A Pedagogical Transition towards Learner Autonomy in Maltese Language Teaching: A Case Study

Audrey R. Galea

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Under the supervision of Prof. Antoinette Camilleri Grima and Dr. Karen Ní Chlochasaigh

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of a pedagogical transition involving targeted pedagogical adaptations aimed at developing learner autonomy in a Maltese primary school. Employing a case study methodology, the empirical project was carried out over one scholastic year in three classes of seven- to eight-year-old pupils during the first year of implementing a learning outcomes curriculum mandated nationally. It examines how targeted modifications to classroom pedagogy fostered a transition to learner autonomy and assesses the impact on the efficacy of the teaching and learning process.

The study adopts a cyclical design that utilises several qualitative research methods to investigate the context, provide professional development, collect evidence, and interpret the findings, thereby supporting the implementation of change. Using textual and visual evidence, the data is analysed through a thematic structure elicited from common links identified among learning theories. Evaluative instruments, such as the Self-Evaluation checklist for teachers, a Learner Autonomy Scale and the Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale, have been designed for this study and can be easily utilised elsewhere. So far, only a limited amount of research has investigated the improvement of learner autonomy, especially the actual implementation practices of a learning outcomes framework (LOF). Internationally, research on the development of learner autonomy in an LOF context primarily focuses on higher education institutions. In Malta, no research had investigated the implementation of the learning outcomes curriculum with a special focus on promoting learner autonomy when teaching the native language in primary schools.

This research demonstrates that implementing targeted collaborative practices between pupils, the strategic use of technology, the refinement of questioning techniques by the teacher and the incorporation of external environments for educational purposes, contribute to enhancing learner autonomy. Thus, this thesis bridges the existing research gap by enriching the pedagogical science of learner autonomy and curriculum design. The results and insights obtained are useful locally and internationally for educators and policymakers alike.

Key words: learner autonomy; pedagogical transition; Maltese learning outcomes; primary school; teaching and learning efficacy.

DEDICATION

To

God, who guides me throughout my life

Mark, my husband and soulmate

Sara and Sean, my pride and joy

My dear parents, who raised me to who I am today

And to that young girl who always wanted to become a doctor.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration i
Abstract ii
Dedication iii
Acknowledgements iv
Table of Contents v
List of Appendices xi
List of Figures xii
List of Tables xiv
List of Photos xv
Abbreviations xxiii

CHAPTER 1 Introduction

1.0 Rationale 1
1.1 Relevance of this study 2
1.2 The Research Questions 4
1.2.1 Addressing the research questions 5
1.3 My Positionality as a researcher and Outline of the Study 6
1.3.1 Positionality 6
1.3.2 Outline of the Study 7

PART 1 LITERATURE REVIEW 12

CHAPTER 2 Principles of learning

2.0 Introduction 13
2.1 The influence of Bloom's taxonomy on pedagogy 14
2.1.1 Limitations of the taxonomy 18
2.1.2 The relevance of Bloom's Taxonomy to this research 19
2.2 The social development theory 22
2.2.1 Bandura's Social Learning Theory 23
2.2.2 Vygotsky's role in the development of social development theory 24
2.3 Situated Cognition 27
2.3.1 The relevance of situated cognition to this research 28
2.4 Social Constructivism 30

2.5 Learning as a process - putting theory into practice 32
2.5.1 Application of theories into practice 34
Engagement of learners 37
Interaction and collaboration of learners 38
The Assimilation of new knowledge through the use of language 40
The Environment and learning conditions in and out of school 41
2.6 The Role of the Educator 43
2.7 Conclusion 47

CHAPTER 3 Learner Autonomy

3.0 Introduction 48
3.1 Learner Autonomy: Theoretical Foundations and Pedagogical Implications 49
3.1.1 The Role of Learner 52
3.1.2 Continuum of degrees of autonomy 53
3.2 Creating an Autonomous Learning Environment 57
3.2.1 The Maltese Context 59
3.2.2 Developing learner autonomy characteristics and traits 61
3.2.3 Diversity in Class 65
3.2.4 Challenges in Pedagogical Practices 66
3.3 Conclusion 68

CHAPTER 4 The Learning Outcomes

4.0 Introduction 69
4.1 Learning Outcomes and their aim to shift the mindset 70
4.2 Global Trends and Benefits 71
4.3 Shortcomings of the Learning Outcomes Curriculum 73
4.4 The Maltese Context 78
4.5 Language Development in a Learning Outcomes Curriculum 84
4.6 Professional Development for Educators 86
4.7 Conclusion 88

PART 2 THE RESEARCH METHODS 89

CHAPTER 5 Research Methods

5.0 Introduction 90

5.1 Why qualitative research? 90
5.2 Ontological and Epistemological Positioning 93
5.3 Case Study 96
5.3.1 Definition and characteristics 96
5.3.2 Aims of Case Study Research 97
5.3.3 Procedures of Case Study Research 98
5.3.4 Shortcomings of Case Study Research 99
5.4 Method of Analysis 100
5.5 The rationale behind the qualitative research methods used 101
5.5.1 Focus Groups 101
5.5.2 Individual Meetings 103
5.5.3 Questionnaires 103
5.5.4 Transcribing Audible Data 104
5.5.5 Observations 105
5.5.6 Photography 107
5.5.7 Data triangulation 108
5.5.8 Sampling 109
5.6 Ethical Considerations in Case Study Research 109
5.7 Conclusion 110

CHAPTER 6 Implementation of the Research Methods

6.0 Introduction 112
6.1 The Context 112
6.1.1 Sampling 112
6.1.2 Description of the Context 113
Profile of the Study 114
Teacher participants' profile 115
Class Profiles 116
The School's Linguistic Landscape 117
6.2 The Research Design 120
Stages of the case study 121
6.2.1 Cyclical design 122
6.2.2 Reflective and Reflexive Practices 125
6.3 Data Collection Methods and Analysis 127
6.3.1 Focus Groups 128

Schedule of focus groups 129
6.3.2 Individual Meetings 136
6.3.3 Student Interviews 136
6.3.4 Questionnaires 137
6.3.5 Photo Journal 138
6.3.6 Lesson Observations 139
Visual Analysis Sheet 139
Lesson Observation Sheet 142
6.3.7 Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers 144
6.3.8 Learner Autonomy Scale 148
6.3.9 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale 150
6.4 Coding 156
6.5 Contextual Ethical Considerations 158
Researcher Positionality, Potential Bias Mitigating Measures 159
Benefits of Positionality 160
6.6 Implementation of Change 161
6.6.1 Timeline of the Processes 167
6.7 Conclusion 169

PART 3 DATA ANALYSIS 170

Introduction 171

CHAPTER 7 Implementing the Learning Outcomes Curriculum

7.0 Introduction 173
7.1 The implementation of the Learning Outcomes Curriculum in this study 173
7.1.1 Grade 4 Learning Outcomes 176
7.1.2 Grade 3 Learning Outcomes 183
7.2 Learning outcomes across disciplines 189
7.3 Conclusion 192

CHAPTER 8 Entering the Scene

8.0 Introduction 194
8.1 Entering the Scene 195
8.1.1 High level of Anxiety 196
8.1.2 High Teacher Dependence 200

8.1.3 Use of English during the Maltese lessons in Grade 3 206
8.1.4 Technology 211
8.1.5 Planning 213
8.2 Conclusion 215

CHAPTER 9 Using Collaborative Learning

9.0 Introduction 217
9.1 Data Analysis 219
9.1.1 Shift to a Multi-dimensional classroom 219
9.1.2 Collaborative Writing 223
9.1.3 Resources used for increased collaboration 236
9.2 Conclusion 246

CHAPTER 10 Using Technology

10.0 Introduction 247
10.1 The effectiveness of using technology in education 248
10.2 Technology in the school context of this case study 250
10.2.1 Tablets 250
10.2.2 The effectiveness of QR codes 254
10.2.3 The Interactive White Board 256
10.2.4 Technology and language acquisition 258
10.2.5 Other devices 264
10.2.6 Collaborative software: Digital eBooks and Padlet 272
10.3 Using technology to nurture LA through self-assessment 276
10.4 Conclusion 281

CHAPTER 11 Self and Peer Assessment

11.0 Introduction 283
11.1 Self-assessment 283
11.2 Peer-assessment 287
11.3 Conclusion 292

CHAPTER 12 Learner autonomy through project work: Using the environment outside of school

12.0 Introduction 293
12.1 Grade 4 Project 294
12.2 Grade 3 Project 317
12.3 Evaluating these projects 337
12.4 Conclusion 346

CHAPTER 13 Underlying Adaptations

13.0 Introduction 348
13.1 Questioning 348
13.2 Using Concrete examples and hands-on activities 355
13.3 Conclusion 360

Part 4 361

CHAPTER 14 Discussion

14.0 Introduction 362
14.1 Aims, Objectives and Research Questions 362
14.2 Contribution to Knowledge 364
14.2.1 Contribution to the local educational community 364
14.2.2 Contribution to pedagogical research 369
14.3 Key components of Learner Autonomy and their impact on teaching and learning effectiveness 375
14.4 How can one ascertain the consolidation of change? 385
14.5 Generalisability and Transferability 389
14.6 Triangulation of Data 391
14.7 Conclusion 391

CHAPTER 15 Conclusion

15.0 Introduction 393

15.1 Issues and limitations of this study 394

15.2 Recommendations for subsequent initiatives and future research 397

15.3 Final Reflection – Il-Miss Tatna l-Power (The teacher gave us power). 399

BIBLIOGRAPHY 400

List of APPENDICES 423

APPENDIX 1 Assent/consent forms 424

Appendix 1.1 Student Assent Form (English version)

Appendix 1.2 Student Assent Form (Maltese version)

Appendix 1.3 Teacher Consent Form (English version)

Appendix 1.4 Parents/Guardians Consent Form (English version)

Appendix 1.5 Teacher Information Sheet (English version)

Appendix 1.6 Parents'/guardians' information sheet (English version)

APPENDIX 2 Approvals 433

Appendix 2.1 Approval from Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 2.2 Approval from the Secretariat for Catholic Education

Appendix 2.3 Letter from communication liaison

APPENDIX 3 Tools 437

Appendix 3.1 Lesson observation sheet

Appendix 3.2 Visual analysis sheet

Appendix 3.3 Self-evaluation checklist for teachers

Appendix 3.4 Learner autonomy scale (LAS)

Appendix 3.5 Teaching and learning effectiveness scale (TLES)

Appendix 3.6 Questionnaires a (Pre-Research), b (Post-Research), c Anonymous Google form

APPENDIX 4 Resource Pack 459

Appendix 4.1 Definition Of Learner Autonomy

Appendix 4.2 Learner Autonomy Characteristics And Traits

Appendix 4.3 Proposed Scheme of Work/Weekly Plan aimed at promoting LA

Appendix 4.4 Collaborative Writing Task Plan
Appendix 4.5 Project Plan For Outings
Appendix 4.6 Handouts For Outing To Nature Park
Appendix 4.7 Learning Outcomes And Success Criteria Templates
Appendix 4.8 Writing Checklist Templates For Grade 3
Appendix 4.9 10 Steps For Teaching And Learning Effectiveness
Appendix 4.10 Presentations Used For Training

APPENDIX 5 Project Timeline 505

APPENDIX 6 Grade 4 Work produced by pupils during the outing project presented in Chapter 12 507
Appendix 6.1 Print out of Grade 4 eBook
Appendix 6.2 Scans Of Writing Tasks Grade 4
Appendix 6.3 Teacher-prepared checklists

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 A diagram depicting the processes occurring in this research 7

Figure 2.1 Cognitive Domain Hierarchy with associated verbs 13

Figure 2.2: Levels of Affective Domain 14

Figure 2.3 Psychomotor Domain 16

Figure 2.4 My interpretation of how Bloom's taxonomy leads to connections made in education 19

Figure 2.5 A visual representation of the non-linear processes that lead to learning through situated cognition 28

Figure 2.6 My interpretation of the network of links made between the four pedagogical principles built on the common aspects found across the learning framework theories 35

Figure 3.1: My depiction of the Continuum of the degrees of Autonomy 53

Figure 3.2: My interpretation of traits and characteristics of an autonomous learning environment 63

Figure 4.1 Language Competencies in line with work demands 83

Figure 5.1: The principles underlying the context of this research 96

Figure 6.1: The study's flow chart 119

Figure 6.2: A pictorial representation of the cyclical design adopted in this case study 122

Figure 6.3: Cyclical reflective practice 125

Figure 6.4 Visual Analysis Sheet used during lesson observations 138

Figure 6.5 Sample of a filled-in Lesson observation sheet, page 1 140

Figure 6.6 Sample of a filled-in Lesson observation sheet, page 2 141

Figure 6.7 Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers, page 1 144

Figure 6.8 Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers, page 2 145

Figure 6.9 Learner Autonomy Scale 147

Figure 8.1 Reference to Chapter 3 Figure 3.1 197

Figure 9.1 Introducing multi-directional communication paths 215

Figure 9.2 Change in class dynamics 218

Figure 11.1 Checklist used for writing in Grade 3 classes (Appendix 4.8) 281

Figure 12.1 Worksheets suggested for outing and presented in Appendix 4.6 290

Figure 12.2 The processes built from Figure 3.1 are marked in red 334

Figure 14.1 Learning Competencies that develop Learner Autonomy 360

Figure 14.2 The push towards autonomy as implemented in this study 363

Figure 14.3 The inverse relationships that emerge from the findings 365

Figure 14.4 The nexus of relationships 367

Figure 14.5 Increase in Spatial Relations results in increased Learner Autonomy 370

Figure 14.6: Adaptations exhibit autocatalytic properties 371

Figure 14.7 Targets to achieve teaching and learning effectiveness 372

Figure 14.8 The Ripple Effect 377

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Learner Autonomy Traits mentioned in literature 61

Table 3.2 Learner Autonomy Characteristics mentioned in literature 62

Table 6.1 Timeline of the stages of the research 121

Table 6.2 Schedule of focus groups 134

Table 6.3: The common principles of teaching and learning effectiveness across Ofsted (2019), OECD (2022), and SPIF (2019) 149

Table 6.4: Salient Principles used by the Maltese Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education for school reviews (2023) 149

Table 6.5: Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale (TLES) 150

Table 6.6 Summary of how codes were built 153

Table 6.7 Codes used for sub-themes 154

Table 6.8 Implementation of change 160

Table 6.9: Timeline of the processes which occurred following a cyclic pattern 164

Table 7.1 Speaking skills Grade 4 173

Table 7.2 Listening skills Grade 4 174

Table 7.3 Writing skills Grade 4 175

Table 7.4 Reading skills Grade 4 176

Table 7.5 Speaking skills Grade 3 180

Table 7.6 Listening skills Grade 3 183

Table 7.7 Reading skills Grade 3 184

Table 7.8 Writing skills Grade 3 185

Table 8.1 Scheme of Work used by teachers at the beginning of the study (Grade 3) 210

Table 8.2 Scheme of Work used by teachers at the beginning of the study (Grade 4) 211

Table 9.1 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) 214

Table 9.1.1 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) Collaborative tasks1 230

Table 9.1.2 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale_Collaboration 232

Table 9.1.3 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) Collaborative tasks2_Gr3 and Gr4 236

Table 9.1.4 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale_CollaborationWord Games 239

Table 10.1 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) Technology digital tasks 258

Table 10.2 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) Technology_Ozobots 264

Table 10.3 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale Technology 1 266

Table 10.4 LAS Self-assessment through the use of Technology 275

Table 12.1 LAS Project G4 308

Table 12.2 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale(TLES) Project Gr4 311

Table 12.3 LAS Traits_ Grade 3 Project 328

Table 12.4 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale_ProjectGr3 330

Table 12.5 LAS_ComparingProjectGr3 and 4 330

Table 14.2 LAS used in this case study - traits (green) and characteristics (peach) 368

List of Photos

Photo 6.1 Grade 3 class notice boards 117

Photo 6.2 Grade 4 class notice boards 117

Photo 6.3 Corridor Notice Board outside the classroom 117

Photo 6.4 Corridor Notice Board outside a classroom displaying drawings from students 118

Photo 6.5 Notice boards in the corridor were observed being used to pass on positive messages 118

Photo 6.6 A training session for teachers with LEGO blocks 127

Photo 6.7 Sample of a Visual Analysis Sheet completed during the lesson 139

Photo 6.3 Self-Evaluation Sheet page 1 144

Photo 6.4 Self-Evaluation Sheet page 2 145

Photo 7.1 An example of a weekly timetable 186

Photo 7.2: Excerpt from the Grade 4 social studies syllabus 187

Photo 7.3: Excerpt from the Grade 4 religious studies syllabus 188

Photo 7.4: Excerpt from the Grade 3 social studies syllabus 188

Photo 8.1 One-dimensional student-teacher and teacher-student interactions 198

Photo 8.2: Lesson observation sheet (LOS)1st December 2021 page 1 199

Photo 8.3: Lesson observation sheet (LOS)1st December 2021 page 2 200

Photo 8.4: Visual Analysis Sheet for lesson observed on 1st December 2021 201

Photo 8.5: VAS 14th January 2022 207

Photo 9.1 Students on separate desks, facing the teacher, listening to the teacher explaining 216

Photo 9.2 One-dimensional student-teacher interactions 216

Photo 9.3 Student-student interactions improved by moving chairs 217

Photo 9.4 Grade 3 students proudly showing off their sentences on interjection "What Fun!" 221

Photo 9.5 "What Fun!" writing group task zoomed in 221

Photo 9.6 Another group of 4 Grade 3 students presenting their sentences 222

Photo 9.7 Sentences (zoomed in) using the interjection'X'Waħda din!'(Ooh!) 222

Photo 9.8 Student using mini whiteboard 223

Photo 9.9 Collaborative dynamics showed peer support 223

Photo 9.10 Students in a group with different roles 224

Photo 9.11 Student eliciting information from the information written on the mini whiteboard after the group activity 225

Photo 9.12 Student working individually 226

Photo 9.13 A student proudly standing before the class and speaking about her work 226

Photo 9.14 Student reading out to the class from the front of the class 227

Photo 9.15 Word cards 233

Photo 9.16 Student deciding which card to use while the teacher quietly observes 234

Photo 9.17 Student miming the action words depicted on the word cards 234

Photo 9.18 VAS_Lesson Word Games 235

Photo 10.1 Grade 4 learners using tablets and showing the teacher their progress 247

Photo 10.2 Using the Learn Pad 248

Photo 10.3: A student using the interactive aspect of the worksheets on her tablet 249

Photo 10.4 QR codes facilitate the provision of differentiated work 250

Photo 10.5 Using a word bank as needed 250

Photo 10.6 Grade 3 students taking the centre stage by interacting with the IWB 252

Photo 10.7 Grade 4 students take ownership of their work and explain it to the rest of the class 252

Photo 10.8: Digital games used to introduce the lesson objectives 254

Photo 10.9 Highlighting on the IWB 254

Photo 10.10 Projecting words 255

Photo 10.11 The writing task 255

Photo 10.12 Highlighting action words 256

Photo 10.13 Using an Ozobot whilst listening to instructions 260

Photo 10.14 Students programme the Ozobot based on listening skills 260

Photo 10.15 Desks were rearranged to mitigate potential accidents involving the Ozobots 261

Photo 10.16 The IWB projecting the story of Little Red Riding Hood 262

Photo 10.17 Trail and other aspects related to the story, such as trees and weather conditions, were drawn 262

Photo 10.18 The completed trails of several learners. Drawings show the level of understanding 263

Photo 10.19 The software's generated code can be shared with any collaborator and accessed anywhere 267

Photo 10.20 The eBook created by the Grade 4 learners 269

Photo 10.21 Screenshot of Padlet page used by Grade 4 class 270

Photo 10.22 The educator can evaluate progress with ease and efficiency 271

Photo 10.23 The task can be set to give immediate feedback through a mark 272

Photo 10.24 Motivational comments such as Prosit! (Well done) can be included as feedback 272

Photo 10.25 Immediate feedback is also given through colour-codes 272

Photo 10.26 The worksheet zoomed in to show the QR code, which accesses the worksheet 273

Photo 10.27 Additional QR codes can be given for reinforcement or additional work 274

Photo 10.28 A student completing her task 274

Photo 11.1 Writing checklist Grade 3 281

Photo 12.1 Tasks were completed individually or collaboratively 291

Photo 12.2 Observations made during the day were registered by the pupils 292

Photo 12.3 Worksheets were prepared beforehand based on the suggested templates 292

Photo 12.4 Similarly to the charades game played in class (Chapter 9.1.3 word card game), groups played charades 293

Photo 12.5 Students walked around and filled in tasks 293

Photo 12.6 Once at school, students worked in pairs 294

Photo 12.7 Brainstorming 296

Photo 12.8 Draft Writing task 297

Photo 12.9 Self-assessing Checklist 298

Photo 12.10 Final writing task 298

Photo 12.11 Writing a Dialogue between 2 fictitious characters visiting the same place (K5) 300

Photo 12.12 Write suggestions to visitors to keep the place clean 300

Photo 12.13 Write information that could be included in a leaflet regarding the place you visited (K1, K4 and K7) 301

Photo 12.14 Describe how you played charades (K8 and K2) 301

Photo 12.15 Write a dialogue between two creatures that live in the Natural Park (K5) 302

Photo 12.16 Write a diary entry describing today's visit to the Natural Park(K6) 302

Photo 12.17 Write a poem using an acronym 303

Photo 12.18 Write a recipe for something you would love to eat at the natural park (K8 and K2) 303

Photo 12.19 Write Captions for the park 1 304

Photo 12.20 Write Captions for the park 2 304

Photo 12.21 Write Captions for the park 3 304

Photo 12.22 You meet a mouse in the park. Write your conversation (K5) 305

Photo 12.23 Write a thank-you letter to the park rangers (K1, K7) 306

Photo 12.24 Students explaining in front of their peers and other guests 308

Photo 12.25 Observing animals 312

Photo 12.26 Students were allowed to observe the habitat of the animals 312

Photo 12.27 Pupils could even enter the habitat when considered safe 313

Photo 12.28 Brainstorming session in Class 3.1 314

Photo 12.29 Brainstorming session in Class 3.2 314

Photo 12.30 Gr3 student working individually 314

Photo 12.31 Student reading the story about Gamri's farm 315

Photo 12.32 Students in a group discussing their building at the initial stages of the process 317

Photo 12.33 LEGO building at a slightly more advanced process stage 317

Photo 12.34 one of the farms complete with trees, tractors, and arches 318

Photo 12.35 Farm 2 318

Photo 12.36 Farm 3 319

Photo 12.37 Farm 4 319

Photo 12.38 Farm 5 320

Photo 12.39 Farm 6 320

Photo 12.40 Farm 7 321

Photo 12.41Groups working on their writing task individually 321

Photo 12.42 Groups working on their writing task individually 321

Photo 12.43 Writing Task 1 323

Photo 12.44 Writing Task 2 323

Photo 12.45 Writing Task 3 324

Photo 12.46 Writing Task 4 324

Photo 12.47 Writing Task 5 325

Photo 12.48 Writing Task 6 325

Photo 12.49 Writing Task 7 326

Photo 12.50 Writing Task 8 326

Photo 12.51 Writing Task 9 327

Photo 13.1 Questions used as prompts 344

Photo 13.2 VAS 15th May 2022 AB4 347

Photo 13.3 Using tangible objects to relate projections to life 350

Photo 13.4 Amalgamating hands-on tasks with writing in Grade 4. Tasks are differentiated (writing instructions) 352

Photo 13.5 Amalgamating hands-on tasks with writing in Grade 4. Tasks are differentiated (putting in order) 352

Photo 13.6 Instructions written by a Grade 4 student after crafting a Christmas stocking 353

Photo 14.1 Educator explaining how collaborative practices increased effectiveness in the learning processes 380

Photo 14.2: Educator going through the eBook project with teachers from other schools 380

Photo 14.3 An example of MKO (Vygostky, Figure 2.6) 380

Photo 14.4 The 2024-2025 online storytelling activities organised for the students by Polylino 380

ABBREVIATIONS

(alphabetically)

FG	Focus Group
IM	Individual Meeting
IWB	Interactive White Board
LA	Learner Autonomy
LAS	Learner Autonomy Scale
LOC	Learning Outcomes Curriculum
LOF	Learning Outcomes Framework
LOS	Lesson Observation Sheet
MKO	More Knowledgeable Other
SBA	School-Based Assessment
SEC	Self-Evaluation Checklist
TLES	Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale
VAS	Visual Analysis Sheet
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Rationale

Studies have demonstrated that students who experience autonomy in their learning journey exhibit heightened motivation and engagement (Mammadov & Schroeder, 2023). Although learner autonomy is acknowledged as essential for lifelong learning (Siacor & Ng, 2024), and despite international educational reforms promoting learner-centred methodologies, conventional teacher-centred approaches still dominate numerous educational systems (DeBattista & Portelli, 2014; Otara et al., 2019; Peresso, 2016) limiting discovery and linguistic engagement (Caruana & Fenech, 2021). In the local field, studies observe that Maltese primary classrooms are largely teacher-driven. Evidence presented states that in Malta, teachers typically lead from the front, dominate classroom discourse, and control assessment, with student responses often limited to brief utterances (Peresso, 2016). It is also claimed that across the island, there is a culture of uniformity in Maltese education, characterised by centralised curricula and standardised textbooks. This centralisation reinforces teacher-centred teaching methods (DeBattista & Portelli, 2014) and limits teacher autonomy in adapting instruction to individual student needs. This case study examines the influence of targeted pedagogical modifications and teaching strategies on fostering student autonomy (detailed in Chapter 3) in a learning outcomes curriculum context (explained in Chapters 4 and 7), which was predicated on specific statements regarding what learners should comprehend, execute, or value following a learning experience. This study will also assess whether this enhancement results in increased teaching and learning efficacy. A case study research design was employed to ensure that the methodology used in the study (detailed in Part 2, Chapters 5 and 6) facilitates profound insights, enabling findings from which conclusions can be drawn (Simons et al., 2003).

The case study is grounded in classroom-based research, examining how to establish a learning environment in which students are active participants in their educational journey rather than mere recipients of knowledge. The notion of teaching and learning effectiveness, elucidated further in Chapter 6 (Section 6.3.9), is consistently articulated across international

and national policy frameworks. Effectiveness is conceptualised as high-quality curriculum implementation and pedagogical practice that enable learners to know more, remember more, and apply learning independently. This doctoral research enabled a thorough examination of the integration of learner autonomy (detailed in Part 3 of this study) within a learning outcomes curriculum (refer to Chapters 4 and 7). The effectiveness of incorporating learner autonomy is evaluated not merely by its presence in instructional practice, but by its impact on key indicators such as the quality of learning, the degree of student engagement, and the coherence between the intended curriculum, classroom enactment, and learners' experiences (Benson, 2011; Little, 1995; MEDE, 2015). When the inclusion of autonomous learning practices demonstrably enhances these dimensions within both national and international educational frameworks, it is regarded as an effective pedagogical strategy that aligns with the principles emphasised by school review organisations, as detailed in Chapter 6. The term 'effective' will be used throughout this case study in line with these principles.

Based on answering the two main research questions detailed later in this chapter, this study investigates the provision of explicit pedagogical modifications to the methodology of teacher participants, facilitating student ownership of their learning trajectories. Utilising a systematic approach grounded in a cyclical research design, detailed in Part 2, Chapter 6, and employing qualitative research-specific tools detailed in Chapters 5 and 6, autonomy-supportive instructional behaviours elucidated in Part 3 of this study are integrated into the teacher's planning and methodology. While aiming to improve students' autonomous learning, a range of qualitative tools is used to investigate and present evidence on the overall educational experience resulting from the development of learner autonomy skills.

1.1 Relevance of this study

In a rapidly evolving global environment, educators must cultivate critical thinking, adaptability, leadership, relationship-building skills, digital literacy, and social awareness to maintain a competitive edge in a performance-oriented landscape (Future of Jobs Report 2025 in World Economic Forum Report 2025). The World Economic Forum (January 2025) asserts that the future of education necessitates adaptable, inclusive, and individualised systems. The forum also contends that conventional uniform techniques are insufficient in a society marked by progressively different individual goals and professional trajectories. Education should provide practical experiences and use technology as both a spark and an enabler of educational innovation. The forum argues that education must extend beyond the simple

delivery of knowledge to encompass developing skills and mindsets essential for addressing complex, multidisciplinary issues. This study deems this adjustment as essential.

This study is relevant to pedagogical research and important to the Maltese educational field. According to the most recent data from the TALIS cycle (2018) published by the OECD (2025) in the report "Future of Education and Skills 2030", Malta is positioned among the lowest in average student life satisfaction among PISA-participating countries and economies (ranked 69 out of 73, 2022), while simultaneously having one of the highest proportions of students whose teachers have to prompt them to articulate their reasoning (ranked 4 out of 79, 2022). The findings regarding students' emotional regulation also serve as an additional concerning indicator for Malta. Maltese pupils exhibited the lowest stress resistance, ranking 41 out of 42 in 2022, and showed insufficient emotional control, ranking 58 out of 61 in 2022. These findings are alarming and require immediate action and attention.

There is limited research investigating the improvement of learner autonomy (Yeh & Lan, 2018), and the limited research on the actual implementation practices of the learning outcomes focuses on higher education institutions (Brooks et al., 2014; Casparsen & Frølich, 2015; Lassnigg, 2012; Sin, 2014). No local research investigates the implementation of the learning outcomes curriculum whilst promoting learner autonomy when teaching Maltese to students in primary schools. This research presents findings that establish a framework designed to establish a learning environment that equips students with the skills to become autonomous learners. Therefore, this study aims to address a research gap by investigating the development of learner autonomy through making the necessary adaptations to the teaching methodology in the Maltese primary classroom whilst implementing the learning outcomes curriculum by emphasising students' capabilities upon completion of a lesson or activity rather than focusing solely on the content imparted to them. It will enhance current understanding of learner autonomy and curriculum design by offering practical advice to educators and policymakers on promoting learner autonomy within a learning-outcomes curriculum. The inquiry will also provide insights on whether this enhances learning effectiveness and will result in elevated cognitive dimensions. The data will elucidate whether structured, persistent, regulated, and accountable behaviours enhance the effectiveness of the learning outcomes programme in the classroom (Part 3, Chapters 7 to 13).

1.2 The Research Questions

Research questions establish the study's aim and direction. Considering the aforementioned research focus, the two research questions addressed are:

1. In a curriculum-mandated programme based on learning outcomes, do learner autonomy pedagogical practices improve the teaching-learning process?
2. What adaptations to the pedagogy are needed to promote learner autonomy?

The two research questions are interdependent, with one contingent upon the other. There are six primary components derived from these two research objectives, which delineate the key areas for the progress of this research. The following is a breakdown of the research questions:

i. curriculum-mandated programme

What implications does a curricular-mandated programme have on teachers? (Part 1, Chapter 4 and Chapter 7)

ii. learning outcomes

What are learning outcomes? How did they come about locally? What is their impact on teaching and learning practices? What challenges do educators face in a learning outcomes approach curriculum? (Chapter 4 and Chapter 7)

iii. learner autonomy

What is learner autonomy? What do teachers understand by learner autonomy? (Chapter 3 and Part 3)

iv. pedagogical practices improve the teaching-learning process

What practices are used in class, and how can an educator improve his/her teaching/learning process? (Part 3)

v. adaptations to the pedagogy

In light of the introduction of the learning outcomes, what adaptations are needed (teachers' opinions before and after the research)? (Chapter 4, Part 3 and conclusion)

vi. promote learner autonomy

How can these adaptations to the pedagogical practices lead to improved learner autonomy? (Part 3 and conclusion)

1.2.1 Addressing the Research Questions.

This research aims to initiate a transformative change that fosters the development of learner autonomy skills among students in the two grades where the new learning outcomes curriculum was being implemented for the first time. Consequently, the decision to ground the research in a case study approach stemmed from the understanding that such methodology facilitates a more profound comprehension of the research domain and the phenomenon under investigation within its contextual framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995).

The following strategies were used during the case study to present evidence that addresses the previously mentioned research questions.

1. Engage in discussions with educators involved in the study about teaching methods that encourage learner independence. This was carried out during focus groups and individual meetings (Chapter 6).

2. Plan and create training pathways for educators. Focus groups aimed at training teachers (Chapter 6).

3. Create a framework of adaptations for educators to guide them in altering their methods to foster learner independence (Chapters 7 to 13).

4. Discuss and supervise the implementation of teaching practices that enhance and support learner autonomy while applying the Learning Outcomes Curriculum (during focus groups, lesson observations and follow up individual meetings).

5. Record the transition observed in both educators and students (presented as evidence in Chapters 9 to 13).

6. Develop resources to help educators reflect on their practices, with the goal of enhancing learner autonomy in their lessons (resources designed for this study are explained in Part 3. These are A Teacher's Evaluation Checklist, Target Learner Autonomy Traits and Characteristic sheet; other resources such as Weekly Scheme of Work, outcomes and

success criteria templates, project plan template, and collaborative plan template are presented in the Appendices section).

7. Create tools for researchers aiming to investigate the development of learner autonomy in classrooms and evaluate its effects on teaching and learning efficiency (A learner autonomy scale and Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale were designed for researchers).

1.3 My Positionality as a Researcher and Outline of the Study

1.3.1 Positionality

In order to uphold and maintain ethical standards throughout the research process, several measures were implemented to guarantee the integrity of this study. Section 6.5 in Chapter 6 provides a comprehensive discussion of all ethical considerations that have been meticulously addressed in context of this study.

Qualitative research inherently carries subjective values (Bryman, 2016), and it is important to acknowledge that researchers are not neutral (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). My motivation to conduct this research stems from my extensive experience in education, having served in several schools in Malta in all three sectors, as a teacher, a member of the leadership team, and as head of school for several years. For an extended period, I assisted educators in securing the necessary resources and support to ensure that their instructional practices inspired, engaged, and empowered learners to achieve their full potential. This significantly affirms my position as an insider within the field of education. This study is guided and inspired by my external viewpoint as a researcher, having left my school employment as head of school to join the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. The motivation of educators plays a vital role in the process of implementing change (Debono, 2020). With the recent introduction of the learning outcomes curriculum in Malta (Chapter 4), it became evident that teachers were confronted with yet another transition that required them to engage in planning, implementation, and evaluation (detailed in Chapters 7 to 13). In contrast to the teacher-centred didactic approach, the outcomes-based curriculum signifies a shift that may pose challenges for some educators who may not be fully equipped or qualified to navigate this change (ibid., 2020; Xerri & Hili, 2022).

My bias for a child-centred approach is balanced by the data presented as evidence in

this study, collected from the teachers and students during this study. My motivation for this study embodies the core principles underlying the necessity of prioritising learner autonomy in every educational experience.

1.3.2 Outline of the Study

This study, which focuses on the teaching of Maltese, was carried out during the first year of implementing the learning outcomes curriculum in Malta. It was carried out in three classes of seven- to eight-year-old primary school pupils from two grades attending a girls' church school: two classes of Grade 3 and one class of Grade 4, each having 24 students. The context of the study is elaborated in Chapter 6 Section 6.1. Out of the 72 pupils invited to participate, only 3 opted out. Therefore, 69 students participated. The pupils who did not participate in the study still participated in all the Maltese lessons and activities organised in the study. The primary school where the study was held has two classes in each grade. Only one of the two Grade 4 classes participated in the study, as the other class was being taught by a Supply teacher who was replacing the main teacher during that year. She was still invited to all focus groups, as will be explained in Chapter 6.

The research methods, delineated in Chapter 5 and explained in the context of the study in Chapter 6, were all grounded in qualitative research. The selection of participants was predicated on a convenience sampling methodology, as the case study required substantial time investment, and the institution where the research was conducted was the one where I could allocate the most time. The sampling was also purposive, as the sample of classes was based on the fact that the learning outcomes curriculum was being implemented for the first time only with those classes for the primary school during the scholastic year when the study was conducted. This will be explained in Section 6.1.1.

This thesis is depicted in Figure 1.1.

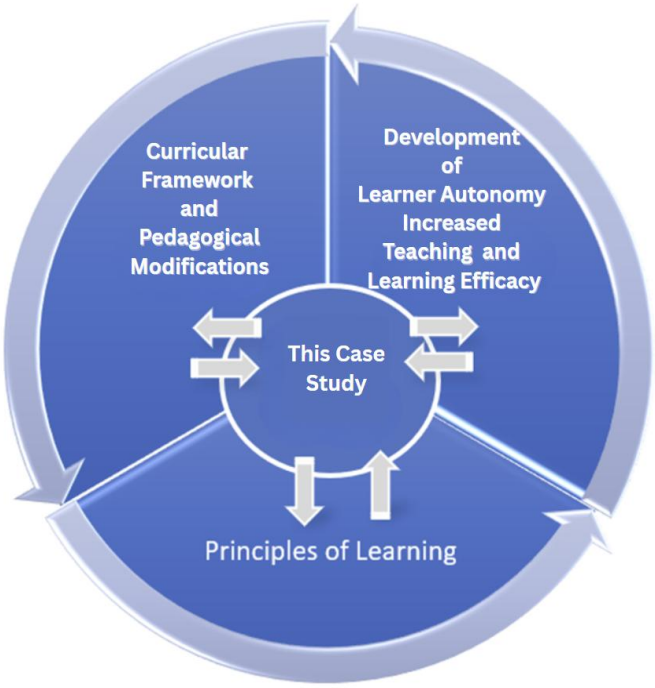


Figure 1.1: A diagram depicting the processes occurring in this research

The diagram (Figure 1.1) illustrates a series of sequential phases in a circular flow model, highlighting the interconnectedness of each stage and the seamless transition to the next. This diagram demonstrates that the study's framework is grounded in theoretical foundations and that it actively contributes to the established body of knowledge. The research is structured into 4 parts. The theoretical aspects discussed in Part 1 informed the development of Parts 2 and 3, which concentrate on the curricular framework and the adjustments made to the teaching methodology. The results presented through the interventions made in this case study, as detailed in Parts 2 and 3, further contribute to knowledge. Part 1 presents the literature review; Part 2 focuses on the research methods; Part 3 presents an analysis of the data in the context of this case study; and Part 4 discusses the findings and how they contribute to local knowledge and educational inquiry. The research is structured in 4 parts as follows.

Following this introductory chapter, the literature review (Part 1) starts with Chapter 2, which focuses on distinctive theoretical areas which will be used as a base for the practical aspect related to the implementation phase of this research, which will be tackled in the second empirical part of this dissertation. Chapter 2 concentrates on learning theories and their provision of essential principles that serve as the foundation for all practical classroom decision-making. A network of connections (Figure 2.6) illustrates the similarities between the fundamental principles of Bloom's hierarchical taxonomy across the cognitive, affective,

and psychomotor domains and social development theory, with a particular focus on Bandura's and Vygotsky's theories concerning social development, the Zone of Proximal Development, and the pedagogical concept of the More Knowledgeable Other, all of which underpin the empirical research. The commonalities of the theories, as illustrated in Figure 2.6, are then used as underlying fundamental principles of the adaptations made to the teacher methodology, used throughout the case study and presented as data in Part 3. All specified theoretical frameworks are based on fundamental concepts that immediately impact classroom pedagogy, enabling the application of teaching and learning methods aligned with the learning outcomes approach as an instructional tool.

Chapter 3 focuses on learner autonomy, offering a theoretical analysis of its significance in enhancing learners' skills within educational contexts. This discussion focuses on the educator's responsibility to address student diversity in the classroom while ensuring the integrity of the implementation process. The power dynamics in the classroom are tackled together with the implications and adaptations teachers need to make to move towards a learner-centred pedagogy that fosters autonomy.

Chapter 4 focuses on the rationale behind the introduction of the learning outcomes approach in the European Union. The shift in teaching and learning methodologies needed for the effective implementation of learning outcomes are addressed with a reference made to the move taking place in European education and training policies and practices, a process which followed the launching of the European qualifications framework (EQF) and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET), putting learning outcomes firmly on the European states' political agenda. The shortcomings associated with implementing a learning outcomes curriculum and concerns for policymakers and educators are highlighted. This chapter outlines the process of introducing the learning outcomes curriculum in Malta and its resulting implications for schools.

Part 2 of this thesis encompasses Chapters 5 and 6. Both focus on the research methods, but from a different perspective. Chapter 5 highlights the theoretical framework behind the study and the rationale behind the different qualitative research methods adopted: focus groups, individual meetings, questionnaires, lesson observations, and photography. It also elaborates on the case study as a research approach. It presents this research's ontological and epistemological positioning, and ethical considerations are explained. Then, Chapter 6 presents how the theory presented in Chapter 5, in relation to the qualitative research methods, is implemented in the context of the study. It delineates the context of the

participant school and presents profiles of the teacher and pupil participants. The ethical considerations and protocols implemented prior to the initiation and throughout the duration of the case study are emphasised. This chapter also explains how the case study developed over a cyclical design whilst using the qualitative research methods mentioned in Chapter 5. This chapter explains how the methods were implemented in an iterative pattern. This chapter also explains the contextual ethical considerations and the researcher's reflective and reflexive practices adopted along the case study.

Part 3 of this thesis comprises Chapters 7 to 13. These chapters emphasise the exposition of data. To answer both research questions, the analysis focuses on the effect the pedagogical transition proposed in this study during the teaching of Maltese had on the development of learner autonomy and the efficacy of the teaching and learning processes. In order to do this, I will draw the analysis from the visual data (photos) and written data (field notes from meetings held during focus groups and individual meetings, interviews with students, lesson observations and questionnaires) to present findings. Since the study was held during the first year of implementation of the Maltese learning outcomes curriculum, the research needed to focus on the implementation practices of the learning outcomes, specifically on how I proposed that they are used as a tool within the context of this case study. This is explained in Chapter 7. Chapters 8 to 13 concentrate on the emerging themes: the presentation of the phenomenon under investigation in its preliminary stage is presented in Chapter 8; then Chapters 9 to 13 focus on the pedagogical modifications as follows. The correlation between an increase in collaborative practices and the effect this had on learner autonomy and teaching and learning effectiveness is detailed in Chapter 9; the correlation of the enhancement in the use of technology and the effect this had on learner autonomy (Chapter 10); the cultivation of self- and peer-assessment competencies and how these contribute to the development of learner autonomy (Chapter 11); and the promotion of learner autonomy through project work (Chapter 12). Finally, Chapter 13 focuses on the underlying modifications implemented to the teachers' questioning tactics and the increase in the use of concrete examples. The timeline of the implementation of the changes delineated in the different chapters is illustrated in Chapter 6, Section 6.6.1, Figure 6.9.

Part 4 comprises the final two chapters. Chapter 14 discusses the research's contribution to local knowledge and educational inquiry, detailing how the phases carried out during the study brought about change. It analyses the intricate interrelationships and catalytic relationships that emerged from the research findings. Chapter 15 is the concluding chapter. It discusses the study's limitations and problems and elucidates the research's generalisability

and transferability. The importance of the process of data triangulation is highlighted, along with suggestions for future initiatives and research projects.

PART 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Working with literature is an essential part of the research process. It inspires, informs, educates and enlightens.

(O'Leary, 2017, p. 187)

This investigation aims to address a gap in the existing research on the Maltese educational system. It examines the degree to which the instructional methods employed in teaching Maltese to primary school students, within the framework of a learning outcomes-based curriculum, foster learner autonomy in the classroom. The focus of this study examines the experiences of participants, both educators and students, during the cyclical process of the research.

Part 1 of this study focuses on the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 explores the Principles of Learning, elucidating the pertinent learning theories that underpin this study and inform the pedagogical decisions regarding methodological modifications made during the empirical research. Chapter 3 addresses Learner Autonomy, and Chapter 4 examines the background and local context as a backdrop to the learning outcomes curriculum.

CHAPTER 2

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

'Learning is an enduring change in behaviour, or in capacity to behave in a given fashion, which results from practice or other forms of experience.'

(Schunk, 1991, p. 2)

2.0 Introduction

Throughout the years, learning theories have provided systematic frameworks for planning and executing instructional design tasks. Since Dewey in 1888, every learning theory has offered a repository of validated teaching strategies. A theory provides educators at all levels with a basis for selecting strategies, demonstrating how specific procedures align with the unique environment and the learners involved. Comprehending learning theories enables educators to identify diverse pedagogical strategies that foster the development of autonomous learning skills in pupils. These skills will also benefit individuals who experience challenges in learning.

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks of learning that directly influence cognitive development and the efficacy of curricular programmes based on the learning outcomes approach. Each framework will contextualise implementation approaches, rendering each theoretical framework pertinent to educators in a practical sense.

2.1 The influence of Bloom's Taxonomy on pedagogy

Albeit its limitations which are elaborated on in Section 2.1.1, Bloom's framework for educational objectives, namely his Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956), is a framework which plays a vital role in promoting deep learning by shifting the focus from mere memorisation to the development of higher-order cognitive abilities, including critical thinking and problem-solving (Forehand, 2010). Bloom's multi-tiered taxonomy includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, emphasising the holistic dimensions of learning, including emotional engagement and skill development (Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia, 1964). These characteristics are particularly relevant in competency-based education, where attitudes, beliefs, and practical skills enrich holistic learning experiences (Kennedy et al., 2015). Through this model, learning objectives emphasise knowledge retention and its application and integration, aligning with contemporary competency-based educational frameworks (Seaman, Brown, & Quay, 2017). Despite its shortcomings, which are discussed later (Section 2.1.1), Bloom's taxonomy has profoundly impacted pedagogical theory, curriculum development, and assessment methodologies (Krathwohl, 2002).

Cognitive Domain

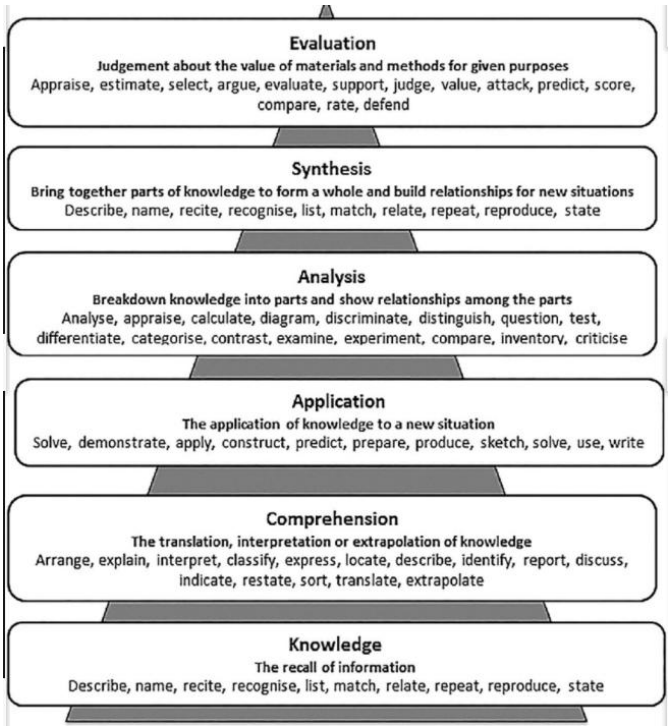


Figure 2.1 Cognitive Domain Hierarchy with associated verbs (Atalia et al., 2022, p.33)

Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) revised Bloom's original taxonomy, enhancing the cognitive domains by adopting a more dynamic view of learning. This updated paradigm corresponds with modern educational trends, like student-centred learning, inquiry-based instruction, and constructivist pedagogy, which prioritise active interaction with information (Miller, 2018). It categorises cognitive processes in a hierarchical framework, advancing from fundamental memory and understanding to sophisticated skills such as analysis, evaluation, and creation. This organised methodology provides educators with a systematic framework for developing instruction and assessment across multiple educational tiers (Anderson et al., 2001).

In primary education, where fundamental cognitive skills are cultivated (Jarvis et al., 2003), Bloom's taxonomy facilitates the systematic design of curriculum that progressively improves students' cognitive capabilities (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001). The cognitive domain relates to intellect and intelligence, focusing on the acquisition and application of knowledge, while the emotive domain directly affects the use of this knowledge. Educators can enhance student engagement and cognitive growth by setting learning objectives that encourage increasingly complex thinking. The taxonomy informs diversified instructional strategies, enabling educators to tailor assessments and learning activities to accommodate diverse student requirements (Sousa, 2017). In response to the limitations in critical thinking skills among Maltese students, as indicated by the TALIS study results in Chapter 1, the advancement towards superior cognitive abilities in analysis, creation, and evaluation represents a progression towards greater independence in thought and autonomous critical decision-making, encompassing self-reflection on one's work (Little, 2020).

Affective Domain

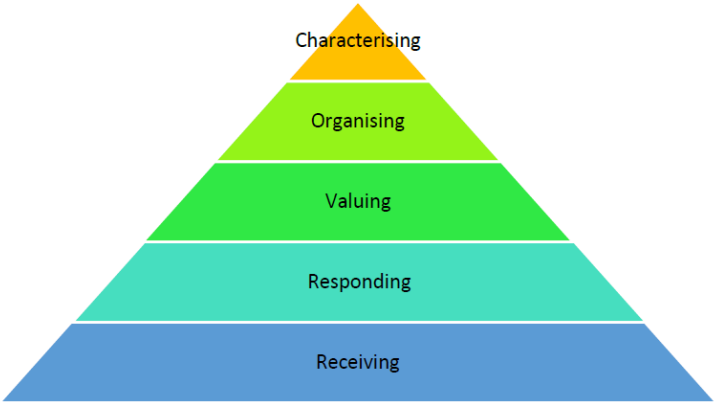


Figure 2.2: Levels of Affective Domain

The affective or emotional domain, which, as shown in Figure 2.2, is also hierarchical, consists of five traits: receiving, responding, valuing, organising, and characterising. This domain aligns with the cultivation of learner autonomy, as it promotes the development of attitudes, values, self-regulation, and motivation, all of which are fundamental to autonomous learning. To achieve the first Receiving level, a learner advances through a continuum that commences with a passive absorption of information. Alternatively, one may choose to concentrate on the information by engaging and participating actively in the learning process. When learners embrace new experiences or knowledge, they cultivate autonomy by making informed decisions regarding their education. The second level, Responding, denotes an individual's active engagement in answers, but not completely acknowledging the necessity of implementing the action. This indicates a position within the affective domain hierarchy that demonstrates an individual's engagement may be voluntary or driven by a desire to engage in learning for personal fulfilment. This is expressed as an emotional reaction to acquiring knowledge. This level also promotes the cultivation of autonomy in learners, as they are actively involved in their educational journey. The third tier in the affective domain taxonomy is Valuing, characterised by the internalisation of a specific set of values. This results in motivation, prompting the individual to actively regulate their behaviour. Defined by the readiness to seek the valued entity and commitment, intrinsic motivation is a fundamental characteristic of autonomy in learners. Learners learn the value of their learning process through intrinsic motivation when they value their learning activities. The fourth tier of the affective domain is Organisation. Throughout the process, the learner would have assimilated a set of values. When the learner faces scenarios where several internalised values are pertinent, he/she must systematically organise these values. The individual acts in accordance with the established dominating value. After this stage, the learner will have assimilated and structured the values to the extent that they become ingrained inside the individual, resulting in a system of personal attitudes and behaviours. As a result of reaching this domain, they develop learning autonomy skills by making decisions in line with their learning, managing their own time and setting their own learning goals. In the final level, Characterising, the individual is defined by the expressions of their internalised values. The internalised values correspond with the essence of this research, which seeks to implement instructional strategies that connect with learners' interests, to foster enduring academic motivation and success. As learners develop their autonomy driven by intrinsic motivation, they actively govern their learning without relying on the teacher. Research (Jagger, 2013) indicates that learning activities such as debating cultivate emotional traits and significantly improve

student engagement, critical analysis, cognitive flexibility, and willingness to learn. Such learning opportunities facilitate incorporating pedagogical strategies that engage cognitive and affective domains, ensuring a comprehensive approach to imparting value-based material.

Psychomotor Domain

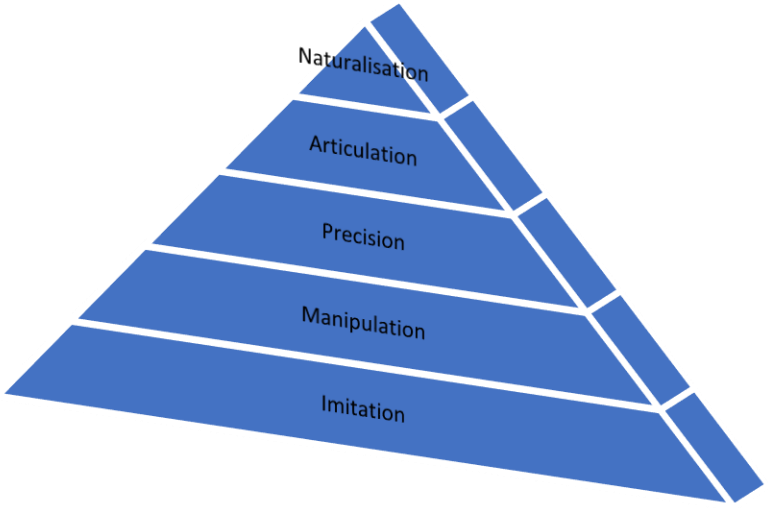


Figure 2.3 Psychomotor Domain

The psychomotor domain illustrated in Figure 2.3 emphasises physical movement, coordination, and motor skill development. Psychomotor skills are characterised by speed, precision, and distance, and in primary educational environments, they can vary from basic tasks like erasing an error in a notebook to more complex activities such as playing charades (refer to Chapter 12 Grade 4) and engage in the hands-on construction of representational models using modular LEGO components, thereby fostering active learning through physical manipulation and scene-building (as presented in Chapter 12 Grade 3). Once again, the levels are hierarchical, with each level signifying varying degrees of expertise in execution. The foundational level is imitation, where a student merely replicates; this is succeeded by manipulation, then precision, followed by articulation, and culminating in naturalisation, the mastery level attained when a student exhibits high performance and the actions become instinctive (Ruhl, 2021). The findings presented in the context of this case study (Part 3 and discussed in Part 4) will demonstrate that the hierarchical structures presented in this taxonomy do not necessarily require a sequential progression. This limitation of the taxonomy is further elaborated in the next section.

2.1.1 Limitations of the taxonomy

Notwithstanding that the taxonomy serves as a fundamental educational framework, categorising cognitive skills into hierarchical levels to inform curriculum creation and assessment (Nurmatova & Altun, 2023) is rigid. Recent critiques have identified many limits to consider when applying its principles. The initial aspect is the hierarchical limitations. The linear evolution of the taxonomy from lower-order to higher-order thinking is contested by the interrelated nature of cognitive processes. Both versions, Bloom's (1956) and Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revised version, offer a misleading perspective on learning. Learning is neither hierarchical nor linear. A linear picture erroneously suggests that various cognitive processes are distinct and that one may execute a particular ability independently from the others. It has been posited that its hierarchical structure may inadequately represent the intricacies of cognitive processes, giving the mistaken impression that some skills are more difficult and important than others (Stanny, 2016). It can blind us to the integrated process in students' minds as they learn. Skills like analysis and evaluation often co-occur, making a strict hierarchy overly simplistic (Main, 2021). It also creates the erroneous perception that abilities are more challenging and significant than others. It can obscure the cohesive process occurring in pupils' thoughts during learning (Nurmatova & Altun, 2023). Skills such as analysis and assessment frequently transpire concurrently, rendering a rigid hierarchy too simplistic. The rigid hierarchical structure may not effectively accommodate the dynamic and context-dependent nature of learning, potentially limiting its effectiveness in fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Main, 2021). It does not account for the complexity of most learning processes. Additionally, the taxonomy does not account for the learner and the unique differences each brings to the table, such as prior experiences with the content and different learning styles and learning difficulties learners might face. Critics (Stanny, 2016) have expressed apprehensions about the empirical validity of Bloom's Taxonomy and its acknowledgement of socio-cultural influences in learning. It lacks empirical evidence and fails to consider the construction of knowledge within sociocultural contexts. The critique of the taxonomy for its disregard of socio-cultural conditions in knowledge formation may restrict its applicability in varied educational environments. These factors can influence the development of autonomy-supportive and independent skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills, suggesting that a more flexible and learner-centred approach may be necessary. The cultivation of autonomy in learners emphasises innate drive and their engagement in decision-making. Benson (2011) also contends that the cultivation of learner

autonomy is context sensitive. This transfers power to learners, whereas Bloom's taxonomy is often task-oriented, predominantly teacher-led, and emphasises structured instruction.

Notwithstanding the critiques and the design of other educational taxonomies created over the years, Bloom's taxonomy remains the one underlying most of the main emerging perspectives for the principles of learning used to date (Anderson & Sosniak, 1994). It has stood the test of time and is still used by curriculum designers and educators at all levels of education worldwide (Forehand, 2010). Despite the limitations, it continues to be a fundamental aspect of educational practice, influencing curriculum design, teaching strategies, and assessment methodologies. Its persistent significance underscores its transforming influence on education, guaranteeing that learning is systematic and meaningful (Anderson & Sosniak, 1994).

The limitations are overcome by adopting a learner autonomy framework, as explained further in the next section.

2.1.2 The relevance of Bloom's taxonomy to this research

Maltese pupils require their teachers to prompt them to articulate their reasoning (OECD, 2025 mentioned in Chapter 1). Whilst addressing the research questions, this research focuses on fostering independent thought and autonomy. Chapters 9 to 13 present and analyse data on a modified teaching methodology that fosters the growth and development of learner autonomy among participants. Chapter 14 draws on these findings to comprehensively discuss the catalytic effect that emerged from the adaptations made.

Despite the limitations mentioned earlier, Bloom's taxonomy offers educators a framework that provides direction when tailored to the educational setting. When the teaching is autonomy-supportive, the learner can attain a heightened degree of critical thinking (explained more in Chapter 3) associated with a degree of understanding expressed through acquiring factual knowledge or inferential learning processes.

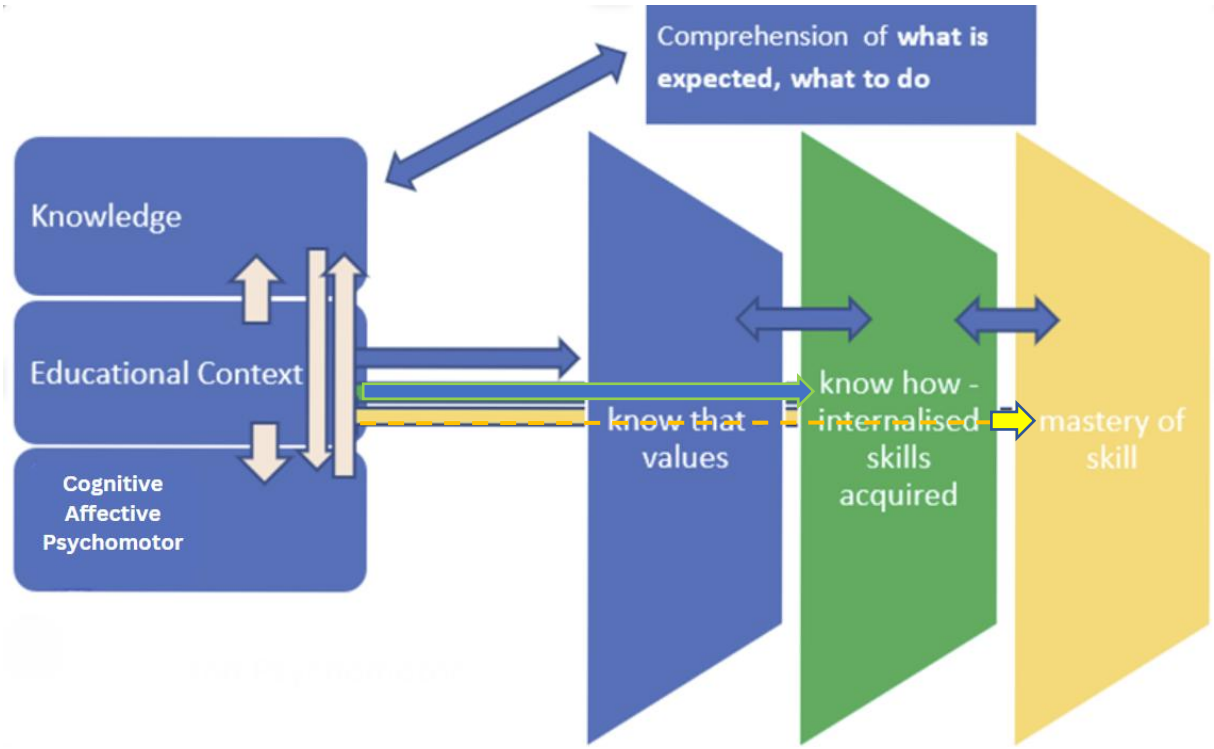


Figure 2.4: My interpretation of how Bloom's taxonomy leads to connections made in education.

Figure 2.4 represents my interpretation of the conceptual framework for learning that integrates knowledge, educational context, and skill acquisition across Bloom's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

1. Knowledge and Educational Context
    - Knowledge is influenced by the educational context, which encompasses cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.
    - The educational context plays a crucial role in shaping the learning process by providing an environment where knowledge is constructed and applied.
2. Comprehension of Expectations
    - Learners must first develop an understanding of what is expected and what to do to guide their learning process. This is a reciprocal process with Knowledge.
3. Progression of Learning
    - Know That (Values): Learners acquire understanding of concepts and internalise values related to the subject.

- Know-How (Internalised Skills Acquired): Learners apply their knowledge to develop practical competencies.
- Mastery of Skill: The final stage involves achieving proficiency and expertise in each skill.

4. Interconnections
    - Knowledge, educational context, and comprehension work together to facilitate the transition from theoretical understanding to practical skill acquisition.
    - Arrows between stages indicate the iterative nature of learning, emphasising continuous development and reinforcement.

This framework emphasises the necessity of synchronising knowledge, educational environments, and skill development to facilitate comprehensive learning and mastery of the subject matter while delineating the processes required for effective knowledge acquisition (Kennedy et al., 2015). This transition underscores the need to transform the focus from mere knowledge dissemination to an authentic learning experience (Munzenmaier & Rubin, 2013), aligning it with a more intentional curriculum (Adams, 2015; Forehand, 2010). As Adams (2015) articulated, this shift introduces a new dimension to all cognitive processes. Knowledge can be addressed through a factual learning activity (recall of terminology and facts), conceptual (categories, theories, principles, and models), procedural (knowledge of techniques, processes, or methodologies), and metacognitive (including self-assessment abilities and knowledge of various learning skills and techniques).

As explained, learning is neither hierarchical nor linear. Educators require a clear structure, and the hierarchical representations of the domains, when presented fluidly rather than rigidly, effectively elucidate the learning objectives for educators during lesson planning. Associated with multiple intelligences, problem-solving abilities, creative and critical thinking, and, more recently, technological integration (Noble, 2004), and when adapted to the needs of the specific context, the framework allows categorising educational aims, experiences, learning processes, and evaluative enquiries and challenges. It assists teachers in concentrating on the fundamental question underlying their preparation and execution. It assists educators in comprehending the rationale for each step and how they might facilitate their students' progression through cognitive levels, enabling them to strategise the speed and advancement of each target. The revised Bloom’s taxonomy delineates a single verb for each

of the nineteen subcategories, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains, hence providing clarity on aligning a specific verb with the desired outcome of a particular learning process. The clearly defined structure can be used as a reference, presenting educators with a tangible tool that can be used to facilitate the learning process. When adapted to the specific learning context, it also provides a universal language applicable across disciplines and across teachers (both horizontally teaching the same grade and vertically teaching the same subject in different grades). This can assist pupils in comprehending the interrelation of topic content and, through the advancement of conceptual procedural knowledge, the taxonomy empowers teachers to design assignments that facilitate students' engagement in more sophisticated higher-order thinking.

This section presents a theoretical framework for the advancement of the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains as delineated by Bloom, illustrating how educators might facilitate students' progression through levels to enhance these domains more profoundly and sophisticatedly. It also offered insights on how the application of taxonomy can be fluid and need not be perceived as a rigid, linear, and hierarchical instrument. This aspect is demonstrated in practical terms in Part 3 of this study. The following section explores a theoretical framework that highlights the importance of the social dimension in teaching and learning processes and how this social aspect fosters students' evolution into more autonomous and successful learners.

2.2 The social development theory

Learning is a complex process influenced by a wide range of factors. Since Rousseau's assertion in the 18th century that society unnaturally modifies persons, the impact of the social environment on individual development has been deemed significant for behavioural change. In the mid-20th century, Sears examined the processes by which children develop values and beliefs, as well as individuals' responses to stimuli. He argued that just as the external world acts on an individual, the individual also influences the external world and that, therefore, social development was dyadic rather than monadic (Grusec, 1992). This fundamental concept became essential while examining the comprehension of social relationships.

2.2.1 Bandura's social learning theory

The social learning theory, more recently pioneered by psychologist Bandura, posits that observation and modelling play a primary role in learning (Deaton, 2015). Bandura's theory transcends behavioural theories that posit all behaviours are acquired through conditioning, as well as cognitive theories that examine psychological factors like attention and memory. Observation is crucial in ascertaining the manner and content of individual learning. Bandura's social learning theory posits that learning can occur only by the observation of others' behaviours. Bandura asserted that individuals acquire new knowledge through observation of others (Deaton, 2015). He also observed that language acquisition and growth are grounded in social learning. Social learning involves acquiring knowledge by observing others, with the intention of modifying one's behaviour in certain social situations (Grusec, 1992).

The fundamental tenet of this framework is that an individual adopts a conduct by seeing another person or entity that has successfully executed that behaviour. This is accomplished by mirroring and imitation. One can modify mirrored behaviour based on the resulting repercussions. The individual will modify their behaviour based on the observations and evaluations conducted (Bandura, 1977). Adaptations will depend on the alignment of behaviour with an individual's personality, capabilities, limitations, personal experiences, physical attributes, and whether the behaviour is socially acceptable (Grusec, 1992). This evaluation will determine the extent to which behaviour is emulated.

Bandura posits that cognitive mechanisms are essential for behavioural modification (Deaton, 2015). The fundamental principles that form the basis of Bandura's theoretical framework for learning and are applied in various circumstances within the empirical section of this study are:

Attention: To learn effectively, one must maintain focus, as any distractions will adversely impact the learning process. The greater the interest and innovation of the observed model, the more attention it commands.

Retention: After a conduct is demonstrated, it is crucial for the individual to retain the acquired information and be capable of retrieving it when necessary at a later time.

Reproduction: Upon focusing on a behaviour and retaining the information, the observed behaviour can subsequently be executed. The practice of this habit and modifications to one's capabilities further enhance and refine the skill.

Motivation: Upon successful modelling of the behaviour, both positive and negative reinforcement are influential factors. If an individual encounters a positive or negative outcome, the behaviour is reproduced to a greater or lesser extent, accordingly.

Consequently, these concepts suggest that individuals modify their initial behaviour. It is asserted (Grusec, 1992) that individuals acquire linguistic skills by emulating the language usage of their surroundings. This then results in affiliation with others, since the individual identifies with their role models. By acquiring various learnt behaviours, individuals will begin to associate with one another (McLeod, 2011). McLeod (2011) asserts that behaviour is acquired through modelling, observation, and reciprocal experiential learning, sometimes referred to as vicarious learning. The pragmatic uses of social learning theory can directly tackle challenges associated with learning difficulties. It is asserted that teaching strategies grounded in social learning promote increased learner engagement (Deaton, 2015). This theoretical concept provides the foundation for modifying the teachers' methodology in this case study, where, through my interventions, explained in Chapter 6, enhanced collaborative social networking was implemented. Within the classroom dynamics of the context of this research, an analysis was made of the data collected to find whether this increased collaboration developed learner autonomy and increased teaching and learning effectiveness. To facilitate healthy language development, it is essential to establish classroom-supervised conditions that encourage children to learn via observation of their peers and their teachers, who serve as role models.

2.2.2 Vygotsky's role in the development of social development theory

Vygotsky's research and theories have, over time, established the basis for what is recognised as social development theory. This emphasises the significance of social contact in cognitive development. Vygotsky firmly asserted that community is essential in the process of meaning-making. He contends that learning is essential for human psychological functioning and asserts that social learning precedes development (Smith, 2019). His views assert that the interaction between the learner and the environment encompasses various interconnected, tangible phenomena within a single relationship (Derry, 2013). The various

interactions evolve over time (Veresov, 2017) and are generative in nature as individuals gain new personality traits and features throughout the process (Kellogg & Veresov, 2021). This element is crucial in my case study, as the generative nature of the abilities acquired by the students was monitored over a year during which data was collected to find the case and effect of modifications made to the teachers' methodology. An individual's knowledge and comprehension are linked to the immediate circumstances (Derry, 2013). Vygotsky posited that the 'first moment' (Kellogg & Veresov, 2021, p. ix) represents the relationship between the child and the environment, encapsulating the social context of development. This is not related to any specific physical attribute of a child or their environment. Nor is it situated in any physical location. However, 'the environment is the source of development' (Moll, 2014, p.45). It is this environment with its important connections and relationships found in the physical surroundings of the individual, which must be analysed and included (Kellogg & Veresov, 2021) in order to ensure that the cognitive development of a child is being nurtured.

Two of the main principles underlying Vygotsky's theories of cognitive development, which advocate the previously mentioned claims, are the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The concept of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), central to Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), is crucial in fostering learner autonomy and enhancing learning effectiveness. Recent studies underscore the pivotal role of More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs)—including teachers, peers, and digital tools—in scaffolding learners to bridge knowledge gaps and promote self-regulation. For instance, Mamun (2022) introduced the Predict-Observe-Explain-Evaluate (POEE) framework, integrating digital tools to support inquiry-based learning, thereby enhancing students' self-regulatory skills. Similarly, Schnaubert and Vogel (2022) demonstrated that adaptable scaffolding through Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) scripts and heuristic worked examples significantly bolsters learners' self-regulation and argumentation skills in mathematics. These findings affirm that strategic scaffolding by MKOs is essential for fostering effective learning and autonomy.

Rabalais, Aleo, and Wellington (2024) examined how digital platforms can serve as MKOs, facilitating participatory experiences and collaborative learning in native language settings. Their study highlights the potential of online communities to provide expert guidance and support, enhancing native language literacy and engagement. Such studies underscore the evolving understanding of MKOs in native language learning, emphasising the importance of leveraging both digital platforms and L1 mediation to enhance learning

outcomes. Through guided interactions and targeted modifications to teaching methodologies, this study focuses on young learners and investigates whether internalising skills leads to transitioning from dependence to independent problem-solving (see Chapters 9, 10, 12 and 13). Effective MKO facilitation improves metacognitive skills, allowing students to manage their learning processes (Mercer, 2016). Consequently, organised MKO assistance inside the ZPD promotes autonomy, facilitating sustained cognitive growth and enhanced learning (van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010). The fundamental facet of this idea is that the More Knowledgeable Other possesses greater expertise in a specific subject or field than the learner.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the cognitive space between a child's current knowledge and their potential learning capacity. The ZDP represents the area around a learner's comprehension in a certain context, with the bottom limit being the threshold at which the child acquires understanding via their own endeavours. Conversely, the upper limit represents the capacity and potential of an individual's comprehension, attained through interventions that facilitate the child's access to this knowledge, so bridging the divide between the lower and upper thresholds. This notion supports the premise that a child's cognitive development requires nurturing and that learning is not only dependent on the enhancement of individual cognitive talents. Interventions focused on the child's development are essential in the implications of this notion (Seita et al., 2019; Podolsky, 2012) (also refer to Chapters 9, 10, 12 and 13).

The MKO and the Zone of Proximal Development collectively establish the basis for the scaffolding element of the cognitive apprenticeship instructional approach. Scaffolding is the method by which the more knowledgeable partner tailors the level and nature of support provided to the learner, aligning it with the child's learning requirements throughout the encounter. Vygotsky characterises the Zone of Proximal growth as the "actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving" and the child's "potential development as determined through problem-solving with adult guidance or in collaboration with more proficient peers" (Vygotsky & Cole 1978, p.86). It is the metaphorical chasm between a learner's current capabilities and their still unattained potential. The child's Zone of Proximal Development is not fixed. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is initially determined by a child's pre-existing knowledge or competence in a particular domain of intellectual growth, which in this research was observed and recorded as evidence in Chapter 8; however, with appropriate educational support, presented through data presented in Chapters 9 to 13, the

child's competence evolves, so altering the ZPD correspondingly (Gauvin & Fontich, 2020). Learning diminishes the disparity between current capabilities and potential achievements (refer to section Collaborative Writing Chapter 9), as it enables greater accomplishments (Kellogg & Veresov, 2021; Seita et al., 2019; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). This suggests that for any assigned activity, regardless of a learner's initial ability to perform it independently, the provision of suitable support will, as per Vygotsky, function as an enhancement through the scaffolding effect. This research investigates whether, with the assistance and direction of diverse scenarios acting as More Knowledgeable Others (MKO), learners will progressively tackle increasingly complex tasks, and the educator progressively diminishes the level of assistance as the learner acquires more proficiency and learners' autonomy skills are enhanced. This technique, rooted in Vygotsky's emphasis on programme design, is particularly relevant to Maltese primary classes, as it addresses the diverse learning needs of children with varying abilities and attitudes.

2.3 Situated Cognition

Situated cognition theory represents a transition from a mechanistic standard psychology approach to an emergent and social understanding of learning (Salomon, 1996), based on Vygotsky's and Leont'ev's work in psychology. Cognitive apprenticeship models are instructional approaches that make expert problem-solving processes visible to learners through guided experiences in authentic contexts. Rooted in Vygotskian socio-cultural theory, these models involve modelling, coaching, scaffolding, articulation, reflection, and exploration. Collins (1998) describes contextual learning as acquiring knowledge and skills within authentic contexts and situations. This research investigates the learning that occurs when learners are immersed in environments conducive to the application of newly acquired behaviours (Schell & Black, 1997) and how, with the appropriate adjustments to teaching methodologies, this can also lead to and enhance learner autonomy.

Cobb (2001) claims that the term situated cognition incorporates a range of theoretical positions, all arguing that cognition is fundamentally linked to the social and cultural contexts in which it occurs. As previously mentioned, Vygotsky's work focused on the roles of social interaction and sign systems in intellectual development. He argued that the mind is created through a process of internalisation of social interaction into the cognitive processes of individual thought. Leont'ev took this argument further by stating that face-to-face

interactions encompass cultural practices that constitute the broader context of intellectual development (Cobb, 2001; Moll, 2014).

This learning theory encourages educators to create contextualised learning situations that present learning as a social practice in real-life situations (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The analytical aspect of this theory advocates the idea that learning is generative and involves creating or co-creating. The social aspect of this theory suggests that learning occurs when at least a portion of the learning time occurs in partnership with others. In this case study, teachers were asked to embed in the learning scenarios opportunities for creating and co-creating (Chapters 9 to 12) in meaningful contexts, enhancing conceptual understanding, critical thinking, whilst utilising real-world contexts which enhance the relevance and transferability of learning. (Matsuo, 2020).

2.3.1 The relevance of situated cognition to this research

Learning must extend beyond the teacher and students, transcending the confines of the classroom (Moll, 2014). This can be accomplished by engaging experts, visiting sites, involving the local community, and utilising digital platforms to access remote and inaccessible locations and learning experiences (Kellogg & Veresov, 2021). Data presented and analysed, particularly in Chapters 9, 10, and 12, assess whether this fosters learner autonomy in students and enhances teaching and learning effectiveness.

Figure 2.5 illustrates my interpretation of the process by which a student acquires knowledge through a contextual cognition model. The stages involve utilising personal experiences followed by critical reflection, culminating in active experimentation and abstract conceptualisation rooted in the learner's personal narrative. Experience can lead to active exploration, which prompts critical thinking that culminates in abstract conceptualisation. This evolves in a non-linear, non-sequential fashion, as indicated by the arrows in the illustration.

This learning process can be represented by my interpretation of the non-linear idiosyncratic processes involved.

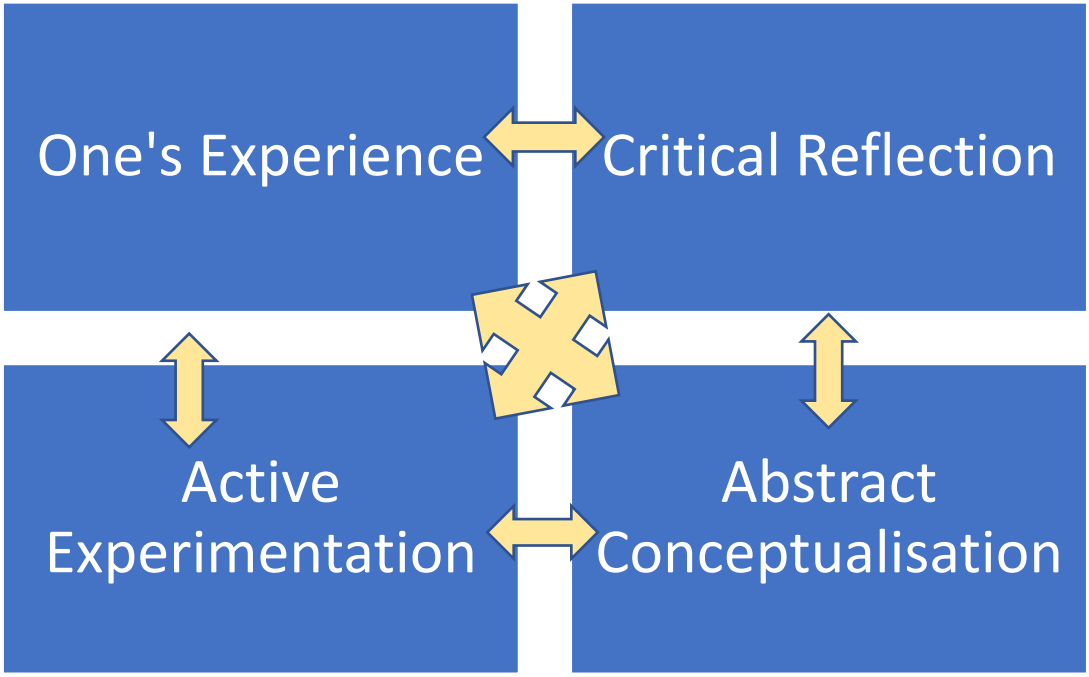


Figure 2.5: A visual representation of my interpretation of the non-linear processes that lead to learning through situated cognition.

Figure 2.5 illustrates that the pathways to learning enable learners to actively gather information through interrelated processes that are cumulative and non-sequential, without a specific order or hierarchical arrangement.

Learners are part of communities where one learner uses their skills to assume different roles at different times, depending on the learners' needs. Therefore, a learner can be a coach in one instance and a learner in another. This is referenced in Chapter 9, which focuses on collaborative strategies used in a multi-dynamic network of interactions (Figure 9.1 and elaborated in Sections 9.1.1 and 9.1.2). There are several benefits to using situated cognition as a theoretical framework for learning (Collins, 1998; Moll, 2014). Firstly, learners are applying knowledge first-hand. They are also most likely to be more engaged in diverse situations through problem-solving. They can witness the implications of the learner's knowledge firsthand, and learners are supported throughout the learning process. This becomes possible because they are an integral part of it, as the structure is provided by the actual context in which knowledge is imparted (Brill, 1993). Part 3 will present evidence related to these concepts in relation to the development of learner autonomy skills and increased teaching and learning effectiveness.

2.4 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism, also referred to as socio-culturalism, promotes the idea that learners develop their interpretations of truth shaped by their background, culture, or inherent worldview. Linked to the developmental theories of Vygotsky and Bruner, as well as Bandura's social cognitive theory, social constructivism is a pedagogical paradigm that emphasises the importance of social interaction, language, and culture in shaping knowledge. Social constructivists assert that human behaviour shapes reality, which cannot be uncovered. Knowledge is a construct resulting from human activity, shaped by social and cultural influences. Social constructivists contend that humans generate meaning through their interactions within a given environment. This underscores the importance of the learner's social engagement with informed individuals in society, strongly related to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of cognitive development, which posits that within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), learning occurs through significant interactions with More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs) (Section 2.3.2). Knowledge is actively co-constructed through discourse, cooperation, and shared experiences rather than being passively absorbed (Palincsar, 1998). This theory underpins student-centred pedagogies, such as collaborative learning and problem-based learning, which foster critical thinking, deep understanding, and skill transfer (Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020). It underscores the significance of culture and context in comprehending societal occurrences while formulating knowledge based on this comprehension (Derry, 1999). This educational paradigm is predicated on assumptions regarding reality, knowledge, and learning (Kim, 2010), indicating that learners generate knowledge through their individual experiences. In the absence of social connections with more informed individuals and resources, young children will be unable to cultivate their cognitive talents through engagement with peers, adults, and the physical environment. Learning within this theoretical framework is the outcome of a social process stemming from individual interactions. Intersubjectivity arises when persons share common interests that serve as the foundation for their communication. These commonalities arise from a shared, albeit implicit, ideology regarding one's worldview. This location also exhibits shared social tendencies and potentially linguistic rules (Ernest, 1989). Social meanings and knowledge are constructed and evolved through negotiation processes and intersubjectivity with these groupings. Part 3, especially Chapter 12, implements these principles.

According to Vygotsky (1987), intersubjectivity not only facilitates communication but also enables individuals to acquire new information through group interactions. Schunk (2000) asserts that within this framework, knowledge emerges from interactions between individuals and their environment, residing inside cultures and the shared social meanings of the group's internal reality.

A pragmatic or emergent approach to social constructivism in the classroom emphasises that this framework should develop as necessity dictates. The comprehension, significance, and interpretation of the world will be examined from either an individual perspective or that of the collective group, such as the entire class or cohort. Transactional or contextual cognitive approaches emphasise the interactions between individuals and their environment, encompassing social relationships (detailed in Chapter 9, Section 9.1.2). Consequently, this theory posits that learning cannot occur in isolation from the environment. The learner's mind engages with its environment, consciously or unconsciously, throughout the teaching and learning process (as explained through methodological adaptations in Part 3).

It is essential to recognise that social constructivism does not constitute a specific pedagogy. This theory elucidates the process of learning, irrespective of whether learners utilise their experiences to comprehend a new subject or adhere to directives for creating a physical object (Schunk, 2000). The notion of constructivism posits that learners generate knowledge through their experiences. Lave and Wenger (1991) contend that educational approaches grounded in the constructivist paradigm underscore the necessity of collaboration among learners. Pedagogies rooted in the social constructivist perspective encompass peer teaching, peer collaboration, and the utilisation of programmes that foster such collaboration, problem-based instruction, and other methodologies that facilitate learning in conjunction with others (Schunk, 2000).

The epistemological perspectives articulated by the aforementioned theories assert that learning is constructed by individuals or groups, occurring not solely through the transmission of knowledge from a teacher or other sources, but also through interactions among individuals in social, real-world contexts. This research will examine how the learning process grounded in these theories fosters autonomy in learners.

2.5 Learning as a process – putting theory into practice

'Learning is not achieved by chance…it must be attended to with diligence'

(Abigail Adams, 1780)

This section examines how educational practitioners or policymakers can implement theoretical concepts in a language-learning classroom by devising effective strategies grounded in the commonalities highlighted in the previously discussed learning theories.

In any educational context, learning theories allow educators to make reliable predictions (Blaz, 2018). From the Enlightenment to the early 20th Century, it has been asserted that knowledge was systematically arranged, dictated by the subject's structure and independent of the learners. Students were not included in the educational process. Conversely, the teacher's function as the source was to guarantee that the learner was exposed to knowledge. The sole adjustment made was the varied entry points for learners, typically based on age, which facilitated access to this knowledge. When students regard the formal curriculum as a structure of facts to be acquired and skills to be exhibited with outcomes to be evaluated, they interpret their responsibilities in school according to the teachers' expectations (Cullingford, 2006). To enhance the efficacy of the learning process, instructional designers, including educators, must strive to cultivate a learning environment that prioritises cooperation, exchange of ideas and direct involvement of the learner.

Educational scenarios are intricate. This case study focuses on the nurturing of learner autonomy and teaching and learning effectiveness. This can only occur if the educator is also autonomous of rigid governmental mandates and independently determines appropriate instructional methods and classroom management strategies for their specific class and subject matter. Numerous factors, including administrative monitoring and societal expectations, shape this complex topic. Recent advancements in the educational sector have further complicated this issue.

In England, the proposed Schools Bill (2022) has ignited discussion on its effects on teacher autonomy. Critics contend that the bill's provisions, including the enforcement of the national curriculum and the requirement for qualified teacher status, may restrict the autonomy previously held by academies, thereby impacting educators' ability to tailor instruction to their students' needs (Spielman, 2025). In the United States (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015), apprehensions emerged regarding the erosion of autonomy of educators attributed to the heightened focus on standardised testing and hierarchical educational

practices. These considerations have resulted in a restrictive teaching environment, where educators feel compelled to teach students to pass the test, thereby constraining their capacity to utilise creative and personalised instructional strategies.

In Malta, teachers do not feel that they have a say in how best to adapt to their students' needs (Micallef, 2025). Furthermore, in this same study carried out in the church school secondary sector, teachers claimed that implementing the new educational reforms related to learning outcomes brought about an imbalance in teachers' autonomy across various schools. Reconciling the requirements of policy adherence with the professional discernment essential for effective instruction necessitates manoeuvring through a complex and frequently evolving educational environment. Teachers also feel that they are not equipped with the necessary tools to implement the new curriculum since limited training has been given. This aligns with another study by Caruana (2020), which critiques the emphasis on theory over praxis in Maltese teacher training, likely because of an instrumental, exam-driven culture that values immediate outcomes over deep pedagogical inquiry. In Maltese state schools, teachers are provided with teaching content by officials from the directorates that must be executed in the classroom. This offers no opportunity to develop customised programmes. This diminishes teachers' autonomy. Regardless of the degree of autonomy a teacher has, the teacher must create opportunities to tailor the learning programme to the specific cohort of students in their class (Srivastava, 2022; Wright, 1996). Additionally, the teacher has to guarantee that the resources employed and the methodologies adopted facilitate cognitive development and foster learning autonomy among the students.

In all circumstances, pupils are ultimately the responsibility of their educators. This research addresses these complexities, necessitating a nuanced approach that considers the aforementioned diverse factors, which also impact teacher autonomy. Empowering educators via supportive practices, such as the development of teacher-centric tools, professional development initiatives, and collaborative decision-making processes, can effectively mitigate these challenges and ultimately enhance educational quality. The empirical research presented in Part 3 analyses, in the context of this study, whether teachers can operate autonomously or collaboratively within a team, actively participate in developing a learning programme specifically designed to meet the class's needs whilst achieving learning outcomes.

2.5.1 The Application of theories into practice

Theory serves a vital and innovative function in educational research and practice (Higgs, 2013; Wilson & Peterson, 2006). The implementation of instructional methods in diverse educational contexts requires that the educator's planning and execution strategies be anchored in a solid theoretical framework. This knowledge must encompass theories on student learning, the curriculum content, and strategies for educators to facilitate student learning (ibid., 2006). Educators ought to ground their instructional methodologies in three modern concepts of learning, as delineated in the previously identified learning theories: first, that learning constitutes an active construction process with the student as the focal point of knowledge creation; second, that learning is inherently a social phenomenon; and third, that learning transpires through diverse interactions between the learner and their surrounding environment, with each individual experience contributing to further learning. Individuals assimilate and acquire language in many ways (Nor & Rashid, 2018). The native language, primary language, or mother tongue is the language learnt in early childhood. As children develop physically, their language capabilities also advance as they assimilate increasingly intricate structures with an expanding vocabulary (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006). It is typically learnt during the developmental process among individuals who communicate in the same language.

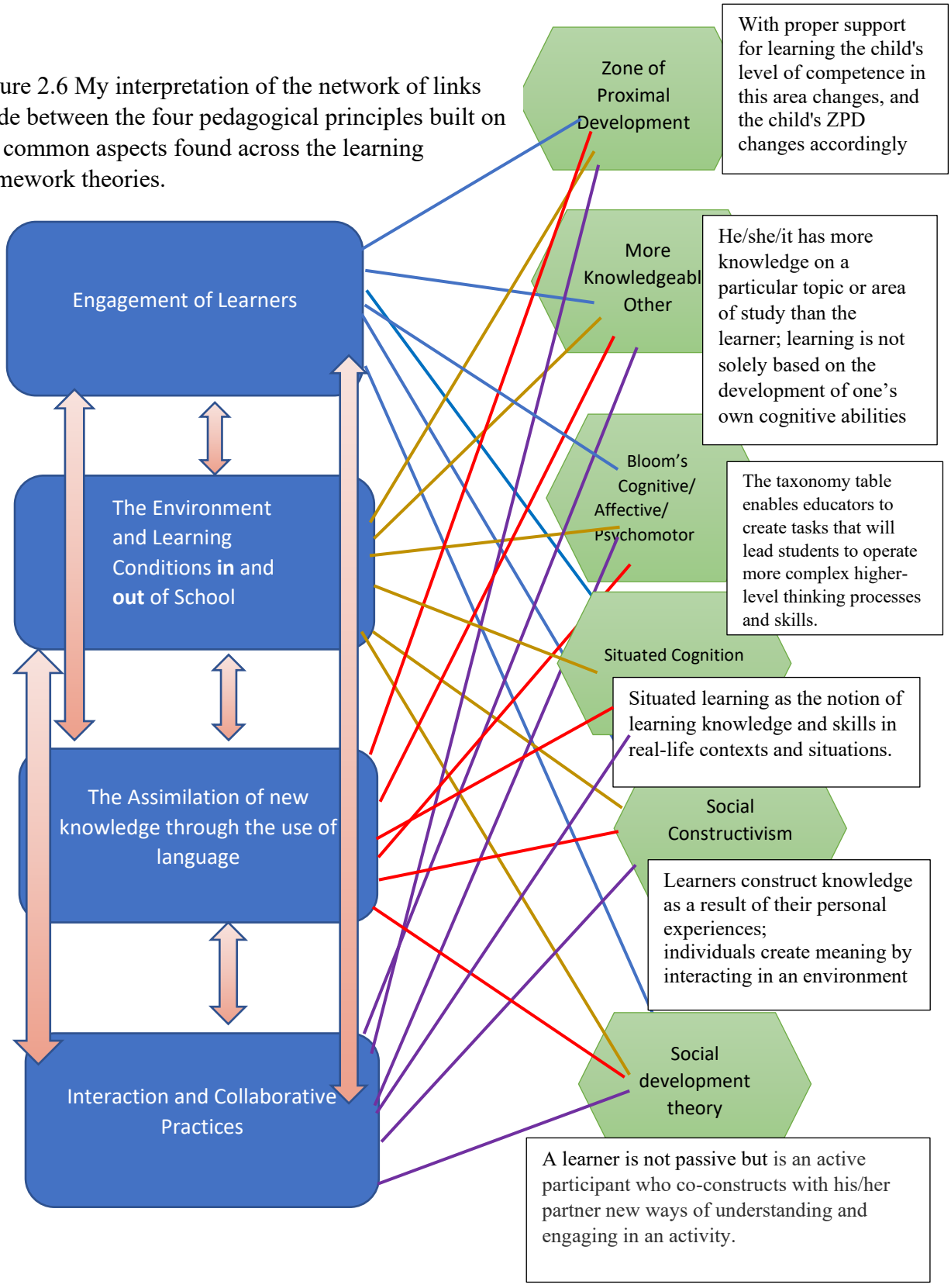
For the basis of this research and the development of effective instructional programmes, in the local context of learning outcomes curricula for the teaching of Maltese, one cannot be restricted to one theoretical position. No single theoretical base provides complete prescriptive principles for an entire design process (Smith & Ragan, 1993, as cited in Srivastava, 2022). The approaches presented by different learning theories yield varying results, and distinct competencies are achieved. When analysing learning theories in the context of designing effective instructional activities, one needs to focus on:

- How does learning occur?
- Which external and internal factors will influence the learning processes?
- How can transfer of learning occur?

Srivastava (2022) emphasises that various learning theories may advocate analogous strategies in response to comparable learning contexts. This section emphasises the implementation of successful pedagogical approaches in a language-learning environment. The research will thereafter explore methods to attain and cultivate learner autonomy and

enhance effectiveness in teaching and learning. From the previously mentioned learning theories, four primary pedagogical areas emerged as shared foundational concepts. These areas outline the significance of learner engagement, the impact of the learning environment on the learning process, the assimilation of new knowledge through language in conducive settings, and the influence of interaction and collaboration on learning outcomes. These four primary domains identified as common principles in the literature outlined in preceding sections are illustrated in Figure 2.6. They will thereafter inform the theme framework for the data analysis conducted.

Figure 2.6 My interpretation of the network of links made between the four pedagogical principles built on the common aspects found across the learning framework theories.



Engagement of learners

A key element of the previously discussed theoretical frameworks (Sections 2.2 to 2.5) emphasises that learners should not be passive; instead, they must engage in learning experiences that allow them to create and co-create, derive meaning from sensory input and actively participate in the learning process. Thus, the fundamental idea is that the learning process must include both the creation of meanings and the formation of systems of meaning. This will enhance the development of metacognitive skills in the learning process, progressing from simple knowledge recall without understanding to a higher cognitive level, where learners foster analytical, evaluative, and critical thinking skills. From the initial planning phases to the teaching and assessment of students, educators must realise that learning is a process and should continually present tasks that engage students in higher-order thinking, notably synthesis and evaluation.

Meticulously crafted activities, such as those detailed in Chapters 9 to 12, involving learning in partnership with others, cultivate problem-solving skills and extend beyond mere content. These activities facilitate generalisations and the transfer of knowledge. This methodology will enable learners to apply their knowledge to novel scenarios when confronted with new topics. This cognitive process, which enables learners to derive meaning, is facilitated by the language employed, through prompting, meticulously designed higher-order enquiries, guidance, and social interaction among peers.

Questions presented in class fulfil many functions. Chapter 13 will elucidate how the interventions made in this case study influenced the utilisation of questions and used them as a tool in class to foster learner autonomy while striving for enhanced teaching and learning efficacy. Questions designed to elicit closed-ended responses often impede students' engagement in the teacher-student dialogue process (Wolf et al., 2006), as they restate information already provided by the teacher, thus limiting the potential for the learner's internal discourse, as noted earlier. Research indicates (Wood, 1992) that excessive queries from the instructor reduce children's engagement in the conversation. Questions can be constructed to manage the class and to extract factual information, knowledge, or understanding. Chapter 13 analyses whether adaptations made to teacher methodology on questioning techniques resulted in increased autonomy in the learners. Formulating enquiries to gauge learners' perspectives while prompting them to expand upon their concepts is less evident, although it cultivates higher-order cognitive abilities such as analysis, reasoning, and

forecasting (Section 2.1; Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.4). Educators should provide opportunities for learners to make substantial contributions and articulate their opinions verbally and in writing. This method will augment learner engagement.

This pedagogical approach fosters an instructional design grounded in three essential elements (Brown, et al., 1989): the activity in which practice occurs, the cultural context that informs the designer's creation of the activity, and the concept that represents the knowledge acquired through the experiential interaction of these three elements. The legitimacy of integrating these aspects relies on the educator's ability to establish an effective teaching and learning environment, as well as the individual learner's capacity to absorb and produce new ideas and knowledge. According to Bednar (2007), learning is contingent upon a connection between the context and the knowledge it embodies. Consequently, educational technologies grounded in real-life contexts will enhance student engagement through relatability. This will evolve into cognitive processes that will then transform into newly learned information, becoming relevant and concrete based on personal experiences (Bada, 2015; Blaz, 2018; Srivastra, 2021). Part 3 will show how the design of a teaching and learning programme that fosters social interaction among learners, facilitates a transition from passive to active learning, leading to the development of learner autonomy. This is another shared characteristic that underpins the primary learning theories outlined in Sections 2.2 to 2.5, which is further developed in the subsequent section.

Interaction and collaboration between learners

A prevalent concept in the aforementioned learning theories emerges when juxtaposing the hierarchical cognitive and affective domains of Bloom's taxonomy with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and the notion of the More Knowledgeable Other, as well as Bandura's Social Constructivist approach. All these ideas emphasise the significance of interaction and collaboration among learners. The linguistic and cultural setting in which pupils are immersed affects their learning (Sylva et al., 2009). Practitioners must choose between acknowledging these impacts or actively managing them to capitalise on opportunities for progress. Regardless of how implicit or concealed the curriculum and material may be, young children are constantly learning (ibid. 2011). Consequently, educators must use approaches that facilitate discussions and exchanges among learners and various resources, whether human or otherwise (Chapter 10 details the use of technology).

This is particularly significant in language acquisition where language serves as a medium of communication and can only be acquired through interpersonal interaction and discourse. The interactionist perspective, also influenced by the environment, rooted in Social Constructivism and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2), emphasises the essential significance of interactions—both among children and with educators—in language acquisition. This methodology presently prevails in educational research (Rashid, Rahman & Rashid, 2016). It is posited that when children engage intellectually with their community through interpersonal language use, whether via oral or written communication, as well as through intrapersonal reflections, they construct meaning in response to a specific learning context (Nor & Rashid, 2018). The partnership between learners and those surrounding them will stimulate additional language development through the negotiation of meaning.

