

**The Educational Challenges of Italian Migrant Learners  
in their Transition to Secondary Schools in Gozo:  
A Comparative Study**

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## Abstract

This dissertation explores the transition of Italian migrant learners into state schools in Gozo in order to understand whether these learners experience any educational challenges when moving from Italian to Maltese schools, given the similarities and/or differences between the two education systems. Shedding more light on this topic is particularly important in the local context because the presence of migrants in Malta and Gozo has increased significantly over the last few years, and schools are becoming more multicultural and multilingual. Besides this, Italians constitute the largest group of migrants on our islands and the largest community of students in Maltese schools.

This study investigates language barriers related to the use of Maltese and English, participation in class, work completion, socialisation, and inclusion issues of Italian migrant learners in middle and secondary state schools in Gozo by taking into account the experiences of these learners themselves, their parents, and teachers. The results of this study confirm that Italian migrant learners are generally well included in local schools, more so if they started their schooling in Malta at a young age. However, some parents claim that their children have experienced exclusion, especially at the beginning of their transition into Maltese schools. Although Italian parents generally feel included too, some feel excluded at school and in the community, in some cases even when they have competence in Maltese. The teachers who participated in this research study do their best to support these learners as they sometimes act as linguistic mediators by switching to Italian when necessary. However, they have limited time and leeway to make further adaptations because of the vast syllabi they have to cover in a short time, also in view of an exam-oriented pedagogy which they feel constrained to adopt. They claim that more support is required to cater for

the needs of migrant learners both inside or outside the school, and advocate for more induction hubs in Gozo, despite the controversial nature of this provision.

Findings from a comparative perspective indicate that Italian migrant learners face a difficult transition into Maltese schools since differences between the Italian and Maltese education systems can affect their performance and general well-being in local schools. Although Italian migrant learners and their parents find local schooling easier than in Italy, this can imply that Maltese schools are not challenging Italian migrant learners to perform to their full potential. The tracking system based on the students' overall achievement may be limiting rather than supporting these learners. Some learners have been placed in low-track classes even though there are indications that some of them performed well in their country prior to arrival. Differences in assessment practices between systems may influence these learners' transition, for the reason that examinations based on written rather than oral testing may be a disadvantage to Italian migrant learners who are not proficient in Maltese and English and unfamiliar with teaching methods and syllabi covered in Maltese schools.

Finally, this study also reflects on the maintenance of Italian, more in-class support through multilingual practices such as language mediation and translanguaging, and effective home-school links to foster a climate of acceptance towards cultural and linguistic diversity in local schools. This would entail further developments in local policies and professional training for teachers to create an ambience where all languages are celebrated and where all students, irrespective of their nationality and background, can learn in a positive and healthy learning environment which empowers them to reach their educational goals.

*Keywords:* Migration, Italian Migrant Learners, Transition, Education, Language, Inclusion



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## Dedication

To my parents Anthony and Antoinette, and my fiancé Justin.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**CEFR** - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

**CPD** - Continuing Professional Development

**EU** - European Union

**IOM** - International Organization for Migration

**L1** - First language

**L2** - Second language

**LOF** - Learning Outcomes Framework

**LPEY** - Language Policy for the Early Years

**LPJY** - Language Policy for the Junior Years

**LSE** - Learning Support Educator

**MEDE** - Ministry for Education and Employment

**MFL** - Maltese as a Foreign Language

**MLU** - Migrant Learners' Unit

**NCF** - National Curriculum Framework for All

**NMC** - National Minimum Curriculum

**NSO** - National Statistics Office

**OECD** - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

**TA** - Thematic Analysis

**TCNs** - Third Country Nationals

**ZPD** - Zone of Proximal Development

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## 1.1 Topic, Aims, and Research Questions

Italy has a long history of emigration in all continents, as Gabaccia (2000) documented in her work entitled *Italy's Many Diasporas*. Malta has become a new destination as the country witnessed a great influx of Italians, especially in the past few years. This new wave of Italian emigration inevitably affects our islands' labour market, health, and education. Many of these are families with young children who start attending Maltese schools and face challenges of inclusion, among which are those attributed to becoming familiar with a new education system and the language of instruction used in class (Caruana & Pace, 2021, p. 150), which in the case of the bilingual situation in Malta, means learning both English and Maltese in order to be functional.

Children who emigrate leave behind a familiar language, a culture, a community, and a social system and sometimes struggle to get accustomed to their new world, sometimes with little or no support. The Eurydice report (2019) shows how students from migrant backgrounds experience linguistic, pedagogical, and socio-emotional challenges at school, with implications on their general well-being, learning, and development. Bezzina (2017) notes that local studies about the inclusion of European migrant learners in the Maltese education system are very limited. The few existing studies mainly focus on migrants of different nationalities rather than specific ones. Bezzina (2017) claims that European migrant learners often face social, emotional, language, and cultural hurdles because “[i]t is never easy to leave behind the country of origin and past friendships and settle in a new environment with different routines, cultures and languages, and build a new life” (p. 44).

Cassar and Attard Tonna (2018) investigated the influence of language spoken at school on young migrant women when interacting with peers, and power issues amongst them, based on their perspectives and of their educators. Cassar and Attard Tonna (2018) claim that “[m]igrant students in both schools faced challenges related to communication, and in both schools Maltese students needed to adapt to the presence of migrant students” (p. 17). Although Maltese students generally show empathy towards migrants, some incidents demonstrate that there could have been migrant learners who may have felt isolated, voiceless, and powerless. Some years before, Micallef Cann and Spiteri (2014) also shed light on the difficulties migrant learners experience when learning two languages in the bilingual context of Malta. While English is perceived as a universal language granting access to many things and being easier to learn, Maltese is viewed as very difficult.

Having said that, the main objective of this research is to investigate the transition of Italian migrant learners into Maltese secondary schools in Gozo and the educational challenges these students face for inclusion during their secondary cycle of education, this within the emerging context of our contemporary society which has become more multicultural and multilingual than ever. Research is currently limited, especially concerning specific minority groups such as Italian migrant learners and their transition into Maltese schools (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020; Caruana & Pace, 2021; Palazzo, 2020). This research gap, including my urgency to listen to the voices of these learners and personal interest in the topic, have inspired me to carry out this study. Policies and procedures on both macro and micro levels are required to foster diversity in schools and provide a better schooling experience to migrant learners. Thus, the overarching research questions which shape my entire research study are:

1. What is the experience of Italian migrant learners in their transition to Maltese secondary schools in Gozo?
2. In the case of students who would have attended school in Italy prior to moving to Malta, to what extent is this transition influenced by similarities and differences between the Italian and Maltese education systems?

Specific underpinning questions which will guide my research study include:

- In view of the similarities and differences between the Italian and Maltese education systems, what are the educational challenges of Italian migrant learners in the process of access and inclusion in Maltese secondary schools?
- How are these potential educational challenges shaping the learning process of Italian migrant learners when they study in Maltese secondary schools?
- How can language barriers affect Italian migrant learners' education?
- What can we learn from the perceptions of teachers and parents on the experience of Italian migrant learners in their transition from the Italian to the Maltese education system?
- To what extent are Maltese schools giving support for the inclusion of Italian migrant learners, also as advocated by local educational policies on diversity?

## 1.2 Personal Interest in the Subject

Personally, I have always had an interest in Italians and the Italian language, as well as the culture, which inclined my career choice to become a teacher of Italian. Italian is my area of specialisation and I have been teaching it for ten years in a girls' Church school in Gozo, where the presence of migrant learners has been generally rather low, as is in most church schools (Caruana & Pace, 2021). I remember when 11-year-old Elisa (pseudonym) from Italy started attending our school a few years ago. Most teachers were apprehensive about how they would teach a girl who could not understand English or Maltese, also because many educators could not communicate in Italian with Elisa and felt unprepared to adapt to such a situation. As an educator, I felt concerned for Elisa who had to strive to learn in an unfamiliar context while making new friends and adapting to a new life in Gozo, but I could also empathise with educators who were limited by their lack of proficiency in Italian to be able to interact with the foreign student.

Thus, my interests in Italian, Italians in Malta, and migrant learners coupled with an interest in education and language lie at the heart of this research, by which I envisage to provide insights into the transition of Italian migrant learners to Maltese secondary schools in Gozo. This will be conducted through my qualitative empirical research within a comparative framework, which is further enhanced by my personal quest for social justice, since research suggests that although some Italian migrant learners are well included in Maltese schools, especially when educators address them in Italian (Caruana, 2018; Palazzo, 2020), many of them face problems in their transition to Maltese schools. Caruana (2023) provides an overview of research on the recent migration of Italians to Malta. Surprisingly, Maltese studies on Italian migrant learners are among the few contributions that address

the inclusion of Italian nationals in educational institutions abroad (Caruana, 2023, p. 107).

Through this research, I aim to explore this matter from an educator's perspective, while also listening to the views of the teachers and parents of these learners.

This research, to a greater extent, will help educators come to terms with the realities of migrant learners at school, particularly Italians, while helping them to become better advocates for migrant learners and their families. Educators would also understand the need for further training and education to be in a better position to help these learners. It would also help improve the formulation and implementation of school policies and enable those involved to have further insights in relation to their implementation.

### **1.3 The Context of the Study**

The context in which this study takes place is the small island of Gozo, the second-largest island of the Maltese archipelago with 67 square kilometres of land and a population of 39,287 (National Statistics Office (NSO), 2023). The age structure of the population of Gozo displays higher proportions of persons over 50 years of age than in Malta. This population characteristic is related to the fact that the younger generations move to Malta for study and work purposes. Owing to its insularity, many Gozitans who study and work in Malta make use of the ferry daily to cross the Gozo channel, between Mgarr and Ċirkewwa. In addition, Gozo is generally marketed internationally as a quieter and calmer place where expats can retire. Notwithstanding this, since 2011, a significant population growth has been recorded both in Malta and Gozo due to the increase of foreign communities in every region and locality. Gozo therefore presents some characteristics which are similar to those found in Malta, but its very own nature of being "an island within another island" also renders it

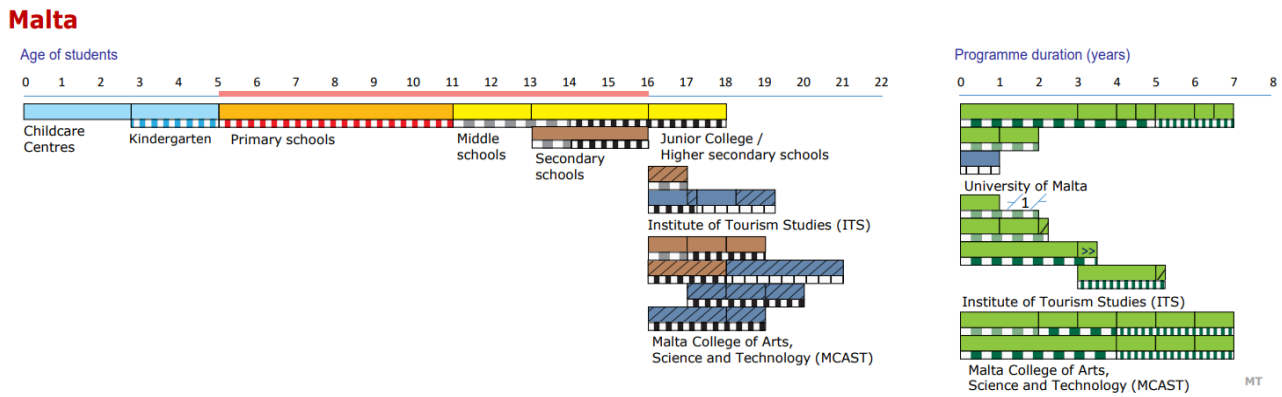
different on some counts, including the need felt by many to travel to Malta daily for work and study purposes.

### **1.3.1 The Maltese Education System**

Malta's education system is organised by the Education Act, Chapter 327, of the Maltese Laws. Many reforms were done to this law, the most pivotal being co-education and moving towards an outcome-based curriculum (Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE), 2014). Education in Malta has followed the British system, a colonial legacy from 1800 to 1964. Therefore, this is important to note because Malta's education system differs significantly from the Italian one.

Maltese children attend compulsory schooling from 5 to 16 years of age. Children attend kindergarten at age 3, start primary school at age 5 in Year 1 and finish at age 10 in Year 6. Secondary schooling is divided into two periods; middle school starts at age 10-11 where students attend Year 7 and Year 8 classes, following a 'benchmark' exercise, and secondary school starts at 13 years and ends at 16 when students attend Year 9, 10, and 11 classes. In Year 7, all students are obliged to start learning a foreign language, normally choosing from Italian, French, German, or Spanish. On completion of Year 11, they have the opportunity to obtain a certification in the language they would have studied via a national assessment system, the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examinations. The Maltese schooling system has been historically characterised by highly competitive written examinations, with performance in English, Maltese, and Mathematics generally determining one's opportunity to further one's studies. Some Italian nationals reportedly face difficulties in this selective system, which creates problems for their inclusion (Baschiera

& Caruana, 2020, p. 153). A representation of the Maltese education system is displayed in Figure 1.1 below.



**Figure 1.1.** *The Maltese Education System (Source: The structure of the European education systems, 2022/23)*

Parents can choose between state, church, or independent schools for their children to attend. State schools are accessible to all students for free. Church schools refer to the schools owned by the Catholic Church and, following an agreement, these too do not charge school fees and tuition is therefore free of charge. However, parents are asked to give annual donations, split over time, to cover school costs. Church schools require parents to purchase the school’s uniform, books, and other school material as necessary. In independent schools, tuition is against payment and parents have to also pay for the school’s uniform, books, and other material. Another difference is language use, which varies to some degree also according to school type: English is often the preferred language for teaching and learning in church and independent schools, whereas Maltese is more associated with state schools. As Caruana (2011) claims, this creates “differences between the various schooling institutions” (p. 33), resulting in students in state schools sometimes having difficulties attaining high

English proficiency levels. In contrast, students in independent schools encounter problems with the Maltese language.

Local policies such as the *National Curriculum Framework for All* (NCF, 2012) and the *Language Education Policy* (Council of Europe, 2015) attempted to address issues regarding Maltese and/or English as languages of instruction; however, the reflections provided in these documents are largely descriptive and add very little to what language teachers in Malta are already familiar with through their practice. Maltese teachers tend to code-switch in class, using both Maltese and English to accomplish different pedagogical functions, ranging from class management to providing explanations related to the subject matter (Camilleri Grima, 1995; Camilleri Grima, 2013). The bilingual context and the use of two languages depending on the school sector or subject can be problematic for teachers and students, especially if the latter are migrant learners who speak neither Maltese nor English (Panzavecchia & Little, 2020, p. 110).

In Gozo, the same system and curriculum are adopted across all levels of education. The Gozo College comprises eleven primary state schools spread around various localities on the island. At the secondary level, there is one co-ed middle school for Years 7 and 8 and one co-ed secondary school for Years 9, 10, and 11. The Catholic Church currently has four primary church schools and two secondary schools, the Archbishop's Seminary, and the Bishop's Conservatory, the former a boys' secondary school and the latter a girls' secondary school. On the island of Gozo, there is only one post-secondary school: it is public and free for all. Moreover, no independent schools have been registered in Gozo up to this date.

### 1.3.2 The Italian Education System

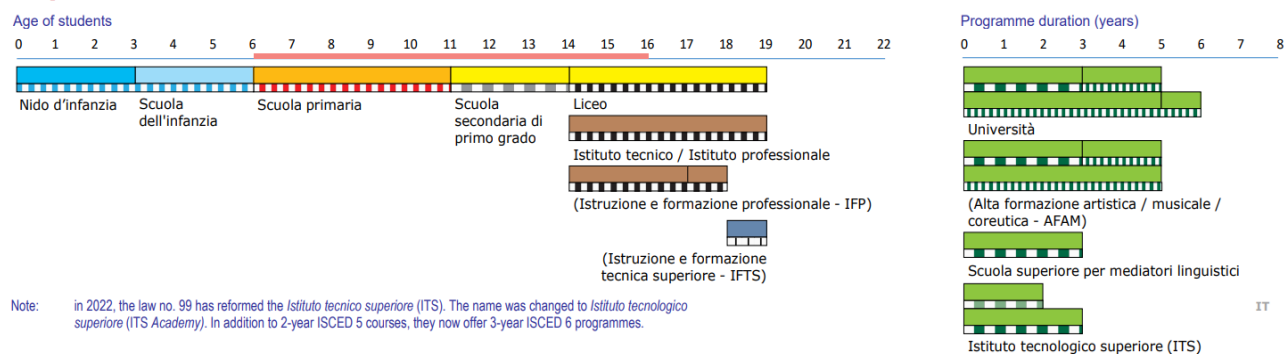
The Ministry of Education and Merit (*Ministero dell'istruzione e del merito* – MIM) and the Ministry of University and Research (*Ministero dell'università e della ricerca* – MUR) are responsible for the general administration of the Italian national education system.<sup>1</sup> The Italian public school system is compulsory until 16 years of age and is free for all children. It covers primary and lower secondary education as well as the first two years of the secondary cycle of education. Schools have a high degree of autonomy in Italy because they are responsible for drawing up an educational plan every three years, known as *Piano triennale dell'offerta formativa* – PTOF. Italian schools define curricula, school time, and groups of pupils. Schooling may vary from region to region due to its decentralised nature, even though certain standards have to be respected.

Cassese (2022) gives an account of the Italian education system and divides it into four stages. Preschool starts from 3 years and ends at 5-6 years and is known as *scuola dell'infanzia* or *scuola materna*. Primary school, known as *scuola primaria* or *scuola elementare*, starts at 6 years of age and ends at 11. Middle school, known as *scuola secondaria di primo grado* or *scuola media*, starts from 11 years and ends at 14 years. High school, also known as *scuola secondaria di secondo grado*, starts from 14 and ends at 19 years. Italy has both public and private schools. Many private schools are known as *paritarie* and parents pay fees. Figure 1.2 below indicates how the Italian education system is structured.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/italy/overview>

## Italy



**Figure 1.2.** *The Italian Education System (Source: The structure of the European education systems, 2022/23)*

Cassese (2022) outlines that whereas schooling is free, textbooks must be purchased. This is a considerable expenditure for parents every year. Assessment includes both writing and oral skills. However, unlike the Maltese education system, the Italian schooling system is highly based on formative assessment over the years and high-stakes examinations are only introduced towards the pre-tertiary stages of education, in which the *esame di maturità* is held, as will be further explained below. Examinations are held at the end of a schooling phase, for instance at the end of primary school, not at the end of every schooling year as in Malta. Before moving to high school, students sit for the *esame di terza media*, which are a combination of written exams in Italian, English, Mathematics and a foreign language, as well as an oral examination that assesses all subjects taught in the final year (Cassese, 2015). After that, students at age 13 choose the *liceo* [high school] to follow. There are various high school options, such as the *liceo scientifico*, the *liceo linguistico*, or the *liceo artistico*, but also vocational and training institutes.

At the end of upper secondary school, students sit for the *esame di maturità* which is a national examination including a first written exam in Italian, a second written exam in the student's area of study, and a final oral exam called *colloquio* (interview) to verify if the students grasped the material covered in the past five years at the high school.

### **1.3.3 Defining Migrant Learners**

Individuals relocate within or between countries for various reasons to begin a new life in a new society. Children relocate with their families and must adapt to the education system of the receiving country, which offers support to the students and their families for a smoother transition between schools.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2010) refers to a child who moves to a new country as a *newly arrived immigrant student*. Nevertheless, Nilsson and Axelsson (2013) state that although this term is used to refer to students who arrive in another country at their mandatory education age, there has been no temporal definition in national and international domains. Therefore, any person under 18 who migrates from one country to another is referred to as a *newly arrived immigrant student*. Janta and Harte (2016) claim that there has been no clear consensus about who is to be considered a migrant child, but they outline that a migrant child is an individual born in a country other than the one in which they reside. They are called a first-generation migrant. However, a migrant child can also be an individual born in the country they reside in, but whose parents (one or both) were born elsewhere. These are referred to as second-generation migrants.

In the context of this research, the term ‘migrant learners’ will be used with reference to migrant children in the classroom/school setting. It will encompass migrant children under the age of 16, of Italian nationality, who started attending school in Malta and Gozo following mobility from their country to the islands.

#### **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

Vygotsky’s social constructivist theory (1978) has been adopted as a theoretical framework for this research, within a qualitative methodological approach, based on interviews with young Italian migrant learners between 11-16 years of age, their teachers and parents, and class observations of these learners. The Vygotskian concepts of learning and development, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and scaffolding are relevant to this research because these aspects will help me understand better the interactions of Italian migrant learners with their teachers and peers within a new schooling context in their host country—in this case, Gozo.

Social interactions and the various roles people take in interactions influence psychological development. For Vygotsky (1978), cognitive development is an interpersonal process transformed into an intrapersonal one because: “[e]very function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapyschological)” (p. 57). Wertsch (1991) describes three main themes in Vygotsky’s social constructivist theory. The first refers to the social origins of individual development in learning and development. The second refers to the physical and symbolic tools, such as language, mediating human action on the social and individual planes to construct and co-

construct knowledge that helps individuals develop problem-solving skills. The third theme is that “[l]earning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and with his peers (...)” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90).

Sociocultural factors are essential for development (Vygotsky, 1978) and, drawing from social constructivism, Norozi (2021) argues that “[u]nique sociocultural settings and milieus determine the development of higher psychological functions” (p. 232). Vygotsky (1978) introduced the ZPD concept to support his perspective. Learning must match the level of the child’s development, and to understand this, Vygotsky (1978) distinguishes between two developmental levels: the actual and the potential. The actual level is what a child can do independently (Vygotsky, 1978). The potential level is the ZPD which translates into what the child cannot do alone but can do with the assistance of an adult or in collaboration with peers, that is, “the distance between a child’s actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Norozi (2021) asserts that scaffolding is a clear parallel of the ZPD because a more knowledgeable other extends skills to another. Wertsch (1998) asserts that scaffolding is a dialogic interpsychological mechanism by which knowledge is co-constructed to internalise it.

Social constructivism can therefore guide me to identify potential educational challenges that Italian migrant learners experience in their transition to local schools in Gozo.

## 1.5 Outline of the Thesis

My research will be spread over six chapters. This introductory chapter will be followed by Chapter 2, providing an extensive account of the literature in my area of study. Recent international research about migrant learners and national research will be illustrated to elucidate the transition of migrant learners through a comparative approach.

Chapter 3 provides information about the methods and tools used in this research to collect data, starting from selecting and recruiting participants, continuing with the procedure followed in conducting the audio-recorded interviews and observations, followed by an explanation of the data analysis method, ethical considerations, and a reflection on strengths and limitations. The results that emerged from the audio-recorded interviews with Italian students, their teachers and parents, and the observations in class will be reported in Chapter 4 and discussed thoroughly in Chapter 5. The results will be divided into themes for analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis (TA) method. This will allow me to identify common points and answer the research questions which emerged at the beginning of this research.

The final chapter will present some personal reflections on the findings of this research regarding the transition of Italian migrant learners in local schools and their implications on the Maltese education system, followed by recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2 - Literature Review

### 2.1 Global Trends in Migration

The past two decades have seen an increased interconnectedness between nations, driven by globalisation processes and changes in the international labour market, leading to what has been described by Castles and Miller (2009) as an age of migration. The unprecedented migration movements have had social, political, and economic implications for societies accommodating migrants worldwide.

Covid-19 has also conditioned mobility worldwide due to restrictions on travel. However, a recent report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has shown that the pandemic did not stop migration flows. Furthermore, there were significant migration events and displacements (IOM, 2022). Currently, 3.6% of the world's population are international migrants (281 million), and nearly two-thirds are labour migrants. The economy, geography, demography, climate-weather disasters, and technology shape migration (IOM, 2022). Migrants from developing countries move to countries with larger economies, such as the United States (US), Saudi Arabia, and Germany. Europe witnessed substantial demographic changes between 2011 and 2021, with a 1.7% increase in its overall population. According to Eurostat (2022a) figures, the highest population increase was registered in Malta and Luxembourg, with one quarter mainly due to migration flows.

Amidst these escalating migration trends, migrant children have increased in many countries. Janta and Harte (2016) define a first-generation migrant child as one born in a country other than the one in which they reside. However, a migrant child can also be born

in the country where they reside but whose parents (one or both) were born elsewhere. In Europe, at the start of 2022, there were 6.6 million migrants under 18 who did not possess the citizenship of their European Union (EU) country of residency, representing 8.2% of children living in the EU and 17.6% of migrant residents. The highest percentages of migrant children were recorded among the 0-4 age group (29.8%) and the 5-9 age group (30.1%), with the lowest being among the 15-17 age group (13.9%). The leading hosting countries were Germany (27.6%), France (16.6%), Italy (15.8%), and Spain (14.2%). Thus, almost 3 out of 4 children were migrants. High shares of foreign and stateless children were registered in Luxembourg (46.6%), Austria (19.5%) and Malta (16.3%).

Between 2014-2022, there was an increase of 36.6% in migrant children in the EU as opposed to a decrease in native children (-3.4%)<sup>2</sup> because of citizenship acquisition and the decrease in the birth rate of migrant children. These Eurostat (2022b) figures show that several countries have many students with a migrant background attending local schools.

### **2.1.1 The Maltese Population and Migration**

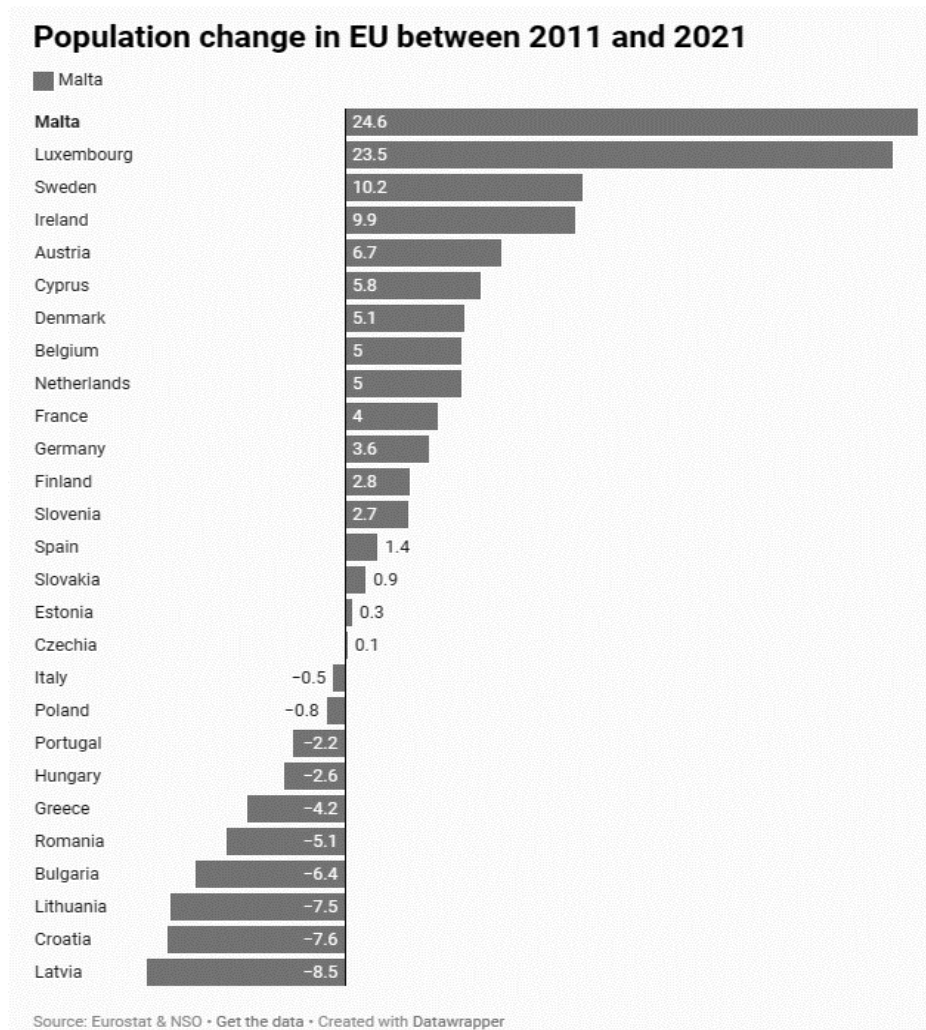
Migratory flows, mixed marriages, student exchanges, and EU enlargement have increased human mobility in Europe. Countries historically known for emigration, like Malta, are experiencing a substantial influx of immigrants. This brought about demographic and social changes (Bezzina & Vassallo, 2019, p. 214) and more cultural interaction between people. On the one hand, recent migration patterns in Malta generated “a sense of

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?oldid=607648#Total\\_number\\_of\\_non-national\\_children\\_in\\_the\\_EU:\\_main\\_indicators\\_in\\_2022](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?oldid=607648#Total_number_of_non-national_children_in_the_EU:_main_indicators_in_2022). Accessed 2022, October 8.

curiosity”, and on the other hand, they gave rise to “a growing sense of uncertainty” (Bezzina & Vassallo, 2019, p. 214). In this section, I will give details about the Maltese population and recent demographic changes due to migration.

A Maltese *National Census of Population and Housing 2021 Report* issued by the National Statistics Office (NSO, 2023) reports that Malta’s current population is that of 519,562 inhabitants. The Maltese population has more than doubled over a century, growing by more than 100,000 over the past 10 years (see Figure 2.1), a growth driven by the increase of foreigners in Malta.



**Figure 2.1.** Population Change in the EU between 2011 and 2021 (Caruana, 2023)

Based on data from the NSO (2023), the Northern District recorded the highest population increase (47%) and the Southern District recorded the least (8.3%). The northern locality of San Pawl il-Baħar almost doubled its population, exceeding 32,000 inhabitants (a 95.4% rise in its population rate) since 2011, followed by Iż-Żebbuġ (Gozo), which comprises the seaside town of Marsalforn, and L-Imsida, with 79.4% and 75.4% respectively.

A total of 14,822 persons immigrated to Malta a year before the census, more than three times the figure reported in 2011. More than one in five residents is foreign, with 115,449 persons, or 22.2%, being non-Maltese citizens (NSO, 2023, p. 30), an increase of more than five times in the share of foreigners since 2011. Foreigners are mainly males, younger than their Maltese counterparts, and almost a third of all foreigners reside in San Pawl il-Baħar, Tas-Sliema, or L-Imsida. Malta's accession to the EU in 2004 increased the level of connectedness to other European countries, and this favoured migration to Malta, especially from countries having English as an official language.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Malta became a port of hope for third-country nationals (TCNs) arriving by sea. TCNs include non-EU citizens who have entered legally in Malta and irregular migrants such as asylum seekers. By the end of 2021, TCNs were predominantly males, and the top three origin countries were the Philippines, Serbia, and India.

Malta remains the most densely populated country in the EU, with 1,649 persons per square kilometre compared to 100 persons per square kilometre in the EU. Malta is 3.4 times more densely populated than Gozo.

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<sup>3</sup> Malta - Migrants & Refugees Section (migrants-refugees.va). Accessed 2022, October 10.

### 2.1.2 Italian Nationals in Malta

While historically the British used to be the most significant foreign workforce in Malta, Italians today constitute Malta's largest foreign workforce community (Caruana & Pace, 2021). This coincides with the fact that the *Anagrafe Italiana Residenti all'Estero* (AIRE) reported a 3% increase in Italian nationals on the move. According to Fondazione Migrantes (2022), this mobility of people involves at least 180 countries, with Sicilians being the largest Italian community abroad. In addition, increasing trends in EU nationals working in Malta include those from other nations, such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary (see Table 2.1).

Rank	Country	Dec-12	Dec-15	Dec-18	Dec-21
1	ITALY	1,269	4,479	9,469	11,096
2	UNITED KINGDOM	2,511	3,629	5,120	0
3	BULGARIA	762	1,825	2,538	2,596
4	ROMANIA	463	1,128	2,039	2,433
5	HUNGARY	448	1,109	1,579	1,651
6	GERMANY	596	920	1,436	1,703

**Table 2.1.** *EU Nationals in Malta (Jobsplus, Ministry for Education & Employment, MEDE)<sup>4</sup>*

For many Italians, Malta is an attractive host country due to its proximity and historically established relationships for commercial and economic reasons (Brincat, 2011). Moreover, they share the same cultural affinities such as values, traditions, and the Roman Catholic faith. More recently, Malta, as a receiving country, has become more popular because it presents an opportunity to non-English speakers, including Italians, to learn

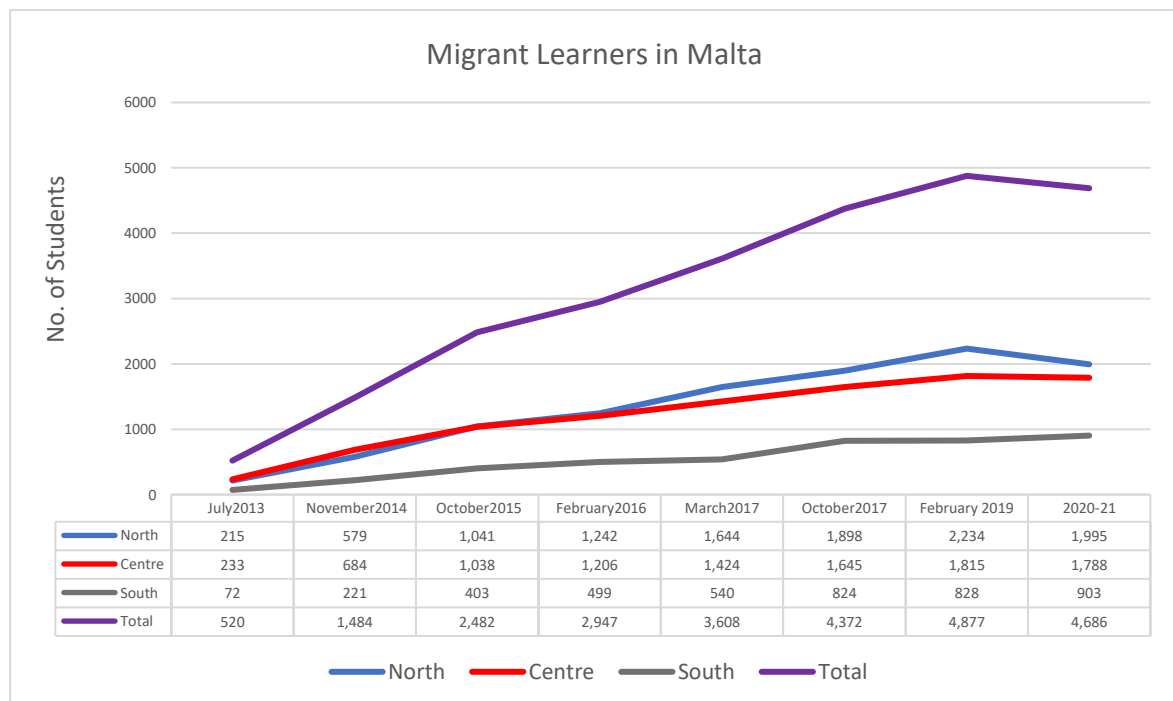
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<sup>4</sup> Jobsplus (gov.mt). Accessed 2022, October 13.

English. The latter is used at most local workplaces and “has an important instrumental function, and offers social mobility as well as better work opportunities, locally and internationally” (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 143).

### 2.1.3 Statistics on Migrant Learners in Maltese Schools

Migration in Malta has led to considerable demographic changes, and as documented by Caruana et al. (2019), these changes have impacted schools. Malta witnessed a significant increase in the total number of migrant learners in compulsory schooling, especially in Maltese state schools, ranging from 520 in 2013 to 4,686 in 2020-2021, as indicated by the Migrant Learners’ Unit (Figure 2.2). The limited presence of migrant learners in church and independent schools creates segregation because it can determine the social position and cultural capital of individuals (Bourdieu, 1977).



**Figure 2.2.** *Migrant Learners in Maltese State Schools from 2013 to 2021*

*(Caruana, 2021, Linguistics Circle Lecture)*

The largest groups of international students between the ages of 5-18 in Maltese state schools during the scholastic year 2020-2021 were Italian, Syrian, and British. The most prominent groups in non-state schools were Italian, English, and Libyan (see Table 2.2 below). According to this data, there are learners from EU countries (mainly Italy), Eastern countries (Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary), and also learners from North African countries (Syria, Libya). The recent NSO (2022) report confirms this data.

Rank	Student nationality (state schools)	Number	Student nationality (non-state schools)	Number
1	Italian	833	Italian	254
2	Syrian	510	English	217
3	British	507	Libyan	168
4	Serbian	502	Chinese	127
5	Libyan	411	Russian	105
6	Bulgarian	345	French	78
7	Romanian	189	Swedish	70
8	Indian	162	German	63
9	Hungarian	146	South Korea	48
10	Philippine	142	American (USA)	47
11	Polish	120	Spanish	40
12	Ukrainian	110	Greek	37
12			Polish	37
13	Macedonian	106		
14	Nigerian	100	Ukrainian	36
15	Pakistani	91	Irish	31
16	Albanian	88	Serbian	28
17	French	73	Canadian	26
18	Eritrean	71	Indian	25
19	Chinese	69	Bulgarian	21
20	Russian	63	Belgian	20
20	Swedish	63		

**Table 2.2.** *Migrant Pupils in Maltese Schools between 2020 and 2021*

*(Caruana, 2021, Linguistics Circle Lecture)*

A study conducted by Iorio (2019, p. 2012), on Italian migrants in Malta, indicates that 19% of Italian migrants in Malta are between 0-18, mainly originating from Sicily. This

indicates the strong presence of children of Italians in Malta attending compulsory schooling in Maltese schools at all stages, from kindergarten up to the post-secondary level (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 152; Caruana & Pace, 2021, p. 148). Figures in the table below (Table 2.3) also indicate a significant increase (+16% between 2017 and 2019) in Italian migrant learners in Maltese schools. These also include children having one parent of Italian origin. Between 2018-19 and 2019-20, 727 learners (around 65%) of the Italian children in Malta aged 3-5 or 5-11 were attending kindergarten and primary schools, implying that “most Italian students are young and that numbers could increase further in the future as they move to secondary schooling” (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 152).

<b>School Sector</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>
State (public) schools	628	758	802
Church schools	25	23	22
Independent (private) schools	275	273	232
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>1,054</b>	<b>1,056</b>

**Table 2.3.** *Italian Migrant Learners in Maltese Schools*

*(Source: Data provided by MEDE in Caruana & Pace, 2021, p. 148)*

## **2.2 Multiculturalism and Super-Diversity**

Today, multiculturalism cannot simply mean a mixture of national and ethnic identities in every society. It is instead a political philosophy shaping public policy to accommodate differences resulting from diversity (Berry, 2011). Many countries’ response to

diversity meant walking away from an assimilationist model while embracing cultural diversity and implementing multicultural policies.

Vertovec and Wessendorf (2010, p. 4) refer to multiculturalism as “a broad set of mutually reinforcing approaches or methodologies concerning the incorporation and participation of migrants and ethnic minorities and their modes of cultural/religious difference”. This thought represents a shift from a model of assimilation to greater recognition of cultural differences. The theoretical, political, and practical implications of this shape decisions and policies in different countries. Kymlicka (2010) analyses multiculturalism in Britain and believes it is a political endeavour that is more concerned with forming new models of democratic citizenship “to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion” (p. 101). Parekh (2006) draws an interesting distinction in the response of a multicultural society to cultural diversity. If it fosters cultural diversity, it is called ‘multiculturalist’, but if it aims to assimilate minorities into the dominant culture, it is called ‘monoculturalist’. In this perspective, although both societies are multicultural, only one is multiculturalist. A multiculturalist society is in opposition to assimilation. Vertovec (2010) advocates that multicultural initiatives aim at:

[...] restructuring institutions towards pluralistic public service provision; putting in place measures to promote equality, respect or tolerance, particularly among the dominant population towards minorities; and providing resources to support the continuity of traditions and identities among immigrant groups. (p. 84)

Rodriguez-Garcia (2010) argues that the assimilation model is based on monoculturalism, where cultural diversity is only acknowledged in the private sphere, at

home, while assimilation is promoted in the public sphere. When the public sphere does not acknowledge cultural diversity for social cohesion and equality, “the result is the profound marginalisation and social exclusion of sections of the population” (Rodriguez-Garcia, 2010, p. 255). For him, the multicultural model fosters cultural diversity both in the private and public spheres. Hence, this debate between multiculturalism and assimilation is based on two spheres: the public and the private. Modood and Werbner (1997) identify the public with the national and the private with the ethnic, stating that both spheres are bound to experience dialectical tensions because there are no clear-cut boundaries between national, local, and individual rights.

Modood and Uberoi (2013) point out that people’s identities are being disturbed by “globalisation, minority-nationalism, supra-national institutions and so on” (p. 131). Moreover, the large mix of different ethnicities makes it more difficult for societies to be inclusive. People share features of their homeland, such as language, norms and values, and question their identity. Institutions help people to make sense of their nation through multicultural education in schools, and “policies of multiculturalism are thus a means to help make a nation’s identity and people’s sense of it more inclusive over time – but not wholly different” (p. 132).

Failure to achieve social cohesion has given rise to a backlash to multiculturalism, particularly in European countries, both in policy-making and political discourse (Modood, 2005). Events such as 9/11 fostered ‘community cohesion’ rather than a multicultural policy (Modood & Uberoi, 2013, p. 134). In recent years, anti-immigration discourse increased, and policies undermining multiculturalism are growing in post-racial Europe (Sayyid, 2017). The rise in political leaders and parties with a strong anti-immigrant agenda, such as the *Lega*

and *Fratelli d'Italia* in Italy proves this (Mikelatou & Arvanitis, 2019). The increased support towards far-right political parties has been evident in elections held since 2013 in several European countries, such as Italy, Germany, and Spain (BBC News, 2019).

Vertovec (2007) coined the term “super-diversity” to confer a new meaning to multiculturalism, often used to refer to different ethnicities living together in the same place. The author sheds light on new challenges for multiculturalism, mainly the new and diverse country of origin of migrants, multilingualism, increase in religious pluralism, different migration channels and immigration status, the shift from a male-dominated to a more female-dominated type of migration, and the age shift of migrants (Vertovec, 2010, pp. 87–89). This gives rise to a dynamic interaction between various elements creating “super-diversity” (Vertovec, 2007), which refers to societies’ linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity. Many European communities today are characterised by super-diversity, often conditioned by stereotypes and prejudice. Vertovec (2010) argues that “[s]uper-diversity is a term intended to capture a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything many migrant-receiving countries have previously experienced” (p. 87).

Although this concept is often addressed in relation to changing migration patterns, many scholars from a wide variety of fields argue that other complex dynamics and processes are forming super-diverse societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Scholars are thus struggling to find new understandings of super-diversity.

### **2.2.1 Multilingualism and Plurilingualism**

Multiculturalism has repercussions on education and brings linguistic diversity in schools. The consolidation of the EU, globalisation, and migration flows to the continent

have impacted the meaning of 'language', both a resource for communication and an indicator of an individual's cultural identity. Language has a strategic role in reflecting European values of citizenship and democracy, as also outlined in the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (2012). European member states are committed to constructing language policies with shared standards to promote intercultural dialogue as well as to end discrimination based on language (Caruana et al., 2013, p. 2). Europe aims to detach itself from the 'monolingual habitus' (Gogolin, 1994), and favours plurilingualism.

The Council of Europe (2007) provides a guide for the development of language education policies in the document entitled *From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education*, thereby defining linguistic diversity under two concepts: 'multilingualism' and 'plurilingualism'. On the one hand,

multilingualism refers to the presence in a geographical area, large or small, of more than one 'variety of language,' i.e. the mode of speaking of a social group whether it is formally recognised as a language or not; in such an area individuals may be monolingual speaking only their own variety. (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 8)

On the other hand,

plurilingualism refers to languages not as objects but from the point of view of those who speak them. It refers to the repertoire of varieties of language which many individuals use, and is therefore the opposite of monolingualism; it includes the language variety referred to as 'mother tongue' or 'first language' and any number of other languages or varieties. Thus, in some multilingual areas, some individuals may be monolingual and some may be plurilingual. (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 8)

Individuals change the languages and varieties spoken and written over time since they can acquire new languages and lose old ones. This guide is therefore concerned with holistic language education, including that of the first language, as well as the education for the maintenance of the language of immigrant communities, not only foreign, second, or minority languages. The aim is to create policies in schools, tertiary education and lifelong learning to enable all Europeans to become plurilingual and to share a feeling of belongingness and democratic citizenship (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 9). The guide adds that it is not simply a matter of pedagogy but carries political significance since language reflects community tensions. There must be the promotion of plurilingualism to counter-balance market forces, which often lead to homogeneity and limit the individual's potential.

Plurilingualism is considered almost a higher-order skill enabling greater mobility for better leisure and work purposes, fostering political and social inclusion in all European countries. However, linguistic diversity, 'multilingualism', is viewed as a threat to the integrity of member states (Caruana et al., 2013, p. 2). This is a dangerous position given that Europe experienced changes in its demography, political structure, and economy because of the considerable mobility and internalisation it has seen in recent years. Currently, the European Union has 24 official languages, and to these, one must add the many minorities and regional varieties enriching the European linguistic scenario. Since the monolingual model is now outdated and plurilingualism constitutes an essential resource for mobility, especially at a policy level, multilingualism can optimise its strategic value by guaranteeing democratic participation, social cohesion, and equal opportunities for all the individuals who live and work in the EU (Caruana et al., 2013, p. 3). However, multilingualism is not free from challenges, especially in education, as outlined by Hélot (2012):

. . . although it is now accepted that multilingualism is the normal state of society as most people in the world speak more than one language, linguistic diversity remains a difficult challenge to address in education systems built on the ideology of linguistic uniformity, an ideology engrained in the formation of European nation-states. Conceived as linguistically and culturally homogenous spaces, our schools find it difficult to question their monolingual habitus, and to imagine that multilingual practices could become the norm in education as well. (p. 215)

The *CEFR Companion Volume* refers to the importance of developing mediation, plurilingual/pluricultural competence to “contribute to the quality inclusive education for all and to the promotion of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism” (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 11). Caruana and Pace (2021) argue that “[t]he development of tools to heighten language awareness, together with practices such as translanguaging, provide a holistic approach to language education, by stressing their commonalities, for instance, rather than their differences” (p. 150).

### **2.2.2 The Maltese Sociolinguistic Context**

Malta’s position between Sicily (93 km) and Tunisia (288 km) historically attracted dominant rulers who settled on our islands: Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Angevins, Aragonese, Castilians, and the Order of St. John. These historical events and Malta’s geographical location have led to continuous cultural and linguistic contact, which shaped a complex linguistic scenario in Malta by assimilating various elements from different languages into one language: Maltese.

After a short French occupation of Malta, throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British Crown came to rule. It brought about a drastic process of Anglicisation which the elite in favour of the Italian language staunchly opposed. This process gave rise to a long battle known as the Language Question (Hull, 1993), a time in which Dun Karm Psaila and other local authors took the opportunity to start publishing literary works in Maltese in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Maltese underwent a slow standardisation process until it was conferred an official language with English and Italian in 1934. Italian was removed in 1936 but became popular again with the advent of Italian television in 1957, which captured the attention of the Maltese public.

The National Council of the Maltese Language and the Department of Maltese at the University of Malta carried out a national survey in 2021 on the use of Maltese and English in different social domains. According to this survey, Maltese is the first language of 97% of Maltese citizens between 18-80 years of age. The Maltese language is therefore still highly dominant locally, even though many Maltese nationals are now exposed to English (via social media) and to a lesser extent to other languages, mainly Italian. Maltese and English are used in different domains, but they complement each other: Malta is officially bilingual, with both Maltese and English used for daily communication.

Nevertheless, the sociolinguistic roles and function of these two languages vary: as a spoken language in Malta, English is sometimes associated with *tal-pepè* 'snobs' or *qżież* 'show-offs' (Caruana, 2011, p. 31). In contrast, the exclusive use of Maltese coupled with poor competence in English is associated with the uneducated or those belonging to low-income families (Caruana, 2011, p. 32). Significant differences in the use of Maltese and English are also evident in schools characterised by a scholastic diglossia (Caruana, 2011).

English is the preferred language to teach many subjects in schools, and it is the official language of the University of Malta (Brincat, 2022).

Although English is used in various sectors, at work and in education, Maltese represents “one of the strongest markers for locals’ identity” (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 143). Since two official languages are used for daily communication, code-switching and mixing occur in specific situations, especially in everyday speech (Vella, 2013). This dimension reveals “the complex linguistic behaviour of Maltese speakers” (Vella, 2013) who are bilingual in Maltese and English or bidialectal in Maltese and one of its dialects. Alongside the use of Maltese and English, migrants introduced new languages in the Maltese linguistic scenario. Third-country nationals (TCNs) who live and work in Malta have also increased substantially, comprising legal and illegal immigrants.<sup>5</sup> The interplay of Maltese and English is a struggle for non-nationals who are not raised in Malta because “[t]hese demographic changes and the inclusion of TCNs do not only involve achieving competences in Maltese and/or English, but also developing metalinguistic competence relating to the way these languages alternate in everyday use” (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 145).

Migrants and TCNs need to learn Maltese and English as quickly as possible for social participation, as indicated by the number of non-nationals attending language courses offered by the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) in the Lifelong Learning Centres.

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<sup>5</sup> [jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/labour-market-information/foreigners-data#title1.3](https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/labour-market-information/foreigners-data#title1.3). Accessed 2022, October 15.

### 2.2.3 The Multilingual Classroom in Malta

Caruana et al. (2019, p. 332) underline that although there are several English-speaking students, many migrant learners, even from bordering countries like Italy, may encounter language-related issues that can be an obstacle for inclusion. Maltese and English are used interchangeably, and in Maltese schools, they are used as mediums of instruction (Camilleri Grima, 2013). Migrant learners in Maltese schools must become familiar with the different contexts and ways Maltese and English are used. Caruana et al. (2019) add that:

[m]igrant learners, in fact, come face to face with an intricate linguistic situation locally because, as explained earlier, both Maltese and English are used in different domains and choice of one language over another depends heavily on context and interlocutors. (p. 332)

The MERIDIUM survey indicated that from a sample of 164 students attending three Maltese primary schools, 14.6% did not speak Maltese or English at home, highlighting extreme heterogeneity and linguistic diversity. The MERIDIUM project, according to Caruana et al. (2013), outlines that “[i]t is clear that integrating children with a migrant background into Maltese schools is not an easy task” (p. 336). Caruana et al. (2013) reported similar analogies among migrant learners in six European countries: Italy, Malta, Spain, Portugal, Slovenia, and Romania. The primary focus was on teaching and learning English, even in countries such as Italy, Spain, and Slovenia, where the presence of English is not strong. Teachers tend to use English as a *lingua franca* with migrants (Caruana et al., 2019, p. 334), but this may not necessarily lead to effective inclusion.

Maltese is frequently used in local schools, especially in informal situations. It is also an important language for socialisation purposes. Caruana et al. (2013) state that migrant learners' "lack of knowledge of the Maltese language and the fact that they feel less 'Maltese' than their fellow students, sometimes causes difficulties when placed in local schools" (p. 337). Cassar and Attard Tonna (2018) reported serious episodes of racism towards female migrant learners in two Maltese state schools. One involved a migrant girl who was not proficient in Maltese. Often, migrants are also teased because of how they speak and how their foreign accent is perceived. Migrant learners in Maltese schools have to deal with a diversified linguistic context because:

these children are faced with a diversified language context in which the patterns of interplay between Maltese and English, in different domains are not easily discernible to those who have not been born in Malta or who have lived in the country for a relatively short time. (Caruana et al., 2013, p. 336)

Micallef Cann and Spiteri (2014) reported that teachers in Maltese schools must face a situation in which students must understand Maltese and English to gain access to the curriculum. The teachers in Cassar and Attard Tonna (2018, p.16) claimed that they code-switched all the time in the presence of migrant learners, adding that having to repeat what they said was very time-consuming and tiring.

Migrant learners in Maltese schools are somewhat invisible, as the MERIDIUM project suggests, especially in relation to policy-making and planning (Caruana et al., 2013). Schools often need more support to implement programmes to maintain heritage languages for practical reasons. Caruana et al. (2019) illustrate how bilingual programmes in some

schools' curricula often promote the English language. Other languages are excluded even though they are spoken by learners in Southern European countries (Eurydice, 2017, as cited in Caruana et al., 2019). Cummins (2015) refers to migrant learners in the US and argues that they should be encouraged to maintain their heritage language and not lose their identity by becoming monolingual English speakers. This is important, especially for migrants who move out of their homeland very young and then live in the host country for several years.

However, other factors come into play: data from the MERIDIUM project (Caruana et al., 2013) reveals that even parents of migrant learners were hesitant when asked whether schools should contribute to the maintenance of their heritage language because they fear it could have detrimental effects on learning context languages, especially English.

### **2.3 The Schooling Experience of Migrant Learners in Malta**

Specific factors can determine the inclusion of migrant learners in schools such as nationality, ethnicity, age, language, religion, personality, friendships, and participation in extra-curricular activities (Bezzina, 2017). Bezzina (2017) interviewed 17 EU migrant learners to explore their educational experience and findings from this study suggest that:

those migrants who migrated and settled in Malta at a young age, and whose country of origin has direct connections (linguistic, historic and cultural) with Malta, tend to have a smooth integration process. This is further accentuated when physical markers and characteristics, as well as religious beliefs are similar to those belonging to the mainstream. (p. 43)

Migrant learners are 'camouflaged' without renouncing their individuality when, for instance, they learn the Maltese language, because in this way they are no longer perceived as 'foreign' (Bezzina, 2017). Physical characteristics and similar beliefs facilitate inclusion to the mainstream culture, and personality traits also help migrants to overcome difficulties for inclusion. All these factors encourage participation in school activities, build friendships, and speed up inclusion. Moreover, Bezzina (2017) notes that "language skills are a fundamental aspect for integration" (p. 43). Findings imply that learning English is very important for migrant learners, particularly for three reasons: to settle in school, make new friends, and succeed. In addition, Bezzina (2017) reveals that those migrants who were also able "to learn the Maltese language tend to have an additional advantage, and subsequently an easier integration" (p. 44). Bezzina (2017) also claims that migrant learners are more relaxed and participative in informal settings, such as in non-academic subjects like Physical Education (PE) and Personal, Social and Careers Development (PSCD). As a result, migrants are not only camouflaged but they are perceived as locals by their peers and educators.

Chircop (2018) investigates the educators' constructions of social diversity, drawing on Modood (2005), who wrote extensively about power issues involved in and around political multiculturalism in British society. Chircop (2018) argues that "[e]ducators' constructions of Maltese students position the students in different strata, incidentally reflecting their constructions of Maltese society" (p. 299). Educators may construct an image, either consciously or unconsciously, of how a student should be academically, socially, and physically. Those who fall in this image are the "insiders" and those who do not are the "others". The link between social class, forms of capital, and educational attainment

is rarely questioned, and educators often put the blame on students themselves and their parents.

Chircop (2018) claims that, in Maltese schools, “[m]igrant students were constructed as unable to learn due to language barriers, and the only possibility they saw, was segregating the migrant students, at least until they learned the language of instruction” (p. 299). Chircop (2018) argues that migrant students are often not considered part of the school community in terms of belonging. Some educators are in favour of diversity outside the school but not in favour of it inside the classroom because they are reluctant to adapt their teaching to become more inclusive. According to Chircop (2018), this ‘same way’ is often “the one size fits all pedagogy, where teaching is aimed at the mainstream learner, who happens to be the one whose identity is privileged over the others” (p. 301). Based on her data, the interviewed educators took “an assimilationist stance in most instances, further engaging in oppression of the groups which they considered as different” (Chircop, 2018, pp. 304-305).

On the same grounds, Cassar and Attard Tonna (2018) draw on Duff (2002) in a local study. Their study indicates that teachers perceived migrant learners as ‘weak’, attaching a ‘deficiency label’ to them because of their language difficulties. According to the teachers participating in this study, migrant learners needed more attention than others in the class. Maltese students were frustrated that the teacher had to speak in English because of migrants. Migrant learners struggled in other subjects too, such as numeracy, because of their inadequate English language proficiency. Despite efforts by the school to facilitate language learning, their limited class participation often resulted in passive resistance and disruptive behaviour. Being ‘different’ led to a general feeling of being left out. Some migrant

girls reported friendship problems because Maltese students initially approached them and then returned to their friends. Another source of pressure for migrant girls were the examinations because the language barrier fosters a fear of not doing well: “they felt they could not perform to the maximum, due to problems in understanding the lesson notes and communicating their answers” (p. 14).

Cassar and Attard Tonna (2018) indicated that teachers often had to prepare supplementary material to replace textbooks and provide additional support to migrants who may have different needs than natives. Chircop (2018) and Cassar and Attard Tonna (2018) report that educators needed support and training to address the challenges of socially diverse and multicultural classrooms. Furthermore, Bezzina and Vassallo (2019) argue with respect to multicultural education that “school leaders, as the ones having executive powers, lead very lonely lives and need to be and feel supported in their endeavours” (p. 225).

### **2.3.1 The Transition of Italian Migrant Learners in Maltese Schools**

Italian migrant learners represent one of the largest communities of migrant learners in Maltese schools, as discussed in section 2.1.3. Caruana and Pace (2021) suggest that the inclusion of Italian migrant learners in Maltese schools is conditioned by levels of competence in Maltese and English. This can determine the active participation of these learners during lessons even of Italian itself. Although the experience of Italian migrant learners is generally considered positive, adapting to the new educational system may affect participation and motivation, as reported by Baschiera and Caruana (2020) and Palazzo (2020). Moreover, although Italians cultivate a sense of pride towards their country and

origins, data from previous research (Palazzo, 2020) shows signs of distancing from their mother tongue. In this section, I will delve into the educational challenges of Italian migrant learners: the maintenance of the Italian language, language barriers, socialisation, tracking and attainment, and inclusion or the lack of it.

### **2.3.1.1 The Loss/Maintenance of the Heritage Language**

One of the main challenges of migrant learners in their transition to a new school in a new country is the maintenance of the heritage language. Diskin (2020) explains that “[m]any first, second or third generation migrants may live or grow up with a language within the home which is different to the language of the community they now live in” (p. 2). In the case of Italian migrant learners, the problem of maintaining their language could, apparently, be contained: Italian is the most popular foreign language in Maltese schools and it is generally spoken widely in Malta despite a recent decline (Caruana & Pace, 2015). Due to Malta’s proximity to Italy, there is easy access to Italian means of communication, which fosters the Italian community’s contact with their language (Caruana & Pace, 2021, p. 158), and most importantly the use of the Italian language at home among parents and siblings.

Palazzo’s (2020, pp. 50-56) data provides insights on Italian language maintenance, indicating that although Italians are proud of their origins, all the participants chose not to study their mother tongue at school. Since Italians mainly use English at school, Palazzo (2020, p. 52) provides some examples of language attrition, where students use English words instead of their corresponding versions in Italian. Some examples are: *parents’ evening, detention, locker, gym* and *timetable* and intra-sentential switching such as *quella di*

*design e technology [l'insegnante] dà sempre...tipo detention. Solo perché magari ti scordi l'apron.* [the teacher of Design and Technology always gives...detentions. Just because you do not bring the apron.]. Learning Maltese and English should not distance migrant learners from their native language because the latter may give these students a greater sense of belonging and well-being. Three interviewed teachers in Palazzo's (2020) data state that Italian migrant learners intervene during lessons to showcase their own identity. Thus, if adequately motivated, Italian migrant learners can be an asset to the class of Italian in helping the other students to learn this language. Another teacher points out that in the case of Sicilian students, they use their regional variety and may find it hard to adapt the pronunciation to standard Italian.

On the basis of local research (Palazzo, 2020), Italians have high considerations about Malta and they try to learn Maltese and English to adapt to our schooling system. However, others wish to return to Italy because of an attachment to their origins. The limited use of the Italian language at school may be overwhelming to migrant learners who are still integrating into a new country's school-life. The regular use of English may hinder the learning process and development, also affecting migrant learners' heritage language and unique identity. "Without intergenerational mother tongue transmission ... no language maintenance is possible. That which is not transmitted cannot be maintained" affirms Fishman (1991, as cited in Romaine, 2006).

### **2.3.1.2 Language Barriers**

English, as a *lingua franca*, is the main language used in multicultural and multilingual classrooms, as discussed in section 2.2.3. Baschiera and Caruana (2020)

conducted focus groups with Learning Support Educators (LSEs) about the inclusion of Italian migrant learners and indicated that “English is the preferred medium for Italian children to communicate with their schoolmates” (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 157). The only exception is Sicilians who find lexical similarities between Sicilian and Maltese and show an interest in learning it.

Caruana and Pace (2021) argue that “learning the language/s of the context in which they are immersed represents an important step for better inclusion” (p. 156) because both Maltese and English are used as languages of instruction and vary in their functions and context (Panzavecchia & Little, 2020). Palazzo (2020), a teacher of Italian who holds both Italian and Maltese nationalities, provided an account of her experience when she arrived aged 12 with her family in Malta, after spending her childhood in Sicily. Palazzo (2020, p. 4) recounted her struggles in her transition to Maltese schools because of linguistic difficulties, and she felt more included when she learned Maltese and English.

Palazzo (2020, p. 89) recalls that many students thought she was less able because she had to repeat the school year and they bullied her. Few Italian migrant learners were in Malta and induction courses were unavailable, so she attended Maltese and English private lessons (Palazzo, 2020, p. 90). Her research findings indicated that although Italians feel included in local schools, it is not easy for them to attain good proficiency levels in Maltese and English. From their findings, Baschiera and Caruana (2020) argue that fewer difficulties in learning Maltese and English occur when relocation to Malta occurs at kindergarten level. However, “difficulties increase, especially in relation to learning the Maltese language, when children join primary schools, and more so when they are older” (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 157).

Language difficulties often represent problems in scholastic performance. Caruana (2020) collected data from twelve teachers of Italian and established that Italian migrant learners in Maltese schools refrain from participating and involving themselves actively during lessons due to the language barrier. Italian migrant learners can follow lessons when they are held in English, but they find it very difficult when they are in Maltese, as expected (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 155). As referred to earlier in section 2.2.3, teachers code-switch in Maltese multilingual classes (Camilleri Grima, 2013), but “[c]ode-switching between Maltese and English does not enable them to follow lessons better, or to participate more actively” (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 155) because migrant learners fail to grasp the dynamics of it.

As a result, teachers and LSEs who are competent in Italian sometimes act as linguistic mediators by switching to Italian when these learners lack proficiency in Maltese and English to facilitate their inclusion in Maltese schools (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020; Caruana & Pace, 2021).

### **2.3.1.3 Socialisation**

Caruana and Pace (2021) argue that “competence in the language/s of instruction is fundamental both for scholastic attainment and socialisation” (p. 156). Italian migrant learners mainly communicate in English with their peers because “[t]he Maltese language undoubtedly represents a challenge for these students, even insofar as their socialisation is concerned” (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 156). This generates a situation wherein Italian migrant learners spend out-of-class time, particularly during assemblies, breaks, or after school hours with foreign students rather than with Maltese peers because local students

often use Maltese for informal communication (Basciera & Caruana, 2020, pp. 157-158). Caruana (2020) revealed that students in secondary schools often do not mix with their Maltese peers at school; they form groups between themselves or with other foreigners. Moreover, Basciera and Caruana (2020) highlight that “[t]his community is also characterised by the maintenance of the mother tongue, especially among younger cohorts” (p. 158).

#### **2.3.1.4 Tracking and Attainment**

Caruana (2020) indicated that tracks (i.e. grouping students by ability) often characterise the Maltese education system, which is entirely different from the Italian one, arguing that: “[t]he Maltese education system is quite competitive (peer pressure), even though today it is less selective and discriminatory than in the past” (p. 438).

Basciera and Caruana (2020) argue that especially at secondary level, “deficiencies related to language competence in Maltese and/or English, students of Italian nationality who achieved well in schooling in their country are placed in lower bands or sets in secondary schools” (p. 159). Their motivation is affected negatively and they face a situation where schooling does not develop their full potential. Similarly, in Moskal et al.’s (2010) study, in relation to Polish migrant learners in Scotland, students stereotyped Scottish schools as easy, implying that they were not being effectively assessed and not even pushed to reach their full potential. Teachers often have low expectations of what migrant learners can achieve, which may lead to a misjudgment of the appropriate pace for learning. Polish is

the most common non-English language in Scottish schools, as reported by Moskal et al. (2010), and it is still the case today.<sup>6</sup>

Camozzi (2020) recently analysed the impact of the German education system on second and third-generation Italian migrant learners in German schools. She indicated that the German streaming system directs Italian learners to vocational or 'special' schools, often because of poor attainment and insufficient proficiency in the German language: "[t]he children of migrants often end up in these schools, meaning that their language problems put them at a lasting disadvantage from a very early age" (Camozzi, 2020, p. 160). Vocational schools in Germany are attended by socially disadvantaged second-generation migrants. Camozzi (2020) exposed the challenges of the German education system to students and their parents and argued that parental involvement is vital. She added that the educational disengagement of Italian migrant learners may impact career choice in the future and may result in a lower sense of belonging and even civil disaffection to German society: "[t]he poor performance at school and political/civil disaffection of the descendants of the first Italian migrants are linked to their sense of belonging to German society" (Camozzi, 2020, p. 166).

