THE ROLE OF CORRECT PRONUNCIATION AND INTONATION IN TEACHING ITALIAN AS A
FOREIGN LANGUAGE THROUGH BLENDED LEARNING:
A GUIDE TO THE CORE SOUNDS OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE FOR ENGLISH NATIVE
SPEAKERS

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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October 2022

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Abstract

Although many scholars have emphasised the value of pronunciation and intonation training as fundamental in FL (foreign language) teaching, it seems that the practise of these skills is still neglected by practitioners. Segmentals and suprasegmentals are often absent in Italian FL courses based on the claim that the phonology of Italian is rather easy, and students are expected to pick it up along the way. Proceeding from the recognition that a difference exists between the theory and the practice of integrating segmentals and suprasegmentals training in FL courses, this qualitative study investigates learners' views about pronunciation and intonation's role in learning foreign languages, in particular Italian FL, and the use of new specific materials and technological tools deployed for the teaching of these phonological skills online. Findings confirm the potential of materials devised appositively for pronunciation and intonation acquisition, and the benefits of using specific online voice recording tools to promote the development of phonological skills and boost students' phonological and cultural awareness; however, they reveal that such potential often remains unrealised in the FL classroom. The role of teachers in terms of beliefs about, knowledge of and approach to teaching pronunciation and intonation in FL courses emerges as crucial. Findings also highlight the need of a deeper understanding of how pronunciation and intonation training can positively affect the students' learning outcomes and how these skills should be systematically and appropriately addressed to in the FL class.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my supervisor Dr. Paola Cori for her guidance and her constructive feedback during the writing of this thesis. Paola's knowledge and enthusiasm for the topic of my research was inspirational. Her constant support and encouragement throughout the various steps of this work and her dedication were incredibly precious.

I would like to thank Clelia Boscolo, without whom I would have never started, and therefore completed, this long and amazing journey. Grazie, prof, for believing in me and for giving me a second home.

I would like to thank the students who took part in the study and without whom this research would have been pointless. You gave me the chance to share our lives briefly but intensively, and to teach you my native language, my world, my gestures, and my sounds. You gave me the chance to pass down to you something which is part of me – my roots, and you made them yours. At the same time, you gifted me with a bit of your own worlds, and you taught me the great art of patience, respect and sharing.

I would like to thank my colleagues at the Modern Languages Department of the University of Birmingham. In particular, Charlotte, Maria, Paola, and Paolo. You taught me how to be a good teacher and the deep love and commitment for what we do.

There are many other people who have greatly supported me and in very special ways. First my mom and dad whose love and support know no distance. Without you I would not be able to do what I love the most. This thesis is dedicated to you both, to my sister Valentina and my brother Giovanni. In particular, I want to dedicate my work to Anna, Paolo, and Bianca for being the loves of my life, and to nonna and nonno who are no longer with me, but whose teachings are preciously guiding my life.

I would like to thank my wonderful friends Eugenia, Jacopo, Lucia, and Marco who have made my life in Birmingham happier, and a million thanks to my dearest friends back home – Alessia, Elisa, Francesca, Giacomo, Giulia C., Giulia P., Giulia R., Ilaria, Laura, Mirko, Nicole.

Finally, I wish to say grazie to Emilio, who believes in me and in what I do like no one else has ever done. Thank you for your never-ending support, your smiles, your carbonara, your positive energy, your love.

Table of contents

List of abbreviations

CA – Constructive Alignment

CALL - Computer-Assisted Language Learning

CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CLT – Communicative Language Teaching

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

ELT – Experiential Learning Theory

ERT - Emergency Remote Teaching

FL – Foreign Language

ILO(s) – Intended Learning Outcome(s)

L1 – First Language

L2 – Second Language

LEAP-Q - Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire

LFC -Lingua Franca Core

ML – Modern Languages

NN(s) – Non-native Speaker(s)

NS(s) – Native Speaker(s)

RI(s) – Regional Italian(s)

RP – Received Pronunciation

RQ(s) – Research Questions

RQ1 – Research Question 1

RQ2 – Research Question 2

SI – Standard Italian

TL – Target Language

VLE(s) – Virtual Learning Environment(s)

International Phonetic Alphabet Symbols for Italian (Adams, 2022:32-33)

1. Vowel Sounds

/ a/ cantare [kan.ˈtaː.ɾe] (to sing)

/ o/ dolore [do.ˈloː.ɾe] (pain)

/ ɔ/ povero [ˈpɔː.ve.ɾo] (poor)

/ ɛ/ prendere [ˈprɛn.de.ɾe] (to take)

/ e/ vedere [ve.ˈdeː.ɾe] (to see)

/ u/ scultura [skul.ˈtuː.ɾa] (sculpture)

/ i/ finire [fi.ˈniː.ɾe] (to finish)

2. Glide Sounds

/ j/ piangere [ˈpjan.d͡ʒe.ɾe] (to weep)

/ w/ seguire [se.ˈɡwiː.ɾe] (to follow)

3. Plosive Consonant Sounds

/ b/ / bb/ debole [ˈdeː.bo.le] (weak) rabbia [ˈrab.bja] (anger)

/ p/ / pp/ popolo [ˈpɔː.po.lo] (population) troppo [ˈtrɔp.po] (too, too much)

/ d/ / dd/ fede [ˈfe.de] (faith) freddo [ˈfred.do] (cold)

/ t/ / tt/ tutore [tu.ˈtoː.ɾe] (guardian) tutto [ˈtut.to] (all)

/g/ /gg/ lago [ˈlaː.ɡo] (lake) fuggo [ˈfuɡ.ɡo] (I flee)

/ k/ / kk/ poco [ˈpɔː.ko] (little, few) secco [ˈsek.ko] (dry)

4. Fricative Consonant Sounds

/ v/ / vv/ vivere [ˈviː.ve.ɾe] (to live) evviva [ev.ˈviː.va] (hurrah!)

/ f/ / ff/ difetto [di.ˈfɛt.to] (flaw) difficile [dif.ˈfiː.t͡ʃi.le] (difficult)

/ s/ / ss/ sole [ˈsoː.le] (sun) sasso [ˈsas.so] (stone)

/ ʃ/ / ʃʃ/ scendere [ˈʃen.de.ɾe] (to descend) lasciare [laʃ.ˈʃaː.ɾe] (let, let go, leave)

/ z/ rosa [ˈrɔː.za] (rose) smania [ˈzmaː.nja] (agitation)

5. Nasal Consonant Sounds

/ n/ / nn/ pane [ˈpaː.ne] (bread) panna [ˈpan.na] (cream)

/ m/ / mm/ fama [ˈfaː.ma] (fame) fiamma [ˈfjam.ma] (flame)

/ ɲ/ / ɲɲ/ gnocco [ˈɲɔk.ko] (dumpling) sogno [ˈsoɲ.ɲo] (dream)

6. Lateral Consonant Sounds

/ l/ / ll/ stelo [ˈstɛː.lo] (stem) stella [ˈstel.la] (star)

/ ʎ/ / ʎʎ/ gli [ʎi] (the; to him) figlio [ˈfiʎ.ʎo] (son)

7. Vibrant Consonant Sounds

/ r/ / rr/ caro carta [ˈkar.ta] (paper) carro [ˈkar.ro] (wagon)

8. Affricate Consonant Sounds

/ t͡ʃ/ / tt͡ʃ/ cercare [t͡ʃer.ˈkaː.ɾe] (to look for) cacciare [kat.ˈt͡ʃaː.ɾe] (to hunt)

/ d͡ʒ/ / dd͡ʒ/ gelido [ˈd͡ʒɛː.li.do] (freezing) fuggire [fud.ˈd͡ʒiː.ɾe] (to flee)

/ t͡s/ / tt͡s / zio [t͡si̯o] (uncle) pazzo [ˈpat.t͡so] (crazy)

/ d͡z/ / dd͡z/ zero [ˈd͡zɛː.ɾo] (zero) mezzo [ˈmɛd.d͡zo] (half)

Introduction

The present research is based on the hypothesis that pronunciation and intonation play an essential role in foreign language teaching and the training in these very often neglected skills is beneficial for language learning at any level of proficiency. More specifically, the study aims to explore the role of correct pronunciation and intonation in teaching Italian as a foreign language and how technology can be used as a valid teaching tool for improving English native speakers' ability to master specific and fundamental phonemic and prosodic characteristics of the Italian language. These phonemic and prosodic features will be frequently addressed in this thesis as *segmentals*, which concern "the consonants and vowels in speech" (Lee & Nusbaum, 1993:157), and as *suprasegmentals*, which regard "acoustic properties that extend over more than one segment, such as intonation contours or stress patterns" (Lee & Nusbaum, 1993:157). In particular, the study aims to individualise the core sounds of Italian that FL learners need to master in order to conduct successful communicative exchanges; furthermore, it provides effective examples of how to deploy blended learning in order to train pronunciation and intonation skills. It is worth mentioning the hybrid and, in some cases, online-only delivery of foreign language classes that tutors and students experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and which have made it necessary to rethink materials and activities designed for the students' acquisition of the necessary language skills for the different levels of language proficiency. Therefore, researchers and teachers have engaged in a fruitful debate on digital educational tools and how these can support students in developing and honing language skills, while maintaining motivation and engagement during a very challenging period. Among these skills, communication plays a fundamental role, and it has been widely identified by teachers as a particular challenge of teaching online in these unprecedented times. The practical phases of this study were conducted during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, where the COVID-19 measures for high education institutions were still in place; hence the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions were all delivered online, via Zoom. This thesis will present and discuss the materials that I devised during my research project, and that aim specifically to enhance and support the honing and enhancement of communicative skills in hybrid learning environments, with a focus on formative and summative assessment. The findings intend to demonstrate the efficacy of the aforementioned activities also for improving grammar skills, vocabulary, and cultural knowledge. Moreover, the new teaching strategies identified in the present research are helpful, as they can be adopted in classes with students having different levels of language proficiency. Despite the teaching materials have been devised for emergency remote teaching (ERT), with the aim to provide valid teaching tools during university shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the results that emerged from the analysis of the data suggest the efficacy and validity of these teaching strategies in wider online/blended learning environments and encourage their future deployment in academic curricula.

The study is framed within both the communicative approach to foreign language teaching, according to which the acquisition of communicative competence is the main purpose of any language activity used in the classroom, and constructivism, conforming to which learners construct progressively and independently their knowledge and "instructors […] thrive as mentors"[1] (McVay Lynch, 2012:15). It is further proved by theoretical discussions that offering specific articulatory training improves the students' communicative competence in the target language (Linebaugh & Roche, 2013); in particular, it helps learners to improve their productive and receptive skills so they can interact with both non-native and native Italian speakers in a more relaxed and natural way; moreover, it helps students to reduce anxiety and fear of failing (Baran-Łucarz, 2013). In addition, it is generally assumed that specific training to raise the students' phonemic awareness deeply and positively affects foreign language learning from its initial stages (Bus and Van Ijzendoorn, 1999; Ehri et al., 2001a,b). Moreover, it is generally hypothesised that immersion in the target language speaking context is not necessary to acquire proper pronunciation and intonation skills. By contrast, direct and prolonged immersion seems rather fundamental to the acquisition of fluency – which presupposes accuracy, a large vocabulary, strong listening comprehension skills and the ability to use a variety of discourse strategy. Many scholars have investigated and outlined the reasons that justify the prime role that phonemic and prosodic awareness should have in foreign language teaching. In particular, intelligibility appears to be the main purpose of a variety of didactic theories that have been suggested through the past decades. In this regard, Underhill writes about "comfortable intelligibility" (Underhill, 1994:171), which means that learners "can be understood comfortably, without undue effort by the listeners, and that they can understand comfortably the speech of native and other speakers without undue effort on their own part" (Underhill, 1994:171). Similarly, Harmer states that "students should be able to use pronunciation which is good enough for them to be always understood" (Harmer, 2001:184). In order to achieve intelligibility, a number of linguistic, pedagogic and motivational models have been offered. According to the *linguistic criterion*, specific articular and muscular training is necessary in order to help students to gain phonemic awareness and improve their capacity to perceive and pronounce specific sounds of the target language correctly, to become aware of the phonemic and prosodic systems of both NL (native language) and FL (foreign language), to reduce possible phonemic transfers from the students' native language or other languages previously learnt (Underhill, 2005). Moreover, in her analysis of the most effective approach to teach English pronunciation to non-native speakers, Jenkins reduces pronunciation training to a group of core sounds that learners must acquire to gain intelligibility in the target language (Jenkins, 2002). The *pedagogical criterion* aims to offer two main approaches to teaching pronunciation: 1) the intuitive-imitative approach – the learner listens and imitates; 2) the analytic-linguistic approach

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[1] The constructivist approach to foreign language education supports the student-centred approach to FL education, according to which students have the 'power' on their learning outcomes, hence they are responsible for it, and teachers act as facilitators/mentors and help students by guiding them throughout the learning process (Tsybaneva et al., 2019; McVay Lynch, 2012)

which completes the intuitive-imitative approach by giving explicit information about the production of sounds (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996). Recently, due to the spread in the use of technology as a didactic tool, new activities, and preparation, both in and out-of-class, have been introduced in pronunciation teaching (Danchenko, 2011), thus supporting learners through class-based teachers' monitoring and empowering learners by giving them responsibility of their own progress through self-regulated learning. As for other language skills, learners' interest and motivation play a fundamental role in the acquisition of correct pronunciation and intonation: in fact, the cognitive-affective approach states that, as human beings, if a psychological problem occurs (ex. anxiety, fear of failure, disinterest, etc), it may affect both our communicative and behavioural attitudes towards foreign language learning (Boureaux, 2003). Although many scholars agree on the beneficial effects of teaching pronunciation and intonation in language classes, pronunciation and intonation are still neglected and play a minor role in language teaching - especially in teaching Italian as a foreign language. As Italian is generally considered easy to pronounce, the teaching of pronunciation and intonation is dismissed as not necessary or a skill that students can pick up and improve along the way (Pelosi, 1974; Dolci & Celentin, 2000). Greater attention is given to grammar, vocabulary, writing skills, since they are considered to be more functional as they are more closely related to the traditional approach to foreign language teaching/learning (Underhill, 2013; Calabrò, 2016); on the contrary, pronunciation is often seen as a minor skill, as "the neglected and excluded Cinderella of language teaching and learning" (Underhill, 2013:2); the TL feature which can be acquired simply by being exposed to the target language or by mnemonic learning (Saito, 2012). However, no research provides evidence of this assumption (Boureaux, 2003; Calabrò, 2015). Based on previous research regarding other languages, this study wants to prove that only specific training and teaching materials can help English native speakers master those sounds of the Italian language that seem to be particularly difficult to pronounce. This preliminary analysis of recent research in the role played by pronunciation in foreign language teaching raised my interest for further investigation on a topic that should receive more attention, especially in the field of teaching Italian as a foreign language. In fact, despite the excellent work offered by some scholars (Mastrantuono, 2010; Romito &Tarasi, 2012; Calabrò, 2016; Calabrò, 2019), an innovative and more diversified selection of teaching materials for the training of both segmental and suprasegmental features of Italian should be offered to Italian FL tutors. In this perspective, this study does not focus only on specific phonological phenomena of Italian (for instance, geminates and syllabification), but on the training of the core sounds of Italian, used in different and contextualised phonological environments, through innovative teaching materials and the use of technological devices.

0.1 The core sounds of Italian

I believe that the lack of research in this field makes this study urgent and valuable. In particular, out of the many different sounds of the Italian phonemic system, I have examined those segmental features of

Italian which do necessarily need to be properly pronounced so as to avoid misunderstandings while interacting with other speakers; moreover, it is interesting to notice that a great number of those sounds do not occur in the English phonemic system. The advantage of reducing the scale of sounds considered is that, according to constructivism, students will be able to use the phonemes they already know – present in both English and Italian, to learn how to pronounce those which seem more difficult, so they will be able to construct their phonemic awareness in Italian. During my MA research project, I conducted a survey, through questionnaires and interviews, involving native English speakers, who studied/study Italian during their university years, and they pointed out some of the most difficult Italian sounds to master – for example, double consonants which signify a difference in meaning (/p/ vs /p:/ "cappello-capello", for example); /ɲ/ ("gnocco", "gnomo", "cognome", etc.); /ʎ/ ("gli", "aglio", "famiglia", etc.); /t/ and /d/ (i.e., tavolo, dentista); /ʃ/ vs /sk/ followed by /i/, /e/ and /e/ ("pesci-peschi", "pesce-pesche", "miscela/bruschetta", etc.); /k/ and /ʧ/ ("gnocchi/cocci", "mucche/gocce", etc.); /r/, especially when it is double /r:/ ("caro-carro") or followed by a vowel ("Roma", "cellulare", "ricordare", etc.); words beginning with /ps/ ("psicologo", "psichiatra", etc.); non-aspirated h ("ho", "hanno", "hai", etc.); Italian stress pattern. The aforementioned phonemes may result difficult to pronounce for English native-speakers either because they do not appear in the English phonological system, or because they appear in different phonological contexts, or they are articulated slightly differently. For instance, the Italian /ɲ/ and /ʎ/ are not part of the English inventory of phonemes, therefore they must be acquired by English learners of Italian. The Italian plosive dentals /t/ and /d/ are articulated in English as alveolar stops; moreover, while in English /t/, /p/, and /k/ are aspired, in Italian they are not. For instance, the Italian /t/ is produced with a relaxed tongue tip, which touches the back of the teeth. Differently, "in English, the tongue tip touches the alveolar ridge and then pulls down releasing a puff of air (aspiration)" (Wheelock, 2016:46). Therefore English native-speakers need to be aware of the different pronunciation in Italian in order to intelligibly articulate these phonemes. Another challenging Italian sound is /r/. While in English /r/ is retroflex, in Italian it is flapped or trilled. Besides articulatory differences between Italian and English, they also differ in "how well pronunciation matches spelling" (Wheelock, 2016:45). In fact since the spelling of Italian is nearly phonemic, "orthography with high grapheme-to-phoneme and phoneme-to-grapheme correspondences" (Wheelock, 2016:45). For instance, while the Italian grapheme [ch] corresponds to the phoneme /k/ (i.e., *chi*cco), the English grapheme [ch] corresponds to the phoneme /ʧ/ (i.e., *ch*est). Therefore, English learners of Italian may find it difficult at a first stage. Finally, the English phoneme /ʃ/ has 14 different spelling, as exemplified by Celce-Murcia et al., "*sh*oe, *s*ugar, o*c*ean, fu*sch*ia and na*t*ion" (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010:54). Thus, since the Italian /ʃ/ only corresponds to the grapheme [sc + i/e], while /sk/ corresponds to the grapheme [sch + i, e], it is rather clear while English native-speakers may have difficulties in remembering and pronouncing these phonemes intelligibly. Italian has seven vowels, while English has from 11 to 13 vowels in its inventory, depending on the variety of English considered. Moreover, English vowels range from full to reduced, both in quantity

and "both quality and duration, and even disappear, depending on the degree of stress they receive in the utterance" (Busà, 2008:115). Thus, English suprasegmental rules " trigger vowel reduction processes and create distinctions between vowels in 'strong' and 'weak' syllables" (Busà, 2008:115). Differently, in Italian, vowel quality is rather stable, therefore "syllables tend to have the same 'weight', and vowels are always fully pronounced" (Busà, 2008:115). Another difference between Italian and English is that, while English is considered a stress-timed language, Italian is a syllable-timed one (Busà, 2008). This means that, on the one hand, "English will show a tendency to keep intervals between stresses equal, independently of the number of intervening unstressed syllables, by compressing sequences of unstressed syllables" (Busà, 200:116); on the other hand, Italian tends to maintain syllable at a constant duration, therefore the duration of sentences proportionally increases. Thus, while English "is characterized by full vowels in stressed position and (highly) reduced vowels in unstressed position, Italian has no vowel reduction at the phonological level and limited vowel reduction at the phonetic level" (Busà, 2008:116). If students are not aware of the aforementioned segmental and suprasegmental characteristics of both Italian and English, they will not be able to understand, learn and master the specific phonological traits of the TL. Starting from the phonemes detected as problematic during my MA degree, and taking inspiration from Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core (LFC)[2] (Jenkins, 2002), as I started my PhD research project, I conducted further research to collect more data so as to establish the core sounds of the Italian language that native English speakers find challenging to master; then, I analysed whether mispronunciation is due to structural problems (absence of that particular sound in the English phonemic system) or personal ones (inability by that particular individual to pronounce specific sounds). Through the analysis of data, I devised specific teaching materials to be used during online teaching, such as loops, sayings, tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes; I also selected literary texts, in particular dialogic texts from contemporary novels, theatrical plays and movies, and songs and specific forms of poetry which, although have not been tested in this research, could act as further sources for language instructors; finally, I created activities and exercises to be done through the use of an online recording voice tool named Vocaroo which greatly helped students to practise pronunciation and intonation skills autonomously and which allowed me to track my students' progress over the two years' research project.

The study, which was conducted in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Birmingham, aims to answer the following research questions:

i)   which are the core sounds of the Italian language that native English speakers must master in order to maintain intelligibility?

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[2] The Lingua Franca Core (LFC) is a selection of segmental and suprasegmentals features of English selected by Jenkins (2002) as a basis in English as Foreign Language (EFL) education. The LFC is recommended as the selection of crucial features that non-native speakers should master in order to be understood.

ii)   how can blended learning be used to elaborate a specific teaching strategy which can usefully help learners to improve their pronunciation and intonation skills, therefore their communicative competence?

In order to achieve the aforementioned aims, I designed a qualitative study which also involved two experimental phases during which a selection of materials devised for the training of pronunciation and intonation skills were used with groups of students of Italian as a foreign language at different levels of language proficiency. My dual role as researcher, conducting the experiment and analysing the data collected, and as teacher, delivering the devised materials in class and guiding learners through the pronunciation and intonation training, allowed me to be "close to the matter at hand" (Hobson, 2001:8). but at the same time far enough to be able to develop "the perspective that comes from a degree of distance" (Hobson, 2001:8). This perspective led me to the methodological choices made during the research project and also helped me to develop a critical attitude towards the influences of the researcher's subjectivity, such as teaching style, perspective, background and biases, which inevitably emerged during the study, and which are unavoidable in qualitative research. The study primarily uses qualitative data analysis. It utilises a triangulation model whereby data collection and information are based on questionnaires, recordings and classroom observations. Questionnaires with students and native speakers serve as important sources of data to answer these questions: 1) how do the students view their pronunciation skills after the experimental phases?, 2) in what ways has correct pronunciation influenced the learners' attitude towards learning Italian?, 3) according to the native speakers involved in the research project, which role does non-native speakers' pronunciation play during communicative exchanges?, 4) according to the native speakers, how can pronunciation and intonation help learners of Italian as a foreign language to integrate in the target country and have the same opportunities as native speakers?. Regarding intonation, recordings were very important to highlight specific prosodic characteristics of the Italian language that may be challenging for native English speakers – for example, the suspensive tune[3] (Canepari, 2008). All the data collected have been summarised, compared, analysed qualitatively, and interpreted to arrive at emerging ideas and findings. The results from my research add to the knowledge and understanding of the role of intelligible/comprehensible pronunciation and intonation in teaching Italian as a foreign language (Chapter 1). In fact, this study is significant in the sense that it: i) allows the identification of effective approaches and activities to promote Italian pronunciation and intonation teaching to native English speakers in and out of class through the use of specific didactic materials; ii) supports and enriches both the theory and the practice in the field of teaching and learning Italian as a foreign language.

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[3] The suspensive tune is used by speakers in order to focus the listeners' attention on what is going to be said rather than on information already provided. In other words, the suspensive tune marks the non-completeness of speech. (D'Imperio, 2002)

0.2 The structure of the study

In the following sections of my thesis, I will explore issues related to the teaching of pronunciation and intonation which will confirm the urgency of this study and the educational validity of the activities devised for segmentals and suprasegmentals training. Firstly, the role of pronunciation and intonation in teaching foreign languages and how it has changed over time and depending on which foreign language will be investigated (Chapter 1). This general overview will provide the necessary theoretical basis on which teaching practices already in use and the elaboration of the activities offered in this study are based on. Secondly, I will review the main theoretical approaches regarding the teaching of segmentals (vowels and consonants) and suprasegmentals (intonation, rhythm, stress, juncture, and pitch), with specific attention to the case of Italian FL. This will be analysed in detail in Chapter 2 and in Appendix A, thanks to the analysis of the pronunciation and intonation sessions offered by textbooks commonly used to teach Italian as a foreign language and their comparison with recent online apps specifically devised for the acquisition of segmental and suprasegmental traits. Moreover, the systematic inclusion of exercises on segmentals and suprasegmentals in the textbooks analysed points out the regained importance of teaching pronunciation and intonation which has been triggered by the recent focus on intelligibility of communication rather than "sounding like a native" (Korkut & Çelik, 2018:2). Besides this analysis, in the same chapter, it will be also offered an insight into the teaching practices and marking criteria for the evaluation of pronunciation and intonation used in standardised language proficiency tests (paragraph 2.5). Thirdly, I will put into practice the theoretical assumptions and examples of good practice pointed out in Chapters 1 and 2 regarding the teaching of pronunciation and intonation by devising new materials (Chapter 3) which aim to help learners of Italian as a foreign language to develop and improve their phonological skills according to their level of language proficiency. The experimental phases, which comprise activities offered during communicative skills online classes, allowed me to gather important data to support the urgency to systematically include pronunciation and intonation training in the modern languages curriculum. Besides the teaching materials delivered in class during the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions, I have elaborated materials which, although they have not been tested in class, represent extra activities which could be implemented in the foreign language class in order to overcome the teaching lacks that this study highlights (paragraph 3.3). Having exposed the research questions and methodology of this qualitative research (Chapter 4), the analysis will focus on the methodological steps for data collection: 1. during my MA research project, I collected data regarding the most difficult Italian sound to master for English native speakers who studied or were studying Italian FL at the time. Drawing from those results, I have investigated the status of things regarding the teaching and training of Italian pronunciation and intonation; 2. I designed the experimental phases of this research by devising the activities for the online training sessions and selecting the literary texts and drama techniques that could be useful to achieve the goals of this study; 3. I conducted the experimental phases with different groups of students and different

levels of language proficiency. The training sessions were conducted online and recorded through the use of the voice recording tool Vocaroo. This phase lasted two semesters; 4. I gathered the students' opinion on the role of pronunciation and intonation while learning Italian as a foreign language. For this, I designed the Four points Likert-scale questionnaire for students (Appendix B); 5. Then, I collected the recordings made during the online training sessions, then I selected the most interesting in terms of learning outcomes and I administered the questionnaire for Italian native-speakers (Appendix C), in order to better define the influence that pronunciation and intonation have during communicative exchanges with NSs and the benefits brought by mastery of segmentals and suprasegmentals in working environments; 6. Finally, at the end of the experimental phases, I analysed all the recordings collected from the online training sessions and compared them to the students' pronunciation and intonation skills displayed during their final summative oral exams, in order to gauge the progress made after the two-semester pronunciation- and intonation-related activities. In Chapter 5 the findings will be presented, while final considerations and suggestions for future research in this field are presented in the conclusions to this thesis (Chapter 6).

0.3 Key words

At this point, it is useful to introduce and explain some of the key term that will be used in my thesis. The first crucial difference that needs to be explained is the one between the terms Native Speaker(s) (NSs) and Non-Native Speaker(s) (NNSs). The Cambridge Dictionary defines NSs as "someone who has spoken a particular language since they were a baby, rather than having learned it as a child or adult"; while it defines NNSs as "someone who has learned a particular language as a child or adult rather than as a baby". Therefore, a NS is someone who speaks a specific language (first language) from early childhood, in different communicative contexts and for daily communication, in the place in which they live. Differently, a NNS is someone who has started speaking a specific language (target language), later on in their life, in a different communicative context from their L1's one. *First language* (L1) which refers to the learners' mother tongue, that is the language that speakers commonly use "both at home and at school and use it for day-to-day communication in the society in which they live" (Punchihetti, 2013:2) and of which they are native speakers (NSs). Other two key terms are *second language* (L2) and *foreign language* (FL), which are used to highlight the learning context in which the target language (TL) – the language that learners need to learn and master, is taught and learnt. In fact, while the term *second* language refers to a target language which is acquired by non-native speakers (NNSs) in the target country – i.e. when Italian is learnt by non-native speakers in Italy -, the term *foreign* language refers to a target language which is acquired by non-native speakers in a country where the target language is not the official language – i.e. when Italian is learnt by non-native speakers in a non-Italian speaking country (Diadori, 2001). The linguistic inputs which learners of a second language are exposed to are constant and include direct communicative exchanges with native speakers in different communicative contexts; on the contrary, learners of a foreign

language have the chance to practise the target language almost exclusively in the foreign language class and with other non-native speakers, apart from conversations with their language tutors and sporadic contacts with other native speakers. These very limited opportunities to use the target language to communicate with native speakers lead to the students' training and good mastery of certain linguistic skills –grammar and vocabulary, while they may have difficulties in developing their oral communicative skills (Diadori, 2001), that is "listening, speaking, and pronunciation" (Murphy, 1991:51), which end up playing a marginal role. Both theoretical studies conducted in second- and foreign-language acquisition have been included in my thesis; however, my investigation has been conducted in a foreign language learning context, chiefly in teaching Italian as a foreign language in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Birmingham. Another key term is *proficiency* that, according to the Cambridge dictionary, is "the fact of having the skill and experience for doing something". In the field of foreign language education, it "encompasses a language learner's or user's communicative abilities, knowledge systems, and skills" (Harsch, 2017:250). Another distinction that needs to be clarified is between *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility. Intelligibility* is defined as "word/utterance recognition" (Smith & Nelson, 1985:334), that is how much words/utterances are understood, while *comprehensibility* deals with how easily FL/L2 speech is understood (Derwing et al., 2008). Finally, in this research the term *correct* is used and it refers to the principle of "correct pronunciation" (Pedrazzini, 2016:65), which is the level of pronunciation that needs to be pursued by FL learners in order to achieve accurate speech. However, an intelligible pronunciation has been recently defined "as a more suitable attainment" (Pedrazzini, 2016:71), in opposition to the native-speaker like pronunciation "which seeks to reduce or eliminate L1 accent from L2 speech" (Saito, 2021:867). The debate between nativeness and intelligibility in teaching segmental and suprasegmental features of a FL will be further discussed in Chapter 1.

0.4 The role of pronunciation and intonation in the foreign-language context in a historical perspective

Over the past decades pronunciation and intonation have repetitively changed position in foreign language education according to the importance that the different teaching methods adopted at the time assigned to them. During the late 1800s and the early 1900s the Direct method emerged as a response to the more popular Grammar-Translation method (Ketabi, 2015). According to the Grammar-Translation method, modern languages needed to be taught following the teaching strategies used for the teaching of Latin and Greek – a strict focus on grammatical rules and the memorisation of vocabulary through lists of words and translation. Very little or no attention was paid to the development of oral communicative skills. In opposition to the Grammar-Translation method, the Direct method was based on the idea that foreign languages needed to be learnt in the same way as children learn their native languages: by listening and repeating (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996). In fact, supporters of the Direct method thought that after a period in which foreign language learners were simply asked to listen to and internalise the sounds

system and rhythm of the target language, they would then been able to pick up the correct pronunciation and intonation without any explicit segmentals and suprasegmentals training. In the 1890s, the Reform movement sharply changed the general attitude towards pronunciation and intonation and specific phonetic training was considered fundamental in order to fully acquire a foreign language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The Reform Movement firstly recognised oral communicative skills as the main focus of foreign language teaching and the acknowledgment of the importance of including segmentals and suprasegmentals training in foreign language education eventually gained popularity. During the Reform movement period, which lasted until the second half of the twentieth century (Setter, 2006), "pronunciation was deemed a major concern in second language instruction" (Ketabi, 2015:183). In the 1940s and 1950s, two teaching approaches greatly helped phonological training to gain momentum: the Audiolingual method in the United States and the Oral approach and Situational language teaching in the United Kingdom. They strongly emphasised pronunciation and intonation and gave these skills a prominent role in the foreign language curriculum (Ketabi, 2015). During the 1960s and 1970s, the introduction of the Cognitive approach, which was focused on the teaching of grammar and vocabulary (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Levis, 2005), and the comprehension-based approaches to teach foreign languages, which assumed that the foreign language acquisition process was based on learners' creative abilities to deduce the grammatical rules of the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), the teaching of pronunciation and intonation was considered rather meaningless, and it fell from grace. In the late 1970s, the Communicative Approach to foreign language teaching initially considered phonological training as a linguistic component in the learning process rather than a communicative one, and therefore an impediment to the acquisition of good oral communicative skills (Pennington & Richards, 1986; Isaacs, 2009). Drills and other activities previously used to train segmentals and suprasegmentals "were not consistent with a communicative philosophy of language" (Ketabi, 2015:183), and were consequently "disregarded or totally dropped" (Ketabi, 2015) from modern languages curricula. Later on, proponents of the Communicative approach changed their opinion regarding pronunciation and intonation training (Foote et al., 2011; Couper, 2008), thanks to the raising of new issues and perspectives regarding the role of pronunciation and its importance during communicative exchanges and started considering phonology as "an essential component of communicative competence" (Ketabi, 2015:183), reintroducing it in foreign language education. Starting from the 1980s and increasingly during the 1990s and in the new millennium, pronunciation and intonation received new interest and fruitful discussions emerged regarding specific aspects related to segmentals and suprasegmentals training (Ketabi, 2015). For instance, controversies such as intelligible vs native-like pronunciation and the predominance of segmentals over suprasegmentals or vice versa involved scholars in heart-felt debates, and new theories regarding the core sounds of languages (Jenkins, 2000) emerged. These aspects will be presented in the first chapter of this thesis.

0.5 Reasons for the inclusion of pronunciation and intonation in the foreign language classroom

Over the past decades, many scholars have pointed out the importance of pronunciation and intonation training in foreign language education. Underhill (2010) suggested four main reasons why pronunciation and intonation should be taught to foreign language learners. The first reason is that pronunciation employs all four linguistic skills (Underhill, 2010). In fact, as Underhill (2010) highlighted, segmental and suprasegmental features not only activate when speakers speak aloud, but they remain in action whenever the speakers' inner voices are active (Underhill, 2010). In fact, pronunciation and intonation are active during writing, thinking, remembering and reading silently (Underhill, 2010), and are therefore involved during all four main linguistic skills. The second reason defined by Underhill (2010) is that pronunciation is beneficial to the development of listening skills. The mouth educates the ear - Underhill (2010) maintained - as much as the ear teaches the mouth, as suggested by the behaviourist theory[4] of language learning. The mastery of segmentals and suprasegmentals does not only improve a speaker's ability to speak and be understood, but it also enables the ear to hear, to successfully distinguish the sounds of speech and to listen to what has been said, making communication possible and meaningful. Furthermore, unlike the cognitive aspect of language (i.e. grammar, vocabulary, etc.), Underhill (2010) described pronunciation as the most physical representation of language, as it involves muscular coordination just like other physical activities such as walking, dancing, climbing or skating. Moreover, as with other physical learning, learners can use the muscular memory of their bodies to provide memory hooks for words and sentences (Underhill, 2010). The last reason identified by Underhill (2010) to teach pronunciation and intonation in the foreign language class is the great impact that a good mastery of segmental and suprasegmental traits can have on learners' self-esteem. In fact, more chances to be better understood and to better understand thanks to a good mastery of pronunciation and intonation can positively affect the learners' feeling of being competent users of the target language (Underhill, 2010). The *motivational role* of pronunciation and intonation training - that is the positive effects that the mastery of the segmental and suprasegmental traits of FLs can have on the learning process, can greatly affect the learners' learning experience, as suggested by many scholars and research findings. For instance, Gardner (1972) and Gardner and Lambert (1972), quoted in Yousofi, Nouroddin & Naderifarjad, Zahra (2015), stated that foreign language learners who have an open-minded and non-judgmental attitude towards the foreign language learning process (integrative orientation) might become "acculturated members of new linguistic and cultural community" (Yousofi & Naderifarjad, 2015:250) and can therefore be motivated to acquire a good mastery of the target language phonological system. Finegan (1999) and Moyer (2007) found that learners with a positive attitude towards the learning of the target language were more likely to develop native-like pronunciation. In foreign language teaching, motivation is deeply linked to the concept of *authenticity*. For this reason, the materials used in my research

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[4] According to the behaviourist theory of language learning infants learn oral language skills through a process which involves imitation, rewards, and practice. Other humans provide the stimuli and rewards to infants. (Reutzel & Cooter, 2004)

for the training of pronunciation and intonation include authentic sayings, tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes that native speakers use for the same purposes as participants in my study did – practising specific combination of sounds through specific articulatory movements by using cultural-related chunks of the target language. The use of authentic materials and literary texts deeply intertwined with the target *culture* in order to train segmental and suprasegmental traits is another aspect that makes this research particularly relevant from both a theoretical and a practical perspective. In fact, the use of dialogic texts taken from contemporary novels and theatrical pieces, dialogue scripts taken from movie scenes and the selection of poetic forms for pronunciation and intonation training allow students to experience the target culture by reading and performing the selected texts (McKay, 1986) and to improve their cultural awareness.

0.6 Theory and practice: some issues

Despite the theoretical discussions which supported and still support the inclusion of pronunciation and intonation education in foreign language teaching, a more accurate analysis of primers commonly used by language tutors in class reveal some practical issues in the delivery of phonological training sessions. In fact, the research studies conducted by Nuessel (1989), and Mason (1993) suggest two significant issues. First, the textbooks generally cover pronunciation and intonation issues rather superficially, proving the lack of specific guidelines and systematic practice in the teaching of these linguistic traits. For instance, within the textbooks, pronunciation and intonation exercises are usually placed in introductory chapters, appendices or in small sections throughout the text. Secondly, the explanations and the activities are generally focused on segmentals rather than on supragmentals (Mason, 1993). In her analyses of six primers commonly used in first-year Italian courses, Mason pointed out that, despite the textbooks authors' interest in covering pronunciation and intonation, "many books include pronunciation practice on lab programs, (but) instructors do not always require students to use them" (1993:153). Therefore, many students have no access to specific materials and training unless their teachers provide them with extra exercises and explanations (Mason, 1993). Drawing from Nuessel (1989) and Mason (1993), I have further investigated how recent primers deal with phonological traits and my results confirm the data collected by previous research. Therefore, if we consider the tools available to foreign language teaching, we realise that pronunciation and intonation are often avoided skills, dreaded by language tutors and learners. A possible solution to the lack of attention to phonological training could be the integration of online apps specifically designed for foreign language acquisition, as I have discussed in chapter 2. In fact, these apps generally include more systematic and more appropriate exercises aimed at developing the learners' phonological skills. Furthermore, the activities that I have devised and my investigation of the forms of literary texts which could be adapted and exploited to provide language tutors with a broad variety of materials to use in class for phonological purposes, represent my response and solution to the urgent need to bridge the gap between theoretical discussions and language classroom practice. In light of the above arguments, it seems

appropriate to ask the following two questions: 1. if pronunciation and intonation play an important role in foreign language acquisition, why do modern languages curricula give very little interest to or often neglect the training of segmental and suprasegmental traits? and 2. how can phonological competence be systematically and appropriately included in foreign language practice? - as it is clear that pronunciation and intonation skills are as important as other linguistic skills which are normally addressed in foreign language education.

0.7 International Phonetic Alphabet Symbols used in this study

A list of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols for Italian is provided (see Introduction:10). The IPA places individual sounds - phonemes, within slashes, as in /a/; words and phrases are placed within brackets, as in [kan.ˈtaː.ɾe] (Adams, 2022). Despite the IPA alphabet does not distinguish vowel length, in this research long vowels are followed by the symbol /ː/. Concerning vowels, a basic understanding of the distinction between /e/, /ɛ/, /o/, and /ɔ/ was considered appropriate in order to achieve intelligibility (Adams, 2022); for this reason, students were not assessed on their ability to distinguish between open and closed vowels, and non-standard variants that did not phonetically conflict with the sound distinctions conveyed in writing were widely tolerated (for instance, marked distinction between the five vowels).

Having outlined the research questions, structure, and outputs, in the next chapter (Chapter 1) I will discuss the concepts of pronunciation, intonation, and accent in learning foreign languages by investigating their theoretical analysis in the past decades and their relationship with the idea of identity. The following discussion will highlight the theoretical bases on which this research is based on, and the principles on which the new materials presented in this study were devised on.

Chapter 1
Pronunciation, intonation, and accent in learning foreign languages

Over the past decades, the popularity of the *communicative approach to foreign language teaching* – a combination of Hymes's (1972) *communicative competence* and Halliday's (1973) *functions of language*, has brought considerable attention to language acquisition research by examining almost every aspect of foreign language acquisition. During the 1970s, both Hymes's (1972) communicative competence theory, according to which the main focus in the learning process is on the socio-cultural dimension of language, and Halliday's functions of language (1973) contributed to the development of the communicative approach to foreign language teaching/learning. In this approach, great importance is given to the authentic use of the language structures and to its social dimension. Moreover, the communicative approach to language learning redefined the roles of the two primary subjects in the acquisition process: learners and teachers. Furthermore, the communicative approach teaching strategies put particular emphasis on communicative interaction rather than on grammatical and vocabulary explanation and practice, which are interwoven into the functional and communicative settings. As for the communicative dimension in which foreign languages are taught, the target language is seen as "a malleable instrument which varies in form, as well as according to geolinguistics or sociolinguistics" (Danesi, 1981:187). Thus, Wardhaugh (1976) highlights phonology as the most variable system in languages. However, it seems that the acquisition of pronunciation has received little interest in communicative research and classroom-based activities. Terrell states that supporters of the communicative approach "have not known what to do with pronunciation" (1989:197); according to the author, this lack of interest is mainly due to the limited time that researchers have devoted to the study of sound systems. Moreover, Pennington and Richards point out that that "pronunciation, traditionally viewed as a component of linguistic rather than communicative competence or as an aspect of accuracy rather than conversational fluency, has come to be regarded as of limited importance in a communicatively oriented curriculum" (1986:207). Similarly, Elliott claims that "teachers tend to view pronunciation as the least useful of the basic language skills and therefore they generally sacrifice teaching pronunciation in order to spend valuable class time on other areas of the language" (1995:531). Elliott reinforces this point by maintaining that teachers usually consider pronunciation a rather difficult skill to master, especially for adult learners, and, therefore, they tend to pay more attention to those language skills that they define as easier to develop or improve. In addition, despite the importance of pronunciation instruction in the acquisition of foreign languages demonstrated by recent literature, FL acquisition research has yet to investigate in depth which classroom techniques are most valuable for teaching pronunciation and training teachers in this specific field, as Saito argues, "pronunciation teaching has been notorious for its overdependence on decontextualized practice such as mechanical drills and repetition, reminiscent of the audiolingual teaching methods of several decades ago […]. Furthermore, very few language teachers

actually receive adequate training in the specific area of pronunciation teaching" (Saito, 2012:842). In addition, Baker (2014) maintains that a few teacher education programmes provide courses on how to teach FL pronunciation. Another issue related to teachers' lack of training concerns their role as *mentors* and the evaluation of pronunciation errors. Many scholars have tried to devise a solution able to combine the bedrocks of the communicative approach – i.e. its over-emphasis on the acquisition of spoken fluency and opposition to direct correction of errors, and the complexity that pronunciation instruction brings to classroom-based teaching. For instance, Marton criticises the communicative teaching strategy by pointing out that it

"is related to one of its fundamental principles, namely, that it forbids direct correction of speech errors and makes the teacher accept structurally erroneous utterances [....]. This principle is based on the assumption that learners' errors are caused by the process' hypothesis testing and as such are transient in nature, with the corollary that they (i.e. speech errors) tend to disappear as the learner proceeds along the developmental path, getting ever more (comprehensible) input and constantly revising and correcting erroneous hypotheses" (Marton, 1988:49).

In order to overcome the dichotomy between the communicative approach and the need for the teacher to intervene in mispronunciations, Clarke suggests that "it is the (individual, autonomous) teacher who is in the position of authority, because only the teacher can decide what to take and what to leave, whom to listen to and whom to ignore" (1984:591). It is clear, though, that teachers lacking in phonological training and knowledge would find it impossible to teach correct pronunciation and to intervene and correct errors when mispronunciations occur. The lack of attention to pronunciation instruction in FL teaching is also evident in textbooks (Chapter 2). As demonstrated in this literature review, although pronunciation plays a fundamental role in the communicative approach to foreign language teaching, little consideration has been given so far both to teachers' training in the phonological system and which specific pedagogical and didactic strategies should be adopted for pronunciation instruction in class.

Two main aspects should be further analysed. First, the difference between pronunciation and accent – in fact, from studying previous research in this field, there is an evident need to rethink the contradistinction between the two and consequently identify the different communicative goals that they aim for (intelligibility vs prestige). Secondly, which pronunciation needs to be taught – native-like or teachable/learnable?

1.1 Accent as a pronunciation trait

According to the Cambridge dictionary, accent can be defined as "the way in which people in a particular area, country, or social group pronounce words"[5]; the Oxford learners' dictionary defines it as "a way of

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[5] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/accent

pronouncing the words of a language that shows which country, area or social class a person comes from; how well somebody pronounces a particular language"[6]. Accent marks the difference between the speakers' way of speaking, and it affects the way in which speakers perceive others during communicative exchanges (Derwing & Munro, 2009). Thus, accent plays a fundamental role from a sociocultural point of view as it shows whether someone is different (Bresnahan et al., 2002; Derwing & Munro, 2015; Moyer, 2013); furthermore, it may arise negative attitudes or prejudices during communication (Carlson & McHenry, 2006; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Drawing from the aforementioned definitions and considerations, accent seems to deal more with the sociocultural and geographical labelling of speakers than with their intelligibility. In this respect, it is urgent now to provide a deeper analysis of the difference between accent and pronunciation, in order to better define their respective roles and importance in foreign language education.

Over recent decades, many scholars have carried out research which tries to combine pronunciation and accent, considering them as two different skills. One example is Harding's qualitative analysis of focus group discussions which target learners' experience by using the European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Phonological control scale to rate FL pronunciation (Council of Europe, 2001). One of the most telling outcomes of Harding's study is that raters believed the scale to be skewed in its treatment of accented versus understandable speech and to include erratic descriptions of pronunciation features across scale levels. The results of this study highlight how difficult it is to evaluate pronunciation and accent as two distinct skills; in fact, the common criteria for their assessment do not take into consideration the differing final goals they aim to. In another study, Ballard and Winke (2017) investigate the interplay between speakers' accents and comprehensibility (that is, the level of listeners' understanding), and their acceptability as an ESL teacher, focusing on non-native listeners. They show that non-native listeners can easily distinguish between accented speakers and those who sound unaccented. Despite this, non-native listeners do not seem to label accented speakers as unacceptable teachers. Instead, listeners associate speakers' acceptability as a teacher with their perceptions of these speakers' comprehensibility. This finding is important in that it confirms that raters' decisions with real-life consequences might depend more strongly on how easily FL speech is understood rather than on how unaccented it sounds, echoing previous work by Derwing and Munro (2005), which showed a similar result for non-native English-speaking engineers in a workplace using English. The significant number of studies regarding English native-speakers' phonological perception of accented and unaccented speech of foreign speakers marks even more the very limited number of research concerning how Italian native-speakers perceive foreign accents. Marotta and Boula de Mareüil (2009) carried out a perceptive test where Italian native speakers were invited to assess chunks of speech in Italian produced by both other native speakers and foreigners having different L1s (French, Spanish, German and English). The results revealed that participants were able to identify whether the acoustic stimuli were produced by NSs or by NNSs, and they managed to identify the L1 of foreign speakers. The most interesting aspect emerged

[6] https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/accent_1?q=accent

is that, despite the rather high level of proficiency in Italian of foreign speakers, Italian NSs were able to detect the non-nativeness of their accents. This result further support the idea that pronunciation and accent should be considered as two separate skills, where the former influences the intelligibility and comprehensibility of speech, and the latter determines a deeper level of mastery and knowledge of the TL. Bianchi and Calamai (2012) investigated the preference of Italian NSs towards specific accents (standard Italian accent, regional Italian accent, accents of foreigners resident in Italy) through different criteria, in particular: 1. the speakers' voice (self-confident/insecure, nice/unpleasant, educated/ignorant, friendly/detached); 2. the speakers' socio-economic status; 3. the speakers' reliability; 4. the speakers' level of working responsibilities; 5. the speakers' success in life. The study showed that participants generally preferred the standard Italian accent which, despite the detachedness expressed by it, is generally defined by Italian NSs as self-confident, educated, and it is associated with a high socio-economic status, reliability, working responsibilities and success in life. Foreign accents appeared to be the least preferred by Italian NSs; however, concerning the criteria nice/unpleasant and friendly/detached, foreign and regional accents were positively perceived by participants. The results confirmed the association of accents with socio-cultural and economic *prestige,* not with intelligibility.

Based on the aforementioned studies and results, the relationship between pronunciation and accent should be rethought. Accent should be defined as a *pronunciation trait* – in fact, from a linguistic point of view, expressions such as *accented speech* and *foreign-accented speech* (Derwing & Munro, 2005)*, unaccented pronunciation* and *accent-free pronunciation* (Crowther et al., 2015: 81; Scales et al., 2006), already define accent as a quality that pronunciation may or may not have. More precisely, instead of considering them as two different skills that learners need to learn, practise and master no less than grammatical and lexical skills, accent should be interpreted as a further step into a deeper knowledge of the FL phonological system (as it can be seen in the schema below):

THE PHONOLOGICAL SYSTEM OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE

↓

PRONUNCIATION(focus on intelligibility)

↓   ↓   ↓

ACCENT   SEGMENTAL FEATURES   SUPRASEGMENTAL FEATURES (focus on prestige)
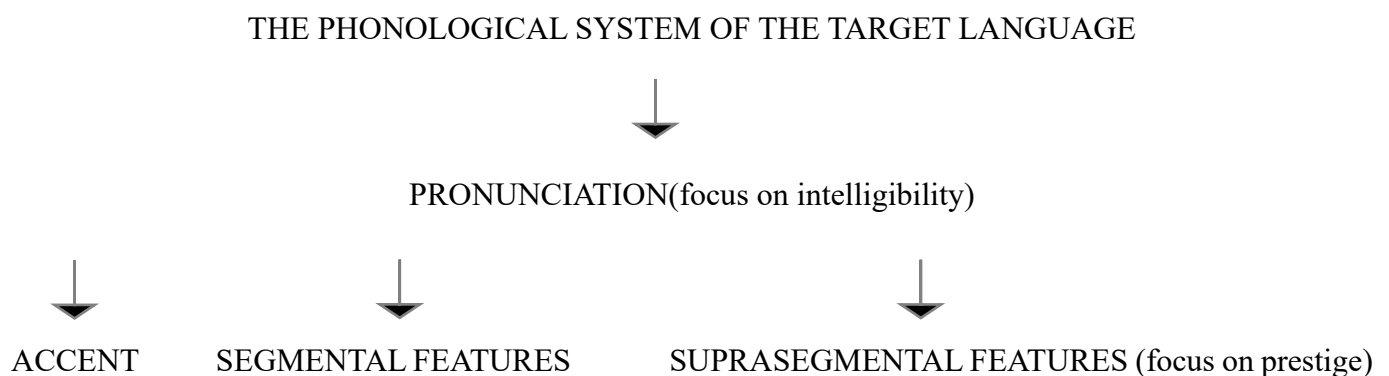
Hockett suggests that two of the most important aspects of foreign language learning are to acquire good pronunciation and to correctly hear the target language. He gives this definition of pronunciation:

"When anyone speaks, in any language, he moves his lips, jaws, tongue, and certain other parts of the mouth, nose, throat, and diaphragm, in certain ways. These motions produce sound waves, which travel through the air to the ears of someone else; if that second person happens to know the same language, there follows (usually) the type of behaviour which we call understanding" (Hockett, 1950:261).

According to Hockett's definition, pronunciation is a mechanical process that involves at least two subjects who interchangeably produce and receive meaningful sound waves in order to reach mutual understanding. Thus, the two main goals of FL pronunciation are both *intelligibility* - that is, the capacity for language learners to be understood by interlocutors (Derwing & Munro, 2015) or the listener's estimation of his or her understanding of a speaker's utterance, with the student being asked 'how much of this speech did you understand?' as measured through a rated degree of understanding (Derwing & Munro, 1997, 2009); and *comprehensibility,* i.e. "the listener's estimation of difficulty in understanding" (Munro et al, 2009:478). Somewhat differently, Crystal (1997) defines accent as a feature of pronunciation, supporting the idea of it as an attribute of the latter:

"The cumulative auditory effect of those features of pronunciation which identify where a person is from, regionally or socially [...] the term refers to pronunciation only, it is thus distinct from dialect, which refers to grammar and vocabulary as well. [...] In Britain, the best example is the regionally neutral accent associated with public school education, Civil Service, the law courts, the Court, and the BBC: hence the labels Queen's English, BBC English, and the like. Received Pronunciation (RP) is the name given to this accent and because of its regional neutrality, RP speakers are sometimes thought of as having no accent. This is a misleading way of putting it, however: linguistics stresses that everyone must have an accent, though it may not indicate regional origin" (Crystal, 1997:2).

Furthermore, *accentedness* is described as "the degree to which the pronunciation of an utterance sounds different from an expected production pattern" (Munro et al., 2009:478); it is also the case here that accent is seen a sort of shade that may characterise pronunciation more or less intensely. Moreover, another important aspect to draw attention to is the shift in the main goal that emerges between pronunciation and accent. In fact, while the former aims at ensuring speakers' intelligibility and comprehensibility, the latter focuses on the social prestige it can confer upon them, and on the identarian sense of belonging to a social group or location (see paragraph 1.2). For instance, Derwing and Munro define accent as "either dialectal differences attributable to region or class, or phonological variations resulting from L1 influence on the L2" (2009:476), but they also describe accent as "the ways in which their [immigrants'] speech differs from that local [language] variety" (2009:476).

The issue of accent prestige has been widely investigated from different perspectives. Sociolinguists researching variation tend to consider prestige as an irrelevant variable (Mugglestone, 1995). In contrast, applied linguists underline the crucial role played by prestige with especial reference to the real use of language in the community. This is supported by Honey (1989), who has been unfairly criticised for supporting class divisions when in fact he simply points out the reality of the situation, that is, that there is always a socially accepted prestige model of accent. Although these studies were primarily carried out with regard to first languages, the results can be applied to foreign accents, too "since language is so potent a marker of status and class, it is not surprising that there is a tendency for speakers both in their first language (L1) and their second language (L2) to accommodate towards the prestige accent, or indeed to a prestige accent where there is more than one" (Davies, 2017:187). In particular, many scholars (Crowther et al., 2015; Scales et al., 2006; Pennington & Richards, 1986) suggest that generally foreign language learners tend to identify, and consequently imitate, as the prestige foreign accent a "native-like, accent-free pronunciation" (Crowther et al., 2015:81). Researchers have tried to explain this learners' attitude. Learners may want a native-like accent because it is considered prestigious (Davies, 2013) or necessary to avoid social and workplace discrimination (Lippi-Green, 2012). Applied linguists, however, will most likely argue that what is important is not a native-like accent, but rather being easily understood (Derwing & Munro, 2009; Harding, 2012; Levis, 2005) or, as Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) concluded, their desire may be related to wanting to be included, accepted or perceived as a member of the target social group. Learners themselves may not be able to articulate the differences between not having an accent and being easily understood. Scales et al. (2006) found that a majority of the language learners in their study wanted to sound like a native speaker, but few could actually identify whether someone was a native or non-native speaker. Some learners stated that they wanted a native accent for future employability, but the majority expressed the view that "the native accent was the obvious choice to strive for" (Scales et al., 2006:735) without being able to give concrete reasons why. Learners may view a native-like accent as the way to acquire their real goals of acceptance and equality, but it is not certain that a native-like accent is indeed needed:

"Some learners, wishing to integrate actively into the target culture and to be identified with its speakers, may be motivated to try to attain a native accent in the foreign language. Others, in contrast, may not have a strong integrative motivation toward the target culture and so may consciously or unconsciously seek to maintain a distinctive accent" (Pennington & Richards, 1986:215).

Although Davies draws the conclusion that "if spoken language is to be assessed and if accent is one of the variables under test, then the native speaker in its idealized representation as a prestige variety is needed as model and goal" (2017:190), several researchers have recently called strongly for more studies of teaching for intelligible pronunciation rather than native-like accent. Their reasoning is that, while maintaining their first language-related accents to a certain degree, students need to fulfil the minimal

phonological requirements to be comprehensible in order to achieve the goal of successful communication (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2005; Jenkins, 2000; Levis, 2005). This idea supports more strongly the need to define accent as a further step that learners need to take in order to acquire deeper and more intelligible pronunciation.

After defining both pronunciation and accent and identifying their main characteristics, it is necessary to determine the fundamental aspects of pronunciation acquisition.

1.2 Standard Italian and regional varieties

Italy certainly is one of the most diversified landscapes in terms of language variety in Europe (Avolio, 2009; Maiden and Perry, 1997). Before the political unification of the nation in 1861, Italy was fragmented into small independent States which had their own local languages. After 1861, the Italian language was adopted as the official national language of the newly proclaimed state, and it became its first unifying element. Standard Italian (SI) derived from a literary language, based on Vulgar Latin, and the spoken variety of the Florentine upper social classes (Maiden and Perry, 1997). At the time of the unification, SI was mastered by less than 10% of the population (De Mauro, 1963), and illiteracy remained high at least for another century. Around the second half of the 20th century, several factors contributed to the diffusion of Italian. Education, the compulsory military service (which encouraged the use of Italian as common language among people coming from different regions, hence speakers of different dialects), the emerging industrial society which gradually replaced the rural-agrarian one, and the rapid spread of modern mass communication (especially, the television broadcasting) played a crucial role in the establishment of SI over local languages and dialects (Ramponi, 2022; Cerruti, 2011). The gradual diffusion of Italian in every social, economic and cultural domain required dialect speakers to learn and to speak the Italian language alongside their local languages/dialects. The imperfect acquisition of SI by dialect speakers favoured interferences of dialects features in Italian, and this process led to the creation of regional varieties of Italian (Cerruti, 2011). Moreover, since the second half of the 20th century, the majority of dialect speakers have started speaking to the new generations in their regional variety of Italian, as educating children to speak only in Italian was considered favourable for social enhancement (Cerruti, 2011). Thus, new generations can be considered as native-speakers of their own RIs. In fact, Cerruti stated that "ruling out possible exceptions, there are no native speakers of SI" (2011:12), but each speaker is a native-speakers of a specific language variety (see paragraph 4.3.2.1). Despite the diffusion of SI, Italy is characterised by a complex and miscellaneous sociolinguistic situation in which varieties of the national language spoken in different regional areas, the so-called regional Italian (RI), coexist with "more than fifteen Italo-Romance dialects and about fifteen historical linguistic minorities (besides a certain number of new linguistic minorities)" (Cerruti, 2011:9). RIs differ from SI at all levels of the linguistic system (especially regarding phonetics, phonology, and prosody), and they represent the Italian language varieties currently spoken in contemporary Italy (Cerruti,

2011). The language-shift from dialects toward Italian "displays however some exceptions, which are mostly due to the particular *lingua cum dialectis* repertoire" (Cerruti, 2011:11). In fact, in Italy there is no distinction between a group of users of "the source language (i.e. an Italo-Romance dialect)" (Cerruti, 2011:12) and a group of speakers of "the recipient language" (Cerruti, 2011:12). Hence, regional Italians derive, on the one hand, from a "a process of unilateral convergence […] from dialects toward Italian" (Cerruti, 2011:12); on the other hand, RIs are "also the outcome of a process of divergence of geographical varieties from the national language; it results from a so-called "dialectization of (varieties of) Italian" (Berruto 2005: 83)" (Cerruti, 2011:12). In fact, differently from SI which seems more conservative (Cerruti, 2011), over the past decades, RIs have developed new features which transcend regional boundaries, and this has contributed to the "standardization of modern *italiano regionale popolare*" (Berretta 1988: 768; Stehl 1995: 56 –57). The process of unilateral convergence of RIs brings to two important observations. Firstly, it tends to reduce the markedness of regional varieties, especially in terms of phonetics and phonology, by including features of other regional varieties and this results in a sort of "composite" regional Italian (Cerruti, 2011:23), which is especially observed in younger generations (Conti and Courtens, 1992; Cerruti, 2011). Secondly, this process of convergence can, in some cases, act as a social marker which attests a speaker's belonging to a specific social group and their identity; moreover, especially for non-native speakers, "it contributes to the attainment of a native-like identity (Boario 2008)" (Cerruti, 2011:23). As other languages, also RIs present a number of sub-varieties which are used depending on the dimensions of linguistic variation. In particular, we distinguish three dimensions which are considered of primary importance: 1. *diatopia* (variation across space); 2. *diastratia* (variation across socio-economic classes and groups); 3. *diaphasia* (variation across communicative situations). Firstly, the diatopic dimension of Italian consists in the varieties of RIs that represent the languages spoken in contemporary Italy. Concerning pronunciation, diatopic variation marks the speaker's place of origin and there is generally less pressure to stick to the SI norms than for other levels of the linguistic system. In fact, Cerruti (2011) pointed out that "even at school, phonetic regional or non-standard variants that do not clearly conflict with phonetic and phonemic distinctions conveyed in writing are widely tolerated" (2011:20), as pronunciation deprived of any regional inflection is barely unachievable, also among educated speakers and in formal communicative situations (Cerruti, 2011). For instance, Rizzi (1989) investigated the phonological features of highly educated speakers from Bologna in careful and controlled speech (diaphasic variation), and noted that specific sound patterns, such as /ʎ/, /ɲ/, and /ʃ/, were still realised with the typical Northern variants. However, the lack of instructions regarding standard pronunciation can lead to less educated speakers' unawareness of the regional markedness of their accent, therefore they may not be sensitive to social stratification (Cerruti, 2011). For instance, Giannelli and Savoia (1978) investigated the social stratification of the Tuscan *gorgia,* that is the spirantization of intervocalic voiceless plosives. The research found that the production of the regional variants /x/, /h/, and Ø in Florentine is more common among lower classes

and in informal communicative situations (diaphasic variation), than among upper classes and more formal styles.

1.3 The four primary dimensions of pronunciation

From the perspective of contemporary research in discourse analysis (Brazil, Coulthard, & Johns, 1980), pronunciation involves a complex interaction of perceptual, articulatory, and interactional factors. There are four primary dimensions of speech that need to be taken into consideration when focusing on phonology instruction: first, the segmental and suprasegmental features of FL; secondly, motor skills and listening training; thirdly, the contrastive analysis of the L1 and FL phonological systems and the core sounds of the target language; finally, learners' familiarity with the L2/FL and their motivational/affective states.

Segmental and suprasegmental features. Segmental features are minimal units of sound defined in phonetic terms. Phonemes have traditionally been considered the basic elements of pronunciation and the acquisition of the FL phonological system "is viewed as mastery of the phonemic distinctions embodied in its phonological inventory and of the phonetic variants of phonemes which occur in particular environments within syllables and words" (Pennington & Richards, 1986:209). As far as instruction in segmental features is concerned, traditional teaching methods suggest the use of both contrastive phonology between learners' first language and the FL and explicit explanation of the anatomy of speech organs. These two types of didactic strategies allow the students to become aware of: 1. the sounds of their L1 that are identical or rather similar in the FL phonological system so they can concentrate on the acquisition of those phonemes that are typical of the target language and needed to ensure intelligibility and comprehensibility while speaking – the so-called *core sounds* (Jenkins, 2000); 2. the parts of the body involved in the production of different sounds (lips, teeth, tongue, breath, diaphragm, etc) and how to move them to correctly articulate a specific sound. Nevertheless, a number of recent linguistic theories have asserted a need to shift from earlier 'bottom-up' or static models of speech perception (from local/segmental to global/suprasegmental meanings, as in Dirven & Oakeshott-Taylor, 1984) to dynamic 'top-down' approaches which investigate language processing from global/suprasegmental to local/segmental meanings. However, pronunciation teaching has continued to focus on segmental features, adhering to the traditional emphasis on phonemes as the basic units of pronunciation. Although this micro-perspective approach to pronunciation teaching has positive impacts on learners' speech skills and awareness of the mechanical side of pronunciation, it has to be integrated with a macro-focus on suprasegmental features (Morley, 1987). Suprasegmental, or prosodic, features include elements such as stress, intonation, rhythmic patterns, and the co-articulatory phenomena of the blending and overlapping (elision, contraction, assimilation between neighbouring phonemes) of sounds which occur in fluent speech. All these elements contribute to the intelligibility of speech as they confer a deeper degree of meaning upon the words pronounced by the speaker. For example, in a study by Suenobu, Kanzaki, and Yamane (1992), English words produced by Japanese speakers were presented to

48 American English listeners for transcription. The intelligibility scores increased when the words were presented in their original sentence context rather than in isolation. Although research indicates that intelligibility is an achievable goal, it is widely accepted that supra-segmentals are very important to it. In another study, Hahn (2004) manipulated prosodic features of Korean to see the effects of a lack of suprasegmental accuracy. She played Korean-accented mini lectures, which only differed in nuclear stress assignment, to three groups of undergraduate students. The group which heard the correct assignment of nuclear stress understood significantly more of the lecture than the other two groups. Hahn's study therefore emphasises the positive effect that accurate prosodic features have on speech intelligibility. Moreover, Brown and Yule claim that stress and intonation mark the "elements which the speaker [does or] does not require the hearer to pay attention to" (1983:164). Syllables or words which are articulated precisely are those high in information content, while those which are weakened, shortened, or dropped are predictable and can be guessed from context (Dirven & Oakeshott-Taylor, 1984). According to Lagefoged (1984), characteristic intonation contours carry both referential and affective meaning. The referential meaning of an intonation contour indicates which part of the utterance is viewed as new or known, important or not, topic or comment. Intonation and stress are also highly context related as they can modify the hearer's perception of an isolated word or sentence if set in a broader context of various utterances. Intonation is, thus, an essential component of the 'prosodic continuity' that makes connected chunks of speech coherent, intelligible and comprehensible to the listener. As a consequence, "To interfere with stress, timing, fundamental frequency [and other aspects of prosodic continuity in discourse] usually has more drastic consequences for comprehension than removing the cues of a particular [phonological] segment" (Dirven & Oakeshott-Taylor, 1984:333). In fact, intonational features distinguish statements from questions or indicate aspects of the speaker's attitude towards a topic or the person spoken to. Brazil et al. emphasise that intonation cannot be adequately described except in relation to the interaction between speaker and hearer:

"We see the description of intonation as one aspect of the description of interaction and argue that intonation choices carry information about the structure of the interaction, the relationship between and the discourse function of individual utterances, the interactional "givenness" and "newness" of information and the state of convergence and divergence of the participants" (1984:11).

Many scholars suggest that prosodic features should be taught from the earliest stage of language acquisition since they greatly influence the intelligibility and the comprehensibility of speech. Practice on segmental as well as suprasegmental levels of the sound system needs to be integrated with broader level communicative activities in which speakers and listeners engage in a process of exchanging meaningful information (Pennington & Richards, 1986). This concern emerges partly in response to the literature on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasises purposeful and meaningful uses of language

in FL classrooms. The studies described above highlight that pronunciation in a second language involves far more than the correct articulation of individual sounds. The acquisition of the phonology of the second or foreign language involves learning how to produce a wide range of complex and subtle distinctions, which relate sound to meaning at several different levels. Articulatory, interactional, and cognitive processes are all equally involved.

Motor skills and listening training. "How can one go about acquiring a good pronunciation? A good pronunciation of a language is a matter of motor skills, coupled with ear training" (Hockett, 1950:265). In fact, foreign language learners have to acquire a set of motor skills in order to articulate properly the phonemes of the target language that play a central role in achieving speech intelligibility. As native speakers of a L1, learners have already mastered a certain number of sounds; this can have a twin effect on the acquisition of the FL phonological system, either helping or interfering with the articular habits to be acquired for the foreign language: "The habits of pronunciation for different languages, however, are not the same. Different motions of the 'organs of speech' are involved in different languages, and even where the same or almost the same motions occur, they are apt to occur in different sequences relative to each other" (Hockett, 1950:261). It is necessary, then, to identify those sounds of the target language – the core sounds (Jenkins, 2000), that do need to be mastered in order to be understood while speaking; moreover, depending on the native language of the students, it important to determine which core sounds do not occur in the L1, so as to focus on those phonemes required for articulatory and listening training.

In order to master the FL sounds that may alter comprehensibility of meaning, learners need a set of motor skills exercises that start by teaching them what is universally necessary or easy and then develop progressively; the phonological learning process must be thoroughly divided into steps, according to the different level of language proficiency, so that every new sound will be properly acquired and the articulatory effort to produce it will become easier and more natural. This step-by-step progression in pronunciation learning necessarily requires the presence of a *mentor* who can guide learners in shaping their study and making improvements. In addition, the capacity to hear the phonemes that characterise the FL is crucial. In fact, as we get used to pronouncing the FL core sounds correctly, "the necessary filtering and sorting apparatus is built into the parts of the nervous system which handle incoming stimuli from the ear, and slowly but surely we begin to hear the relevant and ignore the irrelevant" (Hockett, 1950:165). Learners also need to be trained to hear sounds according to the target language phonological system, not that of their L1 – the development of listening skills will necessarily and positively influence the acquisition of the motor skills required to produce the phonemes correctly.

The core sounds. As already mentioned, motor and listening skills training needs to be focused on those specific phonemes that are relevant for intelligibility as mastering these may be problematic if they are not present in the variables of learners' L1 phonological system. For instance, Jenkins (2000, 2002) elaborates the *Lingua Franca Core* which reduces pronunciation training to a list of more teachable and learnable core

sounds that EFL learners, from different L1s, must acquire to gain intelligibility. In contrast to current pronunciation research which emphasises 'top-down' dynamic approaches looking at language processing from the global/suprasegmental to the local/segmental, Jenkins (2000) stresses the role played by segmentals and downplays the importance of suprasegmentals in the acquisition of intelligible pronunciation. In particular, Jenkins emphasises that research supporting the top-down approach is based on native speaker listeners, who process speech through the top-down approach. In her studies based on NNSs-NNSs (from different L1s) interactions, she found in contrast that bottom-up strategies were used by participants to process language, most communicative breakdowns were due to segmental errors (eventually combined with suprasegmental errors), and that NNSs were not able to solve pronunciation problems by using contextual or other syntactic information. Although Jenkins' *Lingua Franca Core* presents some problematic aspects (for instance, she suggests replacing the English language sounds /θ/ and /ð/ with /f/ and /v/, but /v/ is already a problematic sound; she omits the sound /ʒ/; it is difficult to understand which vowel contrasts are included in the LFC list; her studies were conducted on a small group of very motivated international NNS learners, etc), it does shed light on two important aspects of teaching pronunciation: 1. pronunciation teaching needs to be teachable and learnable – the aims of the acquisition of the target language phonological system have to be tailored to learners' skills and abilities, and its main goal has to be intelligibility rather than a native-like accent so as to discourage demotivation and frustration in the event of the latter not being achieved; 2. a foreign accent is okay – learners have to decide on their pronunciation targets so they are free to maintain their foreign accent if they so want.

Familiarity and motivation. A wide range of listener factors, such as familiarity with foreign-accented speech, willingness to communicate, and attitudes toward speakers, contribute to the success of any communicative activity (Varonis, 1984; MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, & Donovan, 2003). Carey et al. label it "interlanguage phonology familiarity" (2011:204). Researchers have found that *familiarity* – the amount of contact one has had with a particular accent (Derwing & Munro, 1997), has a positive effect on speakers' intelligibility and listeners' comprehension. In fact, when listeners are familiar with a particular speech variety, their comprehension increases in spite of the speakers' accents (Gass & Varonis, 1984). Moreover, when language learners are familiar with a speaker's L1 because it is the same as their own (the shared L1 advantage; Harding, 2012), or because they have grown accustomed to the L1 through sufficient exposure (Gass & Varonis, 1984; Winke et al., 2013), they display better comprehension of the FL speech of speakers with those L1s. Moreover, time and exposure to the accent benefit the students: prolonged exposure to different accents helps learners better comprehend the language in general (Clarke & Garrett, 2004), and this is more reflective of the real-world spoken language where native speakers do not naturally speak the standard language. Gass and Varonis (1984) released the earliest study of familiarity. They argued that four types of familiarity contribute to comprehension: familiarity with topic of discourse; familiarity with non-native speech in general; familiarity with a particular non-native accent; and familiarity with a particular

non-native speaker. They conclude that 'familiarity of topic' is the greatest contributor of the four (see also Kennedy & Trofimovich, 2008). Motivation plays a fundamental role as well (Celce-Murcia and Goodwin, 1991; Stokes, 2001; Bongaerts, 1999). Moyer (2013) supports a holistic approach to spoken language acquisition, highlight various aspects that contribute to the formation of a foreign language accent and finding that the extent to which learners aim at achieving a native-like accent is partly related to their motivation, which plays a fundamental role in imitation of NSs. Moreover, Derwing & Munro (2013) claim the strength of foreign accents varies with L1, with the age when the FL learning starts, with L1-FL use and FL experience, and with motivational factors.