A common element of these concepts fosters an environment grounded in communicative and social skills, stemming from collaborative classroom settings. This learning strategy emphasises the active construction of knowledge by learners (James et al., 2007) and interactions with peers. This concept asserts that knowledge is produced, necessitating educators to design scenarios in which learners interrogate their own and others' beliefs. Collaborative reasoning exercises have been shown to enhance individual performance in task reasoning (Augustinova, 2008). A study by Littleton and Mercer (2016) reveals that discourse between students in groups is beneficial for problem-solving, learning and understanding. Such possibilities are recognised as infrequent in the Maltese classes (Aguis, 2016). Structured collaborative efforts facilitate effective interthinking (as elucidated in Section 2.6), resulting in enhanced achievement. According to Webb, Nemer, and Ing (2019), when educators implement a teaching design that promotes students to expound on their cognitive processes, this approach subsequently influences the relationships among students during collaborative work. This study demonstrates that the dynamics established between a teacher and students directly influence peer interactions among students. Another study conducted by Alexander et al. (2009) demonstrates that collaborative reasoning encourages students to engage in discussions about literary works, even in the context of composing argumentative writing. It is asserted that when educators facilitate discussions and offer guidance, students generate more predictions and explain their viewpoints more effectively than in controlled classrooms. As previously stated regarding the significance of fostering cognitive disequilibrium in learners, it is the educators' duty to provide opportunities

for analytical thinking and discourse, as many students lack such opportunities outside of academic environments. This, therefore, should directly impact the teachers' methodologies and choice of strategies and content. This study will proceed further and analyse the impact of these strategies on learner autonomy skills.

Young children have a profound eagerness to learn, and this socially-oriented method empowers learners with ownership of their educational experience. Learning is predicated on enquiries, investigations, and active participation (Bartolo et al., 2007). Educational programmes should aim to facilitate learners' active exploration of intricate subjects, so engaging them in cognitive processes within specific domains (Srivastra et al., 2021). This would yield a diverse manifestation of knowledge, accomplished through methods such as journal keeping, research reports, physical models, and creative representations (Bada, 2015), in conjunction with discussions and oral communication activities (Jagger, 2013). Participating in their creative aspect will yield learners capable of retaining and applying newly gained knowledge to real-life situations (Srivastra, 2021). The learning process must transpire in authentic contexts, as the interpretations of words may alter or develop based on the learner's existing comprehension of a term or concept (Ibid., 2021). A learner must comprehend the context and subsequently engage fully in the educational process. In this context, learners formulate individual interpretations derived from their personal experiences and interactions with others. To achieve optimal efficacy, it is essential for learners to interact with their peers and adults at school and at extracurricular activities in the target language. This encompasses interactions at home, with family, and in informal contexts. Both learners and environmental elements are essential, and their interplay will 'co-produce' information while fostering cognitive development (Bada, 2015; Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989). Knowledge is perpetually subject to modification and arises within circumstances pertinent to the learners.

The assimilation of new knowledge through the use of language

A prevalent characteristic referenced by the chosen learning theories is the interconnection between language usage and development through learning. Assimilation of knowledge relies on the active involvement of learners in the educational process (Jagger, 2013; Bada, 2015; Srivastra, 2021). Due to precise instructional design, learners will require opportunities for cognitive and affective development. Assimilating new knowledge is

unfeasible without a framework established from the learner's prior knowledge. All knowledge acquisition is interconnected, with new knowledge constructed upon previously acquired information. The advancement of this aspect of learning is facilitated by circumstances that offer possibilities for language use as a social endeavour. A prevalent characteristic referenced by the chosen learning theories is the interconnection between language usage and development through learning. Due to precise instructional design, learners will require opportunities for cognitive and affective development. All knowledge acquisition is interconnected, with new knowledge constructed upon previously acquired information. The advancement of this aspect of learning is facilitated by circumstances that offer possibilities for language use as a social endeavour. Blaz (2018) contends that formal educational experiences should facilitate the development of skills in receiving, responding, valuing, organising, and characterising. Consequently, through the skill of transfer, the learner will be able to apply their learnt information from one context to several other situations. These competencies will include problem-solving, creativity, and other advanced cognitive abilities.

Social interactions play a key role in learning, problem-solving, and cognitive development (Mercer & Howe, 2012), particularly through the affective domain, which connects emotional readiness with beliefs and attitudes toward learning. This domain supports critical language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—by fostering discussion, analysis, and argumentation (Blaz, 2018). As learners progress cognitively, especially at evaluative levels, they engage in deeper mental processes like concept formation and language use. This shift enhances knowledge acquisition. Findings drawn from the data collected in this study will analyse if this will also supports learner autonomy, ultimately promoting self-directed learning—a theme further explored in Chapter 3.

The environment and learning conditions in and out of school

Weiten (2004) asserts that environmental influences regulate language development. A shared aspect across the theories is the emphasis on the environment and the learner's exposure both within and beyond the educational setting. Cognitive theory posits that language development is merely one of several developmental milestones in intellectual growth, while interaction theory underscores the significance of the relationship between adults and children. The theories provide a continuum that regards learning as a lasting

alteration in behaviour. Some learners are totally influenced by their external environment (Ludescher, 2010). Theories position learners as central to their learning processes, with the setting and learning conditions as important in ascertaining the most effective techniques for learning to transpire. The development of the affective dimension is prioritised, emphasising the significance of learners' thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and values. The diverse scenarios encountered by learners enhance the collective knowledge base of the entire class group. Consequently, students are no longer characterised just by their identities within the confines of the classroom; instead, they are recognised as individuals with robust social lives that inform their presence in class. Processes must prioritise the interests, backgrounds, and learning habits of all students. Essential components in educator planning must encompass the learner's engagement with processes, the retrieval and transformation of stored knowledge into new concepts, and the manner in which newly learnt knowledge builds upon existing knowledge. Learning is a process that develops through the manner in which learners derive meaning from their individual experiences.

It is essential to provide a learning environment that consistently provides relevant learning opportunities for all learners. According to Srivastra et al. (2021), specific cognitive reactions would be elicited only if the knowledge is pertinent. Knowledge across many learning systems can be evaluated and distilled into fundamental components. On one end of the continuum, the emphasis is on creating the ideal environment for optimal information recall. In contrast, on the opposite end, higher-level cognitivist learning processes prioritise effective processing mechanisms. Consequently, the design must emphasise the active engagement of the learner, highlighting learner autonomy and metacognitive development. This can be accomplished through self-assessment and peer assessment or revision methods. Additional advanced skills cultivated would emphasise organising, sequencing, and processing, gained through cognitive methods such as brainstorming and drafting out ideas, outlining and summarisation.

The learning conditions at school must also include scenarios that may not always be available inside the classroom. Cognitive dissonance or disequilibrium (Jagger, 2013) is an important characteristic that individuals need to cultivate since it addresses their responses to circumstances that may contradict their established ideals. Consequently, such scenarios encountered through discussions or other collaborative tasks cultivate the abilities that enable students to manage competing perspectives and prepare them to advocate for positions with which they may not personally concur. Furthermore, cultivating a classroom atmosphere

where students engage with a social group holding divergent perspectives fosters the development of essential abilities, enabling learners to politely acknowledge individuals' freedom of opinion.

The next section focuses on the roles of the educator and the learner, as well as the dynamics that need to be created for the effective development of the aforementioned application in theory.

2.6 The role of the educator

The teacher-centred classroom predominant in Malta (DeBattista & Portelli, 2014; Peresso, 2016), referenced in Chapter 1, follows a teaching model of the teacher as the sage on the stage; the teacher is the primary source of information, and the learners passively receive it (Mascolo, 2009). For the aforementioned effective practices developed from Figure 2.6 to occur and for the practices to foster learner autonomy, which is the focus of this study, the teacher needs to take a back seat, enabling the learner to take ownership of his/her learning. The teacher's position must transition to that of the guide on the side when students assume greater responsibility for their learning. Therefore, the educator needs to set contexts in which skills will be learnt and applied (Prensky, 2010) whilst ensuring that learners manipulate information and therefore will be able to use what is learned actively. For this shift to occur, the instruction needs to be based on techniques of analogies, matrices and intertwined relationships, which would lead learners to link new information to prior acquired knowledge. Knowledge must be conveyed to learners in a significant manner, while educators should assist learners in organising retrieved material and relating it to new concepts. In class planning, it is essential to provide ample opportunities for 'the construction of individually suitable learning tasks' (Bruder, 2016, p. 15). Bedford, Brown-Grant, and Georgieff (2017) suggest that the educator needs to aim at instilling in primary age students the inherent value of knowledge, whilst developing skills related to sharing of ideas, learning with others, creativity and good knowledge citizenship. During lesson time, if learners do not manage to link the previously acquired knowledge to new knowledge, it would be either due to forgetfulness, that is they will be unable to retrieve stored information (maybe even due to missing information), or because of interference, memory loss or inadequate cues (ibid. 2017). Therefore, the educator needs to consider the importance of triggers that assist students in eliciting stored knowledge. This is a crucial element, so educators must incorporate it into

their regular teaching practices through structured activities, such as journaling and utilising charts and classroom tools. These tools aid memory retention and facilitate knowledge retrieval (Blaz, 2018).

Sensevy (2014) conceptualises teaching effectiveness as the capacity of teachers to orchestrate classroom interactions to promote intended learning outcomes. Drawing on the framework of didactic situations, he emphasises that effective teaching involves not merely the transmission of content, but the deliberate structuring of conditions in which students can engage, negotiate meaning, and construct knowledge. Effectiveness, therefore, lies in the dynamic relationship among teacher, learners, and content, highlighting the importance of professional judgment, adaptive pedagogy, and the ability to respond to the unfolding classroom context. In a study on what makes primary school teaching effective, (ibid., 2014) it is asserted that teachers need to help their students understand in ways that are not limited to a closed script, but also allow students to practice speaking, reflecting, and regulating their thought process and problem-solving. In this two-way dialogue, teachers can gain a deeper understanding of what students do or do not know and therefore adjust their teaching accordingly. Students feel part of the teaching and learning process while explaining their understanding or lack thereof, reasoning, and sharing their knowledge with the class. In another study by Rojas-Drummond, and Mercer (2003), researchers found that students achieving the best learning outcomes are those who allow more exchanges of ideas and mutual support, and where students have an active, vocal role in the classroom. Here, the teacher needs to look at the teaching and learning process as a social and communicative process.

In the design and planning of teaching and learning programmes and their associated activities, an educator's role is to select the most suitable and effective strategy grounded in relevant learning theory (discussed at the outset of the chapter). This selection, informed by the teacher's perspective, aims to enhance student learning across diverse contexts optimally (Srivastava, 2022), with technology serving as one such support. Technology has changed the roles of teachers and learners. Generation Z (born 1997 – 2012) (Turner, 2015) and particularly Generation Alpha (born 2013 – mid-2020s) (Jha, 2020) exhibit significant technology proficiency and possess a predominantly visual approach to perceiving and understanding their environment. Turner (2015) argued that Gen Z was raised in a technologically advanced society where information was readily available and social networking site activity is the norm. Students forming part of these two generations live in a

technologically driven reality (Jha, 2020) and are accustomed to short, concise clips containing substantial information. Prensky (2010) asserts that contemporary learners are digital natives who choose and favour alternative learning methods due to their inherent capabilities. Technology has not only profoundly changed education but has also greatly expanded access to education. Through access to vast amounts of information provided through books, audio files, images and videos, all available at one's fingertips through the Internet, educators can even ensure that the instruction is providing an inclusive opportunity for engagement and learning (Fitzgerald & Koury, 1996). Social networking platforms, when integrated into educational settings, can enhance communication, collaboration, and engagement among students and educators. Recent studies have demonstrated that platforms like Twitter facilitate timely feedback and improve student performance. Additionally, social media fosters community building by enabling new methods of information sharing (Mallia, 2014; Tiryakioglu & Erzurum, 2011) beyond the classroom, the school and even the country. Purposeful use of features and opportunities of social networks supports teachers' empowerment of the educational process with active learning, creativity, problem solving, cooperation, and multifaceted interactions, as well as students' use and improvement of their academic performance, inquiry, and alternative thinking skills (Walsh, 2019). Opportunities for communication and collaboration have also been expanded by technology (elaborated in Chapter 10). Traditionally, classrooms have been relatively isolated, and collaboration has been limited to other students in the same classroom or building (Dogoriti & Pange, 2014). Today, technology enables unprecedented forms of communication and collaboration. Students in a Maltese classroom can learn about scientists' adventures by actually following the expedition live. They can read experts' blog postings, view photos, email questions, and even engage in live video conferences with other students abroad or experts on a particular topic (Ibid., 2014). Students can share what they are learning with students in other classrooms, either within the same country or with students from different countries. Students can collaborate on group projects using technology-based tools since the walls of the classrooms are no longer a barrier, as technology enables new ways of learning, communicating, and working collaboratively (Bonanno, 2014). The role of the educator is to ensure that these opportunities are created.

This study focuses on developing learner autonomy skills during the instruction of Maltese to mixed-ability primary school learners with a heterogeneous level of abilities and competencies in the language. An educator must recognise that native language acquisition

fundamentally influences cognitive development and learning, as the primary function of language yields various outcomes (Mercer, 2016). Rochex and Crinon (2011) assert that insufficient ability and access to multiple linguistic genres will deprive children of broader educational chances associated with various disciplines and extracurricular activities. Although it can be contended that linguistic proficiency is not essential for non-linguistic domains like coding and mathematics, it remains asserted that language competence fosters consistent reasoning across all disciplines.

Proficiency in one's native language should be viewed as a mechanism that facilitates diverse opportunities, including the formulation of arguments, expression of viewpoints, analysis, and problem-solving (Hall & Cook, 2017). Children will attain proficiency in the distinctive discourses of subject groups through the functional aspect of their linguistic ability. Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that the linguistic dimension offers learning possibilities that allow individuals to integrate into communities of practice, thereby shaping their educational knowledge. Another concept pertains to Vygotsky's connection between the intra-mental and inter-mental realms. The cognitive-social link must be reciprocal; socially shared representations influence an individual's cognition, while their insights and language usage impact the social environment (Walsh, 2019). Acquiring knowledge in every discipline necessitates a degree of expertise to articulate its concepts, and mastering the cognitive processes associated with a subject entails developing the capacity to structure one's thoughts coherently. Thus, it is the linguistic application of shared information that facilitates an individual's capacity for critical analysis. Another linguistic component to explore is the teacher-student connection and the process of the More Knowledgeable Other, already elucidated in the class context. This expression of the social brain, facilitated by language (Mercer, 2018), relies on the formation and proper sustenance of relationships between the teacher and pupils, as well as among peers.

The primary instruments for a teacher while instructing a student and offering feedback on the student's performance are verbal communication and written expression (Wright, 1996). Consequently, as previously stated, the educator employs language to immerse students in various educational genres, and both must possess a certain degree of proficiency in their language usage. Proficient verbal communication is crucial, particularly in the context of collaborative learning and achieving problem-solving goals. This adult-child or child-child interaction fosters learning and cognitive advancement (Walsh, 2019). It is asserted that the significant function of classroom discourse will foster the enhancement of

children's cognitive and reflective abilities (Black & William, 1998; Whitebread, Mercer, Howe, & Tolmir, 2013), particularly regarding the impact on the cultivation of memory as a child's skill (Orstein, Grammer, & Coffman, 2010).

In the Maltese setting, the learning outcomes employed as a curricular framework are associated with a list of tasks, which are assignments given to learners that students must complete to demonstrate that the outcomes have been achieved. A task-based learning strategy (Robertson et al., 2006) is associated with various insights into language acquisition (Nunan, 2006). It is essential to recognise that the execution of a single activity addresses a range of outcomes. A range of exercises can be given, from brief and straightforward to more complex and lengthy exercises. Activities could include group problem-solving, simulations, and decision-making activities (Ellis, 2003; Hall & Cook, 2017). Tasks need to be different from grammatical exercises in that learners are free to use a range of language structures to achieve the various outcomes identified for the task (Willis & Willis, 2001). Nunan also reiterates that a task involves seeing learners engaged in various skills such as comprehending, manipulating the language, and producing work whilst interacting with a target language. During such learning instances, the attention will also focus on mobilising the learners' grammatical knowledge to express meaning.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter examines selected theoretical perspectives that form the conceptual foundation for sound pedagogical practices in language teaching. This review is succeeded by an investigation of the learning frameworks to identify commonalities regarding the significance of learners' active participation in the educational process, the role of collaborative interactions in fostering cognitive development, the integration of new knowledge via language, and the influence of social contexts and environments, both within and outside of school, on individual development. These commonalities are presented in Figure 2.6, on which the thematic analysis of the data presented in Part 3 is delineated. The learners' and teachers' role in developing these aspects was subsequently elucidated.

The next chapter will focus on learner autonomy and pedagogical practices that foster it in the teaching-learning process. It will also examine the necessary adaptations to traditional teacher-centred approaches to promote learner autonomy, emphasising the development of this concept and its significance in educational contexts.

CHAPTER 3
LEARNER AUTONOMY

To say of a learner that he is autonomous is to say that he is capable of taking charge of his own learning (Holec, 1979, p.4)

3.0 Introduction

The future of education is being shaped by a shifting landscape resulting from a a rapidly evolving and demanding social environment where prompt and informed decision-making is essential for successful functioning, learning, in particular language learning, should prioritise fostering learner autonomy (World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, 2025). The current global context requires individuals to demonstrate adaptability, resilience, analytical thinking and technological literacy. The Future of Jobs Report (World Economic Forum Report, 2025 pg. 22) asserts that education should provide practical experiences and be an enabler of innovation. It emphasises that educators must develop learning opportunities to foster critical thinking, adaptability, leadership, relationship-building, digital literacy, and social awareness in their students, thereby equipping them with the essential skills to succeed in a performance-driven landscape. One of the primary goals of education should be to foster learners' independence and autonomy (Blaz, 2018). Consequently, fostering skills related to learner autonomy is viewed as a means to enhance their opportunities for success (Wang, 2011).

This chapter examines the significance of fostering learner autonomy skills among students by emphasising the foundational theoretical principles (Section 3.1). It explores how educators can cultivate an environment conducive to achieving learner autonomy for all students (Section 3.2). This chapter concludes by referencing how a curriculum built on learning outcomes can foster learner autonomy. This is elaborated on in Chapter 4 and developed in context in Chapter 7.

3.1 Learner Autonomy: Theoretical Foundations and Pedagogical Implications

"You cannot teach anything. You can only help him find it within himself."

(Benson, 2008)

Learner autonomy encompasses the capacity and readiness of students to assume responsibility for their educational journey. This involves making informed choices regarding their learning content and methods, establishing objectives, choosing appropriate strategies, and assessing their progress. This encompasses self-direction, intrinsic motivation, and critical reflection. In the realm of education, the analogy pertains to the capacity of learners to operate autonomously, free from external control (Boud, 1981). This process entails the development of knowledge and understanding that are fundamentally subjective, with learners taking an active role in managing their educational paths. This encompasses various educational strategies and methodologies, elaborated upon in Section 3.2, aimed at fostering positive learning attitudes among all students while cultivating their motivation and self-assurance to take charge of their learning (Camilleri Grima, 2015). This process entails cultivating the inherent abilities and attitudes that individuals already possess, which can be enhanced to differing extents, as elaborated in section 3.1.2 titled 'Continuum of degrees of autonomy.'

Learner autonomy should not be conflated with learner independence. Learner autonomy should not be conflated with learner independence, as the two concepts are theoretically distinct despite often being used interchangeably. Autonomy denotes to the learner's ability to assume responsibility for, manage, and make informed decisions about their learning, typically within a structured pedagogical environment that supports such agency (Little, 2020; Benson, 2011). In contrast, independence implies learning without reliance on external guidance or scaffolding, suggesting a level of self-sufficiency that is neither necessary for nor characteristic of autonomous learning. Autonomy is therefore relational and context-dependent, emerging through guided opportunities for choice, reflection, and metacognitive engagement, rather than through the removal of teacher support. It is asserted that autonomy is "a capacity for action" rather than isolation (Little, 1991), and it develops within collaborative, scaffolded, and dialogic learning environments as delineated in Part 3 of this study. As learners cultivate autonomy, it is essential for them to engage cooperatively with both their teachers and peers, aligning with the requirements of the

educational framework. Throughout various phases of their learning journey, they must also seek guidance from their instructors (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Learner autonomy is inherently influenced by contextual factors, including the individual characteristics of learners, such as their personality and motivation, as well as their specific language learning needs and desires and the educational setting in which the learning takes place. Autonomy is a dynamic concept, characterised by variability rather than a stable, uniform condition attained by learners who exhibit autonomy in every context. Furthermore, an effective approach to fostering learner autonomy within the classroom is rooted in the collaboration between teachers and students (Thanasoulas, 2000). The discrepancy between the perception and expectation of the desired level of learner autonomy from both parties may result in a failure to achieve the intended autonomy within the classroom (Rahman et al., 2022).

Learner autonomy has garnered significant attention in recent years (Liu et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2022; Ozer & Yükselir, 2023), as it is posited that the cultivation of autonomy skills will enable individuals to excel in the rapid decision-making environment characteristic of contemporary society (World Economic Forum Report, 2025). Nonetheless, the foundational idea of autonomy can be traced back to the political milieu of ancient Greece, which ultimately paved the way for self-governance. Throughout history, numerous esteemed intellectuals, including Galileo, Rousseau, Dewey, Kilpatrick, and Freire, have examined the concept from a variety of perspectives (Camilleri Grima, 2007; Oracki & Gelişli, 2017). Dewey, a significant figure in philosophy and education, particularly in the realm of language learning, has made substantial contributions across three key areas: the connection between education and social engagement, the concept of education as a means of problem-solving, and the structuring of classroom environments. Dewey emphasised the importance of establishing a collaborative teaching environment that promotes a child's ongoing development in learning, rather than merely focusing on the acquisition of knowledge and subject matter (Dewey, 1966, reviewed in Benson, 2001, p.25-27). In the tradition of Dewey, Chalon, widely regarded as a pioneer of autonomy in language learning, established CRAPEL (Centre de Researches et d'Application en Langue). Subsequent to Chalon's passing in 1972, the stewardship of CRAPEL transitioned to Henri Holec (Oracki & Gelişli, 2017). All of them illuminated that autonomy is a significant domain that intersects with humanism, constructivism, and experiential learning.

Giambattista Vico, a pioneering figure in constructivist philosophy, remarked in 1710 that ‘one only knows something if one can explain it’ (Wang, 2011, p. 273). Based on this concept, constructivists assert that knowledge is actively constructed by learners who engage in participation. In this process, students engage in constructing information, thereby generating meaning and knowledge. As articulated by Thanasoulas (2000), learning transcends mere rote memorisation; it is a constructive endeavour that necessitates the active pursuit or even imposition of meaning derived from experiences (Thanasoulas, 2000). According to Wang (2011), the principles of constructivist teaching and learning promote the autonomy of learners.

Another philosophical dimension that supports the notion of learning autonomy from an alternative perspective is experiential learning. Woolfe (1992) identifies four primary components as the foundation of this concept. The initial subject of consideration is the student. It is recommended that students understand the processes occurring that facilitate their learning. The second indicates that the students engage in a process of reflection. The third aspect pertains to the experience and content, encompassing both the subject matter being acquired and the methodologies employed in the learning process. These hold significant importance for the individual. The fourth component emphasises the importance of the student being engaged in their entirety as an individual.

To enhance the learning experience, it is essential for learners to assume responsibility for their own educational journey as they engage with material that aligns with their readiness to learn (Little, 1991; Lazar, 2013). Little (1991, 2020) further emphasises that this fosters intrinsic motivation, indicating that the aforementioned components imply that a student actively engages in the classroom environment and learns to take responsibility for their own learning, which constitutes fundamental elements of the concept of learner autonomy. The role of the educator is articulated as one of providing support to the learner throughout the learning process (Sinclair, 2000). Students assume control of their educational journey, necessitating accountability for their individual choices. Individuals possess the inherent right to exercise autonomy in their decision-making processes, thereby circumventing the potential pitfalls associated with the decisions imposed by institutional frameworks (Crabbe, 1993, p. 443). Sinclair (2000) synthesises the concept of learner autonomy and, akin to Holec (1981), asserts that ‘autonomy is a construct of capacity’ (p. 7). The concept is articulated as the capacity of learners to engage in informed decision-making regarding their own educational processes. Little (1991, p. 4) further articulates learner autonomy as the ability to engage in self-reflection, make decisions, and act independently. The learner's readiness to assume

responsibility for their own educational journey is influenced by the notion that autonomy in learning relies on a constructive mindset (Sinclair, 2000), which is crucial for the 'purpose, content and process of learning' (Little, 1991, p. 204).

3.1.1 The role of the learner

Oraki and Gelisli (2017) assert that students undergo multiple stages necessary for the emergence of autonomous learning. They posit that students must be aware of the underlying processes that facilitate learning. Subsequently, the students engage in a process of reflection. Subsequently, the student, who has become an integral component of the educational process, will possess an understanding of both the content being studied and the methodologies employed in its acquisition, thereby fostering a holistic engagement with the learning experience. This aspect will be further explored in the context of this case study in Part 3. In adherence to the established learning outcomes curriculum framework, the process of achieving a designated learning outcome involves the preliminary testing of learning activities in draft form. Subsequently, learners engage in self-assessment of their performance before advancing to the execution of the actual task. In the process of acquiring the native language, individuals tend to prioritise reflection on their learning experiences over the practical application of the language itself (Tamer, 2013).

Wang (2011) emphasises the significance of negotiating the curriculum. The assertion is made that this approach will lead learners to engage more diligently and effectively, as their educational experience becomes more meaningful through the process of discovering their own ideas, formulating questions, and exerting effort to find answers independently. The process of curriculum negotiation enhances learners' sense of ownership regarding their tasks, subsequently elevating their commitment to the work at hand. It is imperative that learners assume the role of educational decision-makers (Boomer et al., 1992). Holec's definition (Holec, 1981) involves the establishment of educational opportunities that enable learners to cultivate skills in setting objectives, defining content and progression, selecting suitable methods and techniques, monitoring the learning process through effective communication, and assessing the knowledge acquired. Benson (2006) asserts that autonomy is a recognition of the learners' rights in our schools. According to Little (1991,7), the concept of learners' autonomy has emerged as a significant objective within the educational framework, with the intention of establishing a solid foundation for lifelong learning, as noted by Camilleri Grima (2007). Dickinson (1987), cited in Gardner & Miller (1996, p.6), articulates the concept of

autonomy as a condition wherein the learner assumes complete responsibility for all decisions related to their learning and the execution of those decisions.

Genç (2015) underscores the necessity for learners to engage actively, participate fully, and maintain a clear focus on their goals. The assertion is made that the establishment of goals will subsequently augment learners' motivation to engage in further actions. He further argues that language education ought to prioritise enhancing students' awareness of their learning processes. As discussed in the subsequent section 3.1.2 titled Continuum of Degrees of Autonomy, there exists variability in the levels of dependence among learners. The responsibility lies with the knowledgeable educator to implement effective strategies and methods (see Figure 3.1) to aid and empower the dependent learner in their journey towards greater autonomy. The significance of this matter lies in the fact that the dependent student, who is heavily reliant on the adults and occasionally peers in their environment, exhibits a reluctance to exercise independent judgement and to appreciate the value of knowledge. Consequently, this may hinder their progress along the continuum.

Little, Ridley, and Ushioda (2002) emphasise that the capacity for independent action in learners can only be cultivated when they are flexible and adaptive from their initial stages of the learning journey (Ozer & Yukselir, 2023). It is essential for learners to develop new skills, encompassing both cognitive abilities and a positive attitude towards the learning process (Camilleri Grima, 2007). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages emphasises the significance of enhancing learners' awareness of their current knowledge, establishing achievable and meaningful objectives, selecting appropriate materials, and engaging in self-assessment (Council of Europe 2001, Section 1.5). Furthermore, Lamb (2008) asserts that this skill ought to be incorporated as a key attainment for learners within the curriculum.

3.1.2 Continuum of degrees of autonomy

As previously noted, various levels of autonomy exist (Benson, 2001; Little, 2020; Rahman, 2022). A continuum spans from a total absence of autonomy and significant dependency to complete autonomy. Figure 3.1, as adapted from Houghton et al. (1988), illustrates the continuum transitioning from yellow to blue, reflecting the progression from dependency to autonomy through the enhancement of skills. The dynamics between the educator and the learner evolve significantly by implementing effective teaching strategies and methodologies.

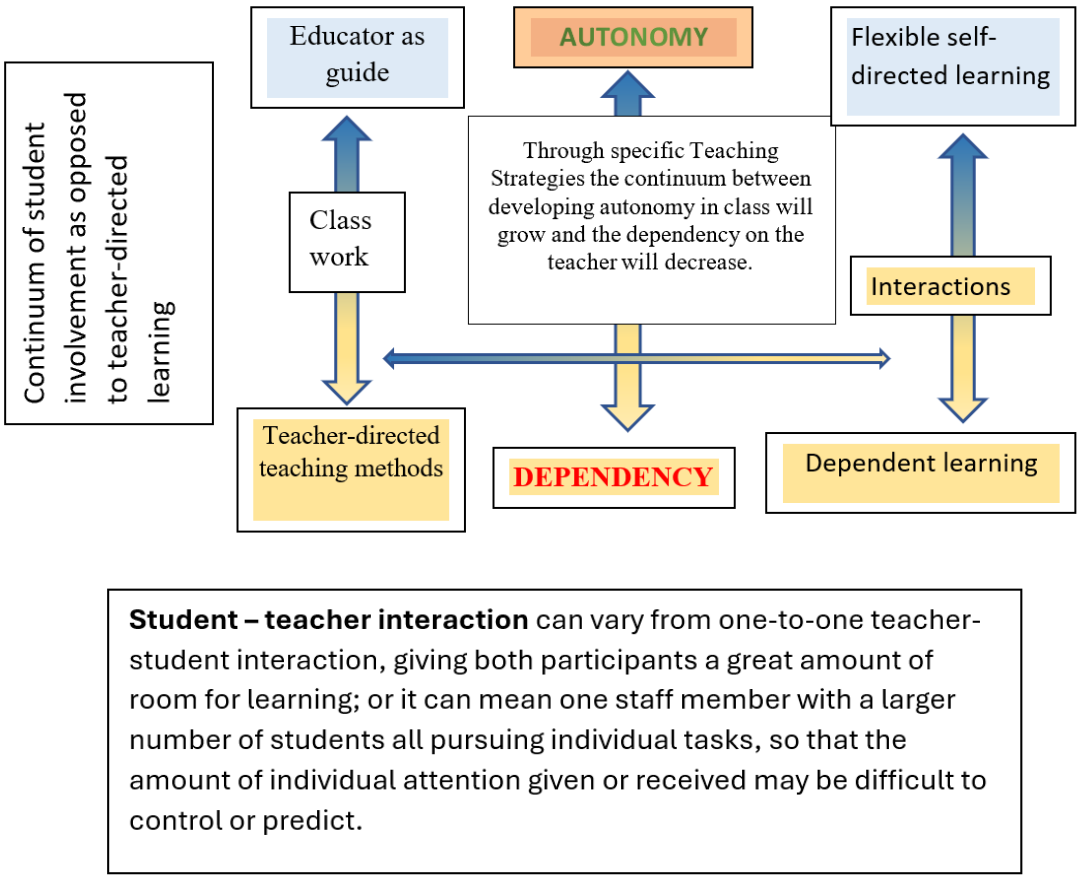


Figure 3.1: My depiction of the Continuum of degrees of Autonomy

Figure 3.1 illustrates that autonomy and dependency exist at opposite ends of the continuum, highlighting that the teaching-learning relationship is characterised by authority dependency (Benson, 2008). The greater the learner's dependence (elaborated in the context of this study in Chapter 8), the more prominent the educator's role becomes (Little, 2020; Rahman, 2022). As depicted in the figure above, by implementing various teaching strategies and tactics, the continuum of fostering autonomy within the classroom will expand, consequently leading to a reduction in students' reliance on the instructor. The spectrum of student engagement contrasts with instructor-led education, where the educator's role as a guide facilitates the development of flexible, self-directed learning approaches. This figure elucidates the notion that traditional teaching approaches lead to a dependence on external support for the learning process. This suggests that classwork holds a crucial role, and the dynamics within the classroom traverse a spectrum from dependency to autonomy. The dependence on teacher-led instruction must transition to approaches that foster advancements in self-directed learning. The dynamics of student-teacher interaction encompass a spectrum that includes personalised

one-on-one engagement, which provides significant learning opportunities for both the educator and the student, as well as situations where a single instructor oversees multiple students engaged in independent tasks. The degree of individual attention that is allocated or received presents significant challenges in terms of regulation and anticipation. Chapter 9 examines the influence of class dynamics on the cultivation of learner autonomy within the context of a learning outcomes framework elaborated in Chapter 7.

The assertion has been made that the development of learners is dependent on their flexibility and adaptability from the very beginning of their educational experience (Rahman, 2022). This investigation will delve into this aspect with greater empirical rigour (Chapter 8). Information that is socially transmitted should not be shared in a hierarchical fashion (Benson, 2008; Camilleri, 1997; Voller, 2014). The evolution of the educational framework necessitates a shift from a model that prioritises the teacher and emphasises knowledge acquisition to one that centres on the learner and is driven by competencies (Serbati, 2015). As students develop independence, the function of the educator evolves, placing teachers in the role of facilitators of change (Biesta & Priestley, 2013). They take on the roles of supporters (Sheerin, 1997 in Benson & Voller, 1997), facilitators (Littlewood, 1996), and advisors (Voller, 2014). The role of the educator is to facilitate the learner's journey towards the ultimate goal, moving away from traditional hierarchical educational models as outlined in Chapter 2 (Derrick, 2001). The outcome is dependent on the students' preparedness and intrinsic motivation to transition from reliance on their instructor for knowledge (see Chapter 8), while also fostering their understanding of the learning process. This leads to an educational setting that promotes learner independence, and moves to highlight a shared responsibility between instructors and learners, who are required to collaborate in creating a self-directed language-learning environment.

The teacher-student interactions can be varied. The figure illustrates that interactions within the classroom can occur on an individual educator-student basis. Chapter 8 will detail the starting point of the entry into the scene and will provide a comprehensive analysis of the class interactions at the beginning of the study. Chapter 9 will elaborate on how adaptations made to class dynamics through different activities lead to an increase in learner autonomy. The variability in the amount of individual attention provided is difficult to regulate or anticipate, as fluctuations in the teacher-to-student ratio influence it. Part 3 will also show how specific learning practices provide individuals with space and opportunity to concentrate on personalised learning (Chapters 9 to 12). Such learning practices emphasise the individual

rather than the collective class. Part 3 will present data showing that when planned with a specific aim, class interactions occurring within various contexts lead to different teaching and learning encounters which nurture learner autonomy.

Figure 3.1 shows that learners' autonomy could enhance as the educational environment broadens and the frequency of educators' interventions diminishes. A highly reliant learner in a one-on-one interaction may completely dominate the environment, leaving the educator with no opportunity to engage effectively. In a whole-class context, it is possible for the dependent learner to unconsciously resist the learning process due to insufficient attention being provided. The educator must navigate the distribution of attention among the diverse learners effectively. This is elaborated on in the context of this study in Chapter 11. Recognising that the educator observes the dynamics as reliant learners reduce their dependency is essential. On one hand, one might observe a learner who has reduced their dependency due to the acquisition of autonomous skills, or as a result of diminished motivation to learn, leading to a cessation of seeking assistance. The latter requires careful consideration, and it is the educator's responsibility to maintain elevated levels of motivation and facilitate ongoing learning (Houghton, et al., 1988).

Teachers can feel unsatisfied with whole-class teaching, especially when they strongly believe in the value of addressing the individual needs of pupils (Blatchford et al. 2006; Xerri Hili & Schembri, 2022). With the right space and time to develop students' group working skills, teachers can transform the teaching and learning environment (refer to Chapters 8 and 9). This approach presents opportunities for students that extend beyond traditional teacher-led or solitary efforts (Blaz, 2018), fostering an environment where learning encourages student collaboration through peer interactions, often referred to as 'co-learning' (Alexander, et al., 2009). To facilitate this change, it is essential to concentrate on the numerous educational opportunities that arise throughout a lesson, extending beyond the scope of the teachers' preparation. This underscores the necessity for educators to be provided with knowledge that enables them to adapt within the classroom environment, fostering an atmosphere where students can assume responsibility for their learning and actively participate in the educational processes (Blaz, 2018). This is connected to the concept of professional development. This notion is further developed in the next chapter, which suggests that individuals should undertake efforts to enhance the effectiveness of their methodologies. Sabitha (2012) supports this ideology, asserting that the concept of learner independence or autonomy transitions into a domain where learners are empowered to guide their educational journeys. All students need to have the opportunity to engage in autonomous

work. However, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, student performance will vary across different stages of the continuum, indicating that not all students will achieve the highest level of competence (Boud, 1981; Liu, 2016). When attention is directed towards the learner, the individual will develop the essential skills that will ultimately foster autonomous and ongoing learning (Deci & Ryan, 2016; Littlewood, 1996). Autonomy is demonstrated when students select their groups, organise their assigned tasks, and make decisions regarding the media they will utilise for presenting their work, among other aspects (aspects developed in Chapter 8). The increased encouragement from the educator for reliant learners to develop this skill correlates with a broader scope of autonomy for the student. As explained in the next section, the responsibility of educators is to cultivate learner independence within the classroom setting by creating an autonomous learning environment, thereby enabling learners to transcend the confines of that environment (Deci & Ryan, 2016; Rahman, 2022) (demonstrated in Chapters 8 and 13).

3.2 Creating an autonomous learning environment

In a time characterised by constant transformation, the rise of Artificial Intelligence and the surge of information and technological advancements underscore the necessity for our learners to possess the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding essential for making responsible decisions (Council of Europe, 2022). Educational systems and institutions need to equip young individuals with the skills necessary to engage actively, participate meaningfully, and assume responsibility in society (Rahman, 2022). The advancement of educators' skills within this educational framework is essential for guaranteeing that effective implementation is prioritised. It is posited (Benson & Voller, 1997, p.63) that ‘educators hold a vital responsibility in initiating learners into self-directed study and in providing consistent support to ensure their continued engagement’. Consequently, educators must implement adjustments within the dynamics of the teacher-learner relationship (mentioned previously in Figure 4.1 and developed empirically in Chapter 8).

Empirical studies have consistently shown that conditions promoting autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhance intrinsic motivation across various contexts, including education, work, and health (Deci & Ryan, 2016; Vansteenkiste, et al., 2006). In educational settings, when learners acknowledge their autonomy in the learning process, through self-directed tasks or decision-making, they exhibit heightened engagement and improved learning

outcomes (Reeve, 2009). Similarly, providing constructive feedback that enhances a sense of competence, rather than utilising controlling evaluation techniques, leads to improved motivation and performance (Deci & Ryan, 2016). Moreover, fostering social connectedness through peer collaborative efforts or nurturing teacher-student relationships significantly boosts academic motivation and persistence (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

This aligns with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), as articulated by Deci and Ryan (2012, 2016), which posits that human motivation is fundamentally shaped by fulfilling three intrinsic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding intrinsic motivation, distinguishing it from extrinsic motivation, which relies on external incentives or pressures. Autonomy refers to the experience of having the freedom to make choices and act following one's own will. At the same time, competence pertains to an individual's belief in their ability to interact with their surroundings effectively. Relatedness involves the feeling of connection and belonging with others (ibid., 2012). The achievement of these three factors leads to improved engagement, sustained effort, and overall psychological well-being. Research findings suggest that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are associated with enhanced satisfaction and better mental health outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2016). Conversely, settings that hinder these essential needs, which are characterised by overbearing control, insufficient support, or social isolation, negatively impact intrinsic motivation and lead to adverse outcomes, such as anxiety and disengagement (Sheldon, et al., 2001). As a result, SDT provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for comprehending human motivation, alongside a practical basis for the design and implementation of interventions aimed at promoting sustained engagement and well-being across diverse areas. The achievement of these three factors leads to improved engagement, sustained effort, and overall psychological well-being.

The influence of whole school learning environments on the development of students' academic competencies is significant (Guay et al., 2016). Research conducted by Vallerand et al. (1997) indicates that the overall school environment significantly influences the development of self-directed motivation in learners, ultimately fostering autonomous learning. Evidence indicates that educational institutions prioritising control, competitiveness, and reward-based assessments impede the cultivation of autonomy and intrinsic motivation for self-directed learning. It was observed that students who are particularly sensitive to highly regulated environments (Deci, 2016) tend to disengage from their studies, increasing the number of early school leavers. Individuals who leave school early result in a population with reduced educational attainment, which subsequently

correlates with diminished social engagement skills when contrasted with their counterparts who possess higher levels of education (Guay, et al, 2016). Menard (2010) posits that individuals who leave school prematurely contribute to the development of societies that exhibit diminished respect for activities linked to positive social outcomes, including voting, as well as skills such as volunteering. This evidence underscores the necessity of implementing more effective learning programs that address the diverse needs of all students, thereby enabling educators and policymakers to mitigate this societal stratum to the greatest extent possible. The following section will elaborate on how this manifests in the Maltese context.

3.2.1 The Maltese Context

The transition to implementing a curriculum based on learning outcomes in Malta should aim to foster a more independent approach to learning. Research conducted in Malta on learner autonomy suggests that learner autonomy represents a significant pedagogical ideal (Camilleri Grima, 1999). Consequently, it is essential for educators to enhance their skills in promoting this practice. Camilleri Grima (1999, p.5) claims that it is essential to recognise that the majority of educators have not encountered this pedagogical approach in practice, which may pose significant challenges for them in its application as a methodological framework within their classrooms. In Malta, educators often exhibit a conservative approach, adhering to familiar methodologies (Xerri Hili & Schembri, 2022).

The successful execution of the learning outcomes, which is elaborated upon in the next chapter and Chapter 7, relies on the premise that learners have been provided with specific targets to strive towards achieving. This suggests that there is a level of expectation of responsibility from both the learner and the educator. In the context of Malta, a conventional classroom typically comprises approximately 20 students, alongside one teacher and one to three Learning Support Educators (LSE). These LSEs are tasked with assisting one or up to three students, contingent upon the official statement of needs issued by a review board appointed in the Students Services Unit. Consequently, it is common for teachers to engage with entire groups of students in a classroom setting (Xerri Hili & Schembri, 2022). Studies (Peresso 2016; Vella, 2017) show that teaching in Malta has long been characterised by teacher-led instruction, with an emphasis on textbook use, note-taking, and preparation for summative assessments (Caruana, 2020). This reflects a broader educational culture in Malta that values teacher authority and standardised outcomes. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, this prevalent teaching methodology is having a direct impact on local students.

Maltese students are positioned among the lowest in average student life satisfaction among PISA-participating countries and economies. The methodology applied in schools around the island is leading to significant teacher dependence, as nearly all students struggle to articulate their reasoning effectively. An additional alarming indicator for Malta is that Maltese students demonstrate the lowest stress resilience and inadequate emotional regulation compared to other participating countries (OECD, 2025).

A 2017 investigation into Early School Leavers (ESL) in Malta (Cedefop, 2018) reported that 20% of Maltese students perceived their educational experience as irrelevant and encountered challenges in comprehending and engaging with the content. In response to this, the ESL Unit proposed several recommendations, which encompassed the adoption of more holistic school practices, the integration of innovative teaching and learning strategies across all educational cycles, and the implementation of whole-school approaches to learning (Cedefop, 2018). In the year 2020, data released by Eurostat indicated that Malta exhibited the highest proportion of early school leavers within the European Union, with a notable 16.7% of students falling into this category. It is crucial to acknowledge that despite this percentage reflecting a decline from prior years, significant measures must still be implemented to reduce this percentage further. All EU member states have committed to decreasing the rate of early school leavers to below 9% by the year 2030. According to the European Commission's "Education and Training Monitor 2024", Malta's rate of early leavers from education and training stands at 10%, marginally exceeding the EU average of 9.5%. The report elaborates on Malta's strategic initiatives for the period of 2023-2030, which are designed to diminish early school leaving through a comprehensive whole-school approach, incorporating measures that emphasise prevention, intervention, and compensation. However, this report lacks a discussion of concrete initiatives that educational institutions could implement to enhance the suitability, relevance and enjoyment of the teaching and learning experiences for students. This thesis holds considerable importance to the need for pedagogical transition, particularly in relation to the necessary transformations needed within the local educational system. It is also of relevance for research in pedagogy. To effectively adopt the learning outcomes approach, as elaborated in Chapter 7, both educators and learners need to possess the ability to cultivate learning environments that incorporate contemporary, communicative, and autonomous language learning methods. This will enhance the significance of the students' educational experience and their intrinsic motivation to learn. Education will fail to meet the needs of its students if it does not strive to establish learning environments that foster self-determination while cultivating learners who possess the

motivation and abilities to engage in independent learning (Liu, et al., 2016). Given this reality, it would be detrimental to our students if instruction focuses solely on content delivery and the transmission of skills that lack transferability.

3.2.2 Developing learner autonomy characteristics and traits

There exists a consensus within the discipline regarding the significance of the teacher's role in facilitating autonomous language learning. This factor warrants considerable attention (Benson, 2006; Little, 1991; Little, 2020; Rahman, 2022). A teacher's role is pivotal within the educational setting, as they hold the responsibility for fostering a classroom environment that can either empower or diminish the learners' experience. Whilst creating an educational experience which engages learners whilst empowering them to take responsibility for their learning, teachers need to ensure that students are provided with learning activities and a classroom environment which allows them to be in sync with their students (Reeve, 2016) shifting the emphasis from teacher to learner, enabling the latter to play a considerable role in setting the learning goals, organising the learning process and aiming at fulfilling the goals.

Students develop this skill in degrees, reflecting a spectrum of understanding rather than a binary distinction. According to Sinclair (2000), the levels of learner autonomy are influenced by a range of external and intrinsic factors, including the language competence of the student, their previous learning experiences, individual affective factors, and the learning environment to which the students are exposed. It has been posited (Piña et al., 2018) that identical learners may exhibit varying degrees of learner autonomy across diverse contexts. Teachers need to understand the significance of practice in cultivating strategies that foster learner autonomy. The activities created need to allow that, through engagement in practice, learners begin to reflect on the elements influencing their learning and adjust their strategies in response to the specific circumstances and contexts they encounter at any given moment. All decisions made by the teacher pertain to the dynamics of negotiation within the classroom, involvement of all students in decision-making processes, reflective practices, opportunities for self-assessment, and collaborative efforts (Benedek & Horvath, 2024).

In the context of learner autonomy, literature (referenced in tables 3.1 and 3.2) refers to the terms "traits" and "characteristics", qualities which are related but subtly distinct. Traits are intrinsic or relatively persistent characteristics in a learner that enable them to act independently. In the literature, which is summarised in Table 3.1, such features are frequently regarded as internal dispositions or personality-related characteristics that are not

necessarily clearly teachable. However, in the right environment, these can be cultivated or fostered over time. A characteristic refers to an observable behaviour or quality that reflects autonomy in learning. It is more context-dependent and can often be taught, encouraged, or developed through pedagogy. The subsequent tables (Table 3.1 and 3.2) delineate the traits and characteristics identified in the literature.

Trait: *Personal qualities that children can develop with support over time*	Manifested quality	Reference
Responsibility	Learners start taking care of their work and learning	Little (1991)
Self-Motivation	Children show interest and enjoy learning without needing rewards	Deci & Ryan (2016)
Goal-Setting	Pupils can set small learning goals for themselves	Zimmerman (2002)
Self-Control	They stay focused and manage their time with help from routines	Zimmerman (2002)
Perseverance	They persevere even when tasks are challenging	Littlewood (1996)
Thinking About Learning	They ask questions like "How did I do?" or "What can I do better?"	Brookfield (2011)
Being Flexible	Adaptive mode of problem-solving	Littlewood (1996)
Curiosity	They love exploring and discovering new things	Deci & Ryan (2016)

Table 3.1 Learner Autonomy Traits as mentioned in literature

Characteristics, listed in Table 3.2, are defined as behaviours, tools, and environments that teachers can foster in school.

Characteristic *Behaviours, tools, and environments that teachers can foster in school*	In Practice (Primary Classroom)	Reference
Reflecting with Tools	Use of learning journals, smiley faces, or traffic lights to reflect on progress	Brookfield (2011)
Learning with Peers	Group work, pair talk, and helping each other in class	Vygotsky (1978); Dam (1995); Camilleri Grima (2015)
Supportive Scaffolding	Teachers guide children step-by-step, then encourage them to try more on their own	Bruner (2013)
Listening to Learners	Teachers ask for pupils' opinions and include their ideas in planning	Benson (2011)
Safe and Encouraging Space	Mistakes are seen as part of learning; children feel safe to try and ask questions	Reinders (2010)

Table 3.2 Learner Autonomy Characteristics as mentioned in literature

Building upon the previously mentioned characteristics and traits in literature, Figure 3.2 illustrates the traits, characteristics, objectives, and components of an autonomous learning environment that educators should strive to foster in a classroom designed to cultivate autonomous learners. This figure is essential to the study, as this compilation of characteristics and traits, as identified in the literature, forms the basis for a Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) designed as an evaluative tool during the analysis of the data collected throughout the case study(refer to Chapter 6, Section 6.3.8). The figure is designed to show how the traits and characteristics, which are the behaviours, tools, and environments teachers can nurture and develop in school, can foster the development of learner autonomy traits.

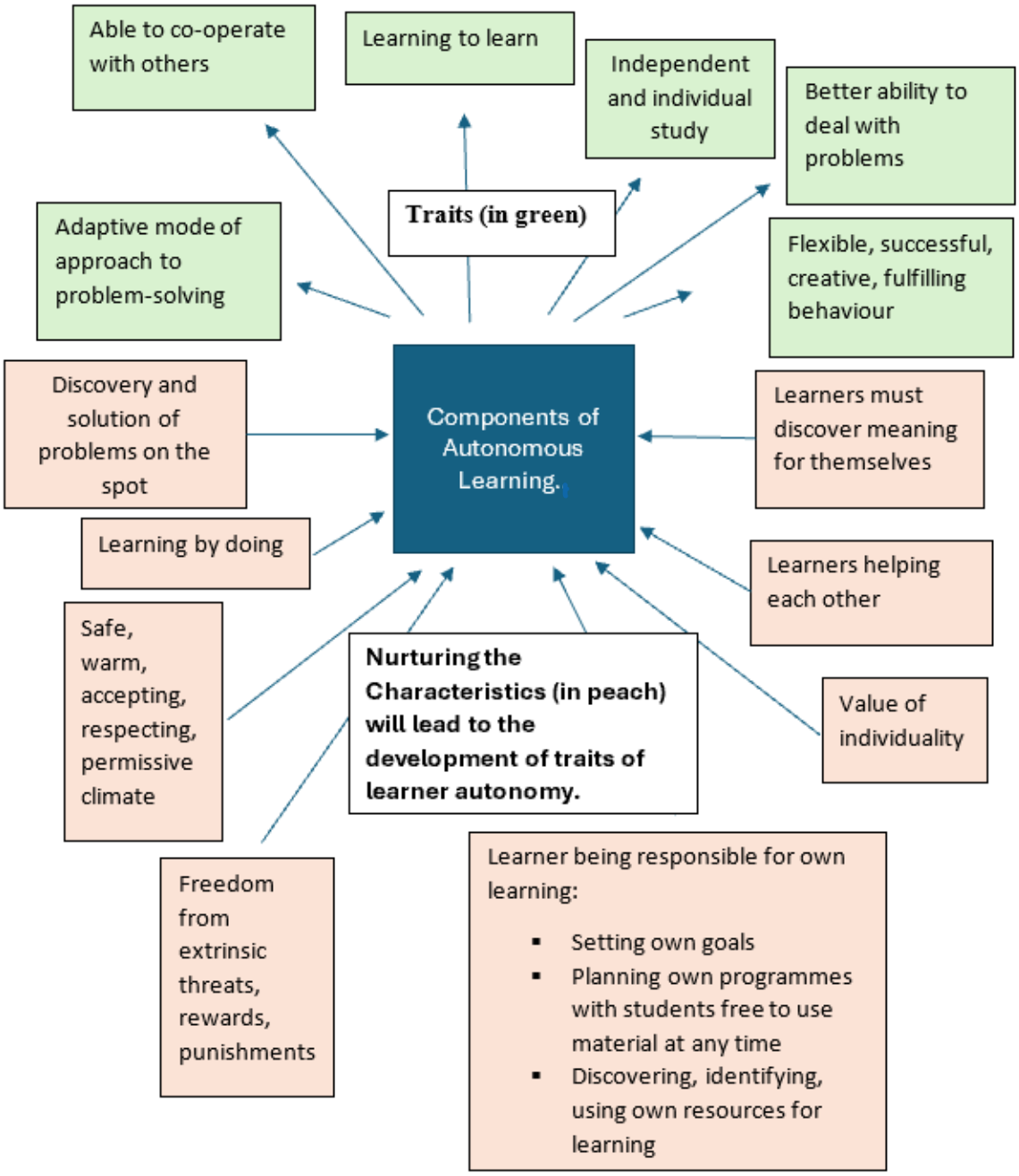


Figure 3.2: My interpretation of the traits and characteristics that foster autonomous learning. This figure is used to develop the Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS), which is elaborated on in Chapter 6.

Regardless of the level of autonomy learners may possess or attain (Farmer, 2006), educators organise the learning process by providing the necessary professional support to enhance learner autonomy through targeted planning activities.

3.2.3 Diversity in class

Every classroom exhibits a diverse range of characteristics (Bartolo et al., 2007). Incorporating diversity within educational frameworks is crucial for promoting learner autonomy, allowing students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds to participate in self-directed learning (Little, 2022). This section analyses how diversity may be integrated into the planning of educational activities aimed at fostering learner autonomy. Building upon the previously mentioned principles, literature, as well as empirical studies, this discussion encompasses strategies such as differentiated instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and inclusive pedagogies that aim to empower learners. Consistent with these principles, the findings presented as evidence in Part 3 highlight the significance of adaptive curricula and teacher training in promoting autonomous learning within diverse classroom settings.

Every student represents a unique individual characterised by distinct needs, abilities, attitudes, aptitudes, learning styles, and learning paces. Differentiated instruction recognises the diversity among students by offering various avenues for learning (Tomlinson, 2020). Through the provision of diverse instructional resources, assessment modalities, and learning experiences, educators can address the unique needs of each learner and consequently foster greater autonomy. In addition to the level of attainment, these diversities encompass secondary aspects that contribute to the overall diversity of a class. These aspects include varied interests, ethnic and family backgrounds, specific skills possessed by students, distinct learning styles, levels of motivation, dependency factors, and, crucially during a language lesson, the language backgrounds of the students. Culturally responsive activities utilise the cultural backgrounds of students as valuable resources in the educational experience (Ladson-Billings, 2021). In the process of designing educational activities, integrating culturally relevant materials and practices empowers students, fostering a sense of ownership over their learning experiences.

Digital tools, particularly adaptive learning platforms, also facilitate personalised learning experiences that cater to students' varied needs (Graham, 2022). Chapter 10 will address the integration of technology in a mixed-ability classroom, and the data presented will assess whether it enhances learner autonomy skills and improves the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Considering diversity in planning activities that promote learner autonomy is fundamental to equitable education. Through differentiated instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and technology-enhanced learning, educators can create inclusive environments that empower all learners. Ongoing research and policy initiatives should continue to support the integration of diversity in autonomous learning frameworks.

3.2.4 Challenges in pedagogical practices

It is crucial to acknowledge the diverse challenges that need to be addressed for the successful implementation of this methodology. First of all, one needs to recognise the fact that there exists a divergence of opinion among researchers and educators regarding the desirability of learner autonomy as a goal in language learning (Dewaele, et al., 2023). Hand (2006) and Laurillard (2002) both critique the notion of autonomy in pedagogy, with Laurillard asserting that allowing students control over their learning constitutes professional negligence and a failure of duty on the part of educators. Hand (2006) posits that although the perception of freedom in exercising choice is appealing, learner autonomy is a potential challenge to educators as it undermines their authority.

Another aspect that may be considered unfavourable is the reliance on teachers' pedagogical approaches and their willingness to transition towards a more student-centred model for the development of learner autonomy. Sercu (2007) posits that alterations in teaching methodologies are contingent upon the degree to which educators are prepared to reassess their convictions regarding effective teaching practices and the criteria for what is deemed as quality instruction. Another aspect that may be considered unfavourable is the reliance on teachers' pedagogical approaches and their willingness to transition towards a more student-centred model for the development of learner autonomy. Research conducted by Sercu (2017) illustrates that educators' beliefs are inherently subjective, a notion articulated by Kagan (1992) as comprising unconsciously held assumptions regarding students, classroom dynamics, and the content being taught. The assumptions regarding what defines effective teaching may not align with another educator's perspective on quality instruction (Sercu, 2007). As mentioned in Section 3.2.1, in Malta, educators often tend to conform to familiar methodologies (Xerri Hili & Schembri, 2022). This discrepancy arises because an educator may firmly believe in the advantages of a specific teaching method and may struggle to recognise the necessity for adaptation. This study offers educators a framework that facilitates an understanding of the shift in pedagogy, enhancing the learning experience by cultivating responsibility, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation among learners. This study

will provide evidence whether through the adaptations made to the methodology of the teacher participants, features and attributes of autonomy also led to enhancing teaching and learning efficacy. Reconfiguring the teacher's position to that of an observer, facilitator, and mentor, while fostering organised autonomy and lifelong learning competencies, will cultivate the abilities considered important for contemporary educational and societal contexts (World Economic Forum. 2025).

It is noteworthy to observe that learner autonomy in language acquisition is also regarded as culturally dependent (Jones, 2004). Over the last ten years, Malta has experienced significant societal changes, culminating in a situation where approximately 30% of the population consists of foreign nationals (NSO, 2024), and one in five infants born in Malta are now to mothers who are not Maltese (Debono, 2023). In a society that is progressively defined by multiculturalism, educators face a varied spectrum of students (KPMG, May 2025). The significance of this study is both critical and timely, as educators must understand that the absence of autonomy in various cultural contexts may suggest the necessity of fostering autonomy as a skill which is developed at school. This observation holds significant importance for today's classrooms, as a number of students may not recognise autonomy as a trait that is esteemed or regarded positively. Studies show (Palfreyman, 2003) that the relationship between culture and learner autonomy was examined through an investigation of students' ethnicity and their preparedness for autonomy. Consequently, contemporary educational practices interpret manifestations of autonomy across various cultures in markedly diverse ways. It is asserted that, in contrast to Asian cultures, Western culture emphasises individualism, self-expression, critical and analytical thinking, and the pursuit of knowledge (Piña, et al., 2018). Collectivism, memorisation, and the preservation of knowledge are highly esteemed in Asian cultures. In Asian culture, educators are regarded as custodians and principal reservoirs of knowledge (Piña, et al., 2018). Learner autonomy embodies a competency intricately linked to Western cultural frameworks, prompting educators to adopt a role that enables students to take greater responsibility for their educational journeys.

Educators operating within diverse learning environments should recognise the disparities that illustrate varying power dynamics in the processes that facilitate the development of young individuals into responsible adult citizens. This research explores how professional development programs (refer to Chapter 6 Section 6.3.1) equip educators with strategies to foster autonomy in diverse settings.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter addresses the research questions by focusing on the impact of pedagogical practices that foster learner autonomy on the teaching-learning process. It examines the necessary adaptations to traditional teacher-centred approaches to effectively promote learner autonomy, emphasising the development of this concept and its significance in educational contexts. The pedagogical transitions made to instructional strategies, whether implemented by individual educators or at the institutional level, are designed to guarantee that all students are engaged throughout the educational process and possess the competencies necessary for independent learning. This aspect was elaborated further by focusing on the Maltese context, referring to the nation's commitment to reducing the rate of early school leavers and to the limitations of Maltese students when compared to other PISA-participating countries (TALIS, 2018, in OECD, 2025). Evidence presented in the following chapters will investigate whether these concerning issues are linked to the perceived irrelevance of current teaching and learning practices to the students. Furthermore, this chapter also elaborates on how the educational experience must be designed to ensure that learners perceive themselves as essential contributors to the learning process. The next chapter delves into the curriculum of learning outcomes as the curricular framework for this investigation.

CHAPTER 4

THE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes in language education refer to explicit statements that describe what learners are expected to know, understand, and be able to do in the target language after a period of instruction. They guide curriculum design, assessment, and teaching practices, focusing on communicative competence, linguistic accuracy, and intercultural understanding.

(adapted from Council of Europe (2020); Andrade, Lui, & Wang, 2022)

4.0 Introduction

Research on the practical implementation of language learning outcomes in the primary sector is limited both internationally and locally, with existing studies predominantly centred on higher education institutions (Chircop Zahra, 2023; Ismajli & Krasniqi, 2018; Xerri Hili & Schembri, 2022). The integration of learning outcomes into national curricula globally seeks to reform educational institutions through pedagogical methods intended to enhance educational quality and student competencies (Ismajli & Krasniqi, 2018). This method prioritises explicit, quantifiable goals that students are required to attain, hence promoting a more organised and results-driven educational environment. This chapter will elucidate the objective behind a learning outcome curriculum (Section 4.1) and examine the worldwide trends and advantages (Section 4.2), whilst Section 4.3 delineates the shortcomings of the learning outcomes curriculum. Section 4.4 outlines the development of the Maltese educational system, culminating in the adoption of learning outcomes. Section 4.5 delineates the requisite professional development for teachers to ensure effective implementation. Before the conclusion, this chapter will focus on language development within a learning objectives curriculum (Section 4.6).

4.1 Learning outcomes and their aim to shift mindset

Motivated by the need to improve the transparency and comparability of qualifications on a global scale and initially conceived to respond to the changing dynamics of job roles and geographic mobility, learning outcomes were established to tackle issues concerning the linkage between education and the labour market. They have been incorporated into worldwide curriculum design strategies (Adam, 2004) and are extensively cited in several Bologna-related documents, including the Berlin Communiqué (2003) (Chantrain, 2010). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) contends that aligning curriculum with clearly defined learning outcomes is essential for adapting educational systems to swift societal and technological transformations. This relationship ensures that students cultivate competences necessary for the 21st century, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability, qualities identified as deficient among Maltese students in the TALIS study (OECD, 2025) priorly mentioned. This transition aims to reduce the delay between societal requirements and educational content, enabling swift updates to the curriculum that align with current expectations.

In curriculum design and development, learning objectives are prioritised to lead educational transformation (Adam, 2004) to foster learner autonomy and independent thinking in students. Educational institutions should encourage and enhance learning activities that facilitate learners' engagement in learning actions (Bruder & Schmit, 2016). A curriculum built on learning outcomes aims to transition the emphasis from educators to learners, from content-heavy, knowledge-oriented curricula to learner-focused, competence-based frameworks (NCCA, 2019). Biesta (2013) asserts that learning outcomes signify a transition towards conceptualising education in relation to learners and their development rather than focusing on the content to be taught. Consequently, there is a direct focus on students and their learning, as well as the achievement of learning outcomes, rather than solely on the methods employed to obtain these outcomes (Aziz et al., 2012). Ruhland and Brewer (2001) argue that learning outcomes should extend beyond merely showcasing students' knowledge. They should serve as a mechanism to document the changes in learners' cognitive and affective growth resulting from their educational experiences. They are intended to facilitate the planning and evaluation of the success of the student, the teacher, and the learning activity. This transition to a competence-based education must be linked to distinct topic areas. Fundamental competencies associated with information processing, critical and creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and personal effectiveness are delineated into core components and their desired

consequences. Consequently, by attaining a learning outcome, one would ascertain the competencies the learner should possess as a result of cultivating each component of a key skill.

4.2 Global Trends and Benefits

Ure (2022) posits that learning outcomes were implemented to replace input-output categories, hence enhancing the transparency and equity of qualifications across nations. The widespread use of learning outcomes in Europe has revolutionised curriculum development, evaluation, and alignment with the labour market (Ioannidou & Zarifis, 2024). A recent study examining 16 European regions across eight EU countries reveals that European policies have increasingly prioritised learning outcomes as measures of educational excellence, aiming for uniformity, transparency, and comparability. This change has led to a re-evaluation of qualifications and curricula in vocational education and training (VET), as well as in general and higher education, emphasising the competencies that learners are expected to achieve (Ioannidou & Zarifis, 2024). The method enhances comparability and adaptability; however, as will be explained in Section 4.3, its efficacy depends on robust stakeholder engagement and adaptation across various educational systems. Improving learning outcomes will continue to impact European education, ensuring students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for lifetime learning and employment.

The learning outcomes are currently incorporated into national curricula in 33 European countries (Cedefop, 2022). Implementation differs throughout Europe. Scotland's 'Curriculum for Excellence' is a premier framework that emphasises both educational experiences and outcomes. This system aims to improve student engagement, motivation, and deep learning by integrating comprehensive curriculum domains and four fundamental learning competencies (Education Scotland, 2023). Comparable methods are present in Estonia and Ireland, wherein learning outcomes are integrated into national qualification frameworks (NCCA, 2019). Although not explicitly stated in policy documents, the UK has a comparable model, with Ofsted actively promoting a focus on learning outcomes (Cedefop, 2016).

Norway and Finland have divergent methodologies on educational attainment. Norway has embraced a more results-driven methodology, departing from conventional Didaktik frameworks. Mølstad and Karseth (2016) assert that the curriculum delineates an expectation for specific learning outcomes or the attainment of specified competencies by students. Although it is evident that, in the statements used, one finds competences that aim to

represent a combination of the teaching and learning process and an orientation towards the products of learning, the overall picture is that the language used points to expected outcomes. An example from the Norwegian outcomes shows how verbs such as *explain, assess, give examples, recall* and *present* are used. It aligns with the Maltese learning outcomes, which are all written in the first person singular *Nieħu sehem (I participate in)*, *Inbassar (I predict), nirrakkonta (I recall)*, *Inħaddem tajjeb il-Perfett u l-Imperfett (I use the Past and Present Tense correctly),* amongst others (refer to Chapter 7 for the learning outcomes of the Maltese four language skills). The verbs point towards the expected target use of the language. Finland, however, aligns educational outcomes with pedagogical principles that preserve discrepancies between content and instructional methods (Mølstad & Karseth, 2016). It is claimed that in the Nordic countries, which prioritise learning outcomes in vocational education and apprenticeships over primary and secondary education, state authority has diminished due to the decentralisation of power and the increasing influence of international reports and resolutions on educational reform. This aligns qualifications with workplace competencies (Cedefop, 2022; Oftedal Telhaug, 2006). France, Belgium, and Poland incorporate learning outcomes into compulsory education, emphasising fundamental knowledge and competencies in accordance with the European Framework. In German-speaking countries, such as Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, educational standards include learning outcomes, but in a subject-specific context. Switzerland characterises them as 'can-do' statements, accompanied by performance criteria and assessment illustrations (Cedefop, 2016).

The streamlining of processes and terminology suggests an understanding of the education processes which is in line with the various rationales found in different countries (Attard Tonna & Bugeja, 2018) and also presents statements which are referring to concrete observable behaviour of a person (Council Of Europe, 2022) with a certain level of competences that will help them thrive in tomorrow's society and economy (Ayet Puigarnau, 2018). Central to policy reforms, this approach influences administrative and pedagogical practices across European education systems (Sweetman, 2019). It establishes overarching educational objectives, ensuring that students attain specific competencies by the end of their learning journey (Prøitz, 2010).

The efficacy of learning outcomes depends on two primary factors: the alignment of teacher training institutions with this framework and the active involvement of all stakeholders, including policymakers and educators, in promoting lifelong learning and skills mobility. The focus has been on cultivating occupation-specific competencies, underscoring

the connection between education and the labour market (Cedefop, 2022; Prøitz, 2010). Learning outcomes have been identified as tools for transforming connections among stakeholders, curricula, and educational infrastructure (Lassnigg, 2012). Moreover, they concentrate on attainment evaluation while prioritising the cultivation of employment-related competencies, such as teamwork and interpersonal skills, which are increasingly esteemed in modern workplaces.

An essential aim of learning outcomes is to implement assessment procedures that confirm a standardised degree of accomplishment internationally. Over the last 25 years, educational reforms have been predominantly shaped by international examinations, notably the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which assesses the competencies of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics, and science. Countries such as Germany and Singapore utilise these findings to identify sectors that require additional resources and investigation (Cedefop, 2016; Psifidou & Ranieri, 2020). In numerous European nations, these evaluations have facilitated a transition towards learning outcomes, impacting curriculum development by encouraging flexibility and autonomy. In this context, learning outcomes function as descriptors within regulated certification frameworks and as benchmarks for assessment standards and curricula. Their integration has enabled personalised learning trajectories inside the EU's educational framework, promoting a systematic approach to both theoretical understanding and practical skills (Meyer, 2007).

Characterised as 'regulated self-regulators' and 'loose learning networks' (Cedefop, 2013), these frameworks aim to enhance communication between basic vocational education and labour market requirements across nations. Pedagogical research supports this strategy by correlating learning outcomes with assessment methodologies and learning strategies (Byrne et al., 2002; Daugherty et al., 2008; Entwistle, 1996). Moreover, learning is increasingly seen as a process of aligning educational objectives with students' understanding of essential competencies (Bruder et al., 2016) for the workforce (Young, 2003).

4.3 Shortcomings of the Learning Outcomes Curriculum

The outcomes-based curriculum has been extensively adopted in diverse educational systems, albeit its implementation faces problems. Although its main objective is to standardise educational qualifications and enhance mobility, critics contend that the model has numerous shortcomings, especially inflexibility, incompatibility with pedagogical diversity, and potential oversimplification of learning (Ioannidou & Zarifis, 2024).

A significant concern is the tendency for learning outcomes to oversimplify the complexities of education (Biesta & Priestley, 2013). The framework's emphasis on established competencies risks reducing learning to a mere checklist of quantifiable skills, rather than promoting profound, meaningful comprehension. This methodology may overlook vital components of education, including creativity, critical thinking, and the capacity to manage uncertainty—attributes that are not readily quantified yet are indispensable in the modern information economy (Oates, 2014). In certain countries, it is claimed (Mølstad & Karseth, 2016) that the formulation of competency objectives differs among subjects, with certain objectives being more generic and challenging to measure. An example of this is the generic outcome for students in Norway completing grade 2, who should be capable of discussing the interplay between words and images in picture books while reading in the library. The challenge in assessing the achievement of the outcome parallels the difficulties educators encounter regarding the Maltese learning outcomes when such outcomes are challenging to quantify (Micallef, 2025). For example, in Maltese Grade 4 reading (T5 see Chapter 7), the outcome states, 'After listening to or reading literary and factual texts, I can retell them to demonstrate my appreciation and comprehension.' Such outcomes are non-quantifiable and, in the absence of relevant descriptors, result in a lack of uniformity among teachers and across different students when evaluating the outcome.

Some argue that the learning outcomes serve as a mechanism to maximise the return on investment from the educational experience (Van DerHayden & Harvey, 2012, cited in Attard Tonna & Bugeja, 2016). However, critics argue that standardising across countries has fostered a more restrictive and cumbersome approach to learning inside educational systems rather than alleviating or elevating it. The European Union (EU)'s endeavour to standardise qualifications via the National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs), which are all aligned with the previously referenced European Qualification Framework (EQF), can be considered as an arrangement that allows the EU to control curricula and course materials (Sweetman, 2019). A significant difficulty is the prescriptive character of learning outcomes, which may constrain pedagogical flexibility. This is elaborated in the context of the Maltese educational system in Section 4.4. Educators may experience limitations imposed by inflexible structures that prioritise assessment-oriented education, resulting in a culture of teaching to the test (Biesta & Priestley, 2013). Some view the framework as a behaviourist, result-oriented, and linear learning methodology as opposed to being process-oriented, featuring open-ended results that match with socially oriented activities. (Mølstad & Karseth, 2016).

There is a lack of harmonisation among educational systems both internationally and locally across educational sectors. Studies claim that there is a high level of variation and ambiguity when outcomes are used as a tool. This variation is due to traditions and differences in policy systems present across the nations (Bleiklie & Michelsen, 2013; Kogan, 2016). This diversity is also evident in the terminology used, for example, outcomes, competencies, or descriptors. Abrandt Dahlgren et al. (2008) argue in their study that learning outcomes were implemented differently depending on the type of course and whether it was vocationally driven. Notwithstanding their underlying aim, the widespread conclusion highlights how the generic learning outcomes are understood and perceived differently by academics from different nations and disciplines, shaping the teaching approaches used (Entwistle, 1996). This implies a lack of standardisation.

The implementation strategy also raises problems regarding the prescriptive characteristics of the proposed pedagogy (Biesta, 2009). The benefit derived from their flexibility may be regarded as a drawback if not adequately controlled. There is limited research pertaining to the development, instruction, and administration of curricular programmes, as well as limited evidence regarding the interpretation and perception of learning outcomes by educators and students. While learning outcomes have become a foundational component of curriculum design and policy frameworks, empirical investigations into how these outcomes are actually constructed, operationalised, and enacted in practice remain comparatively scarce. Existing studies tend to focus on policy-level intentions rather than the lived realities of implementation, leaving unanswered questions about how teachers interpret outcomes, how students experience them, and how such interpretations shape classroom practices. Scholars consistently identify a persistent gap between curriculum design and classroom enactment. Cuban (1992) attributes this policy–practice divide to the complexity of classroom life and the central role of teacher judgment, which often leads to the adaptation or selective uptake of prescribed outcomes. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) similarly argue that successful implementation depends on teachers' pedagogical expertise and professional learning, noting that insufficient support produces inconsistent interpretations and uneven instructional practices. Earlier work by Stenhouse (1975) and Kelly (2009) reinforces the notion that curriculum cannot be reduced to predetermined outcomes, as its meaning is shaped through teacher decision-making, school culture, and classroom relationships. Research on formative assessment further illustrates that students' understandings of learning expectations are mediated by feedback practices and assessment norms (Black & Wiliam, 1998a), contributing to substantial variation in how

outcomes are experienced across contexts. Together, these studies underscore a significant evidence gap in the negotiation and operationalisation of learning outcomes in situ and highlight the need for contextually grounded research to examine the complexities, challenges, and pedagogical implications of outcome-based education in the classroom. Misalignments between intended, enacted, and experienced curricula risk undermining the efficacy of learning-outcomes frameworks, underscoring the need for sustained scholarly attention.

Cedefop (2016) asserts that the crucial inquiry is whether all parties comprehend the ramifications of these predetermined results for learners and educators. The established quality assurance methods must mandate learning outcomes-based courses and assessment practices that correlate with students' attainments and successes (Sweetman, 2019). Furthermore, as Hessel and van Lente (2008) indicate, it is essential to recognise that the implementation of quality controls to guarantee equivalence among nations, may compromise the efficacy of knowledge production. This literature prompts an inquiry into whether the learning outcomes-based curriculum design, which emphasises checks and balances, compromises the acquisition of information. Does this governance facilitate the proliferation of the power game among nations and diverse groups to the detriment of education? Fuller (2003) emphasises the necessity of maintaining fidelity to experiential learning processes in education, rather than succumbing to the demands of industry and equivalency of degrees. Fuller (2003) asserts that the regulation of learning outcomes must guarantee that it does not assimilate industry-led values to a greater extent than industrial society incorporates the knowledge-based value of the educational experience. Sweetman (2017) emphasises the necessity of maintaining the integrity of the educational experience in alignment with experiential learning processes, rather than succumbing to the influences of industry and qualification equivalency. Critics (James, 2005; Mulderrig, 2011) contend that the implementation of learning outcomes results in policy reforms and decision-making processes that prioritise economic demands over educational necessities. Studies (Rafailova, 2024) argue that governments control what gets taught in schools to influence how young people think and shape education policies to promote specific ideologies. Education becomes a tool for gaining influence, promoting agendas, or competing for dominance, rather than focusing on genuinely improving student learning (ibid., 2024).

A study by Brooks et al. (2014) revealed that students' views and application of the Learning Outcomes resulted in uncertainty and varied responses concerning the outcomes of the learning process. Although the learning outcomes curriculum can transform pedagogy,

Lassnigg (2012) asserts that his research indicated minimal, if any, evidence of such a transformation. Furthermore, several scholars deem outcomes-based education 'inhospitable' (Ruitenberg, 2009) as it stipulates the requisite learning inside the educational environments established by educators, thereby relinquishing initiative from the students. Furthermore, by standardising outcomes and evaluating the same product for each student, there exists the risk (Smyth, 1998) that outcomes-based education fails to cater to the individual needs of any specific student. Ruitenberg (2009) critiques outcomes-based education, asserting that it fails to provide a foundation for teachers' understanding, hence fostering a pedagogy that alienates students who are not well-integrated into the educational setting. This alienation arises from insufficient active participation (Berlach, 2004), leading to a deficiency in ownership of learning (Ruitenberg, 2009). Edwards (2016) further elaborates on this idea, drawing a comparison to the Foucauldian theoretical framework, which posits that the knowledge conveyed by teachers bestows them with authority, while students are oppressed to comply. Ruitenberg (2009) asserts that outcomes-based education undermines students' sense of belonging in educational environments and processes by compartmentalising knowledge. Further crucial factor to consider when evaluating its impact on the efficacy of the implementation process is the potential lack of motivation among learners, which complicates the teaching endeavour.

A significant educational shortcoming currently observable in our classrooms is the overlooked potential that the inclusive implementation of learning outcomes could actually offer. In many cases, learning outcomes are linked to standardised testing, which may disadvantage students with different learning needs. The integration of educational learning outcomes relies on their design, implementation, and assessment across various contexts. Although learning outcomes aim to establish a systematic and transparent educational framework, they are not inherently applied to ensure inclusion. Diverse elements influence their efficacy in promoting equitable learning opportunities. Although learning outcomes are intended to address diverse educational needs, including those of students with disabilities, language barriers, and socio-economic challenges, many implement the outcomes by prioritising standardised competencies, thereby overlooking the varied backgrounds, abilities, and learning paces of learners (Florian & Spratt, 2013). Some educational systems attempt to address this issue by incorporating flexible or diverse pathways; nevertheless, the implementation varies significantly (Grima & Chetcuti, 2003). This may stem from the insufficient training provided to educators in adapting learning outcomes to accommodate varied learners' requirements (Deci & Ryan, 2016). Students from economically

disadvantaged homes may be deprived of excellent education, digital resources, or supplementary assistance necessary to attain designated objectives. In systems like the Maltese system, which prioritises standardised accomplishment and mandates specific topic coverage within a fixed timeframe, there is frequently less flexibility, complicating the ability of a fraction of the students to achieve outcomes inclusively.

To mitigate this concern, certain European nations, including Finland, have adopted flexible systems that allow students to attain learning outcomes at different times; nevertheless, many continue to grapple with inflexible systems that hinder diversity (Mølstad & Karseth, 2016). In some countries, including Malta and Germany, failing to achieve learning outcomes at a designated level may result in grade retention or placement in lower educational tracks. In Malta, by age 10, students are categorised into distinct educational programs, potentially constraining their upward mobility. The efficacy of learning outcomes, while potentially inclusive, is contingent upon the extent to which educational systems accommodate varied learners. Moreover, inclusion depends on effective teacher training, sufficient and adequate resources, and adaptable implementation, which also encompasses a systematic record-keeping system (Florian & Spratt, 2013).

4.4 The Maltese Context

Background

Malta has undergone significant educational reforms over the past decade, with the latest being the gradual implementation of the learning outcomes curriculum in primary and secondary schools, introduced annually starting during the year when this case study was conducted. This reform aimed to emancipate educational institutions and students from government-imposed, knowledge-centric curricula (Attard Tonna & Bugeja, 2016).

The Maltese educational system comprises four stages: pre-primary (ages three to five), primary (ages five to eleven), secondary (ages eleven to sixteen) and then post-secondary, followed by tertiary education for those who opt to pursue their studies. Education is mandatory till the age of 16. In Malta, educational institutions are classified into two categories: State Schools, which are managed and governed by the Government of Malta, and Private Schools. According to the Education Act of 1988, the Government of Malta is mandated to provide free education, including at the university level, to qualified residents who meet the necessary admission criteria. Public state schools are located in all areas and

are categorised into colleges based on districts. The private sector accommodates around 30% of students in Malta, and although these schools operate autonomously in executing their specific programs, they remain subject to regulation by the Ministry of Education. Private schools in Malta can be classified into two main categories: Church schools and Independent schools. Both offer education from pre-primary to upper-secondary levels. Despite the independence of the private sector, schools must adhere to government policies and are accountable for executing any nationally mandated reforms. The Ministry of Education and Employment oversees education across all sectors in Malta, while the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) is tasked with regulating, evaluating, and reporting on the components of the compulsory education system to ensure quality education for all. This regulatory framework is applicable to all educational institutions on the island. The subsequent timeline delineates the significant milestones and key educational developments in the recent history of Maltese education that have culminated in the establishment of learning outcomes in Malta to date.

2005	Following its accession to the European Union in 2004, Malta undertook a comprehensive reform of rules and processes across all sectors. The 2005 publication, *For all Children to Succeed*, by the Ministry of Education, emphasises the necessity of a decentralised educational system. State schools transformed into a college-based network, featuring a singular college principal and a head for each school affiliated with the college. This statement was the inaugural effort to address inclusivity and the diverse skills of students. It also sought to unify schools under a single principle to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in decision-making tailored to the requirements of a limited number of schools.
2007	2 Directorates were introduced. Educational services – providing services for state-run colleges Quality and Standards in Education – National accountability for policy execution, quality assurance via the implementation of school evaluations, and the preservation of standards. The establishment of a directorate specifically dedicated to student services indicates a recognition of the necessity to address the needs of students, who are positioned at the centre of the teaching and learning process, and that a team of professionals will attend to these needs.
Pre-2008	Prior to 2008, the Maltese educational system was predominantly centralised. The state sector experienced an Education Division, now a directorate, which served as the regulating authority for all sectors (state, church, and independent) while also operating the state school sector.
2009	The National Minimum Curriculum is designed to accommodate all pupils equitably.
2012	Modification in NMC to implement the learning outcomes approach
2014	The 2014–2024 Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta, released by MEDE, identified four primary objectives for planning the local educational system. The four objectives were to reduce disparities in educational achievement between genders and among students from various schools, and to enhance the academic success of children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds. This was associated with a decrease in early school dropouts. The third objective aimed to improve adult education participation, while the fourth

	sought to enhance retention rates among students enrolled in higher education, whether vocational or tertiary.
(2015) 2018	**Introduction of the learning outcomes approach.** This resulted in the implementation of a learning outcomes curriculum that had already been adopted in other European nations. The launch was originally scheduled for 2015. However, it was postponed until the academic year 2017-2018. The suspension of the process from February 2016 to the academic year 2017-2018, following a mutual agreement between the Ministry and the Malta Union of Teachers, led to a cessation of momentum and engendered a sense of uncertainty. They were first implemented as a pilot project, following which, they were implemented in all schools across Malta and Gozo in the academic year 2021-2022 in Grades 3 and 4 in the primary sector and Form 1 in the secondary sector.

The above timeline outlines the stages the Maltese Educational System has undergone over the years up to the present day. This timeline shows a Maltese context characterised by teachers' reform fatigue (Attard Tonna & Calleja, 2021). Malta implemented the Learning Outcomes Framework incrementally, intending to liberate schools and students from the previously mandated knowledge-centric curricula that addressed students' learning needs. Launched in 2018, it sought to transform the educational paradigm from a prescriptive curriculum to a framework centred on learning outcomes, as stated in the document released by the Ministry of Education and Employment (2012, xiii), which aimed for 'internal flexibility, appeal for lifelong learning, and the cultivation of skills encompassing critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication.' The local dashboard for the Learning Outcomes explicitly indicates that the objective of the Learning Outcomes Framework is to bolster the National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2012), enacted into law in 2012, which guarantees all learners an educational experience grounded in a comprehensive overview of learning domains. The reform project was executed as a multi-tiered curriculum development process, progressively integrating learning outcomes in primary schools, starting with Grade 3, followed by Grade 4, and continuing thereafter. Upon completion, it now regulates all compulsory-level schools, including state, church, and independent institutions. The document 'For All Children to Succeed' (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) advocated various reforms that were enacted into legislation in 2006. Consequently, the procedure to abolish the 11+ examinations that granted admission to

secondary church schools was implemented. A nationwide end-of-primary benchmark examination was implemented at the national level. This exam has now been replaced by continuous assessment and optional informal exams for Year 6 students. In 2009, the National Curriculum Framework was launched, and in 2012, co-education was implemented in state secondary schools and several church institutions. In 2018, the educational system underwent a significant change that aligned its practices more closely with EU standards. The launch marked the transition to the Learning Outcomes Framework.

A study by Xerri Hili and Schembri (2022) contends that the Learning Outcomes Framework (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2012) was designed to enhance teachers' flexibility and autonomy in developing customised lessons that address students' needs, hence fostering a genuinely student-centred system. Shifting to learning outcomes approaches is complex and requires significant implementation capacities (Cedelop, 2016). The recent local changes that introduced a curriculum-mandated framework centred on learning outcomes necessitated a shift in mindset and methodologies for educators (Attard Tonna & Bugeja, 2016) to authentically adhere to the underlying philosophy of the model. However, to date, has this truly resulted in the anticipated change in mindset? Are the checks and balances effectively implemented to assess student achievement, or is the methodology employed in educational institutions endorsing traditional evaluation systems such as tests and examinations and possibly compromising educators' autonomy? Peresso (2016) and Vella (2017) observed that Maltese primary classrooms are largely teacher-driven, emphasising textbook use, note-taking, and preparation for summative assessments. Maltese educators express worry that the learning outcomes curriculum has led to an increase in testing, which burdens local pupils with anxiety and results in a detrimental educational experience. (Micallef, 2025).

It is crucial to note that throughout Europe, the transition to outcome-based education was more pronounced in higher educational institutions, as previously indicated, and to a lesser extent in compulsory schooling. In Malta, beginning with the June 2025 session, the learning outcomes also govern national school-leaving certification after an obligatory secondary education which adopts a school-based assessment system conducted over the last three years of the students' compulsory schooling. Internal evaluations, called School-Based Assessments (SBA), administered by teachers, constitute 30% of the final grade. As SBAs are developed by individual schools, grading may differ among institutions. They can manifest in diverse forms, and there is no standardisation among schools and/or teachers. Students are advised to engage in project work, encompassing research, presentations, coursework, and assignments, including essays, reports, reflections, and, for scientific

disciplines, a collection of experiments and fieldwork reports (Zahra, 2021). Regrettably, despite the endorsement of formative projects, summative assessments are supplanting these assignments, and biweekly examinations are imposing undue stress on secondary students (Attard, 2023). SBAs in Malta are crucial in enhancing the inclusivity and competency-based nature of assessments, in accordance with contemporary educational reforms. Nonetheless, obstacles persist in guaranteeing equity, uniformity, and feasible execution.

The teacher workload has reportedly grown due to the assertion that SBA work necessitates additional time for assessment and feedback, hence intensifying pressure on educators (Chircop Zahra, 2023). Educators assert that some pupils do not regard School-Based Assessments with the same seriousness as they do when preparing for final examinations. A purported difference exists between the work conducted at school and the work submitted as an SBA when performed at home (ibid., 2023).

Regrettably, in Malta, aside from a few hours of teacher training provided to educators at the end of the academic year, the relevant authorities have extended minimal to no substantial effort or support to assist the local teaching community during these transitions (Xerri & Hili, 2022; Micallef, 2025). The current scenario regarding the adoption of learning outcomes in Maltese schools is contentious. On one side, there exists a powerful directorate led by the education directorate and its officers. On the other hand, there are the implementers of the mandates, specifically the stakeholders directly engaged in schools, namely, educators and students. The learning outcomes framework has afforded teachers in Malta greater flexibility to customise lessons according to their students' needs (Xerri Hili and Schembri, 2022). However, a dichotomy exists across all sectors, including primary education, where teachers receive lists of learning outcomes without adequate guidance on their implementation or the methodological adjustments required. Recent research conducted in Maltese primary schools indicates that teachers perceive an excess of mandated materials, including textbooks and timetables, which undermines their autonomy and flexibility. The findings suggest an apparent necessity for further guidelines and rules that offer a more explicit and pragmatic implementation strategy (ibid., 2022).

4.5 Language development in a learning outcomes curriculum

This research focuses specifically on the teaching and learning processes of Maltese whilst developing learner autonomy. Therefore, it is crucial to analyse the incorporation of learning outcomes in language learning through the development of adaptations made to the teacher's methodologies, pedagogical approaches and evaluation techniques. Learning outcomes in language education specify the skills and competencies students are expected to achieve at different proficiency levels. These encompass:

- Receptive skills: Comprehension of reading and listening.
- Productive competencies: Writing and speaking skills.
- Interactive competencies: Communication, negotiation of meaning, and cultural awareness.

The Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) for Maltese (see Chapter 7 for learning outcomes for Grades 4 and 3) in Malta prioritises communicative competence, focusing on reading comprehension, writing proficiency, and developing spoken abilities. This aligns with the language competence and work demands set out by the European Commission, as depicted in Figure 4.1. This structure also presents a structure that aims to ensure that students develop strong literary analysis and linguistic competency skills, including linguistic precision, critical analysis, literary appreciation, and proficient communication in formal and informal settings (Council of Europe, 2020). As illustrated in Figure 4.1, the aim of the language competence programme encourages educators to adopt task-based learning that facilitates the use of the language in genuine contexts; project-based learning aimed at developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills through research and presentations in the native language; and differentiated instruction, utilising a methodology that ensures the involvement of all students in the learning process through diverse adaptations and strategies (as shown in Part 3 of this study).

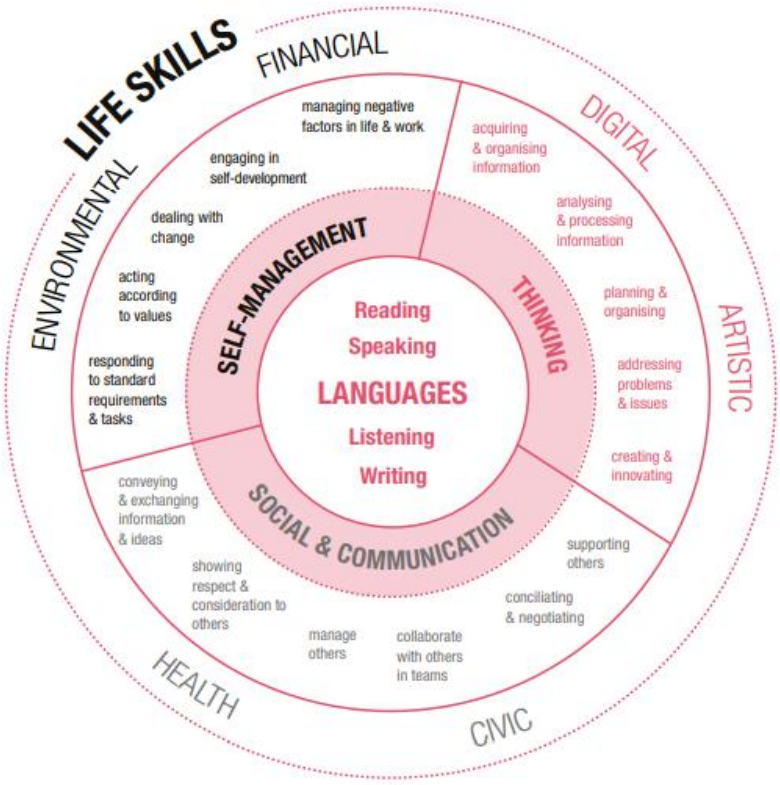


Figure 4.1: Language Competence in line with Work Demands
(Source: Cedefop 2022, p. 45)

The EU aims to ensure that, in addition to affective and cognitive outcomes, learning objectives also emphasise language skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, which are central to providing insights into current and future labour market trends, including the demand for language skills across various sectors and occupations. This data-driven approach aids policymakers and educators in tailoring language training programs to meet market needs. Figure 4.1 (Cedefop, 2022, p.45) delineates the internal and external views aligned with worker expectations. Such objectives must extend beyond work-related demands and be effectively translated into specific targets educational institutions should aspire to achieve in language instruction.

4.6 Professional development for educators

...the success in interpreting the curriculum depends on teachers' competence and effectiveness…

Giordmaina (ed) (2000, p.550)

A significant deficiency observed in Malta regarding a more robust and favourable perspective on learning outcomes is the lack of teacher training (Chircop Zahra, 2023; Xerri & Hili, 2022; Micallef, 2025). This study's research questions examine the pedagogical approaches employed by teachers teaching a learning outcomes curriculum. What modifications, if any, are required in the teachers' pedagogy to promote learner autonomy? One can determine the necessary professional development to facilitate the transfer upon recognising these changes. This study illustrates the feasibility of aiding instructors throughout the educational journey of this case study via a structured programme of ongoing support and use of specifically designed tools (Chapter 6, Schedule and main points discussed during Focus Groups, Table 6.2). Educators can enhance their proficiency through various avenues. A vital pathway is specific training or professional development. The professional growth of a teacher is critically important in language instruction. The educator serves as the exemplar for the student, who assimilates the surrounding language. Consequently, the contributions of educators significantly influence children's growth.

Mollica and Nuessel (2009) assert that, in addition to in-class responsibilities, an effective language teacher must also perform significant out-of-class duties that enhance optimal language learning possibilities. Teachers must assume the roles of researchers, planners, managers, assessors, and communicators. In addition to their initial training, which provides the requisite qualifications for teaching, language educators are expected to engage in ongoing professional development concerning advancements in pedagogy, policies, methodologies, resource utilisation, and other instructional trends and innovations.

In Malta, in recent years, an accelerated remuneration scale system was introduced to motivate teachers to engage in individual professional development courses. Research indicates (Deci & Ryan, 2016) that instructor training in specific domains directly influences student behaviour and perceptions. The learning outcome framework system seeks to decentralise authority and impose further pressure on educators; yet, as Mifsud (2016) asserts, teachers

frequently lack clarity regarding what is expected from them. As previously indicated, learning outcomes are not designed to provide a prescriptive method. Conversely, educators must concentrate on establishing learning environments that foster a drive for discovery and knowledge in students through a pedagogy rooted in innovative strategies that encourage authentic student autonomy. Timmerman (2017) advocates for educators to deliberately implement this practice across diverse topics, as it cultivates students who are "autonomous citizens, solidary and responsible, intended for a democratic, inclusive and fair society" (p. 20). This involves verifying and monitoring whether students are attaining their learning outcomes. This methodological shift necessitates an investment in teacher professional development focused on aiding educators in planning and executing lessons and activities that foster autonomous learning.

Many linguists and researchers have investigated the role of the instructor. Learning outcomes provide a level of flexibility that not all educators can manage (Xerri & Hili, 2022). Educators must be educated to adapt to various responsibilities aligned with this teaching approach to get a flexible disposition. Breen and Candine (cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p.77) categorise the duties of educators into several classifications: teacher as manager and organiser, teacher as facilitator, and teacher as guide. In contrast to the teacher-centred methodology, a learner-centred curriculum focused on learning outcomes necessitates a transition from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach, prioritising the learner in all decision-making processes and the learning program itself. Teachers must organise diverse activities and games that are suitable, effective, and pertinent to classroom instruction, aligning with the students' needs and expectations. The primary objective is to cater to the students' interests and abilities, enhancing their motivation to excel in all classroom activities. Serving as a guide, the teacher must guarantee that the provided instructions are unambiguous, and regardless of whether the activity involves a specific role-play or a group discussion, the instructor should have arranged the students so that they are fully aware of their expectations. Voller (in Wintek, 2012) asserts that the teacher facilitator offers psycho-social and technical support. The former emphasises the motivated student and enhancing learner awareness. Technical support involves assisting the learner in planning and executing their education, facilitating self-evaluation, and aiding in acquiring skills and information. Teachers must ensure that students are reaching their maximum potential. Teachers facilitate the alleviation of doubt and anxiety in learners by providing encouragement and aiding them in overcoming hurdles encountered during the learning process.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter examines the Learning Outcomes curriculum and its underlying philosophy, objectives, and shortcomings, providing a comprehensive analysis of the requirements for the professional development of teachers responsible for implementing the curriculum and the pedagogical implications for its effectiveness. An examination of global trends was conducted with respect to the underlying rationale for implementing learning outcomes across various nations. An analysis of the shortcomings and the ramifications of these pitfalls on the educational experiences of pupils was conducted. The local Maltese perspective further elucidates the contrast between the anticipated pedagogical practices and the actual occurrences within Maltese classrooms. Additional dimensions concerning the significance and necessity of professional development and the critical role of language development in meeting contemporary global work requirements were thoroughly examined.

This chapter concludes Part 1, which focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of this study. Chapters 5 and 6 (Part 2) will concentrate on the research methods used throughout the case study. Chapter 5 will articulate the theoretical justification for each research method selected, while Chapter 6 will elaborate on the development of the different stages in the context of this study.