Difficulties of migrant learners' attainment are confirmed by the Eurydice report issued by the European Commission (2019) entitled *Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe*, in which it is stated that migrants often underperform and thus leave schooling because they experience educational disadvantages rather than enhanced opportunities.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/331886/most-common-non-english-languages-spoken-in-scottish-schools/>. Accessed 2022, October 24.

### 2.3.1.5 Inclusion

Baschiera and Caruana (2020) interviewed LSEs in kindergartens, primary, and secondary sectors in Malta, moreover, they suggested that inclusion is very problematic when Italian migrant learners transition to secondary schools where even cases of bullying and segregation occur, but less problematic when Italian migrant learners are younger.

Data analysed by Caruana (2020) showed that teachers were pleasantly surprised that Maltese students tried to interact with Italians in class when inclusive practices were implemented, possibly implying that Maltese teachers are not used to this type of teaching. Another drawback is that sometimes, Italian migrant learners have marked regional pronunciation and do not speak standard Italian, making it harder for Maltese students to understand them. Sometimes it is challenging for Italian migrant learners, for example Sicilians, to use and speak standard Italian. Therefore, this study has shown the fact that including Italian migrant learners may present problems, even in Italian lessons, considering that in this context they will be learning their L1 as an L2/foreign language. Interestingly, a teacher participating in this study drew a comparison between the public and the private sector, stating that, in their school (private), collaborative practices based on the communicative approach for better inclusion are adopted. Caruana (2020) concludes that “[t]he reference to a context of ‘collaborative learning’ of this teacher represents a useful didactic approach to deal with the problems highlighted by other teachers” (p. 440) (my translation).

Even though teachers are inclined to use pedagogical strategies which promote inclusion, these are only employed occasionally. As a result, inclusion does not always occur

effectively since supporting Italian migrant learners often requires verbal and non-verbal cues rather than adopting a more effective pedagogy. Baschiera and Caruana (2020) point out that “[c]ultural and linguistic mediators, on the other hand, are still absent from the Maltese educational system and LSEs and teachers must often take on roles which could be assigned to these mediators” (p. 154). Nevertheless, Palazzo (2020) concluded that there have been improvements in the inclusion of Italian migrant learners in local schools and “Italian migrant learners have shown that their Maltese educational experience is positive, despite their difficulties, be it with teachers, students and school environment” (p. 88) (my translation).

Teachers do their best to create an inclusive learning environment but only find support occasionally. Parents of Italian migrant learners are interested in their children’s education, and despite language barriers, they offer moral and educational support. However, the parents in Palazzo’s (2020) study assert that they sometimes feel excluded because of the language barrier since communication between them and the school is often in English. One Italian migrant parent had to attend English private lessons because she lacked proficiency in it and felt embarrassed having to rely so often on her son when she had to communicate with the school (Palazzo, 2020, p. 72). Hence, learning Maltese and English for inclusion psychologically affects Italian migrant learners and their parents.

Given that the number of migrant learners in Maltese schools has been rising steadily and classrooms have shifted from bilingual to multilingual, reforms and policies for the effective inclusion of migrant learners started being introduced recently (MEDE, 2019a; MEDE, 2019b). Some steps towards the inclusion of migrant learners have therefore been

taken in Malta. The following section will discuss what has been done so far to reflect upon decisions taken and explore wider approaches.

## **2.4 The Migrant Learners' Unit (MLU)**

Through its mission statement, the MLU promotes the inclusion of the newly arrived in Malta in their transition to Maltese schools. The MLU values the well-being of those involved by providing a holistic educational journey and supporting migrants in their linguistic and sociocultural needs. It also acknowledges the importance of involving all stakeholders in the educational experience of these learners. For example, the MLU indicates the importance of involving families in their children's education from the early years because "[s]tudies have shown how investment in the early years pays off by reducing problems faced later on during the schooling lifetime of the learner" (Facciol et al., 2015, p. 11).

The MLU, established by MEDE in 2014, in line with the *Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools Route to Quality Inclusion* (MEDE, 2019a), offers induction programmes for learners whose proficiency levels in Maltese and/or English are insufficient to follow mainstream lessons (Vassallo Gauci, 2017). These courses are held at school or the nearest point to the child's school. There are two main options for this support which include a pull-out system, where students are drawn out of their classroom to give them extra support to learn Maltese and/or English as needed in small groups, or going to a school (hub) where induction classes are held for a maximum period of one scholastic year or until the students are proficient enough in Maltese and English or both to join mainstream classes, even though sometimes students are sent to mainstream classes earlier (Vassallo Gauci, 2017).

However, it must be noted that, despite the growing number of migrants in schools, there were no hubs for teaching Maltese and English up to 2022 in Gozo.

The main aim of the MLU is that of grouping migrant learners who need support for their inclusion in Maltese schools. Vassallo Gauci (2017) explains that proficiency in the language of instruction is a condition for the inclusion of migrant learners in schools and their educational attainment. Although the MLU focuses on teaching Maltese and English or both, there are other issues affecting the schooling experience of these learners because when they are drawn out of their class, issues of segregation come into play affecting the social sphere of the students and perhaps increasing inclusion barriers. In fact, both the induction hubs and the pull-out system can be quite controversial, and they are systems which may reap fruits at a practical level, but they are, by their own very nature, not inclusive. In fact, they are not widely found in other European countries. Nevertheless, Palazzo (2020, pp. 70-71) reports that parents of Italian migrant learners view induction hubs and the pull-out system favourably and claim that they may have helped their children's transition.

Palazzo (2020) indicates that many migrant learners who attend induction courses offered by the MLU still claim they find it challenging to be included into mainstream education because in the induction hubs learners do not learn a number of curricular subjects. Reflecting on her personal experience and research, Palazzo (2020, pp. 14-17) argues that an intercultural education can be more inclusive for migrant learners to teach them the language used at school and their Maltese peers. The latter may learn how to include and help migrants in their class. This adds more value to the educational experience of all students because it helps them to get to know each other more. Caruana and Pace

(2021) argue that “[w]hile the induction hubs provide a space for migrant learners to improve their competence of the context languages, adequate in-class support should also be provided and sustained” (p. 161).

## 2.5 Education and Language Policies in Malta

Language policies in Malta often emphasise the use of Maltese and/or English in schools due to the strong presence of both languages in Malta and Gozo. The *National Minimum Curriculum* (NMC) (1999) considers bilingualism as the basis of the Maltese educational system, and it outlines a dichotomy between Maltese and English as languages of instruction in schools. The NCF (2012) states that linguistic fluency and competence should be in Maltese and English, respectively, and somewhat in foreign languages. However, in 2012 the NCF did not go into language use directly and left the doors open in the sense that it would be up to various institutions to determine the use of Maltese and English, especially in the Early and Junior Years. The NMC and NCF highlight the importance of introducing foreign languages through a language awareness programme in the primary and secondary years. However, the issue of the growing linguistic diversity in Maltese schools needed to be addressed comprehensively by these policies.

Malta’s accession to the EU in 2004 led to a greater influence of EU policy-making, with documents being drafted at a supra-national level, often in collaboration with other EU states (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 146). An example of this is the *Language Education Policy Profile* (Council of Europe, 2015). This document is mainly descriptive rather than critical. Although it refers to the established language policy direction to use Maltese and English to teach different subjects, it does not state that this was ignored by teachers in

Malta “as both languages are used simultaneously in most pre-primary, primary and secondary schools” (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 146). Reference is then made to the NCF (2012) and to the *Learning Outcomes Framework* (LOF), finalised in 2016, whereby language education shifted to a more dynamic approach which is not based on the separation of Maltese and English as languages of instruction (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 146).

With regard to migrant learners, the Council of Europe’s *Language Education Policy Profile* for Malta (2015) distinguishes between elite and non-elite migrants: the former are “British nationals, families (usually European) of business people and diplomats, for example” (Council of Europe, 2015 p. 50); the latter, for which there are fewer provisions, are “non-valued language groups” (Council of Europe, 2015, p. 50). Although this distinction and its implications are not analysed in detail, the Council of Europe (2015) document provides a realistic picture of the language situation in Maltese schools. This is because, more essentially, “[it] refers to the languages of migrant learners and to the pedagogical uses of code-switching and mixing” (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 146) and paves the way for further policy-making.

The first example of breaking away from previous policies which were too compartmentalised is the *Language Policy for the Early Years* (LPEY) published in 2016, which refers to bilingual development and education. However, it also mentions gaining competences in ‘other’ languages besides Maltese and English: “[a]t several stages, whether explicitly or implicitly, reference is made to multilingualism, and reflections and proposals do not only cover bilingual policies” (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 147). Nonetheless, no measures to foster the home languages of migrant learners are outlined and “less is said in

terms of how – in practical terms – this is to be linked to the teaching and learning of the two official languages” (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 147).

A second example is the *Belonging Migrant Integration Strategy & Action Plan, Vision 2020* (2017), which is the first strategy for the inclusion of migrants in Malta. This policy refers to specific plans to be accomplished through a national Integration Unit, wherein TCNs can learn Maltese and English. This is part of a pre-integration certificate that eventually entitles TCNs to submit their integration request. Although the first step to accessing local services is to learn Maltese<sup>7</sup> and English, “this document paves the way for the establishment of a framework to train professional cultural mediators to be deployed as required in public services” (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 147). Nevertheless, as in the LPEY, measures on language maintenance still need to be included.

The Education Committee of the Ministry for Education in Malta has been working these last couple of years to provide a new language policy for the late primary years, entitled *A Language Policy for the Junior Years* (LPJY) (2023). This policy has been built for public consultation on the LPEY (2016) and proposes a similar vision regarding language development and education. However, it fleshes out some of the points mentioned in the LPEY within the context of the ever-growing linguistic diversity in Malta. The authors declare that this selected policy strives to “foster positive attitudes towards Maltese, English and other languages” and to “develop competences in Maltese and English in different settings” (p. 4). This is because the two most critical educational issues in this language policy, which are very difficult to address in policy-making, are: (1) the use of code-switching/mixing in

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<sup>7</sup> Provisions to teach Maltese as a foreign language were implemented by the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) in 2019.

classrooms for didactic use; and (2) the highly multilingual and multicultural contexts found in most classrooms today. The proposed 'solution' to address these highly cumbersome issues, which at the same time are very critical in today's context, involves the implementation of bilingual education practices in the primary years (7-11 years) to improve the language skills of all students in their primary cycle of education.

Parents and other caregivers are the first educators of children. This policy recommends that they foster bilingualism at home by engaging in a meaningful dialogue with their children and promoting a literacy-rich environment to develop the full bilingual potential in the Maltese and English of their young ones. Likewise, teachers and senior management teams need bilingual education training and ongoing professional development. In recent times, Malta has been experiencing increasing migration from EU and non-EU countries due to labour market demands, but also growing mobility between countries. Thus, foreign language teaching and learning have become essential in light of educational changes with children of migrant background who can speak more than one language and attend Maltese schools.

As a result, some recommendations in this policy underline that teacher educators should train teachers in language mediation and translanguaging to strengthen languages in the current situation. Teachers must be prepared to support children with diverse linguistic needs in schools.

## **2.6 School and Classroom Intervention Strategies**

Schools must ensure to offer equal education and foster a welcoming environment that is safe and supportive to everybody. Practices to promote inclusion of the newly arrived vary across countries and schools. Some schools have some degree of autonomy to design curricula which reflect cultural, ethnic, and faith diversity (Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019, p. 12). Many schools effectively provide academic and linguistic support to facilitate transition and inclusion in the host country's schools (OECD, 2015, as cited in Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019, p. 12). Countries like the Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia, Scotland, and Montenegro place migrant learners in mainstream classes for all lessons, but other countries, including Malta, place them in preparatory classes (European Commission, 2019). Although these classes provide migrant learners with more time to learn the language, they may have implications for their inclusion in school and reduce the time to learn other subjects. Some projects, mentoring programmes, or strategies involving parents were essential for migrant learners (European Commission, 2019); the next section will feature some examples.

### **2.6.1 Peer Support and Mentoring Programmes**

A particular method to help migrant learners is peer support which can take the form of mentoring. This form of cooperative learning supports the inclusion of migrant learners in multicultural environments. Manzoni and Rolfe (2019, p. 13) shed light on an EU project entitled *Intercultural mentoring tools to support integration at school* (INTO) involving five countries (UK, Spain, Cyprus, Poland, and Italy) wherein young people (13-19 years) with a migrant background were trained as mentors to support younger migrants. This project

developed guidelines to implement the mentoring programme, a toolkit for teachers that can be followed during the training process, and a toolkit for mentors.

Another practice is the buddy scheme which involves a peer who volunteers to be a buddy to a migrant peer by offering one-to-one support in helping the migrant learner who just arrived to become familiar with the new system, pass on knowledge about the school, and help with any difficulties (Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019, p. 13). Forest et al. (1993) developed the so-called 'Circle of friends' in North America as a tool for inclusion. It is an approach that works by forming a support group around peers experiencing difficulties at school because of a disability, difference, or behaviour. This process is based on the peer mobilisation of a group of students who help a vulnerable pupil by building a relationship with them and meeting regularly to solve problems. Along with the same principles of the 'Circle of friends', there is the 'No Blame approach' (Robinson & Mains, 1997). The school identifies a student going through a challenging time at school; a support teacher then trains children to be responsible for the peer facing a challenging time at school to make them feel safe and welcome.

These strategies envisage creating a positive school climate for all students. However, it should be noted that none of these schemes are officially mentioned in national policies nor put into practice in Maltese schools.

### **2.6.2 Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Strategy**

Translanguaging as co-learning (Garcia & Wei, 2014) offers a new perspective to optimise learning. For Baker (2011), translanguaging means "[m]aking meaning, shaping

experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two [or more] languages” (p. 288). Translanguaging refers to natural language practices employed by bilingual and multilingual speakers, who consider languages hybrid repertoires, in opposition to separated constructed systems (Baker, 2011; Garcia, 2009). Teachers supporting this idea can provide students with a reading text or an audio in a language they understand in the classroom, allowing them to make meaning and expand their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Thus, teachers may help students draw from their entire linguistic repertoire in discussions, brainstorming sessions or oral presentations. At the same time, the target language can be promoted for the presentation of the final product or assessment purposes (Panzavecchia & Little, 2020). A study by Duarte (2016) examines how students use translanguaging when interacting in the learning process. Duarte (2016) claims that students translanguage both in private and in-class talk, especially when confronted with more challenging tasks. Most importantly, students use translanguaging through their interactions to scaffold meaning, show higher-order thinking, and solve tasks together. Duarte (2016) concludes that effectively using students’ linguistic repertoires in a collaborative environment can provide a better content-matter education.

Panzavecchia and Little (2020) explain how merging translanguaging into pedagogical practices may help mitigate challenges in multilingual and multicultural classrooms. This strategy enables children to reach their full potential as they feel free to communicate in the language they feel more comfortable in (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Students’ participation and interaction during lessons increase when using their entire linguistic repertoire since they

feel less self-conscious (Park, 2013). Translanguaging also further helps students develop their creative and critical skills to inquire and express ideas (Wei, 2011).

Teachers need to be trained to guide the learners to see the benefit of this strategy for learning as most often they do not feel they are prepared to face such challenges and strive to address the linguistic and cultural needs of the multilingual classroom out of empathy rather than professional skill (Caruana & Scaglione, 2017). European countries such as Finland and Germany encourage translanguaging as a pedagogical tool, and even the LPJY (2023) policy in Malta mentions it, as discussed earlier. However, Panzavecchia and Little (2020) outline that although plurilingualism is encouraged, the term *translanguaging* does not feature in the latest European Commission (2019) report.

Learners of foreign nationality, including Italians, can bring much more to the classroom. Translanguaging can be the way forward in a linguistically and culturally diversified society to promote inclusion and equity in an environment where all students can learn (Caruana & Scaglione, 2017). Baschiera and Caruana (2020) suggest promoting language awareness to appreciate linguistic diversity and encourage multilingual practices, including maintaining the heritage language and translanguaging.

### **2.6.3 Parental Involvement**

The term 'parental involvement' is generally defined by a common distinction between home-based and school-based involvement. Manzoni and Rolfe (2019) outline parental involvement areas, including "support parents give to children at home, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, parental participation in school activities, involving

families as volunteers, contact with schools to share information and involvement in school governance” (p. 16).

Studies have shown that communication between the home and school is crucial in supporting children’s education. Hamilton (2013) identifies factors shaping this relationship, such as language and cultural differences, lack of familiarity with the host country’s education system, family structures, and social cohesion. An exploratory study investigating the school and parent relationship of children moving from Eastern European countries to the UK found that the parents’ expectations of schooling did not match those of the UK education system (Christie & Szorenyi, 2015). The main problems were communication difficulties and a lack of understanding of the British education system, which left these parents powerless to contribute to the school. Although schools organise various activities to engage migrant parents in school life, some participating schools in Manzoni and Rolfe’s (2019, p. 32) study claimed that migrant parents’ engagement is very difficult because it is a matter of building relationships.

In the case of Malta, as mentioned earlier, many policies try to address the educational needs of migrant learners rather than those of their parents. Very little documentation takes into consideration the inclusion of the parents of migrant learners in society and, more specifically, in their children’s education. The parents’ role is marginally considered as these are rarely encouraged to participate in their children’s education. Nevertheless, Falzon et al.’s (2012) findings suggest that the parents of migrant learners take an active role in their children’s education by, for instance, attending parents’ day and school activities. The document *Parents’ Guide to the National Inclusion Policy and Framework in Maltese Schools* (MEDE, 2019c) outlines guidelines for parents to assist their children’s

transition and inclusion at school, such as involving themselves in school activities, keeping good contact, or creating a community of parents to support each other.

Facciol et al. (2015) refer to parents as the persons primarily responsible for taking decisions for their children upon arrival to Malta or during the scholastic year. However, the role of parents of migrant children is often reduced to providing general information about their children's nationality and background or explaining their children's attainment (Janta & Harte, 2016). The inclusion of their parents thus conditions the inclusion of migrant learners in schools. Baschiera and Caruana (2020) argue that inclusive pedagogies involving parents and the larger community could give rise "to schools which are open to internal reflection as they reach out to the society which they are part of" (p. 160). The national policy entitled *A National Inclusive Education Framework* (MEDE, 2019b) underlines the importance of collaboration with parents to involve them in the school's community by having an active role in the school's decision-making and, in this respect, all contributions are to be respected. Other initiatives include:

- Communication by the school with parents should be in a language they understand.
- The school should offer support to parents in accessing support networks and resources.
- The contribution of every individual is sought, respected, and facilitated during meetings.
- Providing spaces where parents can meet and where parental participation must be evident.
- Parents should be provided with training opportunities to enhance their parenting skills to better support their children's learning at home and school.

- The schools should provide regular feedback to parents about their children's progress.

(MEDE, 2019b)

On paper, these initiatives look promising for the inclusion of parents in local schools, but this is a complicated process and perhaps an unrealistic one, since in order to implement them effectively, schools must rely on building a solid relationship with parents of migrant learners entrusting each other.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Successful transition and inclusion of migrant learners in education can be supported when institutions work together at macro, meso, and micro levels. Bezzina and Vassallo (2019) indicate that “[...] Maltese school leaders possess an impending sense of social justice, but are finding it difficult to translate this into elaborate leadership processes which instigate the changes necessary to effectively sustain the education of migrants” (p. 225).

Italian migrant learners are now the largest community of foreigners in Maltese schools. Although they generally feel included in Maltese schools, Baschiera and Caruana (2020) argue that they face considerable educational challenges in their transition to secondary schools. These include language barriers, socialisation problems sometimes coupled with bullying and segregation, issues of participation in class, and motivation to learn as well as maintaining their heritage language. In this new situation, in local schools triggered by changing migration patterns, teachers and parents alike feel helpless as, at

times, they have neither the expertise nor the resources to support migrant learners.

Caruana and Pace (2021) suggest that:

Support from linguistic and/or cultural mediators, professional figures which are still absent within our educational system, is urgently required in some cases, even though teachers and LSEs who speak Italian sometimes intervene to help Italian learners feel more welcome, especially during the initial stages of their schooling in Malta. (p. 161)

The initiatives that teachers are taking in class, such as group work, collaborative learning, and teaching material which is of interest to Italians and Maltese students, can help Italian migrant learners to participate more during lessons and get them more motivated to learn, as documented in Caruana and Pace (2021). Translanguaging can be a valuable approach to help Italians use their language and reach their full learning potential (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020; Caruana & Scaglione, 2017). For this to happen, it should be a priority for the Directorate and schools to provide educators with continuing professional development (CPD) to help them respond better to the new realities in the Maltese classroom.

Palazzo (2020) has shed light on aspects of language attrition because there is evidence of some young Italian adolescents who opt for English, even when they could use Italian. However, students often continue to use their dialect or regional variety at home and with peers of the same nationality, making it difficult for the Maltese to understand them (Caruana, 2020). Migrant learners with cultural or linguistic affinities may benefit from peer support programmes, which are still missing in Maltese schools. For example, Italians

attending a school can volunteer to help new arrivals. Families can involve themselves more in their children's education in the host country, raising concerns and voicing opinions.

It is essential to raise awareness about the geographical nearness and cultural similarities and differences between Italians and Maltese. Caruana and Pace (2021) argue that this would be the first step towards inclusion. Referring to various Italianisms in the Maltese language could foster a greater sense of belonging among Italian migrant learners to the Maltese education system.

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This study aims to investigate how young Italian migrant learners experience their transition when moving from their home country to Malta and define any educational challenges they face when settling in local schools in Gozo. This chapter will explain in detail how I conducted this research. First, the choice of a qualitative research approach will be discussed. After that, I will describe how I gained access to the schools where I carried out my research and recruited the participants. Then I will write about the specific tools I used in this research, providing reasons why these were used. This is followed by an explanation of how the data was gathered. I will also discuss how I analysed the data collected through thematic analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Then, I discuss the validity and reliability criteria of this research. Following a discussion of some ethical considerations, I conclude with a reflection on the strengths and limitations of this research.

### **3.2 Qualitative Research Approach**

Vygotskian constructivism (1978) provides the theoretical background of this research, as discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.4. The objective of this research is to understand the transition to a host country's schooling of Italian migrant learners as seen and interpreted by the participants themselves socially in a world "in which the researcher works with the world as it is construed by its participants (i.e. bottom-up)" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, as cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 34). This thesis adopts a qualitative research method based on semi-structured interviews with Italian migrant learners, their teachers

and parents about the transition, and the educational challenges these learners faced or are still facing when moving to Maltese schools. Observations of Italian migrant learners in classes of English, Maltese, and Mathematics were also carried out to gain richer insights about their educational challenges, namely language barriers, participation in class, and work completion.

Qualitative research can be defined as people constructing their reality in interactions with their social worlds and it tries to answer participants' understandings of their own experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Cohen et al. (2018) argue that "[q]ualitative research regards people as anticipatory, meaning-making beings who actively construct their own meanings of situations and make sense of their world and act in it through such interpretations (the constructivist/constructionist premise)" (p. 288). The meanings used by participants to interpret situations are culture and context-bound and "there are multiple realities, not single truths in interpreting a situation" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 288).

For Denzin and Lincoln (2018), "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 43). This means that the qualitative nature of the study does not require a large representative sample. The researcher engages in the research and focuses on the "emic, insider's perspective" (Fairbrother, 2016, p. 75). Interviews are often used to collect data because they allow in-depth explorations of topics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These allow the researcher to obtain authentic data. Observations have also been included to seek patterns in the participants' behaviour in their natural setting where "situations unfold, and connections, causes and correlations can be observed as they occur over time"

(Cohen et al., 2018, p. 544). Given the nature of this research, I am aware of the biases that can interfere with this research.

For these reasons, a qualitative research method was considered appropriate for this study because it allows for more authentic responses than quantitative methods. Moreover, this research involves triangulation of data sources from Italian migrant learners, teachers, and parents within different contexts to include a comparative aspect between different sets of data, also because, as Cohen et al. (2018) argue, “[t]riangular techniques are suitable when a more holistic view of educational outcomes is sought, or where a complex phenomenon requires elucidation” (p. 266).

### **3.3 Sampling Procedure**

Cohen et al. (2018) explain that two different sampling strategies, probability and non-probability, exist in research. A probability sample is a random selection of participants, thus allowing a broader population to participate in the study. In contrast, non-probability or purposive sampling selects a specific portion of the population that can respond to the study at hand. This way, I could ensure knowledgeable responses in the study. In this section, I will first discuss the selection of the schools and then the recruitment of the participants.

Schools were selected after a preliminary exercise was conducted to investigate the number of Italian migrants attending the state secondary schools in Gozo, since the study was based on subjects of this nationality. A secondary school was chosen mainly because, as a secondary school teacher of Italian in Gozo myself, I could relate better to the context in which my subjects were carrying out their education. The state sector was then chosen over

the church sector because most Italian migrant learners have been registered in state (public) schools. In fact, from the information retrieved, 24 Italian migrant learners could act as my subjects. The comparative aspect of this study was sustained by opting for two schools, the Gozo College Middle School and the Gozo College Secondary School, where Italian migrant learners between 11-16 years of age attend school. Heads of schools were contacted personally, and I visited both schools to clarify any queries they had before recruiting potential participants.

Information letters, consent forms, and interview questions were provided in Italian, Maltese, and English versions to all participants. When both schools accepted to assist in my study, I immediately asked each head of school for permission to meet with the Italian migrant learners to inform them about the research and provide them with the information letter and consent forms (see Appendix A). Following the meeting with Italian migrant learners, seven Italian migrant learners handed the signed consent form to the head of the middle school. English, Maltese, and Mathematics teachers were initially sent the information letters and consent forms (see Appendix A) by email. I also spoke to the teachers at the middle school in the staffroom with the help of an assistant head. However, many teachers were reluctant to participate in both schools. Regarding the parents of these learners, four parents gave their consent to participate in an audio-recorded interview and they were all females.

I encountered more difficulties in the secondary school because the pre-established number of three or four migrant learners was not achieved initially since only one learner handed in the signed consent form. However, I kindly asked the head of school to forward an email I had written in Italian to the parents of these learners and, subsequently, four migrant

learners handed in the signed consent form. English, Maltese, and Mathematics teachers were initially contacted by email too, and I organised a meeting at school to inform them about the research, but many did not attend this meeting. Moreover, I was not allowed to go into the staffroom. Then, a guidance teacher helped me out, and I managed to speak to some teachers; I explained to them what this research was about, and they signed the consent forms. Many teachers claimed that they had annual exam corrections and were busy, hence it was very hard to get them to participate. Nevertheless, three teachers of English, Maltese, and Mathematics agreed to participate in this research. Similarly, as with the participation of teachers, parents' participation at the secondary school was limited since only two parents from the secondary school participated in an audio-recorded interview.

Therefore, in my study, I included seven Italian migrant learners from the middle school and five Italian migrant learners from the secondary school. These included participants who have lived in Malta and Gozo for a different number of years, an important factor in order to examine experiences related to transition. The age of the subjects varied and even the classes they were attending: two participants were in Year 7, five in Year 8, one in Year 9, and four in Year 10, as seen in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. I did not involve the Year 11 students because I started this process in February, and these learners were preparing for their examinations.

<b><u>Gozo College Middle School</u></b>				
<b><u>Code</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b><u>Nationality</u></b>	<b><u>Years in Malta and/or Gozo</u></b>	<b><u>Class/Rank</u></b>
1.7	Female	Italian	3 years	7.6
2.7	Female	Italian	8 years	7.5
1.8	Female	Italian	8 years	8.5
2.8	Female	Italian	3 years	8.9
3.8	Female	Italian	4 years	8.9
4.8	Female	Italian	3 years	8.9
5.8	Male	Italian	7 years	8.8

**Table 3.1.** *Italian Migrant Learners at the Gozo College Middle School*

<b><u>Gozo College Secondary School</u></b>				
<b><u>Code</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b><u>Nationality</u></b>	<b><u>Years in Malta and/or Gozo</u></b>	<b><u>Class/Rank</u></b>
1.9	Male	Italian	9 years	9.5
1.10	Male	Italian/Romanian	5 years	10.6
2.10	Male	Italian	5 years	10.3
3.10	Male	Italian	6 years	10.8
4.10	Male	Italian	4 years	10.8

**Table 3.2.** *Italian Migrant Learners at the Gozo College Secondary School*

Both heads of schools supported me, and I recruited six teachers and six parents for the interviews, as seen in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. The six teachers participated in lesson observations.

<b><u>Gozo College Middle School</u></b>		
<b><u>Code</u></b>	<b><u>Subject teacher</u></b>	<b><u>Number of years teaching this subject</u></b>
1.1	Teacher of Mathematics	14 years
1.2	Teacher of English	21 years
1.3	Teacher of Maltese	7 years
<b><u>Gozo College Secondary School</u></b>		
1.4	Teacher of English	23 years
1.5	Teacher of Maltese	36 years
1.6	Teacher of Mathematics	17 years

**Table 3.3.** *Teachers at the Gozo College Middle and Secondary Schools*

<b><u>Gozo College Middle School</u></b>		
<b><u>Code</u></b>	<b><u>Region of Origin</u></b>	<b><u>Number of years in Malta and/or Gozo</u></b>
2.1	Piedmont, Italy	8 years
2.2	Lazio, Italy	4 years
2.3	Lombardy, Italy	3 years
2.4	Campania, Italy	7 years
<b><u>Gozo College Secondary School</u></b>		
2.5	Sicily, Italy	6 years
2.6	Sicily, Italy	6 years

**Table 3.4.** *Italian Migrant Parents with Children at the Gozo College*

A total of twenty-four participants were therefore interviewed. The interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. These interviews occurred at the participants' convenience between February and March 2023. All participants were informed about the details of this research and voluntarily accepted to take part. In Section 3.4, the research tools will be discussed.

### **3.4 Research Tools**

The data gathered entailed the use of two research tools: interviews with Italian migrant learners, their English, Maltese, and Mathematics teachers, as well as their Italian migrant parents, coupled with observations of Italian migrant learners during English, Maltese, and Mathematics lessons. Despite having a small sample, these research tools were chosen because they provide in-depth information (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Interviews can provide richer data because, as Braun and Clarke (2013) argue, you can listen and critically reflect on what is said simultaneously. Observations are “a continuum from the observation of uncontested facts to the researcher’s interpretation and judgement of situations” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 542).

#### **3.4.1 Interviews**

Interviews enable participants “to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 506). Cohen et al. (2018) argue that interviews are a flexible data collection tool because they enable the researcher to gain information through verbal and non-verbal language. The interview as a research method has been defined as “a conversation between two people which is designed to obtain research data to meet

objectives of research” (Cannell & Kahn, 1968, as cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 508). One advantage of interviews is that they can explore a phenomenon deeper; a disadvantage is that they are time-consuming and prone to subjectivity from the interviewer and the interviewee.

The interviews of this research (Appendix B) were semi-structured with a pre-determined set of themes and open-ended questions which, however, were “tailored to each individual interviewee and the responses given, with prompts and probes” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 511). For this research, the interviews with Italian migrant learners, which lasted for about 30 minutes each, provided me with insights about the transition and educational challenges of these learners. The interviews with the English, Maltese, and Mathematics teachers of these learners, which lasted for around 45 minutes, shed light on the teachers’ perception of Italian migrant learners. In contrast, the interviews with the Italian migrant parents gave me insights about the transition from a comparative perspective and the difficulties their children experienced in their transition to schools in Malta and Gozo. Three languages were used when conducting interviews. Maltese and English were used with the teachers, allowing for the option to choose a preferred language. Most teachers preferred using Maltese. Italian was used with the students and their parents.

The interviews with the Italian migrant learners were carried out during school hours. Four students were interviewed in pairs, allowing for greater interaction. However, the others were interviewed one-to-one because it was impossible to interview them together. I also realised that students started repeating the same answers when they were interviewed together. Finding a quiet place, especially at the middle school, was difficult because of space limitations. Despite finding a quiet place, the participants were sometimes

distracted by the bell or noise during lesson transitions. The students were excited and somewhat anxious because they did not know what questions I would ask them, but I ensured that they felt at ease and relaxed as much as possible. In some cases, I had to simplify the questions for the students because they did not understand a technical term in Italian.

The teachers chose the most convenient date, time, and place for the one-to-one interviews. Their interviews were conducted face to face during school hours, during a free lesson. By contrast, finding a date and time for the interviews with parents was much more complicated. This is because most Italian migrant parents work for long hours and they are often unavailable. I called the parents from the office of the assistant head at school, spoke to them in Italian and fixed an appointment for a meeting on Zoom because it allowed greater flexibility. Five interviews out of six with Italian parents were conducted on Zoom. One parent decided to come to school and do the interview face-to-face. Most parents were women, except for one. All the interviews were audio-recorded and password-protected. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed because a code was assigned to each participant.

These interviews were transcribed manually on a Word document (Appendices D, E, F). It was a lengthy process, however, this exercise helped me assimilate and understand the information I obtained. I showed care, respect, and gratitude to each participant for disclosing personal information about their children's education with me. The lesson observations took place between these interviews, as explained in the next section.

### 3.4.2 Observations

Another tool used in this research is lesson observation in classes of Italian migrant learners. The observation was deemed appropriate together with semi-structured interviews because “it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather first-hand, ‘live’ data *in situ* from naturally occurring social situations rather than, for example, reported data and second-hand accounts” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 542).

For this research, I conducted twelve semi-structured observations, eight at the Gozo College Middle School and four at the Gozo College Secondary School, as seen in Table 3.5. Unfortunately, I could not conduct more observations at the secondary school because of time restrictions. Moreover, some teachers at the secondary school were uncomfortable having me observe their lessons. This limited the information I could gather. I informed the participants about my availability, and then I emailed the teachers to fix a date and lesson to observe the Italian migrant learners in English, Maltese, and Mathematics lessons. The observations entailed attention and listening skills. Before I started the observations, the information letters and consent forms were collected from students and parents. Since several students and parents accepted and I had the go-ahead of teachers, the observations started as planned. The Italian migrant parents knew that their children would be observed in class. Hence, observations were overt. Classes ranged from Year 7 to Year 10. The lesson duration was of 40 minutes.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Year 7</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Year 10</b>
<b>English</b>	1	2	0	1
<b>Maltese</b>	2	1	1	1
<b>Mathematics</b>	1	1	0	1

**Table 3.5.** *Observed Lessons according to Year Group*

Italian migrant learners in the class ranged from 1 to 4 students. At the middle school, I observed females only since the parent of one male participant did not consent to observing her son in class, probably because he was the only Italian student in class. At the secondary school, I observed males only since all participants at the secondary were males. These students varied in abilities and class ranking. The class in which there were three to four Italian migrant learners at the middle school was a low-ranking class (class 8.9), and the class in which there were two Italian migrant learners at the secondary was also a low-ranking class (10.8). The English, Maltese, and Mathematics teachers of class 10.8 at the secondary school did not give their consent to observe their lessons. One participant who attends this class has dyslexia, dyscalculia, and is hyperactive. He has a Learning Support Educator (LSE), and I have been told that he has behavioural difficulties. At the middle school, I observed the high presence of migrant learners in the same class where a cluster of four Italian migrant learners was present. The other research participants were mainly in the middle rank or higher, indicated in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2, where I observed a greater presence of local students.

When I entered the classes, some teachers introduced me as a guest, and in others, I introduced myself as a visitor. The students acknowledged my presence, but I refrained from

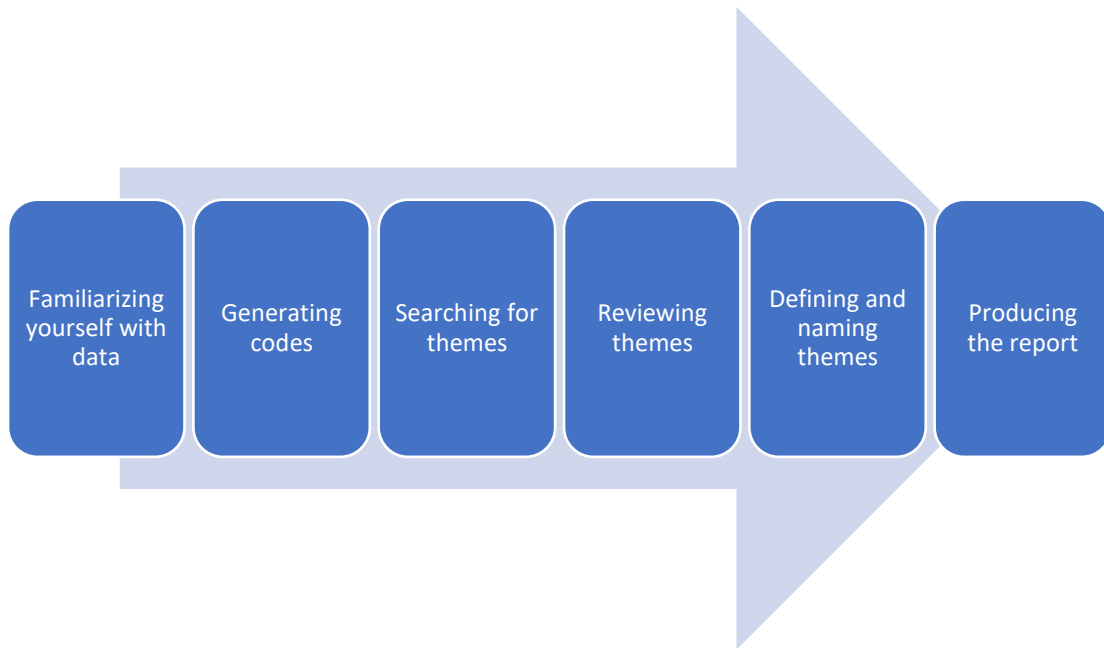
any verbal interaction with them. I wrote my fieldwork notes while observing the Italian migrant learners and their interaction in class with their teacher and peers. I had previously prepared an observation schedule with specific themes: language barriers, participation in class, and work completion (Appendix C). Questions related to these themes were also prepared before starting the fieldwork in each school. These field notes included a “description of the events, activities, and people” (Creswell, 2012, p. 217) and reflections on the educational challenges of Italian migrant learners in local schools. No observation was recorded for anonymity.

Classroom observations gave me more insights into these learners’ transition and class interaction. It was particularly revealing in the case of those learners who may not be proficient in Maltese and English and perhaps struggle more than others at school. These observations also offered me greater insights into the teachers’ challenges when teaching migrant learners, especially those of an Italian nationality. To reap the benefits of the observations, I organised and coded the field notes as required by the process of TA, as discussed in the next section.

### **3.5 Thematic Analysis**

The essential goal of this research is to generate data to answer the research questions. For Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis “can offer a more accessible form of analysis, particularly for those early in a qualitative research career” (p. 81). Thus, I conducted a thematic analysis after data collection from semi-structured interviews and observation field notes that, according to Braun and Clarke (2013), “give voice to a topic or a group of people” (p. 174)—in this case, Italian migrant learners, their teachers, and parents.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis as a qualitative method for data analysis involves a "systematic six-phase process" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 178) and it was followed in this research project. The following figure shows the different phases of this method.



**Figure 3.1.** *Phases of Thematic Analysis (Own illustration from Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)*

While transcribing the data from interviews, I included verbal and non-verbal information because the transcript needed to be "true to its original nature" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). The interview questions of this research were already subdivided into categories based on the themes identified in previous research, as discussed previously in the literature review. Unlike inductive coding, theoretical 'deductive' thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the specific area. It tends to provide more of "a detailed analysis of some aspect of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84), in this case, about the transition of Italian migrant learners. Although this saved time, the transcriptions were read several times, and I jotted down notes to extrapolate

meaning. Different codes were put into a relationship based on the researcher's interpretation to identify other potential themes or sub-themes. All findings were gathered in order to formulate data analysis and find precise answers to the research questions.

The data interpretation of interviews is coherent and logical to the transcriptions of interviews to avoid a mismatch between the data collected and data analysis which would interfere with the quality of the research findings. The field notes derived from observations in class were organised into themes, as discussed in section 3.4.2, to allow personal reflections and ensure credibility. Validity and reliability issues will be tackled in the next section.

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability**

Cohen et al. (2018) argue that "if a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless" (p. 245). As researchers, we must ensure that the research tools are valid. Guba and Lincoln (1989, as cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 247) argue in favour of replacing positivist notions with 'authenticity' in qualitative research. Although Agar (1986, as cited in Silverman, 1993) argues that qualitative data collection secures a certain degree of validity and reliability, because of its nature with intensive personal involvement and in-depth responses, Silverman (1993) notes that individuals are in no privileged position for interpretation to ensure validity in research.

Data selected must represent the sample or the data set and the field, that is, address content and construct validity. Cohen et al. (2018) assert that sincere, extensive, and well-formulated responses can ensure validity in qualitative research. According to Cohen et

al. (2018), “[a] practical way of achieving greater validity in interviews is to minimize bias as much as possible” (p. 271). I sometimes asked additional questions during the interviews to fully understand the participants’ responses. Sometimes, I even repeated the questions because I was aware that, especially for teachers, they would answer what they think is best rather than what they truly feel, something which leads to bias and unreliability (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 492). The language was simple to understand, and rewording to simplify questions was done when necessary, particularly with the students. Triangulation was used because it offered a space for “multiple voices or truths that relate to the topic” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 286). There were no deviations from the topic during the interviews, and prompting was done, even though all participants knew they could refrain from answering questions.

During the observations, I observed the Italian migrant learners and jotted down notes on my prepared observation schedule, which helped me focus on the most important aspects. Although the teachers and the students felt my presence in class, I did not intervene at any point to not affect the lesson and the interaction between the teacher and the students. I interpreted the data collected from interviews and observations with truthfulness, responsibility, and respect without altering any responses or observations to ensure validity and reliability in this research.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

A piece of research that considers ethical issues must demonstrate “rigour and quality in the design, conduct, analysis and reporting of the research” (Morrison, 1996, as cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 112). Before commencing this research, the permission from

the FREC Committee and the Directorate for Curriculum, Research, Innovation, and Lifelong Learning was issued. The heads of schools at the Gozo College Middle and Secondary Schools were informed about this research and received the permission letters. The information letters and consent forms (Appendix A) were handed to students, parents, and teachers. For the Italian students and parents, the documents were in Italian; for the teachers, both versions in Maltese and English were provided. All forms had Maltese and English versions. Since informed consent involved the participation of minors, the process entailed two stages: consent was sought from adults for the participation of their children and then from the young migrant learners themselves. This study was conducted with unfamiliar volunteer students, parents, and teachers. To ensure that all “participants really do understand the implications of research” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 125) and that they would not feel pressured and obliged to participate, they were provided information about the topic and the research aims. All participants handed in the consent forms at the Heads’ office and confirmed that they agreed to participate. No participant refused to participate after giving consent.

The principles of confidentiality and anonymity were respected. As Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest, using pseudonyms is important to maintain anonymity. The participants’ names in this research were not revealed nor identifiable because I assigned a numerical code to each participant. The semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded, and all files were password-protected and will be destroyed after completion of the study. The teachers and parents scheduled with me all the appointments for the interviews according to their and my availability. The teachers also chose when it would be best for them to observe the lesson. During the interviews and the observations, cordiality and respect were maintained.

The questions were asked clearly and without judgement. However, I explained to all the participants the importance of sincere answers. Every participant's answer was respected since, as Creswell (2012) claims, the researcher must focus on "maximizing good outcomes and minimizing risk" (p. 22). There was no risk of harm during this research.

For reciprocity purposes, Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that "[r]esearchers should never lose sight of the obligations they owe to those who are helping" (p. 137). As a result, a summary of the research findings of this dissertation will be handed to the research participants. Moreover, I have maintained a good relationship with all the research participants to show them appreciation rather than detachment for their contribution to this research.

### **3.8 Strengths and Limitations**

This research was a great learning opportunity because I could understand more about the challenges of Italian migrant learners in their transition to local state schools in Gozo. However, this research encompasses both strengths and limitations.

This study is limited because of the small number of participants and schools. Temporal constraints limited the fieldwork because I could not interview or observe more participants. The interviews and observations were very time-consuming, limiting the gathered information. Moreover, an enormous amount of data is collected from the interviews, making it even more difficult to analyse. Other limitations of this research include the fact that the knowledge generated from this study cannot be generalised to large populations of migrant learners. Participants' experiences are subjective and offer a partial

picture of the constantly changing situation. Moreover, other migrant learners who are non-Italians and Maltese students are not involved in this research, even though it would be interesting to investigate how native students look at migrant learners in class, including Italians. The researcher was aware of subjectivity, hence the findings were reported as faithfully as possible to ensure credibility, and no deviations from the data collected were made for the objectives of this research.

The strengths of this research include the in-depth interviews, which allowed me to collect richer data from the participants who could give their direct testimonies about the transition experience in secondary schools in Gozo. Moreover, the observations were an additional research tool that provided me with more information about the challenges of these learners in the classroom context since what they say may not necessarily match what is happening. Triangulation of participants was also a strength in this research because data collected was gathered from multiple sources of information about the educational transition of these learners. These multiple sources involved the students themselves, the English, Maltese, and Mathematics teachers, as well as the parents of these learners. The data collected from Italian migrant parents gave me valuable information about these learners' transition from a comparative perspective.

Despite its limitations, this research shed more light on the studied topic from the semi-structured interviews with Italian migrant learners, their teachers, and parents. Moreover, the observations helped me to get in touch with the real situation of these learners, who may have a distorted perception of how schooling and education in Malta cater for their inclusion.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

Although it is not statistically representative, this research provided more insights into the transition of Italian migrant learners and provided further understanding in relation to recent research carried out locally on Italians in Malta. The qualitative method of this research and “a rigorous thematic approach can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97). In the next chapter, I will report the findings of the audio-recorded interviews and lesson observations of Italian migrant learners.

## Chapter 4 - Results

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will be reporting the results of my fieldwork at the Gozo College Middle and Secondary Schools. As I explained in the previous chapter, a qualitative approach has been adopted for data collection through audio-recorded interviews and observations. I will first give an account of the details from the audio-recorded interviews and then continue with the data analysis of observations in the class of Italian students. The participants in the interviews include students, teachers, and parents. For this reason, the results are subdivided into three categories: students, teachers, and parents.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is adopted in the analysis of the transcribed data because it is a qualitative method used “for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data” (p. 79). For data analysis, a deductive coding approach was used. Based on the literature review, I had previously coded a set of themes in the interviews. The themes are the transition into the Maltese education system, as well as the students’ educational challenges categorised into participation, language, books, homework and exams, inclusion, and future challenges. The theme of parental involvement is included in the homework section. I also added the theme of losing or maintaining the Italian language and identity. The interviews with teachers and parents also had a pre-determined structure of themes. The transcriptions of interviews are found in the appendix of this research (Appendices D, E, F). Data collected from my observations of Italian students in class allowed me “to discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations”

(Cohen et al., 2018, p. 543). I took down notes that provided insights into language barriers, participation, and work completion.

First, before I delve into the details of the transcribed data, I will give some general but essential information to explain how the school's administration divides the students into various classes and ranks. There are 8 to 10 classes in each year at the Gozo College Middle and Secondary Schools. The students who attend Year 7 at the middle school are placed into the first, second, or third band, according to the benchmark examination results in English, Maltese, and Mathematics. The students in Year 8 up to Year 9, 10, and 11 in the secondary are placed into classroom bands according to the annual examination results. Students usually remain in the same class, thereby avoid having to change their classes every year. However, the school's administration considers the teacher's recommendations to allow a change of classes when necessary. The assistant head informed me that those arriving at the beginning or during the scholastic year are tested on an annual exam paper in the core subjects of the previous year before being placed in a class. The migrant learners exempted from sitting for the Maltese benchmark examination start following lessons of Maltese as a Foreign Language (MFL) at the middle school. Those who sit for the Maltese exam are placed in the various tracks of standard Maltese. The students who join MFL classes can move into a higher rank and even opt to move to a standard Maltese class.

Both schools welcome students regardless of nationality during the whole scholastic year, even if it has already started. These students join the other classes to not miss out on their education.

## 4.2 The Interviews with Italian Migrant Learners

I conducted twelve interviews with students: two with Year 7 students (11 years), five with Year 8 students (12 years), one with a Year 9 student (13 years), and four with Year 10 students (14 years) at the Gozo College Middle and Secondary Schools. For anonymity, I assigned a code to each student, which enabled me to identify the students based on their class, that is Year 7, Year 8, Year 9, and Year 10. The transcriptions can be found in the appendices (Appendix D). Below, I present two tables (Table 4.1 and Table 4.2) with information about the students, such as code assigned, gender, nationality, years residing in Gozo, and class.

<b><u>Gozo College Middle School</u></b>				
<b><u>Code</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b><u>Nationality</u></b>	<b><u>Years in Malta and/or Gozo</u></b>	<b><u>Class/Rank</u></b>
1.7	Female	Italian	3 years	7.6
2.7	Female	Italian	8 years	7.5
1.8	Female	Italian	8 years	8.5
2.8	Female	Italian	3 years	8.9
3.8	Female	Italian	4 years	8.9
4.8	Female	Italian	3 years	8.9
5.8	Male	Italian	7 years	8.8

**Table 4.1.** *Italian Migrant Learners at the Gozo College Middle School*

<b><u>Gozo College Secondary School</u></b>				
<b><u>Code</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b><u>Nationality</u></b>	<b><u>Years in Malta and/or Gozo</u></b>	<b><u>Class/Rank</u></b>
1.9	Male	Italian	9 years	9.5
1.10	Male	Italian/Romanian	5 years	10.6
2.10	Male	Italian	5 years	10.3
3.10	Male	Italian	6 years	10.8
4.10	Male	Italian	4 years	10.8

**Table 4.2.** *Italian Migrant Learners at the Gozo College Secondary School*

The ranking number of the class determines the band in which the students are placed. Band 1 includes the best classes with the point 1 class (for example 7.1 or 8.1) representing the class with high-ability students, band 2 includes the classes with students of average ability, and band 3 includes the classes with low-ability students. The number 1 represents the best rank and the best class while the numbers 8 or 9 represent the low-rank classes. As a result, classes 8.8 and 8.9 at the middle school are in the lower band, and class 10.8 in the secondary school is in the lower band too. Therefore, I can observe that most students participating in this research are in the middle and lower ranks, except for 2.10. Students are placed in specific classes within bands according to their performance in English, Maltese, and Mathematics examinations. By the end of the year, migrant learners who obtain good results can switch rank and move to a better class.

The students residing in Gozo for a longer time, 8 to 9 years, that are 2.7, 1.8, and 1.9 are all in the middle rank. These students have become used to living in Malta and Gozo, and

being here for quite some time might favour their inclusion. However, even 5.8 and 3.10 have lived in Gozo for 6 to 7 years and they are placed in low-ranking classes. This suggests that even though migrant learners may have lived in Gozo for a relatively longer time, they do not necessarily catch up with the other students, possibly because they may continue facing challenges in adapting to the new school environment and education system. By contrast, 1.10 and 2.10, who have been residing in Gozo for 5 years, are in the middle and high-ranking classes, respectively. 2.10 lived for one year in an English-speaking country before moving to Gozo, which helped him gain English language proficiency. Other students, 2.8, 3.8, 4.8 and 4.10, who have been living in Gozo for a shorter time, between 3 to 4 years, are placed in the lower band. Nevertheless, student 1.7, who has been living here for 3 years too has been placed in the middle rank.

After illustrating the main characteristics that distinguish the participants of this research to have a clear picture of the background of these students, in the next section of this chapter I will comment on the themes that emerged, as explained in 4.1, from the transcribed data. However, it must be noted that students 1.7, 2.8, 3.8, 4.8, 1.10, and 4.10 could provide insights on transition from a comparative perspective because they have spent a substantial amount of their schooling in Italy.

#### **4.2.1 The Transition into the Maltese Education System**

Almost all students started attending school in Malta and Gozo in the final years of primary school in Year 5 or Year 6 when they moved to the islands, except for 2.7, 1.8, and 1.9, who attended Maltese schools earlier. In the beginning, moving from the Italian to the Maltese school was far from easy for most students, and they referred to the fact that it was

a new school for them, they had to make new friends, and they did not know a word of Maltese and English.

When student 1.7 started attending primary school in Malta, she was not feeling accepted by her peers “... *prima siamo andati a Malta, poi io non stavo bene con la scuola perché i miei compagni erano cattivi*” [... first we went to Malta, then I did not feel good about school because my classmates were bad] (Student 1.7). For this reason, she moved to Gozo to change schools, and then she felt much better: “*[a] scuola a Malta è stato difficile e adesso qua sto bene*” [school in Malta was difficult and now here I feel good] (Student 1.7). In Gozo, she has made more friends. Student 2.7 has had a smoother transition since she is accustomed to the Maltese education system, having lived for 8 years in Malta and Gozo: “*[p]erché ho dei bravi amici, le maestre sono brave e mi piace l’ambiente della classe*” [because I have good friends, the teachers are good and I like the classroom environment] (Student 2.7).

Nevertheless, although 2.7 and 1.8 are sisters, student 1.8, claims that in Malta she felt much better than in Gozo because she feels excluded by her peers: “*[p]rima ero un po’ esclusa ... lo ero un po’ non so perché [abbassa il tono] ... forse perché sono italiana. Loro non me lo dicevano direttamente*” [first I was a little excluded ... I do not know why [lowers her tone] ... maybe because I am Italian. They did not directly tell me] (Student 1.8). Certainly, this makes her feel a little bit “*a disagio*” [uncomfortable] because she adds: “*[n]el Year 7 mi continuavano a dire “go back to Italy, go back to your country.” O se no mi dicono una bad word in maltese e forse anche al mio paese*” [in Year 7 they continued to tell me go back to Italy, go back to your country. Otherwise, they tell me a bad word in Maltese and

maybe also to my country] (Student 1.8). The Gozitan classmates are “bossy” according to student 1.8 because they often leave her out and they do not care about her.

Student 2.8 also struggled because she could not speak Maltese or English. She claims that *“essendo che non parlavo una parola d’inglese o di maltese perché in Italia l’inglese non è proprio parlato, quindi facevo fatica a capire i miei futuri amici. E poi del resto bene”* [since I could not speak a word of English or Maltese because in Italy English is not spoken at all, I struggled to understand my future friends. As for the rest, it was good] (Student 2.8). She now feels much better because she is learning Maltese, and she has identified similarities with Sicilian, her dialect: *“[n]on faccio più fatica a comunicare, ora un po’ il maltese però lo sto già imparando perché è simile al siciliano”* [I no longer struggle to communicate, a little more with Maltese but I am learning it because it is similar to Sicilian] (Student 2.8). Even 3.8, who is in the same class as 2.8, states in comment 1 that transitioning to the Maltese school was very difficult since she suffered from physical and verbal bullying because she could not speak English. However, now she feels much better.

1. *Allora, l’anno 5 per me è stato molto difficile. Ho sofferto di bullismo, non solo verbale ma anche fisico. È stato un po’ difficile abituarsi perché non parlavo l’inglese.* (Student 3.8)

[So, Year 5 was very difficult for me. I suffered from bullying, not only verbal but also physical. It was a bit difficult to get accustomed to the new school because I did not speak English.]

Although they have had a difficult transition initially due to the language barrier, 2.8 and 3.8 have now become the best of friends. Moreover, student 3.8 has other foreign friends from the Philippines and from Albania. The transition was going quite well for student 4.8 until she was suspended. This student has trouble with friends and does not like school in general: “[n]on mi piace la scuola in generale perché è troppo stress. Devo studiare, devo fare, devo dire ... già sto stressata con gli amici” [I generally do not like school because it is too stressful. I must study, I have to do, I have to say...I am already stressed with friends] (Student 4.8). She only has a few Italian friends and this seems to affect her self-esteem which is rather low. Student 5.8 also experienced the transition to the Maltese school with anxiety, and he states: “[a]nsia perché è una scuola nuova, studenti nuovi” [anxiety because it is a new school, new students] (Student 5.8). Although student 5.8 seemed shy, he has both Maltese and Italian friends at school. This could also be because he has lived in Gozo for almost 7 years.

Student 1.9 is the participant who has been living in Gozo for the longest time, 9 years. He says that the transition went well because he also learned Maltese: “è andata abbastanza bene perché sono ancora qua, ho imparato il maltese” [it went quite well because I am still here, I learned Maltese] (Student 1.9). Learning Maltese helped him build many friendships, especially with Maltese students. Although he admits that sometimes he might have felt lonely: “[s]icuramente in certi momenti sì, però poi ho sempre fatto amici e sono stato meglio sempre” [certainly in certain moments yes, but then I always made friends and I have always felt better] (Student 1.9). For student 2.10, it was also a smooth transition because he spent a year in Australia before moving to Gozo, so he was already proficient in English. He now understands Maltese, has friends, and school is not hard for him: “[s]empre

*bene perché ho trovato amici, perché [la scuola] non è difficile*” [always good because I made friends, because school is not difficult] (Student 2.10). Even 2.10 has many Maltese friends and even though he knows some Italians, he says they are not friends: “[s]ì, maltesi. [Amici italiani] No, cioè li conosco ma non ...” [Yes, Maltese. [Italian friends] No, I know them but ...] (Student 2.10).

By contrast, 1.10 (comment 2) and 4.10 (comment 3) recall how the transition into Maltese schools was difficult because of the language barrier. Student 1.10 claims that it was hard until he started going to private English lessons, learned English, and made new friends:

2. *Ero un po’ in difficoltà perché non sapevo né l’inglese né il maltese, però poi ho iniziato delle lezioni private d’inglese e quindi ho imparato un po’ l’inglese e poi ho fatto anche nuovi amici.* (Student 1.10)

[I was having difficulties because I did not know either English or Maltese, but then I started going to English private lessons and therefore I learned some English and then I also made new friends.]

3. *Diciamo che era un po’ difficile perché non parlavo né l’inglese né il maltese e quindi non è stato molto facile.* (Student 4.10)

[Let’s say it was a bit difficult because I did not speak English or Maltese and therefore it was not very easy.]

Student 1.10 still feels uncomfortable because he does not understand Maltese well: *“sento anche persone parlarmi alle spalle in maltese”* [I hear people talk behind my back in

Maltese] (Student 1.10). However, he has made many friends, but the majority of them are Italians and foreigners: “[l]a maggior parte sono italiani però ci sono anche stranieri” [most of them are Italians but there are also foreigners] (Student 1.10). He has a few Maltese friends but he is not that close with them perhaps because he cannot speak Maltese yet: “[a]mici maltesi forse ne ho 5 però non è che siamo tanto amici. Ci parlo qualche volta durante le lezioni” [Maltese friends maybe I have 5 but we are not really friends. I talk to them sometimes during lessons] (Student 1.10). Compared to when he first arrived, student 4.10 feels better since he has many friends: “sì, molti rispetto all’inizio. Sono un po’ maltesi, un po’ italiani e un po’ stranieri pure” [yes, many compared to the first time I arrived. Some are Maltese, some are Italians and some foreigners too] (Student 4.10).

Student 3.10 first started school in Gozo in Year 6, but then they changed classes and put him in Year 5, saying that they had made a mistake: “[h]o cominciato dalla Year 6 e poi mi hanno cambiato alla Year 5 perché hanno fatto uno sbaglio” [I started from Year 6 and then they changed class to Year 5 because they made a mistake] (Student 3.10). This student has dyslexia and is hyperactive and this might have rendered his transition more problematic. Although 3.10 states that he experienced the transition well, he sometimes felt alone because he missed his Italian friends: “alcune volte perché mi mancavano gli amici dell’Italia” [sometimes, I missed my Italian friends] (Student 3.10). 3.10 states that he is now living this change better than before because he has made new friends. Many of them are foreign friends, but not Maltese or Italians: “sono tutti stranieri ... dalla Russia, Australia, Inghilterra, America” [they are all foreigners ... from Russia, Australia, England, America] (Student 3.10).

It seems that the lower the band is, the more foreign friends they have rather than Maltese, as in the case of 1.10 and 3.10. I noticed that although all students made new friends, only 1.9 and 2.10 have made more Maltese friends rather than Italians or foreigners, in comparison to the others, probably because they are in classes in which there are more Maltese students.

#### 4.2.2 Losing or Maintaining the Italian Identity and Language

Eight out of twelve Italian migrant learners miss their country and family ties. They miss their Italian friends, the food, and the countryside. Here are some examples (comments 4, 5 & 6):

4. *Perché ho tutti i nonni là e il mangiare è molto buono [ridiamo] e la campagna è molto bella. (Student 2.7)*

[Because I have all my grandparents there and the food is very good [we laugh] and the countryside is very beautiful.]

5. *Sì, mi mancano tutti i miei nonni, mi mancano tutti i miei cugini che sono molto attaccata a loro. (Student 1.8)*

[Yes, I miss all my grandparents, I miss all my cousins who I am very attached to.]

6. *Sì, perché mi mancano i nonni, i cugini, tutta la famiglia visto che ci siamo trasferiti solo io e i miei genitori e mio fratello eh eh questo. (Student 1.9)*

[Yes, because I miss my grandparents, cousins, the whole family since just me and my parents and my brother moved here eh hh this.]

Student 2.8 (comment 7) does not miss her hometown, her Italian friends or school, but misses her grandma and the gym she used to go to. Students 4.8 and 1.10 do not miss Italy and 1.10 (comment 8) says that it is because he has made new friends now:

7. *No, però mi mancano poco poco i miei nonni e la palestra dove andavo, basta, ma del resto gli amici e la scuola no.* (Student 2.8)

[No, but I miss my grandparents and the gym where I used to go, that is enough, but not my friends and school.]

8. *Ma più o meno perché avevo degli amici là, però anche qui ne ho fatti di altri e quindi è lo stesso per me, quindi no.* (Student 1.10)

[Well, because I had friends there, but here too I made others and so it is the same for me, so no.]

Although 4.8 and 1.10 claim that they do not miss their country, they chose to study Italian at school because since it is their first language (L1) it is easier for them because in Malta it is taught as a foreign language. Other students chose other foreign languages such as Spanish (1.7, 2.7, 1.8, 4.10) or German (2.8, 3.8) to learn a new language. Nonetheless, 4.10 reads in Italian at home to not lose the mother tongue since he rarely speaks Italian at school: *“diciamo che devo per forza leggere uno al giorno, cioè tipo 9 o 10 pagine devo leggere. Alcune in inglese e alcune in italiano per non perdere la madrelingua”* [let's say that

I have to read one a day, that is, like 9 or 10 pages I have to read. Some in English and some in Italian so as not to lose the mother tongue] (Student 4.10). 2.8 (comment 9) admits that she needs to revise her Italian and 3.8 (comment 10) has some Italian books to study the language at home. She also keeps practising with her grandpa:

9. *Poi tra le opzioni che mi hanno dato ho scelto di studiare il tedesco perché l'italiano ormai lo parlo anche se devo ripassarlo però volevo imparare qualcosa di nuovo.*

(Student 2.8)

[Then among the options they gave me, I chose to study German because I now speak Italian even if I have to revise it but I wanted to learn something new.]

10. *E comunque l'italiano non l'ho scelto anche perché faccio lezioni diciamo a casa. Mio nonno è molto bravo a parlare l'italiano e mi aiuta. Ho portato dei libri dall'Italia che mia sorella ha usato in 1<sup>a</sup>, 2<sup>a</sup> e 3<sup>a</sup> media, e niente, me li sono portati così che io studio a casa l'italiano, almeno potevo apprendere un'altra nuova lingua. (Student 3.8)*

[And in any case, I did not choose Italian also because I have lessons at home. My grandfather is very good at speaking Italian, and he helps me. I brought some books from Italy that my sister used in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. I brought them so that I study Italian at home, at least I could learn another new language.]

As a result, during the interviews, students were anxious because although they are natives, they were aware I am a teacher of Italian. They were afraid to make mistakes because they rarely use Italian at school. Hence, while speaking in Italian, students started

using English nomenclature common to local students, and the data transcribed includes many examples (comments 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16) of intra-sentential switching:

11. *Io no. Faccio dance però a scuola durante il break, Monday, Tuesday e Wednesday. Andiamo lì, sai dove c'è l'ufficio della head, because tomorrow andiamo a ballare al party di Carnevale, ecco perché.* (Student 1.7)

[I do not. But I dance at school during the break, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. We go there, you know where the head's office is, because tomorrow we are going to dance at the Carnival party, that is why.]

12. *Sì. La matematica perché la maestra non mi piace perché è molto strict, cioè tipo delle volte si arrabbia.* (Student 2.7)

[Yes. Mathematics because I do not like the teacher because she is very strict, that is, she kind of gets angry sometimes.]

13. *Bossy. Tipo che non gli importa degli altri, gli importa solo di loro.* (Student 1.8)

[Bossy. Like that they do not care about others, they only care about themselves.]

