEASE: Respect the DEADLINE!!

PART 2: Screenwriting & Acting Workshop
2.1 Read very carefully the leaflet about the workshop I have organized for you and do your best to plan the following 2 weeks so that you can participate in the workshop.

2.2 Answer the following questions about the workshop

IIS Pietro Scalcerle, Via Cave, 174, 35136 Padova PD
1BL

SCREENWRITING & ACTING
Workshop

MODULE 1:
Creative Writing: How to Write a Script
- Tuesday, March 7 from 1 to 3 pm in CRM
- Thursday, March 9 from 1 to 3 pm in CRM

SUNDAY, MARCH 12, AT 4PM
DEADLINE FOR THE FINAL SUBMISSIONS OF THE WRITTEN SCRIPTS

MODULE 2:
An Introduction to Acting & Singing
- Tuesday, March 14 from 1 to 3 pm in Auditorium
ONLY The Champions, The Hermit Crabs and The Tramps
- Thursday, March 16 from 1 to 3 pm in Auditorium
ONLY The Krusty Krabs, The Little Beans and The Gossip Girls

FINAL PERFORMANCES
ON MONDAY, MARCH 20
(3rd and 4th hour)

a) When is the workshop starting?

----
b) How many sessions are planned IN TOTAL for each group?

----
c) When is the deadline for the submissions of the group scripts?

----
d) When are final performances taking place?

----
e) Have you ever participated in a workshop similar to this one? Does it sound interesting to you?

----
f) Think about the final test for Roberto's unit (SCRIPT + FINAL SKETCH-TEST). Do you think this workshop will help you perform better in the final test? Explain.

----
g) "Do not take yourselves too seriously, but take extremely seriously all the opportunities life gives you" - Binyomin Abrams. What do you think of this quotation? Summarize your thoughts on this in 2-3 sentences.
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
h) Will you participate in this workshop? [YES] [NO]

Part 2: After-class considerations and in-process analysis

— Keeping in mind Laufer and Hulstijn's Involvement Load Theory (2001, see 1.3), I decide not to provide any word bank for this fill-in-the-gap activity, so as to sustain students' levels of *need*, *search* and *evaluation*. That students complete the task without distractions and actively work to fill in all of the blanks seems to confirm that students' involvement load was high during this activity.

— While I play "Unruly heart" for the second time at the beginning of the lesson, some students who have already completed the task spontaneously stand up and start to dance in small groups while singing along. I observe with pleasure that Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood does not scold them. On the contrary, she encourages them to dance and sing along. "Unruly heart" is a highly emotionally loaded song on self-acceptance. As discussed in chapter 2, students' physical response to this emotion seems to confirm that the physical dimension should never be neglected or underestimated in EFL curricula because of its emotional and communicative potential. Especially in light of this, module 2 of the workshop will also focus on body gestures and on-stage physical movements.

— That I assigned repetitive and decontextualized grammar exercises seems to be in contradiction with what previously stated. Nevertheless, as it has been remarked, any activity can be effective if properly used. In this case, I want my students to verify by themselves that the rules inductively discovered off-book do perfectly work in their book exercises as well. Moreover, by correcting their homework, I have the chance to notice potential recurring mistakes and correct them so as to prevent my students from making those same mistakes in the final written test.

— Some quick considerations on Assignment 4 – Part 2. Questions a-d are just to make sure learners carefully read the workshop leaflet containing important dates and deadlines for our upcoming activities. Questions e and f, on the other hand, address students' interests and needs: I want them to realize that the workshop has been organized just for them and that it is in their interest to participate since it will basically help them succeed in the final test. Here below I attach some answers to questions f and g.

Question f: Think about the final test for Roberto's unit (SCRIPT + FINAL SKETCH-TEST). Do you think this workshop will help you perform better in the final test? Explain.

Some students' answers:
- "I think yes because if we have questions he helps us so we will have no doubts when we go on stage"
- "Of course! It will be very useful! It will make me spend more time with my schoolmates and it will improve my writing and especially my acting skills"
- "Yes, I think this activity will be very useful, also to understand more about the final test"
- "I think that this workshop will help me perform better in the final test because Roberto can give me many valuable tips but also correct me for some mistakes."

Question g: "Do not take yourselves too seriously, but take extremely seriously all the opportunities life gives you" - Binyomin Abrams. What do you think of this quotation? Summarize your thoughts on this in 2-3 sentences.

Some students' answers:
- "I think this quotation is a sentence to think about every day. I think it means you should always be yourself while having fun but not to waste opportunities and take them seriously"
- "I think this quotation is so true. Sometimes we're really hard on ourselves because we want to do everything perfect that we forget to remember all the opportunities life gives us. We only have one life and we have to live it the best we can, without worrying too much"

- "I completely agree with Binyomin Abrams's quote. I personally think that sometimes we take life, with all its opportunities/situations, too seriously. It often happens that we worry too much about what we do and especially how we do it. Sometimes, you just need to be a little more carefree without giving too much weight to things that don't have any. Obviously, we must seize the opportunities life offers, both positive and negative ones, because both cases help us in our growth".

- "I think that Binyomin Abrams is right because life is one and we have to take and to make precious all the opportunities to improve ourselves. Now life has given me a wonderful opportunity to improve in English and I won't waste it".

In line with these answers, all students state they will participate in the workshop with the exception of only 3 students who will probably not be able to join both modules of the workshop because it overlaps with their sport training sessions.

4.10 March 6, Lessons 7-8

Part 1: Detailed description.

Since 1B's teaching assistant is on a school trip with 5B, I have 2 hours in a row today. I start lesson 7 correcting the grammar exercises in Assignment 4 – Part 1. We correct recurring mistakes with more in-class exercises and I make sure the last little criticalities on past simple are solved. After answering the last questions on past simple, Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood and I dedicate some time to give practical instructions on Peer Assessment, remarking that they will have to follow an assessment grid and that they should try to be as objective as possible in the evaluation. Since the target group is not familiar with Peer Assessment, I planned Assignment 5 to be a reading comprehension on a short article on Peer Assessment. Lesson 8 is meant to give the groups a chance to plan their groupwork to write their final scripts, due on March 12. After breaking the class into groups, I project the following slide asking each group to come up with a draft plan for their script.
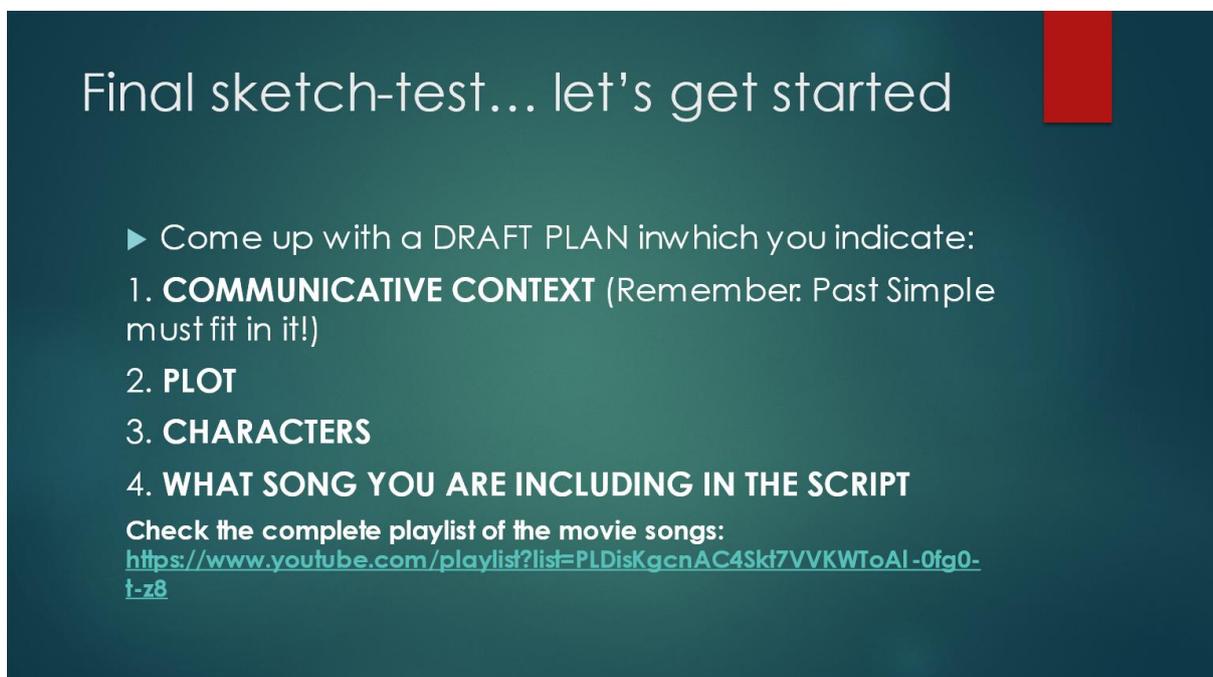
Of course, one hour is not enough to complete the full script, so groups will have to gather after school and finish the script as a group homework. Lesson 8 proceeds as I jump from group to group

answering questions, giving tips and making sure every group comes up with appropriate communicative contexts in which they can make large use of past simple and clothes and prom-related vocabulary. The bell goes and the last lesson of my unit is over.

Part 2: After-class considerations and in-process analysis.

— During lesson 8, I observe that groups work very well. After several hours of group work, it seems to me that at least 4 of the 5 groups are very organized and complete the tasks collectively. One group struggles in that 1 student is absent, 2 students seem reluctant and as a result only 1 student is actively working on the draft plan. I decide to spend more time with them, trying to guide and support them in the task. As I join them, the 2 students that were not actively participating come up with good ideas on the plot and the characters, I value their idea and help the group write down a sketch of their draft plan. They are able to hand in the draft plan by the end of lesson.

— I realize students are very busy in the afternoons. Considering that next week they will both have to come to the workshops and work in groups to write their scripts, I decide to cancel assignment 5 on Peer Assessment (see Appendix B), so they can focus more on the final test. This of course can be potentially problematic since they are not familiar with peer assessment. Nevertheless, I have the feeling adding one more assignment could be stressful and overwhelming, thus ruining the relaxed and friendly atmosphere I was able to create throughout the unit. Keeping in mind that even very good students cannot perform to their best while feeling stressed and overwhelmed (cf. Krashen, 1982), I decide not to administer assignment 5, taking responsibility for the potential consequences of this choice.

4.11 March 7, Workshop session 1: Creative writing – How to create a script

Part 1: Detailed description.

Yesterday (Monday, March 6), I concluded my curricular teaching lessons. Lesson 9-10, planned on March 20, will be dedicated to final performances. In the 2 weeks preceding final performances, Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood will return to teach, while students are going to be with me for the afternoon workshop today (March 7) and on March 16 for on-stage rehearsals. Each of the 2 workshop sessions goes from 1 to 3 pm. Obviously, groups must submit their final scripts before on-stage rehearsals, so that we can work on the scripts after I have reviewed and corrected them. For this reason, I set the deadline for final script submissions on Sunday, March 12.

Today's workshop session consists of 2 parts. In part 1, we are going to explore the role of songs in musical theater scripts. In part 2, I am going to introduce my students to Studiobinder (https://app.studiobinder.com/register), the screenwriting software we are going to use to write and edit our final scripts. I begin explaining that songs in musical theater take the place of monologues and dialogues, thus always having a precise target (receiver) and a precise function in the development of the plot. (See slide below)

I then draw my students' attention on that a song carries a communicative potential that is lyrics-independent: we can distinguish a "happy" song from a "sad" and "melancholic" one even if we do not understand their lyrics. This information is mainly provided through beat, melody and instrumental choices (an e-guitar upbeat pattern appeals to very different feelings than a series of long slow notes played by a clarinet). After reflecting on the feelings evoked by some songs brought up by students, I propose a comparison between songs and human language, making them reflect on that when we communicate, we do not exclusively convey meaning through words. To prove that, I repeat three times the same sentence "I am so happy to be here with you". The first time, I sincerely smile and place my hand on my heart. The second time, I say it with a disgusted face and stressing "o" in "so". The third time, I say it sitting back and yawning. I encourage my students to explain the implied meaning conveyed for each of the three examples, concluding that the same way my gestures and face expressions have an impact on my utterances, music also adds meaning to lyrics in a song. Distinguishing between the 2 major song styles in musical theater (up tempo and ballad songs), I invite my students to carefully choose their song for the final script, making sure the lyrics and the music are consistent with their character's communicative purposes. (See slide below)

WHAT SONG? TO EXPRESS WHAT?

• **Up-tempo**	• **Ballad**
("You Happened")	("The Acceptance Song")
- Happiness	- Melancholy
- Excitement	- Sorrowness
- Tension	- Nostalgia
- Hope	- Introspection
- Redemption	- Romance

In Part 2 of today's workshop, I help my students sign up to Studiobinder, an interactive screenwriting software completely in English that provides practical instructions and tips on how to write a professional screen following the right format. After exploring the software together, I give groups some time to start to write their scripts, while I support them with practical tips. Workshop session 1 ends at 3 pm.

Part 2: After-session considerations and in-process analysis

— Students seemed happy and motivated today. As preannounced, only 3 students were missing today. Even though after a long school day, students are responsive and focused. For the first time in this unit, I have not felt any time pressure. During this afternoon workshop, I was able to expand on some topics I would have never had time to cover in curricular hours. Seeing the quality of my students' work during this workshop, I reflect on that high-quality education needs time, at least more time than teachers normally have in Italian schooling.

— Chapter 2 (see 2.3.5) has proposed that studying the melodic patterns of English song could be a way to study the prosodic functioning of English itself. Moreover, it has been argued that "music and speech are auditory forms of communication that draw on common process[es]" (Stevens et al., 2013, p.59). Consequently, musical dimensions (rhythm, pitch and melody) are pivotal in deciphering oral language. In line with such theories on possible parallels between music and language prosody, today's activity is a clear example of how song can be used in EFL contexts to study prosody and to make learners more aware of its centrality in oral communication.