PART 2

THE RESEARCH METHODS

'Schools should be reconceptualised as "learning organisations" that can react more quickly to changing external environments, embrace innovations in internal organisations… (and) ultimately improve student outcomes.'

(OECD, 2016 in Stenersen & Prøitz, July 2020)

Part 1, encompassing Chapters 2 through 4, concentrated on the theoretical learning frameworks on which the adaptations implemented to the teacher methodology of the empirical research participants were based. Part 2, Chapters 5 and 6, focuses on the research methods employed to address the research questions pertinent to the study conducted within a specific context. The research questions outlined in Chapter 1 examine how, through specific modifications to one's teaching methodology, the learning process fosters learner autonomy while implementing the learning outcomes curriculum.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical foundation for the selected research methods employed to address the research questions, elucidating the reasoning underlying the decisions made. It also elaborates on the participant selection process, the rationale for the observation and data collection methods used, the techniques employed for data collection and analysis, and the ethical considerations addressed and integrated throughout the study. All of this will be supported by evidence presented in context in Chapter 6.

5.1 Why qualitative research

This study aims to investigate the development of evaluative, reflective, and structured planning teaching practices that foster the development of student autonomy skills in conjunction with the implementation of the programme of study. A qualitative approach facilitates a more open exploration of various areas (Wolcott, 2008) and, in this case, was deemed more suitable. Furthermore, qualitative approaches offer a chance to construct a comprehensive narrative of the observations made, thereby enhancing the understanding and elucidation of the matter at hand (Farquhar & White, 2013; O'Leary, 2017).

Within the context of the qualitative framework used in this educational case study research, knowledge is conceptualised as being contingent upon context and influenced by theoretical perspectives, while simultaneously being anchored in empirical investigation. Scholars endeavour to uncover credible interpretations by employing critical realism, reflexivity, and triangulation, while recognising the inherent partiality of truth (Cohen et al., 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). It acknowledges that while objective reality exists, our understanding of it is inevitably shaped by context, values, and human subjectivity. This case study heavily depends on qualitative data, specifically through field notes taken during meetings and observations, experiential records of quotations taken from participants, and images through photos, that is, data that eludes quantification. The decision was informed by the research questions, which seek to explore the extent to which pedagogical practices foster

learner autonomy and whether modifications to the conventional teacher-centred approach are necessary to enhance this autonomy. An investigation of this nature requires data that is dependent on qualitative sources and is inherently descriptive. As a researcher, I sought to gain direct insight into the methods employed in teaching Maltese to native speakers within their specific context, specifically in a context where learning outcomes had just been introduced. Data acquisition necessitated a comprehensive approach involving meticulous observation, detailed documentation, and engagement with all relevant stakeholders. It is asserted that when research is directed towards generating knowledge, it becomes the responsibility of the researchers to articulate their stance concerning the identified knowledge (O'Leary, 2017).

Over the years, research has primarily been viewed as a technical pursuit that follows scientific methods and regulations, all bound by a common goal, particularly assumptions and comprehensive logical methodological frameworks (ibid., 2017). The initial positivist approach functioned within strict scientific frameworks; however, it later transformed into a more exploratory methodology that embraced questioning and critique (Cohen et al., 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). This led to a shift from dependence on conventional methods to interpretivist approaches, marked by heightened collaboration, participation, inductiveness, and exploratory methodologies (Wolcott, 2008). Researchers who adopt an interpretivist perspective assert that knowledge is inherently tied to its context and circumstances, suggesting that the conclusions derived from research may hold validity solely within particular settings. This perspective stands in opposition to the positivist focus on generalisability and universal principles. O'Leary (2017) argues that the qualitative tradition, as a dominant epistemological framework, critiques positivism and underscores the need for alternative methodologies in the production of knowledge. This methodology integrates both inductive and deductive reasoning, recognising the presence of subjectivity along with diverse perspectives and realities (Cohen et al., 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). A crucial aspect of qualitative research is recognising the importance assigned to both the participants and the researchers involved. Qualitative research often yields profound insights and changes that boldly challenge political agendas (Wolcott, 2009).

In the context of qualitative research, the focus on data facilitates a deeper comprehension of specific populations rather than aiming for representativeness (ibid., 2009). The objective here is to attain a profound comprehension that may arise from the few rather than the many. The qualitative approach offers researchers a valuable opportunity to investigate emerging developments that arise during the observation period (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Consequently, the findings of the research evolve progressively due to insights that are

uncovered and refined throughout the empirical investigation (Bailey, 2008). This type of investigation further enables the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the contexts encountered by the participants, including the challenges, concerns, and any unmet needs that may have arisen. The research process used in this case study is designed not to supplant the educators' judgement but to enhance and augment their informal and formal approaches from feedback given to them from the information gathered through my observations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). In this case study, in my role as researcher, I assumed the role of participant-observer with the aim of supplying thorough, systematic, and objective evidence to inform instructional decisions to the teachers. Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that as the research participant gains comfort with the researcher and the evolving study, they are likely to become increasingly motivated to contribute their own insights. This input would undoubtedly enhance and advance the development and implementation of the programme (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). This process aims to enhance the effectiveness of teaching methodologies, as defined in Chapter 1 and further detailed in Chapter 6, ultimately striving to foster greater student autonomy in daily educational practices. Consequently, the chosen research methodologies empower the participants, as they play a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of the study. This reduces the likelihood of the researcher imposing or steering a personal agenda (ibid., 2019).

Tracy (2010, p. 837) claims that ‘qualitative goodness’ includes various concepts and practices. The eight-point conceptualisation of qualitative inquiry all aim at providing a common qualitative language. These are (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigour, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence (Tracy 2010, p.839). This research focuses on linguistic activity and the improved learning experience of a group of students who, over time, develop various skills through the learning experience of the class, defined as intentional (Churchill, 2018). This method claims that all the phenomenologically conscious and unconscious experiences experienced in the classroom setting have experiential features which are unique to the particular cohort and learning experience. Also, the first-hand experience of the researcher will be interpreted in relation to experiences in the context of the classrooms (ibid., 2018).

The principles which underlie the context of this research are summarised in Figure 5.1:

Data type

- Qualitative - written (field notes drawn from different sources) and visual (photos)

Methodology chosen for this research

- This investigation is grounded in a case study that examines a specific issue within a defined context (Section 6.1). The research method uses an iterative cyclical pattern and was selected to achieve a more comprehensive understanding and insight into the designated research area delineated by the two research questions (Chapter 1). This insight leads to the advancements and aims to fill in a gap in pedagogical research. The research strategies will concentrate on addressing real-world issues through a participatory and collaborative approach, aimed at generating knowledge on what modifications to teacher methodology are needed to develop learner auutonomy.

Methods The data was collected through:

- Meetings
- Questionnnaires
- Focus Groups
- Observations
- Interviewing
- Photography

Analysis

- thematic exploration of the data collected

Figure 5.1 The principles underlying the context of this research

5.2 Ontological and Epistemological Positioning

Meltzoff and Cooper (2018) suggest that once the researcher identifies the research questions, the philosophical framework needs to be established. Researchers characterise the research paradigm as a collection of theoretical frameworks that govern the formulation of the phenomenon being studied, the selection of research methodologies, and the processes of data analysis (Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2007). Researchers traditionally rely on the two primary classifications of research philosophies. It is observed that researchers employ varying terminologies in their delineations of these two principal categories. For instance, Lincoln and Guba (1988) utilise the terminology of “naturalistic” in contrast to “scientific” in their analysis. In contrast, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) employ the concepts of “interpretivism” and “constructivism” as opposed to the “positivist” framework.

The selection of methodological design by the researcher is widely recognised as being intrinsically linked to its suitability in addressing the research questions posed

(Silverman, 2024). The selection of research methodology is driven by my ontological and epistemological perspective regarding the most suitable means of addressing the research questions. This study is based on an interpretivist research paradigm that emphasises understanding how individuals derive meaning in particular circumstances (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From this perspective, reality is perceived as plural and socially produced, with the researcher's responsibility being to understand these realities in close partnership with participants. This framework is especially appropriate for educational research investigating subtle pedagogical changes, such as promoting learner autonomy through modifications made to teaching methods. Data collection and analysis follow an iterative and cyclical pattern (elaborated in context in Section 6.2.1), consistent with the principles of participatory and collaborative inquiry (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014), recognising the collaborative production of knowledge and the dynamic process of reflection and change. This is particularly relevant in the context of education, where the aim is not only to describe but to transform teaching and learning practices (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

To capture the complexity of the educational environment, a variety of qualitative data collection methods were employed, including meetings, questionnaires, focus groups, classroom observations, interviews, and photography (delineated in Figure 5.1). These methods enable a rich and multifaceted exploration of participant perspectives and are well-suited to the interpretivist tradition, which seeks depth over breadth and meaning over measurement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This study emphasises the context (Chapter 6 Section 6.1), meaning-making, and the co-construction of knowledge through human interaction (Part 3), whilst using qualitative methods and a case study design, aiming at a transformative pedagogy that promotes learner autonomy.

The primary focus of qualitative research lies in investigating individuals, phenomena, and various circumstances as they manifest in their natural contexts, intending to elucidate the disparities in individuals' perceptions of the world (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). Lichtman (2010) states that when a researcher adopts a qualitative approach, the aim is to provide an in-depth description and understanding of a phenomenon in the context of the studied experience. A qualitative study is more likely to question 'how' and 'why'. This study is grounded within an interpretivist paradigm, which values the subjective experiences of teachers and learners within real classroom settings. Interpretivism asserts that knowledge arises from the collaborative interactions between the researcher and participants, emphasising the importance of context and meaning in understanding human behaviour (Schwandt, 1994). Comparably, the constructivist epistemology posits that learners actively construct knowledge through their interactions with the environment, with these constructions

being profoundly influenced by their personal experiences and pre-existing knowledge (Fosnot, 2013), recognising that knowledge is co-constructed through social interaction and contextual experience (Vygotsky, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This qualitative study, grounded in interpretivist paradigms, seeks to understand meaning-making from three perspectives—the researcher's, the teacher's, and the learner's perspective—an approach that resonates with constructivist assumptions about knowledge being socially constructed and individually interpreted (Fosnot, 2013). Moreover, constructivism emphasises learner agency, encouraging students to take ownership of their learning through exploration, reflection, and collaboration (Mercandal, 2018). Aligned with the rationale of this research, this fosters autonomy by positioning learners as co-constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients, enabling deeper engagement and more personalised educational experiences.

The underlying philosophical framework of the research shapes the ontological position taken by a researcher. This case study in educational research illustrates how ontological positions profoundly affect the interpretation of phenomena. These interpretations can be viewed as either objective and independent of human perception, aligning with a realist ontology, or as socially constructed, subjective, and multifaceted, reflecting a relativist ontology. The ontological position of this research is that the social phenomenon is perceived in a state of flux (Bryman, 2016), which is constantly being constructed and reconstructed through social interaction. The interpretivist or constructivist ontology adopted in this study holds that reality is multiple, subjective, and shaped by human experiences and social interactions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This perspective aligns with classroom-based qualitative research, where meaning is co-constructed between participants within specific contexts. This discourse addresses the fundamental philosophical principles related to the nature of reality and the limits of human understanding in relation to it. The fundamental premises direct the methodological choices and influence the understanding of knowledge within a specific research endeavour (Scotland 2012). Grounded in the works of theorists such as Vygotsky, the constructivist ontology posits that learners actively construct knowledge through experience and social interaction (Wibowo et al., 2025). This theoretical framework is particularly relevant to studies on teaching methodologies, as it shifts the focus from transmission-based models to learner-centred approaches (Fosnot, 2013) emphasising inquiry, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving, aligning closely with contemporary educational goals (Wang, 2011).

5.3 Case Study

The study adopts a qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2018), focusing on a specific educational context in which issues related to learner autonomy and teacher methodology are investigated. As Stake (1995) notes, case studies are well suited to interpretivist inquiry because they allow for in-depth, contextualised understanding of complex phenomena in real-life settings. This study is grounded in a case analysis that seeks to deliver meaningful insights into educational enquiries while also offering a robust foundation for additional narratives that align with comparable research questions within pedagogical research and within the Maltese context.

5.3.1 Definition and characteristics

Creswell and Poth (2018) articulate that research via a case study constitutes a methodological approach focused on examining a particular issue within a defined system situated in a specific context. The context may serve as a focal point for investigation or as a framework for methodological approaches. Employing case study research provides a distinct comprehension or perspective within the research field. It is typically focused on contemporary phenomena, enabling the researcher to examine the phenomenon within its contextual framework (Farquhar, 2013). Flyvbjerg (2006) characterises case study research as a thorough examination of a singular entity, such as an individual or community, emphasising the developmental aspects of their relationships. Hammersley (2000) asserts that the theoretical significance of a case study can reveal the causal mechanisms that connect inputs and outputs within a system, and the researcher frequently identifies these overarching relationships as they unfold. When research concentrates on a specific case, the depth and opportunities it presents uncover inputs and outputs that might otherwise be overlooked (Stake, 1995). For researchers, the closeness of the case study to real-life situations presents a wealth of details (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The case study produces context-dependent knowledge necessary for research since it allows people to develop from ‘rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts’ (ibid., 2006, p. 221).

Case study research is anticipated to be highly descriptive, as it is based on varied and substantial sources of information. It employs quotations from principal participants, stories, tales obtained from interviews, and various literary approaches to generate vivid mental imagery that elucidates the intricacy of the several variables intrinsic to the event being examined (Algozzine & Hancock, 2017). This design was selected for this research since it is especially beneficial in the early phases of research and theory development (Benbasat et al., 1987) and when using novel methodologies (Eisenhardt, 1989). Furthermore, it is appropriate

for practice-oriented issues where the participants' experiences are vital, and the context of the actions is essential (Benbasat et al., 1987). Teaching involves more than just navigating complex decisions and moves beyond the personal experiences teachers encountered as students (Chong & Reinders, 2020). The nature of the research questions necessitated a comprehensive investigation strategy. This research design, primarily linked to qualitative inquiry and techniques, has emerged as a crucial method for examining intricate issues in real-world settings (Tisdell et al., 2025) as it emphasises the exploration of meaning and understanding. The researcher serves as the primary data collection and analysis tool, employing an inductive methodology and producing vividly descriptive outcomes.

Because of these characteristics, case study research was considered the most suitable for analysing the local topical occurrences investigated in this study. This case study can be classified as a descriptive research design, which seeks to provide a comprehensive account of a phenomenon within its contextual framework. The researcher aims to delineate the data as it presents itself.

The principal characteristics of the study, elaborated upon in the context of this study, are:

1. Iterative Process: It follows a cyclical pattern—observe, implement change (intervene), and observe again, and the process is repeated.
2. Real-World Context: This study was conducted in natural settings, which in this case study were classrooms or learning environments outside the classroom.
3. Problem-Solving Focus: Aims to improve practices, solve problems, or introduce innovations.
4. Reflective Practice: Researchers reflect on the outcomes to inform future action.

5.3.2 Aims of Case Study Research

The methodology of case study research is designed to provide a comprehensive and detailed examination of one or more specific cases. This analysis investigates the potential occurrences within specific instances, employing various data sources to compile relevant information. Information can be collected through a variety of methods, including observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, as well as documents and reports.

Case study methodologies exhibit variations that depend on the number of cases involved and the specific objectives of the analysis. Regarding the purpose of case analysis, one may consider three distinct variations to adopt. The researcher conducts a singular instrumental case study, concentrating on a specific issue while selecting one bounded case for in-depth analysis of this matter. In a collective or multiple case study, a singular issue is

once more chosen; however, the researcher opts to examine several case studies while maintaining a focus on the same issue. The investigator is recognised (Yin, 2018) for replicating identical processes across various cases. The intrinsic case study design emphasises the case itself, highlighting a scenario that presents a particularly unique situation. The three variations may be conducted within a single site or across multiple sites, contingent upon the research design employed. This study, although conducted at a single location, rigorously examines distinct scenarios – the grade three and grade four classes. Consequently, as in this case study, although this research constitutes a singular instrumental case study focused on a specific educational institution, it encompasses multiple scenarios, two different grades. This is because, while the school context remains constant, the interventions, observations, and data were gathered from different scenarios within the same site.

Yin (2018) posits that in the context of multiple case studies, the researcher employs the principle of repetition. While generalisation may not be entirely reliable due to varying contexts, the researcher can nonetheless strive to identify shared elements. The likelihood of this increases when the chosen cases are designated as representatives for the qualitative case study's inclusion. This study is grounded in the observation of various classrooms, focusing on the interactions and processes between teachers and students. Consequently, despite being grounded in a singular location, this study will examine various scenarios encompassing diverse teacher attributes and distinct student groups, as well as variables such as age. Despite these distinctions, as Yin (2018) noted, my researcher objective remains to identify shared foundations.

5.3.3 Procedures for Conducting a Case Study

If the research aims to offer a comprehensive insight into a particular scenario, then employing a case study emerges as the most suitable research method for the inquiry (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The researcher must subsequently determine the specific case to be examined, considering whether it pertains to an individual or multiple individuals, and whether the focus will be on a programme, activity, or event. The case may be characterised as single or multiple, multi-sited or within-site, concentrating on a specific case that is intrinsic, or addressing an issue that is instrumental. In case studies, the process of data collection is comprehensive and encompasses interviews, observations, multimedia materials, and documentation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data is subsequently analysed. A comprehensive examination of the entire case may be conducted, or alternatively, one might choose to concentrate on a particular facet of the case and perform a detailed analysis

(Farquhar, 2012). An extensive account encompassing the background, the location of the study, the various contexts of the scenarios analysed within the case, and the timeline of events serves to introduce the case study. Following this largely unchallenged and factual information, the pertinent issues are delineated (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In instances where several cases are selected, a detailed account of each context, along with the themes present within each case, is presented. The process of data collection may encompass a diverse range of media, spanning from written formats to visual representations. The data is subjected to thorough analysis, and during the concluding interpretive phase of the findings, the researcher will 'constitute the lesson learnt from the case' (Creswell, 2007, p. 75).

5.3.4 Shortcomings of case study research

The primary critique directed at case study research is its perceived deficiency in objectivity, precision, and rigour (Farquhar, 2012). Objectivity in this context denotes the concept that reality should be viewed as distinct from the researcher. Objective research typically involves the implementation of experiments and surveys, maintaining a degree of separation between the researcher and the subjects under investigation. While case studies may include a survey component, the primary objective of case study research is, as previously asserted, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of a contemporary phenomenon within its contextual framework. Consequently, one may find that attaining objectivity presents significant challenges. The immersion of the case study researcher in the subject matter often leads to a characterisation of the research as subjective. Achieving precision and rigour necessitates a consistent and coherent research design. This begins with a clear articulation of the philosophical approach, followed by the adoption of an appropriate research strategy. Data collection and analysis should adhere to established research methods, with protocols and justifications meticulously outlined for each phase of the research process. When all of these processes are meticulously delineated, adhered to, and articulated as findings, rigour is attained.

Proponents of quantitative research, particularly those relying on experimental and survey methodologies, often express concern regarding the limited sample sizes characteristic of case study investigations. The primary issue pertains to the limited generalisability of the findings derived from the case study. It is essential in case study research to recognise that the case itself does not represent a sample of one (Bryman & Bell, 2003) and that the objective of case study research is not to generalise the findings from a sample to a broader population.

Ultimately, the critiques directed at case study research align closely with those directed at qualitative enquiries. Certain critics contend that case study research does not

always exemplify qualitative research methodologies. In addressing these criticisms, it is essential to establish well-defined research objectives, employ rigorous methodologies and analyses, and engage in a transparent discourse regarding the findings.

5.4 Method of analysis

The data collected throughout this case study is analysed using the thematic analysis approach. The themes were elicited from the commonalities of the learning theories and depicted in Figure 2.6. A number of emerging sub-themes emerged and were used as additional data (refer to Section 6.4 Codes). Thematic analysis serves as a versatile and extensively applied approach within qualitative research, particularly appropriate for investigations rooted in relativist ontology and interpretivist or constructivist epistemologies. The inherent adaptability of this approach enables scholars to reveal profound, contextually nuanced understandings of participants' personal experiences, resonating with the constructivist perspective that knowledge is actively shaped within particular social environments (Fosnot, 2013). This approach facilitates the recognition of patterns or themes that embody the varied realities encountered by participants, rendering it both accessible and adaptable for the investigation of intricate educational phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nonetheless, thematic analysis presents specific constraints. The identification of themes may inadvertently simplify the intricate nature of participants' experiences, which could diminish the depth of meaning (ibid., 2006). Furthermore, as an interpretive approach, thematic analysis is susceptible to researcher bias, which could distort findings if not meticulously controlled (Schwandt, 1994). Furthermore, although thematic analysis is capable of recognising overarching patterns, it may not provide the same level of depth as alternative qualitative methodologies, such as grounded theory, which delve into the intricacies of meaning-making processes with greater precision (Charmaz, 2006).

Thematic analysis offers significant insights when situated within relativist and constructivist paradigms; however, it necessitates meticulous attention to maintain the depth and intricacy of participants' experiences. In order to overcome the constraints outlined above of thematic analysis within the interpretivist/constructivist epistemologies, it is essential for researchers to adopt various strategies aimed at improving both rigour and depth. To achieve depth, it is essential for researchers to employ triangulation by integrating various data sources or methodologies, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive understanding (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, offering comprehensive accounts of the participants' contexts and experiences contributes to maintaining the intricacy and subtlety of the data, thereby avoiding oversimplification (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is essential for a researcher to confront bias

through the practice of reflexivity, which involves meticulously recording their biases and influences during the research process (Finlay, 2002). Moreover, the process of peer review or member checking serves to authenticate interpretations and reduce bias, thereby ensuring that the identified themes accurately represent the experiences of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thematic mapping, accompanied by subsequent interviews, can delve into the intricate relationships among themes, thereby illuminating the evolving nature of knowledge (Charmaz, 2006). This guarantees a comprehensive examination of the intricacies inherent in the research phenomenon. Through the application of these strategies, scholars can address the limitations of thematic analysis, thereby preserving the method's efficacy as a valuable approach for comprehending subjective realities while upholding the richness and complexity of the results. Incorporating coding software represents a further measure to bolster methodological rigour. The utilisation of multiple coders facilitates collaborative interpretation, thereby strengthening the validity of the findings (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012).

5.5 The rationale behind the qualitative research methods used

Aligned with answering the research questions, the case study adopted a number of qualitative research methods which will be explained in context of this case study in the next chapter. This section elaborates on the theoretical rationale behind each method used.

5.5.1 Focus groups

Focus groups serve as a prevalent technique in qualitative research, offering significant insights into collective viewpoints, social interactions, and the processes of meaning-making within specific contexts. In contrast to individual interviews, focus groups leverage the dynamic interplay of group dialogue to produce comprehensive and nuanced data. These methods are especially appropriate for investigations focused on comprehending the collective experiences, attitudes, or cultural practices of participants, particularly in contexts where consensus, diversity, or conflicting opinions are significant for analysis. Well-designed and moderated focus groups serve as a crucial approach for exploring not only individuals' thoughts but also the ways in which they collectively construct and negotiate meaning. Their alignment with interpretivist and constructivist paradigms is notable, particularly as the social co-construction of knowledge serves as a fundamental epistemological principle (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The primary emphasis of this study was to use focus groups as professional development and to engage with research participants whilst discussing issues related to the current situation and prospective advancements as they

implemented the learning outcomes curriculum. The focus group also facilitated an opportunity for participants to discuss and interact with one another. The limited number of participants in the focus group restricts the findings, making it inappropriate to generalise them to a broader population, as the small sample does not serve as a representative sample (Barbour, 2007). Nonetheless, the outcomes derived from the findings gathered in focus groups may serve as a preliminary basis for conducting a more extensive study, whether at a sectoral level or through a vertical longitudinal approach. The next chapter will elaborate on how these focus groups were designed to address the research questions, with time allocated for explanatory work and training on various topics (Schedule Table 6.2) conducted through the analytical framework of autonomy development. The participants recognised that the analysis would serve as the foundation for the necessary adaptations required for the subsequent lesson. The findings will serve as a descriptive instrument guiding the progression of the implementation programme (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

While focus groups possess certain advantages, they also exhibit several significant limitations. A significant concern arises from the dynamics within groups, as more dominant individuals may overshadow the contributions of those who are less vocal, which could lead to biased data and restrict the range of perspectives represented. This phenomenon which is detailed in context on this case study in Chapter 6, may lead to a bias towards social desirability, wherein individuals align their responses with perceived group norms instead of articulating their own or dissenting opinions. Furthermore, focus groups may not provide the level of insight generally expected from individual interviews. Although these methods are proficient in examining collective interpretations, they may fall short in adequately representing individual or sensitive experiences, especially when participants are hesitant to share such information within a group context (Barbour, 2007).

The moderator's proficiency significantly influences the method's success. Skilled facilitation plays a vital role in promoting balanced participation, managing conflicts, and fostering meaningful discussions. Moderators lacking experience might unintentionally sway the conversation or overlook critical insights (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Ultimately, the examination of focus group data presents distinct challenges. The phenomenon of overlapping speech, characterised by the simultaneous contributions of multiple speakers, alongside the inherently interactive nature of conversation, presents significant challenges for transcription and interpretation. This complexity necessitates a meticulous focus on contextual and discursive subtleties (Barbour, 2007). These aspects are explained further in the section on audible data. These limitations require a careful and reflective approach to the processes of design, facilitation, and analysis.

5.5.2 Individual meetings

Alongside focus groups, individual meetings can be conducted. Arranging individual meetings to gather data from research participants represents an essential methodological approach in qualitative research. Diverse to focus groups where more than one participant is present, these gatherings, often facilitated through semi-structured or comprehensive interviews, provide a private and concentrated setting where individuals can express their personal insights, beliefs, and experiences free from external influence. This holds particular significance when exploring sensitive subjects or examining personal viewpoints that might not be adequately articulated within collective environments (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

One significant benefit of conducting individual meetings is the potential to foster rapport and trust, which can greatly improve the depth and honesty of the data gathered (Seidman, 2013). Individuals frequently demonstrate a greater propensity to discuss intricate or emotionally significant topics when they perceive that their perspectives are acknowledged and valued in a personal dialogue. This approach permits the investigator to customise enquiries according to the unique context and responses of each participant, facilitating a more refined and adaptable exploration. Moreover, one-on-one meetings reduce the likelihood of groupthink or social influence that can arise in focus group settings. The collection of rich, detailed narratives is supported, demonstrating an understanding personal meaning-making processes, identity, and lived experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Unstructured qualitative interviews provide a means for discussions to evolve based on the participants' perceptions of what is important, while allowing the researcher to guide the conversation in alignment with the research questions (Brinkmann, 2020. Chapter 6 will elaborate on the role of individual meetings held throughout this study.

5.5.3 Questionnaires

The application of a case study methodology, utilising various qualitative data sources, adheres to the principle of methodological triangulation, thereby augmenting the study's credibility, dependability, and contextual richness (Yin, 2018). This approach allows researchers to investigate the complexities of real-world environments from various perspectives, amplifying the narratives of both individuals and groups, while ensuring that conclusions are firmly rooted in rich, contextual evidence. In line with this, for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and to enhance the depth, breadth, and trustworthiness of data collection, I decided to use a combination of focus

groups, individual interviews, and qualitative questionnaires. This is elaborated in context of this study in the next chapter.

Closed-ended questions can focus on objective information, including the number of students and their attributes, particularly those associated with their competencies and accomplishments in language application. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, allow research participants to articulate their perspectives, the challenges they encountered, and the factors they believe either impeded or facilitated the development and execution of the investigations related to the research questions. They also elicit narrative responses, reflections, or thematic feedback. This aligns with O'Leary (2017), who asserts that open-ended qualitative questionnaires can successfully elicit written reflections. When crafted with reflective and exploratory questions, these instruments can yield structured yet flexible data that either supports or contrasts with themes that arise from interviews and focus groups. When questionnaires are submitted anonymously, they facilitate an environment in which the respondent feels free to provide any pertinent response.

In case study research, the use of anonymous questionnaires contributes to methodological triangulation, thereby strengthening the credibility and diversity of perspectives within the study, while also addressing ethical considerations such as confidentiality and participant comfort (ibid., 2017).

5.5.4 Transcribing audible data

The representation of auditory and visual data in written format constitutes an interpretative process that necessitates the formulation of judgements. The process of transcription extends beyond simple technical execution, as it invariably involves an interpretative dimension (Bailey, 2008). To maintain clarity and focus, interruptions during lesson time, laughter, casual conversation, and other verbal elements not pertinent to the research will be excluded from the text. Although fully capturing the intricate nature of human interaction in a transcript is nearly impossible, careful consideration should be applied to accurately represent the data as it was originally recorded. Qualitative study data can include written materials, such as documents or field notes, and auditory and visual information, including recordings from interviews, focus groups, and consultations. Transcriptions of recordings are created to facilitate detailed examination, allowing for connections with analytical notes and/or coding.

The first step in data analysis is transcribing by observing audio/visual data closely through careful listening. The process is long and arduous and needs to be planned for in the project timeline (Appendix 5). The process of transcribing spoken language into written form

necessitates a careful reduction, interpretation, and representation to ensure that the resulting text is both comprehensible and meaningful. The determination of relevant data is contingent upon and shaped by the methodological choices and assumptions of the researcher, as well as their disciplinary background and research objectives (ibid., 2008). Transcribing a recording entails reducing the original data, which may include a disturbance in class or a phone call, which is omitted if not relevant to the research. The interplay between verbal and non-verbal interactions is interconnected and contingent upon their relevance to the research. For instance, the arrangement of a classroom and the presence of student groups may hold significance for one specific study while being irrelevant for another.

Another aspect that needed careful consideration in this study was the fact that conversations held during focus groups and other meetings and interactions were in Maltese, the native language of the research participants. The process of translating participant voices from the original language into the presentation language, typically English in scholarly publishing, encompasses more than simply literal word-for-word conversion. Maintaining the data's semantic integrity, tone, and cultural nuances necessitates interpretive judgement (Temple & Young, 2004). Researchers must determine whether to emphasise precise accuracy or conceptual alignment, recognising that each translation inherently involves an interpretative process. In cases where the recordings may be difficult to transcribe due to recording quality, the utterances are interpretable through the knowledge of the context and assumptions made. The interactions underpinning the recordings will also be understood in the context of the settings, the participants and the particular interview topic guidelines. All data presented as evidence (Part 3 of this study) is presented in both Maltese (presented in green) and English (presented in blue). While it is common practice that researchers ask younger researchers or assistants to transcribe their recordings, in this study, only I was involved in transcriptions and translations for standardisation purposes. This process in the context of this study is elaborated on in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.

5.5.5 Observations

Observations are a fundamental technique in qualitative research, offering direct, contextual insights into participants' activities, relationships, and settings. In contrast to interviews or questionnaires that depend on self-reported data, observations enable the researcher to discern non-verbal cues, social dynamics, and situational aspects that may otherwise go unexpressed (Cohen et al, 2018). In educational contexts and the context of this study, classroom observations elucidate the implementation of teaching tactics, the immediate responses of learners, and the dynamics of power relations between educators and students.

Observations can be classified as participant, in which the researcher engages actively, or non-participant, where the researcher maintains a detached yet attentive stance. The selection depends on the research objectives and the degree of immersion necessary. The context of how this aspect developed is further explored in the next chapter.

Observational data is frequently documented by comprehensive field notes, audio-visual recordings, or observation schedules, and it can be utilised to corroborate, contrast, or augment data collected through alternative approaches such as interviews or focus groups. Researchers must remain cognisant of observer bias, reactivity, and ethical considerations, especially concerning informed consent and privacy (ibid., 2018). When carried out with rigour and thoughtful attention, observation serves as a valuable means of documenting the complexities of real-world environments whilst augmenting the validity and depth of qualitative results. This research relied on observations as a primary data source, which served as the foundation for focus groups and individual meetings. Throughout the case study observations occurred within classrooms throughout lesson and activity times, and data is recorded using methods specifically developed for this project. The tools which are presented and detailed in Chapter 6 are designed specifically for this case study (elaborated in context in Section 6.3.6).

Within the framework of case-study inquiry, four distinct observer roles are predominant. The first role is complete participant, when the researcher engages in total immersion, deliberately obscuring the intent of the research, which facilitates the acquisition of insider meanings while simultaneously posing risks related to ethical transparency (Merriam, 1998). The second, the participant-as-observer paradigm, necessitates an open engagement while maintaining an analytic distance, thereby achieving a balance between rapport and reflexivity, as articulated by Smith (2018). The third role is the observer-as-participant who engages in succinct, superficial interactions, such as structured interviews, emphasising achieving descriptive accuracy rather than fostering profound involvement (Merriam, 1998). The fourth, the complete observer maintains a non-interactive stance, depending on unobtrusive observation or archival traces to reduce reactivity (Smith, 2018). The selection process is inherently dependent on the epistemological perspective adopted, the level of access provided, and the ethical limitations that regulate the investigation. It is essential to engage in meticulous reflexive practices (elaborated in Section 6.3), irrespective of the researcher's role, to ensure trustworthiness and alleviate the potential for positional bias, as articulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

To adequately address the research questions, I, as the researcher, needed to engage in the process through focus groups and meetings actively. Simultaneously, it was essential to maintain an analytical distance during lesson observations to discern the extent of transformation, or lack thereof, being implemented in the classroom. The role I assumed as an observer predominantly conformed to the participant-as-observer paradigm, which required a commitment to open engagement. The subsequent chapter delineates the various levels of participation.

5.5.6 Photography

Innovative methodologies are recognised for their ability to provide a comprehensive, inclusive, and adaptable framework for examining social realities, while also enhancing the enjoyment and engagement of the research process, especially when involving children and young individuals as participants (Yamada-Rice & Stirling, 2015). It has been posited that research methodologies ought to be employed innovatively to ensure they are appropriately tailored to their intended objectives (Kara, 2020). In addition to the physical observations conducted in this study, the data gathered encompassed evidence obtained through photographic documentation. Engaging with photography necessitates a deep involvement in philosophical discussions concerning the essence of the social realm and the processes through which knowledge is formed. It has been asserted that photography serves as a medium through which children's perspectives are considered regarding matters that impact them (Hanna, 2022). It is important to note that this method is also regarded as a participant one since it includes all learners, including learners with special needs (Prosser & Loxley, 2007). The realist approach to photography suggests that a photo captures the reality at that moment and offers an indisputable and authentic record of a real-world event. In contrast, the constructivist epistemological perspective, which is adopted in this case study (Section 5.2), views photographs as socially generated artefacts, necessitating an examination of the context, the power dynamics involved in their creation, and the constraints surrounding what can be captured or excluded in photography (Barker & Smith, 2011).

Currently, photography is employed across various fields, with researchers utilising this method for data collection, particularly in studies involving children and adolescents. While photography is a widely recognised research method in early childhood education, its application appears less prevalent among students in compulsory education (Barker & Smith, 2011). The photographic method is considered suitable for application across various learner demographics in educational settings (Kara, 2020). Since photography can capture the ordinary routine of children’s lives at school in real time, it is also useful in educational

contexts for conducting research on children's and young people's experiences at school (Sanders, 2007).

Photography is used as an alternative to traditional qualitative methods that focus on the spoken word or observable phenomena, due to its potential to uncover issues that may not be otherwise explored, therefore adding a richness that may otherwise be absent. It is claimed that photography as a research method has three important aspects and characteristics which are also interlinked, and these are that photography is representative, they are also participative in nature offering a liberatory nature to the research (Hanna, 2022) since it does not restrict the researcher or the participant (Kara, 2020). Photography presents numerous benefits as it can systematically capture much of the fundamental nature of the subject being observed. The incorporation of photography in research encourages a focus on task-oriented activities rather than talk, as it is perceived as enjoyable and does not necessitate advanced verbal or written skills (ibid., 2020). This approach serves to involve children who may otherwise be hesitant to engage in verbal methods or data collection, thereby enhancing inclusivity within the research process. Photography empowers research participants by granting them a degree of agency and direct involvement, thereby increasing their responsibility in the research process. This approach offers participants greater autonomy compared to alternative methods, as it does not consistently necessitate the presence or mediation of the researcher (Sharples et al., 2003).

As a medium, photography is highly flexible in terms of time and space, allowing research to extend into various spaces, environments, and times beyond those directly observable by the researcher (ibid. 2003). To ensure that the interpretative factor of the photos is triangulated, the data obtained from categorising the photos is corroborated with the other methods mentioned above, and vice versa.

5.5.7 Data triangulation

One category of data triangulation delineated by Bryman (2016) is the data triangulation technique used in this case study, which involves utilising multiple data sources within a single study. This study employed a data triangulation method, which involved corroborating textual and visual evidence collected through the different qualitative research methods mentioned in Section 5.5. Findings are drawn from the data collected through the methods used during the case study and analysed as presented as evidence in Chapters 8 to 13.

5.5.8 Sampling

Bryman (2016) categorises sampling for research purposes into two types: Probability (Simple random, Systematic, Stratified and Cluster) and Non-Probability (Purposive, Convenience, Snowball and Quota). To answer the two research questions, this research employed two techniques, both of which are non-probabilistic. The two techniques used are Convenience Sampling and Purposive sampling. This investigation was carried out within three classes that possessed the characteristics pertinent to the study at hand. The selected classes represent the only classes within the primary school selected in which learning outcomes were actively implemented during the very first year of implementation, taught by a full-time, qualified teacher. The selection of the educational institution is predicated upon the factors of availability and accessibility. The considerable amount of time dedicated to engaging with each educator throughout the case study rendered the inclusion of alternative research participants from other schools impossible for the execution of this study.

5.6 Ethical Considerations in Case Study Research

Case studies often involve close engagement with participants, institutions, and sensitive data, requiring a high level of ethical awareness throughout the research process. Ethical issues are essential when conducting responsible and credible research in educational environments. Researchers collaborating with learners, educators, or institutions must comply with standards that safeguard the protection, dignity, and rights of all participants, especially since educational research frequently involves vulnerable populations, such as children and adolescents (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The existing literature delineates specific ethical considerations that researchers should prioritise throughout the research process (Cohen et al. 2018; Lindsay, 2015). Cohen et al. (2018) emphasise that ethical considerations in research can emerge at any point in the process, highlighting the necessity for researchers to maintain a balance between accurately presenting facts and respecting the values and rights of participants. The investigator establishes this equilibrium by considering the topic of inquiry, the methods utilised, the process of data gathering, the later use of the data, and the characteristics of the participants (ibid., 2018). Following a stringent protocol from the beginning is essential, guaranteeing that all relevant parties are informed and that necessary consent and approval are obtained. Obtaining voluntary, informed consent is fundamental. Participants must be provided with clear information about the study's purpose, methods, risks, and benefits, and must understand that participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time without penalty or consequences (BERA, 2018). In the context of

educational or institutional case studies, it is essential to secure consent from gatekeepers such as schools, organisations, or ethical review boards.

An essential ethical consideration meticulously examined during the data collection phase and in the presentation of results is the aspect of anonymity. It is crucial to maintain the confidentiality of participants' identities and the research site when describing the context of the study. The process of revealing information during the presentation of evidence, while simultaneously safeguarding the identities of participants, presents a significant challenge. Christians (2005) emphasises that, despite extensive efforts, particularly during case studies, achieving absolute confidentiality is nearly unattainable, especially in smaller nations, as insiders may identify pseudonyms and specific locations. Researchers need to implement measures to ensure the de-identification of individuals and institutions within transcripts and published findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All data protection protocols must be strictly adhered to when presenting evidence. Furthermore, all collected data must be stored appropriately to guarantee confidentiality and compliance with data protection standards. Researchers must take measures to prevent any psychological, emotional, or reputational harm. This necessitates a careful consideration of the contexts of participants, ensuring that questions or procedures do not lead to any form of distress. It is crucial to engage in ethical reflexivity in contexts where power imbalances are present, especially within hierarchical environments such as educational institutions or professional workplaces (Yin, 2018). Engaging in case study research frequently necessitates the researcher becoming deeply involved in the field environment. Consequently, ethical practice necessitates a constant, thorough self-examination of the researcher's role, inherent biases, and the possible impact on participants.

All ethical considerations in the context of this study will be outlined in Section 6.5.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the theoretical foundations, philosophical framework, and rationale that guided the procedures used in the empirical section of this study. It justifies the decision to base the empirical research on qualitative approaches and includes an overview of the components of case study research. It also underscores the measures researchers must undertake to maintain ethical integrity throughout the research.

Chapter 6 will now focus on the context of this study, which involves three classes of seven- to eight-year-old primary school pupils from Grades 3 and 4 attending a girls' church school. Based on the research method described in this chapter, Chapter 6 outlines the profiles

of participants and specifies how the data were collected during the first year of implementing the learning outcomes curriculum in Malta. This outlines the structure of the cyclical research design used in the empirical investigation and lists the tools employed during the empirical phase of the study. It also provides a framework highlighting the processes and factors influencing change management within the case study and a timeline for implementing change.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODS

6.0 Introduction

Chapter 5 delineated the rationale behind the qualitative research methods used in this research. The case for studying a particular context offers the opportunity for the researcher to present context and content from which inferences are made in their particular context (Simons, 2009).

This chapter will elaborate on the rationale in the context of the case study. Grounded in classroom-based research, the study illustrated in a flow chart in Figure 6.1 was carried out in a girls' church school with three classes (2 Grade 3 classes and 1 Grade 4 class). The context of this research is described in detail in Section 6.1. It aims to analyse classroom dynamics to generate insights into finding the most effective teaching and learning processes that lead to developing learner autonomy skills. This classroom research seeks to investigate the intricacies of what transpires within the chosen classroom environment for this study.

The pedagogical principles elicited from the commonalities of learning theories presented in Part 1 of this study, illustrated in Figure 2.6, led to the design of tools, which will be explained in this chapter and used in this investigation to identify ways for teachers to guide learners more effectively.

6.1 The Context

6.1.1 Sampling

The data for this study were gathered in the inaugural year of the learning outcomes curriculum implementation in Malta, throughout the academic year concluding in June 2022. The sampling technique was non-probabilistic and utilised a combination of convenience and purposive sampling methods. The choice of educational institution ensured that the intensive allocated time needed to carry out the case study, which was based on qualitative research

methods such as observations and meetings, would not be hindered by external factors such as unavailability and lack of enough time dedicated to the process. Therefore, the choice of school was based on convenience sampling. The research participants were sampled using purposive sampling. The data collection period was the initiation year of the learning outcomes curriculum in Malta, that is, during the scholastic year 2021-2022. That year, only two grades in primary education (grades 3 and 4) had been impacted by this mandate. Due to this, during the year of the case study, the only two grades available for research were Grades 3 and 4. Therefore, participants (teachers and pupils) were approached based on their relevance to the research questions, as they were the only participants who met the specific inclusion criteria (purposive sampling).

The combination of purposive and convenience sampling in this context facilitates the systematic gathering of data, concurrently ensuring that the participants possess the relevant insights and experiences essential for effectively addressing the research questions posed. Nonetheless, it is recognised that this particular sampling strategy could impose limitations on the broader generalisability of the findings.

6.1.2 Description of the Context

In Malta, schools are divided into three sectors: state schools, independent schools, and church schools.

State schools are state-funded educational institutions that provide free, inclusive, and equitable education to all children residing in Malta. They are co-ed.

Independent schools are private co-ed schools usually run by a board of governors. They are fee-paying schools since they are funded primarily through tuition fees paid by parents. Although they are still obliged to follow national policies, they enjoy greater autonomy in their administration, curriculum design, and teaching methods.

Different religious denominations own church schools, and all fall under the Maltese Diocese. While privately run, most Church schools in Malta receive government subsidies through an agreement signed in the 1990s, which covers salaries and some operational costs. This allows them to offer education free of charge. Students are asked to contribute to the school's running costs by a minimal donation every term. This is not compulsory. Due to the high demand of parents who request that their children attend a church school, and in line

with the Church's ethos for equity, the Diocese organises an annual ballot as an admissions criterion to select students to attend church schools. The ballot ranking allows parents coming from diverse social backgrounds to choose the school of their choice, depending on availability. This results in a highly diverse cohort of students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. As a family-friendly measure, identical gender siblings usually attend the same school. Some church schools are co-ed, and some are same gender schools. To ensure that the schools in the two latter sectors, the independent and church schools, still reach national standards, they are regulated by the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE).

The study was conducted in a Maltese primary girls' Catholic church school which caters to mixed-ability female students from different social strata who could possess a range of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. The cohort participating in the study comprises seven- and eight-year-old pupils with diverse abilities and varying educational needs. All the students attend the school either because their name or their elder sister's name was drawn out in a randomised national ballot process.

Profile of the study

The following is the profile of the case study:

46 seven-year-olds (2 classes of Grade 3)

23 eight-year-olds (1 class of Grade 4)

3 teacher participants

1 school context

21 lesson observations (7 X 3 classes)

21 individual meetings (7 with each teacher participant)

6 focus groups with the Grade 4 teacher

7 focus groups with Grade 3 teachers (refer to Table 6.2)

- **Three** classes participated: two Grade 3 classes and one Grade 4 class.
- **Seventy-two** mixed-ability female students were invited to participate in the study. Out of the 72 students, **69 voluntarily participated**, with complete anonymity and privacy protection measures in place. The students who opted out of the research were still in class and participated in all the activities held. However, they were not involved in the collection of evidence.

- **Three** female teacher participants participated (a learning support educator was in the grade 4 class).
- The data was collected as follows:
    - **Seven** lesson observations were conducted with each class. These were approximately 35 to 40 minutes each. Follow-up lessons to the project (Chapter 12) held with the two grades were also observed. Even though a plan was initially made to organise the lesson observations, it was evident from the start that as a researcher I needed to be flexible because of school exigencies such as events, teacher sickness or unavailability and special assemblies held. The lessons were observed on a roster basis at a time that was mutually convenient.
    - A minimum of **twenty-one** individual formal and informal meetings were held with the individual teacher participants to discuss observations made (several unofficial encounters, including e-communication)
    - **Seven** Focus group meetings of double lessons (around 60 minutes) were held separately with Grades 3 and 4 teachers. The schedule and content of each focus group are explained in detail in the section Schedule of Focus Groups, Section 6.3.1, Table 6.2. Presentations used during these focus groups are presented in Appendix 4.10.

Teacher participants' profiles

All three teacher participants were female. The three of them graduated from the University of Malta with a teaching degree specialising in Primary Education. One of the teacher participants had graduated two years before the research, one nine years before the research, and one ten years before the research. Two of the participants had only taught in the grade they were observed teaching during the case study, whilst one had experience teaching another class in the early primary classes. Throughout the study, each teacher was given a code: AB3 and CD3 for the two teacher participants of Grade 3, and AB4 for the teacher participant of Grade 4.

Class profiles

Each class was also given a code: 3.1, 3.2, and 4.1. To avoid researcher bias, the data describing the class profile is directly elicited from the questionnaires filled in by the teacher participants at the start of the research. I underlined the aspects I considered most relevant to the study.

Class 3.1 *- 11 to 15 are Maltese Speaking; the rest are Maltese but English is their first language. I feel that 10 students can be considered cognitively challenged. They need a lot of help and spoon-feeding in nearly all subjects especially when it comes to languages (English and Maltese). Some of these students have mild to moderate dyslexia, others have not developed all their alphabetic and phonic skills (most probably due to COVID-19 school closures). I would say, around 10 students out of the whole class are cognitive average ability. These can work independently and can ask questions whenever they do not understand something. However, some areas still need improvement, such as spelling even for these. The foreigners are the problem for Maltese as they do not understand and I feel they do not even want to learn it. They have not been given additional lessons to learn the language. That would be ideal but the complimentary teacher has no time to take them. On the other hand, 1 or 2 students I feel are gifted. I have one student who finds the grade 3 syllabus a bit 'boring' (in fact I do prepare grade 4 things for her, especially when it comes to mathematics). She can read fluently and write very creatively.*

Class 3.2 *– 3 students are cognitively challenged. There is one girl I consider cognitively challenged, a foreigner who does not follow much during Maltese lessons and ends up losing concentration early on in the lesson. In other subjects, she too loses concentration and ends up playing. Another girl has literacy difficulties; therefore, she gets bored during language lessons and gets very talkative and distracting. The last student has literacy difficulties and is absent on most days. The rest of these girls do not have such challenges but tend to make the usual silly mistakes in spelling/reading tasks. They concentrate during the lesson, but sometimes they want to finish early so they make mistakes in their work. They are good at memorising things and are organised. However, I feel that they need to be spoon-fed. A lot of them are English-speaking, and during Maltese lessons, I need to translate a lot.*

Class 4.1 *- Around 6 students would be considered cognitively challenged due to their different academic needs. The most common challenge which hinders them in their reading and writing skills is dyslexia. The students would work well orally but feel at a loss when it comes to reading and/or writing and they give up and depend on me. The majority of the class would be considered as part of this level. The students in general are capable of thinking and being creative and put their thoughts into writing. They would however need some guidance to better their level of work. 3 students I would consider to have a high level. These students are very creative, and come up with very interesting ideas.*

Because admission to the school is determined solely through a national ballot (as explained in Section 6.1.2), the student cohort represents all regions of the country. It also reflects varied socio-economic, cultural and educational family contexts. The above transcripts highlight the diversity of students. The issues mentioned for the Grade 3 cohorts were strongly related to language use, competence, and confidence. The student characteristics had a significant impact mainly on the initial stages of the research, as elucidated in Chapter 8, Entering the Scene.

The School's Linguistic Landscape

The linguistic landscape of an environment serves as a lens through which one can examine the relationship between language, space, identity, and power in a specific sociolinguistic context (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Camilleri Grima, 2024). This section references the visible written language, language used in written communication, and the school's verbal routine activities observed during the case study. The communicative medium used at a school level impacts the students' perception of language, both cognitively and affectively.

School assemblies were typically held daily. The language used during the morning assembly alternated between English and Maltese. Written communication to teachers and parents was usually carried out in English.

Functional and social texts such as timetables, event news and posters, and school rules were observed to be written in English.

Each class had coloured boards at the back of the class (Photos 6.1 and 6.2). The boards were typically used for displaying new content, including new vocabulary introduced. Each subject had a dedicated board. Outside the classroom, each class had another board which was typically used to display students' work or else dedicated to a particular theme.



Photo 6.1 Grade 3 class notice boards



Photo 6.2 Grade 4 class notice boards



Photo 6.3 Corridor Notice Board outside the classroom.



Photo 6.4 Corridor Notice Board outside a classroom displaying drawings from students.



Photo 6.5 Notice boards in the corridor were observed being used to pass on positive messages

Photos 6.3 to 6.5 illustrate notice boards around the school, displaying content written predominantly in English. Some were used to showcase pupils' artwork. It was also observed that notices regarding upcoming school events were in English.

6.2 The research design

The research is illustrated in the following flow chart (Figure 6.1).

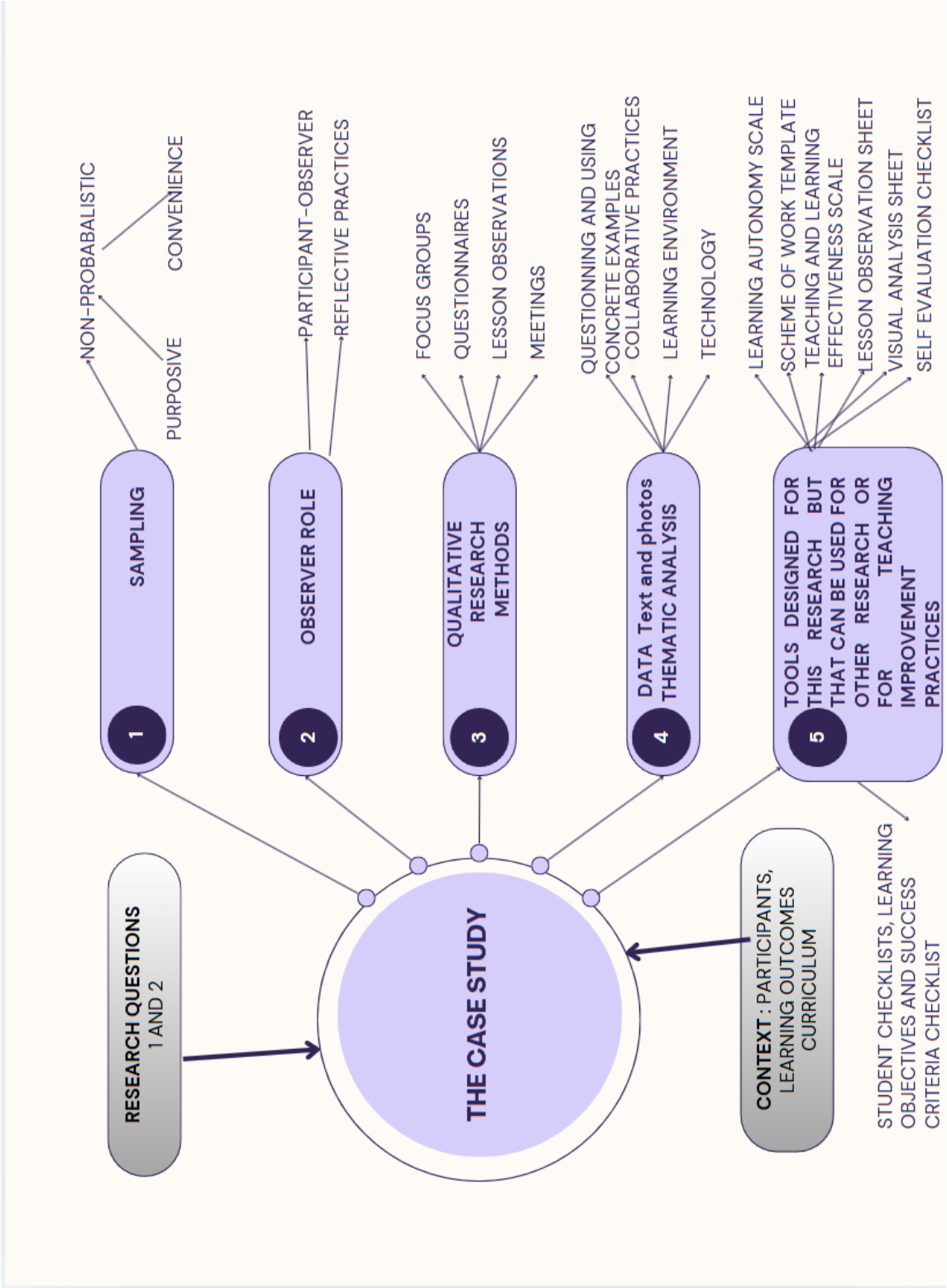


Figure 6.1 The study's flow chart

Stages of the case study

The research depicted by the flow chart, Figure 6.1, followed the 12 stages of qualitative ethnographic research adapted from Cohen et al. (2018). The following table, Table 6.1 highlights the stages of this study.

Stage 1	**Locating a field of study** Date: January 2021
Stage 2	**Formulating the Research Questions** Date: January 2021
Stage 3	**Addressing Ethical Issues** Applying for Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) Approval. Applying for Approval from the Secretariat for Catholic Education (SfCE). Finding a communication liaison to distribute information sheets and consent forms. (Appendices 1 and 2). Date: July 2021
Stage 4	**Deciding on the sample** Date: September 2021
Stage 5	**Finding a role and managing entry into the context** All the necessary consent and assent forms were filled in and endorsed by all educators and students. Since students are at a vulnerable age, the consent must also be filled in by the students' parents. Parents and educators were also provided with a thorough description of the research, its aims and objectives, and the participants' involvement. Date: October 2021
Stage 6	**Finding participants: Convenience and Purposive Sampling** Date: October 2021
Stage 7	**Developing and maintaining relations in the field** Date: July/Sept 2021 to June 2022
Stage 8	**Data collection *in situ* – Presented in Part 3** Date: October 2021 to June 2022
Stage 9	**Data collection outside the field** N/A since no data was collected outside the field

Stage 10	**Data Analysis** Analysis of Transcripts of audio recordings, lesson observation sheets, photos, children's work, self-assessment sheets, and points taken during meetings. Date: Jan 2023 – June 2024
Stage 11	**Leaving the field** Date: September 2022
Stage 12	**Writing the Report** Date: June 2024 – June 2025

Table 6.1: Timeline of the stages of the research

6.2.1 Cyclical design

The above timeline (Table 6.1) and Figure 6.1 (the study's flow chart) delineate the structure of the study. For implementation, the study uses a cyclical design (Figure 6.2). This design was adopted as it presents possibilities for piloting new practices, evaluating their outcomes, re-implementing the practice, re-evaluating the outcome and so on. It incorporates all the stages: data collection, analysis, and finally, the generation of new knowledge. As a starting point, the research carried out in this study will not expect change because of the research, but will demand change through the processes held within the research. Throughout the process adopted throughout this research, the primary focus is on analysing the practices used by teachers teaching classes where the learning outcomes approach is being implemented.

The cyclical paradigm depicted in the following pictorial representation shows how the spiral processes occur one after the other. A detailed timeline of how the case study developed is illustrated in Figure 6.9.

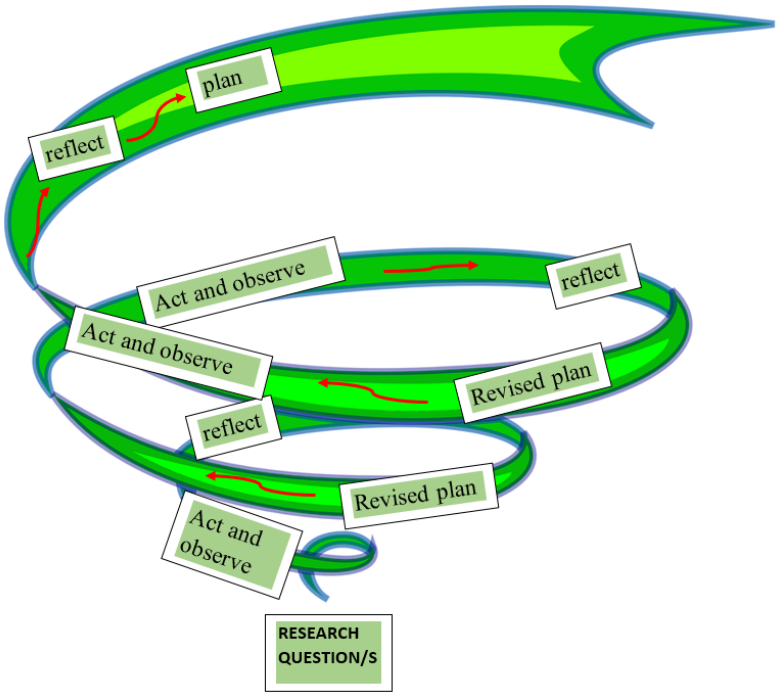


Figure 6.2 A pictorial representation of the cyclical design adopted in this case study

This study examines the pedagogical practices that foster learner autonomy and evaluates the impact of these adaptations on the effectiveness of teaching and learning the native language within the framework of a learning outcomes curriculum. Therefore, this study aims to explore the development of evaluative, reflective and structured planning teaching practices, which will promote the development of student autonomy skills and the effectiveness of the programme's implementation. From the onset of the research, the priority was to experience first-hand the modus operandi for teaching Maltese to native speakers in their context, which is explained in the next section. Therefore, as explained in Chapter 5, to answer the research questions, descriptive qualitative data were used throughout the case study. Data could be obtained by observing, logging descriptions, and speaking to all stakeholders. It is claimed that once research aims at producing knowledge, it becomes the researchers' objective to make claims concerning what position the knowledge that has been identified in the research will take (O'Leary, 2017). Due to the decision to base findings on first-hand data, this research relies on qualitative data through observations, records of experiences, images and words, data that cannot be quantified but relies on qualitative descriptive data.

Figure 6.2 shows how new knowledge is generated as a result of the cyclical process. This was done using a variety of methods. The collection of data, presented and analysed in Part 3

of this thesis, was based on the following qualitative tools, each of which is elaborated further along this chapter:

- Focus groups (Table 6.2) with the teachers of the grade (2 teachers in Grade 3 and 1 in Grade 4)
- Individual meetings with teachers (Section 6.3.2);
- Lesson observations (Section 6.3.6) (photos, lesson observation and visual analysis sheets kept) – tools: lesson observation sheet and visual analysis sheet were designed for this research;
- Interviews with students (Section 6.3.3) (verbal) and questionnaires (section 6.3.4) (written) with teachers;
- In addition to these tools, a self-evaluation checklist (Section 6.3.7) was designed for this research to support teachers when planning and evaluating;
- Photos were taken throughout the case study (Section 6.3.5).

This cyclic design uses a highly structured methodology utilising tools specifically developed for this research (Figure 6.1), and which can be used by other researchers or by schools that aim to develop learner autonomy in their students. These tools will be elaborated upon in this chapter. Other tools, such as the template of a recommended scheme of work to be used in the future by teachers who aim to plan effectively for the development of learner autonomy and a sample of the learner objective checklist for the students, are presented in Appendix 4 (Resource Pack).

Initially, the focus group meeting and individual discussions conducted with the grade educators facilitated a dialogue regarding the pedagogy developed in this research. This approach aims to enhance learner autonomy skills while effectively implementing a curriculum centred on learning outcomes, and it is actively promoted to the teachers involved. Subsequently, the lesson or activity is conducted and monitored for evaluation. The observations are meticulously recorded utilising two primary instruments specifically developed for this study: the Lesson Observation Sheet (Appendix 3.1) and the Visual Analysis Sheet (Appendix 3.2), and during the case study, the teachers were given a Self-Evaluation Sheet (Appendix 3.3). For analysis of data, the Learner Autonomy Scale traits and characteristics (Appendix 3.4) as well as the Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale (Appendix 3.5) were used.

The rationale behind these tools is explained further in the following sections. Following the observation of a lesson, a discussion of the observations made takes place with the teacher during a one-on-one meeting. All findings are shared. The assessment involves a thorough analysis of the degree to which learner autonomy has been fostered, alongside considerations for potential enhancements in its development. The Learner Autonomy scale is used as a benchmark. Utilising a specifically designed scale, which is elaborated upon in this chapter (see Section Learner Autonomy Scale tick list for further details), provides standardisation throughout the research.

Following the evaluative exercise, another lesson is discussed and planned. The procedure is reiterated. The focus groups, which were conducted with teachers from the same year group, were used as a training platform to facilitate the sharing of various adaptations made in response to the observations and evaluations among the educators. Engaging in focus group sessions that included discussions on the rationale behind targets, as presented on the self-evaluation sheet and the learner autonomy scale, served as the foundation for the pedagogical framework necessary for adaptations to take place. The process recommences for another set of learning outcomes. During the case study, students engaged in the evaluation phase by responding to concise, informal questions aimed at gathering feedback. At the end of the study, a formal interview was conducted with fourth-grade students.

The cyclical paradigm described above was a process spread over one scholastic year that aimed to present the educator with a pedagogical view of their classroom teaching and learning processes and practices. Throughout the process, the primary focus of any adaptations made was to promote learner autonomy while reaching targets set by the learning outcomes curriculum.

6.2.2 Reflective and reflexive practices

During the research, it is essential to uphold conceptual rigour during the course of the investigation. The reflective practices implemented during the case study were intentional actions and decisions aimed at enhancing future performance—an “after-action” learning cycle centred on evaluating past actions and identifying ways to improve them (Schön, 1983).

Reflective thinking entails a methodical examination of the research process, actively engaging with various viewpoints to enhance understanding. The iterative structure of this study facilitates this process. The concept embedded within the case study did not define my role as a passive observer but as previously mentioned as participant-observer. It was crucial to continually reflect on my role as a researcher, taking into account my biases, values, interactions with the subjects of the study, and the methods of data processing. Figure 6.3 provides a concise overview of the processes conducted:

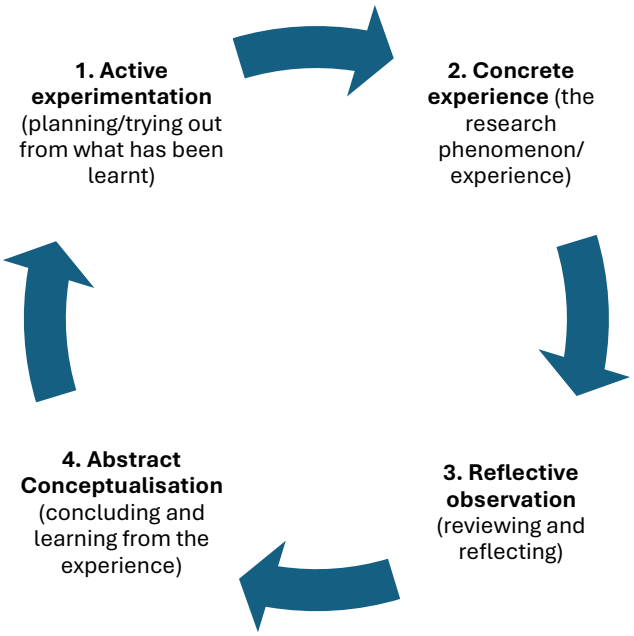


Figure 6.3: Cyclical reflective practice

In line with the stages of this research (Figure 6.1 and Table 6.1), this cyclical reflective practice (Figure 6.3) facilitated a series of ongoing collaborative and multifaceted practices through which I deliberately critiqued, assessed, and analysed the subjectivity and the impact of the context on the research processes. The initial phase entails recognising a problem or area for enhancement and formulating an intervention or strategy. This tallies with Stages 1 to 3 of Table 6.1. The subsequent phase is the active phase, during which the strategy is executed in a practical setting, matching Stages 4 to 8 of Table 6.1. During the Reflective observation phase, results are assessed and analysed in relation to established objectives, utilising the qualitative data. In this study, this covers Stages 10 and 11 of Table 6.1. The Concluding phase involves assessing findings and determining whether to standardise the change, modify it, or commence a new cycle. This dynamic process facilitates reflective inquiry and cultivates a culture of continuous learning and enhancement. This cyclical architecture of reflection in educational research corresponds effectively with case study

methodologies, providing a pragmatic way for improving teaching and learning through iterative, data-driven improvement (Tague, 2023).

Reflexivity, in contrast, represents an ongoing and critical examination of the researcher's own positionality, assumptions, and power dynamics throughout the process of knowledge production. The focus is on the individuals conducting the research and their motivations, examining how these personal perspectives influence each phase of the investigation (Finlay, 2002). The positionality statement presented in the introductory chapter gives a concise portrait of my professional background, motivations and anticipated biases. In order to prevent my bias from advocating for a teaching approach that encourages students to assume responsibility for their own learning from clouding the process, an underlying strategy of engaging participants was implemented. The reflexivity engaged in this research was based on continually reflecting upon my motivation and my role as a researcher. The focus groups functioned as a reflective session, allowing educator participants to examine and question prevailing assumptions critically. Selected passages from the discussions are recorded and presented in Part 3. The comprehensive account detailing the progression of the study, incorporating diary excerpts and lesson observation notes (presented in Part 3), demonstrates reflexive reasoning as it occurs in real time. Another reflexive strategy involves the examination of how particular data was interpreted and triangulated presented alongside supporting excerpts located throughout Chapters 8 to 13.

6.3 Data Collection Methods and Analysis

This section contextualises the theoretical foundations of the qualitative research methods previously outlined in Chapter 5 and presented in the flow chart illustrating the case study (Figure 6.1). Given that educators were executing the programme for the first time, the challenges associated with utilising the learning outcomes as a mechanism within the educators' methodologies were of high significance. In Part 3, Chapter 7 presents evidence and demonstrates how the process resulted in a pedagogical approach that utilised the achievement of learning outcome/s within activities and lessons to enhance learners' autonomy skills. Besides covering the outcomes, to answer the research questions, the educational approach necessitates a transformation in the mindset of educators towards one that fosters autonomy in learners. This pedagogical transformation was consistently reinforced through my role as participant-observer researcher, through the way the qualitative research methods were used as follows.

6.3.1 Focus Groups

The grade focus groups, held with the grade teachers and learner support assistants, concentrated on identifying shared experiences within that specific cohort. These focus groups, the schedule presented in Table 6.2, emphasised theoretical frameworks and concepts detailed in Part 1. They served as ongoing professional development where the theoretical frameworks' principles were examined alongside exploring strategies to implement objectives aimed at fostering learner autonomy. The educators were given the opportunity to enquire and engage in discussions regarding the practical application of any theoretical frameworks that were addressed. Tools designed for this research, such as the self-evaluation checklist based on the theoretical framework, were also explained during the focus groups. They were systematically connected to the teachers' planning and evaluation of the lessons through reference to the tools.

Therefore, the main aim was to link the theory with classroom practices. Teacher participants always attended the focus group. The teacher who was not participating in the study in Grade 4 still attended the focus groups because she was interested in the training and because they served as professional development. The salient points discussed during each session are presented in Table 6.2.



Photo 6.6 A training session for teachers with LEGO blocks.

Photo 6.6 shows one of these sessions. Teachers and Learning Support Educators of both grades were trained on using LEGO blocks in different educational settings.

Schedule of Focus Groups

As mentioned, focus groups were held with teacher participants from grades 3 and 4. At times when the assistant head found the time, she attended as part of her professional development. Notwithstanding the fortnightly plan to organise the observations alternating with meetings, in the case study, as a researcher, I needed to be very flexible with the time slots scheduled for these observations and meetings, since they were amended and held at the convenience of the participants.

The following table (Table 6.2) shows the schedule for these focus group meetings and the topics discussed during each of them. The topics chosen to be tackled were initially planned according to this thesis's exigencies and the needs of the individual grades. Emerging issues that developed and presented discrepancies between the grades are discussed and presented in Chapter 8, Entering the Scene. All educators involved in the grade were invited to attend. Occasionally, even though she was only involved in the research, the assistant head of primary attended as she was interested in implementing the learning outcomes curriculum.

Each session was two lessons long, 45 to 60 minutes long, and was held whilst the pupils had lessons with another teacher. Teachers were not forced to attend, but had consented to participate when they agreed to participate in the study. When a teacher was sick or asked to be excused, the date of the session was changed. Two additional focus groups were held with the Grade 3 team since, in the initial stages of the study, meetings held with the two grades focused on different issues (refer to Chapter 8). This resulted in organising two additional meetings to discuss the outing project (presented in Chapter 12). The focus groups allowed the participants to discuss and engage with each other. The following table (Table 6.2) presents the schedule and the minutes of the main points discussed during these meetings (presentations used during the meetings can be found in Appendix 4.10).

Grade 3	Focus group 1	Monday 18th October 2021
Grade 4	Focus group 1	Friday 22nd October 2021

Minutes of Topics tackled:

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- What do we understand by a learning outcomes curriculum?
- What opportunities does the learning outcomes programme offer? – flexibility, linking outcomes within or across language skills. The flexibility that learning outcomes offer through combinations of outcomes is discussed.
- The increased accountability of the teachers is also discussed. Aspects related to implementing the learning outcomes were underlying throughout the implementation phases and discussed and developed throughout the case study.
- How can the learning outcomes be combined by finding common links between language skills? This aspect is explained in detail in Chapter 7.
- With both grades, reference was made to the underlying issue of direct close-ended questioning techniques and the need to switch to questions that demand thinking and reflecting from the pupils.

The presentation used for these sessions is presented in Appendix 4.

Grade 3	Focus group 2	Monday 8th November 2021
Grade 4	Focus group 2	Friday 12th November 2021

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- With Grade 3 educators, it was crucial to discuss adapting teaching strategies to improve students' motivation to use Maltese (refer to the initial phases of study, Chapter 8). All the initiatives aimed at tackling the use of Maltese with the two classes were discussed. This was crucial at this stage of the study, since better use of the language would also lead to creating an autonomy-supportive classroom. The main issue was: How do the teachers need to assist the Maltese students in consciously making an effort to use their native language while assisting the non-Maltese citizens by exposing them to the language? The aspect of motivating the learners with various initiatives was discussed (in more detail in Chapter 7, Section Implementation of Learning Outcomes Grade 3 and Chapter 8, Section 8.1.3), in line with how to implement the learning outcomes. Aspects related to the introduction of initiatives aimed at changing the learners' attitude towards the Maltese language are presented in detail in Chapter 8. These initiatives, which were also adaptations made to the teacher methodology, were needed since this would lead to the development of the primary focus of this study, which was developing learner autonomy.

- With the Grade 4 teacher, linking learning outcomes was further elaborated (more detail in Chapter 7, Section Implementation of Learning Outcomes Grade 4).

- At this stage, the teachers were introduced to the Self-Evaluation Checklist (Section 6.3.7 and Appendix 3.3) to assist them in reflecting on and evaluating the lessons and activities. The aspects of the evaluation checklist were discussed during the follow-up meeting. In addition to the evaluation checklist, the traits and characteristics (detailed in Chapter 3; Appendix 3.4) manifested when learners develop learner autonomy skills were discussed. Reference to the concept of the continuum and degrees of autonomy in learners was made. These two tools were shared with the participants and kept as a focal point during all the discussions held during the focus groups and follow-up individual meetings.

Grade 3	Focus group 3	Monday 3rd December 2021
Grade 4	Focus group 3	Friday, Dec 6th 2022

Grades 3 and 4:

- The importance of collaboration between pupils and group work dynamics was discussed. Chapter 9 will illustrate how the modifications that were made to the class interactions were implemented in class. Based on the ideas of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and scaffolding discussed and explained in Chapter 2, an aspect discussed during this group was the need to increase collaboration between learners to shift the class dynamics to a multi-dimensional one, as explained in Chapter 8. Teacher participants of both grades were asked to incorporate more activities that included various forms of collaboration. The discussion focused on increased interaction (multi-dimensional as opposed to one-way) between the participants (adults and students) and collaborative practices in teaching the language; an improvement in learners' engagement (even through using hands-on activities) will lead to an improvement in the assimilation of knowledge. Using concrete examples and ways of actively involving the students in the learning experience were discussed.
- During this session, we also discussed how to use IWM effectively. I suggested that projecting on the interactive whiteboard is necessary in some cases; however, to increase student involvement, the IWB needed to be used by the pupils as well as the teacher. This would also lead to improved learner autonomy on an individual and group level.
- A short reference with Grade 4 on ways of using tablets, including the use of QR codes and interactive learning apps, such as learning apps and live worksheets. Using Ozobots to improve learner autonomy was also discussed.
- In both grades, during the discussions, reference was made to the traits (Table 3.1) and characteristics (Table 3.2) related to nurturing learner autonomy (Figure 3.2).

Grade 3	Focus group 4	Monday 17th January 2022
Grade 4	Focus group 4	Friday 21st January 2022
Grade 3 and 4	Training on LEGO	Thursday 20th January 2022.

- The discussion on the continuum of learner autonomy continued. It was also essential to convey the message of flexibility and that learner autonomy was built, a skill the students would obtain through various means.

- Grade 4: More discussion on the use of technology and how it can assist in language assimilation (tablets, QR codes, Ozobots) through the games and activities created. An emphasis on the increase in use of technology and how to transform tasks to tailor-made digital tasks was made.

- Another aspect discussed was the principle related to the assimilation of knowledge, which should occur for all students in all lessons. Pedagogical aspects of retention and how teachers needed to plan to assess retention without risking being repetitive and mechanical were discussed (with reference made to the evaluation checklist). When planning a lesson, the assimilation of the students' knowledge should be at the forefront of decisions. Strategies on how to monitor assimilation of knowledge were discussed. Whilst developing autonomy skills in the students, Grade 4's increase in the use of tablets with a special focus on self-assessment would assist the teacher in monitoring learners' retention and assimilation of knowledge.

- A focused session on new equipment was held. On January 20, 2022, all educators had training focusing on LEGO Education.

Grade 3	Focus group 5	Monday 14th February2022
Grade 4	Focus group 5	Friday 24th February 2022

Grade 3 - How can we effectively plan for writing tasks while planning lessons that aim to increase student collaboration? Does this lead to learner autonomy? Activities presented as evidence in Chapter 9 - Collaboration and Learner Autonomy were discussed and planned (Reference to Appendix 4.3 Collaborative Writing Plan).

Grade 4 – brainstorming and planning for activities to use in an environment outside of school (reference to Appendix 4.4 Project plan and 4.5 Suggested handouts for outing). The Outing Project developed during the third term (as presented in Chapter 12) aims to reap the benefits of the pedagogical transformations made during the previous weeks. The principles found at the foundation of the pedagogy designed in this research all aim at promoting learner autonomy. At the forefront of the pedagogy used for planning the outing was Collaboration, enhancing the use of technology, and using the environment in and out of school, whilst implementing learning outcomes aimed at attaining writing outcomes. All these aspects aim to nurture and develop learner autonomy skills.

Grade 3	Focus group 6	Monday 7th March 2022
Grade 4	Focus group/meeting 6	Friday 25th March 2022
Grade 3 • Special focus on the use of LEGO blocks. Brainstorming of ways to use LEGO. • How can writing tasks be planned whilst using LEGO? • Does this methodology lead to learner autonomy? Evidence related to the introduction and implementation of this methodology is presented in Chapter 12. With Grade 4, the focus was on finalising the tasks related to the outing to a natural park which was held on Tuesday, 29th March 2022 (refer to Chapter 12 and Project plan and resources Appendix 4.5).		
Grade 3	Focus group 7	Monday 4th April
With Grade 3s, the focus was on finalising the tasks related to the outing to the farm, which was held on Tuesday, 26th April 2022 (refer to Chapter 12 and Appendix 6.2). Planning an activity during the third term involving all the principles related to developing learning autonomy through collaboration, using LEGO, and using outdoor education (outing to the farm), which was held on April 26 2022 (refer to Chapter 12) whilst attaining outcomes. Refer to Resource pack Appendix 4.3 (Collaborative writing), Writing checklist (Appendix 4.6)		

Table 6.2 Schedule and main points discussed during the focus groups

During the focus group meetings, issues that initially were not apparent emerged and were developed and addressed, allowing the research to either develop a new direction or broaden its scope. As a result of the cyclical design of the research, evidence collected during lesson observations, follow-up discussions in focus groups or individual meetings led to addressing arising issues that would then be tackled in subsequent interactions. This case study presents a model that schools and practitioners can adopt. This is because the cyclical design adopted resulted in constantly acquiring new valid information. Adopting this design at a whole school level can lead to designing new policies or making the necessary amendments to school action plans. Therefore, it increases the effectiveness of the teaching

and learning processes. As shown in Part 3, in Chapters 8 to 13, this case study shows how discoveries made through field research improve school practices when dealt with promptly.

6.3.2 Individual meetings

In addition to the focus groups, individual sessions lasting around 30 minutes were conducted when the teacher was available, ideally within the same week after the observed lesson. The meetings concentrated on my observations and the teacher participants' pedagogical queries. In my participative role as participant-observer, I stimulated and guided the conversation in alignment with the two research questions' focus. The individual session also examined the implementation of the learning outcomes and lessons scheduled for the upcoming week with the class educators to assess and evaluate the teaching and learning processes. During this session, a discussion was held on various possibilities for combining learning outcomes when planning and implementing activities. This is explained in more detail in Chapter 7. The focus targeted improving and increasing students' direct involvement and autonomy in their learning processes while aiming to plan lessons or activities that led to attaining the learning outcomes. In contrast to the focus group session, the individual meetings were unstructured and informal—the meetings aimed at giving feedback on the lesson and planning for the next one.

6.3.3 Student Interviews

Students were interviewed formally and informally during the process. Students were asked informal questions during the class work, when they were involved in the different tasks. The main aim of these questions was to evaluate their independence in tackling the tasks and whether they showed competence in what they were engaged in whilst working. With both grades, there were instances when, during group work, I went around and logged comments related to practices being implemented. At the end of the third term, in June 2022, students' feedback was also collected. Questions related to various tasks were asked. Quotations from these interviews are presented in Part 3. Grade 3 students' feedback was gathered in groups in class whilst the rest of the class was engaged in a separate activity, whereas interviews were held with all the Grade 4 students. The students were asked to meet me outside the classroom in pairs. The different approach between the two grades for conducting the interviews resulted from the fact that when using the same format, Grade 3 students did not disclose any information beyond their enjoyment of the experience. Grade 3 students could not define the differences in teacher methodology, but could express that they

enjoyed the lessons. In contrast, feedback from Grade 4 students was aligned with the autonomy that they felt they achieved through their involvement in the Maltese language tasks. The variation between the two cohorts, which might have been the result of various factors, including age, is elaborated further in Chapter 10 and Chapter 12, Section 12.3

6.3.4 Questionnaires

At the beginning of the research, before the focus groups started, teachers were given a structured questionnaire similar to another one handed out at the end (Appendix 3.6). The first questionnaire was mainly based on collecting factual information, such as the class profile, presented in the context section earlier. It was designed to collect information from the educators about their views on implementing the learning outcomes approach when teaching Maltese before the study started. Another questionnaire with similar questions was amended to reflect their opinion after the study. I was interested in comparing the teachers' perspectives on planning effectively when using a learning outcomes curriculum before and after the case study research was carried out. This data was not collected anonymously. This included closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions were related to factual knowledge, such as the number of students and ability. All the open-ended questions allowed educators to present personal opinions, challenges faced and issues that they felt hindered or assisted in developing and attaining the investigations and implementation process involved in tackling the research questions.

At the end of the research, teacher participants were given another written questionnaire (Appendix 3.6) to analyse their perspective on the pedagogical transformation made through the adaptations employed in their methodology. This data was collected through an anonymous questionnaire at the end of the research. This anonymous questionnaire had no identifying marks to ensure freedom of speech and total anonymity in the reply (Cohen et al. 2018). Data was collected through a Google form that did not ask for the participants' email information. Aimed at deeper reflective insights, the questionnaire was anonymous, so participants felt free to answer freely. All the data collected was correlated with the data collected during observations, field notes collected during meetings, and the field notes collected from interviews with teachers and students (presented in Part 3). At the end of the research, verbal feedback was also collected from the school's senior leadership team. The data collected is presented and analysed in Part 3 of this dissertation. Also in this case, when evidence was collected in Maltese, a literal translation to English is provided to decrease the researcher's interpretation bias. Data collected in English is presented verbatim.

In Part 3, data is presented in both languages, green for Maltese and blue for English. All transcriptions have been done manually.

6.3.5 Photo Journal

Besides the written medium of collecting data, this research also built a photo journal to substantiate the written data with visual data and enhance the data's authenticity through visual evidence. During lesson observations, when deemed necessary, photos were taken of students during activities and when observed manifesting autonomy. The photo journal was another way data was collected and showed work progress and adaptations of learning environment dynamics. The photos also helped keep track of the accumulation of field notes collected over the weeks. Moreover, the teacher participants became part of the data collection process by taking photos when they felt they had successfully promoted learner autonomy in their teaching. This also served as a way to enhance the teachers' reflections on the transformation process. An interesting method would have been asking students to provide evidence by taking photos. However, since not all student participants in the class consented to participate in the research, asking the students to take photos was impossible since ensuring everyone's privacy was a priority. As the teachers were familiar with all the participants who had consented, no risk was associated with the photography. It was essential to guarantee that participants remained unidentifiable when presenting evidence. Most of the photographs utilised as evidence were altered using blurring techniques to preserve the anonymity of the school and the participants. Attention was made to ensure that the blurring still allowed me to convey the desired message of the image.

The photographic evidence collected for this study was systematically categorised according to predetermined thematic criteria aligned with the research's pedagogical aims. The criteria are presented at the beginning of Chapters 9, 10, and 12 in Part 3. Images were categorised under cooperation and collaborative tasks (Chapter 9) when they illustrated learners participating in joint problem-solving, co-constructed writing, shared decision-making, or other modalities of social learning. A second category, enhanced use of technology (Chapter 10), included photographs illustrating the integration of digital tools such as tablets, QR codes, and Ozobots to support or extend learning, as well as instances where technology enabled inquiry or collaboration. A third category comprised project-based learning and the use of outdoor environments, capturing students' involvement in authentic, inquiry-driven activities situated in both the classroom and outdoor learning spaces. These included the use of LEGO blocks (Chapter 12), word cards (Chapter 9), and evidence of games such as Charades (Chapter 12). A fourth category, use of concrete examples and hands-on games (Chapters 9, 10, 12 and 13), included images showing learners manipulating physical materials,

engaging with tactile resources, or participating in structured learning games designed to deepen conceptual understanding through experiential engagement (Chapters 9, 10, and 12). These criteria ensured that the photographic dataset was organised coherently and allowed for systematic, analytically meaningful interpretation aligned with the study's research questions. The criteria adopted in each chapter of Part 3 will be clearly outlined at the start of each chapter.

6.3.6 Lesson observations

Tools were designed to be used in conjunction with the observations made during this case study. The Lesson Observation Sheet (LOS) (Appendix 3.1) and the Visual Analysis Sheet (VAS) (Appendix 3.2) explained in this section were designed and used during lesson observations.

Visual Analysis Sheet

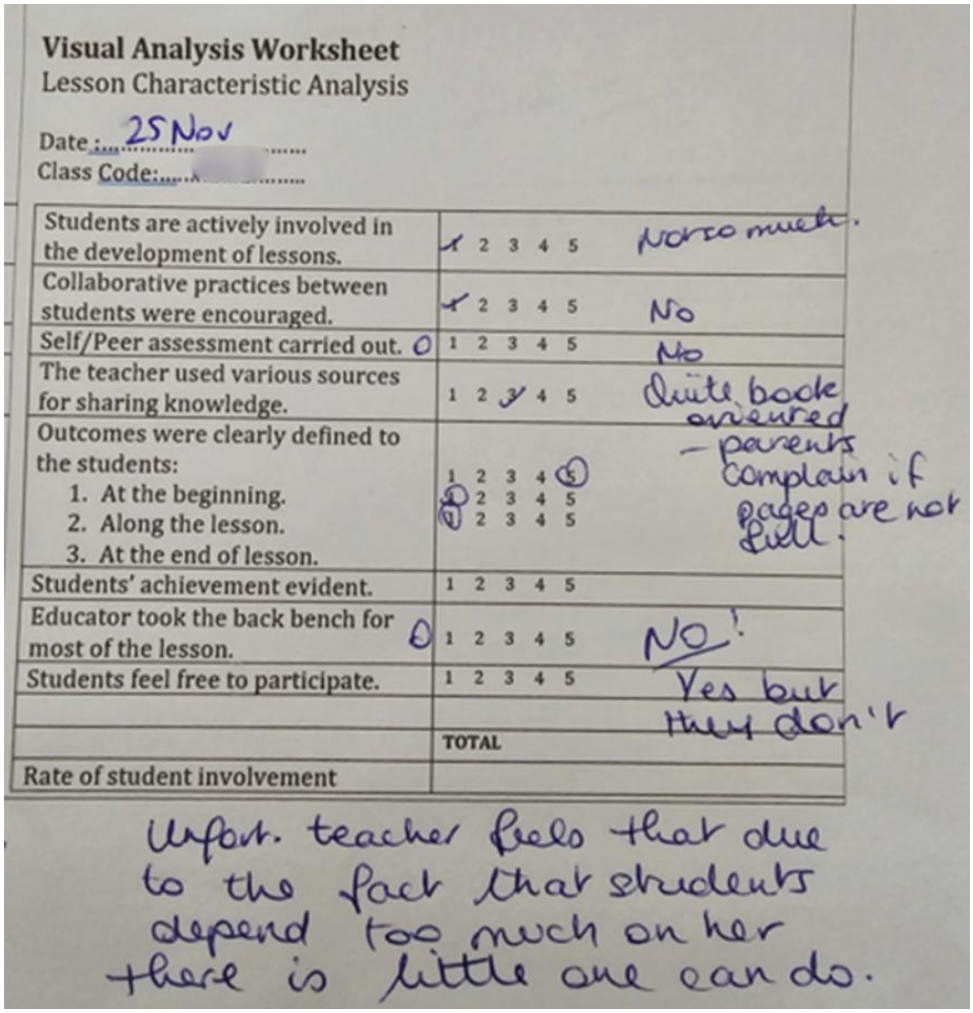
The data collected on the Visual Analysis Sheet (VAS) (Figure 6.4 and Photo 6.7 (filled out VAS) and Appendix 3.2) analysed lesson characteristics. This evaluator sheet, designed for this research, was based on a simple 1 to 5 scale and filled in after each observation. It aimed at presenting a fast way of recording observations which gauged aspects such as student involvement and whether collaboration was encouraged, whether the teacher used sources for sharing knowledge or whether the teacher imparted knowledge throughout, and whether student attainment was evident or not related to the achievement of the outcomes. The visual analysis sheet was written to record interactions. Recording interactions is important since, as Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3 Section 3.1.2 points out, the variation of interactions leads to a high or low learner autonomy on the continuum scale. Teacher dependence is also noted.

Visual Analysis Worksheet
Lesson Characteristic Analysis

Date:.....
Class Code:.....

Students are actively involved in the development of lessons.	1 2 3 4 5
Collaborative practices between students were encouraged.	1 2 3 4 5
Self/Peer assessment carried out.	1 2 3 4 5
The teacher used various sources for sharing knowledge.	1 2 3 4 5
Outcomes were clearly defined to the students: 1. At the beginning. 2. Along the lesson. 3. At the end of lesson.	 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
Students' achievement evident.	1 2 3 4 5
Educator took the back bench for most of the lesson.	1 2 3 4 5
Students feel free to participate.	1 2 3 4 5
	TOTAL
Rate of student involvement	

Figure 6.4 Visual Analysis Sheet used during lesson observations



Visual Analysis Worksheet
Lesson Characteristic Analysis

Date: 25 Nov
Class Code: [redacted]

Students are actively involved in the development of lessons.	1 2 3 4 5	Not so much.
Collaborative practices between students were encouraged.	1 2 3 4 5	No
Self/Peer assessment carried out. 0	1 2 3 4 5	No
The teacher used various sources for sharing knowledge.	1 2 3 4 5	Quite book oriented – parents complain if pages are not full.
Outcomes were clearly defined to the students: 1. At the beginning. 2. Along the lesson. 3. At the end of lesson.	1 2 3 4 5 2 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	
Students' achievement evident.	1 2 3 4 5	
Educator took the back bench for most of the lesson. 0	1 2 3 4 5	NO!
Students feel free to participate.	1 2 3 4 5	Yes but they don't
	TOTAL	
Rate of student involvement		

Unfort. teacher feels that due to the fact that students depend too much on her there is little one can do.

Photo 6.7: Sample of a Visual Analysis Sheet completed during the lesson.

The handwritten observations noted in Photo 6.7, such as '*Unfortunately, the teacher feels that since students depend too much on her, there is little one can do*' (VAS_Nov21), written during a lesson observed in November with one of the Grade 3 classes, would then be followed up during the individual meeting. In my supportive role and as an observer, I would go through the lesson again during the follow-up meetings and discuss and suggest how the teacher's methodology could be amended to enable students to develop autonomy skills. With reference to this lesson noted in the VAS Photo 6.7, open-ended questioning techniques where students are asked to think and give feedback to each other were suggested. Another suggestion based on the observation 'book oriented' included the introduction of games and to minimise the use of the book. The discussion centred on the appropriate use of a book as a supplementary resource, rather than employing it as a comprehensive guide throughout the entirety of a lesson. The discussion centred on the challenge of addressing all the pages in the book, highlighting that parental pressure influenced its usage rather than the educational objectives of the lesson.

Lesson Observation Sheet

Date *1st December (prior to focus group, but after one individual meeting)*	
Class Code *AB3*	
Lesson skills covered *Interjezzjonijiet*	
Number of students *24*	
Organisational autonomy support –e.g. students are allowed some decision-making role in terms of classroom management roles	Examples during this session
The start of the lessons was very teacher oriented. The teacher explained the topic and tried to put the words ('interjezzjoniiet') into context. The students were not very receptive. A few used English as a medium to communicate.	No autonomy was evident.
Procedural Autonomy Support – e.g. students are given the opportunity to choose the use of different media to present ideas	Examples during this session
Initially the students were just asked to write on the book. However, after a short consultation between myself and the teacher (it came from the teacher to ask me what she could do to involve them more) the lesson took a turn for the better.	No procedural autonomy support was observed.
Cognitive Autonomy Support – e.g. students are directly involved in evaluating work possibly even through peer assessment	Examples during this session
During the activity, students in groups as well as individually used different expressive words to place in context.	Refer to Photos

Figure 6.5: Sample of a filled-in Lesson observation sheet page 1

Dependence manifestations

Initially students could not really follow especially due to lack of knowledge of vocabulary. It was surprising how Maltese native children lack vocabulary.

Students showing a process of consciousness of the language.
At the end of the lesson the students were given the opportunity to come up with their own examples. Here one could see that together as group the students did not depend on the teacher as much as they did initially when working as individuals. Together they also became more creative and enjoyed using the language in a fun way.

Evidence

Evidence of autonomy in relation to the development of the lesson: This was not evident
Evidence of the process of consciousness of the native language: The fact that the students sat together and came out with sentences that included the expressive words shows that they have processed the language content discussed throughout the lesson and put it in context.

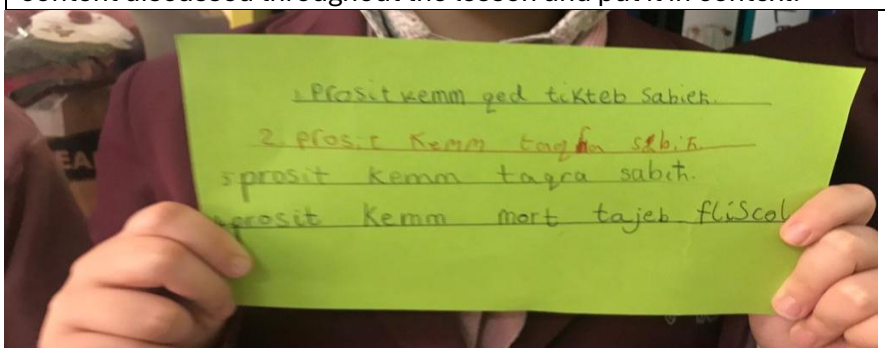


Figure 6.6: Sample of a filled-in Lesson observation sheet page 2 (More photos were included in the original LOS. These photos facilitated my recall of the lesson while analysing the data).

With reference to the observation sheet (Figures 6.5 and 6.6; Appendix 3.1), student autonomy or lack of it was observed by recording instances of autonomy manifested in the classroom in at least three distinct ways: organisational autonomy support, procedural autonomy support, and cognitive autonomy support. An example of organisational autonomy support would be when students are allowed some decision-making in terms of classroom management; an example of procedural autonomy support would be when students are allowed to choose the use of different media to present ideas, and cognitive autonomy support would be observed if, for example, students are directly involved in evaluating the work and possibly even engage in peer assessment. Other examples would include processes of analysis

of the language. These three principles were used in a study by Stefanou et al. (2004), which studied how, during teaching, teachers can provide personal and instructional support meant to facilitate the developing sense of student autonomy. Although all three types of autonomy support are advantageous, developing cognitive autonomy support fosters deep learning and critical thinking abilities, all important factors of learner autonomy. Offering students opportunities for active engagement with knowledge and thinking independently results in more significant educational outcomes (ibid. 2004). Besides these three principles, the lesson observation sheet focused on observing the pupils' dependence manifestations on their teacher. Therefore, instances such as students asking the teacher to tell them answers, dependence on guidance, and so on were logged. The effect of the modifications to the teacher methodology on the development of learner autonomy skills over the weeks was gauged using these tools. Photos were included for ease of reference.