14. *[...] la seconda mia materia preferita è la geografia perché il maestro è molto kind, è molto gentile [...].* (Student 1.8)

[...] my second favourite subject is Geography because the teacher is very kind, he is very gentle [...]

15. *Io faccio Maltese for foreigners e io ormai so il syllabus a memoria.* (Student 2.8)

[I do Maltese for foreigners and by now I know the syllabus by heart.]

16. *Non lo so, forse è perché magari solo noi due [si riferisce a lei e la sua compagna di classe italiana] abbiamo preso un buon mark [...].* (Student 2.8)

[I do not know, maybe it is because maybe just the two of us [referring to her and her Italian classmate] got a good mark [...].

Other English words that are used include “*primary school*”, “*secondary school*”, “*foolscap*”, “*past papers*”, “*free lesson*”, “*assignments*”, “*teacher*”, “*assistant head*” and “*guidance*” together with the name of subjects in English, even though there are corresponding forms in Italian such as: “*Science*”, “*Home Economics*”, “*ICT*”, “*History*” or “*Media*”. Surprisingly, student 2.8 used the wrong adverb in comment 17 and an incorrect verb form in comment 18. However, she corrected herself and apologised, as in the two examples below:

17. *Sì, mi piace perché è molto bene dell'Italia. Scusa, meglio [ride].* (Student 2.8)

[Yes, I like it because it is very good than in Italy. Sorry, better [laughs].

18. *Allora quando sono andata nella primary school mi sono trovata bene perché le maestre era gentile ... erano gentili, scusa!* (Student 2.8)

[So when I went to the primary school I felt good because the teachers was gentle ... were gentle, sorry!]

Student 1.9 uses the word “*la composizione*” rather than “*il tema*” from the English word “composition”. Another student, 1.10, uses an English-based calque “*libreria*” to refer to the school’s library, which is incorrect in Italian because the correct form is “*biblioteca*”.

#### 4.2.3 Educational Challenges: (i) Participation

Most Italian migrant learners participate in lessons, particularly during their favourite subjects, some more or less than others. In this section, I will give details about the students’ participation during lessons in general, whether they understand their lessons from start to finish and what they do in case of difficulties.

Student 1.7 generally participates during lessons, even though she sometimes gets distracted. She follows most lessons from the beginning to the end, and when in need, she asks questions to the teacher, especially during Mathematics: “*[s]ì, certe volte come in matematica, quando non capisco qualche cosa, glielo chiedo e poi capisco*” [yes, sometimes like in Mathematics, when I do not understand something, I ask her and then I understand] (Student 1.7). Student 2.7 participates in lessons and follows lessons without difficulties. However, sometimes when she does not understand she asks her friend: “*[d]elle volte mi perdo perché tipo non so ... magari delle volte sta spiegando [si riferisce alla maestra] e c’è una parola che non capisco in maltese però poi chiedo alla mia amica e me lo dice. Delle volte non la sa neanche lei*” [sometimes I get lost because I do not know ... maybe sometimes she is explaining [referring to the teacher] and there is a word I do not understand in Maltese but then I ask my friend and she tells me. Sometimes she does not even know] (Student 2.7).

Student 1.8 also participates a lot during lessons and follows almost everything. When she does not understand something, she asks her teacher or her classmates, but she says that the latter sometimes do not help her out: “[c]hiedo alla maestra o chiedo aiuto dai miei amici, non amici, ai compagni di classe ma tante volte non mi aiutano allora chiedo alla maestra” [I ask the teacher or I ask my friends, not friends, classmates but many times they do not help me so I ask the teacher] (Student 1.8). Even 2.8 participates a lot during lessons, especially in English and she says that she and 3.8 are the teachers’ pets. Student 2.8 (comment 19) follows all lessons except Mathematics, because here in Malta it is taught differently than in Italy, thus this makes it more complicated for her to understand:

19. *Allora se parliamo di tutte le materie tranne la matematica, sì. Però se parliamo di matematica, ci sono alcuni metodi che io ho imparato in un altro modo in Italia tipo le divisioni. Qua le fanno in un altro modo, poi non riesco a capirle come si lavorano.*  
(Student 2.8)

[So, if we talk about all subjects except Mathematics, yes. But if we talk about Mathematics, there are some methods that I learned in another way in Italy such as divisions. Here, they do them in another way, and then I cannot understand how they are solved.]

When 2.8 (comment 20) has difficulties to understand, she asks her Italian friend who sits next to her in class, that is 3.8, because 3.8 has been here in Gozo for a year longer, so she might know better how to solve certain Mathematics problems:

20. *Se io non capisco qualcosa chiedo alla mia vicina di banco [si siede accanto a un'italiana] perché lei ha fatto pure la primary qua, ha fatto la Year 5, e quindi sa un poco come si fanno le divisioni in questo modo e chiedo a lei e se lei non capisce cose che noi abbiamo fatto in Italia e lei no, chiede a me. (Student 2.8)*

[If I do not understand something, I ask my classmate [sits next to an Italian] because she also did primary here, and therefore knows how to work out divisions and if she does not understand things that we have done in Italy, she asks me.]

Student 3.8, like 2.8, participates very much in lessons. Her class participation sometimes ends up in other students picking on her and her Italian best friend (student 2.8), calling them “nerds” (Student 2.8): *“ci capita di litigare in classe perché gli altri ci dicono “eh voi alzate sempre la mano, siete dei nerd, siete sfigati”* [we happen to argue in class because the others tell us “hey, you always raise your hand, you are nerds, you are losers”] (Student 3.8). Student 3.8 does not have problems following lessons, although sometimes she struggles to understand English: *“...capita che in inglese una parola magari anche nelle poesie non la capisco, chiedo alla professoressa la spiegazione o la chiedo a \*\*\* [si riferisce alla sua compagna di banco italiana] perché siamo vicine di banco e siamo attaccate”* [...it happens that in English I do not understand a word, perhaps even in poems, I either ask the teacher or I ask my friend because we are close] (Student 3.8).

Although student 4.8 is in the same class as 2.8 and 3.8, she does not participate in lessons, and she blames her character: *“[n]o, sono asociale”* [no, I am antisocial] (Student 4.8). Her lack of participation may also result from her psychological state since she might need some support. In addition, she has problems in understanding Maltese. Student 4.8

states that she can follow lessons without difficulties, except Maltese, which she studies as a foreign language: “[s]ì, però se parliamo di maltese, no” [yes, but if we talk about Maltese, no] (Student 4.8). She passively listens to the teacher without understanding: “[s]to zitta e ascolto tutte le parole a caso che dice la prof” [I remain silent and listen to all the random words that the teacher says] (Student 4.8) and she would never raise her hand and ask for help: “[m]acché, io alzare la mano? Mai nella mia vita. Mai l’ho fatto. Macché? Non è possibile. Non lo farei mai” [what, I raise my hand? Never in my life. I never did that. What? It is not possible. I would never do that] (Student 4.8). By contrast to 4.8, student 5.8 follows all lessons without difficulties, and when he has a problem, he asks the teacher to explain again.

In the secondary school, student 1.9 participates often during lessons: “[s]ì, sono molto [pensa] partecipo, partecipo. Non sono molto silenzioso [ride]” [yes, I am very [thinks] I participate, I participate. I am not very silent [laughs] (Student 1.9). For him, it is easy to follow lessons from start to finish because he is proficient in Maltese and English, although sometimes he still loses concentration. Then he asks the teacher or continues to think about it until he understands. By contrast, although student 1.10 (comment 21) always participates in lessons, he does not follow or understand everything when the teachers switch to Maltese. He feels lost, so he raises his hand and asks the teacher to explain again:

21. *A volte mi perdo perché magari i maestri iniziano a parlare in maltese e quindi non riesco a capire, però cioè in caso io alzo la mano e gli chiedo cosa hanno detto.*

(Student 1.10)

[Sometimes I get lost because maybe the teachers start speaking in Maltese and therefore, I cannot understand, but in that case, I raise my hand and I ask them what they said.]

Both students 2.10 and 3.10 participate during lessons. However, 2.10 seems to be introverted and looks like he participates when directly asked: “[s]ì, *quando chiedono una domanda rispondo*” [yes, when they ask a question, I answer]. 3.10 struggles to follow everything, and he starts drawing: “[i]nizio a disegnare” [I start drawing] without bothering to ask the teacher to explain because he seems to have become quite passive. 4.10 asserts he participates in class and follows most lessons without difficulties, although sometimes he does not understand Geography and ICT. Then, he usually asks his classmates or raises his hand to ask the teacher.

#### **4.2.3 Educational Challenges: (ii) Language**

Language use can be challenging, more so in a bilingual country like Malta and perhaps even more so in Gozo where many people use a regional variety of Maltese (*djalett*). Nevertheless, English is widely spoken and, as expected, for eight out of the twelve Italian migrant learners, it is the main means of communication. The time spent in Malta and Gozo also affects language preference.

From the transcribed data, students who have lived in Gozo for a shorter time (3 to 5 years), such as students from the middle school coded 1.7, 2.8, 3.8, and students from the secondary school coded 1.10, 2.10 and 4.10 use English as a main language during lessons. Here are some clear-cut testimonies (comments 22, 23 & 24):

22. *In inglese, ma certe volte anche quando entra la maestra d'italiano nella mia classe le parlo in italiano.* (Student 1.7)

[In English, but sometimes even when the Italian teacher enters my class, I speak to her in Italian.]

23. *Parlo sempre in inglese. In maltese a volte provo a parlare in maltese però non è che lo so così bene.* (Student 1.10)

[I always speak in English. Sometimes I try to talk in Maltese, but I do not really know it so well.]

24. *In alcune lezioni parlo in italiano con i miei amici però nelle altre lezioni parlo sempre inglese con i professori.* (Student 4.10)

[In some lessons I speak Italian with my friends but in other lessons I always speak English with my teachers.]

By contrast, students who have lived in Gozo for more than five years, such as 2.7 and 1.8, use both Maltese and English. Student 1.8 claims that she speaks a mixture of Maltese and English: *“in tutte le materie parlo misto, inglese, maltese ... [ride] non ho mai una lingua che ho deciso”* [in all the subjects I speak a mixture, English, Maltese ... [laughs] I have never decided on a language] (Student 1.8). However, student 1.9 uses Maltese only: *“[m]altese, ehm molto in maltese, in inglese, solo in inglese quando facciamo inglese”* [Maltese, ehm a lot of Maltese, in English, only when we have English] (Student 1.9). Although students 5.8 and 3.10 have lived in Gozo for quite a long time (6 to 7 years), they

still prefer English to Maltese, and the main reason is that they do not like Maltese because it is difficult. Interestingly, some students try to speak Maltese to make more friends such as 1.8: “[t]ante volte cerco di parlare in maltese ma non mi includono ...” [many times I try to speak Maltese but they do not include me] (Student 1.8). On the other hand, her younger sister 2.7 indicates that speaking Maltese helped her in having more friends, probably because learning Maltese gives migrant learners a greater sense of belonging at school: “ho più amici adesso che ho imparato il maltese” [I have more friends now that I have learned Maltese] (Student 2.7).

Even 2.8 asserts that she feels better because she is learning Maltese and tries to use it with friends: “[p]arlo con i miei amici in maltese alcune volte. Riesco a comunicare, non tanto, però riesco a fare qualche frase” [I speak Maltese with my friends sometimes. I can communicate, not so much, but I can form a few sentences] (Student 2.8). Another important aspect is that sometimes other students make fun of Italian migrant learners’ pronunciation: “qualche bambino che ci prende un po’ in giro per la pronuncia” [some children make fun of us for our pronunciation] (Student 2.8). Student 2.10 affirms that he uses Maltese only to joke with friends: “[i]l maltese no, cioè per scherzare, ma no” [no Maltese, only to joke, but no] (Student 2.10). Unlike the other participants, the only means of communication for student 4.8 is Italian, which she uses with the “right” teachers (ie. the teachers who are proficient in Italian): “[m]altese non lo so. Mettiamolo a parte. Italiano sì con i prof giusti e quando ci vuole l’inglese ... raramente” [I do not know Maltese. Let’s put that aside. Italian yes with the right teachers and when necessary English ... but rarely] (Student 4.8).

Most students rarely use Italian, except for 2.8, 3.8 and 4.8, because they are classmates, and stick together. Student 3.8 (comment 25) asserts that she sometimes speaks Italian with her Italian classmate because it is easier to communicate in it. However, the teachers recommended that English must always be used “to be respectful” to others who do not understand Italian, especially because of a particular incident that happened between Italian migrant learners:

25. *Sì, certo anche perché è più facile. L'altro anno le maestre ci hanno detto che dovevamo parlare in inglese per il rispetto degli altri compagni, e ovviamente l'abbiamo parlato, ma non sempre. Però non capivamo e ora capisco perché, perché tante volte c'è gente in classe mia o anche fuori dalla mia classe, italiana che offende in italiano e la gente non capisce, quindi le maestre ce l'hanno detto per il nostro bene.* (Student 3.8)

[Yes, of course also because it is easier. Last year, the teachers told us that we had to speak in English out of respect for the other classmates, and of course we spoke it, but not always. At first, we did not understand why, but now we do, because often times there are people inside or outside class, an Italian who offends in Italian and people do not understand what's going on. It was done for our own good.]

There are students such as 5.8, 1.10, 3.10, and 4.10 who state that in their transition to school in Gozo they had past teachers who spoke to them in Italian when they did not understand Maltese and English: “[s]ì alla primaria in Year 4, lezione di matematica” [yes in the primary in Year 4, Mathematics lesson] (Student 5.8), “ogni volta mi spiegava in italiano poi quello che dovevo fare” [the teacher explained to me in Italian what I had to do

everytime] (Student 1.10), “[a]ll’inizio perché non sapevo né l’inglese né il maltese” [at the beginning because I did not know English or Maltese] (Student 3.10) and “[m]i dovevavo parlare in italiano per capire” [they had to speak to me in Italian to understand] (Student 4.10). Other students, such as 1.7, 2.7, 2.8, 3.8, and 4.8, in comments 26 and 27, say that few teachers let them speak in Italian if they do not understand something in Maltese or English. Here are some examples of this:

26. [...] *ma con la maestra di History delle volte mi dice se non sai una parola me la puoi dire in italiano e io ho detto e lei mi ha spiegato.* (Student 2.7)

[...] but with the History teacher sometimes she tells me if you do not know a word you can tell me in Italian and I said [it] and she explained it to me.]

27. *Sì, sì, sì. Si ferma per parlarmi in italiano quello di matematica o anche quello di scienze.* (Student 4.8)

[Yes, Yes, Yes. The teacher of Mathematics or Science stops to speak to me in Italian.]

Student 1.7 (comment 28), however, states that speaking Italian could isolate her from her peers because nobody understands it. Students 1.7, 2.10, 4.8, 5.8, and 4.10 (e.g. comments 28 & 29) believe that Maltese and English are both important languages to speak with peers and they can understand the lessons better:

28. *Sì, se parlo solo in italiano nessuno mi capirebbe, starei da sola. Il maltese, sì, è utile perché con il maltese puoi parlare con tutti e puoi capire meglio le lezioni.*

(Student 1.7)

[Yes, if I only speak Italian no one would understand me, I would be alone. Yes, Maltese is useful because you can talk to everyone with Maltese, and you can understand the lessons better.]

29. *Sì, si può comunicare di più [con l'inglese]. Il maltese è sempre meglio per comunicare di più però [pausa]...e così durante le lezioni non ci stanno problemi se parlano in maltese.* (Student 2.10)

[Yes, you can communicate more [with English]. Maltese is always better to communicate more though [pause]...and so during the lessons there are no problems if they speak in Maltese.]

Student 4.8 believes that one cannot have friends without proficiency in Maltese and English: *“sì l'inglese serve molto. Se non sai o l'inglese o il maltese, basta, sei finito, niente amici, oppure se hai la chance di conoscere almeno un ragazzo della tua stessa lingua allora hai un amico”* [yes, English is very useful. If you do not know either English or Maltese, you end up with no friends, or if you have the chance to meet at least one boy speaking your language, then you can have a friend.] (Student 4.8). Student 5.8 claims that, at school, everyone speaks English, therefore the English language is a must, but Maltese is also important because we live in Malta: *“tutti parlano in inglese ed è una scuola inglese. A scuola l'inglese si parla molto. Anche il maltese è importante perché siamo a Malta”*

[everyone speaks in English and it is an English school. English is spoken a lot at school.

Maltese is important because we are in Malta] (Student 5.8). Students 2.7, 2.8, 3.8, and 1.10

believe that English is important because its proficiency provides accessibility to any country.

Student 2.7 (comment 30) states that learning English was the main reason why her family decided to come to Malta:

30. *Sono a Gozo da quasi 2 anni, ma a Malta per 6 anni perché mia mamma voleva che imparavamo l'inglese meglio perché le scuole in Italia non ti fanno fare l'inglese bene.* (Student 2.7).

[I have been in Gozo for almost 2 years, but in Malta for 6 years because my mum wanted us to learn English better because schools in Italy do not let you do English well.]

Although students 2.7, 2.8, 3.8, and 1.10 assert that learning English would help them achieve their dreams, they are uncertain about the advantages of learning Maltese for their future: “[s]ì e no perché il maltese lo usi solo qui, cioè a Malta, poi se da grande non vuoi rimanere qui perché l’hai imparato? [ride]” [yes] and no because you only use Maltese here, that is in Malta, then if you do not want to stay here when you grow up, why did you learn it? [laughs] (Student 2.7); “[i]l maltese è importante se vuoi stare tutta la vita qua a Gozo o a Malta” [Maltese is important if you want to spend your whole life here in Gozo or in Malta] (Student 2.8). 1.10 believes that he needs to know Maltese to understand what locals are saying, as explained in 4.2.1, but he is not sure about its relevance for the future: “[i]l maltese sento di averlo bisogno però non credo che mi servirà anche in futuro perché dipende da quello che vorrò fare e ancora non lo so” [I feel I need Maltese, but I do not think

I will need it in the future because it depends on what I want to do and I do not know yet] (Student 1.10).

By contrast, 1.9 believes that Maltese is more important than English in the Maltese schooling context: “[p]iù il maltese perché qua siamo a Malta” [more Maltese because here we are in Malta] and he has more friends who speak Maltese, therefore he uses English much less: “sono più abituato ad avere amici che parlano il maltese e quindi parlare in inglese mi sembra un po’ più di meno” [I am more used to having friends who speak Maltese and therefore speaking in English seems a little less important] (Student 1.9). However, 3.10 thinks that, on one hand, English is important in Malta and Gozo, not in Italy, and on the other hand, Maltese is not useful at all: “[s]ì e no. C’è bisogno qui [dell’inglese], in Italia non tanto. Non c’è bisogno del maltese” [Yes and no. There is a need here [of English], in Italy not so much. No need for Maltese] (Student 3.10).

Eleven out of twelve students currently do not go to any extra lessons of Maltese or English. However, at the beginning of their transition to Maltese schools, some of these students did attend lessons, and they had to pay for them. Student 2.8 says that she and her mother used to attend English lessons, even before coming to Gozo, but it was a waste of money because she could not learn as much as she wished. Student 3.8 (comment 31) used to have the so-called “*doposcuola*” [after-school lessons] to learn Maltese and English during her first year in Gozo, while in Italy she used to attend to the “*convitto*” [after-school session] at a boarding school.

31. *Quando ero qua il primo anno ho avuto il doposcuola che mi aiutava. In Italia ho avuto il convitto ma era soltanto per fare dei compiti e imparare a fare dei giochi. Ma*

*ripetizioni qua a Gozo ho fatto soltanto il doposcuola d'inglese e maltese, ma per il resto, no.* (Student 3.8)

[When I was here the first year I had after-school to help me. In Italy, I had after-school sessions at the boarding school I attended, but it was only to do homework and learn how to play games. Here in Gozo, I only did after-school lessons in English and Maltese, but for the rest nothing.]

On arrival and at the beginning of the transition into the Maltese schools in Gozo, even 1.10 used to go to English private lessons, but now he does not anymore: “[n]o. *Le facevo solo quando ho iniziato la Year 6 le lezioni private più che altro*” [no. I only attended private lessons when I started Year 6 mostly] (Student 1.10). Unlike the others, student 4.8 (comment 32) currently does the “*doposcuola*” [after-school lessons], particularly because of the Maltese language since she does not understand it:

32. *No, però faccio il doposcuola, cioè a casa c’ho una maestra che mi dà una mano a fare il maltese anche se non lo capirei mai. [...] Se mi chiedi di fare i compiti di maltese li lascio fare alla maestra di doposcuola.* (Student 4.8)

[No, but I do after-school, that is, at home I have a teacher who helps me speak Maltese even if I would never understand it. [...] If you ask me to do homework in Maltese, I will let the after-school teacher do it.]

### 4.2.3 Educational Challenges: (iii) Books, Homework, and Exams

In this section, I will provide insights about the books and resources used in Maltese schools compared to Italian schools. I will also discuss the homework given, and whether these Italian migrant learners who are new to the Maltese education system experience any difficulties when doing exams in Maltese and English, since these are not their first languages. 1.7, 1.8, 2.8, 3.8, 4.8, 1.10, and 4.10 could provide insights about books and homework from a comparative perspective. All the participants never sat for exams in Italy. They did written and oral formative assessments in primary schools. Thus, they were unable to compare examinations.

Italian migrant learners like the books and other material used in Maltese schools. The main reason given by some of them is that books are provided for free in Maltese state schools. Student 2.8 (comment 33) claims that it was difficult to financially support her education in Italy:

*33. Io sono figlia unica però io in base ai libri che mi servivano ... per quella materia volevi, per quell'altra volevi un altro, ci volevano tanti soldi. Poi mio padre non trovava lavoro e quindi qua invece dà tutto la scuola [...] (Student 2.8)*

[I am an only child, but a lot of money was needed because for that subject you wanted this, for that other you wanted that. Then my father could not even find a job and so here instead the school gives everything for free [...]]

Then again, students 1.7 and 1.10 (comment 34) point out that since you could buy your books in Italy, you could directly write on them, unlike in Maltese schools:

34. *Sì, ci sono delle differenze perché in Italia potevamo pure scrivere sui libri perché noi li li compravamo ogni anno per un tot di soldi, però qua a Malta si ritornano i libri alla libreria della scuola ogni anno che finisci.* (Student 1.10)

[Yes, there are differences because in Italy we could even write on books because we used to buy them every year for a certain amount of money, but here in Malta you return the books to the school library every year that you finish.]

Eight out of twelve students believe that homework assigned in Maltese schools is much less than that assigned in Italian schools. On one hand, student 1.8 (comment 35) states that teachers give students homework for the summer holidays in Italy. She prefers this aspect of the Italian system to the Maltese because it allows you to practise and revise more. On the other hand, student 2.8 (comment 36) goes as far as claiming that in Italy she used to have so much more to do, to the point that she did not even have time for free time and sports activity.

35. *In Italia ti danno i compiti d'estate così tu comunque studi e secondo me è meglio perché poi ho molta difficoltà a recuperare.* (Student 1.8)

[In Italy they give you homework in the summer, so you study anyway and in my opinion it is better because then I find it difficult to catch up.]

36. *[ride] Quando ero in Italia non è che me ne davano tanti, esageratamente tanti. [...] Quindi io poi che pratico tanto sport, che facevo due sport, era difficile. Infatti, io non riuscivo a parlare con i miei amici, io dovevo stare dentro a fare i compiti o palestra. Qua invece decisamente tantissimo di meno.* (Student 2.8)

[laughs] When I was in Italy, they did not give a lot, a real lot. [...] Then, since I practiced two sports activities, it was difficult to make ends meet. In fact, I could not talk to my friends, I had to stay inside to do homework or go to the gym. Whilst here, on the other hand, much less.]

Even 3.8 says that homework in Italy was too much and she needed help, so she used to go to the “*convitto*”. In Gozo, the homework load is much lighter, and sometimes she cannot believe that she does not have more homework: “[*q*]ua i compiti sono molto leggeri” [here the homework is much lighter] (Student 3.8). Student 4.8 adds that while in Italy teachers used to test them regularly, the assessment in Malta is lighter: “*ehh ti fanno l’interrogazione di là in Italia, qui no niente interrogazioni, al massimo le domande, macché interrogazione!*” [ehh they test you over there in Italy, here no testing, mostly questions, no test!] (Student 4.8). Even student 4.10 thinks that, compared to Italy, homework in Malta is much less and easier to do. By contrast, students 1.9 and 2.10 believe that the amount of homework given in Malta is just right: “[*n*]on ce ne sono troppi, non ce ne sono troppi pochi, dai” [not too many, not too few, come on] (Student 1.9) and “[*s*]ono giusti” [they are a fair amount] (Student 2.10).

Some Italian migrant learners declare that homework at times is easier than in Italy, and often do it independently. However, some students, 1.7, 2.7, 2.8, and 3.8, use *Google Translate* when they have difficulties and all participants ask for help from their parents, except for 4.8, 3.10, and 4.10, who may not have parents who can help them. Thus, most migrant parents support their children's education. Some Italians also ask their siblings, friends, or teachers. 2.8 (comment 37) asks her Mathematics teacher when she has difficulties with the Mathematics homework, and she adds that they are a little bit behind in the curriculum here in Malta:

37. *Matematica, se mio padre non mi aiuta, ci provo e se magari non capisco chiedo al maestro perché qua ... non è una cosa brutta ... sono un po' indietro. Tipo algebra che stiamo iniziando qua, io già la stavo iniziando in Italia.* (Student 2.8)

[Mathematics if my father does not help me, I try and maybe if I do not understand I ask the teacher because here ... it is not a bad thing ... they are a little behind. Like algebra we are starting here, I was already starting it in Italy.]

Student 1.10 refers to the main struggle he faces because of a main difference between homework in Italy and in Malta. Whereas in Italy all the homework was in Italian, here in Malta, almost all of it is in English, so it may be challenging for him because he still does not know some words in English: “[I]’unica differenza per me è che quelli là erano in italiano e questi sono più che altro in inglese perché non so alcune parole in inglese però lo so parlare abbastanza bene” [the] only difference for me is that homework in Italy was in Italian and here it is mostly in English and sometimes I struggle with understanding English words] (Student 1.10). Unfortunately, student 4.8 cannot do her homework on her own, as

explained in 4.2.3 (ii), because of her lack of proficiency in Maltese and probably even English. She usually asks her private tutor or goes on *Discord* (an online platform) to ask her friends for help with the homework: “[a]lla mia maestra di doposcuola. Se non c’è lei vado dai miei amici su Discord” [to my after-school teacher. If she is not there I go ask my friends on Discord] (Student 4.8).

Examinations are more problematic, especially for Italian migrant learners who still have difficulties understanding the Maltese language. Students such as 2.7, 1.8, and 1.9 have learned both Maltese and English and have no problems when exams are in these languages, also because they have attended a substantial number of years of schooling in Malta and Gozo. In fact, regarding Maltese, they do standard Maltese and not MFL. However, although student 5.8 has lived in Gozo for almost 7 years and does standard Maltese, he states that exams in English are fine, but in Maltese not that much: “[i]nglese vanno bene. Maltese non tanto” [exams in English go well. Those in Maltese not much] (Student 5.8). By contrast to 5.8, student 2.10, who has lived for almost 5 years in Gozo (less than 5.8), feels quite well when doing exams in Maltese and English. Nevertheless, many other participants who have lived in Gozo for 3 to 4 years find exams in Maltese or English very difficult. For example, students 1.7, 2.8, and 3.8 did not sit for the benchmark examinations because they were not proficient in Maltese and English. Student 1.7 states that doing exams in English is not a problem for her, but they are difficult in Maltese: “[i]o con l’inglese sono brava quindi mi sento bene però se sono in maltese è un problema, è difficile” [I am good in English so I feel good but if they are in Maltese it is a problem, it is difficult] (Student 1.7). Student 2.8 (comment 38) had major difficulties with exams in Year 7 because these were in English:

38. *Però l'anno scorso (Year 7) mi sono trovata molto in difficoltà perché ci sono vari tipi di insegnamento, non capivo tutto e ho trovato complicato fare gli esami in inglese soprattutto quello di matematica. (Student 2.8)*

[But last year (Year 7) I found it hard because there are various types of teaching, I did not understand everything and I found it difficult to sit for the exams in English, especially the Mathematics exam.]

Similarly, students 4.8 and 4.10 (comment 39) have problems sitting for exams in Maltese and English because they have difficulties understanding both languages:

39. *Un po' nervoso. Ho paura se sto sbagliando qualcosa, se magari l'ho capita male quella domanda, quindi ho paura di sbagliare, un po' di più in maltese. (Student 4.10).*

[A little nervous. I am afraid if I am doing something wrong, if maybe I misunderstood that question, so I am afraid of being wrong, a little more in Maltese.]

#### **4.2.3 Educational Challenges: (iv) Inclusion**

The theme of inclusion explored in this section will include the students' feelings about the school's environment and their sense of belonging to the schools they attend in Gozo. This will enable me to explore if Italian migrant learners feel included or excluded by the school they currently go to.

Most Italian migrant learners in this research like the school environment at the middle and secondary schools in Gozo, and they feel they belong, except for 4.8, 3.10, and 4.10. Two students from the middle school, 1.7 and 1.8, complain about classroom space. However, 1.7 claims that she feels part of the school because she likes her classmates: “[s]i devo dire qua mi piacciono i miei compagni” [I must say that I like my classmates here] (Student 1.7) and 1.8 also feels part of the school because the teachers help her a lot: “[i]n qualche modo sento di farne parte perché gli insegnanti mi aiutano molto” [in some way I feel I belong because the teachers help me often] (Student 1.8). Students 2.7, 2.8, 3.8, and 5.8 also like the school’s environment at the middle school and feel they belong. 2.7 and 5.8 have lived in Gozo for many years, therefore they could not provide insights in relation to transition. Students 2.8 and 3.8 could compare the Maltese school environment to that in Italy. 2.8 asserts that her school in Sicily was known as “la scuola per i poveri” [a school for the poor]. She notes that in her Italian school, she rarely did any physical activity. Moreover, there were no assistant heads or guidance teachers in 2.8’s school in Sicily (comment 40):

40. *Mi piace molto ma molto ma molto perché in Italia io non usavo che nel break andavo fuori a giocare. Sì stavi 8 ore chiusa in classe e nemmeno ti [si ferma], sì e no se c’era quella maestra gentile che magari in quella lezione ti faceva girare di banco. Poi l’educazione fisica in Italia se voleva la maestra ti faceva educazione fisica, e se pure la maestra si scoccia, ti faceva pure matematica, italiano o inglese così. E poi in Italia non esistono gli assistant head o i guidance.* (Student 2.8)

[I like it a lot because in Italy I did not go out and play during break time. You had to stay closed in class for 8 hours and neither did you [she stops]. At times there could

be a kind teacher who could maybe let you change desks in lessons. Then physical education in Italy was done only if the teacher wanted to and, if the teacher got annoyed, she would do Mathematics, Italian, or English. Then in Italy there are no assistant heads or guidance teachers.]

Along the same lines, student 3.8 feels much better in her school in Gozo because teachers are more helpful. In addition, student 3.8 refers to a difficult situation at home because of her family and sometimes she did not have the time to do her homework. Still, teachers in Italy never understood her situation and used to threaten her with reports. Although 3.8 prefers the Maltese school environment and feels better than before, this data also shows that 3.8 used to do well at school in Italy: *“io non ho mai preso la nota perché ho sempre preso 10, 9. Una volta soltanto ho preso un 7, ma era scioccante”* [I never had a report because I always got 10, 9. I once got a 7, but it was shocking] (Student 3.8). However, here in Gozo, she is in a lower band class (8.9). Student 4.8 (comment 41) feels excluded by her peers as explained in section 4.2.1, even though she likes the environment of the school:

41. *Fare parte di questa scuola? Me lo sogno! Perché non ho amici, non faccio nulla di speciale in questa scuola. L'ambiente è bello ...* (Student 4.8)

[Be part of this school? I dream about it! Because I have no friends, I do not do anything special in this school. The environment is beautiful ...]

Students 1.9, 1.10, and 2.10 like their school's environment and feel they belong. However, students 1.9 and 2.10 cannot compare their experience with schooling in Italy because they left when they were very young. 1.9 says that he never felt excluded by the

Maltese system: “[s]ì, e mi sento di farne parte perché mi sono abituato, quindi non mi sono mai sentito al di fuori del sistema” [yes]yes, and I feel like I am part of it because I have gotten used to it, so I have never felt outside the system] (Student 1.9). By contrast, student 3.10 does not feel part of the secondary school and does not like its environment, interestingly because of the Maltese language: “[n]on mi sento di far parte, proprio non mi piace il maltese che si parla” [n]o I do not feel like I belong, I just do not like the Maltese that is spoken] (Student 3.10). However, his feeling of exclusion may perhaps be the result of his difficult transition, as noted in 4.2.1.

Student 4.10 likes the school’s environment but feels somewhat excluded. He claims that a group of Maltese students bully other students, and he does not like it. 4.10 (comment 42) said that, in the first years of arrival, students told him “go back to your country”, and now, since he is Sicilian, some students offend him by telling him “mafia” and other offensive discourse:

42. Sì, ma anche all’inizio quando ero qua i primi 2 anni mi dicevano tipo “go back to your country” e diciamo che anche adesso da dove sono [pausa] siccome sono dalla Sicilia quindi mi dicono cose tipo “mafia” e queste cose qua. (Student 4.10)

[Yes, but even at the beginning when I was here the first 2 years they told me like “go back to your country” and let’s say that even now where am I from [pause] as I am from Sicily, so they tell me things like “mafia” and these things here.]

#### 4.2.4 Future Challenges

Even though most students believe their school is helping them to reach their objectives, by contrast, 4.8 and 3.10 disagree with the other participants. Student 4.8 (comment 43) still struggles in her transition to school in Gozo. According to her experience, she underperformed the year before in Year 7 and only passed in Italian and English:

43. *Non sto imparando nulla, non mi serve la matematica. Lo scorso anno sono stata bocciata, tranne in italiano e inglese.* (Student 4.8)

[No, because I do not need school. I am not learning anything, I do not need Mathematics. Last year I failed, except in Italian and English.]

The school uniform is something that 1.7, 2.7, 1.8, 4.8, and 5.8 would change from the school: “[I]a divisa perché in Italia non si mette la divisa [...] Per esempio mia cugina va a scuola come vuole e delle volte non ho voglia di mettermi su queste cose” [t]he uniform because in Italy you do not wear a uniform [...] For example, my cousin goes to school and dresses up how she wants and sometimes, I do not want to put on these clothes] (Student 2.7). Most importantly, 3.8 wishes her classmates treat her better and 4.10 wants to eliminate bullying from school. Other students, such as 2.8, 1.10, 2.10, and 3.10, would not change anything from their school because they like it as it is: “[n]o, non cambierei niente della scuola perché mi piace” [n]o, I would not change a thing about school because I like it] (Student 2.8).

#### 4.2.5 Summary of Findings

The following are the main findings of the above sections. Firstly, despite language barriers and some issues of bullying, many Italian migrant learners have made new friends, especially if they have lived in Gozo for a number of years. These relationships have helped them to transition positively into local schools, as can be noted in 4.2.1. Secondly, although Italian migrant learners rarely speak Italian at school, many of them are fluent enough in English (and some also cope well with Maltese) and this has facilitated their transition. Interestingly, in my data there are some examples of language attrition (section 4.2.2). Italian migrant learners have had the language barrier of Maltese or English at some point in their transition and some, like 2.8, 4.8, 5.8, 1.10, and 3.10, are still struggling with Maltese. However, many of them learned English quickly and this is their main means of communication with their teachers and peers (section 4.2.3, ii). Thirdly, most Italian migrant learners participate and follow their lessons without difficulties. However, sometimes, difficulties related to Maltese or English as languages of instruction, do occur. Some ask the teacher or a classmate, but others like 4.8 shy away (section 4.2.3, i). Students like the books used in local schools because they do not have to pay for them and homework is generally less and easier compared to Italy. On the other hand, most subjects report that exams in Maltese and English have been difficult, especially when they first arrived in the primary years (section 4.2.3, iii). Overall, although these learners have transitioned into a new education system, they have a positive view of the Maltese education system, as they like the school's environment and feel included (section 4.2.3, iv).

### 4.3 The Interviews with English, Maltese, and Mathematics Teachers

To gain more insights into the transition of Italian migrant learners, I recruited six teachers, three from each school: a teacher of English, Maltese, and Mathematics. I have conducted six audio-recorded interviews with these teachers: three at the Gozo College Middle School and three at the Gozo College Secondary School. A code was assigned to each teacher to ensure anonymity and be able to identify them during my study. The transcriptions of the interviews can be found in Appendix E. Below I have created a detailed table with information about each teacher's subject and how long they have been teaching it.

<b><u>Gozo College Middle School</u></b>		
<b><u>Code</u></b>	<b><u>Subject teacher</u></b>	<b><u>Number of years teaching this subject</u></b>
1.1	Teacher of Mathematics	14 years
1.2	Teacher of English	21 years
1.3	Teacher of Maltese	7 years
<b><u>Gozo College Secondary School</u></b>		
1.4	Teacher of English	23 years
1.5	Teacher of Maltese	36 years
1.6	Teacher of Mathematics	17 years

**Table 4.3.** *Teachers at the Gozo College Middle and Secondary Schools*

Through the audio-recorded interviews, I collected data, which I shall divide into the following themes: the transition of Italian migrant learners, the educational challenges

including participation, language use and inclusion, parental involvement, and future challenges. It has to be noted that there is a slight difference in the themes compared to those of students. The information about work completion and homework was included in the theme of participation because teachers could not provide information from a comparative perspective. Parental involvement is a theme I decided to discuss separately because teachers could provide more information regarding the Italian migrant parents' participation in their children's education.

#### **4.3.1 The Transition into the Maltese Education System**

All teachers have taught or currently teach migrant learners, including Italians. English teachers 1.2 and 1.4 (comment 44) and Mathematics teacher 1.6 (comment 45) point out similarities in culture and character between the Italian migrant learners and local students:

44. *[...] the culture [of Italians] is very similar to Maltese culture. So you have ... well even how loud they are, the way they talk, it's very similar to local kids. So I don't think that it's that much of a problem. (Teacher 1.4)*

45. *Naħseb għax nixxiebhu ħafna fil-kultura, faċli biex jagħmlu l-ħbieb, iżjed outgoing. Studenti barranin oħrajn ikunu iżjed magħluqin ifittxu lil xulxin tal-istess nazzjonalità. Fis-sens il-pajjiżi tal-East u anki l-Ingliżi narahom ikunu jiggangjaw dejjem ma' xulxin. (Teacher 1.6)*

[I think because we are very similar in culture, it is easy for them to make friends because they are outgoing. Other migrant learners will look more for each other. In the sense that I always see students from the East and even British students ganging up with each other.]

Most teachers believe that the transition for Italian migrant learners is easier compared to students of other nationalities, such as Arabs and Asians, with 1.4 referring to a substantial increase in students from the Far East in recent times. Mathematics teacher 1.1, as well as English teacher 1.2, believe that having a smooth transition is essentially a question of English proficiency. Italian migrant learners do not have the same level of English as local students because English is a foreign language for Italian students and not a context language. Nevertheless, 1.2 and 1.4 refer to the fact that many Maltese teachers and people, in general, know Italian, therefore it is somewhat simpler for Italian migrant learners because they can still communicate in their mother tongue: “[...] *with Italian students, it is not as bad as with other students because most teachers and grown-ups understand and they can even speak Italian*” (Teacher 1.4).

Mathematics teacher 1.1 (comment 46) also highlights that Italians are in the same class and can help each other in their own language. English teacher 1.2 (comment 47) notes that Italians stick together in break times and speak Italian between them. Teacher 1.4 (comment 48) claims that, often, newly arrived Italians look for Italian migrant learners who have been in the school for a long time because their parents usually work together in construction or catering, and they would probably know each other:

46. *Jesperjenzaw l-isfida tal-lingwa, rigward ta' kultura naħseb ukoll, għalkemm dawn li sabu tajjeb hu li t-Taljani qegħdin flimkien, fhimt? Jigifieri qishom qegħdin jgħinu lil xulxin iktar. (Teacher 1.1)*

[They experience the challenge of language, regarding culture I think too, although what they found favourable is that the Italians are together, do you understand? I mean like they are helping each other more.]

47. *[...] the Italians then for example they tend to, even in break times, stick together so then it is not like if you are on your own, you do not know with whom to speak your own language, because they continue to speak it between them. (Teacher 1.2)*

48. *Yes, the thing is that when they come they are immediately welcomed into the group of other Italian students which have been here a long time, which know Maltese, so somehow it's easy for them because they quickly grasp the rules and whatever is going on here. (Teacher 1.4)*

Migrant learners who settle in the receiving country at a young age have an advantage over those who come later who encounter serious challenges in their education: “[e]ħe, jiena naħseb li l-fatt li l-istudenti jittrawmu hawnhekk, jidraw il-kultura tagħna, jidraw il-lingwa tagħna, meta mqabbla ma’ studenti li ġew qisek tfajthom f’dinja oħra u li jkunu kbar, ħeqq hemmhekk ħa jbatu” [mhm, I think that when students grow up here, they get used to our culture, they get used to our language, compared to students who arrive later, who are thrown in another world, where they suffer] (Teacher 1.3). Maltese teacher 1.5 notes similarities between the Maltese and Italian languages that can help Italian migrant

learners learn Maltese: “[j]ien naħseb li l-lingwa Taljana tgħinhom ħafna għall-Malti għax hemm mixture tajba bejn il-Malti u t-Taljan” [I think that the Italian language helps them a lot because there is a good mixture between Maltese and Italian] (Teacher 1.5). She also adds (comment 49), like 1.3, that the younger the students the more easily and quickly they adapt to the system compared to older students:

49. *Ara ħa ngħidlek, eżattament ma nafx fuq is-sistema, però kif diġà għedt naħseb li jsibuha easy minħabba s-similarity taż-żewġ lingwi. Però kull bidla hija bidla jiġifieri speċjalment li jkunu diġà għandhom ċerta età, qed nitkellmu regarding sekondarja ħa jsibuha kemm kemm diffiċli, però iż-żgħar nimmagina li jidhlu fis-sistema mill-ewwel, jiġifieri hekk insibha jiena. They adapt more quickly. (Teacher 1.5)*

[Look, let me tell you, I do not know exactly about the system, but as I already said, I think they will find it easy because of the similarity of the two languages. But every change is a change, that is, especially when they are already of a certain age, we are talking about secondary school, they may find it difficult, but the younger ones, I imagine, enter the system right away, that is how I find it. They adapt more quickly.]

By contrast, teachers 1.2 and 1.6 (comment 50) claim that individual personality traits determine an effective transition. English teacher 1.2 observes that Italians are “quite vociferous, friendly and they go with the flow”. Maltese teacher 1.3 (comment 51) adds that the background at home can also help migrant learners to have a better transition:

50. *Jekk ikunu ilhom jgħixu hawn kważi kważi tista’ tgħid ikunu qishom Għawdxin u Maltin, imma xorta mhux kulhadd l-istess. Hawn min jiġi hawn u on day 1 ikun qisu*

*ilu hawn mitt sena u hawn min jiġi hawn u xorta ma jiġix included so jiddependi ħafna mill-karattru. (Teacher 1.6)*

[If they have been living here for a long time you can almost say they seem like Gozitans and Maltese, but still not everyone is the same. There are those who come here and seem as if they have been here for a hundred years while there are those who come here and still are not included, so it depends a lot on the character.]

51. *Naħseb li hija problema komuni, jiġifieri naħseb li tiġri mal-gruppi kollha u jiddependi anki mill-persuna, il-karattru, il-background li hemm id-dar. (Teacher 1.3)*

[I think it is a common problem, I mean I think it happens to all groups and it also depends on the person, the character, the background that is at home.]

English teacher 1.4, a guidance teacher, adds that migrant learners who transition in their secondary cycle of education, at age 14 or 15, struggle with subject choice. This is because the VET subjects are closed after one year, and if they want to choose them at a later stage, they need a special permit and pay a fee. Other options include subjects like the Sciences or Accounts which are very hard to catch up on if you miss a year, *“so then what remains are the other options which are very difficult and you have students who are demotivated greatly, they just stay in class [stops]”* (Teacher 1.4). Maltese teacher 1.3 states that the transition in the secondary sector can be daunting because students have to learn more subjects and this is shocking to them until they settle in the new school. She also adds that it is very hard, especially if migrant learners want to further their studies: *“għax il-Malti bħala lingwa barranija ma jwasslekx għall-O-level”* [Maltese as a foreign language does not

lead you to the O-level] (Teacher 1.3). Along the same lines, Maltese teacher 1.5 (comment 52) claims that transition can be difficult for a local Maltese student, let alone for a migrant learner:

52. [...] *inti immaġinak anki tifel Malti minn skola għal oħra jħossha d-differenza aħseb u ara barranin li ġejjin minn pajjiż ieħor, avolja l-kultura tagħna hija simili imma xorta jibqa' l-fatt li skola differenti, ħbieb differenti, ambjent differenti, sistema differenti, kollox differenti.* (Teacher 1.5)

[...] even a Maltese child feels the difference when changing schools, let alone foreigners, even though our culture is similar, but for them, it is still a different school, different friends, a different environment, a different system, everything is different.]

#### 4.3.2 Educational Challenges: (i) Participation

The teachers interviewed at the middle school, 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 claim that migrant learners participate during their lessons and Italians are among those who participate the most. By contrast, teachers at the secondary school, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6 state that not all of them participate during lessons for various reasons.

Italians participate regularly, sometimes even more than the Maltese: “[i]va, it-Taljani fost l-iktar li jipparteċipaw, kważi aktar mill-Maltin Prattikament” [yes, the Italians are among the most who participate, almost more than the Maltese practically] (Teacher 1.1). Maltese teacher 1.3 refers specifically to an Italian migrant learner she is teaching this year

(coded 1.8) in a class of standard Maltese, who participates actively during her lessons:

*“[e]he, din l-istudenta għax dis-sena waħda barranija li għandi, Taljana, tipparteċipa b’mod attiv, letteralment ħin kollu twaqqafni fejn ma tifhimx, nagħmlilhom l-assessjar ħin kollu ssaqsini per eżempju [...]”* [yes, the student I have this year, an Italian, participates actively, she literally stops me all the time when she does not understand, I do the assessment and she asks me questions all the time for example [...]] (Teacher 1.3). This student is enthusiastic about learning Maltese. By contrast, English teacher 1.4 (comment 53) states that participation depends on the type of students, the environment in the class and the motivation to learn. Even in the case of Italian migrant learners, they do participate. However, one must keep in mind that the environment in class makes a difference and Track 1 classes can be difficult:

*53. Yes, it depends on what environment there is. I mean it depends on what type of students you have, if it is a relatively good class, meaning they’re in Track 3 or even sometimes in Track 2 and students are motivated to learn, there’s good interaction, good participation by all students, even foreign students.* (Teacher 1.4)

Although Maltese teacher 1.5 claims that the majority of students participate during lessons, others are not interested. Sometimes this depends on personality: *“[i]l-maġġoranza tagħhom iva jipparteċipaw. Issib imbagħad dawk illi veru ma jinteressahomx imma l-maġġoranza iva they do participate. Jiddependi mill-karattru”* [t]he majority of them participate. You will then find those who are not really interested but the majority yes, they participate. It depends on the character] (Teacher 1.5). Similarly, 1.6 states that during his

career as a teacher, he had students who participated actively and others who were shy, but these can be Maltese students, Italians, and even students of other nationalities.

All the teachers at the middle school, 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, agree that Italian migrant learners cooperate and work on tasks given in class. Nevertheless, Mathematics teacher 1.1 (comment 54) highlights that whereas Italians cooperate very much, other migrant learners (ie. non-Italians) seem lost and do not cooperate as much:

54. *Mela ... it-Taljani jikkoperaw ħafna ... hemm ċertu studenti li mhumiex Taljani illi mhux għax ma jridux jikkoperaw imma jkunu għadhom iħossuhom mitlufin, jiġifieri għadhom qishom qed jippruvaw jaddattaw għas-sistema tagħna.* (Teacher 1.1)

[So ... Italians cooperate a lot ... there are certain non-Italian students who might want to cooperate but who still feel lost, that is, they still seem to be trying to adapt to our system.]

All the teachers at the secondary school, 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6, agree that work completion in class and overall cooperation depends on willingness to learn. Almost all teachers state that migrant learners, including Italians, do their homework without difficulties except for English teachers 1.2 and 1.4. For English teacher 1.2, students do not always do their homework without difficulties because *“it takes them a while for them to understand that homework needs to be done. And then sometimes like ... again it depends on their personality, some can become a bit defiant, but then again it is [so with] our kids too so ...”* (Teacher 1.2). For English teacher 1.4, migrant learners, including Italians in the higher track classes, most often do their homework, but if they are in lower track classes, it is more

difficult because of the language barrier. 1.4 adds that *“in these type of classrooms you also have local students who struggle to do the work given at home. So then you go over it in class, more or less it depends on the students”*. (Teacher 1.4)

#### **4.3.2 Educational Challenges: (ii) Language**

English is the main language used during English and Mathematics whenever there are migrant learners, as stated by 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, and 1.6, whereas Maltese teachers 1.3 and 1.5 try to use the Maltese language. However, code-switching sometimes occurs when it is necessary.

Mathematics teacher 1.1 mainly uses English, but he uses Italian with the Italian migrant learners when needed: *“ħa nkun sinċier mat-Taljani rarissimu imma ġieli jkun hemm bżonn li nerġa’ nispjega bit-Taljan”* [to be honest with Italians, rarely, but sometimes I need to explain again in Italian] (Teacher 1.1). English teacher 1.2 uses English. She sometimes switches to Maltese *“when I have Syrians or Libyans who absolutely know nothing of English”* (Teacher 1.2). Similarly to 1.2, English teacher 1.4 (comment 55) uses English during her lessons but admits to switching to Maltese in low-track classes to give instructions and explain. Moreover, since she speaks Arabic, German, and Italian, she can code-switch to these languages too:

55. *During the lesson sometimes, if there is this particular word which would help them understand better, I can code-switch to any other language because I come from that age that we used to learn a lot of languages, even Arabic. We learned Arabic at*

*school. We have a lot of Arabic students. I had German, Italian ... so yes a lot of languages and we joke about which word belongs to which language. (Teacher 1.4)*

Even Mathematics teacher 1.6 states that at the beginning of the year he decided to use English as a language of instruction, since the Italian migrant learner he teaches understands and accepts it. However, he also switches to Maltese for a second explanation to locals because, as he says: *“ma rridx ninsa lil kulhadd”* [I cannot forget about everyone] (Teacher 1.6).

Maltese teachers 1.3 and 1.5 mainly use Maltese during their lessons, but sometimes switch to English or other languages. Maltese teacher 1.3 sometimes switches to the Gozitan dialect to ensure that all students understand, especially in a standard mainstream Maltese class. When it is a class of MFL, *“ġieli ovvjament ikolli nispijega xi ħaġa bl-Ingliż għax ġieli jkollok studenti li dawn bil-Malti ma jifhmu xejn”* [sometimes I have to explain something in English because I have students who do not understand Maltese] (Teacher 1.3). 1.3 refers to the Italian migrant learner she currently teaches, stating that this particular student sometimes writes words in English between inverted commas in Maltese writing tasks. However, the teacher suggested that this student indicates that she does not know the corresponding version in Maltese. Maltese teacher 1.5 is proficient in English, German, and Italian and sometimes switches to these languages to ensure all students understand what they are required to do: *“imma l-Maltese and English dak nagħmlu dejjem imma jkun hemm xi instances li ma jifhmuhomx allura I switch għal-lingwa tagħhom safejn inkun naf jien”* [I always do the Maltese and English but there are instances where they do not understand so I switch to their language if I know it] (Teacher 1.5).

All teachers believe that English is very important. According to 1.1 it is an important tool for learning because teachers use English most of the time to communicate with migrant learners. Maltese is more useful for migrant learners to make friends. English teacher 1.2 believes that both Maltese and English are important. Along the same lines with 1.1, for 1.2, English is essential for migrant learners in academic work, but even to make friends. Maltese would be beneficial to acclimatize themselves because migrants should learn the language spoken in the place they live in (1.2). Even Maltese teachers 1.3 and 1.5 (comment 56) claim that on the one hand English is fundamental for communication with migrant learners, on the other hand Maltese is essential for migrant learners to further their education and apply for a new job:

56. *Jien naħseb li ż-żewġ lingwi huma importanti għalihom għax xħin imorru biex japplikaw għal xi job jew hekk ħafna qed jitolbu mhux l-Ingliż biss imma li jkunu jittkellmu anki bil-Malti [...] (Teacher 1.5)*

[I think that both languages are important for them because when they apply for a job many require not only proficiency in English but also Maltese [...]

By contrast, English teacher 1.4 claims that whereas English is the only medium for migrant learners, Maltese is unnecessary: *“I don’t think Maltese is a necessity for them to understand”* and even Mathematics teacher 1.6 states that knowing English is a must while knowing Maltese is an added value. Regarding the use of Italian with Italian migrant learners, almost all teachers state that they had opportunities to speak Italian with these learners, on more than one occasion, except 1.3 who is not proficient in it. For example,

Mathematics teacher 1.1 (comment 57) sometimes speaks Italian when he listens to Italian migrant learners speaking in Italian in the classroom:

57. *Huma bejniethom it-Taljani jitkellmu bit-Taljan fil-klassi. Ġieli meta jkunu jaħdmu fi groupwork, huma jikkomunikaw ħafna bit-Taljan bejniethom, imbagħad nikkomunika magħhom bit-Taljan ukoll.* (Teacher 1.1)

[The Italians speak Italian in the classroom. Sometimes when they are working in groupwork, they communicate a lot in Italian, then I communicate with them in Italian as well.]

English teacher 1.2 uses Italian sometimes “to joke around”. English teacher 1.4 sometimes uses Italian with Italian migrant learners to explain a difficult word. She adds that Italian is mostly used with Italian parents, probably because that is their only means of communication: “[b]ut we use Italian a lot, with the Italian parents” (Teacher 1.4). As mentioned earlier on, Maltese teacher 1.5 alternates between Maltese and English, but there are some instances where she switches to Italian too. Mathematics teacher 1.6 referred to a specific case when he had an Italian migrant learner in class who taught him the mathematical terms in Italian. However, he claims that this one-to-one interaction was only possible because it was a small group of students.

#### **4.3.2 Educational Challenges: (iii) Inclusion**

Mathematics teacher 1.1 claims to do group work activities for all students to include all learners: “*ġieli tajthom assignments fi gruppi u nħallat nazzjonalitajiet differenti, jġigifieri*

*mhux dak it-tip li ngħid mela t-Taljani għalihom, l-Għawdxin għalihom*” [sometimes I gave them assignments in groups and I mix different nationalities, I am not that type that says so the Italians are one group, the Gozitans are another] (Teacher 1.1). English teachers 1.2 and 1.4 refer to the culture sections in the English textbook that allow them to discuss with migrant learners. 1.2 does this type of lesson for all the migrant learners and not just for Italians: *“I cannot really say because I either do it as a general lesson for all the foreigners in class. I am not going to be like “look she is Italian and I am going to do this today”* (Teacher 1.2). 1.4 remembers a Croatian student who discussed a recipe of a traditional sweet in class, and this made him more engaged with the lesson. However, she admits that she does not need to do anything in particular with the Italian migrant learner she currently teaches because he misses out on nothing.

Maltese teacher 1.3 wanted to teach the imperative and gave students a task to write a recipe and the Italian student wrote about an Italian one. Maltese teacher 1.5 assigns migrant learners, including Italians, a presentation. This way *“qed tarak il-klassi kollha u kulhadd qed jieħu mill-kulturi ta’ xulxin”* [everyone is watching in the class and shares his own culture] (Teacher 1.5). By contrast, Mathematics teacher 1.6 maintains a friendly environment in the class and he does not make differences: *“jien inżommhom bħallikieku għandi tfal kollha mill-istess nazzjonalità, m’hemmx differenza għalija”* [it is as if they are all of the same nationality, it does not make a difference to me] (Teacher 1.6). Every interviewed teacher claims to offer individual assistance when necessary to all students, either in class or during a free lesson. English teacher 1.2 goes next to the student having difficulties and explains in a simpler way when needed.

The school and the Maltese education system, in general, are perceived as inclusive towards all migrant learners, including Italians, according to most teachers, except for Mathematics teachers 1.1 and 1.6. English teacher 1.2, Maltese teacher 1.3 believe that the school is inclusive because all students are treated equally, the assembly and school talks are conducted in Maltese and English, and circulars are issued in Maltese and English to guarantee full comprehension. 1.2 refers to a diversity week organised by the middle school whereby migrant learners had the opportunity to show their flags, bring dishes from their countries and speak about their culture to others. 1.3 (comment 58) refers to a particular case of a migrant learner who had just arrived and was put next to other migrant learners to get accustomed more easily to the system, and teachers made sure he was not left alone during break time:

*58. Ovvjament nippruvaw ngħinuhom kemm nistgħu. Jien inzertajt form teacher ta' klassi fejn dan l-istudent il-ġdid għadu kemm ingħaqad magħhom, allura nippruvaw li npoġġuh kemm jista' jkun għall-bidu fejn studenti oħra barranin ħalli jibda jintegra bil-mod il-mod. Anki noqogħdu attenti li waqt il-brejk dan l-istudent ma jispiċċax waħdu. (Teacher 1.3)*

[Of course we try to help them as much as we can. I happened to be the form teacher of the class where this new student was placed, so we try to put him as much as possible, at the beginning, next to other migrant learners so that he starts to integrate little by little. We are also careful that during the break this student does not end up alone.]

English teacher 1.4 and Maltese teacher 1.5 indicate that school is inclusive towards all learners, because it accepts everyone and offers 'Ethics'. Mathematics teacher 1.1 (comment 59) claims that the school is inclusive, but he believes that the Maltese education system is unfair because often a lack of information can give a different picture of migrant learners' abilities:

59. *Mela ... bħala skola iva hija inklussiva, però nħoss li bħala sistema edukattiva kultant ehm ... tikkastiga lil min jiġi minn barra għaliex peress li ma jkunx hemm biżżejjed knowledge dwar x'jafu l-istudenti flok ma nassessjawhom qabel biex naraw x'jafu jew le – biex naraw f'liema livell ħa npoġġuhom – naqbd u npoġġuhom fl-iktar livell baxx u dik sa ċertu punt naraha li hija inġusta. (Teacher 1.1)*

[So...as a school yes it is inclusive, but I feel that as an educational system sometimes ehm...it punishes those who come from abroad since there is not enough knowledge about what the students know. Instead of assessing them first to see what they know or not to verify at what level we should place them, we end up placing them at the lowest level and, to some extent, I think that it is unfair.]

Mathematics teacher 1.6 also goes against 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5 because, for him, although the school does its best to include all students, this is not always the case. He refers to the lenten exercises conducted before the Easter holidays: *"l-istudenti barranin li jsegwu l-Ethics kienu bilqiegħda fuq bank hawn barra jistennew il-ħin jgħaddi bla activity ta' xejn"* [migrant learners who follow Ethics were left outside sitting on a bench doing nothing without any replacement activity] (Teacher 1.6). Moreover, the Italian migrant learner he teaches attended lenten exercises, which were carried out in Maltese, and this particular

student certainly could not understand Maltese: “[k]ien hemm mitfuħ bilqiegħda, lanqas kien hemm sentenza waħda bl-Ingliż kemm tpatti, so ma naħsibx li kien included” [He was sitting down, there was not even one sentence in English to make up for it, so I do not think he was included] (Teacher 1.6).

All teachers have in mind positive and negative cases of Italian migrant learners. 1.1 refers to two students he teaches at present who are participating in this research (coded 3.8 and 4.8): “[g]ħandi studenta, il-ħin kollu taqbez, taħdem biex twieġeb u anki tgħin lil ħaddieħor ... she’s very active u l-oħra prattikament mitlufa u l-ftit li tagħmel irrid nissikkaha jiena” [I have a student, she is impatient to answer, she works hard to answer and even helps others ... she is very active and the other is practically lost and the little she does is because I make her do it] (Teacher 1.1). This teacher feels helpless because although he tries to help the student (coded 4.8) by allowing her to speak in Italian, nothing seems to work: “waqt lezzjoni biċċa zgħira nista’ nispjegaha bit-Taljan imma biex tagħmel lezzjoni sħiħa bit-Taljan jew inkella taqleb bejn Ingliż u Taljan il-ħin kollu naħseb li kwazi kwazi impossibbli” [during part of the lesson I can explain in Italian but I think it is impossible to do a whole lesson in Italian or to switch from English to Italian all the time] (Teacher 1.1).

English teacher 1.2 says that the Italian migrant learner she currently teaches (1.8) is proficient in English and very friendly. However, 1.2 remembers a past Italian student who she describes as “a bit of an introvert, not motivated at all, refused to participate in lessons, refused to do homework” (Teacher 1.2). This teacher adds “[y]es, I do not want to sound perhaps ... but she was quite lazy though, so that would have put her back as well. Ehm ... she was not motivated at all. I did a lot of games with that class and she used to participate only because I kind of made her” (Teacher 1.2). Maltese teacher 1.3 admits that the Italian

migrant learner she currently teaches (coded 1.8) works well both individually and in groups, but she recalls an Italian migrant learner who arrived in Year 11 who hardly cooperated and completed his work. English teacher 1.4 taught an Italian migrant learner who had problems with social skills. He was given a Learning Support Educator (LSE), and he now follows a special programme and she adds that there are quite a few similar cases.

Although Italians blend well with local students, Maltese teacher 1.5 currently teaches an Italian migrant learner who is completely uninterested in learning Maltese. Although he has been inserted in a mainstream class of Maltese, his permanence in Gozo does not mean his level of Maltese is good enough to join a mainstream class: “[g]ħandi tifel Taljan li litteralment ma jinteressah xejn. Jifhem bil-Malti, qiegħed fil-mainstream lanqas huwa for foreigners u jifhem bil-Malti imma [tieqaf taħseb] naħseb jiena l-karattru tiegħu forsi daqsxejn għazzien?” [I have an Italian migrant learner who is completely uninterested. He understands Maltese, he is in a mainstream class not even for foreigners, but maybe he is a bit lazy?] (Teacher 1.5).

#### **4.3.3 Parental Involvement**

Mathematics teacher 1.1, English teacher 1.4, and Maltese teacher 1.5 are proficient in Italian, and Italian is used to communicate with parents of Italian migrant learners. English teacher 1.2 used English with the parent of the Italian migrant learner she currently teaches, because she happens to be quite proficient in English, but with the parents of past Italian migrant learners she communicated in Italian. Maltese teacher 1.3, who is not proficient in Italian, uses English to communicate with parents. Even Mathematics teacher 1.6 uses

English with the parents of the Italian migrant learner he teaches. However, he says he can adapt to speaking Italian.

Teachers 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 observe that the parents of Italian migrant learners generally attend parents' day and other meetings and 1.1 notes that they do not know how to speak English: “[a]ttendew, però nnutajt li ma jafux jirkellmu bl-Ingliż” [they attended, but I noticed they do not speak English] (Teacher 1.1). However, 1.4 adds, “we have parents who cannot make it because of work. We still accept them some other time”. By contrast, 1.5 claims that the parents of Italian migrant learners “lanqas qatt jiġu l-parents tagħhom u ma nafx għalfejn” [their parents never attend parents' day and I do not know why]. 1.6 says that not the majority of parents attend, and it largely depends on the student and this is the same as with local students: “[j]ekk ikunu tfal li jridu l-iskola, naħseb li jkellmuk il-ġenituri, jekk ikunu tfal passivi, bħal-lokali ma jkellmukx għax jafu li m’hemmx xi tbiddel wisq” [If they are students who are keen on learning, I think their parents would come to discuss, if they are passive students, like local students, they do not because they know there is little they can change] (Teacher 1.6).

On the one hand, the parents' reaction to the teachers' recommendations is generally positive for teachers 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 who claim they are cooperative and grateful. On the other hand, although most of the time there are no difficulties, English teacher 1.4 underlines the fact that “[m]ost often when they come they are a bit helpless because they are in a new country, so they are sort of dependent on our recommendations and suggestions” (Teacher 1.4). Maltese teacher 1.5 believes there are different reactions: “[j]ien naħseb li ssib min hu grateful u ssib passivi wkoll, imma mhux miegħi biss” [I think you can find who is grateful and who is passive too, but not only with me] (Teacher 1.5).

Mathematics teacher 1.6 states that their reaction depends on the approach taken when talking to these parents.