4.12 March 8, After-unit observation of 1 lesson by Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood

Although I am not supposed to teach today, I decide to go to school either way: through the observation of the teacher's first lesson after my unit, I can gather important data on the teacher's own perception of the unit. Will she refer to the topics covered in my unit? Will she be satisfied with the results of my work? Here below, I propose some short anecdotes and quick considerations aimed at answering these questions.

— The lesson begins with a wrap up on the pronunciation of the past simple of regular verbs. Students pronounce the verbs in an excellent way. Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood smiles at me with a satisfied expression. Apparently, she is satisfied of our work on phonology.

— Next activity is about past simple. The teacher writes the base form of a verb on the blackboard and she asks students to come up with 3 sentences using the same verb in the affirmative, in the negative and in the interrogative form. I notice all the verb she chooses are strictly connected to the topics covered in my unit. In particular, when a girl hesitates when asked to form an affirmative sentence using the verb "dance", the teacher encourages her saying "you must know this verb very well since you worked on it with Roberto". About 90% of the sentences by the students are accurate and the teacher often smiles and says "excellent" or "well done".

— After reviewing some pronunciations and grammar structures, Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood begins an oral test with a student. Although the teacher is very relaxed and does her best to make her student feel comfortable, I notice the overall atmosphere gets slightly more tense as students realize a traditional oral test is now taking place. Students get quiet and listen to her classmate's oral test. The teacher starts the test asking her students when past simple should be used. Although this is not a difficult question, the student stays quiet, touches her hair and blushes. While the teacher intervenes to help and guide her in the answer, I check on my laptop students' submissions on assignment 4 about past simple. Significantly, that same student's answer to the exact same question in assignment 4 is the following:

PAST SIMPLE – AFFIRMATIVE FORM OF REGULAR VERBS
Finding patterns…

● Think about the communicative contexts of the sentences you have gathered. When do you use the PAST SIMPLE? To talk about what?
I use the past simple to talk about facts happened and ended in the past

Although the student perfectly knows how to answer the teacher's question, the formal context of the traditional oral test negatively impacts on her performance to the point that she remains quiet. This can be seen as a perfect example of affective filter activation due to potentially stressful or judgmental learning situations (cf. Krashen, 1982). This episode seems to confirm the need for informal learning contexts (cf. 2.2) where students do not feel judged and are free to work with language and take risks without the burden of constantly feeling assessed. Thanks to her experience, Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood immediately recognizes her student's discomfort and calms her down. Despite this vacillating start, the student calms down and is able to continue the test giving very good answers.

4.13 March 12, Final submissions of written scripts

March 12 is the deadline for the submission of the final scripts. All 6 groups hand in their scripts before the deadline and I correct them and send them back as soon as possible so students have an appropriate amount of time to see the corrections, edit their scripts and learn them by heart before workshop session 2, when on-stage rehearsals are going to take place. While reading the scripts, I also download the needed soundtrack for each performance and note down any minor practical criticalities that might arise on stage so as to solve them during workshop session 2. Here below, I provide the corrected full version of "Beautiful Memories", one of the 6 submitted scripts. Through the analysis of this script, I will point out recurring patterns and make general considerations that also apply to the other scripts.

"BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES"   PACKING UP

1   IT'S THE END OF SUMMER. ALYSSA IS IN HER ROOM WITH HER   1
    COUSIN MEGAN AND SHE IS PREPARING HER SUITCASES BECAUSE
    SHE IS LEAVING FOR COLLEGE.

    "Unruly heart" - instrumental soundtrack goes while Alyssa
    and Megan are preparing the luggage.

                    ALYSSA
                    (She's wearing a white T-
                    shirt, a pair of blue,
                    flared jeans and white
                    shoes)

          Can you give me that beauty case / Vanity case
          over there?

                    MEGAN
                    (She's wearing a white T-
                    shirt, a pair of blue
                    jeans and white shoes)
          Yes, of course. Here you are.

                    ALYSSA
          The pile of T-shirts, please?

    Megan gives some T-shirts to Alyssa.

                    MEGAN
          Oh my God! There are too many
          clothes in here. I don't think
          you're gonna be able to close it!

                                        Te
2   ALYSSA AND MEGAN ARE PUTTING THE CLOTHES IN THE SUITCASES   2
    WHEN SUDDENLY THE DOORBELL RINGS. ALYSSA'S MOM GOES TO
    OPEN THE DOOR.

                    ALYSSA'S MOM
          Alyssa!! Your friends are here!

                    ALYSSA
          Oh wow, I didn't invite them. Well,
          let them come upstairs.

    Emma, Sophie and Emily go to Alyssa's room and they say hi
    to her.

                    ALYSSA
          Hi girls. Why are you here?

                    EMMA
          (She's wearing a white T-
          Shirt, a pair of black,
          flared trousers and white
          shoes)
     We are here to spend the last
     moments with you before you leave
     for college.

                    ALYSSA
     Thanks girls. You are so sweet.

               EMILY, SOPHIE AND EMMA
     Hi Megan!

                    EMILY
     It's a pleasure to meet you. Alyssa
     talks a lot about you.

                    SOPHIE
          (She's wearing a white T-
          shirt, a pair of blue
          jeans and white shoes)
     Do you need any help with your
     traveling bags?

                    ALYSSA
     Yes, I do. I'd like to close all of
     them by tonight.

                    SOPHIE
     Well, let's start working, then!

                    EMILY
          (She's wearing a grey T-
          shirt, a pair of black
          jeans and white shoes)
     I love this skirt! I think you
     should (bring it.) TAKE IT WITH YOU

                    ALYSSA
     TAKE Ok, give it to me. Girls, I didn't
          (bring)any dresses. Can you help me
     with them?

                    EMMA
     I'll help you.

     Emma passes some dresses to Alyssa while Megan goes in
     front of the wardrobe and helps them.

                    MEGAN

O my god! Look at this gown. Isn't it amazing?

                    EMILY
I remembered it! She wore it at the prom.

                    MEGAN
Wow! This is the most beautiful dress I have ever seen.

Everyone looks at the dress.

                    SOPHIE
Do you remember how much fun we had at the prom?

                    EMMA   *PLACE*
We were all at Emily's house) and we were getting ready for the big night. Suddenly Emily's mom called us and told us to go downstairs, because the limousine *HAD* arrived. Unfortunately we didn't finish our makeup in time, so the chauffer had to wait.

                    MEGAN
Who drove the limousine?

                    SOPHIE
The chauffer was my dad.

                    MEGAN
Was the limousine white?

                    EMILY
No, it wasn't. It was a big, black and comfortable limousine. It arrived at 6:45 p.m. and it took us to the school gym.

                    MEGAN
How was the gym?

                    ALYSSA
The gym was wonderful. It was full of colorful lights and balloons. There was a photo set and a photographer. We ate and we drank a lot, because the chef of the school canteen prepared a special menu.

There were some chaperones, so we
didn't drink much punch.

                    MEGAN
And what about your gowns?

                    SOPHIE
All of our dresses were beautiful,
but Emily's gown was the best one.

                    MEGAN
How was it?

                    EMILY
It was a sparkly, black, long dress
with a vent on the right side and
it was open on the back. I also
wore a pair of YSL high heels
shoes. Thanks to this dress I
became the queen of the prom.

                    MEGAN
Seriously?

                    SOPHIE
Yeahhh! She and her boyfriend wore
matching dresses. Noah's tuxedo fit
him perfectly. That's why everyone
voted for them and they became
queen and king of the prom. Then
they danced together in front of
everyone.

                    MEGAN
Did they have the corsage?

                    EMMA
Yes, they had it. The flowers were
pink and white.

YES, THEY DID

                    MEGAN
What about the music? Was it good?

                    SOPHIE
Actually...I didn't like it,
because there wasn't enough disco
music. The DJ wasn't so good.

                    EMILY
Did you have fun at your prom,
Megan? Did you go alone?

                    MEGAN

Yes, of course. It was fantastic!
I didn't go alone, I went with my
boyfriend Liam.

                    ALYSSA
What was the thing you enjoyed the
most?

                    MEGAN
The prom was fine, but, if I have
to tell the truth, I preferred the
promposal,it was perfect!

                    EMMA
Did Liam do it in public?

                    MEGAN
Obviously! It was break time, we
met in the corridor and he gave me
a bunch of flowers. They were
really pretty.

                    SOPHIE
And then what happened?

                    MEGAN
His friends started to sing and
when they finished, Liam asked me
to go to the prom with him.

                    EMMA
Did you make a video?

                    MEGAN
No, because I didn't have my phone
with me.

                    EMILY
What song did they sing?

                    MEGAN
They sang "Dance with you". Do you
know it?

Alyssa, Emily, Emma and Sophie say that they know it. They
stand up and they start to sing and dance.

                    ALYSSA, EMILY, EMMA, SOPHIE, MEGAN
"I JUST WANNA DANCE WITH YOU
LET THE WHOLE WORLD MELT AWAY AND
DANCE WITH YOU
WHO CARES WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY?

```
                    AND WHEN WE'RE THROUGH
                    NO ONE CAN CONVINCE US WE WERE
                    WRONG ALL IT TAKES IS YOU AND ME
                    AND A SONG"


3        EMMA LOOKS AT THE CLOCK AND SHE SEES IT'S REALLY LATE.        3
         ALYSSA'S FRIENDS SAY GOODBYE TO HER AND THEY HUG HER.

                            EMMA
                    Oh gosh! It's really late. We have
                    to go.

         EMMA, MEGAN, SOPHIE, EMILY
                    Goodbye Alyssa.

                            MEGAN
                    I had so much fun! Good luck in
                    college! Enjoy every moment!

         Alyssa's friends and her cousin Megan go out and they
         close the door. Alyssa closes the suitcases and she thinks
         about the amazing afternoon she spent with her friends and
         her cousin.
```

— By reading this script, I immediately notice it is well structured, cohesive and coherent. The scenes are easily distinguishable, the setting is appropriate and the plot is clear and gripping. The layout respects the basic principles of screenwriting. I conclude that the group meticulously followed the screenwriting tips I gave in the first session of the workshop.

— As specifically recommended during the workshop, I notice the song is perfectly embedded in the synopsis and the dialogue → song transition is smooth and natural (see end of scene 2, pages 5-6): the pre beat consists of Megan asking her friends if they know the song "Dance with you", chosen by his boyfriend for "promposal". As an answer, her friends start to sing the song. Reading the bottom of page 5, I notice the characters are also supposed to "dance" (marked in green). Apparently, the group planned a short choreography for the final performance, even though not required. This seems to show their focus is not (only) final assessment. Even though they perfectly know a choreography will not impact on their final mark, they still choose to spend time to create a choreography from scratch. As proposed in chapter 2, this seems to confirm the use of performing arts in EFL learning can be a good way to foster students' creativity and self-expression in a safe and non-judgmental learning environment where learners' personal passions and original ideas are at the center of the learning process.

— The group made extensive use of prom-related and clothes vocabulary. The communicative contexts chosen by students are consistent with my unit's cultural setting (prom) and vocabulary focus (prom and clothes). Looking at the 2 lines marked in orange on page 3, I notice the group enacts some refined rephrasing strategies to make sure the audience can understand what they are talking about whenever a tricky term is included: when Megan asks Sophie who drove the limousine, Sophie replies the "chauffeur" was her dad. As a result, everybody in the audience must at least assume the chauffeur is the guy driving the limousine. That students used similar inductive learning processes in their scripts seems to show the lifelong learning pills I provided during the unit have made them more aware of learning mechanisms and related teaching techniques.

— Reading the title, "Beautiful Memories", I am pleased to notice they carefully chose a narrative context that allows large use of past simple. Interestingly, memories about prom are triggered by a gown the girls "accidentally" bump into while packing. This is a fascinating narrative device the group came up with to perfectly link target grammar to cultural aspects and target vocabulary of the unit. In general, all groups made large use of past simple with a correctness rate of approximately 86%, meaning that about 86% of the past simple forms included in the 6 scripts are accurate. This seems to indicate the inductive analysis of authentic language in context and related performative activities proposed in my unit were effective tools to teach grammar, as previously hypothesized in 1.4. In particular, I observe students spontaneously used a large number of irregular verbs, resulting in the 6 scripts containing more irregular forms than I had asked for. Considering that long lists of verb paradigm are normally EFL students' worst nightmare, I decide to look more into it, creating a comprehensive list of all of the irregular verbs spontaneously used by students in their scripts. I am stunned by the result: students spontaneously used 57 irregular verbs! Comparing this number to the small and decontextualized list of irregular verbs proposed in the unit on past simple of my students' textbook, I hypothesize open tasks can allow students to independently work with language at a deep level, often outperforming their teachers' expectations. I decide to share with the teacher the comprehensive list of irregular verbs included in the script, inviting her to plan future activities on past simple basing on this chart, attached here below.