In the final analysis, intelligible and comprehensible pronunciation should be taught regardless of accent, which is an attribute of pronunciation, and acquiring a particular accent or not should be a learner's choice. Subjectivity as criterion for the acquisition of specific segmental and suprasegmental traits deeply deals with the idea of identity, which will be analysed in the following paragraphs.

1.4 Identity and foreign language learning

While FL research in the 1970s and 1980s was largely focused on motivation, recently researchers have addressed the investigation of the cultural, sociological, and historical contexts in which language learning happens and the impact that these factors have on the continuous negotiation and construction of learners' identities in relation to the characteristics of the learning context. The relationship between identity construction and negotiation, and language learning, is framed within the shift from a psycholinguistic approach to FL research to a more inclusive approach that focuses on the sociological and cultural dimensions of second and foreign language acquisition. The implication of identity negotiation and construction questions the idea of learners defined in binary terms (e.g. motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, etc.). In fact, this bi-dimensional definition of learners' identities and personalities drastically reduces both their complexity, since contrasting traits can coexist in an individual, and their changeability, inasmuch as individuals can change their attitudes across time and space. In order to understand the relationship between identity and language it is necessary to analyse the post-structuralist theories of language from which the Multiple-identity theory derives.

1.4.1   The post-structuralist approach to language

In the 1990s, post-structuralist theories of language received great attention. The studies conducted, among others, by Michel Bakhtin (1981, 1984), Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1991), Stuart Hall (1997) and Christine Weedon (1997) are certainly the most prominent in this field. These theories developed from the structuralist approach to language based on De Saussure's (1966) work. According to structuralist theories, the linguistic system determines and assures that each linguistic sign has an unequivocal meaning, and each linguistic community has common social practices that guarantee the value of language signs. In this respect,

while structuralists believed that language signs have fixed meanings and that the linguistic communities mutually agree on those meanings, post-structuralists claimed that "the signifying practices of a society are sites of struggle, and that linguistic communities are heterogeneous arenas characterised by conflicting claims to truth and power" (Norton, 2011:77). Thus, the post-structuralist approach sees language not as a neutral means of communication, but as a mean of communication to be "understood with reference to its social meaning, in a frequently inequitable world" (Norton, 2011:82). Since the value of speech is determined by relationships of power that are established between the individuals of each community, power is the social factor that decides and defines the role of subjects in their communities (Norton, 2011). There are three important post-structuralist concepts that need to be discussed: the terms 'subject' and 'subjectivity', the power to impose reception and the notion of cultural capital.

Subject and subjectivity. Weedon's (1997) notion of *subject* and *subjectivity* was particularly influential both in the educational field for the theorisation of identity and in post-structuralist feminism for the definition of subjectivity. Weedon's explanation of the two terms differs from their humanist definition. While the humanist concept of the individual presumed that every person has a defined, fixed and unique essence (i.e. introvert/extrovert; motivated/unmotivated; field dependent/field independent), Weedon (1997) defined individuals as multiple, non-unitary and changing over time. Moreover, Weedon's post-structuralist view defines subjectivity and language as "mutually constitutive" (Norton, 2009:2). In fact, according to Weedon, it is by means of language that a person negotiates his/her subjectivity "within and across a range of sites at different points in time" (Norton, 2009:2). Furthermore, "it is through language that a person gains access to - or is denied access to – powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak" (Norton, 2009:2).

The power to impose reception. Bourdieu's notion of "the power to impose reception" (1977:75) concerns a subject's right to speak and to be listened to. For the theorisation of this concept, Bourdieu started from linguists' assumption that during a communicative exchange those who speak regard those who listen as worthy of listening and those who listen regard those who speak as worthy of speaking (Norton, 2009). Bourdieu sharply criticised this position as it takes the mutual recognition of communicative worth and symbolic power between interlocutors for granted; instead, he suggested that this assumption should be questioned and that other conditions for the establishment of communication should be investigated. In fact, he claimed that the value of utterance could not be understood separately from the subjects involved in the communication, and that the subjects could not be understood separately from the social community in which they interact. According to Bourdieu, every time individuals speak, they negotiate and re-shape their identity in relation to their larger network of social and power relationships. Thus, identity categories such as gender, ethnicity, social class and other social features are involved in this continuous process of identity negotiation.

The notion of cultural capital. Bourdieu's (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1985) notion of *cultural capital* refers to individuals' knowledge and skills that favour them in the achievement of higher social status. Bourdieu identified three types of this capital. The first is *embodied cultural capital* that includes both knowledge actively gained, and knowledge passively inherited from society and cultural tradition; for instance, this is the case with linguistic cultural capital – that is, mastery of the community's language. This kind of cultural capital is not directly imparted, but gradually acquired by the individual in the form of habits. The second type is *objectified cultural capital* that consists of the individual's goods (e.g. works of art, scientific instruments, etc.) which can be directly passed on either for economic profit or to facilitate the symbolic possession of the cultural capital. The object itself and its cultural meaning become the means through which the individual can actively acquire the conceptual and historical basis of the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1985). The third and last type of cultural capital is *institutionalised cultural capital* and is the formal recognition of an individual's cultural capital by institutions (e.g. academic and professional qualifications and rewards, etc.). Particularly in the job market, the recognition by institutions of one's cultural capital is fundamental to its transformation into economic capital, i.e. "a practical solution with which the seller can describe his/her cultural capital to the buyer" (Bourdieu, 1986:47).

The aforementioned concepts of subject/subjectivity and power to impose reception are helpful in order to better understand the continuous negotiation of learners' identities, which happens mainly through the language that they speak, and the learners' social role in the specific communicative and socio-cultural contexts in which they interact with others by means of the target language. Moreover, if we apply the notion of cultural capital to foreign language learning and, in particular, to the higher social status/employment benefits deriving from mastering a FL in all its linguistic aspects, we could support the importance of including systematically and appropriately the training of segmentals and suprasegmentals in order to help learners to achieve a higher level of language proficiency and awareness (see paragraph 4.3.2).

1.4.2 The Acculturation Model of SLA by Schumann

While the post-structuralist approach mainly concerned individuals and their identities as the principal variables influencing the language learning process, other theories focused instead on social and cultural variables, as outlined in the previous paragraph. Among language learning theories based on social and cultural variables, the Acculturation Model proposed by Schumann (1978) is of great interest. Schumann's model is focused on the social differences between the language learners' group and the target language group (Schumann, 1976). Schumann argued that language learning's outcomes mainly depend on the cultural and social gap that exists between the two groups. In fact, on the one hand, when there is a negligible gap between the two groups, this social affinity facilitates the acculturation of the language-learning group into the target language group, in this way enhancing language acquisition. On the other

hand, when there is great social and cultural distance between the two groups, the process of acculturation slows down and language learners will not become proficient speakers of the target language. The Acculturation Model highlights the importance of social and cultural dissimilarities and their negative influence on the language learning process and learners' interaction with members of the target language group.

1.4.3   Norton's Multiple-Identity Theory

Drawing upon the three post-structuralist concepts already discussed in this chapter - subject and subjectivity, the power to impose reception and the cultural capital elaborated by Weedon (1997) and Bourdieu (1991), Norton's (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 1997; Norton, 2000, 2013) theorisation of identity is considered a milestone in language learning research. Norton theorised and demonstrated how learners ceaselessly construct and negotiate their identities by mean of the language they speak and how they try to position themselves and their interlocutors as legitimate speakers and listeners. In particular, Norton combined social identity and language learning and attempted to work out their close relationship by investigating five areas of research: *identity and investment, identity and imagined communities, identity categories and educational change, identity and literacy,* and *identity and resistance.*

Identity and investment. The relationship between identity and investment was firstly theorised by Norton in her research with immigrant women in Canada (Norton, 2000; Norton Pierce, 1995). Norton realised that the fundamentals of the research previously conducted in FL motivation concerned motivation as a personal trait of the language learner and that learners who failed to learn the second/foreign language were consequently disinterested in the learning process and so unmotivated (Schumann, 1986). Moreover, Norton noticed that most theories up to then failed to consider the power relationship between the target language's learners and native speakers. From data analysis of her studies, Norton concluded that "high levels of motivation did not necessarily translate into good language learning, and that unequal relations of power between language learners and target language speakers was a common theme in the data" (Norton, 2013:6). She therefore developed the notion of *investment* to include the two aspects not sufficiently analysed by antecedent FL motivation research. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977, 1991) cultural capital, Norton's notion of *investment* regards the social and historical relationship that learners construct with the target language and their desire to learn and practise it; learners' investment in the target language is directly associated to the acquisition of symbolic and material goods that is necessary to increase their cultural capital (Norton, 1995). Moreover, Norton's notion of investment deals scrupulously with learners' identity which is perceived as mutual across time and space and continuously negotiated through social interactions. Accordingly, while motivation is traditionally defined and analysed in psychological terms (Dörnyei, 2001), *investment* is primarily a sociological construct which attempts to connect "learners' desire and commitment in learning the target language and their changing identity" (Norton & Toohey, 2011:420).

Identity and imagined communities. Imagined communities represent learners' mental idea of social communities in which they might enhance their identity by means of the target language and their investment in the learning process. On the basis of the works of Lave and Wenger (1991), Wenger (1998), and Anderson (1991), Norton argued that all learners of the class community are new to the target community's linguistic and social practices; in this respect, two questions arise: which community practices do the learners want to learn? and what is a community for them? Norton answered that "in many language classrooms, the community may be, to some extent, a reconstruction of past communities and historically constituted relationships, but also a community of the imagination - a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future" (Norton, 2009:6). Moreover, she stated that learners generally have different degrees of investment in different members of the target community and that the members with the highest degrees of investment from the learner are those who give access to the imagined community. From an educational point of view, Norton highlighted that the question of investment brings a need for educators to understand the effects it has on learners' engagement in both the learning process going on in the class community and that in the target community. In the end, Norton claimed, "an imagined community assumes an imagined identity, and a learner's investment in the target language must be understood within this context" (Norton, 2009:6).

Identity categories and educational change. An important area of research is the connection between identity categories, such as gender, ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation, and their effects on the language learning process. Research in this area does not define these identity categories as identity variables, but rather "as sets of relationships that are socially and historically constructed within particular relations of power" (Norton, 2009:7). Many studies have been conducted, especially in immigration contexts, in different areas of the world. One group of studies regarding race and ethnicity (Ibrahim, 1999; Taylor, 2004; Kubota, 2004) highlights how these two identity categories deeply influence certain aspects of language acquisition such as, for example, the language variants spoken by second/foreign language learners (Black Stylized English, Ibrahim, 1999) or the perception of learners' gender in relation to the race or ethnicity they belong to (Taylor, 2004). Other studies have investigated the impact that learners' sexual orientation may have on both the language learning process and class relations (King, 2008, Moffatt and Norton, 2008, and Nelson, 2009). In particular, Norton emphasised the positive effects of Nelson's teaching method of inclusion. In fact, instead of naturalising certain sexual behaviours (mostly heterosexuality), Nelson suggested an inclusive approach to language teaching which could take the experiences of gay, lesbian, and transgender learners into the classroom curriculum and use them as examples.

Identity and literacy. Recently many researchers have investigated the connection between identity and investment in the language learning process, and learners' engagement with oral, written, and multimodal texts. In fact, learning practices involving both the comprehension and the constructions of different kinds of texts have much to do with learners' amount of investment in the activity and with their constant

negotiation of identity during the language learning process (Martin-Jones, 2000; Prinsloo and Baynham, 2008; Hornberger, 2008). Furthermore, as Kintsch (Kintsch and Van Dijk, 1983; Kintsch, 1998) claimed in analysis of the reading process, text comprehension is a mental representation of the content of the text itself, or situation model (Kintsch, 1998). The situation model is based on two main processes: first, the learner creates a mental representation of the literal meaning of the text; secondly, the learner integrates the literal meaning of the text with his/her previous acknowledgements (McNamara and Magliano, 2009; Zwaan and Singer, 2003). This theory primarily refers to written text and the reading process, but it can be applied to any kind of text. In particular, the act of text understanding as a process mediated by the individual's previous knowledge is of great interest as it directly links comprehension of what is said, and of the world in general, to the personal understanding of it achieved by the learner. Consequently, individuals and their identities play a fundamental role in both the reception and construction of text meaning. Thus, both pronunciation and mental reading could be included in the aforementioned theory.

Identity and resistance. The notion of *resistance* has received great attention in recent language learning research (Canagarajah, 2004; McKinney and van Pletzen, 2004; Talmy, 2008). It refers to the capacity of learners to resist undesirable and unfavourable categorisations or positions imposed by society, history, or culture (Norton, 2009). Canagarajah (2004) investigated the strategies adopted by learners to maintain their membership in the target communities while still learning the second/foreign language. The results of this study suggested the notion of pedagogical safe houses in language classes to resist the identity imposed on learners by the target community and to negotiate their own identities as members of different communities during the language learning process. McKinney and van Pletzen's (2004) work focused on the role historically and socially attributed to white Afrikaners in South Africa during the apartheid era. In particular, the researchers examined possible ways in which students' resistance to the identity imposed on them by the curriculum materials could be used in an instructive way. Accordingly, McKinney and van Pletzen tried "to create discursive spaces in which both they and the students could explore the many private and political processes through which identities are constructed. In doing so, they re-conceptualised students' resistance more productively as a meaning-making activity which offers powerful teaching moments" (Norton, 2009:9). Talmy (2008) investigated ESL learners in a Hawaiian high school and their resistance to the conduct expected by the school. Talmy mainly noted that the learners' resistant behaviour led to two pedagogical responses: on the one hand, teachers changed their teaching method as a consequence of students' resistance; on the other, students' attitude of opposition towards the class turned the course into "an easy, academically inconsequential program that did little to meet their FL learning or educational needs" (Talmy, 2008:639). The concept of the self was further investigated by psychology but has traditionally played an important role in FL research, too, as many researchers have always believed in the FL influencing role upon the learner's identity (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011:79). In particular, Dörnyei (2001; Dörnyei 2009; Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011) emphasised the role of possible selves, elaborating a theory

called Possible Selves Theory. The possible selves are the future positive and negative images of learners elaborated by them and these include what they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming. Because of their relationship with the learners' perceptions of themselves in the future, the possible selves greatly affect FL motivation, both positively and negatively. The innovative view proposed by Dörnyei's Possible Selves Theory is the attention given to the role of identity during the language learning process. The mental image of the future self helps learners to adjust and negotiate their current identity in order to realise concretely the future idealised representation of themselves. Consequently, the idea of identity as a powerful learning means through which it is possible to achieve the positive idealisation of oneself should be further investigated and linked to possible pedagogical strategies.

1.4.4   Norton's Classroom-Based Social Research

Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of 'the right to speak', Norton (1995) sought to examine the pedagogical strategies that might help students claim the right to speak outside the classroom. She developed Classroom-Based Social Research (CBSR), i.e. "collaborative research that is carried out by language learners in their local communities with the active guidance and support of the language teacher. In many ways, language learners become ethnographers in their local communities" (Norton, 1995:26). CBSR includes five main objectives and methodologies with the purpose of enhancing language learning and social interaction with native speakers: 1. investigative opportunities to interact with target language speakers; 2. reflect critically on engagement with target language speakers; 3. reflect on observations in diaries or journals; 4. pay attention to and record unusual events; 5. compare data with fellow students and researchers (Norton, 1995). Norton's CBSR has three main goals. First, students can use their social identities to improve their language skills and claim their right to speak outside the classroom. Secondly, learners can understand how social opportunities for interaction are constructed and how they can improve their engagement with native speakers. Thirdly, language teachers can understand the link between their students' language progress and investment in the learning process. Cooperative language learning is a highly effective classroom strategy to increase motivation and to strengthen the students-teachers' and peers' cohesiveness (Dörnyei, 1997). There is wide agreement on the idea of the classroom as a "small culture" (Holliday, 1999:237), a restricted portion of society in which social rules, common beliefs and interaction among the subjects all contribute to the positive or negative outcomes of the classroom goal, that is the learning process. Moreover, Pontecorvo (2000) depicted the classroom as a multi-headed body where each individual cooperates with the other members in order to achieve knowledge in a positive and relaxed atmosphere. Therefore, the satisfaction and the motivation of each learner will necessarily influence other learners. Cooperative language learning is traditionally realised through different classroom-related activities. First, students generally work in small groups which change according to the different types of activities and goals. Secondly, group members are motivated to guarantee the involvement of peers in the achievement of goals,

so that a strong collaborative attitude is generated. Thirdly, in a cooperative language learning class, the evaluation and reward of the groups' achievements are more important than the evaluation and reward of individual achievements.

1.5 Defining identity in foreign language learning

1.5.1 Multiple-Identity Theory, Motivation and Demotivation

Demotivation can depend on the internal factors, such as the psychology of the learner, and it can be overcome through the pedagogical and psychological ways proposed by teachers in order to regain motivation. In this respect, remotivation strategies might link to Norton's Multiple-Identity Theory. Out of the possible strategies to overcome demotivation, researchers examined learners' self-regulatory capacities, in other words how learners cope with positive and negative academic situations and how they control their affective responses to the language learning process (Falout et al, 2009), and personal resourcefulness and initiative (Falout, 2012), i.e. learners' ability to regenerate the motivation toward language acquisition within themselves. These inner processes to reconstruct motivation are deeply associated with learners' emotional and psychological dimension, in other words with their personal identity. The continuous reconstruction and negotiation of identity that naturally occurs within the language learning process, as demonstrated by Norton (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 1997; Norton, 2000, 2013), might then be a plausible strategy that learners can adopt in order to contrast demotivation factors, both external and internal. Since identity is mutual and changing over time and space, its construction and negotiation allows students to adjust their investment in the language learning process according to the positive and negative factors that inevitably occur during the acquisition process. Learners are thus able to temporarily increase or reduce their investment in the learning process based on situational factors (e.g. the teacher, the learning situation, the class, the course, their affective status, etc.), optimising the positive effects of motives while minimising the negative effects of demotives. Moreover, the connection between identity and resistance hypothesised by Norton (1995) is particularly relevant in this regard. In fact, without the ability to reconstruct and renegotiate identity, learners' resistance to identity historically, socially, and culturally imposed on them could turn into demotivation. The undesirable and unfavourable situation in which learners are pressurised by external factors can be reversed by the unfixed and flexible nature of identity.

1.5.2 Suggestopedia in second and foreign language teaching

In the 1960s, Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychotherapist and physician, developed a new method as an alternative to traditional teaching strategies. It soon became known as suggestopedia or Lozanov's method. Even though suggestopedic teaching strategies were also applied to the teaching of other subjects in Bulgarian schools and institutions, the method mainly addresses the teaching of foreign Western languages. Suggestopedia began to receive attention in Western countries in the 1970s when many researchers,

especially from the United States of America, decided to go to the Institute of Suggestology, in Sofia, Bulgaria, to observe and study the practical pedagogical implications of the use of the new teaching methodology elaborated by Dr Lozanov and his colleagues. From these studies, some variants were proposed in order to adapt Lozanov's method to Western students and teaching environments. For the research purposes of this thesis, only specific aspects suggested by Lozanov's method have been adopted and included among the teaching activities offered in the experimental phases of this research project. After a brief explanation of the cognitive and pedagogical principles on which Suggestopedia is based and of the suggestopedic cycle, the suggestopedic aspects also adopted in the present research will be pointed out.

The principle on which Lozanov based his new teaching method is the idea that the conscious mind severely limits knowledge and that only the liberation of the subconscious can lead to real learning. In fact, Lozanov stated that (as quoted in G. Wheeler, 2013):

"The main obstacle encountered in teaching is memorisation, automation and the assimilation of the material presented. Teaching methods have so far been in accordance with the accepted "restricted" capacities of the human personality[…]. One of the most important tasks of suggestopedia has been to free, to suggest and to explain to all students that human capacities are much greater than expected, and to provide liberating-stimulating methods to bring these locked-up human resources into play…It must be underlined, however, that suggestopedia affects not only the memory but the whole personality – its interests, perceptions, creativity, moral development, etc" (G. Wheeler, 2013:189).

Lozanov suggested there was an urgent need to use his new teaching method – suggestopedia, in order to free all the great capacities that our mind is capable of. The key to achieve this is the combination of yoga relaxation strategies with the Mauger oral method which make it necessary to shape the learning environment in accordance with new suggestopedic principles. Consequently, the classroom itself appears unlike any other: great attention is paid to making it look attractive and to the relaxed atmosphere that characterises the classes; soft lighting and *chaises longues,* disposed in an open circle, are used for yogic relaxation; and groups of a maximum of 12 students are allowed (6 males and 6 females). Moreover, classical and baroque music plays while students listen to the teacher read texts and dialogues while matching the rhythm of their voice to the background music. The combination of all these elements, Lozanov claims, leads to a faster acquisition of the target language, with a specific vocabulary memorisation focus. This is the result of the "suggestive state of mind" (Moore, 1992:734), reached through meditation and relaxation, that turns the learners into super-learners thanks to the activation of the subconscious capabilities of their minds. The hyper-receptive condition in which the learner learns the foreign language is achieved through the interaction of "physical and mental factors" (G.Wheeler, 2013:189), of "the logical left side of the brain with the creative right side" (Yoshikawa, 1982:393). Moreover, "suggestopedia also

acknowledges that learning involves both conscious and unconscious functions of the learner. What is remembered is not necessarily what is memorized consciously" (Yoshikawa, 1982:393-394). Suggestopedia provides a month of intensive classes that last four hours per day for six days per week. Each class comprises the three parts of the 'suggestopedic cycle': deciphering, sèance (or concert session) and elaboration.

Deciphering. During this first phase of the lesson, the previous day's material is revised using the Mauger method, also known as the direct method, which includes the use of teacher-students or student-student conversations, sketches, games, and plays. The use of traditional exercises and activities (e.g. language laboratories, rigid structural exercises, mechanical repetition of linguistic patterns, etc.) is avoided. Error correction plays a fundamental role in suggestopedia, but it must be done in a positive and indirect way in order to not embarrass the student. Therefore, "the teacher either uses the correct form in another context or devises a situation for another student to give the proper language" (G. Wheeler, 2013:190). At the beginning of the course the teacher also gives each student another identity, a sort of role to play during the lessons, in order to overcome the initial inhibitions and the emotional barriers that may affect learning outcomes. The biographies usually include aspects of the foreign language being studied that the learners find difficult to master – for instance, complicated phonetic patterners are included in the new role so that students are forced to memorise and focus on the correct pronunciation of sounds that may not occur in their native language, but they can do this in a humanistic context. After this first part, the new material is presented in rather traditionally. New grammar rules and vocabulary are introduced by means of the students' mother-tongue and text translations are presented in a parallel column. The new materials mainly consist of dialogues based on real life and practical situations. Suggestopedia highlights the need to use texts which are interesting and relevant in order to motivate the students to remember and use the language that they have learnt in class in real communicative exchanges. For this reason, some of the types of activities included in this first part of the suggestopedic cycle have been included among the activities offered during the experimental phases of this research (for instance, sketches, games and plays, were adopted in the forms of loops and role-plays) (see Chapter 3). Moreover, the suggestopedic use of activities which encouraged students to practise specific phonetic patterns was applied to the use of loops. In fact, students were required to create loops by using specific Italian segmental and suprasegmental traits in order to train them. Finally, the error correction strategy suggested by Lozanov's method was also used in this research. Students' pronunciation inaccuracies were not pointed out explicitly as errors; they were implicitly highlighted the through the teacher' repetition of the students' chunks of speech, and extra exercises regarding the most frequent unmastered segmental and suprasegmental traits.

Sèance (or concert session). In this second phase, the memorisation of the new content is helped through the activation of the subconscious. Sèance is divided into two parts: active and passive, "with active or outward concentration on the material preceding the rest and relaxation of passive meditation on the text"

(Bancroft, 1978:170). During the active part of the sèance, the students maintain relaxation postures and breathing rhythm while the teacher reads the newly introduced materials with different intonations, voice levels and pitch changes – all these variations are not directly related to the meaning of the text. In this way the students' breathing rhythm matches both the teacher's reading of the material and the classical/baroque music rhythm that plays in the background. The combination of the different musical patterns and the teacher's reading contribute to the relaxation of the students' bodies, which inevitably decreases the fatigue and tension normally involved in the learning process and represents a trigger for the memorisation of the relevant grammatical constructions and lexicon covered during the class. Also this second phase of the suggestopedic cycle highlights aspects which have been included, although not tested, in this research. The use of music to teach rhythm, and other suprasegmental features, will be further discussed through a number of activities suggested in Chapter 4, in which songs are used in order to train specific pronunciation and intonation traits, but also to enhance students' mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and to improve their cultural awareness.

Elaboration. In this last phase are included follow-up activities such as imitation of the text, role-play, games, and teacher-students or student-student conversations (these types of activities have been adopted and included in the experimental phases, which will be further analysed in Chapter 3). Students are required to re-read the dialogue presented in class before going to bed and just after they wake up, and this is basically the only kind of homework set. Other forms of self-study are strongly discouraged.

Another important aspect to highlight in analysis of suggestopedia is the role of teachers and their relationship with students. Lozanov's method demands long and specific training for teachers which includes the study of a variety of disciplines including acting and performing – they are especially essential given the modulation of the voice, intonation and pitch needed to 'perform' texts during the sèance phase. This last aspect recalls the urgency for a more regular inclusion of pronunciation and intonation training in Modern Languages curricula. This would refer, on the one hand, to a more systematic use of teaching materials and activities which aim to practise and develop students' phonological awareness and skills; on the other hand, this would also allude to a more appropriate phonological training for language instructors, which comprises both theoretical knowledge of the main approaches to phonological education, and practical experiences that could develop their teaching skills and expertise.

The investigations and practical teaching activities aiming to involve the learners' personal traits as valuable resources to learn effectively are important aspects which are considered in my study in order to better and fully evaluate the role that subjectivity plays in pronunciation and intonation training specifically (Chapter 3). As discussed in this chapter, phonological traits do help interlocutors in framing their and others' personality and backgrounds. Moreover, the results of the questionnaires for students and native speakers (Chapter 5) will provide a more detailed insight into the role of personal phonological traits in

communicative exchanges. In this chapter I have discussed pronunciation, intonation and accent and the theories elaborated by scholars during the past decades regarding identity in foreign language learning processes. The phonological features of a language are not solely linguistic, and therefore should be included among the linguistic skills that foreign language learners must acquire, but also pertain to learners' identity dimension. Mindful of these theoretical and affective aspects, my study aims to combine them together in order to provide students, having different levels of language proficiency, with appropriate and effective teaching materials for the acquisition of an adequate phonological awareness and skills. In the next chapter how pronunciation and intonation are taught nowadays in different learning contexts and through a variety of teaching tools will be discussed and analysed.

Chapter 2

How pronunciation and intonation are taught nowadays in virtual foreign language learning environments and textbooks

In this chapter, I review and compare the activities offered by pronunciation apps for English and Italian; I provide an analysis of the pronunciation and intonation sections in textbooks commonly used for teaching Italian as a foreign language; and I analyse how pronunciation and intonation are addressed in standardised proficiency tests for English and Italian.

Virtual learning environments (VLE) are defined as "virtual spaces that teachers and students can use to present and share resources and activities and interact with one another" and they "can be used to teach a complete online course or as a supporting feature for face-to-face courses" (Herrera Mosquera, 2017:481). The implementation of technology in FL education can be traced back to the 1970s with the computer-assisted language learning (CALL) gained momentum (for a literary review see Herrera Mosquera, 2017); despite the incremented use and innovation of VLEs, the development of oral skills still raises issues related to the acquisition of foreign languages in distance learning contexts. First, as pointed out by Jordano de la Torre (2011), the vast majority of foreign language virtual courses focus on grammar, writing and listening skills, as oral skills are generally considered as the most difficult to teach, practise and assess in virtual learning contexts (Levy and Stockwell, 2006). Therefore, the characteristics of VLE demand new approaches in order to achieve successful outcomes in the acquisition of oral skills during the foreign language acquisition process. This issue has been partially solved by recent studies derived from the online-only switch of FL classes forced by the COVID-19 pandemic (Doludenko, 2021; Posso Pacheco, 2022; Syafiq et al., 2021; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Akhter, 2020); however, these studies do not specifically concern the teaching of Italian as FL. Thus, the present study is significant as it offers a clear view on the training of Italian pronunciation and intonation in FL learning contexts, and it provides innovative teaching materials for Italian language instructors.

The second issue relates to the psychological and communicational dimensions of language acquisition. In fact, as the transactional distance theory (Moore, 1993) suggests, in VLE the idea of distance does not only refer to geographical distance, but it also deals with "the interactions between the teacher and the learner, the environment and the behaviors" (Herrera Díaz & Darlene González Miy, 2017:77). This psychological and communicational distance, referred to as transactional distance and derived from the virtual dimension of the learning environment, greatly affects both the teachers and the learners by creating a gap between them which could lead to confusion and instability (Moore, 1993), and which requires specific teaching strategies to be overcome (Herrera Díaz & Darlene González Miy, 2017). The third issue deals with constructivism (Ausubel, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivist theories posit that knowledge is constructed on the learners' personal experience and interactions. Therefore, these principles lead to the

elaboration of a student-centred approach in which teachers are mentors who guide the learners by providing them with the necessary conditions for an interactive and active learning experience, and the learners are expected to determine their learning process by taking the responsibility and ownership of their learning process. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that the social dimension of the learning process is fundamental in the acquisition process as it is "the social component that transforms the personal experiences of the learner and leads to a reorganization of mental structures" (Herrera Díaz & Darlene González Miy, 2017:77). In fact, as claimed by Herrera Díaz & Darlene González Miy:

"When learners are trying to learn a new element of the target language, they often compare it to the repertoire they have already learned, then make a hypothetical plan and try it. If such hypothesis is correct, they accept or reject it and try a new one. In this trial-and-error exercise, grammatical rules are learned individually, but when learners take this knowledge to a social environment of exchange, internalization of knowledge takes place and conducts to a reorganization of thoughts" (Herrera Díaz & Darlene González Miy, 2017:77).

Reorganisation of thoughts is the process which leads to meaningful learning. In fact, as Ausubel (1983) suggested, meaningful learning does not derive only by associating the new information received with the knowledge that the learners already have, but is based on interaction processes, i.e. the interaction that occurs between previous and new knowledge, and which inevitably leads to the modification of the learners' cognitive structures (Herrera Díaz & Darlene González Miy, 2017). A possible solution to the issues mentioned above could be the use of blended learning. In fact, as blended learning "is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences" (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004:96), it can offer the most effective teaching aspects of traditional face-to-face or synchronous teaching, such as interaction and real personal experiences, and the teaching potential of online or asynchronous teaching, such as autonomy and flexibility (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Fratter & Jafrancesco, 2015). In particular, blended learning may be a useful teaching strategy to 1. reduce teaching and marking issues specifically related to online-only provision (for instance, the lack of person interactions between learners/peers and learners/teachers; the interference during online oral-aural assessments, etc.); 2. overcome the psychological and communicational gaps that may emerge in virtual learning environments; and 3. enhance the positive influence of the social dimension of learning (i.e. interactive activities) on the outcomes of the foreign language acquisition. Furthermore, blended learning may provide the right tools to teach oral skills such as pronunciation and intonation. In fact, while explanations and instruction on the articulation of segmental and suprasegmental features can be delivered by the language tutor during classroom-based or online-guided hours, the students may use technological devices, such as online apps, to practise and improve their phonological competence at their own pace. Primarily, the use of apps or institutionalised digital technology designed for the acquisition of oral skills can be a valid support to the students' autonomous learning. In fact, the possibility to practise and check the articulation of specific

sounds, both individually or in word-sentence contexts, and to receive immediate feedback on their oral performance could significantly help the learners to achieve phonological competence.

2.1 English pronunciation and intonation mobile apps

In order to define more clearly the present status of mobile apps specifically designed for the training of phonemes, I have tested seven free mobile apps which aim to improve learners' pronunciation in English, and I have divided them into four groups, according to the sections and exercises offered. The selection of the seven apps analysed is based on the activities offered which are exclusively focused on the training of learners' pronunciation and intonation, and which, differently from other online apps, do not include exercises which aim to the acquisition of other linguistic skills. Moreover, among the apps specifically devised for the learning of segmental and suprasegmental skills, the selected apps are the most used and known by learners of English as FL (Baldissera & Tumolo, 2021).

2.1.1 Interactive English phonetic charts: Sounds Right and Sounds of Speech

Sounds Right, designed by the British Council, and *Sounds of Speech*, created by The University of Iowa, provide interactive phonetic charts which comprise individual vowels, diphthongs, individual consonants, and groups of consonants. By simply tapping the icon correspondent to a specific sound, the users can listen to its correct pronunciation. Moreover, *Sounds of Speech* also provides, for each phoneme in the English alphabet, three additional supporting tools: 1. animations representing the human articulation system and showing which facial parts are involved and their position in the correct articulation of a particular sound; 2. videos in which a native speaker shows the movements of the articulation system during the performance of sounds; 3. detailed annotations on the positions of the different parts of the articulation system during the performance. Despite the variety of tools offered by Sounds Right and Sounds of Speech, these apps focus solely on the development and training of students' receptive skills. The lack of focus on the training of productive skills, through the implementation of specific devices (for instance, a voice recording tool which could provide feedback on the learners' phonological performances), greatly limits the potential of these learning supports.

2.1.2 The English IPA alphabet: Pronunroid

Pronunroid is an app which is entirely based on the use of the IPA alphabet for the acquisition of the correct pronunciation of individual sounds or groups of sounds in the English language. The app presents five main options. The first option is 'look up word' which allows the users to look up a word by using Google Text-to-speech Engine or the mobile phone text-to-speech engine. The users can type a word, look at its IPA

transcription and listen to its pronunciation. The three main options are 'guess symbol', 'guess pronunciation' and 'guess word'. These three options are based on the same principle, i.e. using the IPA alphabet to guess and receive a score for every correctly guessed IPA symbol, IPA transcription of the pronunciation and Roman letters transcription of a word presented in its IPA version. The final option is called 'help' and provides information on the app, the scoring, the permissions, with answers to frequently asked questions. As already pointed out (paragraph 2.1.1), the lack of articulatory training and feedback on the learners' actual performance of specific sounds limit the implementation of this app in FL courses, as it does not provide either productive phonological activities or feedback on the students' performance. In this respect, the use of the online voice recording tool Vocaroo in my research (see Introduction and Chapter 3), provides a more concise offer to the training of both receptive and productive phonological skills.

2.1.3 Personalised English pronunciation and intonation programmes: Elsa Speak, Say It and Learn English

Elsa Speak creates a personalised programme based on the score that the users have received in the initial pronunciation test. A section called 'skills' has twenty-two sections, each named 'skill', which address specific individual sounds (i.e. schwa: /ə/) or groups of sounds (e.g. r sounds, nasals, liquids, etc.). By clicking on the different skill icons, the users can access activities at different levels which are linked to everyday topics (e.g. hobbies and free time, celebrations, friends, work, education, travel, etc.). The completion of the activities is assessed immediately and feedback on the user's performance is provided in the form of percentage and proficiency categories (i.e. beginners, intermediate, lower intermediate, intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced). The app also offers a 'topics' section in which users can find tips from pronunciation and intonation experts, or topic-related vocabulary (e.g. Vietnamese culture, Let's beat Coronavirus, High school, Working in a hotel, Intonation, Pick your answers: Interview, etc.). The dictionary section provides an immediate translation of the word selected and some tongue twisters. Finally, users can check their progress in the progress section, where the feedback on the individual sounds or groups of sounds attempted are presented.

Say It presents a list of English words. For each word, its IPA translation and a recording of its correct pronunciation are provided. After listening to the correct pronunciation of the word selected, users can record themselves and compare their performance to the recording. The app also offers a chart with the English vowels, diphthongs, and consonants in and users can listen to them just by clicking on the IPA symbols representing the phonemes.

Learn English gives users the opportunity to record themselves, receive immediate feedback, based on a five-stars score scale, and listen to their recordings to self-assess their performances. The app offers four formats to practise pronunciation and intonation: 1. 'lessons' – short dialogues in which users are asked to play a particular role, set in everyday life situations (e.g. Where are you from?, Do you speak English?,

Asking directions, When do you want to go?, etc.); 2. 'phrases' –users can listen to phrases commonly used in everyday language, they can record themselves and receive immediate feedback based on the five-stars score scale; 3. 'words' – the words are divided into eighteen categories based on different topics (e.g. greetings, travel/directions, numbers/money, time and dates, etc.) and, in this case as well, users can listen to the words, record themselves and receive feedback on their performance; 4. 'videos' – the videos cover the communicative situations already analysed and used in the other three formats, but in this case real people are used to show the non-verbal elements of communicative exchanges (e.g. gestures, facial expressions, etc.).

The tools provided by the three aforementioned apps represent a valid offer to train students' receptive and productive phonological skills. The use of these apps could be supported and encouraged by language instructors as part of learners' autonomous learning, while more curriculum-oriented activities, guided by language tutors, could be offered during communicative skills classes. Drawing from the possible implementation of these apps in the Modern Languages curriculum, in this research I have offered an integrated proposal in which culture-bonded materials, specifically designed for the development of Italian segmentals and suprasegmentals, are delivered through a free online voice recording tool (Vocaroo) can be used, in and out of class, in order to enhance students' phonological skills and awareness (Chapter 3).

2.2 Italian pronunciation and intonation mobile apps

Although I have only tested and included in this chapter seven mobile apps for the training of English pronunciation and intonation, the number of available digital supports for the training of English segmentals and suprasegmentals is considerable. On the contrary, mobile apps specifically designed to practise Italian pronunciation and intonation, or to train perceptive and articulatory skills, are quite limited. Out of those, I have tested and analysed four mobile apps: 1. Specific pronunciation and intonation training mobile apps, such as *Italian Pronunciation* and *Italian Pronunciation Trainer*; 2. Italian listening and speaking mobile apps, such as *Poro – Impara l'italiano* and *Learn Italian*. The selection of the apps to be included in my study was based on the activities offered and on the exclusive focus of the exercises implemented in the apps on the training of Italian segmentals and suprasegmentals. Moreover, their analysis was helpful in order to better define the gaps in pronunciation and intonation teaching and to devise materials which could represent a good educational strategy to fill them.

Italian pronunciation has four sections. The first section is a pronunciation guide, which provides information on six aspects of Italian pronunciation: 1. a general introduction to Italian pronunciation in which general characteristics are given (e.g. pronunciation is regular; Italian has sounds which are similar to English; almost every Italian sound matches the spelling, etc.); 2. the Italian vowels; 3. the Italian consonants; 4. the consonant diagraphs; 5. the double consonants; 6. phonetics. By activating either Google Text-to-speech Engine or the mobile Text-to-speech Engine, users can access the other three sections which

cover homophones (i.e. different spelling of words with the same pronunciation, such as *li/lì, ceco/cieco, anno/hanno,* etc.), words practice (i.e. users can type words and, by clicking a button, they can listen to the words/phrases pronunciation), and phrases and vocabulary (i.e. users can choose from a list of topics and can practise the most common words or phrases linked to the selected topic, for example: topic – bus station/ phrase – which bus do I take to get to the airport?, etc). The use of the contrastive method to highlight similar sounds which occur both in English and Italian is a valid way to enhance students' phonological awareness; moreover, the combination of tools and activities devised for the training of pronunciation, and exercises which enrich and contextualise vocabulary suggest the teaching validity and efficacy of integrating the teaching of segmental and suprasegmental traits and other language skills. These two aspects have been also included in the provision of the teaching materials devised in this study (Chapter 3).

Italian Pronunciation Trainer provides numerous recordings of phrases that users can listen to, pronounce by clicking on the specific icon, and check their meaning thanks to their translation. After pronouncing each phrase, users receive immediate and specific feedback (i.e. the letters of the phrase appear in red/target pronunciation, green/users' incorrect pronunciation, and black/users' correct pronunciation; how many letters have been pronounced incorrectly out of the total number of letters in the phrase; the percentage of the mispronounced sounds). Users are also able to set up a personal vocabulary and to search for and add words that they might be interested in. Also already mentioned in the analysis of *Italian pronunciation*, the combined training of pronunciation and intonation, and other language skills (for instance, vocabulary) is an encouraging element which supports a more appropriate and systematic inclusion of activities which can help students to improve their phonological awareness and skills. Moreover, in the case of *Italian Pronunciation Trainer,* users have the chance to reproduce phrases by recording themselves and to receive immediate feedback on their performance. This aspect helps to train both receptive and productive phonological skills, and the feedback provided will better define the phonological traits that users need to improve. The introduction of Vocaroo, in this research, as supporting device for the training and self-assessment of students' phonological performances aims to train receptive and productive skills, and to develop learners' phonological awareness through self-assessment and feedback provided by the language tutor.

2.2.1 Italian listening and speaking apps

Poro - Impara l'italiano provides 115 daily dialogs, a list of lessons with various topics (for instance, greeting, introduction, shopping, business conversation, family talks, etc.) to allow users to learn and practise, revise, and test their skills, and listen to and learn new vocabulary. Dialogues are recorded by Italian NSs, and the app provides: 1. the dialogue transcription; 2. the translation of each line into the users' L1; 3. the IPA transcription of the dialogue. Despite the variety of tasks offered in order to practise their listening skills and vocabulary, *Poro* does not provide tools or activities which could help users to acquire

productive oral communicative skills, among which pronunciation and intonation. Thus, in order to provide a more holistic language training, a voice recording tool should be implemented. By doing this, users will be able to autonomously train and enhance their productive skills. Moreover, the provision of an immediate feedback on the users' performances could be a valid tool to assess the progress and to define the linguistic aspects that users should improve. This could be particularly helpful since the learning of the TL will be done autonomously, without the guidance of a language tutor.

Learn Italian includes four sections which are particularly focused on training the users' listening skills. The first section is called 'Common sentences' and includes recordings of words and sentences related to different topics (i.e. greetings, general conversation, numbers, time and date, directions and places, transport, accommodation, eating out, shopping, colours, regions and towns, countries, tourist attractions, family, dating, emergency, feeling sick, tongue twisters). By tapping on one of the topics, users are able to access the section and listen to the recordings of words and sentences related to the topic selected. Each topic has five options, which are: 1. Transcription of the Italian words and sentences; 2. Translation of the Italian words and sentences into the users' native language; 3. IPA transcription of the Italian words and sentences; 4. Slow reading mode; 5. listening to a recording again and putting a list of words in the correct order. Each of these options can be activated or deactivated according to the users' needs. The second section is called 'Conversations' and is divided into four proficiency levels (Basic – 70 basic conversations for beginners, Elementary – 40 conversations about daily life for elementary learners, Intermediate – 40 conversations about communicating with people having close relationships in daily life, Advanced – 25 conversations about communicating with people in social life and at work) and a final unit which collects all lessons. The third section, 'Listening to Italian News', includes a number of Italian reports on different topics related to the current international situation (e.g. "Biodiversity loss make impact on humans first", "Winter draught in Romania. Risks for harvest and people's health", "More than 200,000 deaths in Italy due to Covid-19, Continue to control over the weekend", etc.). The last section is called 'Listening to Italian Short Stories' and gathers a series of very well-known stories from the Italian folklore heritage (e.g. The Horse and the Donkey, The Ugly Duckling, The Fox and the Grapes, etc.). As already stated for *Simply*, also in the tasks offered by *Learn Italian* lack in productive oral skills training. The teaching materials devised and tested in this study can be act as a valid support in order to provide a more effective and appropriate training of all language skills.

2.3   Review and analysis of the pronunciation and intonation exercises in the textbooks used to teach Italian as a foreign language

The presence of explanations and exercises specifically designed to train pronunciation and intonation in textbooks currently used to teach Italian as a foreign language is a valid sign of the importance of offering and delivering appropriate training to students to improve and enhance their ability to master segmental

and suprasegmental features of Italian. However, in his analysis of the textbooks used to teach Italian as a foreign language, Nuessel claimed that "pronunciation has sometimes received inadequate attention in many second-language primers" (1989:72). In fact, Nuessel's report on the status of textbooks used to tech Italian as a foreign language suggested two significant issues. First, the textbooks generally cover pronunciation and intonation issues rather superficially, proving the lack of specific guidelines and systematic practice in the teaching of these linguistic traits. For instance, within the textbooks, pronunciation and intonation exercises are usually placed in introductory chapters, an appendix or in small sections throughout the text. Secondly, the explanations and activities are generally focused on segmentals rather than on supragmentals (Mason, 1993). In her analyses of six primers commonly used in First-year Italian courses, Mason pointed out that, despite the textbooks authors' interest in covering pronunciation and intonation, "many books include pronunciation practice on lab programs, instructors do not always require students to use them" (1993:153). Therefore, many students had no access to specific materials and training unless their teachers provided them with extra exercises and explanations (Mason, 1993). Moreover, students may not have access to a lab/additional lab hours/ access to the lab materials.

Drawing on Mason's study on six major First-year Italian textbooks in the 1990s, in this chapter and in Appendix A, I will review and discuss the pronunciation and intonation-focused explanations and exercises offered by some textbooks widely used over the last fifteen years (2005-2020) to teach Italian as a foreign language to university students and adults. This review of textbooks aims to define the status of pronunciation and intonation training in textbooks commonly used to teach Italian as a foreign language at present, and to identify future directions for a more systematic, inclusive, and appropriate coverage of these skills in academic curricula, through both in and out-of-class practice. Therefore, the objectives of this analysis are: i) the identification of the theoretical approaches commonly used in the design of pronunciation and intonation activities offered by textbooks; ii) the types of exercises generally included in coursebooks to train Italian pronunciation and intonation at the different CEFRL proficiency levels; and iii) the evaluation of the textbooks' explanations and exercises provided for the training of Italian segmental and suprasegmental features.

2.3.1 *La lingua italiana per stranieri* (Guerra Edizioni)

This analysis covers the first volume, for beginners (A1) and intermediate (B1) levels, of the coursebook *La lingua italiana per stranieri*, published by Guerra Edizioni in 2014. The pronunciation and intonation exercises are mainly placed in the introductory unit of the textbook. The pronunciation and intonation section is called "Come si dice e come si scrive"[7] and it is divided into two main exercises: Exercise A, about the pronunciation of specific segmental features, and Exercise B, about suprasegmentals (especially intonation). An intonation exercise is present in each unit throughout the text. All the instructions are given

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7   "How to say it and how to write it".

in Italian as the textbook does not address a precise target group of non-native speakers. The exercises are based on both perceptive and articulatory approaches, which consist of the perception of sounds and their articulatory reproduction by learners.

2.3.1.1 Introductory unit
Exercise A

Exercise A has eight sub-exercises: the first two test the pronunciation of vowels and diphthongs (Image 1); the other six activities focus on the pronunciation of specific consonants or groups of consonants which can be particularly difficult to master by learners (Images 2, 3 and 4). The sub-exercises are not introduced by instructions, so it is presumed that the native-speaker teacher decides how to introduce the different sounds (for instance, by giving articulatory explanations, perceptual information, contrastive phonetic information, or sound-to-letter information) and how to practically do the exercises (for instance, the teacher pronounces the sounds and the learners repeat them; the learners guess the pronunciation of the sounds and then they check whether they are correct or not, helped by the teacher, etc.). Although the absence of precise instructions may be a sign of the lack of a systematic inclusion of pronunciation and intonation exercises within this Italian language coursebook, it also makes the practical execution of the activities more flexible by allowing the teacher to find the most appropriate way to deliver the pronunciation training. Following the principles of the communicative approach, within all the sub-exercises learners are required to practise specific sounds used in full sentences, each of which could be used in a broader communicative context. In fact, "Because real language is comprised of a series of words strung together, students need to maintain their pronunciation throughout phrases and not just individual words" (Mason, 1993:157). Moreover, in each sentence used in the segmental sub-exercises, rhythm, stress, juncture, and pitch are signalled by straight lines, curves and connecting signs. Together with the presence of a specific exercise for the practice of intonation, the inclusion of suprasegmental features in the pronunciation exercises section further highlights the strict relationship between pronunciation and intonation and the need to include both these aspects in the foreign language acquisition process. However, the total lack of instructions regarding how to read the lines limits the chances to correctly produce the suprasegmental features of the sentences included in the exercise. Moreover, the assessment of these activities could be time-consuming and challenging for language instructors, especially if they have never received adequate phonological training.

A. Esercizio di pronuncia

1. *Vocali*

"a" Carla ha una casa grande. L'amica di Maria non è italiana, è americana.

"e" Le penne sono verdi. Quella cornice è bella.

"i" Abbiamo pochi amici.

"o" La gonna di Sonia è rossa.

"u" Ugo è uno studente.

2. *Dittonghi* (ia - ei - oi - io - ua - ue - ui - uo)

Sei di qui?

Lei è francese?

Il tuo quaderno è qui.

Questo vestito è nuovo, quello là è vecchio.

Sono Suoi questi libri?

Noi siamo spagnoli, e voi?

Image 1 – The first two sub-exercises (vowels and diphthongs) of exercise A (2014:14).

3. *Le consonanti* "l" e "r"

La porta è grande.

Quelli sono il padre e la madre di Carla.

Queste parole sono difficili.

È un giornale americano.

4. *Doppie consonanti* ("cc", "ff", "ll", "nn", "mm", "ss", "tt")

Questa classe è bella.

Il mio letto è piccolo.

Gianni ha una macchina vecchia.

L'esercizio è difficile.

Mary è una studentessa americana.

Hai una penna rossa?

Penna è una parola femminile.

Gemma ha una gonna gialla.

Image 2 – Sub-exercises 3 and 4 about the pronunciation of liquid consonants and double consonants (2014:14).

5. "C" e "G" ("ca", "che", "chi", "ga", "go")

Franca è amica di Carla.

Questa gonna è di Gabriella.

Franz e Hans non sono tedeschi, ma svizzeri.

Nella nostra classe i banchi sono vecchi.

Chiara ha molte amiche.

6. "Č" e "Ğ" ("ce", "ci", "gia", "gio")

Avete una cornice gialla?

L'esercizio di francese è facile.

Questi giornali sono dei miei amici.

Image 3 – Sub-exercises 5 and 6 about the pronunciation of variations of consonants 'c' and 'g' depending on the following vowel or diphthong (2014:15).

7. "ci" / "chi" e "ce" / "che"

Chi sono Hans e Franz? Sono amici di Chiara.
Nella classe ci sono pochi banchi.
Le amiche di Vincenzo sono francesi.
La macchina è qui vicino.

8. "GN"

Il signor Mignini è di Bologna.
Quella signorina è spagnola.
La lavagna è vicino alla porta.

Image 4 – Sub-exercises 7 and 8 about the pronunciation of 'c' and 'g' when followed by 'i' and 'e', and the 'gn' group of consonants (2014:15).

Exercise B

Exercise B consists of ten phrases which could be plausible sentences in real communicative exchanges and which include all the vowels and consonants that have already been presented to the students in the sub-exercises of Exercise A. Even in this case, the phrases are marked by straight lines, curves and connecting signs which represent intonation, rhythm, stress, juncture and pitch (Image 5), and should guide learners during the reading process. As already mentioned for Exercise A, the lack of instructions on how to read the lines limits the chances to produce the correct intonation.

B. Esercizio di intonazione

Bella questa macchina! È tua?
Sì, è mia.
È difficile questo esercizio?
No, è molto facile.
Hans non è svizzero? No, è tedesco.
La casa di Carla è grande.
La casa di Carla è grande?
La casa di Carla è grande!
La casa di Carla non è grande.
La casa di Carla non è grande?

Image 5 – The lines, curves and connecting signs are used in Exercise B to guide and help learners produce the right intonation, rhythm, stress, juncture, and pitch while reading the phrases (2014:16).

2.3.1.2 Intonation exercises throughout the text

Following the introductory unit, each unit in the textbook features an intonation exercise (Images 7 and 9) which includes phrases taken from the text that generally introduces the unit (Images 6 and 8). Also in this case, the exercises consist of phrases which feature straight lines, curves and connecting signs representing the variations of the suprasegmental traits.

I *Se permette, mi presento*

🎧 Mi chiamo Jean Duvivier e sono un ragazzo francese. Vivo a Marsiglia, dove lavoro in un ufficio commerciale.
Ora sono in Italia per imparare l'italiano, una lingua utile per il mio lavoro.
Abito in una pensione del centro e dalla finestra della mia camera vedo la piazza principale della città; spesso guardo la gente che passa.
Per la pensione pago tanto, perciò cerco un appartamento in affitto a buon mercato.
Studio all'università e seguo un corso elementare. Quando la lezione finisce, torno a casa con una ragazza inglese e parliamo un po' in italiano).

prima unità
(unità numero uno)

Image 6 – The text introducing the first unit of the textbook (2014:17).

III *Ora ripetiamo insieme:*

– Sono in Italia per imparare l'italiano.

– L'italiano è utile per il mio lavoro.

– Abito in una piccola pensione del centro.

– Dalla finestra della mia camera vedo la piazza principale.

– Per la pensione pago tanto.

– All'università seguo un corso elementare.

Image 7 – The intonation exercise in the first unit of the textbook (2014:18).

I   *Paese che vai, problemi che trovi*

Sig. Miller : In questo paese non si può più vivere!
Sig. Rossi : Non esageriamo! La situazione non è certo
tranquilla, ma non è peggiore di quella di altri paesi.
Sig. Miller : Come fa a dirlo? Basta aprire il giornale:
attentati, scippi, rapine, omicidi, sequestri, atti di
terrorismo ...
Sig. Rossi : Intende dire che qui il sistema democratico non
funziona?
Sig. Miller : Appunto! In un paese dove ci sono più poveri
che ricchi non esiste una vera democrazia.
Sig. Rossi : Ma qui abbiamo l'arma dello sciopero per
protestare contro le ingiustizie sociali.
Sig. Miller : Infatti quasi ogni giorno c'è uno sciopero, ma in
effetti nulla cambia.
Sig. Rossi : Le conquiste in campo economico e sociale sono
lente: è più facile conservare che cambiare una
situazione.
Sig. Miller : Secondo me, nel mio paese i sindacati sono più
forti di quelli vostri.
Sig. Rossi : Forse perché sono d'accordo sulle rivendicazioni
da avanzare al governo.
Sig. Miller : Quali sono i motivi per cui si sciopera di più?
Sig. Rossi : I contratti di lavoro delle varie categorie, le
pensioni, l'aumento del salario e la riduzione
dell'orario di lavoro.
Sig. Miller : Se non sbaglio, c'è un numero altissimo di
disoccupati, soprattutto tra i giovani.
Sig. Rossi : In effetti il problema più grosso è la difesa del posto
di lavoro. Con le nuove tecnologie e con la crisi di
certi settori, c'è sempre minore bisogno di manodopera.
Sig. Miller : In questo senso la situazione del mio paese non
è migliore di quella dell'Italia.

Image 8 – The text introducing unit 15 in the textbook (2014:267).

II   *Ora ripetiamo insieme:*

– In questo paese non si può più vivere!

– Non esageriamo!

– Come fa a dirlo?

– In un paese dove ci sono più poveri che ricchi non esiste una vera
democrazia.

– È più facile conservare che cambiare una situazione.

– Quali sono i motivi per cui si sciopera di più?

– Se non sbaglio, c'è un numero altissimo di disoccupati, soprattutto tra i
giovani.

Image 9 – The intonation exercise from unit 15 in the textbook (2014:268).

2.3.2 *Italian 1* (Palgrave Foundations Languages)

The third edition of *Italian 1*, published by Palgrave in 2017, contains a six-exercise section at the end of the book, focused on both pronunciation and intonation. The exercises are not introduced by explanations on the articulation of the sounds and instructions are given both in Italian and English as this textbook is targeted to English speakers (either native or non-native) wishing to learn Italian. Five out of the six exercises in the unit are on pronunciation; only one exercise focuses on intonation.

2.3.2.1 Pronunciation exercises

The pronunciation exercises focus on specific segmental features that are particularly difficult to master by English speakers (for instance, *c* and *g* followed by vowels, double consonants, *sc* followed by vowels, *gn* and *gl*, etc.). The training is on single words, following the principle that "because language is a series of words strung together, students must be able to pronounce individual words first and then proceed to the pronunciation of entire sentences" (Mason, 1993:156-157). Following the perceptive approach, in all the exercises learners are required to listen to audio files and then complete lists of words with the appropriate sound, repeat the sounds, or choose from a list of words the correct phonological trait (e.g. double consonants). These types of activities follow the 'listen and repeat' and 'listen and complete' tasks. The monotony of drills offered by coursebooks could lead to the fossilisation of mispronounced sounds and to the students' lack of interest in improving their phonological skills (Korkut and Çelik, 2018).

1 a Ascolta la pronuncia di questi suoni/Listen to the following sounds.

ce   ge
ci   gi

b Ascolta e completa le seguenti parole/Listen and complete the following words.

1 ami____   7 ____ ta
2 Pari____   8 ____ ttà
3 arriveder____   9 ____ nare
4 no____   10 ____ ro
5 ____ nerale   11 ____ nese
6 ____ ntro   12 fran____ se

2 a Ascolta la pronuncia di questi suoni/Listen to the following sounds.

che   ghe
chi   ghi

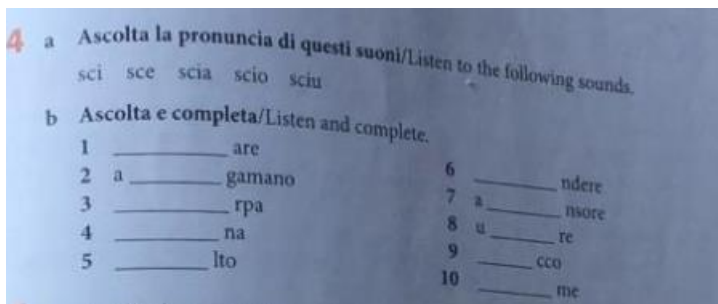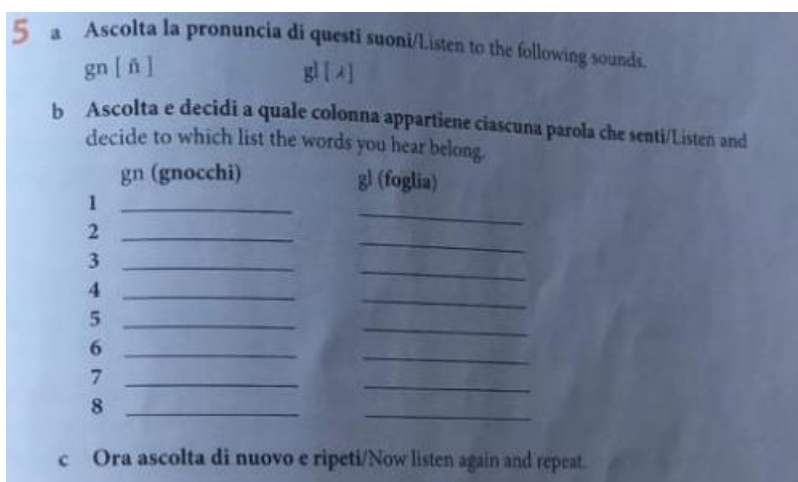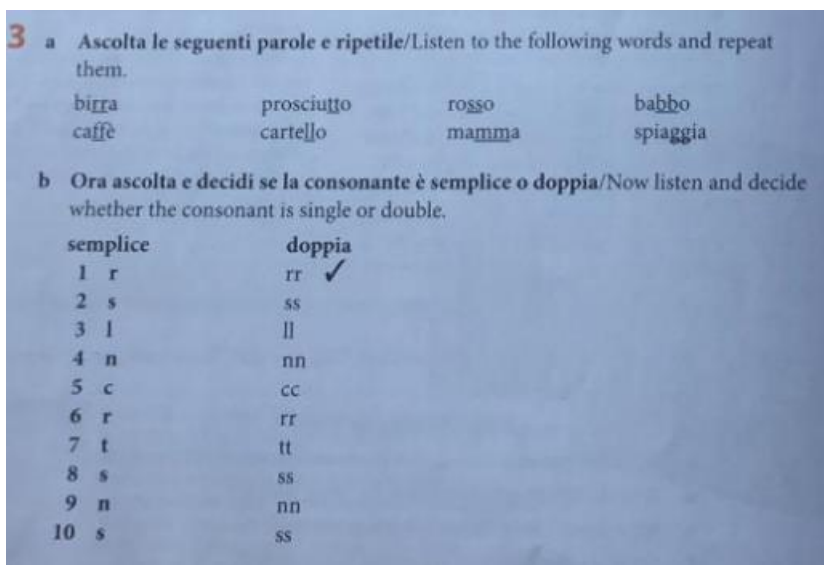b Ascolta e completa le seguenti parole/Listen and complete the following words.

1 alber_____   6 _____ amo
2 _____ ro   7 In ____ lterra
3 ____ rubino   8 _____ accio
4 dialo_____   9 lun _____
5 ri_____   10 ____ ave

4 a Ascolta la pronuncia di questi suoni/Listen to the following sounds.
    sci sce scia scio sciu

b Ascolta e completa/Listen and complete.
1 _____ are
2 a _____ gamano
3 _____ rpa
4 _____ na
5 _____ lto

6 _____ ndere
7 a _____ nsore
8 u _____ re
9 _____ cco
10 _____ me

Images 10, 11, 12 – Examples of listen-and-complete exercises.

3 a Ascolta le seguenti parole e ripetile/Listen to the following words and repeat them.

| birra | prosciutto | rosso | babbo |
| caffè | cartello | mamma | spiaggia |

b Ora ascolta e decidi se la consonante è semplice o doppia/Now listen and decide whether the consonant is single or double.

semplice	doppia
1 r	rr ✓
2 s	ss
3 l	ll
4 n	nn
5 c	cc
6 r	rr
7 t	tt
8 s	ss
9 n	nn
10 s	ss

5 a Ascolta la pronuncia di questi suoni/Listen to the following sounds.
    gn [ñ]   gl [ʎ]

b Ascolta e decidi a quale colonna appartiene ciascuna parola che senti/Listen and decide to which list the words you hear belong.

	gn (gnocchi)	gl (foglia)
1	_____	_____
2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____
4	_____	_____
5	_____	_____
6	_____	_____
7	_____	_____
8	_____	_____

c Ora ascolta di nuovo e ripeti/Now listen again and repeat.

Images 13 and 14 – Examples of listen and repeat and listen and decide the right list according to the phonological trait specifically practiced.

2.3.2.2 Intonation exercise

The intonation exercise in the unit focuses on the listening of a series of recorded sentences and their categorisation as questions (Q) or statements (S), according to intonation, rhythm, stress and pitch. This exercise is based on the perceptive approach; therefore learners are not required to actively reproduce the sentences that have heard. This type of activities are particularly useful for learners as they allow them to

focus their attention on their perceptive skills rather than on their productive ones. Therefore, this exercise greatly improves the students' ability to listen the target language and the suprasegmental traits that native speakers adopt in order to communicative implicit meanings, emotional status, thoughts during communicative exchanges. However, on the other hand, the exclusive training of perceptive skills is not sufficient as learners need opportunities where to practice the suprasegmentals traits that they have been trained to recognise while listening to other speakers.
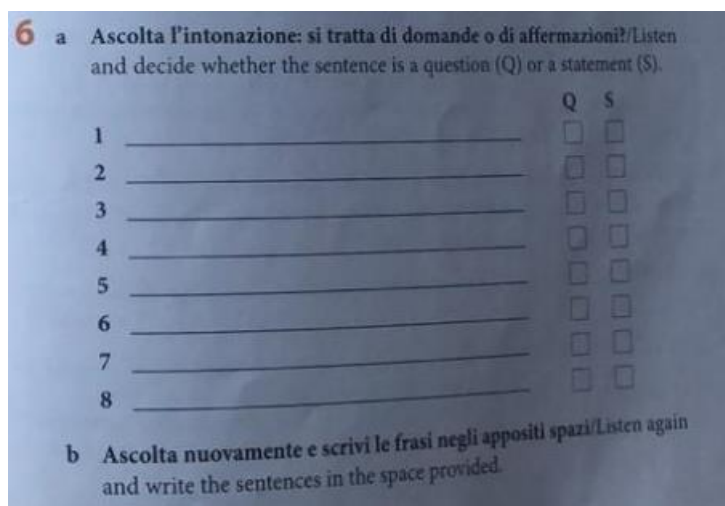

6 a Ascolta l'intonazione: si tratta di domande o di affermazioni?/Listen and decide whether the sentence is a question (Q) or a statement (S).

	Q	S
1	☐	☐
2	☐	☐
3	☐	☐
4	☐	☐
5	☐	☐
6	☐	☐
7	☐	☐
8	☐	☐

b Ascolta nuovamente e scrivi le frasi negli appositi spazi/Listen again and write the sentences in the space provided.

Image 15 – Example of the intonation exercise in the textbook.

2.3.3 *Nuovo Espresso* (Alma Edizioni)

Nuovo Espresso, published by Alma Edizioni in 2014, has six volumes, one for each level of proficiency defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2). A perusal of the units points out the types of activities offered for the training of pronunciation and intonation in this textbook. In particular, the use of literary texts in activities which aim to train both pronunciation and intonation follow the structure used for the tasks in the fourth unit of Volume 6 (Image 25). In fact, the exercise concerns the ability to read a poem with fluidity (which necessarily involves the need to master and follow the correct intonation, rhythm, stresses, junctures and pitches), and to identify the units of meaning that need to be read together in order to properly follow the prosody of the language, which is particularly relevant in the reading of poems (Chapter 3, paragraph 3.3.4).

23 Lettura fluida   15 (◉▸

Quando si legge un testo le parole vengono raggruppate in brevi unità di significato per fare in modo che la lettura risulti più fluida. Torna alla poesia del punto **22** *e cerchia le parole che formano delle unità di significato, come nell'esempio. Poi leggi a voce alta e infine ascolta la lettura della poesia fatta da un attore professionista.*

(Ho sceso) (dandoti il braccio) (almeno un milione di scale) (e ora che non ci sei) (è il vuoto ad ogni gradino)

Image 25 – An example of a "find the units of meaning in the poem and try to read it with fluency" exercise.

2.3.4 *Nuovo Magari* (Alma Edizioni)

Nuovo Magari, published in 2014 by Alma Edizioni, is a textbook for intermediate and advanced students (B1/B2 and C1/C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), and focuses on the teaching of syntactic and lexical forms widely used in everyday Italian, but rarely included in coursebooks. Moreover, it analyses important contemporary aspects of Italian culture. There is a limited number of pronunciation and intonation activities within the units. For instance, in unit 14 of the C1/C2 Volume, having listened to a dialogue taken from a movie scene (Chapter 3, paragraph 3.3.3), students are required to insert the correct punctuation in its transcription. Then, following the articulatory approach, they are required to play it in pairs, paying attention to pauses, intonation, stresses, gestures and movements (Image 26).

2 Analisi della conversazione

2a *Qui sotto hai il testo della prima parte del dialogo. È stata tolta tutta la punteggiatura (, . ? … ecc.). Prova a rimetterla.*

Giovanni - Peppino dai ora torna dentro va bene *ammunì*[1] lo sai com'è papà
Peppino - No com'è papà
Giovanni - Eh un po' antico ma non è cattivo
Peppino - Non è cattivo è un po' antico ma papà non è cattivo sei andato a scuola sai contare
Giovanni - Come contare
Peppino - Come contare uno due tre quattro sai contare
Giovanni - Sì so contare
Peppino - E sai camminare
Giovanni - So camminare
Peppino - E contare e camminare insieme lo sai fare

Giovanni - Sì penso di sì
Peppino - Allora forza conta e cammina dai uno due tre quattro cinque sei sette otto
Giovanni - Dove stiamo andando
Peppino - Forza conta e cammina
Giovanni - Sshhhh piano

[1]**ammuni:** dialetto siciliano, trad.: Dai.

2b *Riascolta il dialogo e verifica. Poi confrontati con un compagno.*
13

2c *In coppia con lo stesso compagno, provate la scena. Pensate alle pause, agli accenti, all'intonazione, ai gesti e ai movimenti. Alla fine recitate la scena davanti alla classe.*

Image 26 – An example of a 'read the dialogue paying attention to pauses, stresses, intonation, gestures and movements" exercise.

2.3.5 Results of the analysis of the pronunciation and intonation sections in Italian LS textbooks

The analysis of the pronunciation and intonation sections of the fourteen student textbooks included in this research (paragraph 2.3 and Appendix A) is helpful to highlight the attention currently paid to the training of these two skills in the foreign language learning process. Primarily, my perusal has sourced significant information on four main issues: 1. the location of the pronunciation and intonation explanations and exercises (i.e. introductory sections, sections through the text or appendix); 2. the focus on segmentals, suprasegmentals, or both; 3. the presence of explanations and the approach used (i.e. articulatory, contrastive or perceptive); 4. the types of exercises offered.

The location of the pronunciation and intonation sections. In line with the communicative approach (Chapter 1), along with the other linguistic features that are usually presented, discussed and practised within the units of textbooks (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehensions, writing exercises, etc.), specific sections devoted to the study and practice of pronunciation and intonation should be offered as well, as they are relevant features that must be acquired in order to achieve a high level of language proficiency. In this respect, the placement of these sections within textbooks may reveal the consideration and importance currently given to these skills in the teaching of Italian as a foreign language. Table 1 summarises the results of the observation of the most common locations of the pronunciation and intonation sections in the Italian language coursebooks analysed. The analysis of data confirms that, generally, pronunciation and intonation units are placed throughout the text – out of fourteen textbooks analysed, ten of them have sections related to pronunciation and intonation training in their central units.

The presence of specific sections devoted to pronunciation and intonation throughout the textbooks reflects the importance of a more systematic attention on segmentals and suprasegmentals (Thomson & Derwing, 2014). This approach does only not affect research in applied linguistics, but also academic curricula and foreign language teaching practice. However, although the presence of specific activities points to an interest in these speaking-related skills by researchers, teachers and editors, explanations and activities still occupy a minor part in the units of coursebooks in comparison with the number of activities offered for the training of other linguistic features. In fact, since textbooks are generally still designed and based on a grammar and vocabulary-focused approach, exercises and activities aiming at the development and reinforcement of these skills prevail over other skills-focused training (including pronunciation and intonation). Therefore, one of the aims of my research is to demonstrate that it is necessary to insert, in an even more inclusive way, pronunciation and intonation activities, alongside other skills, throughout the students' textbooks, as these features play an important role in the positive outcomes of the foreign language learning process.

TITLE	INTRODUCTORY UNIT	SECTIONS THROUGH TEXT	APPENDIX/FINAL SECTION/SINGLE SECTION
La lingua italiana per stranieri	✓	✓	
Italian 1			✓
Chiaro!		✓	
Espresso Ragazzi	✓		
Nuovo Espresso			✓

Nuovo Magari			✓
Al Dente		✓	
Nuovo Progetto Italiano		✓	
Allegro		✓	✓
Nuovo Contatto		✓	
Tanto per parlare		✓	
Spazio Italia		✓	
Affresco Italiano		✓	
Nuovo Affresco Italiano		✓	

Table 1 – The location of the pronunciation and intonation sections in the textbooks analysed.

The focus on segmentals, suprasegmentals, or both. Table 2 shows the results of the analysis of the focus of the exercises and activities offered in the textbooks analysed in this chapter. Out of the fourteen textbooks reviewed, nine offer exercises and activities for the training of aspects of both pronunciation and intonation. In fact, the data collected highlight very little interest in focusing on one only of these two features, showing a largely shared segmental-suprasegmental orientation. This approach further highlights the strict relationship between pronunciation and intonation, which has been demonstrated by studies conducted on native listeners' strategies applied to understanding non-native speakers (Zielinski, 2006) confirming the involvement of both segmental and suprasegmental traits to achieve successful communication, and the recent, more balanced view, after decades of segmental and suprasegmental controversy, that intelligibility of speech is achieved through both segmentals and suprasegmentals (for a review, see Ketabi, 2015). Research in these areas seems to suggest the need for a combination of both segmental and suprasegmental features in phonological training, and therefore the inclusion of both these aspects in the foreign language acquisition process. In fact, if the intelligible articulation of single sounds and groups of sounds is necessary in order to maintain intelligibility and to convey the meaning of our utterances, the ability to perform the appropriate intonation is equally relevant in order to transmit the implicit factors that lay behind words during communicative exchanges – for instance, our emotions, attitudes, and opinions. However, it is helpful to identify different moments within the foreign language learning process for the acquisition of these skills based on the level of proficiency acquired by learners. For instance, a more intonation-oriented focus is appropriate for beginners, since learners at this stage usually have a rather limited vocabulary (see activities in Chapter 3). This can help the students to concentrate exclusively on the prosody of the language.