Maltese teacher 1.3, with reference to her Italian student, says she has a lot of support at home: “[n]emmen li din l-istudenta għandha daqshekk koperazzjoni tajba ħafna fil-klassi minħabba l-background li hemm id-dar” [I believe that this student cooperates so much in class because of her background at home] (Teacher 1.3). By contrast, English teacher 1.2 (comment 60) claims that migrant learners, including Italians, lack support from parents because:

60. *Yes, because I have been through this personally and I do not know if they have the means or what not, but in my opinion if I had to do this to my kids, I would teach them before leaving my actual home country because these children are being plucked out of a place, thrown into another place without any mental resources and I do not think that is fair.* (Teacher 1.2)

Mathematics teacher 1.1 (comment 61) outlines that the parents of the difficult student he has in class did not attend parents’ day, and perhaps this is because of lack of support from home:

61. *Waħda minnhom din li għedtlek li rajtha li ma qabditx. Jiġifieri ma nafx jekk hijjex kwistjoni ta’ attitudni għax m’għandhomx interess jew inkella jekk hux xi raġuni oħra. Jista’ jkun li għax fil-familja stess ma jagħtux daqshekk importanza lill-edukazzjoni.*  
(Teacher 1.1)

[One of them is the one I told you about who did not catch up. I mean I do not know if it is a question of attitude because they have no interest or if it is for some other reason. It may be because her family does not give so much importance to education.]

English teacher 1.4 admits that there are also local students whose parents never attended a single parents' day in five years. Maltese teacher 1.5 states that she does not know if the migrant learners she teaches lack support from home and whether their laid-back attitude at school is influenced by the lack of backing from their parents. Mathematics teacher 1.6 believes some migrant learners, including Italians, whose parents work long hours, come to school without homework the day after, but others, irrespective of their nationality, seem to be coming from a more supportive background where they receive the help and support they need from home.

#### **4.3.4 Future Challenges**

Migrant learners, including Italians, should be offered English language courses before or during their transition into Maltese schools, according to teachers 1.1, 1.2, and 1.4. According to Mathematics teacher 1.1, this type of training should be available in a specific hub or a teacher should provide these lessons in each school. *"I think that it would be highly beneficial to have English for foreigners"*, affirms 1.2 and, apart from that, 1.4 (comment 62) adds that hubs are sorely needed in Gozo because migrant learners need time for transition, and it is not just about learning a new language, but also about learning new skills and adapting to a new culture:

62. [...] *what is needed here and sorely is learning hubs for migrants because it's not only the language and the academics but also the skills, the difference in culture, certain things that they used to do before and here they can't do them. So there needs to be a time of transition where they acquire certain skills and learn why they need these skills in this different culture. They need a safe place where they can be monitored even psychologically because at the end of the day it is a trauma to leave your home and your friends and start afresh in a new country.* (Teacher 1.4)

Maltese teacher 1.3 also agrees with 1.1, 1.2, and 1.4 about having hubs in Gozo that would support these learners, especially if they arrive during mid-scholastic year. In MFL, teachers start teaching Maltese from scratch from September, but “[j]ekk ovvjament jgħilek xi ħadd fi Frar ovvjament għall-għalliema hija ta’ challenge għax jiena għratli għax int għandek lil min wasal s’hawn u min wasal s’hawn” [if someone arrives in February, it is a challenge for the teachers because it happened to me that you have students who are at different points of learning] (Teacher 1.3). She suggests having an MFL class per term for the newly arrived.

The teachers from whom I collected data are not familiar with concepts of language mediation and translanguaging, with the exception of one, teacher 1.6. Most teachers believe that these terms have to do with “translation”. However, English teacher 1.2 and Mathematics teacher 1.6 think that teachers must be offered some professional training to teach migrant learners. Most teachers are still facing difficulties in adapting their teaching to migrant learners, owing to time limits. 1.4 claims she has been adapting all the time. Teachers 1.1 and 1.2 point out that there is not much time for adaptations: “I have no

*leeway to change because at the end of the day since we are exam-based I do not have much time to carry out adaptations and as an English language teacher we have 24 lessons a week”* (Teacher 1.2). Teacher 1.3 claims that time and the syllabus do not allow her to make learning more fun using special resources and games.

Teacher 1.1 claims that the reception and transition of migrant learners can be much better, and there needs to be *“laqgħat kemm għat-tfal biex nuruhom l-affarijiet u kemm għall-ġenituri”* [meetings for students and parents to show them how things work] (Teacher 1.1). Although teachers 1.2 and 1.4 think that the school is quite inclusive, they state that, ideally, there should be different classes of English for foreigners because *“you get students who cannot communicate at all and because of the English language barrier, some students are being put into lower-class ability when they are not low ability”* (Teacher 1.2). For Maltese teacher 1.3, MFL should be considered equivalent to an O-level for migrant learners who arrived recently: *“jekk l-Malti bħala lingwa barranija jiġi meqjus bħala O-level, l-istudenti barranin ikunu trattati aħjar għax huwa ta’ benefiċċju kbir għalihom”* [if MFL would be considered an O-level, that would be beneficial for migrant learners] (Teacher 1.3).

Maltese teacher 1.5 refers to the transition from an MFL class to a Maltese standard class which sometimes is unfair for migrant learners. Time spent in Malta and Gozo cannot determine language learning. There should be some form of assessment before changing Maltese classes: *“[...] jiena nħoss illi dik li tgħid li ilu ħames snin hawnhekk, allura ħa taqleb (għall-Malti Standard) ma nħosshiex li hi fair daqshekk. Irid ikun hemm xi tip ta’ assessments qabel ma jiddeċiedu”*. [...] I feel that it is unfair for a migrant learner to change classes to a mainstream Maltese class because they have been living here for five years. There must be some kind of assessments before deciding] (Teacher 1.5).

#### 4.3.5 Summary of Findings

Teachers believe that migrant learners may experience some challenges in their transition to schools, particularly related to language, friendships, and/or relationships and differences in systems. However, since Italian and Maltese cultures are similar and both languages have some similarities too, the transition of Italian migrant learners can be easier. Moreover, younger migrant learners may adapt more quickly than migrant learners who arrive in their secondary cycle of education, as argued in section 4.3.1. The participation of Italian migrant learners is highly satisfactory according to teachers and they generally complete their work without difficulties, as reported in 4.3.2 (i). Teachers prefer to use English with migrant learners. However, teachers switch to other languages, including Italian with Italians (section 4.3.2, ii).

All English, Maltese, and Mathematics teachers try to promote diversity and include migrant learners in class. They sometimes carry out activities for inclusion and offer individual assistance. Most teachers believe that the school is inclusive towards migrant learners (section 4.3.2, iii), although there is always room for improvement. Teachers claim they do not have major difficulties when communicating with the parents of Italian migrant learners, as English or Italian are used. According to all teachers interviewed, except for Maltese teacher 1.5, their presence and participation in parents' day is quite good. However, Italian migrant learners sometimes lack support from their parents (section 4.3.3). Teachers claim they need supportive services such as learning hubs, the teaching of English for foreigners, and the possibility to obtain a certificate in MFL that is equivalent to an O-level in standard Maltese.

#### 4.4 The Interviews with Parents of Italian Migrant Learners

In this research, six parents of Italian migrant learners participated in an audio-recorded interview, four parents from the Gozo College Middle School and two parents from the Gozo College Secondary School. All the participants were assigned a code to ensure anonymity and be able to identify them during this study. The transcriptions of the interviews can be found in Appendix F. The table provided below indicates how long these parents have lived in Gozo.

<b><u>Gozo College Middle School</u></b>		
<b><u>Code</u></b>	<b><u>Region of Origin</u></b>	<b><u>Number of years in Malta and/or Gozo</u></b>
2.1	Piedmont, Italy	8 years
2.2	Lazio, Italy	4 years
2.3	Lombardy, Italy	3 years
2.4	Campania, Italy	7 years
<b><u>Gozo College Secondary School</u></b>		
2.5	Sicily, Italy	6 years
2.6	Sicily, Italy	6 years

**Table 4.4.** *Italian Migrant Parents with Children at the Gozo College*

The data collected from these interviews will be divided into themes: the transition into the Maltese education system, the educational challenges including inclusion, language and books, homework and exams, parental involvement, and future challenges.

#### 4.4.1 The Transition into the Maltese Education System

Although the Maltese education system has different characteristics than the Italian education system, all the parents of Italian migrant learners favour it because it is less stressful, more student-friendly, and practical. However, some participants highlighted the positive and negative aspects of both systems. The questions asked were intended to compare both systems and acquire insights into the transition of these learners.

Talking from her personal experience, for 2.1 (comment 63), the positive side of the Italian education system is that it helps students develop a studying strategy by, for instance, teaching students independent note-taking, suggesting that the Maltese education system is much more controlled and spoon-fed. Another positive aspect is the oral assessment component because, in Italy, students are often tested orally and not only in writing, an aspect almost completely absent from the Maltese class. However, 2.1 also likes the Maltese education system and her children enjoy going to school because they feel less anxious:

*63. Dalla mia esperienza posso dire che dal sistema italiano secondo me è molto positivo il fatto che i ragazzi sviluppano di più un metodo di studio che comunque è importante per la loro vita anche quando andranno all'università, devono imparare a sapere come si studia, come si prendono bene gli appunti e soprattutto è importante secondo me l'interrogazione orale non solo scritta. (Parent 2.1)*

[From my experience I can say that in my opinion the Italian system is very positive because young people develop a study method which is important for their life, even when they go to university they must learn to know how to study, how to take

their notes well and above all, in my opinion, the oral testing is important, not just written.]

Parent 2.2 (comment 64) openly states that she prefers the Maltese education system because students are followed by their teachers, and when there is a problem, they tackle it rather than leaving it unnoticed. For her, the school in Gozo is better than in Italy because the teachers care for their students. Besides that, the school's infrastructure and the learning process are also better:

*64. Quindi sì, certo è migliore per gli insegnanti, migliore il complesso scolastico, migliore l'apprendimento ma soprattutto la tranquillità che gli permette poi di assimilare meglio quello che ascoltano, che devono studiare. (Parent 2.2)*

[So yes, of course it is better for the teachers, the school complex is better, learning is better but above all the tranquillity that then allows them to better assimilate what they hear, what they have to study.]

Parent 2.3 finds the Maltese education system “*più a portata di bambino*” [more inclined to students' needs] than the Italian one where children are given a lot of homework. Parent 2.4 says that her son often has no follow-up work and content to study: “*[v]edo che qui invece anche lui alle medie qua sempre non ha nulla da fare a casa. In Italia danno molto*” [I see that here, on the other hand, even at the middle school he has nothing to do at home. In Italy they give a lot] (Parent 2.4). For 2.4, it was very difficult to understand the Maltese education system, making it even harder for her to help her children. 2.5 claims that schooling in Malta and Gozo is simpler compared to schooling in Italy. Parent 2.6 outlines

that the secondary school in Gozo is very multicultural and prefers it “*per una questione diciamo di lingue, di opportunità per il futuro*” [for a question of let’s say languages, more opportunities for the future] (Parent 2.6).

Even though most parents like the Maltese education system, this does not mean their children did not experience any challenges in their transition to local schools. Parent 2.1 (comment 65) recalls that her eldest child, who had just finished kindergarten in Italy, endured a traumatic experience at the induction hub in Malta. It started going better in mainstream classes. By contrast, the transition was easier for her younger children. Parent 2.3 (comment 66) also mentions the induction hub, where her daughter spent a year learning Maltese and English, but she states that it was a positive experience even though they arrived during Covid times:

65. *Quando hanno iniziato a \*\*\* [nome di un villaggio a Malta] è stato tutto molto naturale, tranne che per la più grande perché inizialmente mi avevano consigliato di fargli vivere un corso, di fare un corso d’inglese offerto dal governo in un’altra scuola e lì è stato proprio traumatizzante perché eravamo insieme a tantissimi altri stranieri di culture veramente diverse dalla nostra. Lei si è sentita persa e piangeva e non è andata per niente bene. [...] Però per gli altri due [i figli più piccoli] è stato più semplice e naturale. (Parent 2.1)*

[When they started in \*\*\* [name of a village in Malta] it was all very natural, except for the eldest because they had initially advised me to let her take an English course offered by the government in another school and she was completely traumatised because she was together with so many other foreigners of very different cultures

from ours. She felt lost and cried and it did not go well at all. [...] But for the other two [the younger children] it was simpler and more natural.]

66. *No, all'induction hub di Naxxar è stato positivo nonostante ci fosse il covid quando siamo arrivate, quindi giustamente con tutte le difficoltà del caso, ma è stato assolutamente positivo. (Parent 2.3)*

[No, at the Naxxar induction hub it was a positive experience despite Covid when we arrived, so rightly so with all the difficulties involved, it was absolutely positive.]

Although at the induction hub the daughter of 2.3 had a positive experience, when the child joined the primary school in Malta, it was difficult for her to make new friends because *“era l'unica italiana e quindi si sa che i bambini fanno un po' comunella, no? ... diventano un po' cattivelli e quindi era spesso nell'angolo”* [she was the only Italian and it is known that children form groups ... they get nasty, so she was often in the corner] (Parent 2.3). Parent 2.2 describes the transition of her two daughters to schools in Gozo as hard at the beginning because they were anxious for many reasons; making new friends, language barriers, and teachers, but then after the first few months, they felt better: *“quindi erano molto ansiose, molto preoccupate e poi invece nel [pausa] subito ... diciamo già i primi mesi si sono inserite”* [they were very anxious, very worried and then instead in the [pause] right away ... let's say already the first few months they were included] (Parent 2.2). Even parents 2.4 and 2.6 claim that their children had quite a smooth transition and adapted quickly. 2.4 was worried about her son's transition into school in Gozo, particularly because of the bilingual education characterising the Maltese education system. However, her son learned

to speak English and “*si è inserito veramente subito senza difficoltà*” [he was included right away]. She outlines that her son is very friendly and his class was small.

By contrast, parent 2.5 (comment 67) claims that her son had a difficult transition into local schools in Gozo. This parent informed me that, on arrival, the school placed her son in Year 6 because of age (being born in March), but after a month they changed class to Year 5 because the teachers realised he was not prepared for Year 6. According to 2.5, her son was not understood because he was not given the additional support of an LSE immediately, but rather they were told he had to simply get accustomed to the new school. Then, the child became greatly demotivated and could never catch up with his peers:

67. *Allora, l’inserimento è stato diciamo [pensa], si può dire buono, però ha avuto tante difficoltà visto che lui aveva le sue difficoltà. Diciamo che doveva essere capito il ragazzo. Era piccolo. Diciamo che si è un po’ cullata la situazione. L’aiuto che io dicevo per lui che è dislessico è venuto troppo tardi e ora giustamente ci sono le conseguenze perché non è all’altezza giusta della sua classe. (Parent 2.5)*

[The transition was [thinks] good, but he had many difficulties because of his conditions. Let’s say that the boy needed to be understood. He was young. The situation was not taken care of well. The support that I said he needed because he has dyslexia came too late and now the consequences are that he is not at the level of his peers.]

Although initially the transition of some Italian migrant learners was difficult according to parents 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5 and easier for others, mainly 2.4 and 2.6, parents of

Italian migrant learners claim that, nowadays, the transition is much better for their children. Parent 2.1 states that her children *“ormai fanno parte della cultura e della comunità maltese”* [they are now part of the Maltese culture and community] (Parent 2.1). Parent 2.2 says that her daughters do not want to return to Italy: *“[b]ene, benissimo non vogliono più tornare in Italia neanche per le vacanze”* [very good, they do not want to return to Italy, not even for the holidays] (Parent 2.2). When parent 2.3 moved to Gozo, her daughter’s transition to Gozo was much better than in Malta *“forse è perché ci sono più stranieri credo nella scuola di Gozo ... non lo so. È anche più facile magari lasciarli uscire [...]”* [maybe because there are more foreigners in the school in Gozo ... I do not know. It is also because it is much safer letting them go out] (Parent 2.3).

According to 2.4, her son totally assimilated the Maltese culture: *“lui ormai è come se fosse gozitano”* [it is as if he is Gozitan now] (Parent 2.4). 2.5’s son has many new friends in Gozo and when they go to Sicily, he is *“a disagio”* [uncomfortable] because he does not have friends there. Parent 2.6 also agrees that the transition is going well.

#### **4.4.2 Educational Challenges: (i) Inclusion**

Parent 2.1 (comment 68) has not seen any specific measures to help her children feel more included in Maltese schools. Then, as parents, they feel very excluded during meetings because, most of the time, everything is explained in Maltese and they miss important details:

68. [...] *quando ci sono i meeting in presenza, noi stranieri e parlo anche per tanti altri genitori che hanno avuto la stessa lamentela, ci sentiamo molto esclusi, molto esclusi*

*perché tutto viene spiegato in maltese sempre [pensa]. [...] E la traduzione in inglese viene fatta in maniera molto veloce, semplice e rapida. (Parent 2.1)*

[...] when there are face-to-face meetings, we foreigners and I also speak for many other parents who have had the same complaint, we feel very excluded, very excluded because everything is explained in Maltese all the time [thinks]. [...] The translation into English is done very quickly, simple, and fast.]

Parent 2.3 (comment 69) experienced a crisis when she moved to Gozo because the school did not accept her daughter initially since the mother did not have an ID card. As a result, she missed 15 days of school. This parent found this situation somewhat ridiculous since her daughter had already attended a primary school in Malta and spoke English after following an induction course. Thus, parent 2.3 does not believe the school is doing something special to include foreigners. Nevertheless, apart from this episode, as a parent, she cannot say if she feels excluded because her daughter has attended the school for the past few months:

*69. [...] e mi hanno proprio rifiutato la bambina finché sono arrivata addirittura a chiamare il Ministro perché l'ho trovato ridicolo dal momento in cui era una bambina che arrivava già da una scuola maltese che parla inglese, non aveva senso di esistere quel atteggiamento ed è rimasta a casa per 15 giorni. [...] Penso che, diciamo con gli stranieri per l'inclusione non facciamo assolutamente nulla. (Parent 2.3)*

[...] and they just refused the child and I even had to call the Minister because I found it ridiculous since she was a child who already came from a Maltese school

and who speaks English, so there was no point for that attitude and she stayed at home for 15 days. [...] I think that they do absolutely nothing for the inclusion of foreigners.]

Parent 2.5, who lacks proficiency in English and Maltese, claims that teachers and administration help her a lot at school because they always try to speak Italian. Nevertheless, sometimes she felt excluded, especially when she had to always provide documentation in English and wait too much for things to get done, referring to her son's approval of an LSE. By contrast, parent 2.2, although she does not know English or Maltese, said that she never felt excluded, not even during meetings. Even the heads of school speak good Italian, hence they helped her: *"[...] ecco loro parlano benissimo l'italiano, quindi per qualsiasi cosa mi sono state talmente vicino"* [they speak very good Italian, so they always helped me] (Parent 2.2). Even parent 2.4 states that the head of school always listened to them and tried to solve their problems. According to 2.4, meetings are mostly in Maltese, but teachers translate into English. Parent 2.6 mentions that regarding his children, the support given is on the teaching of MFL. As a parent, he feels included because many documents are in English. Most of the time, English is used, although he says that, sometimes, they have to be reminded to use English.

All the interviewed parents of Italian migrant learners claim they participate in parents' days. Although parent 2.4 attends parents' day, her husband does not participate due to the language barrier: *"[s]olitamente io però sempre perché mio marito non sapendo bene l'inglese perché non tutti gli insegnanti parlano bene l'italiano quindi lui no"* [usually I go because my husband does not know English because not all teachers speak Italian well,

so he does not participate] (Parent 2.4). Parent 2.5 (comment 70) usually attends parent's day accompanied by her son, who translates for her. However, she does not participate in other school activities because of work and language:

*70. Io delle volte non partecipo o per lavoro o perché mio marito è sempre fuori a Malta, [...], loro parlano tutto in inglese, io mi sento tipo che non devo disturbare, che qualcuno mi deve spiegare tutte le cose, allora cerco di evitare. Io non voglio cercare una persona per parlare con me. (Parent 2.5)*

[Sometimes I do not participate either for work or because my husband is always away in Malta, [...], they speak English and I do not have someone to explain things to me all the time. Thus, I try to avoid going. I do not want to find someone to translate for me.]

Every participant likes the school's environment and feels part of it. Parent 2.1 suggests more outings and activities. Parent 2.2 (comment 71) likes the order, the cleanliness, the rules, and also the uniform. Parents 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6 think that the school always updates them about everything. However, parent 2.3 (comment 72) hopes to be more included as a parent:

*71. Mi piace l'ordine, la pulizia, le regole e l'autorità che è rispettata. L'autorità non come autorevolezza e di posizione, autorità nel senso di riconoscere il ruolo che uno svolge e quindi i ragazzi riconoscono quello che debbano fare [...] le divise pure che noi non eravamo abituati [...]. (Parent 2.2)*

[I like the order, the cleanliness, the rules, and the authority that is respected.

Authority not in terms of power, authority in the sense of recognising the role that one plays and therefore the children recognise what they are supposed to do [...] I even like the uniforms [...]

72. *Oddio questa è una domanda difficile. Spero insomma di inserirmi meglio, ma sicuramente no. Ripeto lei [la bambina] è molto felice quindi suppongo di sì, ecco.*  
(Parent 2.3)

[Oh my gosh this is a tough question. I hope to fit in better, but I am certainly not now. I repeat she [the girl] is very happy so I guess yes, that's it.]

#### 4.4.2 Educational Challenges: (ii) Language

Learning English to give their children better opportunities and prospects for the future was the main reason for moving to Malta for 2.1's family (comment 73). She considers this of the utmost importance. Parent 2.4 also believes that English is the most important language, especially if her children will not stay in Gozo because it is restrictive with limited opportunities and they decide to go elsewhere. Even parent 2.5 (comment 74) claims that they left their homeland to come here and hope their children will have a better future by learning English:

73. *Il motivo principale per cui siamo venuti qui è stato proprio per l'inglese. [...] l'unico problema nostro era vabbè, a livello di tasse che in Italia è diventato insostenibile ma soprattutto per dare un'opportunità ai ragazzi di studiare l'inglese.* (Parent 2.1)

[The main reason we came here was because of English. [...] apart from taxes which were unsustainable in Italy, we wanted to give our children an opportunity to study English.]

74. *L'inglese è importantissimo e noi diciamo "siamo andati via dal nostro paese e speriamo di darci un futuro con questo inglese" perché sembra un futuro importante l'inglese, che va dappertutto. (Parent 2.5)*

[English is very important and we say "we have left our country and we hope to give ourselves a future with the English language" because using English guarantees a better future wherever you go.]

Parents 2.2, 2.3, and 2.6 agree that English is fundamental for inclusion. Parent 2.6 highlights that English is the only means of communication for migrant learners (comment 75):

75. *Assolutamente sì, certo perché è l'unico mezzo che hanno per comunicare con tutti gli altri ragazzi, diciamo. (Parent 2.6)*

[Absolutely yes, of course because it is the only way they have to communicate with all the other students.]

The Maltese language can help all parents and their children feel part of the local culture and community. However, parent 2.1 (comment 76) notes that although they may speak Maltese, many times Maltese families keep a distance from foreigners, including Italians, who feel left out:

76. *Sicuramente il maltese per essere inclusi nella comunità in generale è importante ... ehm ... anche se comunque al di fuori della scuola c'è sempre tanto distacco tra le famiglie maltesi e noi. Veniamo molto messi da parte.* (Parent 2.1)

[Surely the Maltese language is important for us to be included in the community in general ... ehm ... even though Maltese families always keep their distance from us. They often put us aside.]

Parents 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6 claim that Maltese can be useful for their children to feel more included in the local community and it represents an opportunity to learn a new language. However, parents 2.5 and 2.6 outline that its use is limited, as in comment 77 below:

77. *Per noi il maltese sarebbe buono per capire bene la gente, però non è uno sbocco il maltese. Il maltese è una cosa vostra, una cosa di qui, dell'isola, rimane qui, non va in capo al mondo.* (Parent 2.5)

[For us, Maltese would be good to understand people well, but Maltese is not an opportunity. Maltese is limited to the island of Gozo.]

Parents use the Italian language at home or Sicilian, as in the case of 2.5. However, Italian migrant learners sometimes use English or Maltese whilst speaking, mainly with their siblings, as reported in 2.1's and 2.2's responses. Since Italian is the main language used at home and these learners rarely speak in English or Maltese with their parents, except for 2.4 who sometimes uses English, parents 2.3, 2.5 and 2.6 have felt the need to send their

children to Maltese and English private lessons at the beginning of their transition into schools in Malta and Gozo. Parent 2.3 (comment 78), however, noted how difficult it was during Covid times. Her daughter used to cry every day, and then she gave up on these lessons:

*78. Sì, perché sostanzialmente il primo anno con il covid, il lockdown e la mascherina era molto frustrata la bambina dato che non riusciva a capire niente, [...] e quindi è stato davvero complicato e lì avevo pensato di fargli fare qualche lezione in più online [...]. Alla fine ho rinunciato perché è stato troppo un impatto. (Parent 2.3)*

[Yes, because basically the first year with Covid, the lockdown and the mask, the girl was very frustrated since she could not understand anything, [...] and so it was really complicated and then I thought of giving her some extra lessons online [...] I finally gave up as it was too much for her.]

For 2.5's son, private lessons were a total waste of time, and he did not want to attend anymore. Learning Maltese and English consisted in an additional burden for this student. By contrast, parents 2.1, 2.2, and 2.4 did not feel the need to send their children to private lessons of Maltese and English. However, 2.1 and 2.4 also think that their younger children currently need Maltese private lessons because, as 2.4 states *"è una materia in cui non posso aiutarla e quindi risulta un tantino più difficile"* [it is a subject in which I cannot help] (Parent 2.4). Contrary to all the other parents, parent 2.2 states that her two daughters never asked her to attend extra lessons of Maltese and English because they do not have any difficulties.

#### 4.4.2 Educational Challenges: (iii) Books, Homework, and Exams

Most parents like the books and material used for teaching and learning in local schools, except parent 2.3. Parents 2.1, 2.2, and 2.5 refer to the fact that although other students reuse books, and as a result, they may not all be of excellent quality, their main advantage is that they are free of charge. This is in contrast to Italy, where they have to spend a lot of money to buy them. Parent 2.5 affirms that the expenses in Maltese schools are minimal because the school provides almost all the material and it helps low-income families: *“[c]’è tanta gente che non si può permettere tante spese ed è un aiuto”* [there are a lot of people who cannot afford too many expenses and it is a support] (Parent 2.5).

Both parents 2.4 and 2.6 like the books and materials used in class and according to them they are of excellent quality and simpler to understand. Parent 2.6 adds that the Italian curriculum is more detailed than the Maltese, but books used in local schools are easier: *“secondo me, il programma italiano è un pochino più completo di quello maltese come programma di studio, però diciamo che questi qua maltesi sono più semplice da capire come libri, hanno un linguaggio più semplice”* [I think that the Italian curriculum is a little bit more detailed as a study programme, but Maltese books are simpler to understand, they have a simpler language] (Parent 2.6). By contrast, 2.3 prefers the Italian system to the Maltese. Photocopies are of bad quality. Besides, her disorganised daughter finds it hard to keep everything in order. Parent 2.3 (comment 79) prefers hardcover books because photocopies can easily be lost. It is also time-consuming for her because she always has to print them at a stationery to take them to school and use them during lessons. She states that in Italy you buy books, and you can use them for three years, and after they can be sold to someone else. Besides, it is not a really huge expense:

79. *Mah, io penso che questa cosa delle fotocopie sia una cosa di pessima qualità. [...]*

*Credo che dei libri con le copertine evitino di avere le cartelle piene di fotocopie che volano a destra e sinistra e si perdono anche con facilità. (Parent 2.3)*

[Well, I think that photocopying is bad. [...] I believe that books avoid one having to have folders full of photocopies that fly left and right and are also easily lost.]

All parents claim that homework in Maltese schools is considerably less compared to homework in Italy and 2.1 even declares that she spoke with the head of school about this: *“c’ho tenuto ad avere un incontro con la preside per chiedere se gentilmente venivano dati più compiti a casa [ride] perché per me quello che viene dato a casa è veramente molto poco [...]”* [I wanted to have a meeting with the head of school to gently ask if the teachers could give more homework because what is given is very little [...]] (Parent 2.1). Parent 2.2 adds that students study less in local schools. However, she likes that teachers first explain and then test students. Parent 2.3 outlines that homework in Italy is more demanding. Although parents 2.4 and 2.5 also claim that homework in Italy is more substantial, they like that their children work more in class, especially 2.5 (comment 80) who believes that this is more beneficial for her son because of his abilities:

80. *No, i compiti che gli danno a lui sono di meno, a parte che delle volte, giustamente, non porta i compiti perché magari io non controllo bene e mi sfugge. Però loro sempre non hanno dato tanti compiti perché riconoscono che nella sua capacità gli fanno fare di più a scuola. (Parent 2.5)*

[No, the homework they give him is less, except that sometimes he does not bring homework because maybe I do not check well, and he gets away with it. But they never gave him a lot of homework because they recognise that, given his abilities, they get him to work more at school.]

Almost all parents of Italian migrant learners affirm that generally their children can do their homework independently, except for 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 who claim that sometimes they have difficulties in Mathematics, with 2.5 (comment 81) adding that her son has difficulties with MFL too:

*81. Però sì, ha bisogno di essere seguito, soprattutto in matematica e anche certe cose con il maltese. Il maltese non va bene. Fa quello per gli stranieri. In inglese un pochino di meno se si applica perché l'inglese lo sa un pochino di più, lo capisce. Lui ha accettato di imparare di più, è più motivato. (Parent 2.5)*

[But yes, he needs to be followed, especially in Mathematics and in Maltese. He does not do well in MFL. He does better in English if he works at it because he is more proficient in English, he understands it. He has agreed to learn it more, so he is more motivated.]

Parents 2.2, 2.3, and 2.5 assert that their children had problems with exams in English and Maltese, particularly in the initial phase of their transition to Maltese schools. Some parents, 2.3 and 2.6, claim that exams in Italy are much harder than in Malta but they are less frequent because they are not carried out at the end of each year, as also pointed

out by 2.4. An interesting consideration is that in Italy much importance is given to the correct use of the Italian language apart from content, and the focus is on open-ended questions: “[v]ogliono che sviluppi un argomento per i fatti tuoi, non che te ne esci solo con una X. Poi abbiamo anche le verifiche a scelta multipla, però sono meno, ecco. Qui è più facile sotto quel punto di vista” [They] want you to develop a topic of your own, not just come up with an X. Then we also have multiple choice tests, but they are less. Here it is easier] (Parent 2.3).

Parent 2.2 states that the head of school had agreed to provide her daughter with assistance to read exam questions because this student knew the answers but could not understand the questions because of the language barrier: “[e]h all’inizio sì e infatti alla più piccola soprattutto le hanno messo un aiuto perché lei era molto nervosa” [eh when she arrived yes, in fact they provided my younger daughter with support during exams because she was very nervous] (Parent 2.2). Parent 2.3 is perhaps the most significant case. At the primary school, they advised her not to sit for exams because of a lack of proficiency in Maltese and English. Then, this parent was told by other migrant parents that their children are often exempted from exams and as a result they are placed in a low-ranking class the year after. 2.3 (comment 82) had a conversation with the head of school whereby she outlined that this situation made her daughter feel different and sad. At that point, the head of school agreed to let the child sit for the exams, but parent 2.3 asserts these were not corrected:

82. *Li ha avuti a \*\*\* [la scuola primaria che frequentava a Malta] per esempio. Gli esami non glieli volevano far fare perché [pausa] non è la prima ragazzina a cui capita*

*perché poi ho parlato con altri genitori ovviamente, soprattutto con gli stranieri. Gli fanno saltare l'esame e poi quando vanno alla middle school li buttano nell'ultima classe ... diciamo quella dei somari. [...] [C]redo che invece scoraggi tantissimo un bambino e che si senta trattato come un idiota. Mia figlia, per esempio, grazie a Dio, mia figlia ha un carattere molto forte e gli ha detto "a me non me ne frega niente, io gli esami li voglio fare lo stesso anche se per voi non sono [si ferma]." Quindi lei in realtà li ha fatti ma loro non li hanno valutati. (Parent 2.3)*

[She had them at \*\*\* [the primary school she attended in Malta] for example. They did not want her to sit for her exams and [pause] she is not the first migrant learner that this has happened to because then I spoke to other parents of course, especially with foreigners. They make them skip the exam and then when they go to middle school they place them in the last class ... let's say in the class of less-able students. [...] [I] think that this discourages a child a lot and that he/she feels treated like an idiot. My daughter, thanks be to God, she has a very strong character and she told them "I do not give a damn, I want to sit for the exams anyway even if for you I am not [she stops]." So, she sat for the exams, but they did not correct them.]

Parent 2.3 (comment 83) also refers to the fact that after one year doing an induction course, her daughter was not actually able to follow an English lesson. At the primary school, 2.3 asked the teachers to help her daughter by giving her extra lessons if necessary because she needed more time to learn, but the school totally excluded her from Maltese lessons. Then, when moving to Gozo, she was immediately placed in a low-ranking class and it was

only after that she and her daughter discussed the problem with the head of school that she changed class:

*83. Per un periodo l'ho tenuta a casa, poi quando è entrata al primo anno ad \*\*\* [la scuola primaria che frequentava a Malta] ovviamente non era in grado di seguire una lezione d'inglese. Dopo tre mesi d'estate in Italia, non era in grado. Allora io ho chiesto gentilmente alle insegnanti, ho detto "dato che è solo una bambina straniera, è una sola, non credo che vi costi niente dedicarle del tempo extra." Invece l'hanno esclusa da maltese subito, quindi gli altri facevano maltese e a lei le dicevano di disegnare [...]. (Parent 2.3)*

[For a while I kept her at home, then when she entered the first year at \*\*\* [the primary school she attended in Malta] she obviously was not able to follow an English lesson. After three months of summer in Italy, she was unable to. So I kindly asked the teachers, I said "since she is the only migrant learner, she is the only one, I do not think it costs you anything to give her extra time." Instead they immediately excluded her from Maltese, so the others did Maltese and she was told to draw [...].

Even 2.5 affirms that her son did not sit for the exams in the first years of his transition because he was 'not able' to do them, and the school did not even inform the parent about it. However, when he started doing them, he had a teacher/LSE next to him to read the questions. By contrast, other parents, particularly 2.1 and 2.4 who have lived in Malta and Gozo for a longer time, state that their children do not have problems with exams in English and Maltese. In addition to that, parent 2.1 (comment 84) even states that both languages are now considered as normal subjects like local students by her children:

84. *No, perché sono considerate materie come tutte le altre ormai. Anche l'esame viene dato non come straniero perché so che si danno dei test o degli esami diversi per chi è qui da meno di 5 anni. Loro ormai sono uguali a tutti gli altri studenti. (Parent 2.1)*

[No, because they are considered subjects like any other by now. The exams they do are the same as those of local students. I know that foreigners who have been here for less than 5 years sit for different tests or exams. My children are now the same as all the mainstream students.]

#### **4.4.3 Parental Involvement**

Parents 2.1, 2.3, and 2.4 help their children with homework and studying when necessary, but parents 2.2, 2.5, and 2.6 cannot help them with school work and prefer to call competent persons to help their children. On the one hand, parent 2.2 recalls having to stay long hours with her daughters to study when in Italy, but now she is unable to help. However, she feels good about it because they are responsible for getting the work done independently and studying to obtain good marks (comment 85). On the other hand, parent 2.5 (comment 86) cannot help her son with the homework and even her husband, so sometimes she feels bad about it because she cannot assist him:

85. *No. No no, benissimo perché non è la mia responsabilità. È la loro responsabilità. A scuola ci vanno loro, mica ci vado io. [...] Siccome loro non vogliono prendere brutti voti, studiano. (Parent 2.2)*

[No. No no, it is fine because it is not my responsibility. It is their responsibility. They go to school, I do not go. [...] Since they do not want to get bad grades, they study.]

86. *Un po' a disagio perché non potendo aiutarlo significa che lo lasciamo nel suo, solo su quello che sa fare lui. (Parent 2.5)*

[A little uncomfortable because being unable to help him means that we leave him on his own, only on what he can do.]

Along the same lines, although parent 2.6 (comment 87) can help his son with Mathematics, he cannot with Maltese or English and he prefers to pay for private lessons:

87. *In questo caso preferisco prendere persone diciamo competenti, dargli ripetizioni, perché io posso dargli una mano in matematica, però in inglese e maltese no. (Parent 2.6)*

[In this case I prefer to hire people who are, let's say, competent, because I can help in Mathematics, but not in English and Maltese.]

Parents 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.6 have contacts with other Italian migrant families and sometimes they contact them whenever they have problems. 2.4 speaks with other Italian parents to check if there were any updates in the school calendar: "*[s]ì, ci confrontiamo per degli avvisi della scuola, se c'è stata qualche variazione al calendario scolastico*" [yes]yes, we meet for notices from the school, if there has been any changes to the school calendar] (Parent 2.4). Parents 2.2 and 2.5 do not seek other Italian parents' help: "*no, perché non c'ho tempo e non l'abbiamo mai fatto*" [no because we do not have the time and we never did that] (Parent 2.5).

Parent 2.1 (comment 88) outlines that migrant parents should be considered more just like Maltese and Gozitan parents because as previously mentioned in 4.4.2 (i), she feels somewhat excluded and has noticed this in other migrant parents' discourse:

*88. Per me la principale è considerare i genitori stranieri come quelli maltesi, non dare priorità, questo noi viviamo, e l'ho notato dai discorsi di tanti genitori questo aspetto.*

(Parent 2.1)

[For me the main thing is to consider migrant parents like the Maltese ones, not to give priority to locals, that is what we experience, and I have noticed this aspect from many other migrant parents' discourse.]

#### **4.4.4 Future Challenges**

Parents, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, and 2.6 have a positive view towards education in Malta and Gozo, even though there are differences between systems. Although her children will not have the same grasp of general culture and knowledge, 2.1 still has a positive view. Parent 2.2 firmly believes that her daughters became even more responsible when moving to schools in Gozo and, for 2.6, his children are more participative. Parent 2.4 (comment 89) affirms that in her hometown, Naples, children lack personal attention and she prefers that hers are living and attending school in Gozo. By contrast, parent 2.3 (comment 90), who comes from Northern Italy, changed her perspective to the negative because there is a *laissez-faire* approach in local schools where students are not reprimanded for using foul language. Here are a couple of examples:

89. *Beh io penso in maniera molto positiva anche perché noi in Italia vivevamo al sud e insomma al sud Italia soprattutto nella provincia di Napoli, le scuole stanno, non a livello di insegnamento perché a livello didattico comunque in Italia [si ferma], ma forse a livello di come sono diventati oggi i ragazzi, l'educazione loro personale, forse è meglio che stiano vivendo qui e non in Italia, quindi per me in maniera positiva.*

(Parent 2.4)

[Well, I think in a very positive way also because in Italy we lived in the south and in southern Italy, especially in the province of Naples, the schools are, not at the teaching level because at the didactic level anyway in Italy [she stops], but perhaps at the level of how children have become today, their personal education, maybe it is better that they are living here and not in Italy, so for me in a positive way.]

90. *Secondo me, gli concedono un linguaggio che per me non esiste assolutamente, sono un pochino diciamo più lascia andare, no? In Italia non è proprio così. In Italia ti sospendono più spesso, ti danno le note sul registro. Devi assolutamente stare attento a come parli perché se no, sono guai seri. (Parent 2.3)*

[In my opinion, they let them use foul language which is unacceptable to me, here they are a little bit more lax, right? In Italy it is different and they suspend you more often, they give you the reports on the register. You absolutely have to be careful how you talk because otherwise you get in serious trouble.]

Parent 2.5 (comment 91) cannot say if her perspective changed positively or negatively because her son did not like school and did not want to study even back in his

hometown in Sicily. However, she asserts that things worsened in his transition to school in Gozo and she and her son felt humiliated, especially when she used to leave her son after school hours during the *Klabb 3-16* and teachers often blamed her son for misbehaviour:

91. *[...] visto che il bambino è iperattivo, la colpa di chi era? Era sempre di mio figlio e una volta giustamente mi sentivo umiliata “\*\*\*[nome] ha fatto questo, e \*\*\*[nome] fa questo”, sia io che lui ci sentivamo umiliati. Io una volta l’ho detto perché lui andava pure il continuo dopo la scuola, rimaneva lì a scuola perché io lavoravo allo stesso tempo e lui rimaneva là a fare i suoi compiti. (Parent 2.5)*

[...] since the child is hyperactive, whose fault was it? It was always my son’s and once I felt humiliated, “\*\*\*[name] did this, and \*\*\*[name] does this”. Both me and him felt humiliated. I once told them how we felt because he even used to stay in the after-school club to do his homework since I worked at the same time.]

Most parents would change something from local schools or the Maltese education system, except for 2.4, who could not think of anything to change. For 2.1, local schools should teach students studying techniques and heads of schools should organise more outings and activities to fight bullying and exclusion. Parent 2.1 thinks that hate speech towards migrants is something inherent to the Maltese culture. She adds that local schools should also involve parents, both locals and migrants, in these activities to foster acceptance towards migrants and their children. For parents 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, and 2.6, it would be beneficial to have assistance in class for newly arrived Italian migrant learners because the impact of transition is quite strong psychologically and can have repercussions on the performance and achievement levels of migrant learners. Parent 2.2 would like longer school days and

students should study more. Moreover, assistance to migrant learners should be guaranteed at least in the initial months of transition (comment 92):

92. *[...] se ci fosse un supporto in più per questi bambini, ragazzi che c'hanno i primi giorni sarebbe meglio a parte che umano, sarebbe meglio proprio a livello psicologico, di rendimento, sarebbe meglio perché poi io ringrazio Dio, mi passi il termine, è che le mie bambine alla fine l'hanno superato [...] però l'impatto come le ho detto all'inizio c'è stato, è ovvio, è umano poi. (Parent 2.2)*

[...] if there would be extra support for these children, during their first few days, it would be better on a human level, it would be better precisely on a psychological level, in terms of performance, it would be better because then I thank God, pardon my expression, in the end my girls got over it [...] however, as I told you at the beginning, it was impactful, it is obvious, it is normal.]

Parent 2.3 claims that she would have preferred a smoother transition process for her daughter within the primary school itself and not being pulled out to avoid facing the difficulties of transition twice: *"[s]econdo me, se si potesse fare un inserimento all'interno della scuola ovviamente sarebbe migliore"* [I think that if they do the inclusion inside the school obviously it would be better] (Parent 2.3). Parent 2.5 (comment 93) states that her son would feel much better now and less demotivated if he had been given the support he needed from the start. At school they used to tell her that her son had to adapt to the new school and teaching methods:

93. *Ci voleva quell'assistenza ad aiutarlo sin da quando sono arrivata e invece dicevano "no, si deve ambientare il bambino" e deve fare tipo come si dice, "deve capire la nostra scuola", "deve capire i nostri metodi". Secondo me, sarebbe stato meglio e ora starebbe meglio. (Parent 2.5)*

[We needed that assistance to help him ever since I arrived and, instead, they said "no, the child has to settle in", "he has to understand our school", "he has to understand our methods". In my opinion, it would have been better and now he would be better.]

#### **4.4.5 Summary of Findings**

Italian parents have a generally positive view of Maltese schools. However, their children experienced some challenges in their transition, as reported in section 4.4.1. Some parents felt they and their children were excluded at a certain point, like 2.1, 2.3, and 2.5 (section 4.4.2, i). English is considered as essential for inclusion at school and, for some parents (Parents 2.1, 2.5), learning English can give greater opportunities to their children. All parents admit that English is a tool subject. Maltese helps more with respect to being part of the community (section 4.4.2, ii). Most parents like the books used in local schools. However, homework is much less compared to Italy and parents wish that teachers give more homework (section 4.4.2, iii). Exams in Maltese and English were difficult during the first years and some learners were exempted (section 4.4.2, iii). Some parents help their children with homework when necessary and others cannot, hence they prefer to call more competent persons (section 4.4.3). Most Italian migrant parents wish to have more assistance in class for Italian migrant learners because they all agree that the impact of

transition can have irreversible repercussions on their education (section 4.4.4), as happened to 2.5's son who is now extremely demotivated. One parent would also like the school to organise more activities, involving students and parents to favour socialisation and reduce hate speech against migrants. This is because this often reflects itself in local children who sometimes insult and bully migrant learners just for being migrants.

## **4.5 Observations**

Together with the audio-recorded interviews, observations in English, Maltese, and Mathematics classes of Italian migrant learners were done to gain further insights regarding the transition of these learners into local schools. I conducted eight observations at the Gozo College Middle School and four at the Secondary School, as explained in Chapter 3. However, it must be noted that not all Italian migrant learners were observed. I did not observe 5.8 because his parents did not consent and I did not observe 1.10, 3.10, and 4.10 because their English, Maltese, and Mathematics teachers at the secondary school refused to let me in during their lessons. In this section, I will discuss my observations in both schools categorised in the themes of language barriers, participation in lessons, and work completion.

### **4.5.1 Language Barriers**

English is the main language used for communication during the lessons in the presence of migrant learners, including Italians in both schools. English is used to explain the lesson content, ask questions, and give instructions. Class 8.9 at the middle school, wherein 2.8, 3.8 and 4.8 are placed, is extremely heterogeneous with students of mixed nationalities

but no Maltese students. On the other hand, during Maltese as a Foreign Language (MFL) lessons, a simplified version of Maltese is used, and the teacher often repeats that she does not know English *“Jien ma nifhimx bl-Ingliż. Bil-Malti biss”* [I do not understand English. Just Maltese], as she clearly is inclined to teaching the L2 by using it regularly and asking her learners to do the same.

A different example is the MFL class of student 1.7, where students have less proficiency in Maltese because many of them have just transitioned to school in Gozo and the teacher mainly uses English for lesson explanation and sometimes switches to Maltese. Code-switching between Maltese and English occurs frequently, both in MFL classes and other classes where there are both migrant learners and local students. For example, during the Mathematics lesson of 1.7 (a Track 2 class), the explanation is mainly in English, but code-switching to Maltese occurs to make sure the local students understand. This teacher alternates between Maltese and English when explaining and asking questions. 1.7 struggles to understand Maltese and she seemed very distracted, playing with her hair and sometimes drawing on her hands.

By contrast, the Italian language is used on very rare occasions. However, I observed that although MFL teachers try to use Maltese, they also try to use Maltese words that are similar to Italian in their lessons. I also observed Italian migrant learners drawing comparisons between the target language and their mother tongue both in Maltese and English lessons. For example, the MFL teacher of 2.8, 3.8, and 4.8 was doing a reading lesson about *“ir-reklam”* [publicity] and when the teacher asked *“x’inhu skont?”* [what is *“skont”*?], Italian migrant learners said *“sale”* from *“sconto”* in Italian. The same case occurred in another MFL class because when the teacher asked about the meaning of *“it-temp”*, 1.7

compared with the Italian word "*il tempo*" [the weather]. During English literature, when the teacher used the word "primitive", 2.8 understood its meaning from "*primitivo*" in Italian. Although 2.10 is proficient in English and understands Maltese, sometimes the English and MFL teachers explain a difficult word in Italian, but in very rare cases. It must be noted that this learner is the only learner in a high-track class (class 10.3).

Apart from these rare occasions, where Italian is used with Italians, I also observed the Mathematics teacher 1.1 who used Italian with a particular student (4.8) who lacks proficiency in English and Maltese. I also observed that this student was sitting alone, far from the other Italian migrant learners (2.8, 3.8), who support each other and speak Italian between them. Mathematics teacher 1.1 came next to 4.8 and spoke in Italian with her to check if she was understanding. The student replied in Italian. An LSE was present in class and she was assisting another Italian migrant learner, who was not paying attention to the lesson. 4.8's difficulties went unnoticed by the LSE. While students 2.8 and 3.8 do not have major difficulties when Maltese and English are used, student 4.8 has such difficulties because she lacks proficiency in both languages of instruction and probably needs additional support.

In the case of Italian migrant learners who have lived in Malta and Gozo for a longer time, such as 2.7 and 1.8 from the middle school and 1.9 from the secondary school, the language barriers are less. These learners are proficient in Maltese and English and they are able to understand the dynamics of code-switching in class. 2.7, 1.8, and 1.9 are in a mainstream class of standard Maltese and not MFL. They are all placed in middle-track classes with a higher presence of local students.

#### 4.5.2 Participation in Lessons

Italian migrant learners proficient in Maltese and English generally follow lessons without difficulties and participate during lessons. However, there are Italian migrant learners who encounter difficulties, as in the case of 1.7 and 4.8 at the middle school, especially owing to the language barriers. Some differences in lesson participation between Italians and non-Italians were registered in my observation notes.

Student 1.7 does not participate regularly during the Mathematics and MFL lessons. In the Mathematics lesson, she did not have the handouts prepared by her teacher because she failed to pay for them, and therefore she did not do her homework. She was reprimanded for this in front of the class at the beginning of the lesson, and the teacher seemed very annoyed. Since 1.7 had no handouts, she could not do the class correction and, as a result, she was not paying attention to the lesson. Another English migrant learner had no papers and was not following the lesson. The local students on the other hand were paying attention and participated actively during the lesson. Gozitan students were interacting much more in class with their teacher, but 1.7 was finding difficulties to follow and this teacher barely addressed this issue. She sometimes asked direct questions to this learner, but failed to give her individual assistance. During the MFL class, migrant learners interacted with their teacher mainly in English when she directly asked them questions, including 1.7. There were British, Italian, Syrian, Swedish, and Chinese students. The Maltese lesson was about eating at a restaurant and the teacher tried to engage 1.7 by, for instance, referring to Italian food. However, the majority of migrant learners looked uninterested, and a particular British student was almost sleeping on the desk. Students could not express

themselves in Maltese and could only produce one-word answers, except for the Syrian migrant learner who gained proficiency in Maltese.

On the contrary, 2.8 and 3.8 participate actively during English, MFL, and Mathematics lessons and they follow without major difficulties. They look confident and motivated to learn. Moreover, they support each other and sit side by side in the first row. These learners mainly use English with their teachers and peers, but they often interact between them in Italian. During the English lessons, 2.8 and 3.8 participate regularly together with two American migrant learners in the same class. Some non-Italians (Swedish, Albanian, Polish) misbehave during English and do not participate as much but seem rather passive. 2.8 and 3.8 interact in the English language even in MFL lessons, but they attempt to participate in Maltese. However, sometimes these learners switch to Italian when they have difficulties explaining themselves. For example, when the teacher asked the students where the word *"irġiel"* [men] comes from, and what type of plural it is, student 3.8 tried to answer in Maltese but then she switched to Italian *"plural miksuri għax il-parole diverse"* [plural miksuri because the words are different]. 2.8 and 3.8 seem very motivated to learn Maltese, unlike 4.8 who is in the same class with them and who is only proficient in her mother tongue.

Italian migrant learner 4.8 seems quiet, unmotivated, and passive in English, MFL, and Mathematics lessons and does not participate. I observed that she is quite excluded in class and sits at the back. She can interact only in Italian with her teacher and peers. I observed the Mathematics teacher during an algebra lesson who, while explaining algebra, asked 4.8 to work a particular sum on the interactive whiteboard in front of the class. Although the Mathematics teacher tried to explain in simpler English and some Italian, she

still seemed not to understand. Her Italian classmates (2.8, 3.8) tried to help her out and communicated with her in Italian. However, when 4.8 returned to her place she uttered “*non lo voglio fare mai più*” [I never want to do this again] because she felt singled out and I observed from her body language how much she felt uncomfortable because she is shy and lacks self-esteem. Then, 4.8 was told to change places and go next to an Albanian student who could help her out with the classwork, and close to the Italian migrant learners, 2.8 and 3.8, who could translate in Italian.

During the English lesson, 4.8 also seemed to be lost because the lesson was probably beyond her linguistic abilities. It was a prose lesson and I doubt that 4.8 could understand. She refrained from participating and raising her hand. Moreover, when the teacher asked her directly “*You want to try?*”, this student said “*no*” because probably she does not feel at ease trying for fear of making mistakes because her level of English is below that of her peers. Then, the English teacher continued the lesson and did not address the problem. In MFL, 4.8 is completely ignored, and she was listening passively to what the teacher said because she struggles a lot in Maltese. After, I also spoke to the Maltese teacher and she told me that 4.8 “*ma tasalx*” [she cannot learn], hence judging the child as being unable to learn. Other non-Italian migrant learners were drawing on a rough paper because they are also greatly unmotivated.

On the contrary, students 2.7, 1.8, 1.9, and 2.10 who are all placed in middle and high-track classes, participate actively during lessons because they understand both Maltese and English having lived for more years in Malta and Gozo, as outlined in section 4.5.1. As a result, they do not encounter any major difficulties understanding lessons. On the one hand, 2.7 sometimes asks her classmate about something she misses out during lessons, more so

in Maltese, but she is able to understand independently, and she also asks questions to the teacher when needed just like local students. On the other hand, 1.8, who participates actively during the lessons, interacts less with her peers because she has friendship issues despite knowing Maltese and English.

#### **4.5.3 Work Completion**

As far as classwork and homework are concerned, the Italian migrant learners who have fewer language barriers and participate actively during lessons, 2.7, 1.8, 1.9, 2.10, manage to do their work efficiently without difficulties. 2.7 sometimes asks the teacher to repeat or asks her classmate. Although 1.9 can complete work efficiently, he sometimes tells the Maltese teacher not to go too fast and asks for help when required to complete his work. 2.10 very rarely asks the Mathematics teacher when he goes around and stops next to him, but he asks more during MFL because he needs more assistance to complete his work efficiently.

In lower-track classes, 2.8 and 3.8, who are in low-track classes and have lived in Gozo for less time than 2.7, 1.8, 1.9, and 2.10, sometimes ask the Maltese and English teachers about the meaning of certain words. They complete their work more efficiently when they work together in pairs and teachers allow them to communicate in Italian between them. On the other hand, 1.7 and 4.8, who have greater language problems in Maltese and English and participate much less during lessons, struggle to complete their work both in class and at home. As already referred to in section 4.5.2, 1.7 did not do her Mathematics homework. Her Mathematics teacher informed me that this student has joined a Track 2 Mathematics class very recently following insistence from the parent to change

classes (she was previously in a Track 1 class). However, according to her teacher, this class is beyond the student's abilities because she struggles a lot and missed a substantial part of the syllabus. Even in MFL lessons, 1.7 is not able to produce sentences in Maltese yet and, during the lesson, she copies the sentences that the teacher writes on the screen. Other non-Italian migrant learners in class do the same. Some non-Italians even refuse to write during MFL lessons.

Student 4.8, along the same lines as 1.7, struggles very much to complete her work independently in English, MFL, and Mathematics lessons. During the English and Maltese lessons, 4.8 waits for the teacher or her peers to give answers and copies them. Moreover, she never asks for help and neither of the English and Maltese teachers gave her individual attention in class or offered any additional support during break time or free lessons, rather, they continued the lesson with the rest of the class. She looked confused most of the time and could not catch up with her peers. In the Mathematics lesson, 2.8 often translates in Italian to 4.8 so that she can understand what they are doing in class. At a certain point of the lesson, when the teacher asked the students to work in groups, 4.8 could complete her work with the help of her peers. However, 4.8 keeps being very quiet and never asks the teacher for help. It was student 3.8 who asked the teacher *"Sir, can you help \*\*\* [4.8's name]?"* because 4.8 would never ask herself.

Other non-Italian migrant learners seek help from their peers most of the time and work more efficiently when in pairs or in groups, as observed in a Mathematics lesson at the middle school. They ask the teacher for help in the English language in all English, MFL, and Mathematics lessons, depending on motivation towards learning and individual personality traits.

## Chapter 5 - Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

The Maltese and Italian education systems have similarities and differences that can favour or hinder the transition of Italian migrant learners into Maltese schools. The Maltese education system is more highly selective and exam-oriented than the Italian one (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020), and all students, irrespective of their nationality, are expected to reach standards set by the NCF, the LOF, and the Secondary Examination Certification. This can create short-term and long-term disadvantages for migrant learners who transition to local schools, especially those who are unfamiliar with systems based on such frameworks and summative assessment systems. The presence of migrant learners of different languages and cultures also requires teachers' expertise to provide a quality education for all (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020).

This study confirms that although Italians feel included in local schools, they encounter specific challenges, as already documented by Baschiera and Caruana (2020), Palazzo (2020), and Caruana and Pace (2021). Italian migrant learners face language barriers in both Maltese and English that can affect participation in lessons, attainment, examinations, and socialisation. There are also some indications of difficulties in relation to the maintenance of the heritage language (Palazzo, 2020). Research indicates that "Italian students in our schools are sometimes placed in lower tracks or bands, because of difficulties to follow some lessons due to limited competence in Maltese and English" (Caruana & Pace, 2021, p. 155). Only one student out of twelve participants in this research was placed in a high-track class. This study reflects on the fact that although the Maltese

education system offers linguistic support to these learners to learn Maltese and English, practices to value migrant learners' background, language, and culture are almost absent in Maltese schools.

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of this research in light of the literature to reflect on issues related to the transition of Italian migrant learners into state secondary schools in Gozo.

## **5.2 The Transition of Italian Migrant Learners**

Empirical data from this research suggests that the transition of Italian migrant learners to schools in Gozo was difficult in the first few months for learners who had attended a substantial number of years of schooling in Italy. Initially, students were anxious primarily because of possible language barriers, making new friends, and also because of differences between the two educational systems. This is also confirmed by their parents, who recall situations of stress at the beginning of the transition.

This implies that although the NCF (MEDE, 2012) upholds a vision for social justice and embraces diversity that is “promoted through an inclusive environment” (p. 41), sometimes migrant children and their parents feel excluded, despite the provisions taken to support them. Efforts have been made over the years to address the increasing heterogeneous classes in Maltese schools, as well as to provide migrant learners with a programme that guarantees access to the curriculum. For example, both the *National Policy of the Teaching of Maltese as a Foreign Language within the Framework of Bilingualism and Plurilingualism* (MEDE, 2019d) and the establishment of the Migrant Learners' Unit (MLU)

and its various induction hubs aim to strengthen plurilingualism and multiculturalism (see Chapter 2 section 2.4). Eight Italian migrant learners out of twelve participating in this research follow MFL classes. This helps them learn Maltese because when they transition into schools, their level of this language obviously does not match that of their native peers. Moreover, subjects 1.7 and 1.8 attended induction courses offered to students with limited competences in English and Maltese (Vassallo Gauci, 2017). The implications of these courses will be discussed further in section 5.2.1.

Some learners recall episodes of bullying in their transition to local schools, especially in their first few years of arrival (1.7, 1.8, 3.8, 4.10). 1.7, 1.8, and 4.10 were often told the phrase “*go back to your country*” or “*go back to Italy*” suggesting that local children sometimes use offensive discourse with these learners based on their foreign nationality. A case in point is 4.10, who is often told “*mafia*” because he is Sicilian. Cummins (2015) distinguishes between migrants who are often labelled as ‘good’ and others who are labelled ‘bad’, with the latter being perceived as migrants who create problems. The fact that some Italian migrant learners have suffered episodes of bullying implies that even though Italians originate from contexts which are geographically and culturally close to the local one, as also reported in Palazzo (2020), prejudice exists. These learners carry a deficiency label, sometimes linked to a lack of Maltese language proficiency or to different pronunciation of Maltese and/or English (Cassar & Attard Tonna, 2018). For example, 2.8 claims that other students make fun of her and other Italian learners because of their pronunciation.

The deficiency label given to those who do not match expected standards and, as a result, are “labelled as *different* and addressed in terms of *deficits*” (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 161) is even more evident in countries with a more selective education system, as in

Germany. In this country, some Italian migrant learners are directed towards vocational or special schools because of poor attainment and poor linguistic abilities (Camozzi, 2020). The Maltese education system is highly competitive, and its exam-based structure makes inclusion more problematic (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020). Italian migrant learners often end up in lower-track classes, as mentioned in 5.1, and clusters of migrant learners in the lower band are formed. A group of Italians (2.8, 3.8 and 4.8) is present in the same class (8.9) in this research. Bullying and segregation are the most serious problems encountered by Italian migrant learners (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020), even more so when groups are formed in the lower band.

Cassar and Attard Tonna (2018) claim that when migrant learners are placed in low-track classes, they are perceived as academically 'weak' and power dynamics are created. Thus, the tracking system is indirectly reinforcing differences: I observed that in the lower tracks, there is a higher presence of migrant learners in both schools. Even teachers often make a distinction between classes because of the tracking system and often blame the difficult classroom environment on the limited participation or cooperation from migrant learners. Otherwise, it is a pattern attributed to character, rather than struggles related to learning: *"I do not want to sound perhaps...but she was quite lazy though"* (Teacher 1.2) and *"forsi daqsxejn għazzien?"* [maybe because he is a bit lazy?] (Teacher 1.5). Nevertheless, it must be noted that these types of comments often regard all learners in low-track classes, even locals.

On the one hand, the teachers in this research postulate that the transition of Italian migrant learners is easier compared to non-Italians, such as Arabs or Asians, because they outlined similarities in culture, language, and character. On the other hand, teachers (1.3,

1.5) assert that the younger the students are, the more easily and quickly they adapt to the system because they can learn languages more quickly, confirming that “age is a determining factor in learning languages, with younger learners facing less difficulties than older ones” (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, as cited in Caruana & Pace, 2021, p. 157). Those who did not spend many years of schooling in Italy, such as 2.7, 1.9, and 5.8, had a smoother transition, probably because their transition occurred at a young age. Often, as Bezzina (2017, p. 45) argued, teachers in this research also think that a successful transition depends on assimilation and learning the host country’s languages, although one must take into consideration that our schooling context is characterised by scholastic diglossia (Caruana, 2011) and this can create difficulties as, for example, English is used as a medium of instruction and Maltese is necessary for socialisation with locals.

There are also differences in curricula and teaching methods, which may make the transition of these learners even more challenging. Subject 2.8 highlights that teaching methods differ substantially between Maltese and Italian schools, and this was confusing for her. Therefore, differences in systems and language-related issues may make it difficult for migrant learners to perform well and be at par with native peers in terms of attainment.

### **5.2.1 Language Barriers**

Bezzina (2017, p. 43) argues that “it is vital that EU migrants have a good knowledge of English language to settle in school and succeed academically, and to build friendships with peers”. My data shows that Italians prefer using English rather than Maltese and that they hardly ever use Italian at school. Many Italians struggle to communicate in Maltese, even though a Sicilian student (2.8) observed similarities between Italian and Maltese, and is

interested to learn it, as also reported in Baschiera and Caruana (2020) regarding other Sicilian students.

Many participants of this research arrived in their late primary cycle of education and were placed in mainstream classes immediately because there were not any induction hubs in Gozo. This research shows that while, as expected, Italian migrant learners had no knowledge of Maltese, those who lacked proficiency in English struggled to follow lessons especially in the first few months of their transition. Some teachers sometimes used Italian to favour their inclusion, as denoted in the responses of 5.8, 1.10, 3.10, and 4.10, confirming previous research (Palazzo, 2020). Students 1.7, 2.7, 2.8, and 4.8 confirmed that some teachers use Italian during their lessons to explain difficult words. Baschiera and Caruana (2020) argue that “such practices are necessary in the absence of the role of linguistic mediators, and they represent positive examples of how different linguistic resources are used, as in the case of translinguaging” (p. 159).

According to Cummins (2015), educators positively view language and cultural diversity in schools. Still, they find this diversity irrelevant to the teaching of the curriculum, and they use English also because there are power relations involved in schools related to language and culture. Teachers participating in this research affirm that English as a *lingua franca* is fundamental in multicultural and multilingual classes, in line with Caruana et al. (2019, p. 334). However, teachers frequently use code-switching/mixing in class (Camilleri Grima, 2013), and they do so often in the presence of migrant learners (Cassar & Attard Tonna, 2018). MFL teachers in this research claimed they use code-switching between Maltese and English as a pedagogical tool to overcome linguistic barriers. As Cassar and Attard Tonna (2018, p. 16) have argued, this may be because teachers lack the training to

support migrant learners and deal with their linguistic issues. English teachers, 1.2, 1.4, sometimes switch to Maltese because local students in lower band classes do not understand English.

Nevertheless, Caruana and Pace (2021) argue that “[c]ode-switching and mixing between Maltese and English, both in teacher-talk and during interactions between students, can present additional challenges” (p. 156) for Italian migrant learners. In the past, the MERIDIUM project shed light on their difficulties distinguishing between Maltese and English in different domains, especially if they have lived on the islands for a shorter time (Caruana et al., 2013, p. 336). Moreover, Maltese teacher 1.3 asserts that she sometimes switches to the Gozitan dialect in a mainstream class in the Gozo schooling context. That could add yet more challenging linguistic dynamics for migrant learners.

As expected, on arrival at local schools, many Italian migrant learners were not at par with local students’ proficiency in English. Some parents paid for English private lessons, while others did not: it could be difficult for low-income families to support their children by sending them for private tuition. Moreover, such patterns may widen the gap between natives and migrants, but also between migrant families themselves. The transition phase became easier when these learners could communicate in English and cope with Maltese, confirming the findings reported by Baschiera and Caruana (2020) and Palazzo (2020). However, many students still struggle with Maltese, and this hinders their inclusion. As referred to earlier in 5.2, induction courses are offered to newly arrived students to facilitate learning Maltese and English and favour their academic attainment (Vassallo Gauci, 2017), but this is not always plain sailing. As reported in some parents’ interviews (2.1, 2.3), the induction hubs are quite controversial because, while on the one hand they address the

student's specific needs, on the other, students are veered away from the mainstream, confirming data reported by Palazzo (2020).