LIST OF IRREGULAR VERBS from the unit "THE PROM", Roberto Masetti

n.	SENTENCE	BASE FORM	PAST SIMPLE	PAST PARTICIPLE	TRANSLATION
1	**Was** Paul at the prom?	be	was	been	essere
2	Alyssa's friends **became** quite a problem	become	became	become	diventare
3	Feelings **began** to overflow	begin	began	begun	iniziare
4	Emma's heart **broke** when she found out 2 proms had been organized just to exclude her.	break	broke	broken	rompere
5	Emma **broke up** with Alyssa	break up	broke up	broken up	lasciar(si)
6	He **couldn't** play ice hockey when he was 13 and now he is one of the greatest players on campus.	can	could	could	potere
7	She **came** late and did not apologize	come	came	come	venire
8	Then you **came along** and right or wrong feelings began to overflow	come along	came along	come along	comparire
9	You should apologize for what you **did**	do	did	done	fare
10	Emma **drew** a pink heart on the prom poster	draw	drew	drawn	disegnare
11	Not having you near me was where I **drew the line**	draw the line	drew the line	drawn the line	porre dei limiti, mettere dei paletti

12	We **drank** too much punch at the party. That's why I woke up in a hangover	drink	drank	drunk	bere
13	Berry **drove** me home	drive	drove	driven	guidare (portare in macchina)
14	We **ate** and drank a lot	eat	ate	eaten	mangiare
15	I **felt** sorry for her	feel	felt	felt	sentire, percepire
16	I **found** a video of you kissing another girl	find	found	found	trovare
17	She **found out** he had cheated on her	find out	found out	found out	scoprire
18	That tuxedo **fit** him perfectly… wow!	fit	fit	fit	
19	I **forgot** about her!	forget	forgot	forgotten	dimenticare
20	When I **got** there the party was already over	get	got	got	ricevere, prendere, giungere….
21	They **got together** and planned this without your knowledge	get together	got together	got together	riunirsi
22	Emma **got ready** for the prom	get ready	got ready	got ready	prepararsi
23	She **gave** her a bunch of flowers	give	gave	given	dare
24	He **went** to school by bike	go	went	gone	andare
25	It's like a love bomb **went off**!	go off	went off	gone off	esplodere
26	I **had** a meeting with the PTA	have	had	had	avere
27	You **had fun** at the normal people's prom, didn't you?!	have fun	had fun	had fun	divertirsi
28	I **heard** what you said!	hear	heard	heard	sentire
29	You **hurt** my feelings!	hurt	hurt	hurt	ferire, fare male
30	We **kept** some punch for you	keep	kept	kept	tenere, tenere da parte, conservare
31	I just **kept on** failing	keep on	kept on	kept	continuare
32	I **knew** it! You were lying to me!	know	knew	known	sapere
33	She **laid** the blanket on the floor	lay	laid	laid	stendere, distendere qualcosa (transitivo)
34	She **let** the whole world melt away	let	let	let	lasciare, permettere, far…
35	The body **lay** on the floor when the police arrived	lie	lay	lain	giacere, essere disteso (intransitivo)
36	Emma's classmates **lied** to her about the prom	lie (regular)	lied (regular)	lied (regular)	mentire
37	When you **left**, the world fell apart	leave	left	left	lasciare
38	Sorry, I **lost** control of myself yesterday night	lose	lost	lost	perdere
39	He **made** a mistake and admitted it.	make	made	made	fare

40	His side of the story **made sense** to all of us	make sense	made sense	made sense	avere senso
41	They **made sure** nobody was in the room before locking the door	make sure	made sure	made sure	assicurarsi
42	The parents **met** without my knowledge and organized 2 proms	meet	met	met	incontrarsi
43	He **ran** to school because he missed the bus	run	ran	run	correre
44	The director **said to** Meryl Streep her performance was excellent	say	said	said	dire
45	I **saw** you at Bruce Springsteen's concert yesterday!	see	saw	seen	vedere
46	I **sent** you an email 3 weeks ago and you still have not replied.	send	sent	sent	spendire, mandare
47	Alyssa's mom **shut up** right after Alyssa came out	shut up	shut up	shut up	tacere
48	**Alessia** sang in front of the class	sing	sang	sung	cantare
49	When I was 16, my parents **sat me down** for a serious talk	sit down	sat down	sat down	sedere (far sedere)
50	The girls **spent** the whole afternoon rehearsing for the show.	spend	spent	spent	spendere/trascorrere
51	Someone **stole** 20 dollars from me!	steal	stole	stolen	rubare
52	When I **swore** it, I didn't really mean it…	swear	swore	sworn	giurare
53	I **took** a shower more than one week ago… I had better get washed now.	take	took	taken	prendere/fare
54	I **told** you this would happen! You should have listened to me…	tell	told	told	dire
55	I **thought** you could take over the role of Sophie in Mamma Mia since the other actress left. What do you think?	think	thought	thought	pensare
56	When I **understood** what was going to happen, it was just too late.	understand	understood	understood	capire
57	OMG! President Obama **wore** the same tie in 2 different institutional events!	wear	wore	worn	indossare

— Reading Emma's lines on page 3 (marked in green), I surprisingly bump into a past continuous form: "We were all at Emily's place and we were getting ready for the big night. Suddenly, Emily's mom called us and told us to go downstairs". Although past continuous was not covered in my unit and is the next grammar topic Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood will introduce after final performances, students spontaneously and accurately use past continuous to relate about past actions in progress. Right after, they accurately choose past simple to describe an action interrupting the action in progress ("Suddenly, Emily's mom called us and told us to go downstairs"). In other words, students showed to be able to intuitively use a grammar topic that has not been explicitly covered in class yet. I suggest that the teacher could use this occurrence as a hook to the lesson on past continuous. By observing the structure used by students and asking them why they felt the need to use that form rather than past simple, she could lead them through an inductive study on the use and structure of past continuous. Once again, this episode seems to show that opens tasks should be included in final testing since they give students the space to express themselves and to also show skills that are not strictly required.

— Here below, I attach the assessment grid I used to assess this script. As can be seen, all parameters were respected, so I gave a 10/10.

TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT GRID FOR FINAL WRITTEN SCRIPT (PRACTICAL TEST). DIDACTIC UNIT "THE PROM".

GROUP NAME: _____ THE CHAMPIONS _____

	1 point INSUFFICIENT	2 points BORDERLINE	3 points ACCEPTABLE	4 points GOOD	5 points EXCELLENT
PHONETICS Are all of the 18 sounds included in the script at least once?	Only 0 to 4 target sounds are included in the script	Only 5 to 9 target sounds are included in the script	10 to 14 target sounds are included in the script	15-16 target sounds are included in the script	17-18 target sounds are included in the script
GRAMMAR: Past Simple (1) Does the script include at least: - 10 P.S. affirmatives - 10 P.S. negatives - 10 P.S. interrogatives of both regular and irregular verbs?	The script includes: - 0-2 P.S. affirmatives - 0-2 P.S. negatives - 0-2 P.S. interrogatives and there are either only regular or only irregular verbs	The script includes: - 3-4 P.S. affirmatives - 3-4 P.S. negatives - 3-4 P.S. interrogatives and there is not a good balance between regular and irregular verbs	The script includes: - 5-6 P.S. affirmatives - 5-6 P.S. negatives - 5-6 P.S. interrogatives of both regular and irregular verbs	The script includes: - 7-8 P.S. affirmatives - 7-8 P.S. negatives - 7-8 P.S. interrogatives of both regular and irregular verbs	The script includes: - 9-10 P.S. affirmatives - 9-10 P.S. negatives - 9-10 P.S. interrogatives of both regular and irregular verbs
GRAMMAR: Past Simple (2) Are the structures correct and used in appropriate communicative contexts?	Only 0% to 20% of the structures are correct but are used in inappropriate communicative contexts	Only 30% to 40% of the structures are correct but are mostly used in inappropriate communicative contexts	50% to 60% of the structures are correct and generally used in appropriate communicative contexts	70% to 80% of the structures are correct and mostly used in appropriate communicative contexts	90% to 100% of the structures are correct and always used in appropriate communicative contexts
SCRIPT STRUCTURE Is the script well organized? Does it follow the basic principles of screenwriting covered in the workshop?	The script does not have any organizational structure and does not follow the screenwriting principles. It is impossible to understand	Most of the script does not have any organizational structure and does not follow the screenwriting principles. It is very hard to understand	Overall, the script has an organizational structure and follows some of the screenwriting principles. Some passages are hard to understand	The script has a good organizational structure, follows most of the screenwriting principles and is generally readable	The script has an excellent organizational structure, follows all the screenwriting principles and is very easy to read
5 BONUS POINTS Does the script include a song?	YES ☑ NO ☐				

ASSESSOR SIGNATURE: _____ Roberto Gonlti _____

DATE AND PLACE: _____ 16/03/2023 _____

25/25   (10)

Some might argue a 10 is not the right mark for a text containing some mistakes (see the bring/take mistake on page 2). Nevertheless, as discussed at the end of chapter 2, transparency and consistency with the assessment grids in grading are crucial to keep a healthy and trustful teacher-learner relationship. When assessing, teachers should strictly follow the grids shared with the students during the unit, only considering mistakes on the target topics. If I had lowered the mark because of the bring/take mistake, students might have perceived my behavior as a betrayal, seeing my promises on assessment were not kept during final grading. In other words, a 10 doesn't testify that a test is completely flawless. It simply indicates 100% of the unit objectives were achieved. This does not mean mistakes that are not relevant to the unit should be ignored. Of course, they should be corrected and

further analyzed in class, but they should not affect the final mark. All 6 scripts were assessed following this principle. Here below, I list the written script final marks for each group:

The Champions: 10/10
Gossip Girls: 9,3/10
Hermit Crabs: 8,5/10
Krusty Crabs: 8/10
Little beans: 9,5/10
The Tramps: 10/10

4.14 Thursday 16, Workshop section 2: An introduction to Acting and Singing

Part 1: Detailed description

After a short lunch break, workshop session 1 starts at 1 pm. Only 2 students are missing today. Since today's workshop is dedicated to on-stage rehearsals, we walk together to the school's auditorium I have previously booked. The first section consists of some preliminary exercises on diaphragmatic respiration. I ask students to place one hand on their belly and try to breath in by "inflating" it without moving their chest and shoulders. I ask my students to give me feedback (in English, of course) on whether or not they are used to breathing this way. I explain all newborn babies normally use diaphragmatic respiration, while adults degenerate it to upper lungs respiration due to stress and anxiety. After explaining that breathing using the diaphragm rather than the upper lungs allows a greater air intake, I play one note on the keyboard and ask students to sing it for as long as possible. One first time I ask them to breath in "normally". The second time I ask them to use diaphragmatic respiration. Students' note is much longer the second time. Right after, I do a quick vocal warm up with some scales on the keyboard. After this brief introduction on respiration, section 2 begins. In this section, each group will have around 20/25 minutes to get on stage and try their performance. During the performances, I intervene giving practical tips on body gestures and on-stage movements, I explain that they should never turn their backs to the audience and I make sure they speak loud enough for the audience to be able to hear what they are saying. This is particularly important, since the audience (their classmates) will have to assess them during the final performances.

Part 2: After-session considerations and in-process analysis

— I notice students are not used to being on a stage. Some of them are embarrassed, blush and laugh. While observing this behavior, I think it was a very good idea to plan some stage rehearsals before the final performances, so students can break the ice and get used to this performative environment. Noticing their embarrassment, I decide to get on stage and do very weird and funny gestures asking them to emulate me while walking on the whole stage surface. After this brief exercise in which they see me, "the authority", making fun of myself on stage, I get serious and remind students of that this is a safe place where nobody is judged and everyone can feel free to express themselves the way they want. Suddenly, all the embarrassment is gone so we can start to work seriously on the performances. Since I notice several students do not know their script completely by heart yet, I allow scripts on stage, remarking that the final performance will have to be off book. Students take the rehearsal very seriously and carefully listen to my feedback and tips for the final performances.

— In line with Krashen's *rule of forgetting* (1983) exposed in Chapter 2, in today's workshop language is not the target, but the means through which students can learn some useful stage techniques to be applied during final performances. In other words, students are "forgetting" this is primarily an English lesson. According to Krashen, this is potentially the best learning context for deep acquisition to take place. Nevertheless, as far as pronunciation is

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concerned, I notice several students still make some mistakes. It is my impression they are distracted by the new environment and by the fact that they do not know the script by heart yet. I provide detailed feedback on pronunciation and encourage them to work more on it since they will be assessed on it during final performances.

4.15 March 20, Lessons 9-10: Final performances

Part 1: Detailed description

Today, I officially conclude my unit with the oral test, consisting of the stage performances of the final scripts originally written by students. As students take seat in the school auditorium, they find on their chairs the peer assessment grids they will have to use to assess their classmates' performances. I explain that each student will be assessed by me (50% of the oral mark) and by 3 or 4 peers (the average of their grades will count for the remaining 50% in the oral mark). Both teacher and students will use the exact same assessment grid, attached here below:

PEER ASSESSMENT GRID FOR FINAL SKETCH-TEST (ORAL TEST). DIDACTIC UNIT "THE PROM".