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When we know a language at an intermediate or advanced level, it is more difficult to focus our attention exclusively on the sounds of the language without paying attention to the meaning conveyed by those sounds; in fact, when we listen to someone speaking a language we do know, we tend to focus our attention on the meaning rather than on the prosody of the language itself. Differently, at the early stages of foreign language learning, the meaning of the words is largely unknown, so the exclusive focus on the sounds of the language proves easier. On the contrary, as we will see in Chapter 3, a more pronunciation-oriented focus is more plausible for intermediate or advanced students, who wish to improve their level of proficiency by focusing on small details, such as the intelligible articulation of sounds that they find difficult to master or their desire to achieve a specific accent. However, the combination of proficiency-oriented activities and increasingly difficult tasks could benefit students' motivation and interest in enhancing their phonological awareness and skills.

TITLE	SEGMENTAL FOCUSED EXERCISES	SUPRASEGMENTAL FOCUSED EXERCISES	SEGMENTAL AND SUPRASEGMENTAL FOCUSED EXERCISES
La lingua italiana per stranieri			✓
Italian 1			✓
Chiaro!			✓
Espresso Ragazzi	✓		
Nuovo Espresso		✓	
Nuovo Magari		✓	
Al Dente			✓
Nuovo Progetto Italiano			✓
Allegro			✓
Nuovo Contatto			✓
Tanto per		✓	

parlare			
Spazio Italia			✓
Affresco Italiano	✓		
Nuovo Affresco Italiano			✓

Table 2 – The focus on segmentals, suprasegmentals or both in the textbooks analysed.

The presence of explanations and approach used. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis of the presence of explanations and use of different theoretical approaches in the textbooks analysed. As far as the presence of explanations is concerned, out of the fourteen textbooks analysed, only three offer explicit explanations on pronunciation and intonation. The very limited number of explanations seems to suggest that the native-speaker teacher is presumed to decide how to introduce the different sounds (for instance, by giving articulatory explanations, perceptual information, contrastive phonetic information or sound-to-letter information). Although the absence of precise explanations may be a sign of the lack of a systematic inclusion of pronunciation and intonation exercises within Italian language coursebooks, it also makes carrying out the activities more flexible by allowing teachers to find the most appropriate way to deliver the pronunciation and intonation theoretical explanations and training. However, since teachers might not be able to cover all the pronunciation and intonation sections in class, it would be useful to introduce the segmental and suprasegmental features by providing brief explanations on their articulation and variations, so students could practise these skills autonomously. As far as the approach generally used to design and deliver the exercises is concerned, it is clear that the activities are usually based on both the perceptive and the articulatory approaches. The combination of these two approaches highlights the profound connection between receptive and articulatory abilities, both necessary when undergoing pronunciation and intonation training. In fact, closely linked to the acquisition of pronunciation is the "task of learning to hear the new language correctly" (Hockett, 1950:261). Therefore, exercises and activities absolutely need to stimulate and develop the learners' receptive and productive skills. Notwithstanding the importance of the two approaches adopted, it would be helpful to include exercises based on the contrastive approach as well. In fact, this could help students to notice autonomously, thanks to the development of their phonological awareness, the main phonological differences and analogies between their first language and Italian. In this way, even in multi-lingual and multi-cultural FL learning contexts, students could define the analogies and differences between their mother-tongue and the TL. The advantage of including reflections based on the contrastive approach is that students will be able to use the phonemes they already know – i.e. the ones featuring in both English and Italian, to learn how to pronounce those which seem more difficult, so they

will be able to construct their phonemic awareness in Italian. Therefore, "Teachers also should point out and elucidate the differences between the two phonological systems and the learners' interlanguage instead of correcting their errors" (Moghaddam et al, 2012:218). In this respect, before asking students to perform the activities devised for this research (Chapter 3), I introduced the main articulatory issues that learners could have experienced during the course of the pronunciation and intonation sessions. In this way, students could use their knowledge of the phonological system of their first languages to articulate the sounds which do not change in Italian, and to focus more on the dissimilar ones. Moreover, once they become aware of the peculiar sounds of Italian which are completely or slightly different to any sound of their native languages, they can work on them and avoid the articulatory mistakes.

TITLE	EXPLANATIONS	ARTICULATORY APPROACH	PERCEPTIVE APPROACH	ARTICULATORY AND PERCEPTIVE APPROACHES
La lingua italiana per stranieri				✓
Italian 1				✓
Chiaro!				✓
Espresso Ragazzi				✓
Nuovo Espresso				✓
Nuovo Magari		✓		
Al Dente				✓
Nuovo Progetto Italiano				✓
Allegro	✓			✓
Nuovo Contatto				✓
Tanto per parlare	✓			✓
Spazio Italia				✓
Affresco Italiano	✓			✓
Nuovo Affresco Italiano				✓

Table 3 – The presence of explanations and the use of the articulatory approach, the perceptive approach, or both in the textbooks analysed.

The types of exercises offered. Based on the combination of the perceptive and articulatory approaches, the types of pronunciation and intonation exercises featuring in the textbooks analysed mainly include a perceptive and an articulatory part. Therefore, students are asked to listen to recordings and: 1. repeat the sounds or phrases; 2. complete lists of words with the phonemes present in the audio files; 3. distinguish sounds or groups of sounds that are easily mixed up; 4. complete the phonological rules about specific phonemes; 5. recognise different phrases according to the intonation of the utterances; 6. write down the intonation marks or punctuation, and 7. express various emotional states by doing role plays. The systematic inclusion of exercises on segmentals and suprasegmentals in the textbooks analysed points out the regained importance of teaching pronunciation and intonation which has been triggered by the recent focus on intelligibility of communication rather than "sounding like a native" (Korkut & Çelik, 2018:2). However, the analysis of the types of exercises included reveals a very old-fashioned way to think and deliver pronunciation and intonation training, as the activities offered are mainly "stimulus-response type habit-formation exercises" (Korkut & Çelik, 2018:2), which were mainly used in the Audiolingual Method and Oral Approach (Ketabi, 2015). In fact, as Ketabi highlighted in his review of past and present pronunciation teaching methods:

"the target sound system was practiced through pattern drills, mimicry, repetition, and the elimination of aberrant native language influences. Items for teaching pronunciation were presented in isolation using decontextualized practice of minimal pairs with a considerable emphasis on segmentals and individual sounds (Isaacs, 2009). Features of pronunciation such as phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, and combinatory phonotactic rules were specifically highlighted in the curriculum (Morley, 1991)" (Ketabi, 2015:183).

The activities described by Ketabi (2015) recall the types of exercises offered in the coursebooks analysed, as Moghaddam et al. (2012) suggested by claiming about the Audiolingual method (i.e. listen and repeat) that "although now widely discredited in the areas of grammar and vocabulary teaching this approach has persisted in the teaching of pronunciation" (2012:216). Therefore, the analysis of the pronunciation and intonation sections of textbooks currently in use to teach Italian as a foreign language seems to suggest that, although progress has been achieved from a theoretical point of view as linguists and researchers have investigated new aspects of pronunciation and intonation tuition recently (e.g. Intelligibility versus Nativeness Debate, Segmentals/Suprasegmentals Controversy, Lingua Franca Core – Chapter 1), the elaboration of new teaching resources for the training of segmental and suprasegmental features is still very limited, and further research in this field is urgent. Moreover, although the exercises offered reflect the combined use of both the perceptive and articulatory approaches and give students the chance to practise segmentals and suprasegmentals, they do not offer each student the opportunity to have a targeted training on pronunciation and intonation. The use of digital tools could be a valid didactic strategy in this respect as it may offer more specific training to each learner, giving them the chance to practise at their own pace and

to receive feedback targeted on their phonological needs (Hismanoglu, 2006). It could also encourage autonomous pronunciation and intonation learning (Ketabi 2015). In this respect, my research offer this kind of support to both students and tutors. In fact, the use of Vocaroo, as it is explained in Chapter 3, allows students to repeat autonomously and as many times as they want the exercises already done in class. Moreover, the possibility to store the recording over time, it is helpful for both students and teacher to keep track of the progress made and to define the sounds which still need some practice.

TITLE	TYPE OF EXERCISE: READ AND REPEAT	TYPE OF EXERCISE: LISTEN AND REPEAT	TYPE OF EXERCISE: LISTEN AND WRITE	TYPE OF EXERCISE: LISTEN AND DIVIDE THE WORDS/PHRASES ACCORDING TO THE SOUNDS	TYPE OF EXERCISE: LISTEN AND SELECT THE WORDS/PHRASES THAT PRESENT A SPECIFIC SOUND	TYPE OF EXERCISE: COMPLETE THE PHONOLOGICAL RULE	TYPE OF EXERCISE: LISTEN AND DECIDE WHICH KIND OF PHRASE IS IT ACCORDING TO THE INTONATION	TYPE OF EXERCISE: LISTEN AND WRITE THE INTONATION MARKS (QUESTION, EXCLAMATION, ETC) AND PUNCTUATION	TYPE OF EXERCISE: ROLE PLAY
La lingua italiana per stranieri	✓								
Italian 1		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Chiaro!		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Espresso Ragazzi		✓				✓			
Nuovo Espresso	✓	✓							
Nuovo Magari			✓				✓	✓	

Al Dente	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Nuovo Progetto Italiano		✓	✓				✓		✓
Allegro		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Nuovo Contatto	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tanto per parlare	✓	✓					✓	✓	
Spazio Italia		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Affresco Italiano	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Nuovo Affresco Italiano	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	

Table 4 – The types of exercises featured in the textbooks analysed.

Drawing on the results presented in this chapter, I have designed materials for the training of pronunciation and intonation that are linked to the topics and language activities which are already included in the curriculum of the different academic years. The pronunciation and intonation activities are based on both the perceptive and articulatory approaches and cover the phonological features of Italian that English native-speakers find particularly difficult to master properly. These phonological traits have been identified on the basis of the students' answers to a questionnaire, and the use of the contrastive approach will eventually define the core sounds on which the teaching materials will be focused more precisely. Segmentals and suprasegmentals have been practised by means of their perception and articulation; moreover, they have been introduced, discussed and practised during classroom-based hours and through autonomous learning, thanks to the use of technological devices.

Besides the teaching materials that are offered in order to help students to train and improve their phonological skills, it is important to better define the evaluation and assessment of segmentals and suprasegmentals. In this respect, the notion of proficiency is fundamental in the area of teaching, learning and, primarily, assessing the different language skills. Therefore, it is relevant to explain what proficiency is and define the theoretical principles on which its evaluation and, consequently, the standardised proficiency tests are based. In this respect, Harsch states that:

"It is generally recognized that the concept of proficiency in a second or foreign language comprises the aspects of being able to do something with the language ('knowing how') as well as knowing about it ('knowing what'). Accordingly, language proficiency encompasses a language learner's or user's communicative abilities, knowledge systems, and skills (for example Canale 1983). One widely accepted definition states that proficiency refers to "what someone can do/knows in relation to the application of the subject in the real world" (Harsch, 2016:250).

Therefore, proficiency represents the complex intertwining of the different communicative skills (e.g. writing, listening, speaking, and reading) that are generally tested in order to determine the learners' level of acquaintance with a specific foreign language. Mindful of this, in the next paragraphs will be analysed the training activities and marking criteria that are used to evaluate pronunciation and intonation in standardised proficiency tests for English and Italian.

2.4 Mobile apps and textbooks: a comparison between the pronunciation/intonation-focused activities offered by these two teaching tools

Another comparison that is relevant at this point is the one between the pronunciation and intonation activities offered by the mobile apps and the ones included in the Italian coursebooks reviewed and analysed in this chapter (see paragraphs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and Appendix A). In fact, as my doctoral research aims to define bimodal teaching strategies for the acquisition of the segmental and suprasegmental features of Italian, it may be interesting to investigate how learning technologies (i.e. mobile apps) and more traditional teaching materials (i.e. textbooks) may be integrated in order to offer a more systematic, inclusive and appropriate coverage of these skills in academic curricula, through both in and out-of-class practice. In fact, although mobile apps seems to suggest the possibility for learners to acquire and practise Italian pronunciation and intonation autonomously, the lack of instructions on the positioning of the articulatory organs, the rather limited phonetics training received from the early stages of foreign language acquisition and the absent direct interaction with a native-speaker tutor in a real communicative situation may impede the students in their autonomous achievement of full control of the phonetic and prosodic characteristics of Italian. Therefore, the integration of the enormous potential of digital learning tools with the linguistic and cultural expertise of (non/almost) native-speaker tutors might be a good solution. As for the theoretical principles which the activities offered by both mobile apps and textbooks are based on, both mobile apps and textbooks

usually follow a combination of perceptive and articulatory approaches. In fact, the review and analysis of textbooks previously carried out (see paragraph 2.3 and Appendix A) points out that the types of pronunciation and intonation exercises offered in the textbooks analysed mainly include a perceptive and an articulatory part. Therefore, the students are asked to listen to recordings and: 1. repeat the sounds or phrases; 2. complete lists of words with the phonemes of the audio files; 3. distinguish sounds or groups of sounds that are easily confused; 4. complete the phonological rules concerning specific phonemes; 5. recognise different phrases according to the intonation of the utterances; 6. write down the intonation marks or punctuation and 7. express various emotional states by doing role plays. The same happens with the mobile apps' pronunciation and intonation activities previously discussed, as the exercises usually require users to listen to a recording and record themselves while pronouncing the words/sentences that they have listened to. From a more practical point of view, there are two aspects emerging from the analysis of mobile apps and textbooks that could be integrated in order to offer a more inclusive and appropriate delivery of pronunciation and intonation sessions. On the one hand, digital learning technologies offer learners a chance to practise and self-assess by recording their performances and by listening to them (more than once, if necessary) to spot mistakes, pay attention to their weaknesses, practise at their own pace and focus their attention on the phonemes which they personally find particularly difficult to master. On the other hand, the use of textbooks in classroom-based teaching contexts presumes the mediation of the content of the textbook by a native-speaker tutor. In fact, especially when instruction is limited or completely absent, as the textbooks' review suggests, it is the tutor's feedback and expertise in the linguistic and cultural aspects of pronunciation which provides the guidelines to reach positive outcomes and a deeper insight and understanding of the personal, social and cultural implications of having an accent. Moreover, not only does face-to-face provision allow learners to practise their skills and knowledge in the foreign language in real communicative contexts, it also encourages peer-assessment, comparison and discussion. Consequently, the introduction of blended learning might help in the combination of the two elements described above as it allows the integration and enhancement of the most positive characteristics of autonomous learning and classroom based.

2.5 Pronunciation and intonation in standardised proficiency tests

Regarding the role and assessment of pronunciation and intonation in standardised proficiency tests, a valid tool which could guide and help the evaluation of a speaker's proficiency is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL), which describes six levels of proficiency (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2) and provides the parameters for the assessment of learners' performances. Since its first publication in 2001, the CEFRL has had a great impact in the design of textbooks and academic curricula, and in defining the marking criteria of the standardised proficiency tests (Harsh, 2016). In particular, the marking systems adopted to test speaking skills in standardised proficiency tests are frequently compared

to the CEFRL levels, and the parameters described for the different marking criteria bands often follow the ones used in the CEFRL. In the following paragraphs a list of well-known standardised proficiency tests, for both English and Italian, are introduced and discussed in order to provide an insight into the actual status of things regarding the level of training of segmental and suprasegmental skills and the marking criteria used for their evaluation.
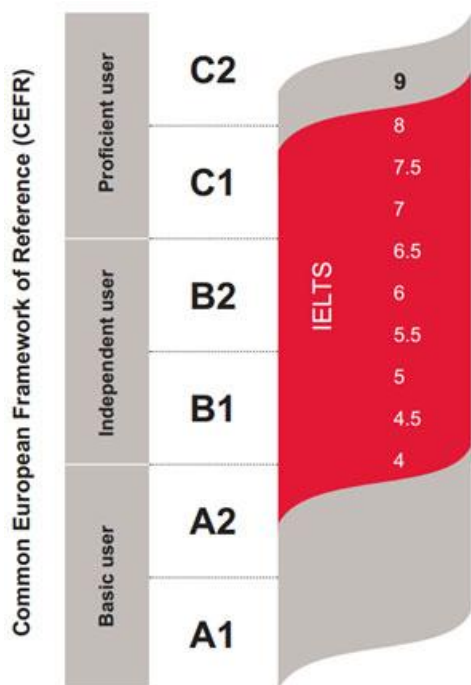
CEFR level	Reading (0–30)	Listening (0–30)	Speaking (0–30)	Writing (0–30)	Total (0–120)
C1 or above	24	22	25	24	95
B2	18	17	20	17	72
B1	4	9	16	13	42
A2	n/a	n/a	10	7	n/a

Images 92& 93 – These images explain the relationships between IELTS and TOEFL band scores and the six CEFR levels.

2.5.1 IELTS (International English Language Testing System)

2.5.1.1 The IELTS Handbook and website

The IELTS Handbook (2007) refers to pronunciation as one of the criteria on which the examiners mark the candidates' speaking test. Primarily, the pronunciation criterion "refers to the ability to produce comprehensible speech to fulfil the Speaking test requirements. The key indicators will be the amount of strain caused to the listener, the amount of the speech which is unintelligible and the noticeability of L1 influence" (2007:11). Although pronunciation and intonation are in the marking criteria, available on the

IELTS website[8], no other reference to segmentals and suprasegmentals is included in the IELTS Handbook. The published version of the IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors lists nine bands (from 0 to 9) for the assessment of four speaking features: 1. fluency and coherence; 2. lexical resource; 3. grammatical range and accuracy; 4. pronunciation. Bands 0 and 1 have no criteria to assess pronunciation, which is tested starting from bands 2 ("Speech is often unintelligible") and 3 ("Shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4"). This total lack of references may suggest that at the lowest levels of language proficiency markers do not consider, therefore they do not assess, the learners' phonological skills. However, the experimental phases of my research (Chapter 3) demonstrate that phonological training produces good learning outcomes even for students who have just started learning Italian. Bands 4 ("uses a limited range of pronunciation features; attempts to control features but lapses are frequent; mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener") and 5 ("shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6") show the phonological requirements and common mistakes in CEFRL B1 level. Band 6 ("Uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control; shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained; can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times") highlights the pronunciation features in CEFRL B2 level; bands 7 ("Shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8") and 8 ("Uses a wide range of pronunciation features; sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses; is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility") those in CEFRL C1 level. Band 9 ("Uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety; sustains flexible use of features throughout; is effortless to understand") describes the phonological traits in CERFL C2 level.

On the British Council's website, in the section devoted to the IELTS certificate, several video lessons focus on the four primary language skills (writing, reading, listening, and speaking) assessed during the exam. Tips on how to improve and to which types of mistakes candidates need to pay attention are given. One of the videos concerning the speaking assessment is specifically designed to highlight the segmental and suprasegmental features of English that are taken into consideration in the assessment of the candidate's oral performance as important to achieve successful interaction between the speakers during the communicative exchanges. This video[9] gives advice on how to reach accuracy and variety in pronunciation features, which are two of the criteria on which the candidate will be tested. These pronunciation features are: 1. individual sounds (i.e. spelling); 2. word stress (i.e. word stress patterns and variations, especially in word families); 3. sentence stress (i.e. emphasis); 4. intonation (i.e. pitch); 5. chunking (i.e. rhythm and pauses). To improve these five pronunciation features, suggestions are given. The first refers to the use of the contrastive approach when comparing the candidate's first language to English in relation to: 1.

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intonation, 2. sentence stress; and 3. rhythm. In particular, the focus is on the effects that intonation and sentence stress-related mistakes may cause in the communication of meaning. In this case, referring to a dictionary to confirm the correct word stress or using authentic sources in English (for instance radio programs, TV shows, etc.) will help candidates to become more familiar with English pronunciation and intonation traits. Another suggestion is to aid clarity during communicative exchanges by avoiding speaking too fast. To improve chunking skills, self-recording is suggested. By doing this, candidates can try and apply all the English pronunciation and intonation features that they have learnt so far. The IELTS' website[10] has further examples and advice. The segmentals and suprasegmentals covered are, as in the video previously described: 1. individual sounds; 2. word stress; 3. sentences stress; 4. chunking; and 4. word linking. The individual sounds focused on are selected by each candidate, according to their personal phonological needs. Students can practise the selected sounds thanks to online dictionaries and interactive phonemic charts, using both the perceptive and articulatory approaches. When highlighting the importance of word and sentence stress, this is defined as the intensity or importance given to a syllable when pronouncing a word or to a word when saying a sentence. Word stress is also important to avoid misunderstandings during communicative exchanges and generic patterns regarding word stress in English are provided (Image 94), with a focus on stress variations in word families (Image 95). These types of activities offered to improve the students' phonological awareness and skills are effective and appropriate; moreover, the combination of the perceptive and the articulatory approaches allows learners to improve their receptive and articulatory skills. However, the inclusion of a digital tool which could help students to keep track of the progress made during the preparation of the exam should be considered, in my opinion. In this respect, the use of online voice recording tools, such as Vocaroo (Chapter 3), could be a valid support for leaners to improve their phonological awareness, spot articulatory mistakes, and correct them autonomously.

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[10] https://www.ieltsessentials.com/blog/2017/11/27/how-to-improve-your-pronunciation-for-your-ielts-part-1 and https://www.ieltsessentials.com/blog/2018/01/08/how-to-improve-your-pronunciation-for-your-ielts-part-2

Type of word	Pattern	Examples	Some exceptions
two-syllable nouns and adjectives	stress on the first syllable	• MOther • LEtter • MARket	• guiTAR • toNIGHT
words that can be used as both nouns and verbs	noun: stress on the first syllable verb: stress on the second syllable	• PROtest (n) proTEST (v) • Decrease (n) deCREASE (v) • Insult (n) inSULT (v)	• rePORT (n) rePORT (v) • WITness (n) WITness (v)
compound nouns	stress on the first part	• softball • makeup • toothpaste	

Image 94 – General patterns regarding word stress in English.

ho spital	hospi **tality**	**ho** spitalize	hospitali **zation**
na tional	natio **nality**	**na** tionalize	nationali **zation**
per sonal	perso **nality**	**per** sonalize	personali **zation**

Image 95 – Word stress variations in word families.

English is defined as a stress-timed language, therefore not every syllable lasts for the same amount of time. Emphasis is usually given to words which carry the meaning of the utterances, such as main verbs, nouns and adjectives. Sentence stress changes the meaning of a sentence by highlighting an element of the sentence instead of another. To improve sentence stress skills, candidate are invited to use authentic materials in English[11]. Chunking and word linking are also relevant features to master in order to have successful interactions with other speakers. Rhythm and pauses are fundamental aspects to make our speech easy to follow and to be understood by listeners. In this case, too, tips on how to improve chunking are given[12]. Finally, instances when sounds change due to word linking, are highlighted, e.g.: sounds change, sounds disappear, sounds linking, consonants influenced by the following vowel sound and vowels influenced by other vowel sounds. Some suggestions to improve word linking are given, too[13].

The activities offered represent good examples of how to introduce the training of pronunciation and intonation to foreign language learners who will be assessed on their oral communicative skills. However, as pointed out in the previous paragraphs, these activities should be integrated with tools which support the

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[11] https://www.ieltsessentials.com/blog/2017/11/27/how-to-improve-your-pronunciation-for-your-ielts-part-1
[12] https://www.ieltsessentials.com/blog/2018/01/08/how-to-improve-your-pronunciation-for-your-ielts-part-2
[13] https://www.ieltsessentials.com/blog/2018/01/08/how-to-improve-your-pronunciation-for-your-ielts-part-2

learning process and the students' development of their phonological awareness, and which allow them to check their performances repeatedly.

2.5.1.2 Complete IELTS. Bands 4-5 B1/Bands 5-6.5 B2/Bands 6.5-7.5 C1 . Student's Book with Answers (Jakeman, V., Brook-Hart, G., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012; Jakeman, V., Brook-Hart, G., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013)

The student book for CEFRL B1, CEFRL B2, and CEFRL C1 levels have ten Units, each with four sections corresponding to the four main language skills tested during the IELTS exam. The speaking section features pronunciation and intonation exercises mainly related to the following phonological traits: single sounds, word stress, sentence stress, chunking and pitch. Additionally, each unit has a section which focuses on the most common spelling mistakes made by candidates in IELTS tests. The pronunciation and intonation exercises are introduced by brief explanations of the specific segmental or suprasegmental traits on which the activity focuses, based on both the perceptive and articulatory approaches. At the end of the coursebook, there is a Language Reference section which provides further explanations on the topics covered in each unit, and additional suggestions and tips on pronunciation and intonation. Additionally, brief recommendations to prepare for each IELTS test are also given. As far as pronunciation is concerned, candidates are invited to check the clarity of their speech by paying attention to the articulation of single sounds, word and sentence stress, chunking and work linking. Also in this case, although the activities and the explanatory sessions represent a valid support for the training of pronunciation and intonation skills, the lack of tools which help students to constantly check their phonological strengths and weaknesses could limit their progress and performance.

2.5.2 TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

The TOEFL Speaking test has four tasks in which the candidates are asked to give personal opinions; summarise and explain a text and a recording; and talk about others' opinion on a topic. There are two types of tasks: 1. the first task is defined as independent as requires the candidates to express their opinions on a particular topic; 2. the other three tasks are defined as integrated as the candidates are asked to develop their discourse by integrating it with the information and opinions gathered from reading a text and listening to a recording. The TOEFL Test Speaking Rubrics[14] for the assessment of both the independent and the integrated tasks also include pronunciation as one of the speaking features tested. The band scores (from 0 to 4) are defined according to a general description of speaking performance which features three aspects: 1. delivery of a speech which includes fluidity of expression, clarity and intelligibility; 2. language use,

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[14] https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/toefl_speaking_rubrics.pdf

which refers to the candidates' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary; 3. topic development, which concerns speech coherence. Band 1 pronunciation descriptors ("Consistent pronunciation, stress and intonation difficulties cause considerable listener effort; delivery is choppy, fragmented or telegraphic; frequent pauses and hesitations") correspond to IELTS bands 2, 3 and 4 (CEFRL B1 level), while Band 2 pronunciation descriptors ("Speech is basically intelligible, though listener effort is needed because of unclear articulation, awkward intonation or choppy rhythm/pace; meaning may be obscured in places") match those of IELTS bands 5 and 6. Band 3 ("Speech is generally clear, with some fluidity of expression, though minor difficulties with pronunciation, intonation, or pacing are noticeable and may require listener effort at times (though overall intelligibility is not significantly affected)") resembles band 7 of the IELTS descriptors and band 4 ("Generally well-paced flow (fluid expression). Speech is clear. It may include minor lapses, or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, which do not affect overall intelligibility") the ones in IELTS bands 8 and 9. Compared to the IELTS website, the websites offering support for the preparation of the TOEFL certificate feature less material and fewer suggestions. However, one of those is the section called Magoosh[15]. As far as pronunciation is concerned, a few posts[16] and a video[17] are available as tips and support to candidates. As in the IELTS test, in this case, too, the focus is on clarity of speech (i.e. paying attention to individual sounds and words in order to maintain intelligibility during communicative exchanges and avoiding rushing while speaking). To achieve this, candidates are invited to practise with authentic English material and record themselves while speaking. These two activities will allow them to identify the phonological traits of English which they find particularly difficult to master and compare their pronunciation and intonation to those of English native speakers. The suggestion to record the individual phonological training is a very good example of good practice. However, not providing learners with a tool endorsed by TOEFL itself, may discouraged learners to follow the suggestion, as they may not know which type of devise they could employ for their training.

2.5.3 Cambridge English Qualifications

As far as the English qualifications released by the University of Cambridge are concerned, assessors test the candidates' speaking performance on three criteria: 1. grammar and vocabulary; 2. pronunciation; and 3. interactive communication. On the Cambridge Assessment English website [18] the speaking test assessment grids for CEFRL A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2 levels may be consulted. All grids have six bands (from 0 to five) and the assessment of the three criteria starts from band 1. Bands 1, 3 and 5 contain the pronunciation and intonation descriptors used by assessors when marking, while for bands 2 and 4 the

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[15] https://toefl.magoosh.com/?utm_source=toeflblog&utm_medium=blog&utm_campaign=toeflhome&utm_term=logo
[16] https://magoosh.com/toefl/2014/improving-your-english-pronunciation/ and https://magoosh.com/toefl/2014/improving-your-pronunciation-for-the-toefl/
[17] https://magoosh.com/toefl/2015/toefl-tuesday-toefl-pronunciation-tips/
[18] https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/

criteria used are not explicitly described as these two bands are considered intermediate between the lower (bands 1 and 3) and the upper bands (bands 3 and 5) respectively.

2.5.3.1 CEFRL A2 level

The assessment grid for the assessment of CEFRL A2 level[19] speaking performance indicates what candidates are expected to demonstrate in terms of mastering of segmental and suprasegmental traits at this level of English proficiency. The descriptors show a growing control of the phonological features of English from band 1 (the speech is often unintelligible, and candidate demonstrates a very limited control of phonological features) to band 5 (the speech presents some mistakes, but is generally intelligible, and the candidate demonstrates some control of the basic phonological features of English).

A2	Grammar and Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	• Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. • Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.	• Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	• Maintains simple exchanges. • Requires very little prompting and support.
4	Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.		
3	• Shows sufficient control of simple grammatical forms. • Uses appropriate vocabulary to talk about everyday situations.	• Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features.	• Maintains simple exchanges, despite some difficulty. • Requires prompting and support.
2	Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.		
1	• Shows only limited control of a few grammatical forms. • Uses a vocabulary of isolated words and phrases.	• Has very limited control of phonological features and is often unintelligible.	• Has considerable difficulty maintaining simple exchanges. • Requires additional prompting and support.
0	Performance below Band 1.		

Image 95 – The CEFRL A2 level speaking assessment grid.

2.5.3.2 CEFRL B1 level

The assessment grid for the assessment of CEFRL B1 level[20] speaking performance indicates what candidates are expected to demonstrate in terms of the mastering of segmental and suprasegmental traits at this level of English proficiency. Verbal communication at CEFRL B1 level is expected to be mostly intelligible, despite a limited control of phonological features as expressed by the descriptors of band 1. As in other standardised examinations previously analysed, pronunciation and intonation at both word and sentence levels are relevant in the evaluation of the candidates' performance. The intelligible articulation

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[19] https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/168617-assessing-speaking-performance-at-level-a2.pdf
[20] https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/168618-assessing-speaking-performance-at-level-b1-preliminary.pdf

of individual sounds, accurate placement of word and sentence stress and appropriateness of intonation are the basic elements to achieve intelligible pronunciation (band 5).

B1	Grammar and Vocabulary	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	• Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms. • Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar topics.	• Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. • Contributions are relevant despite some repetition. • Uses a range of cohesive devices.	• Is intelligible. • Intonation is generally appropriate. • Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. • Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	• Initiates and responds appropriately. • Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.
4	*Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.*			
3	• Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. • Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about familiar topics.	• Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation. • Contributions are mostly relevant, but there may be some repetition. • Uses basic cohesive devices.	• Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	• Initiates and responds appropriately. • Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.
2	*Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.*			
1	• Shows sufficient control of simple grammatical forms. • Uses a limited range of appropriate vocabulary to talk about familiar topics.	• Produces responses which are characterised by short phrases and frequent hesitation. • Repeats information or digresses from the topic.	• Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features.	• Maintains simple exchanges, despite some difficulty. • Requires prompting and support.
0	*Performance below Band 1.*			

Image 96 – The CEFRL B1 level speaking assessment grid.

2.5.3.3 CEFRL B2 level

The assessment grid for the assessment of CEFRL B2 level[21] speaking performance indicates what candidates are expected to demonstrate. As pointed out for the B1 level, verbal communication at CEFRL B2 level is expected to be mostly intelligible, despite a limited control of phonological features as expressed by the descriptors of band 1. In this case, too, pronunciation and intonation at both word and sentence levels are relevant in the evaluation of the candidates' performance.

[21] https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/168619-assessing-speaking-performance-at-level-b2.pdf

B2	Grammar and Vocabulary	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	• Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms. • Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a wide range of familiar topics.	• Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation. • Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas. • Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	• Is intelligible. • Intonation is appropriate. • Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. • Individual sounds are articulated clearly.	• Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers. • Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
4	*Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.*			
3	• Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms. • Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a range of familiar topics.	• Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. • Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition. • Uses a range of cohesive devices.	• Is intelligible. • Intonation is generally appropriate. • Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. • Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	• Initiates and responds appropriately. • Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.
2	*Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.*			
1	• Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. • Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.	• Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation. • Contributions are mostly relevant, despite some repetition. • Uses basic cohesive devices.	• Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	• Initiates and responds appropriately. • Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.
0	*Performance below Band 1.*			

Image 97 – The CEFRL B2 level speaking assessment grid.

2.5.3.4 CEFRL C1 and C2 levels

The assessment grids for the assessment of CEFRL C1[22] and C2[23] levels speaking performance indicate what candidates are expected to master. Verbal communication at CEFRL C1 and C2 levels is always intelligible. Band 1 describes candidates whose phonological control is generally correct and appropriate, although some mistakes or mispronunciations may occur. Band 3 defines candidates who have total control of the segmental and suprasegmental features of English and are able to perform them correctly during communicative exchanges. Band 5 defines speakers who have total control of the phonological traits of English and are able to use pronunciation intentionally and effectively to convey and enhance the meaning of their utterances during communicative exchanges. The speaking assessment grids do not show variations in the pronunciation descriptors, therefore the different marking criteria for these two levels depend on the other speaking features indicated in the grids, such as grammatical resource, lexical resource, discourse management and interactive communication.

[22] https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/168620-assessing-speaking-performance-at-level-c1.pdf
[23] https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/182109-assessing-speaking-performance-at-level-c2.pdf

C1	Grammatical Resource	Lexical Resource	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	• Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms.	• Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics.	• Produces extended stretches of language with ease and with very little hesitation. • Contributions are relevant, coherent and varied. • Uses a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	• Is intelligible. • Phonological features are used effectively to convey and enhance meaning.	• Interacts with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers. • Widens the scope of the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
4	Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.				
3	• Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms.	• Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics.	• Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation. • Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas. • Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	• Is intelligible. • Intonation is appropriate. • Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. • Individual sounds are articulated clearly.	• Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers. • Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
2	Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.				
1	• Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms.	• Uses appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views, but only when talking about familiar topics.	• Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. • Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition. • Uses a range of cohesive devices.	• Is intelligible. • Intonation is generally appropriate. • Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. • Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	• Initiates and responds appropriately. • Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.
0	Performance below Band 1.				

Image 98 – The CEFRL C1 level speaking assessment grid.

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C2	Grammatical Resource	Lexical Resource	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	• Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms and uses them with flexibility.	• Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility to give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics.	• Produces extended stretches of language with flexibility and ease and very little hesitation. • Contributions are relevant, coherent, varied and detailed. • Makes full and effective use of a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	• Is intelligible. • Phonological features are used effectively to convey and enhance meaning.	• Interacts with ease by skilfully interweaving his/her contributions into the conversation. • Widens the scope of the interaction and develops it fully and effectively towards a negotiated outcome.
4	*Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.*				
3	• Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms.	• Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility to give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics.	• Produces extended stretches of language with ease and with very little hesitation. • Contributions are relevant, coherent and varied. • Uses a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	• Is intelligible. • Intonation is appropriate. • Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. • Individual sounds are articulated clearly.	• Interacts with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers. • Widens the scope of the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
2	*Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.*				
1	• Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms.	• Uses a limited range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics.	• Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation. • Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas. • Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	• Is intelligible. • Intonation is generally appropriate. • Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. • Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	• Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers. • Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
0	*Performance below Band 1.*				

Image 99 – The CEFRL C2 level speaking assessment grid.

The Cambridge English Certifications website offer a section where students can find activities helpful to practice a variety of aspects of pronunciation and intonation skills. The activities are mainly based on the perceptive approach, which on the one hand allows students to train their ability to listen and to distinguish different sounds of the target language; however, on the other hand it does not explicitly offer opportunities to perform the phonological system of the FL. In this respect, it would be helpful to include activities based on the combination of the two approaches in order to provide learners with a more appropriate and fuller training. The lack of a holistic training of pronunciation and intonation skills is crucial, however the analysis of the standardised proficiency tests described in the previous paragraphs shows some weaknesses and the necessity to improve the training offer. Standardised proficiency tests for Italian will be discussed in the

following paragraphs in order to show whether the lacks pointed out for the English proficiency qualifications are present also in the ones for Italian.

2.5.4 PLIDA, CELI and CEDILS

As with the English certifications, the standardised tests of Italian as a foreign language also include the assessment of the candidates' phonological control and its impact on the communicative exchange. The CEDILS, PLIDA, CELI and CILS, certifications are the best-known standardised tests for Italian as a FL, according to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation[24]. The CEDILS marking criteria grids only suggest the points to be given in relation to pronunciation and intonation skills (1 point out of ten total points for the other speaking features), and the CILS only provides a general description of the oral communicative skills for each level of language proficiency, without mentioning segmental and suprasegmental skills. Differently, the CELI and PLIDA provide more detailed pronunciation and intonation descriptors.

PLIDA

The speaking assessment criteria for the PLIDA exams[25] are available for CEFRL A2, B1, B2 and C1 levels. The assessments grids have ten points each, distributed in five bands. The lowest band is 0, which represents unintelligible and unmarkable performances, and the highest band is 10, which indicates all the requirements that a candidate should have to pass the PLIDA examination with flying colours. Unlike the Cambridge assessment system, all levels of the PLIDA certification include an 'unintelligible pronunciation' band, therefore acquisition of the basic phonological traits is not taken for granted either for the lowest level of proficiency or for the highest one. The A2 level descriptors suggest the candidates' very limited control of the phonological traits of Italian for all bands, although different degrees of intelligibility are contemplated. In fact, the markers' effort to understand the candidates' speaking performance seems to be the fundamental criterion in the assessment of the test.

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[24] https://www.esteri.it/it/diplomazia-culturale-e-diplomazia-scientifica/cultura/promozionelinguaitaliana/societadantealighieri/
[25] https://plida.it/certificazione-plida/i-criteri-di-valutazione.html

PRODUZIONE ORALE - PRONUNCIA	
10 **9**	• L'interlocutore fa poca fatica a interpretare i passaggi in cui la pronuncia è scorretta.
8 **7**	• In alcuni passaggi l'interlocutore fa fatica a interpretare il messaggio a causa della pronuncia scorretta.
6 **5**	• L'interlocutore fa costantemente fatica a interpretare il messaggio a causa della pronuncia scorretta.
4 **3**	• Malgrado gli sforzi dell'interlocutore la pronuncia scorretta rende incomprensibili parti importanti del discorso.
2 **1**	• Malgrado gli sforzi dell'interlocutore la pronuncia scorretta rende il discorso del tutto incomprensibile.

Image 100 – Speaking assessment criteria for the PLIDA A2 level certification.

As in the B1 level Cambridge English Qualification, verbal communication is described as mostly intelligible in the highest bands, despite the limited control of phonological features expressed by the descriptors of the PLIDA B1 level. Mispronunciation is mainly related to individual sounds or groups of sounds that may be difficult to master and which can negatively influence the intelligibility of the communicative exchange. Furthermore, at this level of Italian proficiency, a markedly foreign accent in the pronunciation is still expected.

Criteri di valutazione per la prova orale - Livello B1

PUNTI	EFFICACIA COMUNICATIVA	INTERAZIONE	LESSICO	GRAMMATICA	PRONUNCIA*
10 / 9	▪ Realizza i compiti assegnati in modo pienamente soddisfacente. ▪ Organizza il discorso in modo efficace e lo sviluppa con relativa disinvoltura. ▪ Riesce a dare la giusta rilevanza ai punti chiave. I connettivi previsti per il livello[1] vengono usati in modo corretto e appropriato.	▪ Interviene e mantiene la parola in modo appropriato. ▪ Procede nella conversazione in modo autonomo. ▪ Chiede in maniera appropriata chiarimenti e dettagli su quello che ha detto l'interlocutore. ▪ Applica le principali regole di cortesia.	▪ Si esprime in modo chiaro. ▪ Ha un patrimonio lessicale ampio e riesce a compensare le lacune lessicali con qualche circonlocuzione. ▪ Le interferenze con altre lingue possono ancora essere presenti.	▪ Dimostra di conoscere una buona gamma di strutture[1]. ▪ Dimostra un buon grado di accuratezza: gli errori sono isolati e riguardano le strutture più complesse.	▪ Occasionali errori fonologici o difficoltà articolatorie. ▪ Quello che dice è abbastanza chiaro.
8 / 7	▪ Realizza i compiti assegnati in modo adeguato anche se alcuni punti possono essere sviluppati meno di altri. ▪ Organizza il discorso in modo abbastanza chiaro: riesce a mettere in evidenza i punti chiave, pur se con qualche vaghezza. ▪ Pause per cercare parole e forme possono occorrere nelle sequenze di una certa lunghezza. ▪ I connettivi previsti per il livello[1] vengono usati quasi sempre in modo corretto e appropriato.	▪ Interviene e mantiene la parola con relativa sicurezza. ▪ Ha ancora bisogno di aiuto da parte dell'interlocutore. ▪ È capace di ripetere parte di ciò che ha detto l'interlocutore per confermare la reciproca comprensione. ▪ Applica in modo adeguato le principali regole di cortesia.	▪ Si esprime in modo abbastanza lineare; può trovare difficoltà quando affronta concetti complessi o descrive situazioni non familiari. ▪ Usa un buon numero di termini legati all'argomento; prova a compensare le lacune lessicali, ma non sempre ci riesce. ▪ Le interferenze con altre lingue sono ancora evidenti.	▪ Usa in modo abbastanza corretto le strutture più frequenti[1]. ▪ Gli errori riguardano perlopiù singoli elementi del discorso.	▪ Gli errori fonologici o le difficoltà articolatorie si verificano in rapporto a determinati suoni e combinazioni di suoni. ▪ Quello che dice è comprensibile.
6 / 5	▪ Realizza i compiti assegnati in parte o in modo approssimativo. ▪ Organizza il discorso in modo semplice: riesce a far capire a grandi linee quali sono i punti che ritiene essenziali. ▪ Le pause per cercare parole e forme o per riparare agli errori sono evidenti. ▪ Usa alcuni connettivi previsti per il livello[1] ma non sempre in modo corretto.	▪ Usa semplici tecniche per intervenire in una conversazione e mantenere la parola anche se non sempre in modo appropriato. ▪ Ha bisogno di aiuto da parte dell'interlocutore per procedere. ▪ È capace di chiedere chiarimenti o ripetizioni quando non capisce. ▪ Dimostra di conoscere le principali regole di cortesia; le applica con qualche incertezza.	▪ Riesce a esprimere quello che vuole dire, nonostante problemi lessicali diffusi (difficoltà di formulazione, ripetizioni). ▪ Usa per lo più vocaboli elementari e qualche termine o espressione legati all'argomento. ▪ Errori lessicali e interferenze con altre lingue sono ancora frequenti.	▪ Gli errori sono frequenti (in riferimento sia alle strutture attese[1] che, occasionalmente, alle strutture di base). ▪ Gli errori non pregiudicano la trasparenza del messaggio.	▪ Gli errori fonologici o le difficoltà articolatorie sono frequenti. ▪ La comprensione di quello che dice richiede generalmente poco sforzo da parte dell'interlocutore che talvolta può essere costretto a interpretare quello che il candidato vuole dire.
4 / 3	▪ Tenta di realizzare i compiti assegnati ma non ci riesce o ci riesce solo in parte. ▪ L'organizzazione del discorso non è molto chiara. ▪ Le pause e le esitazioni sono frequenti e rendono frammentario/ meccanico il discorso. ▪ Usa solo connettivi semplici per collegare frasi.	▪ Procede nella conversazione solo con l'aiuto dell'interlocutore. ▪ Si blocca e non ha strategie per rientrare nella comunicazione.	▪ Ha un vocabolario limitato e gli errori lessicali pregiudicano la capacità di espressione. ▪ Si serve di vocaboli generici e di espressioni semplici e memorizzate di cui tende a sovraestendere l'uso. ▪ Le interferenze con altre lingue sono frequenti. ▪ Può usare parti estese del *prompt*.	▪ Usa una gamma molto limitata di strutture. ▪ Sono frequenti errori di base e incertezze che possono generare difficoltà di comprensione.	▪ Gli errori fonologici o le difficoltà articolatorie sono numerosi. ▪ La comprensione di quello che dice richiede un certo sforzo da parte dell'interlocutore, che può essere costretto a chiedere chiarimenti o conferme.
2 / 1	▪ I compiti assegnati non sono portati a compimento. ▪ Si interrompe continuamente. ▪ Sono molto frequenti salti logici e i meccanismi di coesione sono quasi assenti.	▪ Gli interventi sono inadeguati e inappropriati. ▪ Contribuisce solo in minima parte all'interazione.	▪ Ha un repertorio lessicale estremamente ristretto. Si esprime per *routine* e frasi memorizzate. ▪ Gli errori lessicali rendono quasi impossibile capire quello che dice. ▪ Per sopperire alle lacune lessicali ricorre anche a parole della lingua madre o di altre lingue.	▪ Commette sistematicamente errori morfologici, anche in riferimento a strutture di base. ▪ Continui fraintendimenti da parte dell'interlocutore.	▪ Gli errori fonologici o le difficoltà articolatorie sono molto numerosi. ▪ La comprensione di quello che dice richiede molto sforzo da parte dell'interlocutore. Alcuni passaggi non sono chiari.
	▪ Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.	▪ Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.	▪ Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.	▪ Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.	▪ Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.

[1] Si vedano le *Strutture ricorrenti nelle prove di produzione del livello PLIDA B1* nel *Quaderno delle specifiche* o nel *Manuale per le commissioni orali* del livello B1.
* NB: Al livello B1 ci si aspetta, per tutte le fasce di punteggio descritte, che il candidato abbia ancora un forte accento straniero.

Image 101 – Speaking assessment criteria for the PLIDA B1 level certification.

The PLIDA B2 level speaking assessment grid introduces suprasegmental traits in the assessment of the candidates' performance. In fact, mispronunciation of individual sounds or groups of sounds, lack of intonation and rhythm variations are the two criteria which negatively influence the marking of the speaking test. On the contrary, in the highest bands, the use of variation in voice pitch to stress important words or chunks of speech is a further marking criterion which positively determine the outcomes of the candidates' performance.

	EFFICACIA COMUNICATIVA	INTERAZIONE (SOLO PER LA PROVA DI INTERAZIONE)	LESSICO	GRAMMATICA	PRONUNCIA
10 9	• Realizza i compiti in modo pienamente soddisfacente. • Si esprime in modo chiaro e ben strutturato; usa i connettivi in modo efficace. • Le argomentazioni sono precise e arricchite di esempi o dettagli. • Si esprime con scioltezza e spontaneità tali da non richiedere sforzo da parte di chi ascolta.	• Si collega efficacemente agli interventi dell'interlocutore. • Sviluppa attivamente ed efficacemente il discorso con nuovi argomenti. • Prende, mantiene e cede la parola con sicurezza, con un uso efficace dei segnali discorsivi.	• Ha un repertorio ampio e usa un buon numero di termini specifici. • Usa in modo appropriato locuzioni e collocazioni. • Usa circonlocuzioni appropriate per colmare le lacune lessicali. • Occasionali interferenze con altre lingue.	• Dimostra di possedere una buona varietà di strutture*. • Ha una buona padronanza grammaticale; compaiono sbagli occasionali, generalmente autocorretti.	• Pronuncia chiara e naturale. • Gli errori fonologici sono occasionali e generalmente autocorretti. • Usa abilmente intonazione e ritmo per sottolineare ciò che ritiene importante.
8 7	• Realizza i compiti in modo adeguato anche se alcuni punti possono essere meno sviluppati di altri. • Si esprime quasi sempre in modo chiaro e strutturato; usa i connettivi in modo abbastanza efficace. • Le argomentazioni sono abbastanza precise e supportate da dettagli. • Generalmente sciolto; qualche esitazione in turni lunghi o in argomentazioni complesse.	• Si collega in modo quasi sempre appropriato agli interventi dell'interlocutore. • Propone argomenti per sviluppare il discorso. • Prende, mantiene e cede la parola in modo appropriato; qualche incertezza nell'uso dei segnali discorsivi.	• Ha un repertorio adeguato; usa qualche termine specifico. • Usa in modo quasi sempre appropriato locuzioni e collocazioni. • Usa circonlocuzioni per colmare le lacune lessicali, anche se a volte può risultare impreciso. • Occasionali interferenze con altre lingue.	• Dimostra di possedere una discreta varietà di strutture*. • Ha una discreta padronanza grammaticale; gli errori compaiono soprattutto nei passaggi più complessi.	• Pronuncia chiara e naturale. • Pochi errori fonologici, non sempre autocorretti. • Ricorre in modo abbastanza efficace all'intonazione e al ritmo per sottolineare ciò che ritiene importante.
6 5	• Realizza i compiti assegnati in parte o in modo approssimativo. • Si esprime in modo sufficientemente chiaro e strutturato, anche se con qualche incertezza. • Argomentazioni non del tutto precise; possono comparire dettagli poco pertinenti. • Si esprime con scioltezza, ma alcuni passaggi possono richiedere un leggero sforzo da parte di chi ascolta.	• Gli interventi sono pertinenti, ma non sempre collegati a quelli dell'interlocutore. • Recepisce gli stimoli e li sviluppa aggiungendo qualche elemento. • Prende, mantiene e cede la parola a volte in modo inappropriato. • Gestisce in modo adeguato i livelli di formalità richiesti dalle situazioni, con qualche incongruenza nell'uso dei registri.	• Ha un repertorio sufficiente a rispondere alle richieste. • Usa circonlocuzioni per colmare le lacune, anche se a volte rischia di apparire vago. • Occasionali interferenze con altre lingue.	• Dimostra di possedere un numero limitato di strutture*. • Tende a preferire le strutture semplici a quelle complesse. • Ha una padronanza grammaticale sufficiente. Gli errori, anche se diffusi, non provocano fraintendimenti.	• Pronuncia chiara, talvolta poco naturale. • Gli errori fonologici, anche evidenti, non ostacolano mai la comprensione. • Ricorre a tratti all'intonazione e al ritmo per sottolineare ciò che ritiene importante, ma non sempre ci riesce.
4 3	• Realizza i compiti in minima parte. • Il discorso è poco coeso, a tratti confuso. • Argomentazioni insufficienti e piuttosto povere. • Blocchi e pause innaturali pregiudicano la scioltezza.	• Gli interventi sono poco pertinenti e spesso non collegati a quelli dell'interlocutore. • Si limita a rispondere agli stimoli esterni, senza contribuire attivamente al discorso. • Prende, mantiene e cede la parola con difficoltà o in modo inappropriato. • Mostra evidenti incertezze nella gestione dei registri e del livello di formalità richiesti.	• Compaiono interferenze con altre lingue. • Uso eccessivo di termini generici e di espressioni vaghe.	• Dà l'impressione di saper utilizzare solo strutture dei livelli inferiori. • Ha una padronanza grammaticale insufficiente; gli errori a volte impediscono la comprensione.	• Errori fonologici e difficoltà articolatorie possono pregiudicare la comprensione del messaggio. • Non varia l'intonazione né il ritmo per sottolineare ciò che ritiene importante.
2 1	• I compiti non sono portati a compimento. • Si esprime in modo eccessivamente semplice e buona parte del messaggio non è chiara. • Le idee non sono sostenute da argomentazioni. • Esitazioni continue e discorso frammentario.	• Gli interventi sono scollegati da quelli dell'interlocutore. • Ha bisogno di uno stimolo costante per procedere. • Non ha alcuna consapevolezza del registro da adottare.	• Uso frequente di vocaboli elementari. • Frequenti errori lessicali e interferenze con altre lingue. • Estrema difficoltà a reperire termini adeguati per portare a termine il compito.	• Dimostra incertezze anche sulle strutture dei livelli inferiori. • Gli errori impediscono spesso la comprensione.	• Gli errori fonologici e le difficoltà articolatorie sono molto frequenti. • L'interlocutore può essere costretto a interpretare quello che il candidato intende comunicare.
0	Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.	Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.	Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.	Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.	Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.

*elenco delle strutture derivato dallo spoglio delle prove B2 (Cfr. PLIDA B2 - Manuale delle Commissioni orali, scaricabile dal sito www.plida.it).

Image 102 – Speaking assessment criteria for the PLIDA B2 level certification.

As in the PLIDA C1 level, mispronunciation is often related to the influence of L1 segmental and suprasegmental features which, if reported in Italian, may limit the intelligibility of the communicative exchange. Phonological control and appropriate use of suprasegmentals are still the criteria on which the assessment of the speaking test is based. Moreover, the use of self-correction made by speakers is another marking criterion used at this level of language proficiency. This last aspect is particularly relevant from a methodological point of view, as it includes the learners' phonological awareness among the assessment criteria used for the evaluation of pronunciation and intonation skills.

PRODUZIONE ORALE - PRONUNCIA*	
10 9	■ La pronuncia è chiara e naturale. ■ Il livello di correttezza fonologica è pressoché costante. ■ Varia abilmente l'intonazione per trasmettere sfumature di significato.
8 7	■ La pronuncia è chiara e naturale. ■ Errori fonologici occasionali, prontamente autocorretti. ■ Buona padronanza dell'intonazione per esprimere enfasi.
6 5	■ La pronuncia è chiara e naturale. ■ Persistono errori fonologici che però non appesantiscono l'ascolto. ■ Può aver difficoltà a variare l'intonazione a seconda di ciò che intende dire.
4 3	■ La presenza di tratti della L1 o di errori fonologici rende l'ascolto a tratti faticoso. ■ L'intonazione ricalca quella della L1 e/o non permette di conferire espressività al discorso.
2 1	■ Errori fonologici rendono alcuni passaggi di difficile comprensione. ■ Difficoltà diffuse a livello prosodico.
0	■ Il testo è incomprensibile o non valutabile.

Image 103 - Speaking assessment criteria for the PLIDA C1 level certification.

CELI

As in the CEFRL A1 and A2 levels, pronunciation and intonation are assessed according to three types of errors: 1. systematic pronunciation errors (0 point); 2. occasional pronunciation and intonation errors (1 point); and 3. a few pronunciation and intonation errors which do not interfere which the intelligibility of communication (2 points). As in the CEFRL B1, B2, C1 and C2 levels, the speaking assessment grids include four assessment criteria: 1. lexical competence; 2. sociolinguistic competence; 3. grammatical competence; and 4. phonological competence. Each competence accrues a maximum of five points. The B1 level phonological competence has the following marking criteria: systematic pronunciation and intonation errors which impede fluidity and clarity in the communicative exchange (1 point); frequent errors which sometimes impede the complete understanding of the message by listeners (2 points); various errors and difficulties in the articulation of sounds and in the use of intonation, which, however, do not impede effective communication (3 points); a foreign accented pronunciation, with adequate control of intonation traits (4 points); a foreign accented pronunciation which always maintains clarity of speech and adequate intonation, rare mistakes (5 points). The B2 level phonological competence has the following marking criteria: systematic pronunciation and intonation errors which impede fluidity and clarity in the communicative exchange, the rhythm of speech is not acceptable (1 point); frequent errors which

sometimes impede the complete understanding of the message by listeners, intonation is often unacceptable and the rhythm of speech is hard-earned and unstable (2 points); various errors and difficulties in the articulation of sounds and in the use of intonation, which, however, do not impede effective communication, intonation is often adequate and the rhythm of speech is often hard-earned and unstable (3 points); a foreign accented pronunciation, with adequate control of intonation traits, rare mistakes and unstable rhythm do not impede comprehension (4 points); good and clear pronunciation with fluent and natural intonation, rare mistakes and acceptable rhythm (5 points). The C1 level phonological competence has the following marking criteria: frequent errors, rhythm not always acceptable (1 point); foreign accented pronunciation, various errors, intonation often unacceptable, and the rhythm of speech is hard-earned and unstable (2 points); a foreign accented pronunciation, with adequate control of the intonation traits, rare mistakes and unstable rhythm do not impede comprehension (3 points); good and clear, slightly accented, pronunciation, intonation is clear and natural, a few mistakes are still present, but the rhythm interruptions do not impede communication (4 points); good and clear pronunciation with fluent and natural intonation, rare mistakes and acceptable rhythm (5 points). The C2 level phonological competence has the following marking criteria: foreign accented pronunciation, frequent errors, rhythm not always acceptable and intonation is sometimes inadequate (1 point); foreign accented pronunciation, adequate intonation, rare mistakes but some uncertainties in rhythm (2 points); a slightly foreign pronunciation, with adequate control of intonation traits, rare mistakes and unstable rhythm do not impede comprehension (3 points); good, clear, slightly accented pronunciation, intonation is clear and natural, a few mistakes are still present, but the rhythm interruptions do not impede communication (4 points); very good and clear pronunciation with expressive and natural intonation, and very fluid rhythm (5 points).

As already pointed out for the English standardised proficiency tests, also in the analysis of the Italian standardised proficiency tests, descriptors for the assessment of segmentals and suprasegmentals are presented in detail. However, while the examiners are provided with the necessary tools and marking bands to evaluate the students' performances, learners do not receive an appropriate and effective training. The analysis of online apps, textbooks, and standardised proficiency tests discussed in this chapter stresses the urgency to provide both foreign language learners and tutors with effective and appropriate materials which can fill the weaknesses of pronunciation and intonation training that I have highlighted so far (Chapter 2). I will now procced with a comparison between the standardised proficiency tests and academic foreign language courses' marking schemes. For the purpose of my study, the comparison between the marking criteria used by linguistic and academic institutions is important in order to determine the phonological traits that are already included among the skills assessed by markers and to better define the lacks in the phonological training in terms of activities offered. In order to fill those gaps, I have designed authentic materials (Chapter 3) in accordance with the learning aims of the modules I was teaching on, and which

could better support the acquisition and training of phonological skills at different levels of language proficiency.

2.6 Marking criteria: a comparison between standardised proficiency tests and academic foreign language courses' marking schemes

As already pointed out by the investigation of the criteria used in the assessment of standardised proficiency tests, the analysis of the marking scheme in use at the Department of Modern Languages of the University of Birmingham suggests that pronunciation and intonation are two of the aspects considered in the testing of the students' oral performances in academic programmes as well. In the Department of Modern Languages of the University of Birmingham, the core modules' oral-aural assessments are marked according to the Oral-Aural Assessment Feedback Sheet which includes the assessment of pronunciation and intonation as one of the three criteria (the other two are accuracy and range of structures and vocabulary) which are taken into consideration when marking of the students' quality of language during oral-aural assessments.

	I			IIi		IIii		III		Fail	
Quality of the	100%	80%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	45%	40%	35%	30%
Language (60%)	60	48	42	39	36	33	30	27	24	21	18
Accuracy	Excellent to outstanding			Good to Very good		Satisfactory		Frequent errors		Extremely inaccurate	
Range of structures & vocabulary	(Largely) confident & appropriate use of a wide range of structures, idioms, and vocabulary			Appropriate use of a good range of vocabulary, complex structures & idioms		Some sense of appropriate vocabulary. Adequate command of a range of complex structures & idioms		Limited vocabulary. Weak knowledge of complex structures		Extremely anglicised. Unable to communicate more than basic ideas	
Pronunciation & intonation	Largely accurate to close to native			Mostly correct		Reasonably correct some serious errors		Comprehensible but with some difficulty		Barely comprehensible	

Image 104 – The three marking criteria for the assessment of quality of language during oral-aural exams.

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The different levels of pronunciation and intonation accuracy follow the patterns which have been described for the standardised proficiency tests analysed in the previous paragraphs of this chapter. In fact, as in the standardised proficiency tests' marking criteria grids, the Oral-Aural Assessment Feedback Sheet also provides different marking criteria, each of which corresponds to the main marking bands used in academia for written and oral-aural assessments and which, among other factors, include and assess the learners' pronunciation and intonation skills. For instance, the marking grid in use in the Department of Modern Languages features five bands which correspond to the five marking bands used to test oral-aural performances. The first band in the assessment of pronunciation and intonation describes 'largely accurate to close to native' performances. As already mentioned for the standardised proficiency tests, the marking bands' description suggests the target for pronunciation and intonation is a native speaker's performance. The upper second band describes good to very good performances which are mostly correct, even though an L1 accent may emerge during the communicative exchange. The lower second band describes a satisfactory oral performance with reasonably correct pronunciation and intonation, although some serious errors may interfere with the listeners' general understanding of the student's oral performance. The third band refers to a 'comprehensible' performance, which, however, may be characterised by pronunciation and intonation flaws which could cause some difficulties to listeners. The last band describes a failed oral assessment. In this case, the speaker generally has poor control of segmental and suprasegmental features, and this greatly affects and limits the listeners' ability to understand the student's performance.

Pronunciation and intonation also appear among the marking criteria in use to assess oral assessments, debates and discussions, and oral-aural performances in Languages for All courses, which are university-wide foreign language courses available to students from other departments and university. In this case, too, the grid is divided into five bands and the target for pronunciation and intonation is a native speaker's performance. The first band explicitly suggests the 'level of a native speaker' as the target of an outstanding oral performance in terms of pronunciation and intonation proficiency. This is even further highlighted by reference to the different levels of influence of the speaker's native-language patterns, which are 'not detectable', 'not noticeable' or 'hardly' present. The upper second band refers to accurate pronunciation and varied intonation with very few noticeable patterns from the speaker's native language. In the lower second band, pronunciation and intonation are described as acceptable and may be characterised by some flaws which, however, do not impede the listeners' comprehension. The third band is characterised by unnatural pronunciation and intonation which require the listeners to 'work hard to follow'. The fail band refers to unintelligible pronunciation and intonation which badly affect communication and comprehension.

	FIRST (100-85%) FIRST (84-76%) FIRST (75-70%)	UPPER SECOND = 2.1 (69-60%)	LOWER SECOND = 2.2 (59-50%)	THIRD (49-40%)	FAIL (39-0%)
Criteria 1: Pronunciation & Intonation (10)	Level of a native speaker, influence of native language is not detectable. Near native speaker quality, no noticeable patterns of the native language. Accurate and varied; hardly any patterns of the native language.	Accurate and varied; very few patterns of the native language.	Acceptable. Some flaws but attempts to vary patterns; no undue strain on listener.	Flat intonation; poor pronunciation; listener has to work hard to follow.	P & I are an obstacle to communication; even sympathetic listener can hardly follow.

Image 105 – The pronunciation and intonation descriptors in the LfA marking criteria grid.

Drawing from the analysis of the marking criteria used in both standardised proficiency tests and foreign language academic courses, a few considerations need to be made on the current status of pronunciation and intonation teaching and assessment, and their future developments. First, a precise target for both pronunciation and intonation seems to be defined by the descriptors of the marking schemes discussed in this chapter. In fact, by looking at the descriptions of the pronunciation and intonation skills provided for each band, a native-speaker like pronunciation and intonation feature as the best possible outcomes. For instance, the highest bands of the marking schemes analysed usually describe their pronunciation and intonation proficiency levels as 'fluent and natural', 'clear and natural', 'expressive and natural', 'close to native', 'level of a native speaker'. On the contrary, the lowest bands descriptors usually refer to L1 interference as an obstacle to intelligibility and comprehension. Therefore, in the debate regarding which kind of pronunciation should be taught (Nativeness versus Intelligibility, Chapter 1), marking criteria grids seem to lean towards the 'native-speaker like' pronunciation and intonation, although they include intelligible and comprehensible pronunciation and intonation as acceptable levels of proficiency for lower bands. Secondly, another aspect that emerges from this analysis concerns the need to differentiate the learning outcomes according to the learners' different level of language proficiency. In fact, as the marking criteria generally include pronunciation and intonation, and they usually refer to native-speaker like mastering of the segmental and suprasegmental features of a foreign language as the highest level of proficiency that a learner can achieve, there is clearly a need to design and offer pronunciation and intonation training sessions and teaching materials which allow the learners to actually reach the level of a native speaker starting from different proficiency levels. In this respect, Biggs' (2003; 2011) Constructive alignment (CA) offers a valid paradigm that could be followed in the development of pronunciation and intonation training sessions and assessments. In his description of constructive alignment, Biggs highlights the two main aspects of this teaching/learning process. The first aspect concerns the constructive quality of this approach which "refers to the idea that students construct meaning through relevant learning activities. That is, meaning is not something imparted or transmitted from teacher to learner but is something learners have to create for themselves. Teaching is simply a catalyst for learning" (Biggs, 2003:2). Thus, the teaching process is student-centred rather than teacher-centred, and is framed within another teaching theory, i.e. constructivism. In fact, according to constructivist teaching theories, learners 'construct' their knowledge progressively and independently and "instructors [...] thrive as mentors" (McVay Lynch M., 2012:15). The teaching process becomes flexible and teaching activities are changeable and malleable according to the

students' interests, needs and pace (see the theory of constructivism in Introduction and Chapter 2). The second aspect concerns the notion of alignment and "refers to what the teacher does, which is to set up a learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes. The key is that the components in the teaching system, especially the teaching methods used and the assessment tasks, are aligned with the learning activities assumed in the intended outcomes. The learner is in a sense 'trapped' and finds it difficult to escape without learning what he or she is intended to learn" (Biggs, 2003:2). In order to create a constructive alignment between all aspects of the teaching process (e.g. learning outcomes, activities, assessments, etc.), Biggs suggests a few steps that need to be followed: "1. Defining the intended learning outcomes (ILOs); 2. Choosing teaching/learning activities likely to lead to the ILOs; 3. Assessing students' actual learning outcomes to see how well they match what was intended; 4. Arriving at a final grade" (Biggs, 2003:2). As far as the definition of intended learning outcomes is concerned, Biggs highlights the importance of two different types of knowledge: 1. declarative knowledge and 2. functioning knowledge. Whilst the first type refers to a knowledge that can be declared (without sometimes being fully understood) and which is achieved when the students are able to outline, in their own words, the notions that teachers have been recently imparting to them, functional knowledge refers to a fully internalised knowledge that students can put into practice and use properly in specific areas of life. Therefore, "The first step in designing the curriculum objectives, then, is to make clear what levels of understanding we want from our students in what topics, and what performances of understanding would give us this knowledge" (Biggs, 2003:2). Once the intended learning outcomes are identified and clearly expressed, the selection of teaching/learning activities can take place. In this respect, Biggs points out how out-of-class activities (for instance, interactive group work, peer teaching, independent learning, and work-based learning) can positively supplement more traditional in-class activities. Moreover, as they happen outside the class, the students can autonomously decide the learning/research strategies that better match their learning styles and pace. Finally, Biggs states that the assessment tasks need to mirror the intended learning outcomes. In fact, the students "will learn what they think they will be assessed on, not what is in the curriculum, or even on what has been 'covered' in class" (Biggs, 2003:3). Therefore, if the teaching/learning activities included in the curriculum are reflected in the assessment tasks, "in preparing for the assessments, students will be learning the curriculum" (Biggs, 2003:3). In terms of the assessment of pronunciation and intonation skills, the intended learning outcomes and assessments tasks will be based on the students' questionnaires' (Chapter 4) answers on the target pronunciation that they wish to achieve (native-like vs intelligible).

Furthermore, the role played by pronunciation and intonation at the different levels of language proficiency in general should also be taken into consideration. In fact, as the learning outcomes that the learners can aspire to achieve depend on the learners' level of language proficiency, so the marking grids should be modified and adapted according to the learning goals of each proficiency level. All these considerations

should be addressed in order to provide the students with all the necessary training for their achievement of the best learning outcomes (see Image 104 and 105). Moreover, more accurate marking criteria may facilitate the assessment of oral-aural performances and would certainly be a fairer testing method.

2.7 A comparison between textbooks used for standardised proficiency tests and for non-standardised foreign language courses

Another aspect that is relevant in order to understand how closely standardised proficiency tests and academic foreign language courses are linked to each other is a comparison between the activities offered by these two learning paths for the acquisition and training of pronunciation and intonation. Drawing on the analysis of the pronunciation and intonation activities offered by the IELTS coursebooks, the programmes of standardised proficiency tests generally cover the training of the following segmental and suprasegmental features: 1. individual sounds (i.e. spelling); 2. word stress (i.e. word stress patterns and variations, especially in word families); 3. sentence stress (i.e. emphasis); 4. intonation (i.e. pitch); 5. chunking (i.e. rhythm and pauses). Each pronunciation and intonation unit is introduced by a brief explanation of the communicative function and phonological characteristics of the phonological traits introduced and analysed. The types of exercises offered in the training of these features for CEFRL levels B1, B2 and C1 are based on the combination of the perceptive and articulatory approaches. Moreover, each IELTS textbook has final sections with further information and explanations on the segmental and suprasegmental traits analysed in the central units. Also the Italian coursebooks analysed feature pronunciation and intonation exercises aiming to the development of students' perceptive and articulatory skills. Explanations are usually omitted or relegated to specific units at the beginning or at the end of textbooks, and rarely do explanations introduce activities. By looking at the types of exercises offered by both types of coursebooks, it is clear that textbooks generally follow the same pattern in the types of activities included, explanations offered and theoretical approaches used, i.e. usually a combination of the perceptive and articulatory approaches. Therefore, both standardised and academic programmes seem to rely on a native-speaker tutor's expertise and knowledge for the delivery of pronunciation and intonation training, and for the provision of further explanations on the segmental and suprasegmental traits addressed (see Chapter 2, paragraph 2.5). The phonological knowledge of native-speaker tutors, however, may not be sufficient in order to provide students with the linguistic and phonological variation which characterise modern languages. In this respect, my research offers a number of different teaching resources which could be used by language tutors with the necessary tools to offer an insight, as detailed as possible, of the broad variety of accents and other language variation-related issues that would not be addressed otherwise.

2.8 Standardised proficiency tests in academia

The close connection between standardised proficiency tests and foreign language courses in academia is further highlighted by the numerous language proficiency certification offered by the *Centri Linguistici di Ateneo* (University Modern Languages Centres), also known as *CLAs*. In fact, by accessing the websites of some Italian universities, it is possible to peruse the standardised proficiency tests that are available to enrolled students and staff. As far as English language is concerned, the IELTS, TOEFL, and Cambridge Assessment English tests are the standardised proficiency tests most widely offered by Italian universities (e.g. Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia, Università degli Studi di Padova, La Sapienza – Università di Roma, Università degli Studi di Pavia, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Università degli Studi di Catania). As far as Italian is concerned, Italian universities offer Italian languages certifications to foreign students, researchers and staff. For instance, CEDILS, CELI and CILS are the most popular Italian standardised proficiency tests offered by Italian universities (e.g. Università di Torino, Università degli Studi di Milano, Università degli Studi di Padova, Università per Stranieri di Perugia, Università per Stranieri di Siena).

Having discussed and analysed how pronunciation and intonation are trained in the most popular apps available to learn foreign languages, in textbooks commonly used in academia to teach Italian as a foreign language and in standardised proficiency tests for English and Italian as FLs, it is evident that besides the official teaching resources available, it is crucial to further provide language tutors and students with more appropriate types of activities which can support the training of different phonological skills at different levels of language proficiency, and in order to fill the gaps highlighted in Chapter 2.

In the next chapter, the materials devised for the training of pronunciation and intonation during the two experimental phases in this study will be introduced, analysed, and discussed. In particular, the innovative use of an online voice recording tool for the training of pronunciation and intonation will be described, and activities based on literary texts and drama techniques for the teaching of segmental and suprasegmental features will be exposed.