On the one hand, the MLU provides migrant learners with tailor-made courses to learn Maltese and English, while on the other hand fewer provisions are in place when they are mainstreamed. Teaching methodologies hardly meet their needs (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 160). This is not surprising because education in Malta is often highly concerned with imparting content and passing examinations rather than developing the students' skills and talents, in a system where disadvantaged children, including the children of migrants are underachieving (Borg, 2019). Moreover, although students who follow an induction course are continuously monitored to evaluate progress (Vassallo Gauci, 2017), they may not achieve proficiency, as testified by parent 2.3 whose daughter (1.7) was excluded from Maltese lessons. However, moving to Gozo improved her transition, probably because there were more foreigners in Gozo's school, and she felt more included, also because she had learned English by then, and this reduced labelling.

Nevertheless, the use of English as a *lingua franca*:

does not necessarily lead to effective inclusion mainly because Maltese has a strong function in terms of the identity of locals and their involvement in the larger community, used frequently in informal situations at school as well as to communicate among peers after school hours. (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 153)

The Maltese language is used in formal contexts because teachers code-switch during lessons (Camilleri Grima, 2013), but it is very much used in informal contexts among

local peers. Therefore, as Micallef Cann and Spiteri (2014) claim, teachers in this research face a situation in which migrant learners in Malta must learn Maltese and English to have greater accessibility to the curriculum and to have better opportunities for socialisation.

### **5.2.2 Participation in Class**

Despite the interplay between Maltese and English that makes learning even more challenging for migrant learners (Caruana et al., 2013; Caruana & Pace, 2021), Italian migrant learners generally follow and understand all lessons without major difficulties. Their participation in English, MFL, and Mathematics lessons is highly satisfactory according to their teachers because they are confident and motivated to learn. This research confirms that students participate actively when lessons are held in English but encounter difficulties when Maltese is used, as expected (Basciera & Caruana, 2020, p. 155). Notwithstanding this, there are some instances where students are reluctant to participate because they lack motivation (Caruana & Pace, 2021). In some cases, they do not ask their teachers for further explanation.

Those learners with more resilient characters (2.8, 3.8) participate actively in lessons despite language limitations and being placed in low-track classes, indicating that sometimes character traits make a difference. Non-Italian migrant learners seem less motivated to learn Maltese and sometimes offend Italians, calling them “nerds” or “losers”, also affecting them socially and emotionally. Nevertheless, those learners who are not proficient in Maltese and English (1.7, 4.8, 3.10) encounter major difficulties in class because they may not fully understand their teacher’s explanation. Teachers code-switch between Maltese and English (section 5.2.1), but it “does not enable them to follow lessons better, or to participate more

actively” (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 155). As a result, migrant learners get distracted or demotivated (1.7, 4.8, 1.10, 3.10) because they cannot follow, since they do not understand Maltese or English well. In the case of student 4.8 it is even worse because this is having an impact on the student’s self-esteem, indicating that it is affecting her psychologically. In some cases, misbehaviour occurs too.

Thus, on the one hand Italian migrant learners participate actively during lessons, more so when they are proficient in Maltese and English, on the other hand those learners with language difficulties in Maltese and English who lack support generally become greatly demotivated, negatively affecting their learning.

### **5.2.3 Socialisation**

Caruana et al. (2013) observed that a lack of knowledge of the Maltese language can sometimes cause difficulties for migrant learners who tend to feel ‘less Maltese’, than their peers. The Maltese language may be challenging for socialisation (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 156). Furthermore, in line with Palazzo (2020), for students 2.7 and 1.9, learning Maltese meant having greater connections with native peers and feeling included. Student 2.7 confirmed this because she said she made more friends after learning Maltese. However, although 1.8 is proficient in Maltese, she still feels excluded by Maltese peers, probably because of her personality traits.

Nevertheless, most Italian migrant learners have outgoing and friendly characters according to the data collected from the interviews with teachers. As a result, most of these learners have succeeded in making new friendships. Friends helped them in their transition

to overcome problems because they gave them moral support, which perhaps was absent from home or their teachers. Subjects 2.8 and 3.8 spend most of their time together during lessons and break times, as noted by 1.1, 1.2, and 1.4. Italian migrant learners stick together, confirming observations included in Baschiera and Caruana (2020, p. 158) and Caruana and Pace (2021, p. 154). Some teachers believe that it could be a positive coping strategy when students of the same nationality form a group during break times because they can speak their language, feel more welcome and learn the rules more quickly. These learners feel better because they feel less pressured to understand others speaking Maltese (Caruana et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the clusters of Italian migrant learners may hide socialisation issues (4.8). In his studies, Cummins (2015; 2016) identified various social factors and language barriers that impact the inclusion of disadvantaged communities. The formation of clusters raises concerns about the risk of 'ghettoisation' that may result in the social and academic marginalisation of migrant learners.

Italian migrant learners mainly use English at school and often spend time with foreign friends (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, pp. 157-158) and cluster with English-speaking students (Caruana & Pace, 2021, p. 156). Subject 1.7 perceives that using Italian only at school would isolate her from her peers. This suggests that preferred language use influences friendships. Students proficient in Maltese, having attended local schools for a substantial number of years, and placed in a middle or high-rank class, have more Maltese friends (1.9, 2.10). For example, although 2.10 is not proficient in Maltese, he has more local friends probably because he speaks English well and he is in a high-track class (10.3) in which there are many locals. On the basis of the patterns witnessed, I posit that if these learners are in the higher track and highly proficient in Maltese and/or English (1.9, 2.10), they are

more likely to have local friends and if they are in the lower band and lack proficiency in Maltese, they are more likely to have foreign friends, as well as friends of their own nationality (1.7, 2.8, 3.8, 4.8, 1.10, 3.10).

Extra-curricular activities help these learners experience a smoother transition and speed up inclusion because, as Bezzina (2017) argues, participation in informal activities encourages more social interaction and friendship-building. This is the case of student 4.10 through sports, as he claims to practise Maltese and English with his football teammates.

#### **5.2.4 The Maintenance of Italian**

Although Malta and Italy are geographically close, and although there is easy access to Italian media and a large Italian community on the islands that can create opportunities to speak Italian (Caruana & Pace, 2021), Italian migrant learners mainly use their language at home with their family. At school, they mainly use English and/or Maltese (section 5.2.1).

Sometimes Italian migrant learners have close relationships between them even at school (2.8 and 3.8 are best friends), as referred to in section 5.2.3. They use Italian between them, as reported by Baschiera and Caruana (2020). However, migrant learners are constantly being told by some teachers and school staff to speak English, as stated by 3.8 'to be respectful'. This could imply that some teachers in local schools do not favour multilingualism, a concept enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EU). This is also possibly because they are not familiar with notions related to multiculturalism and multilingualism, as well as how to use these to encourage better inclusion. Caruana et al. (2019) and Caruana and Santipolo (2021) state that the Maltese

education system could provide more support to protect heritage languages. On these lines, the very recent LPJY (MEDE, 2023), in line with the NCF (2012) and the LOF (MEDE, 2016) has provided a clear direction to enhance bilingualism, while promoting other languages. It provides examples of language mediation and translanguaging that can support teachers to be more inclusive in multilingual classrooms.

In my data some examples of language attrition are registered. These are similar to those included in Palazzo (2020), where Italian migrant learners switch to English nomenclature used at school. For example, *“primary school”, “secondary school”, “foolscap”, “past papers”, “free lesson”, “assignments”, “teacher”, “assistant head”, and “guidance”* together with the name of subjects in English, even though there are corresponding forms in Italian, such as *“Science”, “Home Economics”, “ICT”, “History”* or *“Media”*. Intra-sentential switching was also reported such as *“[f]accio dance però a scuola durante il break, Monday, Tuesday e Wednesday. Andiamo lì, sai dove c’è l’ufficio della head because tomorrow andiamo a ballare al party di Carnevale,”* [I dance at school during the break, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. We go there, you know where the head’s office is, because tomorrow we are going to dance at the Carnival party, that is why.] (Student 1.7) or *“[i]o faccio Maltese for foreigners e io ormai ho il syllabus a memoria”* [I do Maltese for foreigners and by now I know the syllabus by heart. [...]] (Student 2.8) (See section 4.2.2 in Chapter 4 for more examples). Some students also made mistakes and perceived losing their first language (L1) (Students 2.8, 3.8, 1.9, 1.10, and 4.10).

Cummins (2015) believes that migrant learners should be encouraged to maintain their heritage language, and he raises ethical questions about schools which do not allow migrant learners to use their language (Gervais, 2012, as cited in Cummins, 2015). European

countries must take the necessary measures when there is an increasing number of foreign students in European schools whose language is different from the host country's (Caruana et al., 2019). Nevertheless, Caruana and Pace (2021) argue that "[t]his maintenance of one's heritage language represents one of the main challenges for migrants, and whether such languages should be available as part of their education is an issue in itself, not least because of practical implications" (p. 151).

### **5.2.5 Books, Homework, and Exams**

Italian migrant learners and their parents like the books used in local schools because they are simpler than those they had used in Italy and are provided free of charge. While the general perception, including my own, is that teachers in Maltese schools give too much homework, according to many Italian migrant learners and their parents, less homework is given compared to Italy. This, however, may also suggest that they feel that their learning progress is not being monitored as much as it was in their home country, with implications on their academic achievement.

As in the case of Polish learners in Scotland in Moskal et al. (2010), Italian migrant learners stereotyped schooling in Gozo as easy and not challenging enough. This implies that teachers in Maltese schools may have low expectations of these students due to their lack of proficiency in Maltese and English and their class ranking. This makes me reflect that when there is a lack of tailored homework and assessment that work in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) of these learners, this may prevent them from appropriate progression in schooling. Italian migrant learners usually manage to do the homework independently, as also outlined by the students, their teachers, and parents. 1.10

outlines that the main difference is that homework in Italy is in Italian, implying that it is more understandable in his L1. Although homework is less and perhaps 'easier' in Maltese schools, some learners admit that they need assistance sometimes. 4.8 has a teacher helping her with the homework after school hours, especially in Maltese, because her parents may not be able to help. Nevertheless, most parents aspire that their children do well at school and do their utmost to support them, confirming Palazzo (2020).

Most Italian migrant parents complain about less homework and testing because they are used to more formative assessments in Italy, including written and oral skills (2.1, 2.3 and 2.4). Besides this, tasks were more challenging and entailed more critical thinking in Italy (2.3). Although Italian parents claim that it is good that the Maltese system is simpler and students are continuously monitored to solve their problems, parents (2.1, 2.2) are quite skeptical about whether the Maltese schooling will be beneficial in the long run for their children's education. This implies that even Italian migrant parents perceive schooling to be easy, in line with their children's beliefs. In fact, several Italian migrant parents (2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4) suggest that they wish that the school would provide a more challenging programme of studies, including more homework. Furthermore, parent 2.1 claims that her daughters (2.7 and 1.8) are neither developing a general culture as they would have done in Italy nor developing studying skills. This indicates the limited teaching strategies in Maltese schools directed to problem-solving or developing abilities to 'learning how to learn', in line with Baschiera and Caruana (2020, p. 160).

Examinations in Italy are generally less-high stakes than those held locally because importance is given to formative assessment that includes oral skills, as argued in the previous paragraph. All the participants of this research never sat for exams in Italy and they

could not provide insights from a comparative perspective. However, Italian migrant learners recall that they had many difficulties sitting for exams in English and more so in Maltese (in the case of those who had to sit for exams in this language) at the beginning of their transition to local schools. Some Italian migrant learners who arrived in their late primary years declared they were exempted from the benchmark examinations (Students 1.7, 2.8 and 3.8) because they were not proficient in Maltese and English. Nevertheless, student 1.7 insisted that she sit for these exams because she felt excluded. In some cases, these experiences can be perceived as acts of discrimination by some migrant learners, but in reality, it may underline the difficulties that schools face when dealing with such situations.

There are indications that Italian migrant learners who used to do well at school in Italy end up in low-track classes (Caruana & Pace, 2021), as in the case of students 2.8 and 3.8 who never failed and used to obtain good marks in Italy, but are now in the lower band, also confirming indications already documented by Caruana (2018). This happened because of their performance in examinations, conditioned by their linguistic abilities, as 2.8 claimed it was very difficult to do examinations in Maltese and English. Other students (4.8, 3.10) struggle with examinations and have become passive. This has heavy implications on the Maltese education system with setting and/or banding which is determined on the basis of performance in examinations. It is treating these learners unfairly because some indications state that they are placed in classrooms where “their own motivation may be affected negatively as they are not faced with the cognitive challenges necessary to fulfil their potential” (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 159). This contributes to the parents’ feelings of helplessness and exclusion, as in the case of 2.5.

Unfortunately, there are Italian migrant learners who still find exams in Maltese and English very challenging, especially if they attended a shorter number of years of schooling in Malta and Gozo (4.8 and 4.10). Surprisingly, this is also the case of an Italian migrant learner who has been living here for more years (5.8) and still struggles in Maltese. This may also be due to other determining factors in language learning, including motivation, aptitude, and attitudes, which could be influential in migrant learners' transition and adjustment to Maltese schools. Other students who have lived in Malta and Gozo for 8 to 9 years, by contrast (2.7, 1.8, and 1.9), have no problems sitting for exams in Maltese and English, probably because they are accustomed to the Maltese system, having lived in Malta and Gozo for a longer time.

#### **5.2.6 Inclusion**

Despite some difficulties encountered in their transition, the general feeling of the Italian migrant learners and their parents on the Maltese education system is generally positive, confirming previous research (Palazzo, 2020). These learners have friends, they like the school's environment, and feel included. However, several Italian migrant parents cannot think of any specific measures that the school or the system adopted to include their children at school, except for the teaching of MFL, as referred to in section 5.2. The fact that some teachers and administrators sometimes communicate with them in Italian and help them with their problems is also seen as positive measure which favours inclusion.

Most parents feel that they belong to their children's schools because the school keeps them updated. Nevertheless, an Italian parent (2.1) reveals that as parents, she and her husband feel very excluded during meetings held at school because, most of the time,

these are held in Maltese and the explanation is done very quickly in English for the parents of migrant learners, omitting important details and information. Moreover, local families do not mix with migrant families at school and in the community even when migrants may speak Maltese, creating a boundary between them, as also reported in local research (Palazzo, 2020). Lack of proficiency in English and Maltese also limits parental involvement in their children's education. For example, parent 2.5 refrains from participating in activities and meetings for these linguistic reasons, suggesting that the linguistic barriers affect migrant parents psychologically as well, because they often feel they depend on someone else. However, the teachers are pleased with the participation of parents in parents' days, except for subject 1.5.

The large presence of migrant learners in schools must be tackled because otherwise there is:

the risk of an increase in the number of learners who could be excluded from the scholastic system, with inevitable negative consequences not only on their performance at school, but also on their behaviour and their contribution to society in its entirety once they become adults. (Caruana et al., 2019, p. 340)

Some parents (2.3, 2.5) testified how often their children felt excluded by the Maltese education system because of a difficult transition. Subject 1.7 was denied the possibility to follow mainstream Maltese lessons (section 5.2.1) and was told not to sit for the benchmark examinations (section 5.2.5). She ended up in a Track 1 class. Parent 2.5 claimed that her son (3.10), once he arrived, was misplaced and changed classes from Year 6

to Year 5 because the teachers realised he was not well-prepared. It must be noted that 3.10 has dyslexia, dyscalculia and is hyperactive. The excessive bureaucracy to assign a Learning Support Educator (LSE) also led to 3.10's disengagement from schooling as he was often blamed for bad behaviour and felt humiliated. These examples also indicate the difficulties that the schools encounter when these learners join mainstream education.

On their part, teachers are inclined to inclusive practices in class because they sometimes carry out activities for inclusion and offer individual assistance, indicating that they value the potential of migrant learners, including Italians. This means that heads of schools and teachers have indeed a positive attitude towards cultural and linguistic initiatives for the inclusion of migrants in schools (Caruana et al., 2019). Palazzo (2020) reported that teachers support migrant learners on the social, psychological, and pedagogical levels because their objective is to support and lead them to succeed. Teachers in Palazzo (2020) employ cooperative learning (Mian Alessio, 2014, as cited in Palazzo, 2020, p. 84) in class. A teacher in this research also makes use of group work as a strategy with migrant learners in Mathematics (1.1). Nevertheless, often the activities for inclusion mainly refer to code-switching/mixing during lessons, creating a friendly environment and, in some cases, teachers refer to the students' linguistic and cultural background (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020, p. 155). Most teachers believe they and the school are being inclusive by, for instance, doing the assembly in Maltese and English and sending circulars in both languages to parents.

Teachers in Palazzo (2020, p. 83) are open to intercultural education practices and, although sporadically, they sometimes carry out activities involving other cultures, and this was confirmed in this research. For example, in the case of English teachers in this study,

they often use their textbooks and use exercises to carry out activities in class that can potentially promote intercultural education. However, most teachers have never heard of language mediation and translanguaging concepts. This suggests that they need more training to provide migrant learners with innovative teaching methods that address their inclusion. Teachers claim that they have no leeway to change teaching methodologies for more inclusion because of time constraints (1.1, 1.2, 1.3) and an exam-based system focusing on completing the syllabus.

As discussed in section 5.2.1, this sheds light on the deficiencies of a system heavily based on passing examinations. 1.4 asserts that she has been adapting all the time. Teachers are concerned about their learners and how to effectively involve them in learning, but they often rightly question and sometimes oppose decisions that are imposed on them by policymakers, especially when these are not explained to them a priori or when they are the result of top-down policy-making. These responses show that some teachers feel somewhat stressed with their workload, hence they find it hard to adapt their teaching methods in order to render them more inclusive towards migrant learners.

Some teachers (1.1, 1.2, 1.6) state that they need more professional training to teach migrant learners along the lines of Bezzina's (2017) respondents who "strongly suggested that there should be more coordination from the Maltese Directorate to guide them on the best ways and methodologies how to handle multi-cultural classes" (p. 46). Caruana et al., (2019) outlined that super-diversity on our islands "undoubtedly warrant[s] pedagogical measures and didactic materials which are tailor-made in the local context" (p. 340) and although the issue of migrants is quite a sensitive one, it is a challenge worth taking. The LPJY (2023) can be the way forward to more multilingual practices in Maltese schools.

Teachers in this research claim that for more inclusion in Gozo, they need more supportive services such as more learning hubs in Gozo, linguistic and cultural mediators in class (1.1, 1.6), the teaching of English for foreigners (1.2, 1.4), and the possibility of obtaining a certificate in MFL equivalent to an O-level in standard Maltese (1.3), which would lead migrant learners to post-secondary education.

### **5.3 Observations**

The sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) encourages meaningful activities and interactions in the class, where the teacher acts as a facilitator (Norozi, 2021, p. 240). When migrant learners lacked proficiency in Maltese, I observed that English is the main language used with migrant learners, including Italians, confirming observations included in Caruana et al. (2019). However, code-switching between Maltese and English often occurs (Camilleri Grima, 2013) as a strategy to make sure that all the students in the class understand, indicating that teachers resort to this to scaffold learning for all students, including migrants. By considering the students' background, identity, and language, teachers can understand what the students have already achieved and build on it.

Nonetheless, other languages, including Italian, are rarely used with these learners, confirming that both schools can only favour plurilingualism and multilingualism limitedly, even though national policies refer to linguistic diversity in schools. These include the NCF (2012) and the recent language policy LPJY (2023). Cummins (2021) argues that multilingual education involves allowing learners to analyse and compare their home language/s to the dominant language of schooling. The language teachers I observed adhere to the language they are teaching as, understandably, they aim to provide exposure to the target language.

In the case of MFL lessons, however, teachers use words which are similar to those in Italian as a strategy to get the Italian migrant learners to participate and engage more in their lessons. This falls within Garcia and Wei's (2014) translanguaging as it allows minoritised learners to extend their multilingual competences. Italian migrant learners, both in MFL and, in some cases, even in English, understood difficult words by comparing them to their L1.

These few examples which can be associated to translanguaging confirm a positive attitude towards using different languages in class. I observed a teacher who communicated in Italian with a particular student (4.8) who completely lacked proficiency in English. Moreover, 2.8 and 3.8 communicate in Italian between them. Translanguaging can be teacher-led and student-led. Students translanguage especially when confronted with challenging tasks to solve problems together (Duarte, 2016). Although 4.8 felt uncomfortable to work out a sum in front of her peers, when 2.8 and 3.8 intervened and used the L1 to help her, she was able to do it. Garcia and Wei (2014) posit that allowing learners to communicate in their preferred language enables them to reach their full potential. As Duarte (2016) indicates, effectively using students' linguistic repertoires in a collaborative environment can provide a better content-matter education.

As expected, Italian migrant learners participate actively, follow lessons and complete their work without difficulties when they have a good grasp of Maltese and English, confirming Baschiera and Caruana's (2020) observations, as in the case of learners who have lived in Malta and Gozo for 8 to 9 years (2.7, 1.8, 1.9). Learners participate to a lesser extent and have difficulties following lessons when they are relatively new to the system and lack proficiency in the languages of instruction (1.7, 4.8). Other factors, including personality and motivation towards learning, make a difference, as in the case of 2.8 and 3.8, who, although

relatively new, participating actively in class. Differences between Italians and non-Italians were also registered. In the lessons I observed, non-Italian migrant learners do not participate, except for a Syrian student who looked interested during an MFL class, probably because she perceived similarities between her native language and Maltese.

Often students' participation and cooperation depend on teachers' initiatives to stimulate more collaborative learning and providing material that interests all learners to motivate them adequately (Caruana & Pace, 2021, p. 161). 1.7, for example, did not do her Mathematics homework. Her teacher claimed that the student should be placed in a lower-track class, possibly because she is finding it hard to understand how to work in her ZPD since this is quite challenging in practice. A meaningful interaction between the student and her teacher is therefore required. This is also the case for 4.8, who is often not able to complete her work. Because of this, on the basis of what I observed, she was labelled as a low achiever. Although an LSE was present, she did not intervene. This observation confirms Baschiera and Caruana's (2020) statement, who argue that "[t]he absence of linguistic and cultural mediators is a gap that needs to be filled, sooner rather than later, especially in the extraordinary demographic circumstances present in Malta" (p. 160), this in order to support migrant learners facing linguistic difficulties in their transition. However, this may be difficult in practical terms because of the lack of human resources and the linguistic diversity in schools.

In my observations, I observed that 4.8 could work better in groups and when she is next to more knowledgeable peers because, as reported in Chapter 4, section 4.5.3, student 2.8 often translates for her in Italian during their Mathematics lesson to scaffold meaning. Even students 2.8 and 3.8 complete their work more efficiently when group work is assigned

and when they can use their L1 because they can support each other better. Social constructivism believes that development first occurs on the interpsychological level (Vygotsky, 1978) and scaffolding is an interpsychological process that is dialogic (Wertsch, 1998). Classroom interactions can be a source of motivation that creates a safe and healthy learning environment. Knowledge is co-constructed and scaffolding acknowledges the contributions that students bring to the learning context (Norozi, 2021, p. 241).

More collaborative learning during lessons can help Italian migrant learners to participate more and get them motivated to learn. Translanguaging can be a valuable approach to help these learners expand their potential in the classroom (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020; Caruana & Pace, 2021; Caruana & Scaglione, 2017). Cummins (2021) provides an informed evaluation of translanguaging and offers practical notions for curriculum and classroom activities. The *CEFR Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020) also included language mediation practices that can be employed as pedagogic practices in the classroom to “clarify meaning and facilitate understanding” (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 117), such as paraphrasing, summarising, reorganising Information, and crisscrossing-information. A series of cross-linguistic mediation tasks incorporated into teaching techniques can make the information more accessible to those struggling to understand oral or written speech in a specific situation, including the class.

#### **5.4 Pedagogical Implications**

Multilingual classrooms are on the increase on the islands, and Maltese children are being exposed to several different languages. Panzavecchia and Little (2020) argue that this is enriching on so many levels as “educational settings which value multilingualism have

been proven to improve children's self-esteem, encourage the integration of migrant students, shape cultural identities and empower all children to reach their full potential" (p. 119).

In the Gozitan context, most teachers in this research affirm that migrant learners would need more language support in Maltese and English through induction hubs that are available for students arriving in their secondary cycle of education, not just in their primary cycle. Some teachers also assert that there should be more support in the school, especially to teach English to foreigners, just like in the case of MFL classes. A pre-transition programme would also be supportive for learners who transition later into secondary schools, especially when choosing the options. Although I tend to agree with these teachers' suggestions, Caruana and Pace (2021) claim that while induction hubs provide support to improve migrant learners' linguistic competences, "adequate in-class support should also be provided and sustained" (p. 161). Italian migrant parents in this study are highly satisfied with local schools. However, some parents advocate for more assistance at school or in class, and linguistic/cultural mediators, especially in the initial phase of transition because their children faced language-related issues.

Baschiera and Caruana (2020) had previously noted that "LSEs and teachers often must take on roles which could be assigned to these mediators" (p. 154). In fact, teachers do their best to adopt inclusive practices and some already translanguage naturally in class, as also outlined in Panzavecchia and Little (2020), especially in the context of Malta and Gozo, where most teachers know a third language. Paradoxically, although teachers in this research are predisposed to carry out inclusive practices, for them, it is very difficult to use more than one language during lessons since classes are becoming extremely

heterogeneous in terms of languages and cultures. In such situations English overpowers all other languages and becomes the main code for both teacher-talk and learner-talk.

Maltese teachers advocate the possibility of a certificate in MFL that would guarantee access to further education because learners who arrive in the middle of their secondary cycle of education find it very hard to reach a level of Maltese equivalent to natives. While I initially argued about the possibility of having more induction hubs in Gozo, in line with the teachers' thoughts, I now argue that the steps that were taken to give importance to the Maltese language, especially in post-colonial Malta dominated by English, must be applied, adapted accordingly, "to acknowledge and safeguard the linguistic rights of migrants" (Caruana & Santipolo, 2021, p. 148). This research reported examples of language attrition and hence the need for the introduction of language maintenance programmes in local schools so that migrant learners' linguistic and cultural heritage is acknowledged by all, as also reported in Panzavecchia and Little's (2020) findings. This would foster a positive attitude towards foreign languages and cultures, not only towards the Maltese and English languages.

Migrant learners would have the opportunity to use their language at school and this would strengthen multilingualism and multiculturalism in schools. However, Sultana (2002, as cited in Caruana & Santipolo, 2021) outlined that "this is no easy feat and requires effective material resources and a highly-prepared and well-disposed teaching profession" (p. 148). Given that this is difficult to implement, I argue that all children need to learn more about language diversity, awareness, and appreciation. This applies to local students who still need to learn to appreciate their own repertoire (including dialects in Gozo) and to migrant learners who need to be taught that their linguistic background forms part of their

identity and that they must therefore safeguard it and nurture it. Partnerships between schools and parents are very important for this.

As argued in Baschiera and Caruana (2020), involving parents in such inclusive practices could be beneficial. Schools can provide cost-effective experimental courses that would involve migrant parents in the school's community to teach the heritage language or carry out language awareness sessions and be more participative in their children's education. Migrant parents can act as role models for migrant learners. An investment in programmes which help migrant learners in schools yields positive outcomes later on with migrants who are willing to make a meaningful contribution to society.

## **5.5 Final Considerations**

Education in Malta is compulsory between 5-16 years of age, whereas in Italy, it is compulsory from 6-16 years. These education systems differ on many levels. In Malta, schooling starts earlier, and there are different stages of schooling (Chapter 1, sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2), language, and assessment practices that could have implications on the transition of migrants.

Italian migrant learners must learn Maltese and English to facilitate their learning since both languages are used as languages of instruction in Maltese schools (NCF, 2012). In Italy, Italian is the main language of instruction, although there are some regional differences where there is also a bilingual policy and minority languages can be used as languages of instruction together with Italian (Law 482/1999). Research shows that Italian migrant learners experience language-related issues when they transition to Maltese

schools (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020; Caruana & Pace, 2021; Palazzo, 2020), more so when code-switching/mixing occurs during lessons (Camilleri Grima, 2013), as discussed in section 5.2.1. One may posit that given the popularity and strength of English, migrant learners should be proficient in it. Although English is compulsory both in the Maltese and Italian education systems, by the end of primary school, Italian students are expected to reach an A1 level<sup>8</sup> (CEFR). In Malta, local students are already independent users of English from the primary years (B1/B2 levels) because of the bilingual context of Malta (Council of Europe, 2015, as cited in Ellis et al., 2017). This difference in systems in terms of English language proficiency leads to participation (5.2.2) and socialisation (5.2.3) difficulties when learners lack basic competences in this language, especially for those learners who must adapt without any additional support.

As discussed in section 5.2.5, assessment in Italy is often based on formative assessment whereby teachers assess students periodically through oral and written tests or any other work in class or homework.<sup>9</sup> Examinations are held at the end of a cycle of education and not each year as in Malta. The Maltese education system can be more competitive and selective because it is based on examinations and is often geared to achieve results, as discussed in 5.1. “Teaching-to-the-test” is common in Malta, at all levels of our educational system. Moreover, examinations in local schools are in Maltese and/or English and migrant learners may not have the necessary linguistic competences or the support to sit for these examinations. As a result, when they arrive in the primary cycle of education, they are often exempted from sitting for the benchmark examinations,

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<sup>8</sup> Teaching and learning in primary education | Eurydice (europa.eu).

<sup>9</sup> Assessment in general lower secondary education | Eurydice (europa.eu).

conditioning their placing in the middle school. There are indications in this research that learners who did well in Italy are sometimes placed in lower-track classes when they transition to the Maltese education system because of lack of proficiency in the context languages, confirming Caruana and Pace's (2021) observations.

Formative assessment in Italy includes both oral and written skills, and in some education cycles emphasis is placed on the former, whereas in Malta, assessment is based more on writing. Final oral examinations in Italy cover all subjects and focus on reasoning abilities, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking. These are perceived as lacking in the Maltese system by Italian parents who can compare both contexts (section 5.2.5). The Maltese education system gives limited prominence to 'learning how to learn' as discussed in 5.2.5 because it values education which is mainly based on imparting content (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020). I argue that when students give standard correct answers in examinations on the basis of the curriculum, this does not involve students' critical thinking in learning. Somewhat unexpectedly, Italian migrant parents complain that homework and testing is less and simpler in local schools as discussed in section 5.2.5. However, they are happy that their children work more on tasks at school and, according to teachers, their participation is highly satisfactory (section 5.2.2). Nevertheless, since Italian migrant students and parents have found schooling easier, this may indicate that the Maltese system may not be challenging these learners enough because work given in class and at home may not be exploiting their potential.

I argue that teachers should be provided with assessment kits and guidelines to support migrant learners when they join mainstream education because they often find themselves in situations where they have to identify flexible measures without any practical

support. Linguistic and cultural mediators can be an additional support (Baschiera & Caruana, 2020; Caruana & Pace, 2021; Palazzo, 2020) both for migrant learners who need language support in class and for teachers who are experiencing extremely diversified multilingual and multicultural classes. The examples of language attrition, on the one hand, represent these students' adaptation to the new system, and on the other hand imply the potential loss or weakening of their heritage language (section 5.2.4). Teachers do their best to support these learners despite all the difficulties and challenges of time limitations and the extensive syllabus because they sometimes engage learners in inclusive practices and switch to their L1 (section 5.2.6). Policies such as the most recent LPJY (MEDE, 2023) offers recommendations for more multilingual practices in Maltese schools and this undoubtedly represents a positive development. Cummins (2021) explored innovative methodologies in multilingual education, while arguing that the educational implications of employing concepts must be evaluated to assess the degree to which it supports quality education.

This study has shown that Italian migrant learners and their parents appreciate the Maltese education system because it provides free education and resources in state schools, in contrast to the Italian education system (section 5.2.5). They generally have a positive view of Maltese schools and feel included, as discussed in 5.2.6. Nevertheless, some of these learners experienced language-related issues, with academic and social repercussions that require more financial and organisational efforts (Caruana et al., 2019) to provide equity and quality of education for all (NCF, 2012). Teachers should foster a positive learning environment where more inclusive practices value the potential of every learner, wherein differences are valued and celebrated. Greater home-school links may engage parents more in their children's education. This would translate into a fairer educational experience with a

social justice agenda led by collectivity, democratic participation, and authentic dialogue (Borg, 2022) between all stakeholders, which in turn provides all learners with opportunities that reflect the super-diversity characterising Maltese society today.

## Chapter 6 - Conclusion

### 6.1 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to study the transition of Italian migrant learners into the middle and secondary schools in Gozo and to find similarities and differences between the Italian and Maltese education systems that could influence the transition of these learners. In view of this, the present study reported the educational challenges of these learners to understand how these are shaping their process of access and inclusion in Maltese schools. Language barriers in Maltese and English were considered as previous research, cited earlier in my work, hints that competence of both these languages may affect the transition of Italian migrant learners. A qualitative research method was employed through semi-structured interviews with twelve Italian migrant learners from Year 7 to Year 10, together with twelve observations of these learners during English, Maltese, and Mathematics lessons. Moreover, interviews with teachers of English, Maltese, and Mathematics provided insights about the perceptions of teachers regarding the transition of these learners. Italian parents provided further insights about their children's transition, including a comparative perspective between Italy and Malta. Additionally, reflections about local educational policies were made to understand to what extent Maltese schools are providing support for the inclusion of Italian migrant learners.

Italian migrant learners generally feel included in local schools, especially when they make new friendships that help them experience a positive transition. However, especially on arrival and during the early stages of their stay, Italian migrant learners experienced some language barriers and bullying issues that affected their achievement. Some students were

placed in lower tracks, also because they could not express themselves extensively in English and/or in Maltese, thereby achieving low scores in core subjects. This ranking system is determined by students' performance in examinations, and migrant learners in lower tracks are consequently perceived as 'weak' students by their peers and teachers. Nevertheless, many of these learners were young when they experienced their transition, they learned English quickly, and some of them can even communicate in Maltese. Age contributes to learning Maltese and English, confirming Baschiera and Caruana's (2020) findings, thereby facilitating the transition and inclusion of these learners.

Some learners attended induction hubs, and felt that these supported them even though they were pulled out from mainstream classes, confirming data from Palazzo (2020). This occasionally led to feelings of exclusion and sometimes to a more difficult transition at a socialisation level. Some teachers observed that Italians stick together during lessons or break times, and that they support each other because they feel less pressured to speak Maltese (Caruana et al., 2019). However, in reality the formation of clusters can hide socialisation issues. Moreover, this study observed that Italian migrant learners in the lower tracks tend to have more foreign friends, as well as friends of their own nationality. In contrast, those Italian migrant learners in the higher tracks tend to have more Maltese friends, probably also because of the larger presence of locals in higher track classes.

Teachers often attribute assimilation and learning the context languages, particularly English, as essential for migrant learners' adjustment (Bezzina, 2017). Therefore, rather than reflecting on their teaching methods and practices for inclusion in the class, they suggest that more induction hubs are needed in Gozo and also the introduction of English for

foreigners classes in the school, as well as awarding an MFL certificate equivalent to an O-level in standard Maltese.

Italian migrant learners generally participate in class, follow lessons without difficulties despite language barriers, and usually complete their work. Teachers often use code-switching (Camilleri Grima, 2013), and sometimes it is exploited as a pedagogical tool in class to support all learners. However, this may present more challenges for migrant learners (Caruana & Pace, 2021), especially when they are not used to the dynamics of this constant interplay between two languages, both used for instruction and for socialisation purposes. Most Italian migrant learners and their parents claim that homework is less voluminous in comparison to what they experienced in Italian schools. It is also easier when compared to Italy and requires less engagement from learners. Although they view this in largely positive terms, explaining that their children have more free time on their hands after school, in some aspects it may also imply that our educational system does not exploit learners' full potential, especially when homework requires repetition and rote learning, rather than reflection on relevant tasks.

This research reported examples of language attrition, also reported in Palazzo (2020), indicating that Italian migrant learners have few opportunities to speak their L1. Although some teachers take positive steps to support these learners and their parents by communicating with them in Italian and by carrying out group activities in class, most are unaware of language mediation and translanguaging as pedagogical strategies. Some teachers affirmed that time constraints and the syllabus do not allow them to carry out adaptations, suggesting that the extremely exam-oriented Maltese education system will not let them thrive and, from a social justice perspective, it still fails our children (Borg, 2022),

including the children of migrants despite efforts to the contrary. Borg (2022) advocates for a social justice-informed public education policy to envision an educational system that serves all and is not driven by a socio-economic agenda. The best-performing public education systems should target more resources to struggling schools and students, provide opportunities to favour the inclusion of minorities and migrants, and have clear objectives to reach equity in education and prioritise access to education for all (Borg, 2022, p. 14).

Italian migrant learners generally have a positive view of Maltese schools; they are appreciative of the environment and the materials they use. However, some parents' comments reveal that sometimes they felt excluded by the schooling system, and so did their children. Induction hubs partially helped these learners, focusing on teaching Maltese and English in a very short time, while taking for granted the maintenance of the heritage language. Parents wish for more and better-quality homework and formative assessment, including oral skills and more assistance in class for the newly arrived. Most importantly, by affirming their identities and cultures, students are empowered to learn more effectively. This clearly indicates the need for an 'additive' model of language education wherein foreign students are encouraged to learn, appreciate, and value their L1, while also developing further their competence in Maltese and English. The cultural and geographical proximity with Italy should be exploited in order to achieve this.

## **6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies**

As discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.8, this research had its limitations. First, it was carried out in the island of Gozo in two secondary schools, thus there were travel and time constraints. As such, it is contextualized in a very specific geographical area and documents

experiences of migrants receiving schooling on an island 'within' another island. Secondly, it involved a small number of participants and heavily relied on the subjective experiences of the participants. The results, as such cannot be generalised to larger populations of migrant learners. Thirdly, some students could not give insights from a comparative perspective because they arrived in Malta and Gozo at a young age. Observations were limited because of time constraints and some teachers were reluctant to give me access to their practices.

Future studies could investigate the transition experience of Italian migrant learners in other secondary state schools in Malta, including church and independent sectors. Moreover, it would be beneficial to carry out a similar study in primary schools in Malta and Gozo to explore the initial phase of transition of Italian migrant learners who arrive in their primary cycle of education and gain more insights about their educational challenges. Other groups of non-Italian migrant learners could also be involved to compare and verify if there are similar or different patterns to the transition of Italian migrant learners. Furthermore, studies with teachers and those based on observations in class could shed more light on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices of inclusive pedagogies in classes of migrant learners.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Information Letters and Consent Forms**

## **Permission letter to Head of School**

Dear Head of School,

My name is Annaliz Calleja and I am a student currently reading for a Master of Arts in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies at the University of Malta. I am currently writing a dissertation in English entitled; 'The educational challenges of Italian migrant learners in their transition to secondary schools in Gozo: A comparative study.' This study will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Sandro Caruana. The aim of this research is to compare the schooling experience of Italian migrant learners in Italy with that in Malta, more specifically in Gozo, and thereby investigate some of the educational challenges of these learners in their transition into the Gozo College Middle and Secondary State Schools. The overarching research questions of this study are the following:

- What is the experience of Italian migrant learners in their transition to Maltese secondary schools in Gozo?
- In the case of students who would have attended school in Italy prior to moving to Malta, to what extent is this transition influenced by similarities and differences between the Italian and Maltese education systems?

To complete my study, I would like to conduct five lesson observations in classes of Italian migrant learners at the Gozo Middle School and five observations at the Gozo Secondary School (ten class observations in total) to evaluate the behaviour, participation in class and overall performance of the Italian students, from Year 7 to Year 11 age group and classrooms. Classes will be chosen on the basis of which they hold the majority of Italian students. No audio recordings will be taken, but I will keep a reflective journal, pseudonymised at source, to jot down my observations in it. Focus will be made particularly on the students' educational challenges amongst which the language barriers (if any) and overall performance in the classroom context during lessons. During the observations in class, I will be writing detailed notes about: (i) the teachers' use of different languages with the Italian students in class during different lessons; (ii) in case of the Italian language use, I shall determine in which

circumstances is this done (i.e. for inclusion or for an explanation of the lesson or a task), and if no Italian is used, when and why it happens, and (iii) if code-switching occurs.

Apart from the linguistic scenario, I will also investigate the behaviour of Italian students due to their general well-being in schools following their transition into the Maltese education system. Moreover, I will take note of whether there are patterns of absenteeism amongst these students and their participation and interaction in the lessons. For example, (i) if they follow the lessons or not; (ii) whether they reply and interact with the teachers, and if yes, how many times this occurs during the 40 minutes lesson; (iii) whether any classwork is completed efficiently and autonomously; (iv) whether they do ask for help or not, and if yes, which language is used to seek help from their teachers, and also (v) whether they interact with their peers, and if yes, which language is used for communication purposes.

After this, the same teachers and students (and their respective parents) observed before will be asked to participate on a voluntary basis in interviews and focus groups for more information. Thus, I will carry out focus groups which will involve 30-minute long conversations (maximum limit of time) with at least 3-4 Italian migrant learners who shall choose to participate on a voluntary basis. Data produced will be audio recorded to allow data transcription at a later stage. The students' observations and focus groups will take place within the school premises during school hours.

I will then carry out audio interviews with three of the students' teachers. The teachers' interviews will last for about 45 minutes. Furthermore, I will be interviewing three parents of Italian nationality. Their interviews will also be recorded via audio and will be 45 minutes long. All names of prospective participants will be pseudonymised to protect their identity. The information retrieved will only be used for research purposes and it will be locked, password-protected and encrypted on my personal computer by using the 7-Zip programme for Windows to convert the files into an encrypted ZIP file. Moreover, I shall not include in the dissertation any data provided by participants without their permission.

Therefore, I kindly request your help to recruit the parents through the school. The parents' interviews will take place outside school premises, within or outside school hours (as

preferred by the parents themselves) and the same applies to the teachers' interviews. An online modality of participation for teachers and parents will also be offered.

I would be grateful if you would give me permission to conduct my research study at your school and carry out the class observations, focus groups with Italian migrant learners and the interviews with their teachers and parents. Moreover, I kindly request for you to act as an intermediary to distribute the Information Letters and Consent/Assent Forms on my behalf. I have provided you with a copy of all the dissertation documents, including the parents' consent form to confirm students' participation in the study, the teacher consent form to carry out the interview (together with the interview questions), and the interview questions prepared for the students who will participate in the study. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and participants will suffer no negative consequences should they choose not to continue with the audio recorded interviews. I would also like to add that if, in any case, parents point out any shortcomings from the school's side regarding their children's inclusion rights, I will be referring them to you or to your delegate, as per the instructions that you will give me.

Upon completion of the study, I will present the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research a copy of the full research as part fulfilment of the Master of Arts in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies and may be available for consultation at the University library.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Name: Annaliz Calleja

Supervisor: Professor Sandro Caruana

Mobile number: XXX

Contact number: XXX

E-mail: XXX

E-mail: XXX

**Guarantees:**

i. Participants' names will not be identifiable in the research. The participants will be given pseudonyms in the study.

ii. The information retrieved will only be used for research purposes and it will be locked, password-protected and encrypted by using the 7-Zip programme for Windows to convert the files into an encrypted ZIP file.

iii. I shall not include in the dissertation any data provided by participants without their permission.

iv. Participants are free to leave the research at any time and for any reason. In the event that participants withdraw, all records and information collected will be destroyed.

v. All data and information will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

---

Annaliz Calleja

Researcher's Signature

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Professor Sandro Caruana

Supervisor's Signature

## Information letter to teachers

Dear teacher,

My name is Annaliz Calleja and I am a student currently reading for a Master of Arts in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies, at the University of Malta. I am currently writing a dissertation in English entitled; 'The educational challenges of Italian migrant learners in their transition to secondary schools in Gozo: A comparative study.' This study is being conducted under the supervision of Professor Sandro Caruana. The aim of this research is to compare the schooling experience of Italian migrant learners in Italy with that in Malta, more specifically in Gozo, and thereby investigate some of the educational challenges of these learners in their transition into the Gozo College Middle and Secondary State Schools. The overarching research questions of this study are the following:

- What is the experience of Italian migrant learners in their transition to Maltese secondary schools in Gozo?
- In the case of students who would have attended school in Italy prior to moving to Malta, to what extent is this transition influenced by similarities and differences between the Italian and Maltese education systems?

To complete my study, I would like to conduct five lesson observations in classes of Italian migrant learners at the Gozo Middle School and five observations at the Gozo Secondary School (ten class observations in total) to evaluate the behaviour, participation in class and overall performance of the Italian students, from Year 7 to Year 11 age group and classrooms. Focus will be made particularly on the students' educational challenges amongst which the language barriers (if any) and overall performance in the classroom context during lessons. During the observations in class, I will be writing detailed notes about: (i) the teachers' use of different languages in class during different lessons, especially when engaging with Italian students; (ii) in case of Italian language use, I shall determine in which circumstances this is done; if Italian is not used, when and why this happens, and (iii) if code-switching occurs. Classes will be chosen on the basis of the presence of Italian students. No audio recordings will be taken, but I will keep a reflective journal, pseudonymised at source, with my observations.

Apart from the linguistic scenario, I will also investigate the behaviour of Italian students due to their general well-being in schools following their transition into the Maltese education system. Moreover, I will take note of whether there are patterns of absenteeism amongst these students and their participation and interaction in the lessons. For example, (i) if they follow the lessons or not; (ii) whether they reply and interact with the teachers, and if so, how many times this occurs during the 40 minutes lesson; (iii) whether any classwork is completed efficiently and autonomously; (iv) whether they do ask for help or not, and if yes, which language is used to seek help from their teachers, and also (v) whether they interact with their peers, and if so, which language is used for communication purposes.

After this, the same teachers and students (and their respective parents) observed before will be asked to participate on a voluntary basis in interviews and focus groups for more information. Thus, I will carry out focus groups which will involve 30-minute long conversations (maximum limit of time) with at least 3-4 Italian migrant learners who shall choose to participate on a voluntary basis. The students' observations and focus groups will take place within school premises during school hours.

I will then carry out audio interviews with three of the students' teachers and three of the students' parents. The teachers' interviews will last for about 45 minutes, and they will be carried out individually. An online modality of participation for teachers and parents will also be offered. Interviews with Italian students and parents will be carried out in Italian, whilst interviews with Maltese or any other nationality other than Italian teachers will be carried out in English or Maltese (as preferred by the participant). The interviews will be recorded using my mobile recorder device. All names of prospective participants will be pseudonymised to protect their identity. The information retrieved will only be used for research purposes and it will be locked, password-protected and encrypted on my personal computer by using the 7-Zip programme for Windows to convert the files into an encrypted ZIP file. Moreover, I shall not include in the dissertation any data provided by participants without their permission. The audio recorded data collected will be destroyed once the research is completed.

Upon completion of the study, I will present a copy of the full research to the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research as part fulfilment of the Master of Arts in

Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies and this may be available for consultation at the University library.

*I am therefore inviting you to participate in this research.* Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without suffering any negative consequences. Should you choose to withdraw, your interview data will not be used for the study, and it will be destroyed. Any notes taken and audio recorded data will be securely stored and will be accessed only by myself. Recordings will be used for the purpose of transcription; once I have transcribed the interview, I will destroy the audio recording. If you agree to participate, kindly sign the Consent Form needed for permission to participate in the study. Kindly return the signed consent form to the head of school, where I will be collecting them from. Furthermore, if you agree to participate in the interview, you will be contacted by the researcher via email, after the collection of your signed consent form. At a later stage to the agreement for the participation, you will be required to meet the researcher at your preferred time and place, to hold the 45 minutes audio interview. I would like to inform you that all details, including your name, will remain confidential. Since this is on a voluntary basis, you have the option to stop the interview at any time or skip any questions you do not want to answer.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Guarantees:**

- i. Your real name will not be used in the research.
- ii. The information retrieved will only be used for research purposes and it will be locked, password-protected and encrypted by using the 7-Zip programme for Windows to convert the files into an encrypted ZIP file.
- iii. I shall not include in the dissertation any data provided by you without your permission.
- iv. You are free to quit the research at any point and for whatever reason. In the case that you withdraw, all the records and information collected from you will be destroyed.

If you are willing to participate in this research, kindly contact the researcher signed below.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

---

Annaliz Calleja

Contact number: XXX

E-mail: XXX

---

Professor Sandro Caruana

Contact number: XXX

E-mail: XXX

## Subject teacher consent form

I, \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I have read the information letter provided by Annaliz Calleja and that I would like to participate in this research study to compare the schooling experience of Italian migrant learners in Italy with that in Malta, more specifically in Gozo. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

*On the basis of the information given, I agree to allow Ms Annaliz Calleja to:*

Conduct class observations within my classroom.

Take part in an audio recorded interview.

*I also agree to the conditions below:*

1. I know that the researcher will be observing my lessons.
2. I understand that she will keep a journal pseudonymised at source.
3. I understand that the same teachers and students observed shall take part in the interview.
4. I know that the interview will be held in English/Maltese.
5. I know that I will be interviewed by the researcher on themes pertaining to her dissertation.
6. I know that the interview will be audio recorded.
7. I understand that my participation is voluntary.
8. I understand that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason and at any stage.
9. The recorded information will be locked, password-protected and encrypted.
10. No information provided will be used without the permission of individual participants.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ **Teacher's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's contact email: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature

Supervisor's Signature

## **Lettera informativa per i genitori (Partecipazione dei genitori)**

*(Versione fornita anche in inglese e maltese)*

Gentile genitore/tutore,

Mi chiamo Annaliz Calleja e sono un'insegnante d'italiano in una scuola media a Gozo. Attualmente sto facendo una ricerca per il 'Master of Arts in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies' (Studi comparativi in educazione) presso l'Università di Malta. Sto scrivendo una tesi in inglese intitolata 'The educational challenges of Italian migrant learners in their transition to secondary schools in Gozo: A comparative study.' (Le sfide affrontate dagli studenti italiani nella loro transizione scolastica alle medie di Gozo). Questo studio sarà condotto sotto la supervisione del Professor Sandro Caruana. Durante il prossimo anno accademico raccoglierò dei dati per poter completare la mia tesi di laurea. Lo scopo del mio studio è di paragonare l'esperienza scolastica degli studenti migranti italiani in Italia, con quella a Malta, più specificamente a Gozo, per investigare le sfide educative che questi studenti affrontano durante il percorso di inserimento nelle scuole statali. Le domande di ricerca di questo studio sono:

- Com'è l'esperienza di studenti migranti italiani nella loro transizione scolastica alle medie statali di Gozo?
- Nel caso di studenti italiani che hanno frequentato la scuola in Italia prima di muoversi a Malta, fino a che punto questa transizione è stata influenzata da similarità o differenze tra il sistema educativo italiano e quello maltese?

Per completare il mio studio, avrei bisogno di condurre un'intervista registrata audio con tre genitori degli stessi studenti italiani che saranno stati precedentemente osservati in classe per saperne di più sulla loro esperienza di avere figli italiani in una scuola maltese. Queste interviste dureranno circa 45 minuti e si svolgeranno nei momenti in cui entrambi i genitori e il ricercatore saranno liberi, in qualsiasi luogo preferito dal partecipante. La modalità di partecipazione online sarà anche a disposizione. Al fine di proteggere l'identità di ciascun partecipante, verranno usati degli pseudonimi e ci saranno ulteriori modifiche dove necessario. Inoltre, l'informazione registrata durante l'intervista sarà protetta da una

password sul mio pc personale creando uno Zip file crittografato con il programma 7-Zip. Nessun'informazione fornita verrà usata senza il permesso dei singoli partecipanti.

Per questo motivo, vorrei invitarla a far parte del mio studio. La partecipazione è completamente volontaria e tutti i dettagli personali rimarranno confidenziali. Poiché la ricerca è volontaria, avrà la possibilità di interrompere il colloquio in qualsiasi momento o di rifiutare di rispondere a qualsiasi domanda a cui non desidera rispondere. Se accetta di partecipare, è necessario firmare il modulo di consenso necessario per il permesso di partecipare allo studio. La prego di restituire il modulo di consenso firmato al preside della scuola, da cui li raccoglierò una settimana dalla data in cui avrà ricevuto questo modulo. Inoltre, se accetta per la sua partecipazione al colloquio, verrà contattato via email dopo la raccolta del modulo di consenso firmato. In una fase successiva all'accordo per la partecipazione, sarà contattato via email dal ricercatore, e Le verrà richiesto di incontrarmi nel momento e nel luogo che preferisce Lei, al fine di tenere l'intervista audio di 45 minuti.

Se ha bisogno di ulteriori informazioni, non esiti a contattare me o il mio supervisore.

#### **Garanzie dei partecipanti:**

i. I nomi dei partecipanti non saranno identificabili nella ricerca. Ai partecipanti verranno dati degli pseudonimi nello studio.

ii. L'informazione registrata durante l'intervista sarà protetta da una password sul mio pc personale creando uno Zip file crittografato con il programma 7-Zip.

iii. Nessun'informazione fornita verrà usata senza il permesso dei singoli partecipanti.

iv. I partecipanti sono liberi di rifiutarsi di rispondere a qualsiasi domanda a cui non desiderano rispondere.

v. I partecipanti sono liberi di abbandonare la ricerca in qualsiasi momento e per qualsiasi motivo. Nel caso in cui i partecipanti si ritirino, tutti i record e le informazioni saranno distrutti.

vi. Tutti i dati e le informazioni saranno distrutti al termine dello studio.

Se Lei accetta di partecipare a questa ricerca, La prego di contattarmi come indicato sotto.

La Sua collaborazione sarà pienamente apprezzata.

Cordiali saluti,

---

Annaliz Calleja

Numero di contatto: XXX

E-mail: XXX

---

Professor Sandro Caruana

Numero di contatto: XXX

E-mail: XXX

## **Dichiarazione di consenso per i genitori (Partecipazione dei genitori)**

*(Versione fornita anche in inglese e maltese)*

Io, \_\_\_\_\_, genitore/tutore di \_\_\_\_\_

confermo di aver ricevuto, e letto attentamente, la lettera informativa relativa allo studio.

Pertanto, do il mio consenso per partecipare allo studio di Annaliz Calleja, svolto in adempimento della sua laurea magistrale con lo scopo di paragonare l'esperienza scolastica degli studenti migranti italiani in Italia, con quella a Malta, più specificamente a Gozo.

*In base all'informazione fornita, do il mio consenso a Annaliz Calleja per:*

Partecipare ad un'intervista registrata audio di 45 minuti.

Di seguito, confermo che sono consapevole che:

1. La ricercatrice ha osservato mio figlio/figlia durante alcune lezioni in classe.
2. L'intervista sarà registrata solamente via audio.
3. L'identità del partecipante sarà anonimizzata con l'uso di pseudonimi.
4. L'intervista sarà condotta in italiano.
5. La ricercatrice farà delle domande pertinenti al suo studio.
6. La partecipazione allo studio è completamente volontaria.
7. I partecipanti possono lasciare lo studio in qualsiasi momento.
8. Le registrazioni saranno archiviate con una password e accessibili solo dalla ricercatrice.
9. Le registrazioni saranno distrutte quando gli studi saranno terminati.
10. Nessun'informazione fornita verrà usata senza il permesso dei singoli partecipanti.

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Firma della del genitore / tutore

---

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Data

---

Annaliz Calleja

Professor Sandro Caruana

## **Lettera informativa per i genitori (Partecipazione del figlio/figlia)**

*(Versione fornita anche in inglese e maltese)*

Gentile genitore/tutore,

Mi chiamo Annaliz Calleja e sono un'insegnante d'italiano in una scuola media a Gozo. Attualmente sto facendo una ricerca per il 'Master of Arts in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies' (Studi comparativi in educazione) presso l'Università di Malta. Sto scrivendo una tesi in inglese intitolata 'The educational challenges of Italian migrant learners in their transition to secondary schools in Gozo: A comparative study.' (Le sfide affrontate dagli studenti italiani nella loro transizione scolastica alle medie di Gozo). Questo studio sarà condotto sotto la supervisione del Professor Sandro Caruana. Durante il prossimo anno accademico raccoglierò dei dati per poter completare la mia tesi di laurea. Lo scopo del mio studio è di paragonare l'esperienza scolastica degli studenti migranti italiani in Italia, con quella a Malta, più specificamente a Gozo, per investigare le sfide educative che questi studenti affrontano durante il percorso di inserimento nelle scuole statali. Le domande di ricerca di questo studio sono:

- Com'è l'esperienza di studenti migranti italiani nella loro transizione scolastica alle medie statali di Gozo?
- Nel caso di studenti italiani che hanno frequentato la scuola in Italia prima di muoversi a Malta, fino a che punto questa transizione è stata influenzata da similarità o differenze tra il sistema educativo italiano e quello maltese?

Per completare il mio studio farò osservazioni in classe per capire meglio l'esperienza scolastica a Gozo e come ci si sente durante le lezioni. Durante le osservazioni non si terranno registrazioni audio, poiché sarà tenuto solo un diario riflessivo personale in cui verranno usati degli pseudonimi. Per questa particolare raccolta di dati, prenderò appunti dettagliati su: (i) quante volte gli insegnanti usano lingue diverse per interagire con gli studenti; (ii) in quali circostanze e per quali motivi si utilizza l'italiano e, se non si utilizza l'italiano, le situazioni e i motivi per cui ciò si verifica e (iii) se durante la lezione si passa da una lingua all'altra. Le osservazioni serviranno per capire se ci sono difficoltà a inserirsi in un contesto scolastico

diverso da quello italiano tenendo anche conto del modo in cui gli studenti italiani riescono a seguire le lezioni o meno.

Di seguito, verrà chiesto agli stessi insegnanti, studenti (e i rispettivi genitori) osservati prima di partecipare su base volontaria a delle interviste registrate per ottenere più informazione. Perciò, condurrò anche un'intervista registrata audio con tre/quattro studenti italiani che si offriranno volontari a partecipare in questo studio. Queste interviste registrate dureranno al massimo 30 minuti e si terranno durante l'orario scolastico. Se tu volessi partecipare, ti farò delle domande, e sarai completamente libero di scegliere quelle a cui rispondere.

Inoltre, condurrò interviste audio-registrate con tre insegnanti degli studenti e con tre dei genitori di qualunque studente che parteciperà. Le interviste degli insegnanti e dei genitori dureranno circa 45 minuti ciascuna. Tutte le interviste saranno condotte individualmente. La modalità di partecipazione online per gli insegnanti e i genitori sarà anche a disposizione. Le interviste con gli studenti italiani e i loro genitori saranno condotte in italiano, mentre le interviste con gli insegnanti saranno condotte in inglese o maltese. Le interviste verranno registrate utilizzando il mio registratore portatile. Al fine di proteggere l'identità di ciascun partecipante, verranno usati degli pseudonimi e ci saranno ulteriori modifiche dove necessario. Inoltre, l'informazione registrata durante l'intervista sarà protetta da una password sul mio pc personale creando uno Zip file crittografato con il programma 7-Zip. Nessun'informazione fornita verrà usata senza il permesso dei singoli partecipanti. I dati raccolti verranno distrutti una volta completata la ricerca.

Al termine dello studio, presenterò una copia della ricerca completa al Centro Mediterraneo per la Ricerca in Educazione come parte dell'adempimento per la mia laurea magistrale. Inoltre, sarà anche disponibile per la consultazione presso la biblioteca universitaria.

Per questo motivo, *le chiedo gentilmente di dare il consenso a suo figlio/a di partecipare a questo studio.* Si informa che gli studenti che non desiderano partecipare allo studio, procederanno come al solito con le lezioni giornaliere, incluse quelle durante le quali sarò presente come osservatore. La partecipazione è completamente volontaria e tutti i dettagli personali rimarranno confidenziali. Poiché la ricerca è volontaria, gli studenti avranno la possibilità di interrompere il colloquio in qualsiasi momento o di rifiutare di rispondere a

qualsiasi domanda a cui non desiderano rispondere. Se accetta che suo figlio/a partecipi, deve firmare il modulo di consenso necessario per consentire a suo figlio/a di partecipare allo studio. Si prega di restituire il modulo di consenso firmato al preside della scuola, da cui li raccoglierò. Inoltre, se accetta la partecipazione di suo figlio/sua figlia all'intervista registrata audio, sarà contattato via email, dopo che i moduli di consenso firmati saranno raccolti da me personalmente. In una fase successiva all'accordo per la partecipazione, gli studenti dovranno incontrare il ricercatore durante l'orario scolastico e all'interno dei locali della scuola, al fine di tenere l'intervista audio di 30 minuti. Raccoglierò i moduli di consenso una settimana dalla data in cui avrò ricevuto questo modulo.

La prego di constatare che anche a suo figlio/a è stato dato un foglio informativo e un modulo di consenso. Se più studenti accetteranno di partecipare di quanto sia necessario per lo studio, dei nomi saranno estratti a sorte.

Se ha bisogno di ulteriori informazioni non esiti a contattare me o il mio supervisore.

#### **Garanzie dei partecipanti:**

- i. I nomi dei partecipanti non saranno identificabili nella ricerca. Ai partecipanti verranno dati degli pseudonimi nello studio.
- ii. L'informazione registrata durante l'intervista sarà protetta da una password sul mio pc personale creando uno Zip file crittografato con il programma 7-Zip.
- iii. Nessun'informazione fornita verrà usata senza il permesso dei singoli partecipanti.
- iv. I partecipanti sono liberi di rifiutare di rispondere a qualsiasi domanda a cui non desiderano rispondere.
- v. I partecipanti sono liberi di abbandonare la ricerca in qualsiasi momento e per qualsiasi motivo. Nel caso in cui i partecipanti si ritirino, tutti i record e le informazioni saranno distrutti.
- vi. Tutti i dati e le informazioni saranno distrutti al termine dello studio.

Se Lei accetta di partecipare a questa ricerca, La prego di contattarmi come indicato sotto.

La Sua collaborazione sarà pienamente apprezzata.

Cordiali saluti,

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Annaliz Calleja

Numero di contatto: XXX

E-mail: XXX

---

Professor Sandro Caruana

Numero di contatto: XXX

E-mail: XXX

## **Dichiarazione di consenso per i genitori (Partecipazione del figlio/figlia)**

*(Versione fornita anche in inglese e maltese)*

Io, genitore/tutore di \_\_\_\_\_ in classe \_\_\_\_\_

do il permesso a mio figlio/mia figlia di partecipare allo studio di Annaliz Calleja, svolto in adempimento della sua laurea magistrale con lo scopo di paragonare l'esperienza scolastica degli studenti migranti italiani in Italia, con quella a Malta, più specificamente a Gozo.

*(Segni gentilmente la casella, se applicabile)*

Do il mio consenso affinché:

Mio figlio/figlia possa essere osservato/a durante alcune lezioni

Mio figlio/a possa essere registrato/a per un'intervista audio di 30 minuti

**Nome del genitore/tutore 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nome del genitore/tutore 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Di seguito, confermo che sono consapevole che:

1. La ricercatrice osserverà mio figlio/figlia durante alcune lezioni in classe.
2. L'identità di mio figlio/figlia sarà anonimizzata con l'uso di pseudonimi.
3. Verrà chiesto allo stesso studente osservato di partecipare a un'intervista audio registrata.
4. L'intervista sarà condotta in italiano.
5. La ricercatrice farà delle domande su temi pertinenti al suo studio.
6. L'intervista sarà audio registrata.

7. Mio figlio/figlia darà il suo consenso per partecipare allo studio.
8. La partecipazione allo studio è completamente volontaria.
9. I partecipanti possono lasciare lo studio in qualsiasi momento.
10. Le registrazioni saranno archiviate con una password e accessibili solo dalla ricercatrice.
11. Le registrazioni saranno distrutte quando gli studi saranno terminati.
12. Nessun'informazione fornita verrà usata senza il permesso dei singoli partecipanti.

<hr/> Nome del figlio/figlia	<hr/> Data
<hr/> Firma del genitore/tutore 1	<hr/> Firma della del genitore/tutore 2
<hr/> Annaliz Calleja	<hr/> Professor Sandro Caruana

## **Lettera informativa per gli studenti**

*(Versione fornita anche in inglese e maltese)*

Caro studente,

Mi chiamo Ms Annaliz Calleja e sono un'insegnante d'italiano in una scuola media a Gozo. Attualmente sto facendo una ricerca per il 'Master of Arts in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies' (Studi comparativi in educazione) presso l'Università di Malta. Sto scrivendo una tesi in inglese intitolata 'The educational challenges of Italian migrant learners in their transition to secondary schools in Gozo: A comparative study.' (Le sfide affrontate dagli studenti italiani nella loro transizione scolastica alle medie di Gozo). Questo studio sarà condotto sotto la supervisione del Professor Sandro Caruana. Durante il prossimo anno accademico raccoglierò dei dati per poter completare la mia tesi di laurea. Lo scopo del mio studio è di paragonare l'esperienza scolastica degli studenti migranti italiani in Italia, con quella a Malta, più specificamente a Gozo, per investigare le sfide educative che questi studenti affrontano durante il percorso di inserimento nelle scuole statali. Le domande di ricerca di questo studio sono:

- Com'è l'esperienza di studenti migranti italiani nella loro transizione scolastica alle medie statali di Gozo?
- Nel caso di studenti italiani che hanno frequentato la scuola in Italia prima di muoversi a Malta, fino a che punto questa transizione è stata influenzata da similarità o differenze tra il sistema educativo italiano e quello maltese?