PERFORMER FULL NAME: _____

GROUP NAME: _____

	1 point INSUFFICIENT	2 points BORDERLINE	3 points ACCEPTABLE	4 points GOOD	5 points EXCELLENT
PHONETICS Our 18 Target Sounds	Most of the target sounds are pronounced so inaccurately as to be incomprehensible	Sufficient to be understood, but most of the target sounds are still pronounced inaccurately	Sufficient to be understood. About 50% of the target sounds are pronounced accurately	Understandable for the most part. About 60-70% of the target sounds are pronounced accurately	Easily understood. 80 % to 100% of the target sounds are pronounced clearly and accurately
GRAMMAR Past Simple	Most of Past Simple structures are so wrong as to be incomprehensible	Past Simple structures are mostly wrong and sometimes incomprehensible	About 50% of Past Simple structures are correct and comprehensible	About 60-70% of Past Simple structures are correct and almost always comprehensible	About 80 % to 100% of Past Simple structures are correct and always comprehensible
VOCABULARY Clothes	The stage costumes indicated in the script DO NOT correspond to what the actors are wearing	Most of the stage costumes indicated in the script DO NOT correspond to what the actors are wearing	About 50% of the stage costumes indicated in the script DO correspond to what the actors are wearing	About 60-70% of the stage costumes indicated in the script DO correspond to what the actors are wearing	About 80 % to 100% of the stage costumes indicated in the script DO correspond to what the actors are wearing
PERFORMANCE	The actor is nervous and uncomfortable, doesn't know the script by heart and/or their voice volume is so low as to be inaudible	The actor is generally uncomfortable, doesn't know most of the script by heart and/or is difficult to hear because of generally low voice volume	The actor has a somewhat comfortable appearance, knows about 50% of the script by heart and is generally audible	The actor looks comfortable, knows 60-70% of the script by heart and their voice volume is appropriate	The actor is relaxed, shows no hesitation, moves with ease and knows 80% to 100% of the script by heart. Their voice is perfectly audible.
5 BONUS POINTS Did the performer sing during the performance?	YES ☐ NO ☐				

ASSESSOR FULL NAME: _____

ASSESSOR SIGNATURE: _____

DATE AND PLACE: _____

After explaining all the technicalities on peer assessment, the show begins. I get on stage and give Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood a bunch of flowers to heartly thank her for the time and great support she gave me during this unit. Everything is ready, so I welcome on stage the first group jokingly modulating my voice in a Broadway style. As students perform, I sit on the far-left side of the stage watching the performances, taking notes while following the scripts and playing the soundtrack as indicated by my students. At the end of each performance, we take a 3-4 minutes break to fill in the assessment grids and make sure everybody is on the same page before moving on to the next performance. The 6 groups perform without any interruptions or technical problems, resulting in performances finishing earlier than expected. Since students ask insistently to come back to stage because they had fun, we agree on that groups willing to repeat their performance "just for fun" are

free to do it. All groups decide to repeat the performance. After the second round of performances is over, I allow them to eat some after-show snacks before the bell rings and lesson 10 is over.

Part 2: after-session considerations and in-process analysis

— I am impressed by the work students have done since workshop session 2. All of the students know the script by heart with only few hesitations. I also notice students have worked a lot on stage movements and acting tips I gave them during workshop sessions 2. Each movement on stage is meaningful and functional to the narration. Students' pitch and intonation varies consistently with the communicative functions, the voice volume is appropriate and students in the audience can easily hear and understand what the actors are saying. Chapter 2 has hypothesized that "drama can be one of the most suitable ways to help them to 'speak with more confidence, with better articulation and resonance (quality and volume)' and learn how to use voice 'to convey different emotions (inflexion, tone/pitch and intonation)' (Almond, 2005, p.64)". (Chang, 2012, p.12). Students' demonstrated prosodic effectiveness and appropriateness in today's performances seem to testify that drama can serve as a valid tool to help students grow prosody-aware.

— I am pleased to see the six performances are original and very different from one another. Three out of six groups created a short choreography for the sung part although it was not required and one student played the piano live during the performance. During final performances on stage, new talents emerge that I had not noticed during in-class activities. In particular, one girl I had wrongly "labeled" as shy reveals great singing skills and stage awareness during a small singing solo. Similarly, a girl that was barely audible whenever asked to intervene during the lessons proves to have a very theatrical voice once on stage. In line with what discussed in chapter 2, it seems that the use of the performing arts in my unit was a means for students to express themselves revealing hidden talents and to personalize their EFL learning process.

— The students look relaxed and focused. The embarrassment we struggled with during workshop session 2 is gone. All students take the test seriously. More than tense, I would describe them as excited about the performances. Similarly to what normally happens to actors, pre-stage tension is unavoidable. Nevertheless, as soon students get on stage, it is transformed into positive adrenaline that results in a focused and fresh performance. This, among many other features hinted at in this chapter, seems to confirm the close actor-student relationship thoroughly analyzed in 2.4.

— I notice pronunciation has greatly improved since last rehearsals, meaning students must have actively worked on it. In particular, I notice a recurring pattern: pronunciation of the target sounds is very good to excellent especially in sung sections, while rare minor mistakes are still recognizable in the spoken sections. In addition, I notice none of the minor memory lapses I register happen during sung parts. While I notice some minor hesitations in the spoken dialogues, none of the students forgets the song lyrics while signing. These observation data seem to confirm the theories exposed in chapter 2 about the role of music in enhancing pronunciation and retention (see 2.3.5).

— That students insistently ask me to repeat the performances is noteworthy. From their perspective, it is most likely just to have fun and to have the chance to perform without being assessed. From a teacher's point of view, this request should be valued as an important opportunity not to be wasted: while having fun, students are spontaneously choosing to do a

very important repetition exercise on a text explicitly designed to contain as many examples as possible of the target topics of the unit (English sounds, past simple and clothes and prom-related vocabulary, in this case). This episode can be seen as a practical example of how music and performative activities provide the context for meaningful repetition without boredom (cf. chapter 2).

— A quick note on peer assessment: although students are not familiar with this way of assessing, it is my impression their response to it is very positive. All students fill in assessment grids properly and meticulously following my instructions. Observing assessing students in the audience during the performances, I am pleased to note most of the them are actively watching the show while filling in the assessment grid and taking some quick notes. From the teacher's perspective, peer assessment can be a useful teaching tool for at least 2 reasons. Firstly, it is a practical way to show students that education is a social act of shared responsibility in which all participants should actively contribute to each other's growth and full development (cf.2.5). Secondly, it is a device to keep students' attention when they are not on stage. Assessing the classmates' performances is indeed a very powerful means to revise and further explore the same target topics from a slightly different perspective: the classmate's.

— In The Champions' scene, a girl is packing up in her room before moving out and her friends are helping her. To make the scene more realistic, students bring to school a clothes rack with a full set of hanging clothes. To decide what to pack and what to leave at home, the group of friends pick the clothes from the rack while simultaneously mentioning them in their conversation. As a result, their verbal message coincides with their tactile experience, in that they mention specific types of clothes while actually touching them, looking at them and passing them to their classmates. As pointed out in section 2.2.3, such authentic and multisensory experience can favor vocabulary long-term retention (clothes vocabulary, in this case).

— I conclude my in-process analysis of final performances with one last short anecdote. The Tramps set their scene in a café, where a group of friends meet up for a brunch. To make the scene more realistic, one girl prepares sandwiches for all members in her group. When performances are over, they eat those same sandwiches as a break snack before next lesson starts. In other words, they perceived the final test of my unit as a safe and informal space where both their academic needs (succeeding at the test) and their physiological needs (having something to eat after the show) could be simultaneously fulfilled. This anecdote suggests that my objective to create an informal and meaningful learning environment in which students' personal needs are at the center of the learning process has probably been achieved.

4.16 Final marks

After final performances have taken place, it is now time to give students the final marks. As previously explained, students get 2 final marks, one for the oral test and one for the written test. While the oral mark integrates my mark (50%) with the peer assessment average mark (50%), the written mark is shared in every group. Nevertheless, as agreed with the teacher and clearly explained to students several times throughout the unit, compliance with take-home assignment submissions will affect the written mark, resulting in each student having a personalized mark for the written part as well. Here below, a detailed record of students' assignment submissions.

1B ASSIGNMENTS

1 point (green)	0,5 points (yellow)	0 points (red)

n.	ASS. 1 (Audios +Word)	ASS. 2 (Mini on IPA)	ASS.3 (Past simple)	ASS.4 (ex.Past simple)	Final script submissions	TOT.
1	(yellow)	(yellow)	(yellow)	(green)	(green)	**3,5/5**
2	(green)	(green)	(green)	w.done (green)	(green)	**5/5**
3	(green)	(green)	excell (green)	(green)	(green)	**5/5**
4	(green)	(green)	(green)	(green)	(green)	**5/5**
5	(green)	(green)	(green)	w.done (green)	(green)	**5/5**
6	(green)	(green)	(green)	excell. (green)	(green)	**5/5**
7	giust. (red)	(yellow)	(yellow)	w.done (green)	(green)	**2/5**
8	(green)	(yellow)	(green)	(green)	(green)	**4/5**
9	(green)	(green)	(green)	(yellow)	(green)	**4,5/5**
10	(green)	(yellow)	(yellow)	(green)	(yellow)	**3,5/5**
11	(green)	ass.	ass	ass	ass.	
12	giust. (red)	(green)	(green)	(yellow)	(green)	**3,5/5**
13	(green)	(green)	excell (green)	excell (green)	(green)	**5/5**
14	(green)	(yellow)	(green)	(green)	(green)	**4,5/5**
15	(red)	(yellow)	(red)	(yellow)	(green)	**2/5**
16	(yellow)	(yellow)	(yellow)	(yellow)	(yellow)	**2,5/5**
17	(green)	(green)	w.done (green)	excell (green)	(green)	**4,5/5**
18	(yellow)	(green)	(red)	(yellow)	(green)	**3/5**
19	(green)	(yellow)	(green)	(green)	(green)	**4,5/5**
20	(green)	(yellow)	very go (green)	w.done (green)	(green)	**4,5/5**
21	(green)	(green)	(green)	(green)	(green)	**5/5**
22	excel. (green)	(green)	excel. (green)	excell. (green)	(green)	**5/5**
23	(green)	(yellow)	(red)	(green)	(green)	**3,5/5**
24	(green)	(yellow)	(green)	excell. (green)	(green)	**4,5/5**
25	(green)	(yellow)	w.done (green)	(green)	(yellow)	**3,5/5**
26	(green)	(green)	(green)	excell. (green)	(green)	**5/5**
27	(yellow)	(green)	(green)	(green)	(green)	**4,5/5**

From a vertical analysis of this chart, a general positive trend can be observed: while 3 people did not hand in assignment 1 and 4 students handed it in late, everybody submitted assignment 4 and 5 (final scripts), although some late submissions persist. Horizontally, while it is true that "only" 15 students regularly submitted their assignments with 0 or 1 late submission, none of the struggling students worsened their submission rate throughout the unit: it either remained steady (see student 25) or improved (see students 1, 12 or 27). On the day after final performances (March 21), I quickly stop by at school and take 10 minutes of Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood's lesson to assign final grades and discuss them at school. Before showing the marks, I read out loud the following message I have prepared for 1B. Below my message, find the chart with final marks:

Final Marks

Each of us is a universe. Don't ever let yourselves be defined by stupid numbers. You are worth much more than that, never forget it. If someone (at school and out of school) ever tries to convince you of the opposite, let them know they are awfully wrong. The numbers you find below do NOT define you as human beings. They just describe how you performed on very specific tasks, in very specific contexts, on very specific days. Some of you will do better in the next test, some others will probably get a lower mark… who cares? That is life. Passion, commitment, creativity, reliability, curiosity, motivation, longing for knowledge, great social skills, hilariousness. This is what I will remember you for. Certainly not for the marks you got. Work on your souls. Believe in your dreams, work hard to make them come true. Fall in love with people that respect you, choose friends that take the best out of you, embrace the opportunities life gives you and learn as much as you can from them. Study hard, discover the pleasure of learning, choose culture over superstition and arrogance. If you have the chance, travel abroad, use your English skills, learn from different cultures and find tolerance in your hearts. Find your place in the world. And find yourselves in everything you do. While your grades will fade, your souls will always be with you. Work on your souls, not on your grades. Rob.

1BL		ORAL MARK			PRACTICAL MARK		
n.	STUDENT FULL NAME	Rob's mark (50%)	Peer ass. (50%)	Final mark (ORAL)	Written Script (50%)	Assignments submissions (50%)	Final mark (PRACTICAL)
1		9+	10-	9 ½	8 ½	3,5/5 = 7	8-
2		9+	9 ½	9 ½	10	5/5 = 10	10
3		10	9 ½	10-	10	5/5 = 10	10
4		7 ½	8 +	8-	9 ½	5/5 = 10	10-
5		9-	9 ½	9	10	5/5 = 10	10
6		9 ½	9 ½	9 ½	10	5/5 = 10	10
7		7-	8-	7+	8 ½	2/5 = 4	6+
8		10	9 ½	10-	8 ½	4/5 = 8	8+
9		9 ½	9 ½	9 ½	10	4,5/5 = 9	9 ½
10		9-	9-	9-	8 ½	3,5/5 = 7	8-
11		10	-------	10	9 ½	-----------	9 ½
12		7-	9+	8-	9 ½	3,5/5 = 7	8+
13		9+	10-	9 ½	10	5/5 = 10	10
14		10	10-	10	9+	4,5/5 = 9	9+
15		7-	7+	7	8 ½	2/5 = 4	6+
16		6 ½	6 ½	6 ½	8 ½	2,5/5 = 5	7-
17		9 ½	9 ½	9 ½	10	4,5/5 = 9	9 ½
18		7+	9	8	9 ½	3/5 = 6	8-
19		10	10-	10	9+	4,5/5 = 9	9+
20		9+	7 ½	8 ½	9+	4,5/5 = 9	9+
21		7-	8+	7 ½	9 ½	5/5 = 10	10-
22		10	9 ½	10-	10	5/5 = 10	10
23		10	8+	9+	9+	3,5/5 = 7	8
24		9 ½	9 ½	9 ½	8 ½	4,5/5 = 9	9-
25		9+	9+	9+	8 ½	3,5/5 = 7	8-
26		10	10	10	10	5/5 = 10	10
27		9+	9	9+	10	4,5/5 = 9	9 ½

The grades, obtained thoroughly following the assessment grids Ms Beverley Jayne Littlewood, students and I agreed on, are very satisfying: with a fail threshold fixed at 6/10, 100% of the students passed both oral and written test with very good to excellent results, with only 3 students getting 7/10 or lower. Although marks are only numbers and often cannot portray the complexity of a varied, subjective and multileveled context such as the EFL classrooms, they seem to indicate that the language objectives for the unit "The Prom" have been achieved. After reading my message and showing final marks to the class, the students' class representative unexpectedly stands up and

comes to me with a present: a cap (I usually wear caps) and a t-shirt with the famous quotation (in English) from Alice in Wonderland "*We are all mad here*". After giving me this present, she thanks me in English on behalf of the class and an applause starts. This small nice gesture, so moving and meaningful for me, seems to confirm that I was able to create an informal and relaxed learning environment in which the preserving of positive human relations was strictly connected to effective EFL learning.