Using loops, tongue-twisters, sayings, literary texts and drama techniques to teach pronunciation and intonation in the foreign language class

3.1 The use of literature and theatrical pieces to enhance pronunciation and intonation

Literature has been widely employed to teach foreign languages and literary texts have been used and adapted to meet the theoretical principles and teaching purposes that progressively characterised foreign language classes over the past decades. The various ways in which literature has been exploited for the acquisition of foreign languages is perfectly reflected in the complex and rich debate that has originated on the role of literature in the foreign language acquisition process. In this context, Kramsch and Kramsch (2000) offer an overview on how literary texts have been integrated and used in foreign languages classes depending on the teaching practices and the pedagogic purposes that characterised specific key periods during the twentieth century. For instance, the first decades of the twentieth century saw the predominance of the grammar-translation method in the teaching practices with foreign languages. According to this method, which was first used to teach Latin and Ancient Greek, literary texts played a central role in the foreign language learning process for their "prestige and educational value" (Covarino, 2019:4). The target language was perceived as "a means of accessing the texts and of gaining accurate understanding, which implied a focus on form and style and a time-consuming translation (word by word, sentence by sentence) into the students' L1" (Covarino, 2019:4). Therefore, the aspects of the target language that needed to be taught and learnt were grammar rules, literary language and expressions, and the specific linguistics devices often employed in literary contexts (for instance, complex grammatical structures, refined vocabulary, etc.). These skills barely represented the natural use of the target language but needed to be mastered in order to meet the language pedagogy's focus of the grammar-translation method, which was the reading process. In fact, reading literary texts was seen as "the most effective way of acquiring and the most useful way of using a foreign language" (Kramsch and Kramsch, 2000:560). The focus of the grammar-translation teaching method was on stylistic and critical analysis of literary texts rather than on the development of students' communicative competence in the target language (Carter and Long, 1991). During the oral-aural period (1940-1960), the focus of teaching shifted from reading to speaking, therefore literature was no longer considered a relevant support in the foreign-language acquisition process and was dismissed as primary teaching material. However, the increasing popularity of the communicative approach during the 70s and the 90s brought new attention on the use of literary texts to teach foreign languages. In fact, the communicative approach greatly encouraged the use of authentic materials as valid and relevant teaching materials to develop sociolinguistic and sociocultural skills (Bagarić and Djigunović, 2007). In this context, literary texts are used, as many other authentic teaching resources (for instance, dialogues and texts on different topics related to everyday life), as conveyors of the natural use of the target language in different

communicative contexts. Notwithstanding the different pedagogic purposes and teaching practices for which literature has been integrated in foreign language curricula during the past decades, its well-established use certainly highlights its beneficial role on the foreign language learning outcomes. In fact, many studies and much research have pointed out the benefits that the use of literary texts can have on the students' target language proficiency. First, literature positively contributes to the acquisition of vocabulary and to the consolidation of grammar (McKay, 1989); moreover, it greatly enhances the learners' writing and reading skills (Parkinson and Reid-Thomas, 2000; Khatib, Derakhshan and Rezaei, 2011). Furthermore, literature offers an authentic experience of the target culture. In fact, through literary texts students can develop and expand their sociocultural and sociolinguistic skills as they have a direct insight, without mediation or filters, into the target culture (McKay, 1986). The authenticity that characterises literary texts also contributes to sustain and enhance learners' motivation, which is identified as the most valuable argument for integrating literature in the foreign language curriculum, as suggested by Hanauer (2001). In fact, as Covarino claimed:

"The stories of literature are non-trivial, encompass human experience and stimulate readers' personal response based on their own life experience (Parkinson and Reid-Thomas, 2000). Consequently, they have a strong appeal to students who not only are involved "in the suspense of unravelling the plot" (Lazar, 1993:15), but are also stimulated to reflect and to discuss. In fact, often the literary text has a hidden meaning to be discovered, so that a dialogue with the reader is created where the reader interprets the text, negotiates its meanings, and feels involved" (Covarino, 2019:7).

Literature has been proved to be a valid teaching material also from the methodological point of view (Covarino, 2019). In fact, the use of literary texts triggers communicative exchanges between the learners, and forces them to think and develop ideas about the concepts they read about in the literary pieces. Thus, not only does literature help students in the development of their critical and analytical thinking, which are fundamental and required skills in academia, but it also puts the thinkers and speakers (i.e. the students) at the centre of the teaching process by "stimulating their interest and participation" (Covarino, 2019:6), putting into practice the theoretical principles of the communicative approach to foreign language teaching. Besides literary texts, also other forms of literary and performative art can be employed to train phonological skills. In the next paragraphs (see paragraph 3.3) other forms of literary texts and audio-visual resources will be introduced and discussed.

Drawing on this brief overview on the different ways in which literature has been used during the twentieth century and on the benefits provided by the use of literary texts, it may seem that literature has been mainly employed for the acquisition of reading, grammar, translation, sociolinguistic and sociocultural skills. However, as it will be further discussed in the following paragraph, the different genres of literary texts, theatrical pieces and creative drama have been used in different foreign language contexts to specifically enhance pronunciation and intonation skills (Özkan Çelik & Perihan Korkut, 2018; V. Tsybaneva, A.

Seredintseva, O. Maletina, 2019) through an active involvement of learners during the learning process, as they are required to verbally perform literary/written resources by paying attention to specific segmental and suprasegmental traits. Moreover, the examples which will be discussed in the next paragraphs are examples of good teaching practice for language tutors, who are invited to use texts already included in the module portfolio in an innovative way.

3.2 Drama Pedagogy in foreign language teaching

Providing a definition of drama in the field of language acquisition and some of its major characteristics seem relevant at this point in order to highlight the pedagogical and linguistic reasons why different drama techniques will be used as teaching materials in my experiment. The first definition of drama as a likely representation of reality can be traced back to Ancient Greece. In fact, Aristotle, in his Poetics, first stated that the main aim of artistic acts is to present "things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be" (Smithson, 1983:4). Therefore, in the Aristotelian view, the arts must adhere to the principle of imitation in order to "depict the universal" (Smithson, 1983:4). At the beginning of the sixth chapter of the Poetics, Aristotle provided a definition of tragedy, according to which "Tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is heroic, complete and of a certain size, in language embellished with all kinds of ornament, each used separately in the different parts of the play, in dramatic, not narrative form, and accomplishing with pity and fear the catharsis of these emotions" (Battin, 1975:294). The Aristotelian definition of tragedy points out three main aspects that must be considered when applying performative arts as teaching tools in education, and more specifically in the foreign language class. First, the imitative aspect which characterises any form of drama should also be reflected in the activities to be carried out in class – this could be in the form of a theatrical *mis-en-scene*, or in exercises and activities which require the students to imitate a likely representation of reality, as we will see when loops and other forms of performative activities will be discussed in the following paragraphs of this chapter (see this paragraph and paragraph 3.3). Secondly, the fundamental role of the language and of some of its aspects, usually and specifically stressed in dramatic representations, such as "rhythm, harmony and melody" (Battin, 1975:294) should be valued and used in the foreign language class in order to convey a more realistic contextualisation of the language itself and of some idiomatic expressions, which otherwise would be difficult for the language tutors to explain and for the learners to acquire (see paragraph 3.3 of this chapter). Third, the emotions that are involved in any form of drama may be used to make the activities more significant and to boost the learners' attention and, consequently, learning, as will be further discussed in this paragraph. In the field of education, the Aristotelian theorisation of tragedy has been put into practice through a series of research projects and theories based on the combination of drama techniques and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Experiential Learning Theory was firstly theorised in 1984 by Kolb, who developed a learning method based on the students' experience and their progressive evaluation in line

with their previous learning experiences (Sternberg & Zhang, 2014). ELT focuses on the importance of students' participation in the learning process and on how experience contributes to learning (Zhai et al., 2017). Thus, students receive more authority and responsibility, as they are directly involved in the learning processes. Moreover, students are encouraged "to be to flexible learners, incorporate all possible ways of learning into full-cycle learning, and bring about effective skills and meta-learning abilities (Kolb and Kolb, 2017)" (Kong, 2021:2). Recently, researchers have combined the use of drama techniques with the theoretical principles of Experiential Learning Theory in different fields of education (for instance, management and life sciences). Boggs et al. (2007) introduced in the management class the use of interactive drama, which consists of scenes "scenes being performed live by trained actors before a student audience, stopping at pivotal points so the audience can interact with the actors" (Boggs et al., 2007:835). Interactive drama encourages participation from the students, who are invited to interact with the performers in a variety of ways (for instance, they can discuss the scenes and suggest changes; they are also allowed to actively join the *mis-en-scene*) and it promotes experiential learning as students are fostered to "Do, Reflect, and Think and Apply" (Butler et al., 2019:12). Similarly, Koponen (2012) found that a communication module based on experiential learning significantly and positively medical students' attitudes towards learning communicative skills. Knowles et al. (2001) showed that medical students who received interactive drama training around interviewing patients with potentially embarrassing health conditions had achieved a higher level of communication skills and knowledge than those students who did not receive the experiential training. The combined use of drama and ELT tools have been used also in foreign language education. Knutson (2003) tackles the benefits of applying ELT to second-language education by analysing its implementation in the English as second language classroom. In fact, according to Knutson (2003), foreign and second language learning is facilitated when students are invited to cooperate in order to complete a task-based or project-based activities; and when the task or project involves ELT's teaching principles such as "exposure, participation, internalization, and dissimilation" (Knutson, 2003:56). Mollaei and Rahnama (2012) offered a historical background of how ELT has been adopted in the field of FL education. In particular, the researchers have highlighted the primer role that ELT can have on students' personal growth and on the development of their potential; moreover, they stated that "experiential learning, with its emphasis on critical self-reflection, may prove to be a beneficial approach for helping learners to negotiate social meaning and their own shifting identities in a new culture" (Mollaei and Rahnama, 2012:268). Thus, ELT tools, such as drama techniques, can on the one hand help students to construct new and positive identities of themselves as successful FL language learners ; on the other hand, ELT can ease the frustration and anxiety that often interfere during the FL learning process (Mollaei and Rahnama, 2012).

The application of the Aristotelian principles of drama to the training of pronunciation and intonation skills greatly boosts the learning experience by actively involving learners through 1. activities which represent

possible real-life communicative situations; therefore their content is meaningful as learners can use it in authentic communicative exchanges with other speakers; 2. a deep focus on the use of the target language which contributes to improving the students' language proficiency and linguistic/phonological awareness; 3. emotional involvement which helps students to mark the pronunciation and intonation training sessions as meaningful learning activities. As previously pointed out in this paragraph, one of the aspects to be considered when applying drama techniques to foreign language teaching is the fundamental role of language and of some of its aspects, such as "rhythm, harmony and melody" (Battin, 1975:294), which are normally and specifically stressed in dramatic representations, and which greatly contribute to a more realistic and natural use of the language. In fact, these aspects are used by native speakers, and sometimes by advanced learners, to convey the nature of their thoughts, their emotional state, the implicit or explicit meaning of their words and the importance of what they say more precisely. By practising the target language in real communicative exchanges, learners are able to acquire these suprasegmental features which otherwise would be difficult for language tutors to explain and for learners to acquire. The benefits of drama techniques in the teaching of foreign languages have been pointed out on many occasions over the past centuries. The Romans used drama techniques to teach Ancient Greek; this employment of drama was further implemented in the teaching of languages during the Renaissance when the Jesuits used theatre to teach Latin and Ancient Greek to their pupils (Piazzoli, 2011). However, from the seventeenth to the first half of the twentieth centuries, the use of drama techniques in language teaching was abruptly interrupted by the appearance of a new teaching method. In fact, in the seventeenth century the grammar translation method emerged and immediately became the most popular pedagogic technique used to teach Latin and Ancient Greek. The focus on the grammatical rules and on their application while translating from the target language into the students' native language and the predominant attention on the teaching of classical languages such as Latin and Ancient Greek consequently lessened the need to develop the main skills extensively practised when using drama techniques in the language learning process, i.e. the communicative skills. Although the use of drama in foreign language teaching was resumed in the nineteenth century (Schewe, 2007), it was only in the second half of the twentieth century that drama regained its importance as a valid teaching method. In fact, with the increasing popularity of the communicative approach (Chapter 1), drama activities have been widely featuring in foreign language classes. The great success of the communicative approach in foreign language teaching required the use of techniques which privileged the development of the learners' communicative skills over their translation ones (Piazzoli, 2011). To fulfil the pedagogical aims of the communicative approach, during the 1960s, in England, Slade (1954) and Way (1967) first suggested using drama techniques in elementary schools in order to develop the creativity of children and boost their individual potentials. Slade (1954) encouraged teachers to prioritise the students' spontaneity of expression and value their freedom of expression over what they actually express. On the practical level, in order to support the teachers who were attempting at applying drama techniques for the

first time in class, Slade (1954) developed the method defined as 'ideas game' which consisted of building up a story with the students before they actually put the plot into practice with their tutor's guidance. Idea games could be more specifically applied to the teaching of pronunciation and intonation, as students could be encouraged to work in pairs or small groups and to build up realistic plots which present dialogues focused on the practice of one or more segmentals and suprasegmentals. Drawing from Slade's theories on the spontaneity of self-expression, Way (1967) decided to apply to the classroom the activities and exercises created by Stanislavskij (1938) for the training of actors. Way (1967) invented a drama method based on a series of exercises and activities devised to develop the students' concentration, creativity and sensitivity. The main aim of Way's method was not to improve the pupils' acting skills, but their life skills (Bolton, 1985). Way also coined the idea of drama as something concerned with the "individuality of the individual" (Bolton, 1985:154). Therefore, in Way's view, drama activities are aimed at providing each individual with a tool to "find himself" (Bolton, 1985:154). The purpose of drama activities pointed out by Way anticipates the debate on the role of learners' identity during the acquisition of a foreign language (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.3.3). Slade and Way's theoretical and practical suggestions were considered the first steps towards a new idea of pedagogy which, three decades later, was defined as process drama (Piazzoli, 2011). During the 1970s drama techniques started to lay the foundations for a new pedagogical method. Drawing on Freire's (1970) problem-posing education, which stated that knowledge is not something which can be transferred from the tutor to the learner, but emerges through the dialogue between the two, the theory of educational drama was devised with the aim of applying drama techniques exclusively for educational purposes. One of the main experts of educational drama was Heathcote (1984), who first applied the theory of drama in education to teach different subjects (e.g. geography, literature, history, English as L1, etc.) in primary and middle schools. Heathcote particularly focused on students from low social-class schools and, through the innovative teaching methods adopted in class, managed to make the pupils passionate about all the different subjects. The new teaching techniques introduced by Heathcote were then defined as process drama. The main characteristics of process drama are 1. the use of dramatic contexts to further analyse a specific subject, and 2. the lack of hierarchical roles while using drama techniques. In this respect, in process drama activities, teachers play a role in the *mis-en-scene* and are responsible for the learning outcomes of the activity as much as the students. Heathcote and Bolton further theorised and developed process drama by introducing the concept of 'the mantle of the expert' (1994), according to which the participants act as experts in a particular field of knowledge during the drama exercise. This idea was based on Vygotskij's (1978) constructivist approach and theory of zone of proximal development. According to Vygotskij (1978), in fact, thanks to other participant' help (e.g. the tutor, the other students, etc.), the learner may be able to acquire abilities which are placed halfway between what they can already do unaided and what they are not yet ready to do unaided. In this way, learners acquire abilities that they would not be able to apply without help, but that they can apply thanks to whatever form of guidance is offered by both peers and tutors. This idea

is particularly true in the case of Italian pronunciation and intonation. In fact, Italian segmental and suprasegmental traits are generally considered easy to pick up and therefore specific training is often dismissed (Introduction). Despite this general belief, the findings of this research (Chapter 5), however, show that not only beginners, but also more advanced students present articulatory issues and that an appropriate, tutor-guided and systematic pronunciation and intonation training could positively help students to amend phonological mistakes during communicative exchanges. Process drama is also based on the theories of Bruner (1976) who defined play as a fundamental activity for the correct and full development of children' personality and creativity, and which can be seen as a way through which children can externalise and consequently experience their inner life. During the 1990s, O'Neill (1995) modernised Heathcote's process drama and transformed it into a real theatrical technique to be used in education. In fact, in O'Neill's idea the dramatic process becomes a theatrical experience in which a teacher-artist guides the learners through a real creative and dramatic process. O'Neill's modernised idea of process drama has been applied since then at different levels of education in Anglo-Saxon countries and is the main field of research and study of master's and doctoral programmes in Modern Languages Departments at universities in Australia, where the professional process drama teachers are trained by academic studies in pedagogy and in dramatic arts combined. The use of drama in education was also suggested by Lazarov in his theorisation of suggestopedia (Chapter 1). As far as the research of a definition of the use of drama in teaching foreign languages is concerned, Holden defined it as "any activity which asks the student to portray a) himself in an imaginary situation or b) another person in an imaginary situation" (1981:1). This definition basically includes any form of drama – from theatrical pieces to role-play exercises. However, as Giebert (2014) suggested, "vocal and physical exercises that do not imply the creation of a fictional character or situation, such as articulation exercises or movement games, should also be included" (2014:140), and this seems particularly relevant in the case of pronunciation and intonation, since a combination of perceptive and articulatory exercises (Chapter 2), and activities linked to the target culture and which emotionally and cognitively engage students (see this paragraph) are an appropriate and effective strategy to support the training of segmentals and suprasegmentals. Giebert (2014) also provided a list of characteristics which can be applied in order to define the different types of drama activities, and which guided my work while I was devising the activities for this study. For instance, drama activities can be: 1. short (i.e. drama games) or long (i.e. drama projects); 2. non-verbal (i.e. "icebreakers to decrease learners' anxiety or to provide topics for discussion or to broaden learners' perspective of a foreign language by drawing their attention to aspects of body language", Giebert, 2014:140) or verbal; 3. open, generally employed to enhance the creative use of the target language as they are focused on meaning, or closed, usually form-focused and helpful to improve the accuracy of specific elements (i.e. grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation); 4. process-oriented and product-oriented, which Giebert described as

"Product-oriented forms can be more motivating for learners who prefer working towards a concrete end-product (Fonio & Genicot 2011; Schewe & Scott 2003) and also tend to be beneficial as a focus on accuracy. On the one hand, process-oriented approaches are believed to be more creative (Glock 1993; Kao & O'Neill 1998) and liberating for certain learners (Culham 2002) as fluency is valued over accuracy and there is no (or less) pressure to perform flawlessly" (2014:140).

On the other hand, the chance to experience situations that may also occur in real life could help students to contextualise the use of the target language and test it in a safe environment – the class. This last aspect was particularly taken into consideration in the development of the materials for this research. In fact, the creation of activities which encourage learners to develop their pronunciation and intonation skills in realistic communicative contexts does not only offer them the chance to learn the target language as it is used by native speakers and to contextualise it in plausible communicative situations, but also to make as many attempts as they want in order to amend the mistakes that they could make during the learning process. In this view, the lesson becomes a sort of rehearsal which take place before being exposed to real life situation; the class gets the students ready for what may or may not happen in a plausible real-life situation with people they do not know (Giebert, 2014). Two further aspects that are positively supported by the use of drama activities in the foreign language class, and which have proved to be fundamental in the experiments conducted for this study, are: 1. the learners' improvement of linguistics features, and 2. the enhancement of their personal and social competences. As far as linguistic features are concerned, drama activities feature a physical and an emotional aspect (Giebert, 2014). On the one hand, the physical aspect includes both non-verbal (i.e. body-language) and para-verbal (i.e. intonation, stress and pauses) elements whose practice could positively influence the learning outcomes (Gregersen, 2007). Primarily, specific drama games and activities could enhance the accuracy of some segmental features (Giebert, 2014), while the use of gestures could help learners to internalise rhythm and intonation (Dubrac, 2013), or, in the case of Italian, they will help students to familiarise themselves with the peculiar gestures that often accompany interactions in Italian. On the other hand, the emotional aspect practised in drama activities is relevant in the sense that drama provokes some sort of emotional reaction in performers –in this specific case the learners, as they have to react in order to solve a new situation that is presented to them and, whether these feelings are positive or negative, they have the power to make the act of performing memorable, unique and relevant to the performers themselves (Giebert, 2014). Moreover, as Giebert (2014) suggested, whichever feeling a drama activity evokes in the performers, that feeling will be deeply associated with some aspects of the target language – in the case of the materials devised for this study the aspects which are marked by the emotions raised from the activities offered in class are pronunciation and intonation, and the emotional attitudes emerged from the segmentals and suprasegmentals training (i.e. enjoyment, interest in phonological variation, willing to improve oral communicative skills, etc.) have some sort of influence on the students' phonological skills and learning outcomes. The idea of mutual influence between what

someone feels, does and learns could be explained thanks to the outstanding and innovative work of Damasio, a neuroscientist who first theorised the interlinked nature of feelings and reason. In his Preface to *Descartes' Error*, Damasio (1995) presented the possible enmeshment that occurs between emotional reactions and reasoning processes as a specific characteristic of humans and as the ability which "allows us to decide in consonance with a sense of personal future, social convention, and moral principle" (1995:XII). The deep interconnection between the emotional and the reasoning spheres that Damasio theorised was totally opposed to the Cartesian view of reason as something totally independent and separate from emotions and feelings. In fact, Damasio was the first neuroscientist who not only considered the negative impacts of the presence of emotional bias in the decision-making process, but also pointed out the havoc that the absence of feelings may cause during reasoning processes in certain circumstances (Damasio, 1995). His innovative theory on how emotions and reason constantly work together to guide human beings in their lives offered a new approach to think and understand the collaborative and supportive relationships which exists between emotional reactions and reasoning processes in humans. Since learning may be considered as a never-ending process that human beings usually pursue in order to reach some aims, whether voluntarily or not, Damasio's suggestion may also be applied to the learning outcomes deriving from the combination of emotional responses and reasoning processes that learners put in place over the entire learning process. More precisely, in the field of pronunciation and intonation acquisition, the use of teaching activities based on different drama techniques, which naturally imply both the emotional and reasoning involvement of students, may boost the learners' ability to memorise some specific segmentals and suprasegmentals which might require more time to be internalised when there is a total absence of emotional response to the different stimuli. In this respect, Decoursey stated that "Damasio suggests that when there is an emotional response to a perception or a bit of learning, the brain marks it as useful to the organism. So why do drama in the language classroom? In order to mark elements of language with emotion so that students will remember them" (2012:7).

Thus, the question arises: which type of drama techniques are the most appropriate in a foreign language class and, more precisely, in pronunciation and intonation training sessions? In order to properly answer this question, a few characteristics already pointed out in the analysis of the theories on drama pedagogy (see this paragraph) must be considered. Drama techniques used in foreign language teaching should be imitative of a truthlike world and should enhance a realistic use of language in plausible communicative contexts by engaging the performers (i.e. the students) actively and emotionally. In this respect, creative drama forms, specifically role-plays and improvisations, are one of the most versatile drama techniques which can be embraced in teaching foreign languages in order to achieve various educational purposes (Raz, 1985). Raz (1985) describes different uses of creative drama which can be implemented in the foreign language class to achieve the specific educational objectives of the different levels of language proficiency. Out of the various uses and aims of creative drama listed by Raz (1985), creative drama's emphasis on

social values and roles needs to be highlighted as this could be particularly helpful to offer plausible real-life situations in which learners are actively and emotionally involved and in which they can practise the foreign language in different communicative and social contexts. In 1980 Raz carried out a case study with the aim of investigating "the potential effects of role-play on communicative competence, on motivation and on under-achieving foreign language learners" (Raz, 1985:226). Raz's research project demonstrated the positive effects and efficiency of creative drama techniques on the foreign language learning outcomes and on the level of motivation, self-confidence and anxiety of learners' during communicative exchanges in the target language. Drawing on these results, Raz (1985) stated that role-plays allow the students to use all their "latent knowledge of the foreign language, all they have absorbed through listening and reading. They become more fluent and confident. Their emotional involvement acts as a powerful stimulus" (1985:228). Therefore, the emotional and the cognitive involvement of the learners in the *mis-en-scene* increase their urge to express themselves and consequently speed up the foreign language learning process, through the use of both learners' implicit and explicit knowledge. Moreover, Raz (1985) further highlighted the idea of role-play as a "rehearsal for real life" (1985:228) through which learners become aware of the relevance of this practice to achieve their goals in learning the target language and define what they already know and what they must learn in order to be able to fully satisfy their communicative urge (1985). Also, the non-judgemental atmosphere in which students learn and perform greatly affects their attitude to learning the foreign language and incredibly reduces the inhibitions that would normally characterise traditional educational assessments. Finally, Raz (1985) enhanced the value of the role played by creative drama in the communicative approach, by offering a comparison between improvised role-play and more conventional dialogues. Despite the large use of dialogues or more structured role-plays in textbooks, Raz (1985) believed that these activities are often based on prejudices and stereotypes, and therefore do not involve the learners personally. In order to offer a student-centred activity, the role-play must involve the students as real human beings expressing real feeling or opinions in different communicative situations (1985). In this respect, Raz (1985) provided some tips on how to effectively use role-plays in the foreign language class. First, role-plays must be introduced and implemented in an "unobtrusive way" (1985:227) and linked, where possible, to topics already introduced to the class through other activities (e.g. poems, songs, objects, etc.). Neither details nor descriptions need to be given, as these would limit the students' creativity and spontaneity. Students should be allowed to select the situations and the roles they want to perform freely; they should also be allowed to use the class space and objects as they prefer. Teachers should not interfere in the creation process and should keep a low profile, offering help only when needed. Mistakes should not be corrected but analysed and discussed during another lesson and anonymously. A further analysis of the implementation of role-plays in the foreign language class was carried out by Lee (2015) who, drawing on Piper's (1984) definition and categorisation of role-playing activities, pointed out the three elements that need to be included in order to devise effective role-playing activities: "1. Learners'

role (who and to/with whom); 2. Venue (where the conversation takes place); and 3. Content (what to talk about)" (2015:351). The data collected by Lee (2015) during classroom observations suggested that "fictitious roles and situations, particularly if too far removed from the students' experience, contribute to the failure of these activities" (Piper 1984:29). Therefore, role-plays should be designed as close as possible to real life situations and should be based on the students' needs and interests in order to make the drama activity as relevant and efficient as possible. Moreover, teachers' explanations of the cultural and social background of the fictitious identities that students were asked to take on and the focus on the vocabulary and the specific jargon to be used in the situations portrayed in the role-playing activities were valuable and effective responses which contributed to the positive outcomes of the drama activities. Drawing from Raz and Lee's theorisation of the role of creative drama and their experiments with role-plays, I have included in the pronunciation and intonation training sessions, delivered online during the two experimental phases of this study, the use of loops (paragraph 3.2.3) which, according to the positive results emerged from this research (Chapter 5), turned out to represent an example of good practice for the teaching of phonology. This activity is based on the free elaboration of brief dialogues which students were asked to write and then perform in class. The only 'obtrusive' elements of this activity were 1. the requirement of including specific segmental and/or suprasegmental features in the dialogue (i.e. the rolling r, the sound gl-, specific emotional status, etc.), and 2. the brief cultural contextualisation provided by the tutor. The combined use of loops with other activities specifically devised for the training of Italian segmentals and suprasegmentals turned out to be particularly effective and enjoyable for leaners (Chapter 4).

Thus, creative drama in all its forms can be a valid means to help students develop empathy and strengthen their collaborative competences (Giebert, 2014), and can be used as an appropriate tool to create effective teaching activities based on the communicative approach. As far as the use of creative drama forms to train pronunciation and intonation is concerned, in the next paragraphs I will analyse three case studies conducted in different foreign language teaching contexts where creative drama activities were used to enhance the acquisition of segmental and suprasegmental features in order to provide practical evidence of the theoretical assumptions discussed in paragraph 3.2.

3.2.1   Case study: "Developing pronunciation through creative drama" (Korkut & Çelik, 2018)

Korkut and Çelik (2018) carried out a project called 'Say Drama' focused on the teaching of specific segmental and suprasegmental features of English to Turkish native-speakers by means of creative drama, which they defined as "the enactment of an idea or a concept with a group, using techniques such as improvisation and role playing based upon the group's life experiences. This enactment happens in accordance with principles of here and now, spontaneity, and make-believe play and directly makes use of the general features of children's play" (Adıgüzel, 2010: 56). Drawing on the results of previous studies, according to which creative drama "helps language learners with their pronunciation, acquisition of new

vocabulary items, fluency and with the familiarisation with the target culture fostering interculturality" (Fuentes 2010:322), Korkut and Çelik (2018) showed the positive influence that creative drama has on pronunciation teaching. In fact, the use of songs, poems, chants, dialogues, and scenes which can be constructed and re-constructed (2018:3) in order to focus on different segmental and suprasegmental elements each time, perfectly meets the creative drama techniques and its pedagogic principles. Moreover, as already mentioned in the previous paragraph, in Korkut and Çelik's 'Say Drama' project (2018) the class also turned out to be a safe place in which learners could learn from other learners' performances and could experience realistic communicative situations and authentic uses of the target language. Furthermore, Korkut and Çelik (2018) highlighted the profound connection that the presence of creative drama creates between learners and their multiple identities (Chapter 1). In this context, pronunciation, intonation and accents seem to be relevant linguistic competences that help the students in their identity formation process:

"In creative drama, students learn not only the subjects but also other domains of personality (Neelands 2004). They find opportunities to practise how they present themselves in various social situations. It has been proved many times that creative drama is an effective tool that can influence the formation of positive attitudes and enhancement of understanding about self (Conard and Asher 2000). Therefore, it is expected that creative drama can also help students in finding ways of integrating pronunciation and accent within their identity formation" (2018:4).

The 'Say Drama' project consisted of 6 sessions of 3 hours each on specific segmental and suprasegmental features (e.g. the sound /o/; diphthongs; silent consonants, etc.) of English. Instead of using drilling, which is traditionally described as "tedious and boring" (2018:5), the researchers offered their participants a precise context in which the target language and therefore the target segmentals and suprasegmentals, were used. The final results revealed a significant and positive influence of the training on all the participants' intonation skills, and mixed results on their performance of the segmental elements included in the training sessions delivered on Zoom. According to the researchers, the lack of good outcomes in some cases was due to the fossilisation of specific segmental features, the monotony of drills offered by coursebooks and the lack of systematic pronunciation and intonation training. However, the results emerging from this research project strongly suggest the need for more inclusive, systematic and targeted activities for the acquisition of pronunciation and intonation. Mindful of the findings emerged from Korkut and Çelik's research (2018), among the activities included in the experimental phases of this research project, I have included tongue-twisters, sayings and nursery rhymes (paragraph 4.4.2) instead of drills in order to help students to reach a certain level of fluency in the articulation of specific sounds. In fact, differently from drills, these forms of repetitive texts are not only characterised by specific linguistic elements – for instance, specific segmental features, rhythm, stress, etc., but they also include cultural links which make their use meaningful for students.

3.2.2 Case study: "Using drama in teaching intonation" (V. Tsybaneva, A. Seredintseva, O. Maletina, 2019)

Tsybaneva et al. (2019) carried out a research project to investigate how drama techniques can be used to enhance intonation skills in learners of English as a foreign language from different linguistic backgrounds. Although the researchers confirmed the need to master motor-receptive skills in order to reach intelligibility, they also argued that traditional drills and imitation exercises negatively affect the students' motivation. Drama techniques seem then to be a good alternative which allows for student-centred teaching programmes whilst maintaining the role of teachers as mentors and convenors of the teaching activities (Tsybaneva et al., 2019). The study conducted was also based on the need to include physical exercises commonly used by actors to prepare their voices to a stage performance. These exercises specifically focus on relaxation and posture, breathing, tone, pitch and articulation. In particular, the activities offered for relaxation, posture and breathing seem to recall Lazarov's suggestopedic techniques (Chapter 1), highlighting the importance of body relaxation in the acquisition of foreign languages and, especially, in the training of pronunciation and intonation. As far as the activities suggested for the strengthening of tone are concerned, Tsybaneva et al. (2019) suggested exercises which include lip reading and split-dialogues activities; for the training of pitch, nursery-rhymes are presented as valid support as their typical rhythm and prosody are easy to pick up and to remember. In terms of articulation exercises, tongue-twisters are used, as they focus the attention on specific suprasegmental elements, can also be used to train segmental features that may be difficult master at first. At the end of the training programme, the participants were asked to answer a questionnaire on the quality of the intonation training undergone during the research project. The participants' answers revealed very positive feedback both in terms of intonation improvement and enjoyment of the sessions. This study also revealed how drama techniques could be beneficial in the general development of the students' autonomy and responsibility during the foreign language learning process. The results of Tsybaneva et al.'s (2019) study represent a valuable precedent in the field of teaching English as FL and encouraged me to explore the effects on the students' learning outcomes of the application of similar activities to teach Italian pronunciation and intonation.

3.2.3 A suggestion for the integration of drama techniques in pronunciation and intonation training: "Loops. A multi-purpose drama technique for the language classroom" (Dockalova, 2011)

Dockalova (2011) suggests the use of a drama technique called 'loops' which was developed at Jeviste, a language school in Prague specialised in the use of drama and theatre in the teaching of foreign languages. Loops are "short dialogues that can be repeated over and over without stopping because the first line of the dialogue can also function as a reaction to the last line" (Dockalova, 2011:28). An example of a loop is:

A: I really have to go now.
B: Wait.
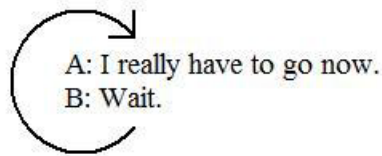
Image 1 – An example of a loop (Dockalova, 2011:28)

The feature that makes loops simple and effective exercises is that by repeating them over and over again with a partner, the performers gradually start changing "intonation, volume, rhythm, stress, facial expression, gestures and movement, and before we know it, a meaningful communication situation is beginning to emerge" (Dockalova, 2011:28). In fact, although loops are basically a form of drilling, the variations that may occur while performing them actually make them imaginative and enjoyable. Loops generally focus on a specific item (e.g. vocabulary and grammar) embedded in a communicative context. However, with the exception of the lines making up the loop, no other information is provided "about the characters, no stage directions, and the lines themselves should be as universal as possible" (Dockalova, 2011:29). Ambiguity is then a necessary characteristic of loops, thus freeing learners to take their own decisions regarding characters, social relationships between them and communicative and the linguistic contexts in which the loop takes place. For example:

"A: *Where have you been*?

B: Nowhere.

A: That's not *an* answer.

B: I want to go to bed.

A: No. We need to talk *first*.

B: I'm tired.

The dialogue could be interpreted as a confrontation between a parent and a teenager, a husband and a wife, a policeman and a bank robber and more. There is no right or wrong and if each pair of students can come up with a different interpretation, the language material will stay fresh and interesting for a long time." (Dockalova, 2011:29). Another fundamental characteristic for effective loops is their dramatic tension. As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the emotional reactions caused by drama activities are relevant and necessary to make the performing act significant and memorable to the learners. Dramatic tension inevitably asks them to be completely involved in the communicative situation that they are practising and performing through the loops. Having described the main features of loops, Dockalova (2011) summed up the reasons why these dramatic devices should be used in class:

• They offer repetitive and at the same time creative practice narrowly focused on selected language points.

• They provide clear examples of language in use that can be easily memorized and internalized

• They naturally stimulate physical involvement and allow for a smooth transition from reading to action.

• They engage the learners' emotions and senses, and at the same time they demand cognitive involvement (the learners need to make decisions about the dialogues)

• They provide an easy and dynamic starting point for improvisation activities and writing activities.

• They are highly enjoyable. (Dockalova, 2011:30)

The most difficult aspect of using loops is their actual writing, as Dockalova pointed out. Creating communicative situations which can be repeated an unlimited number of times and can be embedded in different contexts is obviously difficult and could also be time-consuming for the teacher. However, Dockalova (2011) provided a few suggestions to make the loops-writing process easy and smooth, together with a few communicative contexts in which a loop may take place, for example: simple contradiction, refusal, polite refusal, asking why, using 'exactly' in the first line and 'what else?' in the last line, sending someone away, interrogation, bad hearing, disbelief and not listening. The two criteria that need to be applied while writing loops are obviously ambiguity and dramatic tension, for the reasons previously explained. Moreover, Dockalova offers a plan in which she explains how loops can be integrated in the class and how they can be used to develop different skills (e.g. acting, writing, speaking, etc.). Loops could also be valid teaching tools in the training of segmentals, as they can be specifically focused on the features which students find particularly difficult to master. Moreover, as already pointed out, they represent an appropriate support for the development of suprasegmentals (e.g. pitch, stress, rhythm, etc.). The characteristics of loops previously described, and the educational reasons pointed out by Dockalova for including these activities in the foreign language class led me to the decision to include loops in my research project as they can effectively help learners to practice their phonological competence while verbally performing the loops together with other main linguistic skills (writing, reading, and listening). Therefore, during the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions, I have asked students to work in pairs or small groups and to write loops by following very brief and undetailed instructions. The lack of details from the tutor is necessary in order to free the learners and leave them the flexibility to define the social and linguistic contexts in which the dialogues take place. Loops have been used with beginners, intermediate and advanced students in my study and, together with the other activities offered, learners' answers to the questionnaire have pointed out their validity in terms of enjoyment and self-evaluation of the phonological progress made (Chapter 5).

Besides the aforementioned examples of drama techniques used to train pronunciation and intonation skills, dialogic texts could be a valid resource as well. In the next paragraphs dialogues taken from novels,

theatrical pieces, movies, and poetic texts and songs will be presented as starting points for the creation of activities aiming to develop phonological awareness and skills.

3.3 The use of dialogic texts, poems and songs for pronunciation and intonation training

Out of the different forms of literary texts that language tutors can use to offer pronunciation and intonation training in the foreign language class, dialogic texts selected from contemporary literature and theatrical pieces (see paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2) seem a valid option, in order to integrate literature and drama techniques in the Italian FL class. As mentioned before, Italian literature seems able to offer an authentic insight into the target culture through specific linguistic strategies – especially the combination of standard Italian and regional inflections, which used by authors to better define the cultural background in which the plot takes place and the inner worlds of characters – their thoughts, beliefs and feelings, for instance (Librandi, 2019). Moreover, the plurilingualism which characterises modern and contemporary Italian novels and theatrical plays could help learners familiarise themselves with the polyphony of everyday language and the rapid overlapping of different registers and varieties which is typical of Italian contemporary linguistic reality (Librandi, 2019). Two very well-known Italian authors whose work is frequently characterised by a combination of different linguistic registers and varieties are Luigi Pirandello and Elena Ferrante; for this reason, they have been selected, with some of the activities introduced in this chapter based on two dialogic texts drawn from one of their most famous literary works. Contemporary narrative texts which could be used include a wide range of novels, theatrical pieces and movies linked to topics which are relevant for the learners' curriculum, with poems and songs as the best resources for segmental and suprasegmental training. In fact, since dialogues, both in real-life and fictional contexts, represent the most authentic forms of direct communicative exchanges, these forms of literary texts and written compositions can be used in the foreign language class to practise specific linguistic skills. Not only do dialogues provide real examples of the linguistic varieties of the target language which may emerge during verbal interactions, but they also offer a genuine insight into the social, cultural, historical and political background of the target country. Even during every-day conversations native speakers refer to facts and events that somehow have influenced their personal lives or the society in which they live in, and while doing so, they sometimes use idiomatic expressions, voice inflections and grammatical structures which are specifically chosen to express a specific feeling or attitude towards what has been said. Moreover, during dialogic exchanges, pronunciation and intonation play a fundamental role for the reciprocal understanding of the participants involved in the conversation, and this could prompt learners to improve their skills in order to avoid misunderstandings and make the exchange of information clear and unambiguous. I will now present four different forms of dialogic texts which can be used by tutors in the foreign language class to enhance the learners' linguistic and cultural awareness according to their different levels of language proficiency. The following activities have not been tested in class for organisational reasons (Chapter 6, paragraph 6.3);

however, they were devised starting from the students' phonological issues (Introduction) and teaching gaps highlighted by the revision of textbooks (Chapter 2). In fact, the activities presented in the following paragraphs focus on the training of the same Italian sounds which have emerged as problematic for English native-speakers (Introduction), and for which I have devised specific teaching materials for the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions. Therefore, the following activities act as suggestions provided to Italian language tutors for the training of Italian segmental and suprasegmental features.

3.3.1 Reading and performing a dialogue taken from a modern novel

The first example of dialogic texts that could be used in the foreign language class to teach oral communicative skills and in particular pronunciation and intonation are dialogues taken from novels. It is true that the use of novels in foreign language teaching has been criticised by some scholars for the excessive length of the passages, the large range of vocabulary used, and the complex structures used by authors which may cause difficulties especially when learners do not have a high level of language proficiency (Gareis et al., 2009; Lazar, 1990; Hişmanoğlu, 2005). However, careful choice by language tutors of the novels and passages to be used can turn these forms of literary texts into appropriate teaching materials even with lower levels of language proficiency (Gareis et al., 2009; Jou, 2006; Tsou, 2007), as learners become readers of authentic texts and take on an active role during the learning process, while language tutors leave their role as instructors and become facilitators in the foreign language acquisition process (Tsai, 2012). In fact, novels are "unedited, unabridged, natural in speech and writing, and written to communicate meaning" (Tsai, 2012:104), and the act of reading a novel becomes then a valuable activity which foreign language learners can undertake to achieve better outcomes while using authentic texts. In this context, drawing on other scholars' work (Alkire, 2010; Gareis et al., 2009; Hişmanoğlu, 2005; Lazar, 1990; Melon, 1994; Uyemura, 2006), Tsai (2012) has explained the three main reasons for language tutors to include novels with the teaching materials used to teach foreign languages. The first is the increasing motivation that this type of teaching materials can bring. In fact, by reading novels which deal with universal topics, students will be engaged intellectually and emotionally in the reading process, and will focus their attention not only on the linguistic forms which characterise the selected novels (e.g. vocabulary, grammatical structures, morphology, syntax, etc.) but will also be involved in the investigation of complex situations to which they will respond by analysing the existential topics suggested by the novel and by expressing, supporting and questioning their personal points of view. The process of reading novels will then be further boosted by the learners' "satisfying sense of achievement" (Tsai, 2012:104), which could lead them to read further and actually enjoy the process of reading. The second reason pointed out by Tsai (2012) is the improvement of linguistic skills in the target language. In particular, reading extended literary texts such as novels greatly contributes to the development of vocabulary and familiarity with complex grammatical structures. Moreover, thanks to a prolonged exposure to authentic uses of the target language,

students are invited to familiarise themselves with "various linguistic forms, communicative functions and meanings that are intended for native speakers" (Tsai, 2012:104). The reading process will positively affect the learners' level of language proficiency by providing authentic examples of the target language in various communicative contexts (Tsai, 2012). The third reason for introducing novels in the foreign language class is that literary texts are "a window to the target culture" (Tsai, 2012:104). The use of novels can then greatly improve the cultural knowledge and awareness of students, as literature portrays fictional worlds which, however, are constructed on the authors' cultural background and represent cultural settings which are profoundly linked to "the historical, social, political, and economical facts that shape the cultural background of the novel" (Tsai, 2012:104). Therefore, by approaching a literary text, in particular a dialogue taken from a novel, learners will be able to learn not only the target language by acquiring new vocabulary and grammatical structures, but also cultural elements that are fundamental for the full comprehension of the plot and its historical, social and cultural setting. In addition to the three reasons given by Tsai (2012), other scholars (Maley, 1989; Hişmanoğlu, 2005; Gareis et al., 2009; Melon, 1994) have identified other positive elements which make novels valuable teaching resources for the development of various skills in the target language. Literary texts, especially the *genre* of novels, deal with a variety of universal themes which could perfectly fit the personal interests of students and could help them to further analyse specific aspects of culture, society and politics through discussions and debates which could lead to personal growth and critical thinking. Consequently, the use of dialogues taken from novels could also prompt students to set up debates and further express their personal opinion on the topics emerged from the reading activities based on dialogic texts taken from novels, and this could lead to a better understanding of the socio-cultural movements portraited in the novel, and the plausible historical and political contexts in which the novel is set. In fact, the references to specific social and political movements which are represented in novels may add information regarding the historical periods that are addressed in academic curricula. For instance, in the Department of Modern Languages of the University of Birmingham, where this research was carried out, undergraduate courses include: 1. plenaries and seminars, where students are educated regarding specific historical, social, and political movements which characterised the target country, society and culture across centuries; 2. communicative skills and use of language classes, where students practise their TL skills and learn the grammar. However, very often during communicative skills classes, students are invited to use different *genres* of texts, which have already been introduced to them during lectures and seminars, in order to better link and understand the use of the target language in specific socio-cultural and historical periods.

I will now present two activities based on a dialogue taken from the first part, which entitles the collection - *L'amica geniale* (2011), of the four episodes of a novel written by Elena Ferrante. These activities could be based with second-year intermediate students (level B1/B2), as they have already mastered the basic forms of the target language and are engaged in improving their knowledge of grammatical rules,

vocabulary and idiomatic expression and figures of speech such as metaphors which are necessary to understand both the explicit and implicit meanings of the text. Moreover, Intermediate students of Italian, at the University of Birmingham, usually study Ferrante's work during lectures and seminars. Learners also have an opportunity to improve their cultural awareness and achieve a higher level of linguistic competence. Second-year advanced students and fourth-year undergraduate students could benefit from these activities as well. In fact, they could improve their vocabulary by analysing specific words and expressions used by the author for the first-time, thus also enhancing their knowledge of literary production in the target language. The novel was published in 2011 and is divided into four parts which, in addition to the first one, which has been already cited, include: *Storia del nuovo cognome* (2012), *Storia di chi fugge e di chi resta* (2013), *Storia della bambina perduta* (2014). This novel has been selected for two main reasons. First, *L'amica geniale* is a very well-known novel written by one of the most influential contemporary Italian writers, so it would be interesting and self-rewarding for students to deal with an authentic novel of this standing and engage with its complex narrative and historical and cultural facts that make up the plot of this masterpiece. Moreover, the never ending and still unsolved debate about the identity of the author could engage and interest the students' curiosity even more. In fact, Elena Ferrante is the female pseudonym of an unknown author, and this has led to a heated discussion among literary critics and journalists concerning the writer's identity (Sara Faccini, 2016). Out of the most plausible theories, critics seem to endorse three ideas in particular: 1. the first one suggests Italian writer and scenographer Domenico Starnone as the man behind the most famous contemporary Italian female writer; 2. the second option indicates translator Anita Raja as the real female voice hidden behind the name of Elena Ferrante; 3. the last hypothesis postulates a collaboration between Starnone and Raja. L'*Amica geniale* is a *bildungsroman* which tells the story of a life-time friendship between two girls, Lenù and Lila, who were born and grew up in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the outskirts of Naples. Elena Ferrante touches upon universal topics in her four-part work, such as female bonding and competition in female friendship; the role of women across decades and their participation in the social movements which characterised the Italian socio-cultural and political scene in the 1960s and 70s (e.g. working women during factory strikes, the role of women in politics, maternity and contraception, etc.); the influence of a violent and unsupportive socio-cultural background on women' lives; the role of literature as a kind of emergency exit women can used to denounce the violence they have been subjected to and to release themselves from their past. These topics represent a fruitful source for discussions in class where students can reflect on them, provide possible solutions to improving contemporary society to make it more equal and open for everyone, and state their personal points of view by taking their personal experiences as example. The second aspect that has led me to choose this novel is the rather peculiar relationship between standard Italian and the local dialect. In fact, the author seems to have opted for a new linguistic strategy which does not follow the choices of either plurilingual literature, where standard Italian and regional varieties coexist in the texts, nor the examples of literary texts

characterised by neutral and standard Italian, completely untouched by dialects and local varieties. In most of Ferrante's novels, the Neapolitan dialect is described as a "silent and at the same time cumbersome presence" (Librandi, 2019:387) and in order to make the readers aware of it, the author uses metalinguistic insertions which voice the sound, the murmur and sometimes the cry of the dialect (Librandi, 2019). These metalinguistic insertions generally involve adding the adverbal expressions '*in italiano*' (in English: in Italian) '*in dialetto*' (in English: in dialect) to the characters' speech. Librandi (2019) has selected a number of utterances taken from different novels by Ferrante in order to better exemplify her silent use of dialect:

1. Lila si confuse e disse in fretta **in italiano**: "Sono Cerullo […]" (L'Amica geniale: 304);

2. passò a borbottare **in un italiano incerto** (Storia della bambina perduta: 53).

3. fui raggiunta da un fiotto di oscenità **in dialetto** (L'Amore molesto: 20);

4. io dicevo alla mia **in dialetto**: Tina, mettiti la corona di regina se no prendi freddo (Amica geniale: 26).

(Librandi, 2019:387)

This silent language is used by Ferrante to describe the characters, or to define the different communicative situations and settings of the plot (Librandi, 2019). The veiled presence of regional language in literary texts could be particularly relevant for students as they would approach a literary text written in the standard version of the target language, but at the same time would have the chance to start familiarising themselves with the existence of another language –dialect, which, although silently, profoundly characterises and permeates the communicative exchanges between characters. The examples of phonological variation provided by the dialogues of *L'amica geniale*, as well as those of the other three parts of the novel, could be used by Italian language tutors for the creation of activities which aim to improve specific segmental and suprasegmental traits, and which provide an insight into the sociolinguistic role of phonological variation (i.e. how accents are perceived from a cultural perspective?, which is the role of regional variations?, what is the role of dialects in modern Italy? etc.). The table below shows the dialogue selected from the third volume, *Storia di chi fugge e di chi resta* (ed. 2018:90-91):

Lila era sdraiata su una branda, tutta vestita. Gennaro le dormiva a lato. Entra, mi disse, lo sapevo che saresti venuta, dammi un bacio. La baciai sulle guance, sedetti sul lettino vuoto che doveva essere di suo figlio. Quanto tempo era passato dall'ultima volta che l'avevo vista? La trovai ancora più smagrita, ancora più pallida, aveva occhi rossi, le pinne nasali screpolate, le mani lunghe segnate dai tagli. Seguitò quasi senza pause, a voce bassa per non svegliare il bambino: t'ho vista sui giornali, come stai bene, che bei capelli, so tutto di te, so che ti sposi, lui è un professore, brava, vai a stare a Firenze, scusa se t'ho fatta venire a quest'ora, ho la testa che non m'aiuta, si scolla come la carta da parati, meno male che sei qui.

«Che succede?» le chiesi, e feci per accarezzarle una mano.

Bastarono quella domanda, quel gesto. Sbarrò gli occhi, annaspò, tirò via la mano bruscamente.

«Non sto bene» disse, «ma aspetta, non ti spaventare, ora mi calmo».

Si calmò. Disse piano, quasi scandendo le parole:

«T'ho scomodata, Lenù, perché mi devi fare una promessa, io mi fido solo di te: se mi succede qualcosa, se finisco in ospedale, se mi portano al manicomio, se non mi trovano più, tu ti devi prendere Gennaro, lo devi tenere con te, deve crescere nella tua casa. Enzo è buono, è bravo, mi fido di lui, ma al bambino non può dare le cose che gli puoi dare tu».

«Perché dici così? Che hai? Se non mi spieghi non capisco».

«Prometti prima».

«Va bene».

Si agitò di nuovo, spaventandomi.

«No, non devi dirmi va bene; devi dirmi qui, adesso, che ti tieni tu il bambino. E se hai bisogno di soldi, trova Nino, digli che ti deve aiutare. Però prometti: *il bambino lo cresco io*».

La guardai incerta, promisi. Promisi e stetti ad ascoltarla per tutta la notte.

The first activity for the training of pronunciation and intonation, based on the selected dialogue, is structured in three steps: 1. the language tutor briefly introduces the novel to the class and underlines specific segmental and suprasegmental features present in the text, providing examples of how a native

speaker would enunciate them; 2. intermediate students will then approach the written text individually by reading the paragraph aloud, as naturally as possible, while trying to pay attention to the segmental and suprasegmental features they may find particularly difficult to pronounce or are unable to articulate like their tutor; 3. tutor and students try to identify and highlight the sounds or intonation issues (e.g. the rolling /r/, /ʃ/, /ɲ/ and the natural intonation and fluency during the reading process) spotted during the exercise, focusing primarily on these features while repeating the reading exercise. Once students have reached a good level of competence in the segmental and suprasegmental features of the selected literary text, they will then be divided into pairs, and will be asked to rehearse the dialogue together. Once students have practised enough, the language tutor will ask each pair to perform the dialogue in front of the class, while annotating the pronunciation and intonation issues which emerge from the performance of the majority of students in order to define the segmental and suprasegmental elements which need to be further practised through specific activities. The second activity offered is based on a recently launched miniseries produced by Rai and based on Elena Ferrante's novel. The selected dialogue will also be presented as a clip taken from one of the episodes of the miniseries and students will be required to work in pairs, trying to reproduce the accent used by the two actresses in the scene. The script of the selected scene is exactly the same as in the novel, so students will not have difficulties in understanding the dialogic exchange since they have already familiarised themselves with it during the first activity. By doing this second activity, not only will students put into practice the segmental and suprasegmental training undertaken during the first exercise but can use the actresses' performance to practise an Italian accent different from theirs, thus experiencing an identity, embodied by the accent itself, different from the one/s that they already know or take on when they speak in the target language. In fact, while the narrator – who is the character of Lenù, speaks in standard Italian, in the other characters' voices Italian blends with the Neapolitan, providing not only an authentic insight into the Italian socio-historical and cultural background across decades, but also an accurate representation of the linguistic habits of Italians, marked by the constant overlapping of the officiality and elegance of standard Italian language and the expressiveness and spontaneity of dialects. In the safe place of the foreign language class, students could then experience the linguistic and cultural variety that so typically characterises dialogic exchanges between native speakers in authentic and real-life communicative contexts.

The use of dialogues taken from theatrical pieces to improve learners' oral communicative skills will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.3.2 Reading and performing a dialogue taken from a theatrical piece

One of the most innovative teaching strategies identified to devise creative activities which encourage students to develop their speaking skills in the target language is the use of drama techniques, as previously discussed in this chapter. Plays provide authentic examples of uses of the target language in meaningful and

realistic communicative situations, and their use "is considered an ideal way of encouraging learners to use real, everyday authentic language (Maley & Duff, 1984) which they will need outside the classroom" (Bora, 2021:2). Moreover, drama approaches not only enhance the students' spontaneous oral production (Dodson, 2002; Miccoli, 2003; Ronke, 2005; Bournet-Trites et al., 2007; Jarfàs, 2008; Bora, 2017) by involving them "cognitively, emotionally, and physically" (Bora, 2020:459), but also increase their motivation (Hulse and Owens, 2019) by decreasing anxiety and frustration (Sağlamel and Kayaoğlu, 2013; Galante, 2018; Piazzoli, 2011). Theatrical scripts are authentic texts which not only give the opportunity to analyse and learn grammatical rules "in a discourse context" (Bora, 2020:460), but also help students to retain vocabulary through an in-depth analysis of words and meanings. In fact, drama scripts, as other literary texts, are characterised by "a plurality of meanings" (Bora, 2020:460) which spontaneously bring students to interpret these texts in a more personal way. The discussions emerging from the students' personal interpretations inevitably produce "a greater volume of spoken language" (Bora, 2020:460) since each student is involved and asked to express themselves by arguing, reasoning, questioning the various points of view arising during the debates. Theatrical pieces also offer a variety of topics and themes which deal with human life and can be an interesting starting point for fruitful target-language discussions in class (Bora, 2020). Obviously, these existential questions tackled in plays need to be interpreted according to the target culture, which is usually "deeply embedded in a play script" (Bora, 2020:461). Therefore, when approaching a theatrical script, students are not only required to investigate the language used and the hidden meanings of words, but are also invited to reflect on the cultural elements that strongly characterise the play text and can emotionally involve learners in the reading/performing process (Carroli, 2008). Another benefit of using play scripts is the constant interaction of verbal, non-verbal and para-verbal elements of communication (Bora, 2020). In fact, while plays stand out from other forms of literary texts for the predominant use of monologues and dialogues compared to narrative passages, these dialogic exchanges are often accompanied by instructions about gestures, emotional reactions physical traits and appearance, which can be used by readers/the audience in order to go beyond the obvious meaning of the performed words in order to understand the characters' thoughts, beliefs, behaviour, relationships with others, socio-cultural status and so on better and more deeply (Bora, 2020). As Bora (2020) suggested, a promising use of plays in a foreign language class is drama games which specifically focus on "contextualized and authentic language use in a low stress and positive environment" (Bora, 2020:461) and which mainly focus on the enhancement of speaking skills. Drama games provide students with authentic uses of the target language in real communicative situations, prompting them to actively respond to the various tasks in a significant way (Bora, 2020), and inviting them to focus not only on specific grammar rules and vocabulary, but to interact with others creatively and spontaneously, to be cognitively, emotionally and physically involved in the drama process and to express themselves through an authentic urgency of using the target language (Bora, 2020; Ronke, 2005; Sambanis et al., 2013). Drama games also foster the students'

collaborative skills and the natural enjoyment derived from playing games helps to lessen any feeling of anxiety, demotivation and fear of failure (Gill, 2013 b), as well as increase the students' chances of avoiding mistakes and improving their non-verbal skills (e.g. a more conscious use of their voices to express feelings, etc.) (Bora, 2020). In addition to drama games, Bora (2020) identified full-scale performances as a valuable strategy when using drama techniques for foreign language teaching purposes. In fact, unlike from drama games which last the time necessary to complete the activity, a full-scale performance offers a continuity which can lead to more opportunities for students to experience authentic and spontaneous practices of the target language in realistic communicative situations and a "realistic quasi-immersive language situation in which the learners are involved both physically and emotionally" (Bora, 2020:462). The prolonged emotional state of learners during the learning process fosters the acquisition of the structures of the target language; moreover, the repetition of scenes allows students to retain the target language more easily as their identification with the characters and their emotional state, embodied by the students will bring them to a better understanding of the performed text and consequently to a deeper acquisition of "the words and expressions that are directly linked to the feelings that have been genuinely experienced in portraying the character" (Bora, 2020:462). Therefore, the real emotional response that students have had during the performance will naturally foster the learning process, as structures (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, intonation, and pronunciation, etc.) have been marked with emotion, as theorised by Damasio (1995). As already pointed out for drama games, also in the case of full-scale performances students are invited to collaborate while enjoying the creative process and the decrease of stress, anxiety and lack of confidence positively influence the spontaneous production of a vast quantity of authentic and potentially error-free language (Bora, 2020). The use of drama has not only been proved to enhance the students' vocabulary and grammar ((Erdman, 1991; Gill, 2004, 2007; O'Gara, 2008), but also help them to use their voices more expressively (Gill. 2004). In particular, a more confident use of their voice could lessen anxiety and shyness when approaching a foreign language and could help learners to take risks with the target language (Gill, 2007). With the risks that learners of a foreign language take during the learning process, Gill (2004) included "the danger of mispronunciation" (Gill, 2013a:30) which could cause "a loss of face that, in turn, can have a detrimental effect on the speaker (Goh, 1996)" (Gill, 2013:30). The imaginary identities that students take on in drama activities create a sort of safe space in which learners, even the least self-confident, feel free to take risks and eventually improve their pronunciation (Erbaugh, 1990). In this context, the introduction of activities based on drama scripts, in which students are required to play make-believe roles could positively influence the learners' pronunciation and intonation skills. Now two activities will be presented which can be used in the foreign language class with just one dialogue selected from an Italian novel by Luigi Pirandello. The activities devised could be used with first-year advanced student and with more advanced learners, such as second-year intermediate and advanced learners and fourth-year students. In particular, first-year students could be engaged in an activity which could greatly improve their confidence with the

target language by practising new vocabulary and grammatical rules. Moreover, since the plenaries and seminars of first-year students deal with the rise of fascism, they could explore this topic not only from a historical and political point of view, but also from a cultural perspective by analysing the role of Pirandello and other Italian authors who at first endorsed Mussolini and influenced the Italian cultural movement during the 1920s and 1930s. The chosen novel is called *Così è (se vi pare)* (in English: *So It Is (If You Think So))*. It was selected by taking two relevant aspects into consideration. First, from a cultural and literary perspective, the relevancy of the author's production for Italian literature and culture. Secondly, from a linguistic perspective, the use of a simple and everyday language could be useful as learners do not have to focus their attention on the enhancement and practice of aspects of the target language, other than the articulation of segmental and suprasegmental features which represent the main task of the activities devised. This novel is one of the most important in Pirandello's production as it deals with one of the most significant themes in his production: the impossibility of knowing the truth. In fact, according to Pirandello, each person has their own truth, and they interpret reality according to their inner world, which may differ completely from the version of the truth provided by other people. The play portraits the complexity of human life and the pointless *recherche* for an absolute truth which can explain the outside world. The chosen scene is Scene 1 from Act II, which was selected as it perfectly portrays the main topic of the play. The two activities suggested are complementary as they ask students to read and perform their roles by avoiding specific verbal and non-verbal elements. The first activity consists of asking students to work in groups of three – the same number as characters in the scene - and read the dialogue by paying particular attention to the pronunciation of words and intonation of sentences. The only requirement in this activity is to avoid non-verbal and para-verbal elements (e.g. gestures, facial expressions, etc.). This will force students to focus their attention during the performance exclusively on the verbal elements. Oral skills will therefore be essential not only to gather the literal meanings of words, but they will also be fundamental to unveil the hidden meanings of words which reflect the inner world of the speakers, their emotions and attitudes, the status of the relationships between the characters, their social roles and so on. More specifically, pronunciation will then play a fundamental role as students will need to articulate all sounds intelligibly in order to make the audience understand what has been said; at the same time, intonation will be helpful to make up for the lack of para-verbal and non-verbal elements during the dialogic exchange. The tutor, having introduced the author, the chosen play and having explained the use of archaic forms of the Italian language (i.e., *su la*), will read the scene stressing with his/her voice the phonetic traits that students need to pay particular attention to – these sounds have been highlighted in yellow and are the same sounds which have emerged as problematic from the data analysis of the materials that I have devised for the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions. Then, students will be divided into groups of three and will be given 20 minutes to read the full scene and to rehearse their parts – they will need to focus their attention on the articulation of sounds that they find particularly difficult to pronounce out those highlighted in yellow

by the tutor; they will need to decide how to use their voice in order to interpret emotionally what the characters are saying and the meanings that they want to convey. After the preparation time, each group of students will be asked to perform the dialogue in front of the class. The language tutor will take notes on any of the sounds highlighted that are still not fully mastered by the majority of students. This will be helpful as the tutor will then be able to monitor the students' progress and eventually devise other activities to help learners practise further the sounds they have not mastered yet.

Così è (se vi pare) by Luigi Pirandello (1925)

Act II, Scene 1

ATTO SECONDO

Studio in casa del Consigliere Agazzi - Mobili antichi; vecchi quadri alle pareti; uscio in fondo, con tenda; uscio laterale a sinistra, che dà nel salotto, anch'esso con tenda; a destra, un ampio camino, sulla cui mensola poggerà un grande specchio; su la scrivania, apparecchio telefonico; poi un divanetto, poltrone, seggiole, ecc.

SCENA PRIMA

AGAZZI, LAUDISI, SIRELLI

Agazzi sarà in piedi presso la scrivania, col ricevitore dell'apparecchio telefonico all'orecchio. Laudisi e Sirelli, seduti, guarderanno verso di lui, in attesa.

AGAZZI Pronto! - Sì. - Par**lo** con Centuri? - Ebbene? - Sì, bravo.

Ascolterà a lungo, poi:

Ma come, scusi! possibile?

Ascolterà di nuovo a lungo, poi:

Capisco, ma mettendocisi con un po' d'impe**gn**o...

Altra pausa lunga, poi:

È proprio **str**ano, scusi, che non si possa...

Pausa.

Capi**sc**o, sì... capi**sc**o.

Pausa.

Basta, veda un po'... A rivederla.

Poserà il ricevitore, e verrà avanti.

SIRELLI (*ansioso*) Ebbene?

AGAZZI Niente.

SIRELLI Non si trova niente?

AGAZZI Tutto disperso o distrutto: Municipio, archivio, stato civile.

SIRELLI Ma la testimonianza almeno di qualche superstite?

AGAZZI Non si ha notizia di superstiti; e se pure ce ne sono, ricerche difficilissime, ormai!

SIRELLI Cosicché non ci resta che da credere all'uno o da credere all'altra, così, senza prove?

AGAZZI Purtroppo!

LAUDISI (*alzandosi*) Volete seguire il mio consiglio? Credete a tutti e due.

AGAZZI Sì, e come -

SIRELLI - se l'una ti dice bianco e l'altro nero?

LAUDISI E allora non credete a nessuno dei due!

SIRELLI Tu vuoi scherzare. Mancano le prove, i dati di fatto; ma la verità, perdio, sarà da una parte o dall'altra!

LAUDISI I dati di fatto, già! Che vorresti desumerne?

AGAZZI Ma scusa! L'atto di morte della figliuola, per esempio, se la signora Frola è lei la pazza (purtroppo non si trova più, perché non si trova più nulla), ma doveva esserci; si potrebbe trovare domani; e allora - trovato quest'atto - è chiaro che avrebbe ragione lui, il genero.

SIRELLI Potresti negar l'evidenza, se domani quest'atto ti venisse presentato?

LAUDISI Io? Ma non nego nulla io! Me ne guardo bene! Voi, non io, avete bisogno dei dati di fatto, dei documenti, per affermare o negare! Io non so che farmene, perché per me la realtà non consiste in essi, ma nell'animo di quei due, in cui non posso figurarmi d'entrare, se non per quel tanto che essi me ne dicono.

SIRELLI Benissimo! E non dicono appunto che uno dei due è pazzo? O pazza lei, o pazzo lui: di qui non si scappa! Quale dei due?

AGAZZI È qui la questione!

LAUDISI Prima di tutto, non è vero che lo dicano entrambi. Lo dice lui, il signor Ponza, di sua suocera. La signora Frola lo nega, non soltanto per sé, ma anche per lui. Se mai, lui - dice - fu un po' alterato di mente per soverchio amore. Ma ora, sano, sanissimo.

SIRELLI Ah dunque tu propendi, come me, verso ciò che dice lei, la suocera?

AGAZZI Certo che, stando a ciò che dice lei, si può spiegar tutto benissimo.

LAUDISI Ma si può spiegar tutto ugualmente, stando a ciò che dice lui, il genero!

SIRELLI E allora - pazzo - nessuno dei due? Ma uno dev'essere, perdio!

LAUDISI E chi dei due? Non potete dirlo voi, come non può dirlo nessuno. E non già perché codesti dati di fatto, che andate cercando, siano stati annullati - dispersi o distrutti - da un accidente qualsiasi - un incendio, un terremoto - no; ma perché li hanno annullati essi in sé, nell'animo loro, volete capirlo? creando lei a lui, o lui a lei, un fantasma che ha la stessa consistenza della realtà, dov'essi vivono ormai in perfetto accordo, pacificati. E non potrà essere distrutta, questa loro realtà, da nessun documento, poiché essi ci respirano dentro, la vedono, la sentono, la toccano! - Al più, per voi potrebbe servire il documento, per levarvi voi una sciocca curiosità. Vi manca, ed eccovi dannati al meraviglioso supplizio d'aver davanti, accanto, qua il fantasma e qua la realtà, e di non poter distinguere l'uno dall'altra!

AGAZZI Filosofia, caro, filosofia! Lo vedremo, lo vedremo adesso se non sarà possibile!

SIRELLI Abbiamo inteso prima l'uno, poi l'altra; mettendoli insieme, ora, di fronte, vuoi che non si scopra dove sia il fantasma, dove la realtà?

LAUDISI Io vi chiedo licenza di seguitare a ridere alla fine.

AGAZZI Va bene, va bene; vedremo chi riderà meglio alla fine. Non perdiamo tempo!

Si farà all'uscio a sinistra e chiamerà:

Amalia, signora, venite, venite qua!

The second activity consists of a second performance of the scene in which students are required to use exclusively para-verbal and non-verbal elements in order to express the meaning of the play script. Therefore, instead of acting the dialogue verbally, learners will physically, gesturally and expressively interpret the theatrical text. Contrary to the first activity in which students need to avoid any other communicative elements except the verbal ones in order to perform the dialogue and focus their attention on the segmental and suprasegmental traits that characterise the scene, in the second activity students are required to pay attention to all the other elements that are normally involved during the communicative exchanges and which greatly help speakers to express themselves and listeners to understand the explicit and implicit meanings of the communicative act. In order to interpret the scene better, students will be invited to follow the instructions in brackets in the original text, which suggest the movements and expressions of each character. Moreover, students will be introduced to the use of Italian-specific gestures, and they will be invited to playfully exaggerate non-verbal elements, gestures and movements, in order to better emphasise the meaning of what is gestured and to express the characters' attitudes. Furthermore,

students will be encouraged to use their bodies and facial expressions in order to better express themselves while performing the theatrical piece. By completing these two activities, students will have practised not only specific verbal traits in the target language but will also have used para-verbal and non-verbal elements which may be used differently in communicative exchanges in the target language when compared to their L1 communicative contexts – in the case of Italian this is particularly important, for example.

3.3.3 Reading and performing a dialogue taken from a movie

Out of all the reasons for considering films as valuable teaching materials in the teaching of foreign languages, the authenticity of the language, the visual representation of the target culture and of meaningful communicative situations, and the multimodality which characterises these texts are the most relevant for the development of multiple language skills, in my opinion. First, films are "created for native speakers and not learners of the language" (Kaiser, 2011:233), therefore the language spoken in films is an authentic example of the different uses of the target language. Moreover, although the language spoken in films is a "performed text" (Kaiser, 2011:233), "native speakers suspend disbelief and accept the dialogue as 'real'" (Kaiser, 2011:233). Another feature of the language spoken in films that ostensibly portrays the target language as it is spoken in real communicative interactions is the presence of sociolects, i.e. the linguistic variations of a language according to the speakers and the places where the language is spoken. Sociolects include different registers, slang, jargon, regional inflections and dialects. These linguistic variations are important distinguishing verbal traits that allow students, when they are aware of them, to identify native speakers socially, economically, and geographically, and for this reason I have decided to select scenes where phonological variation is evident. Secondly, films are not only a valuable and authentic way to develop students' linguistic competence and socio-linguistic awareness, but can be introduced in the foreign language class to bring the target culture to students, too. In fact, while they represent good examples of authentic uses of the target language, they also depict authentic cultural contexts and settings thanks to the visual dimension which characterises audio-visual tools. Films can improve the students' "intercultural understanding" (Hilmaz, 2020:284) of the similarities and differences that exist between cultures - for instance the representation of every-day life situations, religious or national events, cultural occurrences and other social situations that are significant in order to understand the target culture (Chan and Herrero, 2010). The third element that makes films particularly valuable materials in foreign-language teaching is their multimodal nature which combines together visual images, audio inputs, authentic linguistic variations and meaningful cultural contexts. In fact, films are "multimodal texts" (Hilmaz, 2020:284) which not only provide authentic examples of the verbal uses of the target language, but the visual representation of authentic communicative exchanges in realistic cultural contexts also allows students to grasp all the non-verbal elements (e.g. gestures, facial expressions, setting, clothing, etc.) which play a fundamental role when trying to understand the communicative exchanges performed in the cinematic representations fully,

and which are inevitably lost when using other types of text for teaching purposes (e.g. printed texts, audio files, etc.). Although in some circumstance viewing an entire film is preferable, Kaiser (2011) suggests the selection of brief clips, as they have more advantages than full movies. First, clips offer students the chance to read the chosen scene closely and to focus fully on all its relevant verbal and non-verbal aspects. Secondly, "the quantity of language is more manageable" (Kaiser, 2011:234), and focusing on specific linguistic and/or cultural aspects can be easier for both tutors and learners. Thirdly, clips can be replayed several times in class quite easily, in order to give students, especially those at the lower levels of language proficiency, multiple opportunities to listen and watch the scene. Finally, clips can be easily uploaded on virtual learning environment platforms where students can rewatch them as many times as they want, and where they can be used by tutors to assign different tasks as homework, making students work individually after analysing the clips in class (Kaiser, 2011). Since clips only represent a very small part of the film from which they are taken, they need to be introduced in detail by the tutor, who must present a detailed contextualisation in order to provide students with all the necessary elements to help them understand the content of the scene fully. In particular, the use of short clips taken from films which are for some reason relevant to learners (i.e. because they deal with topics and themes discussed during the plenaries and seminars; because they analyse aspects of the target culture which students are interested in or consider relevant for their academic education, etc.), can also be selected by language tutors in order to enhance the students' command of specific language skills. Primarily, the audio-visual dimension of cinematic devices offers opportunities to develop and enhance the students' pronunciation awareness and skills. More specifically, clips can be used in order to ask students to complete a variety of tasks which can help them improve their phonological competence. Now two activities will be presented which can be offered in the foreign language class by using just one clip taken from a film. The activities devised can be introduced to learners with different levels of language proficiency by adapting the purpose of the activities to the learning outcomes that need to be achieved. For instance, the chance to play clips an indefinite number of times could be particularly beneficial to first-year beginners, as they could watch the movie clips several times and focus their attention either on the same or on different linguistic aspects. Moreover, students with just a basic level of language proficiency could do the activities at their own learning pace, and this could reduce anxiety and stress during the learning process. Intermediate and advanced students could use movie clips to enhance their vocabulary by familiarising themselves with sociolects, thus improving their cultural awareness. Moreover, learners at different levels of language proficiency could use movie clips to improve their pronunciation skills and awareness by analysing the segmental and suprasegmental traits which characterise the clips' communicative exchanges and reproducing these traits working in pairs or small groups. The two activities that I have devised are strictly focused on the enhancement of the students' pronunciation and intonation skills. The scene selected for the activities is taken from the film *Il Divo* directed by Paolo Sorrentino in 2008. It examines one of the most contradictory figures in Italian politics and probably the most powerful

politician in the so- called First Republic, Life Senator Giulio Andreotti. In particular, the chosen scene contains the dialogue between Giulio Andreotti and Father Mario during the former's religious confession. The two protagonists talk about the kidnapping and murder in May 1978 of Aldo Moro, Secretary of the Christian Democratic party, by the Red Brigades a far-left terrorist group. The dialogue was chosen because it is characterised by colloquial language enriched by various metaphorical expressions and vocabulary related to the semantic field of war, which perfectly depicts the war-like atmosphere of the *Anni di piombo* (Years of Lead) when terroristic attacks, bombings, kidnappings and murders happened on a daily basis. The most complicated expressions and words are analysed and explained to students at the beginning of the class, after briefly introducing the clip and of the film, which relates to one of the most frequently studied historical periods in Italian-as-a-foreign-language curricula in UK universities. The table below shows the original script of the dialogue.