6.3.7 Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers

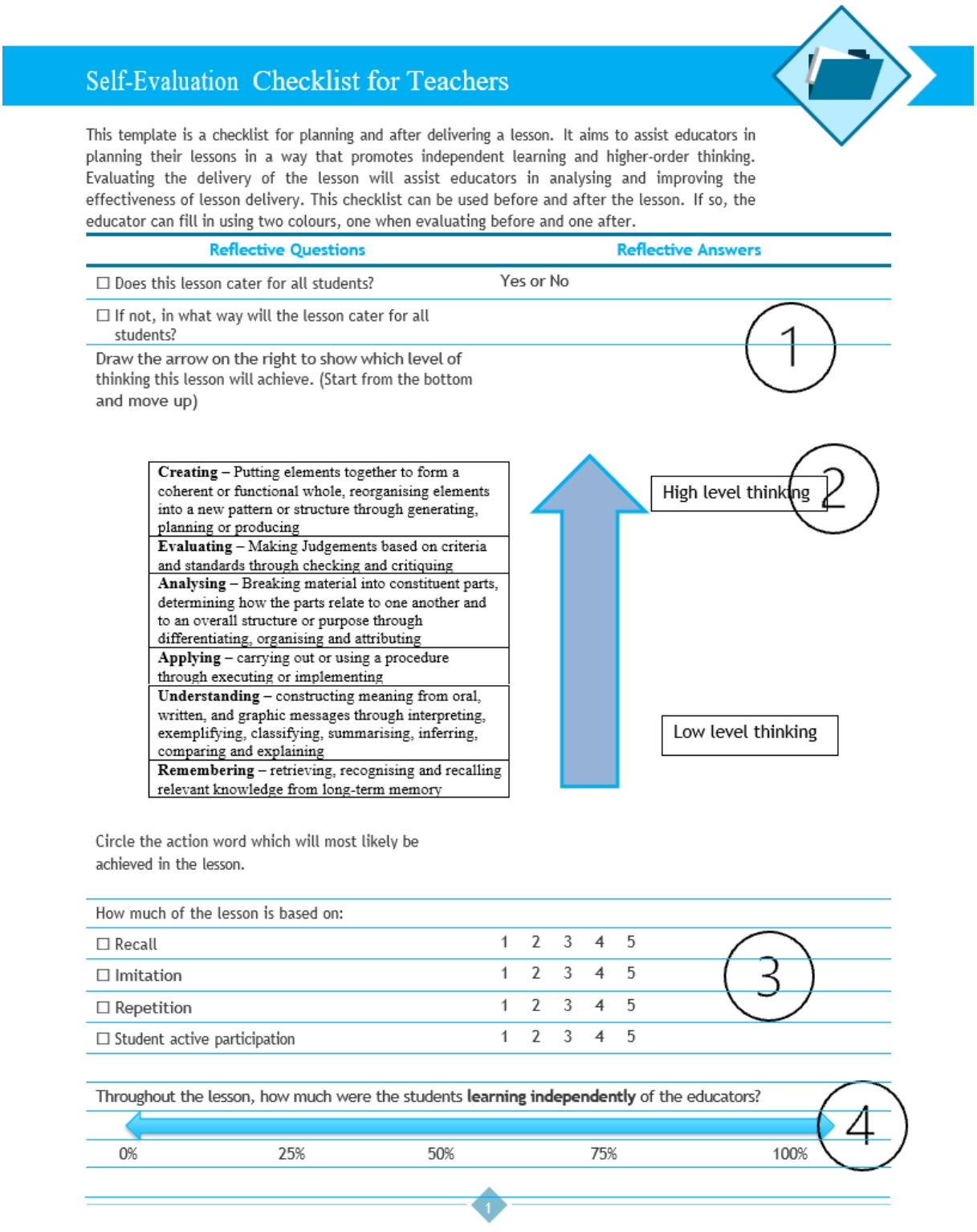
A crucial instrument developed for this research was grounded in the theoretical framework delineated in Part 1 and articulated during the focus groups (presentations used in Appendix 4.10). The self-evaluation checklist (Figure 6.7; Appendix 3.3) was designed and provided to each educator. This sheet aimed to serve as a guide to each teacher during the planning stages of the lesson. This sheet was also used as an evaluation exercise after the lesson. This checklist was designed to take at most ten minutes to fill in. It uses reflective questions that must be answered by choosing a number or a yes / no answer. The yes/no answers aim to assist teachers during their planning and evaluation stages through questions to help them reflect. The Likert scale was used since it is fast to fill in. The scale provides a pictorial prompt to the teacher, indicating areas for improvement in effectiveness. The arrow based on the critical thinking element of the teacher's planning is another visual way of prompting the teacher to vary the tasks to allow opportunities for critical growth during the lesson. Also, these reflective prompts assist the teacher in analysing how the lesson or activity was planned and, when used after a lesson, to evaluate its effectiveness.

The checklist is divided into sections. Each section has been numbered and explained below. Each section aims at prompting the teacher to reflect on specific areas, numbered on the checklist (Figures 6.7 and 6.8) and explained as follows:

1. Inclusivity: The teacher is prompted to reflect on how to incorporate all abilities and learning styles into planning. Here, the focus is on a reflection that examines

methodology, planned resources, including worksheets, the use of technology, and other collaborative tasks.

2. Critical thinking and questioning techniques: The teacher is prompted to reflect on and plan questions, tasks, and ideas that aim to enhance students' analytical skills.
3. Using the Likert scale (for ease and visual representation), the teacher is asked to reflect on the emphasis placed on how much the learning experience will be based on recalling knowledge already acquired in previous lessons or newly acquired in the lesson, imitating the teacher's models, repeating tasks and exercises given, and how much of the lesson will be based on students' active participation.
4. This arrow aims to assist the teacher in reflecting on the percentage of time that is planned, intended to allow students to learn independently, without the teacher's direct involvement. This aligns with my depiction of the continuum of learner autonomy Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3.
5. This section aims to ask teachers to reflect on how they perceive their role as the source of the students' acquisition of new knowledge. It seeks to shift the teacher's mindset and push to find alternative sources of knowledge besides themselves. These can include other students, the use of technology, other guests (even when going on on-site visits), and experts in the field. The fact that the checklist lists some ideas assists the reflection but does not mean this list is exhaustive. Other resources besides those listed can be utilised.
6. This section aimed to reflect on assessment. One of the aspects that this case study aimed to develop was self-assessment and peer assessment. Chapter 11 explains this in detail.



Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers

This template is a checklist for planning and after delivering a lesson. It aims to assist educators in planning their lessons in a way that promotes independent learning and higher-order thinking. Evaluating the delivery of the lesson will assist educators in analysing and improving the effectiveness of lesson delivery. This checklist can be used before and after the lesson. If so, the educator can fill in using two colours, one when evaluating before and one after.

Reflective Questions	Reflective Answers
☐ Does this lesson cater for all students?	Yes or No
☐ If not, in what way will the lesson cater for all students?	

1

Draw the arrow on the right to show which level of thinking this lesson will achieve. (Start from the bottom and move up)

Creating – Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole, reorganising elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning or producing
Evaluating – Making Judgements based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing
Analysing – Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organising and attributing
Applying – carrying out or using a procedure through executing or implementing
Understanding – constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarising, inferring, comparing and explaining
Remembering – retrieving, recognising and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory

High level thinking

2

Low level thinking

Circle the action word which will most likely be achieved in the lesson.

How much of the lesson is based on:					
☐ Recall	1	2	3	4	5
☐ Imitation	1	2	3	4	5
☐ Repetition	1	2	3	4	5
☐ Student active participation	1	2	3	4	5

3

Throughout the lesson, how much were the students **learning independently** of the educators?

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

4

1

Figure 6.7 Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers page 1

Page 2 of the checklist covered the following areas.

Reflective Questions	Reflective Answers
Learning can also occur when learners copy or learn from a more knowledgeable source (More Knowledgeable Other)	
How much did the educator use:	
☐ Modelling	1 2 3 4 5
☐ Positive Reinforcement (to motivate desired behaviour)	1 2 3 4 5
☐ Negative Reinforcement (to withdraw unwanted behaviour)	1 2 3 4 5
☐ How much was the MKO used as a source of knowledge?	1 2 3 4 5
Who was the More Knowledgeable Other?	
Teacher	Yes / No
Technology	Yes / No
Expert / Guest	Yes / No
Other students	Yes / No
Learning occurs when learners are immersed in environments where the newly learned behaviour can be applied.	
How much was the exposure to learning based on immersion? In what ways?	1 2 3 4 5
☐ Experts invited	Yes / No
☐ Technology used	Yes / No
☐ Peer-teaching (Students themselves used)	Yes / No
☐ Videos used	Yes / No
☐ Information passed on through text	Yes / No
☐ Teacher is the MKO	Yes / No
☐ Site Visit	Yes / No
Assessment leads to learning.	
How was the assessment planned?	
☐ Peer assessment	Yes / No
☐ Self-assessment	Yes / No
☐ Teacher assessment	Yes / No
Date:	
Outcomes Covered:	

Figure 6.8 Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers page 2

During the observations, constant contact was maintained with the participants involved. This method helped me better understand the current situation and the teachers' views and perceptions regarding the different aspects related to the research questions, and monitor, evaluate, and improve practices throughout.

6.3.8 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS)

Based on the literature presented in Section 3.2.2, the Learner Autonomy Scale is another essential tool designed for this case study and utilised to target areas for improvement and development. During this case study, the development of learner autonomy was evaluated through analysis of the manifestations observed using the various tools described previously. The Learner Autonomy Scale tick list (Figure 6.9), based on the literature review on learner autonomy presented in Chapter 3, comprises all the traits and characteristics that the literature considers fundamental when describing learner autonomy skills. Developed from Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2 in Chapter 3, the learner autonomy scale measures manifestations of learner autonomy made by students during the learning experiences observed. From the data collected through filling in the learner autonomy scale following the observations made, my role as a researcher was to gauge whether learner autonomy was attained and how. Following this analysis, to answer the research question related to teaching and learning effectiveness, the analysis also focused on whether and how the manifested learner autonomy led to improved teaching and learning effectiveness. Section 6.3.9 on Teaching and Learning Effectiveness will explain this in more detail.

The Learner Autonomy Scale is colour-coded and lists components that the learner manifests as characteristics (peach) that lead to traits (green). Based on the theoretical principles presented in Chapter 3, these characteristics aim to analyse changes made to the learner's personality through changes in behaviours and social roles. Through the observations, one would see if the adaptations made to the teacher's methodology led to a change over time based on the new experiences and contexts presented in the learning experiences. The traits focused more on the distant attributes of the learners. Sharing the targeted traits with the teachers provided them with a clear understanding of the objectives that needed to be accomplished through the adaptations made. The previously detailed checklist was provided to aid in the planning and evaluation of the activities and lessons.

The following is the Learner Autonomy Scale designed and used for this research:

The learning environment created was conducive to:

Learning by doing	
Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	
The learner is responsible for their own learning by setting their own goals	
Learners is responsible for their own learning through discovering, identifying, and using own resources for learning	
Learners helping each other	
Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	
Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	
Learners are responsible for their own learning by planning their own programmes with students free to use material at any time	
Value of individuality	
Learners discover meaning for themselves	

Learners manifested the following traits:

Able to co-operate with others	
Learning to learn	
Independent and individual study	
Better ability to deal with problems	
Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	
Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	

Figure 6.9 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS)

The traits and characteristics in the LAS served as criteria for all manifestations documented, recorded, and presented as evidence in Chapters 9 through 12. The procedure for the ticking was carried out in the following manner:

✓- if the characteristic was evident clearly

t.a.d (to a degree)—if the characteristic was manifested but not necessarily as described by the learner autonomy scale. Then, the difference is explained in context.

n.e. - not evident

In the process of presenting evidence in Part 3 and after conducting an analysis to assess the degree of autonomy achieved through the completion of the scale, a comprehensive explanation follows. Aligned with answering research question (RQ1), issues related to the teaching and learning efficacy are discussed at the end of each initiative. The evaluation of these processes is based on criteria related to teaching and learning processes aligned with the theoretical framework presented in previous chapters and detailed in the next section. The criteria selected to evaluate the pedagogical practices that developed learner autonomy and their impact on improved teaching and learning effectiveness were in congruence with the research questions of this case study.

6.3.9 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness

The notion of teaching and learning effectiveness is consistently articulated across international and national policy frameworks. Ofsted (2019) conceptualises effectiveness in terms of high-quality curriculum implementation and pedagogical practice that enables learners to know more, remember more, and apply learning independently. The OECD (2022) similarly frames effective teaching as a multidimensional construct shaped by evidence-based instruction, learner engagement, and supportive learning environments. The School Performance Improvement Framework (SPIF) in Australia (Australian Government Department of Education, 2019) emphasises system coherence, instructional leadership, and data-informed decision-making as key determinants of effective practice. Within the Maltese context, the National Curriculum Framework and the Learning Outcomes Framework (MEDE, 2012; MEDE, 2015) position teaching and learning effectiveness as the alignment of clear learning expectations, differentiated pedagogy, and formative assessment, supported by professional learning and collaborative school structures. Across these systems, and in this case study, teaching and learning effectiveness is defined as the product of coherent curriculum design, adaptive pedagogy, and the organisational and professional capacities that sustain high-quality educational practices.

Classroom practice, mainly teaching effectiveness, is the most crucial factor in school effectiveness (Muijs et al., 2014). Teaching effectiveness is a strong predictor of pupils' progress throughout school, and having a succession of strong or weak teachers can have lasting effects. The efficiency of teaching and learning (RQ1) was evaluated by quantifying the continuum of manifestations. Throughout the case study, the teaching and learning

processes were evaluated by analysing the primary sources, field notes collected during lesson observations, and transcripts of meetings and interviews with teachers and students. This provided me with first-hand data, which helped me better understand the realities teachers faced in the classroom. Learning effectiveness was gauged based on manifestations, which are summarised in Table 6.5 and explained in this section. The principles listed were founded on indicators related to measuring teaching and learning effectiveness used by local and international regulatory units in documents used for school review.

The following table, Table 6.3, summarises the common principles of teaching and learning effectiveness found across the international bodies of Ofsted (2019), OECD (2022), and SPIF (Australian Government Department of Education, 2019). Despite the national and structural disparities with the Maltese educational framework, the selection of these three entities is grounded in their shared commitment to a student-centred and inclusive educational approach. They advocate for evidence-based teaching practices and effective pedagogy, encourage self-evaluation at the school level with external accountability, and highlight the importance of leadership, collaboration, and equity as essential drivers for enhancement.

Principle	Ofsted (UK)	OECD	SPIF (Australia)
Clear curriculum and learning goals	√	√	√
Evidence-informed pedagogy	√	√	√
Formative assessment	√	√	√
Inclusive and equitable practice	√	√	√
Reflective teaching and collaboration	√	√	√
Student-centred learning	√	√	√

Table 6.3: The common principles of teaching and learning effectiveness across Ofsted (2019), OECD (2022), and SPIF (2019).

The following table, Table 6.4, summarises the indicators used by Maltese school reviewers to assess a school's teaching and learning effectiveness.

Principle	Description
Learner-Centred Approach	Emphasises placing the learner at the centre of the educational process, ensuring that teaching strategies and curricular decisions are tailored to meet diverse student needs and promote active engagement.
Holistic Development	It focuses on students' comprehensive growth, encompassing cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development, preparing them for lifelong learning and active citizenship.
Quality Teaching Practices	It highlights the importance of effective pedagogical strategies, including clear learning objectives, differentiated instruction, and continuous assessment, to enhance student learning outcomes.
Reflective Practice and Collaboration	Encourages educators to engage in continuous self-reflection and collaborative practices, fostering a culture of shared responsibility and professional growth within the school community.
Equity and Inclusion	Equitable access to quality education necessitates a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted dimensions of learners' diverse backgrounds, abilities, and needs. Such inclusive learning environments should cater to the holistic development of all individuals involved in the educational process.
Data-Informed Decision Making	The promotion of reliable data collection methodologies, including benchmarks, SEC results, and international assessments such as PISA and PIRLS, serves as a foundational element for analytical processes aimed at informing pedagogical practices, curriculum development, and school improvement initiatives. This approach ensures that decision-making is firmly rooted in empirical evidence.
Integration of Internal and External Reviews	Supports a balanced approach that integrates internal self-evaluation with external assessments, thereby facilitating a thorough comprehension of school performance and areas for development.

Table 6.4: Salient Principles used by the Maltese Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education for school reviews (2023)

Effectiveness, is measured through multiple, context-dependent indicators. Policy frameworks such as the above-mentioned **Ofsted** (2019), **OECD** (2022), **SPIF** (2019), and the **Maltese Learning Outcomes Framework** conceptualise effectiveness as evidence of improved learning processes and learning outcomes. This typically involves:

1. **Cognitive indicators** — demonstration of knowledge, skill acquisition, problem-solving, and the ability to apply learning in novel situations.
2. **Metacognitive indicators** — learners' capacity to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning, which is central to autonomy.

3. **Behavioural indicators** — sustained engagement, task persistence, and responsible participation in learning activities.
4. **Affective indicators** — motivation, confidence, and learner agency.
5. **Instructional indicators** — the degree to which teaching practices are purposeful, structured, differentiated, and responsive.
6. **Outcome indicators** — progress against clearly articulated learning outcomes, assessed through formative and summative measures.

In this sense, the effectiveness of integrating learner autonomy is assessed not merely by whether autonomy is present, but by whether it leads to **discernible enhancements in learning quality, learner engagement, and the alignment between intended, enacted, and experienced curricula**. When learner autonomy strengthens these dimensions, it can be considered an effective methodological component within both local and international educational frameworks.

In the process of designing a scale that encompasses indicators for assessing the effectiveness of teaching and learning in this case study, all previously outlined objectives were meticulously considered. Since in both grades participating in this study, students had yet to be formally examined, the only indicator which was not considered when designing the teaching and learning effectiveness scale was the indicator correlating efficacy to academic marks (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, 2023).

The manifestations of teaching and learning efficacy were primarily documented by photographs of tasks carried out in various learning environments. As a researcher, I felt that the visual representation of the student's work was the best way to present evidence of how effectiveness was reached. To minimise subjectivity, a triangulation of evidence collected was used. Field notes were compared to transcripts from teachers' and learners' interviews, which were compared to photos and tallied with the VAS and LAS. Therefore, in this way, one could gauge whether the 'deliberate' actions of the teachers, through adaptations to acquire learner autonomy, led to learner effectiveness.

The following table, Table 6.5, illustrates the Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale designed for this research. The effectiveness is considered attained depending on whether the following pedagogical principles were manifested:

There is clarity of presentation suitable for the students' level of attainment
The content to be covered is clearly outlined.
Adaptations and learning environments created were conducive to the development of all students.
There is an effective use of group activities and paired work.
The use of prompts and questions is effective.
There is an opportunity to learn through various learning initiatives.
The quantity of content presented and the instruction pace are suitable for the student's attainment.
Students showed evident progress and attainment of outcomes.
Students show motivation and interest in learning to learn.
Students' attainment of outcomes
The Retention of the assimilation of knowledge is evident among students.

Table 6.5: Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale (TLES)(Appendix 3.5)

The evaluation of students' achievement of outcomes and retention of knowledge was conducted through their performance on similar assignments provided post-task completion. Teachers provided formative comments to students regarding their retention of knowledge. Another aspect that was included and deemed essential (Liu, et al, 2015) in the evaluation of learning effectiveness was the motivation and interest of students in the process of learning to learn (Ofsted, 2019; OECD, 2022; and SPIF, 2019). It is claimed (Pashler, et al., 2008) that students, especially those experiencing learning difficulties, have been characterised as dependent learners, a learning style possibly reinforced by reliance on adults for disproportionate amounts of information. This could also be a tendency which comes as a result of an educator who has a dependent teaching style. This aspect, which is further elaborated in Chapter 8, was also included in the characteristics to observe. A further characteristic observed is the students' awareness of their language. Heidegger asserts that articulating our native language and recognising the underlying structures while employing other media for self-expression are practical instances that do not inherently constitute conscious activities. Furthermore, it is claimed that much of our intentional mental activity, such as using the mother tongue, is an activity of which we are not conscious, and we only become conscious through a structured process (ibid. 2008).

The clarity of presentation when teaching is consistently related to pupils' attainment. Therefore, here, the extent to which activities, adaptations and learning environments were conducive to all students' development was observed. Adaptations and, when needed, differentiation will ensure effectiveness (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, 2023; Ofsted 2019) . It was essential to observe that the teacher talk shifted towards focusing on asking questions and giving feedback rather than extended lecturing (Kyriakides & Creemers, 2008). Effective teaching is also evaluated by how much group activities and paired work contribute to learning. However, pupils will require support to work together effectively, and tasks must be structured. Here, the teacher's prompts and questions must structure the discussion, and active involvement is required to avoid reinforcing misconceptions. Another aspect which was observed is how teachers can effectively communicate clearly and directly with their pupils without going beyond pupils' levels of comprehension (Muijs et al., 2014), which suggests that pupils' attainment and achievement are strongly affected and most likely maximised by the quantity and pacing of instruction (Kyriakides & Creemers, 2008). It was also important to monitor whether having the opportunity to learn through various learning initiatives correlated particularly positively with learners' active attainment.

Another aspect was to monitor the extent to which teachers outlined the content to be covered and signalled transitions between different parts of the lesson, calling attention to main ideas and reviewing main ideas. Summary reviews during lessons are important because they integrate and reinforce key points. This does not, of course, mean that lessons need to follow a particular structure or sequence. These elements can occur at different points in a lesson or over a sequence of lessons and can be integrated in different ways and at different times. However, since these structuring elements not only facilitate the memorising of information but also allow pupils to understand it as an integrated whole and to recognise the relationships between the parts, they will improve their attainment and retention of the new knowledge. Throughout the process, there is an increased focus on encouraging reflection. Educators conducted this reflection using the previously mentioned evaluation checklist (Section 6.4) and discussions in focus groups, with an anticipated increase in their attention to assess the impact of each lesson step on learners' development of autonomous skills. Additionally, reflective thinking and increased awareness of the questioning strategies and all conducted activities were undertaken.

6.4 Coding

Codes are used to ensure anonymity during data collection. To ensure anonymity, each grade was assigned a number, 3 for grade 3 and 4 for grade 4.

The two teachers in Grade 3 were assigned AB3 and CD3, respectively. The teacher in Grade 4 was assigned AB4. Therefore, each teacher is assigned two letters consecutive from the alphabet and a number reflecting the grade taught. The codes for the teachers were then combined with FG for Focus Group, IM for Individual meeting, Q for Questionnaires, and the date.

Evidence was elicited from data collected from students. To ensure that anonymity was not compromised, the system used included Std for student, the number allocated to the student, the grade, and the date, e.g., Std3_G4_date. Each student was allocated a number.

The following is an example of one of the codes given :

FG_AB3_25Jan22 would mean that evidence was collected from the Focus Group held on the 25 January 2022 with teacher AB from grade 3.

An individual meeting would be coded: IM_AB3_13Nov22.

Therefore, the code can be summarised as follows:

Where evidence was collected	Participant	Date

Table 6.6 Summary of how codes were built

During lesson observations, I used the Visual analysis sheet and lesson observation sheet. The codes for these tools were the acronyms LOS for lesson observation and VAS for the visual analysis sheet. Lesson observations were coded using the same principle as above, therefore LOS for data collected during a lesson observation, using initials assigned to the teacher and date, LOS_AB4_Nov22.

Since at the end of the research, written data was also collected anonymously, the code used for this evidence only reflects the date and method of collection, for example, Tchr_June_questionnaire.

Although the primary focus was the development of learner autonomy, and the main themes emerged from the commonalities of the learning theories, illustrated in Figure 2.6, other important sub-themes emerged when analysing the data. Part 3 of this dissertation will

describe and explain these in more detail. All the factors that emerged, even from the sub-themes, were discussed and dealt with at a teacher-classroom level to nurture strategies that would ultimately improve learner autonomy. All the raw data collected was analysed using the following themes.

Learning Outcomes
Parents' influence or pressure
Stress
Learner Autonomy
Teacher Dependence
Time
Technology
Resources
Differentiation and abilities
Influence of English
Work which included note-giving, homework and classwork
Motivation
Other: When sub-themes were not mentioned more than twice, they were classified as Other. These themes included issues related to COVID-19, bullying, students not bringing their things, and school activities that disrupted lessons.

Table 6.7 Sub-themes

The evidence and analysis presented in Part 3 of this study, specifically Chapters 8 to 13, is based on these emerging themes and how these themes impacted the development of learner autonomy skills. Since a class of learners is dynamic and has multifaceted dimensions, as explained in Chapter 8 in the context of this case study, it is essential to note that the themes cannot be separated from one another since each develops on another or is intertwined. The themes are presented developmentally in Part 3 of this thesis, and the descriptions will show evidence of the nurturing and development of learning autonomy, if present and whether this development resulted in increased effectiveness in teaching and learning. All this is carried out whilst adaptations are made to the teacher's methodology through the interventions made during the focus groups and follow-up meetings.

6.5 Contextual Ethical Considerations

The ethical principles outlined in Section 5.6 must be adhered to consistently throughout the research process. The integrity of this research served as a foundation for all decisions, with every effort aligned with the recommendations outlined in the existing literature to ensure it was conducted with rigour and professionalism (Cohen et al., 2018).

In the first chapter, I discuss my positionality as a researcher. To uphold ethical standards, several measures were implemented from the proposal phase when I chose to undertake this research. Before initiating the research, approval was obtained from the University of Malta Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) of the Faculty of Education (Appendix 2.1). The Research Ethics Application Ref. number for this research is 9659_06092021_AudreyR.Galea (letter included in Appendix 2.1). Given that the research was conducted at a girls' Catholic institution, obtaining consent from the Secretariat of Catholic Education in Malta was a crucial step in the process (Appendix 2.2).

All potential conflicts of interest that may have emerged during the preliminary phases of the research were duly disclosed. Before the commencement of the empirical research, my position within the school where the research is carried out was that of head of school. To ensure that the research had ethical integrity at the beginning of the academic year 2021-2022, I resigned from this position. Following recommendations from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, a communication liaison from outside the school was asked to disseminate the information sheets and consent forms and collect them. The communication liaison was also tasked with supervising the process of disseminating all documentation related to the consent obtained from participants to alleviate any undue pressure on the participants.

The documents which were disseminated to all participants granted them the opportunity to consent to or dissent from the procedural principles prior to the commencement of the activity. All educators participating and the parents of all child participants deemed to be of a vulnerable age were apprised of their rights via a letter. The learners were provided with an assent form. As previously stated, all consent and assent forms (Appendix 1 – 1.1 to 1.6) were disseminated to parents of students, instructors, and students via the communication liaison. The informed consent guaranteed that all persons considering participation in the study made their decision based on the offered facts (Cohen et al. 2018). Besides the letter of consent, information papers detailing the research were distributed to

both parents and educators. Given their young age, learners were not provided with written information sheets; nevertheless, educators and the students' parents were requested to explain the research process to the children (Appendices 1.5 and 1.6). This research required that both adult and child participants, together with their parents and educators, be notified of their right to opt out of the study without providing justification. All participants possessed the right to withdraw and to ensure the fairness and correctness of the accounting relevant to them.

Researcher Positionality, Potential Bias Mitigating Measures

A primary source of potential bias in this study is prior relationship bias, stemming from my previous role as Head of School. Participants may have responded differently depending on their familiarity with my authority or leadership style, which could affect the authenticity of their contributions. This prior relationship may also unconsciously affect the researcher's interpretation, as pre-existing knowledge or assumptions about participants' capabilities or behaviours might shape data analysis. Closely related is social desirability bias, wherein participants may provide responses they believe are expected, acceptable, or favourable, rather than fully reflecting their true beliefs or behaviours.

To offset these biases, several strategies were employed:

- Anonymity and Voluntary Participation (Appendix 1): As a researcher, safeguarding the confidentiality and identity of participants was essential to my responsibilities. All data protection processes were adhered to, and all gathered data was stored appropriately in accordance with confidentiality and data protection standards. No explicit names are referenced in the presentation of evidence. It was important to ensure that all participants understood their responses were confidential and that participation was voluntary. From the onset, when the information was disseminated to all involved, the relationships built throughout the research needed to be kept professional, and the research was always carried out to reach as high a standard as possible. All observations were carried out with prior consent obtained from the teacher participants, and all meetings were held when planned after mutual consensus. Reflexive Practices (Section 6.2.2): Maintaining constant reflexive practices to ensure that assumptions, decisions, and reflections made throughout data collection and analysis are not influenced by prior knowledge of participants.

- Data Triangulation (Part 3): Using multiple sources of evidence (photographs, observations, field notes) to validate findings and reduce reliance on a single perspective.

- Peer Review: Teacher participants were involved throughout the case study, as explained in detail in the presentation of data in Part 3 and in the schedule of focus groups, Section 6.3. To counteract subjectivity, teacher participants were involved in discussing the observations made, the findings from the thematic analysis, and my interpretation of the field notes.

Benefits of Positionality

While prior leadership presents challenges, it also offers significant benefits. My extensive professional experience and in-depth understanding of the school's culture, curriculum, and instructional practices enabled an enhanced, sensitive interpretation of observed behaviours and contextual nuances. This insider perspective contributed to the richness and depth of analysis, particularly in understanding the dynamics of teaching, learning, and collaborative practices within the school setting.

In addition to soliciting the participants' involvement, explicit authorisation was obtained from participants to utilise extracts from transcripts, observations, excerpts from audio recordings, and photographs taken during instructional sessions. Photography, in its essence, can present various ethical dilemmas in the context of research. It is essential to guarantee that research participants are treated with respect and not reduced to mere objects of study. Alongside securing approval from the school administration, consent for use of photos was also acquired from the educators and the children involved. The photographs captured were disseminated among the educators throughout the process. Not every photograph captured will be included in this research. As per ethical requirements, upon publication of the study, all photographs and data will be deleted from the storage. It was imperative that only individuals who provided consent appeared in the images.

The study maintained a careful equilibrium between ensuring its integrity and safeguarding the well-being of the participants involved. Given that one of the research enquiries explicitly focused on the adaptations required to foster learner autonomy, it became essential to document all observations meticulously through field notes. The findings derived from the evidence gathered through participant interactions, particularly the minutes from

focus groups, meetings, and lesson observations, were presented to the teacher participants in the course of the meetings. This approach was implemented to ensure ethical considerations were upheld, as well as to accommodate the cyclical nature of the research, which required that the advancement of the case study relied on the assessment of findings prior to proceeding further. Consequently, the findings served as a foundation for subsequent advancements. The sharing of data facilitated a sense of security among participants and enabled the clarification of any potential misunderstandings. There was a transparent and accessible level of communication throughout. The process entailed a negotiation phase, deemed essential for the implementation of adaptations, particularly when participants expressed uncertainty regarding the procedure. This was especially pertinent during the early stages of the research, as participants required clarity on the research's objectives. The tools developed for this case study, which will be elaborated upon later in this chapter, were disseminated among the teacher participants. In addressing the research question concerning the adaptations necessary for fostering learner autonomy, the empirical research outlined in Section 6.2 employed a spiral design that actively engaged participants through discussions, evaluations, and implementation of new techniques.

Ultimately, it was crucial to ensure that the research is both authentic and groundbreaking, while properly recognising the origins of any concepts and efforts undertaken. All previously mentioned considerations have been appropriately recognised. All interventions complied with the established professional code of ethics and practice in Malta, as outlined by the Council for the Teaching Profession (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012) in the Teachers' Code of Ethics and Practice in Malta (2012).

6.6 Implementation of change

This chapter highlighted how this study designed processes and tools to investigate the integration of modifications (RQ2) into pedagogical strategies designed to enhance learner autonomy among students whose curriculum had just transitioned to learning outcomes over the research year. The efficiency of teaching and learning (RQ1) was evaluated by quantifying the continuum of manifestations using scales developed from the common criteria employed by educational bodies (local and foreign) when reviewing teaching.

Change associated with alterations in human behaviour is regarded as a process of transformation (Bekmukhambetova, 2021). A substantial body of literature across all

disciplines addresses the factors contributing to success, and as Anyieni and Areri (2016) assert, it is a multifaceted subject characterised by numerous contradictions. Since this case study aims to find ways to change educators' mindsets and approaches, Hiatt's ADKAR model, considered the model that focuses on people's change and adaptations, best fits this research's rationale. ADKAR is an acronym representing the five tangible and concrete outcomes research participants need to achieve for lasting change (Hiatt & Creasey, 2013). This study adhered to specific steps deemed to have a lasting impact on participants (ibid., 2013). All variables outlined below have ramifications which influence the likelihood of success for change.

This objective-driven paradigm is based on three phases and addresses the processes and steps required for change management. It is a structure that prioritises actions to achieve results. Each action undertaken is explained within the context of this study. The concept is considered adequate (Bekmukhambetova, 2021; Anyieni & Areri, 2016) because it aligns with the natural progression of experiencing change, as elucidated in the following table. Table 6.8 provides a framework systematically guided by the ADKAR model, highlighting the processes and the factors influencing the implementation of change management within this case study. As the case study progressed, participants progressed through the essential stages of awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement. These steps will be detailed in Part 3 through the presentation of evidence. These principles can be followed in similar future studies.

Processes of the change management implementation based on the ADKAR model	**Factors influencing success in the context of this case study**
Awareness of the need to change	• The stakeholders' (participants and researchers) perspective highlights concerns pertaining to the au currant condition and context. (Chapter 7 - Initial stages of the case study). What is the problem? Is there an issue that needs to be solved? • Giving space to educator participants to air views and show how the problems are perceived; • The rationale for the proposed modification is discussed with the participants in the context of the lesson or activity planned.

	• All participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time. In this case study, none of the participants withdrew, which shows a genuine interest in the phenomenon being studied.
Desire to participate in the change	• A crucial element of the case study was the continuous engagement and assistance provided to the educator participants. This was carried out through continuous communication via meetings, focus groups, observations evaluations, and planning assistance (Table 6.2). • Educator participants were motivated to learn and adapt. The progression of the phenomenon under investigation, specifically cultivating student learner autonomy abilities, was correlated with the execution of the learning outcomes. • Teacher participants showed a desire to participate and engage in the research by discussing adaptations during the planning phases. The use of the self-evaluation checklist (Section 6.3.7) assisted in planning. • The changes related to the phenomenon were customised to align with the educators' pace. As evidence in Part 3 will show, the specific requirements and concerns of each group of students were consistently considered. This tailor-made approach further reinforced the support provided to each participant. • It is important to mention that the project will likely fail if awareness and desire are low (Hiatt, 2006). Therefore, for this reason, these two aspects were considered essential throughout the case study.
Knowledge of the phenomenon	• The participants acquired knowledge of the problem through the diverse tactics employed during the case study. During the focus groups, educators received training on multiple facets. In this chapter the schedule and the impact of the research design on the study were addressed in detail. They also gained a deeper understanding of the characteristics of Learner Autonomy (Figure 6.9), which, in conjunction with the self-evaluation checklist (Figure 6.7 and 6.8) explained in this chapter, provided them with guidance.

	• Following every lesson, participants were presented with the collected data, and strategies for achieving continual improvement were discussed.
Ability to implement the required skills and behaviours	• Through constant support during training and meetings and support through immediate feedback after observations, participants were given the skills required to implement the change. • The implementation of adaptations was strongly linked to the cohorts under study. The learners' aptitudes and attitudes towards language use (verbal and written) and their cognitive readiness to take on new challenges were always placed at the forefront of adaptations made. • Teachers' initial methodology and fear of change also impacted this aspect. While all educators were considered capable of implementing the required skills, the attitude and readiness of the individual educator impacted the implementation pace and adaptation. • Time factor: The time available to develop the needed adaptation differed for each participant. • The availability of resources to support the development of new abilities had an impact primarily when technology was used. • Hiatt (2006) asserts that the absence of knowledge and skill leads to diminished utilisation and improper application of new processes and tools, adversely affecting similar project's success.
Reinforcement to sustain the change	• Reinforcement throughout the case study through constant contact, focus groups and meetings. The association of reinforcement to sustain the change was accompanied by sharing data collected in real time and therefore demonstrating progress or accomplishment. • The degree to which the reinforcement is meaningful is specific to the person changing. • The accountability system that creates an ongoing mechanism to reinforce the change.

	• Reinforcement needs to be constant because, in the absence of reinforcement, individuals will lose interest and revert to 'old behaviours' (Hiatt, 2022, p.44)

Table 6.8 Implementation of change

As delineated in Table 6.8, each stage played a crucial role in facilitating and sustaining change among educator participants, particularly fostering learner autonomy through the execution of learning outcomes. By embedding these components into the research framework, the study successfully facilitated the adoption and sustainability of learning outcome-based adaptations in primary education. Each step is explained as follows.

Awareness of the Need for Change

A fundamental prerequisite for effective change implementation is the awareness of the necessity for transformation. Within the context of this study, stakeholders—including both participants and researchers—acknowledged the existing challenges and their implications for educational outcomes. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, the initial stages of the case study provided opportunities for educator participants to express their perspectives on the identified issues, thereby ensuring that their concerns and insights were integrated into the proposed modifications.

To enhance awareness, discussions were held in the context of planned lessons and activities, offering participants a clear rationale for the modifications being introduced. Furthermore, participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any stage. Notably, none chose to do so, indicating a genuine interest in the phenomenon under investigation.

Desire to Participate in the Change

The desire to engage in change is a pivotal factor influencing the success of any change initiative. In this case study, educator participants received continuous engagement and support through regular meetings, focus groups, classroom observations, evaluations, and planning assistance.

Educator participants demonstrated a strong motivation to learn and adapt, particularly as they observed a correlation between the progression of student learner autonomy and the structured implementation of learning outcomes. Their willingness to actively participate was further reinforced through discussions on lesson adaptations during the planning phases. The

integration of a self-evaluation checklist proved beneficial in this regard, as it facilitated structured planning and reflection.

Moreover, adaptations were tailored to align with the educators' individual pacing and the specific needs of their student groups. This personalised approach ensured that concerns were addressed effectively, thereby strengthening participant commitment. As highlighted by Hiatt (2006), a lack of awareness and desire can lead to project failure; thus, ensuring these components were robustly embedded was essential for the study's success.

Knowledge of the Phenomenon

The acquisition of knowledge about the studied phenomenon was enhanced by several focused interventions. Educators engaged in structured training sessions during focus groups, covering multiple facets of the learning process (see Chapter 6 for details on the training schedule and topics addressed).

Additionally, participants gained an in-depth understanding of learner autonomy characteristics, as outlined in Table 4.2. This knowledge was further reinforced through the application of the self-evaluation sheet (Chapter 6 Figure 6.7; Appendix 3.3), which provided guidance on effective implementation strategies. After each lesson, participants were presented with collected data and engaged in discussions on strategies for continuous improvement, ensuring a dynamic learning process.

Ability to Implement the Required Skills and Behaviours

The ability to implement newly acquired skills and behaviours was facilitated by ongoing training, frequent meetings, and prompt feedback after observations. Educators were provided with essential skills to implement change, ensuring that modifications corresponded with their professional competencies and the diverse needs of their student cohorts.

A range of factors influenced the ability to implement change effectively. The learners' linguistic abilities (both verbal and written) and their cognitive readiness to embrace new challenges played a significant role in shaping adaptation strategies. Furthermore, variations in teachers' initial methodologies and potential apprehensions regarding change impacted the pace and effectiveness of implementation.

Time constraints emerged as a variable factor, with participants requiring varying durations to develop and integrate the required adaptations. Additionally, the availability of technological resources played a crucial role in determining the extent to which new skills could be effectively applied.

Hiatt (2006) emphasises that a lack of knowledge and skill acquisition can hinder the proper utilisation and application of new processes, thereby affecting the overall success of change initiatives. This principle was carefully considered throughout the case study to mitigate potential challenges.

Reinforcement to Sustain the Change

To ensure the sustainability of change, a robust reinforcement strategy was implemented throughout the case study. This involved maintaining continuous contact with participants through focus groups, meetings, and direct engagement. The strategies employed to sustain change are discussed in detail in the dedicated section on change reinforcement.

A key aspect of reinforcement was its alignment with demonstrated progress and tangible accomplishments. The effectiveness of reinforcement varied among participants, as its impact was inherently tied to individual engagement and commitment to the change process. Moreover, an accountability system was established to provide a structured mechanism for reinforcing change on an ongoing basis. This ensured that participants remained engaged and committed to the adaptations introduced. Hiatt (2006 p.40) notes that in the absence of sustained reinforcement, individuals are likely to revert to prior behaviours, thus undermining progress. To counteract this tendency, continuous reinforcement strategies were prioritised throughout the study.

6.6.1 Timeline of the processes

Besides the project timeline presented in Appendix 5, the subsequent timeline illustrates the concurrent execution of various methods used within the cyclical design of this case study and indicates how the new initiatives are introduced. The pedagogical transformation towards learner autonomy is examined throughout the various stages of the case study, as outlined in each chapter of Part 3, specifically Chapters 7 to 13. This chapter provides a comprehensive outline of the specifics associated with each qualitative method utilised in the change process, and the initiatives outlined in Table 6.9 are incorporated into the evidence presented in Part 3. All the changes are examined through the perspective of

pedagogical transformation aimed at fostering learner autonomy.

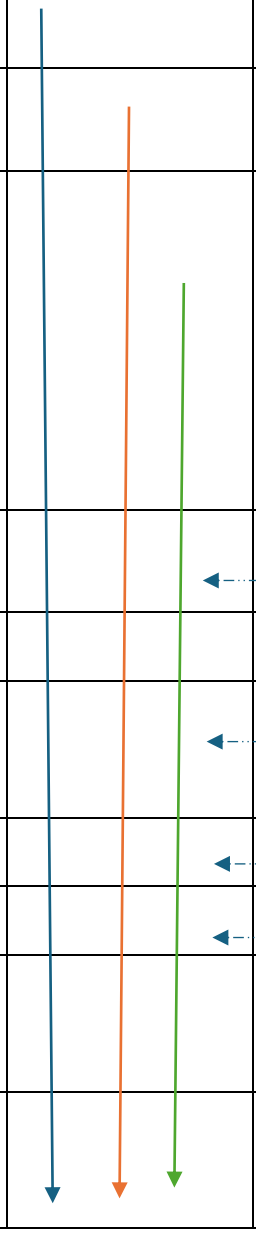
October 2021		Commencement of focus groups (teachers of the grade and LSEs of the respective classes participated) is held monthly.
End of October 2021		Commencement of lesson observations held fortnightly (5 in alternate weeks in each of the two Grade 3 classes and one Grade 4 class)
November 2021		Commencement of individual teacher meetings aimed at following up on the lesson observation. These meetings were aimed at discussing lessons held through unstructured interviews. This type of interview has no strict schedule, and its structure is flexible (Buriro, Awan, & Lanjwani, 2017). As the researcher, this gave me more freedom to present the questions and meet the study's goals. Regular meetings were sometimes ad hoc, and constant contact was maintained via WhatsApp and email.
December 2021		The introduction of a Self-Evaluative checklist for teachers aimed at assisting teachers in their planning.
January 2022		Training Lego Education to all educators in Primary sector
February 2022		Self-Assessment Sheets for Grade 4 students. Discussion on how to incorporate technology and other resources such as LEGO education equipment and held.
March 2022		Outdoor education projects for Grades 3 and 4 planned
April 2022		Outdoor education projects for Grades 3 and 4 implemented
May / June 2022		Follow-up activities based on the outdoor education projects include allowing students to set their own goals, select learning strategies, and assess their outcomes through self-assessment strategies.
June/July 2022		Interviews were held with students (verbal), teachers (one questionnaire answered anonymously and one in person) and administrative staff (verbal and written via email).

Table 6.9: Timeline of the processes which occurred following a cyclic pattern

The timeline summarises how the case study was carried out and administered using the tools described in this section. Each stage is introduced simultaneously with the continuation of the previous ones.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the tools and the qualitative methods used to carry out this case study. The tools were fundamental for observation, analysis, and presentation of findings from the data collection. All the tools were designed for this case study and were linked to the literature presented in previous chapters. The tools used in the case study are explained and placed in the context of the timeline of the implementation of the cyclic design on which this research is designed. The tools designed for this case study contribute to both the research field and the school community, as they can be used for further research and by practitioners aiming for continuous improvement in their educational institutions.

The following chapters (Part 3 - Chapters 7 to 13) focus on the presentation and analysis of evidence. The presentation of data collected using the methodology discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 (Part 2) aims to answer the research questions in Chapter 1. The introduction to Part 3 explains how the learning outcomes curriculum was implemented throughout the case study. Part 3 then presents the data in the different chapters, representing the categories in which the data is categorised. The data analysis is based on the literature framework presented in Chapters 2 to 4 and focuses on the adaptations made to the teaching and learning methods. Using the Learner Autonomy Scale and Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale, both designed for this research, it analyses whether and how the initiatives and adaptations led to the development of learner autonomy traits and characteristics, and whether and in which ways the learner autonomy pedagogical practices led to improved teaching and learning effectiveness.

PART 3

DATA ANALYSIS

“Il-miss tatna l-power”

“The teacher gave us power.”

(Student, Grade 4, June 2022)

Part 3 Introduction

Part 3 of this thesis presents and analyses the data collected. The analysis of the data focuses on answering the two research questions that are,

1. Will learner autonomy pedagogical practices improve the teaching-learning process in a curriculum-mandated programme based on learning outcomes?
2. What adaptations to the pedagogy are needed to promote learner autonomy?

The analysis focuses on learner autonomy from two perspectives. First, on whether learner autonomy pedagogical practices improve teaching and learning processes. This is tackled by analysing the data collected through the methods highlighted in Part 2. This case study's pedagogical transformation towards learner autonomy was based on the commonalities that emerged from the literature. Figure 2.6 in Chapter 2 presents my interpretation of the network of links and relationships found in the learning theories elaborated on in the literature review. The data presented and analysed in the next chapters are aligned to these commonalities, and to the themes that emerged from the analysis made to the data collected, as follows:

Chapter 7 focuses on the strategies used in this case study, which aimed at the Implementation of the Learning Outcomes Curriculum

Chapter 8 focuses on the initial phases of the empirical study. It introduces the phenomenon being studied, the context found in the initial stages, themes emerging, and the strategies adopted during the research. The teachers' methodology employed is further demonstrated by the manner in which the schemes of work were developed before the initiation of this research.

Chapter 9 focuses on Collaborative Learning and Learner Autonomy.

Chapter 10 focuses on the Use of Technology and Learner Autonomy.

Chapter 11 focuses on how self-assessment (Section 11.1) and peer assessment (Section 11.2) were developed in the context of this research.

Chapter 12 focuses on how learner autonomy is developed through project work using the environment outside of school. Two projects, one for each of the participating grades, are implemented.

Chapter 13 focuses on two underlying adaptations made to questioning techniques (Section 13.1) and using hands-on and concrete examples (Section 13.2), which are essential adaptations made to teacher methodology. The evidence produced is linked to the adaptations that led to the development of learner autonomy and an improvement in teaching and learning effectiveness as defined in Chapters 1 and 6.

The theme of the assimilation of new knowledge through language is evaluated throughout and will emerge in all the analysis chapters (7 – 13).

The research elucidates which adjustments in pedagogical methods fostered features and characteristics of learner autonomy (RQ2) while investigating their correlation with the teaching and learning processes (RQ1). The evidence presented will be textual and visual. The documented evidence will consist of excerpts from transcripts of field notes collected during lesson observations, focus groups, interviews with adult and youth participants, and anonymous surveys. The visual data, specifically the photographs from the photo journal, are incorporated to substantiate the written evidence and to provide visual corroboration of the recorded activities. Anonymity was maintained in both the data presentation and imagery by blurring photographs while preserving the substance of the photograph. Of the 72 students, 69 freely engaged in the study, ensuring total anonymity and privacy protection procedures were implemented.

As a researcher carrying out a case study during the first year of introducing the learning outcomes curriculum, implementing the learning outcomes needed to be integrated within the case study implementation programme. How the learning outcomes were tackled impacted the adaptations made to the methodology to foster learner autonomy. The principles set to implement learning outcomes in this case study are explained in detail in Chapter 7 and detailed in context in each subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLEMENTING THE LEARNING OUTCOMES CURRICULUM

7.0 Introduction

For many years, content-oriented teaching methodologies have prevailed in Maltese classrooms (Xerri & Schembri, 2022). The previous chapters have elucidated that the learning results necessitate a transformation not only in the written national curricula for compulsory education but primarily in the mindset of educators. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the transitions in pedagogy that promote fostering learner autonomy. Since the backdrop necessitates a curriculum centred on learning goals, educators must consider these outcomes when designing their lessons and activities. The prevalent characteristic in the research regarding learning outcomes is that they represent what students can do with their acquired knowledge and skills (Alkhidir et al., 2024). This implies that outcomes actively reflect the learners' competence when using or manifesting content, information, ideas and tools. This focuses on attaining competencies and skills throughout learning.

7.1 The implementation of the learning outcomes curriculum in this study

The learning outcomes for Grades 3 and 4 in Malta regarding the instruction of Maltese are delineated in documents entitled 'Il-Kisbiet mit-Tagħlim It-Tielet Sena' and 'Il-Kisbiet mit-Tagħlim Raba' Sena' - Learning outcomes for Grades 3 and 4, respectively (Ministry of Education, Malta, 2024, accessed online). The learning outcomes are articulated as sentences or statements organised into four lists, corresponding to each of the four language skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. The phrases are composed in the first-person singular, indicating that the result is an objective the student must strive to obtain by the conclusion of the learning experience. Alongside the four-page learning outcomes programme document, there exists an additional document entitled 'Programm ta' Metalingwa u tal-Letteratura' (Metalanguage and Literary Programme), which delineates lists pertaining to morphology, syntax, spelling, and punctuation elements that require

development at Levels 4 (Grades 1 and 2) and 5 (Grades 3 and 4). These lists are prescriptive and do not correlate with the Learning Outcomes program. They are also written in the first person singular.

In both programmes, the learning outcomes are delineated as targets, distinct from any other learning outcomes within the same grade or between preceding and subsequent grades. The Maltese programme lacks inter-linkage, as well as intra-linkage with other subjects at the same grade level.

This study aims to transform teachers' mindsets from a predominantly content-oriented curricular approach to an emphasis on an input-based methodology and the mastery of learning by students, facilitated through various strategies employed by the educators within the programme outlined in this research. The adopted programme prioritised the required competency statements, positioning content knowledge as secondary to the goals (BakarNordin & Allias, 2013). This also resulted in a change in the accountability of educators. The approach advocated in the focus groups fostered teacher autonomy, allowing educators the liberty to autonomously organise and construct their activities and lessons, free from the constraints of textbooks and prescriptive workbooks that necessitated sequential completion to cover the subject. The teachers were given autonomy in selecting their teaching methods, allowing them greater latitude to plan, design, and execute activities.

For ease of reference, in Sections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2, the outcomes for Grade 4 and Grade 3 are numbered T1 to T10 for Taħdit (Speaking), S1 to S8 for Smigħ (Listening), K1 to K10 for Kitba (Writing), and Q1 to Q10 for Qari (Reading). The learning outcomes are articulated in Maltese, accompanied by an English translation. Each lesson is meant to focus on one primary learning outcome. However, in my role as participant-observer, I showed the teachers how this did not need to be the case during the focus groups. Section 7.1.1 for Grade 4 and Section 7.1.2 for Grade 3 present recommendations on how, during the teaching of Maltese, the learning outcomes or parts of learning outcomes can be linked together through commonalities found in the language skill. Learning outcomes can also be linked because the lesson will be planned using different tasks, which use different language skills to attain the target language focus of the lesson. Language skills cannot be tackled in isolation from each other without an overlap of outcomes in any one lesson. For example, in a lesson where listening is planned as the main focus, speaking, writing or reading skills can also overlap. Therefore, different lessons or activities can and will also target other outcomes.

On the basis of this principle, which was adopted in this study, learning outcomes were combined for the different activities, which are then presented in detail in the following chapters. Connections made across the different outcomes are explained in Sections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 and are established by correlating inter-skill and intra-skill relationships. The coding key used throughout the table is then presented in a table which presents the combination of outcomes stemming from my analysis of the outcomes based on content similarity or the potential for a lesson or activity to achieve a specific objective related to another skill. This was subsequently shared and deliberated with the educators during the focus group sessions. The prospect of blending outcomes was an innovative thought for the teachers. This method enables them to address and reinforce outcomes across several activities. Their position (evidence presented in Chapter 8) that outcomes must be addressed in just one session before progressing to the next sequentially required intervention. As presented in my recommendations in Sections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2, the system demonstrates that the pressure associated with addressing all outcomes may diminish if educators approach the outcomes curriculum through this innovative integration of outcomes. This change in mindset promotes the exploration of the diverse combinations and possibilities facilitated by the versatility of this mechanism.

Sections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 present tables that list the outcomes for each grade, Grade 4 and Grade 3. Tables 7.1 to 7.8 present recommendations on how selected outcomes or parts of outcomes written in Maltese and translated to English, can be combined to plan specific activities. Other combinations are presented in Chapter 12 when project work is introduced as one of the methodologies used in the pedagogical transformation towards learner autonomy. For the recommendations made during the case study, I used colour codes. A colour code is assigned to each combination of outcomes that can be used during a lesson. An explanation of how the outcomes were combined is then provided. The colour labelling aids referencing during the investigation. However, such a visual system could even aid the teachers when planning. The implementation of the outcomes is discussed through the activities presented as evidence in Chapters 8 to 13. Future studies can build on this analysis and present other combinations related to all the outcomes in the programme.

Section 7.2 presents a multi-disciplinary approach by integrating learning outcomes from different subjects.

7.1.1 Grade 4

Grade 4 learning outcomes and their implementation

T1 ✓ ✓	Nitkellem li ninstema' u ninftiehem sewwa bi pronunzja u b'intonazzjoni tajba, b'enfasi fejn meħtieġ.	I speak clearly so that I can be heard and understood properly, with good pronunciation and intonation, and emphasis where necessary.
T2 ✓ ✓	Nitkellem b'mod ġenerali bl-użu ta' firxa xierqa ta' vokabularju fuq ħwejjeġ familjari u ta' interess għalija billi nuża tajjeb u f'lokhom il-pronomi personali u mehmużin, inqabbel il-ġens u l-għadd man-nomi u l-verbi li nuża u nuża l-forma korretta tal-aġġettiv pożittiv.	I speak generally using an appropriate range of vocabulary on familiar things and things of interest to me. I use personal and attached pronouns well and appropriately, matching gender and count with nouns and verbs I use, and using the correct form of the positive adjective.
T3 ✓	Nagħmel mistoqsijiet u talbiet bi strutturi grammatikali u sintattiċi korretti, bl-użu ta' pronomi u kliem interrogattiv ieħor, b'mod edukat u pulit, biex nikseb it-tagħrif li nkun neħtieġ mingħand xi ħadd li jien midħla tiegħu bħal meta nitlob xi ħaġa lil xi ħadd waqt attività fil-klassi u lil hinn minnha.	I ask and request information with correct grammatical and syntactic structures, using pronouns and other interrogative words in a polite and neat way, to get the information I need from someone I know, like when I ask something from someone during an activity in the classroom and beyond.
T4 ✓	Inħaddem lingwaġġ matematiku, xjentifiku u teknoloġiku fit-taħdit tiegħi ta' kuljum bħal meta ngħid in-numri, nitkellem fuq forom sempliċi u kunċetti xjentifiċi elementari, niżen u nkejjel, u ngħid il-ħin.	I use mathematical, scientific and technological language in my everyday speech such as when I say numbers, talk about simple shapes and elementary scientific concepts, weigh and measure, and tell time.
T5	Nuża l-imperattiv biex nagħti direzzjonijiet u istruzzjonijiet.	I use the imperative to give directions and instructions.
T6 ✓ ✓	Inħaddem tajjeb il-Perfett u l-Imperfett meta ngħid fi kliemi rakkont qasir li nkun smajt jew	I use the Perfect and Imperfect Tenses well when I tell a short story that I have heard in my own words

	niddeskrivi l-karattru prinċipali u l-ambjent ta' ġrajja.	or describe the main character and the setting of an event.
T7	Wara li nisma' jew naqra testi letterarji u fattwali, naf nerġa' nirrakkontahom biex nuri li għoġbuni u fhimthom.	After listening to or reading literary and factual texts, I know how to retell them to show that I liked and understood them.
T8	Inbassar tmiem li nħossu xieraq għal stejjer, poeżiji, taqbiliet li nisma' l-bidu u l-iżvilupp tagħhom.	I predict an ending that feels appropriate to stories and poems, matching the beginning and development I hear in them.
T9 ✓	Nieħu sehem f'diskussjoni fuq temi familjari u nipparteċipa mhux biss bil-kliem imma wkoll b'għadd ta' sinjali, ġesti nonverbali, u enfasi fuq il-kliem ċavetta.	I participate in a discussion on familiar themes, using not only words but also signs, nonverbal gestures, and emphasis on keywords.
T10	Fit-taħdit ma' sħabi, inkun konxju tad-diversità lingwistika, ngħidu aħna, ta' xi kliem li nużaw fil-lingwi ewlenin li nafu (fosthom il-lingwi tal-istudenti barranin) biex infissru l-istess oġġett.	While talking to my friends, I am aware of the linguistic diversity, for example, of some words we use in the main languages we know (among them the languages of foreign students) to mean the same object.

Table 7.1 Speaking skills Grade 4

S1	Niddistingwi bejn ton u ieħor waqt l-irrakkontar ta' storja.	I distinguish between one tone and another when telling a story.
S2 ✓ ✓	Nisma', insegwi u nifhem siltiet qosra fuq suġġetti midħla tagħhom li jkun fihom informazzjoni li nitgħallem minnha *bħal silta informattiva li taqra l-għalliema jew sħabi tal-klassi jew li nisma'/nara minn fuq il-mezzi tax-xandir u l-internet.*	I listen, follow, and understand short passages on topics they are familiar with that contain information that I learn from, such as informative passages read by the teacher or my classmates or that I hear/see from the media and the internet.
S3 ✓	Nisma' rakkont qasir u nuri x'fhimt bil-fomm, bil-kitba jew bil-ġesti.	I listen to a short story and show what I understood orally, in writing or with gestures.
S4	Nisma' u nsegwi reċta qasira u nuri x'fhimt bil-fomm, bil-kitba jew bil-ġesti.	I listened, followed a short play, and showed what I understood orally, in writing, or with gestures.
S5	Nisma' u nifhem il-lingwaġġ matematiku, xjentifiku u teknoloġiku li nuża fil-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum bħan-numri, il-	I hear and understand the mathematical, scientific and technological language that I use in my daily life such as numbers,

	forom sempliċi, il-kejl, l-użin u l-ħin.	simple shapes, measurement, weighing and time.
S6 ✓	Nifhem it-tifsira ta' lingwaġġ ħafif li juri sentiment u opinjoni sempliċi.	I understand the meaning of light language, which shows a simple feeling and opinion.
S7	Nisma' u nsegwi kanzunetti / poeżiji / taqbiliet / u nuri x'fhimt bil-fomm, bil-kitba jew bil-ġesti u nsemmi eżempji fejn ikun hemm ta' rima.	I listen and follow songs, poems, and matches, showing what I understand orally, in writing, or with gestures. I also mention examples where there is rhyme.
S8 ✓ ✓	Nifhem mistoqsijiet sempliċi li jsiruli u nweġibhom bil-fomm jew bil-kitba jew bil-ġesti.	I understand simple questions, and I answer them orally, in writing, or with gestures.

Table 7.2 Listening skills Grade 4

K1 ✓ ✓	Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex minnhom ninseġ abbozzi għal kitbieti, skont għanijiet speċifiċi, billi nsaqsi mistoqsijiet bħal: Min? Meta? Kif? Fejn? X'ġara? Għaliex?	I plan ideas and organise them to weave drafts for my writings according to specific objectives, asking questions such as: Who? When? How? Where? What happened? Why?
K2 ✓	Nikteb listi ta' kliem u sentenzi fuq l-affarijiet li għandi nagħmel, bħal ngħidu aħna lista tax-xiri jew qadjiet.	I write lists of words and sentences, such as shopping lists or chore lists, that describe what I must do.
K3 ✓	Nikteb rakkonti fittizji ta' mhux inqas minn 70 kelma li jkun fihom karattri, postijiet u ġrajjiet.	I write fictional stories of no less than 70 words containing characters, places and events.
K4 ✓	Nikteb testi fattwali ta' mhux inqas minn 70 kelma b'tagħrifiet fuq fejn ngħix jien, il-persuni li nħobb u annimali, passatempi, festi u l-bqija.	I write factual texts of at least 70 words with information about where I live, the people I love, animals, hobbies, parties, and so on.
K5 ✓	Nikteb mill-bidu jew inkompli djalogi ta' mhux inqas minn 70 kelma fuq temi li jittrattaw il-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum u l-ambjent ta' madwari.	I write from scratch or continue dialogues of at least 70 words on themes related to my daily life and my environment.
K6 ✓	Inżomm djarju bil-ġrajjiet l-iktar importanti għalija tal-ġurnata.	I keep a diary with the most important events of the day for me.
K7 ✓	Nippreżenta b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji tas-sintassi, tal-morfoloġija u l-grammatika,	I present my final texts clearly, neatly, and without errors in syntax,

	tal-ortografija u tal-punteġġjatura t-testi finali tiegħi.	morphology, grammar, spelling, or punctuation.
K8	Nikteb tajjeb kliem marbut mal-lingwaġġ matematiku, xjentifiku u teknoloġiku li nużafil-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum bħan-numri, il-forom sempliċi, il-kejl, l-użin u l-ħin.	I write well words related to the mathematical, scientific and technological language that I use in my daily life such as numbers, simple shapes, measurements, weighing and time.
K9	Inwieġeb bil-kitba mistoqsijiet diretti u inferenzjali wara li nkun qrajt u fhimt test fattwali u fittizju.	I answer direct and inferential questions in writing after reading and understanding a factual and fictional text.

Table 7.3 Writing skills Grade 4

Q1	Naqra kitbiet ta' ġeneri, suġġetti u reġistri differenti u nagħraf il-funzjonijiet tagħhom ngħidu aħna, rapporti qosra, reklami, avviżi ta' gazzetti, fuljetti, magażins, poeżiji ħfief, stejjer, ħrejjef tradizzjonali Maltin, taqbiliet, għanjiet, kanzunetti u riċetti, stampati, elettroniċi u diġitali.	I read writings of different genres, subjects, and registers and recognise their functions, such as short reports, advertisements, newspaper notices, brochures, magazines, light poems, stories, traditional Maltese tales, matches, songs, songs and recipes, in print, electronic, and digital form.
Q2	Naqra u nifhem il-lingwaġġ matematiku, xjentifiku u teknoloġiku li nuża fil-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum bħan-numri, il-forom sempliċi, il-kejl, l-użin u l-ħin.	I read and understand the mathematical, scientific and technological language I use daily, such as numbers, simple shapes, measurement, weighing and time.
Q3	Nagħraf il-komponenti ewlenin ta' materjal stampat, elettroniku u diġitali bħat-titlu, il-werrej, il-kapitlu, in-numru tal-paġna, it-tqassim, ix-xbihat jew l-istampi, il-kepxins, il-qoxra ta' quddiem u ta' wara, u nużahom biex infittex l-informazzjoni li nkun neħtieġ.	I recognise the main components of printed, electronic, and digital material, such as title, table of contents, chapter, page number, layout, images or pictures, captions, and front and back cover, and I use them to find the information I need.
Q4	Nagħraf xi jfisser kliem tqil u espressjonijiet li ma nkunx naf mis-sens tas-sentenza/paragrafu jew mill-kuntest billi norbot kliem ma' ieħor u/jew kliem ma' stampi u nassoċja l-qbil fl-għadd	I recognise the meaning of heavy words and expressions that I do not know from the sense of the sentence/paragraph or the context by linking words to another and/or words to pictures and associating the agreement in the count and the

	u l-ġens tan-nomi mal-aġġettivi li jsegwuhom.	gender of the nouns with the adjectives that follow them.
Q5	Naqra testi, animazzjonjiet u stampi, nifhimhom, nixtarrhom u nifforma opinjoni dwarhom billi ngħid il-punti ewlenin, bħal b'mod kronoloġiku jew sekwenzjali, kif ukoll inwieġeb mistoqsijiet fuqhom.	I read texts, animations and pictures, understand them, analyze them and form an opinion about them by saying the main points, such as chronologically or sequentially, as well as answering questions about them.
Q6	Nagħraf is-suġġett/i jew l-idea/t ewlenija/n ta' test billi nislet il-kliem jew is-sentenzi jew il-kunċett/i l-aktar importanti.	I recognize the subject(s) or main idea(s) of a text by underlining the most important words or sentences or concept(s).
Q7	Nuża d-dizzjunarju billi nimxi mal-ordni alfabetiku u mill-ewwel ittra/i nasal għal kliem li nkun qed infittex it-tifsira tiegħu u hekk nitgħallem xi jfisser, kif jinkiteb, kif jingħad jew kif jinqara.	I use the dictionary by following the alphabetical order. From the first letter/s, I get to words whose meaning I'm looking for, and that's how I learn what they mean, how they're written, how they're said, or how they're read.
Q8	Nuża l-faċilitajiet li joffru l-libreriji (tal-klassi, tal-iskola u pubbliċi), naf x'għandi nagħmel biex nissellef ktieb, fejn għandi mmur infittex fuq l-ixkafef, skont il-ġeneru, il-kodiċi, u l-bqija.	I use the facilities offered by libraries (classroom, school, and public), and I know how to borrow a book and where to look on the shelves, according to genre, code, and the rest.

Table 7.4 Reading skills Grade 4

Suggested combinations of outcomes for Grade 4

T4/T1/T2/S3 with S2/S8 and Q1
T4 was combined with S5 when learners were asked to listen to measurements related to the Christmas stocking, and when preparing the plastic cup filled with soil for planting the ġubliena. In line with S2, students listened, followed, and understood short passages on informative passages read by the teacher. The pupils also read out loud in front of their classmates (Q1). In line with T1, when explaining the process in front of the rest of the class, they spoke clearly in order to be heard, and the rest of the class understood correctly. Good pronunciation, intonation, and emphasis were used as necessary. Since the language used related to measurements in both cases, the target outcome was also aligned to T4. Another way to assess the attainment of students' listening understanding of a text (S3) is by using Ozobots or similar devices (as explained in Chapter 10). By using these small

robots, students develop learner autonomy skills and show that they understood a story or instructions by programming their tiny robot to follow a trail (one example of which is presented in the case study Chapter 10).

T3/S8/S2/T1

This is another example of how outcomes can be combined.T3 was combined with S8 for activities which involved understanding the meaning of and asking questions. In activities that involve dialogue and requests for information from peers or even the teacher, one can see the interaction between the listener and speaker. This was also evident during the lessons when the teacher asked questions directly (Chapter 13). It was also apparent in lessons which involved interviewing and activities when asking questions to elicit information, such as when students asked questions to the rangers during the Nature Park visit (Chapter 12) or when they asked questions to the bee expert during an online session organised on Bee Day. T3 was also targeted when creating the dialogue between two characters, when asking peers for information, and when students prepared interviews in collaborative activities (Chapter 9). S8 was evident when students showed they understood a question they were asked through verbal or non-verbal replies. S8 can also be linked with S2 since S2 also targets understanding. S2 was attained when students followed instructions in learning experiences, such as listening to the park rangers and instructions (recipe, Christmas stocking, Christmas plant). During such activities, students also showed competency in their speech; therefore, this aspect targeted T1.

T2/T6/T9/S6 linked with K7 preceeded by K1

Throughout their interactions in lessons, students could also be observed using an appropriate range of vocabulary for familiar things and things of interest to them (T2). They could be observed using personal and attached pronouns well and appropriately, matching gender and count with nouns and verbs used (T6). The correct form of the positive adjective (when used) was also used in their speech. When the lesson focused on writing the different genres referred to in K2, 5, 6 and the generic outcome K7, all the morphological aspects needed to be attained. This showed how the outcomes related to speech could be directly linked to the ones for Writing. K1 was developed using the mind

mapping system – The WH? Questions (in Maltese) were projected on the board, and students were asked to brainstorm. This method was used often when tackling writing tasks.
T6 in relation to K1 for K2/K3/K4/K5/K6
T6 focuses on the correct use of the tense. While using the language in activities involving the verb as the target language, for example, when using the word cards, the teacher specifically targeted the verbs. However, during instances during other activities, such as writing in the past tense when retelling a story, or when they had to retell something that happened, such as when they had to write a diary entry or when they had to write factual writing, they not only wrote but use the verbs correctly even when speaking. Evidence presented related to the use of verbs will show how these outcomes were implemented. Different genres were given to the students during other lessons. Each genre was then selected for the end-of-year project. Learning outcomes K2/K3/K5/K6 focus on these genres, and the students reached the outcomes by writing stories, lists, dialogue, and diaries. K1 was also targeted when planning the writing task. The culmination of the different genres is presented in Chapter 11, highlighting how, through technology, students could exhibit their work through the e-book they created.

Table 7.5 Combination of skills Grade 4

Table 7.5 above shows the flexibility that learning outcomes present to educators. Through various possible combinations, teachers can tackle outcomes in various creative ways whilst keeping the primary focus on one or two aspects for the particular lesson. Teachers must familiarise themselves with the outcomes set by the curriculum so that they start making the necessary connections between skills or within the same skill.

7.1.2 Grade 3

Grade 3 learning outcomes and their implementation

Grade 3 learning outcomes are presented similarly to the Grade 4 outcomes. The combination of learning outcomes in the context of this case study for Grade 3 is also presented through colour codes and explanations as follows:

Taħdit (Speaking)

T1 ✓	Nagħmel talbiet xierqa biex ninqeda għall-bżonnijiet bażiċi tiegħi ta' kuljum billi nuża l-forom sempliċi tat-taħdit differenti f'sitwazzjonijiet familjari u formali, bħal meta nagħmel talbiet lil tal-familja u lil nies oħrajn.	I make appropriate requests to meet my basic daily needs using simple forms of speech in different situations familiar and formal, like when I make requests to family and other people.
T2 ✓	Inwassal messaġġ sempliċi bil-fomm bla ma nħalli xejn essenzjali barra minnu.	I deliver a simple message verbally without leaving anything essential out of it.
T3 ✓	Inwieġeb mistoqsijiet biex nuri li fhimt dak li smajt kemm minn testi fattwali kif ukoll dawk letterarji u nitkellem dwarhom.	I answer questions to show that I have understood what I have heard from both factual and literary texts and talk about them.
T4 ✓	Nuża kliem sempliċi u dirett biex nagħti istruzzjonijiet u direzzjonijiet ħfief u ċari marbutin mal-ħajja u l-esperjenzi tiegħi fl-ambjenti li nkun fihom, fosthom id-dar u l-klassi.	I use simple and direct words to give light and clear instructions and directions related to my life and experiences in the environments that I am in them, including home and class.
T5 ✓	Nuża espressjonijiet ta' tislim, kemm bil-fomm kif ukoll bil-ġesti, fil-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum u fil-waqtiet u l-kuntesti addattati skont l-udjenza li jkolli.	I use expressions of greeting, both verbal and gestural, in my daily life and at appropriate times and contexts according to the audience I have.
T6 ✓	Nitkellem fuqi nnifsi, fuq il-familja tiegħi u l-ambjent li ngħix fih u fuq kif jitqassam iż-żmien fi snin, staġuni, xhur, jiem u l-ħin tal-ġurnata.	I talk about myself, my family and the environment I live in and how time is divided into years, seasons, months, days and the time of day.
T7	Bl-għajnuna tal-għalliema, nagħmel żidiet u tibdiliet żgħar	With the help of the teachers, I make small additions and changes according

	skont il-gosti tiegħi f'testi letterarji mismugħa bħal kanzunetti, taqbiliet, stejjer, poeżiji, ħrejjef u l-bqija.	to my tastes in literary texts heard such as songs, matches, stories, poems, fables and so on.
T8 ✓	Nieħu sehem f'diskussjonijiet fi gruppi żgħar, bl-għajnuna tal-għalliema, fejn nesprimi l-fehmiet u l-ħsus tiegħi bi struttura grammatikali u sintattika tajba, skont il-firxa tal-vokabularju tal-età tiegħi u b'intonazzjoni tajba fejn meħtieġ.	I take part in discussions in small groups, with the help of the teachers, where I express my views and feelings with grammatical structure and good syntax, according to the vocabulary range of my age, and with good intonation where necessary.
T9 ✓	Nisma' l-fehmiet tal-oħrajn filwaqt li nistenna u meta jmissni nagħti tiegħi.	I listen to the views of others while I wait and when it's my turn I give mine.
T10 ✓	Nikkontrolla l-volum ta' leħni skont il-kuntest, il-post u s-sitwazzjoni li nkun fihom.	I control the volume of my voice according to the context, place, and situation I am in.

Table 7.6 Speaking skills Grade 3

The T targets linked with the S target outcomes were used as tools to improve the use of the Maltese language with the young Grade 3 students. Since the evidence (presented in the upcoming chapters) showed that the Grade 3 student participants had issues with using the Maltese language in their everyday interactions, and this research study aimed at developing learner autonomy skills, teachers were asked to use the T targets as daily tasks with all their students to increase their autonomy through their independent use of the language.

T1, T2 with S3 and S6

The teacher focused on T1, which meets students' basic daily needs by using simple forms of speech in familiar and formal situations. Here, students were sent for errands to school secretaries or other teachers and had to pass on messages in Maltese; they were asked to use Maltese to ask for information in class, such as where to write the date or which page to open and so on. T2, which also focused on passing on messages, ensured the information was fully passed on. Here, teachers were asked to write the message that the students needed to pass on on a paper, and the recipient was asked to read it and tally what was written to what the student passed on. A small tick on the paper was written if all the information was passed on correctly. This was done daily. Only a small number of students were given the task on one day, but over a week, the teacher ensured that all students delivered at least one message. The teachers kept the lollipop system to ensure all the names were selected. This outcome was linked with S3 and S6, which focus on understanding directions by listening.

T3 with S2, S3 and S4

T3 then focused on answering questions to show that understanding. This was linked with S2 and S4. S2, besides focusing on understanding general messages, focuses specifically on understanding specific points and details. S4 focuses on understanding simple instructions that someone gives, including the Imperative in the positive and the negative.

The aspect of understanding was a general focus that teachers kept at the forefront of all student interactions. Teachers were asked to use different strategies to ensure that their students understood. Teachers were asked to re-word a question when they felt that the students were lost; teachers asked students directly to avoid having the same few students answer; eye contact was maintained, and teachers were asked to avoid giving their back to the students when listening to an answer or when asking a question; teachers were asked to avoid continuing an answer but were asked to patiently prompt the student and wait for her to build the answer; other students were asked to state the answer again to ensure that the understanding was widespread across many students; and finally teachers were asked to model syntax as needed after the student finalised her answer and not during the students' speech.

T4, T5 and T6 with S5

T4, T5 and T6 focused on different aspects of a student's life, such as talking about their family, hobbies, or things that interest them. T6 also focused on the aspect of time, and this was first tackled as a separate topic and then integrated with other aspects of the student's life. Tasks, which included reading and writing outcomes, were linked to this aspect when students were asked to place sentences describing what someone does during the day in chronological order. Students were also asked to write a diary entry about a typical day. This was also linked to S5, which focuses on listening to specific details about announcements, which include date/time and other minor details.

T8, T9, and T10 were targeted during the long-term project. Chapter 12 explains the process that the students undertook in detail.

Smigħ (Listening)

S1	Nifhem stqarrijiet differenti, kemm fil-pożittiv kif ukoll fin-negattiv, li jkun fihom raġuni jew opinjoni bħal *Jien immur l-iskola kuljum biex niltaqa'*	I understand different statements, both positive and negative, that contain a reason or an opinion such as *I go to school every day toI meet my friends, I don't like to eat sweets because it's not healthy*.

	ma' sħabi, Jien ma nħobbx niekol il-ħelu għax mhux tajjeb għas-saħħa.	
S2 ✓	Naqbad u nifhem xi punti speċifiċi / dettalji meta xi ħadd jitkellem miegħi jew ma' oħrajn fi djalogu jew diskursata qasira.	I catch and understand some specific points / details when someone talks to me or others in a dialogue or short discourse.
S3 ✓	Nifhem meta nisma' ċajta, djalogu, storja u l-bqija, u nirreaġixxi fost l-oħrajn bil-fomm, bil-kitba jew bil-ġesti għalih/a.	I understand when I hear a joke, dialogue, story and so on, and I react among others verbally, in writing or with gestures to him/her.
S4 ✓ ✓	Nifhem istruzzjonijiet sempliċi fl-istruttura u fil-vokabularju li jagħtini xi ħadd fil-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum, fosthom bl-Imperattiv fil-pożittiv u n-negattiv bħal *Kul għal qalbek, Taqsamx it-triq.*	I understand simple instructions in structure and vocabulary that someone gives me in my daily life, including the Imperative in the positive and the negative like *Eat to your heart's content, Don't cross the road*.
S5 ✓	Nifhem avviż/i sempliċi mogħtija bil-fomm u marbuta mal-ħajja tiegħi u madwari li jinkludu d-data, il-ħin u xi dettalji ħfief oħra, bħal *Nhar it-Tnejn 10 ta' Novembru se mmorru ħarġa ma' tal-iskola. Nitilqu fid-disgħa...*	I understand simple verbal announcement/s related to my life and surroundings that include the date, time and some other minor details, such as *On Monday 10 November we will go on a school outing. We leave at nine...*
S6 ✓	Nifhem direzzjonijiet sempliċi li nisma' fil-ħajja tiegħi u madwari fost l-oħrajn kif tasal minn post għal ieħor fl-istess binja jew xi mkien viċin il-post fejn toqgħod, bħal *Itla' fuq u dur fuq il-lemin, Itla' fl-ewwel sular u idħol fil-kamra tax-xellug*.	I understand simple directions that I hear in my life and around me among others how to get from one place to another in the same building or somewhere near where you live, like *Go up and turn right, Go up to the first floor and enter the left room.*
S7	Nisma' u nifhem reklam qasir u sempliċi dwar oġġett/post marbut mal-ħajja tiegħi u l-ambjent ta' madwari bħal reklam ta' ġugarell, kompjuter jew post tad-divertiment.	I hear and understand a short and simple advertisement about an object/place related to my life and the environment around me such as an advertisement for a toy, computer or entertainment venue.
S8 ✓	Nisma' rakkont qasir u nuri x'fhimt bil-fomm, jew bil-ġesti.	I listen to a short story and show what I understood orally, or with gestures.
S9	Nisma' u nsegwi kanzunetti / poeżiji / taqbiliet / tidwir l-ilsien u nuri x'fhimt bil-fomm jew bil-ġesti.	I listen and follow songs / poems / matches / tongue twisters and show what I understand orally or with gestures.
S10	Nisma' u nsegwi reċta qasira u nuri x'fhimt bil-fomm jew bil-ġesti.	I listen and follow a short play and show what I understood orally or with gestures.

S11 ✓	Nifhem mistoqsijiet sempliċi li jsiruli u nweġibhom bil-fomm jew bil-kitba.	I understand simple questions and answer them orally or in writing.

Table 7.7 Listening skills Grade 3

S8, S11,Q1, Q2, Q3

During the end-of-year project associated with the outing (Chapter 12), which focused on using the environment out of class as a learning tool, students were allowed to build their own farm using LEGO education blocks (Chapter 12 photos 78 to 82) and present it to the rest of the class. This project, split up over a number of lessons, as explained in Chapter 12, amalgamated many speaking, listening and writing outcomes. Aligned with outcomes S8, S11,Q1, Q2, Q3 (below) opportunities were created for the students to listen, ask questions to their peers, write their own paragraphs or stories and then explain and describe their own farms to the rest of the class. This was also linked to reading a text whilst showing understanding and meaning. When in difficulty, students were encouraged to split their words into syllables . To increase the assimilation of knowledge, it was evident that an outcome could not be tackled only once but needed to be repeated and presented in different creative ways.

Qari (Reading)

Q1 ✓	Naqra l-kliem li qatt ma nkun iltqajt miegħu qabel billi ngħaqqad ħoss ma' ieħor, ngħaqqad u naqsam f'sillabi jew inxebbah il-forma tiegħu ma' ta' kliem ieħor li jixbhu.	I read the words that I have never met before by combining one sound with another, combining and dividing into syllables or simulating the shape his with other similar words.
Q2 ✓	Naqra bis-sens u b'kunfidenza f'qalbi, waħdi, fis-skiet, għall-gost u nibda nieħu l-qari bħala drawwa.	I read with meaning and with confidence in my heart, alone, in silence, for fun and I start to take reading as a habit.
Q3 ✓	Naqra test quddiem ħaddieħor bħal ngħidu aħna waqt laqgħa fi gruppi, fil-klassi u f'attività għall-istudenti.	I read a text in front of others such as during a meeting in groups, in class and in an activity for students.
Q4	Naf naqra u nifhem il-kliem l-aktar popolari bħall-ġranet tal-ġimgħa, ix-xhur, l-istaġuni, il-kuluri, l-annimali, l-elementi tad-dinja...	I can read and understand the most popular words such as days of the week, months, seasons, colors, animals, elements of the world...
Q5	Nagħraf is-suġġett/i ewlieni/n ta' test billi nislet il-kliem jew is-sentenzi l-aktar importanti.	I recognize the main subject(s) of a text by eliciting the most important words or sentences.

Q6	Nislet minn dak li nkun qrajt it-tagħrif li nkun neħtieġ bħal meta naqra istruzzjonijiet jew direzzjonijiet li jkun hemm fi ktieb ta' riċetti jew manwal tal-logħob.	I derive from what I have read the information I need such as when I read instructions or directions that are in a recipe book or game manual.
Q7	Inqis ruħi bħala qarrej/ja u bl-għajnuna tal-għalliem/a nagħraf nagħżel kotba li jaqblu mal-livell tal-qari tiegħi.	I consider myself a reader and with the help of the teacher I know how to choose books that match my reading level.
Q8 ✓	Naqra u nagħti kas tal-intonazzjoni billi nsegwi sewwa s-sinjali tal-punteġġjatura bħal l-ittri kapitali, is-sing, il-punt, il-virgola, is-sinjal tal-mistoqsija, is-sinjal esklamattiv u ż-żewġ punti.	I read and pay attention to intonation by following correctly the signs of punctuation such as capital letters, dash, full stop, comma, sign of the question, the exclamation mark and the colon.

Table 7.8 Reading skills Grade 3

The learning outcome, which was linked to reading using the correct intonation, was used when teaching writing tasks, and students needed to be made aware of missing punctuation marks.

Kitba (Writing)

K1 ✓	Nikteb u nifforma sentenzi sempliċi jew paragrafu fuq suġġetti li jien midħla tagħhom.	I write and form simple sentences or paragraphs on topics I am familiar with.
K2 ✓	Bl-għajnuna tal-għalliem/a tiegħi, ngħaqqad sentenzi sempliċi f'paragrafu.	With the help of my teacher, I combine simple sentences into a paragraph.
K3	Nagħti bil-kitba d-dettalji personali tiegħi.	I give my personal details in writing.
K4	Bl-għajnuna tal-għalliem/a tiegħi naf insib mudelli tajbin ta' kitbiet ħfief biex intejjeb kitbieti u nsaħħaħ u nkattar il-vokabularju skont l-għanijiet tiegħi.	With the help of my teacher I know how to find good models of light writings to improve my writings and strengthen and increase my vocabulary according to my goals.
K5	Nikteb kepxins taħt ritratti u stampi fuq nies u ħwejjeġ li nara madwari.	I write captions under photos and pictures on people and things I see around me.
K6 ✓	Nikteb messaġġi qosra ta' madwar 30 kelma f'kartolini li nkun se nibgħat lil nies li nħobb.	I write short messages of about 30 words in postcards that I will send to people I love.

K7	Inkompli u nimla l-vojt f'taqbiliet sempliċi ta' strofa waħda jew tnejn fuq suġġetti li jinteressawni bħall-ambjent ta' madwari u fuq l-ħlejjaq li nħobb u l-affarijiet li nħobb nagħmel.	I continue and fill in the blanks in simple rhyming poems of one or two stanzas on subjects that interest me such as the environment around me and on creatures that I love and the things I love to do.
K8	Nikteb mistoqsijiet ħfief u sempliċi li bihom nikseb tagħrif li nkun neħtieġ bħal ngħidu aħna f'intervista, telefonata u l-bqija.	I write light and simple questions with which I get information that I need such as for example in an interview, a phone call and so on.

Table 7.9 Writing skills Grade 3

Writing tasks were regularly given to the Grade 3 students. Initially, students were asked to write sentences, which then developed into more complex tasks, such as writing a few sentences or paragraphs on a particular event or topic. Collaborative writing was employed as a teaching strategy that promoted student autonomy in the methods outlined in Section 9.1.1 of Chapter 9. Here, tasks were presented in a scaffolded manner over the weeks. The evidence in the next chapters will demonstrate how the Grade 3 pupils' exposure to various situations helped them improve their writing abilities. Several strategies were employed, such as beginning the lessons with reading or discussing the subject in groups or pairs, like Carnival (see Photos 9.4 to 9.8), to which the students would have been exposed, and then developing the lesson to allow them to practise writing.

7.2 Learning outcomes across disciplines

Besides integrating learning outcomes within the same subject, learning outcomes can be integrated across subjects. When planning projects or outings, such as the one presented in Chapter 12, outcomes from different subjects can be included in the tasks. In this way, when pupils are out for the day for an outing, different subjects would be tackled. The medium of Maltese can then be used even when covering outcomes elicited from other subjects. As shown below, aspects from various disciplines can be synthesised.

The screenshots (Photos 7.1 to 7.5) from the presentation (Appendix 4) used with the teachers, demonstrate how the learning outcomes curriculum facilitates subject integration. In the primary sector, when one teacher teaches different subjects to the same students, the teaching and learning experience can be characterised as a singular experience that addresses multiple topic areas.



Photo 7.1 An example of a weekly timetable

The above example shows how during one week of lessons, learning outcomes elicited from different subjects can be linked. Both the Grade 3 and Grade 4 projects presented in Chapter 12, are situated in an external natural environment. Photos 7.2 to 7.5 show extracts from the social studies and religion syllabi across Grade 4 and Grade 3. They illustrate how the framework presented in this study can also address learning objectives from these syllabi.



Photo 7.2: Excerpt from the Grade 4 social studies syllabus

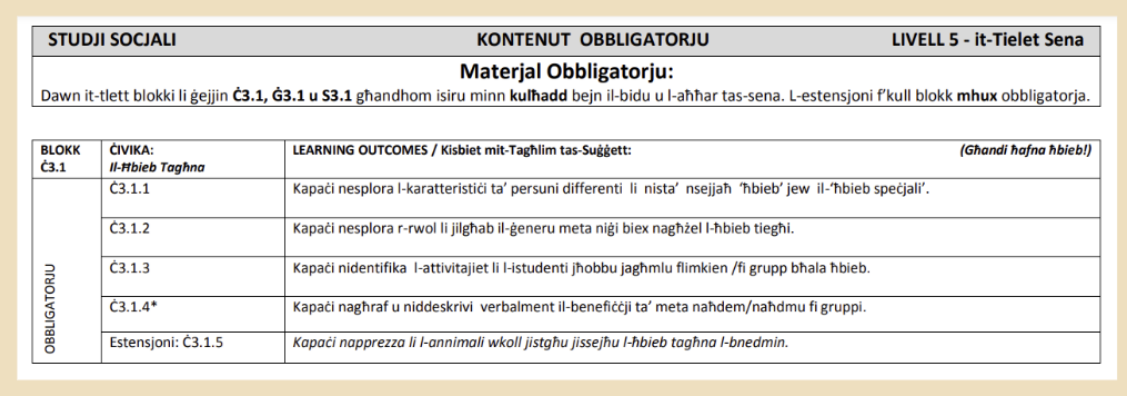
The Grade 4 social studies syllabus, excerpt of which is shown in photo 7.2, shows how the practical work assigned for the subject refers to field work or a project. This needs to be held between January and May, and involves an outing to the countryside or a choice from Nature reserves around Malta.

The Religion Syllabus, Photo 7.3, shows how aspects related to beauty around us, exploring God the Creator and the Creation around us as a gift for all humanity, observing the environment and reflecting on God's love are part of the syllabus. The first arrow points to identifying objects, sounds, places, and appreciating their beauty. The second arrow points to the appreciation of God in all His glory through the creation around us, which is a gift for all humanity. The third arrow points to nature around us and how its beauty is proof of God's love.



Il-Mira/L-Aspett tas-Suġġett nr. 6: Apetti ta' sfida fl-esperjenza umana	1] Kapaċi: - nagħmel mistoqsijiet dwar Alla. - Nidentifika mumenti ta' sbuħija: *e.ż. oġġetti, postijiet, ħsejjes u persuni.*
Il-Mira/L-Aspett tas-Suġġett nr. 7: Il-Kelma t'Alla – Il-Bibbja	1] Kapaċi: - nuri rispett u stima lejn il-Bibbja bħala l-Kelma t'Alla miktuba. 2] Kapaċi: - nfittex u nuża l-Iskrittura Mqaddsa (il-Bibbja għat-Tfal). 3] Kapaċi: - nesplora Ġenesi 1 u 2 u nirrifletti fuq Alla l-Ħallieq u fuq il-ħolqien Tiegħu bħala rigal għalija u għall-umanità. 4] Kapaċi: - nirrelata mal-immaġini tar-Raġħaj it-Tajjeb kif insibuh f'Salm 23 u fl-Evanġelji.
Il-Mira/L-Aspett tas-Suġġett nr. 5: L-Għaqda: miegħi nnifsi, mal-oħrajn u m'Alla	1] Kapaċi - nitħarreġ fis-silenzju għal mumenti qosra u hekk niżviluppa fiha l-valur u l-attitudni li nitgħallem nisma', nirrispetta u jkolli kuntatt miegħi nnifsi, mal-oħrajn u ma' Alla. 2] Kapaċi: - nikteb talbiet qosra biex nitlob għalija nnifsi u għall-oħrajn, waqt li nagħraf li meta nkun qed nitlob, inkun qed nitkellem ma' Alla. 3] Kapaċi: - nosserva kemm l-ħolqien ta' madwari hu sinjur u nirrifletti fuq dan bħala prova ta' kemm Alla jħobb lili u lil-oħrajn u ta' kemm hu twajjeb lejja u lejn l-oħrajn.

Photo 7.3: Excerpt from the Grade 4 religious studies syllabus



STUDJI SOCJALI	KONTENUT OBBLIGATORJU	LIVELL 5 - it-Tielet Sena

Materjal Obbligatorju:

Dawn it-tlett blokki li ġejjin **Ċ3.1, Ġ3.1 u S3.1** għandhom isiru minn **kulħadd** bejn il-bidu u l-aħħar tas-sena. L-estensjoni f'kull blokk **mhux** obbligatorja.

BLOKK Ċ3.1	ĊIVIKA: *Il-Ħbieb Tagħna*	LEARNING OUTCOMES / Kisbiet mit-Tagħlim tas-Suġġett: *(Għandi ħafna ħbieb!)*
OBBLIGATORJU	Ċ3.1.1	Kapaċi nesplora l-karatteristiċi ta' persuni differenti li nista' nsejjaħ 'ħbieb' jew il-'ħbieb speċjali'.
	Ċ3.1.2	Kapaċi nesplora r-rwol li jilgħab il-ġeneru meta niġi biex nagħżel l-ħbieb tiegħi.
	Ċ3.1.3	Kapaċi nidentifika l-attivitajiet li l-istudenti jħobbu jagħmlu flimkien /fi grupp bħala ħbieb.
	Ċ3.1.4*	Kapaċi nagħraf u niddeskrivi verbalment il-benefiċċji ta' meta naħdem/naħdmu fi gruppi.
	Estensjoni: Ċ3.1.5	*Kapaċi napprezza li l-annimali wkoll jistgħu jissejħu l-ħbieb tagħna l-bnedmin.*

Photo 7.4: Excerpt from the Grade 3 social studies syllabus

Photo 7.4 shows an excerpt from the Grade 3 Social Studies syllabus. It refers to the fact that animals are our friends and that we should appreciate and love them. This would align with the project presented in Chapter 12 for Grade 3s, which was based on a visit to a farm.

This research does not aim at analysing other subjects' curricula; however, it is important to note that commonalities between subjects should form part of the teachers' planning practices. Besides presenting a more holistic way of presenting learning, it would make the implementation of the learning outcomes more time-efficient.

The topic of subject integration was communicated to all the educators in the primary sector of the participant school during the training session conducted at the beginning of the academic year following the case study (Appendix 4.7).

7.3 Conclusion

Learning outcomes offer teachers the flexibility to look at content taught over a scholastic year in a multitude of ways. This chapter investigated a mechanism which was adopted to implement the learning outcomes curriculum during this case study. The flexibility and adaptability with which this approach was tackled presented educators with different combinations of inter- and intra-skill links to the outcomes. An important aspect that one can conclude from this chapter is that implementing the learning outcomes curriculum should not be prescriptive. This system led to decreased pressure related to the time needed to cover all the outcomes and increased accountability, which shifted to the teacher. This curriculum implementation strategy promotes a tailor-made pedagogy for each learner cohort and each individual learner's needs (see Sections 9.1.3, 10.2.2, Chapter 12).

The upcoming chapters present evidence collected during this case study of how the learning outcomes were tackled over a particular period, focusing on creating opportunities to develop learning autonomy skills. The evidence presents a developmental journey throughout the case study. It led the participant teachers to adapt their methodology, focusing on nurturing learner autonomy and implementing the learning outcomes programme for their grade.

CHAPTER 8

ENTERING THE SCENE

8.0 Introduction

In educational case study research, the initiation of research holds both practical and ethical importance, especially when engaging with young children and within familiar institutional settings. This chapter examines the process of gaining admission to the research site and the implications of negotiating entry while shifting from a previous leadership position to that of a researcher. Engaging in such a context requires a delicate balance of relational awareness, ethical integrity, and methodological rigour (Simons, 2009; Yin, 2018).

Considering the participants' age and my previous role as Head of School, the distinctions between insider and outsider status necessitated continuous reflexivity and transparency (Finlay, 2002; Hammersley, 2000). Obtaining consent and assent, navigating gatekeeping frameworks, and establishing confidence were not merely procedural actions but were essential to the ethical and epistemological framework of the study (Lindsay, 2015). This chapter delineates the methods employed to address these concerns, emphasising the relational, ethical, and contextual intricacies of engaging in educational research with young learners and educators. It also delineates the preliminary issues that emerged and directly influenced the investigation.

8.1 Entering the scene

Before presenting data that focuses on the shift and adaptations made to teaching and learning practice, it is essential to understand the starting point of the empirical research, the context, and the phenomenon being studied.

In the initial stages of the research, educators needed to become more insightful about how they could aim to become more autonomy-supportive. Building a solid working relationship was essential for the teachers (Mercer & Howe, 2012), which was done through meetings with me. Focus groups consisting of teachers from the same grade level, along with me as participant-observer researcher, were scheduled, and a strategy for organising regular meetings was devised. Chapter 6 (Section 6.3.1 Table 6.2) presented the content that concentrated on the research questions and the schedule for the focus group meetings. As time progressed, the material for the focus groups evolved in response to the emerging needs identified during the analysis of the data gathered through observations and discussions. The educators from the two-year groups were unable to convene together due to scheduling limitations. The initial meeting agenda required adjustments in response to the school's demands and various routine considerations, including the need for teacher substitutions, scheduled activities that necessitated student supervision by their teachers, or instances of teachers' illness or unavailability. This did not impact the process, as I, in my capacity as a researcher, adjusted my availability to accommodate the demands of the teacher participants.

At the start of the research, it was essential to set the tone. This was done by establishing an ethical stance, explaining my role as a researcher as opposed to my previous role at school, using the methodological approach, shaping how the study is understood, and signalling the values that guide its conduct and interpretation. It was explained to participants that the meetings aimed to create an opportunity for educators to discuss challenges faced, if any, and celebrate good practices. The meetings allowed peer educators to discuss effective ways of tackling different scenarios and sharing challenges. It was explained how, during the focus groups, the teachers were also offered the opportunity to undergo professional development, focusing on the practical aspect of implementing the learning outcomes.

The teachers were conscious that the actions taken throughout the research were being viewed through the analytic lens of autonomy development. They also knew that the analysis

would be used as the onset for emerging adaptations needed for the next lesson. This way, the findings would be used as a descriptive tool for moving forward in the implementation programme. These meetings also allowed me, as a participant-observer researcher, and the teachers, as research participants, to clarify misconceptions and assist with any concerns while providing suggestions and ideas. The development of relationship dynamics corresponds with Stage 7 of Cohen's Timeline as outlined in Chapter 6, Table 6.1. The concurrent organisation of focus groups alongside lesson observations and individual meetings facilitated the establishment of a trusting relationship and contextualised the emerging issues effectively. The collected textual and visual data will be presented in accordance with the established codes and schedule, as detailed in Chapter 6, in line with the emerging themes. The textual data is presented in both Maltese (green) and English (blue) to reflect the original language of collection and to align with English as the academic language of this research. FG is used for focus groups, IM is used for individual meetings, LOS is used for lesson observations, and VAS is used for visual analysis sheets. During observations, I registered my observations in English.

8.1.1 High level of anxiety

Data collected during the first focus group focused on the teachers' needs. The teachers' feedback made it clear that they felt a strong level of anxiety and pressure arising from the changes presented in the new curriculum mandated by the State.

> FG_AB3_Oct21: *Veru inħossni mitlufa xi kultant. Għandna wisq. Lanqas tkun taf minn fejn se tibda... U t-tfal trid tara kif tilħaqhom għax tiegħi dis-sena vera batuti fil-Malti. Kollox bl-Ingliż jgħiduli. Nispiċċa nagħmel translation nikteb fuq il-board u jikkuppjaw. Imbagħad għandi l-barranin lanqas iridu jagħmlu xejn. Għandna nibdew diġà għajjejt inħossni. U l-learning outcomes ma jikkejterjawx għal hekk. Ituk agħmel hekk u int trid tara x'se tħawwad. Kollox mill-bidu erġajna bdejna. Għallinqas għandna l-ktieb u nfittex minnu ħalli nara x'jaqbel u ma jaqbilx. U fis-sajf għamilna l-booklets so ilna għaddejjin nippjanaw.*

> FG_AB3_Oct21: At times, I feel lost. We have too much. You won't even know where to start from... and you need to see how to reach all the children. This year's cohort is quite weak. They constantly use English. I have to write the translation on the board and then they copy. And then the foreigners show no interest. We just started the year and I already feel tired. And the learning outcomes do not cater for these issues. They just tell you do this do that and it is up to you to see what to do. We had to start everything from scratch. At least we have a book and we look at the pages to see what fits and what doesn't. And during summer we did not stop preparing since we were preparing the booklets.