FINAL RESULTS AND POST-SESSION QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

After Easter break, precisely on April 11, I send my ex-students a post-session questionnaire on the unit "The Prom", asking them to fill it out as soon as possible. 22 students complete the questionnaire. In the bullet list here below, I provide an analysis of students' opinions comparing them to the data I gathered during my experience. In this comparative analysis, I point out congruencies and incongruencies between the 2 perspectives. Moreover, recurring patterns will be outlined throughout the analysis.

— **Students' perceived effectiveness of the unit on their pronunciation skills**
After drawing some conclusions on the effectiveness of my unit basing on the observation of workshop session 2, final performances and final grades, I decide to doublecheck my results comparing them to the students' perceived effectiveness of the unit "The Prom". In particular, when I ask students whether or not their English pronunciation has improved thanks to the unit, this is their answer:

Would you say your English pronunciation has improved thanks to the unit?
22 risposte
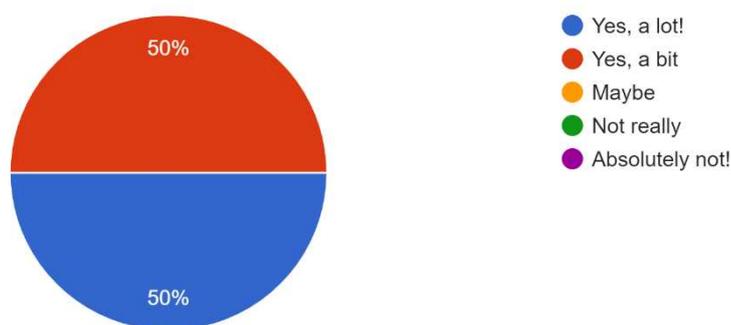
As can be read in the graph above, 100% of the students think their pronunciation has improved (50% think it has improved a lot, 50% think it has improved a bit). To verify the reliability of this answer, I decide to compare students' pre-unit and post-unit answers on the pronunciation of 3 specific phonemes, /r/, /θ/ and the /ʌ/ vs /æ/ phonemic distinction. As can be noticed in the graph below, while before the unit 73,7% of the participants thought they were good or excellent at pronouncing /r/, the percentage of students believing their pronunciation of /r/ is good or excellent has increased to 81,8% (+ 8,1%). A similar trend can be observed with /θ/: while 78,9% of the students claimed to have a good or excellent pronunciation of /θ/ before the unit, this percentage raises to 81,8% after the unit (+ 2,9%). Most interestingly, while 5,3% of the participants believed to be very bad at pronouncing /θ/ before the unit, 0% of participants think they are bad or very bad at pronouncing /θ/ after the unit. As further proof of my unit's beneficial effects on students' pronunciation skills, I decided to ask students the exact same question on /ʌ/ vs /æ/ phonemic distinction both before and after the unit. While 21,1% of the participants got the answer wrong before the unit, 100% of the answers is correct in the post-session questionnaire (check red pie chart here below).

PRE-UNIT	POST-UNIT
How good do you think you are at pronouncing the R sound in "Red"? 19 risposte	**In light of what you have learnt with Roberto, how good do you think you are at pronouncing the [r] sound?** 22 risposte
63,2% 10,5% 26,3% — 1 I think I am very bad; 2 I think I am bad; 3 I think I am on average; 4 I think I am good; 5 I think I am excellent	72,7% 9,1% 18,2% — Very bad; Bad; On average; Good; Excellent
How good do you think you are at pronouncing the TH sound in "THink"? 19 risposte	**In light of what you have learnt with Roberto, how good do you think you are at pronouncing the [θ] sound?** 22 risposte
68,4% 10,5% 15,8% — 1 I think I am very bad; 2 I think I am bad; 3 I think I am on average; 4 I think I am good; 5 I think I am excellent	72,7% 9,1% 18,2% — Very bad; Bad; On average; Good; Excellent
Do you think the vowel sound in "but" and "bat" is the same sound? 19 risposte	**Do you think the vowel sound in "but" and "bat" is the same sound?** 22 risposte
78,9% 21,1% — YES; NO	100% — YES; NO

— **Students' perception on the effectiveness of music and performative activities in EFL curricula**

The aim of my study is exploring whether or not music-based authentic materials and performative activities can enhance EFL acquisition. While the data I gathered during the unit seem to suggest a potential beneficial effect of music and the performing arts on EFL curricula, I am willing to find out more about students' opinion on the matter, especially in light of our just-concluded experience. As indicated in the graph below, 100% of the participants think singing and acting were effective tools to learn English and would recommend this method to our students.

Think about our unit. Do you think singing and acting were effective tools to learn English? Would you recommend it to other students?
22 risposte

100% — YES; NO

174

Interestingly, as proposed in Chapter 2, music, singing and acting seem to have played a significant role in boosting students' motivation during the unit. As can be read in the pie chart below, 90,9% of the students affirm that music, singing and acting increased their motivation.

Do you think music, singing and acting increased or decreased your motivation?
22 risposte

- Music increased my motivation
- Music decreased my motivation

90,9%
9,1%
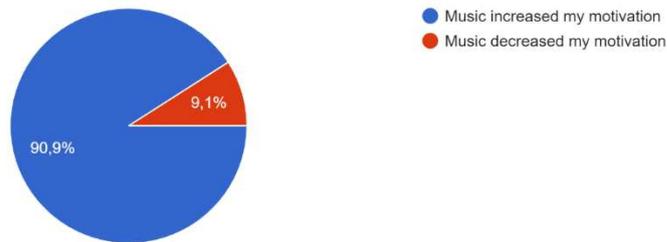
Consistently with the data summarized in the graph here above, when asked to type down the activities they liked the most during the unit, these are the unedited answers:

1. the song and the show
2. sing and act with my friends
3. working in groups
4. see the film
5. the workshop
6. when we talked about the prom
7. Writing the script
8. Doing the home assignment, they are less stressful than normal homework for me
9. I liked writing the script and then performing it on stage.
10. Write the script and recite it
11. watch the film
12. the show
13. acting
14. The show
15. I enjoyed the "show"
16. the activity I enjoyed the most was singing
17. the final exam
18. The group's work
19. the theatre
20. the little show
21. I like writing the script with my group and acting it like an actress
22. sing

As can be observed in the list above, 16 out of 22 students' answers explicitly mention singing and acting or refer to art-based performative activities. 3 students' favorite activity was watching the musical movie "The Prom" or doing prom-related activities. 2 students mention groupwork and one student affirms their favorite activity was doing the home assignments, described as "less stressful than normal homework". In other words, 95,5 % of participants directly mention the performing arts, performative activities or music-related

authentic materials when describing their favorite activities. Besides boosting students' motivation, participants' opinion seems to indicate that music, singing and acting functioned as acquisition catalysts in the achievement of language goals set for this unit: as summarized in the pie chart here below, 100% of participants affirm that music, singing and acting helped better understand the topics of the unit (English pronunciation, past simple and clothes and prom-related vocabulary).

Do you think music, singing and acting helped you understand better the topics of the unit (pronunciation, past simple and clothes vocabulary)?

22 risposte

● Yes, they did
● No they didn't

This trend persists when students are explicitly asked to compare the teaching methods I used with a more traditional teaching approach. As showed in the pie chart here below, 81,8% of participants affirm that you learn more with the method I used.

Compare the teaching method I used to the traditional, book-based teaching style. With what method do you think you learn more?

22 risposte

● You learn more with the traditional method
● You learn more with Rob's method
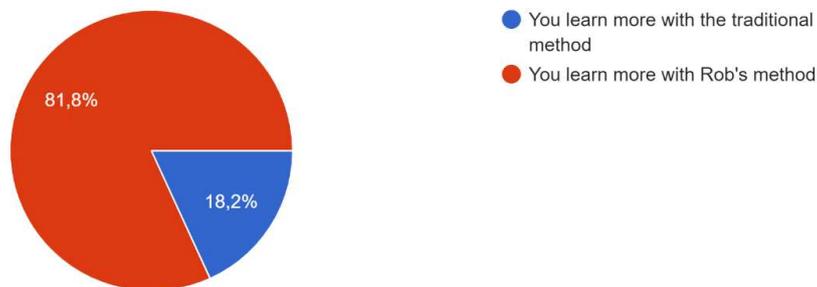
Students' answers when explicitly asked to mention the activities in which they felt were learning the least are consistent with the data showed so far. Among students' answers, 3 are noteworthy:

In what activities did you personally feel you were learning the least?

1. "Studying the sounds without acting"

2. "In the moments of explanations"

3. "During the normal lessons"

In other words, the perceived least effective activities where the ones closer to the traditional teaching style, including taught lessons and teacher explanations that did not involve practical and performative group activities. To conclude, I would like to point out that after the unit, 90,9% of participants state they now like English better:

Would you say you now like English more than you did before the unit?
22 risposte
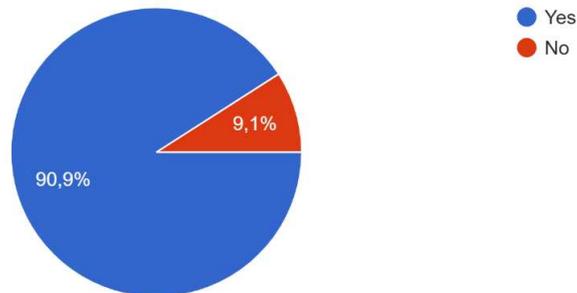
— **Students' perceived role of fun and playfulness in EFL acquisition.**
In the post-session questionnaire, 90,9% of the students affirm they had fun most of the time during the activities, while 9,1% state they had fun sometimes. (Compare the first chart here below). Chapter 2 proposes that fun and playfulness can enhance acquisition in EFL learning contexts. Consistently with this hypothesis, 95,5% of my students participating in the post-session questionnaire agree on that having fun while learning makes one learn more (Check the second pie chart below).

Did you have fun during the activities?
22 risposte
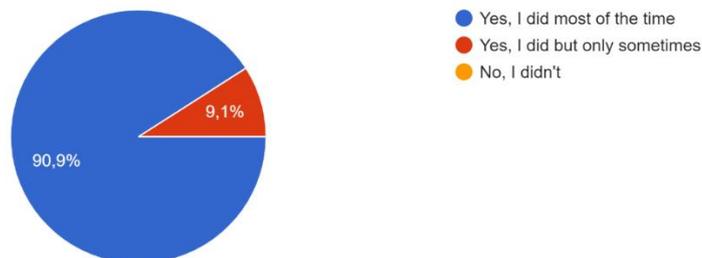
Do you think having fun while learning makes you learn less or more?
22 risposte
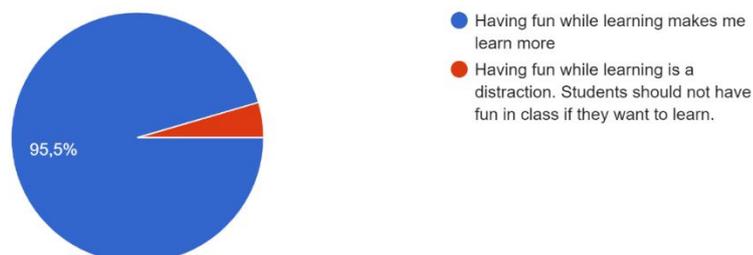
To verify the reliability of such affirmations, I decide to ask my students to indicate in two separate questions of the post-session questionnaire in which activities they had most fun and in which activities they learned the most. Here below, I provide a detailed comparison of the 2 resulting lists to check whether any parallels or links can be established between the 2 categories.

In what activities did you have fun?	In what activities did you learn the most?
- Acting - In recite the script - in the final activity, it felt like a real musical - the final exam - I had fun during the final show - the rehearsals and the performance on stage. - in the rehearsals of the show I had fun	- Acting - To recite - In acting - during the show - in the final workshop - acting
- Singing the songs, - Singing - when we heard and sang the movie songs - sing	- Sing - When I sang - Sing - Hearing the songs and trying to pronounce the words correctly - The lesson about the pronunciation of the words in the songs - the activity about the pronunciations
- in the script writing activity - working on the script - when we wrote a script - Learning the script	- writing the script - studying the script - when I wrote the script - I feel I was learning the most while I was writing the script
- Watching the movie	- watch the film in English
- The game of the sounds	- I felt I was learning the most when we did the quiz with the IPA
- The practical lessons, but also normal - I had fun in almost all activities - all the activities were funny	- In reality both in theory and in practice I learned a lot - in all the activities I think - All the lessons

As clearly visible in the chart here above, almost a one-to-one correspondence is recognizable between the activities in which students had fun and the activities in which they perceived they were learning the most. The results of this comparison, in line with students' opinion on the role of fun in learning and consistently with the results of my observation during the unit, seem to confirm the theories exposed in Chapter 2, according to which playful learning environments can enhance acquisition. Moreover, since the most recurring activities in both categories (singing, acting and screenwriting) are strictly connected to music and the performing arts, it is possible to conclude that, in light of their potential to foster playful and creative learning environments, music and the performing arts can function as useful tools to enhance EFL acquisition.

— **Students' feedback on the inductive approach to grammar**
Section 1.3 has explained the advantages of using full-length authentic materials (movies, novels, etc.) to promote an inductive study of grammar based on an extensive analysis of

specific grammar structures naturally occurring in contextualized and authentic language. In line with this approach, I have tried to introduce students to an inductive study of past simple by observing and catalogizing past simple occurrences in "The Prom" (Murphy, 2020) to then hypothesize general grammar rules. If my in-process observation and the final results of my unit suggest that the grammar objectives seem to have been achieved, I think the students' opinions on this method cannot be ignored since they are the direct recipients of the method I proposed. As showed in the graphs below, 100% of participants in the post-session questionnaire think finding examples on past simple in the movie extract was an effective way to see how past simple is used in real language. Similarly, when explicitly asked to compare the inductive approach based on authentic materials to a more traditional textbook-based and deductive approach to grammar, 81,8% of participants confirm that learning grammar rules by heart from their textbook is less effective than observing real language and trying to find out grammar rules by themselves.