Scene taken from "Il Divo" by Paolo Sorrentino (2008)
Don Mario: Da troppi anni c'erano questi sospetti su Lima come uomo legato alla Mafia; era troppo chiacchierato. E anche gli altri esponenti della tua corrente sono chiacchierati. Tutto questo non è bene.
Andreotti: Anch'io sono chiacchierato.
Don Mario: Ma tu sei Giulio Andreotti, loro no.
Andreotti: Almeno questo non è colpa mia.
Don Mario: Giulio, perché ti circondi di certa gente?
Andreotti: La guerra si fa con i soldati che si hanno.
Don Mario: I migliori possono scegliere i soldati migliori.
Andreotti: Ma gli alberi per crescere hanno bisogno del concime.
Don Mario: La tua ironia è atroce.
Andreotti: L'ironia è la migliore cura per non morire e le cure per non morire sono sempre atroci.
Don Mario: Soffri per Lima?
Andreotti: Soffro per Moro. Tutto mi è sempre passato addosso senza lasciare segni ma Moro no. Non riesco a togliermelo dalla testa; è come una seconda emicrania, ancora più lancinante. Perché non presero me? Io sono forte, Moro no, Moro era un uomo debole.
Don Mario: Non devi parlare così, questi sono sterili rimorsi.
Andreotti: Volevano i segreti, le Brigate rosse. Con me potevano stare a parlare un anno, Moro certe cose non solo non le sapeva, non poteva neanche immaginare che esistessero. Sai, Mario, una volta [le BR] mi hanno chiamato a casa. Nessuno ha il mio numero di casa. Mi dissero che mi avrebbero ammazzato il 26 dicembre. Io gli risposi: "Grazie, così passerò il santo Natale in pace." Sono ancora qui. Si fecero scoraggiare da una battuta: queste erano le brigate rosse, gente troppo

seriosa.

Activity 1

In the first activity, punctuation has been removed from the original dialogue. Students are required to decide which punctuation marks need to be inserted in the text according to the variations in the two speakers' intonation. Students watch the scene three times. During the first viewing they are asked to listen to the dialogue and spot the main pauses, so as to have a clearer idea of the beginning and end of the main clauses; during the second viewing, they are required to insert all the punctuation marks; during the final viewing, students can check their work and correct any mistakes. The tutor then asks each student to read a line of the dialogue aloud and explicitly say which punctuation mark they have put and where they have inserted it. After checking the entire dialogue and having discussed and clarified any doubts, students are invited to read the dialogue individually, paying attention to the punctuation marks, and therefore intonation, inserted before.

Instructions: Punctuation is missing from the dialogue below. Watch the scene taken from the film three times and decide which and where punctuation marks need to be inserted. You can choose from these punctuation marks: . ; , ? ! : ""

Don Mario: Da troppi anni c'erano questi sospetti su Lima come uomo legato alla Mafia era troppo chiacchierato E anche gli altri esponenti della tua corrente sono chiacchierati. Tutto questo non è bene

Andreotti: Anch'io sono chiacchierato

Don Mario: Ma tu sei Giulio Andreotti loro no

Andreotti: Almeno questo non è colpa mia

Don Mario: Giulio perché ti circondi di certa gente

Andreotti: La guerra si fa con i soldati che si hanno

Don Mario: I migliori possono scegliere i soldati migliori

Andreotti: Ma gli alberi per crescere hanno bisogno del concime

Don Mario: La tua ironia è atroce

Andreotti: L'ironia è la migliore cura per non morire e le cure per non morire sono sempre atroci

Don Mario: Soffri per Lima

Andreotti: Soffro per Moro Tutto mi è sempre passato addosso senza lasciare segni ma Moro no Non riesco a togliermelo dalla testa è come una seconda emicrania ancora più lancinante Perché non presero me Io sono forte Moro no Moro era un uomo debole

Don Mario: Non devi parlare così questi sono sterili rimorsi

Andreotti: Volevano i segreti le Brigate rosse Con me potevano stare a parlare un anno Moro certe cose non solo non le sapeva non poteva neanche immaginare che esistessero Sai Mario una volta [le BR] mi hanno

chiamato a casa Nessuno ha il mio numero di casa Mi dissero che mi avrebbero ammazzato il 26 dicembre Io gli risposi Grazie, cosi passerò il santo Natale in pace Sono ancora qui Si fecero scoraggiare da una battuta queste erano le brigate rosse gente troppo seriosa

Activity 2

In the second activity, students are divided into pairs and are asked to perform the scene which they have previously read autonomously. Each student will play a part, with 20 minutes to prepare their *mise-en-scène*. Students are invited to replay the clip as many times as they need and to pay attention to the performance of the actors in order to detect the segmental and suprasegmental features of the lines, they need to practise in order to provide a good performance of the script. Students are invited to mimic the actors' performance by following the pronunciation and intonation patterns of the original scene. After the 20-minute preparation, each pair is invited to perform the scene in front of the class. During the performances, the tutor takes notes on the segmental and suprasegmental traits that have generally caused the largest number of errors, and once the performances are over, s/he tutor reads the dialogue, focusing their attention on the most problematic phonological features by exaggerating their articulation in order to make clear to students the segmentals and suprasegmentals which need to be improved. After this moment of revision, students are asked to keep working in pairs, replaying the scene just once and rehearsing the dialogue while focusing on the segmental and suprasegmental traits pointed out during the revision with the tutor. Students are also invited to use a particular accent while performing and to use their bodies as necessary (e.g. gestures, positioning themselves while performing, etc.) in order to convey the non-verbal elements that are nonetheless fundamental during communicative exchanges. Clips taken from movies allow students to practice specific segmentals and suprasegmentals and get some sort of immediate feedback on their performance from the clip itself - for instance, students could check their performance of specific phonological aspects and compare it to the way they are articulated by actors in the scene. This kind of activities could be beneficial since it encourages autonomous learning and students could practice phonology individually and out-of-class.

3.3.4 Reading poems and (singing) songs

Out of the different types of literary texts that foreign language tutors can use to help learners improve their pronunciation and intonation skills, poems can also be useful. Poetry has traditionally been considered one of the most difficult types of literary text to introduce to students, and in particular to foreign language students, since it is characterised by "literary allusions, historical references and cultural assumptions" (Finch, 2003:29) that can greatly affect comprehension not only by foreign language learners, regardless how advanced their level of language proficiency, but native speakers as well. In fact, as suggested by Brindley (1980), allegorical and allusive language in poetry represents a barrier to comprehension and

language skills improvement rather than a help, especially for beginner and intermediate students. However, if we define specific forms of written poetry – for instance futurist poems, haikus and pattern poems, as "a piece of writing in which the words are chosen for their beauty and sound and are carefully arranged, often in short lines which rhyme" (Collins Cobuild, 2001), the total lack of reference to allusive language, metaphorical meanings, historical and geographical references and cultural links, allows us to include under the poetry label whichever form of short literary text predominantly characterised by close attention to the combination of sounds in the words which make it up. As Finch pointed out, the total lack of reference "to comprehension of difficult metaphorical, cultural, or ethical allusions, and nothing about grammatical correctness, metrical structure, sentence structure or logical sequencing of ideas, opens the doors to pop-songs, haiku, pattern poems, picture poems, nursery rhymes and folksongs, all of which can be viewed as poetry" (Finch, 2003:29). The lack of metaphorical, cultural, ethical and grammatical references in the poetic forms selected could be viewed positively by students as they would be encouraged to focus their attention exclusively on the segmental and suprasegmental aspects which characterise the written poetic forms chosen rather than concentrate upon the obscure meanings hidden behind words and metaphorical expressions, the cultural links and anything else not exclusively related to the pure combination of sounds, which features prominently the three forms of poetry mentioned above: futurist poems, haikus and pattern poems. Therefore, the reading of poetry and of other forms of poetic/literary text through specific teaching methods, which highlight the intrinsic characteristics of poetic works (e.g. prosody, attention to sounds, juxtaposition of words, etc.) can directly and actively involve students in the learning process by asking them to verbally and physically perform the selected texts; can positively influence the learning outcomes at different levels of language proficiency; and can help learners improve different language skills, including pronunciation and intonation. In fact, by asking learners to actively read poems and, by quoting Moore (2002:44), "to be 'in the poem'" – to interpret the poem according to their personal perspectives and emotional status, poetry can then be used by learners as a tool to express themselves and to communicate and discuss topics that mirror their interests in the target language, during both individual and collaborative activities, thus enhancing their oral communicative skills. More specifically, since poems and other poetic texts are characterised by a careful combination of sounds and are particularly appreciated for their prosodic characteristics, they can be helpful additional materials language tutors can select to train pronunciation and intonation. In his investigation on the use of poetry to teach English as a foreign language, Finch (2003), identified three types of poems that can be used in a foreign-language class with learners with different levels of language proficiency: 1. picture poems; 2. haikus; and 3. pattern poems.

3.3.4.1 Picture poems – the Futurist movement

First, picture poems are a poetic subgenre which is characterised by a visual representation of the poem itself, in the arrangement of its words. This characteristic can positively invite students to play with the

target language actively, without the need to follow rigid grammatical structures, "producing visual and verbal output" (Finch, 2003:30). A good example of Italian picture poems can be found in the avant-garde Futurist movement, founded in Italy in 1909 by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and characterised by a rejection of the past and its forms of expression (such as romantic poetry, for example) and the extolling of science, technology and industry. In his *Manifesto del Futurismo* (1909), first published on the Gazzetta dell'Emilia on 5th February 1909, Marinetti defines the features of futuristic poetry with the expression "*parole in libertà*" ("words in freedom") referring to a language freed from common syntax and structures that, together with sharp typographic variations, was able to convey the poets' profound emotions. In the three examples offered below, the poems written by Carlo Belloli visually represent the emotions of the poet through the special collocation of words, specifically chosen for their meanings and sounds and with which the poet seems to keep playing. The total lack of punctuation, grammatical structures, predefined word order and common syntax allows students to interpret the meaning of the poems freely and subjectively and to play with the target language actively, both individually and in pairs/small groups. Students can be invited to reflect on known and new words and define connections between words in order to create meanings without grammatical structures and convey their deepest emotions. This activity could be addressed to all levels of language proficiency as it develops the students' writing skills in the target language freely, without the need to follow strict writing conventions which could be a demotivating factor even in advanced students. First-year beginners could particularly benefit from this exercise. The absence of common grammatical structures and syntax and the lack of punctuation marks and a defined word order free the target language of the norms which generally rule written production, leaving beginners free to experiment with the language by using any element they already know. Moreover, the production of a piece of poetry could act as a motivating factor to boost the learners' desire to learn even more.

Carlo Belloli (1949), "I treni", da *Testi-poemi murari*, Milano, Edizioni Erre
treni   i treni i iiiiiiiiiiiii
Carlo Belloli (1949), "Bimba bomba", da *Testi-poemi murari*, Milano, Edizioni Erre

b   a
  i   b
    m
  o   b
 b   a

```
                          balla bimba

                          bomba balla

                          bella bimba

                          bomba bella

                          bimba

                          balla

                          bomba

                          bella
```

Carlo Belloli (1943-1944), "Guerra", in *Parole per la Guerra*, Milano, Edizioni dei futuristi in armi

```
                              guerra          terra

                    serra                guerra

                    serra                serra

                    terra                terra

      guerra        guerra
```

The insistent repetition of sounds in futurist poems can be rather helpful in the training of the sounds of the target language which seem to be particularly challenging for students at different levels of language proficiency. Language tutors can select the poetic pieces accordingly, with the segmental features that they want to focus on from class to class and use the poems as tools for the training of those specific segmentals. For instance, tutors can select a number of poems and then ask each student to choose the one that they like the most. Then each student can work individually on their chosen poem – i.e. they can look up any unknown vocabulary, interpret the meaning of the literary piece according to their own emotions and feelings, practise reading the poem and try to find their preferred reading style. After working autonomously, each student can be asked to read the poem in front of the class and to provide a personal interpretation of it.

3.3.4.2 Haikus

Haikus are a traditional form of short Japanese poetry which generally follows a 5/7/5-syllable scheme consisting of five syllables in the first line, seven in the second and five in the third. Haikus are characterised by a simple and flexible structure and are famous for their capacity to depict images perfectly by using a very limited number of words, without the need to follow rigid sentence structures. In this sense, this form of poetry could help students experiment freely with the target language by associating words, sounds and images which evoke a specific emotion or idea. Thus, haikus can be a valid tool for learners to express themselves in a rather simple but creative form of poetry in the target language, unincumbered by complex

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grammatical structures. In this case too, students can be asked to work either individually or in pairs/small groups. Despite the fact that haikus are characterised by adaptable structures and a limited number of words, following a specific syllable pattern and using very few terms to express specific feelings or thoughts could be rather challenging. For these reasons, the examples of activities offered in this paragraph could work more fruitfully with advanced levels of language proficiency. An activity which can help students develop multiple linguistic skills can be the writing of a haiku and, once this has been done, its performance in front of the class. This task can be focused on a specific aspect of the target language. In fact, students can be required to practise specific grammatical rules and syntactic structures; or they can be asked to use new vocabulary linked to a specific topic; or tutors can invite students to use words with specific segmental traits.

The tables below show two very well-known haikus with interesting structures and use of words:

English version	Italian version (Starace, 2018)
Ours is a world of suffering, Even if cherry-flowers bloom. Kobayashi Issa (1763-1827) Edition 1997 (see References)	Mondo di sofferenza: eppure i ciliegi sono in fiore. Kobayashi Issa (1763-1827)
Barn's burnt down -- Now I can see the moon. Mizuta Masahide (1657 -1723) Edition 1995 (see References)	Il tetto si è bruciato: ora posso vedere la luna. Mizuta Masahide (1657 -1723)

3.3.4.3 Pattern poems

Pattern poems are visual poems in which different patterns can be used to train different language skills (e.g. grammar, syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.). Moreover, this *genre* of poetry can be used with learners having differing levels of language proficiency. Pattern poems invite students to use the target language in order to express themselves and communicate their ideas. The patterns generally consist of 1.

grammatical items (adjectives, adverbs, verbs, etc.); 2. metrical frameworks; 3. phrases; 4. sentence structures; 5. acronyms; and 6. alphabetical sequencing (Finch, 2003). Holmes and Moulton (2001) have summed up some of the activities that learners can do while working with pattern poems:

" - play with words and see what fits because the burden of discovering a proper format for a poem is removed;

- create a polished piece of writing in a relatively short period, thereby experiencing "instant gratification";
- rehearse correct spelling;
- use familiar vocabulary;
- discover new vocabulary while using the dictionary or thesaurus to find words that serve their ideas;
- practice specific language structures such as phrases, word order, and verb tenses;
- develop confidence in their ability to share ideas in writing;
- nurture creativity by giving their imaginations a free reign;
- cultivate logical and sequential thinking skills through storytelling;
- refine summarising skills" (Holmes & Moulton, 2001:3).

The table below shows the aforementioned uses of pattern poems in action. In this specific example, a familiar word (*amico*, meaning 'friend') is used as an acronym to make students practise a number of linguistic aspects (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, syntax, etc.). The central acronym asks students to find single words associated to the idea of friend; the acronym on the left requires the same task as the central acronym, but by using the structure noun + adjective, which is the most common syntactical combination in Italian; the acronym on the right requires students to create two full sentences, in which the required initial letters appears every two, three or four words (Finch, 2003):

Acronym on the left	Central acronym	Acronym on the right
Amico gentile	Allegro	Ancora penso al
Mamma premurosa	Meritevole	Mio amico
Insetto fastidioso	Irriverente	Ignazio. Lui arrivò a
Cane affettuso	Contento	Casa un giorno alle
Occhi vispi	Orgoglioso	Otto di sera, affamato.

As suggested by Holmes and Moulton (2001), the use of pattern poems can positively influence the development of multiple skills in foreign language learners. In particular, pattern poems can be used by teachers to make students practise specific grammatical and syntactical structures; or to develop new vocabulary associated with a specific topic/area. Moreover, students are required to work in pairs or in small groups and while doing this they can improve their collaborative skills and learn how to cooperate with others to acquire the target language in a more enjoyable and productive way. Furthermore, these forms

of literary art greatly improve the students' capacity to think, feel and express themselves in the target language as pattern poems leave them the freedom to associate whichever words to the item selected as a pattern. Finally, pattern poems can also be used to train and enhance the students' pronunciation and intonation skills. In fact, using a pattern which contains segmental features that students have not yet mastered can help them to focus specifically on those sounds. Moreover, by asking students to complete the pattern poems using words which contains specific sounds and by asking them to read the pattern poems aloud, learners are invited to focus on phonological aspects of the target language that they may still pronounce inaccurately. For instance, the example given in the table above includes segmental features that the data collected through the pronunciation and intonation training offered in class pointed out as particularly challenging at different levels of linguistic competence, such as geminates, the rolling /r/, /k/, /ʎ/, /ɲ/ and stressed words.

These aforementioned activities are not simply relevant for the development of students' linguistic and cultural awareness, but they also allow learners to train pronunciation and intonation skills together with other linguistic skills. Thus, the teaching approach adopted for the elaboration of these activities allows students and language tutors to see pronunciation and intonation not as marginalised skills that need to be trained apart from the other linguistic skills. Phonological competence becomes as crucial and important as other linguistic skills, and therefore its training is integrated in the learning process together with the practice of other competences.

3.4 Songs

As well as different forms of poetic compositions which can be used to improve multiple linguistic skills, songs can be a useful tool, too. In particular, songs are an enjoyable and helpful teaching aid to train multiple skills (e.gg. listening and reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, etc.) but they can also be a valuable source in terms of pronunciation and intonation practice. In fact, students imitate the singer while performing the song and they produce a similar version of the original piece, in terms of both pronunciation of single words and full sentences, and suprasegmental traits (e.g. prosody, stress, pitch, vowel length, etc.). This type of exercise could be a useful activity to use alongside the pronunciation and intonation training activities presented and discussed in my thesis. While repeating single words and tongue-twisters or sayings supported by the use of Vocaroo allows students to focus on single segmental traits which they may not have mastered yet, the use of songs is relevant as songs invite students to practise pronunciation and intonation rules at a sentence-text-level. This exercise allows students to become aware of the "sentence flow and the relative stress of words as they appear in different combinations" (Finch, 2003:36). Moreover, songs are a good example of authentic use of the target language, and therefore are a particularly valuable source for foreign language tutors and learners (Finch, 2003). Activities based on the use of songs are suitable to students with different levels of language proficiency. In fact, songs can be used to achieve

different learning outcomes by devising exercises which are appropriate to the goal to be reached. Beginners could use songs to approach and familiarise themselves with the sounds and rhythm of the target language in an enjoyable way, which could give them the opportunity to learn new vocabulary and grammatical structures at the same time. Intermediate and advanced students could use songs to perfect segmental and suprasegmental features which they have not mastered yet; moreover, they could use songs to understand specific historical, social and cultural movements better, thus increasing their cultural awareness while practising different language skills. A song that features repeated rhymes which linguistically help the singer to highlight the topic of the song is *Nel blu dipinto di blu*, also known as *Volare*, written by Franco Migliacci and Domenico Modugno. *Nel blu dipinto di blu* was sung for the first time by Domenico Modugno and Johnny Dorelli at the Festival di Sanremo in 1958, when it achieved first place and won the competition. It was also presented at the Eurovision Song Contest in the same year, where it came third. The song is certainly one of the best known Italian songs in history and has been sung by many famous international singers over the years, who made it one of the most popular in the world. As Gianni Borgna (1992) told in his book about the origin of the most famous Italian songs, *Volare* was put into words just after a nightmare Migliacci had during a very difficult moment in his life. The famous refrain "Volare, oh oh" was composed by chance by Domenico Modugno, while he was contemplating the blue Roman sky on a Sunday morning with his wife. The first stanza already contains all the rhythmic elements which make this song a valuable text for the training of segmentals and suprasegmentals. It is characterised by alternate rhymes, which follow the rhyming scheme ABCB and give a definite rhythm to the song:

Stanza 1
Penso che un sogno **così (A)**   non ritorni mai **più**, **(B)**   mi dipingevo le **mani (C)**   e la faccia di **blu**, **(B)**   poi d'improvviso **venivo (A)**   dal vento **rapito**, **(B)**   e incominciavo a **volare (C)**   nel cielo **infinito. (B)**

The refrain appears in two slightly different versions and is divided into three parts. The first and the last sections are identical - they are introduced by the very well-known sentence "Volare oh oh, cantare oh oh oh oh" and follow an AABB rhyming pattern. The central section seems to have a double function. From a content perspective, it allows the singer to better explain the nightmare he had to his listeners and to justify

somehow the happiness of flying in the sky; from a rhythmic point of view, it insists on the consistent rhythm of the refrain.

Refrain 1	Refrain 2
Section 1:	Section 1:
Volare **oh oh (A)**	Volare **oh oh (A)**
cantare oh **oh oh, (A)**	cantare oh **oh oh, (A)**
nel blu dipinto di **blu, (B)**	nel blu degl'occhi tuoi **blu, (B)**
felice di stare **lassù**, **(B)**	felice di stare qua **giù, (B)**
Section 2:	Section 2:
e volavo **volavo (A)**	e continuo a volare **felice (A)**
felice più in alto del **sole (B)**	più in alto del **sole (B)**
ed ancora più **sù, (C)**	ed ancora più **su, (C)**
mentre il **mondo (D)**	mentre il **mondo (D)**
pian piano spariva **lontano (E)**	pian piano **scompare (E)**
laggiù, (C)	negl'occhi tuoi **blu, (C)**
una musica dolce **suonava (F)**	la tua voce è una **musica (F)**
soltanto per **me. (G)**	dolce che suona per **me. (G)**
Section 3:	Section 3:
Volare **oh oh (A)**	Volare **oh oh (A)**
cantare oh **oh oh (A)**	cantare oh **oh oh (A)**
nel blu dipinto di **blu (B)**	nel blu degl'occhi tuoi **blu**, **(B)**
felice di stare **lassù**. **(B)**	felice di stare qua **giù, (B)**
	nel blu degl'occhi tuoi **blu, (B)**
	felice di stare qua **giù (B)**
	con te.. **(C)**

The second stanza has a different rhyming pattern if compared to the first, but the melody and the rhythm are the same:

Stanza 2
Ma tutti i **sogni (A)**
nell'alba svaniscon **perchè, (B)**

quando tramonta la luna li porta con **sè, (B)**
ma io continuo a **sognare (C)**
negl'occhi tuoi **belli, (D)**
che sono blu come un **cielo (E)**
trapunto di **stelle (F)**

The simple metric and rhyming patterns of the song make it easy to remember the prosody, rhythm, pitch and stress, and by singing it, students can practise pronunciation and intonation in a rather enjoyable way. The acquisition and improvement of the phonological skills could be then checked from time to time by asking students to sing or read small chunks of the song. The correct use of pauses and rhythm will represent an effective way to detect eventual segmental and suprasegmental issues. Moreover, the song deals with the topic of lost love and consequent pain, a rather relevant and interesting topic for young learners, which could lead to a genuine and original discussion in class. Therefore, the song can be used by the language tutor to give different tasks to students and to practise different language skills. Moreover, songs generally convey important information on the cultural, social, political and historical background of the time when they were written, or they refer to. For instance, the song that I would like to analyse as a possible valuable resource to bring the target-language culture to learners is *Un'estate italiana* (An Italian summer) by Edoardo Bennato and Gianna Nannini, also very well-known as *Notti Magiche* (Magical Nights). This song became popular during the football World Cup which was played in Italy during the summer of 1990. The song vividly depicts the feeling of excitement and unity that characterises an Italian summer when any kind of international football game takes place. Despite the disappointing result of the 1990 World Cup, Italians still sing *Un'estate italiana* as their lucky song when Italy plays in international championships, but it is mostly sung after a victory. This song is part of Italian culture and deals with one of the best-known Italian stereotypes, Italians' passionate love for football. Therefore, it seems relevant for students of Italian to know this song and when it is sung. In addition to rhyming lines (*via/follia; spogliatoi/noi*), the song is characterised by a rather colloquial register which can enrich the vocabulary of beginner and intermediate students. Moreover, it can be used as a valuable tool to improve the students' phonological awareness at sentence-level (Quel sogno che comincia da bambino/e che ti porta sempre più lontano. Non è una favola/e dagli spogliatoi escono i ragazzi/ e siamo noi) as the rhythm of the song is not only evident in the actual singing performance, but also through the visual end of each line of the lyrics.

Un'estate italiana, Edoardo Bennato and Gianna Nannini (1990)
Forse non sarà una canzone
A cambiare le regole del gioco
Ma voglio viverla così quest'avventura

Senza frontiere e con il cuore in gola

E il mondo in una giostra di colori

E il vento accarezza le bandiere

Arriva un brivido e ti trascina **via**

E scioglie in un abbraccio la **follia**

Notti magiche

Inseguendo un goal

Sotto il cielo

Di un'estate italiana

E negli occhi tuoi

Voglia di vincere

Un'estate

Un'avventura in più

Quel sogno che comincia da bambino

E che ti porta sempre più lontano

Non è una favola e dagli **spogliatoi**

Escono i ragazzi e siamo **noi**

Notti magiche

Inseguendo un goal

Sotto il cielo

Di un'estate italiana

 negli occhi tuoi

Voglia di vincere

Un'estate

Un'avventura in più

Notti magiche

Inseguendo un goal (inseguendo un goal)

Sotto il cielo

Di un'estate italiana

E negli occhi tuoi

Voglia di vincere

Un'estate

Un'avventura in più

Un'avventura

Un'avventura in più

Un'avventura goal!

Having provided theoretical explanations regarding pronunciation, intonation and accent (Chapter 1), a detailed review of the phonological activities offered by textbooks, online apps and standardised proficiency tests (Chapter 2), and having provided examples of activities based on literary texts and other written forms (Chapter 3), which aim to train and help students to improve and develop their pronunciation and intonation skills, in the next chapter I will analyse the research methods employed in this study in detail (Chapter 4).

Chapter 4

Methodology

This chapter is about the research methodology employed and provides an in-depth explanation of the triangulation of research measures adopted in the design of the study. My research case consisted of different groups of undergraduate students of Italian as a foreign language with different levels of language proficiency. It is worth mentioning the hybrid and, in some cases, online-only delivery of foreign language classes that tutors and students experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and which have made it necessary to rethink materials and activities designed for the students' acquisition of the necessary language skills for the different levels of language proficiency. Therefore, researchers and teachers have engaged in a fruitful debate on digital educational tools and how these can support students in developing and honing language skills, while maintaining motivation and engagement during a very challenging period. Among these skills, communication plays a fundamental role, and it has been widely identified by teachers as a particular challenge of teaching online in these unprecedented times. The practical phases of this study were conducted during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, where the COVID-19 measures for high education institutions were still in place; hence the pronunciation and intonation training sessions were all delivered online, via Zoom. Despite the teaching materials have been devised for emergency remote teaching (ERT), with the aim to provide valid teaching tools during university shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the results that emerged from the analysis of the data suggest the efficacy and validity of these teaching strategies in wider online/blended learning environments and encourage their future deployment in academic curricula.

The main issues in my study were to gain an understanding of students' attitudes towards pronunciation and intonation skills and their training and report the students' learning outcomes after a two-year period of segmentals and suprasegmentals practice. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss: 1. the research method adopted, and qualitative and quantitative research measures used in this study (for instance, questionnaires, and recordings); 2. the data collection procedures followed in this research; 3. the experimental phases, the participants, the teaching materials devised for the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions; 4. questionnaires for students and Italian native-speakers; 5. data analysis; and, 6. finally, the integrity of the study, selection of participants and criteria used for the data collection and analysis will be addressed.

4.1 Research questions and methodology

The research questions that this study, conducted in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Birmingham, aims to answer are:

RQ1: which are the core sounds of the Italian language that English native speakers must master in order to maintain intelligibility?

RQ2: how can blended learning be used to design specific teaching materials which can usefully help learners to improve their pronunciation and intonation skills, therefore their communicative competence?

In order to achieve the aforementioned aims, I designed a qualitative study also involving two experimental phases during which a selection of materials, devised for the training of pronunciation and intonation skills, were used with groups of students of Italian as a foreign language, at different levels of language proficiency. The study primarily uses qualitative data analysis, although some of the data collected through questionnaires and recordings were also analysed qualitatively or on a statistical basis.

4.1.1 The research method: Case study

The nature of this study is exploratory, therefore it aims to "develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry" (Yin, 2009:9). Out of the different research methods that can be used in an exploratory study, I decided to use case study. This choice allowed me to analyse in depth a specific instance – the role of pronunciation and intonation in learning Italian as a foreign language and how to use blended learning to improve the learners' phonological awareness and skills, in a natural setting such as communicative-skills classes in university courses of Italian as a foreign language. My research case consisted of different groups of undergraduate students of Italian as a foreign language with different levels of language proficiency. The main issues in my study were to gain an understanding of students' attitudes towards pronunciation and intonation skills and their training and report the students' learning outcomes after a two-year period of segmentals and suprasegmentals practice. I selected this case (undergraduate students of Italian at a Department of Modern languages of a British university) because it featured crucial characteristics which could also have been found in other, similar groups of learners and therefore the findings of this research could also be applicable to other Italian-as-FL learning contexts. From a methodological point of view, I decided to use a case study because of its "unique strength" (Yin, 2009:18) deriving from the use of different sources of evidence (e.g. questionnaires, recordings, etc.). Moreover, case studies explore single or multiple cases in details and focus specifically on the process leading to certain results, thus fully explaining the reasons of certain results (Denscombe, 2007). Despite the numerous pros supporting the use of case studies as a valuable research method, some scholars claim that case studies impede generalisation as they only focus on one or a very limited number of cases (Yin, 2009). Other researchers maintain that case studies are not rigorous as investigators may allow personal bias "to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions" (Yin, 2009:14). In response to these reservations, Denscombe (2007) claims that "there may be insights to be gained from looking at the individual case that can have wider implications and, importantly, that would not have come to light through the use of a research strategy

that tried to cover a large number of instances – a survey approach" (Denscombe, 2007:36). Moreover, Yin (2009) and Denscombe (2007) suggest that the analysis of the single case can lead to more general ideas, thoughts and hypotheses about specific phenomena, which however need to be further analysed and investigated through further research in order to reach more secure findings (Denscombe, 2007). In this sense, this research needs to be taken as a starting point for a closer investigation of the role of pronunciation and intonation training in learning Italian as a foreign language.

I will now present the six steps which have been followed in the data collection, which will be analysed in detail in the following paragraphs of this chapter.

4.2 Data collection procedures

I gathered the data for this study in six steps:

- During my MA research project, I collected data regarding the most difficult Italian sound to master for English native speakers who studied or were studying Italian FL at the time, through questionnaires and interviews. Drawing from those results, I have investigated the status of things regarding the teaching and training of Italian pronunciation and intonation.

- During the second step, I designed the experimental phases by devising the activities for the online training sessions and selecting the literary texts and drama techniques that could be useful to achieve the goals of this study.

- In the third step, I conducted the experimental phases with different groups of students and different levels of language proficiency. The training sessions were conducted online and recorded through the use of the voice recording tool Vocaroo. This phase lasted two semesters.

- The fourth step was gathering the students' opinion on the role of pronunciation and intonation while learning Italian as a foreign language. For this, I designed the students' questionnaire, and I administered it to the students who took part in my study by filling in a consent form.

- The fifth step involved the collection of the recordings made during the online training sessions, the selection of the most interesting in terms of learning outcomes and the administration of the native speakers' questionnaires, in order to better define the influence that pronunciation and intonation have during communicative exchanges with NSs, and the benefits brought by mastery of segmentals and suprasegmentals in working environments.

- At the end of the experimental phases, I analysed all the recordings collected from the online training sessions and compared them to the students' pronunciation and intonation skills displayed during their final summative oral exams, in order to gauge the progress made after the two-semester pronunciation- and intonation-related activities.

4.3 The experiment

The experimental phases consisted of a series of pronunciation and intonation sessions delivered to different groups of learners of Italian as a foreign language at different levels of Italian proficiency during online communicative skills hours. Students were required to do activities (in online-classes and at home) which were selected, devised, and explained by me as teacher-as-researcher. The following paragraphs provide a detailed explanation of the participants, the teaching materials used, the teaching approach and the methodology.

4.4 The participants

The subjects in the experiment were 36 during the first experimental phase, and 7 during the second one. The participants were first-years (beginners and advanced) and second-year (intermediate and advanced) students of Italian as a FL enrolled on a BA course in the Modern Languages Department at the University of Birmingham, UK. Participants were selected on a voluntary basis and were a "sample of convenience" (McKay, 2006), since they were enrolled on the courses I was teaching, so they were subjects that I could "get access to" (McKay, 2006:37). Two further factors which guided the selection of the experimental subjects were: 1. students had different levels of language proficiency and I was interested in investigating the role of pronunciation and intonation at different level of linguistic competence and in identifying at which level of the foreign language learning process students could get better learning outcomes and develop greater phonological awareness; 2. the size of the groups was relatively small, which allowed me to deliver the activities devised more efficiently and monitor the students' learning pace, needs and outcomes more accurately. The experiment took place for the first time during the second term of the academic year 2020-2021 (February-April); the second delivery of the pronunciation and intonation training took place during the second term of the academic year 2021-2022 (February-April). During both phases, the experiment lasted 20 minutes per week working exclusively on the pronunciation and intonation activities devised for the training. Before participants took part in the experiment, the framework and aim of the study were explained, so as to enable them to give informed consent about participation and use of data. Students were also told that the experiment would not be part of their exam and would not affect their final mark. In the analysis of the recordings, each student was named by using an identification number which included: 1. type of participant (i.e., student); 2. identification number, which was progressive (i.e., student1, student2, etc.); 3. academic year of the experimental phase (i.e., student1_20, student2_21, etc.).

4.5 Teaching materials

Since my intention was to encourage students to enhance their phonological awareness by improving their pronunciation and intonation in Italian and to apply their phonological knowledge to any kind of activity in the target language (e.g. speaking, thinking, performing, reading, etc.), I opted for two models: 1. the

language-based model – in fact, the activities that I devised where always considered as a starting point for students' to improve their linguistic competence and proficiency and for me as teacher to teach the target language; 2. the cultural-based model – as the inclusion of cultural-related texts offered a great insight into the target culture and allowed students to enhance their cultural awareness and knowledge. The activities devised and included in the pronunciation and intonation training process were framed within two students-oriented approaches to foreign language teaching: the communicative approach to foreign language teaching (Chapter 1), according to which the acquisition of communicative competence is the main purpose of any language activity used in the classroom, and constructivism (Introduction and Chapter 2), according to which learners construct their knowledge progressively and independently and "instructors [...] thrive as mentors" (McVay Lynch M., 2012:15). In order to make the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions meaningful for students, I introduced the activities by highlighting the importance of pronunciation, intonation and accents while studying foreign languages in general and more specifically Italian. For this reason, I pointed out to students *what*, *why* and *how* they would have done during the sessions; this would help them to approach the training classes more actively and consciously. Therefore, the aims and the procedures of the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions were introduced and explained to the students as follows:

- Class goal: fluent pronunciation and intonation. In order to enhance the students' phonological awareness, they were encouraged to practise the segmental and suprasegmental features of Italian that generally cause more articulation issues to students of Italian as a foreign language;
- Students' focus: students were asked to focus: 1. on the pronunciation of single sounds – differences among sounds were highlighted by the researcher, through the use of voice changes, while introducing the activities; 2. on the pronunciation of sounds in different phonological contexts (e.g. the rolling /r/; the rolling /r/ before vowels; the rolling /r/ after specific consonants, etc.); and 3. on the intonation of sentences according to the explicit and implicit meanings that they wanted to communicate or their emotional state.
- Speed: I usually asked students to repeat and record their online training sessions at their own pace and speed; however, especially in the case of tongue-twisters, they were asked to try to speak faster than usual while focusing on pronouncing all sounds intelligibly.
- Method: in online classes, individual and group activities were combined with the use of technological devices (Vocaroo) which also help autonomous learning and practice at home.

In order to achieve the aforementioned aims, loops, tongue-twisters and sayings were devised and deployed for the pronunciation and intonation training offered to students. Moreover, a selection of dialogic texts taken from contemporary novels, theatrical pieces and movies was also included in this study in order to

provide a wider choice of teaching materials to language tutors. Finally, a small number of poetic forms and songs was also included with the teaching materials analysed in this study. The selection of the types of activities and texts was based on my beliefs as language instructor, on my experience and on the evidence from different case studies previously discussed in this thesis (Chapter 3). I opted for loops, tongue-twisters and sayings as many scholars (Yana V. Korolkova et al., 2015; Yollanda L. Turumi et al., 2016; Nurhasanah, Yetty Zainil, 2018) have identified them as useful teaching resources to train and improve the students' phonological awareness. Moreover, the lack of research on the use of loops (Chapter 3) for the teaching and training of Italian segmentals and suprasegmentals seemed to me a good reason to test them in my study and analyse the findings derived from their implementation in communicative skills classes. As far as the use of dialogic texts selected from contemporary novels, theatrical pieces and movies is concerned, this choice arose from a desire to avoid literature forms which could undermine the students' motivation and enjoyment of the pronunciation and intonation training (Chapter 3). In this respect, contemporary literary texts and movies may prove easier for learners in terms of language and content, as they feature not only a broad variety of different uses of the target language, but also a considerable number of cultural, social and historical links which could positively affect the students' mastery of both linguistic and cultural awareness. Furthermore, the combination of reading activities based on the selected literary texts with drama techniques, which require students to actively perform the written texts, can provide learners with 1. a detailed insight into the verbal and non-verbal habits of native speakers of the target language; 2. the chance to practise the aforementioned verbal and non-verbal features of the target language in a safe place. Finally, songs and a limited number of poetic forms (i.e. futurist poems, haikus and pattern poems) were selected to provide examples of peculiar combination of sounds and prosodic characteristics. In fact, thanks to their specific phonological characteristics, they can be helpful additional material that language tutors can select for the training of pronunciation and intonation skills.

Once I decided the forms of text I wanted to include in my study, I selected the right ones for the experimental phases by asking three main questions:

- Which learning outcome should students achieve thanks to the pronunciation and intonation training sessions?
- Which topics should be addressed in the selected literary texts, poems and songs in order to make the materials interesting, as well as useful?
- How can the devised activities be differently targeted according to the learners' different levels of language proficiency?

Trying to answer these questions during the text-selection process was fundamental in order to choose the right texts for the training sessions delivered during online Communicative Skills classes, and so as to devise appropriate activities for the different proficiency levels and learning needs.

After completing the experiment phases, I asked the participants to fill in a questionnaire aimed at investigating their personal points of view as learners of foreign languages on the role of pronunciation and intonation.

4.6 Questionnaires

Questionnaires with students and native speakers serve as important sources of data to answer these questions: 1) how do the students view their pronunciation skills after the experimental phases?, 2) in what ways has correct pronunciation influenced the learners' attitude towards learning Italian?, 3) according to the native speakers involved in the research project, which role does non-native speakers' pronunciation play during communicative exchanges?, 4) according to the native speakers, how can pronunciation and intonation help learners of Italian as a foreign language to integrate in the target country and have the same opportunities as native speakers?. As far as intonation is concerned, recordings collected during the experimental phases proved to be very important to highlight specific prosodic characteristics of Italian that may be challenging for English native speakers – for example, the suspensive tone (Canepari, 2008). All the data collected have been summarised, compared, interpreted, and analysed qualitatively to arrive at defining examples of good teaching practice for the training of Italian pronunciation and intonation at different levels of language proficiency. In the next paragraph, the four-point Likert scale questionnaire for students and the three-section questionnaire for Italian native-speakers, that have been adopted in order to 1. investigate the learners' attitude towards phonological training and 2. native speakers spontaneous feedback on the role of pronunciation and intonation during verbal exchanges with learners of Italian as a foreign language, will be fully explained.

4.6.1 Four-point Likert-Scale Questionnaire for students (see Appendix B)

The four-point Likert-Scale questionnaire is the result of the combination of Likert-Scale questionnaires and the Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q). This choice arose from the need to have easily analysable data and the need to investigate aspects specifically related to foreign language learners. In fact, the questionnaire's aim is to explore Italian language students' opinions on three main aspects of learning Italian as a foreign language: motivation and demotivation, the correlation between pronunciation and identity factors and the use of authentic materials. The four-point Likert-Scale questionnaire has four sections (general section; motivation and demotivation section; pronunciation and identity section; authenticity section) with 20 items in total.

4.6.1.1 The aims of the Four-point Likert-Scale Questionnaire for students

The four-point Likert-Scale questionnaire for students has four main aims. First, the questionnaire aims to identify the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students taking part in the survey to provide valid data for the finding of reliable results and the design of teaching materials which respond to the phonological needs of learners. Secondly, it explores the intrinsic and extrinsic motives and demotives that characterise the students' Italian language-learning process; moreover, it investigates the role of foreign language learning in the shaping of the learners' possible selves, their level of integration and the students' attitudes towards the learning situation. Thirdly, it identifies the core sounds of Italian that learners of Italian from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds may find particularly difficult to master and investigates the correlation between pronunciation and identity. Finally, the fourth aim of the four-point Likert-Scale questionnaire concerns the role of authentic materials in the acquisition of Italian as a foreign language through the evaluation of its use in the development of the language in general (cultural elements included), in the acquirement of the four main skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing), and in the improvement of pronunciation and intonation skills (i.e. accent).

The first two questions of the Four-point Likert-Scale Questionnaire for students were taken from the LEAP-Q. The first question ("Please list the languages you know in order of acquisition. Your NATIVE LANGUAGE is the FIRST") asks for the age of acquisition of the language spoken by the students. This item is particularly significant as it finds out the level of English nativeness of participants and, consequently, which variables may cause differences in the acquisition of Italian pronunciation and intonation in the students involved in the survey. It is useful, at this point, to give a definition of native speaker of a language. As Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2000) pointed out, there are various acceptable ways, referring to different criteria, to define the concept of native-speaker, for instance: 1. native-speaker by early childhood exposure to the language (known also as native-speaker by birth); 2. native-speaker by credit of being a native-speaker; 3. native-speaker (or near native-speaker) by being an exceptional learner; 4. native-speaker by the academic education received in the foreign language; and 5. native-speaker by residence in the foreign language speaking country. In addition to these definitions, Davies (2017) highlighted the inappropriateness of using the expression 'the native speaker' as "There are native speakers, but the native speaker does not exist" (2017:185). In fact, Davies (2017) maintained that each speaker is a native speaker "of something, some code, dialect or language, but each of us is different" (2017:185). In this respect, Berruto (2012) suggested six types of speakers from the highest level of nativeness to the lowest: 1. a prototypical native-speaker, i.e. a monolingual speaker of just one language, defined by Berruto as 'continuous' (2012:39); 2. a plurilingual continuous native-speaker, that is a speaker of other languages; 3. a semi-native-speaker (semi-nativo), i.e. a bilingual speaker who has been exposed to two languages from early childhood; 4. a near native-speaker, i.e. a speaker who, although did not acquire the target language from early childhood, has a high level of proficiency; 5. a former-native speaker, i.e. a speaker

who has lost or is losing their first language, acquired during early childhood, in favour of a more dominant language which typically coincides with the language spoken in the place of residence; 6. a non-native-speaker, i.e. a speaker who has not yet achieved an adequate level of proficiency in the target language (Berruto, 2012:39-40). Drawing on Berruto's six types of native speakers, the four-point Likert-Scale questionnaire's item about the native language of participants pointed out who could be considered as a monolingual English native-speaker, as a multilingual English native-speaker, or as a near-English native-speaker (for instance, a student might be born in a non-English speaking country, but they might have lived for many years in an English-speaking country and, therefore, their linguistic competence in English might be close to the one of a monolingual or multilingual English native-speaker). As already mentioned, international students at the University of Birmingham are required to provide a language certificate which shows an appropriate level of English proficiency, therefore speakers having a very limited knowledge of English were very unlikely to take part in the research project.

The second item concerns the dominance of a language over another ("Please list all the languages you know in order of dominance[26] – 1. LEAST DOMINANT; 2. SLIGHTLY DOMINANT; 3. DOMINANT; 4. MOST DOMINANT"). This item is necessary to determine whether the participant's knowledge of Italian is influenced by other more dominant languages (i.e. bilingual English native-speakers and multilingual English native-speaker students, who have studied other romance languages since high school and who have started studying Italian at university, tend to apply the phonological traits of those languages to Italian, since they are in a dominant position). Determining which language is more dominant for each student clarifies which kind of phonological issues might occur and, therefore, which specific phonological training students should do to improve their pronunciation and intonation in Italian. Another aspect of the LEAP-Q that was included in the four-point Likert-Scale questionnaire concerns the students' self-perception of their pronunciation in Italian ("In your perception, on a scale from one to four, how much of a foreign accent do you have in Italian? Please tick (✓) your accent – 1. NOT PERVASIVE; 2. SLIGHTLY PERVASIVE; 3. PERVASIVE; 4. VERY PERVASIVE") and the frequency of the students' identification as a non-native-speakers by others due to their foreign accent in Italian ("Please tick (✓) how many times others identify you as a non-native based on your accent in Italian – 1. NEVER; 2. SOMETIMES; 3. OFTEN; 4. ALWAYS"). These two questions highlight the importance of including specific pronunciation and intonation training in the teaching of Italian as a foreign language as a possible means to enhance and support the learners' linguistic self-confidence (Clément, 1977, 1994), which can be defined as "self-perceptions of communicative competence and concomitant low levels of anxiety in using the second language" (Noels et al. 1996:248). In fact, since pronunciation and intonation-focused training can improve the learners' chances to master the foreign language phonological traits more accurately, this will also

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[26] "Language dominance is most often interpreted as referring to the relative strength of a bilingual's proficiency in each language, with the dominant language being the 'more proficient' or 'further developed one' " (Treffers-Daller, 2019:379)

increase their chances to understand and, more importantly, to be understood while having a communicative exchange with both native and non-native speakers. Consequently, the learners' level of anxiety when speaking the foreign language may decrease and the foreign language learning outcomes may improve.

4.6.1.2 Results of Four-points Likert scale Questionnaire for students

The students' answers to the questionnaire on the role of pronunciation and intonation in learning Italian as a foreign language reveal that, despite the lack of a systematic and appropriate training of these skills in modern languages BA programmes at university level, learners do believe that they have a crucial role in their final learning outcomes and consider activities aiming at their development very useful. The students who filled in the questionnaire were 12 in total (gender: 11 females and 1 male; ethnic background: 10 white British, 1 white Irish, 1 white other background (Croatian), 1 white/Asian; first language: 11 English native speakers, 1 Croatian native speaker). Out of the 12 respondents, 3 students were first-year beginners, 8 students were second-year intermediates, and 1 student was second-year advanced. The answers provided to the questions "In your perception, could specific pronunciation/intonation training be useful to improve your ability to master the sounds listed above? Please tick (✓) how useful specific pronunciation training is for you (1: NOT USEFUL; 2: SLIGHTLY USEFUL; 3: USEFUL; 4: VERY USEFUL)." and "On a scale from one to four, please tick (✓) your interest in learning Italian pronunciation and intonation (1: NOT INTERESTED; 2: SLIGHTLY INTERESTED; 3: INTERESTED; 4: VERY INTERESTED), revealed that: one student considered the training very useful and they were interested in it; three students considered the training useful and were interested in it; one student considered the training useful and they were very interested; 7 students considered the training very useful and they were very interested in it. The answers collected reveal that generally students, despite their different levels of language proficiency, gender and ethnic backgrounds, consider the implementation of pronunciation and intonation training positively and are interested in doing specific activities and exercises in order to acquire or improve their pronunciation and intonation skills. Therefore, a more systematic and appropriate teaching of segmental and suprasegmental features would be appreciated by students of modern languages. Also the open-answer item of the four-point Likert questionnaire is relevant to this study. The item asked "Which of the following pronunciation/intonation do you think you have achieved so far? Please tick (✓) your answer and write the reason of your choice". This open-answer item provides an insight into the students' perception of the pronunciation and intonation that they have achieved between native-like and intelligible accents, and the reason why students perceive their accents as such. Out of twelve students, two ticked native-like pronunciation and justified their answers by saying: "It would be nice for people not to realise instantly that I am a non-native speaker" and "If you have a good accent it makes up for not knowing certain words etc, it also makes you sound much more fluent". The other respondents perceived their accents as understandable and supported their answers by justifying them as reported in the table below:

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PRONUNCIATION/INTONATION	✓	REASON
Understandable pronunciation/intonation	✓	1. I am sure I still make mistakes especially with intonation but listening and copying native speakers has really helped 2. I feel more confident when speaking and reading in front of others however I am yet to master or become overly familiar with certain sounds. 3. My pronouncing has improved massively with speaking exercises but I feel I need more practice/immersion to sound like a native speaker 4. Some pronunciation sounds don't come naturally to me; I have to think about how to pronounce them before speaking, which is why I don't think I have native-like pronunciation. 5. I have not spent the necessary time conversing with natives to mimic their mannerisms and achieve a natural manner of speaking. Also have not been able to properly converse with the native members of staff this year due to online learning. 6. Because I think that I have

		improved on areas that I found difficult (like double consonants) but I definitely still have a bit of an English accent when speaking.
		7. I think while most of my pronunciation is correct, it will take living in the country to gain a native-like intonation.
		8. Some of my pronunciation/ intonation has improved but other sounds aren't as understandable.
		9. I definitely need to work on my pronunciation/intonation as some sounds are still quite tricky.
		10. I still sometimes forget to emphasize double letters or I accent a wrong syllable

The answers provided by the respondents reveal that they have developed a level of pronunciation and intonation awareness that allows them to better define the segmentals and suprasegmentals which still need some practice in order to be fully mastered. Another aspect emerging from the answers is the negative influence that unmastered sounds can have on learners' confidence, especially during oral communicative exchanges with native speakers. This is another reason why pronunciation and intonation training should be introduced systematically and appropriately in modern languages curricula – students can then practise and improve the phonological features which may interfere negatively with their use of the target language, both in class and in more natural communicative contexts. The last open-answer item in the pronunciation and intonation section of the questionnaire deserving of some attention is the question "Is there any Italian accent that you feel you have achieved so far? Or do you still want to keep your foreign accent? Please list which accent you have acquired/maintained and why". Students were required to choose among: standard, northern, central, southern, and foreign. This item deals with two main issues related to pronunciation and intonation training. The first issue concerns the cultural value that a specific accent may have for foreigners

who are learning Italian as a foreign language. In fact, the students' perception can point out some cultural, social, historical and stereotypical reasons why learners of Italian as a FL may or may not want to have a specific Italian accent. Moreover, the learners' willingness to keep their foreign accent could also be related to identity reasons, so to their voluntary maintenance of their cultural and national identity while speaking in a foreign language. The second issue faced in this case is the tutor's choice of the activities and materials to be used during online pronunciation and intonation training sessions. In fact, foreign language tutors may adapt their teaching materials according to the students' interests and reasons for the acquisition of specific pronunciation and intonation traits. Out of the twelve respondents, two students said that they would like to maintain a foreign accent for the following reasons: 1. "Don't feel as able to distinguish between different accents yet so maintaining the foreign one."; and 2. "I'm not quite sure of all the different Italian accents, but in order to achieve one I think I need to work on pronunciation/intonation". The other nine respondents agreed that a standard accent is the goal for foreigners and justified their answers with the reasons in the table below:

Accent:	Standard
List reason here:	1. I try to notice regional accents and avoid them to make my Italian clearer 2. I am yet to be able to fully tell the difference between the accents but think I have acquired the standard. 3. I feel I have achieved a standard Italian accent due to the effective exercises (speaking, listening). I still find it difficult to differentiate between accents in Italy but when I'm abroad I will most likely have a better understanding. 4. I am used to practising with the standard Italian accent in class, and most of the Italian series/films I watch use the standard accent. 5. We have been taught a standardised version of Italian, perhaps picking up some elements of members of staff's accents who are mostly

		Northern/ Central.
		6. I still find it hard to understand different dialects and accents, particularly from the south of Italy, and therefore even trickier to imitate. This is probably because we tend to focus on standardised Italian in class to not overcomplicate lessons. However, I would like to be able to speak in multiple different accents in the future.
		7. It is the one I most often hear
		8. If I travel around the country it would be easier to have a standard accent. I would be very happy to have an accent that is not instantly recognised as foreign, but I would not say that I have a preference over a regional accent that I would like to have specifically.

The answers to the last item analysed reveal that learners perceive standard Italian as the best accent to achieve in order to be understood easily by any speaker anywhere. Moreover, the low-intermediate levels of language proficiency of the largest number of respondents and the limited phonological training may have both interfered with the students' ability to recognise and reproduce Italian accents differing from the ones practised during the pronunciation/intonation sessions. In fact, students have familiarised specifically with northerner/central/standard Italian accents through both the provided audio teaching materials and the geographical origins of most of the language tutors. Furthermore, these results are especially relevant for the selection of teaching materials to include in the training sessions held on Zoom. In fact, based on the respondents' answers, language tutors should choose the most appropriate materials to meet the learners' needs also in terms of pronunciation and intonation.

Having analysed the data emerged from the four-point Likert questionnaire for students, I will now present the answers collected for the questionnaire for Italian native speakers which intends to define the influence of pronunciation and intonation skills of learners of Italian FL during communicative exchanges in the target language. The results emerged from the analysis of data confirms the crucial role of phonological skills in order to achieve intelligible communication.

4.6.2 Questionnaire for Italian native speakers (see Appendix C)

I have designed the 3-section Questionnaire for Italian native speakers with two main aims. The first was to receive spontaneous feedback from native speakers on the role of pronunciation and intonation in foreign speakers' intelligibility. In order to achieve this aim, the questionnaire was submitted to Italian native speakers with different linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds in order to gauge an immediate perception and assessment of the students' performance, through a selection of recordings collected during the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions, by NSs coming from across Italy and with differing working positions. Moreover, the heterogeneous backgrounds of the respondents was relevant to detect possible phonological misperceptions which might be linked to their different places of origin, language knowledge and levels of education. In fact, the comparison between the answers provided by NSs from the three main linguistic areas in Italy –North, Centre and South, may lead to relevant results on the positive and negative effects that specific regional segmental and suprasegmental features and the knowledge of local languages may have on the intelligibility of non-native speakers. Similarly, the level of education and sociolinguistic and geographic contexts in which someone lives may also influence their perception of foreigners' pronunciation and intonation skills. Therefore, the first section (items 1-8) of the questionnaire was aimed at gathering data about the respondents' linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds. The first two items enquired about the gender and age of respondents in order to identify the variations of Italian according to their roles in society; in item 3 and 4, respondents were asked to provide information about their geographical location in terms of both place of origin and residence. Both these items are specifically designed to determine the influence that regional and local cultures, as well as foreign cultural contexts, may have on the respondents' assessments during the test. Items 5 and 6 enquired about the respondents' educational backgrounds and job placements, while items 7 and 8 about their linguistic skills. These last three items were fundamental to gather data about the influence that different educational paths, work experiences and knowledge of other modern languages and dialects or regional variants may have on the respondents' assessment of foreigners' segmental and suprasegmental features.

The second aim of the questionnaire was to define the role of segmentals and suprasegmentals on the communicative outcomes of the language learners' performance, especially in terms of employment. In fact, one of the main difficulties that graduates in Modern Languages experience nowadays is the lack of good job opportunities where they can put into practice the linguistic and cultural skills gained not only during university lectures and seminars, but also during their experience abroad as exchange students. In fact, as suggested by Canning, research studies conducted in the past twenty years on the correlation of language knowledge and employability have shown that employers who require an employee with specific language skills "they will employ a native speaker of that language" (Canning, 2009:1). When it comes to foreigners who decide to live and work in the target language's country, especially when this is not an English-speaking country, mastery of the TL is needful to become assimilated in the TL community and, primarily, to find

employment. In fact, despite the important role played by English in various working contexts, even in non-English-speaking countries, knowledge of the target language is a compulsory requirement for many jobs (Canning, 2009; Grasmane, D. & Grasmane, S., 2011; Grosu, 2012). Therefore, in order to further highlight the relevance of good pronunciation and intonation and the need to include the training of these skills in a more appropriate and structured way in the academic curriculum offered by Modern Languages Departments across the world, I believe it was important to include a section investigating employability and the role of good pronunciation and intonation in terms of job suitability with the aspects analysed in the questionnaire. Therefore, in the last item of the questionnaire, respondents were required to suggest appropriate working contexts where language learners may be suitable on the basis of the recordings that they have listened to. Accordingly, sections 2 (items 9-12) and 3 (items 13 and 14) gathered information on the respondents' assessment of the language learners' performances and their employability, respectively. In item 9 participants were required to select the positive aspects of the recordings, while item 10 enquired about further elements that positively affected the understanding of the audio files. In item 11 participants were required to select the aspects in the recordings which weakened comprehension, and item 12 enquired about further elements that negatively affected their understanding of the recordings. In item 13 respondents were asked to select the posts that most suited the language learners according to their pronunciation and intonation skills from a list provided; while item 14 asked respondents to provide information about the role of pronunciation and intonation in their choices from the job list in item 13.

As previously pointed out in the outline of the general structure and main purposes of the questionnaire for Italian native-speakers, the survey was divided into three main parts. The data collected through the answers submitted by the respondents are analysed in the following three subparagraphs, each pointing out the results emerged and the possible explanations of the answers provided by participants.

4.6.2.1 Results of Questionnaire for Italian native speakers

Analysis of participants' answers (Part I)

The first part of the survey presented questions aimed at gathering information about the respondents – for instance, gender and age, which could be relevant in defining the differences in perception of the students' performances; moreover, in the first section, the participants were required to provide information about their geographical, educational and linguistic backgrounds in order to define which variables could be particularly influential during their assessments of foreigners' pronunciation and intonation.

The native speakers who decided to take part in the survey and who submitted their answers to the questionnaire were 35 in total. Out of these, 18 are males (51.4%) and 17 are females (48.6%) (Figure 1).
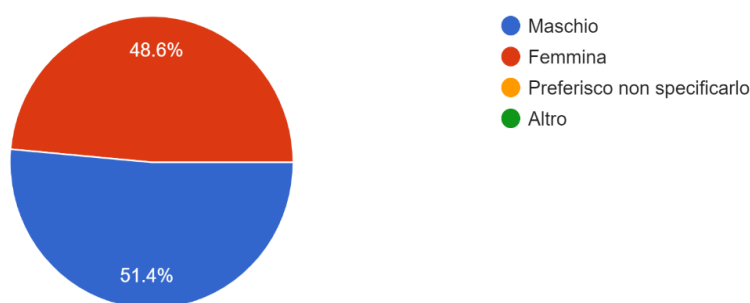
Image 1 – Pie chart of the participants' gender.

The respondents ranged in age from 26 to 67 (Image 2) and were originally from 11 out of the 21 regions of Italy: 20 respondents (57.1%) declared they were originally from Emilia-Romagna; 3 from Lombardy, and 3 from Sicily; 2 participants said they were from Veneto. Lazio, Basilicata, Puglia, Calabria, Piedmont, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia and Liguria were represented by 1 participant each (Image 3). The different regional origin of the respondents might have affected their answers about the intelligibility of recordings, especially in terms of 1. pronunciation of single sounds or specific groups of sounds, and 2. intonation during both the articulation of tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes, since the influence of their own regional accents and dialects, and their lack of knowledge of the Italian standardised phonological rules could, in some cases, have led them to perceive specific segmentals (for instance, open vs closed vowels) and suprasegmental (for instance, prosodic traits) features as incorrect. However, from the analysis of the answers collected, there was no particular gap or difference in the responses of participants from different parts of Italy.
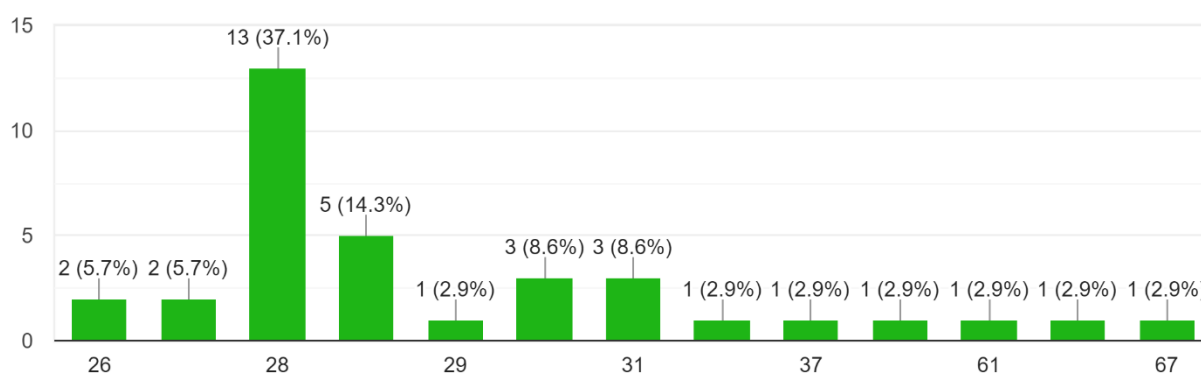
Image 2 – Bar chart with the respondents' age range.

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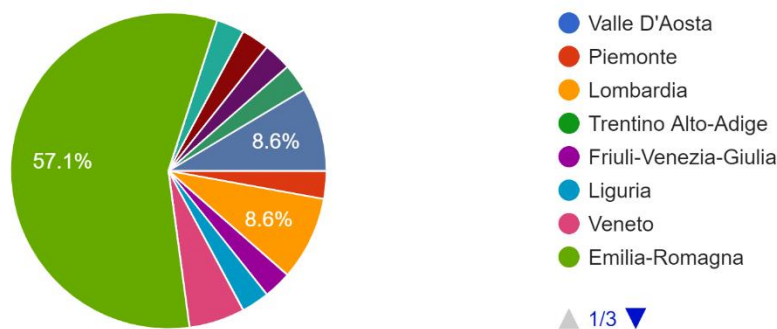
Image 3 – Pie chart with the respondents' regions of origin.

Out of the 35 respondents, 30 live in different areas in Italy, while 5 live abroad (1 respondent lives in Germany, 1 in Switzerland, and 3 in the United Kingdom) (I 4). In this case, too, the respondents' different places of residence did not influence the answers provided, as they did not differ between those who declared they live in Italy and those who stated they live in other countries, nor did they present patterns which might be considered significant as indicators of any kind of influence determined by the different contexts in which the respondents live.
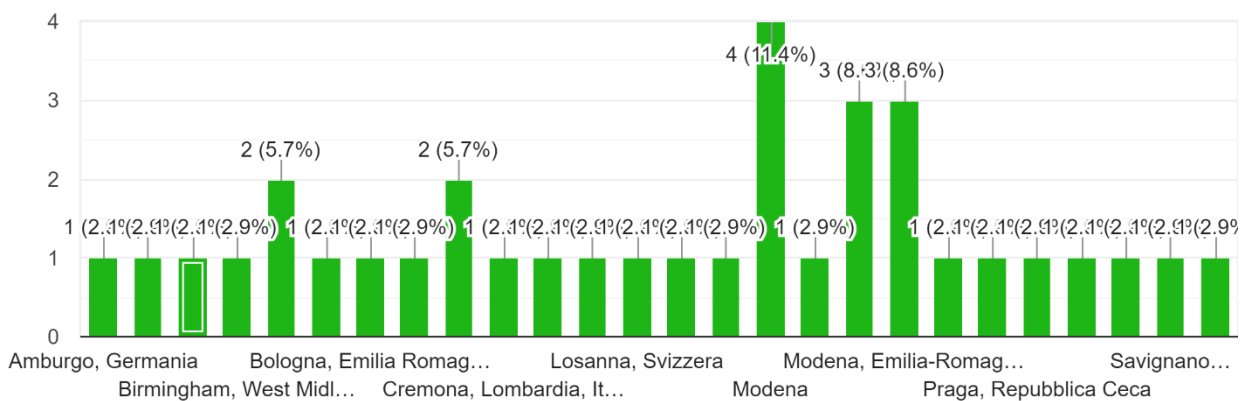
Image 4 – Bar chart with the respondents' residence.

As far as the respondents' level of education was concerned, 20 (57.1%) participants stated they have a master's degree; 9 (25.7%) respondents declared they have a bachelor's degree; out of the 35 native speakers taking part in the survey, only 4 (11.4%) have a high school diploma. Only one participant stated

s/he has a *laurea a ciclo unico* (an Italian degree which combines a bachelor's and a master's degrees together and which generally lasts five years); and one participant said s/he has a PhD (Image 5).
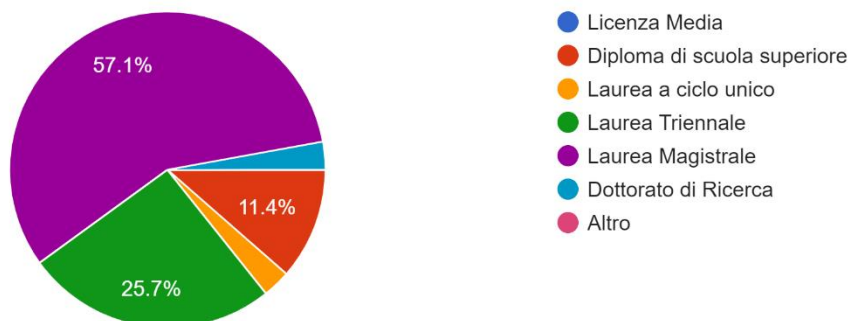
Image 5 – Pie chart of with respondents' level of education.

The respondents were also asked to provide information about their professions. The answers collected revealed a heterogenous range of occupations. It is possible to divide the respondents into three main groups according to the kind of job that they declared in their answers to the questionnaire (Image 6): 11 respondents – Undergraduate and Postgraduate studies (Doctoral students, researchers, post doc researchers, university students, Bachelor, and Master students, etc.); 10 respondents – Education (Teachers of Italian as a foreign language, High school teachers, and Professors/Lecturers, etc.); 14 respondents – Other professions (Engineers, IT services, office workers, medical staff, etc.)
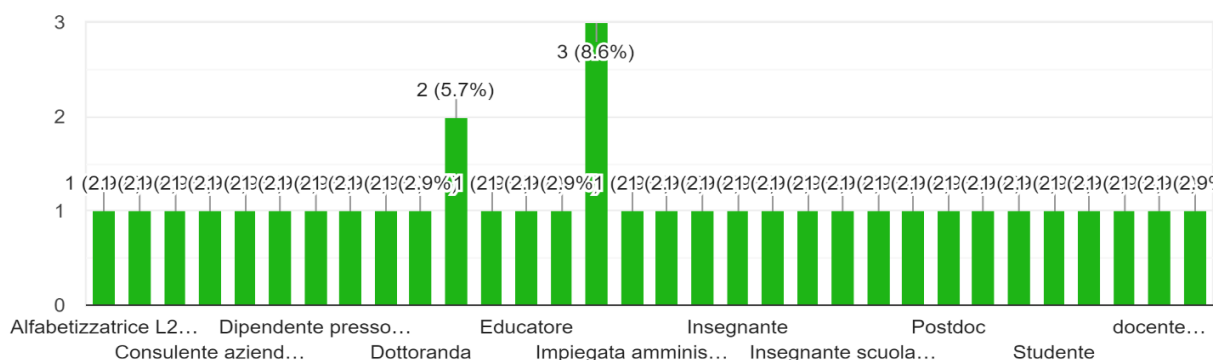
Image 6 – Bar chart with the respondents' professions.

The following bar chart shows the answers of the participants about their proficiency level in various modern languages (Item 7), selected on the results of recent surveys regarding the most spoken languages

in the world (Ispi, 2022). The answers collected are particularly relevant as they point out the respondents' linguistic skills. Their knowledge of the phonological characteristics of languages which share specific pronunciation and intonation characteristics with Italian might have influenced their perceptions of the students' performances and, as a consequence, their answers to the questions specifically related to the audio files (Image 7).
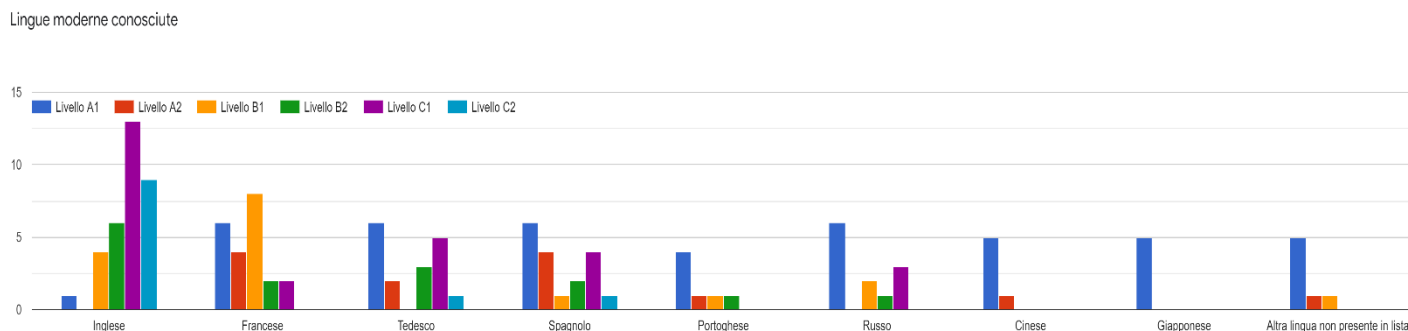
Image 7 – Bar chart with the modern languages known/spoken by the respondents.