A high level of stress was evident in how the teachers expressed themselves. An aspect that emerged very strongly and that needed to be tackled to increase the effectiveness of the teaching and learning practices was the difficulty of catering to the different abilities, including teaching Maltese to pupils who had a wide range of competency in the Maltese language. When asked if teachers felt group work could assist them to be more effective (to link with Muijs et al., 2014), providing an opportunity to split the students according to ability, teachers said that they felt that the teaching needed to emphasise whole-class teaching, followed by individual work. They felt that there was little room for group work. The overall belief among the three teacher participants from both Grade 3 and 4 was that organising group work took up too much time, which they felt was very limited.

(Evidence collected from questionnaires is usually collected in English, so it is only presented in one language.)

> Questionnaire_AB3_Oct21: As a teacher, I still do not get a full view of how good my students are as a whole, as they could forget all I taught them by the next week.
>
> Questionnaire_AB4_Oct21: I feel that the most pressure is the lack of time we have to cover so many outcomes. It is a constant race against time.

> IM_CD3_Oct21: *Le, ma nlaħħaqx nagħmel group work. Għandi wisq f'nikkaverja u nippreferi naqbad il-lesson u nagħmilha.*
>
> IM_CD3_Oct21: No, I will not manage to organise grooup work. I have too much to cover and I prefer to just carry out with the lesson.

> IM_AB4_Oct21: *Jaħlu wisq ħin sakemm nixegħlu t-tablets jew nirranġaw is-siġġijiet. Jaħlu nofs il-lesson u ma nlaħħaqx nagħmel dak li nkun ippjanajt.*
>
> IM_AB4_Oct21: They waste too much time until they switch on their tablets or to arrange the chairs. They waste half the lesson and then I will not manage to cover the content I would have planned to cover on the day.

It was felt that due to the vast learning outcomes programme, they had no time and no choice but to cover content without necessarily catering to the individual needs of their students.

The excerpts show that teachers were not so forthcoming with ideas and were not willing to change their practices. They felt curricular constraints and parent pressure, such as their custom to expect homework and marks at regular intervals, which were hindering their openness to try new things. Teachers' expectations and aspirations concerning improving learner autonomy for the students were low, and all the teachers felt a high stress level. This is also in line with international literature, which shows how the culture of teachers, parents and

learners is not always conducive towards autonomy (Ivone & Jacobs, 2022). The educators claimed that parents would rather have the teacher dictate and deliver knowledge, whilst learners passively receive this information. Excerpts of the field notes collected during the second focus group held in November 2021 show that when asked whether the culture aims at an educational experience directed towards having learners take responsibility for their learning, educators' reactions were not favourable.

> FG_AB4_Nov21: *Il-parents igorru jekk ma ttihomx kollox bl-imgħarfa u ma tispjegalhomx kollox int. Imbagħad joqogħdu jiktbu jew iċemplu u niddejjaq.*
>
> FG_AB4_Nov21: Parents complain if you do not provide everything and do not explain everything from beginning to end. They write or call to complain, and I do not like it.

> FG_AB4_Nov21: *Jien lanqas għadni nipprova intihom research jew xi ħaġa li jridu jaħsbu għad-dar għax il-parents jippreferu li t-tfal ipoġġu u joqogħdu jimlew il-pages li tkun spjegajtilhom u jekk jista' jkun b'xi example biex kulma jagħmlu jimlew bħalu.*
>
> FG_AB4_Nov21: I do not even think about giving them research or a task where they need to be critical thinkers in their work. Parents prefer it when their children go home with homework based on filled-in work pages, which I would have explained. If possible, provide an example so that all the students will need to complete it similarly.

These excerpts illustrate that, at first, educators exhibited considerable caution regarding any shift from what they perceived as standard practice, driven by concerns that adopting a non-traditional teaching style might provoke complaints from parents. Upon inquiry regarding their perspective on the impact of fostering learner autonomy on students, the educators exhibited minimal, if any, connection between learner autonomy and collaborative language acquisition.

> FG_AB4_Nov21: *Autonomy li jkunu jafu jaħdmu waħedhom hux? Jaħdmu huma waħedhom imma jkollhom bżonn dejjem isaqsu ħalli jkunu ċerti.*
>
> FG_AB4_Nov21: By autonomy one means to learn independently no? They do work on their own but they always seem to need my reassurance and ask me to be sure of themselves.

> FG_CD3_Nov21: *Imma x'iġifieri jitgħallmu l-lingwa waħedhom. Ir-rules u hekk mhux it-teacher trid tgħaddihomlhom? Xorta se jkollhom bżonn lit-teacher. Ma jistgħux jitgħallmu rules waħedhom.*

FG_CD3_Nov21: But what do you mean by learning the language on their own? The teacher is the one to partake in rules no? They will always need a teacher. How can they learn rules on their own?

Such concerns and queries reflect genuine problems that emerged in the initial stage of the study. These issues needed to be tackled during the focus groups and subsequent meetings. By sharing their concerns during these encounters, the educators could discuss how particular adaptations to their planning and lesson delivery could lead to a more effective learning environment.

It is noteworthy to highlight that the year in which the research was conducted coincided with the period when students and educators resumed a standard academic year following the aftermath of COVID-19. Several concerns expressed by the educators appeared to be directly linked to the two-year duration of the pandemic. Educators widely recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced students' alertness and awareness regarding their learning processes. It is important to note that the school was unable to accommodate all students simultaneously due to social distancing protocols implemented during the two academic years preceding the commencement of the study. Consequently, in the context of the pandemic, students were divided into two distinct groups. Half of the pupils participated in traditional schooling, while the remaining half engaged in online education from home. In the subsequent week, the groups alternated. All educators expressed that their experience of spending an entire academic year alternating between physical and online attendance, with some pupils choosing to participate solely online, significantly influenced their cognitive processing capabilities.

IM_AB4_Oct21: *Qishom saru slow hekk jibqgħu jħarsu lejk iċċassati xi kultant. Qishom jistennewk tagħmililhom kollox int.*

IM_AB4_Oct21: It's like they've become slow, so they keep looking at you in confusion sometimes. It's like they expect you to do everything for them.

Educators felt that at home, students were constantly being monitored by an adult, which could have hindered their independence when, for example,

FG_AB4_Oct21: *Biex isibu page mill-ktieb, jew jaqraw u jifhmu xi ħaġa waħedhom*

FG_AB4_Oct21: To find pages of a book, to read independently and to understand concepts autonomously.

FG_AB3/CD3_Oct21 (both teachers discussing): *Peress li ħafna mid-drabi dejjem kien ikun hemm xi ħadd magħhom waqt il-lessons, qisu ma kinux jaħsbu għar-rashom. Meta ġew lura, kienu veru babyish.*

FG_AB3/CD3_Oct21 (both teachers discussing): The fact that an adult was usually present during lesson time did not allow students to stand on their own two feet. When they returned to school, they were very babyish.

The high dependence on adult intervention was impacting the pupils' general attitude, leading to a high dependence on the teacher, as explained in the next section.

8.1.2 High teacher dependence

The research questions of this case study focus on students' involvement, which was equally important as the involvement of the teacher participants. In the initial stages of the research, evidence showed that learner dependence on the teacher was very high, putting learners on the extreme left of the continuum on the learner autonomy scale discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.1.

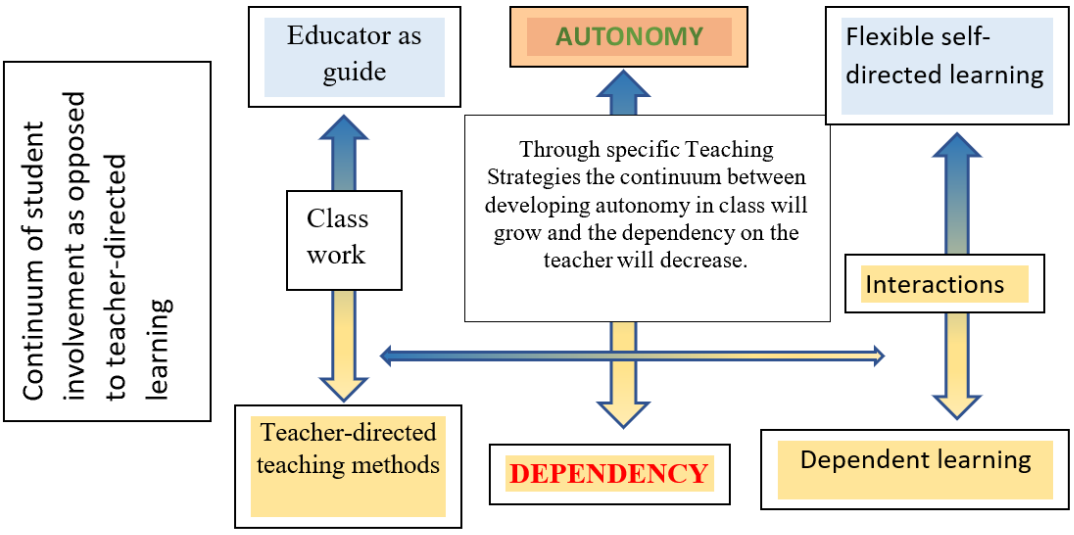


Figure 8.1 Reference to Chapter 3 Figure 3.1

This figure, which was explained in Chapter 3, elucidates the continuum of fostering autonomy within the classroom and shows that, from the data presented from the field notes collected when entering the scene, the relationship between teaching and learning was characterised by a dependency on authority (marked in yellow). The more dependent the learner, the more the educator takes a central role (Little, 2020; Rahman et al., 2022). This figure will be used in this study to analyse whether, through the different modifications made to the teaching methodology, a transition from dependency to autonomy, albeit at varying

degrees, will be presented through distinct stages. Evidence presented subsequently will show how the reduction of student dependency on the educator was achieved.



Photo 8.1: One-dimensional student-teacher and teacher-student interactions observed from the side (bottom image of the screen depicts my position at the side of the class)

In the initial stages, the first visual analysis sheets logged instances whereby students would ask the teacher every step of the way, from the page and question number to questions related to how they were to answer the assigned tasks (Photo 8.4). As illustrated in Photo 8.1, pupils consistently sat at separate desks, facing the teacher. It was noted that the teachers' questions were all closed-ended and mainly related to yes/no answers or answers that depended on the content of the question itself.

During the initial lesson observations in both Grade 3 classes, field notes collected show that "*teacher spent a higher proportion of lesson time focusing on mechanical matters such as filling in pages from workbooks and/or books, providing notes with model answers for students to follow once they were doing their work; and writing answers on the board with answers for students to copy."*(LOS_AB3_25Nov21) and *"The class dynamics were based on one-directional interactions between individual students and the teacher, and there was hardly any evidence of student collaboration during learning*." LOS_CD3_1Dec21) (field notes Lesson observations (LOS)) and "*Students spend too much time listening*" Visual

Analysis Sheet (VAS) (9th Nov_AB3). Especially in Grade 3 classes, evidence showed a "*high teacher dependence very present*" "*The lessons were mainly teacher-centred, and the students individually listened to the explanation, worked on their class work and, when in difficulty, asked the teacher*" (VAS_AB3_9th Nov). The teacher "*spoon fed the children with answers*" (VAS_CD3_1st Dec).

The student–teacher dependence was recorded and measured by recording the visual analysis and the lesson observation sheet, explained in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.6. A high teacher dependence prevailed in all the classes, and students depended on the teacher to provide them with answers. There was limited opportunity for students' cognitive growth. Matters observed during the lesson were discussed during the individual meetings after each lesson observation. Through discussions held during the focus groups, there was a shift in the methodology used by teachers, which set a positive tone for the rest of the study. The following presents evidence of how adaptations were made in class with the teacher, even when actively delivering the lesson.

Field notes taken during observations

Date 1st Dec 2021 *(Observation 2)*	
Class Code *3.1*	
Lesson skills covered użu tal-interjezzjoni fis-sentenzi	
Number of students: *24*	
Organisational autonomy support –e.g., students are allowed to have some decision-making role in terms of classroom management.	Examples during this session
The start of the lessons was very teacher-oriented. The teacher explained the topic and tried to put the words ('interjezzjoniiet') into context. The students were not very receptive. A few used English as a medium to communicate.	No autonomy was evident.
Procedural Autonomy Support – e.g. students are given the opportunity to choose the use of different media to present ideas	Examples during this session
Initially, the students were just asked to write in the book. However, after a short consultation between myself and the teacher (it came from the teacher to ask me what she could do to involve them more) the lesson took a turn for the better.	No procedural autonomy support was observed.
Cognitive Autonomy Support – e.g. students are directly involved in evaluating work, possibly even through peer assessment	Examples during this session
During the activity, students in groups as well as individually used different expressive words to place in context.	Photos
Dependence manifestations	
Initially, students could not really follow, especially due to their lack of knowledge of vocabulary. It was surprising how Maltese native children lack vocabulary.	
Students showing a process of consciousness of the language. *At the end of the lesson, the students were given the opportunity to come up with their own examples. Here, one can see that, together as a group, the students did not depend on the teacher as much as they did initially when working as individuals. Together, they also became more creative and enjoyed using the language in a fun way.*	

Photo 8.2: Lesson observation sheet (LOS)1st December 2021 page 1

Field notes taken during observations

Together they also became more creative and enjoyed using the language in a fun way.

Evidence

Evidence of autonomy in relation to the development of the lesson: This was not evident
Evidence of the process of consciousness of the native language: The fact that the students sat together and came out with sentences that included the expressive words shows that they have processed the language content discussed throughout the lesson and put it in context.

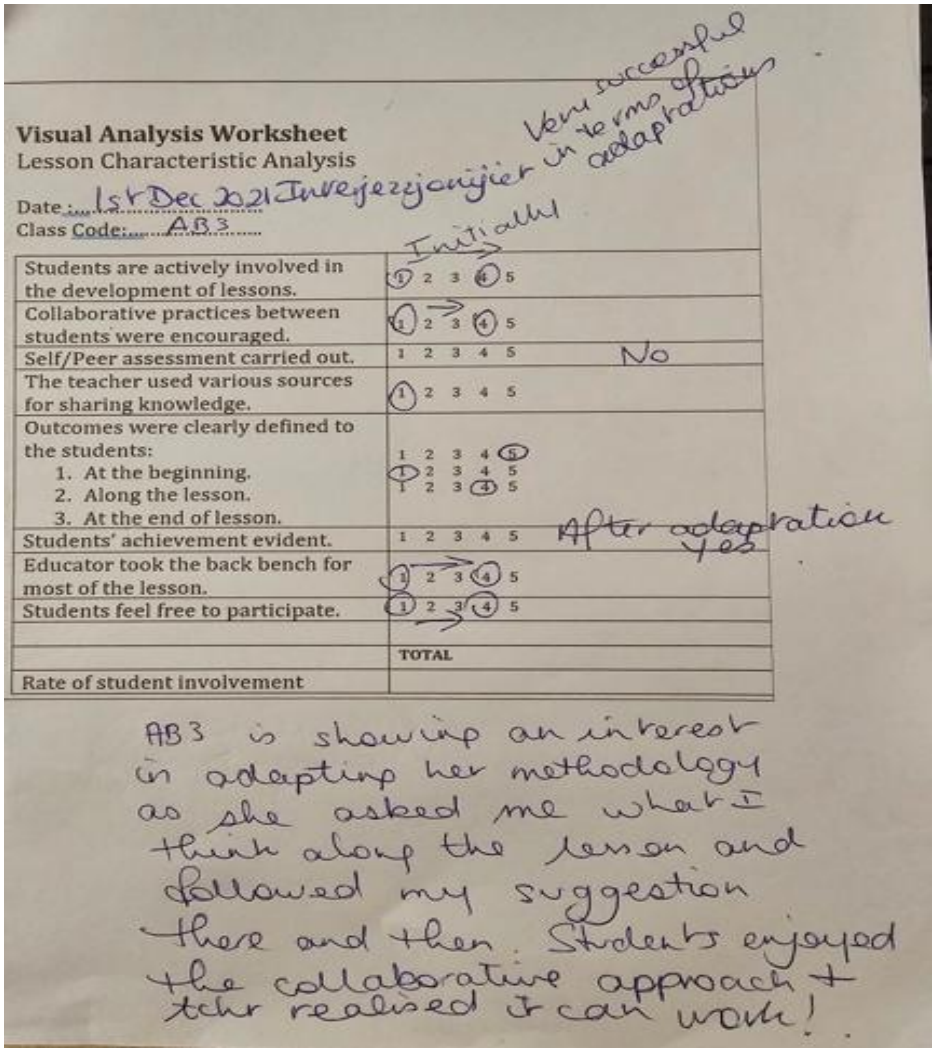
Evidence:



During the activity, students in groups as well as individually used different expressive words to place in context.

Photo 8.3: Lesson observation sheet (LOS)1st December 2021, continued page 2

The above representation of the lesson observation sheet presents evidence which shows how "*the start of the lesson was very teacher-centred* and '*the students were only asked to fill in the page on the book'* (LOS_AB3_1st Dec21) and it was noted that on regular instances, 'the teacher answered the exact instructions and information repeatedly, even when different students asked the same question' (LOS_AB3_1st Dec21).



Visual Analysis Worksheet
Lesson Characteristic Analysis

Date: 1st Dec 2021 Interjezzjonijiet
Class Code: AB3

Very successful in terms of adaptation

Students are actively involved in the development of lessons.	Initially 1 2 3 4 5
Collaborative practices between students were encouraged.	1 2 3 4 5
Self/Peer assessment carried out.	1 2 3 4 5 No
The teacher used various sources for sharing knowledge.	1 2 3 4 5
Outcomes were clearly defined to the students: 1. At the beginning. 2. Along the lesson. 3. At the end of lesson.	1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
Students' achievement evident.	1 2 3 4 5 After adaptation Yes
Educator took the back bench for most of the lesson.	1 2 3 4 5
Students feel free to participate.	1 2 3 4 5
	TOTAL
Rate of student involvement	

AB3 is showing an interest in adapting her methodology as she asked me what I think along the lesson and followed my suggestion there and then. Students enjoyed the collaborative approach + tchr realised it can work!

Photo 8.4: Visual Analysis Sheet for lesson observed on 1st December 2021

The visual analysis sheet in Photo 8.4, another tool used during the case study to log observations, represents the notes logged during the lesson. The Visual Analysis Sheet (VAS), which is detailed in Chapter 6, describes how there was a shift in methodology which changed class dynamics. In my notes, I write how the teacher asked for feedback during the lesson. Following my suggestions to shift the class dynamics by decreasing teacher talk and increasing student collaboration, the teacher improvised a group-work activity that shifted the students' involvement and increased their autonomy.

In the first half of the lesson, the teacher explained the lesson, and the students just listened. No collaboration or involvement from the students was expected. However, a shift in the middle of the lesson changed the dynamics. The teacher also showed readiness to adapt by asking for feedback and was ready to take on the suggestion to involve the students. The students showed readiness to get involved and actively discussed in groups. They came up with sentences they proudly read in front of their classmates (Chapter 9, Photos 9.11, 9.12 and

9.13). A shift in increased collaboration allowed the students to apply the knowledge. They assimilated new knowledge when writing sentences by using the language and putting it in context. During the follow-up one-to-one meeting, the teacher explained how she realised that her class's dependence was also a result of her methodology.

> IM_AB3_Dec21: *Indunajt li kif ħallejthom jaħdmu huma, aktar ħadu gost u irnexxilhom. Ħsibtu li mhux se jirnexxilhom. Daqskemm narahom iebsin, kollox iridu bl-imgħarfa lanqas nirriskja. Iva vera, nipprova li inżid aktar activities fejn jiddiskutu bejniethom ħa nara x'jiġri.*
>
> IM_AB3_Dec21: I realised that the more I let them work, the more fun they had and succeeded. I thought they would not succeed. I feel that they are too rigid, everything they want spoon fed….Yes true, I'll try to add more activities where they talk to each other more and see what happens.

She was also pleasantly surprised at her students' readiness to work collaboratively.

> IM_AB3_Dec21: *'Qatt ma immaġinajt li se jaqbdu u jiktbu. Dehru li ħadu gost.'*
>
> IM_AB3_Dec21: I never imagined they would just start writing. They seemed to enjoy it.

This indicates that in December, 2 months in the case study, the educator figured that the change in methodology leads to practices that led to promoting learner autonomy.

8.1.3 Use of the English language during Maltese lessons in Grade 3

In both Grade 3 classes, in 3.1 more than in 3.2, the high English-speaking culture was a significant factor impeding the successful attainment of Maltese language learning outcomes.. In the initial stages of the case study, this was a predominant theme highlighted in the field notes of lesson observations and discussions held with the teachers of Grade 3. Feedback presented by the Grade 3 teachers highlighted how lessons to teach Maltese were predominantly held in English. During observations, it was often observed how 'the teacher tried to use Maltese during the Maltese lesson; however, she immediately translated to English consistently and throughout the lesson' (LOS_AB3_25thNov21). It was also observed that 'Maltese native students (also) found it challenging to use Maltese to communicate in class, and when they needed to ask something, they used English' (LOS_AB3_25thNov21). Another aspect observed was how 'whenever this was the case, the teacher asked them to say what they needed to say in English, then translated it to Maltese orally and wrote it on the board in Maltese for the children to copy' lesson' (LOS_AB3_ 25thNov21). This presented a situation whereby the students were not only highly dependent

on the teacher and lacking in autonomous learning skills but highly dependent on the teacher to translate the language, understand and express themselves.

> IM_AB3_26Nov21*: Kollox trid tgħidilhom u tagħtihom bl-imgħarfa.*
>
> IM_AB3_26Nov21: You need to tell them everything and spoon-feed them.

These issues were brought up and discussed during the follow-up meeting, which, as explained in Chapter 6, was always held as close as possible to the lesson which had been observed. When the topic of using English during the Maltese lesson was brought up, the teachers showed a defeatist attitude, reporting that:

> IM_CD3_26Nov21*: Iva hekk jagħmlu għalxejn nispjega. Irrid ngħidlhom miljun darba l-istess ħaġa. Ma jafu jagħmlu xejn waħdehom.*
>
> IM_CD3_26Nov21: Yes that is what they do. It's useless explaining since I have to repeat a million times. They are not capable of anything on their own.
>
> IM_AB3_26Nov21*: Ma nafx kif din il-klassi marelli ġejjin minn familja Maltin ta u 4 għandi barranin. Imma bl-Ingliż jitkellmu u bil-Malti qishom m'huma jifhmu xejn. Bl-Ingliż inkellimhom biex jifhmu. Naf li ħażin imma ma nistax nagħmel mod ieħor. Impossibli.*
>
> IM_AB3_26Nov21: I don't know why in this class they have Maltese speaking backgrounds only 4 are foreigners, but they use English to communicate and in Maltese, it's as if they do not understand anything. I am using English so that they understand. I know it's not the right thing to do but I cannot do otherwise. It's impossible.

When examining the phenomenon of native speakers opting to use English over their native language, particularly in academic and professional contexts, it is essential to consider the multifaceted socio-linguistic, economic, and global factors that drive this preference. As Crystal (2003) points out, one of the most prominent reasons for the preference for English lies in its status as the global lingua franca. English has become the dominant language in international business, science, technology, and academia, offering access to vast knowledge, research, and networking opportunities. As Camilleri Grima (2013, p. 34) states, in Malta, 'The teacher switches from English to Maltese, and uses a mixed code, to make sure that the learners can make sense of the subject matter.' Until a few years ago, Maltese classes exhibited a high degree of homogeneity. Currently, children encounter a complex array of cultural diversity that had not been prevalent in Malta until recent years. The multilingual environment within the classroom influences language selection, indicative of an intention to engage with various cultural identities. In Malta, the language utilised by students coming from diverse countries of

origin is English. The utilisation of English by Maltese students for communication is influencing the prevalence of their native language within the educational environment from early years (Caruana, 2022). This phenomenon can be observed even internationally, in the rise of code-switching and the development of hybrid identities, where individuals seamlessly blend their native languages with English, reflecting global and local affiliations (Garrett, 2010).

As previously noted, while the research focused on fostering learner autonomy, it was essential to address other emerging issues, particularly those related to language use and the adaptations made in the classroom. These issues needed to be tackled during the meetings, since they influenced the teachers' motivation and affected the learners' ability and attitude towards the Maltese language and the assimilation of new knowledge. Consequently, in the early discussions, emphasis was also directed towards modifying instructional approaches to primarily enhance their language proficiency and subsequently cultivate skills for independent language use. In order for Maltese students to develop autonomy in their Maltese lessons, it is essential that they actively engage with their native language deliberately. According to Camilleri Grima (2013), it is essential to immerse learners who are not native to Malta in the language, and educators should strive to equip these students with sufficient proficiency to engage fully in all bilingual lessons. During the preliminary phases of this investigation, findings indicated that teachers in Grade 3 frequently reported a lack of motivation among students to engage in their efforts. Consequently, as discussed in Chapter 7 and elaborated upon in the subsequent Chapters, it was imperative to creatively implement the learning outcomes to address the challenge of students' motivation to engage in communication in Maltese.

Due to the above-mentioned predominant problem related to their lack of confidence to use Maltese, the approaches and modifications aimed at promoting learner autonomy among Grade 3 students were implemented distinctively from those utilised for Grade 4 students. Given the observed lack of confidence in language use among Grade 3 students during the initial data collection phase, it became essential for teachers to facilitate collaborative opportunities that would enable students to support one another as a cohesive unit, thereby fostering the confidence necessary for proficient language use. In alignment with enhanced collaborative practices, elaborated in Chapter 9, additional initiatives aimed at motivating students during Maltese lessons were deliberated and executed. As a researcher, I aimed to investigate whether implementing language development through modifications to classroom dynamics enhanced learner autonomy.

The following adaptations were made in the initial phases of the study. Further developments of the adaptations will be presented in the following chapters in Part 3.

i. The modifications concentrated on the educator's approach during the preliminary phases of the research. The instructional approach needs to transform into one which engages children through enjoyable activities and immersion in the language. The introduction of various initiatives aimed at enhancing motivation was presented, and these initiatives and adaptations to the teacher methodology persisted throughout the academic year. One of the initial principles I concentrated on was the ongoing utilisation of Maltese. The teacher was encouraged to demonstrate resilience throughout the Maltese lesson and to refrain from transitioning to English.

The teacher was instructed to adhere to Maltese as the medium of instruction, employing techniques such as paraphrasing, documenting key terms on the board, enhancing gestural communication, preparing visual prompts, and incorporating tangible objects into the learning process. This required additional preparation, a fact noted by the teachers involved. Technology implementation has successfully improved the extra challenges associated with organising visual content. Visual elements were displayed as required. The students expressed appreciation for this aspect, which consequently increased their motivation. ii. I engaged in discussions with the teachers regarding the necessity of implementing school-home initiatives to guarantee that the Maltese language is afforded a vital communicative function within the home environment. During the focus group discussion regarding the reluctance of children to borrow Maltese library books, it was proposed that educators should mandate the inclusion of a Maltese library book within the lending initiative. Furthermore, it was emphasised that teachers should engage students by linking enjoyable activities to borrowing these books. To enhance student motivation, initiatives must be characterised by innovation. Engaging activities focused on borrowing and interaction with books were implemented. Students were instructed to create an illustration of their preferred character, wear attire resembling one of the characters, post a photo or video on the Padlet, or perform a recitation in front of their peers. Evidence collected during the observations in January shows that learners showed an improved willingness to communicate using Maltese over the weeks.

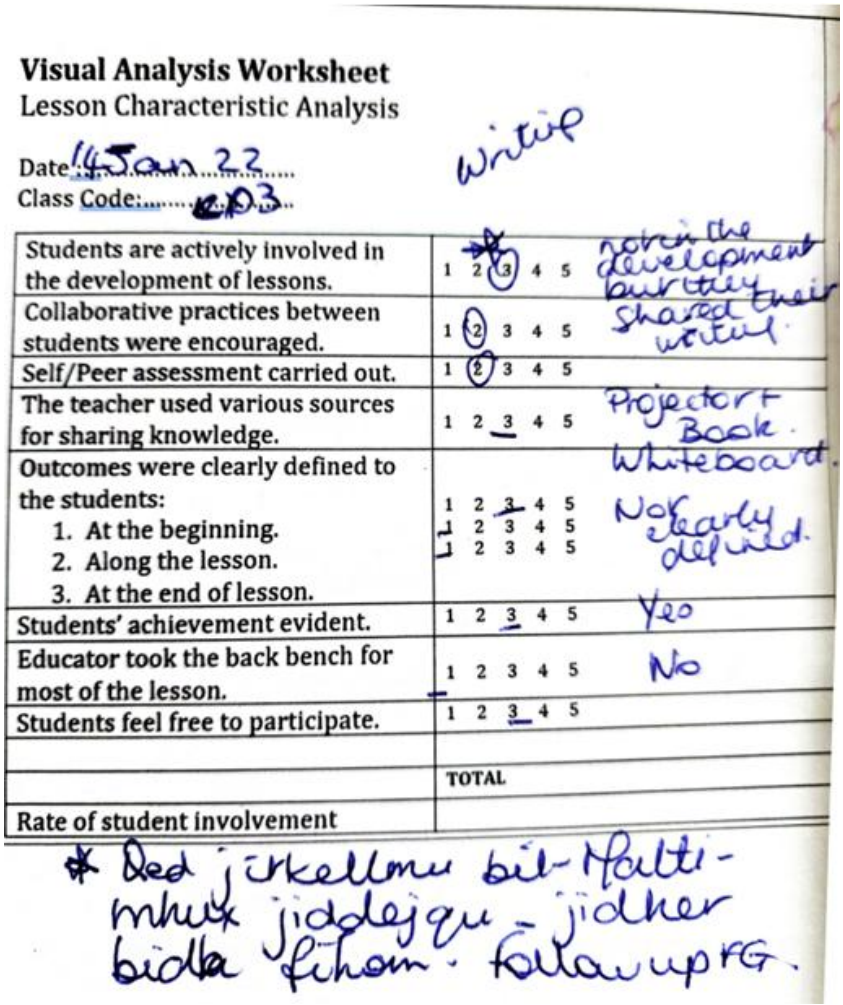
LOS_CD3_14thJanuary22: Students are more ready to use Maltese even when asking questions. They raise their hands more often when asked questions in Maltese. The teacher could assist more through concrete objects, not only visuals projected on the IWB. Objects could be labelled, and vocabulary could be learnt and put into context. To discuss during individual meeting.

During the individual meetings, teacher CD3 commented that:

IM_CD3_17thJanuary22: *Saru jipparteċipaw aktar u qed narahom jieħdu aktar gost. L-activities tal-library pero jista' jkun nibda nnaqqashom għax mhux dejjem ikolli ċans. Lilhom xorta ngħidlhom jagħmlulhom imma ma narawhomx fil-klassi. Il-ħin dejjem il-problema għax huma jieħdu gost jaraw lilhom infushom fuq l-iscreen.*

IM_CD3_17thJanuary22:They became more involved, and I can see them having more fun. I still tell them to do the library activities, but I may start to reduce them because I don't always have time. Most probably we will only see some or else I use them as the film to watch during food breaks. Time is always the issue because they enjoy seeing themselves on the screen.

The lesson observations and visual analysis sheets documented a vast improvement in the students' use of language and interactions between peers and the teacher. The time factor emerged as an issue, and the teacher utilised food breaks to show the films taken of the learners reviewing the books. This was motivational to the learners since, as the teacher noted, '*jieħdu gost jaraw lilhom infushom fuq l-iscreen'* 'they enjoy seeing themselves on screen.'



Visual Analysis Worksheet
Lesson Characteristic Analysis

Date: 14 Jan 22
Class Code: CD3

Students are actively involved in the development of lessons.	1 2 3 4 5	
Collaborative practices between students were encouraged.	1 2 3 4 5	
Self/Peer assessment carried out.	1 2 3 4 5	
The teacher used various sources for sharing knowledge.	1 2 3 4 5	Projector + Book. Whiteboard.
Outcomes were clearly defined to the students: 1. At the beginning. 2. Along the lesson. 3. At the end of lesson.	1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Not clearly defined.
Students' achievement evident.	1 2 3 4 5	Yes
Educator took the back bench for most of the lesson.	1 2 3 4 5	No
Students feel free to participate.	1 2 3 4 5	
	TOTAL	
Rate of student involvement		

Photo 8.5: VAS 14th January 2022

Visual Analysis Sheet (VAS) for the lesson held on 14 January 2022 with CD3 registered instances when '*Qed jitkellmu bil-Malti – mhux jiddejqu – jidher bidla fihom*' – they are using Maltese confidently, showing a change in attitude. This was followed up when meeting the teacher. The lesson observation sheet (LOS) for the same lesson also shows my reflections on the fact that :

LOS_CD3_14thJan22: There is hardly any use of English. One can still hear the odd word here and there, especially when speaking to non-Maltese. Good use of mini whiteboards.

Initiatives were also having a positive impact on the other Grade 3 class:

LOS_AB3_14thJan22: The point system is working. Girls are looking at it as part of a game. They are almost all on board. XXX is still a problem (ask XX about her). They all like the charade game.

IM_AB3_15thJan22: *Qed jieħdu gost għax qishom qed jilagħbu pero ddum iżjed. Inkun mejta biex naqbad u ngħidhielhom.*

IM_AB3_15thJan22: They are enjoying it as it has turned into a game, but it's taking longer. I will be dying to tell them.

During lesson observations, it was noted how Maltese students found alternative ways to communicate with non-Maltese students and students used non-verbal gestures to explain what they needed to say to their non-Maltese friends. Both the teachers and the students spoke to the foreign learners in Maltese while 'drawing on their mini whiteboard or using gestures,' (LOS_AB3_ 1st Dec2021) instead of switching to English. The use of the mini-whiteboards assisted and allowed non-verbal communication. These minor adaptations also nurtured independence and autonomy from the teacher. Non-Maltese students were included in group work and not secluded. Using English with non-Maltese speakers was no longer preferred because they now found it fun to explain. Points were given to the students for their efforts. Evidence will also show how the adaptations to class dynamics, described in more detail in the next chapter, led to higher motivation and interest, resulting in better attainment and use of Maltese and nurtured to develop learner autonomy skills further.

8.1.4 Technology

In addition to the issues discussed in the preceding sections, another dimension which required modifications in order for the teaching and learning processes to foster learner autonomy was the use of technology. This is elaborated in detail in Chapter 10. Grade 4 students were equipped with handheld devices as part of a government subsidy initiative. During the

preliminary stages of the case study, it was observed that these devices remained unused despite Grade 4 students carrying the tablets daily in their bags. During one of the meetings with the teacher, a discussion was held about why the tablets were never used. The explanations provided by the teacher were diverse. The inconsistent internet connectivity at the school was identified as the primary factor. Upon further investigation, it became evident that additional factors were at play. The time aspect once again surfaced as an impediment to the progression of alternative methodologies. Students exhibited delays in activating their tablets, often neglecting to charge them from home, which resulted in complications with the assigned tasks, and they also required excessive time to locate the necessary applications. The teacher believed she could not afford to lose so much time and did not understand the added value using the tablets could bring to her teaching. Convincing the teacher that the time used would be justified by the increased effectiveness of teaching and learning, as defined in Chapters 1 and 6, and by the importance of developing autonomy skills. The ensuing discussion focused on the preliminary adjustments required for the efficient administration of tablet utilisation. The measures implemented encompassed a number of logistical solutions. Firstly, the teacher was asked to remind all parents and guardians about the necessity of ensuring that the tablet was adequately charged. Additionally, learners were encouraged to activate their tablets during the break, particularly if the lesson was scheduled after the break or if they completed their prior lesson ahead of time. It was proposed that students who promptly place their tablets should assist those who require additional time. The learning support educator was asked to assist all students in this context. Chapter 10 will focus on how technology had an impact on the development of learner autonomy in class. It will examine additional modifications related to the teaching and learning processes that were implemented in the application of technology to facilitate learner autonomy.

Every classroom in the school where the case study was being held, is equipped with interactive whiteboards and internet access. In the preliminary phases of the case study, data gathered from lesson observations in Grade 3 and Grade 4 classrooms indicated that the interactive whiteboard was predominantly utilised for projection functions. The interactive whiteboard features, including dragging capabilities, graphic utilisation, and colour-coded writing, were not employed. Students were prohibited from using the interactive pens and writing on the IWB since the teachers feared that the learners would drop the pen, which meant a cost to fix it or purchase a new pen.

The focus group conducted in December (schedule in Section 6.3.1, Table 6.2) addressed the necessity of diversifying the application of the IWB. Educators needed to explore

strategies to integrate the projection with alternative instructional approaches. As will be explained in more detail in Chapter 10, more than projection is necessary for effective teaching and learning practices. Observations showed how relying solely on projection was, at times, leading to passive learning. It was noted in three observation field notes that students were attentively watching and listening without actively being engaged. It is essential for educators to integrate diverse instructional strategies to foster student engagement, thereby improving the overall efficacy of the teaching and learning experience. Consequently, conversations took place regarding the scheduling of additional practical activities and the implementation of collaborative work to foster active engagement and interaction, thereby improving comprehension and retention of knowledge. Educators expressed that further training in technology utilisation would have enhanced their confidence in employing this equipment proficiently .

8.1.5 Planning

Planning is an essential element in teaching and professional education practice. It functions as a method for structuring educational material while organising instructional content. Planning should also act as a reflective tool that assists the teacher in enhancing both teaching efficacy and student learning outcomes. Given the aim of this research, planning also needs to focus on all these aspects whilst promoting learner autonomy. Within the profession, planning extends beyond preparing daily lesson plans; it should encompass long-term curriculum development, alignment with learning objectives, adaptation to diverse learner needs, and proactively addressing potential challenges that may arise in the classroom.

In my role as participant observer researcher, I asked the teacher participants to share their schemes of work. Grade 3 teachers had one scheme of work, which both teachers used. To share the workload of planning all the schemes of work for all the subjects taught in primary classes, it was common practice that one teacher designed the schemes and then shared them. Tables 8.1 and 8.2 present excerpts from the schemes of work for Grade 3 and Grade 4.

Week 16 *8 ta'Jannar - 12 ta' Jannar* /	1	Smigħ	Dawra mad-dinja (Referenza għas-sillabu 3.1.1)	Tikka Malti 3A Pgs. 46, 47
	2	Grammatika	In-nom	Tikka Malti 3A Pg. 48. In-Nom ppt http://skola.edu.mt/primaryresources/res4/M4LSinnomi.pps
	3	Taħdit	Ikel Malti (Referenza għas-sillabu 3.1.2)	Tikka Malti 3A Pg. 51
	4	Qari		
Week 17 ***15 ta'Jannar - 19 ta'Jannar***	1	Smigħ	*Sa Spanja*	Tikka Malti 3A Pg. 52

Table 8.1 Excerpt from the Scheme of Work prior to study, Grade 3, split into Week number, topic and homework allocated, and reference to the book and page covered.

Ġimgħa 4-8 ta' Ottubru	*Referenza għas-sillabu*	*Topik*	*Xogħol għad-Dar*
	Grammatika: - L-alfabett u l-Ordni alfabetika - Il- konsonanti b jew p - il-Konsonanti f jew v - il-Konsonanti s jew ż Komprensjoni: - Is-Saħħara Lavanja Kitba u Taħdit: Assessjar Kontinwu + Nikteb Sentenzi u Nistaqsi Mistoqsijiet Qari: Tikka Qari	Grammatika: - L-ordni tal-alfabett paġni 6-8 - Malti Primarja Il-5 Tarġa – paġni 10 – 15 - Malti F (4A) paġni 1-7 - Malti Primarja Il-5 Tarġa paġni 16-17 Avventura Abbord (Kapitlu 1)	- Malti Taħriġ (4) paġni 5-8 - Malti Taħriġ (4) paġni 9-12

Table 8.2 Excerpt from Scheme of work prior to study Grade 4 split into the dates for the Week planned, reference to syllabus, topic and reference to page covered, and homework allocated.

The outlined schemes of work in Tables 8.1 and 8.2 delineate the planning undertaken for each lesson throughout the week, systematically arranged to address the various language skills that require enhancement. The evidence shows that the planning showed a significant reliance on the textbook and the class booklet. The lessons were designed to encompass material referenced in the syllabus, alongside the classwork and homework scheduled for assignment.

In Chapter 14, the discussion chapter, the catalytic effects of the modifications made to the teachers' methodology during this case study will be analysed. Through the evaluation of learner autonomy development and the efficacy of pedagogical practices, this analysis will determine the extent to which these factors have influenced the enhancement of teaching and learning effectiveness as previously defined, alongside promoting student manifestations of autonomy in learning. This will provide data which will be used to propose a template (refer to Appendix 4) for a scheme of work that, together with the other tools designed for this research (Chapter 6 and Appendix 4), teachers can use in their planning processes when they aim at fostering learner autonomy in their teaching practices.

8.2 Conclusion

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the issues that arose from the data gathered during the preliminary stages of the case study. These results are significant as they influence the direction and progression of this research. This chapter also presents an overview of the importance of meetings and observations for teachers to enhance their understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Simultaneously, it was paramount to establish a robust professional rapport with the educators through attentive consideration of their concerns. Addressing emerging issues and integrating them into the research action plan was imperative at this stage of the investigation. The evolution of the participants' perspectives was facilitated by the iterative cyclical framework of this study, as detailed in Section 6.3, enabling teachers to enact initiatives and recommendations following the discourse held during meetings. The modifications observed in the case study stem from this iterative design process.

The subsequent chapters concentrate on the implementation phases of the empirical research. With reference to the pedagogical principles derived from the learning theories framework outlined in Part 1 and illustrated in Figure 2.6, the chapters will focus on each principle and evaluate its contribution to fostering learner autonomy and enhancing the efficacy of teaching and learning. Using the LAS and TLES (detailed in Chapter 6) designed for this

research, the following chapter will examine collaborative tasks and how adapting the teachers' methodology promotes learner autonomy.

CHAPTER 9

USING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

9.0 Introduction

A common misconception among educators is that learners do not need to collaborate with others to be autonomous and that interacting does not involve or foster learners' learning autonomy (Carson, 2010). Collaborative learning strategies in diverse classrooms foster the development of autonomy through peer interactions (Dewaele et al., 2023). This chapter will present evidence which focuses on the notion that the learners' independence as social beings is consistently counterbalanced by their dependence (Little, 1994), suggesting that our fundamental state is one of interdependence (Ivone and Jacobs, 2022).

Through modifications made to the teacher methodology, evidence will assess if and how student-student interaction impacted and supported students' success, enjoyment in learning and whether interaction led to developing learner autonomy. In line with answering RQ2, the analysis will focus on the modifications made to the teaching strategies that promote collaboration and interaction and their impact on learners' autonomy. Besides adaptations made to the teachers' communication dynamics with the learners, such as how to answer questions (elaborated in Chapter 13), in line with answering RQ1, evidence will analyse whether there is a causal relationship between collaborative practices and the nurturing and development of learner autonomy and its impact on increasing teaching and learning effectiveness.

As explained in Chapter 6, the photographic evidence was systematically organised according to predefined thematic criteria aligned with the study's pedagogical priorities. This chapter provides photographic evidence depicting the types of collaborative involvement witnessed throughout the case study's teaching and learning process. The chosen photos are intended to illustrate learners collaboratively engaging in tasks, co-creating textual content, making collective decisions, and assisting each other through organised peer interaction. These photos emphasise the social and conversational aspects of learning and illustrate how

collaborative frameworks facilitated active engagement and shared understanding. An analysis is presented of whether these dynamics led to an increase in learner autonomy.

The photos presented in this chapter were included if they demonstrated:

- Peer interaction aimed at completing a shared goal or solving a joint problem.
- Co-constructed outputs, such as collaborative writing or group project drafts.
- Collective decision-making, negotiation, or turn-taking.
- Visible social learning behaviours, including supporting peers, explaining thinking, or distributing roles.

As explained in Chapter 6, the following ticking list was designed as an evaluatory tool for this research. The same scale is used throughout the research for the adaptations made and presented in the subsequent chapters in Part 3 of this case study. Throughout this chapter and subsequent chapters presenting data, reference will be made to the achievement or manifestation of the characteristics (highlighted in peach and numbered 1 to 10) and traits (highlighted in green, numbered 11 to 16). Literature explained in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2, considers these attributes manifested by students as target learner autonomy skills. This study will evaluate the manifestations after adaptations are made to the teaching methodology and class dynamics. The ticks show that the characteristic or trait was manifested, whereas if not evident throughout, it is marked as n.e.. The tick list filled in at the end of each lesson observation was discussed with the teachers during the individual meetings held after the observation.

1. Learning by doing	
2. Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	
3. The learner is responsible for their own learning by setting their own goals	
4. Learners are responsible for their own learning through discovering, identifying, and using own resources for learning	
5. Learners helping each other	
6. Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	
7. Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	
8. Learners are responsible for their own learning by planning their own programmes with students free to use material at any time	
9. Value of individuality	
10. Learners discover meaning for themselves	

Whilst working and presenting the tasks, learners manifested the following traits:

11. Able to co-operate with others	
12. Learning to learn	
13. Independent and individual study	
14. Better ability to deal with problems	
15. Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	
16. Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	

Table 9.1 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS)

9.1 Data analysis

9.1.1 Shift to a Multi-Dimensional Class

Considering the students' varied learning styles and capabilities in learning a language, as described in Chapter 8, teachers needed to refrain from concentrating on a singular pedagogical method. As described in Chapter 8, the preliminary phases of this investigation experienced unidirectional communication. The teacher spoke throughout most of the lesson in the three classes, while the learners attentively listened. The teacher provided examples that the pupils merely reproduced into their copybooks or booklets, resulting in consecutive filled

pages. The significance of students' engagement in lesson content was overlooked, and a uniform methodology was applied to all pupils. Observations revealed that, in addition to the absence of collaborative learning opportunities, one factor impeding engagement was ‘ in both grades, feedback given to the students was given in the form of providing answers verbally and in writing on the board for the students to copy’ (LOS_AB3_1st Dec21).

This method was consistently employed in both grades, with a greater prevalence in Grade 3 groups. This was addressed with the teachers individually following lesson observations and during the subsequent focus group. The first adaptations concentrated on fostering collaboration among students and sought to transform the unidirectional classroom dynamics into a circular format (as illustrated in diagram 9.1).

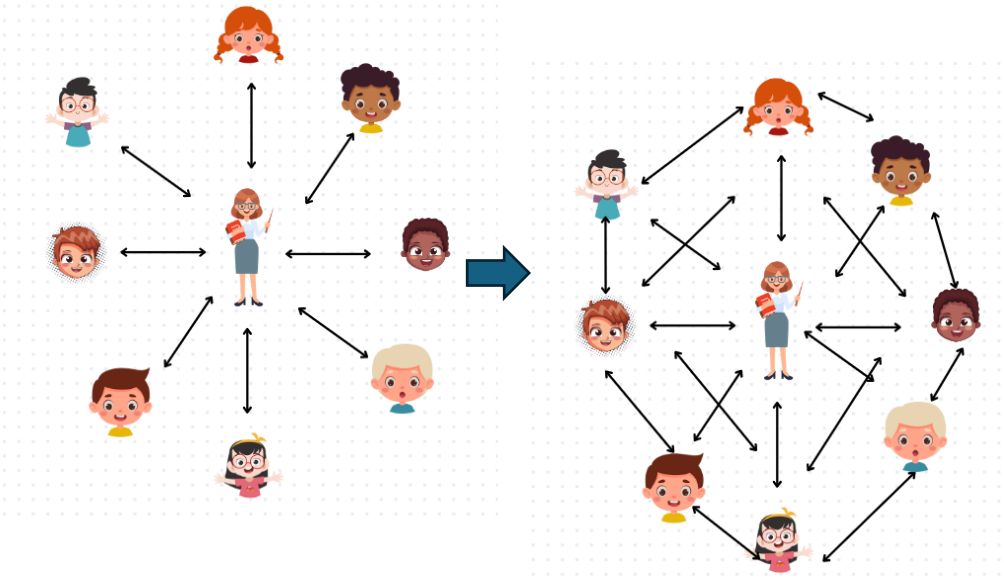


Figure 9.1 Introducing multi-directional communication paths.

The objective was to transition from a unidirectional linear form of communication to one that fosters interaction, discussion, and active participation among all members of the class community.



Photo 9.1: Students on separate desks and facing the teacher, listening to the teacher explaining



Photo 9.2: One-dimensional student-teacher interactions



Photo 9.3: Student-student interactions improved by moving chairs

Relocating pupils resulted in modifications to the group dynamics. The initial one-dimensional contact evolved into a dynamic exchange characterised by idea sharing and collaboration among learners. The transition to a more collaborative learning approach was discussed with the educators during focus groups. Before incorporating collaboration into the technique, educators were informed that when implementing collaborative projects, it was crucial to acknowledge that not all students would desire to work with a partner. Not all pupils may be prepared for or recognise the advantages of cooperative learning. This aspect is elaborated upon in this chapter through testimonials gathered from students (Section 9.1.2 - Collaborative Writing), illustrating how the young learners perceived the collaborative writing process as class dynamics shifted towards greater collaboration. These testimonials illustrate the students' early responses, their evolving sentiments, and their motivation for collaborative writing activities. Methods for implementing this in their pedagogical methods were examined. A template for collaborative writing is presented in Appendix 4. Collaborative techniques and procedures were progressively included in teachers' preparation and integrated into activities that engaged students in peer collaboration. This led ‘to enhanced student-to-student interaction whilst decreasing the one-to-one teacher-student interaction’ (LOS_AB3_13thJan22).



Figure 9.2 Change in class dynamics

Like building blocks, illustrated in Figure 9.2, initiatives were introduced, implemented, evaluated, and tweaked. Then, other initiatives were introduced, implemented, evaluated, and tweaked. Collaboration also took a cyclic design. Group dynamics started introducing the students to new skills, whilst new learning outcomes were introduced through the introduction of new tasks. As previously stated, evidence gathered from lesson observations at the outset of the research indicated that the teaching approach was predominantly one-dimensional. The

teachers' role in modifying instructional methods was crucial in fostering student engagement, interaction, and autonomy. The attributes associated with cultivating learner autonomy during observations were recorded on the Learner Autonomy Scale checklist (Table 9.1), which, as explained in preceding chapters, was created to assess the characteristics and traits associated with learner autonomy. The evidence presented is linked to the different characteristics and traits as numbered on the checklist.

The process of collaborative practices, explained in detail subsequently, developed chronologically as follows:

1. Initially, pair work was introduced and practised by both Grade 3 and Grade 4 students.
2. Secondly, group work, comprising no more than four students, commenced in both Grade 3 and Grade 4.
3. Self-assessment through checklists was adopted in Grade 4, even through pair work. Chapter 10 will provide a comprehensive explanation of self-assessment strategies. Based on multiple variables thoroughly examined in Chapter 10, it is concluded that Grade 3 students did not achieve this aim efficiently.
4. Collaborative or paired activities focused on generating original content based on student-selected objectives. This chapter and Chapter 12 elucidate this for both grades.

Initially, activities were structured for execution in pairs, progressively enhancing collaboration through diverse methodologies as detailed below. Upon the initiation of enhanced learner collaboration by teachers, students received explicit directives on cooperative engagement, encompassing attentive listening to their partners and providing constructive feedback. Teachers gave clear instructions: *Isimgħu lil xulxin* – Listen to each other. When working in pairs, both students were given equal importance. The content discussed by the students was written on paper or by using mini whiteboards, as shown in the photos in the following sections.

9.1.2 Collaborative writing

An important adaptation addressed throughout the Maltese lessons was an approach that facilitates the exchange of ideas among peers and enhances individual language proficiency through increased use. One way of achieving this was through collaborative writing. This enhances learners' verbal and written language proficiency while encouraging student participation and autonomy. This new way of teaching and learning for the pupils was especially crucial to use with the Grade 3 students due to the observed low utilisation of

the Maltese language observed at the start of this study. Considering that learners previously exhibited a lack of confidence in language usage, it was essential for both students and teachers to actively employ Maltese in their classes and activities, thereby fostering the use of the language among Maltese students, whilst increased exposure to the language facilitated the acquisition of Maltese for non-Maltese students.

The concept of collaborative writing used with both grades, was broken down into steps, with teamwork as the foundation of each decision. A plan for collaborative writing is presented in the Resource Pack in Appendix 4. Whether in pairs or larger groups of no more than four or five, each individual needed to interact by making suggestions and proposing ideas, leading to the generation of writing. Initially, the writing tasks involved the production of sentences. Over time, these tasks became more complex. Students were asked to discuss what was being written during the discussion process. The activity consisted of several consecutive steps, each logically building on the previous one. The writing process included drafting and re-drafting until the final product was presented to the rest of the class for further evaluation. The use of the mini whiteboard at this drafting stage became prevalent as all students used it as a tool. Students showed competence writing down their ideas, discussing them, and re-drafting until they presented their final version. Evidence presented in Chapter 12 in Section Grade 4 and Grade 3 project shows how such tools gave the students more autonomy from the teacher. During the observation of the project work, which took a month of activities and lessons, field notes also recorded the progress made by the students when teacher CD3 was observed that '*sentences turned into paragraphs, eventually leading to longer writing by the end of the year'* (IM_CD3_ May22). The progress made by the learners in their writing skills can also be observed in the photos presented as evidence in Chapter 12.

This cooperative language acquisition approach was founded on short- and medium-length tasks. For both grades, a long project, elaborated upon in Chapter 12, which was implemented at the end of the case study, was founded on a synthesis of skills achieved during the months.

The Grade 3 and Grade 4 pupils were given identical opportunities, albeit via distinct activities, as demonstrated by the subsequent evidence. Photographs 9.11, 9.12 and 9.13 illustrate how during the initial stages, Grade 3 pupils engaged in particular activities, including composing words pertaining to 'Interjezzjonijiet' (Interjections). Collaborative writing was employed in several tasks with differing levels of complexity. During the initial phases, sentences were finalised by the conclusion of a lesson. The long project, detailed in

Chapter 12, encompassing events beyond the school grounds, was scheduled over a four-week period.

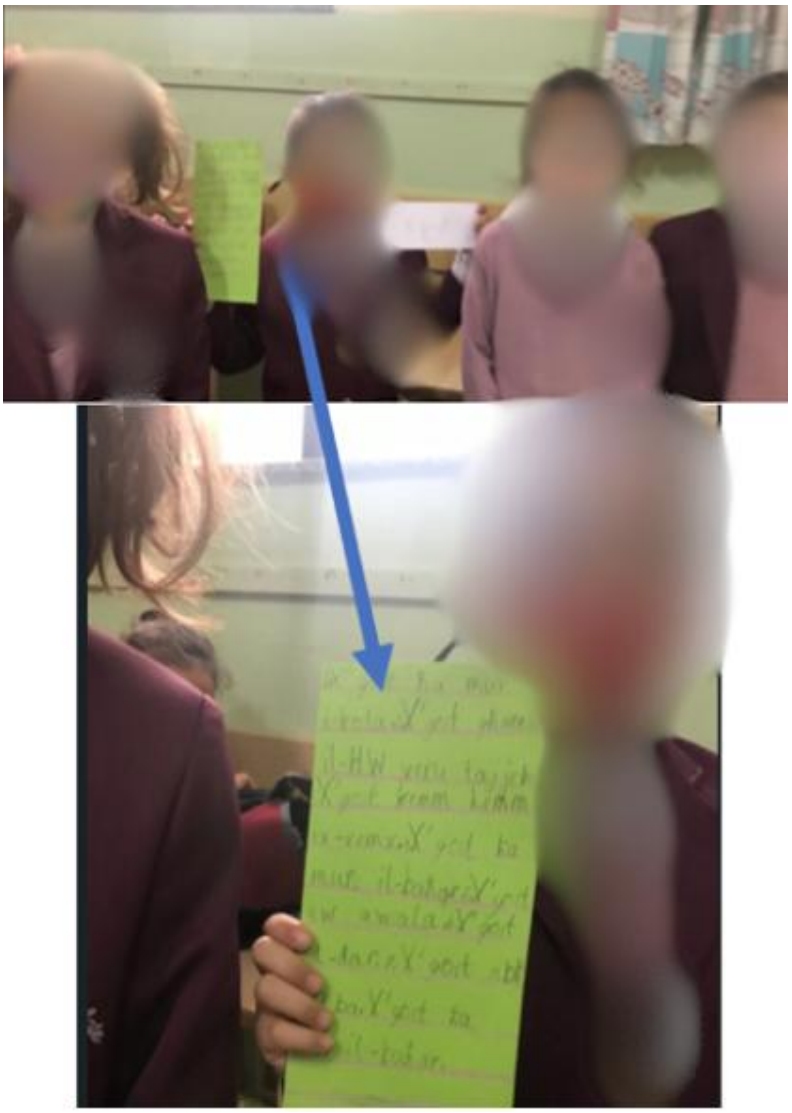
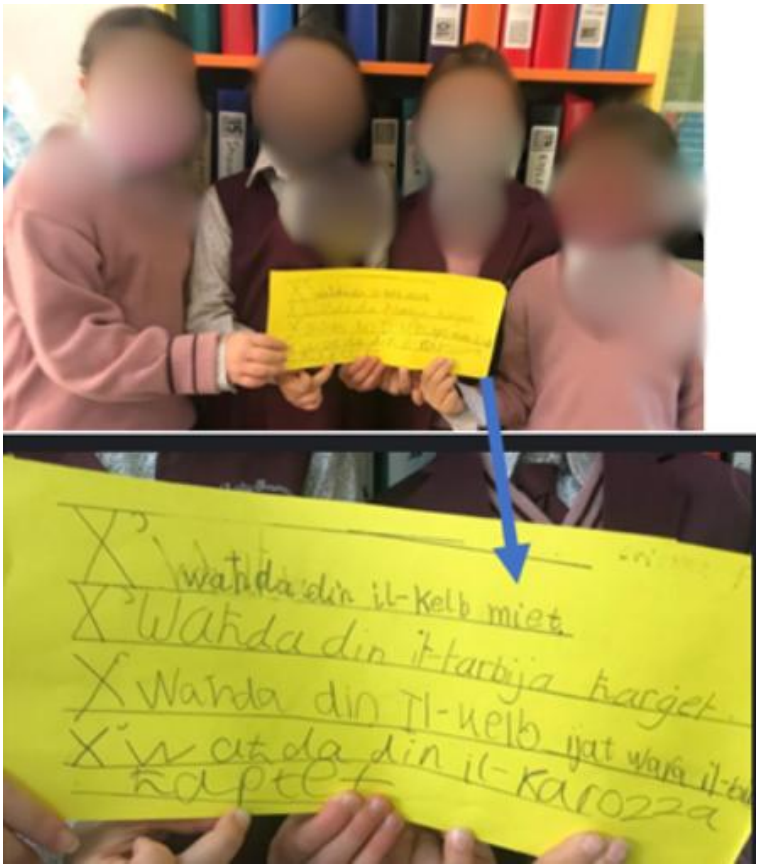


Photo 9.4 shows 4 Grade 3 students (Photo 9.5 zoomed to display work) proudly showing off their sentences on interjection "What Fun!" (X’gost !).



Photos 9.6 and 9.7 show another group of 4 Grade 3 students presenting their sentences (zoomed in) using the interjection'X'Waħda din!'(Ooh!)

Photos 9.4 to 9.7, taken during a lesson observation held on 1st December 2021 shows one of the first activities whereby the teacher adapted her teaching method and started introducing the concept of collaboration. Grade 3 students were asked to write sentences and read and act them out in front of the rest of the class. It is interesting to note that non-Maltese students were placed in groups with Maltese students, and they participated by trying to read the words aloud and even acting out the sentences as dialogues in front of their peers. Observation of speech fluency recorded a more confident approach to communicating to an audience in pronunciation, cohesion, and turn-taking strategies.



Photo 9.8: Grade 3 student using mini whiteboard. This photo shows that students were able to brainstorm and use the mini white. This shows evidence of language acquisition in relation to the speaking and writing learning outcomes.

In the subsequent phase of collaborative practices, the teacher augmented the group size, designating distinct roles and responsibilities to each participant. Observations showed that collaborative dynamics (photo 9.9) were not only task-oriented but also showed signs of 'peer support, learning from each other and improved listening techniques. While working together, students were all expected to participate equally and take ownership of their learning' (LOS_AB3_16thFeb22). Photos 9.9 and 9.10 show students in a group. All students had different roles. The triangulated data set (lesson observation sheet field notes and photographic evidence reveal consistent advancement across oral and literacy domains. This indicates holistic language development, with improved patterns of language use across speaking, listening and writing tasks. This points to an integrated growth in overall linguistic proficiency.



Photo 9.9: Collaborative dynamics showed peer support

Activities were organised such that each student participant in a group was assigned distinct roles, ensuring that no member could remain passive or disengaged. This aligned with characteristics 1, 2, 6, and 10, as well as features 11 and 16. Each group was required to complete assignments and submit the results to the entire class.



Photo 9.10: Students in a group with different roles

Evidence shows that collaborative practices enhanced the effectiveness of the classroom dynamics and showed a growth in learner autonomy. This aspect was related to characteristics 1, 5 and trait 11 on the Learner Autonomy Scale checklist (Table 9.1). The following excerpt shows how evident the shift was when, during the lesson observation held in January with Grade 3 students, I recorded that

> 'Student engagement is considered high, and there is an evident increase in student motivation and interest. Interestingly, the increased interest led to increased learner autonomy since learners took the initiative and even discussed independently from their teacher; learners became responsible for their learning through discovering and identifying, whilst using their resources for learning.' (LOS_AB3_ 17thJan22) .

This specific adaptation emphasised assigning roles to each student, resulting in achieving the targeted language skill, enhanced efficacy of the teaching and learning processes, assessed at the conclusion of this section, and fostering the learners' autonomy. Students demonstrated significant advancement in language usage and, via the process, indicated that they achieved the objectives established for that lesson. Observations recorded that the students 'showed motivation in learning to learn and work was produced with minimal input from the teacher' (LOS_AB3_ 17thJan22). Students were observed to be more

ready to take risks, take the initiative in their learning (related to trait 13 and characteristic 10), discuss, jot down notes and produce work with pride (related to characteristics 5,7 and traits 14 and 16). The teachers were observed going around the groups, listening, and responding as needed. Instead of taking centre stage, the teachers took the guiding role. This led to a classroom climate which valued individuality (characteristic 9).

It is important to note that once the collaborative practice led to the expected outcomes, students were then asked to work individually to show their learning attainment through writing (photo 9.8). This was related to characteristics 1, 3, 7, 10, and 13. Only in this way could one gauge the level of learner autonomy achieved and whether this led to teaching and learning effectiveness.



Photo 9.11 shows a student eliciting information from the information written on the mini whiteboard after the group activity.

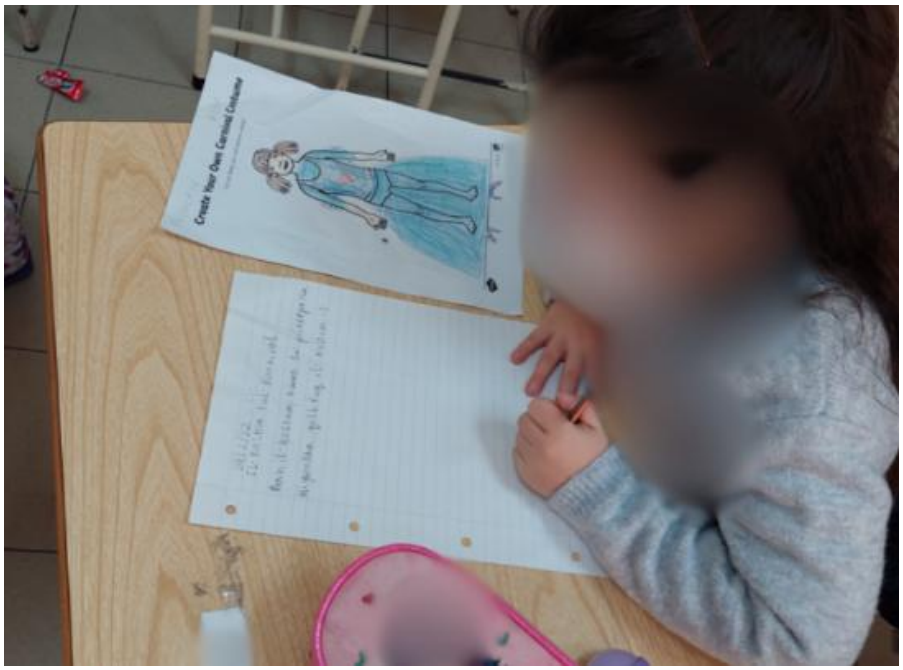


Photo 9.12: Student working individually. Individual work is important to ensure the learning outcome is attained by the students

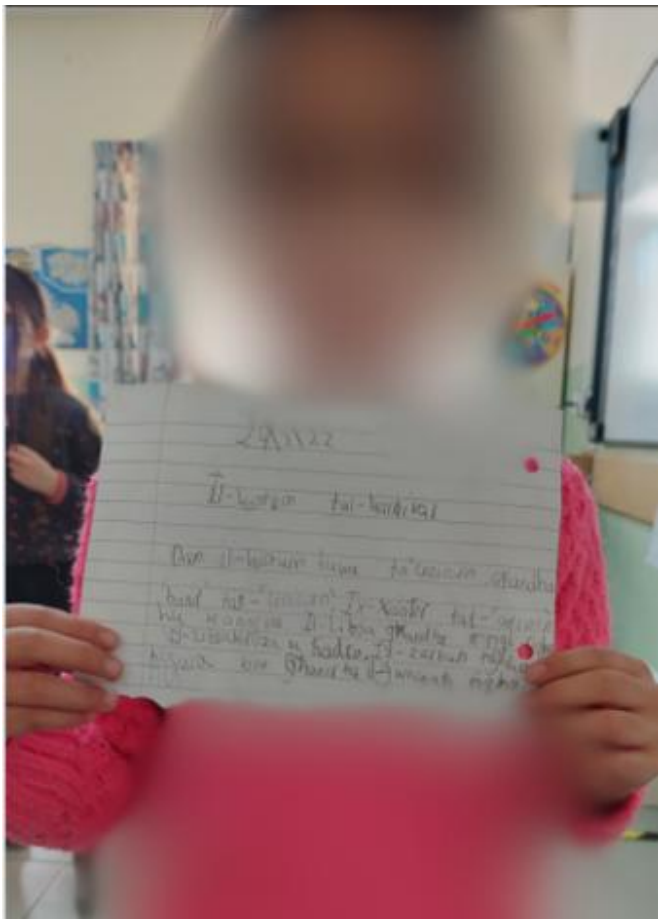


Photo 9.13: Following group work, a student proudly stands before the class and speaks about her work. This achieved language acquisition targeting speaking, listening and writing is another effective way of evaluating the learners' autonomy and learning.

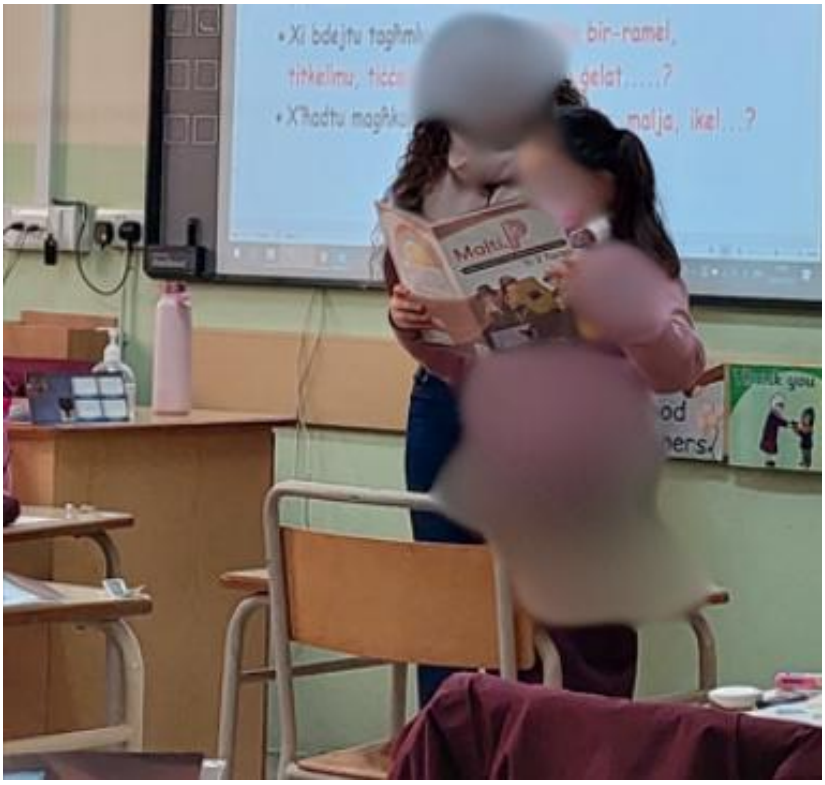


Photo 9.14: A student, represents her group and reads out to the class from the front. She is replacing the teacher, who is only there to guide and observe.

The triangulated data set (lesson observation sheet field notes, and photographic evidence reveals evidence of language acquisition across oral and literacy domains. The improved patterns of language use across reading, listening and writing tasks also led to the manifestation of the following learner autonomy characteristics and traits. The increased accountability from the learners when presenting the work produced in class related to characteristics 1,9,10, and traits 13 and 15 in table 9.1. Standing before peers and sharing work became more common and accepted by the students, leading to more ownership and autonomy. By working as a group and then working individually, learners discover meaning for themselves and do not depend on the teacher (characteristic 10, Table 9.1). The following evidence, presented as excerpts from testimonials from students and teachers, shows how the process took time to be accepted. The evidence below shows the challenges teachers face when adopting this methodology, especially when the teacher does not have an assistant to assist with the diverse needs of the students. Evidence collected also shows that through collaborative practices and increased presentations, the teachers felt that the students

developed autonomy skills, which could also be transferred to other subjects (related to characteristics 2,5,7 and 9 in Table 9.1), as both the pupils and the teachers explain. Photographs and corresponding interview quotations, presented as triangulated evidence, provide insight into the reasoning processes that contributed to enhanced language learning and the achievement of learner autonomy skills.

> *Std 6_Gr3_13Feb22: Nistħi naqra imma nieħu gost meta naqra quddiem l-oħrajn għax inkun proud.*
>
> Std 6_Gr3_13Feb22: I will be a bit shy, but I enjoy reading in front of my friends as it makes me proud.
>
> *IM_AB3_Dec21: Trid tippjana kollox sa l-inqas dettall għax anke kif joqogħdu flimkien, ir-roles bl-instructions, u trid toqgħod iddur tara li qegħdin on track mingħajr ma tgħidilhom wisq. Sakemm nidra.*
>
> *IM_AB3_Dec21*: One needs to plan everything, step by step, how they are sitting together, their roles with instructions and you need to go round and see that they are on the right track without telling them too much. Until I get used to the system.
>
> *IM_AB4_Dec21: L-istructure qed tgħinnhom. Pass pass u jaslu u li jistgħu jitkellmu bejniethom tgħinhom ukoll. Imbagħad jagħmlu x-xogħol waħedhom għax ma nkunx naf x'jafu waħedhom.*
>
> *IM_AB4_Dec21:* The structure is helping them. Step by step they attain the target and the fact that they can discuss between them helps. However it is important that they also work individually as I need to know what they learnt.
>
> *AnonTeacher_Questionnaire_June: Drawha s-sistema. Sirt nużaha anke f'suġġetti oħra. Ngħidlhom group work, iduru u jafu x'se jagħmlu u saru vera jtellgħu xogħol. Ikun hemm dawk li jdumu ftit imma to be honest xorta jaslu bil-mod il-mod u jaslu. Il-fatt li m'għandix LSE ma tgħinx għax kollox jien irrid nieħu ħsieb u għandi tfal bl-istatement u ma tawhomx. Dawk irrid ngħinhom aktar u meta npoġġihom ma' studenti li jmexxu jgħinuhom.*
>
> *AnonTeacher_Questionnaire_June*: They got used to the system. I am using it in other subjects, too. I tell them group work; they go around, know what they need to do, and work hard. They are those few students who still take a long to settle into their task, but to be honest, they get there eventually, too. The fact that I have not yet been assigned an LSE, notwithstanding that there are statemented(*) students, does not help. I need to assist those more, and when I assign them to a group with an above-average student, the student assists them.
>
> *(*) In Malta, the term statemented students refers to students who have been diagnosed with a learning difficulty following testing conducted by an educational psychologist. Students are then placed on a waiting list to be reviewed by a Student Services panel and allocated the assistance of a Learning Support Educator.*

The above quotations were collected from field notes taken during the lesson observations, transcripts from the anonymous questionnaire and field notes taken after the

lesson during the teacher's meeting. The student's statement shows that contrary to the students' attitude at the beginning of the research, collaborative tasks and taking ownership of the work produced, and presenting it to the rest of the class, led to a feeling of achievement, which also led to motivation and added interest (characteristics 3 and 4 in Table 9.1). The student states she is proud of her work and enjoys sharing it with her peers, which shows that trait 2 in the checklist was achieved since the students felt that the class environment was safe, warm, accepting, respectful, and permissive. The teacher's testimonials show a clear shift in mindset and teaching philosophy.

Evidence collected in December 2021 shows that teacher AB3 is concerned with the planning, about how she will cope with ensuring that all learners are engaged and how she will manage to go around the learners whilst ensuring that all the students are engaged and fulfilling their duties. Teacher AB3 still feels that she needs to take full responsibility for what happens in class, which undermines the fact that students can have a role in class dynamics. In contrast, in June, the teacher claimed in the anonymous questionnaire that the system is effective and she feels that the pupils adapted to it even through simple instructions. As explained in Chapter 2, in line with Vygostky's MKO, knowledge should become an integral part of the class pedagogy and educator's methodology (Moll, 2014). In this way, students are no longer defined by who they are within the classroom walls and boundaries but are understood as persons with a solid social life as their background (related to characteristics 2,5,7 and 9 in Table 9.1). This teacher now feels that the learners got used to working with their peers collaboratively and independently, which she describes as 'reciprocal instruction' (Gauvin, 2020) (related to characteristic 5 in Table 9.1). As explained in Chapter 2, learners benefit from participating in a collaborative classroom arrangement. Difficulties with addressing the class's needs and the statemented students, (explained above, refer to *) still do come up since the teacher knows the small number of statemented students need more assistance than she can give. In such cases, higher-abled students can assist their peers, and relieve the teacher, who can, in the meantime, assist the most needy. This would lead to the development of characteristics 5 and 7 in Table 9.1, which focuses on students assisting each other. Consequently, evidence indicates her intention to engage students and empower them to assume responsibility for their learning, fostering collaboration among peers autonomously, devoid of extrinsic rewards, and emphasising learning for its intrinsic value. This aligns with characteristic 7.

Despite the independent characteristics encouraged by the educator and exhibited by the students, the educator establishes learning objectives. Characteristics 3 and 7, which

emphasise learners' capacity to establish goals and devise their programs, were not attained at this stage. Teachers were observed modifying tasks to ensure they were achievable for learners while providing assistance as necessary. This aligns with Vygotsky's scaffolding process described in Chapter 2, wherein the educator progressively diminishes support as the learner acquires greater proficiency. This method is particularly pertinent to Vygotsky's emphasis on developing programmes that address the educational requirements of learners.

The following ticking reflects the above-mentioned targets. This was discussed with the teachers during the individual meetings held after the lesson was observed.

1. Learning by doing	✓
2. Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	✓
3. The learner is responsible for their own learning by setting their own goals	n.e.
4. Learners are responsible for their own learning through discovering, identifying, and using own resources for learning	✓
5. Learners helping each other	✓
6. Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	✓
7. Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	✓
8. Learners are responsible for their own learning by planning their own programmes with students free to use material at any time	n.e.
9. Value of individuality	✓
10. Learners discover meaning for themselves	✓

Whilst working and presenting the tasks, learners manifested the following traits:

11. Able to co-operate with others	✓
12. Learning to learn	✓
13. Independent and individual study	✓
14. Better ability to deal with problems	✓
15. Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	✓
16. Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	✓

Table 9.1.1 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) Collaborative tasks1

To address both research questions, it was essential to analyse whether the augmented learner autonomy resulted in enhanced teaching and learning efficacy and the mechanisms behind this phenomenon. The Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale (TLES), detailed in the preceding chapter and specifically developed for this research, emphasises teaching and learning efficacy. Upon evaluating the indicators of learner autonomy, I subsequently employed the scale to examine the extent to which the alterations described in this chapter contributed to improved teaching and learner efficacy. Table 9.2 delineates my analysis of the degree to which collaborative tasks contributed to improved efficacy in teaching and learning, as measured by the scale. As detailed in Chapter 6, this list was built from elicited targets from the literature review. Analogous to the data gathered in the LAS, the TLES was likewise presented to the teachers during the post-observation focus group 2. This dissemination of information primarily sought to analyse observations and identify potential enhancements.

The following was filled in, in view of the adaptations made through the increase of collaboration and the change in class dynamics mentioned earlier in this chapter.

TL1. There is clarity of presentation suitable for the students' level of attainment.	The activities planned and the content presentation were suitable for the students in this course.
TL2. The content to be covered is clearly outlined.	Targets were set based on which learning outcomes would be attained by the end of a learning experience.
TL3. Adaptations and learning environments created were conducive to the development of all students.	This was evident through the photos and transcripts presented in this chapter.
TL4. There is an effective use of group activities and paired work.	This was evident through the photos and transcripts presented.
TL5. The use of prompts and questions is effective.	Questioning techniques improved, and questions were planned and used as prompts. Chapter 11 further develops this aspect.
TL6. There is an opportunity to learn through various learning initiatives.	This was made evident through the use of the different activities planned.

TL7. The quantity of content presented and the instruction pace are suitable for the students' attainment.	Teachers met this target through the use of different methods of instruction. The pace was such that it targeted the majority of students. The students who struggled were placed with the other students for group work, and they showed that they managed to reach the targets set verbally. Their difficulties were more evident when they needed to write. Here, the teacher presented less complex tasks.
TL8. Students showed evident progress and attainment of outcomes.	This was made evident through the photos.
TL9. Students show motivation and interest in learning to learn.	All students were motivated to participate and learn.
TL10. Students' attainment of outcomes.	Outcomes set were achieved.
TL11. The Retention of the assimilation of knowledge is evident among students.	Not all students retained the new knowledge obtained through collaborative tasks. Evidence collected during the observations shows that when work was presented individually, most students retained the new knowledge assimilated during the activities. In contrast, a few students still needed assistance when working individually.

Table 9.1.2: Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale(TLES)_Collaboration

The above manifestations show increased teaching and learning effectiveness, manifested to various degrees, due to the adaptations made to the collaborative aspect of the activities described in this chapter. Since when observations were made, it was not evident that all the learners showed that knowledge retention and assimilation were present when working, target (T11) was not marked as achieved.

9.1.3 Resources used for increased collaboration

The discussions held during the focus groups provided insights that increased the potential of the teachers' creativity. Educators began augmenting the resources employed to enhance student engagement and foster collaboration among learners. The Grade 4 teacher effectively utilised word card games, inspired by charades, to contextualise language, encourage student initiative in acting out action words, and engage the remaining group in guessing the shown word. Students were eager to deduce the terms and subsequently incorporate them into phrases.

Photo 9.15 shows a sample of the word cards which display different action words. These were used in Grade 4. Since these resources were not available in the market, the teacher needed to develop her own. The cards were designed and laminated. These word cards aimed at using action words in context, presented various opportunities for using language. Word cards can focus on particular grammatical lexemes, such as verbs, or provide opportunities to build sentences and stories. Word cards can be used for role-play, writing, and speaking.



Photo 9.15 word cards

As shown in the visual evidence presented in photos 9.16 and 9.17, students engaged in role-play, with their roles associated with language tasks linked to achieving various learning outcomes. Additionally, students were allowed to select word cards (photo 9.15), thereby indirectly taking the initiative to choose their tasks. Students were required to mime verbs while others in their group guessed the words. Although the student had to mime the action word alone, the learning outcome was still achieved through the collaborative efforts of the students within the group. All the strategies mentioned, from the selection of cards (photo 9.16) to miming (Photo 9.17) to evaluating the correct answers, were essential to achieving the outcome planned for the activity. This is because to nurture autonomy, one needs to value the importance of the fact that learners themselves, in the classroom, contribute to classroom discourse, which is then built upon by other students or by the educator. This leads to the acquisition of new knowledge and language.



Photo 9.16 shows the student deciding which card to use while the teacher quietly observes.

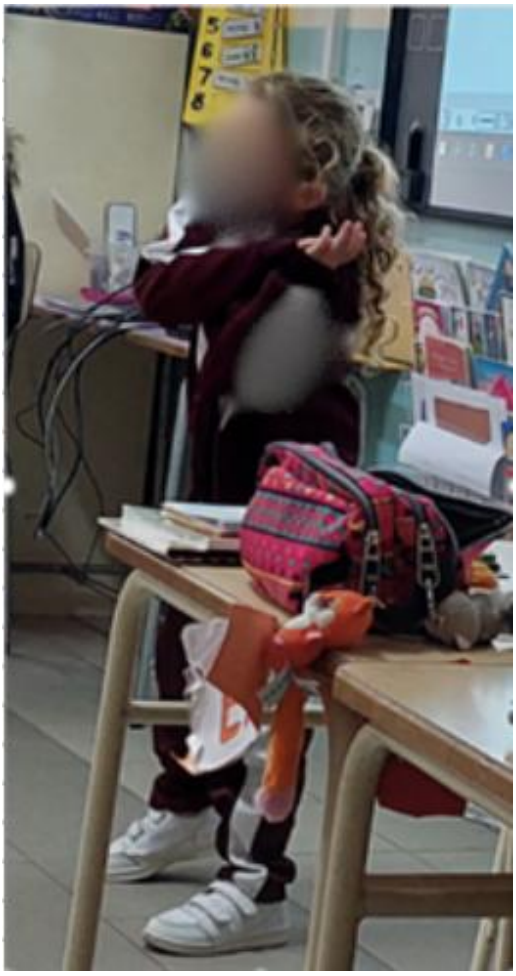
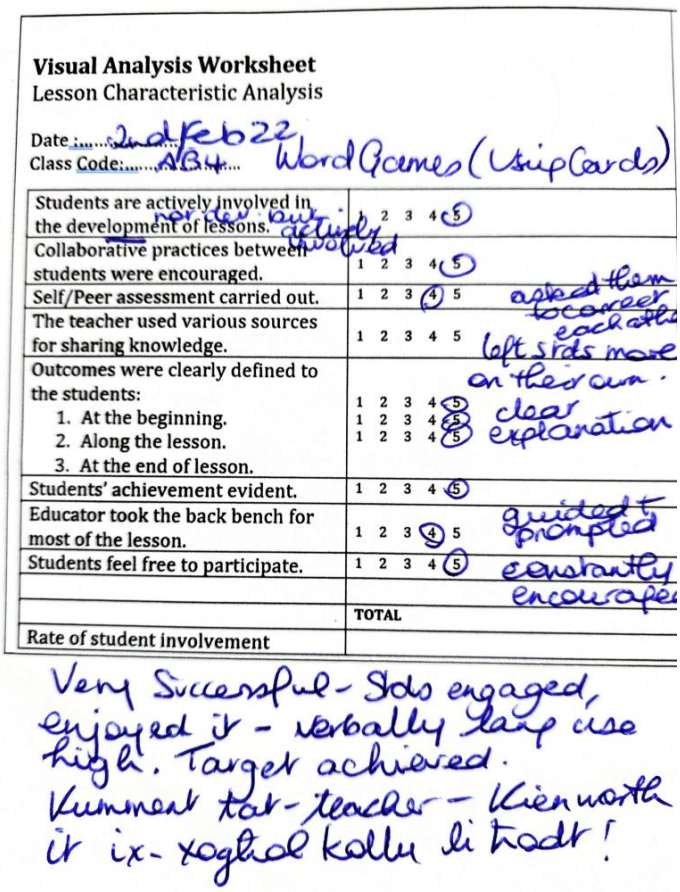


Photo 9.17 shows a student miming the action words depicted on the word cards.



Visual Analysis Worksheet
Lesson Characteristic Analysis

Date: 2nd Feb 22 Word Games (Strip Cards)
Class Code: AB4

Students are actively involved in the development of lessons.	1 2 3 4 (5)
Collaborative practices between students were encouraged.	1 2 3 4 (5)
Self/Peer assessment carried out.	1 2 3 (4) 5
The teacher used various sources for sharing knowledge.	1 2 3 4 5
Outcomes were clearly defined to the students: 1. At the beginning. 2. Along the lesson. 3. At the end of lesson.	1 2 3 4 (5) 1 2 3 4 (5) 1 2 3 4 (5)
Students' achievement evident.	1 2 3 4 (5)
Educator took the back bench for most of the lesson.	1 2 3 (4) 5
Students feel free to participate.	1 2 3 4 (5)
	TOTAL
Rate of student involvement	

Very Successful - Stds engaged, enjoyed it - verbally lang use high. Target achieved.
Kumment tat-teacher - Kien worth it ix-xogħol kollu li ħadt!

Photo 9.18 VAS_2Feb22_AB4_Word Games

The observations made and registered in the Visual Analysis Sheet for the word games activity (Photo 9.18) were very positive. The observations refer to student engagement, high verbal use of language, students being asked to give feedback to each other, and students moving from one word game to the next at their own pace. This indicates significant teaching and learning efficacy and a high level of student engagement. Observation of speech fluency recorded a more confident approach to communicating to an audience in cohesion of formulating sentences in the targeted context and turn-taking strategies.

Documentation of peer assessment was noted when I indicated that the teacher permitted students to evaluate one another's sentences. The lesson also motivated teacher AB4, who commented that *'Kien worth it ix-xogħol kollu li ħadt!'* - the hard work entailed to prepare the word games was worth it.

The following table summarises how the Grade 3 and Grade 4 activities described, nurtured and developed learner autonomy in the context.

Table 9.1.3 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) Collaborative tasks2_Gr3 and Gr4

The learning environment created was conducive to:

	G3	G4
1. Learning by doing	✓	✓
2. Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	✓	✓
3. The learner is responsible for their learning by setting their own goals	n.e.	To an extent
4. Learners are responsible for their learning through discovering, identifying, and using their own resources for learning	To an extent	To an extent
5. Learners helping each other	✓	✓
6. Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	✓	✓
7. Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	✓	✓
8. Learners are responsible for their learning by planning their own programmes with students free to use material at any time	n.e.	n.e.
9. Value of individuality	✓	✓
10. Learners discover meaning for themselves	✓	✓

Whilst working and presenting the tasks, learners manifested the following traits:

11. Able to co-operate with others	✓	✓
12. Learning to learn	✓	✓
13. Independent and individual study	✓	✓
14. Better ability to deal with problems	✓	✓
15. Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	✓	✓
16. Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	✓	✓

The Learner Autonomy Scale for Grades 3 (collaborative writing Photos 9.8, 9.8 and 9.10) and Grade 4 (word cards games) in Table 9.1.3 shows how the activities resulted in the manifestations of different characteristics and traits in the pupils. The ticking shows how learner autonomy was achieved. With reference to Table 9.1.3, in both lessons, the manifestations of the learners' traits showed that they could cooperate by working together (trait 11); all worked towards the same goal to achieve the correct answers whilst adapting the mode of being assessed through problem solving in groups (trait 16) and, most importantly, to contextualise the language. The contextualisation of the language was shown through the written medium for Grade 3 and acting and verbally putting action words in context for Grade

4 students. Such language activities allow learners to learn how to learn (related to trait 12) through discussions, brainstorming and presenting a final product. To an extent, through these games and activities, students could also apply their active learning techniques by

- Questioning: Ask questions about the material and seek answers (related to characteristics 1 and 3 and traits 14 and 16).
- Teaching: Explain to someone else (related to characteristic 5).
- Practice: Regularly apply what was learned through assimilating the new knowledge acquired (related to characteristics 6 and 10).

This development in learner autonomy also led to an increase in teaching and learning effectiveness. The learning environment allowed the students to discover meaning for themselves while discovering ways to explain, understand, and solve problems when faced with a complex word. In a safe, warm, accepting, respectful, and permissive climate (characteristic 2), students assisted each other in their roles and learned by doing (related to characteristics 2 and 5). On the other hand, during the games, the learners were not observed to be responsible for their learning by setting their own goals. Characteristic four was achieved in Grade 4 to an extent since students were allowed to choose their content to mime and build sentences. Each member of the team chose the action verbs for their classmates to enact, allowing the other group members to infer their meanings and contextualise them. Characteristic 8, which pertains to the planning of their programs, was not observed. Throughout the activities, their teacher organised all the materials and directed the pupils at each stage. Preparing other similar games aimed at different linguistic goals could enhance learner autonomy. Students could be given the opportunity to select and engage in activities of their choice out of the selection of games, within their groups. Consequently, this would empower them to make their own decisions. A potential expansion for this game could have asked the students to invent their own game for their peers to play based on their set goals and outcomes.

Retention of the new knowledge assimilated through these activities could be measured through the ability of the learners to put into practice and context the new language learnt. All the aspects led to the conclusion that the teaching and learning effectiveness was increasing based on the criteria mentioned in Chapter 6. The teachers were observed to break down the quantity of content into smaller steps whilst pacing instruction step by step, allowing learning through various learning initiatives to be highlighted through the activities mentioned. It was also noted that teachers outlined the content to be covered whilst signalling transitions

between different parts of the lesson, calling attention to main ideas and reviewing main ideas.

These and other collaborative games presented in this chapter and in subsequent chapters in Part 3 present possibilities for an interactive format focusing on language use and meaning negotiation. Even though the context of this case study is one where the teacher is teaching Maltese, due to the challenges highlighted in Chapter 8, the techniques used still need to present practice and reinforcement techniques, which are usually associated with second-language teaching. Such problem-solving games, which involve more than one learner, unfold in a group-based interactive format that creates content in which the language is used in discourse-appropriate ways and constitute communication-based language-teaching games. As further explained in Chapters 10 through 13, autonomy and effectiveness increase when games are presented with other techniques within the broader methodological and curricular framework. The evidence linked to the use of group-based games shows that it is important that these games are enjoyable, leading to motivation. Evidence also shows that this is also the result when they are presented as part of a process that leads to review, thinking, reinforcement, and communication in the classroom.

Consequently, the Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale (TLES) (Table 9.1.4), filled in after the lesson, where word cards were used, refers to the manifestations observed. The collaboration promoted in this lesson led to the following observations:

TL1. There is clarity of presentation suitable for the students' level of attainment	The teacher was observed breaking down the quantity of content into smaller steps and pacing instruction step by step.
TL2. The content to be covered is clearly outlined.	This was carried out explicitly to ensure that students knew precisely the target and learning outcomes that needed to be attained.
TL3. Adaptations and learning environments created were conducive to the development of all students.	Students' involvement took centre stage, changing the teacher's role to observer. Learning effectiveness was high. The planning before the lesson allowed the activity to progress independently of the teacher's involvement. This adaptation to the learning environment and class dynamics increased learner autonomy skills, which led to an increase in learning effectiveness.
TL4. There is an effective use of group activities and paired work.	Each group participated in the games and worked together to develop sentences that contextualised the action words.
TL5. The use of prompts and questions is effective.	The resources were the prompts, and the lesson progressed independently of strong teacher involvement. The learning that was being assimilated was evident throughout the activity.

TL6. There is an opportunity to learn through various learning initiatives.	This was evident throughout the activity.
TL7. The quantity of content presented and the instruction pace are suitable for the students' attainment.	Yes
TL8. Students showed evident progress and attainment of outcomes.	The progress was evident when the students presented their sentences in context after guessing the action word.
TL9. Students show motivation and interest in learning to learn.	All the students manifested motivation throughout the activity.
TL10. Students' attainment of outcomes.	All students reached the outcomes set for the activity.
TL11. The Retention of the assimilation of knowledge is evident among students.	As mentioned prior, the retention of new knowledge was made evident when action words were put in context.

Table 9.1.4: Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale_CollaborationWord Games_Grade 4

Grade 3 students' feedback collected in December, when asked for their feedback following the collaborative games used, shows that they felt motivated and supported :

> Std 11_Gr3_1stDec21 : *għax ma kontx waħdi aktar ħadt gost*
>
> Std 11_Gr3_1stDec21: Grade 3: since I was not alone I enjoyed it more;

> Std 14_Gr3_1stDec21: -*flimkien ftehemna għalhekk qisni ma ddejjaqtx li nieħu żball*
>
> Std 14_Gr3_1stDec21: we decided together so it was like it did not bother me so much that I make a mistake;

A Grade 4 student also commented that:

> Std2_Gr4_2ndDec21: *naħseb kien jirnexxili imma ma' XX stajt nara x'taħseb u naħseb bl-ideja tiegħi u tagħha flimkien is-sentences ġew isbaħ*
>
> Std2_Gr4_2ndDec21: I think I would have still managed alone, but with XX, I could see what she thinks, and I feel that when I combined my idea with hers, the sentences came out nicer.

These quotations demonstrate pupil participants' varying perceptions regarding this transition's efficacy. The skills acquired by the pupils resulted in enhanced learner autonomy. At the end of research interviews held in June with Grade 4 students, it was evident that the young participants felt the shift in teaching and learning processes and felt that 'they are succeeding alone' Std1_Gr4_June. Some claimed that:

> Std1_Gr4_June: *Jien ippreferejt kelli lil xi ħadd miegħi. U qisna waħedna jirnexxielna naslu qisu.*

Std1_Gr4_June: I prefer having someone with me. It is as if we succeeded alone.

Std2_Gr4_June:*Jien nippreferi li kelli lil xi ħadd miegħi għax stajt niddiskuti miegħu u nara x'inhu orrajt għalih.*

Std2_Gr4_June: I prefer having someone with me because I can discuss this with the other person and see what is OK with them.

Std6_Gr4_June:*Qisni meta naħdem ma' tfal oħra ma noqgħodx nibża' nieħu żball u flimkien qisna nibnu xi ħaġa u mbagħad ngħidu lit-teacher. Għax waħdi qisni nibda nibża' u hekk iktar nagħmlu xogħol sabiħ u aktar nieħdu gost.*

Std6_Gr4_June: When I work with other children, I am not afraid to make mistakes. Together, we build something, and then we tell the teacher. Because alone, I start feeling scared. In this way, we produce beautiful work, and I enjoy it more.

When asked whether they still felt as comfortable and motivated working alone with the collaboration of their peers, learners also concluded that :

Std4_Gr4_June:*Jien waħdi xorta naħdem il-class work li ttina l-miss u d-dar il-mummy tgħinni xi kultant imma tirrabja meta ma nkunx naf nagħmel il-homework waħdi għax tgħidli mela fil-klassi mhux int kont l-iskola! Allura noqgħod attenta ħalli nkun naf nagħmel il-homework waħdi.*

Std4_Gr4_June: I manage to complete my class work on my own and at home my mother does help me but she's not that happy when I stay asking a lot of questions as she tells me weren't you the one in class at school ! So I pay attention so that I will know how to complete my home-work.

Teachers also felt that collaboration seemed to motivate the students and that the teaching and learning processes were more effective. Grade 3 teachers who initially were concerned with how their students felt towards using the language verbally as well as in writing stated that:

IM_AB3_17Jan22: '*flimkien qishom jagħmlu kuraġġ*' - together it is as if they feel braver;

IM_AB3_17Jan22:'*isaqsu lili inqas u qishom iżjed lesta jaħdmu għar-rashom u mhux kollox spoon feeding*' –

IM_AB3_17Jan22: they ask me less frequently and it is as if they are more readily eager to work independently and not everything spoon fed.

IM_AB4_17Feb22: *'Narahom qishom aktar jitgħallmu u x-xogħol tagħhom ikun aktar ta' livell. Meta jkunu waħdehom aktar indum ngħidlhom kelma b'kelma u in pairs mhux ma jsaqsux imma jsaqsuni inqas, jippruvaw aktar , qishom jagħmlu kuraġġ b'xulxin u x-xogħol ikun aktar kreattiv. L-ideat u anke il-kliem li jużaw flimkien qishom jippruvaw jużaw kliem aktar sabiħ*'

IM_AB4_17Feb22: I feel that they learn more, and their work reaches a higher standard. When they work alone, I need to prompt them word for word, and when they work in pairs, they take more initiative. They still ask, but they ask me less.

They encourage each other, and their work is more creative. The ideas and the words they use together are somehow better.