Do you think finding examples on the Past simple in the movie extract was a useful way to see how Past simple is used in real language?
22 risposte

Do you think learning grammar rules by heart from your textbook is more effective than observing real language and trying to find out the grammar rules yourself?
22 risposte
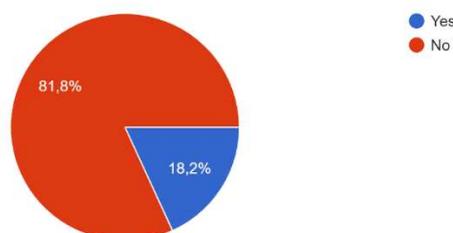
Observing these results, it can be concluded that students' opinions perfectly reflect my own findings and the theories exposed in Chapter 1 on the beneficial effects of an inductive approach to EFL grammar acquisition.

— **Did students "learn how to learn" in my unit?**
In line with the considerations on lifelong learning presented at the end of chapter 2 and as also specified in this chapter, one of the goals set for my unit was providing students with some lifelong learning pills they could independently use in future. In particular, my introduction to IPA and English sounds was not meant to provide a comprehensive inventory of all existing English sounds. On the contrary, it was a way to show my students how IPA can serve as a practical tool to independently improve one's own pronunciation and to become more aware of English sounds. That this lifelong learning goal was probably achieved seems to be confirmed by students' opinion on a specific question on it: 90,9% of

participants claim that they think they are going to use the IPA in future to check the pronunciation of a sound they are not sure about. (see pie chart below)

After Roberto's class, do you think you are going to use the IPA alphabet to check the pronunciation of a sound you are not sure about? In other words:...ful tool to make your pronunciation more accurate?
22 risposte

- Yes
- No

90,9%   9,1%
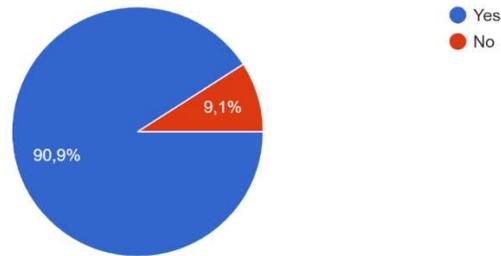
Of course, the metacognitive reflections proposed in class on inductive approach (discussed in the previous section) can also be interpreted within the framework of lifelong learning. One third aspect being strictly connected to lifelong learning was my attempt to raise students' awareness on the advantages of social, cooperative and community-based learning, embodied in the two concrete experiences of cooperative learning and peer assessment I proposed in my unit. Students' almost unanimous opinion on both experiences seems to confirm that this third lifelong learning objective has been achieved as well. As indicated in the 2 pie charts here below, 90,9% of participants think groupwork can make one learn more than individual work. Complementarily, the same percentage affirm they liked peer assessment and think observing their peers' performances can make them more aware of their own performances.

After this unit, do you think working in groups can make you learn more than working individually?
22 risposte
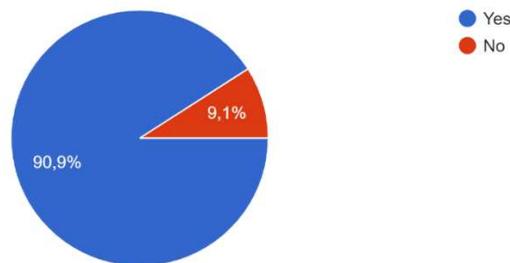
- Yes
- No

90,9%   9,1%

Did you like peer assessment? Do you think observing and assessing your peers' performances can increase your awareness about your own performance?
22 risposte

- Yes
- No

90,9%   9,1%
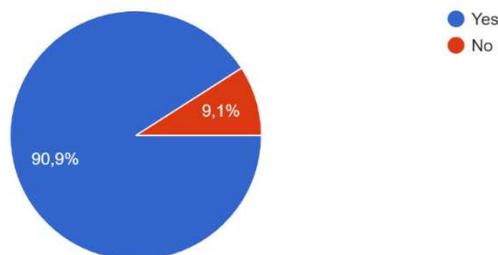
Nevertheless, that both cooperative learning and peer assessment are complicated techniques that need time, constant practice and several attempts before they can produce steady, reliable and unanimously recognized results is confirmed by two critiques I have the pleasure to read in the last section of the post-unit questionnaire, where I let students a free space to express any thought or add any comments:

1. "I would add some individual work because although working in a group is more fun, I think that working individually helps to concentrate better and rely exclusively on one's own abilities without letting others do their job or getting too much help,"
2. "The only thing that I would change is the granding system, I would have not let students to put a mark on the other classmate. But I personally wouldn't change anything alse because I think that all activities were very useful."

— **Did this unit meet students' needs and support their ambitions?**
When planning my experiment with 1B, I tried to put my students at the center of the learning process, tailoring my activities to their tastes, needs, personal inclinations and ambitions. While doing this, I let myself be inspired by the theories on input relevance presented in chapter 1. To check whether or not I have achieved this goal, I decide to ask my students a very specific question on it:

> **"Do you think some of the topics, activities or whatever aspect of this unit could ever affect your life and change it to the better? Explain (If no, just type "no")"**
> Here below, the complete list of my students' answers:
> - no
> - I think yes, if I ever go to work abroad and this job will be the teacher I will take inspiration from these activities
> - I think it will help me relate better to people who speak English
> - yes, because even by doing something fun you learn a lot of things
> - yes, because if I travel a lot, I have to learn English and its pronunciation
> - Yes, some of them helped me with my skills in working on a group
> - No
> - No
> - Yes because now I like much the English
> - yes
> - yes
> - yes, because they could Help me in my everyday Life, to explain my opinion of past Things
> - yes, especially the pronunciation
> - Yes, because the unit is useful when you want to speak in English
> - I won't add anything because everything I did with roberto helped me improve my pronunciation and learn English better

I am pleased to read only 3 students reply no to the question. The rest of the class answer positively to the question, confirming they found the contents of the unit relevant and functional to their personal improvement as English students and, most importantly, as individuals. That my goal of designing a unit centered around high-quality EFL acquisition in a relaxed and non-judgmental learning environment in which students feel free to express themselves seems to be confirmed by the two graphs here below:

Think of the way I designed the unit and the way I behaved in class. What do you think was at the center of the unit?

22 risposte

● Your uniqueness as a student and human being
● The English language
● The marks

50%

50%
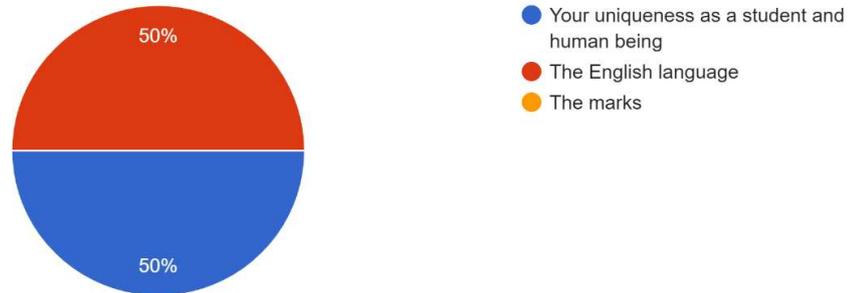
What did you have the impression was more important during the unit?

22 risposte

● Marks and assessment
● The content of the unit
● The wellbeing of the students

40,9%

59,1%
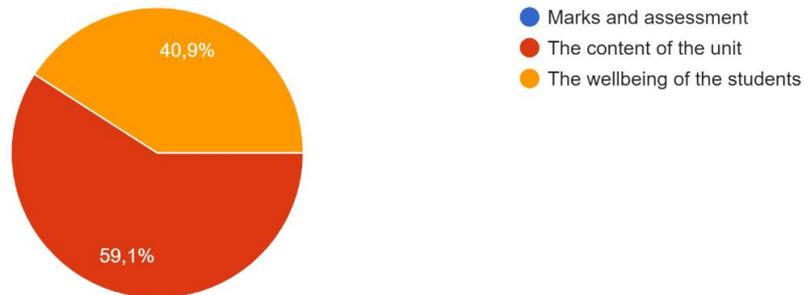
As can be read in the 2 pie charts here below, 0% of participants perceived marks and assessment to have played a relevant role in the unit even though it was clear since the very first day that 2 final tests were included. On the contrary, when asked to state what they think was at the center of the unit, 50% answer their uniqueness as students and human beings, and the remaining 50% answer English Language. A similar trend is recognizable in the second graph, which shows 59,1% of the participants perceived the content of the unit to be the most important element, while the remaining 40,9% perceived what I most valued in the unit was the wellbeing of my students. Significantly, 0% of the students perceived formal assessment to be important in the unit "The Prom".

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This thesis consisted of an experimental study on the use of music and the performing arts in EFL teaching. My research experiment, which was conducted with a first-year class at *IIS P. Scalcerle*, Italy, Padua, was thoroughly described and analyzed in chapters 3 and 4 in light of the studies and the theories exposed in chapters 1 and 2. Following the principles of Action Research, in-class praxis served as a research tool to achieve a deeper understanding of and critically analyze existing studies and theories on the use of music and the performing arts in EFL teaching settings. Of the three performing arts (acting, singing, and dancing), this dissertation mainly focused on acting and singing. Throughout the 4 chapters, EFL pedagogy based on drama and singing was showed to produce beneficial effects in motivational, behavioral and cognitive terms. Though, an integratory study would be needed to conduct a full examination of the possible advantages of using dancing training techniques in EFL teaching. In Chapter 1, I described, critically analyzed and interrelated existing literature and theories explaining why an extensive use of authentic materials in the English classroom can enhance EFL acquisition. In particular, section 1.2 considered authentic materials as powerful tools to link students' needs and passions to the contents of the English curriculum and to the teacher's language goals, thus promoting relevant and student-tailored language curricula in which learners are free to express themselves and actively work on the fulfilment of their personal goals as students and human beings. Section 1.3 provided insights on the advantages of using full-length authentic materials (movies, novels, etc.) in terms of vocabulary recycling, thematic continuity and gripping potential. Section 1.4 explained how a systematic use of authentic materials in EFL classrooms can foster an inductive approach to grammar, thus enhancing students' analytical and critical skills and promoting the understanding of pre-university students as young researchers rather than passive recipients of pre-made knowledge. After presenting Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory and Fleming's VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) model, section 1.5 remarked the importance of designing varied, multimodal and multileveled language curricula, tailored to students' different learning styles, needs, and personal inclinations. Again, authentic materials have been presented as useful practical tools to guarantee a multisensory, multileveled and varied language input in EFL curricula. In particular, practical evidence was provided on that drama- or music-based activities can be highly inclusive teaching strategies thanks to their multimodal and laboratorial nature. Consistently with this assumption, chapter 2 offered a focus on a specific type of authentic materials: music-and-drama-based authentic materials. By interrelating existing literature on the subject, Chapter 2 showed how an extensive and systematic use of music and the performing arts in the EFL classroom can potentially enhance language acquisition. More specifically, section 2.2 focused on drama. This section proposed that drama pedagogy can promote social learning by providing meaningful communicative contexts within which students can freely experiment with language by actively collaborating in creative group tasks. Moreover, this section explored drama's potential to promote inclusive and multimodal EFL teaching. Section 2.3, on the other hand, specifically focused on music, exploring its role as potential acquisition catalyst in motivational, attentional and cognitive terms. In particular, music was showed to favor syntax, prosody and pronunciation learning in the target language, as well as enhancing students' long-term recalling of the language learned through music thanks to its emotional load. Section 2.4 drew a comparison between actors and EFL students, revealing several touchpoints and parallels between the 2 worlds. Consistently with these parallels, this section considered the possibility of understanding EFL learners as performers, thoroughly analyzing how acting and singing training techniques can sustain EFL students' development of the basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Drawing on the same parallel, section 6 described the figure of the EFL teacher as a "director" of their students' learning process. This section reflected upon the delicate learner-teacher relationship, and explained how some key concepts normally used by directors to keep a positive relationship to actors can be borrowed from the acting world to enhance the teacher-student relationship in the EFL classroom. In chapters 3 and 4, I described the experimental part of my research, which consisted of an EFL unit I taught as a trainee teacher in a first-year class of Scalcerle

High School in Padua, Italy. More specifically, in chapter 3 I related about my pre-unit observation period. In section 3.2, I described the general context in which my teaching experiment took place. Section 3.3. provided a summary table about my unit "The Prom", in which I outlined objectives, methodologies, materials and described my target group. In section 3.4, I explained how Action Research inspired my research methodology, while the last section of this chapter, 3.5, contained a full description of my observation period. Within this section, I included the teacher interview transcript and data analysis for teacher and students' pre-session observation. My observation data were critically compared to students' answers to the pre-session questionnaire. In chapter 4, I dived into a detailed step-by-step description of my unit "The Prom", in which all teaching materials were included to provide a comprehensive report of my praxis-based study. I dedicated one section to each relevant step of my unit (e.g., lessons, home assignments, workshop sections, etc.). Each section consisted of two parts. In part 1, I related about the specific activities carried out. In part 2, I reported the diary I kept during the unit, integrating its contents (e.g., field notes, general thoughts, after-class considerations or specific anecdotes) with my in-progress analysis of the data I gathered as the unit proceeded. I then analyzed my practice-derived data making punctual references to the theories and hypotheses formulated in Chapters 1 and 2, so as to measure their validity in light of my in-class experience.