Item 8 concerned the participants' knowledge of local languages or dialects. The answers to this question are meaningful as, when combined to the data collected from the answers to Item 7, they contribute to a better definition of the respondents' linguistic skills in terms of pronunciation and intonation awareness, based on their linguistic backgrounds and languages known and spoken. In this respect, Italian dialects and regional variations may play an important role in the assessment of foreigners' ability to pronounce Italian correctly. In fact, particular phonological traits of a specific local variation could help listeners during the communicative exchange. The answers provided by the respondents revealed, with a couple of exceptions, widespread knowledge of dialect and/or local variations (Images 8, 9, 10 and 11).
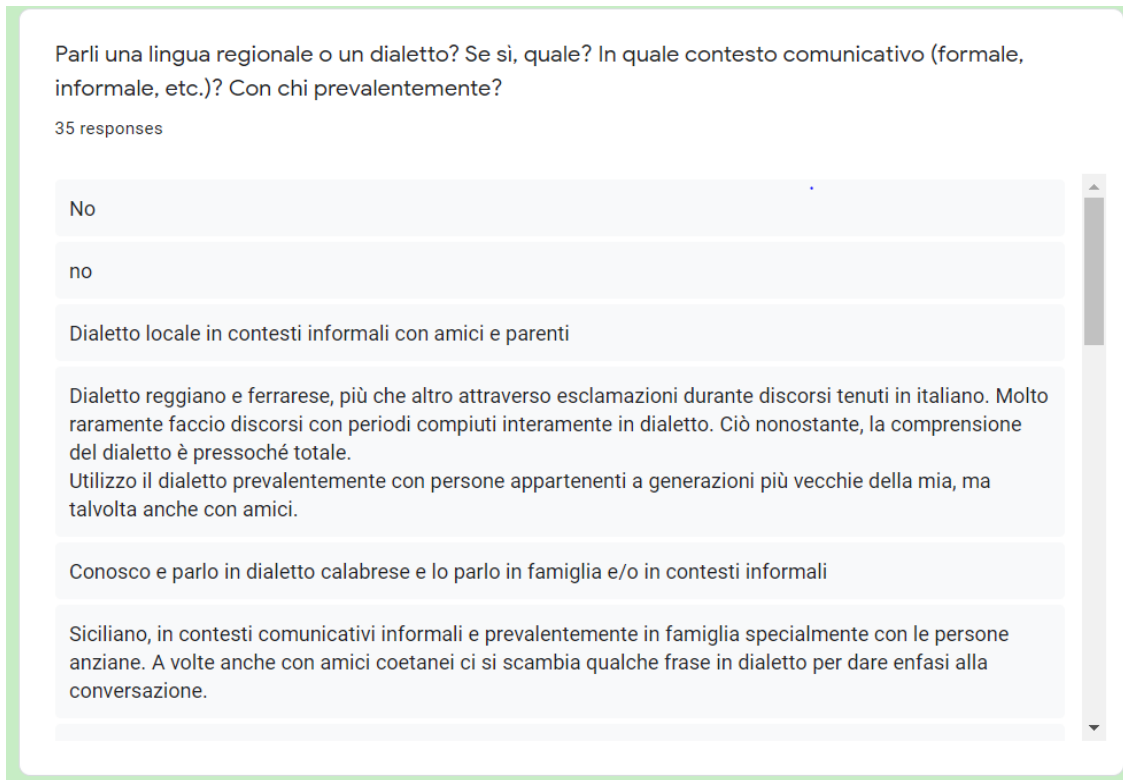
Image 8
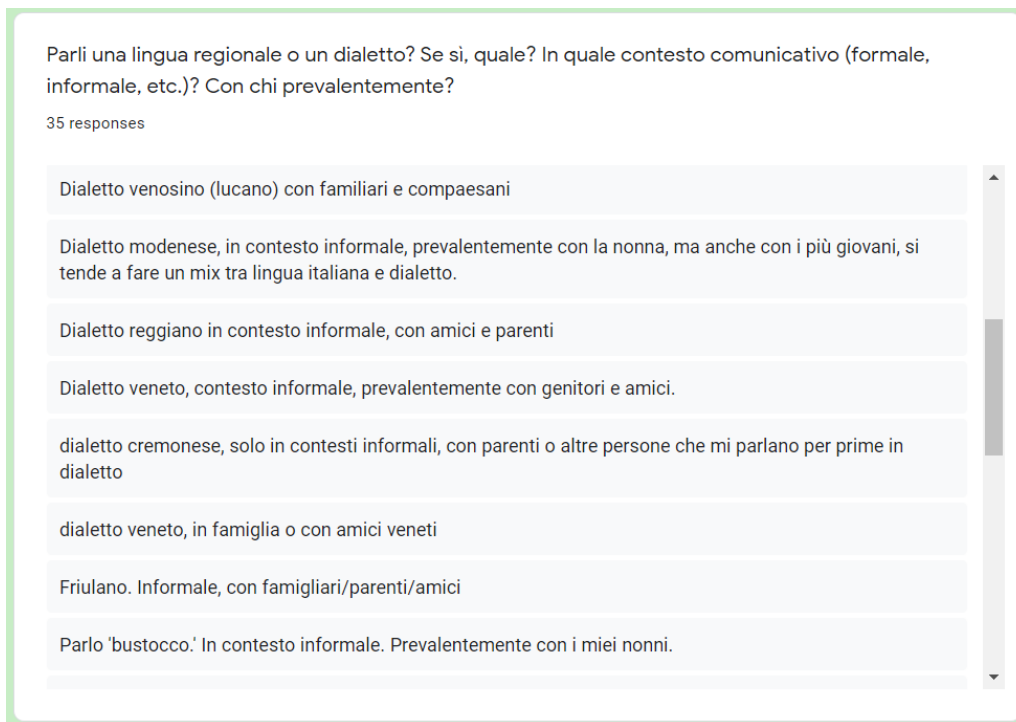
Image 9

Parli una lingua regionale o un dialetto? Se sì, quale? In quale contesto comunicativo (formale, informale, etc.)? Con chi prevalentemente?

35 responses

Dialetto modenese, con parenti e amici originari della zona.

Il Modenese, quando posso e con chi mi capita.

Uso il dialetto dell'area modenese in contesti informali e, in prevalenza, con persone anziane (70 anni o più).

Non parlo nessun dialetto, ma comprendo quello bolognese e pugliese

Siciliano. Prevalentemente con amici e parenti

Dialetto modenese, prevalentemente in contesti informali e famigliari

Sì, il dialetto Siciliano. Con amici e familiari

Dialetto modenese, in famiglia o con amici della stessa zona

Parlavo napoletano con mia nonna (contesto informale).

Image 10

Parli una lingua regionale o un dialetto? Se sì, quale? In quale contesto comunicativo (formale, informale, etc.)? Con chi prevalentemente?

35 responses

Dialetto modenese, prevalentemente in contesti informali e famigliari

Sì, il dialetto Siciliano. Con amici e familiari

Dialetto modenese, in famiglia o con amici della stessa zona

Parlavo napoletano con mia nonna (contesto informale).

Dialetto modenese in contesto famigliare con genitori e nonni

modenese, con parenti e qualche amico

Parlo poco dialetto bolognese/modenese, solo in contesti informali, con parenti o amici

Campano, piuttosto passivamente, con mio padre, spezzino italianizzato con amici e conoscenti in Liguria.

Comprendo tutto il dialetto modenese che uso per brevi scambi comunicativi informali.

Image 11

Analysis of participants' answers (Part II)

The second section of the questionnaire was entirely devoted to the analysis and assessment of the students' performances after listening to a selected number of Vocaroo recordings collected during the Communicative Skills hours of the second Term of academic year 2020-2021. The audios selected were taken from those recorded by First-year, Second-year Intermediate and Second-year Advanced students. I selected tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes focused on the training of specific phonological traits that at the end of the online training sessions still caused considerable articulation and communication problems or were not completely mastered or perfectly performed, but which did not negatively interfere with the understanding of what was being said.

Item 9 listed a number of aspects which could have helped the respondents in assessing the intelligibility of the recordings (Image 12). Five parameters were offered to participants : 1. Intonation - speakers used their voices to communicate a specific opinion, emotion or thought; 2. Pronunciation - speakers pronounced single sounds and groups of sounds correctly; 3. Accent - speakers did not have a very strong foreign accent which made understanding difficult; 4. Vocabulary - speakers pronounced intelligibly the words; 5. Grammar - speakers used simple and complex grammatical structures appropriately. The respondents' answers revealed that the correct use of grammar and the appropriate use of intonation were the aspects which positively affected the general understanding of the recordings. Despite the controlled use of grammatical rules (in fact, students were performing selected and grammatically correct materials), Italian NSs pointed out grammar as one of the aspects which positively influenced the comprehension of the recordings. This could derive from the perception of grammar as a crucial element for comprehension. Thus, the teaching of grammar and the mastery of grammatical rules, together with the mastery of other linguistic elements, is fundamental in order to achieve intelligibility; therefore, a combined teaching method which includes the training of every language skill should be offered and put into practice.

Correct articulation of words and lack of a very strong foreign accent were the other two most useful qualities in the students' performances detected by listeners in order to understand the statements recorded.

Dopo aver ascoltato le registrazioni, segnala quali aspetti positivi hai riscontrato tra quelli indicati:
35 responses

- Intonazione - i parlanti modulavano la voce correttame… — 15 (42.9%)
- Pronuncia - i parlanti pronunciavano correttamente i… — 12 (34.3%)
- Accento - i parlanti non presentavano un accento strani… — 14 (40%)
- Lessico - i parlanti pronunciavano correttamente il lessico più co… — 14 (40%)
- Grammatica - i parlanti utilizzavano correttamente le c… — 21 (60%)

Image 12 – Bar chart with the positive aspects which helped respondents during assessment of the intelligibility of the recordings.

Moreover, respondents were asked to point out any other aspect or quality in the students' performances which helped them to understand fully the content of the recordings. The answers highlighted two further aspects identified as key elements for the correct understanding of the recordings. On the one hand, native-speakers stated that their previous knowledge of the tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes was particularly helpful to understand the content of the audio tapes completely; on the other hand, the rhythm and inflection were rather beneficial to their understanding of the recordings.

Item 10 listed a number of aspects which could have negatively affected the understanding of the recordings (Image 13). Five parameters were offered to participants: 1. Intonation - speakers did not use their voices to communicate a specific opinion, emotion or thought; 2. Pronunciation - speakers mispronounced single sounds and groups of sounds; 3. Accent - speakers had a very strong foreign accent which made understanding difficult; 4. Vocabulary - speakers did not pronounce intelligibly the vocabulary; 5. Grammar - speakers did not use simple and complex grammatical structures appropriately.

Dopo aver ascoltato le registrazioni, segnala quali aspetti negativi hai riscontrato tra quelli indicati:
35 responses
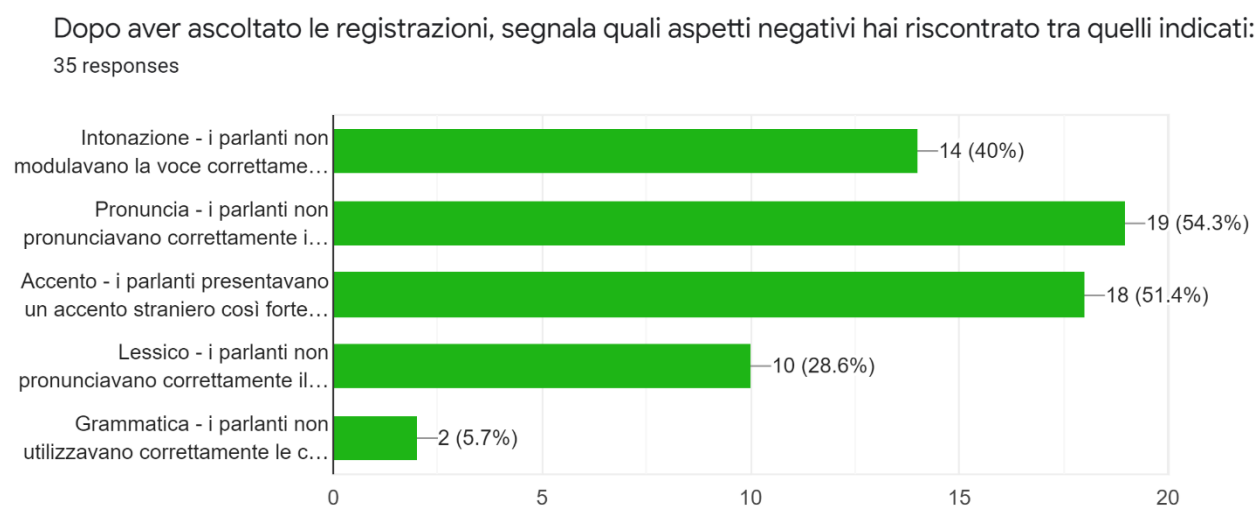
Image 13 – Bar chart with the aspects which did not help respondents during assessment of the intelligibility of the recordings.

From the respondents' answers, the mispronunciation of specific sounds and a strong foreign accent were identified as the two main aspects which most negatively affected the understanding of the content of communicative exchanges. The appropriate use of intonation and correct articulation of words were the other two features highlighted as relevant characteristics by participants, and whose misuse could negatively interfere on the listeners' ability to understand what had been said by speakers. The element which negatively affected the understanding of the audio tapes the least was grammar – this was due to the fact that students did not record chunks of free speech where grammatical errors might have occurred copiously, but were tested on the performance of the loops, tongue-twisters, sayings, and nursery rhymes practised through Vocaroo (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, paragraph 4.4.2). The choice 'to mute' the variable of

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grammar (in fact, students were performing selected and grammatically correct materials) aimed to demonstrate that, despite the grammatically correct performance of students, intelligibility of speech was compromised by pronunciation and intonation inaccuracies. Thus, although the teaching of grammatical rules is fundamental in foreign language education, the integration of segmentals and suprasegmentals training is equally crucial in order to achieve intelligibility during communicative exchanges.

An interesting aspect emerging from the respondents' answers about the identification of phonological elements, which could either positively or negatively affect the understanding of communicative exchanges, is the role of the pronunciation of single sounds which demonstrates the need to combine together the decontextualised training and the contextualised practice of single sounds. In fact, the good articulation of single sounds was identified as one of the least important aspects which supported understanding, but as one of the most relevant aspects which negatively affected the full understanding of the audio clips. This could depend on the way listeners detect mistakes which could lead to misunderstandings or on communication issues related to mispronounced sounds. In fact, during communicative exchanges, listeners apparently do not focus exclusively on the correctness of singles sounds, but more generally on the appropriateness of words, even before they start focusing on meanings (DeVito, 2000). Therefore, it seems clear that pronunciation and intonation training should focus on both the articulation of single and specific sounds and the articulation of single sounds in a communicative context. This is also pointed out by the additional elements that respondents highlighted as possible causes of misunderstanding or total lack of understanding. In fact, native speakers stated that some students' inability to pronounce specific single sounds (e.g. /r/, /t/, etc.) or groups of sounds (e.g. /ʎ/, /ɲ/, /tr/, etc.) and the lack of contextualisation of some words were further elements which undermined the understanding of the recordings. Strong accents, pauses, hesitation, wrong rhythm, syllabification, and the quality of some audio clips were other elements which, according to the respondents, in some cases negatively influenced the overall understanding of the recordings.

Analysis of the participants' answers (Part III)

The third part of the questionnaire was based on two items which aimed at gathering data about employability and at the role of correct pronunciation and intonation in this context. Item 13 asked respondents to assess the suitability of different jobs based on the level of language proficiency in the recordings previously heard. The list of jobs included professions requiring different levels of direct interaction with the public and involving verbal or written communication through a variety of channels (e.g. emails, calls, face-to-face interaction, etc.). The working environments were: 1. Company (administration); 2. Company (customer service); 3. School/University (office administration with little or no verbal contact with the public); 4. School/University (teacher of English); 5. Shop (warehouse); 6. Shop (shop assistant); 7. Translation agency (customer service); 8. Translation agency (translator); 9. Call Centre (administration with little or no verbal contact with the public); 10. Call Centre (customer service); 11.

Police (administration with little or no verbal contact with the public); 12. Police (policeman); 13. Public administration (office with little or no verbal contact with the public); 14. Public administration (customer service). Respondents could choose from three possible answers: 1. No (*No*); 2. Maybe (*Forse*) and 3. Yes (*Sì*).
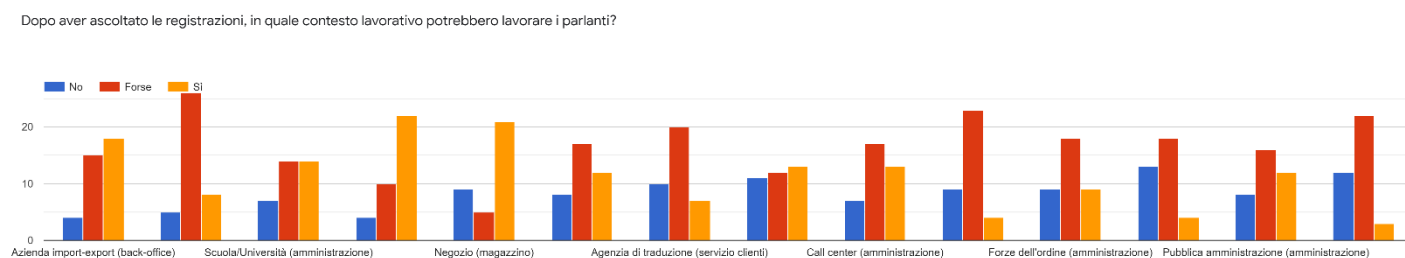
Image 14 – Bar chart with the professions which respondents defined suitable for students based on the recordings.

The only professions which were considered absolutely suitable (the answer given was Yes/*Sì*) by the majority of respondents were characterised by a very low level of oral interaction with customers, whether mediated by technological devices or face-to-face. In fact, the jobs considered as the most suitable by participants were: 1. Company (administration with little or no verbal contact with the public); 2. School/University (administration with little or no verbal contact with the public); 3. School/University (teacher of English); 4. Shop (warehouse); 5. Translation agency (translator). On the contrary, jobs requiring a higher level of interaction with customers were considered as maybe (*forse*) or not (*no*) suitable.

Item 14 asked respondents to provide information on the effects of pronunciation and intonation on their answers to item 13. The answers collected reveal the relevance attributed to pronunciation and intonation by respondents when it comes to employability. In fact, based on their answers, it is clear that whereas intelligible pronunciation and correct intonation are considered sufficient for communicative exchanges with both native and non-native speakers, when it comes to employability and the social role linked to different working positions, the speakers' pronunciation and intonation skills take on a fundamental role, which could also determine the successful or unsuccessful recognition of individuals in the social context in which they speak, interact with others, work and live.

The analysis of the three sections of the questionnaire revealed that the respondents' personal details (e.g. gender, age, place of origin, level of education, profession, etc.) generally do not influence the native speakers' assessment of foreigners' pronunciation and intonation skills. In defined and controlled communicative contexts such as the pronunciation and intonation exercises delivered online during the training sessions, the students' performances were positively commented upon by the respondents in terms of intelligibility; one of the main reasons on which the respondents' understanding of the recordings was based was their previous knowledge of the tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes used. However,

intelligibility was never undermined, specific characteristics of the students' mother tongue (in this case, English) emerged on some occasions and were pointed out by the participants as elements which defined the gap between native-speakers and learners of a target language. In terms of the correlation between employment and the role of correct pronunciation and intonation, the respondents to the questionnaire highlighted the relevant role played by good mastery of segmental and suprasegmental features, especially for those roles which require direct and close contact with customers or are representative of national or governmental institutions (police officers, for instance). Therefore, the respondents' answers suggest the need for learners of modern languages to master the segmentals and intonation traits of the target languages and develop the great linguistic awareness which could help them acquire all the essential skills in the target language, including pronunciation and intonation.

4.7 Data Analysis

I organised the data collected from the questionnaires and class recordings before analysing them, through content analysis, a method which "involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labelling the primary patterns in the data […] to determine what's significant" (Patton, 2002:463). As my approach to data analysis combined deductive and inductive analysis, I first categorised the findings collected in the predefined categories that I designed while preparing the experimental phases (i.e., folder (Core)_training1(date), folder(questionnaire for students)_student1_21; etc.). The limited number of participants who filled in the students' questionnaires and who underwent the pronunciation and intonation training during the two-year experiment does not allow the quantitative analysis to be generalised. The quantitative one, however, is useful to interpret the data collected in the sample better and define the future developments needed in the educational aspects discussed in the study. Moreover, quantitative data was complementary to qualitative and was used to expand and clarify the qualitative one. Two different types of quantitative data were collected: 1. nominal data "from counting things and placing them into category" and 2. ordinal data, i.e. "counts of things assigned to specific categories" which "stand in some clear, ordered, ranked relationship" (Denscombe, 2007:255). In particular, ordinal data was gathered from the four-point Likert scale for students and the three-section questionnaire for Italian native speakers. The study utilised a triangulation model whereby data collection and information are based on questionnaires, recordings and classroom observations. The decision to adopt a model which deploys three methods of data collection was due to the need to reduce the chances of misinterpretation of the data collected and to draw conclusions more confidently from the results obtained from the analysis. The triangulation model was also applied to the number of informants (Denscombe, 2007) included in the study. In fact, from the analysis a comparison of the data derived from three different informants: students of Italian, Italian native-speakers and me in the role of teacher-researcher was carried out. Using more data collection models and

informants allow the researcher to produce more accurate findings and returns a broader picture of the topic analysed (Denscombe, 2007).

The analysis of the data collected went through three steps. First, I organised and processed the data gathered from the students' questionnaires (i.e., folder(questionnaire for students)_student1_21) and the native speakers' questionnaires (i.e., folder(ItalianNSs)_NS1). I analysed the answers provided by participants, collated the findings and started to draw conclusions about the topics addressed in the questionnaires. Secondly, I organised and encoded the recordings of the training sessions by using codes which allowed me to associate the audio files to individual students and organise the data meaningfully (i.e., student1_20, student2_21). Then, I analysed the recordings and collated the files of each student following three principles: 1. I analysed the file for each online training session and identified the main pronunciation and intonation issues for each student; 2. I compared the results emerging from each online session for each student in order to define the progress made during the two semesters of segmentals and suprasegmentals training; 3. I compared the results of the analysis of the online training sessions' recordings to the pronunciation and intonation issues emerged during the final summative oral assessments in order to arrive at final and more precise results for each student. The data I obtained from the research measures was analysed and then used to describe students' progress and, consequently, also to address each of this study's research questions.

4.8 Reliability and validity of the study

Unlike quantitative research, where the reliability and validity of data can be investigated as many times as possible, in qualitative research these criteria are not easy to check. This is due to the impossibility of reproducing the characteristics (e.g. participants, environment, etc.) of the qualitative study conducted and the involvement of the researcher, which reduce the chances for other researchers to investigate the phenomenon studied in the same way (Denscombe, 2014). For this reason, qualitative researchers must follow a few procedures to guarantee the validity and reliability of their findings. Validity is assured when qualitative research is based on "accurate and appropriate" (Covarino, 2019:190) data. To ensure this, I used multiple data collection methods (i.e. questionnaires and recordings) and I asked participants in my study (i.e. students and native speakers) to validate the data and findings from the experimental phases. Data was analysed and interpreted with the aim of producing evidence of the participants' opinions about the role of pronunciation and intonation in foreign language learning and of detecting the effectiveness of segmental and suprasegmental training on the students' learning outcomes. Therefore, the research findings emerged from different research measures and the validity of this research was thereby enhanced, while my personal bias – the willingness to prove the urgency to include phonological training in the foreign language class systematically and efficiently, was minimised and supported by rigorous data. Furthermore, validity is also increased by what is known as transferability, which means that the results emerging from

this study may be applied to others. The research was described in detail by providing exhaustive information about the research context, the participants, the research methodology, the materials employed in the experimental phases and the teacher-as-researcher. Moreover, the participants (i.e. students, researcher and, native speakers) are representative of a wider number of undergraduates, language tutors, investigators and native speakers from the academic institution where the research was conducted and other similar institutions. Another criterion which confirms the validity of qualitative research is dependability, according to which any researcher should ground their research on "procedures and decisions" (Denscombe, 2014:298) that external examiners can understand and identify as valid. In this respect, I took decisions and procedures based on previous research, conducted by scholars in foreign language education, which were shown as valid and reliable. The last criterion which may influence the validity of research is confirmability: this depends on the researcher's involvement with and influence on the data analysis and interpretation. As already pointed out in this chapter, the use of a triangulation of data collection methods and the validation derived from students and Italian native speakers' questionnaires, allowed the minimisation of the researcher's personal biases and the collection of scientific and rigorous data.

In this chapter, I have reported and discussed findings about the effects of pronunciation and intonation training on the learning outcomes in the FL classroom. It emerged that students greatly benefit from a systematic and appropriate training of phonological skills in terms of improving their phonological skills and awareness; moreover, students through the activities offered are given the opportunity to enrich their cultural awareness of the target language.

Chapter 5

Results of the Study

In this chapter, I report and discuss the findings related to the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions conducted during the two-semester long experimental phases. Participants' recordings are described, analysed and compared. Moreover, findings from the final summative oral-aural assessment taken in May 2021 and in May 2022 are also discussed, analysed, and compared to the other findings.

5.1 Analysis of the recordings collected during experimental phase 1 (February-May 2021)

CORE II BEGINNERS			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
01/03/2021	double consonants /r/ /t/ /ɲ/	/br/ /ʎ/	Single words work fine
04/03/2021	/r/	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /ɲ/ vs /n/ stress double consonants	Students are not able to reproduce all segmentals, they just focus on the segmentals trained at that time
18/03/2021	/rv/	Stress /rl/ /tr/	
22/03/2021	/rv/	/rd/ /rf/ /rt/ /rl/ /ʃ/ vs /sk/ double consonants	
25/03/2021	t	/sbr/ /uor/ /rn/ /rt/ /tr/ /uo/ Double consonants	

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
08/03/2021	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /dʒ/ vs /g/ /ʧ/ vs /k/ double consonants	/ʃ/ vs /sk/	

	/r/		
18/03/2021	/tr/ /r/	/t/, /d/	
22/03/2021	/rv/	n.a.	
25/03/2021	n.a.	n.a.	

CORE IV ADVANCED			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
04/03/2021		/ɲ/ vs /n/	
24/03/2021	/r/ /ʎ/ vs /l/ /tr/ /rv/		

5.1.2. Linguistic analysis of the Core II Beginners' recordings – Term 2 – Academic Year 2020/2021

The recordings analysed in this research were collected during the academic year 2020/2021 in the Modern Languages Department at the University of Birmingham. The pronunciation and intonation training sessions were delivered during the online Communicative Skills classes, which were 2-hour long sessions held once a week with two different groups of beginner's-level, first year students (Group 1 and Group 2). The materials used for the training were single words presenting specific segmental features that I selected during my MA research project on the basis of the answers of a group of English native-speakers, who were studying or had studied Italian during their academic experiences, about the segmental and suprasegmental traits they found particularly difficult to master while learning Italian.

Session 1 – Group 1 & 2, 1ˢᵗ, and 4ᵗʰ March, 2021

Activities

The first pronunciation and intonation training sessions were delivered during the online Communicative Skills classes to group 1 on 1ˢ March, 2021, and to group 2 on 4ᵗʰ March, 2021. The session was focused on specific sounds and groups of sounds which were identified as particularly difficult to master during my MA degree. At the time, I collected data through interviews and questionnaires regarding the core sounds of the Italian language that English native speakers, who were studying Italian or had studied Italian at a certain point in their academic careers, found particularly difficult to pronounce. The pronunciation exercises included in the first session were mainly focused on listening and repeating decontextualised words which contain the first group of segmentals to be trained. The students were required to listen to the language tutor pronouncing the words twice and then they were invited to use an online voice recording tool – Vocaroo -, to record themselves. The segmentals that were addressed during the first online pronunciation training session were: the voiced palatal lateral approximant /ʎ/; the phonological distinction between single consonants and their geminated counterparts in words which have similar spellings - /l:/ vs

/l/, /s:/ vs /s/, /m:/ vs /m/; the voiced alveolar trill preceded by a consonant - /pr/, /br/, /tr/; the geminated voiced alveolar trill /r:/; the nasal palatal /ɲ/; the nasal alveolar /n/; the voiceless dental /t/, the geminated voiceless dental /t:/, and the voiced dental in post-consonantal position /rt/; the voiced alveolar sibilant fricative at the beginning of a word /dz/ and in post-consonantal position /ndz/. The selected words were chosen on the basis of their phonological characteristics and, since no communicative context was provided for this exercise, I decided to use rather commonly words – which appeared several times in the teaching materials (i.e., handbooks and textbooks) used for communicative skills classes, so as to be sure that students knew their meanings and could immediately put the pronunciation and intonation training into practice during real communicative exchanges in class. Before students recorded themselves using the online voice recording tool Vocaroo, I pronounced these words twice, one at a time, and repeated them if students asked me to do so either because they wanted to listen again to the correct pronunciation of the single words before proceeding with the recording or because they experienced technical issues during the first repetition and were not able to hear the words properly. The words used for the first pronunciation training session, delivered on Zoom, are listed and classified according to the segmental features drilled in the table below.

Segmentals trained during this session							
Voiced palatal lateral approximant. /ʎ/	Single vs geminated. /l:/ vs /l/ /s:/ vs /s/ /m:/ vs /m/	Voiced alveolar trill in post-consonantal position. /pr/ /br/ /tr/	Geminated voiced alveolar trill. /r:/	The nasal palatal /ɲ/	The nasal palatal gn-/-gn /ɲ/ vs the nasal alveolar /n/ /ɲ/ vs /n/	Voiceless dental (single, double and in the middle of a word and post-consonant) /t/ /t:/ /rt/	Voiceless alveolar affricate (at the beginning of a word, in the middle of a word) /dz/ /ndz/
coniGLio	paLLa vs paLa	Prato	aRRivare	coGNome	CampaGNa	Tavolo	Zucchero
taGLiare	caSSa vs caSa	liBRo	coRRere	Gnocchi	CampaNia	teTTo	Zanzara
imbroGLiare	caMMino vs caMino	Trono	maRRone	Gnomo		toRTa	melanZana

As for the suprasegmentals practised during the first session, two very well-known Italian tongue-twisters were included in the training. The selection of tongue-twisters was based on the need to practise the single consonants and geminates that were trained during the drilling activity carried out with Vocaroo. Therefore, in addition to continuing to practise the segmentals trained during the first part of the session, students were

also required to produce the same segmentals in a contextualised phonological situation, where the co-presence of different segmental features might have resulted in a more complex realisation of the sounds already trained during the 'listen and repeat' exercise. Moreover, using tongue-twisters in the sessions was particularly useful to train intonation and phonological fluency. In fact, tongue-twisters and nursery-rhymes are characterised by specific sound patterns such as: 1. alliterations – i.e. the repetition of the initial consonant sound in subsequent words - , 2. consonance – i.e. the repetition of a word's inner consonant in subsequent words, 3. repetition – i.e. the repetition of some words in the same sentence - , 4. assonance – i.e. the repetition of same vowel sounds in subsequent words - , and 5. the juxtaposition of sounds requiring good control of the articulatory system. Therefore, the use of tongue-twisters is useful as it allows students to become more accustomed to the prosody of the target language both from a perceptive and a productive point of view and to improve their articulatory skills and result more fluent and natural when they speak the target language. The tongue-twisters used in the first online intonation training session are listed in the table below.

Segmentals and suprasegmentals trained during this session
Single vs double consonants (liquids, dentals, nasals)

Apelle figlio di Apollo fece una palla di pelle di pollo. Tutti i pesci vennero a galla per vedere la palla di pelle di pollo fatta da Apelle figlio di Apollo (https://bit.ly/3d22c6j)	Trentatré trentini entrarono a Trento tutti e trentatré trotterellando (https://bit.ly/3d22c6j)

Results

The analysis of the recordings from the first pronunciation and intonation training pointed out both the segmentals already mastered by learners and some incorrect phonological reproductions of two segmental features practised during the session. In fact, out of all the segmentals practised, only the voiced palatal lateral approximant /ʎ/ preceded by a vowel (i.e., coni*gl*io) , and the voiced alveolar trill /r/, preceded by a consonant (i.e., p*r*ato) seemed to be the segmental features which students had more difficulty in articulating properly (two out of fifteen students could not master /ʎ/; one out of fifteen students could not master /r/). As for intonation, no relevant issues were detected during the phonological reproduction of the decontextualised words included in the first pronunciation exercise in the first session. However, the recordings of the tongue-twisters revealed some difficulties when students were asked to pronounce the trained segmental features in a more phonologically articulated context. In fact, even the segmentals which

were pronounced intelligibly in the pronunciation activities which involved single decontextualised words were not properly articulated, and this resulted in a lack of fluency and in an unnatural oral performance.

DATE	SEGMENTALS MASTERED	SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED	INTONATION
01/03/2021 and 04/03/2021	geminates /r/ /t/ /ɲ/	/br/ /ʎ/ vs /l/ /ɲ/ vs /n/	Single words work fine. More issues were detected with tongue-twisters.

Session 2 – Group 1 & 2, 18^{th,} and 22nd March, 2021

Activities

The second pronunciation and intonation training session were delivered on Zoom to group 1 on 18th March, 2021, and to group 2 on 22nd March, 2021. Unlike the first pronunciation and intonation session, the second online training session exclusively included tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes specifically selected for the practice of stressed words (i.e., met*à*), geminates (i.e., ca*ppott*o), the voiceless alveopalatal fricative /ʃ/ (i.e., *s*erva), and the voiced alveolar trill /r/ (i.e., t*r*eno). The decision to exclude the use of single decontextualised words and to insert primarily activities which could allow students to practise the segmentals in a more phonologically articulated communicative context arose from the results collected during the first online pronunciation and intonation training session. In fact, as already outlined in the previous paragraph, while the pronunciation of segmental features was appropriately performed when students were required to articulated single decontextualised words, when the task was more phonologically demanding – i.e. when learners had to intelligibly articulate the already-trained segmentals in tongue-twisters -, the students' performance was less accurate then in the first activity. Therefore, I decided to include in the following online training sessions only exercises which could both encourage the students to practise segmental and suprasegmental features together and train them to articulate sounds in a phonological context more similar to real communicative exchanges. The tongue-twisters used in the second intonation training session, delivered on Zoom, are listed in the table below.

Segmentals trained during this session				
Stressed words	Geminates /p:/ /t:/ /r:/ / ʧ:/ /n:/ /k:/	Geminates vs single consonants /s:/ vs /ts/ /l:/ vs /l/ /r:/ vs /r/	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/	Voiced alveolar trill. /r/
Per colpa di un accento un tale di Santhià credeva d'essere alla meta ed era appena a metà. Per analogo errore un contadino a Rho tentava invano di cogliere le pere da un però. Non parliamo del dolore di un signore di Corfù quando, senza più accento, il suo cucu non cantò più. (*Per colpa di un accento*, in Filastrocche per tutto l'anno by Gianni Rodari, edition 2010)	Appendiamo un cappotto marrone ad un attaccapanni di legno ed ottone.	Il vecchio e caro carro portava a casa una cassa che conteneva una pala ed una palla.	Se la serva non ti serve, a che serve che ti serva di una serva che non serve? Serviti di una serva che serve, e se questa non ti serve, serviti dei miei servi. https://learnamo.com/en/italian-tongue-twisters/ Se oggi seren non è, doman seren sarà. Se non sarà seren, si rasserenerà. https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando	Treno troppo stretto e troppo stracco stracca troppi storpi e stroppia troppo https://www.fabulinis.com/filastrocche-per-bambini/scioglilingua/

Results

The recordings collected during the second online training session showed as challenging the articulation of the voiced alveolar trill (seven out of fifteen students were not able to master it) when it is located in post-consonantal position after the voiceless dental /t/ (i.e., *tr*eno *tr*oppo s*tr*etto[…]), and when it is located

in pre-consonantal position before the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ (i.e. sto*rp*i). Moreover, words presenting the same graphic appearance, but whose meaning changes according to the different position of the stress (i.e., m*è*ta vs met*à*) were particularly difficult to pronounce correctly. In fact, students 1 and 5 from group 1, and student 3, student 5 and student 7 from group 2, were not able to recognise the stress changes and totally missed marking the changes in stress position while performing the exercises. Other segmental features which turned out to be rather problematic were geminates (six out of fifteen students could not master geminates), especially when they were positioned in phonological contexts with more challenging phonological traits. In fact, students had shown in the first training session held on Zoom, that they were able to articulate geminates properly when they are located in single, decontextualised words. However, when they are placed in words or in challenging phonological contexts, students at this level of language proficiency were unable to master double consonants. As a consequence of this first analysis, it is clear that the mastering of suprasegmental features was impeded by the inability to perform some specific segmentals correctly, which negatively affected the learners' overall performance from an intonation point of view. In fact, the lack of correctness in the articulation and production of segmentals limited the fluency and naturalness of the oral performance.

DATE	SEGMENTALS MASTERED	SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED	INTONATION
18/03/2021 and 22/03/2021	/s/	/rp/	Issues were detected during more complex phonological patterns.
	/r/	/tr/	
	/rv/	Stress changes and geminates	

Session 3 – Group 2, 24th *March 2021*

Activities

The third online training session was held only with group 2 on 24th March, 2021. The decision to deliver an additional pronunciation and intonation class with group 2 was due to the greater difficulties that the second group of learners had shown during the first online training session, which clearly emerged from the listening and comparison of the recordings. Therefore, in order to give students the chance to even out their pronunciation and intonation levels to those of group 1, I decided to run a third training session, on Zoom, specifically focusing on the segmentals which caused more articulatory issues in the two former sessions. This session included tongue-twisters focused on the practice of geminates, the voiced palatal lateral approximant /ʎ/, the voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ combined with voiceless velar plosive /k/

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(i.e., e*sc*a - English meaning is 'lure') and the voiced alveolar trill /r/ (i.e., *r*ema*r*e – English meaning 'to row').

Segmentals trained during this session			
Geminates	Voiced palatal lateral approximant. /ʎ/	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ + voiceless velar plosive /k/ /sk/	Voiced alveolar trill. /r/
/l:/ /s:/ /n:/			
Un'antica stele era ricoperta di stelle incise con uno scalpello ed un martello, e dipinte così bene che sembrava che avessero usato un pennarello al posto di un pennello. (This tongue-twister was devised by the researcher)	Io cercavo l'erba-voglio, tra le foglie, sotto il tiglio, ma ho trovato solo miglio, un cespuglio di cerfoglio, fiori rossi di trifoglio. Ma non c'era l'erba-voglio https://www.filastrocche.it/nostalgici/scioglil/s_51.htm	Ho in tasca l'esca ed esco per la pesca, ma il pesce non s'adesca, c'è l'acqua troppo fresca. Convien che la finisca, non prenderò una lisca! Mi metto in tasca l'esca e torno dalla pesca. https://www.filastrocche.it/contenuti/scioglilingua-0043/	Sei tu quel barbaro barbiere che barbaramente barbasti la barba a quel povero barbaro barbone? https://www.filastrocche.it/contenuti/scioglilingua-0031/ Remo rema sul Reno con remi di rame https://www.filastrocche.it/contenuti/scioglilingua-0057/

The last exercise consisted of a nursery-rhyme, that I have invented, which combined together some of the segmentals trained in the first four exercises and encouraged students to articulate the segmental features previously practised in a different phonological context, where other sounds and groups of sounds were also present. Moreover, the phonological and prosodic characteristics of nursery-rhymes help the learners to acquire a more natural way of speaking and encourage them to improve the mechanical articulation of specific sequences of sound patterns which may prove difficult to pronounce properly.

Segmentals and suprasegmentals trained during this session
Geminates, voiceless alveopalatal fricative, voiced alveolar trill.

Un nuovo uovo fu comprato tra gli ingredienti

Per creare una torta niente male

Tuorli, zucchero e farina

Vanno messi in una terrina

Poi si inizia a mescolare e fra poco è da infornare.

Muovi i mestoli e prepara la torta non troppo amara

Aggiungi un po' di saccarosio per renderla di un sapor ancor più

Strepitoso.

Uomini e donne la mangeranno e dell'altra ne vorranno

Quindi due te ne convien preparare

Forza, sbrigati, che di lavoro ne hai da fare!

(This nursery rhyme was devised by the researcher)

Results

The recordings from the last online pronunciation and intonation training session pointed out some sequences of segmentals that students found particularly difficult to perform. In particular, the combination of the voiced alveolar trill /r/, with both consonants and vowels and in different positions (pre-consonantal, post-consonantal, post-vowel) was shown to be the most difficult segmental sequence to master (five out of nine students could not master it). Moreover, the diphthong /uo/ was not correctly articulated (two out of nine students) and geminates were not properly pronounced, (four out of nine students) causing difficulties in the overall understanding of the students' performance.

DATE	SEGMENTALS MASTERED	SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED	INTONATION
24/03/2021	/t/	/sbr/ /uor/ /rn/ /rt/	Issues were detected during more complex phonological patterns.

		/tr/	
		/uo/	
		Geminates	

5.1.3 Linguistic analysis of the Core IV Intermediate recordings – Term 2 – Academic Year 2020/2021

The online pronunciation and intonation training sessions were delivered to two different groups of Intermediate-level second year students (Group 1 and Group 2). Unlike the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions devised for beginner's-level first-year students (paragraph 5.1.2), the sessions created for second-year intermediates consisted of one repeated training session (the session delivered on Zoom 18th March 2021 with group 2, and the one delivered on Zoom on 22nd March 2021 with group 1) and two single training sessions differentiated for the two groups (the session delivered on 8th March 2021 with group 1, and the one delivered on 25th March 2021 with group 2). The structure of the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions had two main aims. The first was to compare the two groups of intermediate students when practising the same segmental and suprasegmental traits in order to detect any major issues in one class or in the other. Moreover, the comparison between the two groups of intermediate students helped to identify on a larger scale the phonological sequences which were still not mastered or were still causing articulation issues at this level of language proficiency and those which were already acquired and correctly used in oral communicative contexts. The second aim was to compare the performance of second-year intermediate students to that of first-year beginner's students so as to identify the segmentals and suprasegmentals which are naturally acquired by students as their overall language proficiency improves. My aim was also to identify the phonemes which were still causing problems despite the more advanced level of the students' language skills. As a consequence, two out of the three pronunciation and intonation training sessions delivered on Zoom to second-year intermediate students were identical to the two pronunciation and intonation sessions delivered online to both groups of first-year beginners' students.

Session 1 – Group 1, 8th March, 2021

Activities

The first pronunciation and intonation training session was delivered during the online Communicative Skills class to group 1 on 8th March, 2021. The pronunciation exercises included in this session were the same exercises previously described in this chapter (paragraph 5.1.2). Unlike the activities devised for the first online pronunciation and intonation training session of the two groups of first-year students, for second-year students I decided to include from the beginning exclusively exercises which combined together the practice of segmental and suprasegmental features; therefore, I did not include activities based on drilling single decontextualised words. In fact, as already pointed out in the description of the second

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and third online pronunciation and intonation training sessions of Core II Beginners' students, the use of complex phonological exercises, such as tongue-twisters and nursery-rhymes, is useful to help students train segmentals and supragmentals at the same time and learn how to articulate different pairs of sounds more fluently and naturally, i.e. more likely to represent the way in which speakers normally pronounce words while normally speaking with their interlocutors (Prosic-Santovac, 2009). Moreover, unlike first-year beginners who might have found it difficult to figure out the meaning of the tongue-twisters and nursery-rhymes used in the exercises, intermediate learners should be able to understand at least their general meaning, so the use of decontextualised words was neither helpful nor necessary. The tongue-twisters used in the first pronunciation and intonation training session, delivered on Zoom, are listed in the table below.

Segmentals trained during this session			
Sound discrimination	**Drilling of consonants**	**Training of geminates**	**Intonation**
1. the nasal palatal /ɲ/ vs the nasal alveolar /n/; 2. voiced palatal lateral approximant /ʎ/ vs voiced alveolar lateral approximant /l/ 3. Voiceless palatal affricate /ʧ/ vs voiceless velar plosive /k/	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ Voiced alveolar trill. /r/	1. voiced alveolar lateral approximant /l:/; 2. voiced dental /t:/; 3. the voiced alveolar trill when preceded by the voiced dental /tr/.	No particular suprasegmentals related issues were detected
-/ɲ/ vs /N/ Il compagno di Melania ha sognato di accompagnare sua cognata in campagna, in Campania, per farle compagnia in caso di bisogno (This tongue-twister was devised by the researcher) - /ʎ/ vs /L/ Sul tagliere l'aglio taglia, non tagliare la tovaglia; la tovaglia non è aglio, se la tagli fai uno sbaglio http://www.filastrocche.net	-/S/ Sa chi sa se sa chi sa, che se sa non sa se sa, sol chi sa che nulla sa, ne sa più di chi ne sa https://www.filastrocche.it/nostalgici/scioglil/s_11.htm -/R/ Trentatrè Trentini entrarono a Trento tutti e trentatrè trotterellando https://www.amicideltedes	-/T:/, /TR/ Stanno stretti sotto i letti sette spettri a denti stretti https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando -Double consonants Apelle figlio di Apollo fece una palla di pelle di pollo. Tutti i pesci vennero a galla	

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/sciooglilingua/aglio_taglia.htm -/tʃ/ vs /K/ Il cuoco cuoce in cucina e dice che la cuoca giace e tace perché sua cugina non dica che le piace cuocere in cucina col cuoco. https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/sciooglilingua/sciooglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando.	co.eu/sciooglilingua/sciooglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando Sopra la panca la capra canta, sotto la panca la capra crepa https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/sciooglilingua/sciooglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando. Tigre contro tigre https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/sciooglilingua/sciooglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando	per vedere la palla di pelle di pollo fatta da Apelle figlio di Apollo https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/sciooglilingua/sciooglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando	

Results

As already pointed out in the introductory paragraph, this session aimed to define and compare the phonological traits which can cause articulation issues to second-year students at intermediate level. The recordings collected during the first online training session showed an overall appropriate level of segmentals and suprasegmentals mastery by learners at this level of language proficiency. In fact, the majority of segmental features selected turned out to be already acquired and generally well-articulated by both groups of students, as shown in the table below. However, despite the students' good level of pronunciation and intonation, their pronunciation of some of the segmentals in the exercises was slightly inaccurate. For instance, only one out of seven students showed some difficulty in discriminating between the pair of sounds [sc] /ʃ/ and [sch] /sk/ (i.e., pe*sc*e vs pe*sch*e). Despite the fact that the mispronounced segmentals did not limit the understanding of the recordings, the imprecise articulation of the sounds and resulting inaccuracy may be perceived as a negative trait by Italian native-speakers.

DATE	SEGMENTALS MASTERED	SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED	INTONATION
08/03/2021	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /ɲ/ vs /n/ /dʒ/ vs /g/ /ʧ/ vs /k/ double consonants /r/	/ʃ/ vs /sk/	No particular suprasegmentals-related issues were detected

Session 2 – Group 1 & 2, 18th, and 22nd March, 2021

Activities

The second online session was delivered to both groups – to group 1 on 18th March, 2021, and to group 2 on 22nd March, 2021. This session included pronunciation and intonation activities which had been already used with first-year students at beginner's level. As for the other online pronunciation and intonation training sessions, students were required to listen carefully to the language tutor repeating the sentences twice and then were asked to record themselves using the online voice recording tool Vocaroo. The tongue-twisters and nursery-rhymes used for this session focused on the practice of stressed words (i.e., per*ò*), geminates (i.e., a*pp*endiamo), the voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ (i.e., *s*ereno) and the voiced alveolar trill /r/ (i.e., ca*r*o).

Segmentals trained during this session				
Stressed words	Geminates	Geminates vs single consonants	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative	Voiced alveolar trill.
	/p:/ /t:/ /r:/ / ʧ:/ /n:/ /k:/	/s:/ vs /s/ /l:/ vs /l/ /r:/ vs /r/	/s/	/r/

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Per colpa di un accento un tale di Santhià credeva d'essere alla meta ed era appena a metà. Per analogo errore un contadino a Rho tentava invano di cogliere le pere da un però. Non parliamo del dolore di un signore di Corfù quando, senza più accento, il suo cucu non cantò più. (*Per colpa di un accento*, in Filastrocche per tutto l'anno by Gianni Rodari, edition 2010)	Appendiamo un cappotto marrone ad un attaccapanni di legno ed ottone. (This tongue-twister was devised by the researcher)	Il vecchio e caro carro portava a casa una cassa che conteneva una pala ed una palla. (This tongue-twister was devised by the researcher)	Se la serva non ti serve, a che serve che ti serva di una serva che non serve? Serviti di una serva che serve, e se questa non ti serve, serviti dei miei servi. https://learnamo.com/en/italian-tongue-twisters/ Se oggi seren non è, doman seren sarà. Se non sarà seren, si rasserenerà. https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando	Treno troppo stretto e troppo stracco stracca troppi storpi e stroppia troppo https://www.fabulinis.com/filastrocche-per-bambini/scioglilingua/

Results

The recordings collected during the online training session showed an overall mastery of the main segmental and suprasegmental features on which the exercises were focused. In terms of the suprasegmental features, no specific issues emerged from the recordings and comprehension of tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes was not compromised. As stated in the description of the activities used for this online training session, using the same activities devised for first-year beginners for both groups of intermediates as well was mainly justified by the need to ascertain whether certain segmental and suprasegmental features can be naturally picked up by students while they are improving their general language proficiency. The results collected from the recordings showed that second-year students at an intermediate level have generally overcome the phonological issues that first-year students at beginner's level have. For instance, by comparing the two tables below, which report the segmentals and suprasegmentals mastered and not yet mastered by second-year intermediate students and first-year beginners' students, it is clear that most of the segmental and suprasegmental traits identified as problematic for first-year students - /rp/, /tr/, stress changes and geminates -, where generally well-performed by second-year students. For instance, student 4 presented articulation issues with /r/ in different phonological contexts as a beginner student (2020-2021).

The analysis of student 4 performance as an intermediate student (2021-2022) reveal that they have reduced the pronunciation and intonation problems to stress-related issues in new words. The same happened for student 5, who presented articulatory issues for /r/ and geminates in the training sessions carried out online in 2020-2021, while they only presented stress-related issues in the online training sessions in 2021-2022.

2ND YEAR – CORE IV INTERMEDIATES			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
18/03/2021	Geminates /tr/ /r/ /rp/	/t/, /d/	No particular suprasegmentals-related issues were detected
22/03/2021	/rv/	n.a.	

1ST YEAR – CORE II BEGINNERS			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
18/03/2021 and 22/03/2021	/s/ /r/ /rv/	/rp/ /tr/ Stress changes and geminates	Issues were detected during more complex phonological patterns.

Session 3 – Group 2, 25th March, 2021

Activities

As for the session previously analysed, the third online training session was also based on pronunciation and intonation exercises already delivered to first-year students at beginner's level. As already stated in the previous paragraph for session 2, using the same activities for both first-year beginners and second year intermediates was aimed at identifying the segmentals and suprasegmentals which are normally mastered at higher levels of language proficiency compared to beginner's level, and at highlighting the phonological features which students have not yet mastered despite their more advanced level of linguistic competence in Italian. This session included tongue-twisters focused on the practice of geminates (i.e., scalpe*ll*o), the voiced palatal lateral approximant /ʎ/ (i.e., ti*gl*io), the voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ (i.e., ta*s*ca) and the voiced alveolar trill /r/ (i.e., ba*r*bie*r*e) and a nursery-rhyme focused on geminates, the voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/, and the voiced alveolar trill /r/.

Segmentals trained during this session			
Geminates	Voiced palatal lateral approximant. /ʎ/	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /ʃ/	Voiced alveolar trill. /r/
/l:/ /s:/ /n:/			
Un'antica stele era ricoperta di stelle incise con uno scalpello ed un martello, e dipinte così bene che sembrava che avessero usato un pennarello al posto di un pennello. (This tongue-twister was devised by the researcher)	Io cercavo l'erba-voglio, tra le foglie, sotto il tiglio, ma ho trovato solo miglio, un cespuglio di cerfoglio, fiori rossi di trifoglio. Ma non c'era l'erba-voglio https://www.filastrocche.it/nostalgici/scioglil/s_51.htm	Ho in tasca l'esca ed esco per la pesca, ma il pesce non s'adesca, c'è l'acqua troppo fresca. Convien che la finisca, non prenderò una lisca! Mi metto in tasca l'esca e torno dalla pesca. https://www.filastrocche.it/contenuti/scioglilingua-0043/	Sei tu quel barbaro barbiere che barbaramente barbasti la barba a quel povero barbaro barbone? https://www.filastrocche.it/contenuti/scioglilingua-0031/ Remo rema sul Reno con remi di rame https://www.filastrocche.it/contenuti/scioglilingua-0057/

Segmentals and suprasegmentals trained during this session
Geminates, voiceless alveopalatal fricative, voiced alveolar trill.
Un nuovo uovo fu comprato tra gli ingredienti Per creare una torta niente male Tuorli, zucchero e farina Vanno messi in una terrina Poi si inizia a mescolare e fra poco è da infornare. Muovi i mestoli e prepara la torta non troppo amara Aggiungi un po' di saccarosio per renderla di un sapor ancor più

Strepitoso.

Uomini e donne la mangeranno e dell'altra ne vorranno

Quindi due te ne convien preparare

Forza, sbrigati, che di lavoro ne hai da fare!

(This nursery rhyme was devised by the researcher)

Results

The analysis of the recordings did not show up any difficulty in the pronunciation of the segmentals and suprasegmentals in the tongue-twisters and nursery-rhymes practised in the session. All the phonological patterns and traits trained were mastered and well-performed by second-year intermediate students. Unlike in the previous comparison between the results of second-year intermediates and first-year beginners, in this case the difference between the performance of intermediates and that of beginners was more marked. In fact, the pronunciation and intonation issues identified for first-year beginners, and which negatively affected the students' overall performance, seemed to be completely absent from the performances of second-year students.

2ND YEAR – CORE IV INTERMEDIATES			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
25/03/2021	All segmentals mastered	n.a.	n.a.
1st YEAR – CORE II BEGINNERS			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
24/03/2021	/t/	/sbr/ /uor/ /rn/ /rt/ /tr/ /uo/ Geminates	Issues were detected during more complex phonological patterns.

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5.1.4 Linguistic analysis of the Core IV Advanced recordings – Term 2 – Academic Year 2020/2021

The online pronunciation and intonation training sessions were identical to the ones previously described in this chapter (paragraphs 5.1.2 and 5.1.3). Unlike the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions devised for beginner's-level first-year students and intermediate-level second-year students, the online sessions created for second-year advanced learners consisted of two training sessions (the first online session was delivered on 4th March, 2021 and the second one was held on Zoom on 22nd March, 2021). Both online sessions were based on tongue-twisters and nursery-rhymes already used for the pronunciation and intonation sessions held for first-year beginners and second-year intermediates. The structure of the sessions had two main aims. The first was strictly linked to the pronunciation skills of advanced students. In particular, I aimed to find out the segmentals and suprasegmentals which still needed to be trained and practised at this level of language proficiency. Secondly, I believed the advanced students' performances was a good parameter to compare the mastery of specific segmental and suprasegmental features between advanced and intermediate students in their second year of Italian. Moreover, the recordings were useful to identify the pronunciation and intonation differences between beginner's level first-year students and advanced-level second-year students and to compare the results with those from the comparison between beginners and intermediates.

Session 1 – 4th March, 2021

The first online pronunciation and intonation training session was delivered during the online Communicative Skills class on 4th March, 2021. The pronunciation exercises included in the first session were the same explained for session 1 delivered on 8th March 2021. As already pointed out for the intermediate level, for second-year students I decided to include exclusively exercises which combined together the practice of segmental and suprasegmental features from the beginning; therefore, I did not include activities based on drilling single decontextualised words. Moreover, whilst the use of decontextualised words was helpful for first-year beginners since they might have had difficulties to understand the meaning of the tongue-twisters and nursery-rhymes, advanced students should be able to understand at least their overall meaning, therefore the use of decontextualised words was neither helpful nor necessary. The tongue-twisters used in the first online pronunciation and intonation training session are listed in the table below.

Segmentals trained during this session			
Sound discrimination	**Drilling of consonants**	**Training of geminates**	**Intonation**
1. the nasal palatal /ɲ/ vs the nasal alveolar /n/; 2. voiced palatal lateral approximant /ʎ/ vs voiced alveolar lateral approximant /l/ 3. Voiceless palatal affricate /ʧ/ vs voiceless velar plosive /k/	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ Voiced alveolar trill. /r/	1. voiced alveolar lateral approximant /l:/; 2. voiced dental /t:/; 3. the voiced alveolar trill when preceded by the voiced dental /tr/.	No particular suprasegmentals related issues were detected
-/ɲ/ vs /N/ Il compagno di Melania ha sognato di accompagnare sua cognata in campagna, in Campania, per farle compagnia in caso di bisogno (This tongue-twister was devised by the researcher)	-/S/ Sa chi sa se sa chi sa, che se sa non sa se sa, sol chi sa che nulla sa, ne sa più di chi ne sa https://aforismi.it/anonimo /sa-chi-sa-se-sa-chi-sa-che-se-sa/	-/T:/, /TR/ Stanno stretti sotto i letti sette spettri a denti stretti https://www.amicideltedesco. eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi %20seren%20non%20%C3% A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20 trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterel lando -double consonants Apelle figlio di Apollo fece una palla di pelle di pollo. Tutti i pesci vennero a galla per vedere la palla di pelle di pollo fatta da Apelle figlio di Apollo https://www.amicideltedesco. eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi %20seren%20non%20%C3% A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20 trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterel lando	

Results

The analysis of the recordings showed the only sounds which still seemed difficult to distinguish by advanced students were the nasal palatal /ɲ/ and the nasal alveolar /n/. The other segmentals trained during the first session, as well as the suprasegmental features practised, did not seem to have caused specific articulation problems to the participants. As already pointed out in the introductory paragraph, the second aim of the advanced students' online training session was to identify the difference between the beginners', intermediate and the advanced students' pronunciation and intonation skills. This session was also delivered to intermediate learners, so it is possible to compare the results of both levels to find out the main differences between the two in terms of mastery of segmental and suprasegmental features. The two tables below report the results shown by the recordings of the intermediate groups and the advanced one. The only segmentals to appear problematic, for two out of fourteen intermediate students but not for the advanced ones, are the sounds [sc] /ʃ/ and [sch] /sk/ (i.e., pe*sci* vs pe*schi*). Therefore, it is possible to state that, based on the pronunciation and intonation exercises delivered to the different groups of students, there is a more rapid and consistent progress for Intermediates regarding their phonological skills than for other linguistic competences.

CORE IV ADVANCED			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
04/03/2021	All the other segmental features	n.a.	No particular suprasegmental-related issues were detected

DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
08/03/2021	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /ɲ/ vs /n/ /dʒ/ vs /g/ /tʃ/ vs /k/ double consonants /r/	/ʃ/ vs /sk/	No particular suprasegmental-related issues were detected

Session 2 –22ⁿᵈ March, 2021

Activities

The second online session was delivered on 22ⁿᵈ March, 2021. This session included pronunciation and intonation activities which had been already used with both first-year students at beginner's level, and second-year students at intermediate level (paragraphs 5.1.2 and 5.1.3). As for the other pronunciation and intonation training sessions delivered on Zoom, students were required to listen carefully to the language tutor repeating the sentences twice and then were asked to record themselves using the online voice

recording tool Vocaroo. The tongue-twisters and nursery-rhymes used for this session focused on the practice of stressed words, geminates, the voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ and the voiced alveolar trill /r/.

Segmentals trained during this session				
Stressed words	Geminates /p:/ /t:/ /r:/ /ʧ:/ /n:/ /k:/	Geminates vs single consonants /s:/ vs /s/ /l:/ vs /l/ /r:/ vs /r/	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/	Voiced alveolar trill. /r/
Per colpa di un accento un tale di Santhià credeva d'essere alla meta ed era appena a metà. Per analogo errore un contadino a Rho tentava invano di cogliere le pere da un però. Non parliamo del dolore di un signore di Corfù quando, senza più accento, il suo cucu non cantò più. (*Per colpa di un accento*, in Filastrocche per tutto l'anno by Gianni Rodari, edition 2010)	Appendiamo un cappotto marrone ad un attaccapanni di legno ed ottone. (This tongue-twister was devised by the researcher)	Il vecchio e caro carro portava a casa una cassa che conteneva una pala ed una palla. (This tongue-twister was devised by the researcher)	Se la serva non ti serve, a che serve che ti serva di una serva che non serve? Serviti di una serva che serve, e se questa non ti serve, serviti dei miei servi. https://learnamo.com/en/italian-tongue-twisters/ Se oggi seren non è, doman seren sarà. Se non sarà seren, si rassererà. https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando	Treno troppo stretto e troppo stracco stracca troppi storpi e stroppia troppo https://www.fabulinis.com/filastrocche-per-bambini/scioglilingua/

Results

The recordings of this session confirmed the advanced students' mastery of all the segmental and suprasegmental traits practised during the second pronunciation and intonation training. Unlike what emerged from the analysis of the first-session results, the pronunciation- and intonation-related issues were clearly more evident in this session, especially between second-year students of both proficiency levels - and first year beginners. In fact, while the intermediates' results differ from the advanced students' outcomes only in the articulation of the voiceless dental /t/ and the voiced dental /d/, the beginners (student 1 and 5 from group 1, and students 3, 5, and 7 from group 2) reported difficulties in the pronunciation of the voiced alveolar trill when it is in a post-consonantal position after the voiceless dental /t/ and when it is in a pre-consonantal position before the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/. Moreover, beginners (student 1 and 5 from group 1, and students 3, 5, and 7 from group 2) showed some uncertainties with geminates and with the stress variations in words with the same spelling, but which differ in meaning when the position of the stress changes. Moreover, in terms of the suprasegmental features of the activities included in this session, while intermediate and advance students did not have problems with the specific suprasegmentals trained, in the first-year beginners' recordings intonation problems were detected when learners were required to articulate more phonologically complex patterns.

CORE IV ADVANCED			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
24/03/2021	/r/ /ʎ/ vs /l/ /tr/ /rv/	n.a.	No particular suprasegmental-related issues were detected

2ND YEAR – CORE IV INTERMEDIATES			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
18/03/2021	Geminates /tr/ /r/ /rp/	/t/, /d/	No particular suprasegmental-related issues were detected
22/03/2021	/rv/	n.a.	

1ST YEAR – CORE II BEGINNERS			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**

18/03/2021 and 22/03/2021	/s/ /r/ /rv/	/rp/ /tr/ Stress changes and geminates	Issues were detected during more complex phonological patterns.

5.1.5 Analysis of each student's performance

CORE II BEGINNERS – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021

GROUP 1

Segmental features which were not mastered by each participant

STUDENT	01/03/2021	18/03/2021
Student 1	/ʎ/ /rt/ Some geminates (*marone, corere*)	Distinction between single consonants and geminates (*maronne, ottonne*) /ʃ/ vs /sk/ Word stress
Student 2	/s/	n.a.
Student 3	n.a.	n.a.
Student 4	/ʎ/ Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/	/ʎ/ vs /l/
Student 5	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ /br/	/rt/ /gr/ /tr/ /ʃ/ vs /sk/ Word stress
Student 6	n.a.	Distinction between single and geminated voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/

CORE II BEGINNERS – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021

GROUP 2

STUDENT	04/03/2021	22/03/2021	25/03/2021
Student 1	n.a	absent	absent
Student 2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Student 3	/tr/ /ʎ/ The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/	/k/ vs /ʧ/ /g/ vs /dʒ/	/ʎ/ vs /l/ Word stress

Student 4	/pr/	/kr/	/tr/
	/br/	/r/	/pr/
	/tr/	/r:/	/rt/
	/rt/	/ʎ/	/br/
	/r/	/rl/	/r/
	/ʎ/	/rd/	/ʎ/
	Distinction between the single consonant /s/ and the geminate /s:/	/rv/ /tr/	
Student 5	/rt/ /tr/ Geminates (*venero*) The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (*succhero*)	n.a.	Geminates (*done*) /uor/ Word stress
Student 6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Student 7	The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (*succhero*)	n.a.	Geminates (*penelo*) Word stress
Student 8	absent	/rt/ /tr/ /rp/ /l/ vs /l:/	/uor/ /rn/ /rt/
Student 9	absent	absent	/r/ The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (*succhero*)

CORE IV ADVANCED – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021 Segmental features which were not mastered by each participant		
STUDENT	**04/03/2021**	**22/03/2021**
Student 1	n.a.	absent
Student 2	n.a.	n.a.
Student 3	/ɲ/ vs /n/	absent
Student 4	n.a.	absent
Student 5	/ɲ/ vs /n/	n.a.
Student 6	absent	n.a.
Student 7	absent	absent

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021 Group 1 Segmental features which were not mastered by each participant		
STUDENT	**08/03/2021**	**22/03/2021**
Student 1	n.a.	n.a.
Student 2	/ʃ/ vs /sk/	Stress

	/ʎ/ vs /l/	/ɲ/ vs /n/
Student 3	/ʎ/ vs /l/	/ɲ/ vs /n/
		/s/ vs /s:/
Student 4	n.a.	absent
Student 5	n.a.	/r/
		/r:/
		/tr/
		/kr/
		/rf/
		/rv/
Student 6	n.a.	n.a.
Student 7	/ʎ/ vs /l/	absent
	/ɲ/ vs /n/	

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021		
Group 2		
Segmental features which were not mastered by each participant		
STUDENT	**18/03/2021**	**25/03/2021**
Student 1	/ʎ/ vs /l/	n.a.
	Geminates (*marone, capoto*)	
Student 2	n.a.	n.a.
Student 3	Stress	n.a.
	/ʎ/ vs /l/	
	sc	
Student 4	n.a.	n.a.
Student 5	/ʧ/ vs /k/	absent
	Stress	
	/r/ vs /r:/	
	/rf/	
	/rv/	
Student 6	/ʎ/ vs /l/	absent
Student 7	absent	n.a.

5.2 General analysis of the recordings of the Core IV Intermediate students during the academic year 2021/2022 compared with the results of the same group of students during the academic year 2020/2021 and the Core IV Intermediate group during the academic year 2020/2021

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE			
Academic year 2021/2022			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
04/03/2021	/dʒ/ vs /g/	/ʎ/ vs /l/	Stress issues related to unknown words
	/ʧ/ vs /k/		
	double consonants		
	/r/		
	/ʃ/ vs /sk/		
18/03/2021	/tr/	/ʎ/ vs /l/	Stress issues related to unknown words
	/r/		
	/t/, /d/		
25/03/2021	All segmentals included in the	n.a.	Stress issues related to unknown words

	exercises were mastered by the students		
CORE II BEGINNERS **Academic year 2020/2021**			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
01/03/2021	double consonants /r/ /t/ /ɲ/	/br/ /ʎ/	Single words work fine
04/03/2021	/r/	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /ɲ/ vs /n/ stress double consonants	Students are not able to reproduce all segmentals, they just focus on the segmentals trained in each session
18/03/2021	/rv/	Stress /rl/ /tr/	
22/03/2021	/rv/	/rd/ /rf/ /rt/ /rl/ /ʃ/ vs /sk/ double consonants	
25/03/2021	/t/	/sbr/ /uor/ /rn/ /rt/ /tr/ /uo/ Double consonants	

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE **Academic year 2020/2021**			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
08/03/2021	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /dʒ/ vs /g/ /ʧ/ vs /k/ double consonants /r/	/ʃ/ vs /sk/	
18/03/2021	/tr/ /r/	/t/, /d/	
22/03/2021	/rv/	n.a.	
25/03/2021		n.a.	

5.2.1 Linguistic analysis of the recordings of Core IV Intermediate – Term 2 – Academic Year 2021/2022

The recordings analysed in this research were collected during the academic year 2021/2022 in the Modern Languages Department at the University of Birmingham. The pronunciation and intonation training sessions were delivered during the online Communicative Skills class, which was a 2-hour long session held once a week with one group of second-year students at Intermediate level. The students had already received the same type of pronunciation and intonation training during their first year at university when they were enrolled as Core II Beginners. Due to the different allocation of students and tutors to the Communicative skills groups for the academic year 2021-2022, I was only able to gather the new recordings for half of the students who had taken part in the research project during the academic year 2020-2021. Although the number of participants was reduced if compared to the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions held in 2020-2021, the data collected are useful for two main reasons: 1. to determine whether the students who were trained for two years had improved their performance of segmental and suprasegmental features which were not mastered during the first trial; 2. to determine whether learners who had been trained for two years had worse, equal or better pronunciation and intonation skills when compared to the Core IV Intermediate students who were involved in the research project during the academic year 2020-2021 and who received the segmental and suprasegmental training for just one semester. The pronunciation and intonation training sessions delivered on Zoom during the second term of the academic year 2021-2022 featured the same activities used during the academic year 2020-2021. The structure of the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions had two main aims. The first was to compare the two groups of intermediate students (the 2020-2021 groups vs the 2021-2022 group) on the same segmental and suprasegmental traits in order to detect possible major issues in one group or in the other. Moreover, the comparison between the two groups of intermediate students helped to identify on a larger scale the phonological sequences which were still not mastered or still caused articulation issues at this level of language proficiency and those which were already acquired and correctly used in oral communicative contexts. The second aim was to compare the performance of second-year intermediate students to the one during their first year at university as beginner students in order to identify the segmentals and suprasegmentals which are naturally acquired by students as their overall language proficiency improves. My aim was also to identify the phonemes which still caused problems despite the more advanced level in the students' language skills and despite the two years' training received. As a consequence, all the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions delivered to second-year intermediate students during the academic year 2021-2022 were identical to the two pronunciation and intonation sessions delivered to both first-year beginner students and second-year intermediate students during the academic year 2020-2021.

Activities

The first online pronunciation and intonation training session was delivered during the Communicative Skills class on 4th March, 2022. The segmentals that were addressed during the first online pronunciation training session and the structure of the sessions was the same which has been described for the previous sessions (paragraph 5.1.2). Unlike the activities devised for the online pronunciation and intonation training session of the two groups of second-year students during the academic year 2020-2021, I also decided to include the drilling of single decontextualised words so as to identify the improvements that students might have made from the first year of pronunciation and intonation training to the second one. The tongue-twisters used in the first online pronunciation and intonation training session are listed in the table below.

Segmentals trained during this session							
Voiced palatal lateral approximant. /ʎ/	Single vs geminated. /l:/ vs /l/ /s:/ vs /s/ /m:/ vs /m/	Voiced alveolar trill in a post-consonant position. /pr/ /br/ /tr/	Geminated voiced alveolar trill. /r:/	The nasal palatal /ɲ/	The nasal palatal /ɲ/ vs the nasal alveolar /n/ /ɲ/ vs /n/	Voiced dental (single, double and in the middle of a word and post-consonant) /t /t:/ /rt/	The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative (at the beginning of a word, in the middle of a word) /dz/ /ndz/
coniGLio	paLLa vs paLa	Prato	aRRivare	coGNome	CampaGNa	Tavolo	Zucchero
taGLiare	caSSa vs caSa	liBRo	coRRere	Gnocchi	CampaNia	teTTo	Zanzara
imbroGLiare	caMMino vs caMino	Trono	maRRone	Gnomo		toRTa	melanZana

As for the suprasegmentals practised in the first session, two very well-known Italian tongue-twisters were included in the training once again. As already specified in the previous analysis of the recordings, the selection of tongue-twisters was based on the need to practise the single consonants and geminates that were trained during the drilling activity carried out with Vocaroo. Therefore, in addition to practising the segmentals trained during the first part of the session, students were also required to pronounce the same segmentals in a contextualised phonological situation, where the co-presence of different segmental features might have resulted in a more complex articulation of the sounds already trained during the 'listen and repeat' exercise. Moreover, using tongue-twisters in the sessions was particularly useful to train

intonation and phonological fluency. For the specific sound patterns of tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes (paragraph 5.1.2 and 5.1.3). The tongue-twisters used in the first intonation training session on Zoom are listed in the table below.

Segmentals and suprasegmentals trained during this session	
Single vs double consonants (liquids, dentals, nasals)	
Apelle figlio di Apollo fece una palla di pelle di pollo. Tutti i pesci vennero a galla per vedere la palla di pelle di pollo fatta da Apelle figlio di Apollo https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando	Trentatré trentini entrarono a Trento tutti e trentatré trotterellando https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando

Results

As already pointed out in the introductory paragraph, this session aimed to define and compare the phonological traits which caused articulation issues to the participants during their first year at university. The recordings gathered during the first online training session reflected an overall appropriate level of segmental and suprasegmental mastery by learners at this level of language proficiency. In fact, the majority of segmental features selected for the training turned out to be already acquired and generally well-articulated by students. However, despite the students' improvement in the level of pronunciation and intonation, the pronunciation of some of the segmentals in the exercises was still slightly inaccurate. For instance, four out of six students showed some difficulties in the discrimination between the pairs of sounds [sc] /ʃ/ and [sch] /sk/. In the tables below, the improvements made by the participants can clearly bee see. In fact, with the exception of the discrimination between the sounds /ʎ/ vs /l/ (five out of six students were still not able to master them), the segmentals which were shown to be difficult to pronounce by Core II Beginners had been acquired.

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE **Academic year 2021-2022**			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
04/03/2022	/dʒ/ vs /g/ /ʧ/ vs /k/ double consonants /r/ /ʃ/ vs /sk/	/ʎ/ vs /l/	Stress issues related to unknown words

CORE II BEGINNERS Academic year 2020/2021			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
01/03/2021 Group 1	double consonants /r/ /t/ /ɲ/	/br/ /ʎ/	Single words work fine
04/03/2021 Group 2	/r/	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /ɲ/ vs /n/ stress double consonants	Students are not able to reproduce all segmentals, they just focus on the segmentals trained from time to time

Session 2 – 18ᵗʰ March, 2022

Activities

The second online session was delivered on 18ᵗʰ March, 2022. The same exercises were delivered during the academic year 2020-2021 to Core IV Intermediate students. The exercises used in the first training were the same described previously in this chapter (paragraphs 5.1.2 and 5.1.3). Unlike the first-year beginners who might have found it difficult to figure out the meaning of the tongue-twisters and nursery-rhymes used in the exercises, intermediate learners should be able to understand at least their overall meaning, therefore the use of decontextualised words was neither helpful nor necessary. The tongue-twisters used in the first online pronunciation and intonation training session are listed in the table below.