The field notes recorded in January and February 2022 indicate that whilst students achieved the targeted language skill, educators from both Grade 3 and Grade 4 perceive an enhancement in the efficacy of teaching and learning processes attributed to students' autonomy. The above quotations show that Grade 3 pupils solicited their teacher's assistance less frequently after 3 to 4 months of the process and exhibited a greater inclination towards autonomous work. The significant reliance on the teacher by students, prominently evident in the early phases of the research (as referenced in Chapter 8), indicates that the modifications implemented in class dynamics facilitated the development of new competencies. Students started showing more self-confidence when using the language. Educators indicated that they perceived their pupils as more engaged and learning effectively, suggesting that the desired results were achieved more successfully. Teacher AB4 additionally indicated that the students' work was of superior quality. The claims made by teacher AB4 led to the conclusion that modifications to her teaching methodology resulted in students taking greater initiative during pair work, as she observed them encouraging one another, subsequently affecting the quality of their output. The teacher asserts that collaborative efforts among pupils yield greater creativity and incorporate more complex language.

The fear of change mentioned at the start of this chapter is a factor that required careful monitoring from me as a researcher and prompter of modifications during the transition to collaboration. Before implementing changes in class dynamics and increasing collaboration, teachers must recognise that pupils unfamiliar with a multi-dimensional classroom dynamic may struggle to comprehend their function. Any modification to the standard must be endorsed. The following quotations were gathered during my conversation with fourth-grade pupils in June. Their insights, presented in the following excerpt, provide the learners' perspective and illustrate how collaboration with partners may evoke ambivalent feelings.

Std10_June: Jien qisu l-aktar parti li qisu m'għoġbitnix meta jkollok partner qisu li meta jkolli xi idea tiegħi forsi nkun diġa użajtha l-idea tiegħi u mbagħad ikolli żonn indaħħal tagħha u mbagħad qisu ma nkunux nistgħu ndaħħlu kollox u nikkomunikaw sew. Jiġfiieri ġieli nippreferi bil-partner u ġieli nippreferi waħdi. Imma wara fhimt għaliex importanti.

Std10_June: The part I did not like is that when you work with a partner, perhaps when I have an idea, I need to include hers, and then we won't be able to include everything and communicate well. So sometimes I prefer to work with a partner,

and sometimes I prefer to work alone. However, after, I understood why it was important.

Researcher: *Għaliex importanti?* Why is it important?

Std10_June: Għax hekk nifhem kif jaħseb xi ħadd ieħor u anke forsi tiġi isbaħ għax ftit minn tat-tnejn. U anke ddeċidejna flimkien mhux bilfors insaqsi lill-miss.

Std10_June: This way, I understand how others think, and perhaps the work is nicer since there is the work from both. Anke, we decided together that we did not need to ask the teacher.

For the reasons explained in these quotations, teachers are responsible for creating the right environment and climate to nurture learner autonomy, support their students, and make the necessary adaptations.

9.2 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated a direct causal relationship between enhanced collaborative practices and cultivating learner autonomy. The adaptations implemented cultivated an environment that enhanced learners' capacity to develop the characteristics associated with learner autonomy. This was attainable solely because the educators were receptive to the researcher's recommendations and were willing to delegate responsibility to the students and modify their instructional approaches. The evidence indicates that enhancing learner autonomy significantly improved teaching and learning practices. The findings indicate that such a modification should be implemented while assisting students who might find adopting collaborative practices challenging.

The next chapter focuses on whether increased use of technology which is aimed at specific language tasks result in the growth of learner autonomy.

CHAPTER 10

USING TECHNOLOGY

10.0 Introduction

Technology integration in education has recently been a subject of extensive academic inquiry (Chacón-Prado, 2023). Technologies have radically changed the way people gather information, carry out research, and communicate with others worldwide. This chapter aims to explore how using technology in the classroom environment leads to enhanced learner autonomy and how it increases teaching effectiveness. It examines the effects of technology use on student engagement, information accessibility, and how it shapes pedagogical practices, with a particular focus on learner autonomy. This case study emphasises the challenges encountered by the teachers (elaborated on in Chapter 8) in relation to the use of technology and how to incorporate it into their methodologies. This chapter demonstrates ways in which technology may be integrated. It examines whether improvements made to the educator's pedagogical approach by incorporating technology lead to fostering learner autonomy while enhancing teaching and learning efficacy.

This chapter presents photographic evidence that illustrates the intentional incorporation of digital instruments in the educational setting. The images depict students utilising handheld devices for educational tasks, retrieving worksheets via QR codes, and using Ozobots to enhance computational thinking, integrated with the development of linguistic skills. Photos also aim at illustrating how the gamification of language tasks led to recreational cognitive engagement. Aligned with the analysis of the causal relationship between technology use and increased learner autonomy, these examples illustrate how technology-mediated tasks enhanced learner engagement, facilitated inquiry, and promoted the development of digital literacy.

10.1 The effectiveness of using technology in education

As digital tools become increasingly widespread in classrooms, educators and policymakers evaluate these innovations' potential benefits and drawbacks (ibid., 2023). Technology integration is increasingly used in instruction to improve teaching and learning, presenting a better pattern to find new teaching models. Consequently, it is key to learning and teaching language skills (Rafiee & Gilakjani, 2024). Research shows how interactive tools such as smartboards, educational apps, and virtual simulations create a more dynamic learning environment, fostering active participation and deeper comprehension, both essential for teaching and learning effectiveness (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Rafiee & Gilakjani, 2024). Learning through multimedia, combining words and images in educational presentations and using tools such as the Interactive White Board, significantly improves information retention compared to traditional text-based instruction (Mayer, 2009). This chapter focuses on the enhanced use of educational games and simulations through tools such as Ozobots and handheld devices, which offer hands-on experiences, allowing students to apply knowledge in practical scenarios. Evidence will be presented, and an analysis will be made to determine whether this leads to further increasing student engagement and comprehension. Such individualised learning pathways have been shown to improve learning outcomes, particularly for students who may struggle in conventional classroom settings (Johnson et al., 2015). This approach aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (Chapter 2), where learners achieve more when there is appropriate scaffolding. As explained in this Chapter, adaptive technologies can provide such scaffolding, offering tailored feedback and guiding students toward mastery at their own pace, aimed at enhancing the knowledge base regarding effective digital innovation integration within educational environments.

On the other hand, while technology has the potential to enhance engagement, current studies indicate that excessive digital usage in educational settings results in eye fatigue and distractions. Excessive use of screen time also introduces the risk of distraction from access to games and videos through the children's devices. Studies indicate that digital devices in the classroom can lead to reduced attention spans and multitasking, negatively impacting learning (Junco, 2012). Teachers need to be conscious of this and ensure that, through constant monitoring and balanced, varied methodologies, technology is used to engage learners and as an asset to reinforce effectiveness, not as a tool hindering the learners' cognitive development. This necessitates that schools establish a balance incorporating digital and conventional pen-and-paper methods into the learning process.

This chapter and the next (Chapter 11), which focuses on self-assessment, will also demonstrate how the "digital divide" (Warschauer, 2004) between students with access to modern devices (in this case, Grade 3 and Grade 4) and reliable internet connections can lead to educational inequalities. This divide is further compounded by differences in other aspects of student diversity, such as literacy competencies, age factors and exposure to language (quotations presented in Chapter 11).

Another essential aspect for the effective use of technology is the requirement that teachers adapt to new technologies. The successful integration of technology into the classroom is contingent upon educators having the necessary skills and knowledge to use these tools effectively. When teachers feel inadequately prepared to integrate digital technologies into their teaching practices (Chacón-Prado, 2023), it will not only hinder the effective use of technology but can also lead to frustration and resistance to adopting new methods.

Digital tools provide numerous pedagogical advantages that facilitate specific language development. Personalisation is achieved through adaptive systems that customise language assignments to meet individual student needs, ensuring instruction is appropriately challenging and responsive. This was achieved through QR codes. Multimodal design, which incorporates text, audio, and visual elements, accommodates various learning preferences and enhances understanding through numerous input channels. The use of Ozobots during the listening task was aligned with this aspect. Furthermore, engagement is enhanced by gamified elements such as digital games, which make repetitious language practice more stimulating and pleasurable. Digital tools provide genuine exposure to practical language usage, thereby bridging the divide between classroom instruction and substantive communicative practice.

As technology continues to evolve over the coming years, educators, policymakers, and researchers must collaborate to maximise its benefits while mitigating its risks. This balanced approach will ensure that technology enhances rather than hinders the educational experience (ibid., 2023). The photos included in this chapter aim to show:

- The integration of digital tools that supported, extended, or transformed learning.
- Learners using tablets for instructional activities or digital tasks.
- Use of QR codes to access information, prompts, or interactive resources.

- Engagement with Ozobots to develop coding, sequencing, or computational thinking skills.
- Instances where technology facilitated collaboration or independent inquiry.

10.2 Technology in the school context of this case study

Initially, it was crucial to ascertain that technology was accessible to the educators in the two participating grades. The classroom of each participating grade was equipped with an Interactive Whiteboard linked to the teacher's laptop. In Grade 3, no additional technological devices were accessible to students, whereas all Grade 4 learners possessed a tablet. These tablets are provided to all primary students from Grade 4 to Grade 6 as part of a government-funded initiative. The tablet is equipped with pre-installed software and is linked to the school's network. The school has two computer laboratories accessible to teachers. A collection of Ozobots was also accessible. The school also had 20 external writing pads shared between primary and secondary school teachers, for teachers to use when projecting real-time writing and drawing. This section will clarify the adjustments implemented in the teaching methodology and instructional strategies. It will examine whether any of the characteristics outlined in the Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) (Table 9.1 in Chapter 9) were achieved. References to these characteristics will be made by indicating their respective numbers as found on the LAS.

10.2.1 Tablets

The initial modification implemented in the Grade 4 class was integrating tablet usage. Chapter 8 discussed how basic management adjustments implemented during the initial phases of the case study mitigated the issues encountered by teachers while utilising tablets in the classroom.

The teacher participant was amenable to change and prepared to modify her practice only when she perceived that the adjustments would enhance her teaching efficacy and the students' learning experience. It is crucial to note that, in addition to the teacher's adaptability, she demonstrated proficiency in utilising technology. The initial adaptation to the activities, which involved the use of tablets, was to ensure that these devices served not merely as information retrieval tools but as interactive instruments that facilitated cognitive development and the enhancement of autonomous skills among learners. The focus group 4 meeting in January addressed multiple methods of utilising the tablets (see Chapter 6, Section

6.3.1 Schedule of Focus Groups). The use of software, including live worksheets (Section 10.2.1), educational applications, including collaborative applications (Section 10.2.4, 10.2.6), and the use of QR codes (Section 10.2.2) is discussed. Such discussions lead to adaptations in teacher methodology, which integrate interactive worksheets in the lessons. These not only allow users to drag or input words but also include programmed responses via a pre-defined command. This was accomplished through multiple techniques. One method involved configuring the application to generate a summative score post-task completion. A further characteristic incorporated colour labelling, further detailed in Section 10.3. The colour of the boxes designated for word insertion from the word bank was altered, necessitating students to reevaluate their responses accordingly. This application was designed to inspire the children. The encouraging term 'Prosit!', signifying well done, was expressed upon completion of the digital assignment.

It was noted by the teacher that:

> IM_AB4_25Jan22: *Fihom ħafna logħob u ddum ftit però sakemm ikollok l-ewwel waħda għax imbagħad qisek ikollok template u kemm tbiddel il-kliem. Bdejt intihom reinforcement work fuqhom xejn xejn jużawhom anke d-dar u hekk ikunu qed jagħmlu practice work u huma jkunu qishom qed jilagħbu.*

> IM_AB4_25Jan22: It takes a while to create the worksheets, but once I have the first one, I use that as a template and then just change the words. I started also giving them reinforcement sheets for home. At least they use them at home, too, and in that way, they practice, and for them, it's a game.

This statement highlights some essential themes in the incorporation of technology in primary education. First, it demonstrates the requisite time investment for creating digital learning materials, a frequently mentioned difficulty in implementing educational technology (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Teacher AB4's implementation of templating signifies a transition towards more sustainable methods, enabling the efficient adaptation of digital resources for recurrent utilisation. This corresponds with results showing that the integration of digital technologies can markedly diminish planning time and enhance instructional consistency (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). This data presents evidence on how the enhanced use of technology led to reinforcing targeted language skills used in class even outside the classroom environment.

As this section progresses, evidence will illustrate how such tasks can be carried out at school during a lesson or as additional reinforcement activities. These opportunities are also available outside of the school setting. The implementation of reinforcement worksheets for

home use illustrates technology's role in broadening education beyond the classroom. By enabling ongoing practice at home, such instruments promote a comprehensive approach to learning, wherein both school and home contexts jointly enhance a child's educational growth (Vella Cumbo, 2022).

The Grade 4 teacher's observation that pupils view the activities as a game underscores the gamification potential present in digital learning resources. This notion can augment student motivation and engagement, especially among younger learners, and corroborates research indicating that gamified methods can favourably affect attitudes towards learning.(Romero-Rodríguez, 2024).



Photo 10.1 Grade 4 learners using tablets and showing the teacher their progress.

As mentioned, Grade 4 learners in this school all possessed tablets as part of a government-funded initiative. During focus group 2 (Table 6.2), various ways of developing learner autonomy with these tablets were discussed. Photo 10.1 shows that immediate feedback can be given when using tablets. During a particular activity, such as the one illustrated in this photo, the teacher goes around students quickly and analyses commonalities in their mistakes. This presents the opportunity to follow up with a reinforcement exercise to mitigate common mistakes.



Photo 10.2 Using the Learn Pad

Photo 10.2 demonstrates Grade 4 students approaching the interactive whiteboard with their tablets to scan the code for access to the Learn Pad site. Worksheets were subsequently uploaded to the pupils' tablets. Moreover, QR codes provided the opportunity to assign diverse tasks, as will be elucidated shortly in Section 10.2.2.

Digital tasks assigned as classwork were used to nurture the students' autonomy skills. Photo 10.3 illustrates that when students engage in a digital task, they enhance their problem-solving skills and, unlike when working on a worksheet, interact with their digital worksheet by dragging words or writing directly in the provided space using the keyboard. This interactivity is enhanced by features such as clickable answers, drag-and-drop functionality, sounds, animations, or gamified feedback (Prosit! – Well done!).

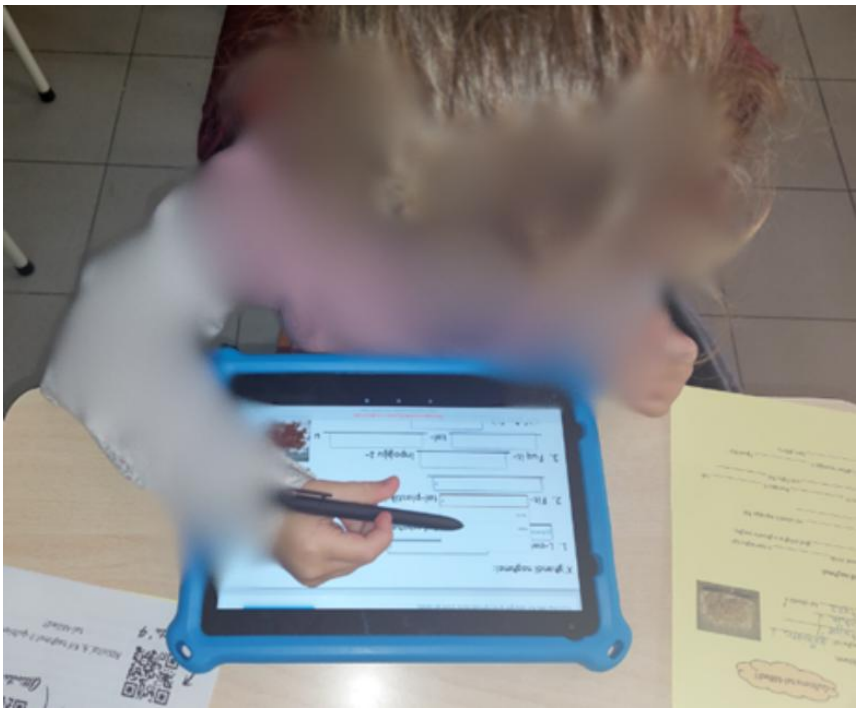


Photo 10.3: A student using the interactive aspect of the worksheets on her tablet

Here the student is being challenged to solve the digital task after having worked out her worksheet. The features on the task are assisting her through a drop-down menu. However she is still developing her cognitive problem-solving skills independently of any assistance given from the teacher.

10.2.2 The effectiveness of QR Codes

Another adaptation, which was discussed and planned during Focus Group 3 (refer to Table 6.2, Schedule of Focus Groups), was the use of QR codes. Supplementary tasks can be created for students by accessing their customised work using the QR code. Photo 10.3, left-hand corner, illustrates how QR codes can be given to students to complete digital tasks in addition to tasks given on the worksheet. Any URL can be changed to a QR code, scanned using a tablet or a digital device. This can give access to videos, games, worksheets and more.

As mentioned previously, finding a balance between technology use and traditional resources such as books and worksheets is crucial. Photo 10.4 shows that technology can be used in conjunction with worksheets. In this case, additional activities are planned by utilising the traditional worksheet and technology. Different QR codes, in this case presented on the white worksheet shown in photo 10.4, can be scanned by the learners. Scanning the different QR codes facilitates uploading different worksheets tailor-made to the student's needs.



Photo 10.4 QR codes facilitate the provision of differentiated work



Photo 10.5 Using a word bank as needed

Photos 10.3 and 10.5 illustrate how two different students accessed different worksheets upon scanning different QR codes during the same lesson covering the same learning outcome, which in this case focused on verbs. Different worksheets can be crafted to correspond with the pupils' capabilities and educational requirements. For instance, if a student requires a word bank or reduced content, as shown by the work assigned on the green tablet, the various features made available by the interactive worksheets facilitate this.

As illustrated in Photo 10.5, depending on needs and abilities, certain students can drag words rather than compose text. Consequently, when the task is not directly associated

with writing, students who struggle with writing activities can nonetheless engage completely and attain the established objective. The student utilising the green tablet is seen dragging the word (photo 10.5) rather than writing it, in contrast to the directions provided to the learner utilising the blue tablet illustrated previously in photo 10.3.

Interactive digital worksheets foster learner autonomy by providing immediate feedback, enabling students to track their progress and engage in self-analysis independently, without the need for continuous teacher involvement. Customisable tasks promote learner autonomy by allowing individuals to progress at their own pace. This approach cultivates independence, enhances motivation, and instils a sense of responsibility for one's educational journey, all while reinforcing essential skills through engaging and tailored practice that extends beyond the traditional classroom setting. In line with Characteristic 4 on the Learner Autonomy Scale (Table 9.1), students developed a sense of responsibility for their learning through discovery, identifying and using their own resources for learning. In line with Characteristic 8, to an extent, they were also responsible for planning their work and were free to use the material at any time, while learning through independent and individual study (Traits 12 and 13 on LAS respectively). To answer the research questions, the analysis of the attainment of learner autonomy skills is registered on the LAS in this chapter, in Table 10.1; and the analysis of how these impacted the teaching and learning effectiveness is registered in Table 10.2.

Grade 4 students also used the devices for self-assessment practices. Chapter 11, which focuses on self-assessment, will further develop this aspect.

10.2.3 The Interactive Whiteboard

Autonomous pupils are responsible for their learning through discovery when accessing resources for learning (Liu et al., 2015). Classroom equipment can provide opportunities for the development of learner autonomy, leading to more effective teaching and learning processes. Using specific adaptations to implement digital tools, such as enhancing the use of interactive whiteboards (IWB), which are present in all primary and secondary classrooms in Malta, has the potential to enhance learner autonomy and increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Furthermore, with the correct planning, these tools can foster learner autonomy by facilitating a shift towards more student-centred pedagogical approaches.



Photo 10.6: Grade 3 students taking the centre stage by interacting with the IWB

Photo 10.6 shows a student taking over the explanation using the interactive pen. The student drags the picture to show the class the order of instructions given, which they later need to follow in a follow-up hands-on activity for the whole class. The rest of the class waits for the student to move the picture or instruction, and then gives feedback. The teacher is an observer at the side and available for guidance as necessary. In line with Characteristic 1 (Learning by doing) and Characteristic 6 (Discovery and solution of problems on the spot), in instances as demonstrated in Photo 10.6, when students take over the front of the class, they develop a better ability to deal with problems (Trait 14). This simple yet effective adaptation encourages students to think on the spot, whilst explaining decisions taken to their peers.



Photo 10.7: Grade 4 students take ownership of their work and explain it to the rest of the class

Photo 10.7 demonstrates the nurturing of many autonomy skills in line with Characteristic 3, by taking responsibility for their learning and by setting their own goals; Characteristic 9, which aimed at the value of individuality; and developing traits 11, able to cooperate with others, and 12, learning to learn. Photo 10.7 shows how the interactive whiteboard is used to project students' work, which in this case was carried out in pairs. Scanning physical worksheets and projecting the work for all students to see transforms pupils' own work in teaching resources. When asked to explain their work to the teacher and their peers, students take ownership of their work and explain the process to their peers and their teacher. These then ask questions. In the image, the educator is seen engaging the students with enquiries focused on the essential attributes of caption writing. Students were observed 'emphasising that a caption should be concise, potentially incorporating exclamation marks, and convey significant meaning through a limited number of words' (LOS_AB4_June22). This strategy of projecting pupils' work and asking them to take ownership can be employed by all educators when evaluating and assessing whether a student has achieved a specific outcome.

10.2.4 Technology and Language Acquisition

This section focuses on how digital games, the interactive whiteboard's interactivity and traditional resources such as writing on a copybook can be conjoined in a multidimensional lesson. This example delineates a multifaceted interactive lesson conducted in February 2022. The achievement of learning outcomes associated with the utilisation of action verbs was realised through a systematic, stepwise approach, as evidenced in images 10.8 to 10.12. This process illustrates the potential of digital games and the interactivity provided by the interactive whiteboard to facilitate novel opportunities for language acquisition. Through various steps using technology, students are tasked with selecting the appropriate action word based on the contexts they have chosen themselves. This introduces an extension exercise in which students compose sentences. The approach encompasses various dynamics, adjusts to students' diverse abilities, and seeks to achieve both verbal and written outcomes pertinent to writing and grammar. The methodology established throughout this lesson is illustrated through images 10.8 to 10.12 captured as the lesson progressed. This shows that the pedagogical transition aimed at promoting learner autonomy also led to language acquisition skills such as drafting, editing, and refining their writing with scaffolds such as checklists, sentence starters, and genre templates, all of which contribute to improved accuracy and coherence. This aspect is further developed in Chapter 12, where triangulated

evidence presented through photos of children's work and quotations from interviews held with research participants presents evidence of the language skills acquired.

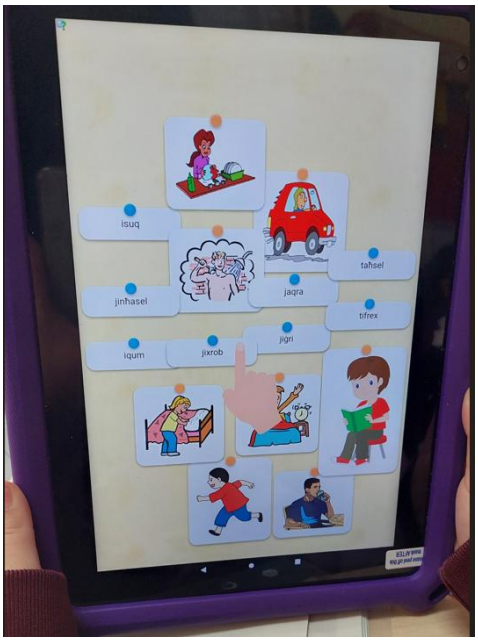


Photo 10.8: Digital games used to introduce the lesson objectives.

Photo 10.8 illustrates how a digital game was used as an introduction to the lesson. In this case, students had to match the action word with the picture. This offered an introductory exposure that would lead to acquiring a new language outcome.

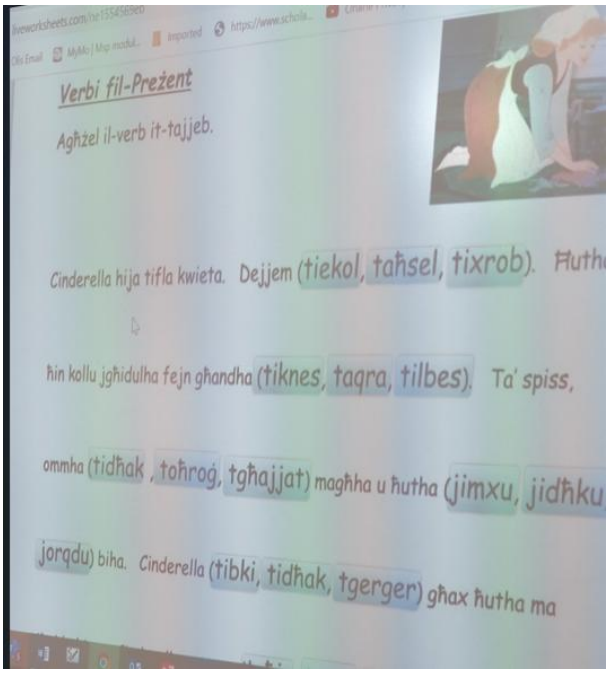


Photo 10.9: Highlighting on the IWB

Photo 10.9 illustrates how the individual digital game lesson progresses to interactivity on the IWB, highlighting the correct verb. This is achieved by using the pen, which provides students with the opportunity to put language into context while reading aloud in front of peers who are also engaged in the process.

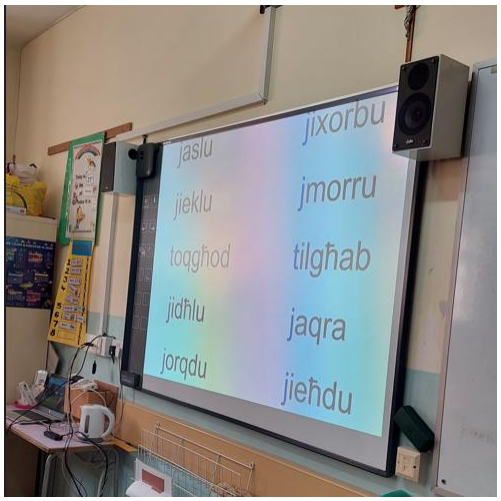


Photo 10.10: Projecting words

Photo 10.10 illustrates how the IWB can also serve as a word bank. Here, action words are displayed for students to select and use in their writing. Students were asked to write sentences using the chosen action words.

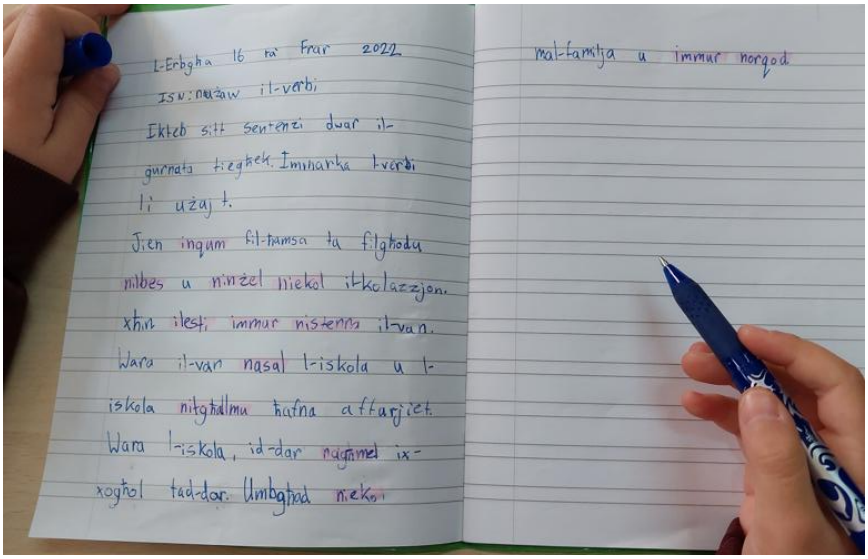


Photo 10.11 The writing task

Students were asked to write using verbs in the context chosen by the students themselves.

Learning outcome included related to language target acquired

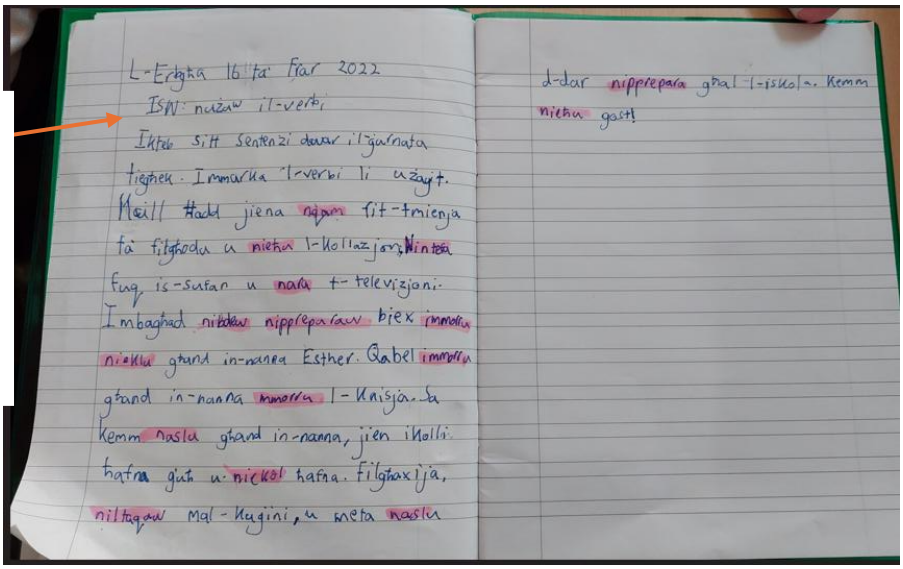


Photo 10.12: Highlighting action words

As a final task, students were instructed to identify the action verbs in their writing, illustrated in Photo 10.12. The lesson's developmental processes commenced with fundamental exposure to words introduced by the teacher, which, through the aforementioned steps, enabled the students to exhibit the traits of experiential learning (trait 1) and self-discovery of meaning (trait 10). Photo 10.2 clearly shows that students start by including the learning objective of the task prior to their work.

The teaching and learning of the outcome was planned in several steps. First, the new language outcome is introduced using fun activities aimed at engaging students in an entertaining way, whilst using visuals when introducing a new topic. When learning applications and digital games are used to assimilate language use, planned tasks need to motivate the learners. The following evidence shows that this motivated the students' engagement and helped them creatively assimilate new knowledge. Excerpts from testimonials collected from students report how using learning apps helps them remember more, and teachers also reiterate that when given exercises on topics where learning apps are used, learners do better in their written work and show improved retention. Utilising digital games enables the provision of quick feedback to learners during their tasks. This fostered an adaptive approach to problem-solving, as individuals must evaluate themselves, cultivate independent study, and enhance their capacity to address challenges. These digital games may be accessed outside of school, offering an engaging method for learners to enhance their

language abilities. The photographic evidence presented (photos 10.8 to 10.12) and the following written evidence present the actual language acquisition made by the students.

During an interview with Students 8,9,10 after this lesson, learners reported that:

I_Stds 8,9,10_Feb*: Nieħu ħafna gost nilgħab bil-games/ jien dejjem niftakarhom aktar għax niftakar l-istampa/il-kelma inkun naf x'inhi imma l-picture tgħinni imbagħad qisni niftakar l-istampa tal-kelma u f'moħħi nagħmilha flimkien.*

I_Stds 8,9,10_Feb: I really enjoy playing the games/ I remember them more since I remember the picture/ I would know the word, but the picture helps me, and then it is like I remember the picture of the word, and my brain joins them together.

Students assert that they find the process more enjoyable, and the pictures in the games support them in integrating and retaining new information. Upon inquiry regarding the assistance provided during sentence composition, students stated that:

I_Stds 8_Feb: *Għas-sentence peress li nkun rajt l-istampa imbagħad tiġini idea imbagħad moħħi qisu jtini l-answers.*

I_Stds 8_Feb: For the sentence, since I saw the picture, it gave me ideas and then my brain started giving me answers.

The digital game facilitated an experience that activated cognitive processes. This aligns with the assertions made by Danesi and Mollica (2009, p.347) concerning the utilisation of games. Their findings assert that the most effective method for humans, from infancy to adolescence, to cultivate linguistic notions is through recreational cognitive engagement. The evidence in this chapter of this case study not only provides a solid foundation for asserting that the utilisation of digital games enhances linguistic proficiency and knowledge acquisition in language learning but also shows that learner autonomy skills are achieved through the use of these games. Digital games in this case study were presented as game-playing techniques that required the learner to come up with solutions within the framework of the text and were, therefore, more focused on contextual parameters. This research provides evidence that such games promote learning. These activities served not as time-fillers but as motivators and challenges for students. They concentrated on the individual learner's focus on specific linguistic structures. Language games are adaptable and can be manifested in several formats, including word searches, scrambled letters, crosswords,

and mazes. In addition to enhancing language proficiency, digital games augmented the development of autonomy abilities, as indicated by the learner autonomy scale skill checklist utilised in this study.

The following table (Table 10.1) and the explanation which follows summarise how the use of technology mentioned above, through digital tasks when using tablets and through the use of QR codes, developed learner autonomy skills in Grade 4 students.

The learning environment created was conducive to:	
1. Learning by doing	✓
2. Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	✓
3. The learner is responsible for their learning by setting their own goals	t.a.e
4. Learners are responsible for their learning through discovering, identifying, and using their own resources for learning	✓
5. Learners helping each other	n.e.
6. Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	✓
7. Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	✓
8. Learners are responsible for their learning by planning their own programmes with students free to use material at any time	✓
9. Value of individuality	✓
10. Learners discover meaning for themselves	✓
Whilst working and presenting the tasks, learners manifested the following traits:	
11. Able to co-operate with others	n.e.
12. Learning to learn	✓
13. Independent and individual study	✓
14. Better ability to deal with problems	✓
15. Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	✓
16. Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	✓

Table 10.1 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) Technology_digital tasks

The above analysis shows that the use of technology through the use of digital tablets enabled the possibility to discover and solve problems on the spot, and learners were responsible for their progress on tasks. They discovered meaning for themselves while enhancing the cognitive processes aligned with the language outcomes.

10.2.5 Other devices

As a researcher, I was also interested in examining the influence of and encouraging instructors to utilise other innovative technologies and equipment that can assist in fostering learner autonomy. Ozobots are small robots that can be programmed and used in multiple ways for various subjects. Prior to this case study, these teachers had never used them with these pupils. When planning activities with robots and/or similar devices, it is important to ensure that at least one robot is used between two students.

In focus group 3, an extensive review of the diverse applications for Ozobots was conducted. The meticulously designed activities depicted in images 10.13 to 10.18, associated with Ozobots, enabled students to engage with the target language and demonstrate their comprehension through activities centred on listening to a narrative. In the course of the case study, Ozobots were utilised on two separate occasions. As an introductory activity, Grade 4 students engaged with Ozobots through a straightforward activity. In photo 10.13, the Ozobot was programmed by the students to follow a straight trail. While listening to the narration of the biblical story, students had to replicate the path followed by the Holy Mary and St. Joseph to reach the stable. This activity was conducted in the period leading up to Christmas.



Photo 10.13: Students are using an Ozobot whilst listening to instructions

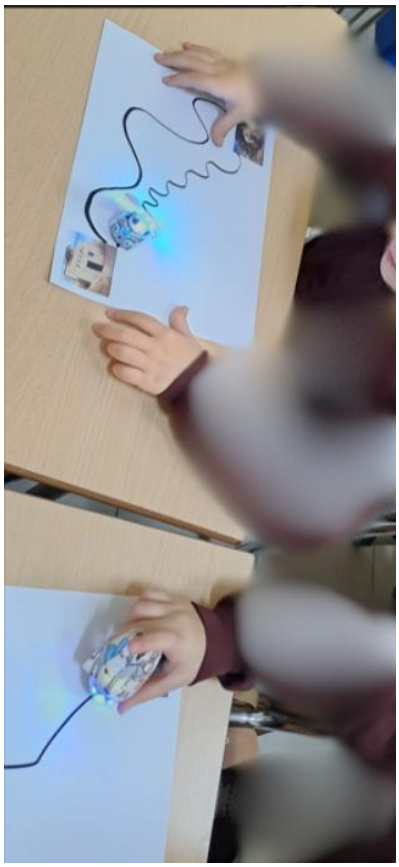


Photo 10.14: Students programme the Ozobot based on listening skills.

Photo 10.14 shows that the trail for the second activity became more complex. The road became bumpier, and the Ozobots needed to pass through a more complex route.

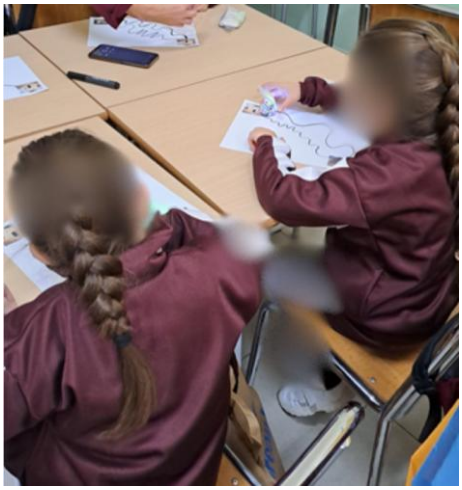


Photo 10.15: Desks were rearranged to mitigate potential accidents involving the Ozobots.

The subsequent activity exhibited greater complexity and took place following Focus Group 4. The objective of this lesson was to enhance listening skills, in line with learning outcomes S2 and S8 as outlined in Chapter 7 Table 7.5. This activity utilises the narrative of Little Red Riding Hood as the thematic backdrop for the trail. In addition to demonstrating comprehension of the narrative through drawing and programming the Ozobot, students exhibited autonomy in their learning by independently expressing their acquired knowledge, independent of teacher guidance, in line with trait 4. Learners were responsible for their learning through discovery (Characteristic 4). Their objective was to maintain the momentum of the anticipated narrative on the interactive whiteboard. This listening activity was also inclusive of all learners, irrespective of their reading and writing abilities. The initiative promoted active engagement among all students, aiming for the specified outcomes of the task, as outlined in Chapter 7 Table 7.5, given the absence of conventional writing requirements. The outcome was realised by illustrating the narrative content and programming the Ozobot to navigate the designated path. The presented evidence illustrates the flexibility inherent in achieving learning outcomes, emphasising the necessity for teachers to employ a variety of resources in their teaching methodology.



Photo 10.16 The IWB projecting the story of Little Red Riding Hood



Photo 10.17 The trail and other aspects related to the story, such as trees and weather conditions, were drawn

During another activity, while engaging with the narrative presented on the interactive whiteboard (Photo 10.16), Photos 10.17 and 10.18 demonstrate how Grade 4 students were required to program the Ozobots by selecting directional inputs and simultaneously illustrating the path described in the story on an A4 sheet.



Photo 10.18 The completed trails of several learners. Drawings show the level of understanding.

The photographic evidence presents a visual representation of the actual language acquisition achieved through the multimodal design, which incorporated audio and visual elements. The use of Ozobots during the listening task created the opportunity to achieve targeted listening skills outcomes. The following table (Table 10.2) and the explanation which follows, summarise how the use of technology mentioned above through the use of Ozobots, developed learner autonomy skills in Grade 4 students.

The learning environment created was conducive to:

1.	Learning by doing	✓
2.	Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	✓
3.	The learner is responsible for their learning by setting their own goals	n.e.
4.	Learners are responsible for their learning through discovering, identifying, and using their own resources for learning	✓
5.	Learners helping each other	n.e.
6.	Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	✓
7.	Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	✓

	8. Learners are responsible for their learning by planning their own programmes with students free to use material at any time	n.e.
	9. Value of individuality	✓
	10. Learners discover meaning for themselves	✓

Whilst working and presenting the tasks, learners manifested the following traits:

	11. Able to co-operate with others	n.e.
	12. Learning to learn	✓
	13. Independent and individual study	✓
	14. Better ability to deal with problems	✓
	15. Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	✓
	16. Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	✓

Table 10.2 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS) Technology_Ozobots

The evidence provided previously, along with the above Learner Autonomy Scale checklist, illustrates how technology facilitates numerous opportunities for learner development and fosters the cultivation of learner autonomy. The observed characteristics of the learners indicate their ability to operate autonomously, without the need for explicit instructions or prompting (Trait 13). Additionally, learners demonstrated problem-solving skills in real-time and engaged in hands-on activities at their own pace (Traits 14 and 16). All learners collaborated towards a common objective. The desired outcome was attained through various activities, including drawing and programming the Ozobot. Since the task did not entail pair or group work, the collaborative characteristics and traits related to Learners helping each other (Characteristic 5) and 'Able to cooperate with each other' (Trait 11) respectively, were not that evident. However, it was observed that when students were faced with difficulties, they were asking their peers instead of the teacher.

The contextualisation of the language was demonstrated through various methods. Previous activities involving technology involved selecting the appropriate answers from digital word banks, including digital games that were occasionally customised via QR code access and innovative written mediums that transcended mere words and incorporated drawing elements. The evidence provided through selected excerpts from transcripts indicates that this methodology fosters a more motivated cohort of students who perceive an enhanced ability to assimilate knowledge effectively and retain it over the long term. This highlights another important aspect that literature links to the development of autonomy skills,

specifically the freedom from external threats, rewards, and/or punishments, which allows learners to engage in learning for its intrinsic value (Trait 12 and Characteristic 10). Characteristic 3 was not observed because, even though students developed autonomy through the development of other skills, they were still not responsible for setting their own goals. Also, since the activities were not based on collaboration strategies, as promoted in Chapter 9, in this activity, learners were not observed helping each other attain the target.

The following table (Table 10.3), analyses whether the increase in learner autonomy achieved through the use of technology (Tables 10.1 and 10.2) resulted in enhanced learning effectiveness.

There is clarity of presentation suitable for the students' level of attainment. • *The targets were explained at the beginning of each digital task.* • *All games were presented clearly and were suitable for the students' level of ability.* • *QR codes provided differentiated work.* • *Tasks related to Ozobots were in line with the outcome and age-appropriate.*
The content to be covered is clearly outlined. *(as above)*
Adaptations and learning environments created were conducive to the development of all students. • *An inclusive class environment helped create a positive learning environment where all students felt that they achieved the outcome targeted for that lesson or activity.* • *All students participated in the tasks.* • *QR codes allowed for differentiated work.*
There is an effective use of group activities and paired work. • *The use of group activities depended on the task.* • *When using the tablets and Ozobots, learners worked independently.* • *Digital games did not foster collaborative practices.* • *Collaboration through the use of technology was not evident in these particular tasks.*
The use of prompts and questions is effective.

The teacher's preparation was very adequate. Written prompts were presented throughout the games, and interactive worksheets were set. Questioning was replaced by the effective presentation of tasks. One task led to the other, allowing the learners to follow the route toward attaining the outcome.
There is an opportunity to learn through various learning initiatives. *A variety of initiatives were used.*
The quantity of content presented and the instruction pace are suitable for the students' attainment. *This was evident primarily when QR codes were used.*
Students showed evident progress and attainment of outcomes.
Students show motivation and interest in learning to learn. *Visual and textual evidence shows that the pupils' motivation increased.*
Students' attainment of outcomes. *Evidence presented showed that the outcomes were achieved.*
The Retention of the assimilation of knowledge is evident among students. *When asked to complete digital tasks after completing a worksheet, students showed competency in the lesson's target. This showed that they retained the knowledge they had assimilated for that lesson.*

Table 10.3 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale_Technology1

The explanation is in italics in the Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale (Table 10.3) presented. It reflects on the use of technology mentioned in Sections 10.2.1, 10.2.2, 10.2.3, 10.2.4 and 10.2.5 (the use of tablets, QR codes, IWB, digital games, and Ozobots, respectively). The above analysis shows that the increase in learner autonomy resulted in increased teaching and learning effectiveness in most areas. The increase of technology integration within the learning environment facilitated students' ability to uncover meaning and articulate, comprehend and address challenges when confronted with intricate tasks.

During the execution of their digital assignments, the Grade 4 learners demonstrated accountability for their educational journey by establishing personal objectives while selecting tasks on their devices. This included engaging with QR codes and advancing

through tasks, as well as adhering to the narrative and navigating pathways, programming Ozobots, and illustrating characters and trees in conjunction with the stories being narrated.

10.2.6 Collaborative Software: Digital eBooks and Padlet

Incorporating digital eBooks represented a significant evolution in the pedagogical approach the Grade 4 educator employed. Digital eBooks facilitate the exchange of ideas, narratives, and audio content among educators and learners. As detailed in this section, the utilisation of digital books, exemplified by the software employed in this case study, offers significant advantages for learners. Additional comparable software may be deployed on learners' devices to facilitate collaborative practices within and outside the classroom. This form of learning is grounded in social constructivism, as discussed in the first part of this study. It emphasises the significance of interpersonal interactions in the process of meaning-making, as articulated by Vygotsky (1978), which facilitates language acquisition in both formal and informal contexts, as noted by Mallia (2013).

Research indicates that the teaching and learning experiences of students are significantly enhanced in educational settings that employ collaborative platforms (ibid., 2013). Within the framework of this case study, it was observed that online collaborative practices were not predominantly reliant on Social Network platforms, primarily due to the sensitive age of the student participants involved. The eBook examined the methodologies employed in online collaboration. The subsequent section will explain the utilisation of Padlet.

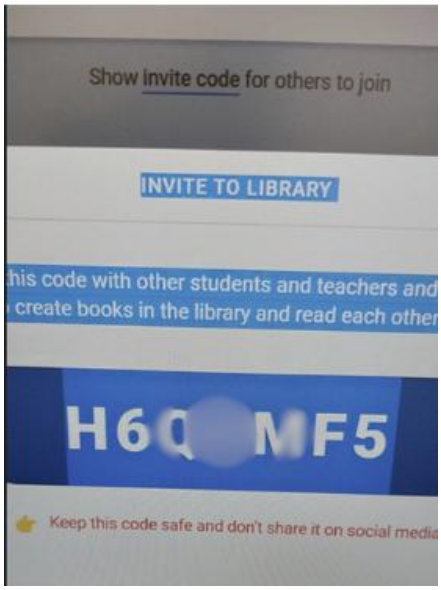


Photo 10.19 The software's generated code can be shared with any collaborator and accessed anywhere. The code has been blurred to ensure anonymity.

The utilisation of the eBook was associated with the extensive project outlined in Chapter 12. Fourth-grade students were enthusiastic about developing a digital book and showcasing it to their parents and educators. This eBook was presented as a component of the class activity during the school's Book Week organised that year, as well as being part of an EU Erasmus project. The subsequent excerpts from the Grade 4 teacher's statements made during two individual meetings held in June, indicate that the students exhibited a strong motivation to engage with the book, demonstrating that it was their sole focus of interest.

> IM_AB4_1June22: *Illum tghidx kemm staqsewni jekk hux se nahdmu fuqha. Isaqsuni nerġgħu naħdmu illum miss? Bdejna nagħmlu l-kitba u jimmarkaw pass pass fejn waslu. Kollox f'idejhom niggustahom.*
>
> IM_AB4_1June22: Today, they wanted to work on the ebook when we were going to work on it. They asked me, "Are we working on it today, Miss? " They started the writing, marking step by step where they stopped. It's all in their hands. They are so sweet.
>
> IM_AB4_5June2022: *eċitati ħafna. Moħħhom biex jaħdmu fuq il-ktieb biss. Li kien għalihom nagħmlu l-Book Creator biss.*
>
> IM_AB4_5June2022: they are very excited. They just want to work on the book. If it were for them we only do Book Creator.

The following will represent the collaborative efforts of the Grade 4 class and their educator in the Book Creator project. The writing tasks of the learners are presented across the various pages. The writing tasks outlined herein constitute an integral component of an extensive collaborative writing process, which will be elaborated upon in Chapter 12.

The digital book presented in Appendix 6, fostered the young learners' understanding of various components of a book, including the cover, contents page, introductory page, and additional sections. It additionally enabled learners to incorporate backgrounds, graphics, images, and hyperlinks. Additionally, one may observe small loudspeaker icons that, when activated, convert the digital text into an audio format. This ensures that the book is accessible for a diverse audience, encompassing individuals with varying levels of literacy proficiency.



Photo 10.20: A visual representation of the eBook created by the Grade 4 learners. The copy of the eBook is presented in print form in Appendix 6.1. It is not possible to give direct access to the eBook itself to ensure that the anonymity of the school, teacher, and student participants is respected.

When working on the eBook, learners showed initiative in decorating pages with graphics and backgrounds that they deemed suitable for their task. In Chapter 12, other aspects related to the process and the development of learner autonomy skills and traits when working on the eBook (Appendix 6.1) will be presented in the context in which they were implemented.

Another digital application that enhances collaborative communication is Padlet. Photo 10.21 illustrates a practical application of Padlet for the display and sharing of student projects. In the context of this case study, educator AB4 employed Padlet as a platform to disseminate students' work to the entire class. The work was presented to the entire class for review and discussion. This platform allows for the incorporation of both textual content and photographic components. Additionally, these tasks may incorporate audio files or recordings, as well as interactive applications like Kahoot, which facilitate student engagement through voting and expressing their viewpoints on a range of subjects. These applications can be disseminated via codes as illustrated in Photo 10.19.

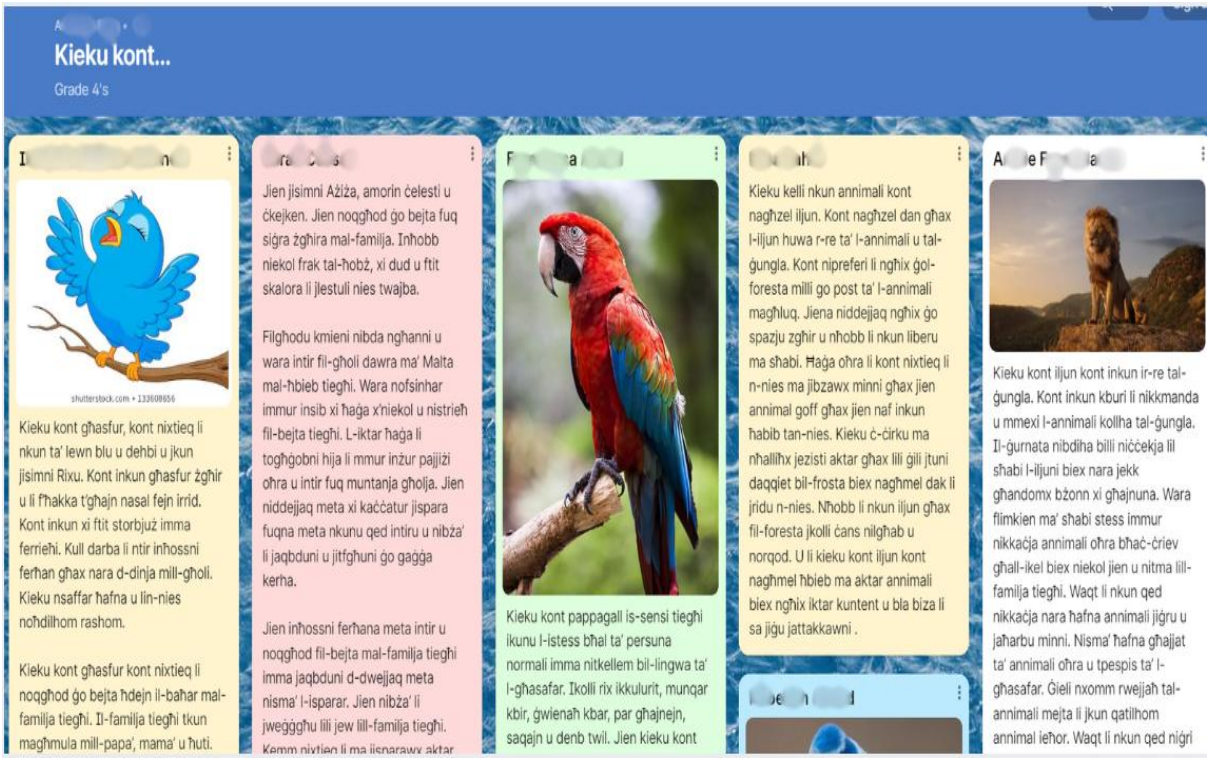


Photo 10.21: Screenshot of Padlet page used by Grade 4 class. It is not possible to give direct access to the eBook itself to ensure that the anonymity of the school, teacher, and student participants is respected.

Technology, in this case, encourages collaboration between students and includes collaborators beyond the classroom. An example of such a collaboration could be inviting other students from other schools, locally as well as internationally, or even inviting experts from various disciplines such as animals and sports. This will be in line with Vygostky's

MKO theory where More Knowledgeable Others can take centre stage. Links to YouTube interviews can be included and used as a resource for listening tasks.

10.3 Using Technology to nurture learner autonomy through self-assessment

Technology can also be utilised to promote learner self-assessment. This skill instils in students reflective practices that assist them in learning and to be more autonomous in ways which will be elucidated in this section. Self-assessment skills need to be achieved through careful teacher planning. More on self-assessment will be presented in Chapter 11. This section focuses on the use of technology for self-assessment purposes. In this case study, elucidated in Photos 38 to 40, modifications were made to the use of the tablets available in Grade 4 classes aimed at providing the opportunity for students to develop the skill of self-assessment.

When tasks are administered via tablets, it is essential for the software to be designed to deliver prompt feedback to students by indicating any errors or confirming correct responses. Feedback may be provided either during the actual input of answers or at the conclusion of a task. In this manner, students are allowed to think about their replies and provide different answers. This is in line with trait 3, which nurtures the learner's responsibility for their learning by setting their own goals as well as dealing with and solving problems on the spot (trait 6). Such practice also facilitates the teacher's bird's eye view of the learners' work since, from the front of the class, one can get a quick indication of the student's progress.



Photo 10.22: The educator can evaluate progress with ease and efficiency.

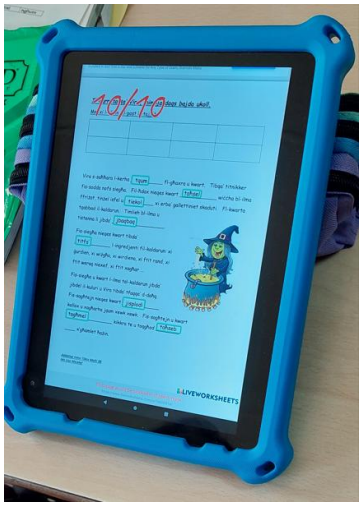


Photo 10.23: The task can be set to give immediate feedback through a mark.



Photo 10.24: Motivational comments such as Prosit! (Well done) can be included as feedback.

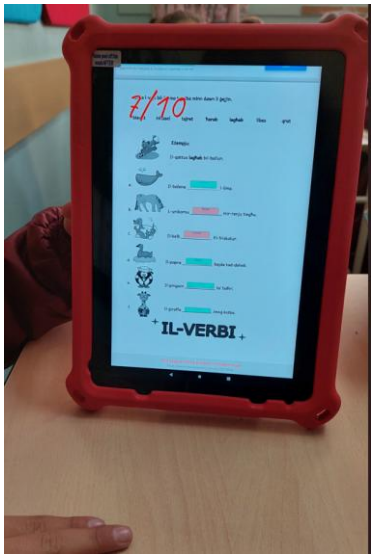


Photo 10.25: Immediate feedback is also given through colour-codes (red for mistakes and green highlight marks correct answers) as shown in this photo.

Self-assessment practices using technology, illustrated in Photos 10.22 to 10.25, give the student autonomy to analyse work and finish the task at his/her own pace. When students receive colour-coded feedback highlighting mistakes on their tablets, it allows them to go back and rethink their answers, which is an advantage compared to giving tasks on paper when feedback is given back to the students days after the task has been completed. The only disadvantage is that such activities depend on the Internet's availability.

The following example, demonstrated in Photo 10.26, shows how a customised exercise, launched by giving QR codes to pupils, enhances reinforcement and assists in the learning processes, which are tailor-made to cater for the students' diverse needs. This method incorporates self-assessment by allowing students to interact with tasks using digital worksheets as well as conventional worksheets autonomously, without the educator's involvement.

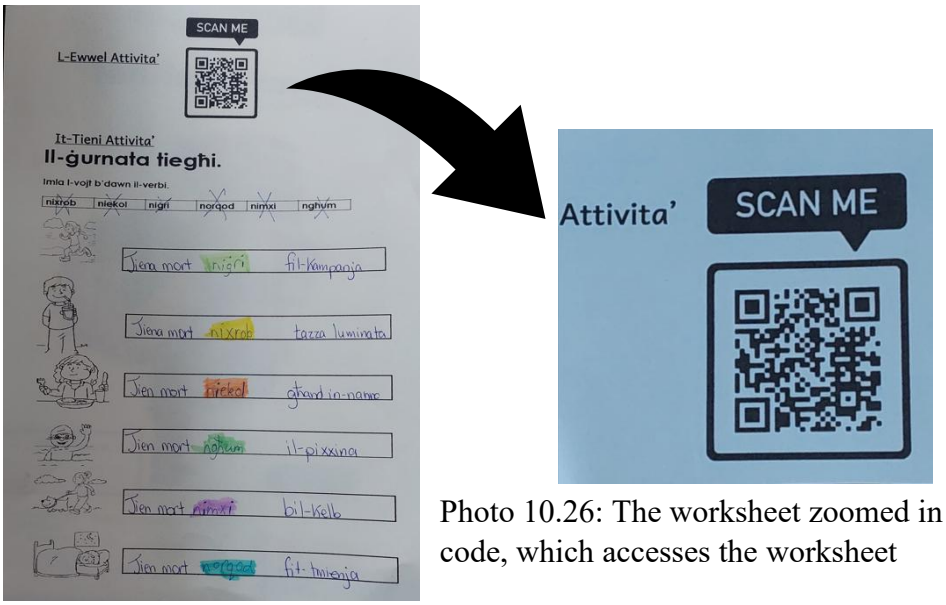


Photo 10.26: The worksheet zoomed in to show the QR code, which accesses the worksheet

The integration of QR codes on worksheets, such as the one illustrated in Photo 10.26, facilitates the inclusion of supplementary extension exercises using alternate digital worksheets set with self-assessment techniques. In this case, photo 10.26 depicts the QR code presented on the worksheet, which enables access to live worksheets. In this case, the learner was provided with a word bank for assistance. The interactive worksheet provided the student with constructive feedback and colour-coded responses illustrated in Photo 10.28. This promoted independent learning through self-assessment practices.



Photo 10.27: Additional QR codes given for reinforcement and/or additional work.

Following recommendations made during focus group 3 (Schedule of focus groups - Table 6.2) the Grade 4 teacher prepared a bank of QR codes in addition to the QR codes on worksheets. Printed on small pieces of paper, as illustrated in Photo 10.27, QR codes provide additional digital tasks. Students can use them as additional work in class or at home, and can self-assess their work.

The following example, illustrated in Photo 10.28, shows how a tailor-made digital activity was accessed through the provided QR code. The colour-coded zoomed-in view in red illustrated in Photo 10.28 on the right offers immediate feedback, aiming to foster the development of learning-to-learn self-assessment skills alongside problem-solving attributes.

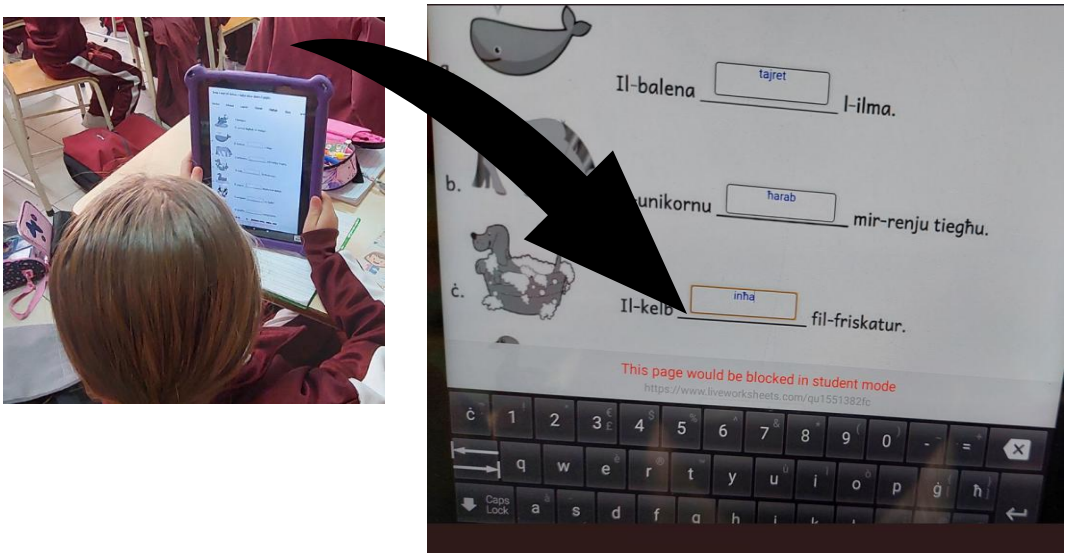


Photo 10.28: A student completing her task.

The algorithms in specific digital tools, such as the one illustrated in Photo 10.28, can be set to highlight errors made allowing students to self-assess their input. This promotes progressive development of literacy skills.

Photos 10.26 to 10.28 demonstrate how the alterations made to the teaching methodology, by integrating the use of QR codes with self-assessment, culminate in a learning experience that promotes autonomy while integrating all the components discussed in this chapter. Planning differentiated but similar activities promotes autonomy and inclusivity amongst all students. Irrespective of their individual abilities, students are involved in participating in different learning journeys, which still lead towards attaining the outcomes.

The learning environment created was conducive to:

1. Learning by doing	✓
2. Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	✓
3. The learner is responsible for their learning by setting their own goals	t.a.e.
4. Learners are responsible for their learning through discovering, identifying, and using their own resources for learning	✓
5. Learners helping each other	n.e.
6. Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	✓
7. Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	✓
8. Learners are responsible for their learning by planning their own programmes with students free to use material at any time	n.e.
9. Value of individuality	✓
10. Learners discover meaning for themselves	✓

Whilst working and presenting the tasks, learners manifested the following traits:

11. Able to co-operate with others	n.e.
12. Learning to learn	✓
13. Independent and individual study	✓
14. Better ability to deal with problems	✓
15. Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	✓
16. Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	✓

Table 10.4 LAS Self-assessment through the use of Technology

The ability to engage in self-assessment concurrently fostered additional skills related to learner autonomy. In the course of completing their digital assignments, fourth-grade students were instructed to engage with their tasks independently. The traits observed during self-assessment practices showed that the learners clearly indicated their ability to operate autonomously without the need for explicit instructions or prompting. Additionally, learners demonstrated problem-solving skills in real time and engaged in hands-on activities at their own pace. Through their engagement with the varied digital tasks, all learners showed an ability for independent and individual study. Through the use of the QR codes, the tasks were different; however, the way they were tackled was not. Therefore, all pupils were included equally and engaged in the tasks.

The data mentioned above indicates that an activity based on self-assessment through completed digital tasks after accessing QR codes develops autonomous study. Whilst activities are based on the teacher's pre-planned activities, the learner is responsible for the learning because, to an extent, is setting his/her own goals. The integration of technology provides the opportunity for students to set their own goals by accessing different activities and progressing at their own pace. Such an activity enhances the students' capacity to address the challenges encountered during the task. They exhibit a flexible and adaptable behaviour, demonstrating an positive approach to problem-solving. Such activities are not designed to facilitate collaboration among students, and therefore, they do not promote peer cooperation.

10.4 Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter is related to promoting learner autonomy through the integration of technology in the teaching and learning processes. It has been demonstrated that technology, manifested in various ways, has significant potential to enhance learner autonomy. Technology empowers students to take control of their learning through access to diverse resources, personalised learning platforms, and self-paced activities, including self-assessment practices. Using digital tools such as educational apps, online quizzes, and collaborative platforms can foster independence and self-regulation by allowing learners to set their own learning goals and track their progress, thus contributing to a more student-centred approach. In line with the notions explained in Section 6.3.9 which delineates the principles adopted by international and national policy frameworks in terms of teaching and learning effectiveness, the enhancements made to the lessons through the integration of technology resulted in increased motivation among students, cultivating a positive attitude towards the learning tasks, which is a crucial prerequisite for effective learning to take place.

Despite the advantages, educators must recognise the issues of excessive dependence on technology. Some students may lack the digital literacy or critical thinking skills required to use online tools effectively, which can hinder rather than promote autonomy (Passey, 2016). From an instructional perspective, the role of the teacher remains crucial. While technology can support autonomous learning, teachers are needed to guide students in navigating the vast array of digital resources and to scaffold learning processes (Kong, 2014). The effectiveness of technology in promoting autonomy is, therefore, contingent upon how it is integrated into pedagogical practices and how teachers support its use in fostering independent learning.

Technology in the classroom holds significant promise for enhancing learner autonomy. Triangulated evidence presented in this chapter shows that the digital tools used as a means to promote learner autonomy also enhanced the targeted language skills by providing personalised, multimodal, and interactive learning experiences that align with specific linguistic learning outcomes. However, its effectiveness depends on addressing issues related to access, digital literacy, and pedagogical integration. Future research should focus on developing more inclusive technological solutions and on teacher training to ensure that technology fulfils its potential as a tool for learner autonomy in language teaching.

The next chapter will focus on the impact the style of feedback given to students has on developing their autonomy skills. With special focus on self-assessment and peer assessment, the evidence will analyse whether specific adaptations to the teacher methodology facilitate a process of self-assessment and peer assessment and whether other factors influence the attainment of these skills.

CHAPTER 11

SELF and PEER ASSESSMENT

11.0 Introduction

Promoting learner autonomy puts the learners in the forefront of the teaching and learning experience whilst putting the teacher in the back seat. An autonomy-supportive methodology indirectly releases the teacher from the pressures associated with constant didactic methods. This time can then be dedicated to students who need it most. This chapter focuses on the impact of feedback, which goes beyond the teacher's direct feedback, on the students during their learning journey.

11.1 Self-Assessment

Research has clearly shown that feedback promotes learning and achievement (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik, & Morgan,1991; Butler & Winne, 1995; Hattie & Yates, 2014), yet most students get little informative feedback on their work (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Yates, 2014). The scarcity of feedback in most classrooms is due, in large part, to the fact that few teachers have the time to regularly respond to each student's work (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009). Self-assessment in primary school students is essential for developing learner autonomy since self-assessment fosters ownership, reflection, empowerment and goal setting (Elder, 2010; Qasem, 2020). In a recent study, Aldosari et al. (2023) claim that self-assessment can allow students to critically evaluate their progress and skill development, leading to more creativity and autonomy and contributing to learning enjoyment in the process.

Through the initiatives discussed in the preceding chapter and those that will be further elaborated upon in the following chapter, self-assessment was promoted as a skill intended to enhance reflective practices among learners. In the written feedback collected from the Grade 4 teacher participant after the case study, she articulates that she felt that self-assessment facilitates the attainment of learner autonomy. She states that:

> ‘encouraging self-assessment in class, for me it means when I ask them to check their work and find mistakes. I feel it helps students set their own goals, by linking the outcome stated at the beginning with asking them what did you learn by the end of this topic/lesson?. At the beginning of the lesson, we are giving them the outcome, and through self-assessment, they have to learn to reflect on what they did and not expect me to tell them.’ (extract from Questionnnaire_AB4_July.).

The tools used to obtain a pedagogical transition towards learner autonomy, including digital tools as discussed in Chapter 10, checklists shown in Chapter 12 and presented in Appendix 6.2, and underlying strategies detailed in Chapter 13, were introduced gradually and included in the teachers' methodology by the end of the case study. The adaptations facilitated learners in self-monitoring their progress and making informed decisions about their educational journey. This helped them take responsibility for their academic development and instilled in the students a sense of continuous improvement. Evidence collected during interviews held with Grade 4 students in June shows that by engaging in self-assessment practices, students feel more independent and empowered.

When asked about this, one student replied:

Std 4_Gr4_June22: *Il-miss tatna l-power .*

Std 4_Gr4_June22: The teacher gave us power.

In contrast to the context provided in the preliminary stages, as evidenced by the data gathered at the outset of the case study and discussed in Chapter 8, students developed confidence in their judgement when assessing their work rather than depending exclusively on external evaluation from educators. This skill does not come easily to pupils, and the same student who perceived the tool as empowering now confronts challenges she previously did not encounter.

> St4_Gr4 _June22: *Kelli xi ftit diffikultà biex nifhem ftit..allura naħseb li għandi bżonn nagħmel naqra revision..għax qed nagħmlu revision ovvjament imma hekk iktar*
>
> St4_Gr4 _June22: I had some difficulties understanding a bit…so I think that I need to revise more .. we are revising, obviously but in this way, more

Upon inquiry regarding the reasoning behind that opinion, the elucidation provided by three Grade 4 children indicated their comprehension that, as learners, they cultivated a cognitive competence stemming from the development of learner autonomy characteristics.

:

Std4 Std 5 and 6_Gr4_June22 *għax il-miss kienet hemm imma ma kenitx hemm ukoll/għax konna qisna waħedna, irridu naraw hux tajjeb imbagħad insaqsu veru jekk ma jirnexxilniex/ eh u hekk allura mhux issaqsi lill-miss trid qisek tara sew u hekk tkun qisek qed tagħmel revision għax anke l-mama meta inkun qed nagħmel revision għall-eżami tgħidli fl-eżami waħdek se tkun.*

conversing with Std4 Std 5 and 6_June22: because the teacher was there but was also not there /because it was as if we were alone, we needed to see what was correct but if we really did not manage we could ask/ eh and in this way so you do not just ask the teacher you need to see well first, in this way it is like you are revising as even at home when I revise for the exam my mother tells me that during the exam I will be alone.

The above evidence shows that the shift in teaching and learning practices also brought about a shift in the mentality of the pupils, which came about from the pedagogical transition that developed autonomy in the learners. The learners knew the teacher was there, but they also felt that it was as if she was not there. They refrained from asking the teacher and switched to finding the evaluation themselves. They expressed a sense of independence, although acknowledging the teacher's physical presence. The students deliberated on their journey to independence, emphasising their self-reliance and detachment from teachers and others. Simultaneously, the awareness of the teacher's availability in case of difficulties served as a reassuring safety net. However, this testimonial shows they had developed the necessary skills not to rely on the teacher's availability quickly. The comment 'we need to see what is correct' also shows that learners felt responsible for their learning through discovering and identifying whether their work reached the goals. This also shows that their mindset shifted to one which was ready for discovery and finding solutions to problems on the spot. These traits align with the targets found in the Learner Autonomy Scale.

With Grade 4 students, self-assessment was successfully achieved in many ways. Besides using technology, as explained in the previous chapter, another way to develop this skill was through checklists provided to the students. When students can check their work by tallying it with the checklists provided, they will undergo a self-reflective exercise. Students are pushed to fend for themselves, and as Std 13 and 14 stated,

IM_Std13_June22: *Kienet ftit hard time*. It did not come easy.

Evidence presented in the previous chapter highlighted ways in which technology can assist self-assessment practices. However, not all students are equipped with tablets or laptops in class. In this case study, Grade 4 students had tablets; however, the Grade 3 participants did

not. In such cases, learners who cannot use technology need to use self-assessment checklists (also refer to Section 12.1), which tally with the learning outcomes prepared by the teacher.



Photo 11.1 Writing Checklist Grade 3. This checklist was not specific to any particular learning outcome but included K1 and K2 (Chapter 7 Table 7.9). It focuses on self-assessing Capital letters, punctuation, presentation, spelling and coherence in the writing task.

Because of the wide diversity of abilities and attitudes towards Maltese, the self-assessment checklist for Grade 3 pupils needed to be very basic. Instead of presenting a written checklist, during the planning phases, I recommended to the teachers that they prompt the learners with the steps while the students checked their work. The teachers of Grade 3 generally felt that more time was needed to prepare the students for this skill. However, they felt that with time, the learners could focus on the targets and check their work. When the teachers orally prompted the learners step by step, it was felt that

> Questionnaire_CD3_July22: It (self-assessment) assisted the learning process since checking your work with someone helps you understand if you did something or not. It helps you focus on what needs to be done.

This excerpt shows that this Grade 3 teacher was conscious of the fact that self-assessment is a process that involves the students' cognitive reflective development. However, she believes that it helps the students focus on their tasks and what needs to be achieved, resulting in more achievement.

However, teacher CD3 felt that for her cohort:

> Questionnaire_CD3_July22: It (self-assessment) was complex for the girls. They still needed a lot of prompting. I guided them step by step, going round and also checking their work myself.

The interventions implemented throughout the case study delineated the process by which one attains sufficient competence in self-assessment. Successful self-assessment depends on the teachers' level of preparation. Initially, the objectives and goals of the task must be explicitly defined. Either the teacher, the students, or both may perform this action. This can assist pupils in concentrating on the job as they become more familiar with it by contemplating what is significant and how to attain the desired result.

During focus groups 1 and 2, I strongly recommended that the learning outcome be explicitly delineated at the commencement of the activity or class, written down on the board and on the checklist. Secondly, the teacher had to explain the tasks clearly. Tasks were organised with clearly delineated directions and parameters, including activities such as filling in or dragging words (when using a tablet), writing words, colouring adjectives, and an explanation on how to submit feedback. As elucidated in the previous chapters, when using technology, evidence demonstrated that colour coding offered students prompt direction (Photos 10.25 and 10.28). This mechanism was used as feedback when using digital tasks, and when learners wrote on copybooks and used highlighters (Photos 10.11 and 10.12). Most importantly, students used the feedback from their self-assessments to guide their revision and reinforcement tasks. The teachers' feedback clearly indicated a significant need for time to strategise and assist students in developing this skill. This aspect is also elaborated in the context of project work in Chapter 12, Section 12.3.

11.2 Peer-assessment

This skill was tried and attained at varying levels solely among most Grade 4 pupils (refer to evidence presented in this section). In June, observations of Grade 4 students revealed varying levels of proficiency in adhering to the teacher-prepared checklists (Appendix 6.3); they were able to meet established targets, evaluate peers' work, and provide feedback (refer to Chapter 12, Section Grade 4 project; Appendices 4.7, 4.8 and 6.3). This stemmed from a process in which students were progressively led to embrace critical input from their peers. The method required a conducive environment that had been cultivated over several months. This stemmed from the several collaborative activities in which the pupils

participated. Through that partnership, they established a receptive relationship, which influenced their acceptance of the comments provided. The teacher was overseeing all the provided input.

Observations indicated that most Grade 3 students lacked proficiency in peer assessment. Numerous elements elaborated upon in the Evaluation Section of Chapter 12, Section 12.3, influenced the cultivation of this competence. The following excerpt from the field notes indicates that when one of the Grade 3 teachers attempted to apply peer evaluation, the students reverted to their habitual reliance on asking questions and failed to assume responsibility for the skill. This occurred during the observation of both Grade 3 classes. The significant reliance on teachers outlined at the beginning of the study in Chapter 8 directly influenced the implementation of the modifications and initiatives and the time allocated to cultivating autonomy skills among Grade 3 students. By May, the excessive spoon-feeding transitioned to an environment where children evolved into eager learners prepared to embrace risks and engage in discussions. Nevertheless, further work was required to cultivate the peer assessment skill to an adequate standard. In the context of this case study, for the Grade 3 students, the teachers' preparedness to cultivate this skill, the age factor, and the learners' maturity level in addressing unfamiliar challenges, particularly in comparison to Grade 4 students, were all significant determinants. Only three pupils were noted to engage with their peers' work and provide feedback. The capabilities of these pupils were deemed superior in cognitive capacity when compared to the remainder of the cohort.

> IM_AB3_May22: *it-tajbin irnexxielhom imma bħala klassi ma nistax ngħid li kienet suċċess. Ma' dawn ma nerġax nipprova għax kaos kelli kulħadd reġa' beda jsaqsi, qishom tħawdu għax ma kellhomx tagħhom quddiemhom. Nippreferi nibqa' naħdem fuq is-self-assessment għax għallinqas ikunu qishom qed jagħmlu revision miegħi step by step.*
>
> IM_AB3_May22: The high achievers managed, but I cannot say it was a success as a class. I do not want to try again with this class. I had chaos; everyone started asking again. It was like they got confused because they were not seeing their work. I prefer consolidating the self-assessment skill, and at least in that way, it would be as if I am revising step by step under guidance.

During discussions with the educators, they determined a preference for solidifying the abilities their students had begun to master, while setting aside peer assessment. Once more, the temporal element emerged as an impediment to the developing phases of the transition. The Grade 3 teacher participants firmly believed that the students required time to consolidate before progressing to the subsequent skill.

When Grade 4 students were asked to assess their peers' work, it resulted in a positive, engaging learning experience that increased their autonomy for most students. For Grade 4 students, the peer-assessment reflective process was found to help students consciously become aware of what is written and said. This skill was felt to help them do better next time around. The following excerpts are taken from students' reflections on peer assessment collected during individual meetings held:

> IM_Std 15Gr4 __May21: *nara ta' studenta oħra, tgħinni ninduna x'inhuma l-iżbalji. Għax xi kultant tiegħi lanqas narahom.*
>
> IM_Std 15Gr4 __May21: Observing another student's work helps me understand which mistakes one can make. At times, I do not even see my own mistakes.
>
> IM_Std20Gr4 __May22: *meta nara tagħha imbagħad nħares lejn tiegħi u nara li nkun għamilt l-istess bħalha u lanqas kont inkun indunajt*
>
> IM_Std20Gr4 __May22: When I see her work, I look at mine and realise that I would have done exactly like her, and I would not have even realised.

The evidence in this case study aligns with Deci and Ryan (2000), and indicates that some factors directly influence the adoption of self-assessment methods and the specific year group. The age disparity between the Grade 3 and Grade 4 students was perceived to influence their cognitive readiness. Additional criteria emphasised in the class profiles (Chapter 6 Section 6.1.2), such as their aptitude and attitude towards the language, influenced the time dedicated to encouraging the Grade 3 children to utilise Maltese. The time that may have been allocated to self-assessment and peer evaluation techniques was instead utilised to cultivate abilities deemed vital in the initial stages of the case study for fostering learner autonomous qualities. Research (Artino, 2008) indicates that additional factors not included in this study, such as social background and access to support systems and surroundings, may influence students' adaptation to changes. It is claimed that (Ryan & Deci, 2016), psychological well-being and familial ties substantially impact the cultivation of autonomy, especially in younger demographics. Developmental patterns indicate that learner autonomy escalates with age, particularly throughout adolescence; nonetheless, this relationship is intricate and affected by multiple circumstances. Since a few students in Grade 3 attained this skill, one could conclude that age may not be a crucial factor influencing autonomy in some learning contexts, highlighting the necessity of evaluating individual learner traits and pedagogical approaches. The evidence shows that Grade 3 students started to reach self-assessment skills when guided

by the teacher (refer to Figure 1), but by the end of the case study, they still could not assess their peers.

At the late stage of the case study, when I suggested implementing peer assessment practices, Grade 3 educators emphasised that consolidating the advancements attained through the alterations made to their methodology would have been more beneficial to their students. Their satisfaction stemmed from the students' advancement in utilising Maltese, the motivational impact the adaptations had on the students' overall attainment, and the positive shift in students' attitudes towards learning the language. They also noted that the reliance on teachers had significantly altered. Their reluctance to introduce another topic for fear of regression impeded the teachers' willingness to advance. As a researcher, I ethically refrained from pressuring them to adopt more new adaptations and accepted their option to consolidate existing achievements.

In addition to the teachers' motivation to modify their technique to enhance self-assessment and implement peer-assessment, it is perceived that the availability of tablets to Grade 4 students and the teacher's readiness for using technology helped the process for the Grade 4 participants. The continuous use of technology by Grade 4 students to reinforce self-assessment skills facilitated their enhanced preparedness for peer assessment. Simultaneously, the Grade 4 teacher utilised the tablet for additional subjects, making her students more acquainted with self-assessment techniques. This evidence is aligned with a study by Archambault et al. (2020). It shows that student engagement is maximised when educators exhibit high levels of involvement through autonomy-supportive and structured instructional techniques. Field notes from observations, testimonials from student data, and remarks from the teacher provide compelling proof that the Grade 4 students embraced self-evaluation, which subsequently facilitated peer assessment, during their writing and presentations.

> LOS_AB4_11May22: Students are commenting and following the targets. They listen to each other and discuss things. Teacher prompting when students find difficulty elaborating, there is good use of questioning, prompting, and not spoon-feeding.
>
> Questionnaire_AB4_July (written feedback): The girls took the teacher's role and used the checklist to assess their friends in the same way they would have assessed theirs.
>
> IM_AB4_11May22: *Ma jiddejqux anzi qishom jieħdu gost. Ġieli ngħidlek il-verità jkun hemm xi waħda tagħmilha tal-bossy u nkellimha imma on the whole ma kienx hemm xi problemi kbar. Anzi qisu jitgħallmu minn xulxin naraha jien. S'issa ma kienx hemm xi parent tgorrli għax minn dik kważi bdejt nibża'.*
>
> IM_AB4_11May22: They enjoyed it. At times, there is that bossy one that I need to speak to, but on the whole, there weren't any major problems. I feel that it helps

them learn from each other. Until now, there haven't been any complaints from my parents, as that is what I feared most.

The collaborative aspect of peer assessment brings about further cognitive development, as explained clearly by one of the students:

Std14Gr4 _June22: *għax per eżempju konna niktbu u mbagħad niġu darba oħra u ngħidu le għandna idea oħra minflokha ejja ħa nħassruha u nagħmlu l-oħra. Imbagħad nispiċċaw ngħidu le mhux tajba ejja ngħaqqduhom flimkien u wara nerġgħu narawha kollha f'daqqa.*

St14Gr4_June22: For example, we were writing, and then we went over it again and said, "No, we have another idea." Instead of it, we rubbed it off and did another one. And then we said, "No, it's not correct. Let's join them together, and then we see it all again at one go."

This process leads to meta-cognitive development, which aligns with the developmental stages described in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5.1: The assimilation of new knowledge through the use of language) since it encourages students to reflect on their learning experiences. Bandura's social learning theory states that individuals can achieve linguistic skills by imitating those around them (Chapter 2 Section: 2.2.1). By reflecting on someone else's writing, the collaboration between the learners developed since they learnt to think about their reflections. This helped them understand how they learnt best and how to approach future learning tasks with greater competence. This metacognitive awareness is a key component of learner autonomy. When assuming responsibility for their learning process, students assessed their progress, recognised their strengths and weaknesses, and established goals for enhancement. This sense of ownership generated a more profound dedication to their learning and personal development. This was further developed and became more apparent in Grade 4. Non-Maltese students collaborated with Maltese pupils and were prompted to make decisions regarding the task. In this instance, imitation engendered motivation stemming from proficient modelling. The Maltese students functioned as the MKO (aligned with Chapter 2 Section 2.2.2) inside the group and, through positive reinforcement, supported the non-Maltese peers in attaining the objectives established by the teacher. Group work, which was emphasised throughout Chapter 9, presents evidence in relation to this (refer to photos 9.5, 9.6, 9.11 to 9.13).

11.3 Conclusion

Self-assessment and peer assessment implemented in the final stages of this case study have emerged as critical tools in fostering learner autonomy and improving the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning as defined in Chapters 1 and 6. Both approaches encourage students to actively participate in their learning process, promoting self-reflection and deeper engagement with content. This aligns with the goals of developing independent learners capable of lifelong learning and critical thinking (Yang et al., 2022).

Self-assessment enables students to recognise their learning requirements, establish objectives, and evaluate their progress, thus cultivating an increased sense of accountability for their academic pursuits. The systematic self-reflection checklists supplied by the Grade 4 teacher (elaborated in Chapter 12) enable learners to better comprehend their strengths and weaknesses while also enhancing their metacognitive skills, which are crucial for efficient autonomous learning. Likewise, peer assessment serves as a valuable mechanism to augment student participation and critical evaluation. Through assessing their peers' work, learners cultivate a more objective perspective on quality, acquiring the ability to apply standards and criteria that may subsequently guide their work (ibid., 2022). Peer evaluation cultivates community and collective accountability as students participate in constructive feedback exchanges, enhancing their evaluative abilities and gaining insights from varied viewpoints.

In this case study, adaptations led to different degrees of development of self-assessment and peer assessment evaluation techniques. The transition from a teacher-centred assessment paradigm to a student-centred one led to an augmentation of learner autonomy and improved teaching efficacy. When executed with consideration, self-evaluation and peer assessment augment learner autonomy and foster a more dynamic, responsive, and pedagogically strong educational environment. In this context, the strategies used provide considerable potential for teachers to seek to develop autonomous, self-driven learners who are equipped with skills that prepare them better when faced with future challenges in their learning process.

The next chapter will focus on two projects: one carried out with the two Grade 3 classes and the other with the Grade 4 class. The projects, which were planned to be carried out over several lessons, included an outing. They were planned and held during the last term, and evidence will show that the learners manifested learner autonomy skills, resulting from the benefits of the pedagogical transition implemented during the months of the case study.

CHAPTER 12

LEARNER AUTONOMY THROUGH PROJECT WORK: USING THE ENVIRONMENT OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

12.0 Introduction

As explained in Chapter 6, my role as a participant-observer researcher evolved to accommodate various settings. Prior to the conclusion of the second term, around March 2022, during Focus groups 5, 6 and 7 (Schedule Table 6.2), I wanted to evaluate the degree to which the teachers' pedagogical transition in methods and decisions promoted student autonomy whilst acquiring language. I designed a plan which involved an integration of language learning outcomes that evolved around project work (project plan template, Appendix 4.5). Planning with the two grades took different directions, due to the age of the pupils and also because I wanted to be able to try out new initiatives with the different cohorts. Both projects were planned to take around four weeks to implement during the third term. The activities needed to be linked to attaining a number of language learning outcomes. I also ensured that the project would integrate the cultivation of learner autonomy skills, and in line with acquired skills mentioned in previous chapters, create opportunities for individual and collaborative designated tasks, opportunities for pupils to enhance their written and verbal linguistic abilities aligning with written and verbal language acquisition whilst integrating the use of technology and self-assessment. As a researcher, it was essential to assess the degree to which students could cope with the change in approach that they had been exposed to through the case study, how they perceived the change, their emotional responses, and the impact on their language attainment.

In addition to employing the numerous adjustments introduced, whilst aiming at developing learner autonomy, I also aimed to highlight the impact of environmental factors in the teaching process. The initiative entailed leaving the school grounds to visit a site of interest, which corresponded with fostering effective learning settings and examining the external environment for pedagogical methods. The textual or visual evidence provided will

seek to establish a causal relationship between the given tasks and the increase in learner autonomy. The photographs of learners engaged in various activities will provide evidence of Grade 3 and Grade 4 learners' involvement in a variety of activities undertaken across both classroom and outdoor settings. Photographs of their work provide evidence of written language acquisition aligned with the learning outcomes targeted for the different tasks. The images capture students engaging in extended inquiry, interacting with authentic materials, and applying curricular knowledge within real-world contexts. These photographs highlight how project work and outdoor learning spaces created opportunities for contextually meaningful experiential, inter-skill, and intra-skill engagement among learners.

The photos were presented as evidence in this chapter if they captured:

- Learners participating in planning, investigation, creation, or presentation.
- Activities that utilised the outdoor learning environment as an instructional space.
- Evidence of students applying knowledge in relation to the acquisition of the learning outcomes set.
- Hands-on or inquiry-based work involving using the outdoors to acquire knowledge, using different spaces as an educational tool, or the integration of cross-skills activities.
- Collaboration or reflection occurring within outdoor settings.

12.1 Grade 4 project

The project was planned using a project plan flow chart (presented as a template in Appendix 4.5). In line with my role as participant observer, during focus groups 5 and 6, I led the discussion and involved the Grade 4 teacher participant in decisions.

I suggested a number of worksheet templates, as presented below (in full size in Appendix 4.6), to the teacher that could be used during the outing. The handouts were planned to be used by the pupils during the outing and as a reference when working on tasks after the outing. Work sheets used as checklists for the work assigned after the outing, were planned by the teacher in line with the learning outcomes (Appendix 6). All twenty-four students participated in the activity (one of whom was not participating in the research).





Figure 12.1 Worksheets used are presented in full size as Appendix 4.6

For the project, the Grade 4 students visited a Maltese Natural Park. Welcomed by the park rangers, they had the opportunity to ask and gain knowledge about the local fauna and vegetation. During the outing, pupils were assigned a number of tasks in line with different learning outcomes. The outcomes are aligned with actual language acquisition related to written and verbal skills and are referenced in the way they have been presented in Chapter 7, that is K for Kitba Writing, T for Taħdit Speaking, S for Smigħ Listening and Q for Qari Reading. The number of the outcomes reflects the number given when detailed in chapter 7. Pupils needed to observe the environment and write about what they felt was sustainable and what was not environmentally sustainable (worksheet 2, targeting learning outcome K2). Pupils were encouraged to ask appropriate questions (worksheet 3 in the pack, targeting learning outcome K9) to the park rangers. The worksheet provided guidance on enquiries, primarily concentrating on the maintenance of the location and the surrounding flora; however, pupils were prompted to formulate their questions. They were asked to organise themselves in groups and play charades on words that they decided on as a group (work sheet 4 -targeting learning outcomes S8, T5 and T1) after which they needed to be creative and invent their own game (work sheet 5- targeting learning outcomes S8, T5 and T1); pupils were asked to write instructions for a snack which they felt was appropriate to take on a picnic in the countryside (worksheet 6 – targeting learning outcomes K2, K7, T5); worksheet 7 prompted them to write captions that they would have wanted to place around the park (targeting learning outcomes K2, T5); then they gave their opinion on whether they enjoyed going out in the fresh air or not (activity 8-targeting learning outcomes T5, T1 T9) and for activity 9 they could choose anything they saw around them, write the word down vertically and compose their rhyme (an extension to the writing outcomes of the grade).

The responsibilities encompassed watching flora and fauna, engaging in charades, dining collectively at the table, and documenting any observations, including environmental signage. In the outdoor setting, the students were able to practise the language with their peers, employing it in both spoken and written communication. They were permitted to stay with any of their acquaintances. Accompanying adults constantly supervised the pupils' safety but were hardly involved in the tasks.



Photo 12.1: Tasks were completed individually or collaboratively. Learners could discuss with their peers along the day.



Photo 12.2: Observations made during the day were registered by the pupils



Photo 12.3: Worksheets were prepared beforehand based on the suggested templates



Photo 12.4: Similarly to the charades game played in class (Chapter 9.1.3 word card game), groups played charades.

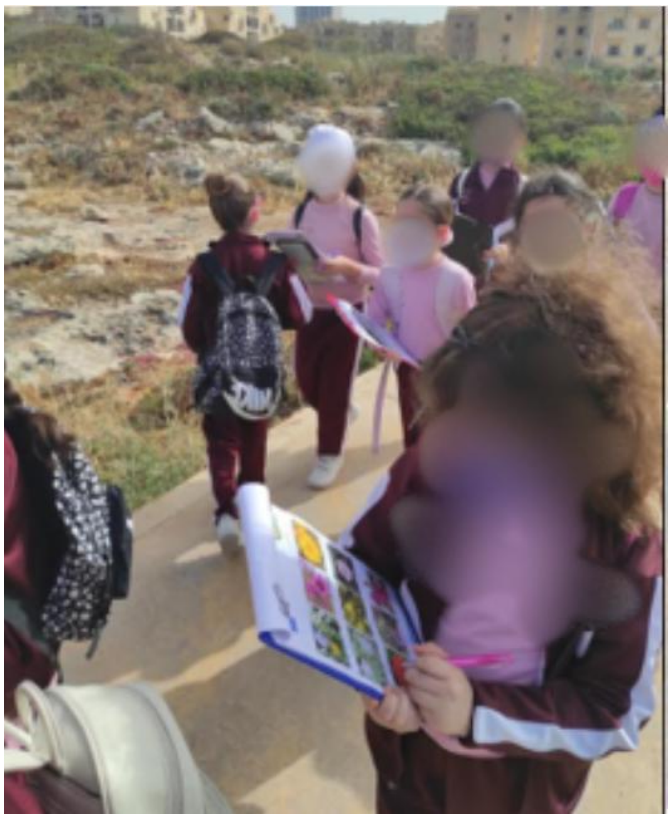


Photo 12.5: Students walked around and filled in tasks. At the start of the day, they were informed that once at school, they would need to refer to their notes to continue with their work.

Photos 12.1 to 12.5 show instances when several tasks were assigned and completed during the outing. The photos show evidence that students could fill in and complete tasks and discuss. Learners were encouraged to cooperate with others, demonstrated flexibility in problem-solving when given written tasks, as illustrated in the worksheets or kinaesthetic tasks such as Charades, and manifested an independent and individual ability to learn, such as

when asking questions to elicit information from the park rangers. This was achieved in a successful, creative, and fulfilling manner. The learner autonomy traits evaluated in the learner autonomy scale were all manifested to various degrees.

After the visit, upon returning to school during that week's lessons, the pupils were partnered. The teacher determined the pairings based on ability. Each pair received a compilation of writing genres from a list, presented below.

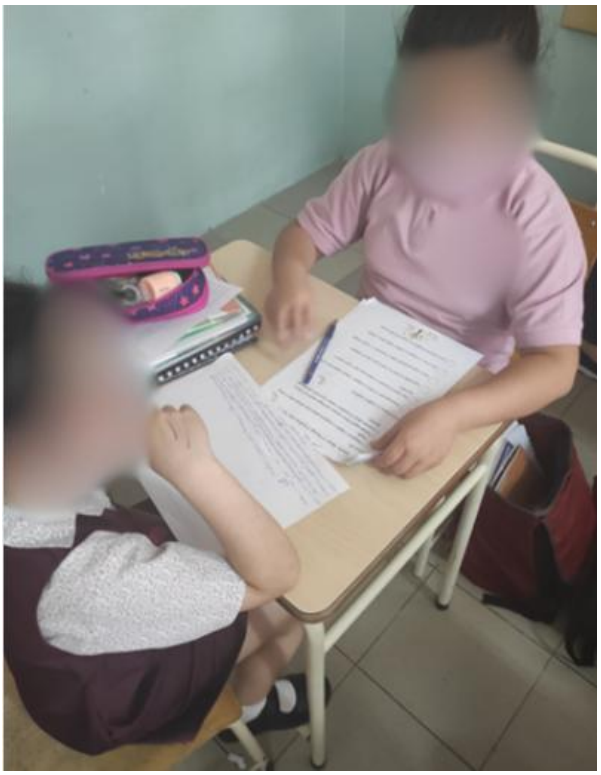


Photo 12.6: Once at school, students worked in pairs.

In line with writing language acquisition, there were three lists of writing tasks which corresponded to the three primary levels of student ability. Encouraging pair work is essential, as elucidated in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.2) and further elaborated in Chapter 9. School tasks involved collaborative learning, transforming the learner from a passive observer into an active participant when each individual becomes responsible for co-constructing novel work by engaging in the activity with their partner.

The lists included the following writing genres (Level 3 for the high achievers, to Level 1 planned for students who find writing challenging). They were all linked to different learning outcomes. The information that they needed to plan and write their task could be drawn from the tasks they had carried out during the outing, as follows :

- a day in the life of .... (diary entry) (Level 3 and 2) (outcome K6)
- a dialogue between (chose any two organisms) observed in the park (Level 3 and 2) (outcome K5)

- a recipe which can be used to prepare food suitable for the visit to the park (Level 3) (K8 and K2)
- a poem (using the acronym of anything related to the park) (Level 2 and 1)
- a letter of appreciation to the Park Rangers (Level 3 and 2) (K1, K7)
- slogans related to appropriate signage that can be used in the park (Level 1) (K1 K7)
- captions related to appropriate signage that can be used in the park (Level 1) (K1, K7
- write the instructions to the game of Charades (Level 2) (K8 and K2)
- write information that could be included in a leaflet regarding the place you visited (K1, K4 and K7) (Level 3)
- Write suggestions to visitors to keep the place clean (Level 2) (K8 and K2)

From the writing genres set for the different levels, students, in pairs, chose the writing task they wanted to work on. Chapter 3, which focused on the theoretical frameworks of learner autonomy, asserts that a learner's capacity for independent action can only be cultivated through personal accountability for their education (Little et al., 2002) and flexibility and adaptability (Benson, 2011), along with the traits and characteristics listed in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. The task provided learners with a degree of autonomy. Besides allowing the possibility to choose their task, the thematic content of the writing genre also allows for freedom of choice despite the genre constraints. For example, the diary entry prompts learners to write a diary entry; other than that, the learners had no constraints on who was writing the entry. This aligned with the characteristic that permitted pupils to select their materials. After the students selected the writing job, the teacher prepared the handout for their final presentation.

Upon receiving the above-mentioned list of writing genres, the students were instructed to select their preferred assignment and engage in discussion with their partner. The students collaborated in pairs to strategise their writing work, deliberated on language, determined presentation methods, and subsequently commenced the initial draft. The observed learning processes related to these writing tasks, concentrated on fostering learner autonomy in the classroom setting, necessitating that all tasks commence, progress, and conclude within the school setting. This was constructed using the same framework as the collaborative writing assignments outlined in Chapter 9. The student's ability to follow instructions independently of their teacher was a manifestation of retention from the

collaborative skills they developed earlier in the case study. The completion of the tasks took two double lessons (around 160 minutes). Photos 12.7 to 12.10 present evidence of actual writing language acquisition and show the process each pair of students undertook to obtain the learning outcome targeted for the genre they chose to work on. All the students followed the writing process in pairs. The plan moves on to the first draft. The learners wrote down their final version from the first draft. The process was then self-assessed on the sheet provided by the teacher, which tallied the learning outcomes that needed to be reached by the end of the project.