*Avrei bisogno di chiedere ad alcuni studenti di nazionalità italiana di partecipare alla ricerca.*

Per completare il mio studio farò osservazioni in classe per capire meglio l'esperienza scolastica a Gozo e come ci si sente durante le lezioni. Durante le osservazioni non si terranno registrazioni audio, poiché sarà tenuto solo un diario riflessivo personale in cui verranno usati degli pseudonimi. Per questa particolare raccolta di dati, prenderò appunti dettagliati su: (i) quante volte gli insegnanti usano lingue diverse per interagire con gli studenti; (ii) in quali circostanze e per quali motivi si utilizza l'italiano e, se non si utilizza l'italiano, le situazioni e i motivi per cui ciò si verifica e (iii) se durante la lezione si passa da una lingua all'altra. Le osservazioni serviranno per capire se ci sono difficoltà a inserirsi in un contesto scolastico

diverso da quello italiano tenendo anche conto del modo in cui gli studenti italiani riescono a seguire le lezioni o meno.

Di seguito, verrà chiesto agli stessi studenti osservati prima di partecipare su base volontaria a delle interviste registrate per ottenere più informazione. Perciò, condurrò anche un'intervista registrata audio con tre/quattro studenti italiani che si offriranno volontari a partecipare in questo studio. Queste interviste registrate dureranno al massimo 30 minuti e si terranno durante l'orario scolastico. Se tu volessi partecipare, ti farò delle domande, e sarai completamente libero di scegliere quelle a cui rispondere. Al fine di proteggere l'identità di ciascun partecipante, verranno usati degli pseudonimi e ci saranno ulteriori modifiche dove necessario. Inoltre, l'informazione registrata durante l'intervista sarà protetta da una password sul mio pc personale creando uno Zip file crittografato con il programma 7-Zip. Nessun'informazione fornita verrà usata senza il permesso dei singoli partecipanti.

Per questo motivo, vorrei invitarti a far parte del mio studio. La partecipazione è completamente volontaria e tutti i dettagli personali rimarranno confidenziali. Poiché la ricerca è volontaria, avrai la possibilità di interrompere il colloquio in qualsiasi momento o di rifiutarti di rispondere a qualsiasi domanda a cui non desideri rispondere. Se accetti di partecipare, devi compilare il modulo di richiesta per il permesso di partecipazione allo studio. Gentilmente, restituisci il modulo di consenso al preside della scuola, dove li raccoglierò da una settimana dopo che ti ho dato questo foglio. In seguito all'accordo per la partecipazione, ti verrà richiesto di incontrare il ricercatore durante l'orario scolastico e nei locali della scuola, al fine di tenere l'intervista audio di 30 minuti.

Se hai delle domande, per favore, chiedi pure. Puoi mandarmi un'email o mi puoi parlare di persona quando sono a scuola. Se preferisci, i tuoi genitori possono contattarmi tramite e-mail.

#### **Garanzie dei partecipanti:**

i. I nomi dei partecipanti non saranno identificabili nella ricerca. Ai partecipanti verranno dati degli pseudonimi nello studio.

ii. L'informazione registrata durante l'intervista sarà protetta da una password sul mio pc personale creando uno Zip file crittografato con il programma 7-Zip.

iii. Nessun'informazione fornita verrà usata senza il permesso dei singoli partecipanti.

iv. I partecipanti sono liberi di rifiutare di rispondere a qualsiasi domanda a cui non desiderano rispondere.

v. I partecipanti sono liberi di abbandonare la ricerca in qualsiasi momento e per qualsiasi motivo. Nel caso in cui i partecipanti si ritirino, tutti i record e le informazioni saranno distrutti.

vi. Tutti i dati e le informazioni saranno distrutti al termine dello studio.

Se accetti di partecipare a questa ricerca, ti prego di contattarmi come indicato sotto.

Grazie per la tua partecipazione.

Cordiali saluti,

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Annaliz Calleja

E-mail: XXX

## **Dichiarazione di consenso per gli studenti**

*(Versione fornita anche in inglese e maltese)*

Nome e Cognome: \_\_\_\_\_

*Voglio partecipare alle osservazioni nelle classi:*



**Sì**

*Voglio partecipare all'intervista audio:*



**Sì**

Di seguito, confermo che sono consapevole che:

1. So che posso scegliere di non rispondere a una domanda.
2. So che il mio nome non verrà utilizzato nella ricerca e rimarrà confidenziale.
3. Posso chiedere di non continuare a partecipare alla ricerca in qualsiasi momento.

## Invitation letter to participate in observations

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Annaliz Calleja and I am a student currently reading for a Master of Arts in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies, at the University of Malta. I am currently writing a dissertation in English entitled; 'The educational challenges of Italian migrant learners in their transition to secondary schools in Gozo: A comparative study.' This study is being conducted under the supervision of Professor Sandro Caruana. The aim of this research is to compare the schooling experience of Italian migrant learners in Italy with that in Gozo and thereby investigate some of the educational challenges of these learners in their transition to the Gozo College Middle and Secondary State Schools. The overarching research questions of this study are the following:

- What is the experience of Italian migrant learners in their transition to Maltese secondary schools in Gozo?
- In the case of students who would have attended school in Italy prior to moving to Malta, to what extent is this transition influenced by similarities and differences between the Italian and Maltese education systems?

To complete my study, I would like to conduct five lesson observations in classes of Italian migrant learners at the Gozo Middle School and five observations at the Gozo Secondary School (ten class observations in total) to evaluate the behaviour, participation in class and overall performance of the Italian students, from Year 7 to Year 11 age group and classrooms. Focus will be made particularly on the students' educational challenges amongst which the language barriers (if any) and overall performance in the classroom context during lessons. During the observations in class, I will be writing detailed notes about: (i) the teachers' use of different languages in class during different lessons, especially when engaging with Italian students; (ii) in case of Italian language use, I shall determine in which circumstances this is done; if Italian is not used, when and why this happens, and (iii) if code-switching occurs. Classes will be chosen on the basis of the presence of Italian students. No audio recordings will be taken, but I will keep a reflective journal, pseudonymised at source, with my observations.

Apart from the linguistic scenario, I will also investigate the behaviour of Italian students due to their general well-being in schools following their transition into the Maltese education system. Moreover, I will take note of whether there are patterns of absenteeism amongst these students and their participation and interaction in the lessons. For example, (i) if they follow the lessons or not; (ii) whether they reply and interact with the teachers, and if so, how many times this occurs during the 40 minutes lesson; (iii) whether any classwork is completed efficiently and autonomously; (iv) whether they do ask for help or not, and if yes, which language is used to seek help from their teachers, and also (v) whether they interact with their peers, and if so, which language is used for communication purposes.

After this, the same teachers and students (and their respective parents) observed before will be asked to participate on a voluntary basis in interviews and focus groups for more information. Thus, I will carry out focus groups which will involve 30-minute long conversations (maximum limit of time) with at least 3-4 Italian migrant learners who shall choose to participate on a voluntary basis. The students' observations and focus groups will take place within school premises during school hours.

I will then carry out audio interviews with three of the students' teachers and three of the students' parents. The teachers' interviews will last for about 45 minutes, and they will be carried out individually. An online modality of participation for teachers and parents will also be offered. Interviews with Italian students and parents will be carried out in Italian, whilst interviews with Maltese or any other nationality other than Italian teachers will be carried out in English or Maltese (as preferred by the participant). The interviews will be recorded using my mobile recorder device. All names of prospective participants will be pseudonymised to protect their identity. The information retrieved will only be used for research purposes and it will be locked, password-protected and encrypted on my personal computer by using the 7-Zip programme for Windows to convert the files into an encrypted ZIP file. Moreover, I shall not include in the dissertation any data provided by participants without their permission. The audio recorded data collected will be destroyed once the research is completed.

Upon completion of the study, I will present a copy of the full research to the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research as part fulfilment of the Master of Arts in

Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies and this may be available for consultation at the University library.

*I am therefore inviting you to participate in this research.* Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without suffering any negative consequences. Should you choose to withdraw, your interview data will not be used for the study, and it will be destroyed. Any notes taken and audio recorded data will be securely stored and will be accessed only by myself. Recordings will be used for the purpose of transcription; once I have transcribed the interview, I will destroy the audio recording. If you agree to participate, kindly sign the Consent Form needed for permission to participate in the study. Kindly return the signed consent form to the head of school, where I will be collecting them from. Furthermore, if you agree to participate in the interview, you will be contacted by the researcher via email, after the collection of your signed consent form. At a later stage to the agreement for the participation, you will be required to meet the researcher at your preferred time and place, to hold the 45 minutes audio interview. I would like to inform you that all details, including your name, will remain confidential. Since this is on a voluntary basis, you have the option to stop the interview at any time or skip any questions you do not want to answer.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Guarantees:**

- i. Your real name will not be used in the research.
- ii. The information retrieved will only be used for research purposes and it will be locked, password-protected and encrypted by using the 7-Zip programme for Windows to convert the files into an encrypted ZIP file.
- iii. I shall not include in the dissertation any data provided by you without your permission.
- iv. You are free to quit the research at any point and for whatever reason. In the case that you withdraw, all the records and information collected from you will be destroyed.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

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Annaliz Calleja

Contact number: XXX

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Professor Sandro Caruana

Contact number: XXX

**APPENDIX B**  
**Interview Questions**

## Domande per l'intervista con gli studenti

Limite di tempo: 30 minuti

<b>Tema per l'intervista</b>	<b>Domande</b>
Informazione generale - <i>Linee guida</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Dove sei nato/a? Per quanto tempo sei vissuto/a in Italia? Hai cittadinanza italiana o di un altro paese?</li><li>2. Da quanto tempo sei a Gozo? Perché? Ti manca il tuo paese? Spiega.</li><li>3. Quante scuole hai frequentato nella tua vita? In quali paesi?</li><li>4. Da quando frequenti questa scuola? Come ti senti? Perché ti senti così (male/bene/confuso/a disagio/da solo ecc.)? Da' delle ragioni.</li><li>5. Quale scuola era/è la tua preferita? Perché?</li></ol>
Transizione - <i>Linee guida</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Secondo te, ci sono delle differenze tra la scuola italiana e quella maltese? Da' degli esempi.</li><li>7. Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando hai cominciato a frequentare questa scuola? Spiega.</li><li>8. Attualmente come stai vivendo/Come hai vissuto questo cambiamento di scuole? Spiega.</li><li>9. Hai fatto nuovi amici? Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani come te, maltesi o stranieri?</li><li>10. Avevi/Hai un/un'insegnante preferito/a? Che cosa aveva/ha di speciale? Se non hai nessuna preferenza, perché?</li><li>11. Ci sono delle differenze nelle relazioni tra insegnanti e studenti in Italia in confronto a Malta?</li><li>12. Quali sono i tuoi ricordi più belli delle lezioni in Italia? Ne hai alcuni in merito alla scuola attuale?</li></ol>

		13. Qual era/è la tua materia preferita a scuola? Perché? C'è una materia che non ti piace? Perché?
Sfide per l'educazione - <i>Linee guida</i>	Partecipazione in classe	14. Partecipi spesso alle lezioni a scuola? Sì o no? Perché?  15. Riesci a seguire ogni lezione dall'inizio alla fine senza problemi o a volte ti perdi?  16. Quando non capisci più, che cosa fai di solito?
	Lingua	17. Parli in italiano nelle lezioni o in inglese e/o in maltese? Perché?  18. Ti è mai capitato di avere qualche insegnante che si ferma per parlarti in italiano durante la lezione? E durante le pause ricreative?  19. Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché? A quale livello?  20. Frequenti qualche lezione di ripetizione d'inglese e/o di maltese durante o al di fuori dell'orario scolastico? Perché?  21. Se fai parte di una classe di ripetizione: descrivi la classe, quanti studenti siete e di quale nazionalità sono? Trovi che queste ripetizioni siano interessanti e utili?
	Libri e materiale didattico, compiti e esami: un confronto tra sistemi	22. Ti piacciono i libri e/o il materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Ci sono delle differenze da quelli che usavi in Italia?  23. Che ne pensi dei compiti che ti vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze nella quantità e nella qualità da quelli assegnati nella scuola italiana?  24. Riesci a fare i compiti da solo/a o hai bisogno di aiuto? Perché? Quando hai delle difficoltà che cosa fai normalmente?  25. In caso di necessità a chi ti rivolgi abitualmente per essere aiutato/a nello studio e nello svolgimento dei compiti?

		<p>26. Noti delle differenze negli esami in Italia e quelli che devi fare a Malta? Da' degli esempi.</p> <p>27. Come ti senti quando devi fare gli esami e le prove sono in inglese e/o in maltese?</p>
	Inclusione	<p>28. Gli insegnanti usano dei metodi specifici per aiutarti a capire meglio la lezione nel caso ci siano delle difficoltà?</p> <p>29. Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Senti di far parte di questa scuola? Perché?</p> <p>30. C'è qualche gruppo della tua età con interessi in comune a cui appartieni al di fuori della scuola e che frequenti nel tempo libero per sentirti più incluso nella società maltese?</p>
Coinvolgimento dei genitori - <i>Linee guida</i>		31. I tuoi genitori si interessano al tuo rendimento scolastico? Ti aiutano con lo studio e nello svolgimento dei compiti?
Sfide per il futuro - <i>Linee guida</i>		<p>32. Dopo la scuola cosa vuoi fare? Credi che questa scuola ti stia aiutando a raggiungere i tuoi obiettivi?</p> <p>33. C'è qualcosa della scuola o del sistema educativo maltese che cambieresti? C'è qualcosa che non ti piace? Perché?</p>

## Domande per l'intervista con i genitori

Limite di tempo: 45 minuti

Tema per l'intervista		Domande
Informazione generale - <i>Linee guida</i>		<p>1. Dove siete nati? Per quanto tempo siete vissuti in Italia? Avete cittadinanza italiana o di un altro paese?</p> <p>2. Da quanto tempo vi siete trasferiti a Malta? E a Gozo? Perché? Siete qui per un breve periodo o a lungo termine?</p> <p>3. Conoscete altri genitori italiani (o anche stranieri) con figli che sono studenti qui a Gozo? Siete semplicemente conoscenti o siete diventati amici?</p>
Transizione - <i>Linee guida</i>		<p>4. Secondo voi, quali sono le differenze tra la scuola italiana e quella maltese? Date degli esempi.</p> <p>5. Tra il sistema educativo italiano e maltese quale preferite? Perché? Pensate che uno dei sistemi sia migliore o peggiore dell'altro? Perché?</p> <p>6. L'inserimento di vostro/a figlio/a in questa scuola è stato positivo o negativo? Spiegate.</p> <p>7. Com'è stato vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione ovvero quando vostro/a figlio/a ha cominciato a frequentare questa scuola? Date degli esempi.</p> <p>8. Attualmente vostro figlio/a come sta vivendo questo cambiamento? Date degli esempi.</p>
Sfide per l'educazione - <i>Linee guida</i>	Inclusione	9. Che cosa fa la scuola per aiutare voi e vostro/a figlio/a a sentirvi inclusi? Ci sono delle misure specifiche?

		<p>10. Come genitori vi sentite inclusi quando la scuola comunica con voi? C'è mai stato un momento in cui vi siete sentiti esclusi? Spiegate.</p> <p>11. Come genitori vi sentite inclusi quando la scuola organizza delle attività scolastiche? Vi siete mai sentiti esclusi? Spiegate.</p> <p>12. Il giorno genitori-insegnanti lo vivete in modo positivo o negativo? Perché?</p> <p>13. Vi piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Sentite di far parte di questa scuola? Perché?</p> <p>14. C'è qualche gruppo della stessa età di vostro/a figlio/a con interessi in comune a cui appartiene al di fuori della scuola e che frequenta nel tempo libero per sentirsi più incluso nella società maltese?</p>
	Lingua	<p>15. Ritenete che conoscere la lingua inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché? A quale livello?</p> <p>16. Quale/i lingua/e usate per comunicare tra di voi e con i vostri figli a casa?</p> <p>17. Avete sentito la necessità di mandare vostro/a figlio/a a delle lezioni di ripetizione d'inglese e/o di maltese durante o al di fuori dell'orario scolastico? Perché?</p>
	Libri e materiale didattico, compiti e esami: un confronto tra sistemi	<p>18. Che ne pensate dei libri e/o materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Sono di ottima o di pessima qualità? Ritenete che ci siano delle differenze da quelli usati nella scuola italiana?</p> <p>19. Che ne pensate dei compiti che vengono assegnati agli studenti in questa scuola? Sono adeguati in termini di quantità e di qualità?</p> <p>20. Ritenete che ci siano delle differenze tra i compiti assegnati nella scuola italiana e quelli assegnati nella scuola maltese?</p> <p>21. Vostro/a figlio/a ha problemi a fare i compiti? Date degli esempi.</p>

		<p>22. Ritenete che ci siano delle differenze negli esami che faceva vostro figlio/a in Italia e quelli che fa a Malta? Se sì, quali?</p> <p>23. Vostro figlio/a ha dei problemi con gli esami in lingua inglese e/o maltese in questa scuola?</p>
<p>Coinvolgimento dei genitori - <i>Linee guida</i></p>		<p>24. Nel caso ci siano problemi per fare i compiti e/o per studiare, riuscite ad aiutare vostro/a figlio/a? a) Se sì, in che modo? b) Se no, perché non vi sentite nella condizione di aiutarlo/a a svolgere i suoi compiti e/o a studiare? E come vi sentite a riguardo (tristi, confusi, a disagio, non abbastanza capaci ecc.)?</p> <p>25. Nel caso avete dei connazionali che abitano a Gozo, vi rivolgete a loro? a) Sì: vi aiutate a vicenda quando avete dei problemi a capire ciò che la scuola richiede o magari aiutate i vostri figli rispettivi a svolgere i compiti assegnati e/o a studiare? b) No: ce ne occupiamo in famiglia, anche nel caso di difficoltà nei compiti e/o nello studio.</p> <p>26. Secondo voi, quali sono le esigenze scolastiche più importanti di vostro/a figlio/a da quando vi siete trasferiti a Gozo?</p>
<p>Sfide per il futuro - <i>Linee guida</i></p>		<p>27. Secondo voi, cambiare la scuola da quella italiana a quella maltese ha cambiato la vostra prospettiva in modo positivo o negativo in merito all'educazione di vostro/a figlio/a?</p> <p>28. Nel caso di vostro/a figlio/a, pensate che cambiare la scuola da quella italiana a quella maltese abbia cambiato la sua prospettiva in modo positivo o negativo in merito alla sua formazione educativa?</p> <p>29. C'è qualcosa della scuola o del sistema educativo maltese che cambiereste? Spiegate.</p>

## Interview questions for teachers

(English version)

Time limit: 45 minutes

<b>Interview Theme</b>	<b>Questions</b>
Background information - <i>Guidelines</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What subject do you teach and how long have you been teaching it?</li><li>2. Have you taught migrant students in the past and do you teach some at present?</li><li>3. What are the nationalities of the migrant students you have taught, or currently teach?</li><li>4. How do you feel about having migrant students from diverse backgrounds in your class? Are there any benefits and/or drawbacks?</li><li>5. Have you had, or do you have Italian students in class? Do you think that they feel included in their class and in the school?</li></ol>
Transition – <i>Guidelines</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Do you think there are any differences between the Italian and Maltese educational systems? Give examples.</li><li>7. What aspects of the Maltese system do you think that Italian students find easy or difficult to adapt to in their transition, that is when moving to Gozo and when they start attending the host country's school? Give examples.</li><li>8. Do you think that this happens with all students, or it is easier for some groups (e.g. the younger ones) to adapt? Why does this occur according to you?</li><li>9. What are your views about the transition of Italian students in this school? Do you believe they experience any challenges?</li></ol>

Educational challenges - <i>Guidelines</i>	Participation in class	<p>10. Do all students participate actively in your lessons, including migrant students?</p> <p>11. Do Italian students participate actively in your lessons?</p> <p>12. Do migrant students, including Italians, cooperate and work on tasks given in class? Explain.</p> <p>13. Do migrant students, including Italians, carry out their homework without difficulties?</p>
	Language use	<p>14. Which language/s do you normally use during explanation for better understanding?</p> <p>15. Is English and/or Maltese proficiency necessary for migrant students to learn? At what levels?</p> <p>16. Have you ever had the opportunity to speak in Italian with Italian students? When did this occur, and if not, why?</p>
	Inclusion	<p>17. Can you give some examples of activities you carry out to promote diversity in class and include migrant students in your lessons?</p> <p>18. Can you give some examples of activities you carry out to include Italian students in your lessons?</p> <p>19. Do you offer the students individual assistance after lessons or even during break times?</p> <p>20. Do you believe that the school is inclusive towards all students, including those of a different nationality? Give reasons.</p> <p>21. Do you believe that the school is inclusive towards Italian students? Give reasons.</p> <p>22. Could you give me two examples of Italian students you have taught or teach. Explain their attitude in class and general behaviour at school with their teachers and classmates, their attitudes towards the homework or tasks given in class and examinations.</p>

<p>Parental involvement - <i>Guidelines</i></p>	<p>23. How do you communicate with the parents of the Italian students you teach? Give examples.</p> <p>24. Do the parents of Italian students generally attend parents' day and other meetings?</p> <p>25. Do you have any difficulties communicating with the parents of Italian students and what is their reaction to your recommendations (hostile, passive, helpless, grateful etc.)?</p> <p>26. Do you feel that migrant students, including Italians, lack support from parents?</p>
<p>Future challenges - <i>Guidelines</i></p>	<p>27. Do you think that additional support in class is necessary to cater for the specific needs of migrant students, including Italians?</p> <p>28. Are you familiar with concepts such as language mediation and translanguaging? What type of professional training do you think you need to be able to help migrant students be successful at school?</p> <p>29. What would you change from your lessons to provide an inclusive learning environment?</p> <p>30. What would you change from the school and the Maltese education system to provide an inclusive learning environment?</p>

## Mistoqsijiet tal-intervista għall-ghalliema

*(Verzjoni bil-Malti)*

Hin: 45 minuta

It-tema	Il-mistoqsijiet
Informazzjoni generali - <i>Linji gwida</i>	<p>1. Liema suġġett tgħallem u kemm ilek tgħallem?</p> <p>2. Għallimt studenti barranin fil-passat u tgħallem xi wħud fil-prezent?</p> <p>3. X'inhuma n-nazzjonalitajiet tal-istudenti barranin li għallimt, jew tgħallem bħalissa?</p> <p>4. Kif tħossok dwar il-fatt li jkollok studenti barranin ġejjin minn realtajiet differenti fil-klassi tiegħek? Hemm xi benefiċċji u/jew żvantagġi?</p> <p>5. Kellek, jew għandek studenti Taljani fil-klassi? Taħseb li jhossuhom inklużi fil-klassi tagħhom u fl-iskola?</p>
It-tranzizzjoni - <i>Linji gwida</i>	<p>6. Taħseb li hemm xi differenzi bejn is-sistema edukattiva Taljana u dik Maltija? Agħti xi eżempji.</p> <p>7. Liema aspetti tas-sistema Maltija taħseb li l-istudenti Taljani jsibu faċli jew diffiċli biex jidraw fit-tranzizzjoni tagħhom, jiġifieri meta jiġu jgħixu Għawdex u meta jibdew jattendu l-iskola tal-pajjiż li jilqagħhom? Agħti xi eżempji.</p> <p>8. Taħseb li dan jiġri mal-istudenti kollha, jew huwa aktar faċli għal xi gruppi (eż. daww izgħar) biex jidraw? Għaliex taħseb li dan iseħħ?</p> <p>9. X'inhuma l-fehmiet tiegħek dwar it-tranzizzjoni tal-istudenti Taljani f'din l-iskola? Temmen li jesperjenzaw xi sfidi?</p>
L-isfidi edukattivi - <i>Linji gwida</i>	<p>Il-parteciċipazzjoni fil-klassi</p> <p>10. L-istudenti kollha jipparteċipaw b'mod attiv fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek, inklużi l-istudenti barranin?</p>

	<p>11. L-istudenti Taljani jipparteċipaw b' mod attiv fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek?</p> <p>12. L-istudenti barranin, inklużi dawk Taljani, jikkooperaw u jaħdmu fuq xogħlijiet mogħtija lilhom fil-klassi? Spjega.</p> <p>13. L-istudenti barranin, inklużi t-Taljani, iwettqu x-xogħol għad-dar tagħhom mingħajr diffikultajiet?</p>
Il-lingwa	<p>14. Liema lingwa/i normalment tuża waqt spjegazzjoni għal fehim aħjar?</p> <p>15. Li tkun taf l-Ingliż u/jew il-Malti huwa meħtieġ biex l-istudenti barranin jitgħallmu? F'liema livelli?</p> <p>16. Qatt kellek l-opportunità li titkellem bit-Taljan mal-istudenti Taljani? Meta seħħ dan, u jekk le, għaliex?</p>
L-inklużjoni	<p>17. Tista' tagħti xi eżempji ta' attivitajiet li tagħmel biex tippromwovi d-diversità fil-klassi u tinkludi l-istudenti barranin fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek?</p> <p>18. Tista' tagħti xi eżempji ta' attivitajiet li tagħmel biex tinkludi l-istudenti Taljani fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek?</p> <p>19. Toffri lill-istudenti assistenza individwali wara l-lezzjonijiet jew anke waqt il-ħinijiet tal-<i>break</i>?</p> <p>20. Temmen li l-iskola hija inklussiva lejn l-istudenti kollha, inklużi dawk ta' nazzjonalità differenti? Agħti xi raġunijiet.</p> <p>21. Temmen li l-iskola hija inklussiva lejn l-istudenti Taljani? Agħti xi raġunijiet.</p> <p>22. Tista' tagħtini żewġ eżempji ta' studenti Taljani li għallimt jew qed tgħallim. Spjega l-attitudni tagħhom fil-klassi u l-imġiba ġenerali fl-iskola mal-għalliema u sħabhom tal-klassi, l-attitudnijiet tagħhom lejn ix-xogħol għad-dar jew tal-klassi u l-eżamijiet.</p>

<p>Is-sehem tal-ġenituri - <i>Linji gwida</i></p>	<p>23. Kif tikkomunika mal-ġenituri tal-istudenti Taljani li tgħallem? Agħti xi eżempji.</p> <p>24. Il-ġenituri tal-istudenti Taljani ġeneralment jattendu Jum il-Ġenituri u laqgħat oħra?</p> <p>25. Għandek xi diffikultajiet biex tikkomunika mal-ġenituri tal-istudenti Taljani u x'inhom r-reazzjoni tagħhom għar-rakkomandazzjonijiet tiegħek (ostili, passivi, grati eċċ.)?</p> <p>26. Thoss li l-istudenti barranin, inklużi t-Taljani, m'għandhomx appoġġ mill-ġenituri?</p>
<p>L-isfidi tal-futur - <i>Linji gwida</i></p>	<p>27. Taħseb li huwa meħtieġ appoġġ addizzjonali fil-klassi biex jilqa' għall-bżonnijiet speċifiċi tal-istudenti barranin, inklużi t-Taljani?</p> <p>28. Int familjari ma' kuncetti bħall-medjazzjoni tal-lingwa u t-translanguaging? X'tip ta' taħriġ professjonali taħseb li għandek bżonn biex tkun tista' tgħin lill-istudenti barranin jkollhom suċċess fl-iskola?</p> <p>29. Kieku x'tibdel mil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek biex tipprovdi ambjent ta' taġlim inklussiv?</p> <p>30. Kieku x'tibdel mill-iskola u mis-sistema edukattiva Maltija biex tipprovdi ambjent ta' taġlim inklussiv?</p>

**APPENDIX C**  
**Observation Schedule**

**Observation schedule**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

		<b><u>Notes</u></b>
<b>Language barriers</b>	What language(s) do educators mainly use to communicate in class and in which circumstances do they use them?	
	When Italian is used with Italian students, why does this happen? Is the use of this language directed to specific communication and/or pedagogical functions?	
	Does code-switching in Maltese/English occur and if so, how often?	

<b>Participation in lessons</b>	Do students participate regularly in the lesson? Are differences registered between migrant learners (including those of Italian nationality) and other students?	
	Do students follow the lessons or do they encounter difficulties to do so? Are differences registered between migrant learners (including those of Italian nationality) and other students?	
	So learners interact with their teacher, with their peers and with LSEs? Are differences registered between migrant learners (including those of Italian nationality) and other students?	
<b>Work completion</b>	Do students manage to work on their own when classwork is assigned? Are differences registered between migrant learners (including those of	

	Italian nationality) and other students?	
	Is their classwork completed efficiently?	
	Do students ask for help from their teacher? If yes, when, and why? Are differences registered between migrant learners (including those of Italian nationality) and other students?	

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Samples of the Interviews with Students**

## Interview with student 1.7

This student was assigned code 1.7. She is in class 7.6 and has lived in Malta for 3 years, 2 years in Malta and 5 months in Gozo. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.

**D: Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando hai cominciato a frequentare questa scuola? Spiega.**

Quando mi sono trasferita, all'inizio ero felice perché in Italia non è che ... c'era poco lavoro e quindi ci annoiavamo. Quindi, prima siamo andati a Malta, poi io non stavo bene con la scuola perché i miei compagni erano cattivi, molto più di qua e quindi anche per mia mamma, ci siamo trasferiti a Gozo.

**D: Quindi è stato facile o difficile? \***

A scuola a Malta è stato difficile e adesso qua sto bene. Mi dicevano "go back to your country."

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**D: Partecipi spesso alle lezioni a scuola? Sì o no?**

Mhmm ... *Sometimes I get* ... certe volte mi distraigo perché i miei compagni mi distragono e mi fanno ridere soprattutto in inglese.

**D: Riesci a seguire ogni lezione dall'inizio alla fine senza problemi? O a volte ti perdi?**

Sì, certe volte come in matematica, quando non capisco qualche cosa, glielo chiedo e poi capisco. Però certe volte mi distragono [fa dei nomi di compagni di classe] \*\*\*, \*\*\* e \*\*\*.

**D: Quando non capisci più, che cosa fai di solito?**

Mhmm ... *sometimes* mi arrabbio però certe volte chiedo alla maestra.

**D: Parli in italiano nelle lezioni o in inglese e/o maltese? Perché?**

In inglese, ma certe volte anche quando entra la maestra d'italiano nella mia classe le parlo in italiano.

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**D: Ti è mai capitato di avere qualche insegnante che si ferma per parlarti in italiano durante la lezione? E durante le pause ricreative?**

No, mai ... [breve pausa] *only like to joke my Science teacher*. Mi parla in italiano se non capisco qualcosa il mio maestro di scienze.

**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Sì, se parlo solo in italiano nessuno mi capirebbe, starei da sola. Il maltese, sì, è utile perché con il maltese puoi parlare con tutti e puoi capire meglio le lezioni.

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**D: Ti piacciono i libri e il materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia? Perché?**

No, non mi piacciono. Sì, in Italia abbiamo certi libri come alla scuola primaria che non hai bisogno dei *foolscap* dove devi scrivere tutte le domande. Ce le hai sul libro perché in Italia non ti danno i libri di scuola. Tu li devi andare a comprare i libri e devi pagare tutti i libri.

**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Trovi che siano troppi o che siano facili o difficili? \***

Allora, così così perché comunque i compiti ... non voglio essere cattiva ... però i compiti non servono tanto perché tu sei a scuola tutto il giorno che studi e *you pay attention* in classe e se ti danno troppi compiti comunque non è giusto. In Italia, tipo per le vacanze estive, ti danno un libro così [vuole dire un libro grande] da fare per ripetere e se non lo finisci si arrabbiano.

**D: Riesci a fare i compiti da sola o hai bisogno di aiuto?**

Io da sola però se in matematica ho un problemino, chiedo a mia mamma.

**D: Come ti senti quando devi fare gli esami e le prove sono in inglese e qualche volta in maltese?**

Io con l'inglese sono brava quindi mi sento bene però se sono in maltese è un problema, è difficile.

**D: In quale materia hai più difficoltà? \***

Boh, non ne ho una ... forse *History*, di storia perché la maestra parla poco poco in inglese.

**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Perché? Senti di fare parte di questa scuola?**

Sì, devo dire qua mi piacciono i miei compagni. L'unico problema è che nelle classi ci sono troppi studenti. Le classi sono un po' piccole.

**D: C'è qualche gruppo della tua età con interessi in comune a cui appartieni al di fuori della scuola per sentirti più inclusa nella società maltese?**

Io no. Faccio *dance* però a scuola durante il *break*, *Monday*, *Tuesday* e *Wednesday*. Andiamo lì, sai, dove c'è l'ufficio della *head*, *because tomorrow* andiamo a ballare al *party* di Carnevale, ecco perché.

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## Interview with student 2.7

*This student was assigned code 2.7. She is in class 7.5 and has lived in Malta for 8 years, 6 years in Malta and 2 years in Gozo. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Da quanto tempo sei a Gozo? Perché?**

Sono a Gozo da quasi 2 anni, ma a Malta per 6 anni perché mia mamma voleva che imparassimo l'inglese meglio perché le scuole in Italia non ti fanno fare l'inglese bene.

**D: Ti manca il tuo paese?**

Sì [ride].

**D: Perché?**

Perché ho tutti i nonni là e il mangiare è molto buono [ridiamo] e la campagna è molto bella.

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**D: Da quanto frequenti questa scuola e come ti senti?**

La frequento da settembre e mi sento bene.

**D: Spiegami perché. \***

Perché ho dei bravi amici, le maestre sono brave e mi piace l'ambiente della classe.

**D: Hai fatto nuovi amici? Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani come te, maltesi o stranieri?**

Mhmm ... diciamo ho due gruppi con cui ho stretto molta amicizia ... un gruppo siamo maltesi a parte io e una mia amica, che noi due che siamo in un altro gruppo, siamo in tre. Siamo una mezza australiana e maltese perché è nata in Australia, l'altra è mezza *British* e mezza maltese e io sono italiana.

**D: Qual è la tua materia preferita? Perché?**

Spagnolo perché è simile all'italiano, lo posso imparare veloce, poi ho i miei nonni da parte di mio papà che in estate vanno ... adesso non mi ricordo come si chiami l'*island* [pausa] ... perché hanno una casa a [pensa e poi si ricorda] Tenerife ... *and the people are very friendly and they learned Spanish and I like the teacher.*

**D: C'è una materia che non ti piace?**

Sì. La matematica perché la maestra non mi piace perché è molto *strict*, cioè tipo delle volte si arrabbia.

**D: Partecipi spesso alle lezioni a scuola?**

Sì, sì perché mi piacciono le maestre e mi piacciono le lezioni.

**D: Riesci a seguire ogni lezione dall'inizio alla fine senza problema o a volte ti perdi?**

Delle volte mi perdo perché tipo non so ... magari delle volte sta spiegando [si riferisce alla maestra] e c'è una parola che non capisco in maltese però poi chiedo alla mia amica e me lo dice. Delle volte non la sa neanche lei.

**D: Parli in italiano nelle lezioni o in inglese e/o maltese?**

Inglese e maltese, ma con la maestra di *History* delle volte mi dice "se non sai una parola me la puoi dire in italiano" e io gliel'ho detta e lei mi ha spiegato.

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**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? Per sentirti accettata? \***

Sì, perché poi anche da grande vorrei andare a studiare in Polonia ma se fossi stata in Italia non avrei saputo molto l'inglese, allora se sono qui so l'inglese e posso andare a studiare là.

**D: E il maltese pensi che sia fondamentale per sentirti accettata? \***

Sì e no perché il maltese lo usi solo qui, cioè a Malta, poi se da grande non vuoi rimanere qui "perché l'hai imparato?" [ride]

**D: Non serve un po' per farti più amici? \***

Sì, sì perché da quello che ho capito fin da quando sono qui è che ai maltesi gli piace la gente che parla l'inglese, ma forse più il maltese ... beh ho più amici adesso che ho imparato il maltese. Però, anche se lo capisci, hai tanti amici perché ti possono parlare in maltese.

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**D: Riesci a fare i compiti da sola o hai bisogno di aiuto?**

Riesco a farli da sola.

**D: Come ti senti quando devi fare gli esami e le prove sono in inglese e/o in maltese? Ti senti bene o a disagio? \***

Bene.

**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Senti di farne parte?**

Sì, sì.

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**D: C'è qualcosa della scuola che cambieresti? Qualcosa che non ti piace?**

La divisa perché in Italia non si mette la divisa ... solo nel *primary* metti la divisa. Per esempio, mia cugina va a scuola come vuole e delle volte non ho voglia di mettermi su queste cose.

## Interview with student 1.8

*This student was assigned code 1.8. She is in class 8.5 and has lived in Malta for 8 years, 6 years in Malta and 2 years in Gozo. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Ti manca il tuo paese?**

Sì, mi mancano tutti i miei nonni, mi mancano tutti i miei cugini che sono molto attaccata a loro.

**D: Da quando frequenti questa scuola? Come ti senti e perché?**

Da quasi un anno e mi sento bene. Prima ero un po' esclusa ... lo ero un po' non so perché [abbassa il tono] ... forse perché sono italiana. Loro non me lo dicevano direttamente, ma ...

**D: Quindi questa cosa ti fa sentire a disagio? \***

Mhmm ... anche quando vogliono parlare in privato, mi lasciano lì e sono un po' imbarazzata. Nel Year 7 mi continuavano a dire "go back to Italy, go back to your country." O se no, mi dicono una *bad word* in maltese e forse anche al mio paese.

**D: Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando hai cominciato a frequentare questa scuola? Spiega.**

La scuola mia di Malta era meglio di qui. Qui li ho trovati più *bossy*. Li ho trovati più tipo che non gli importa di me ... che sono tipo un oggetto. A Malta avevo più amici, molti di più di qui e comunque adesso ho ancora un migliore amico con cui mi sento ancora.

**D: Hai fatto nuovi amici? Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani, maltesi o stranieri?**

Qui li ho fatti però mi sentivo meglio a Malta. Gli amici erano maltesi e adesso qui mi sono fatta amici italiani e anche maltesi però i gozitani sono un po' così [ride].

**D: Così come? \***

*Bossy*. Tipo che non gli importa degli altri, gli importa solo di loro.

**D: Qual era in Italia e qual è la tua materia preferita a scuola? E c'è una materia che non ti piace? Perché?**

Io non avevo una materia preferita in Italia perché ho fatto solo cinque anni a scuola, voglio dire, ho fatto solo il *Kindergarten* là, quindi la mia materia preferita qui è lo spagnolo perché mi trovo molto molto bene e la seconda mia materia preferita è la geografia perché il maestro è molto *kind*, è molto gentile, cioè ci aiuta in tutto e la lezione passa molto in fretta perché infatti a noi [si riferisce alla classe] ci piace molto perché tante volte non facciamo bene nelle materie perché sono gli insegnanti ... La materia che odio in assoluto è penso ... *Science*.

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**D: Quando non capisci più, che cosa fai di solito?**

Chiedo alla maestra o chiedo aiuto dai miei amici, non amici, ai compagni di classe ma tante volte non mi aiutano allora chiedo alla maestra.

**D: Parli in italiano nelle lezioni o in inglese e/o maltese? Perché?**

Io non parlo in italiano. Parlo solo in italiano quando la maestra d'italiano entra in classe per gli altri studenti o le dico "Buongiorno" o mi parla lei. Io in tutte le materie parlo misto, inglese, maltese ... [ride] non ho mai una lingua che ho deciso. Di solito con i miei amici italiani parlo in italiano, non parlo in maltese o inglese così gli altri non mi capiscono [ride].

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**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Tante volte è così, ma tante volte mi fanno capire che non devo essere dentro al gruppo e allora ciao ciao. Tante volte cerco di parlare in maltese ma non mi includono nei loro ...

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**D: Ti piacciono i libri e il materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia? Perché?**

No, affatto [ride]. Odio i libri e odio la scuola. Qui non si può scrivere sui libri anche perché i libri poi li usano altri studenti.

**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Trovi che siano troppi o che siano facili o difficili? \***

Tipo tante volte sono molto difficili. Non trovo che siano troppi. A me non piace molto l'inglese però comunque devo fare i compiti. Le maestre, esempio quella di maltese, mi dà due compiti di maltese e poi la maestra d'inglese non lo sa che abbiamo già i compiti di maltese e allora ci dà ancora e poi abbiamo una lista di compiti da fare anche perché noi abbiamo altre attività nelle giornate. Ad esempio, io ho canto, ho ginnastica però comunque ... In Italia ti danno i compiti d'estate così tu comunque studi e secondo me è meglio perché poi ho molta difficoltà a recuperare. Alla fine dell'anno ci dovrebbero dare dei *past papers* così comunque studiamo.

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**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Perché? Senti di fare parte di questa scuola?**

No, non mi piace perché tra gli studenti e la mia classe è molto piccola e fa molto caldo. In qualche modo sento di farne parte perché gli insegnanti mi aiutano molto.

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## Interview with student 2.8

*This student was assigned code 2.8. She is in class 8.9 and has lived in Gozo for 3 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Ti manca la Sicilia? \***

No, però mi mancano poco poco i miei nonni e la palestra dove andavo, basta. Ma del resto, gli amici e la scuola, no.

**D: Da quando frequenti questa scuola? Come ti senti e perché?**

Allora, questa scuola la frequento dal *Year 7* dall'inizio che sono venuta qua, però io sono venuta qua che andavo in *Year 6* a \*\*\* [nome di un villaggio a Gozo]. In questa scuola mi trovo benissimo, bene se non per qualche bambino che ci prende un po' in giro per la pronuncia, però del resto niente.

**D: Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando dall'Italia ti sei trasferita a Gozo e hai cominciato a frequentare questa scuola? Da' delle ragioni.**

Allora, quando sono andata nella *primary school* mi sono trovata bene perché le maestre era gentile ... erano gentili, scusa! Però essendo che non parlavo una parola d'inglese o di maltese perché in Italia l'inglese non è proprio parlato, quindi facevo fatica a capire i miei futuri amici. E poi del resto, bene.

**D: Attualmente come stai vivendo questo cambiamento di scuole?**

Mi sto trovando benissimo finora, non ho avuto né tristezza né niente. Non faccio più fatica a comunicare, ora un po' il maltese però lo sto già imparando perché è simile al siciliano.

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**D: Partecipi spesso alle lezioni a scuola? Sì o no?**

Sì, soprattutto in inglese. A volte la maestra d'inglese dice che esistiamo solo io e \*\*\* in classe. A me e \*\*\* ci chiamano *animal pets*, gli animaletti della maestra. Almeno sono intelligente!

**D: Riesci a seguire ogni lezione dall'inizio alla fine senza problemi? O a volte ti perdi?**

Allora, se parliamo di tutte le materie tranne la matematica, sì. Però se parliamo di matematica, ci sono alcuni metodi che io ho imparato in un altro modo in Italia, tipo le divisioni. Qua le fanno in un altro modo, poi non riesco a capirle come si lavorano. Però se tipo prendi un problema, ci sono delle parole chiavi che in Italia sono spiegate in un modo e qua a Malta in un altro modo. Tipo dei problemi ... le parole che mi dicevano per capire che devi fare la divisione, la moltiplicazione, il più e il meno, sono diverse. Però ora sto iniziando a capire, quindi non è più un problema.

**D: Quando non capisci più, che cosa fai di solito?**

Se io non capisco qualcosa, chiedo alla mia vicina di banco [si siede accanto a un'italiana] perché lei ha fatto pure la *primary* qua, ha fatto la *Year 5*, e quindi sa un poco come si fanno le divisioni in questo modo e chiedo a lei e se lei non capisce cose che noi abbiamo fatto in Italia e lei no, chiede a me.

**D: Parli in italiano nelle lezioni o in inglese e/o maltese? Perché?**

Parlo in italiano con lei [con la sua vicina di banco]. C'è stata una compagna che parla male in italiano con gente che comunque sa che non capisce oppure che capisce però magari non vuole dirlo. Poi con le maestre, ci sono alcune maestre, tipo quella d'inglese, che non parla in italiano, eppure ci facciamo capire e se non so qualche parola, lo dico a lei.

**D: Ti è mai capitato di avere qualche insegnante che si ferma per parlarti in italiano durante la lezione? E durante le pause ricreative?**

Sì, il maestro di scienze e quello di storia che parla in italiano a me e alla mia compagna di classe italiana. Anche quella di religione.

**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Sì, lo penso perché poi l'inglese è una lingua che viene parlata da un po' tutto il mondo, quindi, secondo me, è importante pure qua a Malta sapere l'inglese. Il maltese è importante se vuoi stare tutta la vita qua a Gozo o a Malta, però se magari vuoi andare in altri paesi è un po' difficile capire con il maltese [ride], però non è così difficile impararlo. Io faccio *Maltese for foreigners* e io ormai so il *syllabus* a memoria.

**D: Come mai non sei stata inserita in una classe di maltese standard? \***

Non lo so, forse è perché magari solo noi due [si riferisce a lei e la sua compagna di classe italiana] abbiamo preso un buon *mark* oppure perché magari fare solo il maltese per noi due e gli altri magari non capiscono ... però ci sono altri bravi come noi che imparano il maltese. Ci sono quelli che hanno la mamma o il papà maltesi, capito? E sono lo stesso bravi.

**D: Studi qualche altra lingua in questa scuola? Quale e perché? \***

Poi tra le opzioni che mi hanno dato, ho scelto di studiare il tedesco perché l'italiano ormai lo parlo anche se devo ripassarlo, però volevo imparare qualcosa di nuovo. Il francese anche no perché è troppo delicato, anche no! Ero indecisa tra spagnolo e tedesco. Solo che mi volevo complicare la vita e ho scelto il tedesco! Però se ci metti testa non è complicato.

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**D: E il maltese? \***

Parlo con i miei amici in maltese alcune volte. Riesco a comunicare, non tanto, però riesco a fare qualche frase.

**D: Ti piacciono i libri e il materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia? Perché?**

Sì, mi piace perché è molto bene dell'Italia. Scusa, meglio [ride]. Ci sono tante cose diverse, ma infinite, del tipo qua non c'è il libro, non c'è il quaderno per scrivere la matematica o per

scrivere per quello, qua usiamo i *foolscap*, poi magari [si ferma]. Io sono figlia unica però io in base ai libri che mi servivano ... per quella materia volevi, per quella altra volevi un altro, ci volevano tanti soldi. Poi mio padre non trovava lavoro e quindi qua invece dà tutto la scuola compreso quel quadernino, il compasso. Qua è meglio.

**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze tra quelli in Italia e quelli assegnati qui?**

[ride] Quando ero in Italia non è che me ne davano tanti, esageratamente tanti. Due volte alla settimana che avevo il rientro perché io praticamente finivo all'una. Solo che poi con questi rientri finivo alle 4 del pomeriggio, due volte a settimana, martedì e venerdì. E li assegnavano pure al doposcuola, non è come qua. In alcune scuole c'era il sabato che non avevi scuola, però finivi più tardi durante la settimana, cioè era un misto di ore. E i compiti dopo questi doposcuola ce li davano magari doppi. E i compiti non erano magari per venerdì, erano per l'indomani. Quindi io poi che pratico tanto sport, che facevo due sport, era difficile. Infatti, io non riuscivo a parlare con i miei amici, io dovevo stare dentro a fare i compiti o palestra. Qua invece decisamente tantissimo di meno perché qua io quando sono venuta in *Year 6* che avevano lasciato due pagine di compiti con due esercizi e gli altri già si lamentavano che erano troppi e io li guardavo della serie "tu ti lamenti che qua ci sono tanti compiti, vieni in Italia." Invece qua sono molti di meno, cioè come oggi quello di matematica c'ha lasciato due pagine con due esercizi, se no mettiamo tre, non è tanto.

**D: Riesci a fare i compiti da sola o hai bisogno di aiuto?**

Spesso sì.

**D: E quando hai delle difficoltà a chi ti rivolgi abitualmente per aiutarti?**

Se non capisco, vado su *Google Translate*, mi salva la vita. Chiedo aiuto in base al compito che ho. Se è matematica, chiedo a mio papà, perché mia mamma e la matematica sono proprio due cose diverse. Se invece è magari storia o che ne so inglese, d'inglese me li faccio da sola perché mio padre e mia madre non è che hanno questa grande base d'inglese. Mio padre non è che lo parla perché sono tutti italiani dove lavora. Invece per alcune volte magari chiedo a mia mamma. Matematica, se mio padre non mi aiuta, ci provo e se magari non capisco chiedo al maestro perché qua ... non è una cosa brutta ... sono un po' indietro. Tipo *algebra* che stiamo iniziando qua, io già la stavo iniziando in Italia. In Italia, già alla 3<sup>a</sup> elementare tu devi sapere le tabelline fino a 12, ma devi anche sapere fino a 100 a memoria con le tabelline, già sono più avanti in Italia. Qua alle medie fanno *algebra*, in Italia già la facevo alla 5<sup>a</sup> elementare ... qua sono poco poco indietro. Mi piace così, non è che [ride e si ferma]. Meglio.

**D: Come ti senti quando devi fare gli esami e le prove sono in inglese e/o in maltese?**

Allora io in *Year 6* non li ho fatti gli esami. Sì, li ho fatti ma quelli solo per vedere perché non sapevo una parola in inglese e maltese, quindi ho preso mi sa 18 su 80. Non era nemmeno la metà. Però l'anno scorso (*Year 7*) mi sono trovata molto in difficoltà perché ci sono vari tipi d'insegnamento, non capivo tutto e ho trovato complicato fare gli esami in inglese soprattutto quello di matematica.

**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Perché? Senti di fare parte di questa scuola?**

Mi piace molto ma molto ma molto perché in Italia io non usavo che nel *break* andavo fuori a giocare. Sì, stavi 8 ore chiusa in classe e nemmeno ti [si ferma], sì e no se c'era quella maestra

gentile che magari in quella lezione ti faceva girare di banco. Poi l'educazione fisica in Italia se voleva la maestra ti faceva educazione fisica, e se pure la maestra si scocciava, ti faceva pure matematica, italiano o inglese così. E poi in Italia non esistono gli *assistant head* o i *guidance*. La scuola dove andavo io tutti la chiamavano "la scuola per i poveri" quella scuola, semplicemente perché era una zona con un po' più di campagna, ma non era vero, anzi c'erano delle maestre ancora più brave. Se andavi in quella del centro; c'era la preside, c'era la vicepresidente, la scuola era più grande. Io avevo una maestra che non mi prendeva di mira, ma era un po' strana. Una volta le ho detto "io so tutte le tabelline, ma quella del 7 non mi entra in testa." E allora mi fa, "allora, dimmi quella del 2." E quando mi ha interrogato, prima mi ha chiesto quella del 2 e poi mi ha chiesto quella del 7. E per questa tabellina mi sono presa un 5 che non avevo mai preso un 5. La mia pagella era tutta 10, 9, 8. E il voto di matematica era 7,5. Non me lo scorderò mai.

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**D: C'è qualcosa della scuola che magari cambieresti? Qualcosa che non ti piace? Perché?**

No, non cambierei niente della scuola perché mi piace.

## Interview with student 3.8

*This student was assigned code 3.8. She is in class 8.9 and has lived in Gozo for 4 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Da quando frequenti questa scuola? Come ti senti e perché?**

Eh sì, sono qui dalla *Year 7*, quindi sono 2 anni, però sono venuta qua e ho fatto la *Year 5* e la *Year 6* nella *primary school* di \*\*\* [nome di un villaggio a Gozo]. Mi trovo decisamente bene e sono contenta, ho amici anche italiani e tranne qualche volta che litigo, sto bene.

**D: Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando dall'Italia sei venuta qui e hai cominciato a frequentare questa scuola? Da' delle ragioni.**

Allora, l'anno 5 per me è stato molto difficile. Ho sofferto di bullismo, non solo verbale ma anche fisico. È stato un po' difficile abituarsi perché non parlavo l'inglese. In Italia non si insegnava. Sapevo solo dire come mi chiamavo e basta. Però grazie a Dio, ho trovato degli ottimi insegnanti che mi hanno aiutato a imparare l'inglese in poco tempo.

**D: Attualmente come stai vivendo questo cambiamento di scuole?**

La primaria è stata un po' difficile però poi imparando l'inglese e anche il maltese, per me è meglio ed è anche più facile, quindi mi trovo bene.

**D: Hai fatto nuovi amici? Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani, maltesi o stranieri?**

Beh, io ho trovato \*\*\* [nome] come amica italiana, però diciamo in classe ho altre amiche, una delle Filippine, e un'albanese. Ho anche altri amici italiani. Fuori dalla scuola ho, diciamo, amici della mia famiglia di età un po' alta, però che mi aiutano ad apprendere il maltese.

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**D: Partecipi spesso alle lezioni a scuola? Sì o no?**

Io anche troppo [ride]. La maestra di maltese dice "ho capito, ma non ci siete solo voi in classe." [si riferisce alla sua vicina di banco italiana] Anche per questo ci capita di litigare in classe perché gli altri ci dicono "eh voi alzate sempre la mano, siete dei *nerd*, siete sfigati."

**D: Riesci a seguire ogni lezione dall'inizio alla fine senza problemi? O a volte ti perdi?**

Sì, non ho problemi. Qualche volta, ma proprio raramente, capita che in inglese una parola magari anche nelle poesie non la capisco, chiedo alla professoressa la spiegazione o la chiedo a \*\*\* [si riferisce alla sua compagna italiana] perché siamo vicine di banco e siamo attaccate.

**D: Quindi questo ti aiuta, il fatto di essere vicino a lei? \***

Sì, tanto.

**D: E parlate in italiano tra di voi? \***

Sì, certo anche perché è più facile. L'altro anno le maestre ci hanno detto che dovevamo parlare in inglese per il rispetto degli altri compagni, e ovviamente l'abbiamo parlato, ma non sempre. Però non capivamo e ora capisco perché, perché tante volte c'è gente in classe mia o anche fuori dalla mia classe, italiana che offende in italiano e la gente non capisce, quindi le maestre ce l'hanno detto per il nostro bene.

**D: Ti è mai capitato di avere qualche insegnante che si ferma per parlarti in italiano durante la lezione? E durante le pause ricreative?**

Ho il professore di etica che mi parla in italiano, certe volte quando non capisco. Lui è stato anche il professore di mia sorella perché lei ha fatto Year 8 *here*. L'ha aiutata e allora lui si ricorda di lei.

**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Sì, io penso che l'inglese sia importante non solo per essere accettata ma anche per comunque apprendere un'altra nuova lingua ed è parlato in tutto il mondo. Poi io faccio *Maltese for foreigners* da 4 anni e ancora lo sto facendo. Ci sono due americani che sono *half American e half Maltese* che sono bravi *but* [breve pausa e riprende in italiano] certe volte capita che in classe gli altri non partecipino, allora io e \*\*\* [nome della sua compagna di classe italiana] proviamo comunque a fargli vedere [abbassa il tono] però certe volte quello è un argomento in cui cominciano a offendere. Poi io ho scelto il tedesco perché vorrei andare a vivere in Germania anche per poco e niente. Penso che il tedesco mi servirà se voglio andare a vivere là.

**D: Perché non hai scelto l'italiano? \***

Per non complicarmi la vita! [ride] E comunque l'italiano non l'ho scelto anche perché faccio lezioni, diciamo, a casa. Mio nonno è molto bravo a parlare l'italiano e mi aiuta. Ho portato dei libri dall'Italia che mia sorella ha usato in 1<sup>a</sup>, 2<sup>a</sup> e 3<sup>a</sup> media, e niente, me li sono portati così che io studio a casa l'italiano, almeno potevo apprendere un'altra nuova lingua.

**D: Frequenti qualche lezione di ripetizione d'inglese e/o di maltese? Perché?**

Quando ero qua, il primo anno ho avuto il doposcuola che mi aiutava. In Italia ho avuto il convitto ma era soltanto per fare dei compiti e imparare a fare dei giochi. Ma ripetizioni qua a Gozo ho fatto soltanto il doposcuola d'inglese e maltese, ma per il resto, no. Soltanto che l'inglese io lo pratico con mia sorella a casa, ci parlo, e il maltese lo parlo con questo grande gruppo, sono 40 persone, in cui loro parlano solo maltese con me perché dicono "ma tu stai da 4 anni qua, non dovresti parlare inglese, dovresti parlare il maltese con noi!"

**D: Ti piacciono i libri e il materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia? Perché?**

Sì, mi piacciono. In Italia era una grande spesa per i libri, anche per la mia famiglia perché io e mia sorella, soltanto per i libri, pagavamo 300 euro.

**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze tra quelli in Italia e quelli assegnati qui?**

[ride] Allora, in Italia ogni giorno finivo la scuola all'1:45 e andavo al convitto che noi avevamo ... cioè si chiamava il Convitto di Margherita.

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**D: Ma perché c'andavi? Perché i compiti erano tanti, non riuscivi a farli da sola? \***

Sì, i libri erano grossi tanto così. Un libro erano 800 pagine e ci davano 20 pagine da fare in due giorni e poi matematica era difficile. Quando tu andavi là, avevi il diario pieno e anche il diario ti dovevi pagare da solo. E quindi io e mia sorella abbiamo sofferto di bullismo e quindi ogni volta ci rompevano l'astuccio, le penne, le cose ecc. ecc. o rubavano a scuola le mie gomme, matite, forbici e quindi andavi e ricompravi, ricompravi tutto, anche borracce, zaini certe volte.

**D: E qui i compiti come sono? \***

Qua i compiti sono molto leggeri. Infatti, certe volte diciamo "ma solo?!" No, no, esempio il prof di storia ci dà dei compiti extra perché lui di solito non li dà i compiti e poi lui spiega, non è che ci fa scrivere. Lui spiega soltanto, invece ero tanto abituata a scrivere tanto.

**D: Riesci a fare i compiti da sola o hai bisogno di aiuto?**

Allora, qualche volta chiedo aiuto.

**D: E quando hai delle difficoltà a chi ti rivolgi abitualmente per essere aiutata nello studio e nello svolgimento dei compiti?**

*Google Translate* per me è la vita, o se no, certe volte faccio il *question mark* quando non capisco, faccio il punto interrogativo per farmelo spiegare dal mio maestro o facciamo le videochiamate e facciamo i compiti insieme, o se no, chiedo a mia sorella che è in *Year 11* e quindi è più brava. Non posso chiedere ai miei nonni perché non capiscono per niente l'inglese.

**D: Come ti senti quando devi fare gli esami e le prove sono in inglese e/o in maltese? Hai avuto qualche difficoltà? \***

Il primo anno non l'ho fatto perché io ero straniera e non avevo ancora imparato bene l'inglese e il maltese. Il secondo anno l'ho fatto, quindi non ho avuto problemi in questa scuola a farlo.

**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Perché? Senti di fare parte di questa scuola?**

Sì, è molto bello. Mi trovo molto meglio. In Italia era anche ... non c'era una preside nella scuola, quindi se io avevo problemi di bullismo dovevo andare da Anagni, la parte sotto c'è la campagna dove io vivevo e c'era la scuola, la parte sopra era più città e quindi tu dovevi andare sopra con la macchina, andare là da Regina Margherita e dovevi andare alla superiore e ti diceva "devi fare questo, questo e questo." Ma lei non faceva niente. Invece qua subito un problema, si risolve. Come dire, ai professori in Italia, dei tuoi problemi non gliene frega nulla. Io non ho avuto un grande ambiente familiare con i miei genitori e quindi io mi ritrovavo in situazioni in cui non potevo fare i compiti perché comunque non avevo tempo o ero impegnata a fare qualcos'altro e loro invece di capirmi "no, no, tu perché non l'hai fatto? Io ora vado a parlare o con la preside o la nota." Ovviamente io non ho mai preso la nota perché ho sempre preso 10, 9. Una volta soltanto ho preso un 7, ma era scioccante.

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## Interview with student 4.8

*This student was assigned code 4.8. She is in class 8.9 and has lived in Gozo for 3 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando dall'Italia ti sei trasferita a Gozo e hai cominciato a frequentare questa scuola? Da' delle ragioni.**

Ok, allora prima di tutto andava bene, poi basta. Sono stata sospesa un giorno.

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**D: Attualmente come stai vivendo questo cambiamento di scuole?**

Buono. Non mi piace la scuola in generale perché è troppo stress. Devo studiare, devo fare, devo dire ... già sto stressata con gli amici perché tante cose stanno succedendo, però va bene.

**D: Hai fatto nuovi amici? Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani, maltesi o stranieri?**

Eh, no. [Fa dei nomi di 4 compagni italiani] \*\*\*, \*\*\*, \*\*\* ni, \*\*\* e basta. C'ho altre due amichette però alcuni sono italiani.

**D: Partecipi spesso alle lezioni a scuola? Sì o no?**

No, sono asociale.

**D: Riesci a seguire ogni lezione dall'inizio alla fine senza problemi? O a volte ti perdi?**

Sì, però se parliamo di maltese, no.

**D: Quando non capisci più, che cosa fai di solito?**

Sto zitta e ascolto tutte le parole a caso che dice la prof.

**D: Non chiedi alla prof di rispiegarti? Non alzi la mano? \***

Macché, io alzare la mano? Mai nella mia vita. Mai l'ho fatto. Macché? Non è possibile. Non lo farei mai.

**D: Parli in italiano nelle lezioni o in inglese e/o maltese? Perché?**

Maltese non lo so. Mettiamolo a parte. Italiano sì con i prof giusti e quando ci vuole l'inglese ... raramente.

**D: Ti è mai capitato di avere qualche insegnante che si ferma per parlarti in italiano durante la lezione? E durante le pause ricreative?**

Sì sì sì. Si ferma per parlarmi in italiano quello di matematica o anche quello di scienze.

**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Ah sì, l'inglese serve molto. Se non sai o l'inglese o il maltese, basta, sei finito, niente amici, oppure se hai la chance di conoscere almeno un ragazzo della tua stessa lingua allora hai un amico.

**D: Frequenti qualche lezione di ripetizione d'inglese e/o di maltese? Perché?**

No, però faccio il doposcuola, cioè a casa c'ho una maestra che mi dà una mano a fare il maltese anche se non lo capirei mai. Mi sono già scordata i numeri, come si legge, cioè ce la faccio un pochino come si legge e tutto il resto non so nulla. Se mi chiedi di fare i compiti di maltese, li lascio fare alla maestra di doposcuola.

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**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze tra quelli in Italia e quelli assegnati qui?**

Allora, primo, i compiti fanno schifo. Secondo, i compiti non mi piacciono e fanno comunque schifo. Terzo, qui ci danno da studiare ma non ci fanno ripetere. A scuola in Italia dovevamo studiare un'intera pagina. Si doveva prendere il foglio, scrivere, studiare, ripassare e poi ehh ti fanno l'interrogazione di là in Italia, qui no, niente interrogazioni, al massimo le domande, macché interrogazione! Sono onesta, mi sono mossa in questa scuola perché c'avevo una prof di [pensa] "come si dice?", storia e uno d'italiano in Italia che non mi piacevano e quando mi hanno detto "ehi \*\*\*, lo sai che il prossimo anno si cambieranno i prof? Quella di storia diventerà la prof d'italiano e viceversa?" Ho detto "ok, me ne vado." Ho detto "mamma, mi puoi portare da papà? Mi fa schifo questa scuola" letteralmente. Gli insegnanti mi trattavano male.

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**D: Riesci a fare i compiti da sola o hai bisogno di aiuto?**

No, me lo sognerei. Mia madre piangerebbe di gioia se io mi potrei fare i compiti da sola.

**D: E quando hai delle difficoltà a chi ti rivolgi abitualmente per essere aiutata nello studio e nello svolgimento dei compiti?**

Alla mia maestra di doposcuola. Se non c'è lei vado dai miei amici su *Discord* e dico "Ehi, mi fai i compiti?" Ok.

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**D: Come ti senti quando devi fare gli esami e le prove sono in inglese e qualche volta in maltese?**

Se mi mostrano un test in maltese, io lo prendo, lo strappo e me ne vado. In inglese va bene, non capisco un cavolo comunque perché alcune parole sono molto difficili e io nel test mi stresso, macché? Se me lo fai vedere in maltese no ... scrivo il nome e basta, in inglese va bene.

**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Perché? Senti di fare parte di questa scuola?**

Fare parte di questa scuola? Me lo sogno! Perché non ho amici, non faccio nulla di speciale in questa scuola. L'ambiente è bello ... ci sta dai però non trovo giusto che non ci lasciano usare il telefono come fanno anche di là alle superiori. Ma che senso c'ha che loro [alle superiori] lo possono usare e noi al massimo nelle *free lesson* lo potremmo usare? Non è che facciamo, che ne so, andiamo in giro al mondo. E poi non trovo giusto che io devo mettere su sta roba [l'uniforme] e lei [si riferisce alla maestra di doposcuola] si può mettere tutti i vestiti che vuole.