Segmentals trained during this session			
Sound discrimination	**Drilling of consonants**	**Training of geminates**	**Intonation**
1. the nasal palatal gn-/-gn /ɲ/ vs the nasal alveolar /n/; 2. voiced palatal lateral approximant gli-/-gli /ʎ/ vs voiced alveolar lateral approximant /l/ 3. Voiceless palatal affricate /ʧ/ vs voiceless velar plosive /k/	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ Voiced alveolar trill. /r/	1. voiced alveolar lateral approximant /l:/; 2. voiced dental /t:/; 3. the voiced alveolar trill when preceded by the voiced dental /tr/.	No particular suprasegmental-related issues were detected
- /ɲ/ vs /N/ Il compagno di Melania ha sognato di accompagnare	-/S/ Sa chi sa se sa chi sa, che se sa non sa se sa, sol chi	-/T:/, /TR/ Stanno stretti sotto i letti sette spettri a denti stretti	

sua cognata in campagna, in Campania, per farle compagnia in caso di bisogno (This tongue-twister was devised by the researcher) -/ʎ/ vs /L/ Sul tagliere l'aglio taglia, non tagliare la tovaglia; la tovaglia non è aglio, se la tagli fai uno sbaglio http://www.filastrocche.net/scioglilingua/aglio_taglia.htm -/tʃ/ vs /K/ Il cuoco cuoce in cucina e dice che la cuoca giace e tace perché sua cugina non dica che le piace cuocere in cucina col cuoco. https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando	sa che nulla sa, ne sa più di chi ne sa https://aforismi.it/anonimo/sa-chi-sa-se-sa-chi-sa-che-se-sa/ -/R/ Trentatrè Trentini entrarono a Trento tutti e trentatrè trotterellando https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando Sopra la panca la capra canta, sotto la panca la capra crepa https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando Tigre contro tigre https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando	https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando -Double consonants Apelle figlio di Apollo fece una palla di pelle di pollo. Tutti i pesci vennero a galla per vedere la palla di pelle di pollo fatta da Apelle figlio di Apollo https://www.amicideltedesco.eu/scioglilingua/scioglilingua-italiani/#:~:text=Se%20oggi%20seren%20non%20%C3%A8,Trento,%20tutti%20e%20trentatr%C3%A9%20trotterellando	

Results

The recordings collected during the second online pronunciation and intonation training session showed an overall mastery of the main segmental and suprasegmental features on which the exercises were focused. In terms of the suprasegmental features, no specific issue emerged from the recordings, and the

understanding of tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes was not compromised. As stated in the description of the activities used for this online training session, the main aim in using the same activities devised for first-year beginners for both groups of intermediate students as well was mainly justified by the need to ascertain whether certain segmental and suprasegmental features can be naturally picked up by students as their general language proficiency is improving. The results gathered from the recordings showed that second-year students at an intermediate level and who received the pronunciation and intonation training for two semesters, have generally overcome the phonological issues that they had as first-year students at beginner's level. For instance, by comparing the two tables below, which show the segmentals and suprasegmentals mastered or not yet mastered by second-year intermediate students (former Core II Beginner 2020-2021) and second year intermediate students (who received one online training session in 2020-2021), it is clear that most of the segmental and suprasegmental traits which were identified as problematic for former Core II Beginner (2020-2021) - /rp/, /tr/, stress changes and geminates (see Results of Session 2 – Group 1 & 2, 18th, and 22nd March, 2021), were generally well-performed in the second semester of pronunciation and intonation training sessions delivered on Zoom. The tables below outline the improvements made by Core IV Intermediate students during the academic year 2021-2022 compared to those by Core IV Intermediate students during the academic year 2020-2021.

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE Academic year 2021/2022			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
18/03/2022	/tr/ /r/ /t/, /d/ /ʎ/ vs /l/	n.a.	Stress issues related to unknown words

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE Academic year 2020/2021			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
08/03/2021	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /ɲ/ vs /n/ /dʒ/ vs /g/ /tʃ/ vs /k/ double consonants r	/ʃ/ vs /sk/	No particular suprasegmental-related issues were detected

Activities

The third online training session was based on pronunciation and intonation exercises already delivered to first-year beginner's students and to second-year intermediate students during the academic year 2020-2021 (paragraphs 5.1.2 and 5.1.3).

Segmentals trained during this session			
Geminates	Voiced palatal lateral approximant.	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative	Voiced alveolar trill.
/l:/ /s:/ /n:/	/ʎ/	/ʃ/	/r/
Un'antica stele era ricoperta di stelle incise con uno scalpello ed un martello, e dipinte così bene che sembrava che avessero usato un pennarello al posto di un pennello. (This tongue-twister was devised by the researcher)	Io cercavo l'erba-voglio, tra le foglie, sotto il tiglio, ma ho trovato solo miglio, un cespuglio di cerfoglio, fiori rossi di trifoglio. Ma non c'era l'erba-voglio https://www.filastrocche.it/nostalgici/scioglil/s_51.htm	Ho in tasca l'esca ed esco per la pesca, ma il pesce non s'adesca, c'è l'acqua troppo fresca. Convien che la finisca, non prenderò una lisca! Mi metto in tasca l'esca e torno dalla pesca. https://www.filastrocche.it/contenuti/scioglilingua-0043/	Sei tu quel barbaro barbiere che barbaramente barbasti la barba a quel povero barbaro barbone? https://www.filastrocche.it/contenuti/scioglilingua-0031/ Remo rema sul Reno con remi di rame https://www.filastrocche.it/contenuti/scioglilingua-0057/

Segmentals and suprasegmentals trained during this session
Geminates, voiceless alveopalatal fricative, voiced alveolar trill.

Un nuovo uovo fu comprato tra gli ingredienti

Per creare una torta niente male

Tuorli, zucchero e farina

Vanno messi in una terrina

Poi si inizia a mescolare e fra poco è da infornare.

Muovi i mestoli e prepara la torta non troppo amara

Aggiungi un po' di saccarosio per renderla di un sapor ancor più

Strepitoso.

Uomini e donne la mangeranno e dell'altra ne vorranno

Quindi due te ne convien preparare

Forza, sbrigati, che di lavoro ne hai da fare!

(This nursery rhyme was devised by the researcher)

Results

The analysis of recordings did not detect difficulties in the pronunciation of the segmentals and suprasegmentals present in the tongue-twisters and nursery-rhymes practised in the session. All the phonological patterns and traits trained were mastered and well-performed by second-year intermediate students. In this case the difference between the performance of intermediate students from both academic years (2020-2021 and 2021-2022) and that of beginner's was more marked than the one detected in the previous comparison between second-year intermediate and first-year beginner's students. In fact, the pronunciation and intonation issues identified in first-year beginners, and which negatively affected the students' general performance seemed to have been completely eradicated in the performances of second-year students, showing in this way the validity of the teaching materials used and of the systematic delivery of pronunciation and intonation training sessions.

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE Academic year 2021/2022			
DATE	SEGMENTALS MASTERED	SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED	INTONATION
25/03/2022	All segmentals included in the exercises were mastered by the	n.a.	Stress issues related to unknown words

	students			

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE Academic year 2020-2021			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
25/03/2021	All segmentals mastered	n.a.	n.a.

CORE II BEGINNERS Academic year 2020-2021			
DATE	**SEGMENTALS MASTERED**	**SEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**	**INTONATION**
25/03/2021	/t/	/sbr/ /uor/ /rn/ /rt/ /tr/ /uo/ Geminates	Issues were detected during more complex phonological patterns.

5.2.2 Analysis of the performance of each student – Core IV Intermediate 2022 (former Core II Beginners 2021)

Group 1

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE (FORMER CORE II BEGINNERS) – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022 GROUP 1 Segmental features which were not mastered by each participant					
STUDENT	**01/03/2021**	**22/03/2021**	**04/03/2022**	**18/03/2022**	**25/03/2022**
Student 2	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/	n.a.	/tr/ in new words	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /tr/	/uo/ /rl/ /n:/ /tr/ /ʎ/ vs /l/ /ʃ/ vs /sk/
Student 5	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/	/rt/ /gr/ /tr/	/br/ /ʎ/ The stress	/ʎ/ /gr/	n.a.

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	/br/	/ʃ/ vs /sk/	is pronounced incorrectly in some words (càmino vscamìno)		

Group 2

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE (FORMER CORE II BEGINNERS) – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022 GROUP 2					
STUDENT	**04/03/2021**	**18/03/2021**	**25/03/2021**	**04/03/2022**	**18/03/2022**	**25/03/2022**
Student 4	/tr/ /pr/ /rt/ /br/ /r/ /ʎ/ Distinction between the single consonant /s/ and the geminate /s:/	/kr/ /r/ /r:/ /ʎ/ /rl/ /rd/ /rv/ /tr/	/tr/ /pr/ /rt/ /br/ /r/ /ʎ/	/tr/ /pr/ /rt/ /br/ /r/ /ʎ/ Distinction between the single consonant /s/ and the geminate /s:/	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /str/ /tr/ /kr/ /t/ /t:/ The stress is pronounced incorrectly in some words (campanìa vs campània)	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /tr/ /pr/ /r/ /r/ when associated with other consonants /t/
Student 6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	/l/ Stress in new words	/ɲ/ vs /n/	n.a.
Student 7	The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (*succhero*)	n.a.	Geminates (*penelo*)	n.a.	/tʃ/ vs /k/	n.a.
Student 9	absent	absent	/r/ The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (*succhero*)	absent	absent	/ʎ/ Distinction between the single consonant /s/ and the

						geminate /s:/ /ʃ/ vs /sk/

5.3 Analysis of the summative oral-aural assessments – academic year 2020/2021

The analysis of the audio files recorded with Vocaroo pointed out the specific segmental and suprasegmental traits that students at different levels of Italian proficiency are able or unable to pronounce when they are required to articulate them in specific phonological contexts. In fact, the tongue twisters and nursery-rhymes included in the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions asked the participants to focus their attention on the articulation of single sounds or groups of sounds different in each session and located in specific phonological positions and communicative contexts. Although the tongue twisters and nursery-rhymes used in class were authentic resources and a useful training for students, helping them to achieve greater phonological awareness of the segmentals and suprasegmentals considered by them the most difficult to articulate, the exercises delivered during the online training sessions can only provide an insight into the students' level of mastery of the sounds trained in specific phonological locations. Therefore, in order to have a more rigorous picture of the level of the learners' mastery of segmentals and suprasegmentals in spontaneous communicative contexts, it is helpful to analyse the recordings of the online oral-aural assessments of Core II Beginner's, Core IV Intermediate and Core IV Advanced students, where students were required to discuss a chosen topic, either in the form of a presentation or a monologue, and then spontaneously answer a series of unprepared questions asked by the tutors. The analysis of recordings of the oral-aural assessments will provide an insight into the students' spontaneous use of language and will help to determine whether in unprepared phonological contexts learners still display the same phonological deficiencies as those detected in the Vocaroo audio files. The comparison between the results gathered from the analysis of the Vocaroo recordings and those collected during the examination of the summative oral-aural assessments will also identify the positive outcomes that a more systematic and appropriate implementation of pronunciation and intonation training sessions within the Modern Languages curriculum can bring to the level of phonological awareness of learners at different levels of language proficiency.

Core II Beginner's students – Oral-aural assessments – 5th May 2021

The online summative oral-aural assessment of Core II Beginner's students was divided into two main parts. The first consisted of a discussion of a chosen topic. Students were required to prepare a 2-3-minute presentation on a chosen topic and answer some questions asked by their tutors on the presentation's topic. The second part of the exam involved the discussion of unseen material. Students were given two unseen pictures and a couple of minutes to familiarise themselves with them. Then they were asked to describe both pictures and compare them; the description of the pictures was followed by questions and answers.

The two tables below report the data collected for each Core II Beginner student during the pronunciation and intonation training sessions delivered on Zoom. The analysis of the Vocaroo audio tapes identified the sounds - from those trained in the pronunciation and intonation activities - which caused the main articulation problems to both groups of beginner's students. In fact, students found particularly challenging the discrimination between: /ʎ/ vs /l/ (four out of fifteen students) – i.e., miLiore vs mi*gli*ore; /ʃ/ vs /sk/ (two out of fifteen) – i.e., *SC*ema vs *sch*ema; the difference between the voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (four out of fifteen students) and the voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/– i.e., *S*ucchero vs *z*ucchero; /k/ vs /ʧ/ (one out of fifteen students) – i.e., ghia*KK*io vs ghia*cc*io; /g/ vs /dʒ/(one out of fifteen students) – i.e., *GI*accio vs *gh*iaccio; the articulation of the voiced alveolar trill /r/ when preceded or followed by another consonant sound (seven out of fifteen students) – i.e., pato vs p*r*ato; and the geminates (six out of fifteen students) – i.e., pe*NeL*o vs pe*nnell*o.

CORE II BEGINNERS – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021 Group 1		
Pronunciation and intonation training sessions		
STUDENT	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED 01/03/2021	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED 22/03/2021
Student 1	/ʎ/ /rt/ Some geminates (*marone, corere*)	Distinction between single consonants and geminates (*maronne, ottonne*) /ʃ/ vs /sk/
Student 2	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/	n.a.
Student 3	n.a.	n.a.
Student 4	/ʎ/ Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/	/ʎ/ vs /l/
Student 5	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ /br/	/rt/ /gr/ /tr/ /ʃ/ vs /sk/
Student 6	n.a.	Distinction between single /s/ and geminated /s:/ voiceless alveopalatal fricative

STUDENT	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED 04/03/2021	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED 18/03/2021	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED 25/03/2021

CORE II BEGINNERS – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021
Group 2

Pronunciation and intonation training sessions

STUDENT	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED 04/03/2021	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED 18/03/2021	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED 25/03/2021
Student 1	n.a	absent	absent
Student 2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Student 3	/tr/ /ʎ/ The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/	/k/ vs /ʧ/ /g/ vs /dʒ/	/ʎ/ vs /l/
Student 4	/tr/ /pr/ /rt/ /br/ /r/ /ʎ/ Distinction between the single consonant /s/ and the geminate /s:/	/kr/ /r/ /r:/ /ʎ/ /rl/ /rd/ /rv/ /tr/	/tr/ /pr/ /rt/ /br/ /r/ /ʎ/
Student 5	/rt/ /tr/ Geminates (*venero*) The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (*succhero*)	n.a.	Geminates (*done*) /uor/
Student 6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Student 7	The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (*succhero*)	n.a.	Geminates (*penelo*)
Student 8	absent	/rt/ /tr/ /rp/ /l/ vs /l:/	/uor/ /rn/ /rt/
Student 9	absent	absent	/r/ The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (*succhero*)

The following two tables report the data collected during the analysis of the recordings from the summative oral-aural assessment of each beginner student. They identify the segmentals and suprasegmentals which

were still problematic after the online training sessions. In fact, as the tables below show, the sounds which caused the main articulation problems during the speaking exam were the same that had emerged from the analysis of the Vocaroo audio files. The most common pronunciation issues were spotted in the articulation of geminates (four out of fifteen students) – i.e., succe*S*o vs succe*sso*; /ʎ/ (seven out of fifteen students) – i.e., mi*L*iore vs mi*gl*iore; /dz/ (four out of fifteen students); /s/ vs /ts/ (five out of fifteen students) – i.e., vacan*S*a vs vacan*z*a; /k/ vs /tʃ/ (two out of fifteen students) – i.e., ghia*CCH*io vs ghia*cc*io ; /g/ vs /dʒ/ (two out of fifteen students) – i.e., *G*iaccio vs *gh*iaccio; /ʃ/ vs /sk/ (one out of fifteen students) – i.e., preferi*SCI*o vs preferi*sc*o. The comparison between the results from the analysis of the Vocaroo files and the ones from the Zoom recordings of the exams confirmed the complexity of the articulation of the sounds listed above for students at beginner levels of Italian language proficiency. Moreover, the more spontaneous nature of the language used during the oral-aural assessment highlighted further phonological traits that seemed to be problematic for some of the participants. In particular, the pronunciation of the sound /g/ appears to be particularly confusing when it appears in words which contain other complex sounds, such as /k/ vs /tʃ/; for example, one student (student 3, see table below) the word *ghiaccio* ['giat.tʃo] (ice) as *giaccio* ['dʒat.tʃo], and as *giacchio* ['dʒak.kio]. In the first case, the student pronounced the hard sound /g/ as if it was assimilated with the following soft sound /tʃ/ and consequently pronounced it as /dʒ/. In the second case, the student pronounced /g/ as /dʒ/, and double /tʃ/ was pronounced as /k:/. The mispronunciation of the phonemes - /g/as /dʒ/, and /tʃ/ as /k/, which are present in the word *ghiaccio*, could suggest a not-reached-yet phonological awareness of student 3 regarding the differing phonemes /g/ vs /dʒ/, and /tʃ/ vs /k/. Another problematic segmental was the diphthong /au/, which was often pronounced as /o/; for example, c*au*sa (cause) became c*o*sa (thing), and p*au*sa (pause) became p*o*sa (pose). In such cases mispronunciation might cause misunderstanding as the incorrect articulation of the diphthong changes the meaning of words completely. Lastly, errors in word stress and the influence of other languages' suprasegmental features (especially Spanish) were detected during some students' performance. The incorrect use of these suprasegmental features negatively affected the speaking performance of students by making them sound less natural while they were speaking in Italian.

CORE II BEGINNERS – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021	
Summative oral-aural assessment (05/05/2021)	
Group 1	
STUDENT	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**
Student 1	- Geminates (succeSo)
Student 2	- /s/ (impreSSa) - geminates (imbaLaGio, faTo, doNa, freDo) -word stress (albèri, cìtta)
Student 3	- /ts/ (alteSSa, sforSo) - /k/ vs /tʃ/ (ghiaKKio)

	- /g/ vs /dʒ/ (dʒiaccio, inGLaterra) - /au/ (diphthong – cOsa) - Geminates (inghilteRa)
Student 4	-/ʎ/ (tagliatelle)
Student 5	- /r/ (when placed before another consonant sound: formula, peRchè) -/t/ -word stress (capàcita)
Student 6	-/ʎ/ (miLiore, famiLia) -/ɲ/ (camapNia)

CORE II BEGINNERS – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021 Summative oral-aural assessment (05/05/2021) Group 2	
STUDENT	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**
Student 1	-Word stress (perche, pandèmia) -/t/ vs /d/ (aiuDare) -/ts/ (infanCia) - Both segmental and suprasegmental features are affected by interference from Spanish
Student 2	-/ʎ/ (li)
Student 3	-/e/ at the end of words is pronounced as /i/ -/ts/ (vacanSa) - /kw/ vs /k/ (cinKe) -/ʃ/ (eXcursione) - /au/ (diphthong – pOsa) - /ʃ/ vs /sk/ (preferiSCIo)
Student 4	-/r/ (completely omitted) -/t/ (chiefly when it is followed by r) -/ɲ/ (spaNia) -word stress (pandèmia)
Student 5	-/au/ (diphthong – cOsa) -/gh/ (inGLaterra) -/ʎ/ (miLiore)
Student 6	-/l/ (-/l/ (it is pronounced as the palate-alveolar /l̡ʲ/) -/ʎ/ (voLiono)
Student 7	-/ts/ (vacanSa) -word stress (abàzzia) -/ʎ/ (voLio)
Student 8	-/ts/ (vacanSa, preSo) -geminates (preZo)

	-/ʎ/ (miLiore) -/r/ (chiefly when it preceeds another consonant sound: aeropoRto) -word stress (tavòli)
Student 9	- /ʧ/ vs /k/ (camiKa)

The comparison between the results gathered from the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions and the oral-aural assessments reveal that students have similar articulation issues both in predetermined communicative contexts (i.e. tongue twisters and nursery rhymes) and in more spontaneous communicative exchanges (i.e. unprepared answers to the tutors' questions during the speaking exam). However, the audio tapes of the summative oral-aural assessments also highlighted segmental and suprasegmental features with articulation issues and, in some cases, misunderstandings only during spontaneous speech. Therefore, a more systematic implementation of pronunciation and intonation training sessions in the Modern Languages curriculum from the very first stages of language acquisition could train and help students remember and acquire the necessary phonological awareness that could help them to remember the articulatory and muscular positions required in order to pronounce all the segmental features correctly while using the target language in different communicative contexts.

Core IV Intermediate – Oral-aural assessments – 4th May 2021

The online summative oral-aural assessment for Core IV Intermediate students was linked to the digital project that students had to complete as part of their summative assessment at the end of the second semester. The digital project consisted of 600 words in a PDF document or Power Point selected from a series of posts that students had left during Semester 2 on the Discussion section of the module page on Canvas. For each student a discussion page had been created with the title 'Discussione attivata da...(name of the student)'. Over the second Semester, the students were required to choose a topic or topics linked to the content of the Communicative skills hours. This included topics addressed in the textbook, activities in the course pack and YA-related activities. The posts needed to show that the students had engaged in preliminary research on the selected theme. Students were asked to adopt a critical approach by analysing specific issues, leaving informed comments and trying to persuade others of the importance of their points of view. They were also required to stimulate a debate and provoke reflections in their fellow 'bloggers'.

The oral-aural assessment consisted of a 7–10-minute presentation on one of the topics that students had proposed on the Canvas discussion page as 'topic leader'. The topic of the presentation had to be different from the topic that students had used for their digital-project assessment. They were required to present the topic; specify why they were interested in it and analyse a specific aspect. They were required to use Power Point slides and show that they had engaged in independent research. The students' presentations were followed by questions asked by the examiners.

The tables below show the data collected for each Core IV Intermediate student during the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions and the summative oral-aural assessments on Zoom. The sounds which caused articulation issues were: -/ʃ/ vs /sk/; /ʎ/ vs /l/; /ɲ/ vs /n/; geminates; the consonant r and its specific phonological positions (before and after consonants); /ʧ/ vs /k/; and word stress. Among the participants, three students in group 1 (students 1, 4 and 6) and three more in group 2 (students 2, 4, and 7) had no articulation issue either in the performance of the online training sessions or in the online oral-aural assessment. As for the other learners, the segmentals and suprasegmentals not mastered which emerged from the analysis of the summative assessments reflected those which have already been highlighted by the data collected from the Vocaroo recordings. Only two sounds did not seem to be challenging during the pronunciation and intonation activities whilst they caused some issues during the oral-aural exam. In fact, the voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/, either geminated or single, was not mastered by student 7. In particular, the sounds /ts/ and /dz/ were often mistaken for the voiceless alveolar sibilant /s/. This pronunciation issue might be caused by the influence of Spanish phonology on Italian by learners of Spanish. Moreover, some students had intonation issues specifically related to the interference from Spanish suprasegmental features which affected their Italian pronunciation. The emergence of the same problematic sounds reveals that the pronunciation and intonation exercises devised for the Intermediate groups were well tailored to the learners' phonological needs. Obviously, the small amount of time devoted to the specific training of pronunciation and intonation did not allow the articulation problems detected to be overcome. However, a more systematic and appropriate inclusion of phonological training in the Modern Languages curriculum and the introduction of the study of phonology from the very beginning of the students' academic experience might positively affect the students' phonological skills and awareness and can avoid the fossilisation of mispronounced sounds.

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021 Group 1		
Pronunciation and intonation training sessions		
STUDENT	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED** **08/03/2021**	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED** **22/03/2021**
Student 1	n.a.	n.a.
Student 2	/ʃ/ vs /sk/ /ʎ/ vs /l/	Stress /ɲ/ vs /n/
Student 3	/ʎ/ vs /l/	/ɲ/ vs /n/ /s/ vs /s:/
Student 4	n.a.	absent
Student 5	n.a.	/r/ /r:/ /tr/

		/kr/
		/rf/
		/rv/
Student 6	n.a.	n.a.
Student 7	/ʎ/ vs /l/	absent
	/ɲ/ vs /n/	

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021
Group 2

Pronunciation and intonation training sessions

STUDENT	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED 18/03/2021	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED 25/03/2021
Student 1	/ʎ/ vs /l/ Geminates (*marone, capoto*)	n.a.
Student 2	n.a.	n.a.
Student 3	Stress /ʎ/ vs /l/ /ʃ/	n.a.
Student 4	n.a.	n.a.
Student 5	/ʧ/ vs /k/ Stress /r/ vs /r:/ /rf/ /rv/	absent
Student 6	/ʎ/ vs /l/	absent
Student 7	absent	n.a.

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021

Summative oral-aural assessment (04/05/2021)

Group 1

STUDENT	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED
Student 1	n.a.
Student 2	-/s/ vs /ts/ (appreSSata) -Word stress -Mispronunciation of many words
Student 3	-/ʧ/ (speZialmente)
Student 4	n.a.
Student 5	-/r/ (vedeRe, veRona, peR) - /ts/ (sensa) -/t/ (Tra, capuleTi)
Student 6	n.a.
Student 7	- /au/ (Diphthong: Otentico) -/e/ at the end of words is pronounced as

	- /i/
	- /ɲ/
	- /dz/ (Samboni)
	-Word stress (cìtta)

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021	
Summative oral-aural assessment (04/05/2021)	
Group 2	
STUDENT	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED
Student 1	-Geminates (capaNe) -Word stress (profùghi) -Intonation is greatly influenced by Spanish
Student 2	n.a.
Student 3	-/r/ (parlare, foRma, ripercoRRere) - /ts/ -/e/ at the end of words is pronounced as /i/ (introduzionI, regionI)
Student 4	n.a.
Student 5	-/dr/ (squaDRa) -/rm/ (foRma) -/rt/ (paRte) -/t/ -/r/
Student 6	-Geminates (beLezza, aBracciato) -Word stress (cìtta)
Student 7	n.a.

Core IV Advanced – Oral-aural assessments – 6th May 2021

The online summative oral-aural assessment for Core IV Advanced students was structured exactly like the one already analysed for the Intermediate level of the academic year 2020/2021. The only difference was in the required number of words for the digital project, which was of 750 words. The tables below report the data gathered for each Core IV Advanced student during the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions and the summative oral-aural assessments. Unlike the results of the Intermediate students, with the Advanced group it was clear that when students were required to focus their attention on specific segmental and suprasegmental features, their mastery of the phonological traits drastically improved. In fact, with the exception of students 3 and 5 who had articulation issues when required to distinguish between /ɲ/ and /n/, no other relevant phonological errors were detected. However, when students were required to use the language in a more spontaneous communicative context and when they were not explicitly asked to focus their attention on the articulation of sounds, more pronunciation and intonation mistakes were identified. Although mispronunciations did not interfere with the intelligibility of the students' speech, a larger number of imprecisions were detected, mainly concerning the articulation of geminates (three out of

five respondents) – i.e., meta*L*i vs meta*ll*i; and the correct location of word stress (four out of five respondents) – i.e., proiet*Ì*lle vs proi*è*ttile; articulation issues also emerged for the voiced alveolar trill /r/ - student 4 omitted it when located before consonants (i.e., gionali vs gioRnali), and in the distinction between /ʃ/ and /sk/ - student 7 pronounced *SC*ematica instead of *sch*ematica.

CORE IV ADVANCED – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021		
Pronunciation and intonation training sessions		
STUDENT	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED** **04/03/2021**	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED** **22/03/2021**
Student 1	n.a.	absent
Student 2	n.a.	n.a.
Student 3	/ɲ/ vs /n/	absent
Student 4	n.a.	absent
Student 5	/ɲ/ vs /n/	n.a.
Student 6	absent	n.a.
Student 7	absent	absent

CORE IV ADVANCED – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021	
Summative oral-aural assessment (06/05/2021)	
STUDENT	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**
Student 1	-/uo/ (diphthong) (Omo) -Word stress (contemporanèa)
Student 2	n.a.
Student 3	-/ts/ (firenZe, senZa) -Geminates (metaLi) -Word stress (proietìle)
Student 4	-/r/ (when located before consonants: gioRnali, distRarre) -Geminates (proietaTo, DistraRe)
Student 5	n.a.
Student 6	-Geminates (beLezza, GambardeLa) -Word stress (cìtta) -/a/ (the vowel is pronounced as it is in French: Anche) -Strong influence of French on intonation
Student 7	- /ʃ/ vs /sk/ (Scematica) -Word stress (stereotìpi) -/e/ at the end of words is not pronounced (interpretazion) -Strong influence of French on intonation

The comparison between the results of the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions and those of the online summative oral-aural assessments revealed that students were physically able to master the majority of sounds trained thanks to the tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes used in class. Therefore, the mistakes detected during the individual performances at the oral-aural assessment were not caused by articulatory impediments. What emerged from the analysis of the assessment recordings was the students' inability to remember the place where the trained sounds are articulated. Their inability to memorise the articulatory and muscular movements necessary to pronounce the sounds correctly reflects their lack of phonological awareness which, at this stage, was not strong enough to guarantee the correct articulation of the more difficult sounds to master. In fact, when students were not explicitly required to focus their attention on the articulation of specific sounds, even learners who did not make any mistake during the training sessions on Zoom mispronounced sounds which they could master in a more defined communicative context, such as the one provided by the pronunciation and intonation exercises during the Communicative Skills hours. A possible reason for this could be the very limited time specifically devoted to the training of pronunciation and intonation and to the novelty of this practice. In fact, students only attended two online training sessions and had never received specific training or guidelines on pronunciation and intonation. A more systematic and appropriate phonological training might plausibly help students to implicitly memorise the movements of the articulatory apparatus and apply them consistently while speaking the target language, without the need to focus on how to pronounce a particular sound or group of sounds. Therefore, a possible solution could be the implementation of the teaching of segmentals and suprasegmentals in the Modern Languages curriculum from the very first year in order to get the students accustomed to practising their phonological skills in step with the other linguistic skills normally learnt during the Communicative Skills classes. Furthermore, the introduction of phonology from the beginning of their academic experience might also help the learners to avoid mispronunciation mistakes that could become fossilised and be difficult to correct from the very first stages of the acquisition process.

Core II Advanced – Oral-aural assessment – 5th May 2021

In order to better determine the students' phonological improvements associated with the pronunciation and intonation sessions delivered online, it was fundamental to have a benchmark uninvolved in the training sessions which could therefore immediately highlight the benefits brought by the segmental and suprasegmental-focused activities. The benefits are not to be intended exclusively as the actual improvements in the students' phonological skills and their consequent mastery of the sounds which emerged from the analysis of the Vocaroo recordings and the oral-aural assessment video tapes as the most difficult. The benefits brought by the segmental and suprasegmental training sessions must be also intended as boosters for the development of phonological awareness in both learners and tutors. In fact, phonological awareness by both agents involved in the foreign language learning process would improve the attitude towards the acquisition of the basic phonological skills which are necessary in order to avoid

misunderstandings during communicative exchanges with other speakers; but would also change, improve, and enrich the curriculum offered for the acquisition of Modern Languages at university level. The Core II Advanced module was not involved in the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions for two main reasons. First, the module was entirely run by a colleague of mine, and it would have been complicated for another tutor to plan and deliver the training sessions; secondly, the level of Italian proficiency of the Core II Advanced module could be compared to the Core IV Intermediate level. Therefore, the analysis of the students' phonological issues and its comparison to the Intermediate students' was seen as useful to show the main segmental and suprasegmental issues between trained and untrained learners, and consequently, this supported the validity and importance of the inclusion of pronunciation and intonation training sessions at all levels of language proficiency. The analysis of the online summative oral-aural assessments followed the same procedures used for the other modules' recordings. Each student was given a number in order to minimise the chances that personal data might leak from the study and, during the listening of the recording, the phonological issues or errors which could cause misunderstanding during the communicative exchanges were recorded and analysed by comparing them to the results of the analysis of the video tapes of the Core IV Intermediate summative oral-aural assessments.

The online summative oral-aural assessment consisted of a student presentation (3-5 minutes) on one of the topics covered in class (oral component) followed by questions and answers (aural component). By Week 8 of semester 2, students were required to communicate their chosen presentation topic to their tutors. The presentations needed to show awareness of the historical, cultural and social issues linked to the chosen topic and discussed in the Core II module. Furthermore, students were required to conduct individual research on their specific titles. Students were also required to avail themselves of Power Point slides (or similar digital presentation tools). The suggested topics for the summative oral-aural assessment were: The South and the Southern Question; Rome and Fascism; Antifascism and internal exile; WWII and its aftermath; the Mafia: Myths and Representations; Immigration.

CORE II ADVANCED – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021 Summative oral-aural assessment (05/05/2021)	
STUDENT	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**
Student 1	-/ɲ/ (siNificati) -/s/ (invaSSori) -/au/ (Otorità) -Word stress (omìcidi)
Student 2	n.a.
Student 3	-/r/ (peR) -/rt/ (PaRti)

	-/rs/ (sviluppaRsi) -/dr/ (dRoghe) -/st/ (conteXTo) -/ʧ/ vs /k/ (pubbliCHi) - /ʦ/ (piSSo) -Word stress (spavàlderia)
Student 4	n.a.
Student 5	/ʃ/ vs /ʧ/ (soSCietà, SCIuccesso, diSCIotto, capaSCità, diSCIannove) -Word stress (bùgie)
Student 6	n.a.

With the exception of three students, who had native-speaker-like pronunciations and levels of language proficiency and whose performances were therefore excluded from the phonological analysis, the recordings analysed revealed phonological issues which mirrored the results already highlighted during the analysis of the Core IV Intermediate Vocaroo recordings and video tapes of their summative oral-aural assessments. In fact, for Core II Advanced as well, the phonological traits that emerged as problematic during the analysis of the recordings were: /ɲ/ (one out of six students) – i.e., si*N*ificati vs si*gn*ificati; the consonant /r/ and its specific phonological locations - before and after consonants (one out of six students) – i.e., pe vs pe*r*, pati vs p*r*ati; /ʧ/ vs /k/ (one out of six students) – i.e., pubbli*CH*i vs pubbli*c*i; and word stress (three out of six students) – i.e., b*Ù*gie vs bug*ì*e. Moreover, the sounds /ʦ/ and /dz/, either geminated or single, was not mastered by some of the students. In particular, /ʦ/ and /dz/ were often mistaken for the voiceless alveolar sibilant /s/ (one out of six students) – i.e., pi*SS*o vs pi*zz*o. Another problematic segmental was the diphthong /au/, which was often pronounced as /o/ (one out of six students) – i.e., *O*torità vs *au*torità. The only segmentals which did not cause relevant issues in this group of students were the geminated sounds, which were identified as problematic phonological traits for the Intermediate group instead. The results reveal that phonological issues were also present among students who had high level of language proficiency. Furthermore, without a specific pronunciation and intonation training aimed at improving the students' performance by highlighting the more problematic sounds and making students aware of the phonological traits which they have more difficulties in pronouncing, students may keep mispronouncing sounds and causing misunderstandings during communicative exchanges with other speakers. Therefore, as already pointed out in this chapter, a more systematic and appropriate inclusion of phonological training in the Modern Languages curriculum and the introduction of the study of phonology from the very beginning of the students' academic experience, might positively affect the students' phonological skills and awareness and can avoid the fossilisation of mispronounced sounds.

5.4 Analysis of the summative oral-aural assessments – academic year 2021/2022

As already pointed out in the analysis of the oral-aural assessments recordings of the academic year 2020-2021, the audio files recorded by means of Vocaroo were valuable as they highlighted the specific segmental and suprasegmental traits that students at different levels of Italian proficiency were able or unable to master when required to perform them in specific phonological contexts. In fact, the tongue twisters and nursery-rhymes included in the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions asked the participants to focus their attention on the articulation of single sounds or groups of sounds which were different in each utterance, and which were located in defined phonological positions and communicative contexts. Although the tongue twisters and nursery-rhymes used in online classes were authentic resources and useful training for students, helping them to achieve greater phonological awareness of the segmentals and suprasegmentals which were considered the most difficult to articulate, the exercises delivered during the training sessions can only provide an insight into the students' level of mastery of the sounds trained in defined phonological locations. Therefore, to have more accurate knowledge of the learners' degree of mastery of segmentals and suprasegmentals in spontaneous communicative contexts, it is helpful to analyse the recordings of the online oral-aural assessments of a sample of students from the Core IV Intermediate module. The online summative oral-aural exercise for Core IV Intermediate students consisted of a chosen topic, either in the form of a presentation or monologue, followed by a number of unprepared questions asked by the tutors and which students had to answer spontaneously. The analysis of the oral-aural assessment of a number of Core IV Intermediate students' oral-aural assessment recordings and its comparison to the results of the analysis of the same sample of students' Vocaroo audio files is justified by the fact that Core IV Intermediate students were the only group of learners who received the online pronunciation and intonation training during the second term of the academic year 2020-2021 and during the second term of the academic year 2021-2022; moreover, due to organisational issues within the department, I personally delivered the online Communicative skills sessions only to one of the two groups of Core IV Intermediate students. In the analysis of the academic year 2021-2022 recordings, each student is named by using the same identification number already used in the analysis of the Vocaroo audio files and the oral-aural assessment recording in the academic year 2020-2021. The analysis and assessment of the Core IV Intermediate students' Vocaroo files and online oral-aural exams' recordings identified the positive outcomes that a more systematic, appropriate and prolonged implementation of pronunciation and intonation training sessions can bring to the level of phonological awareness of learners. Furthermore, the analysis of recordings of the oral-aural assessments provided an insight into the students' spontaneous use of the language and helped to determine whether, in unprepared phonological contexts, learners still made the same phonological errors as those emerged from the data collected through the Vocaroo audio files.

The online summative oral-aural assessment for Core IV Intermediate students was structured exactly like the one already analysed for the academic year 2020/2021. The tables below report the data collected for each Core IV Intermediate student during the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions and the summative oral-aural assessments of the academic year 2021-2022. The sounds which caused articulation issues during the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions delivered in class were: /ʃ/ vs /sk/ (one out of six students) – i.e., mi*SCH*ela vs mi*sc*ela; /ʎ/ vs /l/ (two out of six students) – i.e., me*L*io vs me*gl*io; /ɲ/ vs /n/ (one out of six students) – i.e., *N*occhi vs *gn*occhi; geminates (two out of six students) – i.e., genera*LL*e vs genera*l*e; the consonant /r/ and its specific phonological locations - before and after consonants (two out of six students) – i.e., palare vs pa*r*lare; and word stress (four out of six students) – i.e., c*Ì*tta vs citt*à*. Unlike the analysis of the academic year 2020-2021 recordings, out of the participants who took part during the academic year 2021-2022, all students presented articulatory issues either in their performance of the online training sessions or in their oral-aural assessment, or in both. The unmastered segmentals and suprasegmentals which emerged from the analysis of the summative assessments match those which have been already highlighted in the data collected from the Vocaroo recordings.

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE (EX CORE II BEGINNERS) – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022 GROUP 1 Pronunciation and intonation training sessions					
STUDENT	**01/03/2021**	**18/03/2021**	**04/03/2022**	**18/03/2022**	**25/03/2022**
Student 2	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/	n.a.	/tr/ in new words	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /tr/	-/uo/ -/rl/ /n:/ /tr/ /ʎ/ vs /l/ /ʃ/ vs /sk/
Student 5	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative /s/ -/br/	- /rt/ -/gr/ -/tr/ /ʃ/ vs /sk/	/br/ /ʎ/ The stress is pronounced incorrectly in some words (càmino vs camìno)	/ʎ/ /gr/	n.a.

	CORE IV INTERMEDIATE (EX CORE II BEGINNERS) – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022 GROUP 2					

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE (EX CORE II BEGINNERS) – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022

GROUP 2

Pronunciation and intonation training sessions

STUDENT	04/03/2021	22/03/2021	25/03/2021	04/03/2022	18/03/2022	25/03/2022
Student 4	/pr/ /br/ /tr/ /rt/ /r/ /ʎ/ Distinction between the single /s/ consonant and the geminate /s:/	/kr/ /r/ /r:/ /ʎ/ /rl/ /rd/ /rv/ /tr/	/tr/ /pr/ /rt/ /br/ /r/ /ʎ/	/tr/ /pr/ /rt/ /br/ /r/ /ʎ/ Distinction between the single consonant /s/ and the geminate /s:/	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /str/ /tr/ /kr/ /t/ /t:/ The stress is pronounced incorrectly in some words (campanìa vs campània)	/ʎ/ vs /l/ /tr/ /pr/ /r/ /r/ when associated with other consonants /t/
Student 6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	/l/ Stress in new words	/ɲ/ vs /n/	n.a.
Student 7	The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (*succhero*)	n.a.	Geminates (*penelo*)	n.a.	/ʧ/ vs /k/	n.a.
Student 9	absent	absent	/r/ The voiced alveolar sibilant fricative /dz/ (*succhero*)	absent	absent	/ʎ/ Distinction between the single consonant /s/ and the geminate /s:/ /ʃ/ vs /sk/

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022

Summative oral-aural assessment (06/05/2022)

Group 1	
STUDENT	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**
Student 2	- /ʃ/ vs /sk/ (miSCHela) Some sporadic inaccuracies: -/ia/ (ma_ale vs maiale) - /v/ vs /b/ (proBengono, proBiene) - /ʧ/ vs /ts/ (commerZializzazione) Word stress (satùri)
Student 5	-/r/ (when placed before another consonant sound: palare vs paRlare; pesone vs peRsone; formula vs formula) Some sporadic inaccuracies: - /ʎ/ (meLio) - /s/ (anZia) - Geminates (generaLLe)

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022

Summative oral-aural assessment (06/05/2022)

Group 2	
STUDENT	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**
Student 4	-/r/ (completely omitted) -/t/ (mainly when it is followed by r) -/ɲ/ (Nocchi) Some sporadic inaccuracies: -word stress (adìge) -/kw/ vs /k/ (ki vs qui) -/ʎ/ vs /l/
Student 6	-/l/ (it is pronounced as the palate-alveolar /l̠ʲ/)
Student 7	-word stress (ìnvano) -Unnatural intonation
Student 9	-word stress (cìtta, socìeta, antasia) Some sporadic inaccuracies: -/sf/ (traSFeriva) -/ʃ/ (traSCorreva) -/ai/ (a_uto vs aiuto) -Geminates (guiDDano)

The comparison between the results from the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions and the online oral-aural assessments revealed that students had similar, but fewer articulation issues in more spontaneous communicative exchanges (i.e. unprepared answers to the tutors' questions during the speaking exam) than in predetermined communicative contexts (i.e. tongue twisters and nursery rhymes). Only in a very small number of cases the audio tapes of the summative oral-aural assessments highlighted segmental and suprasegmental features which caused articulation issues and, in some cases, misunderstandings only during spontaneous speech which had not emerged during the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions. In general, the oral-aural assessment recordings showed a significant improvement in the students' pronunciation skills. For example, in the first group of students, student 2's oral-aural assessment tape showed that the student only had repeated issues in the distinction between /ʃ/ vs /sk/, while the other segmental features identified as not mastered in the Vocaroo recordings seemed mastered in the oral-aural exercise. Similarly, student 5 still had articulation issues with the sound /r/ when placed before another consonant, but seemed to have overcome the other pronunciation inaccuracies that were noticed during the online training sessions. Similar results also emerged from the analysis of group 2's oral-aural assessment recordings. Student 6 still had issues with the articulation of the sound /l/, but demonstrated s/he could master the sound /ɲ/ during the oral-aural exam; student 7 did not appear to have any of the articulation issues highlighted during the analysis of the Vocaroo audio tapes, but still have difficulties with the suprasegmental features of Italian; and student 9 still showed inaccuracies in word stresses, but none of the articulation issues in the Vocaroo files was still present in their oral-aural exam. The only exception was student 4. In fact, although the recording of his/her oral-aural assessment shows that s/he was able to master the sound /ʎ/, there were still frequent inaccuracies when pronouncing the sounds /r/ and /t/ and s/he also mispronounced the sound /ɲ/ which did not emerge as an unmastered segmental during the analysis of the Vocaroo recordings. Despite the results of student 4 from group 2, the analysis of the oral-aural assessment recordings highlights the students' acquisition of the segmental and suprasegmental traits that had caused issues during the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions. A more systematic implementation of pronunciation and intonation training sessions in the Modern Languages curriculum from the very first stages of language acquisition could train and help students to remember and acquire the necessary phonological awareness to help them remember the articulation and muscular positions required in order to pronounce all the segmental features correctly while using the target language in different communicative contexts.

At this point, to lend further support to the already established and evidenced argument that the prolonged and systematic training of segmentals and suprasegmentals positively affects the students' phonological awareness and skills, it seems relevant to compare the results of the analysis of the oral-aural assessment collected during the academic year 2020-2021 with the results emerged during the summative oral-aural exercise in the academic year 2021-2022. As already pointed out in the introductory paragraph of this

chapter, the sample of students analysed during the academic year 2021-2022 had already been analysed during the previous academic year, and these learners were the only ones who have received a two-year pronunciation and intonation training during their communicative skills hours in the second term of each of the academic years mentioned above.

CORE II BEGINNER – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021 **Summative oral-aural assessment (05/05/2021)** **Group 1**	
STUDENT	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**
Student 2	-/s/ (impreSSa) -geminates (imbaLaGio, faTo, doNa, freDo) -word stress (albèri, cìtta)
Student 5	-/r/ (when placed before another consonant sound: formula, peRchè) -/t/ -word stress (capàcita)
CORE IV INTERMEDIATE – SECOND TERM- ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022 **Summative oral-aural assessment (06/05/2022)** **Group 1**	
STUDENT	**SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED**
Student 2	- /ʃ/ vs /sk/ (miSCHela) Some sporadic inaccuracies: -/ia/ (ma_ale vs maiale) - /v/ vs /b/ (proBengono, proBiene) - /ʧ/ vs /ts/ (commerZializzazione) -Word stress (satùri)
Student 5	-/r/ (when placed before another consonant sound: palare vs paRlare; pesone vs peRsone; formula vs formula) Some sporadic inaccuracies: -/ʎ/ (meLio) - /s/ (anZia) - geminates (generaLLe)

CORE II BEGINNER – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021 **Summative oral-aural assessment (05/05/2021)** **Group 2**

STUDENT	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED
Student 4	-/r/ (completely omitted) -/t/ (mainly when followed by r) -[ɲ] (spaNia) -word stress (pandèmia)
Student 6	-/l/ (-/l/ (it is pronounced as the palate-alveolar /l̠ʲ/) -/ʎ/ (voLiono)
Student 7	-/ts/ (vacanSa) -word stress (abàzzia) -/ʎ/ (voLio)
Student 9	- /tʃ/ vs /k/ (camiKa)

CORE IV INTERMEDIATE – SECOND TERM – ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022

Summative oral-aural assessment (06/05/2022)

Group 2

STUDENT	SEGMENTALS AND SUPRASEGMENTALS NOT MASTERED
Student 4	-/r/ (completely omitted) -/t/ (mainly when followed by r) -/ɲ/ (Nocchi) Some sporadic inaccuracies: -word stress (adìge) -/kw/ vs /k/ (ki vs qui) -/ʎ/ vs /l/
Student 6	-/l/ (it is pronounced as the palate-alveolar /l̠ʲ/)
Student 7	-Word stress (ìnvano) -Unnatural intonation
Student 9	-Word stress (cìtta, socìeta, fantàsia) Some sporadic inaccuracies: -/sf/ (traSFeriva) -/ʃ/ (traSCorreva) -/ai/ (a_uto vs aiuto) -Geminates (guiDDano)

By observing the tables above, which sum up each student's progress over the two-year online pronunciation and intonation training, it is clear that each participant had managed to improve their pronunciation skills by overcoming some of the pronunciation issues that had emerged at the end of the first online pronunciation and intonation training session, and which were recorded during the oral-aural assessment in May 2021 (see tables reporting students' progress in Core IV Intermediate – Oral-aural assessments – 6th May 2022).

The findings analysed in this chapter revealed that regular and appropriate training of segmentals and suprasegmentals positively affected the learners' phonological awareness and skills. As far as the pronunciation of single sounds or groups of sounds is concerned, the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions confirmed the challenging segmentals, which have been identified as problematic by English NSs interviewed during my MA degree, and which generally cause articulation issues for learners of Italian FL – for instance, the rolling /r/, dentals (/t/ vs /d/), /ɲ/, /ʎ/, /ʧ/ vs /k/, /ʃ/ vs /sk/, geminates. However, language tutors who are willing to introduce systematic pronunciation and intonation training sessions in their classes are advised to ask their students directly which segmental and suprasegmental traits they personally find difficult to master – in fact, since foreign language classes may include learners having a variety of linguistic backgrounds, it would be more inclusive to adapt the segmental and suprasegmental training to the learning needs of every student. As far as intonation is concerned, it seems the most difficult phonological skill for students to master, as data revealed that unnatural intonation was one of the most frequently emerging issues from the analysis of the recordings, at differing levels of Italian language proficiency. However, a more intense and consistent intonation training, based on the use of materials which encouraged the development of suprasegmental traits (i.e., loops, dialogues taken from contemporary novels, movies and theatrical pieces, or the use of a variety of poetical forms and songs) could greatly improve the learners' mastery of intonation as well. Several factors may have contributed to the development of greater phonological competence and skills – for instance, the progressively higher level of language proficiency of learners, a greater self-confidence while speaking the target language, a desire to improve their language skills before moving to the target country for the year abroad, an increased cultural competence gained during the classes, the growing rapport with a familiar examiner. However, the targeted and specific phonological training that was offered must have certainly influenced the learner' approach to the study of the target language, by pointing out the most challenging sounds of the Italian language and by offering to pronounce them correctly. In fact, as the training in some specific areas of foreign language learning can improve the learners' competence in these specific aspects, a specific, systematic, and rigorous training of segmental and suprasegmental traits of the target language should have helped students to improve their pronunciation and intonation skills over the two-year training period at least as much.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

This chapter summarises the insights garnered by my study and their implications for pedagogy and research. The study's limitations are also included.

6.1 Conclusions and implications of RQ1

One of the aims of my research was to define the core sounds of the Italian language that learners of Italian FL must master in order to maintain intelligibility during communicative exchanges in the target language. The relevance of pronunciation and intonation training is maintained by many scholars (Introduction, paragraph 0.1), and this was also one of the beliefs which inspired this study. Moreover, the interviews conducted during my Master Degree, with English native speakers who studied/study Italian during their university years pointed out some of the most difficult Italian sounds to master – for example, double consonants which indicate a difference in meaning; /ɲ/; /ʎ/; /ʃi/ vs /ski/; /ʃe/ vs /ske/; /k/ vs /ʧ/; the rolling /r/, especially when it is double and followed by a vowel; words with /ps/ at the beginning; non-aspirated h; dentals (/t/, /d/). Starting from that list and taking inspiration from Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2002), I designed specific teaching materials to be used during class-based teaching, such as loops, sayings, tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes; I also selected literary texts, in particular dialogic texts, from contemporary novels, theatrical plays and movies, as well as songs and specific forms of poetry which, however, have not been tested in class, but which represent examples of good practice for language tutors; finally, I created activities and exercises to be done using an online recording voice tool named Vocaroo which greatly helped students to practise pronunciation and intonation skills autonomously and which allowed me to keep track of the students' progress over the two-year research project (Chapter 3). The use of Vocaroo during the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions revealed the potential of this technological tool. Firstly, Vocaroo encouraged students to actively practise and train both their productive and receptive phonological skills. In fact, learners were invited to articulate specific sounds, in differing phonological contexts of gradually increasing difficulty (i.e., decontextualised words, sayings, tongue-twisters and nursery rhymes). Moreover, Vocaroo also allowed students to listen to their recorded performances and to spot phonological mistakes and inaccuracies; thus, this device helped learners to develop their receptive phonological skills and phonological awareness. Furthermore, the implementation of this device in this specific research points out the potential benefits of Vocaroo for the consolidation and training of a variety of language skills. In fact, beside phonological skills, Vocaroo could be used for 1. the memorisation of new vocabulary, 2. the consolidation of grammatical rules in oral communicative contexts, 3. the enhancement of students' linguistic awareness, and 4. as an extra tool to practise the TL language. This last point could be particularly beneficial for 1. autonomous learning and practice, but also for 2.

enhancing the use of the TL outside the classroom. In fact, regarding the first point, students could use Vocaroo in order to fix and consolidate specific language skills, that may not be included in the teaching materials used in class, at any time, for how long they need, and as many times as they want. Thus, the learning curriculum will be enriched by an easy and free tool that provides students with extra chances to construct and define the foreign language learning process according to their learning needs and pace. Concerning the second point, Vocaroo could be implemented in ML departments' virtual learning environments as a recording tool to be used to send voice messages to language tutors and peers. In this way, Vocaroo could offer an alternative to written messages and replies, and it could support and encourage the practice and development of oral skills outside the communicative skills hours.

Findings (Chapter 5) revealed that regular and appropriate training of segmentals and suprasegmentals positively affected the learners' phonological awareness and skills. The online training sessions have proved that the specific segmentals, which have been identified as problematic during my MA degree, are the phonemes that generally cause articulation issues for English NSs who learn Italian FL – for instance, the rolling /r/, dentals, /ɲ/, /ʎ/, /ʧ/ vs /k/, /ʃ/ vs /sk/, geminates; however, the training of segmentals specifically designed for specific groups of learners is encouraged – in fact, since foreign language classes may include learners having a variety of linguistic backgrounds, it would be more inclusive to adapt the segmental and suprasegmental training to the learning needs of every student. As far as intonation is concerned, it seems the most difficult phonological skill for students to master, as data revealed that unnatural intonation was one of the most frequently emerging issues from the analysis of the recordings. However, a more intense and consistent intonation training, based on the use of materials which encouraged the development of suprasegmental traits (for instance loops, nursery rhymes, and tongue-twisters) could greatly improve the learners' mastery of intonation as well. Moreover, further research in the field of TL phonological education could better investigate the benefits and learning outcomes of the use of dialogues taken from contemporary novels, movies and theatrical pieces, or the use of a variety of poetical forms and songs, which have been introduced but not tested in this study. For improvements to happen and to make pronunciation and intonation exercises meaningful within the overall foreign language learning process, language tutors must select sources and devise new materials which combine the practice of specific segmental and suprasegmental traits with the training of other language skills. Moreover, in order to link the language acquisition process closely to the acquisition of cultural awareness, pronunciation and intonation training sessions should be thematically linked to the topics addressed in the academic curricula. In this way, the phonological training could benefit from the use of materials which students are familiar with from plenaries and seminars and the training of segmentals and suprasegmentals which characterise specific and technical vocabulary related to certain topics could improve the students' self-confidence when addressing specific topics in the target language. The use of drama techniques for segmentals and suprasegmentals training, which encourage learners to emotionally and physically be involved in the

practice of pronunciation and intonation, and the introduction and implementation of technological devices (i.e., Vocaroo) which allow students to practice, in and out of class, specific language skills, could be a valid and effective support to a more systematic and appropriate coverage of phonological skills in ML departments.

6.2 Conclusions and implications of RQ2

The second aim of this research was to confirm effectiveness of blended learning to design a specific teaching strategy which can usefully help learners improve their pronunciation and intonation skills and more widely their oral communicative competence. Despite the teaching materials have been devised for emergency remote teaching (ERT), with the aim to provide valid teaching tools during university shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the results that emerged from the analysis of the data suggest the efficacy and validity of these teaching strategies in wider online/blended learning environments and encourage their future deployment in academic curricula. In this study, I exploited technology's potential, in addition to interactive and enjoyable activities, to provide students and myself as teacher-as-researcher with a tool which could keep track of the progress made by each participant in segmental and suprasegmental mastery during the two-semester long training, and which could support the development of phonological awareness by identifying the segmental and suprasegmental features of Italian that every single learner needed to focus more on. In this respect, Vocaroo turned out to be a valuable technological support to reach both these goals. In fact, on the one hand it allowed students and language tutors to check the progress made in terms of pronunciation and intonation correctness regularly, as the opportunity to record and store one's performances and listen to the audio files as many times as users wish allows them to chart their progress or lack of it. On the other hand, Vocaroo proved to be a valuable tool to spot the phonological elements which still need to be trained to reach a higher level of linguistic competence. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic (February 2020-to date) has led to a rapid need to move classes online. In this specific teaching context, the use of Vocaroo as an online voice recording tool turned out to be an appropriate support for the delivery of pronunciation and intonation training sessions on Zoom –the communication platform chosen by the institution where my research was conducted -, or on other platforms. The experience with Vocaroo during the recent pandemic could certainly be considered a valuable and successful example of good online training of pronunciation and intonation, which could be replicated in the future by universities and other academic institutions in order to include more efficient and effective teaching of segmentals and suprasegmentals in their curricula. As already mentioned in the conclusions and limitations of RQ1, in this case, too, the role of both participants in the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions – learners and language tutors - is crucial. On the one hand, learners need to be fully engaged in the learning process and see the pronunciation and intonation training sessions as an opportunity to speak and understand the target language and culture better. During the foreign-language acquisition process, students need to build

up their personal learning path in adherence to their personal learning methods, needs and pace. On the other hand, tutors must introduce and explain the teaching purpose of pronunciation and intonation exercises fully. Moreover, they need to select the segmentals and suprasegmentals which cause greater articulation issues and therefore need to be practised carefully. Finally, they need to devise new materials based on different sources and which can be completed by learners both during in-class sessions and autonomous learning.

6.3 Limitations

One limitation of my research relates to the sample size. In fact, the number of students who participated in my study was small, therefore findings cannot be generalised. Moreover, findings specifically relate to the context where my research was conducted (i.e., the participants, the ML Department of the University of Birmingham), therefore they cannot be considered as absolute. However, these findings can be seen as a starting point to expand the existing theory on the role of pronunciation and intonation in foreign language teaching/learning, as they can be transferred to other similar learning contexts. In fact, the participants can be considered representative of a wider population of modern languages undergraduates in other universities and academic institutions similar to the one where my study took place. As explained in Chapter 3, readers are aware of the context, type of participants, teaching materials, etc. and therefore estimate the extent to which these findings are transferrable to their contexts.

Another limitation of my study was the fact that the experimental phases were included in curricular FL courses which I was teaching, therefore I acted as both researcher and teacher, and I had to fulfil both the teaching requirements of the course and the research needs. This imposed on me some methodological and practical choices: for instance, the selection of materials and activities to be used in online classes, as well as the amount of time to be devoted to the online pronunciation and intonation training sessions were influenced by the need to reach the curriculum goals and prepare students for their formative and summative assessments. Had the experimental phases been conducted with students who were not required to take any form of assessment or learn specific topics, my choices, especially in terms of time management, would probably have been different. I would have included more regular activities which combined the training of other linguistic skills with the practice of pronunciation and intonation and would have chosen materials linked to a broader variety of contemporary social, historical and cultural events. I believe that future studies could explore other ways to integrate extensive pronunciation and intonation training in the L2/FL classroom, considering the actual difficulties faced by teachers – in fact, selecting and devising activities for the training of segmental and suprasegmental traits requires time, resources and a certain level of freedom for the teacher to adapt a course programme.

Another limitation which must be highlighted relates to the particular way in which Italian language courses are organised in the institution were my research was carried out. The number of participants in the different language proficiency levels during the two experimental phases slightly changed and this did not allow me to collect a more extensive quantity of data than the one ultimately resulting from the analysis of the recordings gathered. The study would have had additional audio files and more extensive data analysis of the students in the first experimental phase had had the chance to participate in the second phase as well. Additionally, results on the positive effects of a prolonged training in segmentals and suprasegmentals would have been supported by further data.

Finally, another limitation could relate to the personal bias of students who took part in my research as they were also students in the courses where I taught as language instructor. Being my students might have affected the truthfulness of some of the answers to the students' questionnaire, as they may have wanted to please me or feared repercussions. To avoid this, I assured students that the experiment would not affect their final mark and would not be part of the exam through a 'letter to the participants' which was validated by the university Ethical Review Panel.

6.4 Final thoughts and recommendations for future research

Overall, the experience of using materials specifically to train the segmental and suprasegmental features of Italian was successful both for students, who improved their linguistic competence and culture awareness thanks to the practice of new skills and the use of new tools and materials, and for me as a teacher, as it increased my interest and confidence in supporting the teaching of pronunciation and intonation in foreign language curricula. The materials and the new online tool used during the training sessions to collect the recordings were found to be effective and efficient for foreign language learning, in conformity with the learning objectives of the course. Students' language proficiency and cultural awareness improved and, more importantly, the feedback received from students on the usefulness and enjoyment of the pronunciation and intonation activities was very positive. As a teacher, I realised that including segmental and suprasegmental training in foreign language classes is demanding in terms of time and effort and also requires a strong desire to offer students a more comprehensive foreign language education. I showed the difficulties in the decision to include pronunciation and intonation training in the modern languages curriculum – for instance, the limited attention given to these skills by textbooks and other, more traditional resources, the need to combine the training with the teaching of the course programme and the sometimes-exclusive interest of students in learning only what was needed to be prepared for the formative and summative assessments. Whereas my research primarily looked at the attitude of students towards the practice of segmentals and suprasegmentals, my findings open several avenues for further research to investigate 1. teachers' attitude towards pronunciation and intonation and their role in foreign language

teaching, 2. the lack of phonological teaching in their courses and therefore 3. the need to train language tutors on the segmental and suprasegmental traits that must be mastered by learners in order to reach intelligibility, 4. the role of intelligible pronunciation and intonation in terms of future employability. My study revealed that phonological training should be introduced from the lowest levels of language proficiency. Beginners greatly improved their pronunciation and intonation skills and I found that their motivation and sense of achievement were especially enhanced because of their low proficiency level as they did not expect to be able to improve their phonological skills in such a short period of time, nor to master very complex phonological features of Italian so rapidly. Hence, future studies may further investigate specific teaching materials for beginners, and how pronunciation and intonation training could affect and influence the foreign language learning experience of students who are used to it from their very first approach to the target language. Finally, the relevance of pronunciation and intonation in foreign language teaching deserves more attention, in my opinion. My research findings show that pronunciation and intonation can be taught in an appropriate, effective, and enjoyable way, achieving significant results at different levels of language proficiency. I would recommend, in particular, that future research investigate how a more regular introduction of pronunciation and intonation training to modern languages curricula might benefit the learners' acquisition of foreign languages, especially those languages which share specific phonological traits (for instance, Romance languages). The results of the questionnaire for Italian NSs (Chapter 4) should lead to further research dealing with the role of intelligible pronunciation and intonation on ML students' future employability. The effects that the intelligible mastery of the TL phonological traits could have in terms of job opportunities may have important repercussions in the field of modern language education, and also on the students' attitude towards pronunciation and intonation training. Moreover, it would also be appropriate to further investigate the importance of accents in foreign language learning and the identity implications that achieving specific target accents or retaining a foreign accent may have on the learners' perception of themselves while interacting in the target language.

Appendix A: Review and analysis of the pronunciation and intonation exercises in the textbooks used to teach Italian as a foreign language

Espresso Ragazzi (Alma Edizioni)

Published by Alma Edizioni in 2015, *Espresso Ragazzi* has three volumes (1, 2, and 3). My perusal of the units found limited pronunciation sections. For instance, the phonetic section of Volume 1 features three exercises. The students are required to listen to some recordings and to 1. repeat the words heard (Image 23); 2. order the words according to the different sounds or groups of sounds; 3. complete the phonological rule related to specific sounds (Image 24). The pronunciation exercises are based on both the perceptive and the articulatory approaches.
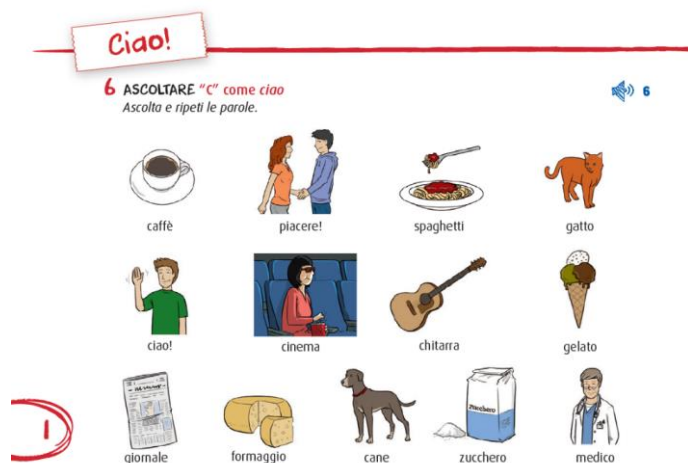
Image 23 – An example of a 'listen and repeat' exercise.

Image 24 – An example of an 'order the words according to the sounds' and 'complete the phonological rule' exercise

Al Dente (Casa delle Lingue)

Published by Casa delle Lingue, *Al Dente* has of 4 volumes (Volume 1, 2017; Volume 2, 2017; Volume 3, 2018; Volume 4, 2019), and is based on the communicative approach to foreign language teaching, following the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The four volumes are designed to cover levels A1, A2, B1 and B2, and the activities are based on plausible real-life situations where the students are expected to work and use Italian either individually or in pairs, therefore encouraging a more useful and natural acquisition of the language. The first two volumes are divided into nine units – an introductory unit (Unit 0) followed by a further eight; the third and fourth volumes feature ten units – an introductory unit (Unit 0) followed by a further nine. The units have the same structure in each volume, six parts linked together by the main topic, the grammar rules and the vocabulary: 1. the first part is based on a specific topic, with texts and multiple exercises to develop the four main skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing); 2. the second part covers the grammar rules encountered in the first section, with exercises for practice; 3. the third part focuses on the new vocabulary related to the unit's main topic, and contains a small section, named 'Suoni'[27], which offers specific exercises related to some segmental and suprasegmental traits; 4. the fourth section is called 'Salotto culturale'[28] and examines cultural aspects related to the main topic of the unit; 5. the fifth section includes a series of communicative activities to be done individually or in groups; 6. the sixth section is an evaluation of the unit where the students express their opinion on the content and the abilities that they have developed throughout the unit. Within all four volumes, the pronunciation and intonation exercises are based on both the perceptive and articulatory approaches; the activities focused on segmentals are generally more numerous than those focused on suprasegmentals. The first volume is targeted on the CEFRL level A1, and pronunciation and intonation exercises feature in each of its units. In the introductory unit (Unit 0), pronunciation is introduced from the very beginning (Images 27 and 28): students are asked to think which, out of the adjectives provided, describes how Italian sounds to them and to read and listen to the sounds of the alphabet.

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[27]   Sounds
[28]   Cultural gathering

2. Come suona l'italiano

A. Quale aggettivo associ alla lingua italiana?
• Per me l'italiano è *dolce* / *romantico*...
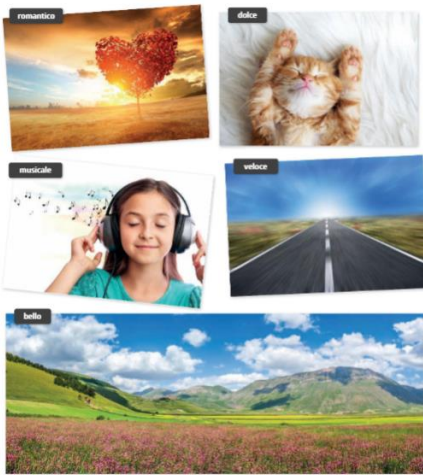
Image 27 – In this exercise students are asked to describe how Italian sounds to them by selecting one of the adjectives provided in the exercise.

4. L'alfabeto

A. Leggi le lettere dell'alfabeto e gli esempi insieme a un compagno. Poi ascoltate come si pronunciano.

Come si scrive	Come si dice	Esempi
A / a	a	amore [a]
B / b	bi	buonasera [b]
C / c	ci	casa [k], Colosseo [k], cuore [k], amiche [k], chiesa [k] cena [tʃ], arrivederci [tʃ], ciao [tʃ], cielo [tʃ], cioccolato [tʃ], ciuccio [tʃ]
D / d	di	domani [d]
E / e	e	erba [ɛ], pesca [e]
F / f	effe	fermata [f]
G / g	gi	gatto [g], lago [g], guida [g] spaghetti [g], funghi [g] gelato [dʒ], vigile [dʒ], valigia [dʒ], buongiorno [dʒ], giusto [dʒ]
H / h	acca	hotel [ø]
I / i	i	Italia [i], piede [j]
L / l	elle	lista [l]
M / m	emme	mamma [m]
N / n	enne	notte [n]
O / o	o	oro [ɔ], bottone [o]
P / p	pi	pasta [p]
Q / q	qu	quadro [k]
R / r	erre	Roma [r]
S / s	esse	sera [s], smontare [z] scena [ʃ], sciare [ʃ]
T / t	ti	torre [t]
U / u	u	ulivo [u] uomo [w]
V / v	vi / vu	Vespa [v]
Z / z	zeta	grazie [ts], pizza [ts], zoo [dz]
J / j	i lunga	Jacopo [j]
K / k	cappa	kiwi [k]
W / w	doppia vu	whisky [w]
X / x	ics	xilofono [ks]
Y / y	ipsilon	yogurt [j]

con accento aperto: città, caffè, sì, andrò, virtù
con accento chiuso: perché
con dieresi: Günter
con la tilde: João
con accento circonflesso: Benoît
c con cediglia: François

B. Ascolta e scrivi le lettere che mancano, poi confronta con un compagno. Di quali parole si tratta?

04   1. B _ _ n _ _ _ r _ _   3. _ o z _ _ _ _ e _ _ _   5. _ o _ _ o l _
     2. _ _ p _ _ _ _ _ no   4. _ _ lo _ _ _ o

Image 28 – The sounds of the Italian alphabet are presented to students.

Except for the introductory units of Volume 2, Volume 3 and Volume 4, the sections regarding pronunciation and intonation are based on both the perceptive and articulatory approaches. While the pronunciation exercises are mainly based on single words containing specific sounds or groups of sounds, the exercises on intonation use phrases. Pronunciation sections include different kind of exercises, for example: 'listen and identify the correct sound', 'listen and establish the variations of pronunciation of a sound depending on the phonological context in which it occurs', 'complete the phonological rule', 'listen and complete a list of words with the correct sound', 'read a list of words and then listen to the recording to check if you have pronounced them correctly', 'listen to the recording and use different colours to identify the sounds that you listen to'. Moreover, some pronunciation exercises include activities with are related to Italian elocution. For instance, in some exercises, after listening to a recording, students are required to establish whether a sound is open or closed in the word in which it appears. The intonation sections include exercises where students are required to read a list of words or phrases to a peer, and then listen to a recording to check if they have used the correct suprasegmentals; or write the stress on words or phrases and then listen to the recording to check if they have written them correctly.

Image 29 – The pronunciation activities in Unit 1 of Volume 1.

Suoni 2

1. Ascolta la registrazione e completa le seguenti parole con l o ll.

a. pa__o
b. tavo__o
c. co__ore
d. a__ontanare
e. mode__o
f. paro__a

2. Leggi le seguenti parole, poi ascolta la registrazione per verificare la pronuncia.

a. famiglia
b. collana
c. consiglio
d. cavaliere
e. glossario
f. gallo

3. Leggi le frasi a un compagno. Poi ascolta la registrazione per verificare.

a. Giuseppe ha due sorelle?
b. I genitori di Monica sono molto giovani.
c. Tua cugina Alessandra è simpaticissima!
d. Vivo con i miei genitori e i miei nonni.
e. Giorgia va d'accordo con sua sorella?
f. Paolo e Marco sono fratelli ma sono molto diversi!
g. Ho tre cugini, tutti più grandi di me.
h. Tuo padre si chiama Simone?

4. Leggi le frasi e sottolinea la sillaba accentata nelle parole in grassetto. Poi ascolta la registrazione per verificare.

a. Metti la valigia in quell'**angolo**, per favore.
b. I miei figli non si **alzano** mai prima delle 10.
c. Mio fratello fa il **medico** in un **ospedale**.
d. Anna e Claudio non **parlano** il tedesco, ma lo **capiscono** un po'.
e. Questo **compito** mi sembra un po' **difficile**.
f. Per piacere, **telefona** a Serena per sapere quando arriva.

Image 30 – The pronunciation and intonation activities in Unit 2 of Volume 1.

Suoni 3

1. Ascolta la registrazione e sottolinea in rosso il suono [sk] di scuola e in blu il suono [ʃ] di scivolo. Poi completa la regola d'uso.

a. Scusa, gli spaghetti sono un po' scotti.
b. Conoscete gli articoli di questo scienziato?
c. Non mi piace per niente la pesca: è uno sport noioso e un po' scemo!
d. Finisco di studiare ed esco con Marina.
e. Compro sempre prodotti freschi, i cibi in scatola non mi piacciono.
f. Compiliamo insieme la scheda per l'iscrizione in piscina?