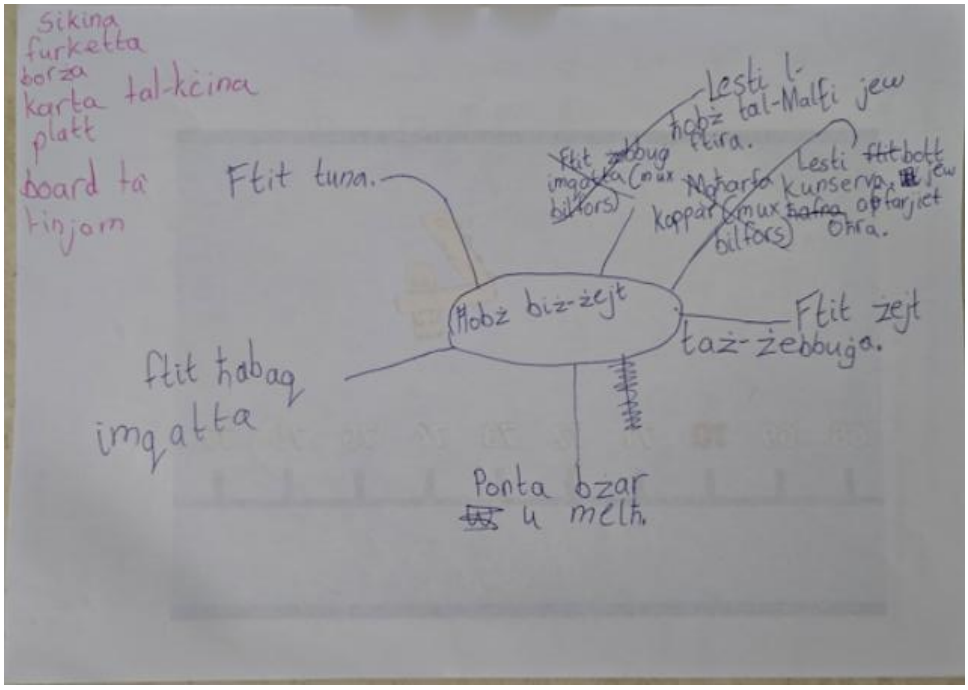


Photo 12.7 Brainstorming

Photo 12.7 displays a draft of the mind map and words that one pair of learners intended to utilise in their recipe. The selected recipe was for the traditional Maltese Ħobż biż-Żejt (Oiled Bread). During this process, learners deliberated and generated instructions and words that reflected the ingredients to be utilised. In the top left corner, in red, the vocabulary selected by the learners is displayed. This procedure was facilitated by the training they received through word banks and the mini-whiteboard.

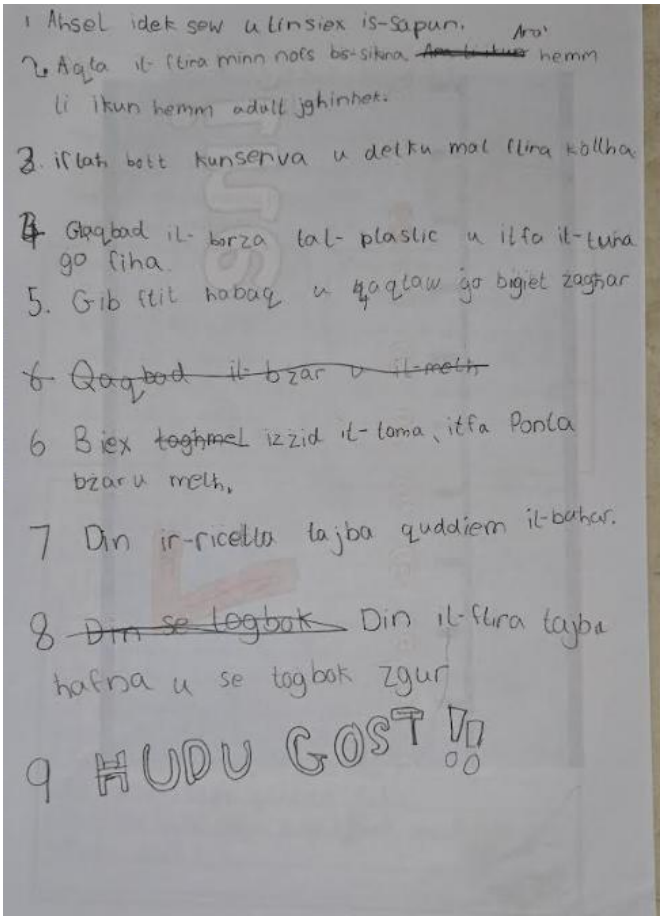
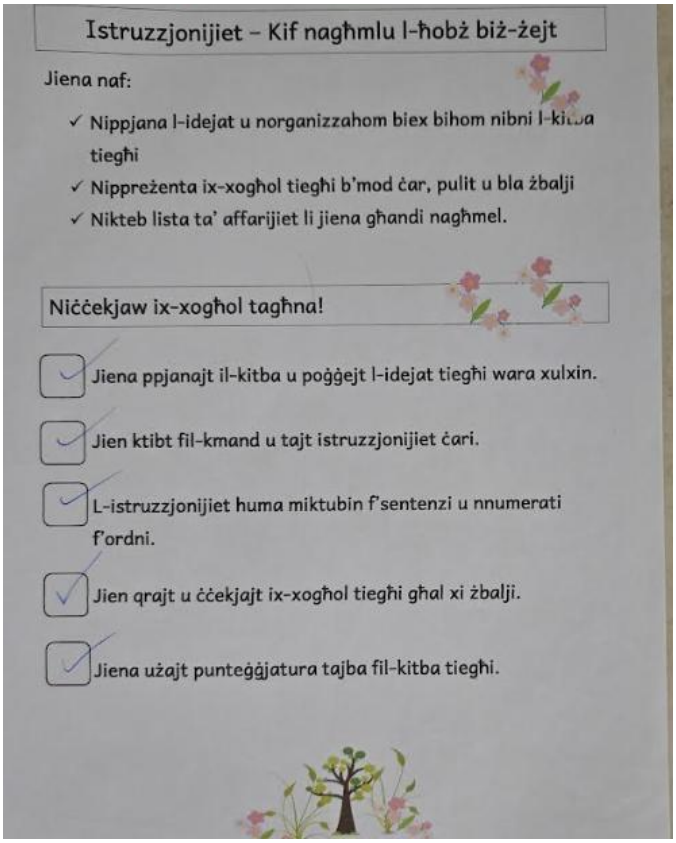


Photo 12.8 Draft Writing task

Photo 12.8 illustrates the phase after the brainstorming session. Here, learners organised their preliminary concepts sequentially. This photograph illustrates their ability to evaluate, erase, and change their work as required. In addition to minor spelling problems, there is also demonstrable proficiency in sequential writing, characterised by accurate punctuation. They are indicating their intention to design graphics for the representation of the final edition.

The pupils were given a self-assessment checklist (presented in Appendix 6.3), which the teacher prepared and which they filled in in pairs (photo 12.9). After drafting and checking the draft using the checklist, the learners moved on to the final version of their writing, illustrated in Photo 12.10.



Istruzzjonijiet – Kif nagħmlu l-ħobż biż-żejt

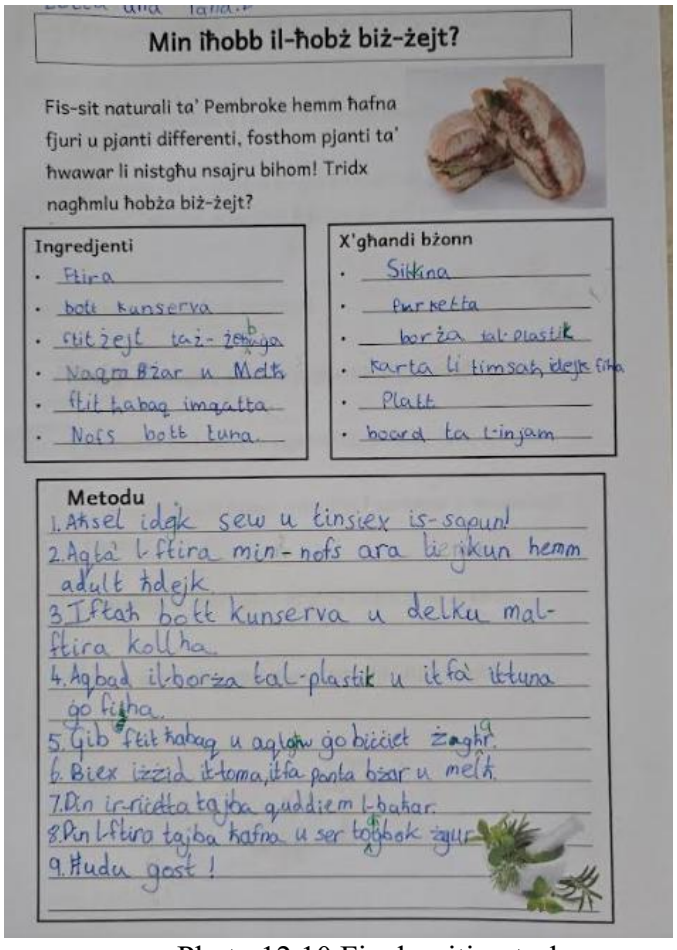
Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-idejat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb lista ta' affarijiet li jiena għandi nagħmel.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☑ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-idejat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☑ Jien ktibt fil-kmand u tajt istruzzjonijiet ċari.
- ☑ L-istruzzjonijiet huma miktubin f'sentenzi u nnumerati f'ordni.
- ☑ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☑ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.

Photo 12.9: Self-assessing Checklist



Min iħobb il-ħobż biż-żejt?

Fis-sit naturali ta' Pembroke hemm ħafna fjuri u pjanti differenti, fosthom pjanti ta' ħwawar li nistgħu nsajru bihom! Tridx nagħmlu ħobża biż-żejt?

Ingredjenti

- Ftira
- Bott Kunserva
- Stit żejt taż-żebbuġa
- Nagra Bżar u Melħ
- ftit ħabaq imqatta
- Noss bott tuna.

X'għandi bżonn

- Siftina
- Purtetta
- borża tal-plastik
- Karta li timsaħ idejk fiha
- Platt
- board ta l-injam

Metodu

1. Aħsel idejk sew u ħinsiex is-sapun!
2. Aqta' l-ftira min-nofs ara li jkun hemm adult ħdejk
3. Iftaħ bott kunserva u delku mal-ftira kollha.
4. Aqbad il-borża tal-plastik u itfa' ittuna go fiha.
5. Qib ftit ħabaq u aqlgħu go biċċiet żgħar.
6. Biex iżżid it-toma, itfa ponta bżar u melħ.
7. Din ir-ricetta tajba quddiem l-baħar.
8. Pin l-ftira tajba ħafna u ser togħbok żgur
9. Ħudu gost!

Photo 12.10 Final writing task

Photo 12.9 shows the self-assessment checklist filled in by the pair of learners who chose to work on the instructions of how to make 'ħobż biż-żejt' – the Oiled Maltese traditional bread. The teacher prepared the checklist in line with the learning outcomes, which were listed at the top of the checklist. The outcomes in the illustrated checklist (Photo 12.9) were elicited from K7 (I present my final texts clearly, neatly, and without errors in syntax, morphology, grammar, spelling, or punctuation); K1(I plan ideas and organise them to weave drafts for my writings according to specific objectives, asking questions such as: Who? When? How? Where? What happened? Why?) and K2 (I write lists of words and sentences, such as shopping lists or chore lists, that describe what I must do.) Since the imperative verb was used (Imperattiv) throughout the instructions, this could also be linked to T5 (I use the imperative to give directions and instructions). Photo 12.10 illustrates the final version of the written representation of the learners' work.

This is one example of work presented by the pupils. All student pairs utilised the aforementioned technique. They followed the following steps: Brainstorming including vocabulary needed; first draft; amendments made by following the checklist provided; and then the final draft was produced.

Samples of the complete scanned writing process of 4 pairs of students are presented in Appendix 6.2 as evidence to show the written language acquisition. The following photographs display the completed versions of all the writing assignments that the students collaborated on in pairs. The identities of individuals and the school have been obscured to safeguard anonymity.



Photo 12.11: Writing a Dialogue between 2 fictitious characters visiting the same place (K5).

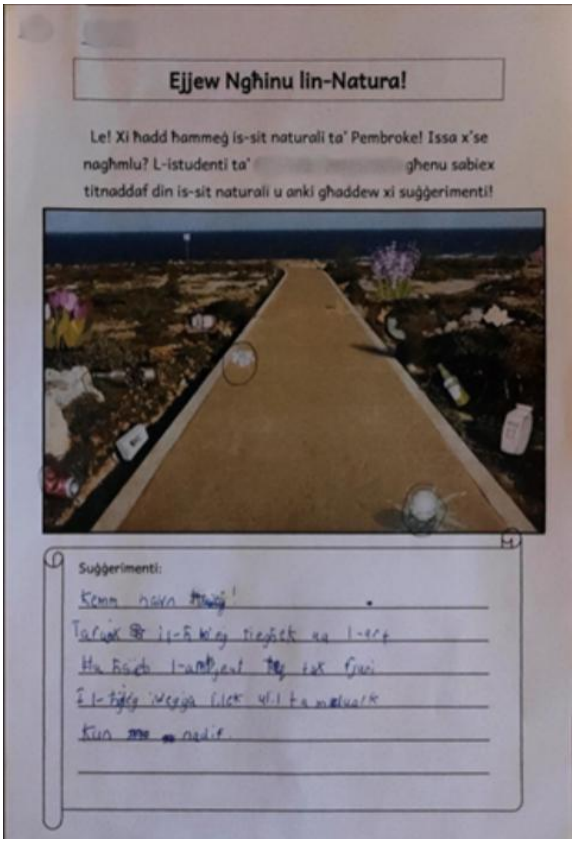


Photo 12.12: Write suggestions to visitors to keep the place clean

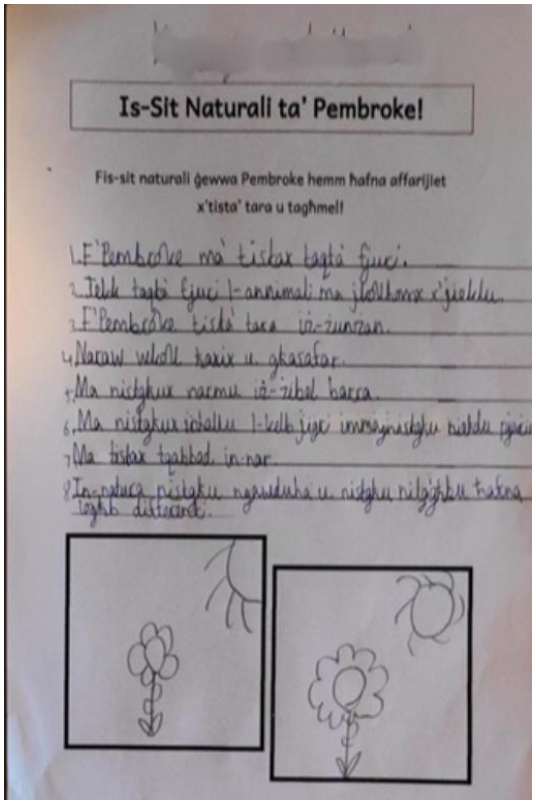


Photo 12.13: Write information that could be included in a leaflet regarding the place you visited (K1, K4 and K7)

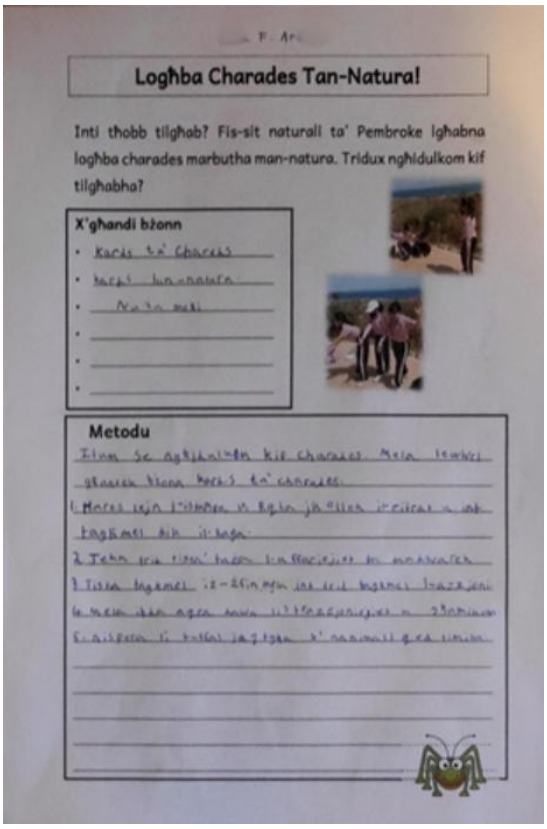


Photo 12.14: Describe how you played charades (K8 and K2).

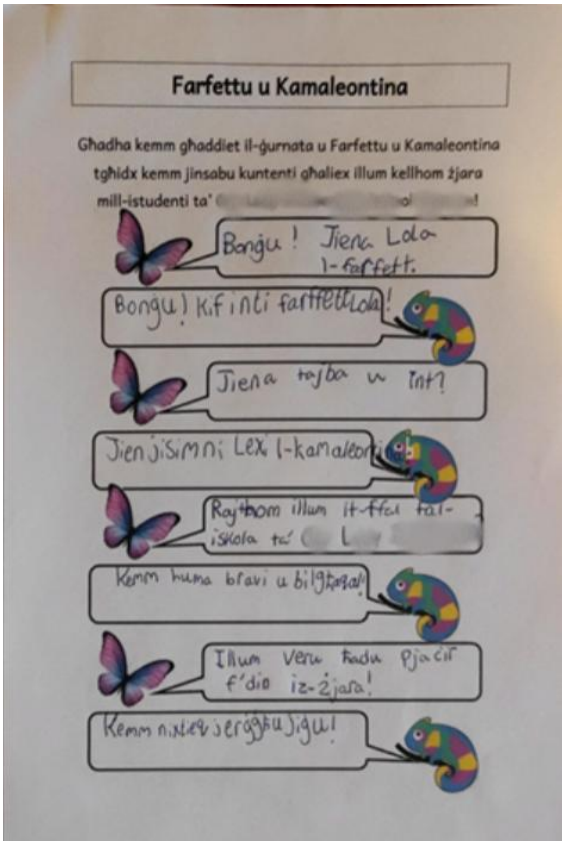


Photo 12.15: Write a dialogue between two creatures that live in the Natural Park

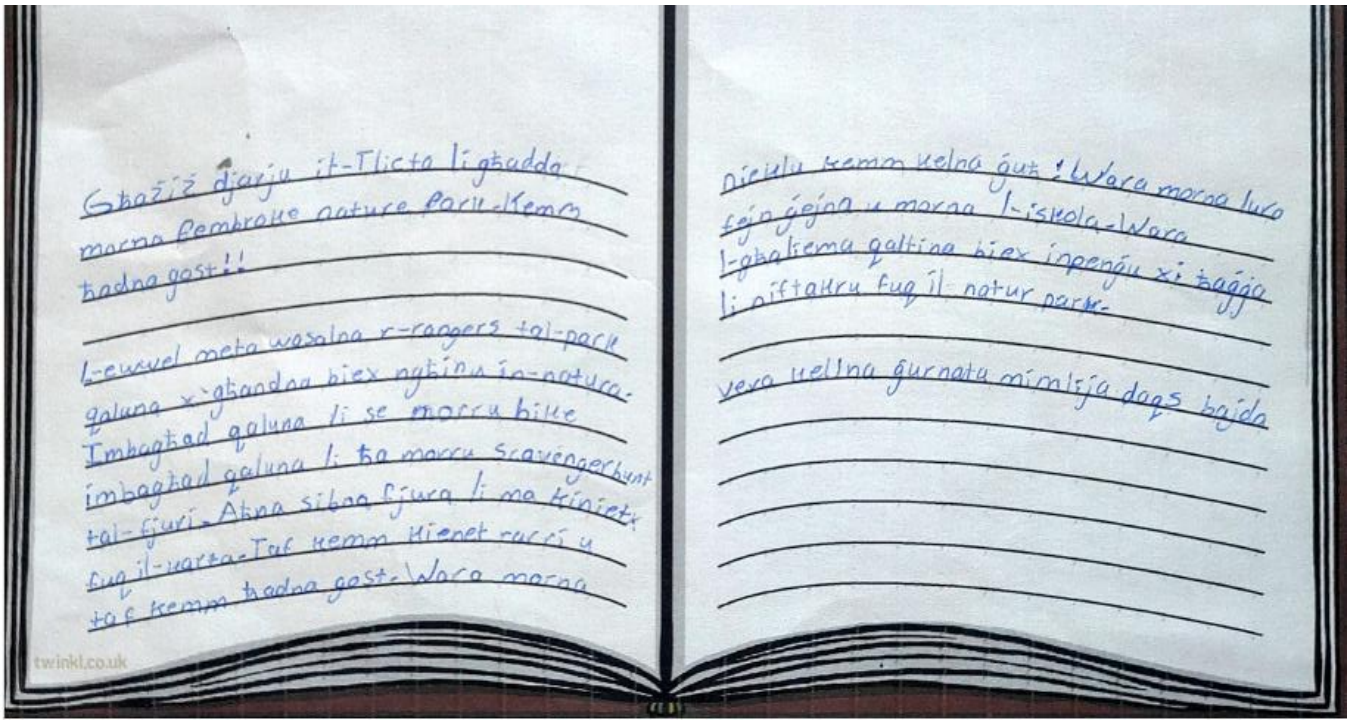


Photo 12.16: Write a diary entry describing today's visit to the Natural Park(K6)

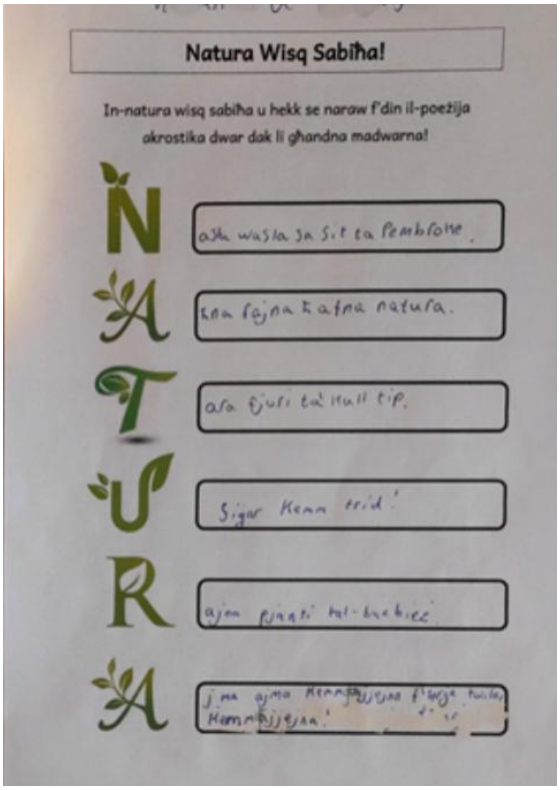


Photo 12.17: Write a poem using an acronym.

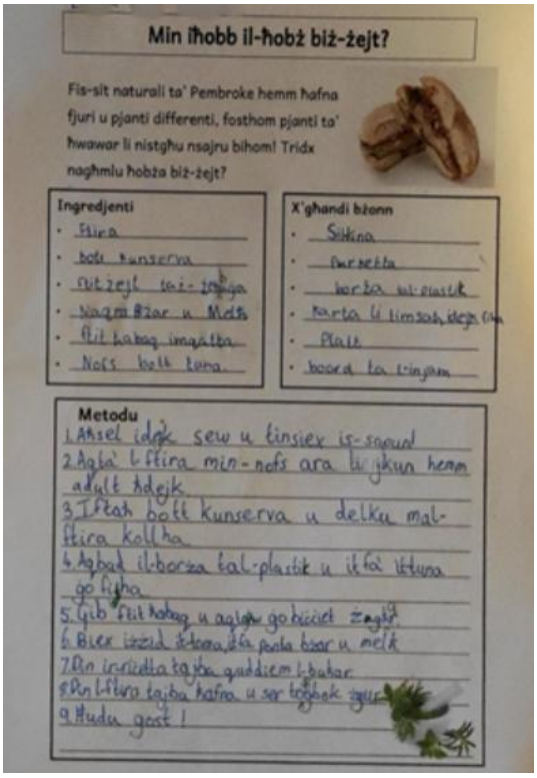
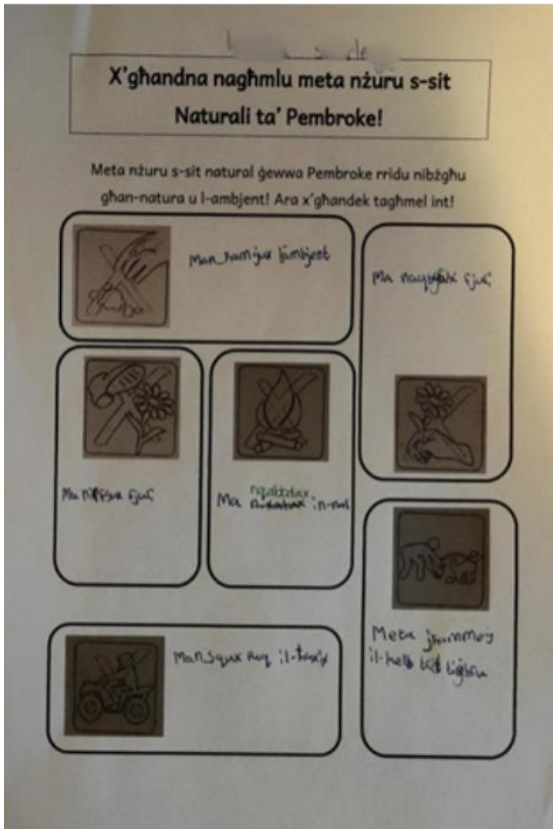
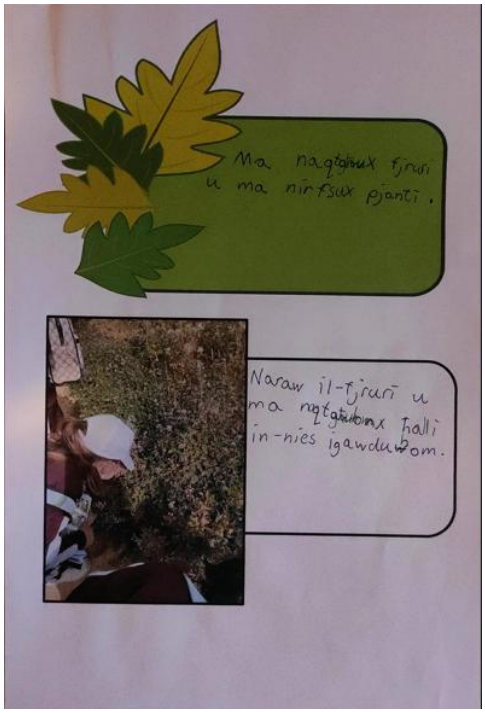


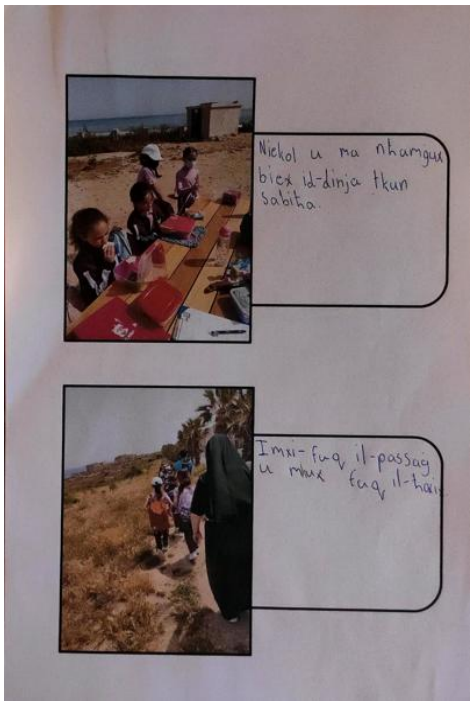
Photo 12.18: Write a recipe for something you would love to eat at the natural park (K8 and K2)



Photos 12.19 Write Captions for the park (one pair of students)

Photos 12.20 and 12.21 (one pair of students):
Write captions of messages you want to print and put around the natural park (K1, K7).





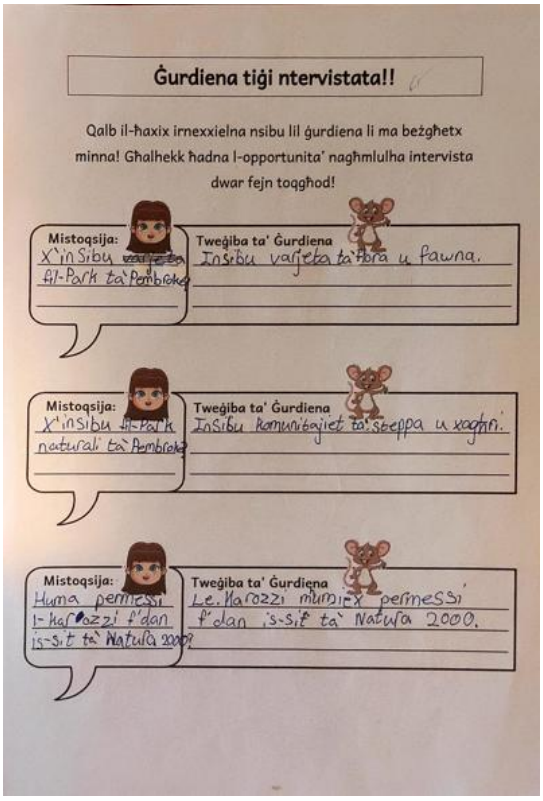
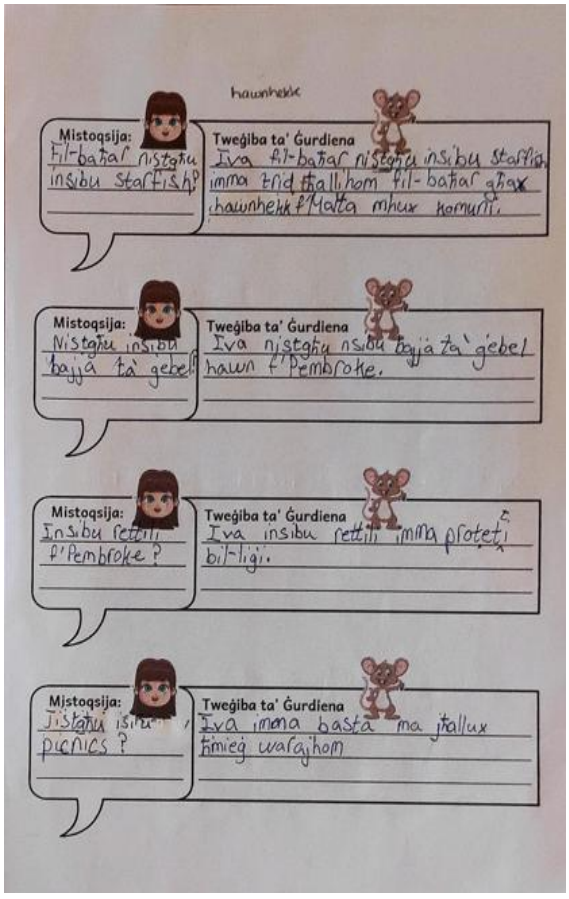


Photo 12.22a and 12.22b:You meet a mouse in the park. Write your conversation (K5)



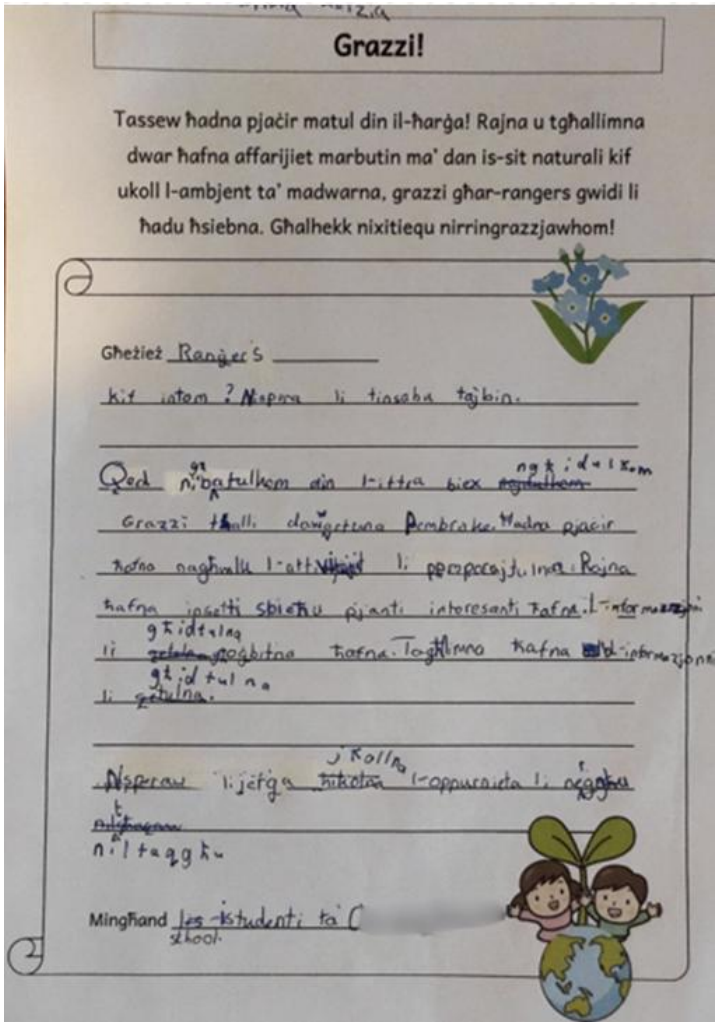


Photo 12.23: Write a thank-you letter to the park rangers (K1, K7).

Photos 12.11 to 12.23 all present evidence of the written language acquisition acquired by the different students. The images of the writing tasks of all the pairs of pupils are presented in Appendix 6.2. After completing the writing tasks associated with the different writing genres, every pair of students was asked to finalise a self-assessment checklist. The teacher subsequently reviewed their work. All submissions were scanned and compiled into an eBook using the Book Creator software. The digital book was detailed in Chapter 10, Section 10.2.6 and presented in print form in Appendix 6.1. The eBook was printed and displayed on the display board in the corridor outside the classroom for all to see. This project integrated all the learner autonomy skills cultivated and enhanced throughout the case study. The writing work resulted from collaboration, achieving a combination of aims as previously defined, utilising technology effectively. When combined with the writing task, the activity provided an adaptive learning experience (every pair of students was responsible for their page) based on personalised instruction (every pair of students chose and wrote their task), engaging in discussions during the process. During the outing, pupils' tasks employed

kinaesthetic and higher-order thinking. Becoming co-authors in a book gave the learners a high level of satisfaction:

> Std14_June22: *eċitata ħafna. Qatt ma ħsibt li se jkolli ismi fuq ktieb.*
>
> Std14_June22: I am very excited. I never thought my name would be published in a book.

Throughout the process, the teacher was noted to adopt an overseeing role, monitoring progress from a distance. The following checklist illustrates that this Grade 4 project provided numerous chances for cultivating learner autonomy.

To answer RQ2, the data analysis and findings presented in this chapter and the following analysis show that the pedagogy adopted in this project aligns with the LAS targets set during the project's planning and implementation phases. The Grade 4 pupils reached the targeted LA characteristics and traits at various degrees through the project.

The learning environment created in and out of school was conducive to the following characteristics:

Learning by doing	✓
Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	✓
The learner is responsible for their own learning by setting their own goals.	✓
Learners are responsible for their own learning through discovering, identifying, and using their own resources for learning.	✓
Learners helping each other.	✓
Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	✓
Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	✓
Learners are responsible for their own learning by planning their own programmes, with students free to use material at any time.	✓
Value of individuality	✓
Learners discover meaning for themselves.	✓

During the visit, and whilst working and presenting the tasks, learners manifested the following traits:

Able to co-operate with others	✓
Learning to learn	✓
Independent and individual study	✓
Better ability to deal with problems	✓
Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	✓
Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	✓

Table 12.1 LAS Project G4

Following the completion of the written genres, the digital book was later presented to other teachers and the assistant heads of primary as a project during Book Week. On the day of the eBook launch, the digital access code was provided to the parents, and all pupils presented their work confidently, addressing questions from peers and educators while the eBook was displayed on screen.



Photo 12.24: Students explaining in front of their peers and other guests.

As illustrated in Photo 12.24, students gained sufficient confidence to 'defend' their work. This is in line with verbal language acquisition which focuses on expression and fluency. They are observed elucidating the genre they selected for their writing to their

classmates. Any member of the audience could ask questions pertaining to the process. All the learner-partners advanced to the front of the class to showcase their work.

In this project, all students were able to engage equally and demonstrate autonomy, regardless of their abilities, throughout the park visit and while discussing and completing their tasks. Moreover, the anxiety exhibited by the students at the onset of the case study described in Chapter 8 was no longer obvious. The results indicate that pupils took ownership of their work and presented themselves confidently before an audience.

With awareness that the project was held after months of adaptations, which aimed at nurturing learner autonomy, the outcome of this project managed to reap the benefits of the transition. When requested to elucidate their work, all the pupils exhibited confidence as they had not depended on an adult for its creation and could take ownership of the process. Bell (2009) asserts that substantial class projects facilitate collaboration among all participants towards a shared goal and foster appreciation for the collective result. Recent research (Horkan McWalters, 2020; Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė, 2021) demonstrates that collaborative teaching methodologies with upper primary and secondary students enhance students' active engagement and linguistic advancement. This study focuses on younger students and incorporates a wide enough variety of tasks for everyone to be engaged in at their respective levels. It seeks to analyse the cultivation of the traits and characteristics previously identified in the LAS that align with fostering autonomy. The assistant head's comments sent to me via email, after the presentation of the eBook, showed that the change was evident for all to see:

> I was so impressed by all the girls. They were so proud to show off their work and explain what they did, and they all managed to participate. That is so good. Unfortunately, some students find school hard; they find it hard to feel that they will not fail or that they can cope with the workload. What impressed me the most was that the ones who are usually shy and feel inferior to the others were happy to explain and show off their work. The environment was so positive. Moreover, showing off their book to their parents is also very positive.

This section provides study findings indicating that attaining learning outcomes can involve a synthesis of many outcomes and can be achieved over multiple lessons centred on a project. When planned and implemented effectively and aimed at promoting learner autonomy, whole-class projects can foster skills in students across the proficiency levels. The educational experience encompasses both the classroom and external environments, resulting in activities and assignments that prompt students to focus on their surroundings, express descriptions clearly, demonstrate creativity, and link academic concepts to real-world

applications. As mentioned in Chapter 10, the methodology used in this project provided a combination of enhanced technology use and handwriting and paper-based tasks. Evidence shows that this methodology enhances student engagement and achievement, as learners benefit from the immediacy and multimodal stimuli of digital platforms and the tactile, reflective nature of writing (Tanyeli Zeki & Kuter, 2018). This approach ensures that technological innovation complements rather than replaces foundational pedagogical practices, creating a more inclusive and effective educational experience. In line with research question 1, the following table (Table 12.2) delineates how this project increased teaching and learning effectiveness in this context with the Grade 4 class.

There is clarity of presentation suitable for the students' level of attainment. *The teacher explained the targets for each task. Learners were left alone to decide which task to cover.*
The content to be covered is clearly outlined.√
Adaptations and learning environments created were conducive to the development of all students. *An inclusive class environment helped create a positive learning environment where all students felt that they achieved the outcome targeted for that lesson or activity.*
There is an effective use of group activities and paired work. *Learners worked independently in pairs. They made decisions related to the content they were going to cover. The collaborative aspect was also evident when using technology. This was used to present and explain the processes involved in the writing genres. The eBook offered the possibility for collaboration.*
The use of prompts and questions is effective. *This was not as pronounced verbally but was presented through checklists, indirectly prompting the students without needing the teacher's intervention.*
There is an opportunity to learn through various learning initiatives. √

The quantity of content presented and the instruction pace are suitable for the students' attainment. √ *students coped well*
Students showed evident progress and attainment of outcomes. √ *targets were reached*
Students show motivation and interest in learning to learn. √ *evident throughout*
Students' attainment of outcomes. √ *achieved presented as evidence*
The Retention of the assimilation of knowledge is evident among students. √ *This is evident since students were able to complete their tasks independently of the teacher's didactic instructions.The teacher acted as a guide and took the role of facilitator of learning.*

Table 12.2 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale(TLES) ProjectGr4

The aforementioned indicates that, in accordance with the objectives established on the TLES scale, this initiative demonstrated a high efficacy in teaching and learning.

This section presents evidence related to the Grade 4 project. The subsequent section will elucidate the Grade 3 project, which was structured in phases, used the new LEGO equipment and focused on reaching a number of outcomes as explained in Section 12.2. It also required a number of lessons to complete.

12.2 Grade 3 project

The Grade 3 pupils engaged in a project centred on the theme of animals. The project's planning and associated tasks aimed to foster student autonomy and incorporated a blend of skills that the learners had previously developed during the first two terms. The learning outcomes pertaining to the achievement of objectives in writing, reading, speaking, listening, and vocabulary acquisition were incorporated. Speaking and listening skills were also addressed during the presentations of their work. This project involved both grade 3 teacher participants and 48 pupils (2 pupils were not part of the research but still participated in all the activities and lessons). The two classes enjoyed the outing together. The lessons held after, as explained in this section, were also completed on the same days. The project also incorporated LEGO Education, which promotes hands-on learning, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving through playful, engaging activities that support literacy development. Teachers had been given training on how to incorporate LEGO education to nurture learner autonomy during one of the focus groups.

Outing (Activity 1): All students were taken to a farm near Manikata, Malta. Prior to the one-day excursion, the students received explicit instructions. They were instructed to observe the farm and document the animals and their respective habitats. They were instructed to retain as much information as possible, as it would be necessary upon their return to school. In contrast to the organisation of the Grade 4 assignment, the pupils were neither provided with handouts to complete nor instructed to bring their clipboards. The purpose of the excursion was experiential. There was a farmer around, but the teachers acted as guides and prompted the pupils to observe different areas.



Photo 12.25: Observing animals



Photo 12.26: Students were allowed to observe the habitat of the animals.



Photo 12.27: Pupils could even enter the habitat when considered safe

Photos 12.25 to 12.27 illustrate Grade 3 pupils permitted to approach the animals as closely as considered safe. They observed the animals and their habitat. It is noteworthy that it was their first time visiting a farm for several of them.

Lesson (Activity 2): Subsequent to the site visit, the project was incrementally developed a few days after the outing was held. The pupils were initially instructed to engage in a class

brainstorming session. The pupils were asked to recount their observations, while the teachers transcribed the children's statements on the board. This assignment pertains to the learning outcome for Maltese T6 (I discuss myself, my family, and my surroundings), emphasising the recognition and acquisition of new words related to the environment. This subsequently evolved into targeting T8, (I engage in discussions within small groups, facilitated by teachers, to articulate my opinions and emotions using appropriate grammatical structure, syntax, vocabulary, and proper intonation as required), when students were instructed to expand individual words into sentences verbally. The teacher prompted students to construct sentences utilising descriptive language and conjunctions verbally. This verbal part of language use served as the foundation for more intricate linguistic tasks.

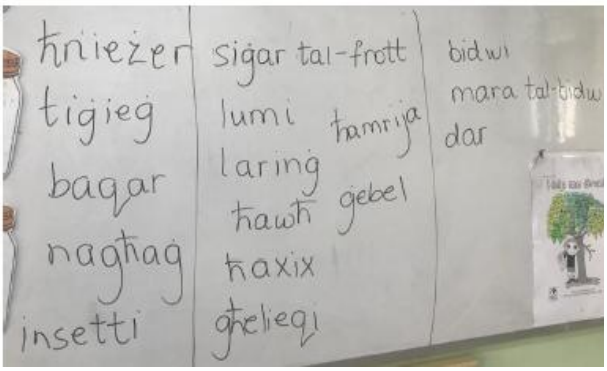


Photo 12.28: Brainstorming session in Class 3.1

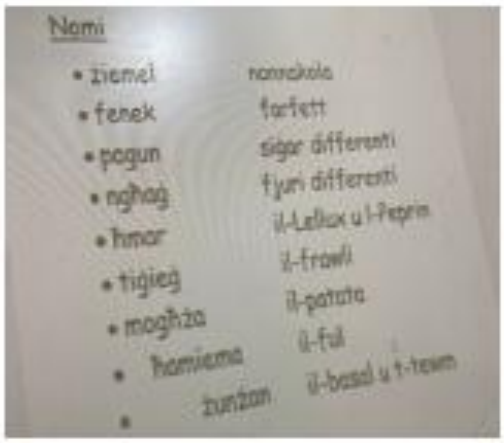


Photo 12.29: Brainstorming session in Class 3.2

This activity targeted T4, T9 and T10 which are speaking outcomes which focus on intonation, ability to pass on the message correctly, speak on yourself and the environment. They were exposed to the written new vocabulary targeting Q1 which focuses on reading new words.

The next step focused on writing learning outcomes K1, K2 and S8. Learners were first asked to write the words, then asked to select a few of the words with which they wrote sentences. This work was completed individually and independently of peers or their teacher (photo 12.30).



Photo 12.30: Gr3 student working individually

This lesson aligned with learner autonomy trait 13 and characteristic C1, which focuses on independent working. It also shows increased efficacy in teaching and learning, since the adaptations and learning environments created were conducive to the development of all students irrespective of their ability; students showed evident progress and attainment of outcomes, and the content to be covered was clearly outlined.

Lesson (Activity 3): During another session, following the brainstorming and sentence writing session, students were asked to read a story on Gamri's farm (photo 12.31). This targets learning outcome Q2 (I read with meaning and with confidence in my heart, alone, in silence, for fun). The story was not read in silence but read out aloud using role play. This story, 'Ir-razzett ta' Ġamri' (Gamri's farm), was then compared and contrasted with the farm they had visited.

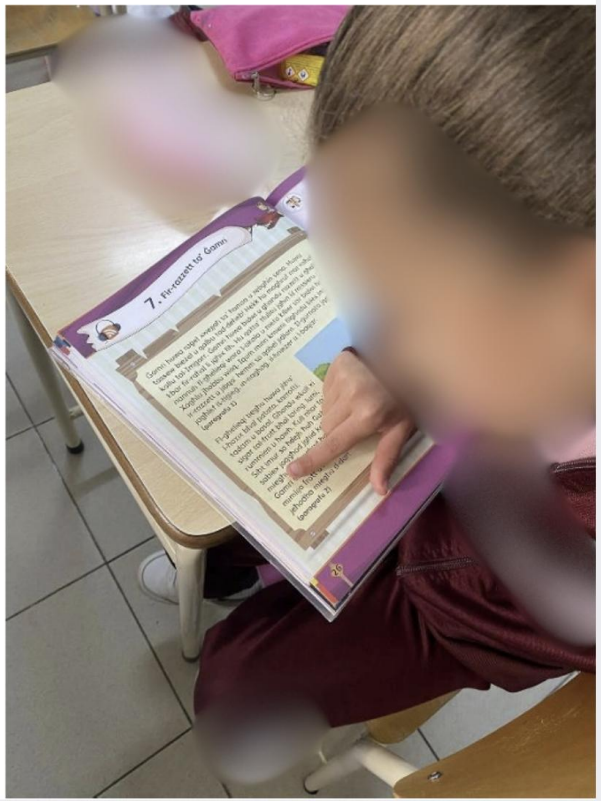


Photo 12.31: Student reading the story about Gamri's farm

The comparisons were made verbally, which also targeted T8 ((I take part in discussions in small groups, with the help of the teachers, where I express my views and feelings with a grammatical structure and good syntax, according to the vocabulary range of my age and with good intonation where necessary). During this lesson, in my observations I wrote that students were observed:

> LOS_AB3_7May22: There is a huge difference in the students' verbal language use from last Oct. They put their hands up and are trying very hard to avoid code-switching.
>
> LOS_CD3_7May22: The girls are following the teacher and engaging in the lesson. They are following the text and showing that they are understanding since when she is asking them questions, they put their hands up and answer in relation to the text and her question.

Lessons 4 and 5: The following was divided over two sessions. The process was similar in both Grade 3 classes, which organised the lessons at the same time. The students in both classes were divided into groups. Each group received a LEGO kit and was instructed to conceptualise and construct their perfect farm using the LEGO pieces. They were granted complete autonomy and permitted to exercise their creativity to the fullest extent. LEGO Education employs a tactile learning methodology that actively engages students in their educational journey. Through the use of the LEGO bricks, students in both classes were observed addressing challenges creatively, demonstrating proficiency in collaboration, whilst engaging in critical thinking. Students were observed using Maltese to deliberate whether their construction provided sufficient light for animals or if their constructed habitat permitted animals to exit from the enclosure. Others deliberated on the proximity of animals to the residential area of the farm and the potential disturbance this may cause to the owners. This offered a significant chance for verbal engagement.

The photographs of the farms provided as evidence below (photos 12.32 to 12.40) illustrate varying degrees of design complexity in the structures, which matched the students' varied cognitive capacities. The students' varying competencies did not impede their attainment of the objective, which centred on constructing a fictional farm and composing a narrative about it. Chapter 8 provided evidence of when, in October, these learners had low self-esteem when utilising Maltese for communication. Conversely, months later, the same students were utilising Maltese for group communication to conceptualise a farm.



Photo 12.32 Students in a group discussing their building at the initial stages of the process.



Photo 12.33 shows a LEGO building at a slightly more advanced process stage.



Photo 12.34 shows one of the farms complete with trees, tractors, and arches.

Such activities stimulated the students' imagination and creativity and instilled a strong sense of autonomy. Throughout the open-ended process, students designed their structures, vehicles, and entire worlds, allowing them to explore their ideas and experiment with different building techniques while expressing their unique perspectives.



Photo 12.35: Farm 2



Photo 12.36: Farm 3



Photo 12.37: Farm 4



Photo 12.38: Farm 5



Photo 12.39: Farm 6

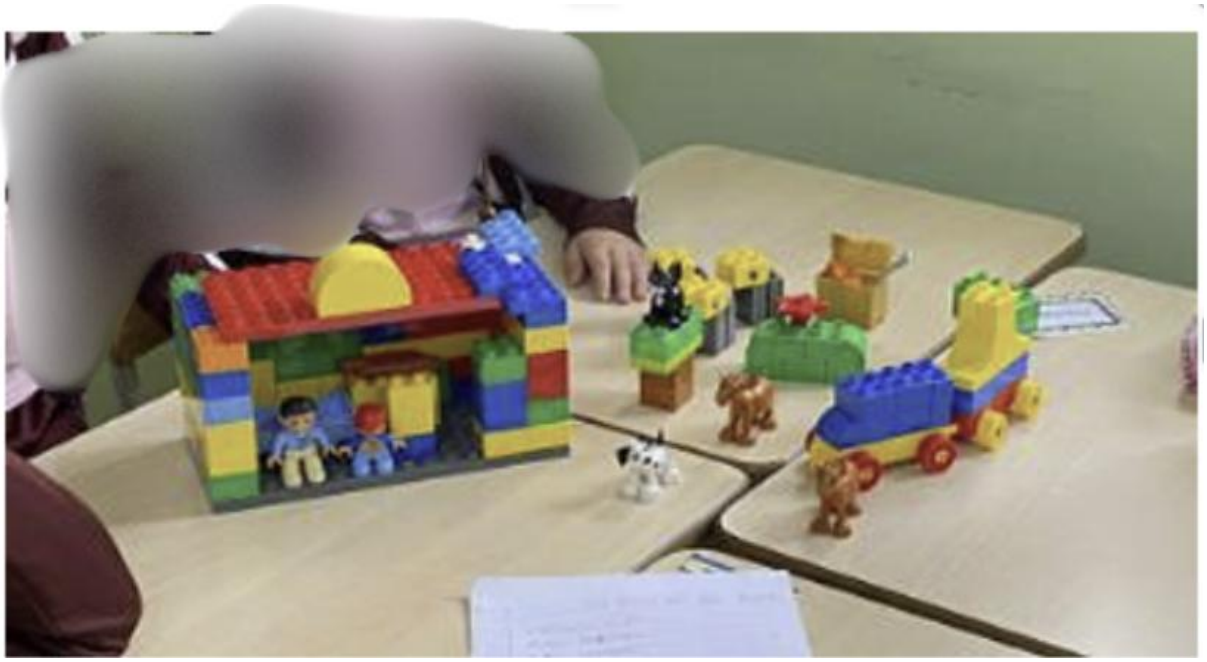


Photo 12.40: Farm 7





Photos 12.41 and 12.42 show the groups working on their writing tasks individually. They could still discuss, ask each other questions, and collaborate.

Lesson 6: Following their collaboration to construct the farm of their dreams, each student was instructed to write a description of the farm. While the groups collaboratively constructed their farm, they were instructed to compose their descriptions individually. Nevertheless, dialogue among students remained permissible. Photographs (Photos 12.41 and 12.42) illustrate that the pupils' desks remained arranged in clusters.

Completing the project took six sessions, a whole day for the outing and five 40-minute lesson slots, during which students were asked to use Maltese to communicate verbally and in writing. During the interactions conducted while constructing the farm, the students applied their newly acquired language skills together. Their experiences gained at the farm in a novel environment showed retention of the new vocabulary that they developed in their own creations.

A number of outcomes were targeted: T8 (I take part in discussions in small groups, with the help of the teachers, where I express my views and feelings with grammatical structure

and good syntax, according to the vocabulary range of my age, and with good intonation where necessary), T9 (I listen to the views of others while I wait and when it's my turn I give mine) and T10 (I control the volume of my voice according to the context, the place and the situation I am in) were the primary three learning outcomes targeted during the verbal interactions. The teachers walked around in both classes to ensure this was enforced.

The writing that was produced varied and reflected their diverse abilities. Notwithstanding this, the targeted learning outcomes were reached, albeit at different levels of the learners. These reflected K 1 (I write and form simple sentences or paragraphs on topics I am familiar with.); K3 (With the help of my teacher, I combine simple sentences into a paragraph.), and K4 (With the help of my teacher I know how to find good models of light writings to improve my writings and strengthen and increase my vocabulary according to my goals.) Notwithstanding their diversity in manifesting written and verbal language in varied degrees, all the students showed that they achieved the targeted outcomes related to writing, as shown in the evidence presented in the photos below.

There is evidence that shows that the learning autonomy traits on the LAS described and explained further on in Table 12.3, were achieved. Evidence presented in Table 12.4 shows that this also led to an increase in effective teaching and learning processes. In the context of this case study, this project showed the intrinsic value of learning through the manifestations of students' engagement, motivation, and interest in the tasks and the production of work that met and were aligned with the learning outcomes set by the teachers.

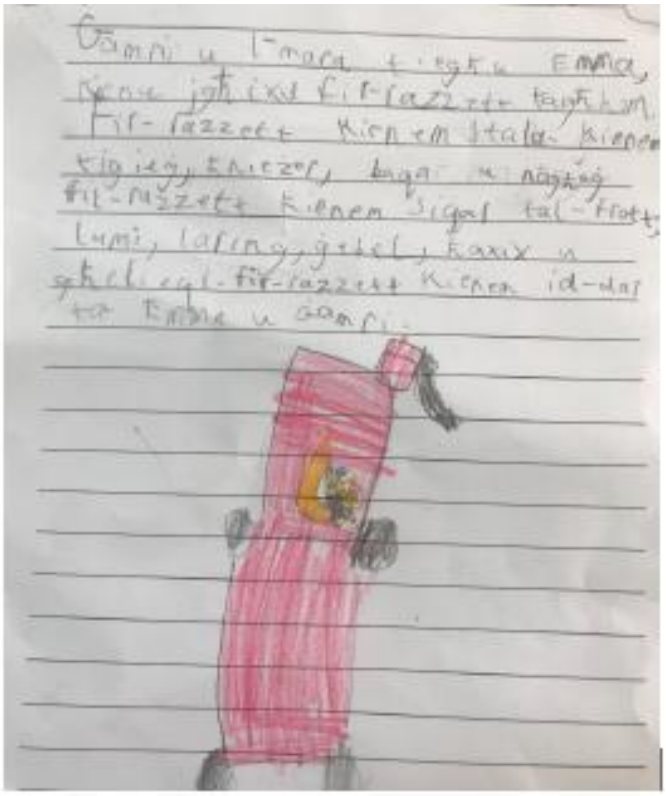


Photo 12.43 Writing task 1



Photo 12.44: Writing task 2

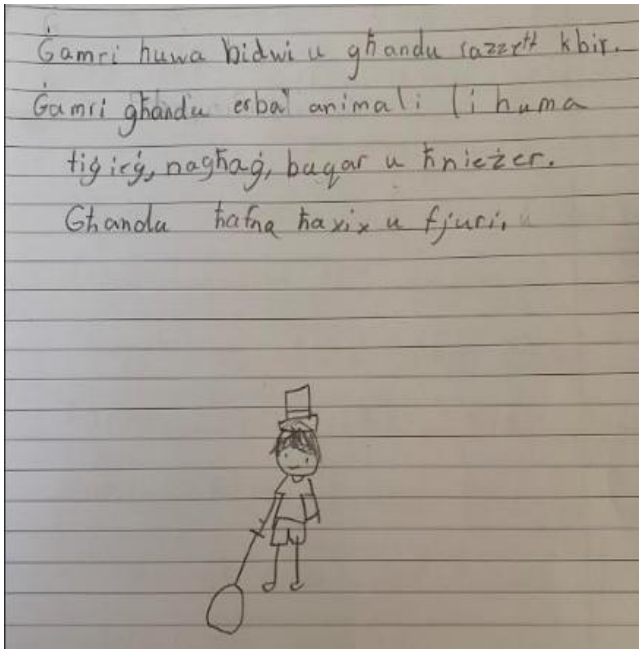


Photo 12.45: Writing task 3

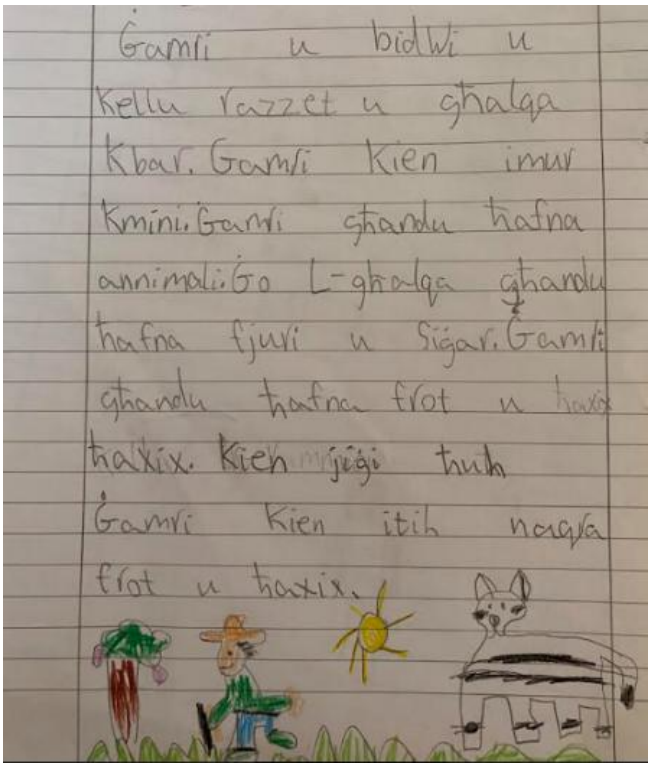


Photo 12.46: Writing task 4

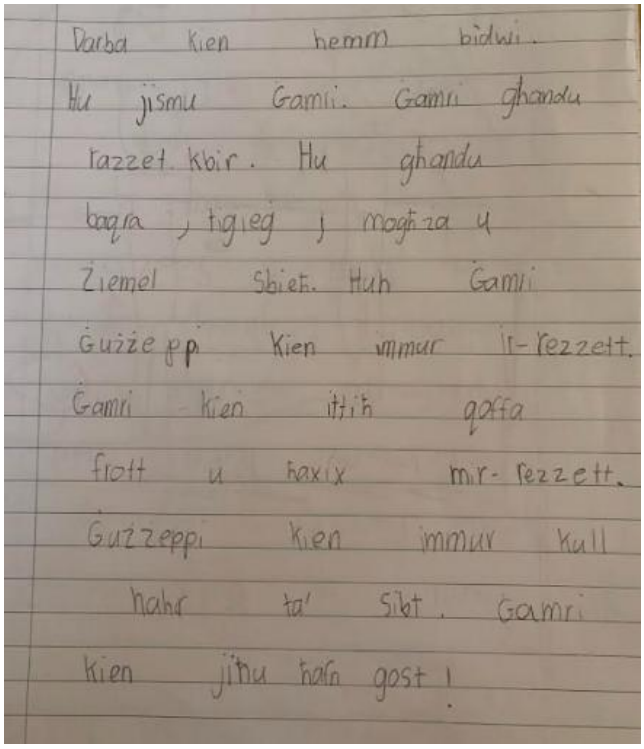

Darba kien hemm bidwi.
Hu jismu Gamli. Gamli ghandu
razzet. kbir. Hu ghandu
bagra, tigieg, maghza u
Ziemel sbiet. Huh Gamli
Guzeppi kien immur it-razzett.
Gamli kien itfih qafa
frott u haxix mir-razzett.
Guzzeppi kien immur kull
nahar ta' sibt. Gamli
kien jinu hafn gost!

Photo 12.47: Writing task 5

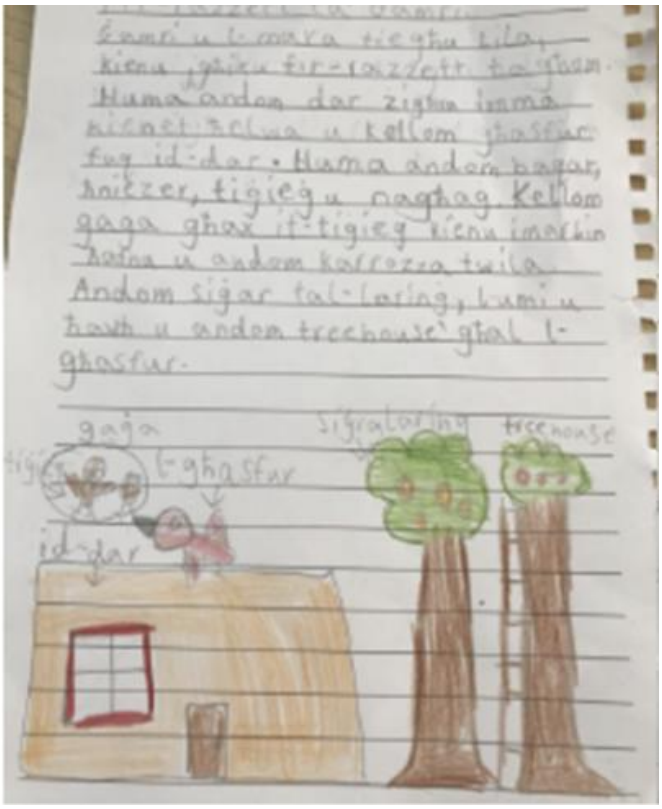


Photo 12.48: Writing task 6

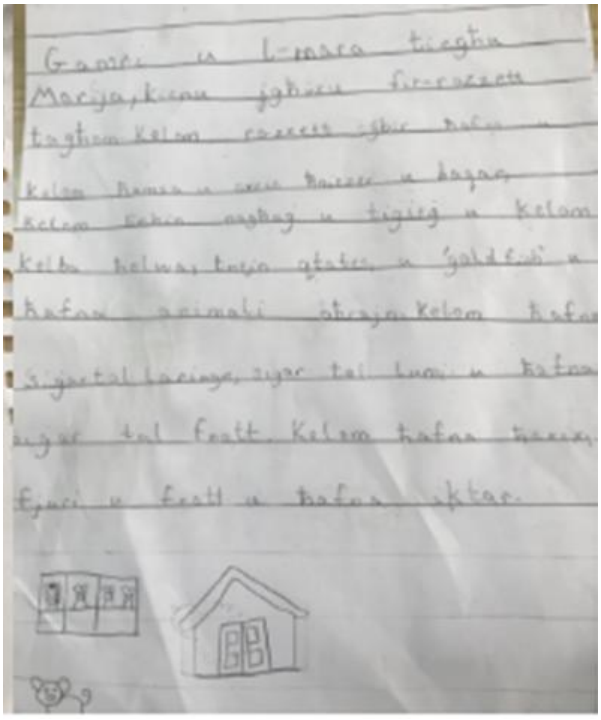


Photo 12.49: Writing task 7

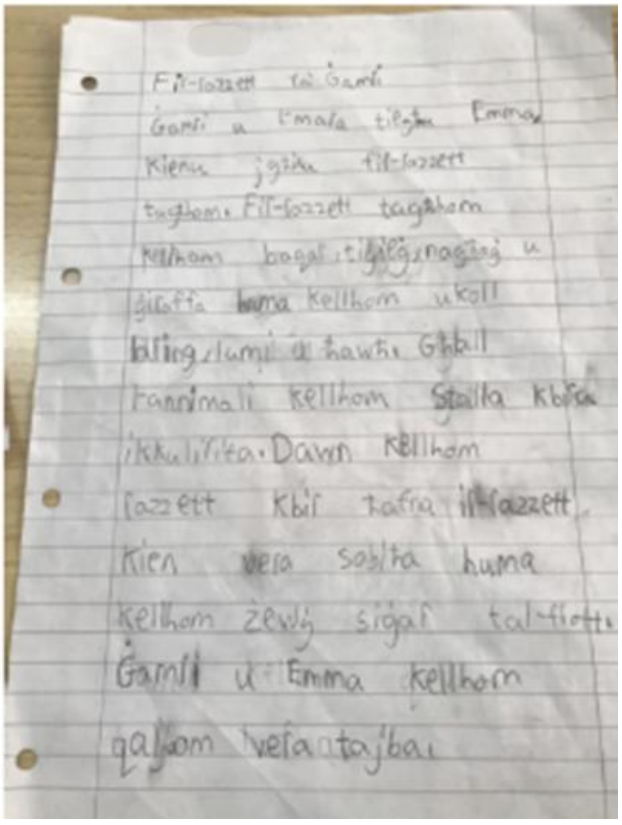


Photo 12.50: Writing task 8

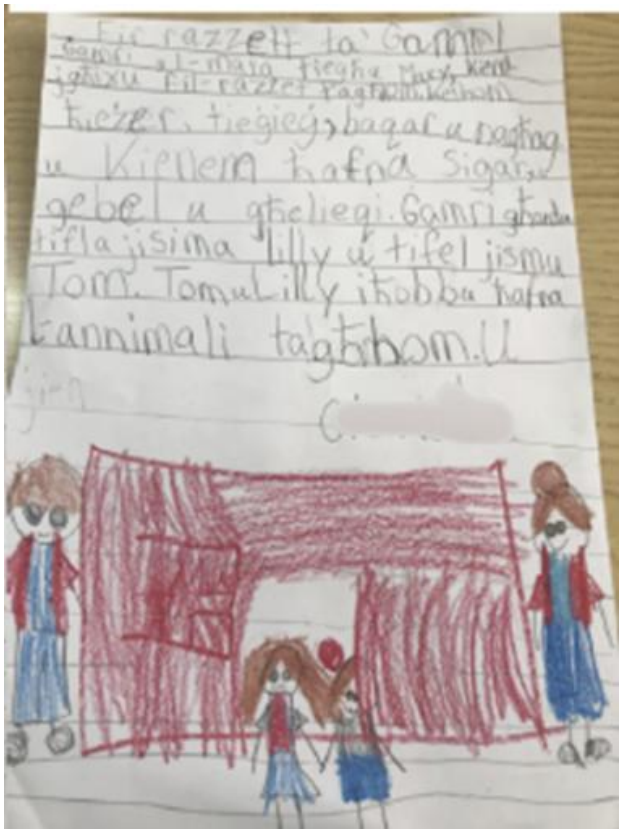


Photo 12.51: Writing task 9

The work produced, of which a selection is illustrated in Photos 12.42 to 12.51 was celebrated in class since all the tasks were read in front of the class and then proudly displayed on the class corridor display board. The above photos present different levels of the individual writing tasks, reflecting the different levels of attainment. They show that the teaching and learning processes were effectively reached. Autonomy traits and characteristics reached are logged in Table 12.3_LAS_ProjectGr3 and 4.

When planning this project with the teachers, it was important to emphasise and highlight the active involvement of all students. Students took on various roles during the process, from building the farm to discussing it within their groups and presenting it to the class. This active participation allowed them to listen and learn from each other, enhancing their learning experience. The autonomy manifested in their learning processes during the project, encompassing brainstorming, engagement in reading and comparing farms, subsequent design of their farms using LEGO, and subsequent writing, was innovative, resulting in a classroom environment markedly distinct from that observed at the outset of this case study.

In line with the LAS, students could be observed to learn by doing and discovering meaning for themselves throughout the process. They were responsible for their learning by

setting their own goals and building the farm they desired. This was done independently of the teacher, and the actual building was then used as a springboard for the writing task. On the other hand, the learners were not responsible for planning their programmes since even though the content of the writing task was based on the decisions made by the learners, the goals set were in line with the learning outcomes set by the teacher. Throughout the whole process, even though in different degrees of the continuum of autonomy, all Grade 3 learners, in both classes manifested the following traits. My comments elicited from the field notes of the observations made during the lesson and are written in italics in Table 12.3:

Able to co-operate with others	✓*observed during the discussions held to design and build the farms*
Learning to learn	✓*Throughout the 6-day process, learners were given opportunities to learn by comparing, brainstorming, developing their contexts, building the farm using LEGO, and writing their descriptions.*
Independent and individual study	✓*Opportunities for independent and individual study were given to the students when comparing and contrasting with a passage and when they wrote their descriptions.*
Better ability to deal with problems	✓*This was observed to an extent when students needed to design the farm and find compromises between the various members of the group. The teacher did not intervene when learners wanted different things and just assisted by suggesting a compromise.*
Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	✓*The experience was very creative and fulfilling for the learners. Throughout the process, from the experiential farm visit to the brainstorming session, contrasting their experience with another farm presented in a story to designing their farm and writing a description, their behaviour was successful, creative and fulfilling.*
Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	✓*When faced with a problem, the learners were observed discussing it among themselves, trying to find solutions, and trying different scenarios before making a decision.*

Table 12.3 – LAS Traits_ Grade 3 Project

Based on this evidence, teaching and learning effectiveness increased in the various activities and tasks carried out during the Grade 3 project with both classes. The Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale (Table 12.4) below gauges that all the targets for effectiveness

are manifested in some way or another, albeit in various degrees. My comments elicited from field notes of the observations held during the lesson and are written in italics in Table 12.4.

There is clarity of presentation suitable for the students' level of attainment. *The teacher explained the targets for each task every step of the way..*
The content to be covered is clearly outlined.√ *The students were guided in each phase of this project by the systematic approach adopted.*
Adaptations and learning environments created were conducive to the development of all students. *An inclusive class environment helped create a positive learning environment where all students felt that they achieved the outcome targeted for that lesson or activity*
There is an effective use of group activities and paired work. *Learners work alone or in groups. During all the phases, students were actively engaged and motivated to move on with their tasks.*
The use of prompts and questions is effective. *The teacher was constantly moving around and guiding them through prompting.*
There is an opportunity to learn through various learning initiatives. √*through the phases, students were exposed to a number of approaches which involved individual and group work, writing, discussions, and critical thinking opportunities*
The quantity of content presented and the instruction pace are suitable for the students' attainment. √ *students coped well*
Students showed evident progress and attainment of outcomes. √ *targets were reached*
Students show motivation and interest in learning to learn. √ *evident throughout*
Students' attainment of outcomes. √ *achieved*
The Retention of the assimilation of knowledge is evident among students. √ *This is evident since students were able to complete their tasks*

independently of the teacher's didactic instructions.The teacher acted as a guide and took the role of facilitator of learning.

Table 12.4 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale_ProjectGr3

12.3 Evaluating these projects

The evaluation of the relationship between adaptations employed in both the projects and the development of learner autonomy reveals that, in both Grade 4 and Grade 3 projects, students achieved varying degrees of learner autonomy. Throughout the project, the learning environment created was conducive to:

	Gr 3	Gr 4
Learning by doing	✓	✓
Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	✓	✓
The learner is responsible for their own learning by setting their own goals.	✓	✓
Learners are responsible for their own learning through discovering, identifying, and using their own resources for learning.	✓	✓
Learners helping each other.	✓	✓
Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	✓	✓
Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	✓	✓
Learners are responsible for their learning by planning their own programmes, with students free to use material at any time	n.e.	✓
Value of individuality	✓	✓
Learners discover meaning for themselves.	✓	✓

Table 12.5 LAS_ComparingProjectGr3 and 4

The Grade 3 project was structured and executed utilising the scaffolded framework of the self-evaluation checklist. The educators '*felt safe using the self-evaluation sheet*' (IM_30May_CD3) since they could use it as a '*reference point when planning the activities*'.

The learners' creativity and autonomy were motivated in different ways. In this case, in both Grade 3 classes, the LEGO blocks were used to instigate creativity and nurture learner autonomy. The systematic methodology employed to create successive lessons after the outing established a framework that enabled students to expand their vocabulary and facilitated their ability to plan, design and write about the farm they built. The results that emerged from this method show that achieving learner autonomy does not necessarily or always imply that students are granted unrestricted freedom.

Extensive planning is essential for the success of such projects. Teachers must also be trained to use the equipment in class. In view of the project, as detailed in the schedule of focus groups, I organised training for the teachers during the focus group on the 20th January 2022. When planning the activities, as opposed to the Grade 4 teachers, the Grade 3 teachers chose not to prepare handouts to be used during the outing to the farm. During discussions over the project before the site visit, the teachers expressed concern that using handouts during the visit would detract from the students' experience, leading them to concentrate on writing instead of observing the environment. They also believed that the pupils may not have managed the clipboard and pencil effectively. As a researcher, I had to respect their opinion that distributing handouts to the learners during the visit would have hindered the pupils' focus on the experience. During the observation of the follow-up sessions held in class soon after the outing, it was evident that there was active student participation during the brainstorming sessions, which were in both classes highly productive. This shows that in the context of these two classes, not providing handouts during the outing was not a hindrance to the pupils' retention of the knowledge gained during the outing and the effectiveness of the follow-up sessions.

> IM_15May_CD3: *Meta għamilna l-brainstorming kollox bdew jiftakru. U meta waħda bdiet tirrispondi qisha bdiet tgħin lill-oħrajn jiftakru. U waħda tiftakar hekk u l-oħra xi ħaġa oħra. Le ta kien hemm discussion sħiħa għaddejja.*
>
> IM_15May_CD3: When we did the brainstorming, they started to remember everything. When one started to respond, she indirectly helped others to remember. One remembers that, and the other something else. No, there was a whole discussion going on.

Experiences like visiting a farm provide numerous opportunities that can culminate in linguistic outcomes. The learners' final product demonstrated that, when equipped with

appropriate tools and immersed in conducive learning situations and surroundings, students may exhibit flexibility and effectively display creative and autonomous behaviour.

Similarly to Grade 4, self-assessment through the use of checklists, was discussed with Grade 3 teachers as a follow-up to the writing tasks. Teacher AB3 presented a breakdown of the outcomes on the board and asked the students whether they felt that they had reached the outcomes after the lesson.

> IM_15May_AB3: *Ngħidlek il-verità, meta ippruvajt, għax għidt ara ħa nipprova nara x'jagħmlu, bdew iħawdu u nerġgħu bdew isqasu għal kull ħaġa ta' xejn u qtajt qalbi. Bżajt li ħa jerġgħu jibdew bħal qabel. U issa ma fadalx ħin għax nibdew bil-half days dalwaqt u nippreferi li nissoda dak li jafu milli nibda xi ħaġa ġdida u jmorruli lura.*
>
> IM_15May_AB3: To be honest, when I tried, because I said let's try to see what they do, they started to mess up and they started asking and asking again and I gave up. I was afraid they would start again as before. And now there's no time left because we start with half days soon and I'd rather solidify what they know than start something new and they regress.

This shows that the writing presentation was treated as the end goal of the project, and students were not given the opportunity to push themselves further and reach the self-evaluation phase. This was a lost opportunity since further development in this aspect would have resulted in the development of other traits related to individual and independent study.

The structure used to build the Grade 3 project, which aimed at learner autonomy whilst reaching different learning outcomes, differed from the one used with Grade 4 students. The teachers and the cohort of students differed. Factors mentioned in Chapter 8 showed evidence of a very different starting point in ability and attitude towards learning Maltese between the two grades. The different teaching styles of the teachers also had an impact on the project. On the one hand, the teacher in Grade 4 was more ready to experiment with new methods, even when using technology. In the first phases of the case study (detailed in Chapter 8), Grade 4 pupils exhibited greater preparedness for critical and reflective engagement, resulting in the development of learner autonomy abilities in a shorter duration compared to both Grade 3 classes. Consequently, they manifested degrees of autonomy during a shorter period of time than the Grade 3 pupils. At the end of the case study, the

ability for self-assessment among Grade 3 students remained in its early phase, and peer-assessment was not accomplished. Various factors had an impact on this development. Grade 3 students needed more time at the start of the research to tackle the emerging issues, which, if not tackled, would have impacted the outcome of the case study. Language use was given priority, and introducing the initiatives described in Chapter 8 Section 8.1.3, took their time. Self-assessment skills were introduced with Grade 4 students early in the second term, when Grade 3 students were still familiarising themselves with working collaboratively whilst using Maltese. This time factor, along with the age factor and other factors elaborated upon in this section, impacted the acquisition of learner autonomy skills.

The two Grade 3 teachers, whilst open to new concepts and suggested adaptations, had a more cautious teaching approach. They believed that the students had numerous challenges that first rendered them unable to comprehend how their classrooms could achieve autonomy. They asserted that to cover the subject matter, guidance and prompting were necessary. Chapter 8 presented evidence indicating that the learners' significant reliance on teachers was contributing to a spoon-feeding pedagogical approach. When observing them in the initial stages of the study, the learners and the teachers were stuck in a circular trap. The situation was one where learners depended on the teachers, and teachers fed the learners more of what they wanted, that is, more spoon-feeding. In Grade 3, the strong collaboration between the two teachers may have also affected the diversity that one would assume would emerge when observing two different classes. Although collaboration among teachers of the same grade is essential and commendable, the individual teacher's characteristics and teaching methodology must still be expressed freely.

The age factor significantly influenced the rate and degree of autonomy attained between the two age groups. Within the context of this study, Grade 3 learners showed less maturity than Grade 4 students, even in relation to non-academic skills. The ability to open the correct page, adhere to fundamental directions, and execute other vital abilities, such as decluttering the desk and preparing for the next lesson, was deficient. This initially affected their preparedness to reduce the significant teacher dependence outlined in Chapter 8, necessitating the resolution of other concerns discussed in the same chapter. Consequently, characteristics and traits of autonomy were exhibited in more subtle forms and, as mentioned earlier, required a longer duration to demonstrate learner autonomy abilities in their language activities at the same level when compared to the Grade 4 students. Additional time was required for grade 3 pupils to consolidate their skills, leading to insufficient time to develop the self-assessment competence. The follow-up lessons after the outing were held in May,

leaving only two weeks of full days of schooling. This left no time to introduce other new initiatives since, in the school where this case study was held, school days in June are only three and a half hours long.

Notwithstanding the abovementioned issues, the evidence presented in the previous section shows that in both instances, the Grade 3 and Grade 4 projects were considered successful by all involved: the students, educators, and the researcher. Observations demonstrated a high level of collaboration between students, which was not evident in the students in October. When using the continuum figure in Chapter 3, Figure 3.1, the projects reached a high level of Learner autonomy. The dependency flowed from bottom to top, resulting in less teacher dependence (from Chapter 3 Figure 3.1).

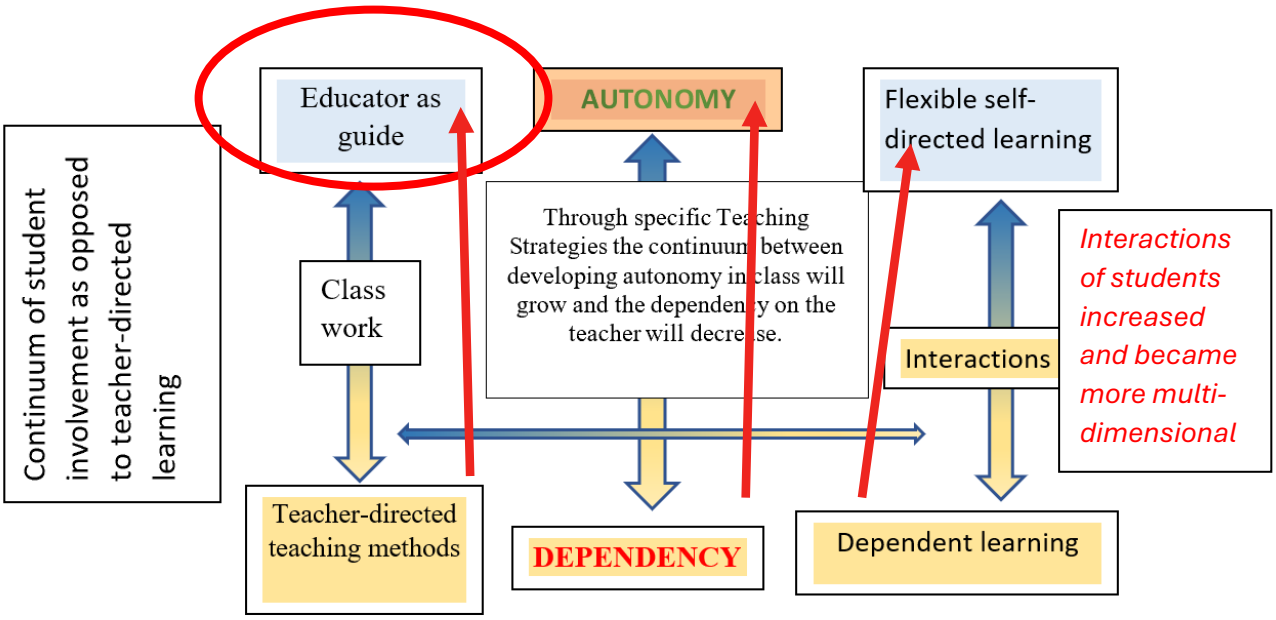


Figure 12.2 The processes built as a result of the case study are marked in red.

The adaptations mentioned led to the dynamics marked in red. The teaching and learning strategies described in both long-term projects aimed at increasing student involvement instead of depending on teacher-directed learning. The learning effectiveness reached was considered high since the learner engagement and motivation were constantly active and manifested in different ways, especially when most learner autonomy traits were manifested in both grades. This shows that such a model achieves the desired results. In both grades, this approach produced a high level of attainment in the tasks and learning outcomes set. The students were highly engaged throughout the process. As shown in the learner autonomy scale, learner autonomy was developed and manifested in various degrees.

Data gathered from educators indicated that students across both grade levels successfully adapted to this instructional approach. In Grade 3 classrooms, teachers noted the contrast between October and May, highlighting the significant reliance on teacher support and the students' limited confidence in language use during October compared to the observable increase in learner autonomy by May.

In the individual meetings (IM) held in June, The Grade 3 teachers commented that:

IM_TchrG3_June: *lanqas qishom l-istess tfal*

They do not even seem like they are the same children.

and

Waslu aktar milli ħsibt għax huma rawha qisha logħba

They reached the goal more than I thought because they looked at learning as a game.

The Grade 4 teacher stated that:

IM_TchrG4_June: *ovvja li ħadu gost, anke jien ħa ngħidlek ! Tarahom hekk kollha busy għaddejjin jirraġunaw....tieħu gost tarahom jieħdu gost jitgħallmu*

IM_TchrG4_June: Obviously, they really enjoyed themselves—to be honest, even I did! When you see them busy on their toes working and discussing, it is very satisfying to see them enjoying themselves while learning.

The elevated motivational factor was associated with a notable enhancement in student engagement levels. The achievement was realised within a motivated and stimulating learning environment, which facilitated optimal content delivery, thereby enabling learners to engage effectively and develop autonomous skills. The findings indicate that the adaptations fostered motivation among students, leading to enhanced interaction and increased engagement, thereby promoting a greater motivation to learn. The transition facilitated student agency in the learning process through engagement in discussion, thereby minimising the initial tendency to defer to the teacher. Student 9 indicates that they also fostered teamwork through cooperative efforts.

IM_Std9_Gr4_June: *Għamilna teamwork*

IM_Std9_ Gr4_June: We worked as a team.

The collaborative efforts resulted in the cultivation and enhancement of learner autonomy, as evidenced by a quotation derived anonymously from the reflections of one of the participating teachers, gathered at the conclusion of the research study. She contemplates the necessary change in teacher methods and, when enquired about her understanding of developing learner autonomy, she expresses that:

> Questionnaire_AnonTchr_July*:* Learner autonomy is the possibility for a learner to take learning or at least part of the learning in their hands. A way of learning by doing and making one's own decisions.

Upon inquiry regarding her reflections on the year of training, she states that:

> Before the training was held, there were instances where I gave the opportunity to the students to, for example, choose which activity to do first or to be part of the lesson; however, I feel that it was still teacher centred and most of the decisions on how the lessons proceed where up to me as a teacher.

To the question reflecting whether she feels that she will adopt this methodology in the future, she shared that:

> I will follow this method because I believe that in this manner I will guide the students, not tell them to do what I want them to achieve. The only thing is that it entails a lot of hidden work, which takes time. You need to think and be creative.

The excerpts presented indicate that the adaptations implemented throughout the case study facilitated a deliberate transition from a directive approach to one that emphasises guidance for the learners. The teacher recognises that the preparation of such activities requires a greater investment of time compared to the method of having students complete exercises from the textbook. The transition to adaptations that extended to the outside environmental context from the classroom also significantly influenced class dynamics through activities that fostered collaboration, independent thinking, and other interconnected phenomena. This approach facilitated the development of learner autonomy characteristics and improved the overall efficacy of teaching and learning methodologies, transforming the learning environment into a catalyst for growth (Moll, 2014).

During interviews conducted concurrently with the data collection period, Grade 4 students expressed their awareness of the changing dynamics, as evidenced by the adaptations they reported making. It is essential for students to receive adequate support in order to foster

confidence and cultivate skills that promote greater autonomy. Grade 4 student participants were asked to articulate their emotional responses when engaged in their learning processes and afforded the opportunity to make choices. When interviewed, Grade 4 pupils expressed that:

I_St1_June: *Fil-bidu ma kontx naf x'se nagħmel, imma mbagħad kont naf.*

I_St1_June: At first, I did not know what I was doing, but then I knew

I_St2_June: *Jien ħassejtni eċitata għax naħseb kienet l-ewwel darba li konna se niddeċiedu fi grupp bejnietna.*

I_St2_June: I felt excited because this was the first time we were asked to decide as a group.

It was also clear that the cognitive process behind working collaboratively became clear to the students. This aligns with Vygostky's social development theory explained in Chapter 2 Section 2.2.2, which asserts that interactions are generative when developed over time. Also, along the process, individual learners acquired new traits (Kellogg & Veresov, 2021) as students 5 and 6 during the interview claim :

I_St5_June*: Bdejna naħsbu x'għamilna*
I_St5_June*:* We started thinking about what we had done

I_St6_June*:Imbagħad bdejna niktbu bil-mod il-mod plan u bdejna niktbu fuq il-plan*
I_Std6_June: Then we started writing the plan slowly and writing on the plan

Researcher: Bravi. U tgħallimtu xi ħaġa minn xulxin?
Researcher: Well done! And did you learn from each other?

St5_June and St6_June: Iva per eżempju jiena (Std5) kont insejt xi ħaġa ma kontx nafha imbagħad St6 ġiet u għenitni l-ispelling tagħha. Std6 - Kien hemm xi ħaġa li kont naf jien u li ma kenitx taf (St5) u li kienet taf hi li jien ma kontx naf u tgħallimna xi ħaġa ġdida minn xulxin.

St5_June and St6_June: Yes, for example, I (Std5) had forgotten something I did not know, and then St6 helped me with the spelling. Std6—There was something I knew and she did not know, and then that she knew and that I did not know, and we learnt something from each other.

Researcher: Prosit ! Well Done !

The evidence indicates that the skills acquired align with social constructivism, where individuals learn from each other and enhance higher-order thinking abilities, aligning with Bloom's framework of developmental stages in cognitive development. As students plan, draft, and revise their work, they engage in metacognitive activities that require them to evaluate their and others' contributions critically. This iterative process helps refine their ideas and develop a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter. In this way, the activities promoted critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity.

The projects in this case study demonstrate that the attainment of learner autonomy is contingent upon the comprehensive ownership by all participants involved in the process. The participants in this study discuss the pedagogical transition in their cognitive frameworks, detailing the alterations in their thought processes and the adaptations they made to enhance collaborative efforts. Their collaboration subsequently facilitated advancements in their cognitive processes, resulting in enhanced individual language acquisition and improved attainment of the learning outcomes.

The findings indicate that increased motivation to actively participate in activities is directly correlated with the pursuit of tasks and content that learners perceive as interesting and engaging. Their role in the class underwent a transformation. '*Students are in the centre – imexxu waħedhom* (they are leading independently), and *the teacher took the back bench*' (LOS_2June22). In line with the proposed multi-dimensional dynamics detailed in Section 9.1.1, this led to more effective class interactions between students and teachers, leading to higher student engagement and the acquisition of new knowledge.

By the end of the cyclical process of the case study, students of both Grade 3 and Grade 4, to varying degrees, could make choices related to content choice and mode of delivery. This was evident not only from the observations made but was also felt by the teachers who, in the written questionnaires, claimed that:

> Questionnaire_AB4_July22: Such changes… lead directly to learner autonomy since when we work with different levels, the students will be working on different activities. Some of the decisions and practices can be done by them. In this way, they will also be given more autonomy in their own learning. With my help, they can reach a goal that is set, possibly even by them, for example, the different writing genres.

Questionnaire_CD3_July22: Be more student-centred, give the students more space to think, and open up their ideas. This will give the students a better understanding of what they are learning and why they are learning it.

Questionnaire_AB3_July22: The students feel that they are performing well (as the work matches their needs), they become more motivated, and eventually, this will lead to more learning.

As explained, variables such as age, support systems or lack thereof, cognitive or emotional readiness for the skill, the teachers' approach, and the time factor impacted the attainment of learner autonomy skills.

12.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on two projects, one with Grade 4 and one with Grade 3 classes. Both aimed at observing the manifestations of a combination of adaptations based on the network of links made between the four pedagogical principles built on the common aspects found across the learning framework theories and the theories depicted in Chapter 2, Figure 2.3. The two projects were planned to observe the level of attainment of students' autonomy manifested in various degrees and different situations. The planning and assessment phases of the projects were designed to assess the degree to which teachers had gained insight into their methodologies for developing lessons and activities that foster learner autonomy among their pupils. Teachers were directed to make decisions that informed their planning to create activities that fostered learner autonomy.

Evidence presented in this chapter shows the written language skills acquired and the opportunities for verbal language acquisition. The teaching strategies implemented throughout the two projects demonstrated a clear positive reciprocal relationship between learner autonomy and cooperative language learning. This is because what successful language learners draw from their vaster repertoire, weaker language learners will be guided through more explicit strategies such as repeating and imitating, matching, and making associations. The evidence presented in this chapter also shows how fostering a positive disposition towards language use and collaborating with peers enhances one's linguistic ability. This is evident in the writing tasks the students presented and in their verbal interactions, compared to those observed in October. This chapter also elaborates on the pedagogical transitions detailed in Chapters 9 to

11. Evidence collected in this context shows that when modifications are made to the teachers' methodology that focus on facilitating language tasks through enhanced collaboration and effective language utilisation, learner autonomous abilities are also fostered. The evidence indicates that interactive environments extended outside the class boundaries encourage deeper language processing, leading to better retention and understanding and the development of higher-order thinking skills.

The methodology in both the grade 3 project and the grade 4 project nurtured and developed skills in line with Holec's (1981, p.3) definition of learner autonomy, 'ability to take charge of one's learning' as one of the learners herself stated that '***it-teacher tatna l-power'*** – ***the teacher gave us power***. Whilst the manifestation of learner autonomy by the various students in both classes could be placed on various points of the learner autonomy scale continuum, evidence shows that learner autonomy traits are achieved through the adaptations made to both the teachers' methodologies and the class environment.

As illustrated even through Photos 21.1 to 12.49 and Tables 12.1 to 12.5 together with the excerpts from field notes taken from observations and interviews held with teacher and pupil participants, both these projects present the research field and practitioners with detailed, real-world insights into how, through the process of language acquisition, specific strategies foster learner autonomy. Examining the dynamics of the particular classroom or group of learners in the context of this case study generates actionable frameworks that educators and policymakers can adapt to in different contexts.

As Part 1 of this study shows, learner autonomy has been widely theorised, but what this case study has done is apply that theory to a particular context, serving as a bridge by testing theories in practice, showing how abstract principles, like self-regulated learning, translate into actionable steps within specific learning environments. The challenges faced in this context are unique to the specific learners and are explored in depth. This makes the research highly relevant for stakeholders working in similar environments. It contributes to understanding the most effective pedagogical approaches, tools, or interventions. This evidence can inform curriculum design, particularly in primary education, to better scaffold independence and self-regulated learning, especially in school contexts that are still teacher-centred.

The next chapter will focus on two underlying adaptations made, which were implemented throughout the study and introduced at the beginning: the application of questioning techniques (Section 13.1) and the incorporation of hands-on and concrete examples (Section 13.2).

CHAPTER 13
UNDERLYING ADAPTATIONS

13.0 Introduction

This chapter elucidates two fundamental adaptations that were implemented in the daily interactions between teachers and learners: the application of questioning techniques (Section 13.1) and the incorporation of hands-on and concrete examples (Section 13.2). In conjunction with the pedagogical principles mentioned in the previous chapters, as from the initial stages of this study, during the first focus group and throughout the meetings held with the teachers, in my role of participant-oberver, I insisted that the teachers also prioritised the formulation of questions that foster cognitive development, while also incorporating concrete examples in their interactions and planning processes. The photographs presented in this and in other preceding chapters illustrate the use of concrete materials, tactile resources, and structured hands-on activities designed to support conceptual understanding. The images depict learners manipulating physical objects such as LEGO blocks, engaging with concrete representations of abstract ideas (Chapter 12), and participating in experiential learning tasks such as collaborative writing tasks in Chapter 9. The photographs underscore the pedagogical value of sensory-rich, practical activities in fostering active learning and deepened comprehension.

13.1 Questioning

In an educational setting, the implementation of thoughtfully constructed questioning techniques has the potential to transfer control to students. Through the implementation of open-ended, higher-order, and metacognitive questioning techniques, educators facilitate independent thought among students, prompting them to engage in reflective practices regarding their cognitive processes and to cultivate their own lines of inquiry. The strategic implementation of questioning serves to enhance the depth of learning and promotes increased student agency in their educational experiences (Marantika, 2021).

Effective questioning stimulates critical thinking, encouraging learners to move beyond surface-level understanding. During planning phases held during focus groups,

teacher participants were asked to plan open-ended questions, prompting students to analyse, evaluate, and synthesise information, thus fostering higher-order thinking skills (refer to Chapter 2 Section 2.2). This aligns with Bloom's conceptualisation of higher-order thinking as well as Bandura's theories regarding imitation and modelling (Section 2.2.1). The learning environment must be designed to facilitate the potential for interference with traditional learning processes, thereby promoting autonomous learning among individuals. Previous chapters have illustrated through various examples that the intended learning strategy should facilitate opportunities for students to engage with information, enabling them to construct their newly acquired knowledge independently of direct didactic interactions with the teacher. In accordance with Vygotsky's concept (Section 2.2.2), the interactions between learners and their environment involve a range of interconnected, tangible generative phenomena within a singular relationship. When students engage in listening to one another's reasoning, they not only imitate but also internalise the language they hear, thereby making it their own. Regular engagement in critical questioning among students fosters the capacity to interrogate their own assumptions and learning processes. This practice enhances self-reflection, which is a fundamental component of learner autonomy. The effective utilisation of these skills is likely to enhance student performance levels, thereby fostering a more dynamic and supportive teaching and learning environment (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020).