The aim of Chapters 3 and 4 was testing the validity of the hypotheses formulated in Chapters 1 and 2 through first-hand experience in a real EFL teaching context. As a result, the post-session questionnaire analysis provided here above drew conclusions on my research on the possible beneficial effects of the use of music and the performing arts in EFL teaching. Overall, in-class practice seemed to confirm the validity of the theories and hypotheses proposed in chapters 1 and 2. To start with, relevant conclusions can be drawn on the role of performative authentic materials in providing student-tailored learning contexts which favor and inductive and discovery-based approach to grammar and linguistics. I observed students' inductive analysis on past simple and English pronunciation based on the systematic study of language naturally occurring in the music movie "The Prom" produced excellent results as also testified by students' excellent final marks (cf. 4.16). When explicitly asked on the matter, students affirmed an inductive approach to grammar and linguistics was more effective than a traditional deductive and book-based approach. Since these data are in line with the theories presented in chapter 1, it is possible to conclude that an extensive use of the music movie "The Prom" (Murphy, 2020) as authentic material promoted an inductive approach resulting in students obtaining excellent results in final testing. One further result I obtained through the analysis of my data is that drama-based playful and performative activities were proved to have facilitated the learning process throughout my unit. In particular, besides providing meaningful contexts to language and grammar analysis, final data analysis confirmed that drama favored social learning thanks to its laboratorial nature. During the unit, I observed the six groups worked effectively and positively engaged in community-based language learning activities. My impressions were confirmed by students' opinions expressed in the post-session questionnaire. Students' answers to the post-session questionnaire indicated that the activities students perceived to be fun and playful (e.g., rehearsals, group performances, etc.) corresponded to the activities in which they felt they were learning the most. Such results, backed up by my in-process analysis of the data, are in line with the theories proposed in Chapter 2. All this considered, I can conclude that a drama-based teaching approach enhanced cooperative EFL learning. Moreover, in line with the theories presented in chapter 2, drama pedagogy in this unit fostered a multimodal and inclusive learning environment in which all students had the chance to work on language consistently with their preferred learning style. As described in chapter 4, drama- and song-based activities stimulate all sensory channels and multiple intelligences, thus allowing all students to get access to the target information. Consistently, *all* of my students perceived they had improved on their pronunciation and grammar skills, as indicated in their answers to the final questionnaire. That *all* students, passed the final tests achieving good to excellent results besides obvious differences in their dominant intelligences and learning styles suggests that

all multiple intelligences and cognitive styles were evenly addressed in my unit. In light of the theories expressed in chapters 1 and 2, which were confirmed by my observation, by students' perceived effectiveness of the unit and by students' actual final marks, it is therefore possible to conclude that an extensive use of the performing arts in this unit promoted a multimodal and inclusive learning environment. As far as music is concerned, the data I gathered during my in-process analysis suggested that music worked as an acquisition catalyst for my students in terms of motivation, attention and retention. I noticed students were more motivated when carrying out music-based or performative activities rather than traditional activities. In addition, I noticed students paid greater attention to musical authentic materials rather than spoken authentic material. What is more, students showed better recalling skills when singing than when acting during final stage performances. This data, backed up by the theories expressed in Chapter 2, were confirmed by students' answers to the post-session questionnaire, in which they unanimously testified that music facilitated their EFL acquisition. In light of these evidences, it is possible to conclude that music can work as an acquisition catalyst when properly used in EFL learning contexts. Talking about the final test, the data produced during my unit showed that using creative and performative open tasks in final testing was crucial in building a relaxed environment in which students could be able to freely express themselves without feeling judged, thus giving their very best during the performance. In particular, writing an original script (written test) and performing it on stage (oral test) were found to be effective testing techniques in that all students passed the exam while not feeling stressed or judged. What is more, new talents and unexpected language skills emerged during final testing, proving such open tasks allowed students to show even greater skills and talents than the ones strictly required by the teacher, while it would be rather complicated in traditional testing mainly consisting of closed tasks. As demonstrated and explicitly testified in the post-session questionnaire, students faced final performances relaxedly and even had fun while performing. In line with what was argued in chapter 2 on final testing, it is therefore possible to conclude that scriptwriting and on-stage performances were adequate open tasks to test students' achievement of the unit's language goals while letting them the space to freely express themselves without feeling stressed of judged. Theories discussed at the end of chapter 2 suggested that unit contents in any EFL curriculum should be learnt from a lifelong learning perspective. Consistently, one of the goals set for my unit was providing students with some lifelong learning pills throughout the activities. For example, I introduced the IPA as a practical tool for students to "learn how to learn" the right pronunciation of unknown words. Moreover, I challenged my students on some metacognitive reflections in which I asked them to critically analyze my teaching techniques and approaches (inductive vs deductive), so as to make them more aware about their own preferred teaching and learning modes. In addition, peer assessment was to be understood within the framework of lifelong learning as a way to develop self-reflection skills while at the same time training students' abilities to provide their peers with punctual and constructive criticism. During the activities on IPA, students independently looked for the IPA transcription of unknown words, suggesting that they "learned how to learn" new pronunciations. In addition, during the lessons, in the home assignments and in the final questionnaire, students provided insightful metacognitive observations and considerations, indicating that my unit helped them grow metacognition-aware. What is more, I could observe peer assessment during final performances was a successful attempt to provide students with a real-life context in which to give and receive constructive criticism in punctual and respectful ways. Again, students' answers to the final questionnaire seem to confirm the results of my observation. That IPA was conceived from a lifelong learning perspective was confirmed by that, when explicitly asked on the matter, students indicated they were going to use the IPA as a lifelong pronunciation learning tool whenever needed in the future. Moreover, students' answers to the post-session questionnaire confirmed that they acknowledged groupwork and peer assessment as effective learning tools. To sum up, the theories exposed in chapter 2 on how drama pedagogy can promote lifelong learning skills development were confirmed through real-life teaching practice. Moreover, the results gathered in the observation of the practical experiment corresponded to students' opinions expressed in their answers to the post-session questionnaire. As a result, it can be stated that the extensive use

of the performing arts during the unit "The Prom" promoted lifelong learning skills development. To conclude my experimental study, I remark that the theories proposed in chapters 1 and 2 were confirmed by both in-class practical experience and students' answers to the post-session questionnaire. Considering the congruency between the theories exposed in Chapters 1 and 2, the practice-derived data I gathered during my experiment, and students' answers to the post-session questionnaire, it is possible to come to the conclusion that a proper use of song and drama in EFL teaching can enhance acquisition in English Foreign Language learning contexts. Nevertheless, as hinted at in my introduction and as thoroughly described in section 3.3 on research methodology, my findings are not to be understood as scientific truths that can be generalized and indiscriminately applied to other learning contexts. On the contrary, the conclusions of my research are to be interpreted as the result of a self-directed and context-dependent investigation carried out following the principles of Action Research to the purpose of improving and refining my teaching style consistently with my personal skills, objectives and passions. Despite the subjective nature of my research, it is my pleasure to share it with teachers and scholars, hoping my findings can inspire their work and raise new doubts and questions to be addressed in further research.

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Materia Inglese lingua e cultura straniera 1   classe 1BL   a.s.   2022-2023

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ATTIVITÀ DIDATTICHE IN RELAZIONE A CONTENUTI DIDATTICI, ABILITÀ DA ACQUISIRE O DA RAFFORZARE

Contenuti: titolo dell'unità didattica	Competenze e abilità da conseguire	Tipo di attività (lezione frontale, lavori di gruppo, relazioni, ecc.) Materiale da proporre alla classe (testi, video, ecc.)	Tempi (periodo o n. ore di lezione previste)
Starter Lessons Ripasso delle conoscenze e applicazione delle competenze già acquisite (emerse dalla prova d'ingresso e dalle prime osservazioni), in particolare: verbo essere e verbo avere (present simple - forma affermativa, interrogativa e negativa); pronomi soggetto e aggettivi possessivi; pronomi complemento; pronomi interrogativi; genitivo sassone; aggettivi e pronomi dimostrativi; preposizioni di luogo; gli articoli a/an, the; there is/there are e il partitivo (some e any); Lettere dell'alfabeto, numeri, giorni, mesi e date. Criteri di valutazione	Produzione e comprensione orali. Produzione e comprensione scritte. Saper presentarsi e presentare altre persone; esprimere le proprie e altrui abitudini. Parlare di nazionalità. Parlare di persone famose. Spiegare dove si trovano le cose. Descrivere le persone e le case e parlare della propria famiglia. Porre e rispondere a domande sull'ortografia. Avvio alle competenze chiave per l'apprendimento: imparare ad imparare; strategie specifiche di lavoro e di studio.	Libro di testo Interactive e-book con video e audio. Lavoro in coppie, lavoro di gruppo, flipped classroom e strategie di autovalutazione e auto-correzione.	settembre - ottobre

Contenuti: titolo dell'unità didattica	Competenze e abilità da conseguire	Tipo di attività (lezione frontale, lavori di gruppo, relazioni, ecc.) Materiale da proporre alla classe (testi, video , ecc.)	Tempi (periodo o n. ore di lezione previste)
Units 1 and 2 **My music and free time; daily routine and sports.** Lessico: musica; il tempo libero; la vita quotidiana e gli sport. Strutture: present simple; pronomi personali complemento; aggettivi d'opinione; reggenza dei verbi per esprimere ciò che piace o non piace; avverbi di frequenza; costruzioni e preposizioni temporali; espressioni di accordo e di disaccordo. Fonologia: suoni vocalici e consonantici.	Produzione e comprensione orali. Produzione e comprensione scritte. Saper esprimere i propri interessi; saper interagire esprimendo accordo e disaccordo; saper dire che ora sono in vari modi; parlare e scrivere delle propri abitudini quotidiane. Saper pronunciare e distinguere fra le vocali e le consonanti inglesi.	Libro di testo Interactive e-book con video e audio. Lavoro in coppie, lavoro di gruppo, flipped classroom e strategie di autovalutazione e auto-correzione.	ottobre-novembre
Units 3 and 4 **Abilities and describing people; everyday activities and dream jobs.** Lessico: abilità personali; tipi di personalità; descrizione fisica; attività quotidiane; professioni. Strutture: il verbo modale can; ordine degli aggettivi; both e neither; il present continuous e espressioni di tempo connesse; verbi stativi e dinamici. Fonologia: /I/ e /i:/, lo schwa.	Produzione e comprensione orali. Produzione e comprensione scritte. Saper esprimere le proprie e altrui abilità; descrivere l'aspetto fisico e la personalità; saper descrivere azioni in corso di svolgimento e attività permanenti o temporanee. Saper pronunciare e distinguere fra vocali brevi e vocali lunghi; saper utilizzare il suono vocalico dello schwa.	Libro di testo Interactive e-book con video e audio. Lavoro in coppie, lavoro di gruppo, flipped classroom e strategie di autovalutazione e auto-correzione.	novembre - dicembre

Contenuti: titolo dell'unità didattica	Competenze e abilità da conseguire	Tipo di attività (lezione frontale, lavori di gruppo, relazioni, ecc.) Materiale da proporre alla classe (testi, video , ecc.)	Tempi (periodo o n. ore di lezione previste)
Units 5 and 6 **Outdoor activities and suggestions; my room and getting around.** Lessico: attività all'aperto e di svago; stanze della casa e arredamento; negozi e luoghi d'interesse in città. Strutture: il present continuous con significato futuro; would like to e want to; espressioni per fare proposte; il partitivo some e any; there is e there are; preposizioni di luogo e di direzione; l'imperativo.	Produzione e comprensione orali. Produzione e comprensione scritte. Saper esprimere decisioni per il futuro; chiedere, fare, accettare e rifiutare proposte. Saper descrivere la casa; chiedere e dare indicazioni di percorso. Saper pronunciare e distinguere fra altri vocali brevi e vocali lunghe.	Libro di testo Interactive e-book con video e audio. Lavoro in coppie, lavoro di gruppo, flipped classroom e strategie di autovalutazione e auto-correzione.	dicembre-gennaio
Units 7 and 8 **Food and drink and eating out; what's on and famous stars?** Lessico: cibi e bevande; quantità e contenitori; aggettivi d'opinione; film e TV. Strutture: sostantivi numerabili e non; aggettivi indefiniti per quantità; pronome interrogativo whose; pronomi possessivi; so e such; suffissi ing/ed per aggettivi; past simple del verbo be; be born ed espressioni di tempo connesse.	Produzione e comprensione orali. Produzione e comprensione scritte. Saper parlare e scrivere di alimentazione, bevande e diete; fare richieste e offerte; saper ordinare qualcosa in un ristorante e esprimere prezzi. Saper parlare e scrivere di film e programmi TV; esprimere opinioni; saper parlare e scrivere del passato.	Libro di testo Interactive e-book con video e audio. Lavoro in coppie, lavoro di gruppo, flipped classroom e strategie di autovalutazione e auto-correzione.	gennaio-febbraio

Contenuti: titolo dell'unità didattica	Competenze e abilità da conseguire	Tipo di attività (lezione frontale, lavori di gruppo, relazioni, ecc.) Materiale da proporre alla classe (testi, video , ecc.)	Tempi (periodo o n. ore di lezione previste)
Units 9, 10 and 11 **A spooky story and party time.** Lessico: feste e celebrazioni. Strutture: verbi irregolari al passato; forma affermativa, negativa e interrogativa del past simple; spelling dei verbi regolari e variazioni ortografiche. **School life and clothing disasters; nimal facts and wild weather.** Lessico: istruzione e materie scolastiche; indumenti e abbigliamento; regno animale e tempo meteorologico. Strutture: differenze d'uso tra present simple, past simple e past continuous con avverbi temporali connessi; aggettivi comparativi affermativi e negativi; aggettivi superlativi.	Produzione e comprensione orali. Produzione e comprensione scritte. Saper descrivere avvenimenti nel passato. Saper pronunciare con chiarezza e precisione i verbi regolari nel simple past. Saper parlare e scrivere della vita scolastica e di abilità; descrivere l'abbigliamento; parlare e scrivere di azioni in corso di svolgimento nel passato. Saper fare comparazioni o raffronti; parlare e scrivere del tempo metereologico.	Libro di testo Interactive e-book con video e audio. Lavoro in coppie, lavoro di gruppo, flipped classroom e strategie di autovalutazione e auto-correzione.	febbraio-marzo