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**D: Credi che questa scuola ti stia aiutando a raggiungere i tuoi obiettivi?**

No, perché non mi serve la scuola. Non sto imparando nulla, non mi serve la matematica. Lo scorso anno sono stata bocciata, tranne in italiano e inglese. La *Year 7* era ok, poi ho preso troppi *report* e mio padre si è incavolato molto ... ero in punizione.

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## Interview with student 5.8

*This student was assigned code 5.8. He is in class 8.8 and has lived in Gozo for 7 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando dall'Italia ti sei trasferito a Gozo e hai cominciato a frequentare questa scuola? Da' delle ragioni.**  
Ansia perché è una scuola nuova, studenti nuovi.

**D: E attualmente come stai vivendo questo cambiamento di scuole?**  
Bene.

**D: Hai fatto nuovi amici? Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani, maltesi o stranieri?**  
Sì. I miei amici sono maltesi e ce li ho anche italiani.

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**D: Ti è mai capitato di avere qualche insegnante che si ferma per parlarti in italiano durante la lezione? E durante le pause ricreative?**  
Sì alla primaria in *Year 4*, lezione di matematica.

**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**  
Sì perché tutti parlano in inglese ed è una scuola inglese. A scuola l'inglese si parla molto. Anche il maltese è importante perché siamo a Malta.

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**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze tra quelli in Italia e quelli assegnati qui?**  
Inutili perché quando torni da scuola, a casa devi stare con la famiglia, non perdere il tempo a fare i compiti. Non sono troppi.

**D: Riesci a fare i compiti da solo o hai bisogno di aiuto?**  
Da solo.

**D: Come ti senti quando devi fare gli esami e le prove sono in inglese e qualche volta in maltese?**  
Inglese vanno bene. Maltese non tanto.

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**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Perché? Senti di fare parte di questa scuola?**

Sì, sì perché sto studiando in questa scuola.

**D: C'è mai stato un episodio di bullismo? \***

No, solo un litigio con un ragazzo maltese.

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**D: I tuoi genitori ti supportano per quanto riguarda la scuola? Ti aiutano con lo studio e con i compiti?**

Sì, alcune volte. Quando sono in difficoltà nel compito specifico tipo matematica e alcune volte in inglese, mi aiuta mia madre.

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## Interview with student 1.9

*This student was assigned code 1.9. He is in class 9.5 and has lived in Gozo for 9 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Ti manca il tuo paese? Perché?**

Sì, perché mi mancano i nonni, i cugini, tutta la famiglia visto che ci siamo trasferiti solo io e i miei genitori e mio fratello, ehm questo.

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**D: Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando hai cominciato a frequentare la scuola a Gozo? Spiega.**

Non mi ricordo benissimo, però sì, sono stati sicuramente [pausa] è andata abbastanza bene perché sono ancora qua, ho imparato il maltese e sì, è andato abbastanza bene.

**D: Non ti sei mai sentito solo? \***

Sicuramente in certi momenti sì, però poi ho sempre fatto amici e sono stato meglio sempre.

**D: Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani, maltesi o stranieri?**

Sono maltesi.

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**D: Partecipi spesso alle lezioni a scuola? Sì o no?**

Sì, sono molto [pensa] partecipo, partecipo. Non sono molto silenzioso [ride].

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**D: Parli in italiano nelle lezioni o in inglese e/o maltese? Perché?**

Maltese, ehm molto in maltese, in inglese, solo in inglese quando facciamo inglese e italiano quasi mai.

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**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Più il maltese, però! Più il maltese perché qua siamo a Malta, ci sono beh più maltesi chiaramente e quindi è normale mi sembra.

**D: Però a Malta si parla anche l'inglese, no? \***

Però sono più abituato ad avere amici che parlano il maltese e quindi parlare in inglese mi sembra un po' più di meno.

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**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze nella quantità e nella qualità da quelli assegnati in Italia?**

Sì, ci sta dai. Non ce ne sono troppi, non ce ne sono troppi pochi, dai. È il giusto secondo me. In Italia ho fatto solo l'asilo, quindi.

**D: Riesci a fare i compiti da solo o hai bisogno di aiuto?**

Allora, in certe materie quando abbiamo delle specie di *assignments*, sicuramente ho bisogno di un po' d'aiuto però, come ieri che ho fatto la composizione di maltese, l'ho fatta da solo, matematica la faccio da solo. Quando non capisco qualcosa, sì, chiedo aiuto ai miei genitori.

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**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Senti di fare parte di questa scuola? Perché?**

Sì, e mi sento di farne parte perché mi sono abituato, quindi non mi sono mai sentito al di fuori del sistema.

## Interview with student 1.10

*This student was assigned code 1.10. He is in class 10.6 and has lived in Gozo for 5 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Ti manca il tuo paese?**

Mah, più o meno perché avevo degli amici là, però anche qui ne ho fatti di altri e quindi è lo stesso per me, quindi no.

**D: Da quando frequenti questa scuola? Come ti senti e perché?**

In generale tutti gli anni...ho iniziato da *Year 6* e in poi e sono ora in *Year 10*. Non mi sento a mio agio però, cioè non è male perché alla fine ho tanti amici ora, quindi.

**D: Perché ti senti un po' a disagio allora? \***

Perché non so il maltese, cioè lo capisco poco e quindi, cioè sento anche persone parlarmi alle spalle in maltese e per questo, sai, non mi piace tanto.

**D: Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando hai cominciato a frequentare la scuola a Gozo? Spiega.**

[Pensa] Ero un po' in difficoltà perché non sapevo né l'inglese né il maltese, però poi ho iniziato delle lezioni private d'inglese e quindi ho imparato un po' l'inglese e poi ho fatto anche nuovi amici.

**D: Attualmente come stai vivendo questo cambiamento di scuole?**

[Ride] Ehm ... tipo diciamo bene bene anche se ho ancora dei problemi per il maltese.

**D: Hai fatto nuovi amici? Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani, maltesi o stranieri?**

Sì, molti, molti. La maggior parte sono italiani però ci sono anche stranieri e questo.

**D: Quindi non hai amici maltesi? \***

Amici maltesi forse ne ho 5 però non è che siamo tanto amici. Ci parlo qualche volta durante le lezioni e questo.

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**D: Partecipi spesso alle lezioni a scuola? Sì o no?**

Sì, sempre. Parlo sempre in inglese. In maltese, a volte provo a parlare in maltese però non è che lo so così bene.

**D: Riesci a seguire ogni lezione dall'inizio alla fine senza problemi? O a volte ti perdi?**

A volte mi perdo perché magari i maestri iniziano a parlare in maltese e quindi non riesco a capire, però cioè in caso io alzo la mano e gli chiedo cosa hanno detto.

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**D: Ti è mai capitato di avere qualche insegnante che si ferma per parlarti in italiano durante la lezione? E durante le pause ricreative?**

Sì, in *Year 9* perché il mio maestro d'italiano non aveva ancora capito che parlavo l'inglese credo e quindi ogni volta mi spiegava in italiano poi quello che dovevo fare.

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**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Sentirmi accettato sì perché devo anche capire con chi ho a che fare e parlare in inglese così per capire. Il maltese sì, anche perché ci sono molte persone che mi parlano alle spalle o almeno quello che capisco e quindi non mi piace tanto questa cosa. Infatti vorrei capire più che altro che cosa stanno dicendo, così per essere sicuro anche se stanno parlando di me o di qualcun altro.

**D: Ma c'è stato qualche episodio di bullismo? \***

Bullismo no, però la gente a volte parla dietro le spalle, e quindi per questo.

**D: Frequenti qualche lezione di ripetizione d'inglese e/o di maltese? Perché?**

No. Le facevo solo quando ho iniziato la *Year 6* le lezioni private più che altro. Il maltese sento di averlo bisogno però non credo che mi servirà anche in futuro perché dipende da quello che vorrò fare e ancora non lo so. Non sono così grande ancora per capire.

**D: Ti piacciono i libri e il materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia? Perché?**

Sì, ci sono delle differenze perché in Italia potevamo pure scrivere sui libri perché noi lì li compravamo ogni anno per un tot di soldi, però qua a Malta si ritornano i libri alla libreria della scuola ogni anno che finisci e quello.

**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze nella quantità e nella qualità da quelli assegnati in Italia?**

Dei compiti ci sono che sono anche un po' difficili, però ogni volta magari mando un messaggio alla maestra su *Teams* per chiedere. A volte maltese o *media* per capire magari anche sugli *assignment* se è così, così che poi potrò studiare meglio per quando avrò gli esami. L'unica differenza per me è che quelli là erano in italiano e questi sono più che altro in inglese perché non so alcune parole in inglese però lo so parlare abbastanza bene.

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**D: Come ti senti quando devi fare gli esami e le prove sono in inglese e/o in maltese? Perché? \***

Ehm, ho dello stress più che altro quando so di queste cose perché ho paura di non riuscire a passare gli esami e quindi cioè è come se non ho fiducia in me stesso.

**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Perché?**

Sì perché questa scuola, sai, è molto più grande di quelle là che avevamo in Italia. Qua c'è pure la cantina, tipo, c'è il campo di calcio grandissimo e questo.

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## Interview with student 2.10

*This student was assigned code 2.10. He is in class 10.3 and has lived in Gozo for 5 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Da quando frequenti la scuola a Gozo? \* Come ti senti? \***

Dall'anno 6 a metà anno ho cominciato la scuola a Gozo. Mi sentivo bene.

**D: E qui come ti senti? \* Perché? \***

Sempre bene perché ho trovato amici, perché [la scuola] non è difficile.

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**D: Hai fatto nuovi amici? Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani, maltesi o stranieri?**

Sì, maltesi.

**D: Non hai amici italiani? \***

[Amici italiani] No, cioè li conosco ma non ...

**D: Partecipi spesso alle lezioni a scuola? Sì o no?**

Sì, quando chiedono una domanda, rispondo.

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**D: Parli in italiano nelle lezioni o in inglese e/o maltese? Perché?**

No [non parla in italiano], in inglese.

**D: E il maltese? \***

Il maltese no, cioè per scherzare, ma no.

**D: Ti è mai capitato di avere qualche insegnante che si ferma per parlarti in italiano durante la lezione? E durante le pause ricreative?**

No.

**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Sì, si può comunicare di più [con l'inglese]. Il maltese è sempre meglio per comunicare di più però [pausa] ... e così durante le lezioni non ci stanno problemi se parlano in maltese.

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**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze nella quantità e nella qualità da quelli assegnati in Italia?**

Sono giusti.

**D: Riesci a fare i compiti da solo o hai bisogno di aiuto?**

Sì, riesco a farli da solo.

**D: Come ti senti quando devi fare gli esami e le prove sono in inglese e/o in maltese?**

No, mi sento bene.

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## Interview with student 3.10

*This student was assigned code 3.10. He is in class 10.8 and has lived in Gozo for 6 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando hai cominciato a frequentare la scuola a Gozo? Spiega.**

Ho cominciato dalla Year 6 e poi mi hanno cambiato alla Year 5 perché hanno fatto uno sbaglio.

**D: E come ti sentivi? \***

Bene.

**D: Non ti sei mai sentito solo? \***

Alcune volte, alcune volte perché mi mancavano gli amici dell'Italia.

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**D: Hai fatto nuovi amici? Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani, maltesi o stranieri?**

No, sono tutti stranieri ... dalla Russia, Australia, Inghilterra, America.

**D: Partecipi spesso alle lezioni a scuola? Sì o no?**

Sì.

**D: Riesci a seguire ogni lezione dall'inizio alla fine senza problemi? O a volte ti perdi?**

No, mi distraigo.

**D: Quando non capisci più, che cosa fai di solito?**

Inizio a disegnare.

**D: Non alzi la mano per chiedere alla maestra di rispiegare? \***

No.

**D: Parli in italiano nelle lezioni o in inglese e/o maltese? Perché?**

No, inglese.

**D: Ti è mai capitato di avere qualche insegnante che si ferma per parlarti in italiano durante la lezione? E durante le pause ricreative?**

All'inizio perché non sapevo né l'inglese né il maltese.

**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Sì e no. C'è bisogno qui [dell'inglese], in Italia non tanto. Non c'è bisogno del maltese.

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**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze nella quantità e nella qualità da quelli assegnati in Italia?**

No, facili. Trovo difficile la matematica.

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**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Senti di fare parte di questa scuola? Perché?**

Non mi sento di far parte, proprio non mi piace il maltese che si parla.

**D: I tuoi genitori ti supportano per quanto riguarda la scuola? Ti aiutano con lo studio e con i compiti?**

No.

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## Interview with student 4.10

*This student was assigned code 4.10. He is in class 10.8 and has lived in Gozo for 4 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Da quando frequenti questa scuola? Come ti senti?**

Da 2 anni la *secondary school*. Mi sento meglio.

**D: E quando hai cominciato la scuola a Gozo? \***

Dalla *Year 6*.

**D: Come hai vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando hai cominciato a frequentare la scuola a Gozo? Spiega.**

Diciamo che era un po' difficile perché non parlavo né l'inglese né il maltese e quindi non è stato molto facile.

**D: Quindi non capivi nulla durante le lezioni? \***

Ehm, no. Mi dovevano parlare in italiano per capire.

**D: Chi ti parlava in italiano? \***

Ehm la *teacher*.

**D: Attualmente come stai vivendo questo cambiamento di scuole?**

Meglio.

**D: Hai fatto nuovi amici? Quelli con cui hai stretto amicizia sono italiani, maltesi o stranieri?**

Ehm sì, molti rispetto all'inizio. Sono un po' maltesi, un po' italiani e un po' stranieri pure.

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**D: Parli in italiano nelle lezioni o in inglese e/o maltese? Perché?**

In alcune lezioni parlo in italiano con i miei amici però nelle altre lezioni parlo sempre inglese con i professori.

**D: Quindi ci sono altri italiani in classe con te? \***

In alcune classi ci sono italiani, in inglese, maltese ...

**D: Ti è mai capitato di avere qualche insegnante che si ferma per parlarti in italiano durante la lezione? E durante le pause ricreative?**

Ehm, solamente all'inizio, adesso non più.

**D: Ritieni che conoscere l'inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Sì, tutti e due.

**D: Frequenti qualche lezione di ripetizione d'inglese e/o di maltese durante o al di fuori dell'orario scolastico? Perché?**

No, provo a parlarli di più con i miei compagni di squadra [il ragazzo gioca a calcio].

**D: Ti piacciono i libri e il materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia? Perché?**

No, però diciamo che devo per forza leggere uno al giorno, cioè tipo 9 o 10 pagine devo leggere. Alcune in inglese e alcune in italiano per non perdere la madrelingua, leggo libri italiani per non [si ferma].

**D: Che ne pensi dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Noti delle differenze nella quantità e nella qualità da quelli assegnati in Italia?**

Mah, rispetto all'Italia sono pochi e per me sono più facili da fare.

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**D: Come ti senti quando devi fare gli esami e le prove sono in inglese e/o in maltese?**

Un po' nervoso. Ho paura se sto sbagliando qualcosa, se magari l'ho capita male quella domanda, quindi ho paura di sbagliare, un po' di più in maltese.

**D: Ti piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese?**

Diciamo di sì, un po' e un po'.

**D: Senti di fare parte di questa scuola? Perché?**

Mhmm diciamo ... perché ci sono tanti ... [pausa] persone che diciamo bulli che bullizzano tante persone, tipo c'è un gruppo di maltesi.

**D: Ma ti escludono perché sei straniero? \***

Diciamo di sì, ma ci sono altri tipi di persone maltesi che comunque [si ferma].

**D: Ma ci sono alcuni che sono dei bulli mi hai detto. C'è stato qualche episodio di bullismo nei tuoi confronti? \***

No, nei miei confronti no, però nei confronti di molte persone, sì.

**D: E che fanno, li insultano? \***

Sì, ma anche all'inizio quando ero qua i primi 2 anni, mi dicevano tipo "go back to your country" e diciamo che anche adesso da dove sono [pausa] siccome sono dalla Sicilia quindi mi dicono cose tipo "mafia" e queste cose qua.

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## **APPENDIX E**

### **Samples of the Interviews with Teachers**

## Interview with Mathematics teacher 1.1

*This teacher was assigned code 1.1 and has taught Mathematics for the past 14 years. The teacher answered the questions in Maltese, although sometimes code-switching to English occurred. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**M: Liema aspetti tas-sistema Maltija ta'hebb li t-Taljani jsibu fa'li jew diffi'li biex jidraw fit-tranzizzjoni tagħhom, jigifieri meta jigħu Għawdex u jattendu l-iskola tal-pajjiż li jilqagħhom?**  
Jien mhux li nara daqshekk differenza, infatti huma draw mill-ewwel, jigifieri kont h'sibt li ilhom hawnhekk aktar snin, imma l-bi'ċċa l-kbira tagħhom din hija l-ewwel sena tagħhom qegħdin hawn.

**M: Imma temmen li jesperjenzaw xi sfidi?**

Jesperjenzaw l-isfida tal-lingwa, rigward ta' kultura na'hebb ukoll, għalkemm dawn li sabu tajjeb hu li t-Taljani qegħdin flimkien, fhimt? Jigifieri qishom qegħdin jgħinu lil xulxin iktar.

**M: L-istudenti kollha jipparte'cipaw b'mod attiv fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek, inkluzi l-istudenti barranin?**

Iva, jipparte'cipaw hafna hafna hafna ...

**M: Inkluzi dawk Taljani? \***

Iva, it-Taljani fost l-iktar li jipparte'cipaw, kwa'zi aktar mill-Maltin prattikament.

**M: L-istudenti barranin inkluzi dawk Taljani jikkoperaw u ja'hdmu fuq xogħlijiet li jingħata lilhom fil-klassi? Spjega.**

Mela ... it-Taljani jikkoperaw hafna ... hemm ċerti studenti li mhumiex Taljani illi mhux għax ma jridux jikkoperaw imma jkunu għadhom iħossuhom mitlufin, jigifieri għadhom qishom qed jippruvaw jaddattaw għas-sistema tagħna.

**M: Liema lingwa/i normalment tu'za waqt spjegazzjoni għal fehim aħjar?**

L-Ingliż, ovvjament hija lingwa li jifhimha kul'hadd ... ħa nkun sinċier mat-Taljani rarissimu imma ġieli jkun hemm b'zonn li nerga' nispjega bit-Taljan.

**M: Qatt kellek l-opportunità li titkellem bit-Taljan mal-istudenti Taljani? U meta se'ħ dan għaliex?**

Iva, kelli l-opportunità li nitkellem bit-Taljan mat-Taljani meta ma jkunux fehmu bl-Ingliż u speċjalment meta tismagħhom jtkellmu bit-Taljan bejniethom. Huma bejniethom it-Taljani jtkellmu bit-Taljan fil-klassi. Ġieli meta jkunu ja'hdmu fi groupwork, huma jikkomunikaw hafna bit-Taljan bejniethom, imbagħad nikkomunika magħhom bit-Taljan ukoll.

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**M: Tista' tagħti xi eżempji ta' attivitajiet li tagħmel biex tippromwovi d-diversità fil-klassi u tinkludi l-istudenti barranin fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek?**

Mela ... ehm [jjeqaf jaħseb] ... għamilt ehm ... ġieli tajthom assignments fi gruppi u nħallat nazzjonalitajiet differenti, jiġifieri mhux dak it-tip li ngħid mela t-Taljani għalihom, l-Għawdxin għalihom, ie. U jiġifieri għalkemm, to be honest, l-ewwel assignment kien hemm oppożizzjoni, aċċettaw u daħlu għaliha tajjeb jiġifieri.

**M: Temmen li l-iskola hija inklussiva lejn l-istudenti kollha, inkluzi dawk ta' nazzjonalitajiet differenti? Agħti xi raġunijiet.**

Mela ... bħala skola iva hija inklussiva, però nħoss li bħala sistema edukattiva kultant ehm ... tikkastiga lil min jiġi minn barra għaliex peress li ma jkunx hemm biżżejjed knowledge dwar x'jafu l-istudenti, flok ma nassessjawhom qabel biex naraw x'jafu jew le – biex naraw f'liema livell ħa npoġġuom – naqbd u npoġġuom fl-iktar livell baxx u dik sa ċertu punt naraha li hija ingusta.

**M: Tista' tagħtini żewġ eżempji ta' studenti Taljani li għallimt jew li qed tgħallem? Spjega l-attitudni tagħhom fil-klassi u l-imġiba generali fl-iskola mal-għalliema u sħabhom tal-klassi, l-attitudni tagħhom forsi lejn ix-xoġhol għad-dar jew tal-klassi u anki l-eżamijiet?**

Ha nagħtik żewġ eżempji differenti minn xulxin. Għandi studenta, il-ħin kollu taqbez, taħdem biex twieġeb u anki tgħin lil haddieħor ... she's very active u l-oħra prattikament mitlufa u l-ftit li tagħmel irrid nissikkaha jiena.

-----

**M: Taħseb li forsi tista' tagħmel xi ħaġa biex forsi tgħinha taddatta iktar? \***

Ma nafx x'nista' nagħmel iktar. Il-problema ehm ... din ma tafx titkellem xejn bl-Ingliż u għandi dubji kbar jekk tifhimx l-Ingliż. Jiġifieri jien aċċettajt li tkellimni bit-Taljan u nirrispondiha bit-Taljan ukoll ... imma fejn jidhol ... imbagħad heqq waqt lezzjoni biċċa żgħira nista' nispijegaha bit-Taljan imma biex tagħmel lezzjoni sħiħa bit-Taljan jew inkella taqleb bejn Ingliż u Taljan il-ħin kollu naħseb li kważi kważi impossibbli.

-----

**M: Il-ġenituri tal-istudenti Taljani ġeneralment jattendu Jum il-Ġenituri u laqgħat oħra?**

Attendew, però nnutajt li ma jafux jikkellmu bl-Ingliż.

**M: Infatti kont se nsaqsik, tħoss li l-istudenti barranin, inkluzi dawk Taljani, m'għandhomx appoġġ mill-ġenituri tagħhom?**

Hemm biċċiet mit-Taljani li m'attendewx qed niftakar. Naħseb li minn ħamsa, attendew tlieta u tnejn minnhom ma ġewx.

**M: U għalfejn taħseb li ġara hekk? \***

Waħda minnhom din li għedtlek li rajtha li ma qabditx. Jiġifieri ma nafx jekk hijiex kwistjoni ta' attitudni għax m'għandhomx interess jew inkella jekk hux xi raġuni oħra. Jista' jkun li għax fil-familja stess ma jagħtux daqshekk importanza lill-edukazzjoni.

**M: Taħseb li huwa meħtieġ appoġġ addizzjonali fil-klassi biex jilqa' l-bżonnijiet speċifiċi tal-istudenti barranin, inklużi t-Taljani? Semmejna xi ħaġa aktar qabel.**

Heqq, naħseb li waħda mill-affarijiet li hemm bżonn hija li jingħataw courses biex jitgħallmu l-lingwa Ingliża minn qabel ma jidhlu fil-klassi. Hemm xi ħaġa, imma sfortunatament tant hemm domanda kbira li mhumiex qed ilaħħqu ma' dik id-domanda kbira ... imma naħseb illi l-ħaġa minflok ma tkun xi ħaġa nazzjonali, jiġifieri li jkun hemm post fejn jingħata dat-taħriġ, forsi għandu jkun dat-taħriġ f'kull skola. Minkejja li Malta hemm il-Hub, hemm waiting list kbira. Allura ma jlaħħqux mad-domanda. Kieku f'kull skola jkun hemm għalliem iffukat fuq hekk, ikun aħjar.

-----

**M: Kieku x'tibdel mil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek? \***

Ma nafx, ehm ... naraha diffiċli tal-lingwa, mhijiex Prattika, diġà kemm kemm tlaħħaq. Hija kwistjoni wkoll ta' ħin, is-sillabu, jiġifieri kollox ma' kollox. Kieku jkollok ngħidu aħna l-klassi kollha tkun kompletament Taljana, tgħid ħa ngħallimhom u nassessjahom bit-Taljan imma dawn imħalltin, it is multicultural class.

**M: Kieku x'tibdel mill-iskola u mis-sistema edukattiva Maltija biex tipprovdi ambjent ta' tagħlim aktar inklussiv?**

Naħseb li dawn il-barranin li qed ikollna u li qed jiżdiedu ħafna ħafna dawn l-aħħar snin ehm [jjeqaf jaħseb] ... hemm bżonn li nuruhom li they are welcome, imma biex nuruhom li they are welcome rridu speċjalment, bħal meta jidhol xi ħadd mill-primarja għall-middle school, nagħmlulhom laqgħat kemm għat-tfal biex nuruhom l-affarijiet u kemm għall-ġenituri. Dan għaliex hija sitwazzjoni diffiċli, diffiċli ħafna meta jkollok student barrani li jiġilek f'nofs sena skolastika. Hemm bżonn illi r-reception tkun aħjar, illi naraw kif nilqgħuhom. Naħseb fl-aħħar mill-aħħar hija responsabilità tagħna li naraw li l-istudenti kollha ... qed jaddattaw ruħhom tajjeb.

## Interview with English teacher 1.2

*This teacher was assigned code 1.2 and has taught English for the past 21 years. The teacher answered the questions in English, although sometimes code-switching to Maltese occurred. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**Q: What aspects of the Maltese system do you think that Italian students find easy or difficult to adapt to in their transition, that is, when moving to Gozo and when they start attending the host country's school? Can you give examples?**

I think culturally we are relatively the same...ehm...the language is their drawback because in Italy I do not think ... *mhux* I do not think ... in Italy they do not have the same level of teaching and learning in the English language and when they come here they obviously do not know Maltese and English is the only main means of communication, but then again a lot of people here know Italian so I think the fact that maybe they could speak Italian [stops].

**Q: During the English lesson? \***

No, no during the English lesson they have to speak in English. I do not know if I could add this...ehm the Italians then for example they tend to, even in break times, stick together so then it is not like if you are on your own, you do not know with whom to speak your own language, because they continue to speak it between them.

-----

**Q: What are your views about the transition of Italian students in this school, generally, not in relation to the specific case of the student you teach now? \***

The problem we have as English teachers and that we have been trying to implement is that they would introduce English for foreigners the same as there is Maltese for foreigners but so far nothing has been done because I think that would help them [refers to migrant students] a lot to get at least basic English to start them off with because what is happening to these ones, to who comes, they are thrown into a classroom where it is beyond their level of English and then they start struggling.

**Q: Apart from the language, do you think there are any other challenges? \***

I do not know, I came from abroad as well, and it depends on the personality, as like I said so far, the Italians I had, they were quite vociferous, friendly and they go with the flow *tipo*.

-----

**Q: Do migrant students, including Italians, carry out their homework without difficulties?**

Not always, because there is another difference. If I understand correctly, homework abroad is optional in some countries, England especially, and some parts of Italy as well, so it takes them a while for them to understand that homework needs to be done. And then sometimes like ... again it depends on their personality, some can become a bit defiant, but then again it is our kids too so ...

**Q: And why do you think they become defiant? \***

Differences in systems, differences in cultures, sometimes it takes them a while to accept that they are living here.

**Q: Which language do you normally use during explanation for better understanding?**

Just English.

**Q: And you never use Maltese?**

Uhm, I try not to, rarely, no ... you are saying with Italians?

**Q: No, I am saying generally in the class because you may have Maltese students and migrants all mixed up together in the same class. \***

No, the only time I use Maltese is when I have Syrians or Libyans who absolutely know nothing of English.

-----

**Q: Do you think that Maltese and English proficiency is necessary for migrant students to learn and at what levels?**

Yes, I think it is very important and English I think as soon as they come, I mean it will help them not only in academic work, but even to make new friends, even in their villages where they live. Maltese being the language that it is, I think they should be given time to acclimate themselves, but yes, I believe, even for our students, you know, you learn the language where you are living in *hux*.

**Q: Have you ever had the opportunity to speak in Italian with Italian students and when did this occur? If not, why?**

I sometimes do, to joke around.

-----

**Q: Can you give examples of activities you carry out to promote diversity in class and include migrant students in your lessons?**

Yes, ehm...we have in our textbooks as well we have culture sections, and for example especially in the Year 7 books ehm...there is a section on nationalities, we do the flags. This happened to me actually last year. I had 6 nationalities in the classroom, and everyone told us what festivities they do, what customs they follow, and religion-wise as well and some prepared a little speech or we do posters and stick them up. What I did as well last year was

when a certain nationality has a particular feast or something like that, we mention it in the classroom and explain why they follow it.

**Q: And can you give me examples of activities you do to include Italian students in your lessons?**

I cannot really say because I either do it as a general lesson for all the foreigners in class. I am not going to be like "look she is Italian and I am going to do this today", and like I said so far the Italians I had were quite capable in English and even their personality ...

-----

**Q: Do you believe that the school is inclusive towards all students, including those of a different nationality? Give reasons.**

I think so. I have never been given the impression that they are not...I mean. Examples as such what I can say from the SMT and the teachers all students are treated equally.

**Q: The assembly for example, is it in Maltese and English? \***

I do not participate in the assembly, but school talks are done in both.

**Q: Even the circulars they send to the parents? \***

Yes, in both, and last year, for example, when we celebrated diversity week, all students from different nationalities did their flags, they got dishes from their countries, they spoke to explain. I could tell you more but this year we are limited since this is not our school and we have nowhere to do these things [works are being done at the Gozo College Middle School and space is currently limited].

-----

**Q: Could you give me two examples of Italian students you have taught or you currently teach? Explain their attitude in class and general behaviour at school with their teachers and classmates, their attitudes towards the homework or tasks given in class and examinations?**

*Mela* ... I had four Italians. The one I currently teach this year and I had one a few years ago. They were both similar in that they were quite proficient in English and there were no communication barriers there and they were both, ehm, quite friendly, they were cheeky, for me they did as well as their peers. I can speak about two students I had, a brother and sister. One was in one year and the other in another year.

**Q: One was in Year 7 and the other in Year 8? \***

No, both were in Year 8, but I taught them in different years and they were low-ability students as well. The sister who was a bit more timid, she was a bit of an introvert, not motivated at all, refused to participate in lessons, refused to do homework.

**Q: So she had difficulties in class to understand English? \***

Yes, I do not want to sound perhaps ... but she was quite lazy though, so that would have put her back as well. Ehm ... she was not motivated at all. I did a lot of games with that class and

she used to participate only because I kind of made her and then the following year I had her brother.

-----

**Q: Do you feel that migrant students, including Italians, lack support from parents?**

Yes, because I have been through this personally and I do not know if they have the means or whatnot, but in my opinion if I had to do this to my kids, I would teach them before leaving my actual home country because these children are being plucked out of a place, thrown into another place without any mental resources and I do not think that is fair.

**Q: Do you think additional support in class is necessary to cater for the specific needs of migrant students, including Italians?**

Yes, as I explained before. I think that it would be highly beneficial to have English for foreigners.

-----

**Q: What would you change in your lessons to provide an inclusive learning environment?**

At the moment nothing. I have no leeway to change because at the end of the day since we are exam-based I do not have much time to carry out adaptations and as an English language teacher we have 24 lessons a week.

**Q: What would you change from the school and the Maltese education system to provide an inclusive learning environment?**

Again, I think we are quite inclusive, but they need to start from the beginning by offering them English for foreigners. It is very important because you get students who cannot communicate at all and because of the English language barrier, some students are being put into lower-class ability when they are not low ability.

## Interview with Maltese teacher 1.3

*This teacher was assigned code 1.3 and has taught Maltese for the past 7 years. The teacher answered the questions in Maltese, although sometimes code-switching to English occurred. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**M: Liema aspetti tas-sistema Maltija taħseb li t-Taljani jsibu faċli jew diffiċli biex jidraw fit-tranzizzjoni tagħhom, jiġifieri meta jiġu Għawdex u jattendu l-iskola tal-pajjiż li jilqagħhom? Aġti xi eżempji.**

Naħseb li l-ikbar sfida li jitgħallmu jiktbu l-Malti tajjeb, il-fatt li għandna l-għ u l-h, id-diffikultà tal-lingwa, però mill-banda l-oħra, mill-ġdid nitkellm fuq esperjenza personali, din l-istudenta li għandi fil-letteratura naraha tmexxi sew. Naħseb li, bħalma aċċennajt qabel, li kieku m'aħniex daqshekk marbutin mal-kitba, eżempju kellna sett ta' assessjar fl-ewwel term, minn sitta wieħed biss kien orali, naħseb li eħe bħal dawn l-istudenti jmorru ħafna aħjar.

**M: Taħseb li dan huwa faċli għal xi gruppi, eżempju dawk iżgħar biex jidraw?**

Naħseb li hija problema komuni, jiġifieri naħseb li tiġri mal-gruppi kollha u jiddependi anki mill-persuna, il-karattru, il-background li hemm id-dar. Imbagħad hemm diversi fatturi. Aħna qed nitkellmu b'mod ġenerali.

**M: X'inhuma l-fehmiet tiegħek dwar it-tranzizzjoni tal-istudenti Taljani f'din l-iskola partikolari? Temmen li jesperjenzaw xi sfidi?**

Eħe, jista' jkun li jaffaċċjaw xi sfidi ... hemm ... ovvjament xħin jiġu mill-primarja hawnhekk se jiltaqgħu ma' wesgħa ferm ikbar ta' studenti jiġifieri ħa jiltaqgħu ma' ħafna iktar tfal, iktar sugġetti, is-sugġetti ovvjament ħa jitqalu jiġifieri nidħlu f'ħafna iktar dettalji, anki f'ċerti aspetti tal-grammatika pereżempju fejn fil-primarja forsi sempliċement jissemmew, jien naf, pereżempju l-aġġettiv jissemma biss li jfisser spempliċement li jiddeskrivi kelb imma aħna hawnhekk noqogħdu naraw għax u għaliex, nidħlu f'ħafna iktar dettalji. Allura ovvjament naħseb tkun daqsxejn ta' xokk sakemm jissetiljaw daqsxejn imbagħad jibdeu jintegraw bil-mod il-mod aktar f'din is-sistema li hawn fl-iskola medja.

**M: Immagina pereżempju student jew studenta li tiġi mill-Italja u tkun diġà fl-età tas-Sekondarja, kif taħseb li tesperjenza din il-bidla? \***

Ifhimni naħseb ħa tkun daqsxejn diffiċli għax jekk din l-istudenta tkun għadha ġejja mill-Italja u tkun trid tkompli l-Università ovvjament trid timxi fuq il-Malti nattiv għax il-Malti bħala lingwa barranija ma jwasslekk għall-O-level. Allura, ovvjament, ħeqq int jekk m'għandekx l-O-level tal-Malti ma tistax tkompli għaddejja fl-iskola Post-Sekondarja u Università. Allura eħe tkun ta' sfida għalihom li qisek mhux xi ħaġa zgħira imma qisek fuq sugġett li huma ma jkunux daqstant tajbin fih minħabba r-raġunijiet li qed insemmu għax ma jkunux trabbew hawnhekk ma jkunux jistgħu jwessgħu l-edukazzjoni tagħhom bil-mod li forsi jkun jixtiequ.

**M: L-istudenti kollha jipparteċipaw b'mod attiv fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek, inklużi l-istudenti barranin? Inkluża l-istudenta Taljana li semmejtli?**

Ehe, din l-istudenta għax dis-sena waħda barranija li għandi, Taljana, tipparteċipa b'mod attiv, letteralment ħin kollu twaqqafni fejn ma tifhimx, nagħmlilhom l-assessjar ħin kollu ssaqsini pereżempju u għall-argument din il-ġimgħa kellhom l-assessjar fuq il-ħajku allura hemmhekk jekk inti ma tifhimx il-kliem tal-ħajku allura ovvjament ma tistax tispjegah. Allura l-ħin kollu ssaqsini pereżempju xi tfigger il-kelma "loqma", xi tfigger il-kelma "għonja" alright? Allura jiena hemmhekk nifhem li jekk ma tkunx ġej minn hawn, anki l-Maltin xi kultant, speċi ċerti tfal ukoll isibuhom diffiċli aħseb u ara studenta li hija midħla tal-Malti imma forsi mhux daqskemm hu Malti nattiv, qed tifhem? Allura hemmhekk ikun hemm diffikultà anki peress li ma tkunx titkellmu d-dar jiġifieri għax tkellimt m'ommha u hi kellmitni bl-Ingliż. Allura ehe, nieħu gost li speċi naraha daqshekk entużjasta f'lingwa li fil-verità mhix tagħha.

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**M: Liema lingwa/i normalment tuża waqt spjegazzjoni għal fehim aħjar?**

Jiena rrid nuża l-Malti għax ovvjament ngħallimhom il-Malti, allura ehe bilfors irrid kemm jista' jkun inkellimhom bil-Malti standard, imbagħad ovvjament biex nagħmel enfasi ġieli anki nkellimhom bid-djalett biex inkun ċerta li wasslet f'moħħhom il-verżjoni t-tajba ta' li rrid ngħid.

**M: Ġieli ġara li kellek taqleb għall-Ingliż jew għal xi lingwa oħra mal-istudenti barranin? \***

Ifhimni meta jkun Malti għall-barranin ġieli ovvjament ikolli nispjega xi haġa bl-Ingliż għax ġieli jkollok studenti li dawn bil-Malti ma jifhmu xejn. Dawn jekk tkellimhom bil-Malti qisu daqsliekeu xi hadd ġie jkellimni biċ-Ċiniż, mhu ħa jifhmu xejn. Però f'din is-sitwazzjoni li għandi jiġifieri le, jiġifieri l-Ingliż rari ħafna li nużah, l-iktar li forsi jintuza pereżempju din l-istudenta Taljana ssaqsini "isma' din il-kelma x'tigi bil-Malti?" jiġifieri mal-bqija ... anki f'xi komponimenti ġieli pereżempju ninnota li din l-istudenta tagħmilli l-kliem fl-inverted commas. Kien parir tiegħi li ngħidilha għax hi kienet qisha qed tużali kelma bl-Ingliż u jien ovvjament irrid innaqqas il-marki jekk tuża kelma bl-Ingliż fil-Malti, però meta għedtilha li jekk tindikali li l-kelma ma kinitx tafha mbagħad jien hemmhekk nimxi mod ieħor ħalli hi ovvjament il-kelma titgħallimha. Mhux l-iskop li jiena nippenalizzaha għax ma kitbitx il-kelma bil-Malti, imma l-fatt li indikatli li isma' din ma nafhiex, hemmhekk alright imbagħad jiena nispjegahielha. Niktbilha fuqha bl-aħmar imbagħad li nagħtiha x-xogħol lura kkoreġut nispjegahielha. Ehe nipprova li kemm jista' jkun l-Ingliż jinqata' kemm jista'. Mhijiex ċirkostanza li nsibha f'kull paragrafu imma forsi f'250 kelma, ikun hemm forsi 3 kelmiet.

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**M: Temmen li l-iskola hija inklussiva lejn l-istudenti kollha, inklużi dawk ta' nazzjonalitajiet differenti? Agħti xi raġunijiet.**

Ehe, ifhimni, l-iskola tara li ovvjament kemm jista' jkun kull student ikun inkluż anki minkejja li matul is-sena dejjem ikollna influż ta' studenti barranin dejjem ġejjin. Dil-ġimgħa stess kellna każ partikolari ta' student li ġie dil-ġimgħa. Ovvjament nippruvaw ngħinuhom kemm nistgħu. Jien inzertajt form teacher ta' klassi fejn dan l-istudent il-ġdid għadu kemm ingħaqad magħhom, allura nippruvaw li npoġġuh kemm jista' jkun għall-bidu fejn studenti oħra barranin

ħalli jibda jintegra bil-mod il-mod. Anki noqogħdu attenti li waqt il-brejk dan l-istudent ma jispiċċax waħdu. Nippruvaw kemm jista' jkun inżommu lil kulħadd flimkien biex ovvjament ħadd ma jħossu iżolat.

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**M: Tista' tagħtini żewġ eżempji ta' studenti Taljani li għallimt jew li qed tgħallem? Spjega l-attitudni tagħhom fil-klassi u l-imġiba ġenerali fl-iskola mal-għalliema u shabhom tal-klassi, l-attitudni tagħhom forsi lejn ix-xogħol għad-dar jew tal-klassi u anki l-eżamijiet.**

Jien għalija l-istudenta Taljana li għandi bħalissa hija studenta li hija waħda mill-aħjar. Il-mod ta' kif iġġib ruħha fil-klassi m'għandix xi ngerger minnha. Alright ġieli niġbdilha l-attenzjoni għax taf inti t-tfal iparlaw flimkien u ġieli jkolli bżonn niġbdilha l-attenzjoni għax tgħid xi kelma żejda ma' ta' ħdejha. Xogħol fil-klassi tagħmlu, naraha taħdem tajjeb kemm fi grupp u anki b'mod individwali jiġifieri fit-tnejn kapaċi tmexxi. Ovvjament meta jkun hemm xi xogħol individwali forsi ġieli ssaqsini daqsxejn speċjalment in-numri. Pereżempju "isma' n-numru 115 kif jinkiteb bil-Malti?" imma huma affarijiet li ġieli anki student Malti jsaqsihomli. U x-xogħol għad-dar jasal fil-ħin u jekk forsi jsir ħazin terġa' tagħmlu. Fil-fatt talbitni anki xi titli extra biex tkun tista' tagħmilhom bħala extra work. Jiena għeditilha li ovvjament dawk ma nistax nagħtiha marki tagħhom imma li nimmarkahom fir-registru bħala xogħol żejjed.

**M: Mill-banda l-oħra ġieli kellek xi student/a Taljan/a bil-kontra ta' din l-istudenta li qed tgħallem bħalissa? \***

Darba kelli student Taljan li kien ġie Malta fil-11-il sena. Kien ġie f'nofs is-sena, kien jagħmel il-Malti għall-barranin u dan kellu dik l-attitudni li l-Malti m'għandux x'jambih. Allura dan anki biex ġabar il-booklet battikata. Ix-xogħol għad-dar dejjem ovvjament b'xi skuża, jew m'għandux ħin, il-Malti kien jarah bħala żejjed. Lil ommu kont inkellimha. Ommu kienet vera tirraġuna jiġifieri u eħe qaltli li kienet inkwetata ħafna bis-sitwazzjoni. Ovvjament xi stajna nagħmlu? La ma jkunx hemm il-commitment tal-istudent, kultant ħa tkun diffiċli ħafna.

**M: Taħseb li peress li għall-kuntrarju tal-istudenta l-oħra, il-fatt li dan l-istudent kien ġie kbir hawnhekk affettwat? \***

Eħe, jiena naħseb li l-fatt li l-istudenti jitrawmu hawnhekk, jidraw il-kultura tagħna, jidraw il-lingwa tagħna, meta mqabbla ma' studenti li ġew qisek tfajthom f'dinja oħra u li jkunu kbar, ħeqq hemmhekk ħa jbatu. Jiena nista' nifhimha għax kultant ngħid kemm hija sitwazzjoni ironika, jiena ġejt hawnhekk ta' 8 snin għax jien trabbejt l-Amerika u allura peress li kont immur skola hemmhekk il-ġenituri tiegħi kienu jkellmuni bl-Ingliż u meta ġejt hawnhekk ma kont naf lil ħadd, ma kontx naf il-Malti, il-Malti forsi xi kelma 'l hawn u 'l hemm, allura spiċċajt qisni f'baħar negħreq waħdi. Però maż-żmien addattajt u jiġifieri lhaqt għalliema tal-Malti [daħk]. L-istudenti li jiġu kbar hawnhekk jiena ifhimni nifhimhom għax jien stess kont bħalhom. Illi inti spiċċajt hawnhekk ħeqq 'il bogħod mill-ħbieb tiegħek, 'il bogħod mis-sistema li trabbejt fiha, 'il bogħod mil-lingwa, ħeqq kollu ċajt hu. Tispiċċa ma tħossokx sew avolja l-iskola tipprova tintegrak kemm tista', tkun daqsxejn diffiċli għall-bidu.

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**M: Il-ġenituri tal-istudenti Taljani generalment jattendu Jum il-Ġenituri u laqgħat oħra?**

Iva attendew. F'Jum il-Ġenituri kelli diskussjoni twila ma' omm din l-istudenta Taljana li qed ngħallem dis-sena bl-Ingliż għax kienet waslet dik il-ġimgħa li kienet se ssiefer u allura ommha riedet tkun taf jekk tridxi tieħu xi affarijiet magħha biex tkun tista' tibqa' għaddejja mal-klassi u ovvjament hemmhekk għeditilha li m'hemmx għalfejn tieħu l-affarijiet magħha għax kienet sejra vaganza mbagħad kont għeditilha li ħa tirkupra fi żmien qasir wara s-safra. Nemmen li din l-istudenta għandha daqshekk koperazzjoni tajba ħafna fil-klassi minħabba l-background li hemm id-dar għax mill-ftit drabi li kellimt lil ommha nħoss li ommha għandha dak it-tip ta' karattru li mhux dak it-tip li taqa' u tqum. Qiegħda hemmhekk u tagħti l-appoġġ. Fil-fatt kont kellimtha biex kemm jista' jkun lill-istudenta tesponiha għal-lingwa Maltija għaliex id-dar ma jintużax u talbitni xi kotba li tkun tista' taqra għaliex semmejtliha xi żbalji tal-ortografija li qed tieħu fejn jaħasra qed tiżloq fin-niexef, m'hemmx għalfejn tagħmilhom. Li tagħmel hi tuża ħafna l-aċċent. U jiġifieri ommha kkoperat ħafna.

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**M: Taħseb li huwa meħtieġ appoġġ addizzjonali fil-klassi biex jilqa' l-bżonnijiet speċifiċi tal-istudenti barranin, inklużi t-Taljani? Mhux bilfors b'referenza għal din l-istudenta li tħoss li hija inkluża, imma anki bħal perezempju dak l-istudent l-ieħor li semmejt.**

Ifhimni dawn jekk ikunu studenti li ġew l-iskola f'nofs is-sena u inti tkun ilek għaddejja bis-sillabu minn Settembru, fil-Malti għall-barrani tibda mill-qiegħ. Jekk ovvjament jiġilek xi ħadd fi Frar ovvjament għall-għalliema hija ta' challenge għax jiena ġratli għax int għandek lil min wasal s'hawn u min wasal s'hawn, min għadu ħa jibda u min wasal kważi nofs triq jiġifieri eħe nemmen li għandu jkun hemm xi tip ta' għajjuna fil-klassi għax dan jiġifieri perezempju l-Malti għall-barranin minn esperjenza passata kien hemm klassi waħda f'kull band, jiġifieri dan kull min ġie għal go din il-klassi. Jiġifieri dil-klassi minn 12 fl-aħħar tas-sena tispiċċalek b'xi 23 għax dan kull min ġej mela Malti għall-barranin, Malti għall-barranin, allura dan ma jistax ikun li inti terġa' tibda u għall-argument jekk inti qed tgħallem kif jgħaqqdu s-sentenzi, is-sugġett, verb u oġġett, min għadu ġej ma jkollux idea, jiġifieri jew trid forsi l-klassi tal-Malti għall-barranin ... imbagħad ovvjament ħa jkun hemm il-problema ta' nuqqas ta' staff għax int trid l-għalliema, forsi l-Malti għall-barranin ikun hemm klassi ġdida għal kull term ħalli kemm jista' jkun naqbd u l-catchment kollu.

**M: Kieku x'tibdel mill-lezzjonijiet tiegħek biex forsi tipprovi ambjent aktar inklussiv, jekk hemm x'tibdel?**

Ifhimni, għandna bżonn daqsxejn lezzjonijiet itwal għax aħna għandna lezzjonijiet ta' 40 minuti u sakemm it-tfal jissetiljaw fil-klassi [waqfa] aħna hawnhekk għandna sitwazzjoni li t-tfal fl-ewwel brejk ma joħorgux, joħorgu biss fit-tieni brejk. Allura dawn jagħmlu mill-ewwel lesson sas-sitt lesson bilqiegħda u malli ddoqq il-qanpiena kulħadd għal barra. Sakemm tiġbor lil kulħadd għandek l-ewwel 10 minuti tal-lezzjoni barra. Mhux l-ewwel darba li jkolli naqbeż il-logħob b'xi flashcards għax il-ħin ma jippermettix imbagħad hemm is-sillabu kontrik. Għandna r-riżorsi rridu nużawhom imbagħad hemm il-ħin, ħaġa kontra l-oħra, diffiċli naqra li jaħdem kollox jiġifieri minkejja li niltaqgħu magħhom ħames darbiet fil-ġimgħa.

**M: Kieku x'tibdel mill-iskola u mis-sistema edukattiva Maltija biex ttiprovdi ambjent ta' tagħlim aktar inklussiv?**

Kieku nbiddel, u qed jaħdmu fuqha, li l-Malti għall-barranin jiġi kkunsidrat bħala O-level. Li jkun hemm pereżempju min ikun ilu inqas minn ħames snin hawnhekk għax imbagħad ikun hawn min jipprova japprofitta mis-sitwazzjoni, min ikun ilu inqas minn ħames snin hawnhekk jista' għall-argument jagħmel l-O-level Malti għall-barranin u jibqa' għaddej, min ikun ilu aktar minn ħames snin imbagħad irid jagħmel il-Malti nattiv għax naħseb li f'ħames snin tkun ħadt il-grip tajjeb tal-lingwa. Emm, naħseb dik hija l-iktar ħaġa li għandna bżonn naħdmu fuqha għax dan jekk jiġi xi ħadd fil-Year 9, jiena ma nimmaginax li ħa jagħmel l-O-level tal-Malti f'sentejn ... diffiċli ħafna meta tqis il-letteratura li hemm u l-grammatika ... li mbagħad aħna għandna grammatika purament kwazi Għarbija, allura min ma jkunx midhla tal-lingwi semitiċi allura hemmhekk ħa jbat iżjed, allura eħe nemmen li jekk il-Malti bħala lingwa barranija jiġi meqjus bħala O-level, l-istudenti barranin ikunu trattati aħjar għax huwa ta' benefiċċju kbir għalihom.

## Interview with English teacher 1.4

*This teacher was assigned code 1.4 and has taught English for the past 23 years. She is also a guidance teacher. The teacher answered the questions in English. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**Q: How do you feel about having migrant students from diverse backgrounds in your class? Are there any benefits and/or drawbacks?**

So, ehm..as I said the drawbacks exist when they don't have a means of communication because they don't speak a word of English. Well, the good side is that these students are very resilient and they catch up quite a few words quickly...so they have friends. Most often with the Italian student group they tend to stick together, and even British students, they tend to stick together, but with other nationalities, for example, we've had recently a Chinese girl and during the same week we had another new student from Albania and they've become best friends. So you can imagine, the Albanian student does speak quite good English. The Chinese student didn't know a word of English but somehow they've become best of friends and they joke together and nowadays they manage very well.

**Q: Have you had Italian students in class or do you have now? Do you think they feel included in their class and in the school?**

So, Italian students [pause]. So let me start at the very beginning. Some of the students have been here a long time so they speak Maltese as well. Most of the students I have taught, Italian students that I have taught that were in my class, they were here quite a few years so they knew Maltese as well. I've taught Italian students who wrote better English essays than local kids, I've taught Italian students who are now at university so even, [pause] well many of them had parents who follow them at school, so that makes a difference. And Italian parents, they've got an advantage because when they come to school nearly everybody can speak to them in Italian. So if they don't know how to speak in English it's fine because most teachers can speak Italian. So even if it's parents' day, I mean, these last few years, we had online parents' day, we talk to Italian parents in Italian.

**Q: We will speak about the parents' day later on. \* But what about the Italian students who are here from a short time? \* Do you think they feel included? \***

Yes, the thing is that when they come they are immediately welcomed into the group of other Italian students which have been here a long time, which know Maltese, so somehow it's easy for them because they quickly grasp the rules and whatever is going on here.

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**Q: What aspects of the Maltese system do you think that Italian students find easy or difficult to adapt to in their transition, that is, when moving to Gozo and when they start attending the host country's school? Can you give examples?**

Yes, so difficulties as I said before, Italian students, the culture is very similar to Maltese culture. So you have ... well even how loud they are, the way they talk, it's very similar to local kids. So I don't think that it's that much of a problem. Now, the difference is when we have social cases because we do have social cases that come from abroad as well. But you cannot place such a family within the general context of immigrants because families with social cases, they stand in a totally different category and we have services that we offer to them.

**Q: Now, apart from social cases, what do you think...? \***

Apart from social cases, I don't think they have a lot of [stops]. Well, it depends if they are students in a secondary school ehm there is a problem, a major problem because when students arrive at the age of 14 and 15 and they are in Year 10 or 11, Year 9 would be better because it is the year when they start the option. Now when they arrive here in Year 10 they have to choose an option obviously and which option are they going to choose? The VET subjects are closed because you cannot start a year after. If you start, you have to get a special permit and you have to pay an extra fee. So most often VET subjects are not available, that option is out of the question. Then you have the other options like Biology, Chemistry, Accounts, any other option most often it's very very difficult to start from the second year when you've had a whole year, Year 9, also worked out and you missed on that...so it's very very difficult. So then you have many of these students who take options such as Art, but they're now all full because as I said we have an average of one to two new students every single week, so those options are full, so then what remains are the other options which are very difficult and you have students who are demotivated greatly, they just stay in class [stops]. It is not something which refers to culture, it's something related to the educational system where these students, in my opinion, should have a short term...well [pause]...we have been taught that a new learning hub is going to be open soon, it has already started for primary school, I hope it will be available for the secondary school because it's very unfair for these students who arrive in Year 10...what option are they going to choose? All options are more than mid-way through, more than mid-way. Year 11 is not a whole year.

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**Q: And what about language, do you think it is a barrier? \***

Obviously, but we have local kids who have a language barrier as well because they lack social skills. Although they speak Maltese, they don't really know how to communicate their feelings. But obviously, it is a language barrier, it is, but as I said, with Italian students, it is not as bad as with other students because most teachers and grown-ups understand and they can even speak Italian.

**Q: Do all students participate actively in your lessons, including migrant students?**

Yes, it depends on what environment there is. I mean it depends on what type of students you have, if it is a relatively good class, meaning they're in Track 3 or even sometimes in Track 2 and students are motivated to learn, there's good interaction, good participation by all students, even foreign students.

**Q: Even the Italians? \***

Yes, yes. Then you have classrooms where the class is made up of Track 1 students. Now, that is a bit more difficult because you find students that are not keen on learning, so students then pick on other students. It depends what type of students they are.

**Q: Do migrant students, including Italians, work on tasks given in class?**

It depends what type of students they are. If they are willing to learn, they do learn because even some of them are willing [pause]. Well, some of them can afford to, others cannot afford to do it, but some of them go to private lessons for example to catch up with the options that they have in class because as we've said before, if you choose European Studies, Accounts or Biology, you need private lessons to catch up.

**Q: Do migrant students, including Italians, carry out their homework without difficulties?**

Yes, most often they do because all homework given is explained thoroughly in class, so once again if students are in classrooms where you have Track 3 students they do manage on their own and they bring work just like other students do. If they are in lower track classes and you have students who are new ones, don't have the communication because of the language barrier then it's a bit more difficult...but then in these type of classrooms you also have local students who struggle to do the work given at home. So then you go over it in class, more or less it depends on the students.

**Q: Which language do you normally use during explanation for better understanding?**

I teach English, so obviously [laughs].

**Q: You never code-switch to Maltese for the Maltese students who may be struggling in English? \***

Not in this particular class because it's a good class, but I've taught other classes which are not in Track 3, and yes you do have to switch, so switching, even though we are not supposed to switch during the English lesson, sometimes you do have to switch to give instructions and even if you are explaining certain things and the explanation itself is still beyond, then you do have to say a certain word in Maltese. Sometimes some words are very similar, so saying a word in Maltese would help them remember this English word more. So sometimes it's helpful even though we're not supposed to. During the lesson sometimes, if there is this particular word which would help them understand better, I can code-switch to any other language because I come from that age that we used to learn a lot of languages, even Arabic. We learned Arabic at school. We have a lot of Arabic students. I had German, Italian ... so yes a lot of languages and we joke about which word belongs to which language. But it's all within the sake of learning and remembering more, so yes I do code-switch.

**Q: Do you think that Maltese and English proficiency is necessary for migrant students to learn and at what levels?**

I don't think Maltese is a necessity for them to understand because they don't know any words in Maltese, so their only medium is English and the Maltese students...it's only in extreme cases where they cannot simply comprehend what we're talking about...I use Maltese, but then once again I go over it in slow English so even all students, even the Maltese students can understand.

**Q: Have you ever had the opportunity to speak in Italian with Italian students and when did this occur? Why?**

Yes, yes, if you have a very difficult British word and you've given the definition which is still difficult, then with this Italian student, I simply find the word in Italian. But we use Italian a lot, with the Italian parents.

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**Q: Can you give me examples of activities you do to include Italian students in your lessons?**

With this particular student, I don't have to do anything because he's been here a while and before he was in an English-speaking country. He's just like the other students, when we joke we all laugh and he's a very good student actually, he misses out on nothing, so I don't need to make any special concessions or whatever.

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**Q: How do you communicate with the parents of Italian students you teach?**

Yes, in Italian [laughs].

**Q: Do the parents of Italian students generally attend parents' day and other meetings?**

Yes, yes, they do and we have parents who cannot make it because of work. We still accept them some other time.

**Q: So you never had any difficulties when communicating with the parents of Italian students? What is their reaction to your recommendations? Are they grateful or passive?**

No difficulties. Most often when they come they are a bit helpless because they are in a new country, so they are sort of dependent on our recommendations and suggestions. When the student starts following the educational program and they see something they don't like, we talk again, we see the most viable option there is and we consider and most often we do change options and classes.

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**Q: What type of professional training do you think you need to be able to help migrant students at school? \***

I believe, the professional training mostly first of all [pause]...well, all training helps. But first of all what is needed here and sorely is learning hubs for migrants because it's not only the language and the academics but also the skills, the difference in culture, certain things that they used to do before and here they can't do them. So there needs to be a time of transition where they acquire certain skills and learn why they need these skills in this different culture. They need a safe place where they can be monitored even psychologically because at the end of the day it is a trauma to leave your home and your friends and start afresh in a new country. This is, in my opinion, the most important thing we need right now and unfortunately, we don't have this here yet.

**Q: What would you change in your lessons to provide an inclusive learning environment?**

[laughs] I don't know what else I can change. I've been doing that every year. I change something new according to the situation. You have to be inclusive. In my class, I have about six different nationalities.

**Q: What would you change from the school and the Maltese education system to provide an inclusive learning environment?**

Do we have enough time to go through the list that the Maltese education system needs to change? Because that is the great need that there is, but with the resources we have in school, I believe we are doing a great job depending on the lack of resources we have, especially teachers. Ideally, you would have different classes where different teachers teach English for the very beginners, English for children who know a bit more but not enough, different types, not everybody is bundled into Track 3.

## Interview with Maltese teacher 1.5

*This teacher was assigned code 1.5 and has taught Maltese for the past 36 years. The teacher answered the questions in Maltese, although sometimes code-switching to English occurred. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**M: Kellek jew għandek studenti Taljani fil-klassi?**

Iva, kelli u għandi.

**M: Taħseb li l-istudenti Taljani jhossuhom inkluzi fil-klassi tagħhom u fl-iskola?**

Iva ta, ħafna minnhom iva, m'għandhomx problema.

**M: Għalfejn taħseb hekk? \***

Jien naħseb li l-lingwa Taljana tgħinhom ħafna għall-Malti għax hemm mixture tajba bejn il-Malti u t-Taljan, jiġifieri hemm relationship bejn iż-żewġ lingwi. Infatti ninnotaha dik il-ħaġa fit-Taljani jiena, iva, iva.

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**M: Liema aspetti tas-sistema Maltija taħseb li t-Taljani jsibu faċli jew diffiċli biex jidraw fit-tranzizzjoni tagħhom, jiġifieri meta jigu jgħixu Għawdex u jattendu l-iskola hawnhekk?**

Ara ħa ngħidlek, eżattament ma nafx fuq is-sistema, però kif diġà għedt naħseb li jsibuha easy minħabba s-similarity taż-żewġ lingwi. Però kull bidla hija bidla jiġifieri speċjalment li jkunu diġà għandhom ċerta età, qed nitkellmu regarding sekondarja ħa jsibuha kemm kemm diffiċli, però iż-żgħar nimmagina li jidhlu fis-sistema mill-ewwel, jiġifieri hekk insibha jiena. They adapt more quickly.

**M: Taħseb li dan huwa faċli għal xi gruppi, eżempju dawk iżgħar biex jidraw?**

Iva, minħabba l-età tenera tagħhom għaliex iż-żgħar jitgħallmu iżjed lingwi malajr, qed tifhem?

**M: X'inhuma l-fehmiet tiegħek fuq it-tranzizzjoni tal-istudenti Taljani f'din l-iskola? Temmen li jesperjenzaw xi sfidi?**

Kull bidla fiha sfida fl-opinjoni tiegħi. Ifhem jien naħseb li iva they do experience certain things hu' msieken, għax inti immaġinak anki tifel Malti minn skola għall-oħra jhossu d-differenza aħseb u ara barranin li ġejjin minn pajjiż ieħor, avolja l-kultura tagħna hija simili imma xorta jibqa' l-fatt li skola differenti, ħbieb differenti, ambjent differenti, sistema differenti, kollox differenti.

**M: L-istudenti kollha jippartecipaw b'mod attiv fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek, inkluzi l-istudenti barranin?**

Il-maġġoranza tagħhom, iva, jippartecipaw. Issib imbagħad dawk illi veru ma jinteressahomx imma l-maġġoranza iva they do participate. Jiddependi mill-karattru.

**M: L-istudenti Taljani jippartecipaw b'mod attiv fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek?**

Mhux kollha. Hemm minnhom ma jinteressahomx. Però mhux fil-lezzjonijiet tal-Malti biss għax jiena mbagħad ninvestiga ... nara jiġifieri t-tifel jew it-tifla ... u jgħiduli "eĥe anki fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħi" jiġifieri anki f'suġġetti oħrajn.

**M: L-istudenti barranin inkluzi dawk Taljani jikkoperaw u jaħdmu fuq xogħlijiet li jingħata lilhom fil-klassi? Spjega.**

Min irid jaħdem iwa m'għandix problemi bih.

**M: Iwettqu x-xogħol għad-dar tagħhom mingħajr diffikultajiet?**

Iva, m'għandix problemi [tieqaf taħseb u wara tispeċifika] ... min irid jaħdem.

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**M: Liema lingwa/i normalment tuża waqt spjegazzjoni għal fehim aħjar?**

Nuża l-Malti ovvjament imbagħad għandi l-Ingliż, it-Taljan u l-Ġermaniż. Nirranġa bihom anki jekk ikolli bżonn ngħidilhom xi ħaġa apparti li nispeġja, anki jekk ikolli bżonn ngħidilhom xi jridu jagħmlu jew xi jridu jgħibu, x'nistenna minnhom ... conversation normali mhux it-tagħlim biss. Nitkellem magħhom bħalma nitkellem ma' studenti oħrajn. Min jifhimni bl-Ingliż inkellmu bl-Ingliż, min jifhimni bil-Malti nkellmu bil-Malti, min jifhimni bit-Taljan bit-Taljan biex inkun ċerta li dak li qed ngħidilhom jaqbdur kollha kemm huma.

**M: Li tkun taf l-Ingliż u/jew il-Malti huwa meħtieġ biex l-istudenti barranin jitgħallmu? F'liema livelli?**

Ovva. Ħa ngħidlek, jiena nħoss illi hemm ħafna minnhom jifhmu l-Malti mbagħad isibuha diffiċli [tieqaf]. L-Ingliż hija storja oħra. Fl-Ingliż, iwa, kapaċi jikkomunikaw ħafna minnhom, kemm jirrispondu u kemm jifhmu, però l-Malti hemm minnhom iva jirrisponduni bil-Malti, l-Ingliż jintuża iżjed. Jien naħseb li ż-żewġ lingwi huma importanti għalihom għax xhin imorru biex japplikaw għal xi job jew hekk ħafna qed jitolbu mhux l-Ingliż biss imma li jkun jitekellmu anki bil-Malti ħabba l-problema li għandna li ħafna barranin u min ma jafx jikkomunika bl-Ingliż qed isibha problema ... the people out there ... dawn għada pitgħada hemmhekk ħa jmorru [fil-komunità].

**M: Qatt kellek l-opportunità li titkellem bit-Taljan mal-istudenti Taljani? U meta seħħ dan għaliex?**

Iva ta, spiss. Perezempju jiena nħobb l-ewwel inkellimhom bil-Malti għax dik il-lingwa tagħna u dak qegħdin ngħallmu. Allura ngħidilhom "Kulħadd qed jifhimni?" u ndurhom wieħed wieħed, waħda waħda. Jekk perezempju xi ħadd minnhom jgħidli "m'iniex qed nifhemek eżattament" imbagħad niswiċċja għal-lingwa tiegħu, qed tifhem? L-ewwel naqleb għall-Ingliż imbagħad jekk nara li ma fehmux imma ħafna drabi niswiċċja għal-lingwa tiegħu imma l-Maltese and English dak nagħmlu dejjem imma jkun hemm xi instances li ma jifhmuhomx allura l switch għal-lingwa tagħhom sa fejn inkun naf jien.