Davanti a ____ e ____, **sc** si pronuncia [ʃ].
Davanti a ____ , ____ e ____, **sc** si pronuncia [sk].
Sc seguito da **h** si pronuncia ____

2. Leggi queste frasi al tuo compagno: che intonazione usi? Poi ascolta la registrazione e indica sorpresa (S) o interesse (I).

a. Davvero non ti piace il cioccolato?! ____
b. Ah, anche a te piace la danza. ____
c. Hai tre gatti e preferisci i cani?! ____
d. Tra gli hobby di Carla ci sono la musica e la poesia. ____

3. Ascolta i dialoghi e indica se le espressioni ma va e certo indicano accordo (A), disaccordo (D) o sorpresa (S).

a. certo ____
b. ma va ____
c. ma va ____
d. certo ____

Image 31 – The pronunciation and intonation activities in Unit 3 of Volume 1.

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Suoni 1

1. Leggi le seguenti parole e indica se la **i** si pronuncia (✔) o no (✗). Poi ascolta la registrazione per verificare.

a. disagio
b. giusto
c. tecnologia
d. associare
e. grigio
f. magia
g. bugia
h. giallo
i. Lucia
l. simboleggiare

2. Ascolta la registrazione e inserisci il punto fermo (.), il punto interrogativo (?) o il punto esclamativo (!).

a. Hai una scrivania molto ordinata
b. Susanna arrossisce facilmente
c. Alberto è a disagio quando parla in pubblico
d. Per me il cellulare è indispensabile
e. Quanti evidenziatori hai
f. I giovani della mia generazione sono sempre connessi

3. Ascolta la registrazione e indica se le frasi esprimono delusione (D), sorpresa (S), interesse (I) o preoccupazione (P).

a. Quali sono le caratteristiche tipiche della generazione X?
b. Davvero l'oggetto di cui non puoi fare a meno è la bicicletta? Ma dai!
c. Non ci sono più biglietti per lo spettacolo. Peccato!
d. Ieri Clara è stata molto socievole con tutti. Proprio lei che è sempre così timida!
e. Devo fare un discorso in pubblico? Proprio io? Non lo può fare qualcun altro?
f. Raccontami: il corso di teatro ti ha aiutato a comunicare meglio?
g. Non vieni alla festa? Mi mandi da solo? Ma io non conosco nessuno!
h. Il corso sta per finire e a me non sembra di aver migliorato la mia comunicazione.

Image 32 – The pronunciation and intonation activities in Unit 1 of Volume 2.

Suoni 2

1. Ascolta la registrazione e sottolinea in rosso il suono [ts] di *sezione* e in blu il suono [dz] di *zero*.

a. abitazione
b. personalizzare
c. costruzione
d. organizzato
e. spazio
f. terrazza
g. utilizzare
h. pranzo
i. stanza
l. negozio

2. Leggi ad alta voce le frasi da *a* a *c*. Il tuo compagno deve indicare dove hai pronunciato l'accento tonico nelle parole in grassetto. Poi, invertite i ruoli per le frasi da *d* a *f*. Infine, ascoltate la registrazione per verificare.

a. Quando **eravamo** piccoli, i nostri genitori **avevano** lo spremiagrumi elettrico e il tostapane, ma in casa non **avevamo** la lavastoviglie.
b. La mia famiglia **aveva** una casa piccola, in periferia. E voi, **avevate** una casa grande?
c. **Avevi** molti fratelli e sorelle? Quanti **eravate** in famiglia?
d. Le nuove tende **erano** molto belle, ma **avevamo** qualche difficoltà ad appenderle perché il soffitto **era** molto alto.
e. I nonni **avevano** un giradischi, ma **era** rotto.
f. A casa **avevamo** molti quadri perché i miei genitori **erano** appassionati di arte.

Image 33 – The pronunciation and intonation activities in Unit 2 of Volume 2.

Suoni 3

1. Ascolta la registrazione e indica quale parola senti.

a. casa / cassa
b. caro / carro
c. pala / palla
d. dita / ditta
e. sano / sanno
f. note / notte
g. base / basse
h. ala / alla
i. mese / messe
l. polo / pollo
m. impresa / impressa
n. sera / serra

2. Leggi le frasi e indica se la lettera **c** si pronuncia [k] come in **cane** o [tʃ] come in **ciao**. Poi ascolta la registrazione per verificare.

a. Sai che mi è successo (_____) oggi? Ho incontrato (_____) la mia maestra delle elementari: non la vedevo da quando ero piccola (_____)!
b. Ieri mentre facevo (_____) la doccia sono scivolato e mi sono rotto un braccio (_____).
c. Riccardo (_____) era stanco (_____) di fare sempre le stesse cose (_____) e vedere sempre le stesse facce (_____), perciò (_____) si è trasferito all'estero.
d. Sono molti i disoccupati (_____) che (_____) emigrano verso Paesi più ricchi (_____).

3. Leggi le frasi e indica se la lettera **g** si pronuncia [g] come in **gatto** o [dʒ] come in **gelato**.

a. La giornata (_____) scolastica si svolgeva (_____) sempre uguale (_____): la maestra spiegava (_____), poi ci interrogava (_____).
b. Mentre guardavamo (_____) i disegni fatti con il gesso (_____) colorato, purtroppo è arrivata la pioggia (_____).
c. Oggi (_____) sono molti i giovani (_____) che cercano un impiego (_____) all'estero.

Image 34 – The pronunciation activities in Unit 3 of Volume 2.

Suoni 1

1. Ascolta la registrazione e indica se senti il suono doppio o semplice.

	suono semplice	suono doppio
a		
b		
c		
d		
e		
f		

2. Ascolta la registrazione e completa le frasi con le parole mancanti.

a. L'_____ aiuta a vivere più sereni.
b. L'_____ non fa prendere buone decisioni.
c. Devi essere più _____!
d. Che _____! Il mio coinquilino ha lasciato pentole e piatti sporchi!
e. Questa canzone mi fa venire _____.
f. Bea è troppo _____, a volte non ragiona.

3. Leggi le seguenti frasi: che intonazione dai, sorpresa o incitazione? Poi verifica con la registrazione.

a. Hai comprato una moto? Ma se non sai andare neanche in bici!
b. Lasci il lavoro? E perché?
c. Imparerai subito ad andare in moto, è facile!
d. Marco e Giulia si sono lasciati?!
e. Praga è una bellissima città, starai benissimo!
f. L'esame non è così difficile, coraggio!

Image 35 – The pronunciation activities in Unit 1 of Volume 3.

Suoni 2

1. Leggi le frasi e fai attenzione alla pronuncia della s: [s], come in **sole**, e [z], come in **casa**. Poi ascolta la registrazione per verificare. Infine completa la regola.

a. Fare sport fa bene alla salute. Dà molto bessere.
b. Superamento è la parola per descrivere Bebe Vio.
c. L'arrampicata libera per me è pericolosa. Se sbagli, cadi!
d. Belle queste scarpe da ginnastica! Sono da corsa, no?
e. Gli atleti paralimpici trasmettono tanta positività.
f. Mi piace il rischio, è una bella scossa di adrenalina.
g. Sveglia alle 6:00 e maratona: una vera sfida per il mio fisico.
h. Oggi gioco a tennis e domani ho pilates.

La s doppia è **[s] sorda / [z] sonora**.
La s tra due vocali è **[s] sorda / [z] sonora**.
La s finale è **[s] sorda / [z] sonora**.
La s iniziale, seguita da vocale, è **[s] sorda / [z] sonora**.
La s che precede una consonante sorda è **[s] sorda / [z] sonora**.
La s che precede una consonante sonora è **[s] sorda / [z] sonora**.

2. Leggi le frasi. Che intonazione usi per esclamare o domandare? Poi ascolta la registrazione per verificare.

a. Forza ragazzi! Dateci dentro!
b. Che tipo di attività fisica preferisci?
c. ● Allora, com'è andata la partita?
   ○ Abbiamo vinto!
d. La vita è una figata!
e. Più di 40 km di maratona! Ma sei sicuro che ce la fai?
f. ● Ti va di fare una bella camminata?
   ○ Sì, dai! Bella idea!
g. Secondo te vanno bene queste scarpe per fare trekking?
h. Davvero emozionante il rafting! Vuoi provare anche tu?

Image 36 – The pronunciation activities in Unit 2 of Volume 3.

2. Ascolta la registrazione e completa le parole con p o b.

a. ___azienza
b. ___ottiglia
c. ___lastica
d. a___ ___andono
e. res___onsa___ile
f. ___arattolo

Suoni 3

1. Leggi le frasi e fai attenzione alla pronuncia dei suoni bilabiali [p], come in **pasta**, e [b], come in **basta**. Poi ascolta la registrazione per verificare.

a. Il design sostenibile riduce l'impatto ambientale.
b. È importante recuperare edifici in disuso.
c. L'obiettivo è ridurre gli effetti negativi.
d. Il progetto si chiama "Laboratori urbani".
e. Questo spazio prima ospitava una fabbrica.
f. Ti faccio un bracciale di latta un batter d'occhio!

3. Leggi ad alta voce le seguenti frasi: che intonazione dai ad **anzi**? Verifica con la registrazione.

a. L'Arte povera mi sembra interessante, **anzi** mi piace proprio!
b. Non è difficile, **anzi**!
c. È triste vedere edifici abbandonati, **anzi** è vergognoso!
d. ● Hanno recuperato bene l'ex caserma?
   ○ No, **anzi**!
e. Questo non si fa in poco tempo, **anzi** ci vuole un sacco di pazienza!
f. Probabilmente farò delle lampade con queste bottiglie. **Anzi**, senza dubbio.

Image 37 – The pronunciation activities in Unit 3 of Volume 3.

Suoni **5**

1. Ascolta la registrazione e indica se la pronuncia della **o** e della **e** nelle parole evidenziate è aperta o chiusa.

a. Questa app **collega** tutti i dispositivi digitali presenti in casa.
b. Il mio **collega** usa molto i social network per lavoro.
c. Hai sentito della nuova **legge** sulla privacy?
d. Ultimamente mia sorella **legge** solo e-book.
e. Il **tema** di oggi è dedicato alla comunicazione via email.
f. Penso che Facebook non **tema** rivali.

2. Leggi ad alta voce le seguenti frasi: che intonazione dai ai connettivi evidenziati? Poi ascolta la registrazione per verificare.

a. **Innanzitutto**, iscriviti al sito e crea un profilo.
b. La tua connessione Internet è rapidissima **rispetto alla** mia!
c. Si deve ricordare, **inoltre**, che non tutti i dispositivi sono uguali.
d. **In altri termini**, tutti i siti web su cui navighi raccolgono i tuoi dati.
e. **Da una parte** Internet permette una rapida fruizione dell'informazione, **dall'altra** è più facile incontrare false notizie.
f. **Per concludere**, non credo che il web sia una minaccia, ma una risorsa.

3. Leggi ad alta voce le seguenti frasi: che intonazione dai a certo? Poi ascolta la registrazione per verificare.

a. ● Hai un profilo Facebook?
   ○ **Certo**! Anche Instagram.
b. Quando gliel'ho detto, **certo** non potevo pensare che reagisse così.
c. ● Hai letto i commenti che hanno postato sul mio blog?
   ○ **Certo**, molto interessanti!
d. ● Posso giocare con il tuo smartphone?
   ○ **Certo**, così consumi tutta la batteria come l'altra volta.
e. ● Pranziamo insieme oggi?
   ○ **Certo**, con molto piacere!

Image 38 – The pronunciation activities in Unit 5 of Volume 4.

Nuovo Progetto Italiano (Edilingua)

Based on *Progetto Italiano* (first edition, Edilingua, 2006), *Nuovo Progetto Italiano* is a multimedia Italian language coursebook which combines grammar exercises and communicative activities. The textbook has three volumes (Nuovo Progetto Italiano 1 – Level A1/A2; Nuovo Progetto Italiano 2 – Level B1/B2; Nuovo Progetto Italiano 3 – Level B2/C1). In particular, a perusal of the units has shown there are pronunciation and intonation sections in the first and second volumes.

Nuovo Progetto Italiano 1

As for Volume 1, the pronunciation exercises in the introductory unit (Unit 0) are based on both the perceptive and articulatory approaches. The first pronunciation exercise in Unit 0 features the letters of the Italian alphabet; students are required to listen to a recording of the letters and then to read letter by letter the words in another activity from the unit (Image 39).

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Image 39 – The first pronunciation exercise in Unit 0.

The following pronunciation activities mainly consist of two types of exercise: 1. 'listen to the recording and repeat the words' (Images 40, 41, 42 and 43); 2. 'listen to the recording and write down the words' (Images 44 and 47). The 'listen and repeat' exercises focus on the comparison between single sounds and groups of sounds which must be pronounced differently according to the phonological context in which they appear.

Images 40, 41, 42, and 43 – Examples of the 'listen and repeat' exercises in Unit 0.

Images 43 and 44 – Examples of the 'listen and write down the words' exercises in Unit 0.

Nuovo Progetto Italiano 2

In *Nuovo Progetto Italiano 2*, the unit analysed (Unit 1) does not provide pronunciation activities but features three exercises which could be implicitly related to intonation training (Image 45). In fact, the

exercises require the students to: first, pay attention to the suprasegmental features of some expressions (in particular, the emotional connotations of the interjections in Exercise 2); secondly, actively interpret some emotional states related to specific news (Exercise 3b). Although these exercises do not explicitly refer to intonation training either in the instructions or in any form of explanation, the exercises refer to the practice of specific suprasegmental traits.

2 Cercate di ricordare quali di queste espressioni avete ascoltato e letto!

sorpresa		incredulità	
☐ *Davvero?!*	☐ *Ma va!*	☐ *Non ci credo!*	☐ *Incredibile!*
☐ *Scherzi?!*	☐ *Chi l'avrebbe mai detto?*	☐ *Non me lo dire!*	☐ *No!*
☐ *Caspita!*	☐ *Possibile?!*	☐ *Non è vero!*	☐ *Impossibile!*

3 Sei *A*: riferisci a *B* le notizie che seguono. Dove necessario puoi usare espressioni come "hai sentito che…?", "lo sai che…?", "hai saputo che…?" ecc.

Sei *B*: reagisci alle notizie che ti riporta *A*.

- *la vostra squadra ha perso di nuovo*
- *una vostra conoscente ha avuto un incidente*
- *un'amica si è finalmente laureata*
- *i professori faranno sciopero*
- *la vostra cantante preferita ha annullato il concerto nella vostra città*

Ancora una vittoria per la squadra torinese! Juventus-Parma 2-0

Scuola: scioperi in vista Esami a rischio!

☞ 13

Image 45 – Examples of exercises on suprasegmental traits from Unit 1.

Tanto per parlare (Loescher Editore)

Tanto per parlare, published by Loescher Editore, covers from CEFRL Level A2 to Level B1. It is a coursebook to practise the use and comprehension of pragmatic and discursive elements of Italian. It offers authentic audio and video files, which also allow the autonomous practice of intonation, pronunciation, and rhythm of discursive signs. In this paragraph the first unit is analysed, which is totally focused on the uses of the word *cioè*[29]. Out of the many activities presented in the unit, there are two exercises on the interjection 'Ah!' and the word 'cioè' and the different meanings they can express according to the intonation used (Images 71 and 72). Students are required to repeat the discursive signs or to identify their meanings according to the different communicative contexts in which they appear.

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[29]   This word can be translated in three different ways: 1. as 'that is/that is to say/ namely'; 2. as 'meaning what?/by which you mean?'; 3. as 'actually/rather'.

Image 71 – Exercises on the different uses and meanings of the discursive sign 'Ah!'.

Image 72 – Exercises on the different uses and meanings of the word 'cioè'.

Spazio Italia (Loescher Editore)

Spazio Italia, published by Loescher Editore, is an Italian language coursebook based on the communicative approach and includes four volumes addressing four levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (A1, A2, B1 and B2). Each unit in the textbook features a section, named 'Pronuncia e grafia'[30], specifically focused on pronunciation and intonation. Two units from each volume

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[30] 'Pronunciation and spelling'

are analysed to give an overview of the types of exercises on pronunciation and intonation featured by this coursebook.

Spazio Italia 1

Units 1 and 2 of the first volume are analysed in this paragraph. In Unit 1, the Italian alphabet is introduced, and four types of exercises are featured, all based on both the perceptive and articulatory approaches: a 'listen and repeat' exercise on the letters of the alphabet; a 'listen and complete the words with the missing letter' exercise; a 'listen and write down the words of the recording' exercise; and a 'find a word for each of the letters of the alphabet' exercise (Image 73).

Image 73 – The exercises in Unit 1.

In Unit 2, the first four exercises are mainly focused on stress. Students are asked to listen to the recordings, pay attention to the stress in a list of words or write the stress in the correct position and repeat the words in the recordings. In exercise 5, students are asked to listen to a list of numbers and write them in the spaces provided (Image 74).

Image 74 – The exercises in Unit 2.

Spazio Italia 2

Regarding the second volume, the analysis of the pronunciation and intonation sections concerns the exercises in Units 1 and 2. The first two exercises in Unit 1 ask students to: first, listen to a recording and put the letters and words that they listen to in the correct numerical order; secondly, listen to the recording again and repeat the words (Image 75).

Image 75 – Exercises 1 and 2 in Unit 1.

Exercise 3 focuses on the spelling of proper names, while in exercise 4 students are required to write some given words in the correct spaces in a table according to the position of their stress (Image 76).

3 Girate per la classe e chiedete a sei vostri compagni come si chiamano e come si scrive il loro nome. I compagni rispondono dicendo il loro nome e cognome lettera per lettera e voi lo scrivete negli spazi sottostanti.

1 ....   3 ....   5 ....

2 ....   4 ....   6 ....

4 Ascoltate e inserite le parole nella giusta colonna in base al loro accento.

> caffè   cucina   parlano   pilota   essere   devono   permesso   mobili   città
> cinema   lavoro   validità   però   perché   sposato   vivere   italiano   identità

università	natura	musica
caffè, ...	cucina, ...	parlano, ...
....	....	....
....	....	....

Image 76 – Exercises 3 and 4 in Unit 1.

The first two exercises of Unit 2 focus on the difference between open and closed vowel sounds in the two vowels /e/ and /o/, and students are required to indicate this (X) in the correct space on the table. Exercise 3 is a 'listen and repeat' exercise on numbers (Image 77).

Pronuncia e grafia

1 Ascoltate le parole. La prima vocale che sentite è una /ɛ/ aperta o una /e/ chiusa? Inserite una X nella casella giusta.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
/ɛ/ come in *terra*								
/e/ come in *mela*	X							

2 Ascoltate le parole. La prima vocale che sentite è una /ɔ/ aperta o una /o/ chiusa? Inserite una X nella casella giusta.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
/ɔ/ come in *colle*								
/o/ come in *ponte*	X							

3 Ascoltate e ripetete.

a	1000	c	1100	e	3700	g	5806	i	7000	m	9100	o	100.000
b	1020	d	2200	f	4450	h	6934	l	8020	n	10.000	p	1.000.000

Image 77 – The three exercises in Unit 2.

Spazio Italia 3

The pronunciation and intonation exercises in Units 1 and 2 of the third volume are analysed and discussed. Unit 1 features two exercises focused on intonation, more precisely on junctures. The first exercise concerns the difference between apocope and elision: these two linguistic phenomena are first defined, and students are required to identify the difference between the two when the apostrophe is graphically used. In the

second exercise they are asked to listen to a recording and complete a text with groups of words characterised by apocope or elision (Image 78).

PRONUNCIA E GRAFIA

1 Osservate le parole nella tabella tratte dall'unità. Poi leggete le affermazioni accanto e rispondete alla domanda.

TRONCAMENTO	ELISIONE
una gran passione	un'amica
il mal di testa	all'università
un amico	l'ho nascosta
qual è	com'è cambiato
non aver paura	c'è

- Il troncamento consiste nella caduta della vocale finale non accentata o della sillaba finale di una parola.
- L'elisione consiste nella caduta della vocale finale non accentata di una parola di fronte alla vocale iniziale di un'altra parola.

Qual è la differenza tra troncamento ed elisione rispetto all'uso dell'apostrofo?

2 Ascoltate e completate.

Ciao Mariella,
come va? Ti scrivo per chiederti un paio di informazioni su New York. Ti ricordi _quel mio_ amico che hai conosciuto .... tempo fa, in estate, quando sei passata a trovarci? Ebbene, ... novità? Proprio lui mi ha convinto a partecipare .... newyorkese, la vostra maratona. Abbiamo già prenotato................................. per la prossima settimana. .... il tempo a New York al momento? Fa freddo? Ma soprattutto, ... dove siamo state dieci anni fa Marta e io? Lo so che potrei cercare in Internet ma con .... come te non ho bisogno .... a navigare alla ricerca di informazioni!!! Ultimamente il computer mi fa venire il .... Va bene se ti chiamo tra un paio di giorni? Per ora .... una cosa: .... alla tua bimba.
Un caro abbraccio e a presto.
Cristina

Image 78 – The exercises in Unit 1.

Unit 2 features three intonation exercises all focused-on interjections and exclamations. The first exercise asks to put the interjections and exclamations taken from a previous exercise in the correct order; in the second exercise, students are required to listen to some dialogues and match a list of interjections and exclamations with a list of words which could replace them; the third exercise asks students to complete a series of phrases with an appropriate interjection or exclamation (Image 79).

Image 79 – The exercises in Unit 2.

Spazio Italia 4

The pronunciation and intonation exercises of Units 1 and 6 of the fourth volume are analysed and discussed. Unit 1 features five exercises. The first three exercises concern the variations in rhythm, stress and pitch of the same sentences when written with different punctuation marks. Students are required to write the questions again, and then listen and check if their use of punctuation is correct and corresponds to the intonation in the recordings. Exercises 4 and 5 are a 'listen and repeat' activity and a 'listen and write down the sentences' activity respectively (Image 80). Unit 6 features two exercises on correct intonation when reading a literary text. Students are required to read the text many times, until they find the intonation that they like the most. Then, they are asked to listen to a recording and try to read the text by imitating the intonation in the recording (Image 81).

PRONUNCIA E GRAFIA

1 Riformulate le seguenti frasi, come nell'esempio.

1 L'hai presa, la crema solare? *Hai preso la crema solare?*
2 Il maglione verde, l'hai preso? ....
3 I sandali, me li sono dimenticati. ....
4 È Lara che ha prenotato il viaggio! ....
5 È passato Carlo in agenzia. ....

2 Leggete le frasi della colonna di sinistra e riformulatele come indicato nella colonna di destra.

1a Abbiamo portato troppe scarpe. *Di scarpe, ne abbiamo portate troppe.*
1b Hai stampato i documenti di viaggio? ....
2a Hai caricato le valigie? *Le hai caricate, le valigie?*
2b Hai chiamato Giovanni? ....
3a Tu pensi sempre a tutto. *Sei tu che pensi sempre a tutto.*
3b Lei controlla se è tutto a posto. ....
4a Io ho sbagliato. *Ho sbagliato io.*
4b Lorenzo ha telefonato. ....

3 Ascoltate la pronuncia delle frasi delle attività 1 e 2 e controllate le vostre frasi.

4 Ascoltate e ripetete.

5 Ascoltate e scrivete.

....
....
....
....
....
....

Image 80 – The exercises in Unit 1.

PRONUNCIA E GRAFIA

1 Ecco un brano tratto dal primo capitolo dei *Promessi Sposi* in cui si racconta la scena dell'incontro tra Don Abbondio, il sacerdote che dovrebbe celebrare il matrimonio tra Renzo e Lucia, e due uomini mandati dal signore locale. Provate a leggerlo a voce alta fino a quando sarete soddisfatti della vostra lettura.

Diede un'occhiata, al di sopra del muricciolo, ne' campi: nessuno; un'altra più modesta sulla strada dinanzi; nessuno, fuorché i bravi. Che fare? tornare indietro, non era a tempo: darla a gambe, era lo stesso che dire, inseguitemi, o peggio. Non potendo schivare il pericolo, vi corse incontro, perché i momenti di quell'incertezza erano allora così penosi per lui, che non desiderava altro che d'abbreviarli. Affrettò il passo, recitò un versetto a voce più alta, compose la faccia a tutta quella quiete e ilarità che poté, fece ogni sforzo per preparare un sorriso; quando si trovò a fronte dei due galantuomini, disse mentalmente: ci siamo; e si fermò su due piedi.
– Signor curato, – disse un di que' due, piantandogli gli occhi in faccia.
– Cosa comanda? – rispose subito don Abbondio, alzando i suoi dal libro, che gli restò spalancato nelle mani, come sur un leggìo.
– Lei ha intenzione, – proseguì l'altro, con l'atto minaccioso e iracondo di chi coglie un suo inferiore sull'intraprendere una ribalderia, – lei ha intenzione di maritar domani Renzo Tramaglino e Lucia Mondella!
– Cioè... – rispose, con voce tremolante, don Abbondio: – cioè. Lor signori son uomini di mondo, e sanno benissimo come vanno queste faccende. Il povero curato non c'entra: fanno i loro pasticci tra loro, e poi... e poi, vengon da noi, come s'anderebbe a un banco a riscotere; e noi... noi siamo i servitori del comune.
– Or bene, – gli disse il bravo, all'orecchio, ma in tono solenne di comando, – questo matrimonio non s'ha da fare, né domani, né mai.

2 Ascoltate la lettura. Al termine leggete ancora da soli a voce alta cercando di imitare l'intonazione e il ritmo che avete ascoltato.

Image 81 – The exercises in Unit 6.

Affresco Italiano (Le Monnier)

Affresco italiano, published by Le Monnier, is an Italian coursebook which mainly focuses on grammar and vocabulary. It has six volumes which address each proficiency level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2). The volumes which cover levels A1 to B2 feature eight units, one of which is called 'Scrittura e pronuncia'[31] and offers exercises for the training of spelling and pronunciation. A perusal of Unit 3 of Level A1 and Unit 3 of Level B2 is offered here. In Level A1, Unit 3 has three exercises on the pronunciation variations of the consonants/k/ vs /ʧ/ and /g/ vs /ʤ/. The exercises consist of lists of words which the students are asked to listen to, read and write in the correct space on a table, according to the /k/ vs /ʧ/ and /g/ vs /ʤ/ sounds variations that the words feature (Images 82, 83 and 84).

Image 82 – Exercise 1 is on allophones /k/ vs /ʧ/ of the grapheme [c] when followed by vowels.

Image 83 – Exercise 2 in on allophones /g/ vs /ʤ/ of grapheme [g] when followed by vowels.

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[31] 'Writing and pronunciation'

gelato • *cibo* • *albergo* • *colla* • giornale • arancia • felice • ago • medico • greci • gente
• laghi • amici • mago • cura • giraffa • carta • gomma • mangiare • chiave

c (+ e, i) /tʃ/ ci (+ a, o, u) /tʃ/	c (+ a, o, u) /k/ ch (+ e, i) /k/	g (+ e, i) /dʒ/ gi (+ a, o, u) /dʒ/	g (+ a, o, u) /g/ gh (+ e, i) /g/
cibo	*colla*	*gelato*	*albergo*

Image 84 – Exercise 3 is on allophones of both /k/ vs /ʧ/ and /g/ vs /dʒ/ when followed by vowels.

In Level B2, Unit 3 has three exercises. The first exercise is in two parts: the first part explains which vowels must be preceded by graphemes [cu] and [qu], both expressing the phoneme /kw/; the second part is an exercise where students are required to listen to a recording and write down the words according to graphemes [cu] and [qu], (Images 85 and 86). The second exercise also has two parts: the first part is an explanation of when the graphemes [qu] (/kw/), [cqu] (/kkw/) and [qqu] (/kkw/) must be used; the second part is an exercise in which learners listen to a recording and then divide the words according to the graphemes ([cu] and [cqu],) that they feature (Image 87). The third exercise asks students to underline the correct written form choosing between two lists of words; moreover, it includes a brief explanation on the use of graphemes [cu] and [ccu] before consonants (Image 88).

Perfezioniamo la scrittura e la pronuncia

17 **A.** Leggete.

CU / QU

Tra la *c* di *cuore* e la *q* di *quotidiano* non c'è nessuna differenza di suono: le lettere *cu* + vocale e *qu* + vocale rappresentano lo stesso suono /kw/.

Davanti a *a, e, i* usiamo quasi sempre *qu*:

– parole con *qua*:
antiquario, equamente, equatore, Pasqua, qua, quaderno, quadrante, quadrifoglio, quadro, quadruplo, qualcuno, quale, qualunque, quando, quantità, quanto, quaranta, quartiere, quarzo, quasi, quattordici, quattro, squadra, squallido;
– parole con *cua*: *arcuare, evacuare*;

– parole con *que*:
chiunque, cinque, comunque, delinquente, delinquenza, dovunque, dunque, eloquente, equestre, frequentare, fequente, frequenza, ovunque, qualunque, quercia, querela, quesito, questionario, questione, questo, questura;
– parole con *cue*: nessuna (tranne le forme femminili plurali degli aggettivi in *-cuo*: *somme cospicue, letture proficue*);

– parole con *qui*:
aquila, aquilone, conquista, conquistare, equilibrio, equivalente, equivoco, inquilino, inquinare, inquinamento, liquido, qui, quiete, quindici, quintale, quinto, squillare, squillo, squisito, tranquillità, tranquillo;
– parole con *cui* /kui/: *cui, circuito, circuire*.

Davanti a *o* usiamo a volte *qu*, a volte *cu*:

– parole con *quo*:
equo, iniquo, liquore, obliquo, pedissequo, quota, quotazione, quotidianità, quotidiano, quoziente;
– parole con *cuo*:
cospicuo, cuocere, cuoco, cuoio, cuore, innocuo, percuotere, proficuo, promiscuo, riscuotere, scuola, scuotere.

Image 85 – The explanation on when graphemes [cu] and [qu], which both express the phoneme /kw/ must be used.

B. Ascoltate e dividete le parole in due gruppi.

cu (+ a, e, o, i) /kw/	qu (+ a, e, o, i) /kw/

Image 86 – The exercise in which students are required to listen to a recording and write down the words according to whether they feature graphemes [cu] or [qu].

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18 **A.** Leggete.

QU / CQU

Indichiamo la pronuncia intensa della *q* con *cq* e non con *qq*. Usiamo *cqu*:

– nella parola *acqua* e in tutte le parole che derivano da *acqua*:
  acquaio, acquaragia, acquazzone, acquedotto, acquerello, acquitrino, acquolina, annacquare;

– nelle parole:
  acquirente, acquisire, acquistare, acquisto;

– in alcune forme irregolari del passato remoto:
  nacque, piacque, tacque.

ATTENZIONE!

Usiamo *qqu* soltanto nella parola *soqquadro*:

I bambini hanno messo la camera a soqquadro. = I bambini hanno messo la camera in grande disordine.

B. Ascoltate e dividete le parole in due gruppi.

qu /kw/	cqu /kkw/

Image 87 – The explanation on when graphemes [qu], [cqu] and [qqu] must be used.

19 Sottolineate la parola giusta.

1. Pasqua / Pascua
2. percuisire / perquisire
3. cualunque / qualunque
4. cumulo / qumulo
5. qubo / cubo
6. incudine / inqudine
7. cuota / quota
8. cuantità / quantità
9. taccuino / tacquino
10. accusa / aqqusa
11. cuestura / questura
12. accurato / acqurato
13. nacque / naccue
14. acquedotto / aqquedotto

ATTENZIONE!

Scriviamo sempre *cu* e *ccu* quando dopo c'è una consonante:
cugino, custode;
accudire, accumulare

Scriviamo *ccu* + vocale nella sola parola *taccuino*.

Image 88 – Exercise 3 and its explanation.

Nuovo Affresco Italiano (Le Monnier)

Nuovo Affresco Italiano, the recently revised edition of *Affresco Italiano*, is currently available for CEFRL levels A1, A2 and B1. As for the previous edition, the coursebook focuses mainly on the use of grammar and the acquisition of new vocabulary, but each volume includes pronunciation- and intonation- focused

sections, called 'Scriviamo e pronunciamo bene'[32]. An analysis of the three tasks offered in Unit 6 in Level A1 is offered here. The first exercise focuses on the sounds /ʎ/ and /ɲ/ and asks students to listen to a recording and place the words in the correct place on a table according to the sound that they feature (Image 89). The second exercise concerns the different intonation between statements and questions and requires students to listen to a list of phrases and , if necessary, add a question mark (Image 90). The third exercise is divided into two parts: the first part features a list of exclamations that learners listen to and repeat; in the second part, students are required to listen to a recording and identify when an utterance is an exclamation or a question by writing the correct mark (Image 91).

Scriviamo e pronunciamo bene

28 🎧 50 ✍ Ascoltiamo e dividiamo le parole in due gruppi.

gl (+ i) /ʎ/ gli (+ a, e, o, u) /ʎ/	gn /ɲ/
bottiglia	insegnante

Image 89 – The first exercise in the pronunciation and intonation section.

29 🎧 51 ✏ Ascoltiamo e scriviamo, se necessario, il punto interrogativo.

1 Chi viene con me in libreria _
2 Quando arriva il treno _
3 Matteo è di Genova _
4 Lunedì andiamo all'università _
5 Preferisci il tè o il caffè _

6 Scrivo una lettera a Giulio _
7 La mia mamma cucina piatti speciali _
8 Perché non rispondete _
9 Prendi il treno o l'aereo _
10 La biblioteca comunale è lontana da qui _

Image 90 – The second exercise on the distinction between the intonation of statements and questions.

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[32] 'We write and pronounce correctly'

30a 🎧 52 📖 Ascoltiamo e leggiamo.

1 Mario è veramente bravo!
2 Sei bellissimo!
3 Oggi è una giornata stupenda!
4 Che fortuna!
5 Molto bene!

30b 🎧 53 ✏ Ascoltiamo e scriviamo, se necessario, il punto interrogativo o esclamativo.

1 Oggi vai a scuola _
2 Non è vero _
3 Livia è una ragazza intelligente _
4 Antonio, sei fantastico _
5 Stasera non usciamo _

6 Quando torni a casa _
7 Oggi sto molto bene _
8 Sei sicuro _
9 Suona il telefono _
10 Questa città è meravigliosa _

Image 91 – The two parts of the third exercise on the distinction between the intonation of exclamations and questions.

Chiaro! (Alma Edizioni)

The textbook *Chiaro!* has three different levels – A1 (Bergero, B., De Savorgnani, G., 2019), A2 (Cordera Alberti, C., De Savorgnani, G., 2020), B1 (Cordera Alberti, C., De Savorgnani, G., 2013), and its main goal is to develop the necessary skills to learn and to communicate in Italian from the very early stages of the learning process. Drawing on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, this textbook is based on the need to use the language in practice and for this reason its activities directly involve learners in real communicative situations in which they are required to collaborate and interact as they would do in normal life situations. In the Exercise-book, there are brief sections on the pronunciation of single or groups of sounds and the intonation of phrases, which are both necessary in order to achieve intelligibility and a good command of suprasegmental traits of the target language.

2.4.3.1 Level A1

For the Level A1 Exercise-book, my analysis covers the phonetic sections of Units 1 and 6. With the exception of Unit 10, which focuses on a larger group of sounds (/f/ and /v/, /p/ and /b/, /t/ and /d/, /k/ and /dʒ/), and Units 5, 8 and 9, which cover the changes in the intonation of phrases depending on their meanings, each phonetic section is focused on the pronunciation of sounds, generally two, which can be easily mispronounced or confused. For instance, Units 1 and 6 cover the difference between the sounds /tʃ/ and /k/ and the sounds /sk/ and /ʃ/ Respectively. Both units provide exercises to distinguish these specific phonological traits. Unit 1 features five exercises, while Unite 6 has four. The type of activities recurs practically unchanged in both units. For instance, students are required to listen to some recordings and

then they need to: 1. identify which of the two sounds occurs in a list of words by underlying /tʃ/ and /sk/, and circling /k/ and /ʃ/ (Images 16 and 17); 2. complete the phonological rule which determines when [c] needs to be pronounced either as /tʃ/ or as /k/, and when *sc* needs to be pronounced either as /sk/ or as /ʃ/ (Images 18 and 19); 3. distinguish the two sounds while listening to the audio files (Image 20); 4. complete a list of words by writing the correct sound (Image 21). In this case, too, the exercises are based on the perceptive approach as students are not required to actively reproduce the sounds heard in the recordings. The exclusive use of the perceptive approach, although useful, does not offer an appropriate and effective training, in my opinion. A combination of the different approaches for pronunciation and intonation training should be adopted.

20 I suoni [tʃ] e [k]

a *Ascolta la registrazione e fai attenzione alla pronuncia delle parole. Poi riascolta e ripeti le parole.*

chiamarsi   Francesco   tedesco   macchina   mercato   sedici

piacere   cuore   pronuncia   perché   come   cinema

b *Riascolta le parole del punto* **20a**: *sottolinea il suono [tʃ] e* (cerchia) *il suono [k].*

I suoni [sk] e [ʃ]

a *Ascolta le frasi seguenti e fai attenzione alla pronuncia delle sillabe* **evidenziate**.

1. Ho sentito delle di**scu**ssioni interessanti.
2. Ho cono**sci**uto due colleghe.
3. Sono u**sci**to con un amico.
4. La settimana **sco**rsa il dottor **Sca**letti è stato a Bologna.
5. Paola e**sce** spesso il giovedì sera.

b *Sottolinea il suono [sk] e* (cerchia) *il suono* [ʃ] *nelle parole della lista.*

esco   usciamo   scambiare   scherzare   riunisce   conoscono   conosce

scusi   pesce   lasciare   scorso   maschere   nascita   maschile

Images 16 and 17 – Examples of "listen and identify the appropriate sound" exercises.

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c *Completa la regola sulla pronuncia dei suoni [tʃ] e [k]:*
- la **c** si pronuncia [tʃ] prima della lettera _____ e della lettera _____
- la **c** si pronuncia [k] prima delle lettere _____, _____ e _____, o quando c'è una **h** tra la **c** e la **e/i**

Images 18 and 19 – Examples of a phonological rule to be completed.

Image 20 – An example of a "listen and distinguish which sound is pronounced" exercise.

Image 21 – An example of a "complete the list of words with the correct sound" exercise.

2.4.3.2 Level A2

In the Level A2 Exercise-book, the index provides the list of phonological topics covered in the units of textbook and exercise-book. The phonetic sections cover single or groups of sounds which are more difficult to be mastered by learners, or the intonation of specific phrases or interjections. As for the single sounds and groups of sounds, for instance, Unit 1 covers the geminates, or double consonants; Unit 2 focuses on the sounds /l/ and /ʎ/, while Unit 3 on [s] followed by a consonant; Unit 5 examines the sounds /dʒ/, /g/, /tʃ/ and /k/ and the consonant [q], while Unit 6 concentrates on the diphthongs /ei/, /ai/, /ie/, /ia/ and /eu/; Unit 7 focuses on the graphemes [gua], [qua], [gui], and [qui], while Unit 8 covers the rolling /r/; finally, Unit 10 focuses on the sounds /n/ and /ɲ/. As for intonation, Unit 4 focuses on words stress, and Unit 9 on the changes in intonation between statements, questions and exclamations.

2.4.3.3 Level B1

In the Level B1 Exercise-book, the phonetic sections largely focus on intonation, rhythm, pitch, stress and juncture. Therefore, the structure of *Chiaro!* seems to suggest a defined division between the teaching of

pronunciation and intonation, based on the learners' level of proficiency. In fact, while in the Level A1 and Level A2 textbooks, the phonetic sections mainly focus on the pronunciation of single sounds or groups of sounds, leaving the intonation exercises to sporadic appearances, the phonetic sections within the Level B1 textbook are predominantly focused on the training of intonation-related skills. The intonation activities cover different aspects related to the suprasegmental features of Italian, for instance, how to express: emphasis; surprise, sorrow and objection; incredulity; expressions such as 'no?' and 'vero?'; interjections (e.g. ah, boh, mah, etc.). Moreover, the sections provide training for specific phrase-related intonation issues, for example: continuative and conclusive phrases; junctures; combined pronouns; tongue-twisters (Image 22). The intonation exercises follow both the perceptive and articulatory approaches making the activities offered more effective and appropriate than the ones based on the development of just one phonological skill.

Image 22 – Examples of the phonetic exercises in Level B1.

Allegro (Edilingua)

Allegro is an Italian language textbook based on the communicative approach to foreign language teaching and consisting of three volumes (*Allegro 1* – CEFRL Level A1, *Allegro 2* – CEFRL Level A2, and *Allegro 3* – CEFRL Level B1). A perusal of the three volumes points out the presence of explanations and training on pronunciation and intonation only in the first and second volumes. As for Allegro 3, pronunciation is used in an extra section at the end of the textbook to give some supplementary explanations on specific grammar rules.

Allegro 1

In *Allegro 1*, out of the twelve units that make up the volume, pronunciation and intonation sections are present in the first four units and in a final section, named 'Approfondimento grammaticale'[33], which provides further explanations on specific grammar topics. Based on both the perceptive and articulatory approaches, the pronunciation and intonation sections through the volume feature different types of exercises, for example: 'listen and repeat'; 'insert the words in the right space according to specific sounds'; 'listen and complete the words with a single consonants or double consonants' (Images 46, 47, 48, 49 and 50).

Image 46 – An example of a 'listen and repeat' and an 'insert the words in the right column according to their pronunciation' exercise.

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Image 47 – An example of a 'listen and repeat' exercise with the letters of the Italian alphabet.

Image 48 – An example of a 'listen and repeat' exercise with numbers.

Image 49 – An example of a 'complete the words with a single or a double consonants' exercise.

Image 50 – An example of a 'listen and repeat' and na 'insert the words in the right column according to their pronunciation' exercise.

The only exercise on suprasegmental traits in the first volume features the listening of a recording and the students' creation of small dialogues based on examples taken from the recording (Image 51).

Image 51 – An example of an exercise on suprasegmentals.

At the end of the volume, there is a final section which further explains grammar rules already introduced in the central units of the textbook. This section features exercises on pronunciation where students are required to complete a list of words with the correct sounds or to associate different words based on their common phonological traits (Images 52, 53 and 54).

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Image 52 – An example of a 'complete the words with the correct letters' exercise.
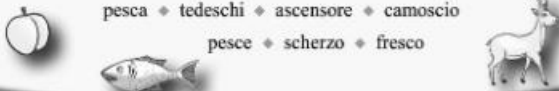
Image 53 – Another example of a 'complete the words with the correct letters' exercise.

Image 54 – An example of an 'associate the words according to the common sound' exercise.

In addition, the final section provides a brief explanations on: 1. stress rules in Italian, for instance which syllable is usually stressed in Italian words, when it is necessary to graphically mark the stress, and the distinctive role of stress in case of the same monosyllabic words where the graphic stress is used to differentiate their meanings and grammatical functions; 2. the role of intonation to differentiate questions from statements, as the order of words does not change in Italian as it does in other languages such as English, for example (Image 55). These types of explanation are helpful as they ask students to actively compare the phonological rules of the target language to the language/s that they master already and to detect the phonological differences that intercourse between them.

Accento e intonazione

1 L'accento

Nella maggior parte delle parole italiane l'accento cade sulla penultima sillaba. In alcune parole, invece, l'accento cade sulla terzultima o la quartultima sillaba. Infine, ci sono delle parole che hanno l'accento sull'ultima sillaba. In questo caso la vocale finale deve avere l'accento grafico.

libro, conosco, interessante	■ Accento sulla penultima sillaba
medico, abito, vengono, facile	■ Accento sulla terzultima sillaba
telefonano, abitano	■ Accento sulla quartultima sillaba
città, caffè, novità	■ Accento sull'ultima sillaba

Attenzione: In italiano l'accento è indicato solo in pochi casi. Il segno grafico degli esempi della tabella serve soltanto a facilitare la pronuncia. Inoltre, spesso, quando abbiamo due parole monosillabe che sono uguali, una prende l'accento e l'altra no: *sì* (avverbio) – *si* (pronome), *là* (avverbio) – *la* (articolo femminile).

L'intonazione

Una frase interrogativa e una frase affermativa spesso hanno lo stesso ordine di parole. Quello che cambia è l'intonazione, cioè il tono della voce (vedere curva melodica).

	curva melodica della frase	tipo di frase
Mauro abita in Svizzera.		affermazione
Mauro, abita in Svizzera? Abita in Svizzera Mauro?		domanda senza pronome o avverbio interrogativo
Dove abita Mauro?		domanda con pronome o avverbio interrogativo

Image 55 – The explanations on stress and intonation given in the final section of the volume.

Moreover, pronunciation is also used in the final section to give more precise information on other grammatical elements. For instance, pronunciation is used to introduce and explain the changes that occur in some nouns in the passage from their singular to plural forms (Image 56); or to show how to pronounce the different forms of both regular and irregular verbs (Image 57).

Particolarità nella formazione del plurale

Singolare	Plurale		
il problema	i problemi	a ⇆ i	■ Sostantivi maschili in -a terminano in -i al plurale.
il negozio lo zio	i negozi gli zii	io ⇆ i io ⇆ ii	■ Sostantivi che al singolare terminano in -io (i atona) terminano in -i al plurale. ■ Sostantivi che al singolare terminano in -io (i tonica) terminano in -ii al plurale.
il tedesco l'albergo l'amica la bottega il medico	i tedeschi gli alberghi le amiche le botteghe i medici	co ⇆ chi go ⇆ ghi ca ⇆ che ga ⇆ ghe co ⇆ ci	■ Nei sostantivi in -co, -go, -ca e -ga si inserisce una h al plurale per conservare il suono [k] oppure [g]. ■ Sostantivi maschili in -co terminano in -ci al plurale se hanno l'accento sulla terzultima sillaba. Fa eccezione: *l'amico - gli amici*.
l'arancia la spiaggia la camicia la farmacia	le arance le spiagge le camicie le farmacie	cia ⇆ ce gia ⇆ ge cia ⇆ cie cia ⇆ cie	■ Sostantivi in -cia/-gia terminano al plurale in -ce/-ge quando prima della c e della g c'è una consonante. Terminano al plurale in -cie/-gie quando prima della c e della g c'è una vocale o quando la i è accentata.

Alcuni sostantivi hanno una forma irregolare al plurale: *la moglie - le mogli, l'uomo - gli uomini*.

Image 56 – The use of pronunciation to point out the changes occurring between the singular and plural forms of nouns.

Il presente

18 Verbi regolari

	-are	-ere	-ire	
	lavorare	prendere	aprire	finire
io	lavoro	prendo	apro	finisco
tu	lavori	prendi	apri	finisci
lui, lei, Lei	lavora	prende	apre	finisce
noi	lavoriamo	prendiamo	apriamo	finiamo
voi	lavorate	prendete	aprite	finite
loro	lavorano	prendono	aprono	finiscono

- In italiano, usiamo spesso il verbo senza il pronome personale soggetto: *Lavoro in banca*. Usiamo il pronome personale soggetto quando vogliamo sottolineare il suo ruolo nell'azione: *Io prendo un caffè, e tu?* (vedere anche il *Punto 15* a p. 159).
- Quando parliamo a qualcuno in modo formale usiamo:
  - la terza persona singolare del verbo per una persona: *Dove lavora?*
  - la seconda persona plurale del verbo per più persone: *Quando venite?*
- Dei verbi in **-ire** esistono due gruppi:
  Come *aprire*: *sentire, partire*.
  Come *finire* (e aggiungiamo **-isc-**): *capire, preferire, pulire*.
  Fate attenzione: La pronuncia di **-isc-** cambia secondo la vocale che segue:
  finisco [-sko], *finisci* [-ʃi], *finisce* [-ʃe], *finiscono* [-skono].

Verbi particolari

	cercare	pagare	mangiare	leggere	conoscere
io	cerco	pago	mangio	leggo	conosco
tu	cerchi	paghi	mangi	leggi	conosci
lui, lei, Lei	cerca	paga	mangia	legge	conosce
noi	cerchiamo	paghiamo	mangiamo	leggiamo	conosciamo
voi	cercate	pagate	mangiate	leggete	conoscete
loro	cercano	pagano	mangiano	leggono	conoscono

- Con i verbi in **-care** e **-gare** la pronuncia della **c** [k] oppure della **g** [g] non cambia. Per conservare la pronuncia mettiamo quindi una **h** davanti alla **i**.
- I verbi in **-iare** hanno soltanto una **i** alla seconda persona singolare (tu) e alla prima persona plurale (noi).
- Con i verbi in **-gere** e **-scere** cambia la pronuncia della **g** e di **sc** secondo la vocale che segue (**e** o **i/e**): *leggo* [-go], *leggi* [-dʒi], *legge* [-dʒe]; *conosco* [-sko], *conosci* [-ʃi], *conosce* [-ʃe].

Image 57 - The use of pronunciation to point out the changes occurring in different forms of both regular and irregular verbs.

Allegro 2

The second volume does not feature exercises on pronunciation and has a rather limited number of activities on intonation. For instance, the only activity offered in the central units of the textbook is an exercise in which the students are required to read a comic strip and determine the emotional state of the speaker by means of the body movements of the characters in the pictures and the meaning and intonation of the dialogues (Image 58). In this case, too, the final section of the volume provides some explanations on the differences in intonation that differentiate a question from a statement (Image 59); and it introduces the concept of emphasis or pitch, while saying a phrase – the words order changes and pitch is used to mark the most relevant element in the sentence (Image 60).

Image 58 – The intonation exercise featured in the central units of volume 2.

Image 59 – The explanation in the final section on the intonation differences between questions and statements.

→32 Complemento oggetto diretto e indiretto

| Ho visto | **Silvia.** **tuo fratello.** | *Chi? / Che cosa?* | Complemento oggetto diretto. |
| Scrivo | **a Paolo.** **alla mia amica.** | *A chi?* | Complemento oggetto indiretto. Il complemento oggetto indiretto è introdotto dalla preposizione *a*. |

Fate attenzione:
- In italiano alcuni verbi richiedono il complemento oggetto diretto, per esempio:
  aiutare: *Aiuto mio padre.*
  ringraziare: *Ringrazio il mio professore.*
  Altri verbi richiedono il complemento oggetto indiretto, per esempio:
  telefonare: *Telefono a Mario.*
  rispondere: *Perché non rispondi alla mia lettera?*
- Se in una frase abbiamo sia un complemento oggetto diretto che un complemento oggetto indiretto, generalmente, mettiamo per primo il complemento oggetto diretto:
  Scrivo una lettera a mio fratello.
- Se il complemento oggetto, diretto o indiretto, è espresso da un pronome quest'ultimo lo mettiamo sempre prima del verbo coniugato (vedere anche il *Punto 6* a p. 155):
  L'ho visto.
  Le scrivo.

→33 Enfasi

Senza enfasi	*Con enfasi*	
Paola arriva stasera. Sandro ha comprato dei fiori. Che cosa mangiano i bambini?	Stasera arriva **Paola.** Ha comprato dei fiori **Sandro?** **I bambini** che cosa mangiano?	soggetto
Domani faccio il minestrone. Fabio ha montato la cucina.	**Il minestrone lo** faccio domani. **La cucina l'**ha montata Fabio.	oggetto
Non vado mai al cinema.	**Al cinema** non **ci** vado mai.	luogo

Image 60 – The paragraph on emphasis in the final section.

Nuovo Contatto (Loescher Editore*)*

Nuovo Contatto, published by Loescher Editore, is an Italian language coursebook in five volumes which cover from CEFRL Level A1 to CEFRL Level C1. The coursebook mainly focuses on the constant learning of new vocabulary; also, it is characterised by continuous inputs to practise the language in real communicative contexts by offering activities which require students to concentrate more on content than on linguistic forms – in this way, both the active and passive acquisition of the foreign language contribute to the positive learning outcomes.

Nuovo Contatto – Level A1

The contents page and Unit 3 are analysed in this paragraph. The contents shows pronunciation and intonation exercises in all five units of the coursebook: Unit 1 presents activities on the Italian vowels and words stress; Unit 2 focuses on the difference in intonation between statements and questions, double consonants and the sounds /p/ vs /p:/ and /b/ vs /b:/; Unit 3 introduces the intonation of exclamations and the difference between the sounds /k/ vs /ʧ/, /r/, /l/ vs /ʎ/; Unit 4 introduces the sounds /g/ vs /dʒ/ (i.e. [g] and [gh]), /k/ vs /ʧ/ (i.e. [c] and [ch]), /ɲ/; Unit 5 features the difference between /ʃ/ vs /sk/, /b/ vs /v/ and /t/ vs /d/.

Unit 3 features an intonation and a pronunciation section. The intonation section has 'listen and repeat' exercises on the difference between statements and questions, and a 'listen and decide whether the phrase is a statement or a question' exercise (Image 61).

Image 61 – The exercises of the intonation section in Unit 3.

The pronunciation section includes 'listen and repeat' exercises, 'listen and distinguish between two sounds' exercises, 'complete the phonological rule' exercises and 'listen and identify the correct sound' exercises (Image 62).

Image 61 – The exercises of the pronunciation section in Unit 3.

Nuovo Contatto – Level A2

From the Level A2 volume, Unit 2 is discussed here. It only features pronunciation exercises on the sound [ʎ] and on double consonants. The section features 'listen and repeat' exercises, 'listen and identify the

words which contain the sound /ʎ/' exercises, 'answer the teacher's questions by using words which contain the sound /ʎ/' exercises, 'listen and recognise the words with double consonants' exercises, 'listen to the recording and write down all the words with double consonants' exercises, and 'write all the words with double consonants that can be related to a list of given words' exercises (Image 62 and 63).

Image 62 – Examples of a 'listen and repeat' exercise, 'listen and identify the words which contain the sound /ʎ/' exercise and 'answer the teacher's questions by using words which contain the sound /ʎ/' exercise.

Image 63 – Examples of a 'listen and recognise the words with double consonants' exercise, 'listen to the recording and write down all the words with double consonants' exercise, and 'write all the words with double consonants that can be related to a list of given words' exercise.

Nuovo Contatto – Level B1

Unit 2 in the Level B1 volume contains a pronunciation section with exercises on the difference between single and double consonants and an intonation unit with exercises on its use to express refusal, hesitation, interest or excitement when someone gives us a piece of advice.

The pronunciation section includes a 'listen and decide whether the verb is in the future tense (single consonant) or conditional mood (double consonant)' exercise and a 'write down a list of verbs in the first-person plural of the future tense and conditional mood' exercise (Image 64). The intonation section consists of a 'listen and decide which emotional status is expressed by the speaker' exercise (Image 64), a 'listen, write down the phrases used by the speaker to express his emotions, and repeat them' exercise and a role play to be done in pairs (Image 65).

Futuro e condizionale

1a ▢T12 Ascolta le frasi e indica se viene usato il futuro (es. *partiremo*) o il condizionale (es. *partiremmo*).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
futuro								
condizionale								

1b Gioco a squadre. Pensate (o scrivete) alcuni verbi alla prima persona plurale dell'indicativo futuro e del condizionale presente (es. *mangeremo* e *mangeremmo*). Poi seguite le istruzioni dell'insegnante.

Intonazioni: accettare o rifiutare un consiglio

2a ▢T13 **Ascolto 1.** Patrizia, la fidanzata di Giacomo, compie gli anni. Giacomo non sa che cosa regalarle e chiede consiglio a un'amica. Ascolta i suggerimenti e indica che cosa esprimono le reazioni di Giacomo.

	rifiuto	esitazione	interesse	entusiasmo
1 ingresso alle terme				
2 smartphone				
3 e-reader				
4 abbonamento a teatro				
5 borsa				

Image 64 – The pronunciation section of Unit 2; the 'listen and decide which emotional status is expressed by the speaker' exercise from the intonation section.

2b ▢T13 **Ascolto 2.** Riascolta facendo attenzione alle parole e all'intonazione. Annota sul foglietto sotto (studente B) le espressioni usate da Giacomo. Poi ascolta di nuovo e ripeti le battute di Giacomo.

2c In coppia. Siete due amici, è sabato sera e state per andare a ballare. La macchina dello studente B non parte. Lo studente A cerca di dare dei consigli. Lo studente B risponde usando alcune delle espressioni annotate nell'esercizio 2b. Svolgete il dialogo facendo attenzione all'intonazione. Poi ripetete l'esercizio scambiandovi i ruoli.

Studente A
Consigli
• fare l'autostop
• aprire il cofano e vedere che cosa c'è che non va
• chiamare un taxi
• telefonare a qualcuno
• andare a casa a guardare un film in TV

Studente B
Reazioni ai consigli

E 24, 25, 26

Image 65 - The 'listen, write down the phrases used by the speaker to express his emotions, and repeat them' exercise and the role play to be done in pairs from the intonation section.

Nuovo Contatto – Level B2

Unit 1 in the Level B2 volume does not feature specific sections for either pronunciation or intonation, but includes two exercises which can be indirectly related to the practice of discursive signs used to express emotional states or agreement and disagreement (Images 66 and 67)

1d 🎧 **105 Ascolto 3.** Riascolta la prima parte del dialogo e annota le espressioni che esprimono i punti di vista indicati nella tabella.

disaccordo e incredulità	parziale accordo
	Ok, ma…

Image 66 – An example of a 'listen and write the agreement and disagreement expressions in the right space' exercise.

2a 🎧 **122** Leggi il dialogo tra Rosa e Giampaolo (*Per capire*, es. 1b, p. 30) e completa con i segnali discorsivi. Poi ascolta il testo per controllare. Rifletti con l'insegnante sull'intonazione usata per ciascun segnale.

Rosa   Allora ci vediamo domani mattina per andare alla mostra all'Accademia Carrara?
Giampaolo Ah, benissimo, dai, ti passo a prendere in macchina e andiamo.
Rosa   Come mi passi a prendere in macchina? Domani è domenica e il centro è chiuso alle macchine.
Giampaolo Mado', ma ancora una volta 'sto blocco del traffico, non ce la faccio più, mamma mia.
Rosa   Ma, ma **(1)** _____? Cioè, almeno le domeniche, in cui si può andare in bici…
Giampaolo **(2)** _____, ma non si riduce lo smog per un giorno, e tu pensi che tutto torna come vent'anni fa? Ma ormai è impossibile.
Rosa   Beh, non questo, però almeno cercare di ridurre un po' lo smog non sarebbe una cosa così…
Giampaolo Ascolta, l'inquinamento è prodotto soprattutto dalle industrie e dal riscaldamento, le macchine hanno una percentuale bassa in questa…
Rosa   **(3)** _____, l'inquinamento è prodotto da tantissime cose, ma se almeno un po' non si cerca di ridurlo, non arriviamo da nessuna parte.

Image 67 – An example of a 'complete the dialogue with the correct discursive signs, then listen to the recording and check your answers' exercise.

Nuovo Contatto – Level C1

Unit 7 in the Level C1 volume contains two exercises which focus on discursive signs and their interpretation during communicative exchanges. In the first exercise, students are required to complete a dialogue with the correct discursive sign, and then listen to a recording and check their answers (Image 68); the second exercise asks students to repeat a few lines taken from the first exercise, paying attention to the communicative purpose of the sentences (Image 69).

Image 68 – The 'complete a dialogue with the correct discursive sign, and then listen to the recording and check your answers' exercise.

Image 69 – The 'repeat a few lines taken from the first exercise, paying attention to the communicative purpose of the sentences' exercise.

Intonation also features in a role-play exercise where students are required to use emphasis to perform the dialogue suggested for the activity (Image 70). In this example, drama techniques are used to train phonological skills. This teaching strategy will be further discussed in the next chapter (Chapter 3) where a variety of effective examples of drama activities aiming to teach pronunciation and intonation are offered.

Image 70 – The role-play exercise.

Appendix B: The four-point Likert-Scale questionnaire for students

STUDENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

PERSONAL RESERACH ID:

1. **GENERAL SECTION**

- Please tick (✓) the correct answers.

GENERAL INFORMATION	ANSWER
Gender	☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Other
Year of study	☐ First year ☐ Second year Third year /Year abroad Fourth year

☐

☐

Level of Italian language Proficiency	☐	First year - A1 – Beginners
	☐	First year – A2 – Advanced
	☐	Second year – B1 – Intermediate
	☐	Second year – B2 – Advanced
		Third year/Year abroad – C1
		Fourth year – C2

- Which of the following ethnic groups do you consider that you belong to? Please tick (✓) the correct answer and add information if required.

ETHNIC BACKGROUND	✓	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
White (British)		
White (Irish)		
Any other white background (please describe)		
Mixed (White/Black Caribbean)		
Mixed (White/Black African)		
Mixed (White/Black South Asian)		
Any other mixed background (please describe)		
Black or black British (Caribbean)		
Black or black British (African)		
Any other Black or black British background (please describe)		
South Asian or South Asian British (India)		
South Asian or South Asian British (Pakistani)		
South Asian or South Asian British (Bangladeshi)		
Any other South Asian or South Asian British (please describe)		
Chinese		
Any other ethnic background (please describe)		

- Please list the languages you know in order of acquisition (your NATIVE LANGUAGE is the FIRST).

1.	
2.	

3.	
4.	

- Please list all the languages you know in order of dominance (1: LEAST DOMINANT; 2: SLIGHLTY DOMINANT; 3: DOMINANT; 4: MOST DOMINANT).

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

- Which of the following cultural background do you consider that you belong to? Please tick (✓) the correct answer and add information if required.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND	✓	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (which country of the suggested areas?)
Western culture (i.e. Europe, North America)		
Latin culture (i.e. South America)		
Eastern culture (i.e. Asian countries, South Asian countries)		
Middle Eastern culture (i.e. Middle Eastern countries)		
Black culture (i.e. Africa, Caribbean countries)		
North African culture (i.e. North African countries)		
Mixed culture		
Any other cultural background (please describe)		

2. MOTIVATION AND DEMOTIVATION SECTION

- Please list the reasons why you study Italian in order of importance (1: LEAST IMPORTANT; 2: SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT; 3: IMPORTANT; 4: MOST IMPORTANT).

1.	

2.	
3.	
4.	

- In your perception, how can having high skills of proficiency in Italian help you in the future? For example: more chances to be accepted for a postgraduate programme; more chances to get a job in the UK; more chances to get a job abroad. Please list in which ways learning Italian can help you in order of importance (1: LEAST IMPORTANT; 2: SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT; 3: IMPORTANT; 4: MOST IMPORTANT).

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

- Among the activities that you usually do in your university Italian course, which are the most motivating ones? ? For example: individual/group presentations in class; grammar/vocabulary exercises; individual/group speaking activities. Please list the activities that motivate you the most in order of motivation (1: LEAST MOTIVATING; 2: SLIGHTLY MOTIVATING; 3: MOTIVATING; 4: MOST MOTIVATING).

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

- Among the activities that you do in your university Italian course, which are the most demotivating ones? ? For example: individual/group presentations in class; grammar/vocabulary exercises; individual/group speaking activities. Please list the activities that demotivate you the most in order of demotivation (1: LEAST DEMOTIVATING; 2: SLIGHTLY DEMOTIVATING; 3: DEMOTIVATING; 4: MOST DEMOTIVATING).

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

- Which activities do you consider essential in your Italian course to enhance or support your level of motivation? Please list the activities that you would include/maintain in order of importance (1: LEAST IMPORTANT; 2: SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT; 3: IMPORTANT; 4: MOST IMPORTANT).

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

3. PRONUNCIATION AND IDENTITY SECTION

- Look at these Italian words and the sounds highlighted:

Coniglio, cucinare, chiamare, cena, anche, cuoco, gara, generale, ghepardo, gioco, ghiro, tranquillo, casa, cassa, arrivare, pappagallo, libro, prato, gnocchi, gnomo, psicologo, pneumatico, pizza, melanzana, tavolo, dente, dare, andare, croce, trono, tagliare, incontrare, pala, palla, porto.

Please list the Italian sounds that pronunciation and intonation training sessions have helped you to master in order of outcomes (1: LEAST IMPROVED; 2: SLIGHTLY IMPROVED; 3: IMPROVED; 4: MOST IMPROVED).

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

- In your perception, the specific pronunciation/intonation training has been useful to improve your ability to master the sounds listed in the initial students questionnaire? Please tick (✓) how much specific pronunciation training has been useful for you (1: NOT USEFUL; 2: SLIGHTLY USEFUL; 3: USEFUL; 4: VERY USEFUL).

1	2	3	4

- On a scale from one to four, please tick (✓) your interest in learning Italian pronunciation and intonation after having received specific training sessions (1: NOT INTERESTED; 2: SLIGHTLY INTERESTED; 3: INTERESTED; 4: VERY INTERESTED).

1	2	3	4

- Which of the following pronunciation/intonation do you think you have achieved so far? Please tick (✓) your answer and write the reason of your choice

PRONUNCIATION/INTONATION	✓	REASON
Native-like pronunciation/intonation		
Understandable pronunciation/intonation		

- In your perception, on a scale from one to four, how much of a foreign accent do you think you have in Italian after having received specific pronunciation/intonation training? Please tick (✓) your accent (1: NOT PERVASIVE; 2: SLIGHTLY PERVASIVE; 3: PERVASIVE; 4: VERY PERVASIVE).

1	2	3	4

- On a scale from one to four, how much does your accent influence your self-confidence when you speak Italian? Please tick (✓) how often your accent in Italian affects your self-confidence (1: NEVER; 2: SOMETIMES; 3: OFTEN; 4: ALWAYS).

1	2	3	4

- Is there any Italian accent that you feel you have achieved so far? Or do you still want to keep your foreign accent? Please list which accent you have acquired/maintained and why

Accent:	☐ Standard
	☐ Northern
	☐ Central
	☐ Southern
List reason here:	

4. AUTHENTICITY SECTION

- On a scale one to four, please tick (✓) how much the use of authentic materials (for example: interviews, radio/TV programs, newspapers, books, songs, etc.) has influenced your learning in general (1: NOT INFLUENCIAL; 2: SLIGHTLY INFLUENCIAL; 3: INFLUENCIAL; 4: VERY INFLUENCIAL).

1	2	3	4

- On a scale from one to four, please tick (✓) how much the use of authentic materials has influenced the four skills listed in the tables below (1: NOT INFLUENCIAL; 2: SLIGHTLY INFLUENCIAL; 3: INFLUENCIAL; 4: VERY INFLUENCIAL).

LISTENING SKILLS			
1	2	3	4

SPEAKING SKILLS			
1	2	3	4

READING SKILLS			
1	2	3	4

WRITING SKILLS			
1	2	3	4

- On a scale from one to four, please tick (✓) how much the use of authentic materials has influenced your pronunciation/intonation and accent (1: NOT INFLUENCIAL; 2: SLIGHTLY INFLUENCIAL; 3: INFLUENCIAL; 4: VERY INFLUENCIAL).

1	2	3	4

Appendix C: Questionnaire for Italian Native-Speakers

Questionario per madrelingua italiani. Il ruolo della pronuncia e dell'intonazione nella comprensione degli scambi verbali.

Il presente questionario è parte della mia ricerca di dottorato che è volta all'investigazione del ruolo della pronuncia e dell'intonazione nell'insegnamento dell'italiano come lingua straniera. L'obiettivo del presente questionario è quello di valutare il ruolo della pronuncia e dell'intonazione negli scambi comunicativi orali. Il questionario si pone come strumento di valutazione della pronuncia e dell'intonazione di studenti non italofoni che parlano in italiano in alcune registrazioni.
I partecipanti al questionario devono necessariamente essere madrelingua italiani.
Il questionario è completamente anonimo.
I risultati ottenuti dal presente questionario verranno inseriti all'interno del mio progetto di ricerca.

* Required

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Parte I

In questa prima sezione del questionario sono presenti domande volte alla raccolta dei dati relativi al contesto linguistico, professionale, sociale e culturale dei rispondenti.

1   Genere *

Mark only one oval.

( ) Maschio

( ) Femmina

( ) Preferisco non specificarlo

( ) Altro

2.   Età *

3   Provenienza geografica (Regione) *

Mark only one oval.

( ) Valle D'Aosta

( ) Piemonte

( ) Lombardia

( ) Trentino Alto-Adige

( ) Friuli-Venezia-Giulia

( ) Liguria

( ) Veneto

( ) Emilia-Romagna

( ) Toscana

( ) Umbria

( ) Marche

( ) Lazio

( ) Abruzzo

( ) Molise

( ) Campania

( ) Basilicata

( ) Puglia

( ) Calabria

( ) Sicilia

( ) Sardegna

4. Residenza attuale (Città, Regione e Stato) *

5 Livello scolastico *

Mark only one oval.

○ Licenza Media

○ Diploma di scuola superiore

○ Laurea a ciclo unico

○ Laurea Triennale

○ Laurea Magistrale

○ Dottorato di Ricerca

○ Altro

6. Occupazione *

7 Lingue moderne conosciute

Check all that apply.

	Livello A1	Livello A2	Livello B1	Livello B2	Livello C1	Livello C2
Inglese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Francese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tedesco	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spagnolo	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Portoghese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Russo	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cinese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Giapponese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Altra lingua non presente in lista	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. Parli una lingua regionale o un dialetto? Se sì, quale? In quale contesto comunicativo (formale, informale, etc.)? Con chi prevalentemente?

Parte II

In questa seconda sezione del questionario sono presenti delle domande che aiuteranno a definire l'intelligibilità delle registrazioni che ti sono state fatte ascoltare. Le risposte che fornirai permetteranno di definire più accuratamente quali sono gli aspetti che più aiutano e quali che più minano la comprensione durante gli scambi comunicativi orali.

9   Dopo aver ascolta o le registrazioni, segnala quali aspetti positivi hai riscontrato tra quelli indicati:

Check all that apply.

☐ Intonazione - i parlanti modulavano la voce correttamente per esprimere particolari opinioni, emozioni, pensieri.

☐ Pronuncia - i parlanti pronunciavano correttamente i suoni singoli e i gruppi di suoni presenti negli enunciati.

☐ Accento - i parlanti non presentavano un accento straniero così forte da rendere difficile la comprensione degli enunciati

☐ Lessico - i parlanti pronunciavano correttamente il lessico più complesso e specifico rendendo completamente comprensibili gli enunciati.

☐ Grammatica - i parlanti utilizzavano correttamente le costruzioni grammaticali, sia semplici sia complesse, rendendo semplice la comprensione degli enunciati.

10.   Oltre agli elementi sopra elencati, quali altri aspetti hanno reso facile la comprensione delle registrazioni?

11.   Dopo aver ascoltato le registrazioni, segnala quali aspetti negativi hai riscontrato tra quelli indicati: *

Check all that apply.

☐ Intonazione - i parlanti non modulavano la voce correttamente per esprimere particolari opinioni, emozioni, pensieri.

☐ Pronuncia - i parlanti non pronunciavano correttamente i suoni singoli e i gruppi di suoni presenti negli enunciati.

☐ Accento - i parlanti presentavano un accento straniero così forte da rendere difficile la comprensione degli enunciati

☐ Lessico - i parlanti non pronunciavano correttamente il lessico più complesso e specifico rendendo difficilmente comprensibili gli enunciati.

☐ Grammatica - i parlanti non utilizzavano correttamente le costruzioni grammaticali, sia semplici sia complesse, rendendo semplice la comprensione degli enunciati.

12.   Oltre agli elemen i sopra elencati, quali altri aspetti hanno reso difficile la comprensione delle registrazioni?

Parte III

In questa terza sezione del questionario sono presenti domande volte al mondo del lavoro. In particolare, si chiede ai partecipanti di valutare, sulla base delle registrazioni ascoltate, in quale contesto lavorativo il ruolo della pronuncia e dell'intonazione hanno il maggior impatto e, conseguentemente, quali sono i mestieri che più si addicono agli apprendenti di italiano sulla base della loro pronuncia e della loro intonazione.

13. Dopo aver ascol ato le registrazioni, in quale contesto lavorativo potrebbero lavorare i parlanti?

Check all that apply.

	No	Forse	Sì
Azienda import-export (back-office)	☐	☐	☐
Azienda import-export (servizio clienti)	☐	☐	☐
Scuola/Università (amministrazione)	☐	☐	☐
Scuola/Università (insegnante di lingua inglese)	☐	☐	☐
Negozio (magazzino)	☐	☐	☐
Negozio (commesso/a)	☐	☐	☐
Agenzia di traduzione (servizio clienti)	☐	☐	☐
Agenzia di traduzione (traduttore)	☐	☐	☐
Call center (amministrazione)	☐	☐	☐
Call center (servizio clienti)	☐	☐	☐
Forze dell'ordine (amministrazione)	☐	☐	☐
Forze dell'ordine (agenti)	☐	☐	☐
Pubblica amministrazione (amministrazione)	☐	☐	☐
Pubblica amministrazione (servizio clienti)	☐	☐	☐

14. La pronuncia e l'intonazione degli apprendenti hanno influenzato le tue risposte *
alla domanda precedente? Motiva brevemente la ragione delle tue risposte.

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