Contenuti: titolo dell'unità didattica	Competenze e abilità da conseguire	Tipo di attività (lezione frontale, lavori di gruppo, relazioni, ecc.) Materiale da proporre alla classe (testi, video , ecc.)	Tempi (periodo o n. ore di lezione previste)
Units 12 and 13 **Future intentions and be careful; arrangements and on holiday.** Lessico: eventi della vita; intenzioni e ambizioni; malattie, infortuni e incidenti; mezzi di trasporto e vacanze. Strutture: il futuro intenzionale con going to; was/were going to; to be about to; congiunzioni temporali - after, before, when, while, as soon as; forme per il futuro - will/shall, going to, present continuous, present simple.	Produzione e comprensione orali. Produzione e comprensione scritte. Saper esprimere intenzioni futuri e ambizioni; descrivere gli eventi della vita e esprimere giudizi e previsioni sul futuro. Saper esprimere decisioni, offerte, richieste e promesse.	Libro di testo Interactive e-book con video e audio. Lavoro in coppie, lavoro di gruppo, flipped classroom e strategie di autovalutazione e auto-correzione.	marzo-aprile
Units 14 and 15 **Jobs in the house and using computers; experiences and supernatural events.** Lessico: lavori domestici; i social network; avverbi di modo. Strutture: uso di have to/don't have to, must/mustn't, both e neither; uso del present perfect con ever/never, been/ gone e differenze rispetto al past simple; participi passati irregolari; comparativi degli avverbi.	Produzione e comprensione orali. Produzione e comprensione scritte. Saper parlare e scrivere di obblighi, divieti, regole e leggi; saper scusarsi. Saper parlare e scrivere di esperienze di vita e del modo in cui accadono le cose	Libro di testo Interactive e-book con video e audio. Lavoro in coppie, lavoro di gruppo, flipped classroom e strategie di autovalutazione e auto-correzione.	aprile-giugno

PROVE DI VERIFICA

Tipo di prova	N° di volte	Durata (in ore)	Tot. ore	Periodo
Compiti scritti	6	1 ciascuno	6	Anno scolastico 22-23

ALTRE PROVE DI VERIFICA

Prove di produzione e di comprensione orali (almeno 2 al quadrimestre per ogni studente, compresa quella di conversazione).

Valutazione costante in itinere da osservazione durante attività comunicative.

Controllo del lavoro svolto a casa.

ALTRE ATTIVITÀ DIDATTICHE
VENTURE INTO CULTURE (dal libro di testo con la docente di conversazione)

Una lezione settimanale con la docente di conversazione: dialoghi in compresenza per affrontare vari argomenti di attualità e di interesse personale, nonché per entrare in contatto con la cultura del mondo anglosassone e celtico al fine di avviare e favorire interazione nella produzione orale e promuovere competenze nella comprensione orale verso la soglia di padronanza B1.

Si cercherà inoltre di promuovere le abilità di lettura di vari generi testuali. Si inizierà con un approccio esplorativo e analitico per favorire l'apprendimento lessicale e per stimolare le capacità logico-intuitive.
Argomenti: musica, sport, cinema, animali, lo studio (anno all'estero), York e Liverpool, Wimbledon, Thrillers e Horror, festivals, scuola in Inghilterra, uccelli e insetti, para-olimpiadi, New Zealand, adolescenza e esplorazione.

Percorsi indipendenti dalle conoscenze specifiche, basati sulle competenze trasversali: la docente privilegerà l'apprendimento laboratoriale per promuovere la riflessione e il dialogo sulle attività proposte (come descritto nella programmazione comune di classe).
Le competenze trasversali impiegate nel corso delle unità di apprendimento: comprendere; comunicare; confrontare; dedurre; distinguere; ipotizzare; leggere; ascoltare; parlare; scrivere; memorizzare; progettare; riconoscere; valutare.

ESERCITAZIONI PRATICHE ED ATTIVITÀ DI LABORATORIO

Titolo	Obiettivi	Durata (in ore)
Venture into Culture	Descritti sopra	1 ora la settimana con la docente di conversazione.

Firme: Beverley Jayne Littlewood e Clodagh Ni Mhuiris

Peer Assessment

1. What is it?

Peer Assessment is a student-centered assessment approach that allows students to develop a deeper insight into the quality of their own work through the assessment of peers' work. Students take responsibility for assessing the work of their peers using the assessment criteria. Students' understanding of the assessment criteria is a key component of successful peer assessment. In all aspects of assessment students need to understand what performance they should aim for, their level of current performance, and how to improve their performance.

2. How might I use it?

Peer assessment can be used across a wide variety of activities. Students may be required to provide feedback to their peers (sometimes referred to as peer review), summative grades (moderated by the teacher), or a combination of the two.

Peer assessment can be used:

- for formative or summative assessments
- online or in class
- for individual or group-based activities
- anonymously or openly

3. How do staff and students use it effectively?

For all forms of peer assessment, a critical success factor is that the students fully understand this type of evaluation; how it works, their role and the benefits to them. Teachers should provide students with:

- a clear definition of the type of assignment they will complete
- clear and explicit assessment criteria (with associated grades if appropriate)
- guidance on how to use the assessment criteria

Carefully designing the peer assessment or peer review activity is crucial. The following principles, constructed by Nicol (2013) taking account of research literature, provide a framework for good practice in peer review:

- encourage an atmosphere of trust
- use a range of perspectives for reviews
- give practice in formulating criteria
- require explanations for feedback responses
- facilitate dialogue around reviews
- integrate self-reviews
- encourage evaluation of received reviews
- help learners calibrate their judgments

(Source: https://teachinghub.bath.ac.uk/tools-and-resources/teaching-with-technology/peer-assessment/)

Assignment 5. Peer Assessment

After reading the brief text about Peer Assessment on page 1, answer the following questions.

1) Find a good Italian translation for the noun "peer". Make sure the translation fits in the context of Peer Assessment

_____

2) Try to give a good definition of "Peer Assessment" using your own words. Make sure you use very easy and understandable words (1 or 2 sentences)

_____
_____
_____

3) Is Peer Assessment only possible with individual activities?

_____
_____

4) What should teachers provide students with in order for Peer Assessment to succeed? (Read section 3)

_____
_____

5) Have a look at Nicol's principles for good practice in peer review. Which is the most important one to you? Why? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

5) Do you think Peer Assessment can be a successful assessment approach? Try to come up with AT LEAST 2 pros and 2 cons of using Peer Assessment in class.

_____
_____
_____

RIASSUNTO IN ITALIANO

La presente dissertazione è il parziale risultato della mia ricerca (ancora in corso) sull'uso della musica e delle arti dello spettacolo nell'insegnamento dell'Inglese Lingua Straniera, ossia l'insegnamento dell'inglese in Paesi non anglofoni. Il mio esperimento di ricerca si è svolto presso l'IIS P. Scalcerle, un liceo linguistico di Padova, ed è stato condotto con 26 studenti del primo anno. L'obiettivo fondamentale di questo studio sperimentale è quello di fornire una descrizione approfondita di come l'uso delle tecniche della recitazione e del canto possa promuovere e rendere più efficace l'insegnamento dell'Inglese Lingua Straniera, in termini motivazionali, comportamentali e cognitivi. Assumendo la Ricerca Azione come quadro metodologico di riferimento, questa tesi mira a esaminare criticamente la letteratura esistente alla luce dell'esperienza didattica diretta. L'obiettivo è quello di fornire una risposta ponderata (ma, di certo, non definitiva) alla mia domanda di ricerca sui possibili vantaggi dell'uso della musica e delle arti dello spettacolo nell' insegnamento dell'Inglese Lingua Straniera. Questa tesi è composta da 4 capitoli. I capitoli 1-2 costituiscono la parte teorica, mentre il mio esperimento pratico è descritto in modo approfondito nei capitoli 3 e 4.

Più in dettaglio, il Capitolo 1 offre una panoramica dei principali vantaggi dell'uso di materiali autentici nell'insegnamento EFL. Partendo dalla *Systemic Functional Linguistics* di Halliday, questo capitolo spiega come i materiali autentici possano fornire contesti comunicativi significativi, permettendo così agli studenti di esplorare il linguaggio nelle sue tre *metafunctions* (*ideational*, *interpersonal*, e *textual*). Inoltre, si propone che testi autentici ben selezionati possano essere potenti strumenti pedagogici per collegare l'aula di lingua al mondo reale, rispondendo così agli interessi degli studenti e ai loro bisogni esistenziali e comunicativi in contesti di vita reale. In particolare, la sezione 1.3 suggerisce che l'uso di testi autentici completi (ad esempio, film, romanzi, opere teatrali, ecc.) nell'insegnamento dell'inglese potrebbe comportare vantaggi significativi a livello motivazionale e cognitivo, migliorando così l'acquisizione. Inoltre, la sezione 1.4 spiega come i testi autentici possano promuovere un approccio alla grammatica di tipo induttivo. Questa sezione sottolinea l'importanza di promuovere una concezione descrittiva (piuttosto che prescrittiva) della grammatica, attraverso la quale le strutture grammaticali possono essere comprese a pieno non solo considerando la dimensione formale, ma anche il loro significato e il loro uso in contesti comunicativi autentici. Il capitolo 1 si conclude con la sezione 1.5, in cui i materiali autentici vengono analizzati in funzione del loro ruolo pedagogico nel garantire la varietà dell'*input* e un'esperienza di apprendimento inclusiva e multimodale. Approfondendo la Teoria delle Intelligenze Multiple di Gardner e il modello VAKT (*Visual*, *Auditory*, *Kinesthetic*, *Tactile*) di Fleming, questa sezione conclusiva mostra attraverso esemplificazioni pratiche che le attività linguistiche performative basate sulla recitazione e sul canto possono rivolgersi a tutte le diverse intelligenze e stimolare tutti i canali sensoriali, fornendo così un ambiente di apprendimento inclusivo.

Sulla base di queste ultime considerazioni, il capitolo 2 è interamente dedicato all'indagine del teatro e della musica come strumenti didattici per l'insegnamento dell'Inglese Lingua Straniera. In questo capitolo, i materiali autentici basati sull'arte e le relative attività performative sono proposti come strumenti efficaci per coinvolgere gli studenti in contesti comunicativi autentici e in attività di apprendimento pratico-laboratoriali. In particolare, la sezione 2.2 si concentra sul teatro. Questa sezione mostra come la pedagogia teatrale possa promuovere l'apprendimento sociale, fornendo contesti comunicativi significativi in cui gli studenti possano sperimentare liberamente con la lingua, collaborando attivamente in attività creative di gruppo. Inoltre, questa sezione mostra in che modo il teatro può promuovere un insegnamento linguistico inclusivo e multimodale. La sezione 2.3, invece, si concentra sul ruolo della musica nel migliorare l'acquisizione della lingua inglese in termini sia cognitivi che motivazionali. Il capitolo 2 si conclude proponendo una concezione innovativa degli

studenti di inglese come performer. Coerentemente, l'insegnante di inglese viene proposto come "regista teatrale o cinematografico" nel processo di acquisizione della lingua straniera. In particolare, la sezione 2.4 mette in luce interessanti parallelismi tra l'apprendimento dell'inglese e la formazione teatrale-canora. Di conseguenza, questa sezione fornisce spunti di riflessione su come gli studenti di inglese possano "sfruttare" le tecniche di formazione artistico-performativa per promuovere l'acquisizione linguistica. Il capitolo 2 si conclude con la sezione 2.5, in cui il ruolo del regista nelle produzioni cinematografiche viene dettagliatamente comparato al ruolo dell'insegnante di Inglese Lingua Straniera. Partendo dalle riflessioni contenute nel manuale di regia "Directing Actors" di Weston (1996), questa sezione offre un'analisi comparativa tra il ruolo del regista e il ruolo dell'insegnante di lingua, mostrando come le tecniche e i principi di regia possano essere "presi in prestito" dagli insegnanti di lingua per promuovere un ambiente di apprendimento sereno, costruttivo e non giudicante, favorendo così l'acquisizione.

I capitoli 3-4 rappresentano la fase della mia ricerca in cui tutte le teorie e le ipotesi formulate durante gli studi teorici vengono testate, confermate o messe in discussione attraverso l'esperienza pratica di insegnamento. In questi due capitoli racconto in modo approfondito la parte sperimentale della mia ricerca, che si è svolta presso l'IIS P. Scalcerle, un rinomato liceo linguistico di Padova, dal 2 febbraio al 23 marzo 2023. Durante questo periodo ho lavorato come insegnante di inglese tirocinante e ho realizzato un'unità curricolare a 26 studenti del primo anno utilizzando "The Prom", un film musicale di Netflix, come materiale autentico di riferimento. La maggior parte del mio insegnamento si è basato sulla musica e sulle arti dello spettacolo e ha richiesto la partecipazione attiva degli studenti a laboratori creativi e performativi. L'obiettivo dei capitoli 3 e 4 è quello di verificare la validità delle ipotesi formulate nei capitoli 1 e 2 attraverso l'esperienza diretta in un contesto reale di insegnamento di lingua. Complessivamente, la pratica in classe sembra aver confermato la validità delle teorie e delle ipotesi proposte nei capitoli 1 e 2. Considerando la congruenza tra le teorie esposte nei capitoli 1 e 2 e i dati ricavati durante la fase sperimentale della mia ricerca, è quindi possibile giungere alla conclusione che un uso appropriato del canto e del teatro nell'insegnamento dell'Inglese Lingua Straniera può favorire l'acquisizione linguistica.