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**M: Tista' tagħti xi eżempji ta' attivitajiet li tagħmel biex tippromwovi d-diversità fil-klassi u tinkludi l-istudenti barranin fil-klassi tiegħek?**

Powerpoints ta. Ngħidilhom aghmlu Powerpoint u jgibuha fuq pendrive, jipprezentawha u jithaddtu huma bejniethom. Jiena nħoss li hemmhekk tgħallmet il-klassi kollha għax jekk pereżempju fejn naf jiena composition jew whatever, inti hemmhekk int biss tgħallimt mentri meta tagħmel presentation qed tarak il-klassi kollha u kulhadd qed jieħu mill-kulturi ta' xulxin.

**M: Toffri assistenza individwali wara l-lezzjonijiet jew anki waqt il-ħinijiet tal-break?**

Iva, if needed yes, I do. Anki meta nkun free jew inkella ngħidilhom "Għandkom free lesson? Ejjew fittxuni". Hemm minnhom li jkunu interessati, jiġu. Il-klassi fejn ikun hemm min irid veru jitgħallem, jiġi.

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**M: Tista' tagħtini żewġ eżempji ta' studenti Taljani li għallimt jew li qed tgħallem? Spjega l-attitudni tagħhom fil-klassi u l-imġiba generali fl-iskola mal-għalliema u sħabhom tal-klassi, l-attitudni tagħhom forsi lejn ix-xogħol għad-dar jew tal-klassi u anki l-eżamijiet.**

S'issa qatt ma kelli problemi bħala Taljani. Ma' studenti oħra anki ta' kulturi differenti narahom they blend well anki mal-Maltin, it-Taljani. Għandi tifel Taljan li litteralment ma jinteressah xejn. Jifhem bil-Malti, qiegħed fil-mainstream, lanqas huwa for foreigners u jifhem bil-Malti imma [tieqaf taħseb] naħseb jiena l-karattru tiegħu forsi daqsxejn għażżien? Qed tifhem imma? Jithallat regarding ħbieb imma regarding skola ma tantx irid.

**M: Kif tikkomunika mal-ġenituri tal-istudenti Taljani li tgħallem? Agħti xi eżempji.**

Ħaġa tal-iskantament, l-ebda parent, lanqas parents' day, ma jidhol online meta kellna l-online sessions, u lanqas qatt jiġu l-parents tagħhom u ma nafx għalfejn. Forsi jibzġħu li m'aħniex kapaċi nitkellmu magħhom minħabba l-lingwa? Imma t-tifel u t-tifla għandhom jgħidulhom fil-każ tiegħi li kapaċi nkellimhom bit-Taljan, ma naħsibx li għandha żzommhom lura. Ħaġa tal-iskantament.

**M: Il-ġenituri tal-istudenti Taljani ġeneralment jattendu Jum il-Ġenituri u laqgħat oħra?**

Le, ġeneralment ma jattendux u laqgħat oħra ma nafx.

**M: Jiġifieri għandek xi diffikultajiet biex tikkomunika magħhom? X'inhom r-reazzjoni tagħhom għar-rakkomandazzjonijiet tiegħek? Huma ostili, passivi?**

Ifhem, jiena s'issa ma kellix problemi li rrid nirrapporta jew inkella nressaq xi lment fuq l-istudent jew l-istudenta regarding Taljani. Però jekk ikolli l-bżonn incemplilhom. Peress li ma tantx [tieqaf]. Jien naħseb li ssib min hu grateful u ssib passivi wkoll, imma mhux miegħi biss.

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**M: Inti familjari ma' kuncetti bhall-medjazzjoni tal-lingwa u t-translanguaging? X'tahrig professjonali taħseb li għandek bzonn biex tkun tista' tgħin lill-istudenti barranin fl-iskola?**

Le. Jiena nħoss illi [tieqaf taħseb] issa mhux biex niftaħar imma I think I'm doing well. Inħossni komda, kunfidenti għax s'issa ma affaccjajtx problemi, dejjem imxejt tajjeb, fejn stajt għenthom għenthom, it is quite plain sailing il-lessons tiegħi għax jiddependi mill-behaviour tat-tfal ukoll, qed tifhem? Għax imbagħad ġieli kelli klassijiet jiġifieri now you see them, now you don't. Jidhlu fil-cupboards jistaħbew jiġifieri, qed tifhem? [daħk]. Imma jiddependi ... talking about this scholastic year, ma tantx insib problemi. Insomma ilni ngħallem jiġifieri bl-esperjenza li għandi one way or another I'm going to tackle it.

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**M: Kieku x'tibdel mill-iskola u mis-sistema edukattiva Maltija biex tipprovdi ambjent ta' tagħlim aktar inklussiv?**

Jiena naħseb qabel jinqalbu għall-Malti mainstream, il-barranin ma tridx tgħid l-istudent ilu hawnhekk daqshekk snin, allura ħa jinqaleb għax mhux kulhadd ikun laħaq dak il-livell li jinqaleb. Dik naħseb ta' min iħares lejha. Inti tgħallimt u jien għadni ma tgħallimtx. U aħna nafu li l-lessons mhux kulhadd jagħmilhom l-istess. Allura jien forsi miegħek qbadt u s-sena ta' wara messni ma' ħaddieħor u ma qbadtx biżżejjed u apart from that anki l-istudenti mhumiex kollha l-istess. Hemm min jaqbad within 2 years u jimxi 'l quddiem, it depends minn liema again pajjiż ġej, fejn it-Taljan kif għedna huwa ħafna simili tal-Malti, allura dawk ħa jaqbd u iżjed, jekk ikunu jridu. Però jiena nħoss illi dik li tgħid li ilu ħames snin hawnhekk, allura ħa taqleb (għall-Malti Standard) ma nħosshix li hi fair daqshekk. Irid ikun hemm xi tip ta' assessments qabel ma jiddeċiedu.

## Interview with Mathematics teacher 1.6

*This teacher was assigned code 1.6 and has taught Mathematics for the past 17 years. The teacher answered the questions in Maltese, although sometimes code-switching to English occurred. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**M: Kif t'hossok dwar il-fatt li jkollok studenti barranin ġejjin minn reattijiet differenti fil-klassi tiegħek? Hemm xi benefiċċji u/jew żvantaġġi?**

Benefiċċji ifhimni diffiċli nwieġbek fuq benefiċċji imma żvantaġġi jekk ma jkunux jafu jitekllmu bl-Ingliż, li qed nassumi hija l-lingwa ġenerali, huwa żvantaġġ kbir.

**M: Taħseb li l-istudenti Taljani j'hossuhom inkluzi fil-klassi tagħhom u fl-iskola?**

Naħseb li iva għax on a day to day basis narahom li għandhom il-ħbieb, ifittxuhom so basically jekk inti għandek il-ħbieb tkun included awtomatikament.

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**M: Liema aspetti tas-sistema Maltija taħseb li t-Taljani jsibu faċli jew diffiċli biex jidraw fit-tranzizzjoni tagħhom, jiġifieri meta jiġu jgħixu Għawdex u jattendu l-iskola hawnhekk?**

Nazzarda ngħid li min-nazzjonalitajiet kollha li ġew l-iskola, it-Taljani l-aktar li jsibuha faċli biex jamalgamaw ruħhom mas-sistema.

**M: Għaliex taħseb hekk? \***

Naħseb għax nixxiebhu ħafna fil-kultura, faċli biex jagħmlu l-ħbieb, iżjed outgoing. Studenti barranin oħrajn ikunu iżjed magħluqin ifittxu lil xulxin tal-istess nazzjonalità. Fis-sens il-pajjiżi tal-East u anki l-Ingliżi narahom ikunu jiggangjaw dejjem ma' xulxin.

**M: Taħseb li dan huwa faċli għal xi gruppi, eżempju daww izgħar biex jidraw?**

Jekk ikunu ilhom jgħixu hawn, kważi kważi tista' tgħid ikunu qishom Għawdxin u Maltin, imma xorta mhux kulhadd l-istess. Hawn min jiġi hawn u on day 1 ikun qisu ilu hawn mitt sena u hawn min jiġi hawn u xorta ma jiġix included so jiddependi ħafna mill-karattru.

**M: X'inhuma l-fehmiet tiegħek fuq it-tranzizzjoni tal-istudenti Taljani f'din l-iskola? Temmen li jesperjenzaw xi sfidi?**

Nassumi li kull student barrani jesperjenza xi diffikultajiet għax int mhux faċli li tbiddel mil-lum għal għada l-pajjiż, il-kultura, il-ħbieb, id-dar u tiġi ġo ambjent ġdid.

**M: L-istudenti kollha jipparteċipaw b'mod attiv fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek, inkluzi l-istudenti barranin?**

Le, so dejjem ikun hemm studenti li huma kwieti, magħluqin, ma jipparteċipawx. Ikunu jafu x'inhu jigr most probably imma jistħu jirkellmu jew jiddeju, kemm Maltin, u kemm Taljani, u kemm ta' kull nazzjonalità oħra.

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**M: L-istudenti barranin inkluzi dawk Taljani jikkoperaw u jaħdmu fuq xogħlijiet li jingħata lilhom fil-klassi? Spjega.**

Heqq, meta kelli studenti Taljani li kienu [jjeqaf jaħseb] li l-ħajja akkademika kienet toghgobhom, jipparteċipaw, jaħdmu, jagħmlu x-xogħol tad-dar bla problemi. Meta kelli studenti Taljani illi ma toghgobhom l-iskola xejn, kienu just jattendu għax bilfors. Ma kienu jagħmlu xejn, just jiġu hawn imdejnin. Qed niftakar f'tewmin partikolari, kienu jidhru li huma mdejnin hawn. Infatti reggħu telqu.

**M: L-istudenti barranin, inkluzi t-Taljani jwettqu x-xogħol għad-dar tagħhom mingħajr diffikultajiet?**

Li għandi bħalissa nista' ngħid iva għax huma tfal bilgħaqal u jhobbu jaħdmu u s-sugġett jogħgobhom so m'għandix diffikultà minn hekk.

**M: Liema lingwa/i normalment tuża waqt spjegazzjoni għal fehim aħjar?**

Fil-bidu tas-sena ddeċidejt li nuża l-Ingliż kompletament għax l-istudent li għandi l-Ingliż jaċċettah mija fil-mija. Ovvjament imbagħad nuża ftit Malti għax ma rridx ninsa lil kulhadd biex nerġa' nispijega għat-tieni darba jew xi ħaġa li ma jkunux fehmu.

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**M: Qatt kellek l-opportunità li titkellem bit-Taljan mal-istudenti Taljani? U meta seħħ dan, għaliex?**

Kelli l-opportunità iktar minn darba u niftakar każ ... kelli studenta kienet tgħallimni hi x'jgħidulhom it-termini bit-Taljan għax kienet tgħallimthom is-sena ta' qabel. So jien ħadt gost għax tgħallimthom magħhom, imma kienu klassi żgħira so dik kienet possibbli li jkolli dik l-interaction one-to-one magħha.

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**M: Tista' tagħti xi eżempji ta' attivitajiet li tagħmel biex tinkludi l-istudenti Taljani fil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek?**

Xejn partikolari ta, fis-sens jien inzommhom bħallikieku għandi tfal kollha mill-istess nazzjonalità, m'hemmx differenza għalija. Il-lingwa kollox. Kultant ngħid xi ċajta żgħira bit-Taljan biex tagħmilhom komdi iżjed.

**M: Toffri assistenza individwali wara l-lezzjonijiet jew anki waqt il-ħinijiet tal-brejk?**

Dejjem u bil-qalb kollha. Huma jiġu l-ewwel dejjem.

**M: Temmen li l-iskola hija inklussiva lejn l-istudenti kollha, inkluzi dawk ta' nazzjonalitajiet differenti? Aġti xi raġunijiet.**

Inhoss li mhux f'kollox, fis-sens li jagħmlu the best li jistgħu. Ħa nagħtik eżempju. Bħalissa, dalgħodu kien hemm l-eżercizzji fl-ewwel lesson. L-istudenti lokali u dawk Catholic, eja ħa ngħidulhom hekk, kienu qegħdin għall-eżercizzji. L-istudenti barranin li jsegwu l-Ethics kienu bilqiegħda fuq bank hawn barra jistennew il-ħin jgħaddi bla activity ta' xejn so they were not included, plus li lbieraħ attendejt lesson tal-eżercizzji u kien hemm l-istudent Taljan li ngħallem li ma naħsibx li jifhem bil-Malti kien bilqiegħda hemm, tliet kwarti bil-Malti so ma nafx x'ħa. Kien hemm mitfuħ bilqiegħda, lanqas kien hemm sentenza waħda bl-Ingliż kemm tpatti, so ma naħsibx li kien included. Qed neskluduhom.

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**M: Il-ġenituri tal-istudenti Taljani generalment jattendu Jum il-Ġenituri u laqgħat oħra?**

Naħseb li mhux il-maġġoranza. Jekk ikunu tfal li jridu l-iskola, naħseb li jkellmuk il-ġenituri, jekk ikunu tfal passivi, bħal-lokali ma jkellmukx għax jafu li m'hemmx xi tbiddel wisq.

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**M: Inti familjari ma' kuncetti bħall-medjazzjoni tal-lingwa u t-translanguaging? X'taħriġ professjonali taħseb li għandek bżonn biex tkun tista' tgħin lill-istudenti barranin fl-iskola?**

Translanguaging nifhem biha jiena combination ta' languages li inti mhux qed taqleb minn lingwa għal-lingwa u tħallat lingwa go lingwa u tiġi tagħmel sens. So jien ġieli ngħid sentenza bil-Malti u go fiha jkun hemm kliem bl-Ingliż li tista' tgħidhom, so dak li naħseb li hu translanguaging. Ifhem, jien qed nifhem li din hi r-realtà tal-lum so qed nimtlew iżjed bl-istudenti barranin milli bil-lokal so xi tikka training speċjalment f'każi delikati, f'suġġetti fejn il-lingwa hija importanti li tintuża, naħseb li hemm bżonn xi ħaġa eħe xi push.

**M: Kieku tiddel xi ħaġa mil-lezzjonijiet tiegħek biex tipprovdi ambjent ta' taġlim aktar inklussiv?**

Jiġu mument, jiġu lessons fejn ngħid ara llum ma saqsejtx biżżejjed jew saqsejt in general u dejjem wieġbu l-istess ħamsa so dawk l-oħrajn imbagħad ġew left out, so iva dawk huma żbalji illi ninnota bihom so ngħid l-għada ħa npatti u nsaqi lil min ilbieraħ ma tkellimx. Dik hija r-realtà li dejjem ikun hemm ħamsa li jieħdu l-kmand.

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## **APPENDIX F**

### **Samples of the Interviews with Parents**

## Interview with parent 2.1

*This parent was assigned code 2.1. The participant is a woman from Piedmont married to a man from Lombardy in northern Italy. They have three children, all attending Maltese schools in Gozo. They have lived in Malta for 8 years, 6 years in Malta and 2 years in Gozo. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Tra il sistema educativo italiano e quello maltese, quale preferite e perché? Notate delle differenze?**

Allora, entrambi hanno lati positivi e negativi. I miei figli non hanno frequentato la scuola italiana. Nella loro generazione hanno sempre vissuto a Malta.

**D: Ma in base alla vostra esperienza cosa ne pensate? \***

Dalla mia esperienza posso dire che dal sistema italiano secondo me è molto positivo il fatto che i ragazzi sviluppano di più un metodo di studio che comunque è importante per la loro vita anche quando andranno all'università, devono imparare a sapere come si studia, come si prendono bene gli appunti e soprattutto è importante secondo me l'interrogazione orale non solo scritta. Dall'altro canto però il sistema maltese dà la possibilità di essere più pratico, di sviluppare più il ragionamento e forse utilizzando una metodologia meno stressante per i ragazzi che effettivamente vivono, hanno voglia di venire a scuola, non è vissuta come un'esperienza ... con ansia.

**D: Com'è stato vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione dalla scuola italiana a quella maltese?**

Quando hanno iniziato a \*\*\* [nome di un villaggio a Malta] è stato tutto molto naturale, tranne che per la più grande perché inizialmente mi avevano consigliato di farle vivere un corso, di fare un corso d'inglese offerto dal governo in un'altra scuola e lì è stato proprio traumatizzante perché eravamo insieme a tantissimi altri stranieri di culture veramente diverse dalla nostra. Lei si è sentita persa e piangeva e non è andata per niente bene. Infatti, poi ne ho parlato con la scuola dove lei sarebbe poi dovuta andare e assolutamente l'insegnante mi aveva detto "non funziona così, la bambina deve venire con serenità e con calma imparerà la lingua." Poi piano piano è stata inserita in maniera serena, ecco. Però per gli altri due [i figli più piccoli] è stato più semplice e naturale.

**D: Attualmente come stanno vivendo questo cambiamento?**

Mah, sinceramente benissimo, nel senso che loro ormai fanno parte della cultura e della comunità maltese, quindi.

**D: Che cosa fa la scuola per aiutare i vostri figli a sentirsi più inclusi? Ci sono delle misure specifiche?**

Mah, i miei figli ora vengono considerati come studenti normalissimi maltesi quindi ... non c'è nessun'assistenza in più a parte altri tipi di assistenza che però possono anche riguardare

anche altri studenti maltesi. So che, per esempio, mio figlio nella *primary* dov'è adesso ha avuto un aiuto magari nel leggere, tipo come si chiama? [pensa], la *complementary teacher*, ha avuto questo supporto.

**D: E come genitori vi sentite inclusi quando la scuola comunica con voi? Per esempio, quando vi mandano degli avvisi, delle mail o anche quando si fanno delle attività? \***

Questo sì, perché la comunicazione spesso è in due lingue e quindi siamo capaci di capire. Quello che non mi sembra molto ... come dire ... non mi sembra corretto è che essendo una scuola bilingue dove sono presenti tanti stranieri, quando ci sono i *meeting* in presenza, noi stranieri, e parlo anche per tanti altri genitori che hanno avuto la stessa lamentela, ci sentiamo molto esclusi, molto esclusi perché tutto viene spiegato in maltese sempre [pensa] e a furia di chiedere, di ripetere tutto in inglese o magari di fare dei *meeting* specifici in inglese, ci viene sempre detto "sì sì, alla fine vi diremo tutto in inglese." E la traduzione in inglese viene fatta in maniera molto veloce, semplice e rapida senza, omettendo secondo me, determinate cose che vengono dette nel *meeting* in maltese e noi ci sentiamo un po' esclusi anche per questo motivo. Anche quando i genitori fanno delle domande che sono tutte in maltese, sono domande che magari possono servire anche a noi. Anche noi abbiamo gli stessi dubbi o domande e quindi, secondo me, dovrebbero sviluppare di più questo aspetto del bilinguismo.

**D: Il giorno del *parents' day* lo vivete in modo positivo o negativo? E perché?**

Mah, a dire il vero lo viviamo in maniera positiva perché comunque gli insegnanti sono sempre disponibili sia in presenza ma anche online perché ultimamente li fanno online. Devo dire che sono molto cordiali, rispondono a qualunque tipo di domanda e quindi in modo positivo.

**D: Vi piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese?**

Qui a Gozo devo dire che la scuola è bella, vedo che comunque ci sono tante risorse. Sicuramente si può migliorare, cioè nel senso si può continuare a investire e, secondo me, potrebbero fare un po' più di attività extra scolastiche o durante le ore scolastiche come gite o vivere un po' di più l'esterno.

**D: Ritenete che conoscere la lingua inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

Sicuramente il maltese per essere inclusi nella comunità in generale è importante ... ehm ... anche se comunque al di fuori della scuola c'è sempre tanto distacco tra le famiglie maltesi e noi. Veniamo molto messi da parte. L'inglese è importantissimo. Il motivo principale per cui siamo venuti qui è stato proprio per l'inglese. Noi, quello che pensano in tanti qui [ride], perché abbiamo problemi o perché viviamo male, no non è per niente così. Noi avevamo una vita bellissima, serenissima, con la casa in proprietà in un posto favoloso dove ci tornerai domani ma l'unico problema nostro era vabbè, a livello di tasse che in Italia è diventato insostenibile ma soprattutto per dare un'opportunità ai ragazzi di studiare l'inglese.

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**D: Che ne pensate dei libri e/o del materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Ci sono delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia in base alla vostra esperienza ovviamente?**

A me piace molto il materiale qui perché comunque dà la possibilità ai genitori di non avere un'enorme spesa perché in Italia questo è un grosso problema perché in Italia si utilizzano

proprio i libri e non fogli fotocopiati. A me piace molto perché sono ben spiegati, anche gli esercizi sono un po', secondo me, come dei giochi più che dei fogli didattici, e sì a me piace, non vedo una brutta offerta e in Italia la differenza è che in Italia si usano proprio dei libri, libri che si comprano, usati o non usati e bisogna pagare tanto.

**D: Che ne pensate dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Sono adeguati in termini di quantità e di qualità?**

Allora, io all'inizio di quest'anno c'ho tenuto ad avere un incontro con la preside per chiedere se gentilmente venivano dati più compiti a casa [ride] perché per me quello che viene dato a casa è veramente molto poco, poi posso avere una differenza tra la figlia che è in *Year 8* e l'altra figlia che è in *Year 7*, con la più piccola che ha sempre qualcosina da fare, l'altra un pochino meno, ma non penso che non sia lei che non voglia fare, ma secondo me viene dato poco da quegli insegnanti e secondo me dovrebbero impostare un pochino meglio i compiti, darli un po' più specifici, far studiare un pochino di più per l'appunto ad aiutare a studiare, a memorizzare meglio le cose o piuttosto dare più compiti scritti, test, domande, esercizi, ma un po' di più perché è molto poco.

**D: Hanno dei problemi con gli esami in lingua inglese o in maltese?**

No, perché sono considerate materie come tutte le altre ormai. Anche l'esame viene dato non come straniero perché so che si danno dei test o degli esami diversi per chi è qui da meno di 5 anni. Loro ormai sono uguali a tutti gli altri studenti.

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**D: Secondo voi, quali sono le esigenze scolastiche più importanti di vostro figlio da quando vi siete trasferiti a Gozo?**

Per me la principale è considerare i genitori stranieri come quelli maltesi, non dare priorità, questo noi viviamo, e l'ho notato dai discorsi di tanti genitori questo aspetto.

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**D: C'è qualcosa della scuola o del sistema educativo che cambiereste? Chiedo se avete ulteriori suggerimenti. \***

Il mio suggerimento è magari di insegnare un pochino di più a studiare, inserire un po' più di gite per coinvolgere e cercare di aiutare l'aggregazione della classe proprio. So che c'è anche molto bullismo nelle classi ma perché secondo me deriva proprio dalla cultura maltese, dai genitori e i ragazzi, poi lo trasmettono nelle classi e i ragazzi stranieri la vivono costantemente. Poi c'è chi riesce meglio a essere inserita come magari può essere la mia figlia più piccola e c'è chi magari ha più difficoltà come può essere la mia figlia più grande, e questa è una cosa abbastanza triste perché nonostante tutto noi siamo persone che comunque contribuiscono alla comunità, nel senso, siamo qui che lavoriamo, che viviamo, che ci comportiamo bene e però la scuola secondo me dovrebbe far sentire molto meno questa differenza, aiutando proprio i ragazzi ad accettare e trasmettere questa accettazione anche alle famiglie, magari organizzando eventi dov'è più possibile la socializzazione, incontrarsi o aiutare i ragazzi a fare dei gruppi per lavorare su qualcosa insieme, queste cose qui.

## Interview with parent 2.2

*This parent was assigned code 2.2. The participant is a woman from Lazio married to a man from the same region in central Italy. They have two children, both attending Maltese schools in Gozo. They have lived in Gozo for 4 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Tra il sistema educativo italiano e quello maltese, c'è uno che preferite e perché?**

Sì, sicuramente l'istruzione inclusa l'educazione, ossia lì a Gozo, gli insegnanti si prendono cura dei bambini e per qualsiasi problematica loro hanno, vengono seguiti e viene risolto il problema e non vengono abbandonati, e se vedono una cosa non è che fanno finta di nulla, anzi a volte la prevenivano vedendo un comportamento di un bambino, loro ci riescono ovviamente essendo più grandi a comprendere, quindi a prevenirlo e purtroppo qui dove stavamo a vivere non era assolutamente così. Quindi sì, certo è migliore per gli insegnanti, migliore il complesso scolastico, migliore l'apprendimento ma soprattutto la tranquillità che gli permette poi di assimilare meglio quello che ascoltano, che devono studiare.

**D: Com'è stato vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando le vostre figlie hanno cominciato a frequentare la scuola a Gozo? È stato positivo o negativo?**

Sì, sì, negativo e ci sono state delle difficoltà, ma non per quanto riguarda la scuola e gli insegnanti, ma proprio per quanto riguarda le bambine perché erano ansiose per la lingua, per gli amichetti e appunto per i professori che non sapevano l'impatto qual era, quindi erano molto ansiose, molto preoccupate e poi invece nel [pausa] subito ... diciamo già i primi mesi si sono inserite, hanno compreso che qui ci sono le regole, le regole ci sono e vanno osservate e vanno rispettate. Quindi loro si sono trovate bene per questo perché hanno visto che tutti, se sbagliano, vengono ripresi ma se si comportano bene vengono lodati o per lo meno diciamo ... passiamo il termine, non c'era rompimento di scatole da parte degli altri alunni, quindi no no all'inizio sì, tra tanta preoccupazione e ansia e invece poi piano piano erano felicissime perché hanno visto proprio il comportamento diverso di tutto, dalla divisa, dal cibo, dagli educatori che comunque hanno un'autorità, hanno una posizione, vengono rispettati, dai compagni che anche se hanno avuto degli screzi ... ci sono state delle piccole cose di bambini però sono state subito appianate, quindi è andata così l'esperienza, tanto è vero che ora, cioè, triste a dirsi non vogliono più tornare in Italia, neanche per le vacanze.

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**D: E come genitori vi sentite inclusi quando la scuola comunica con voi? C'è mai stato un momento in cui vi siete sentiti esclusi?**

Mhmm ... no, no. Durante le riunioni ho sempre avuto o un'amica che parlava l'inglese che poi mi ha aiutata a capire quando ci sono state le varie riunioni, ad esempio quella prima della

scuola, cioè ho fatto così e quindi sì, oppure in altre occasioni vabbè ... c'era sia la preside precedente sia quella attuale, ecco loro parlano benissimo l'italiano, quindi per qualsiasi cosa mi sono state talmente vicino, loro mi hanno aiutato per le divise, oppure per i certificati medici oppure per altre cose, quindi [pausa] sì, io cioè non mi sento [si ferma]. Ecco, l'ultima che c'è stata la riunione per quanto riguarda l'indirizzo dei ragazzi perché lei deve andare in un altro istituto, però non ho avuto problemi perché era presente anche la bambina, quindi m'ha detto "guarda hanno detto così e così." Quindi no, cioè io non capivo però se mi serviva qualcosa, infatti poi c'era il responsabile e m'ha detto "Signora, Lei è italiana? Mi dica se non ha capito." Ho detto "guardi c'è la bambina, comunque ha capito tutto lei, l'interessata è lei, io son venuta solo per vedere com'eravate organizzati." Benissimo, proprio organizzati bene.

**D: Vi piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese? Perché?**

Sì, molto. Mi piace l'ordine, la pulizia, le regole e l'autorità che è rispettata. L'autorità non come autorevolezza e di posizione, autorità nel senso di riconoscere il ruolo che uno svolge e quindi i ragazzi riconoscono quello che debbano fare. Nel momento in cui non viene fatto, vengono reinseriti nel modo giusto e quindi questa è una grande cosa e permette che tutto funzioni ed ecco, le divise pure che noi non eravamo abituati, quindi questo era sempre un problema tutti i giorni per il vestire, qui non c'è questo problema [ride] e già è tantissimo, l'alimentazione pure, e questa è la scuola. Ecco, il fatto che i professori seguono e spiegano e il fatto che le ragazze comunque riescono, lì dove non riescono a capire vengono [pausa] ... cioè loro mi dicono è impossibile non capire perché nel momento in cui tu non capisci, loro te lo riespongono, quindi come fai a non capire? Allora sei tu. Loro si sono trovate benissimo per questo e qualsiasi cosa viene comunicata per email, qualsiasi cosa fate, qualsiasi cosa, quindi questo è un aggiornamento che c'è sempre. Nessuno può rimanere indietro.

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**D: Che ne pensate dei libri e/o del materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Sono di ottima o pessima qualità? Ci sono delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia?**

Una differenza fondamentale, soprattutto economica perché qui in Italia mi facevano comprare tutti quei libri così [grossi] e non li aprivano MAI [enfasi]. Io glieli ridavo proprio interi perché proprio non funziona il sistema scolastico. Lì a Malta ottima qualità ovviamente no perché i libri comunque sono usati, vengono riciclati essendo che vengono usati più volte ma a sto punto è poco importante perché significa che son stati usati. Quindi vengono riusati, le bambine li studiano o li studia un altro bambino. Quindi non ci sta la speculazione sopra perché alla fine qui in Italia io penso che sia una questione di speculazione, lì a Malta studiano quelli lì ... dove non bastano, vengono fatte le fotocopie, vengono fatti altri test fotocopiati e ben venga che rimangono individuali a quella lezione, a quel programma che inizia e finisce per ogni bambino. Quindi che ci fanno comprare in Italia sei, settecento euro ogni volta i libri che poi non vengono usati. Ben venga il sistema vostro costo zero, solo fotocopie e cose varie, però si studiano quei libri perché io ogni volta che li prendevano si vedeva che finivano gli esercizi, comunque il libro era usato, ma ben venga. Quindi no, è meglio il vostro sistema anche per quanto riguarda il fatto del riciclaggio, l'inquinamento e tutto il resto.

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**D: Hanno dei problemi con gli esami in lingua inglese o in maltese?**

Eh, all'inizio sì e infatti alla più piccola soprattutto le hanno messo un aiuto perché lei era molto nervosa. Mi dice "io la so, la so, l'ho capito" e infatti la *Madam* lì è stata carinissima, le ha detto "non ti preoccupare, ti mettiamo vicino chi ti spiega la domanda, perché se tu non capisci la domanda, non puoi dare la risposta". Però lei all'inizio era nervosa e ha detto "io la sapevo, io la sapevo ma non avevo capito qual era la domanda" e infatti poi gliel'hanno spiegata e vabbè, pure lì a scuola è andata benissimo.

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**D: Nel caso ci siano dei problemi per fare i compiti o anche nello studio, voi riuscite ad aiutare le vostre figlie? Come vi sentite a riguardo?**

No. No no, benissimo perché non è la mia responsabilità. È la loro responsabilità. A scuola ci vanno loro, mica ci vado io. Io l'ho fatto il mio dovere già che io gli do la possibilità ... poi dalla mattina alla sera faccio tutto il resto. Se non l'avete capito, il problema ce l'avete voi. Qua in Italia io stavo fino alle 9 alle 10 di sera e gli dicevo "non ti preoccupare, le rileggiamo, ripetiamo ...", là ho buttato la spugna nel senso che io vi ho fatto il sacrificio nel senso siamo venuti qua, solo quello dovete fare, se non capite, aprite sta mente o te prendi un brutto voto. Siccome loro non vogliono prendere brutti voti, studiano.

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**D: C'è qualcosa della scuola o del sistema educativo che cambiereste?**

Sì, io gli farei fare più ore ai ragazzini, almeno fino alle 5 perché dovrebbero studiare di più e [pausa] no questo ... e anche maggiore assistenza per l'italiano che arriva perché comunque l'impatto è forte, per noi adulti no, ma per loro sì perché stiamo parlando di bambini di 10 anni, 11, 12, quindi lì ci vorrebbe proprio un percorso almeno per i primi mesi e non dico il primo anno perché poi i bambini assimilano subito però per non fargli sentire subito l'impatto perché voi comunque siete, cioè non dogmatici, comunque siete precisi. Quindi quando arriva il bambino la prima volta, in questo caso se ci fosse un supporto in più per questi bambini, ragazzi che c'hanno i primi giorni sarebbe meglio a parte che umano, sarebbe meglio proprio a livello psicologico, di rendimento, sarebbe meglio perché poi io ringrazio Dio, mi passi il termine, è che le mie bambine alla fine l'hanno superato perché comunque c'era l'altra zia che già parlava inglese e maltese, poi abbiamo avuto tanti amici, si sono subito inserite però l'impatto come le ho detto all'inizio c'è stato, è ovvio, è umano poi.

## Interview with parent 2.3

*This parent was assigned code 2.3. The participant is a woman from Lombardy. She has one child attending a school in Gozo. They have lived in Malta for 3 years, 2 years in Malta and 5 months in Gozo. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Tra il sistema educativo italiano e quello maltese, c'è uno che preferisce e perché?**

Allora, come sistema educativo sicuramente quello maltese perché è un po' più a portata di bambino, mentre in Italia la scuola viene affrontata in maniera già troppo pesante quando sono piccoli. Quindi vengono inondati di compiti, si sta a scuola tante ore, non hanno tempo per lo sport. Insomma, i genitori italiani si lamentano molto perché fino alle 10 di sera sono sovraccaricati di lavoro, ecco. Quindi sicuramente preferisco quello maltese.

**D: Com'è stato vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando sua figlia ha cominciato a frequentare la scuola a Malta e poi a Gozo? È stato positivo o negativo?**

No, all'*induction hub* di Naxxar è stato positivo nonostante ci fosse il covid quando siamo arrivate, quindi giustamente con tutte le difficoltà del caso, ma è stato assolutamente positivo. Sostanzialmente noi siamo arrivate durante l'estate, ho preso le prime informazioni. Siamo state accolte dal preside dell'*induction hub* che subito è stato simpaticissimo, molto accogliente e ha iniziato direttamente lì, diciamo, ad approcciare con l'inglese perché non lo parlava naturalmente e anche con il maltese e si è trovata subito bene, poi ripeto abbiamo fatto anche l'*home schooling* che per un bambino straniero che non sa la lingua è inutile perché non capisce nulla. Però insomma a fatica ci siamo un pochettino adattate, però sono sicura che, se non ci fosse stato il covid sarebbe stato bellissimo perché tutti hanno sempre parlato bene dell'*induction*, quindi assolutamente positivo.

**D: Attualmente come sta vivendo questo cambiamento?**

Allora da quando siamo a Gozo molto bene ... diciamo è riuscita a stabilire delle amicizie che a Malta non c'era riuscita e diciamo forse perché lei a Malta frequentava la scuola di \*\*\* [il nome del villaggio] ed era l'unica italiana e quindi si sa che i bambini fanno un po' comunella, no? ... diventano un po' cattivelli e quindi era spesso nell'angolo, ecco. Poi lei ha un carattere molto molto da *leader* e quindi piangeva tutti i giorni ... sostanzialmente era una tragedia. Poi lei è anche molto scontrosa, poi se uno le va contro, poi reagisce, insomma non si trovava più la chiave per andare d'accordo, ecco. Allora abbiamo provato questo cambiamento e devo dire che qui, sì, è stato molto più facile ... forse è perché ci sono più stranieri credo nella scuola di Gozo ... non lo so. È anche più facile magari lasciarli uscire e quindi condividere anche dei momenti tra ragazzini e a Malta era molto più difficoltoso assolutamente.

**D: Che cosa fa la scuola per aiutare lei e sua figlia a sentirvi più incluse? Ci sono delle misure specifiche?**

No, devo dire che l'unica cosa che ho trovato molto brutta è che nonostante mia figlia arrivasse già da una scuola maltese, quindi era un trasferimento diciamo tra una scuola di Malta a una scuola di Gozo ... mia figlia è stata rifiutata dalla scuola di Gozo all'inizio per il semplice fatto che non avevamo ancora la *blue paper* perché io purtroppo dopo un'estate che non trovavo nessuna casa, ho trovato quest' appartamento che era ormai fine settembre e quindi non ho avuto diciamo il tempo materiale di organizzare appuntamenti per l'*ID card* ecc. ... e mi hanno proprio rifiutato la bambina finché sono arrivata addirittura a chiamare il Ministro perché l'ho trovato ridicolo dal momento in cui era una bambina che arrivava già da una scuola maltese che parla inglese, non aveva senso di esistere quell'atteggiamento ed è rimasta a casa per 15 giorni. Quindi ha saltato 15 giorni di scuola e [pausa] diciamo che quello è stato un momento abbastanza da panico perché si immagina, io vado a lavorare ... ero un attimo in crisi. Penso che, diciamo con gli stranieri per l'inclusione non facciano assolutamente nulla ... anzi!

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**D: Le piace l'ambiente della scuola maltese?**

Sì, sì.

**D: Sente di farne parte?**

Oddio, questa è una domanda difficile. Spero insomma di inserirmi meglio, ma sicuramente no. Ripeto lei [la bambina] è molto felice quindi suppongo di sì, ecco.

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**D: Ha mai sentito la necessità di mandare sua figlia a delle lezioni di ripetizione d'inglese e/o di maltese durante o al di fuori dell'orario scolastico? Se sì, perché?**

Sì, perché sostanzialmente il primo anno con il covid, il *lockdown* e la mascherina era molto frustrata la bambina dato che non riusciva a capire niente, anche perché il labiale è fondamentale, no? per imparare una lingua e quindi è stato davvero complicato e lì avevo pensato di fargli fare qualche lezione in più online, però anche lì dicevo "a scuola online, lezione online, questa piangeva sempre." Alla fine ho rinunciato perché è stato troppo un impatto. C'erano troppi problemi, no? Con la mascherina, *social distance* e tutte queste cose qui e allora ho mollato. Ho detto con il tempo lo imparerà insomma, senza fretta, ecco.

**D: Che ne pensa dei libri e/o del materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Sono di ottima o pessima qualità? Ci sono delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia?**

Mah, io penso che questa cosa delle fotocopie sia una cosa di pessima qualità. Il problema che riscontro è che essendo i bambini, i ragazzini molto [pausa] grossolani nei movimenti e non avendo cura delle loro cose, su un pacchetto di 10, solo uno abbiamo ordinato, tutti gli altri sono dei disastri solitamente. Credo che dei libri con le copertine evitino di avere le cartelle piene di fotocopie che volano a destra e sinistra e si perdono anche con facilità. Io lo riscontro, vabbè, con mia figlia che è particolarmente disordinata, però io non credo che esistano dei bambini di 10, 11 anni molto ordinati! Quindi ... [ride]. Anche perché poi tra l'altro per chi lavora, avere magari una commissione e poi andare a fare le fotocopie durante la giornata e

poi magari uno è al lavoro poi davvero manca il tempo materiale e non riesci a farlo e poi il giorno dopo giustamente la maestra ti sgrida perché non li hai e quindi, secondo me, questa cosa delle fotocopie è un po' [pausa], è un po' così controproducente. Noi in Italia abbiamo per esempio i libri, magari li portiamo anche per 3 anni di fila, abbiamo dei programmi di 3 anni, triennali e poi magari si rivendono o si regalano ai ragazzini che entrano a scuola dopo, cioè non c'è uno spreco di carta inutile.

**D: Senta, che ne pensa dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Sono adeguati in termini di quantità e di qualità? Ci sono delle differenze da quelli che si danno in Italia?**

Troppo pochi. In Italia sono fuori di testa al contrario. Qui troppo pochi. Insomma, una via di mezzo non sarebbe male [ride]. In Italia diventi veramente pazzo. Ti danno magari anche dieci, undici problemi. Io mi ricordo facevo anche trenta moltiplicazioni. In Italia sono veramente massacranti, cioè non hanno senso, è da pazzi. Troppo.

**D: Ritieni che ci siano delle differenze negli esami tra quelli in Italia e quelli che si fanno qui a Malta?**

Allora, l'unica differenza è che qui si fanno gli esami sostanzialmente alla fine di ogni anno, mentre in Italia per esempio gli esami delle elementari li fai alla fine della 5<sup>a</sup> elementare, gli esami della *middle school* li fai alla fine della 3<sup>a</sup> media e gli esami delle scuole superiori è uguale, sempre alla fine. Non c'è ogni anno insomma un esame, ecco. Si fanno delle verifiche regolari tutto l'anno e poi ovviamente se sei proprio un disastro in qualche materia, qui si chiama ... ti danno il debito. Quindi hai il debito se devi recuperare nel periodo estivo e a settembre dai l'esame su quella materia, insomma dove facevi schifo sostanzialmente.

**D: E per quanto riguarda il fatto che il sistema italiano sia più basato sull'oralità e si fanno tantissime interrogazioni orali, che ne pensa di questa differenza? \* Perché il sistema maltese è più basato sullo scritto? \***

Allora, io non lo so se questa è una questione legata alla lingua. Nel senso, in Italia devi stare molto attento a come parlare, nel senso a come coniugare i verbi, a parlare l'italiano correttamente, utilizzare una serie di termini che non sono i termini che utilizziamo noi magari parlando in casa, e quindi, secondo me, infatti durante le interrogazioni, oltre diciamo a valutare il contenuto di quello che stai parlando, loro valutano moltissimo anche come utilizzi l'italiano e questo vale anche per lo scritto. Noi scrivevamo temi di 3, 4 ore. Ci facevano cadere le dita a furia di scrivere e dovevi avere una calligrafia in un certo modo. Errori grammaticali non ammessi. Al terzo errore grammaticale erano 2 [il voto]. Assolutamente. Quindi credo che sia anche legato al fatto che l'italiano è complicato. Ha un sacco di parole e come posso dire, loro tendono molto alla domanda aperta, no? Non alla crocetta. Vogliono che sviluppi un argomento per i fatti tuoi, non che te ne esci solo con una X. Poi abbiamo anche le verifiche a scelta multipla, però sono meno, ecco. Qui è più facile sotto quel punto di vista.

**D: Sua figlia ha dei problemi con gli esami in lingua inglese o in maltese?**

Li ha avuti a \*\*\* [la scuola primaria che frequentava a Malta] per esempio. Gli esami non glieli volevano far fare perché [pausa] non è la prima ragazzina a cui capita perché poi ho parlato con altri genitori ovviamente, soprattutto con gli stranieri. Gli fanno saltare l'esame e poi quando vanno alla *middle school* li buttano nell'ultima classe ... diciamo quella dei somari.

**D: Questo è giusto secondo lei? \***

No, credo che invece scoraggi tantissimo un bambino e che si senta trattato come un idiota. Mia figlia, per esempio, grazie a Dio, mia figlia ha un carattere molto forte e gli ha detto “a me non me ne frega niente, io gli esami li voglio fare lo stesso anche se per voi non sono [si ferma].” Quindi lei in realtà li ha fatti ma loro non li hanno valutati. Io poi ho chiamato la *head* e le ho detto “per favore, non tratti mia figlia come una scema, se lei va male non fa niente, è solo una bambina, ha una vita per imparare quello che vuole.” Ho detto “però negarle di fare quello che fanno gli altri sta anche mettendo gli altri bambini nella posizione di dire che è una cretina, cioè non è bello, no?” Questo è escludere anche perché uno si sente [pausa] anche all’inizio quando abbiamo avuto tutti questi problemi linguistici, per le mascherine, il *lockdown* ecc. abbiamo fatto l’*induction*, poi io non le nego, ad un certo punto ho detto a mia figlia “in queste condizioni stai a casa perché se devi tutti i giorni disperarti per questa cosa non ha un senso. Stai a casa, sei piccola, hai una vita per recuperare.” Per un periodo l’ho tenuta a casa, poi quando è entrata al primo anno ad \*\*\* [la scuola primaria che frequentava a Malta] ovviamente non era in grado di seguire una lezione d’inglese. Dopo tre mesi d’estate in Italia, non era in grado. Allora io ho chiesto gentilmente alle insegnanti, ho detto “dato che è solo una bambina straniera, è una sola, non credo che vi costi niente dedicarle del tempo extra.” Invece l’hanno esclusa da maltese subito, quindi gli altri facevano maltese e a lei le dicevano di disegnare e poi mi hanno cominciato a tartassare, mi dicevano “che mia figlia di qua, mia figlia di là” e gli ho detto “se magari a questa bambina, le date il tempo necessario ... magari ci mette un po’ di più o un po’ di meno ... magari si sente a disagio perché sono tutti maltesi e quindi c’è bisogno di un po’ di pazienza, dico.” Poi gli ho detto “se pensavate che non fosse pronta, poteva fare un altro anno d’*induction*. Siccome lì all’*induction* l’hanno ritenuta pronta, non ve la dovete prendere con lei.”

**D: Poi quando ha cominciato la scuola a Gozo, è successo che l’hanno messa in una classe diciamo di un livello inferiore al suo livello? \***

Subito, sì assolutamente, tanto è vero che poi io mi sono resa conto che non faceva niente e nessuna fatica ed era lei la prima a dirmelo. Io all’inizio sono stata zitta, ripeto perché non volevo perché poi magari a scuola va lei, se la prendono con lei, quindi ho cercato di essere morbida. Poi lei invece ha la lingua lunga, ha chiesto alle insegnanti di essere spostata di classe ed effettivamente la *head* mi ha chiamato e ha detto “è vero che sua figlia non va bene lì dentro” perché mi raccontava delle robe, cioè, c’erano dei bambini che non sapevano fare maggiore e minore, cioè io lo trovo estremamente grave, no? E allora niente, poi alla fine l’hanno spostata di classe e adesso alcune volte va bene, alcune volte va meno bene però, secondo me, è al suo livello, ecco.

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**D: Secondo lei, cambiare la scuola da quella italiana a quella maltese ha cambiato la sua prospettiva e quella di sua figlia in modo positivo o negativo in merito all’educazione?**

In merito all’educazione un po’ in negativo qui perché probabilmente parlano tutti l’inglese e a volte utilizzano dei termini che non essendo della loro lingua probabilmente non gli danno il giusto significato, cioè la stessa parolaccia diciamo detta in inglese o in questo caso detta in italiano, se la dice in italiano le devo dare una sberla, le devo fare cadere tutti i denti, se la dice in inglese pesa un pochino di meno. Penso che valga anche per i maltesi, no? Diciamo ha una

forza diversa. Secondo me, gli concedono un linguaggio che per me non esiste assolutamente, sono un pochino diciamo più lascia andare, no? In Italia non è proprio così. In Italia ti sospendono più spesso, ti danno le note sul registro. Devi assolutamente stare attento a come parli perché se no, sono guai seri.

**D: C'è qualcosa della scuola o del sistema educativo che cambierebbe?**

Più che altro perché quando fai una scuola per stranieri che convogliano da tutta l'isola, poi ognuno si sparpaglia nella competenza del suo paese e questi non si vedono più. Devono ricominciare da capo, rifarsi di nuovo degli amici e quando sono tutti maltesi e magari si conoscono come può essere in una zona particolare come \*\*\* [la scuola primaria che frequentava a Malta] che diciamo è una zona, non è come stare a Bugibba ... e quindi lì diventa veramente difficile. Secondo me, se si potesse fare un inserimento all'interno della scuola ovviamente sarebbe migliore.

## Interview with parent 2.4

*This parent was assigned code 2.4. The participant is a woman from Campania married to a man from the same region in southern Italy. They have two children, both attending Maltese schools in Gozo. They have lived in Gozo for 7 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

### **D: Tra il sistema educativo italiano e quello maltese, c'è uno che preferite e perché?**

No, che preferisco, no. Sono differenti perché aiutando e seguendo i miei figli, vedo comunque che c'è differenza rispetto al sistema educativo e scolastico in Italia. Quindi anche per me è stato difficile capirlo per aiutarli, però adesso no, che preferisco, no. Entrambi vanno bene per me.

### **D: Quali sono le differenze maggiori? \***

Beh, a parte che come sono strutturati gli anni, nel senso qui a Malta la *primary school* inizia a 5 anni mentre in Italia ci sono 3 anni di *Kinder*, 3 anni d'asilo e poi a 6 anni si inizia la primaria. Questa è una delle tante differenze. [Pensa] Nell'insegnamento forse vedo che in Italia tendono più ad assegnare *homework* e soprattutto per le materie orali tipo per la geografia, la storia, o anche la matematica orale, [pausa] tendono più a interrogare ogni giorno i ragazzi e quindi sei costretto a studiare quella lezione tutti i giorni bene, altrimenti non [pausa] se il professore o l'insegnante ti chiamerà a parlare, tu non sai nulla. Vedo che qui, invece, anche lui alle medie quasi sempre non ha nulla da fare a casa. In Italia danno molto.

### **D: Com'è stato vissuto il periodo iniziale di transizione, ovvero quando i vostri figli hanno cominciato a frequentare la scuola a Gozo? È stato positivo o negativo?**

Devo dire la verità, era la cosa che mi preoccupava di più prima di trasferirmi a Gozo, nel senso che la piccola era ancora [pausa] ancora non andava al *Kinder* perché aveva 2 anni quando ci siamo trasferiti. Il più grande, che ora è in *Year 8*, in Italia aveva finito l'asilo, il *Kinder*, e quindi per me ... io avevo paura del suo inserimento comunque siccome qui parlano altre due lingue diverse e invece da fine settembre che è iniziata la scuola, a dicembre poi per le feste di Natale, già conosceva, parlava l'inglese, già si era inserito molto bene e quindi [si ferma]. All'inizio è stato facile sia perché comunque il ragazzo è veramente molto *friendly*, si è inserito veramente subito senza difficoltà grazie comunque agli insegnanti e l'allora preside di \*\*\* [nome della scuola primaria], ma devo dire anche i compagni lo hanno accolto molto bene. Era una classe con 8 bambini, ma era molto unita, non ho mai avuto problemi. Erano tutti gozitani e l'unico straniero era lui.

### **D: Attualmente i vostri figli come stanno vivendo questo cambiamento?**

Attualmente mio figlio [il figlio più grande] a scuola non male, sta vivendo un po' il cambiamento adolescenziale, visto che l'età è un po' quella particolare. Quindi iniziano i primi litigi, le prime incomprensioni tra i compagni, ma questo penso sarebbe successo anche se

eravamo in Italia perché comunque è l'età, non è una questione di paese, ma dal punto di vista scolastico tutto OK niente di che, cioè, lui ormai è come se fosse gozitano perché magari l'italiano non lo sa neanche scrivere tanto bene, perché lui gran parte degli anni li ha trascorsi qui.

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**D: C'è mai stato un momento in cui vi siete sentiti esclusi? Tipo nei *meeting*? \***

No, mai. Molto spesso parlano in maltese però tipo quest'anno che mia figlia ha iniziato a \*\*\* [nome di una scuola primaria] c'è stato il *meeting* d'inizio anno. Il preside ha parlato in maltese e dopodiché le insegnanti, visto che erano presenti con noi genitori stranieri, hanno detto le stesse cose in inglese, quindi tranquillamente anche se quelle cose in maltese per sommità io le avevo capite, insomma i punti principali. Riesco a capire ora un po'.

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**D: Il giorno del *parents' day* lo vivete in modo positivo o negativo? Ci andate? \***

Sì, perché mi è sempre piaciuto a me essere presente in prima persona. Ho sempre ... Sono sempre andata a tutti i *parents' day* perché mi piace insomma capire cosa fanno i miei figli, e come si avvicinano con gli altri alla scuola. Solitamente io però sempre perché mio marito non sa bene l'inglese e perché non tutti gli insegnanti parlano bene l'italiano, quindi lui no.

**D: Avete sentito la necessità di mandare i vostri figli a delle lezioni di ripetizione d'inglese e/o di maltese durante o al di fuori dell'orario scolastico? Se sì, perché?**

Maltese più che altro perché tipo adesso la bambina inizia a fare le composizioni di maltese e io [pausa] è una materia in cui non posso aiutarla e quindi risulta un tantino più difficile, quindi stavo pensando di farle fare più che altro le lezioni di ripetizione per le composizioni di maltese. Il ragazzo più grande anche, però vedo che lui comincia a cavarsela, quindi [si ferma].

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**D: Nel caso avete dei connazionali che abitano a Gozo vi rivolgete a loro per aiutarvi a vicenda?**

Sì, ci confrontiamo per degli avvisi della scuola, se c'è stata qualche variazione al calendario scolastico.

**D: Secondo voi, cambiare la scuola da quella italiana a quella maltese ha cambiato la vostra prospettiva e quella dei vostri figli in modo positivo o negativo in merito all'educazione?**

Beh, io penso in maniera molto positiva anche perché noi in Italia vivevamo al sud e insomma al sud Italia soprattutto nella provincia di Napoli, le scuole stanno, non a livello di insegnamento perché a livello didattico comunque in Italia [si ferma], ma forse a livello di come sono diventati oggi i ragazzi, l'educazione loro personale, forse è meglio che stiano vivendo qui e non in Italia, quindi per me in maniera positiva.

## Interview with parent 2.5

*This parent was assigned code 2.5. The participant is a woman from Sicily married to a man from the same region in southern Italy. They have two children, both attending Maltese schools in Gozo. They have lived in Gozo for 6 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Secondo voi, quali sono le differenze tra la scuola italiana e quella maltese? E se potete, date degli esempi.**

Allora, la scuola italiana è abbastanza complicata, abbastanza. Qui è un po' più semplice. Si studia per carità però delle cose come sono in Italia, come tutti i verbi, tutti i congiuntivi e tutte quelle cose con precisione che si devono studiare, tante cose ci sono. Le cose sono più dettagliate. Qui si studia, per carità, però è diverso, è più leggero.

**D: Quindi quale dei due sistemi educativi tra quello italiano e quello maltese preferite?**

Non ho una risposta ben precisa perché ai confronti di mio figlio, io sono contenta per mio figlio perché lui magari riesce a fare un pochino di più quando c'ha voglia [ride]. Io sinceramente, sempre Le dico, per il fattore di mio figlio, è buono [il sistema maltese] per mio figlio, però il modo dello studio italiano è diverso.

**D: Però visto che siete stranieri, siete italiani, l'inserimento di vostro figlio è stato positivo o negativo? Com'è stato il periodo iniziale di transizione dalla scuola italiana a quella maltese?**

Allora, l'inserimento è stato diciamo [pensa], si può dire buono, però ha avuto tante difficoltà visto che lui aveva le sue difficoltà. Diciamo che doveva essere capito il ragazzo. Era piccolo. Diciamo che si è un po' cullata la situazione. L'aiuto che io dicevo per lui che è dislessico è venuto troppo tardi e ora giustamente ci sono le conseguenze perché non è all'altezza giusta della sua classe, capito? Però pazienza [assume un tono di rassegnazione] ... Purtroppo noi mica possiamo dire "fate questo, fate questo." Io ho sempre spiegato le mie problematiche, però purtroppo con la burocrazia si fa sempre tempo a tempo.

**D: Ma vostro figlio quando ha cominciato la scuola a Gozo? \***

Prima ha fatto 2 anni alla \*\*\* [nome di una scuola primaria], sarebbe la primaria, 2 anni ha fatto. Mi dicevano che si deve inserire, che si deve ancora ambientare. Tutte queste cose, sì.

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**D: Attualmente come sta vivendo questo cambiamento?**

Lui si è ambientato benissimo. Di fatti, quando noi nelle ferie o nei momenti come Natale o Pasqua che noi andiamo in Sicilia, lui si trova a disagio perché non ha più le sue amicizie là [in Sicilia] perché non ha fatto amicizie. Era piccolo. Ora ce li ha qui gli amici, a Gozo.

**D: Che cosa fa la scuola per aiutare voi e vostro figlio a sentirvi più inclusi? Ci sono delle misure specifiche?**

Diciamo che io mi sento ehm [pensa] come si dice, mi fanno far parte perché purtroppo io non ho imparato né l'inglese né il maltese, ma loro mi aiutano tanto a parlare in italiano quando io vado per chiedere qualcosa di mio figlio. Fanno di tutto per parlare con me in italiano. Mi aiutano tantissimo su questo.

**D: Ma c'è mai stato un momento in cui magari vi siete sentiti esclusi?**

In certe cose sì, tipo quando uno deve sbrigare qualche cosa, qualche pratica, ti lasciano un pochino come dire "aspetta e spera", come dice la battuta, cioè domani, dopodomani. Su questo è uguale all'Italia.

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**D: Come genitori vi sentite inclusi quando la scuola organizza delle attività scolastiche?**

Io delle volte non partecipo o per lavoro o perché mio marito è sempre fuori a Malta, poi essendo pure che allo stesso tempo, avendo delle cose, loro parlano tutto in inglese, io mi sento tipo che non devo disturbare, che qualcuno mi deve spiegare tutte le cose, allora cerco di evitare. Io non voglio cercare una persona per parlare con me, capito?

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**D: Ritenete che conoscere la lingua inglese sia utile per l'inclusione? E il maltese? Perché?**

L'inglese è importantissimo e noi diciamo "siamo andati via dal nostro paese e speriamo di darci un futuro con questo inglese" perché sembra un futuro importante l'inglese, che va dappertutto. Per noi il maltese sarebbe buono per capire bene la gente, però non è uno sbocco il maltese. Il maltese è una cosa vostra, una cosa di qui, dell'isola, rimane qui, non va in capo al mondo. Il maltese serve per noi per stare qui nella società, ma per noi non è per andare fuori.

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**D: Che ne pensate dei libri o del materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Ci sono delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia?**

Allora, come materiale non ti so rispondere, però è un grande vantaggio perché danno tanti libri la scuola, tu non compri. Qui se ne comprano pure alcune cose però la maggior parte te la dà la scuola, i libri di testo anche se poi si va in cartolibreria e si va a fare un libro di fotocopie. Però sono minime le cose, non sono come comprare tutto. C'è tanta gente che non si può permettere tante spese ed è un aiuto.

**D: Che ne pensate dei compiti che vengono assegnati in questa scuola? Sono adeguati in termini di quantità e di qualità?**

Allora, i compiti che fa mio figlio sono pochissimi, perciò non ti posso [si ferma]. Invece quando studiava mia figlia stava ore e ore seduta.

**D: Ma perché? \* Forse vostro figlio li trova un po' difficili da fare e ha dei problemi a farli da solo? \***

No, i compiti che danno a lui sono di meno, a parte che delle volte, giustamente, non porta i compiti perché magari io non controllo bene e mi sfugge. Però loro sempre non hanno dato tanti compiti perché riconoscono che nella sua capacità gli fanno fare di più a scuola. Però sì, ha bisogno di essere seguito, soprattutto in matematica e anche certe cose con il maltese. Il maltese non va bene. Fa quello per gli stranieri. In inglese un pochino di meno se si applica perché l'inglese lo sa un pochino di più, lo capisce. Lui ha accettato di imparare di più, è più motivato.

**D: Nel caso ci siano dei problemi per fare i compiti o anche per studiare, voi riuscite ad aiutare vostro figlio, lei o suo marito, o magari la sorella?**

No, noi no. La sorella, quando c'è, se lui si fa aiutare, sì, perché non è sempre che si fa aiutare. È un tipo così, vuole fare vedere che è in grado di fare tutto da solo.

**D: Non potendo aiutarlo, come vi sentite?**

Un po' a disagio perché non potendo aiutarlo significa che lo lasciamo nel suo, solo su quello che sa fare lui.

**D: Vi rivolgete a dei connazionali che abitano a Gozo per aiutarvi a vicenda?**

No, no perché non c'ho tempo e non l'abbiamo mai fatto.

**D: Secondo voi, quali sono le esigenze scolastiche più importanti di vostro figlio da quando vi siete trasferiti a Gozo?**

Le sue esigenze sono che lui purtroppo non essendo stato seguito sin dall'inizio, per me lui si è cullato un pochino e ha perso quella voglia di imparare sui libri, sullo scrivere perché lui ascolta sì, però quello che dovrebbe svolgere sulla lettura non gli va con voglia. Non ha nessuna motivazione.

**D: C'è qualcosa della scuola o del sistema educativo che cambiereste? Spiegate.**

Allora non sono io che posso andare a cambiare le cose, però l'ho notato sempre negli anni precedenti, ora è più comprensivo mi sembra, negli anni quando il bambino era più piccolo, visto che il bambino è iperattivo, la colpa di chi era? Era sempre di mio figlio e una volta giustamente mi sentivo umiliata "\*\*\*[nome] ha fatto questo, e \*\*\*[nome] fa questo", sia io che lui ci sentivamo umiliati. Io una volta l'ho detto perché lui andava pure il continuo dopo la scuola, rimaneva lì a scuola perché io lavoravo allo stesso tempo e lui rimaneva là a fare i suoi compiti. Rimaneva là fino alle 4 e quando lo andavo a riprendere "eee \*\*\* [nome] ha fatto questo, \*\*\* [nome] ha fatto questo" e purtroppo mi dispiaceva.

**D: Non pensa che ci sarebbe stato bisogno di un ulteriore aiuto in classe per assistere vostro figlio? \***

Sì, ci voleva da quando sono arrivata. Ci voleva quell'assistenza ad aiutarlo sin da quando sono arrivata e invece dicevano "no, si deve ambientare il bambino" e deve fare tipo come si dice, "deve capire la nostra scuola", "deve capire i nostri metodi." Secondo me, sarebbe stato meglio e ora starebbe meglio.

## Interview with parent 2.6

*This parent was assigned code 2.6. The participant is a man from Sicily married to a Romanian woman. They have three children, all attending Maltese schools in Gozo. They have lived in Gozo for 6 years. The participant replied in Italian. The interview has been transcribed in the original language. This interview was held on Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023.*

*This transcription includes some of the questions asked during the interview. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) were added during the interview.*

**D: Tra il sistema italiano e quello maltese, quale preferite e perché?**

Preferiamo quello maltese per una questione diciamo di lingue, di opportunità per il futuro.

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**D: Che cosa fa la scuola per aiutare voi e vostro figlio a sentirvi più inclusi? Ci sono delle misure specifiche?**

Mah, misure specifiche che io ho visto non tantissime, più che altro l'aiuto è più che altro sulla lingua maltese e queste cose così però perché comunque non è molto facile, diciamo, per i ragazzi imparare il maltese perché è una lingua molto complicata, diciamo, come non sarebbe facile l'italiano per i ragazzi maltesi, diciamo [ride].

**D: Come genitori vi sentite inclusi quando la scuola comunica con voi?**

Sì, si può dire di sì perché comunque molte trascrizioni sono in inglese, la maggior parte delle volte parlano in inglese. Ogni tanto bisogna ricordaglielo, però! [ride].

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**D: Sentite di far parte di questa scuola? Perché?**

Sì, perché comunque abbiamo sempre delle notifiche via email, ci rendono partecipi un pochino su tutto, per queste cose più che altro.

**D: Ritenete che conoscere la lingua inglese sia utile per l'inclusione?**

Assolutamente sì, certo perché è l'unico mezzo che hanno per comunicare con tutti gli altri ragazzi, diciamo.

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**D: Avete sentito la necessità di mandare vostro figlio a delle lezioni di ripetizione d'inglese e/o di maltese durante o al di fuori dell'orario scolastico?**

Nel primo anno di scuola abbiamo fatto, poi dopo non più.

**D: Che ne pensate dei libri o del materiale didattico che vengono usati in questa scuola? Ci sono delle differenze da quelli usati in Italia?**

No, è abbastanza eccellente. Diciamo che, secondo me, il programma italiano è un pochino più completo di quello maltese come programma di studio, però diciamo che questi qua maltesi sono più semplici da capire come libri, hanno un linguaggio più semplice.

**D: Ritenete che ci siano delle differenze nei compiti assegnati nella scuola italiana e quelli assegnati nella scuola maltese?**

Nella quantità, la scuola italiana ne assegna molti di più di quella maltese, sì.

**D: Vostro figlio ha dei problemi a fare i compiti?**

No. Li fa da solo, non viene aiutato.

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**D: Ritenete che ci siano delle differenze negli esami che faceva in Italia e quelli di qui?**

Guardi, i miei figli non hanno fatto tanti esami in Italia. In base alla mia esperienza personale, gli esami in Italia erano più tosti di questi qua.

**D: Ma vostro figlio ha dei problemi con gli esami che si fanno in inglese o in maltese?**

Problemi no, però fa maltese per gli stranieri, perciò è aiutato sotto quel punto di vista.

**D: Nel caso ci siano dei problemi per fare i compiti o per studiare, riuscite ad aiutare vostro figlio?**

In questo caso preferisco prendere persone diciamo competenti, dargli ripetizioni, perché io posso dargli una mano in matematica, però in inglese e maltese no. Preferisco altre persone che sono meglio di me. Non mi sento nella condizione di aiutare. Maltese assolutamente [ride].

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**D: Secondo voi, quali sono le esigenze scolastiche più importanti di vostro figlio da quando vi siete trasferiti a Gozo?**

Che io sappia no, non proprio. All'inizio quando si arriva, secondo me potrebbero fare qualcosina in più, però se i ragazzi sono abbastanza svegli, si adattano facilmente. Hanno la mente più giovane della nostra.

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