Consequently, in the lesson planning process, I insisted that the teacher participants prepare and utilise prompts such as visual aids, gestures, or strategically formulated questions during activities. Field notes collected from a lesson observation (LOS) held in May, presented below, show how this approach aims to enhance students' cognitive abilities and facilitate the achievement of desired educational outcomes. Photo 13.1 presented below illustrates the questioning used and projected on the IWB, based on the methodology employed to assist Grade 3 students in enhancing their language proficiency through the strategic use of questioning techniques. In the development of this specific activity, the pupils were engaged in writing about a day spent at the beach. '*The prompting questions are providing guidance. The first point addresses the weather, providing students with a selection of four scenarios. The second point enquires about the condition of the sea on the specified day, followed by a presentation of descriptive options for students to select from. The third point directs students to identify the most appropriate description of the sand. The fourth point emphasises the accurate application of verbs that students can use as a word bank, relevant to the topic. Finally, the last question encourages students to reflect on items they brought during their beach visit'* (LOS_CD3_15May22). Based on Socratic questioning

(Balbay & Dogan, 2023, p.363) this dialogue builds students' higher-order thinking and self-discovery: it "enables students to examine ideas rationally… Teachers can promote independent thinking and autonomous learning". Teachers were asked to plan a series of purposeful, open-ended questions designed to stimulate critical thinking, expose underlying assumptions, clarify ideas, and uncover contradictions. Rather than providing direct answers, the Socratic method encourages learners to reflect deeply, reason logically, and construct their understanding. This technique is often used in educational contexts to develop higher-order thinking skills and promote a deeper grasp of complex concepts (Balbay & Dogan, 2023).

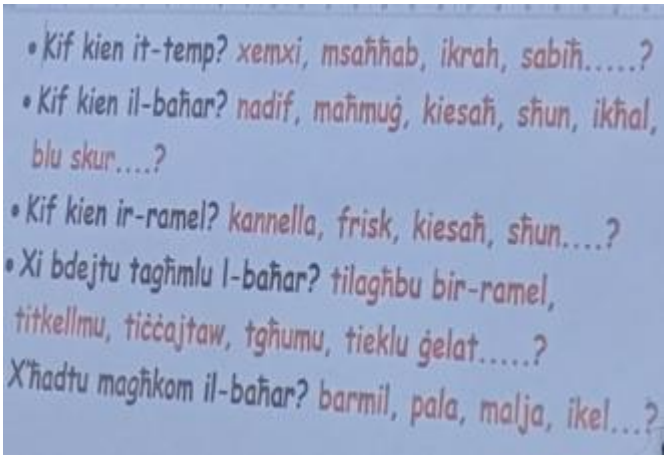


Photo 13.1: Questions used as prompts

It is essential to adapt the use of questioning during the interactions held in class. As Smith et al. (2004) state, teachers can use both product questions (calling for a single response from pupils) and process questions (calling for explanations from pupils). Again, the balance will depend on the lesson, topic, and learners' ability. In the context of this case study, to promote autonomy, observations showed that product questions led to one-word answers, which do not delve deep into the pupils' understanding. It was observed that '*when asked close-ended questions, pupils do not really show that they have understood. She answered yes, but she did not really know why. She depended on the teacher to elaborate.*' (LOS_AB3_25Nov21).

Another aspect which was developed involved encouraging students to formulate their own questions, thereby transforming them into active investigators. Students were prompted to pose enquiries, which may subsequently be directed to the class prior to receiving a response from the instructor. Drawing from the field notes presented (LOS_AB3_25Nov21), incorporating pertinent student feedback into the instructional framework is essential for

enhancing the educational experience and promoting autonomy. An essential adaptation highlighted with the teacher participants to incorporate in the lessons involved planning to permit students to articulate their thoughts and experiences before posing a question. Teachers were instructed to guide students to initially engage with their peers and refrain from viewing the teacher as the sole source of authority. This also simultaneously fostered an environment conducive to discussion and allowed for the possibility of error. Implementing these questioning techniques was designed to stimulate and enhance critical thinking abilities. Before a task, students were asked, "How will you do this? What do you already know?", during work "How is this helping you? What else could you do?", and after "What did you learn? What would you do differently?"

This was carried out by using scaffolding to guide learners through problem-solving processes without providing direct answers. Teachers in both grades were asked to plan questions that led students to find solutions independently, gradually reducing the level of support as learners develop more confidence and competence. This scaffolding approach enhances self-directed learning by equipping students with the strategies to tackle complex tasks independently (Smith et al., 2004). The instructional processes employed were inferential in nature, corresponding with the analytical level as delineated by Bloom's taxonomy. In this context, students engage in the decomposition of problems into distinct components while simultaneously deriving knowledge. An example of this was when learners were faced with a collaborative task (refer to Chapter 9, Photos 9.4 to 9.6), had to discuss vocabulary using their mini whiteboard and break down the task into mini-tasks until, through scaffolding, the students achieved their task whilst using and developing autonomy skills.

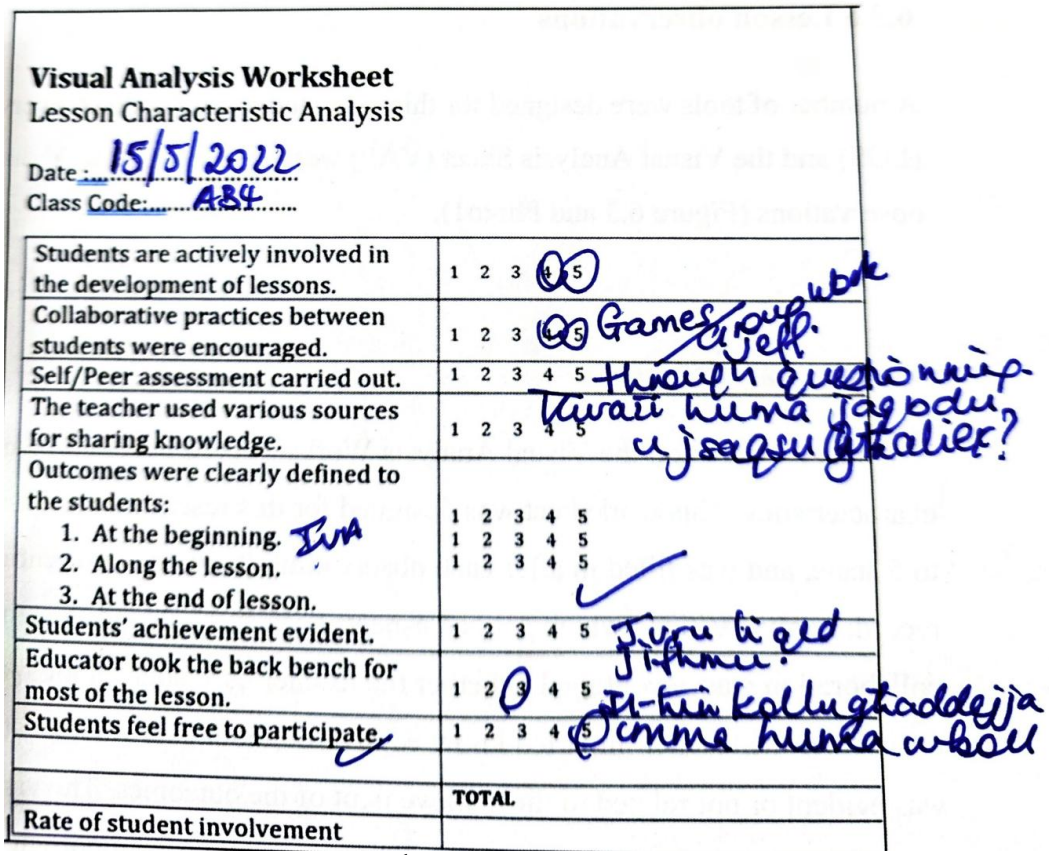
This case study also challenged students to develop autonomy when relating to assimilating and retaining new knowledge. Through the guidance of effective questioning, they created, designed, led and discovered meaning. This is evident in the results obtained in both long-term projects. The adaptations made to the teachers' methodologies in this case study showed how learners' expected behaviour sees them learn by doing, deducing hypotheses and creating new knowledge from those hypotheses. This was presented in the evidence presented during the Grade 3 project, where students experienced a farm, compared and contrasted it with another farm presented in a reading text, and then designed their farms, leading to their writing task creation (Chapter 12). The questioning employed during brainstorming sessions, as well as during the analytical phase pertaining to students' fictitious farms, was primarily centred on cognitive strategies. This was also presented as evidence in

many instances observed in the Grade 4 class, such as when using word games (Chapter 9), when using Ozobots (Chapter 10) and also during observations when in all three classes, both Grade 3 and Grade 4 classes, the teachers were prompting learners to think further when asking questions through the use of divergent questions. In general, the teachers were asked to ensure that the practice of guessing was prohibited. Participants were prompted to engage in reflection, exercise judgement, and conduct analyses of one another's responses, teacher prompting '*u intom x'taħsbu?*' (and what do you (plural) think?).

The acquisition of this skill facilitated the enhancement of self-assessment capabilities among the learners, especially with Grade 4 students (Chapter 11, Section 11.1). The dynamics that developed in the class environment showed that by giving feedback to each other, learners understood what and why they were learning. This developed their critical thinking skills and reflective self-assessment. Prompts were presented on tally sheets called 'Ċekkjaturi' (checklists) (Appendix 6.3 and Appendix 4.8), which aimed to break down the outcomes and list them. These were presented as statements or through questions. Students then needed to tally these with their work and reflect on whether the targets were achieved. This simple, effective tool encouraged self-monitoring, organisation, and responsibility. This reflective exercise facilitated student ownership of their work, a critical attribute of learner autonomy. This fostered a sense of accountability for their actions and the resulting outcomes. The process of reflection and the systematic marking of targets provided children with a distinct understanding of their progress and an assessment of whether the predetermined outcomes, communicated to them at the outset of the task, had been successfully attained. The implementation of validation questioning promotes learners' validation of their efforts during the checklist process, enhancing self-motivation and reinforcing a sense of accomplishment. This enhances their focus and provides a visual representation of their accomplishments, thereby reinforcing their capacity to establish and pursue objectives.

The research questions also aimed at investigating whether the development of autonomous skills through adaptations increased teaching and learning efficacy. As explained in chapters 9 to 12, one aspect leading to increased teaching and learning effectiveness is pacing, guiding the learners, and ensuring repeated reinforcement and reference to the outcomes. Point 5 of 'The Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale', designed for this case study, defines one of the traits that leads to an increase in effectiveness as 'The use of prompts and questions is effective'. Through the planning of well-structured questioning, discussed during focus groups 1 and 2 and throughout the feedback sessions held in individual meetings, this adaptation to questioning pushed learners to think further. Prompts led

learners to reflect on their thought processes, enhancing metacognitive awareness. This underlying transformation to the teacher methodology aimed at a result which expected students to think when the teacher asked, '*Għaliex?* Why?', every time a student gives a reply. After a student gives a reply, before just giving a reply, teachers were encouraged to ask the rest of the class, *'Intom x'taħsbu?'* – 'What do you (plural) think? Is she right? Why?' This approach facilitated the active engagement of all attentive students, as they were aware that their opinions would be solicited. The participants demonstrated an active comprehension of enquiries, regardless of whether those enquiries were specifically directed towards them. Longitudinal analysis of field notes gathered during observational studies indicates a notable increase in the frequency with which educators posed the question 'Why?'. This inquiry seems to have encouraged students to autonomously integrate reasoning into their responses.



Visual Analysis Worksheet
Lesson Characteristic Analysis

Date: 15/5/2022
Class Code: AB4

Students are actively involved in the development of lessons.	1 2 3 4 5
Collaborative practices between students were encouraged.	1 2 3 4 5 Games Group work Jeff.
Self/Peer assessment carried out.	1 2 3 4 5 through questioning
The teacher used various sources for sharing knowledge.	1 2 3 4 5 Kwazi huma jaqbdu u jsaqsu ghaliex?
Outcomes were clearly defined to the students: 1. At the beginning. 2. Along the lesson. 3. At the end of lesson.	1 2 3 4 5 Iva 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
Students' achievement evident.	1 2 3 4 5 Jiftakar li qed jitkellmu!
Educator took the back bench for most of the lesson.	1 2 3 4 5 Il-tfajla kollugtaddejja Imma huma wkoll
Students feel free to participate.	1 2 3 4 5
	TOTAL
Rate of student involvement	

Photo 13.2 VAS 15th May AB4

In the Visual Analysis Sheet for a Grade 4 lesson observed in May 2022, I observed how, through questioning, '*kważi huma jaqbdu u jsaqsu għaliex?*' 'Even the girls are asking why now. ' Enquiring of students regarding the processes they employed to reach a conclusion or the strategies they utilised promotes self-monitoring and self-regulation of their learning experiences. Examining learning processes is essential for fostering autonomous learners, enabling students to discern the most effective strategies for their contexts (Schraw & Moshman, 1995). All these processes contributed to an evident decrease in teacher

dependence, which the teachers noted in the written feedback they provided in July after the completion of the case study. When asked for an evaluation of the adaptations made, AB3 (Grade 3 teacher of class 3.1) and AB4 (Grade 4 teacher) stated that:

> Questionnaire_AB3_ July22: They still ask but for my opinion (more support) and not so much for answers. They are ready to make mistakes and when they work together they correct each other and then they ask me 'hux hekk miss?'. (miss it's that so?)
>
> Questionnaire_AB3_ July22: It helped me a lot to plan out the questions. They became part of the lesson. And I realised that they expected me to ask them questions, whereas before, if I asked one girl, the others started playing with something else. The questions are helping them think and I feel that I prefer planning them and not come up with questions there and then. It takes more time to plan them.

During an individual meeting (IM), AB3 (teacher in Grade 3) said that:

> IM_AB3_May22: *M'għadhomx ifajru l-answer daqskemm kienu. Saru jaħsbu aktar narahom. U drawha issa Imma għaliex? Kważi saru jsaqsuha huma.*
>
> IM_AB3_May22: They no longer blurt out the answer as much as they used to. I see them thinking more now. And they've gotten used to it. But why? They almost ask it themselves now.

The data gathered from observations and testimonials presented in Chapters 9 to 12 provide compelling support for the assertion that modifications to teachers' questioning techniques within their instructional practices significantly fostered learner autonomy. The act of posing questions constitutes a fundamental aspect of language acquisition due to the increase in metacognitive skills. This case study demonstrated that the implementation of questioning strategies, which included the planning of questions that promote critical thinking, the facilitation of active engagement, the scaffolding of problem-solving skills, and the encouragement of metacognitive reflection, resulted in students assuming greater control over their learning processes. These techniques also help to shift classroom dynamics from teacher-centred instruction to a more autonomous, learner-centred approach, thereby contributing to more effective and independent learning experiences.

The various questioning techniques employed as supplementary elements to the instructional methodologies through the case study contributed to the enhancement of autonomy skills among learners. The following strategies were identified and used in the

presentation (Appendix 4.10 presentation used in training), used in the focus group 1, to 4 and as needed throughout the interactions with the teachers throughout the case study.

The use of open-ended questions (*X'taħsbu li jiġri jekk* ..? What do you think will happen if we try it this way?) encourages learners to explore multiple possibilities and express their ideas, developing critical thinking and decision-making skills;

Reflective questions (*Kif stajt tiktibha jew tgħidha aħjar?* How can you write it or say it better?) prompt learners to evaluate their actions and outcomes, promoting self-awareness and a growth mindset. This was also used when using checklist sheets '*Ċekkjaturi*'.

Probing questions (*Why do you think* …? Can you explain further?) deepen understanding and encourage learners to articulate their reasoning, building confidence in their ability to analyse and explain;

Choice-oriented questions also known as Socratic (as in photo 13.1), offer choices and give pupils a sense of control over their learning, fostering independence and responsibility;

Predictive questions (when using Ozobots, learners were asked to predict where the character could go next) encourage children to think ahead, make decisions, and anticipate outcomes, strengthening their problem-solving abilities;

Probing and problem-solving questions, such as the ones the teacher used when pupils were working on their tablets and faced difficulties, guided them but did not dictate how to proceed. These questions help learners develop strategies for overcoming challenges independently and build resilience and confidence.

This section presents how adaptation to questioning played a significant role in increasing the autonomy of the learner participants. The following section explains another underlying adaptation that promoted autonomy in the learners. It focuses on how, from the start of the case study, I ensured that the pupils were presented with tangible, concrete examples to heighten their experiential educational experience.

13.2 Using concrete examples and hands-on activities

Consistent with constructivist principles, an additional adaptation embedded within the teaching methodologies, as evidenced in the case study, was the heightened incorporation of concrete examples and experiential activities. Chapters 9 to 12 provide a selection of testimonials and photographic evidence that illustrate how the incorporation of hands-on

activities and tangible examples has facilitated active engagement in student learning. Active participation enhances the comprehension of concepts, as learners engage in exploration and experimentation, thereby transitioning from passive reception to the active construction of knowledge (Prince, 2004). Tackled during focus groups 1 and 2 and mentioned throughout the meetings, this approach was presented as a method that involved promoting direct interaction with the material and facilitating participation in experiential activities. The active engagement observed during the case study indicated that learners develop a sense of responsibility for their learning, thereby fostering autonomy. Such examples varied from wearing casual clothes during a lesson, which involved Grade 3 students writing on clothing (Chapter 9 Photos 9.4 to 9.6) to using Ozobots during a Grade 4 listening comprehension lesson where students manifested their listening skills through programming the Ozobot (Chapter 10 Photos 10.13 to 10.18). This case study draws on data to reveal that when learners are presented with diverse experiences and scenarios, there is a notable increase in their motivation to engage in independent navigation of tasks and problem-solving activities. The observations also indicated that collaborative interactions among learners, such as through collaborative writing (Chapter 9 Section 9.1.2), also contributed to the cultivation of critical skills necessary for autonomous learning.



Photo 13.3: Using tangible objects to relate projections to life

When discussing lesson planning with the teachers during the focus groups, I consistently pointed out that the use of concrete examples and hands-on tasks, consistent with the principles of experiential learning theories, leads to students acquiring knowledge through

active engagement and practical application. This approach facilitates the application of theoretical concepts to practical scenarios, thereby enhancing the relevance and significance of the learning experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2018). The observation of practical applications of their learning significantly enhances students' propensity to assume ownership of the educational process, a critical element in fostering autonomy (Little, 2020). The image presented (Photo 13.3) illustrates the potential for enhancing learner autonomy through experiences that are enhanced by using concrete objects. In addition to the projection of visuals on the interactive whiteboard, tangible items are incorporated into the classroom setting whenever feasible. This approach facilitates students' direct engagement with objects, flavours, and experiential learning opportunities. All educators must recognise that students do not share identical experiences. Consequently, it is the responsibility of each educator to facilitate a learning experience, both within and outside the classroom, that promotes equitable engagement among all students.

In photo 13.3, the Grade 3 teacher is explaining and presenting a visual representation of the traditional Maltese cake linked to the Carnival celebration, while simultaneously providing a written explanation. Furthermore, she has brought an actual cake to accompany her presentation. The students were permitted to sample the cake as an integral component of the lesson, contingent upon obtaining parental consent and ensuring that all dietary restrictions were adequately addressed. These experiential learning opportunities significantly enhance a constructive, efficient, and pragmatic approach to teaching and learning.

As detailed in Chapter 12, their involvement in follow-up tasks and activities was engaging in the learning process when the students were taken on-site to experience the locations firsthand. Asking for students’ opinions and involving them in discussions related to experiential learning provides an autonomy-supportive learning environment.



Photos 13.4 Amalgamating hands-on tasks with writing in Grade 4. Tasks are differentiated (writing instructions)



Photos 13.5 Amalgamating hands-on tasks with writing in Grade 4. Tasks are differentiated (put instructions in order)

Photos 13.4 and 13.5 show the worksheets used for differentiated hands-on tasks, which the Grade 4 learners filled in. The writing task was differentiated; however, all students also produced their Christmas socks by following the instructions. Such hands-on activities are also inclusive of all abilities. Photos 13.4 and 13.5 illustrate how the same hands-on task was differentiated to address the diverse writing levels of attainment among Grade 4 students. The worksheets demonstrate how incorporating photos into the worksheet serves as a guide.

Encouraging each learner to create the actual object, in this case, a Christmas sock, alongside the writing task, it helps construct the structure of the writing assignment.

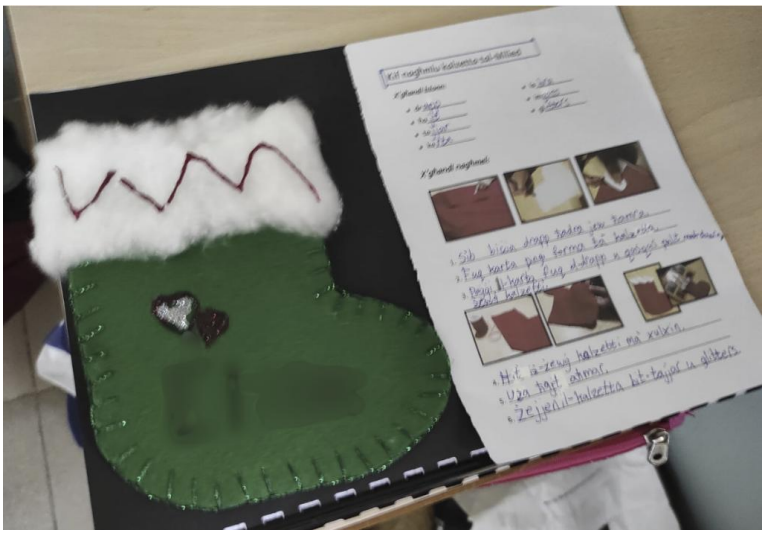


Photo 13.6 shows instructions written by a Grade 4 student after crafting a Christmas stocking

In such situations, such as the writing tasks associated with writing instructions in Grade 4 also illustrated in photo 13.5, progress can made be throughout the week. Such lessons can be amalgamated with the time allocated for other lessons such as Art.

These kinaesthetic activities, such as building models or experimenting with materials, require learners to engage in critical thinking, hypothesising, and testing ideas. This promotes analytical thinking, creativity, and adaptability, which are essential for cognitive development, while also providing opportunities for immediate feedback and a sense of accomplishment. The gradual increase in independence fosters confidence in their abilities, which is vital for encouraging learner autonomy (Camilleri Grima, 2020). As students gain confidence in their skills through hands-on practice, they become more inclined to take charge of their learning (Chapter 3 Section 3.2). Through shared tasks, learners engage in discussions, negotiate roles, and solve problems collectively, promoting independence and interdependence. This social aspect of learning supports the development of self-directed learners who can also work autonomously in team environments (Chapter 3, Figure 3.2 and Chapter 12, Figure 12.1).

Engagement in experiential learning facilitates the consolidation of abstract concepts within memory, thereby enhancing the process of knowledge assimilation for learners. Engagement in activities such as utilising Ozobots, constructing with LEGO blocks, participating in charades with word cards, and learning through digital games, as outlined in

Chapters 9 to 12, provides substantial evidence that experiential learning contributes to developing learner autonomy. The findings indicate a correlation between the theoretical framework and the implementation strategies employed, demonstrating that students effectively assimilated knowledge and retained information over an extended period. The findings indicate that the employed methodology significantly improved learners' capacity to apply knowledge in future situations independently. Evidence for this is presented in the writing process employed by the learners of both Grade 3 (Section 12.2) and Grade 4 (Section 12.1) in Chapter 12. The practical approach further enhances students' comprehension, fostering continuous lifelong learning (Mayer, 2009).

13.3 Conclusion

This chapter is the last chapter of Part 3 and highlights two important underlying adaptations common to all the activities carried out throughout the teachers' practices along the case study. These underlying adaptations led to actively engaging students, enhancing their problem-solving skills, whilst building their confidence. These methods equip students with the critical thinking and self-management skills necessary for lifelong autonomous learning. The following two chapters, Chapters 14 and 15, present the discussion and conclusion, respectively, as detailed in the introduction of Part 4.

PART 4

DISCUSSION
&
CONCLUSION

Part 4 comprises the final two chapters. Drawing on the findings presented in Part 3, Chapter 14 analyses the research's contribution to local knowledge and educational inquiry and examines the intricate interrelationships presented. Chapter 15, the concluding chapter, discusses the study's limitations and offers suggestions for future initiatives and research projects.

CHAPTER 14
DISCUSSION

14.0 Introduction

The findings of this study demonstrate that specific adaptations to a teacher's methodology enhance students' learning autonomy skills (RQ2). This research has also shown that this increases teaching and learning effectiveness (RQ1). The data analysis reported in Part 3 presents textual and visual evidence that illustrates the importance of establishing a framework for classroom adjustments that foster student learner autonomy skills. The study examined and showed how, when particular modifications are made to teaching methods (RQ2) (Chapters 8 to 13), students' accountability for their learning increases. The novel comprehension of pedagogy proposed in this study is crucial for fostering enhanced learner autonomy in language education. Throughout the case study, the learning content is derived from a learning outcomes curriculum, which was implemented as explained in Chapter 7.

14.1 Aims, objectives and research questions

The two research questions addressed in this study are:

1. In a curriculum-mandated programme based on learning outcomes, do learner autonomy pedagogical practices improve the teaching-learning process?
2. What adaptations to the pedagogy are needed to promote learner autonomy?

This study achieved the objectives delineated in Chapter 1, which responded to the two research questions (Chapter 1 Section 1.2) whilst contributing to the local and international educational community by having:

- Designed a framework of adaptations that lead to increased learner autonomy while following a learning outcomes curriculum in Part 3, Chapters 8 to 13.
- Designed evaluator tools that can be used to assess the manifestations of LA in learners, as shown in Chapter 6 and implemented in Chapters 9 to 12.

- Designed evaluator tools which can be used to assess the increase in teaching and learning effectiveness in Chapter 6 and implemented in Chapters 9 to 12.
- Implemented and documented continuous on-site training and support for educator participants (Schedule in Chapter 6 and evidence documented in its implementation stages in Chapters 8 to 13).
- Created a cyclical implementation design that achieved the above targets (presented in Chapter 6).

As delineated in Part 3, Chapters 8 to 13 were implemented in the cyclical research design employed throughout the case study. This encompasses the phases of discussion, planning, implementation, and evaluation in a continuous sequence of processes built in an iterative and cumulative manner. This pedagogical transition did not occur instantaneously and required time to manifest and yield the benefits of the implemented measures. The dynamic, cyclical process in each phase introduces new aspects that build on previously established ones. Each cycle deepens understanding, integrates greater complexity, and reinforces earlier components, allowing for ongoing development and refinement over time (Stringer, 2024). The case study was constructed through and grounded in a blend of qualitative strategies.

- A scholastic year-long training programme was implemented with the teachers utilising a cyclical, iterative, and cumulative process.
- Support was given throughout the year through meetings and constant contact.
- Observations of lessons and activities were held.
- Field notes were analysed and discussed with the teachers, who gradually accepted the suggested adaptations.
- A photo journal was compiled to ensure evidence is presented visually and complements the written descriptions, offering deeper insight into settings, environments, and non-verbal cues.
- The development of a comprehensive toolkit that includes various evaluative instruments has facilitated the process. Together with other resources, this toolkit is presented as a resource pack for teachers in Appendix 4. This toolkit encompasses a self-evaluation checklist, a synthesis of how learning outcomes can be combined in different scenarios, a learning autonomy scale, and a teaching and learning effectiveness scale, presentations used for training purposes, templates for collaborative writing and project planning, and templates for students and teachers in line with lesson outcomes.

Since this case study adopted a strategy that followed a cyclical pattern encompassing observations, training, change implementation, and subsequent evaluation of the methodological alterations, the narrative of the case study and its developments evolved concurrently with the implemented changes.

14.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This research significantly contributes to the local educational community and enhances the field of pedagogical inquiry in various dimensions. Through the iterative and cumulative adaptations aimed at promoting learner autonomy, the data-driven decision-making processes (field notes collected in observations led to further suggestions) in the case study facilitated ongoing enhancement by examining the relationship between instructional quality and student performance using the tools designed for this study.

14.2.1 Contribution to the educational community from a Maltese context

This case study's findings offer the local educational community a structured approach to addressing the cognitive deficiencies identified among Maltese students, as highlighted in the TALIS research findings presented in the introductory chapter of this study (OECD, 2019). The young age of the learner participants aligns with the notion that from a young age, educational experiences need to be associated with developing resilience, fostering a positive mindset, and possessing the capacity to assess and learn from failures. The dimensions also include critical thinking, independent reasoning, resilience in problem-solving, digital competencies, collaborative abilities, and motivation.

This case study outlines a framework which focuses on processes rather than content, which:

- heightens the educators' understanding of all the students' needs. This was done during the meetings and evaluation sessions held with teachers in conjunction with lesson observations;
- combines worksheets and books with an enhanced use of other educational materials, including technology and other innovative resources such as LEGO blocks;
- utilises both indoor and outdoor environments;
- uses improved collaborative tactics which focus on classroom interaction and dynamics; and

- presents an approach that combines learning outcomes in the teaching and learning experience. Colour coding presented in Chapter 7 (Tables 7.5 to 7.9) suggests the mechanism that local teachers can use during their planning.

The findings indicate that increasing teacher accountability through active involvement when planning activities (digital games and collaborative software, enhanced use technology, outings, card games, experiential learning such as visiting a farm and a nature park, tasting food, collaborative activities, using innovative resources) increases the purpose behind the planning which used to take place before this study (presented in Chapter 8 Tables 8.1 and 8.2). By drawing on the evidence presented in Chapters 9 to 13, and by using the Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale (Chapter 6, Table 6.5 and Appendix 3.5) throughout these chapters as a scale that measures teaching effectiveness, observations showed that the increase in learner autonomy led to an increase in teaching and learning effectiveness. Evidence shows that there is a shift from using the book as the centre of planning a lesson to using resources that may include the book as a means that supports the process of learning.

The learning competency that nurtures Learner Autonomy is achieved through pedagogical transition, which came about as a result of adaptations made to teacher methodology. Figure 14.1 presents how a competency, for example, collaborative skills, presented on the left, led to the development of LA through the various adaptations (listed on the right).

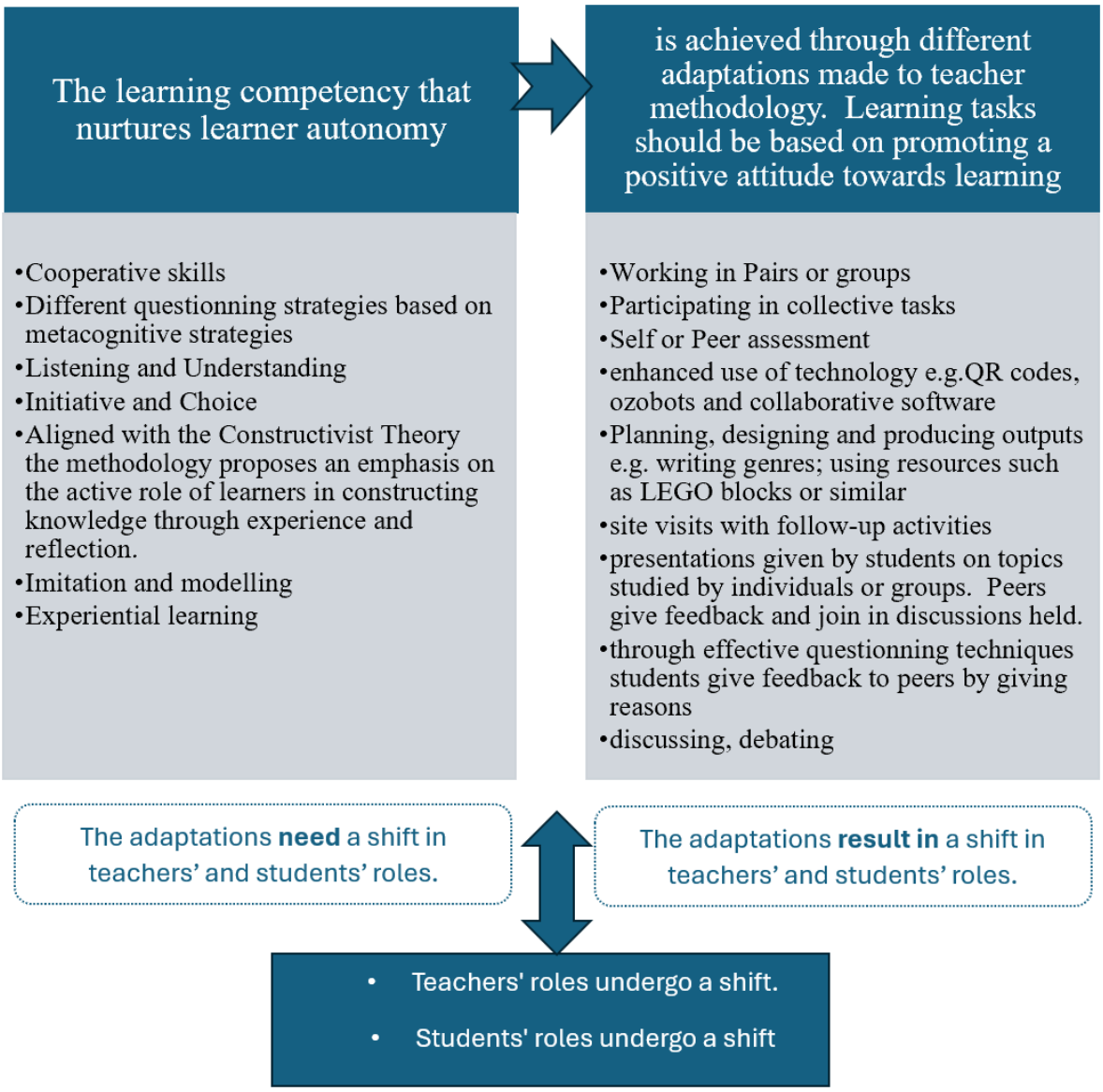


Figure 14.1 Learning Competencies that develop Learner Autonomy

The findings indicate a significant transformation in the roles assumed by educators and learners. The role of educators has transformed from traditional authoritative figures to that of facilitators of knowledge, wherein they guide students throughout the learning process. Simultaneously, students embraced a more independent and assertive approach, engaging actively in the construction of knowledge and collaborative inquiry. The tasks were designed with the intention of necessitating problem-solving and the evaluation of arguments, thereby encouraging learners to engage in the analysis of evidence, recognise logical fallacies, and develop independent conclusions (Halpern, 2014). Findings show that through the systematic organisation of learning objectives centred on advanced cognitive skills, educators have the potential to enhance the development of students' critical thinking abilities. Figure 14.1

delineates the findings by enumerating learning competencies and establishing causal relationships with the adaptations that had been implemented. Grounded in constructivist theory, modifications emphasised the active participation of learners in knowledge construction through experiential and reflective practices. The successful acquisition of these competencies depended on adaptive teaching methods that promote a positive attitude towards learning by all participants. These techniques prioritise collaborative learning experiences, such as pair or group work and participation in common projects. Moreover, formative assessment methods, including self- and peer-assessment, are essential in fostering self-regulation and reflective learning.

The incorporation of technology, including ozobots, pedagogical transitions that can be used in different local and international contexts, significantly improves student engagement and cognitive growth. Furthermore, pedagogical tactics that encompass planning, designing, and generating diverse outputs—such as writing genres and tactile activities using resources like LEGO blocks—enhance the practical implementation of acquired concepts. Enhancing the educational experience through site visits accompanied by organised reflective activities fosters a profound comprehension of theoretical concepts in practical settings. Learners manifested an increase in autonomy by using written and verbal use of the Maltese language medium.

Data from this case study demonstrates that, compared to the language competence evidenced at the start of this study, tasks completed by students in Grades 3 and 4 acquired language outcomes that led to improved performance and language proficiency. The initial reliance on the teacher transitioned to collaborative practices that fostered self-efficacy. The findings indicate that the methodology, through the changes made, provides an optimal setting for students to cultivate independent language abilities individually or collaboratively. This aspect is encapsulated in the following excerpt. Students 5 and 6 described how, when one student forgot how to spell a word, another student assisted her with her spelling. Student 6 stated that '*There was something I knew and she did not know, and then that she knew and that I did not know, and we learnt something from each other*' (excerpt also presented in Maltese in Chapter 12). This evidence suggests that instructional approaches promoted in this study emphasised higher-order cognitive engagement, contributing to increased student resilience and motivation without resorting to teacher intervention.

Teacher dependence diminished significantly, and the students' autonomy fostered constructive communication. Their critical thinking also showed a shift '*Saru jaħsbu u*

jiddiskutu'. They became thinkers able to discuss (IM_ AB3_June22) which also relates to their language skills acquired. Students started analysing information objectively whilst making informed decisions based on evidence rather than opinions, a skill which could only be developed because students were given opportunities to question, make assumptions and challenge ideas. This skill was an underlying adaptation made throughout the time of the research. Teachers were asked to allow students to think and elaborate before giving them a reply. The *Għaliex?*Why? *Kif?* How? *X'taħseb?*What do you (singular) think? *U intom x'taħsbu u għaliex taħsbu hekk?* And what about you, what do you (plural) think and why? questions, and the responsibility of the thought process is placed on the students. In contrast to the significant teacher dependence noted in the early phases of the study (Chapter 8), this indicated that the adjustments resulted in enhanced learner autonomy.

The framework for comprehending the phenomenon of learner autonomy within a given environment, based on the integrative approach of implementing the learning outcomes curriculum used in this research, contributes to the local field by offering educators a practical foundation for adapting their teaching approach to one which fosters learner autonomy. The subsequent section elucidates that the findings concerning the integration of learning outcomes and the pedagogical shift in teaching methodologies to foster learner autonomy are replicable both locally and internationally. Although this study is situated in a single, contextually specific school, the findings retain analytic value for both local and international audiences when interpreted through the logic of analytic generalisation rather than statistical generalisation. Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that carefully conducted case studies produce detailed, context-dependent knowledge that exposes the mechanisms and processes underlying social phenomena; Case studies, such as this exemplar, can elucidate the mechanisms and rationale behind specific pedagogical interventions and transitions to teaching methodologies—specifically, practices that promote learner autonomy—thereby informing both local and international theory and practice. The formulation of external validity, expressed as the principle of proximal similarity (Campbell, 1957), provides a practical bridge from a single case to other settings: transferability depends on the degree of structural, cultural, and situational similarity between the case and potential target contexts. The applicability of the integrated approach using learning outcomes, as demonstrated in this case study conducted in a girls-only church school, is enhanced when other local and international schools possess similar characteristics (e.g., single-gender composition, comparable socio-economic profiles, or analogous curricular focuses). Explicitly mapping these dimensions of similarity enables other researchers and practitioners to judge and adapt the relevance of the findings in their

own settings. By contextualising the empirical observations and findings from Part 3 within the established theoretical frameworks outlined in Part 1, the study formulates theoretically substantiated propositions regarding the conditions, mechanisms, and contingencies that facilitate autonomy. Such ideas can subsequently be evaluated or modified in alternative situations, so enhancing cumulative knowledge rather than remaining as separate descriptions.

14.2.2 Contribution to Pedagogical Research

Research on improving learner autonomy in teaching the native language to primary school students within a learning objectives curriculum is scarce (Yeh & Lan, 2018). This section will elucidate how the research findings pertinent to this study have addressed this gap in pedagogical research. Findings do not imply that to foster learner autonomy, students are given unbounded freedom. Learning is based on acquiring conscious, declarative knowledge through facts and articulating what we learn and reflecting upon it as unconscious procedural knowledge (Butler, 2021). Educators need to adapt their techniques to integrate 'learning awareness' (Zouaoui, 2021, cited in Butler, 2021) into their teaching and assessment procedures, ensuring that students are aware of the learning objectives. Findings presented in previous chapters show that advancing autonomy in language instruction requires a revised comprehension of education. This aligns with Chong and Reinders (2022). Findings illustrate that effective teaching can be achieved and increased through a pedagogy focused on nurturing and developing learner autonomy (RQ1). The educational tools presented in Chapter 6 of Part 2 and the modifications to teaching methodology outlined in Part 3 provide evidence that encourages both students and educators to perceive learning as a process of behavioural transitions rather than merely a mechanism for attaining outcomes or accumulating content (RQ2). The modifications align with Ure's (2022) claim that implementing learning outcomes in educational reform aims to transform national educational practices by transitioning from input to output. This case study demonstrates that this can be accomplished through modifications made to teacher methodology and by enhancing teacher accountability while cultivating a mindset aimed at raising standards rather than diminishing them (Matthews, 2020). This is linked to the fact that, despite the acceptance of Learner Autonomy in language education (Mynard & Shetton-Strong, 2022), the fundamental understanding of how educators perceive Learner Autonomy remains ambiguously defined (Chong & Reinders, 2022). This research contributes to the broader educational community by presenting a clearly defined framework with tangible examples that emphasise the necessity for practitioners to utilise exploratory methods to promote learner autonomy in their various teaching environments. It also underscores the importance of presenting arguments, enhanced with photos, to

practitioners and policymakers, which incorporate an adaptive, non-linear, and dynamic research design. The visual presentation of results continues to add to the authenticity of this research and its findings.

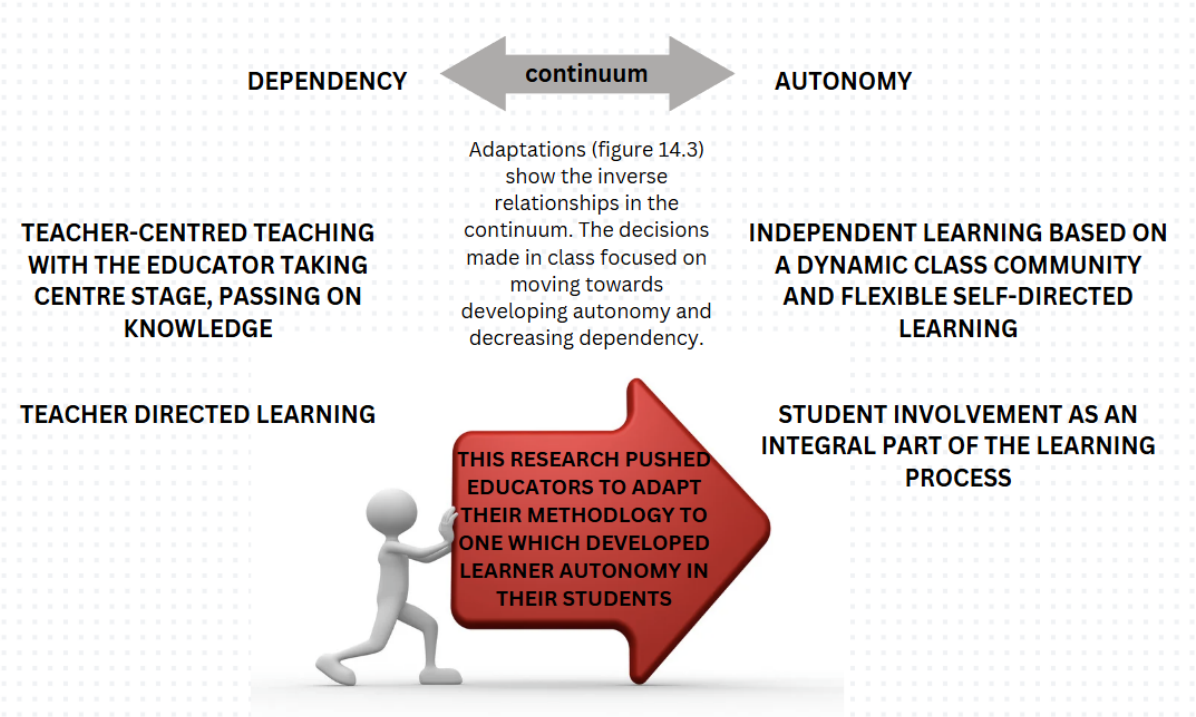


Figure 14.2 The push towards autonomy as implemented in this study

This study is depicted by the red arrow in Figure 14.2. The data demonstrates a favourable relationship between autonomy and motivation, as declared by a teacher participant who claimed that 'Student engagement is considered high, and there is an evident increase in student motivation and interest' (IM_AB3_17January2022). Interestingly, the increased interest led to increased learner autonomy since learners took the initiative. A favourable relationship was felt in student accomplishment when, for example, by May 2022, seven months in the case study, sentences turned into paragraphs, eventually leading to longer writing by the end of the year (IM_AB3_7May22), and critical thinking gave the students a better understanding of what they are learning and why they are learning it. (IM_CD3_7May22). The learning autonomy continuum (presented in Chapter 3 Figure 3.1), developed in Figure 12.1 and Figure 14.2 in this chapter. The evolution of the continuum shows the progress with which this study reallocates authority from the educator to the student. As the case study progressed, students showed more interest and manifested better learning when given more control over their learning. One Grade 4 pupil remarks, "***Il-miss tatna l-power***" -**"The teacher gave us power."** Over an academic year, the methodology gradually delegated the authority often assigned to the teachers to the students. Educators

included in the study claimed that this strategy was beneficial mostly due to the diverse ability groupings, '*Ikolli l-ħin indur'* 'I have more time to go round' (IM_AB4_8May22), implying that the teacher felt she could leave some students alone while assisting those who needed her. The system's efficacy improved as teachers were liberated from continuous direct instruction due to this shift of authority. They could dedicate time to pupils needing more assistance by moving among the groups and supporting those needing additional tutoring.

Academic motivation and persistence improve when students and teachers work together to build social connections (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009), and this was developed through the collaborative projects described in Chapter 9. The social connections made were further developed through self-directed projects or activities that saw both the teacher's and students' roles shifting. Rather than using controlled evaluation methods, teachers built competence in their students by providing constructive, continuous feedback, which enhanced motivation and performance. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory further supports this process by emphasising the role of social interaction in cognitive development. The concept of the MKO—a teacher, peer, or digital resource—facilitates movement through the ZPD, where learners progress from what they can do independently to what they can achieve with support (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding, a pedagogical approach derived from this theory, enables students to engage with their learning through guided discourse, collaboration, and problem-solving activities (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), leading to the acquisition of higher-order thinking skills. Through guided scaffolding, as clearly shown in the Grade 3 project in Chapter 12, learners achieved autonomy by eventually internalising skills and knowledge. This explicit illustration of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) exemplifies the cultivation of learner autonomous skills, contrasting with the competencies of the Grade 3 pupils demonstrated in the preliminary phases of this study, as detailed in Chapter 8. The ZPD provides a structured pathway for this transition, as learners initially rely on guidance from an MKO but gradually assume control over their own learning. When students engage in evaluative and creative tasks, they learn to set their own learning goals, assess their progress, and refine their strategies. This autonomy is particularly vital in lifelong learning contexts, where individuals need to continuously adapt and acquire new skills (Benson, 2011).

Evidence presented in Part 3 of this study manifests an inverse relation as follows:

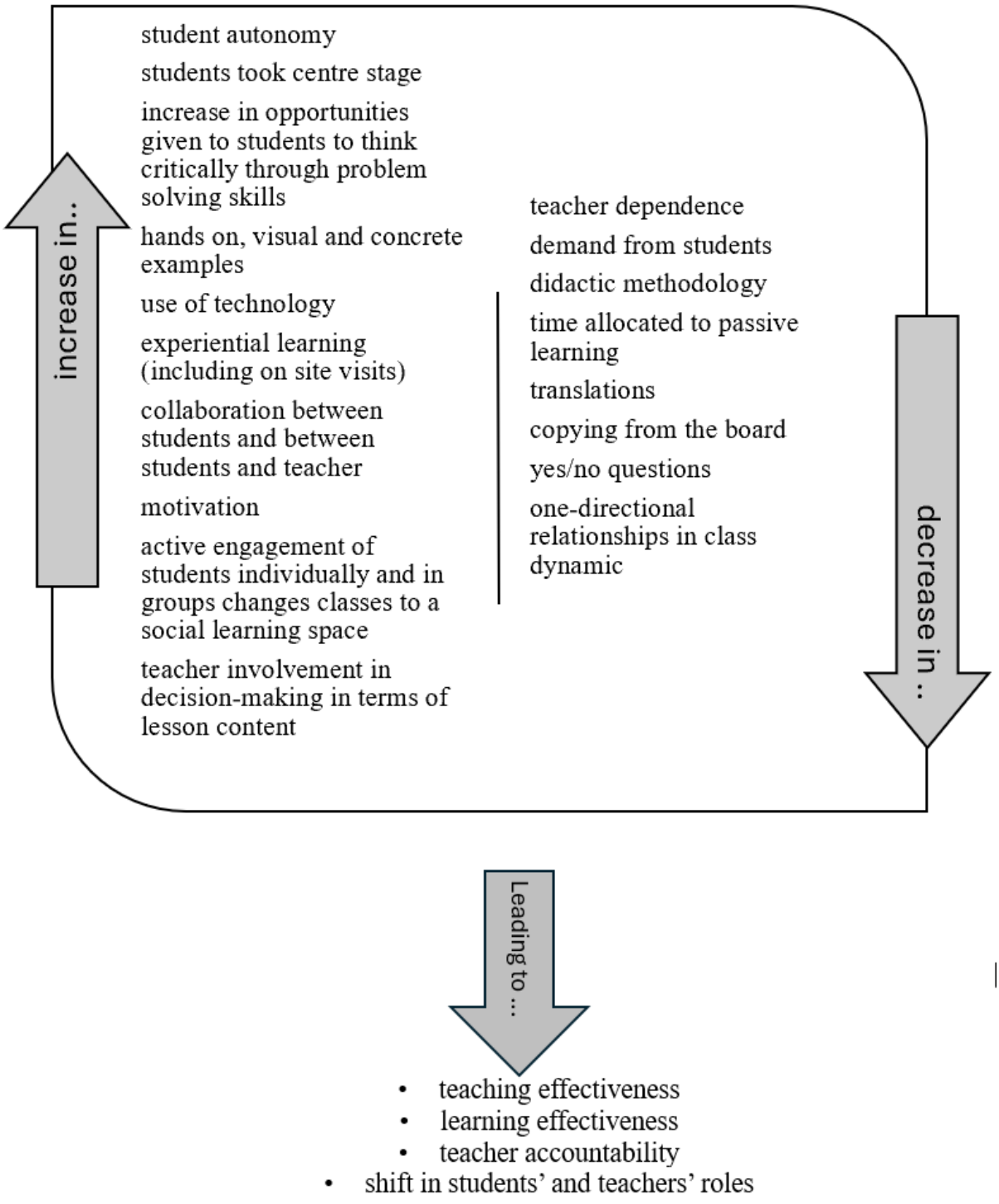


Figure 14.3 The inverse relationships that emerge from the findings

Figure 14.3 illustrates the inverse relationship between all the concepts explained in Figure 14.2. Figure 14.4, which builds on this figure, shows the intricate nature of the language classroom, which is displayed as a system characterised by interdependent connection webs. In addition to the subtle and complex connections among peers and between students and

educators, interconnected relationships also exist. These also encompass spatial relations that can directly influence the effectiveness of the learning process in fostering learner autonomy. These connections all illustrate the relationship between autonomy and relational interdependence. The findings resulted in a nexus of relationships presented in Figure 14.4.

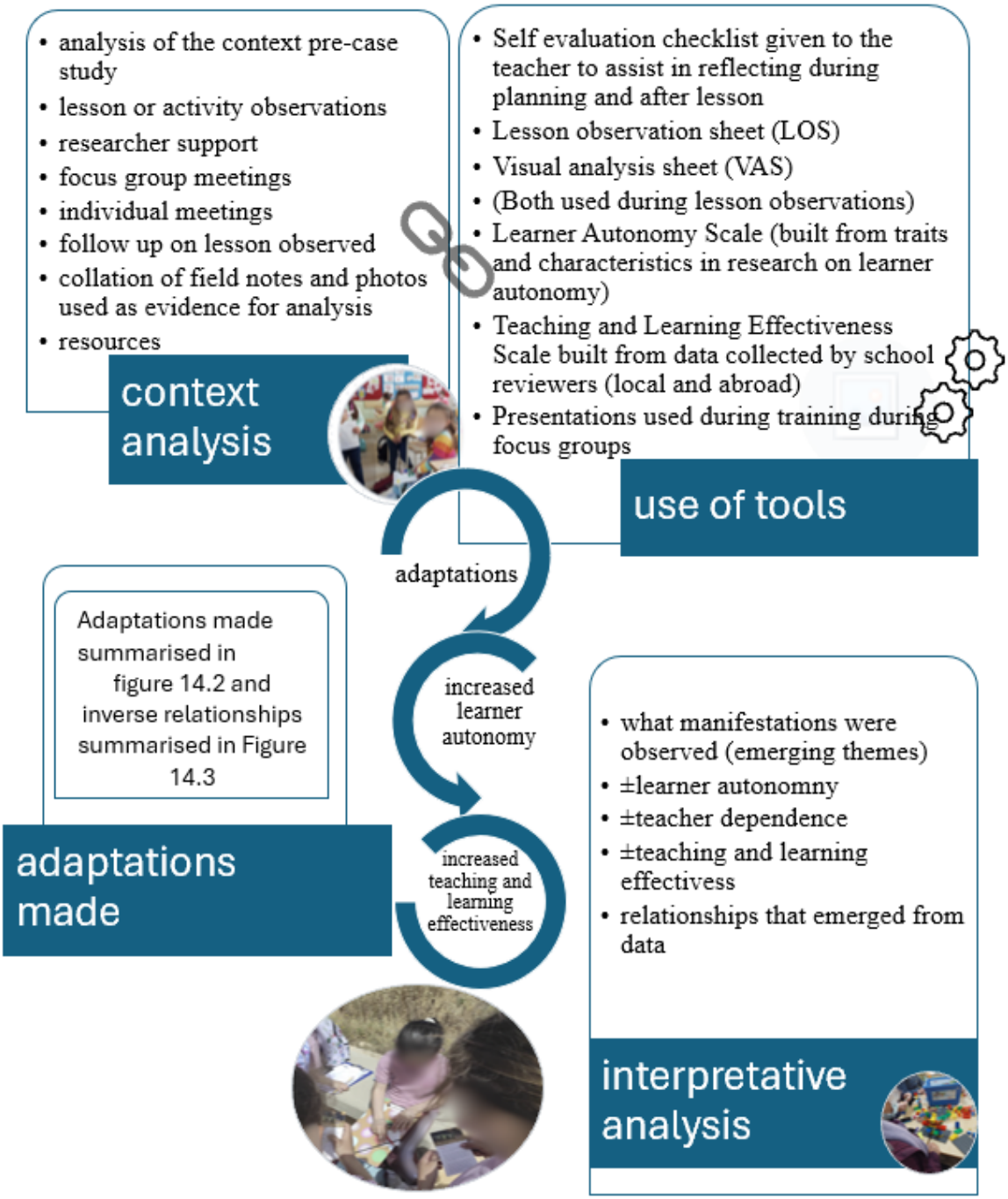


Figure 14.4 The nexus of relationships

14.3 Key Components of Learner Autonomy and their impact on teaching and learning effectiveness

This section focuses on the manifestation of a continuum of the key components of Learner Autonomy traits and characteristics that emerged from evidence and the impact these manifestations had on teaching and learning effectiveness.

LEARNER AUTONOMY SCALE

1. Learning by doing	
2. Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	
3. The learner is responsible for their own learning by setting their own goals	
4. Learners are responsible for their own learning through discovering, identifying, and using own resources for learning	
5. Learners helping each other	
6. Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	
7. Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	
8. Learners are responsible for their own learning by planning their own programmes, with students free to use the material at any time	
9. Value of individuality	
10. Learners discover meaning for themselves	
11. Able to co-operate with others	
12. Learning to learn	
13. Independent and individual study	
14. Better ability to deal with problems	
15. Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	
16. Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	

Table 14.1 LAS used in this case study - traits (green) and characteristics (peach)

The scale sought to assess whether learner autonomy in literature was attained in this case study through modifications to the teaching approaches. This scale is presented as an evaluative tool educators can use to assess whether their teaching has improved their students' attainment of traits and characteristics.

Throughout the case study, the cyclical research method examined the multifaceted nature of language learner autonomy. It does not follow the onion layer patterns described by Tassinari (2015) (cited in Stringer, 2024), who considers the analytic layers of Learner Autonomy as separate, interrelated inner layers encapsulated in layers of visible outer shells. This study showed that the language classroom is a complex system based on interdependent

connection webs of interpersonal relations. The evidence presented shows children navigating the classroom and interacting with one another while utilising various tools such as small whiteboards, technology, and LEGO, along with teacher-created resources such as word cards and handouts. The classes were transformed into language-learning communities.. Learning took place outside the classroom, when the park and the farm were used as an extension to the classroom.

The advancement of Learner Autonomy stemmed from continuous interlinked developmental processes (illustrated through figures 14.5, 14.6 and 14.7), which developed over the months. A fundamental underpinning principle throughout the research was the dynamism and constant adaptation of tempo and techniques used. Even the confines of the classroom were dismantled when pupils were encouraged to utilise language and engage with people beyond the educational environment (examples of Grade 3 students interacting with administrative staff and other teachers and farm owners, and Grade 4 students interacting with park rangers in the long-term project). The success of this case study stemmed from mutual support and cooperation between the researcher, teacher and student participants, and once teacher dependency decreased, autonomy increased.

The network of relationships depicted in Figure 14.4 and the spatial relations depicted in Figure 14.5 illustrate the impact that different factors in the learning environment have on nurturing Learner Autonomy. Evidence collected and presented throughout the chapters in Part 3 (Chapters 8 to 13) demonstrated that traits and characteristics of learner autonomy (introduced in Chapter 3 and used to design the LAS) increased gradually in an iterative and cumulative manner.

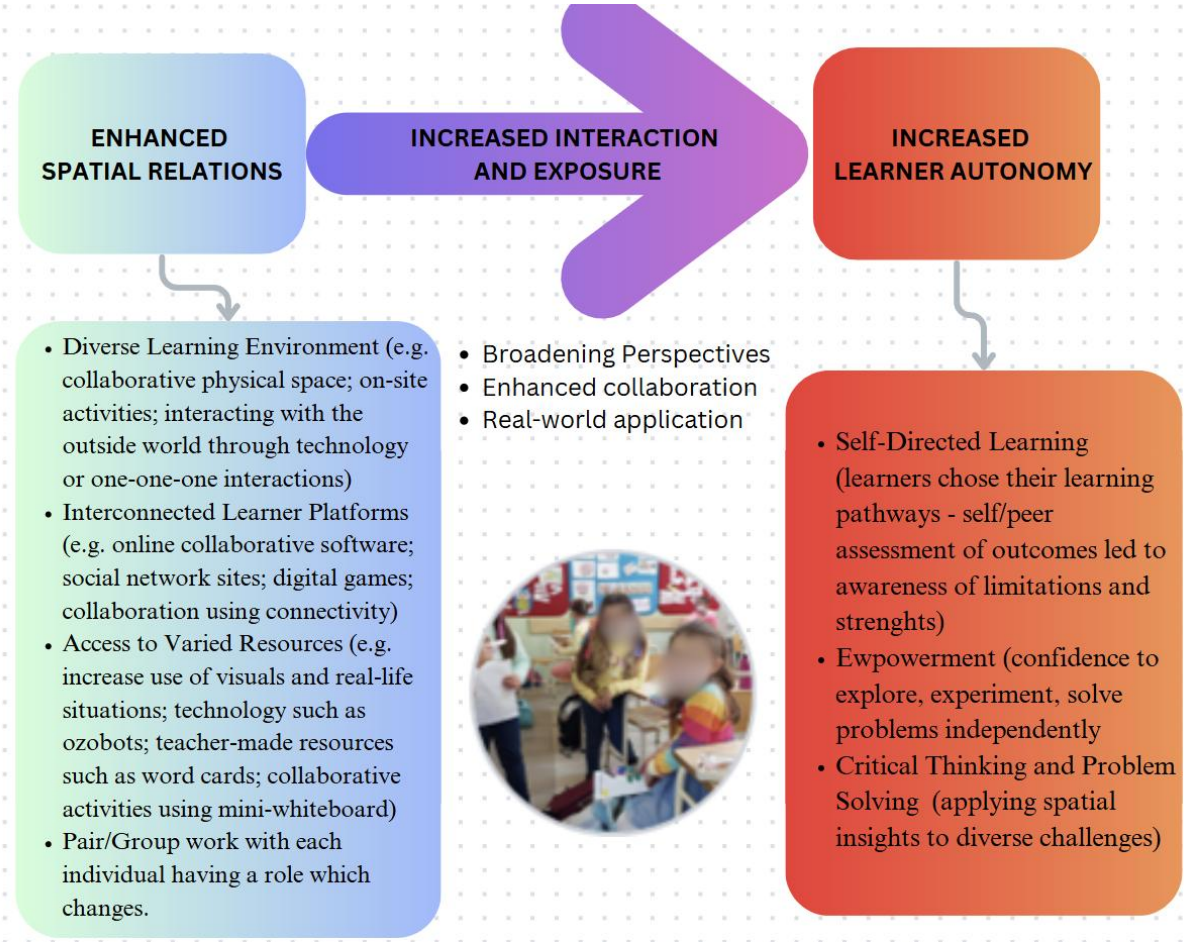


Figure 14.5 Increase in Spatial Relations results in increased Learner Autonomy.

Figure 14.5 illustrates that as learners encounter diverse and interconnected spatial experiences, they cultivate a wider array of skills and confidence, enabling them to assume control of their learning. The targets reached under the heading Increased Learner Autonomy in this figure are explained in more detail. The gradient transition from a cool colour (blue/green) for the “Spatial Relations” side to a warm colour (orange/red) for the “Learner Autonomy” side has been chosen to represent progression visually.

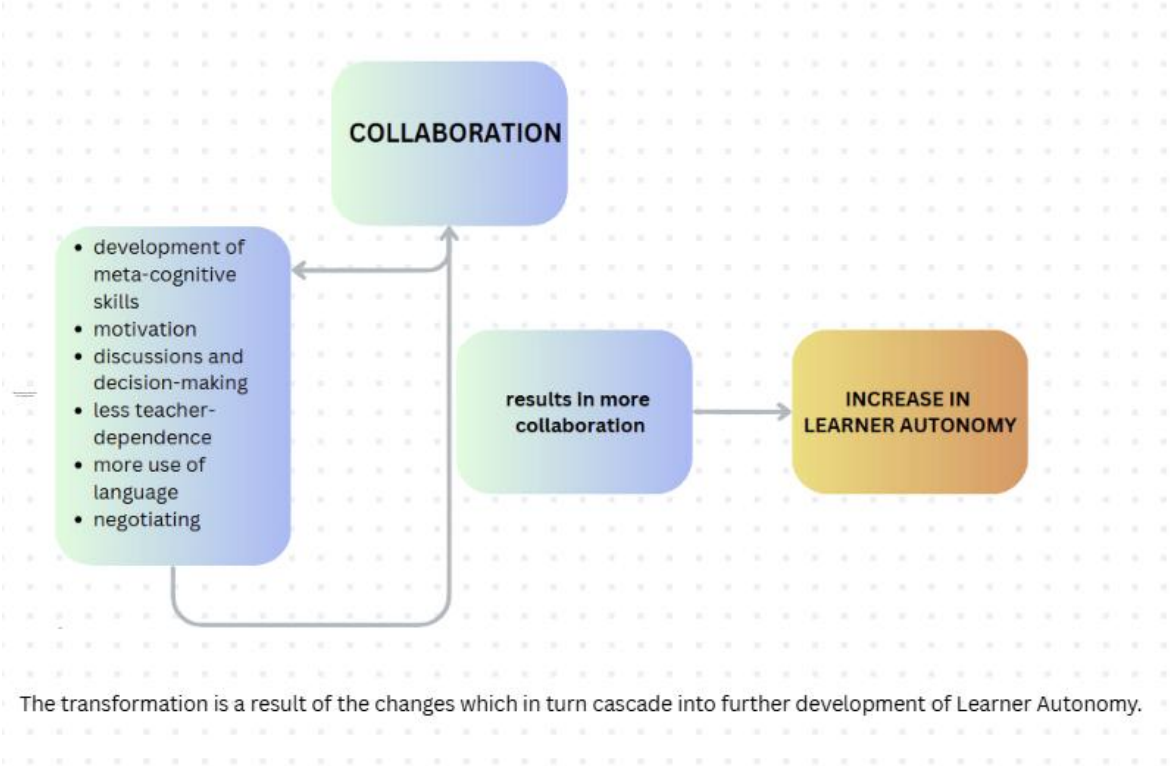


Figure 14.6: Adaptations exhibit autocatalytic properties.

Figure 14.6 demonstrates how adaptations generate autocatalytic results, as collaborative adaptations promote additional collaboration, thereby augmenting learner autonomy. The data gathered indicates that modifications in instructional methodologies initiate a cycle of self-reinforcing enhancements in student learning, engagement, and instructional practices. This, in turn, contributes to greater effectiveness in teaching and learning, as illustrated in Figure 14.7.

The next figure, Figure 14.7, aimed at the teachers, encapsulates all the elements corresponding to the teaching and learning efficacy objectives elucidated in the Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale used in the observations during the case study. The targets are presented as a ten-step paradigm that teachers can reference in their planning. This ten-step paradigm, together with the resources designed throughout the case study, is presented in the Resource Pack in Appendix 4.9.

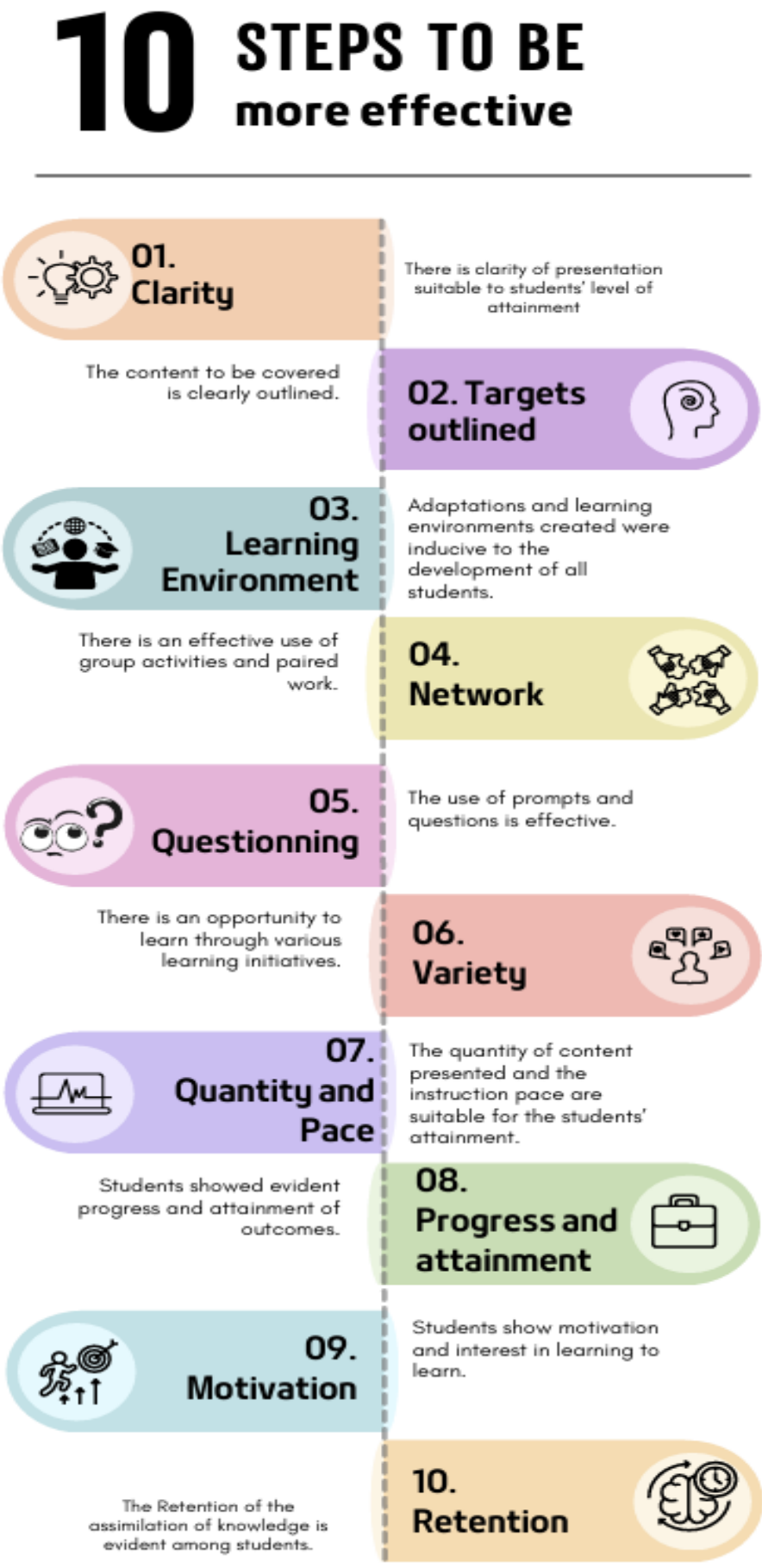


Figure 14.7 Targets to achieve teaching and learning effectiveness

This paradigm, designed to optimise pedagogical methods, draws on evidence presented in Part 3 that indicated improved teaching and learning efficacy. Educators utilising this systematic methodology, which includes ten essential principles explained below, guarantee instructional clarity, inclusion in learning environments, and the enhancement of cognitive memory.

1. **Clarity**

   Effective instruction necessitates an explicit and coherent process of teaching and learning practices. The pedagogical materials and instructional strategies need to be aligned with students' cognitive levels to enhance comprehension and facilitate optimal conditions for implementing learning outcomes.

2. **Target Specification**

   Clearly defined learning objectives are essential in guiding educators and learners toward achieving predetermined educational benchmarks. Arranging these targets allows for a structured and purposeful instructional approach.

3. **Learning Environment**

   Establishing an adaptive and inclusive learning environment fosters student engagement. Collaborative learning methodologies, such as group discussions and paired activities, enhance knowledge construction and peer-assisted learning, which leads to the development of learner autonomy. The learning environment can be in and out of school.

4. **Network and Interaction**

   The strategic use of networking through collaborative activities that could also use technology fosters an interactive and dynamic learning environment. These methods stimulate critical thinking, allowing students to engage deeply with the material, which leads to the development of learner autonomy.

5. **Questioning Strategies**

   The integration of varied questioning techniques facilitates knowledge exploration and deeper cognitive engagement. Incorporating inquiry-based learning strategies encourages students to analyse and apply their knowledge across different contexts critically.

6. **Diversity in Instructional Methods**

   A heterogeneous instructional approach, encompassing multimodal teaching

strategies, caters to diverse learning needs. Variability in pedagogical techniques enriches the educational experience and ensures accessibility for all learners.

7. **Appropriate Content Volume and Pacing**
   The quantity of instructional content and its delivery pace need to be attuned to the cognitive and developmental readiness of learners. Effective pacing prevents cognitive overload and enhances content assimilation.

8. **Progress and Learning Outcomes**
   Evidently, student progress is a fundamental indicator of instructional efficacy. The systematic assessment of learning trajectories ensures that pedagogical strategies align with intended educational outcomes.

9. **Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation**
   Students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play crucial roles in the learning process. Engaging instructional strategies that resonate with learners' interests contribute to sustained academic motivation and performance, leading to learner autonomy.

10. **Knowledge Retention**
    The ultimate objective of effective pedagogy is the long-term retention and application of acquired knowledge. Assessing students' ability to recall and apply learned concepts validates the effectiveness of instructional methodologies.

By systematically integrating these ten principles, educators can foster an optimal learning environment that promotes cognitive development, knowledge acquisition, academic success and the development of learner autonomy skills.

Throughout the case study, additional changes focused on goal-setting, self-monitoring, and decision-making skills, which evidence indicates are essential for fostering learner autonomy.

Goal-Setting Skills: The implementation of meticulous planning facilitates the attainment of goal-setting among the primary school learner participants. The practice of goal-setting is associated with numerous advantages. This practice fosters the development of foundational habits related to planning and time management from an early age. The motivation experienced by learners encourages them to derive satisfaction from achieving personal milestones. This process, in turn, enhances their self-esteem through measurable progress, thereby fostering the intrinsic motivation previously discussed. This approach fosters a sense

of ownership regarding tasks and learning outcomes, while simultaneously cultivating perseverance and adaptability in the face of challenges. Addressing the deficiencies identified in the TALIS and PIRLS studies referenced in Section 14.2.1 among local students, the implementation of these strategies will facilitate the development of essential goal-setting skills in primary school learners, which are expected to evolve throughout their subsequent educational stages.

One of the characteristics in the learner autonomy scale targets the responsibility of learners to set their own goals for their learning. This case study examines the adaptations implemented to incorporate goal setting within standard classroom practices. At the commencement of each instructional session or activity, the educator explicitly delineates the learning objective or objectives that are to be achieved by the conclusion of the educational experience. This subsequently initiates a discourse with the learners, centred on the establishment of objectives within the classroom setting. The findings delineated in Chapter 8 at the start of the study illustrate the manner in which one of the Grade 3 educators facilitated the establishment of goals for their students. When I suggested introducing a library borrowing initiative with the learners to motivate them to read more books in Maltese, students in the third grade were permitted to establish objectives pertaining to their reading activities, subsequently engaging in discussions with their teacher regarding these goals. The discussion included timelines and outcomes of the book review, for example, whether a pupil would prefer presenting a drawing, writing sentences or explaining verbally after reading the book. The follow-up was conducted to verify that the reading had been executed. Project objectives were established in the context of the project delineated in Chapter 12.

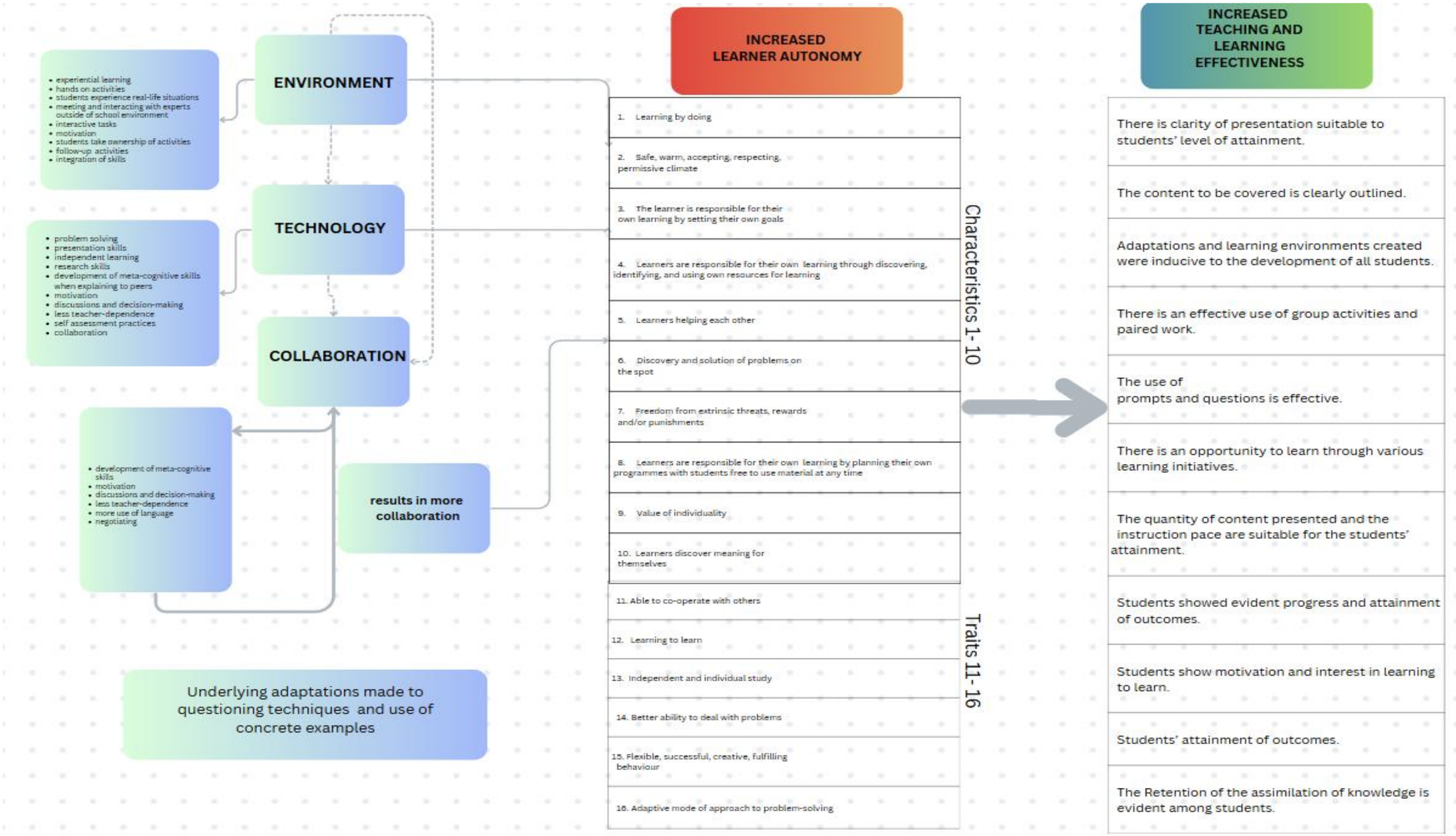
In Grade 3, the involvement of students in the goal-setting process of their project-based learning was evident as they established timelines for the design and construction of the farms, as well as for planning, drafting, and presenting their writing tasks. This collaborative effort included negotiations with their teacher, for example, "By the end of the week, we will complete our group plan on how to design the farm". The Grade 3 LEGO farms and the associated tasks related to the designed farms were at varying stages of development during that week. In Grade 4, the pupils chose their writing genres to work on and include in their eBook. In both instances, the teacher systematically observes the advancement of students' task completion. This is one of many other examples mentioned in previous chapters which present evidence related to goal-setting.

Self-monitoring: For progress to occur in the case study, self-monitoring was an underlying attribute needed by all - the researcher, the teacher and student participants. Self-monitoring for the researcher included reflective practices, which will be developed in Section 14.4. Throughout the meetings, teachers developed reflective practices needed to develop them into insightful practitioners who aimed at being more autonomy supportive. Chapters 11 and 13 elucidate how reflective practices were also instilled in the students in many ways. Data indicated that variables including age, competency, and initial readiness and preparation influenced the learners' skills acquisition in this domain (refer to Chapters 8, 11 and 12.3, Evaluating these projects in Chapter 12). As elaborated in the self-assessment section (Chapter 10 Section 10.1), the characteristics of grade 3 learners, including self-assessment and peer assessment, were still in their initial stages. This may arise from multiple causes, such as age-appropriateness, availability of support systems, cognitive or emotional preparedness and readiness for the skill, and time constraints.

Decision-Making: Allowing choice and control over learning paths. Examples include the LEGO experience for grade 3 (Chapter 12), the collaborative writing experience for Grade 3 (Chapter 9 Section Collaborative Writing), and students setting goals through their involvement in decision-making during the Grade 4 writing experience where learners were given the ‘power’ to choose the genre and decide on a plan of action (Chapter 12) as well as tasks related to word cards and use of QR codes. When students were asked to speak about what they felt when they were involved and allowed to make choices about their learning, the evidence showed that the students themselves felt that this led to a development of their cognitive ability. ‘Il-Miss tatna l-power’ is a statement which encapsulates the culmination of the development of learner autonomy for the students. This aligns with Vygotsky’s social development theory, explained in Chapter 2, which asserts that interactions are generative when developed over time.

The connections made resulted in a ripple effect amongst the various aspects and phases discussed in this research, illustrated in Figure 14.8.

Figure 14.8 The Ripple Effect



The transformation results from the adaptations made, which cascade into further development of learner autonomy skills. The increased learner autonomy skills increase teaching and learning effectiveness.

This figure (Figure 14.8) encompasses all the elements that emerged from the analysis conducted in this case study, from various spatiotemporal developments within a defined site and period. Both aspects possess equivalent importance. The findings suggest that the developmental stages of each part of the cyclical design process depend on specific circumstances, affecting the progression of the emerging themes and the nurturing of learner autonomy skills. These circumstances are aligned with the issues related to language competence highlighted in the initial stages of the research, readiness by teachers to embark on an innovative methodology which included an enhanced use of technology, learners' age and other attributes related to language competency, the outcomes, design of evaluator tools and constant support provided by the researcher. Under appropriate temporal and contextual conditions, the adaptations were systematically introduced and evolved, leading to a notable enhancement in learner autonomy, as illustrated in Figures 14.2 and 14.3. This case study examines the emergent evaluation of learner autonomy, which corresponds with Stringer's (2024, p.6) concept of 'cycles of emergence'. This framework facilitates a reconceptualisation of autonomy, thereby fostering the development of novel conceptual perspectives and instructional lines of inquiry.

14.4 How can one ascertain consolidation of change?

Change and movement transpire when the factors propelling change surpass those attempting to inhibit it (Burnes, 2020). Upon the manifestation of change, during the case study, it was crucial to ensure its protection for implementation in the future. In change management models, such as Lewin's three stages, Kotter's eight steps, and Hiatt's ADKAR (Bekmukhambetova, 2021), the last stage is consistently dedicated to hindering change from reverting to its original state. The Freezing stage for Lewin, The Make it Stick 8th step for Kotter and the R for Reinforcement for Hiatt, all focus on consolidation.

The reinforcing process includes all action that strengthens and solidifies, fulfilling specific adaptations explained in Chapters 7 to 13. Hiatt and Creasey (2012) claim that when implementing change, reinforcement is successful when it is meaningful, when it is associated with actual accomplishments, when there is an absence of negative consequences and when accountability mechanisms are in place. Throughout the case study, reinforcement functioned as a mechanism to generate momentum. It maintained the transformation and prevented participants from reverting to the teacher-centred approach characterised primarily by a top-down didactic style. Ultimately, reinforcement establishes a benchmark wherein the celebration and affirmation of change enhance the readiness and capacity for further

acceptance of change. The following excerpts from one of the last meetings held with the teachers in the third term indicate that the participants also perceived the pedagogical transition towards learner autonomy as beneficial.

> IM_AB3_30May22: *Tgħallimt ħafna u indunajt li xi kultant naqa' in a rut u nibqa' nuża' l-istess activities u anke jien stess nibda niddejjaq sena wara sena. Biex inħaddem il-learning outcomes mhux se nsibha diffiċli s-sena d-dieħla u anke biex ninkludi activities biex it-tfal ma jibqgħux jiddependu daqshekk fuqi.*
>
> IM_AB3_30May22: I learned a lot and realized that sometimes I fall into a rut and keep using the same activities and even I myself start getting bored. I will not find it difficult next year, to operate learning outcomes and to include the activities. Hopefully in that way, the children will no longer rely so much on me.
>
> IM_AB4_30May22: *Jien naħseb l-aktar change kbira li qabel vera kont ninkiweta minħabba l-ħin, kienet t-tablets. Veru rajthom għamlu progress t-tfal bihom. Issa la għandi t-templates anke fuq il-live ma rridx nibda kollox milll-bidu. U l-ktieb veru ħadu pjaċir jagħmluh. Nibda nużah għar-revision għax lanqas jindunaw li jkunu qed jagħmluh.*
>
> IM_AB4_30May22*:* I guess the biggest change that I really used to worry about because of the time element was using the tablets. I've really seen their effectiveness and the learners have made progress with them. Now that I have the templates even on the live (worksheets) I don't want to start everything from scratch. Moreover, we enjoyed working on the e-book*. I will start using it for revision because they don't even notice they are revising.
>
> IM_AB4_30 May22: *Iċ-changes nibda nippjanahom għax dik ic-checklist nibqa' nużaha għax sibtha tgħinni. Qisha tiftaħli għanjejja jien u nippjana ta' x'suppost nagħmel. It-tfal veru jqumu fuq tagħhom hekk kif għamilna din is-sena. U l-learning outcomes issa naf kif nibda ngħaqqahom ukoll. Fih aktar xogħol ta' planning imma taf li naħseb li in the long run, worth it għax ittella' aktar xogħol f'daqqa?*
>
> IM_AB4_30 May22: For next year, I plan to use the changes we worked on this year. I will keep using that checklist because I found it helpful. It's like opening my eyes while I'm planning what I'm supposed to do. If I follow what we did this year, the learners will become much more engaged. And the learning outcomes—now I know how to start combining them as well. It entails longer time to plan but do you know that in the long run I feel that it's worth it since more work is covered at one go?

*ebook presented in Appendix 6.1

Additional measures were implemented to facilitate the consolidation of change. According to Bekmukhambetova (2021), external reinforcement includes recognition related to the execution of the change. As mentioned in Chapter 12, during the final stages of the case study, the school's senior management was invited to the classes to celebrate the attained accomplishments. Their invitation and commendations for the teachers and learners

celebrated success. External recognition of achievements was also acknowledged. At the end of the scholastic year, during the end-of-year teacher days, the educator participants were requested to elucidate the processes of change, resources used and the outcomes attained, with other teachers. I was also invited to give 12 hours of training on learning outcomes implementation and the development of learner autonomy to the rest of the teachers of the primary sector (Presentations used for training found in Appendix 4.10). During this training, the grade 3 and 4 teacher participants were also requested to present processes linked to adaptations made to their colleagues. The teachers could see photographs of learners in action and highlight the changes that had been implemented. During another event, the Grade 4 teacher explained the processes to a group of educators from a number of European partner educational institutions. The eBook project was presented during a European school seminar as a successful initiative that the school had achieved. The event centred around books. Such celebrations promote reinforcement when implementing change (Hiatt, 2006). When changes are celebrated, reinforcement creates a milestone. The transition that the educators underwent by the end of the year of the case study resulted in a transformation that reinforced their readiness and capacity to consolidate the accepted change.



Photo 14.1: Educator explaining how collaborative practices increased effectiveness in the learning processes



Photo 14.2: Educator going through the eBook project with teachers from other schools.

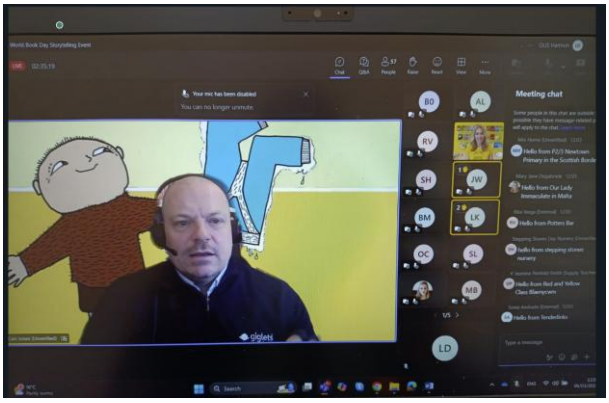


Photo 14.3

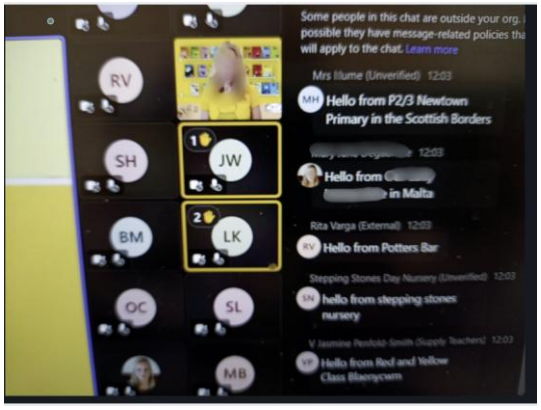


Photo 14.4

As an example of MKO (Vygostky, Figure 2.6) this photo illustrates the 2024-2025 online storytelling activities organised for the students by Polylino

In the advancement of this research, I conducted training for the entire sector in the subsequent academic year to facilitate the implementation of the identified learning outcomes. This program provided substantial insights regarding the requisite modifications to enhance learner autonomy within the classroom setting. Due to directives issued by the teachers' union, I was restricted from observing the classes. Nevertheless, considering that one of the teachers involved was promoted to assistant head, I sustained communication with her. I obtained feedback concerning the feasibility of the proposed methodology among teachers in the subsequent academic year. From information gathered from the school, a range of efforts were made, and learner autonomy remains operational to this day in various initiatives as follows:

- The lesson objectives are shared with the students at the beginning of the lesson, and they are then prompted to evaluate their attainment of those objectives at the end. Learning outcomes have been integrated into course materials.
- Students are granted access to IWB pens, and they are given more opportunities to interact with their peers and adopt the role of 'the teacher'.
- Tools such as Padlet and Book Creator facilitate collaboration via technological methods.
- The IWB enables engagement with the external environment, including special themed assemblies. For example, on Bee Day, using the MKO principle (Figure 2.6), a bee expert was invited to join in via Teams to show the students the bee hives and honey production process.
- Educators are encouraged to facilitate collaborative activities, enable students to engage in discussions, and provide mutual feedback. Writing tasks include both collaborative and individual efforts, including planning and drafting processes.
- Learning outcomes are integrated across different subjects during the planning phases.
- All grades use site visits as experiential educational opportunities. Follow-up activities are integrated into the teaching and learning process after site visits.
- Students are permitted to showcase their work via presentations utilising technology.
- The teacher participants still use the checklist throughout the discussions and planning meetings.
- In Grades 4 through 6, the focus of self-assessment and peer assessment is to shift from evaluations led by teachers to more student-centred assessment approaches. This is done through an increase in the use of checklists.
- The integration of learning outcomes across disciplines is presently being considered as a priority target for upcoming School development Plans.
- More robotic equipment was purchased.

- Union directives have hindered members of the senior management from observing the classes, and therefore, no feedback on class dynamics could be passed on regarding class interactions.

14.5 Generalisability and Transferability

'*the trouble with generalisability is that they don't apply to particulars'* (Poth and Beck, 2010, p. 1458)

Eisenkopf (et al., 2015) asserts that single-gender classrooms may encourage more confidence in participation in certain subjects (e.g., STEM), potentially affecting observed engagement levels or collaborative behaviours. Although this study is situated in a single gender girls-only church school, its findings can still offer insights applicable to other educational contexts through the lens of analytic generalisation. Following Flyvbjerg's (2006) argument, a well-conducted case study provides rich, context-dependent understanding that illuminates broader social mechanisms and processes, rather than aiming for statistical generalisation. By deeply examining the interactions, practices, and outcomes within this particular setting, the study generates exemplars that highlight patterns potentially relevant beyond the immediate context. Campbell's (1957) notion of **proximal similarity** further supports this approach, suggesting that transferability depends on the structural and relational similarity between contexts. Other schools that share comparable features—such as single-gender composition, religious affiliation, or collaborative pedagogical approaches—may find the insights regarding learner autonomy, collaboration, or technology use applicable or adaptable. Thus, while the study's conclusions are inherently contextualised, they retain value for informing practice and guiding further research in settings with analogous characteristics. The qualitative investigation adopted in case study research seeks to deliver comprehensive insights and interpretations rather than broad generalisations (Carminati, 2018). As Polit (2010) claims in qualitative studies where evidence is highly valued, the aim is not to generalise but to provide a rich, contextualised understanding of a phenomenon. It is also claimed that any generalisation represents 'a working hypothesis and not a conclusion' (Cronbach, 1975, in Polit & Beck, 2010 p. 125). Kerlinger and Lee (2000) consider generalisation as a concept that exists along a continuum, not an absolute on a fixed point. This study followed the principle that in case study research, what is most purposeful is the presentation of an in-depth picture that adds to the value to the case study (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Generalisation requires extrapolation from the data collected, which Polit and Beck (2010) claim can never be fully justified since findings, such as the findings in this study, are

permanently embedded in a context. Qualitative researchers believe in-depth qualitative research is well suited for revealing high-level concepts not unique to one particular setting (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This study's generalisability corresponds with the continuum principle and Campbell's (1986) proximal similarity model (Brunner, 1987). The extent to which these research findings can be applied to other contexts depends on the similarity between this original research setting and the new contexts of future research. Therefore, rather than treating generalisability as binary (either generalisable or not), this approach views it along a continuum, that is, the more similar the populations, settings, and variables of new research are to the original study, the stronger the basis for generalisation. Future researchers and consumers of this research can evaluate which circumstances are similar to or differ from those in their study along a spectrum of similarity. In this case study, the knowledge obtained is idiographic (Erlandson et al., 1993), emphasising in-depth, qualitative analysis rather than general laws. The applicability of research findings beyond a particular context can shape the opinion of decision-makers (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This research can align with Firestone's (1993) third model typology of generalisability, called transferability or reader generalisability (Drisko, 2025). This involves the use of findings from an inquiry into a different group of people or setting. In this model, the researcher's job is to provide detailed descriptions that allow readers to make inferences about extrapolating the findings to other settings. An evaluation of the extent to which the findings apply to new situations is carried out by new researchers who 'transfer' the results to the new context.

Encouraging a higher level of learner autonomy in language education entails a new conception of pedagogy (Stringer, 2024). Findings in this study show that adapting teachers' methodology increases learners' responsibility towards their learning process. This was evident when enhancing the use of technology (Chapter 10), when focusing on a learning environment beyond the classroom (Chapter 12) and also when enhancing collaborative practices (Chapter 9) and other underlying adaptations which were introduced and implemented throughout the case study.

The key principles on which the modifications were planned (Figure 2.6) and implemented (Part 3 of this thesis) can be adapted and transferred to other educational environments. Moreover, educators and policymakers can promote learner autonomy by utilising the suggested adaptation framework as a guiding instrument. The theoretical and pedagogical justification for the implementation of student-centered approaches designed to foster learner autonomy may serve as a foundation for the replication of studies that could

differ in various variables, including context and demographic data. This would enhance the robustness of the findings (Drisko, 2025).

14.6 Triangulation of Data

In order to address potential bias and to enhance the validity and reliability of this study, methodological triangulation is employed by incorporating various data collection techniques as suggested by Bryman (2016). The range of strategies implemented for collecting and analysing data are textual and visual. The study employed a triangulation process to enhance the validity of the findings. This study employs a comparative analysis of field notes alongside data collected from the documented trail of materials and processes, integrating a multi-dimensional approach to the compiled data. This case study utilises a multimethod and multidisciplinary collaborative approach, facilitating cross-validation and improving the overall quality of research outcomes. The triangulation of data significantly enriches this research by offering a variety of data sets that clarify multiple dimensions of the subject being examined (Noble & Heale, 2019).

As detailed in Chapter 6, this approach primarily involved the use of observations, meetings, interviews, and questionnaires, which were administered both prior to and following the study, utilising anonymous feedback to ensure participant confidentiality. Furthermore, the photo journal enhanced the credibility and authenticity of the written data presented in Chapters 8 to 13. This underscores the potential for a relationship among the diverse sources discussed across various sections within Part 3 of this study, wherein evidence was presented to reduce bias, thereby illustrating a considerable level of transparency in citing credible sources.

14.7 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the relationships that emerged from the findings of the study in relation to the research questions, utilising a critical reflection on the research conducted to clarify the complexities inherent within the context under investigation. This examination clarifies the approach utilised in the case study, illustrating the rationale behind the adaptations that led to pedagogical transition intended to promote learner autonomy. Moreover, the methodologies utilised to assess the incorporation of these adaptations have been defined. The analysis articulated within this document provides critical insights and

foundational knowledge that underpin the proposed educational framework. This research delineates its contribution to the Maltese educational community and pedagogical knowledge. The concluding chapter elucidates this study's issues and limitations and presents recommendations for prospective initiatives and research projects, culminating in a final reflection.

CHAPTER 15

CONCLUSION

15.0 Introduction

This research articulates an innovative perspective on educational methodology and provides a framework for adopting learner-focused approaches when teaching Maltese to primary students that promote student autonomy, yielding a significant and pragmatic advancement within the field. These modifications to pedagogical approaches facilitated the enhancement of learner autonomy (Research Question 2). Drawing from the visual and textual data (Part 3) collected through the various qualitative methods (Chapter 6) used, the discussion in Chapter 14 presents causal relationships also presented through Figures 14.1 to 14.8, which elucidate how the extrapolation of data led to a catalytic pattern of relationships.

i The shift towards autonomy (Figure 14.2) results from several inverse relationships (Figure 14.3). The interconnections between the relationships that derived from the comprehensive analysis of the data are illustrated in Figure 14.4. These indicate that the interactions taking place are interrelated and that their relationships contributed to the transition of the educational environment into one that supports autonomy.

ii The instructional methods led to a marked increase in efficacy. The emerging textual and visual data revealed that the varied initiatives substantially enhanced learning opportunities for all learners.

iii By employing a reflective methodology facilitated through consistent meetings (focus groups, individual meetings and tools such as the evaluation checklist), the teacher participants effectively planned activities designed to promote learner autonomy through an integrated approach of targeting learning outcomes.

iv Furthermore, the pace of delivery was meticulously adjusted to align with the students' needs and abilities. Through modifications made and elaborated on in Chapters 7 to 13, students demonstrated a significant increase in active engagement and motivation to the educational process within the established framework. This driving force resulted in additional achievements and advancements in teaching and learning efficacy (addressing

Research Question 1). Promoting learner autonomy in the context of language education holds significant relevance (Stringer, 2024). The tasks assigned to the students yielded substantial evidence indicating that their advancement was not merely absorbed for the particular task but was also preserved over the extended duration of the case study. The results indicate that interactive environments contribute to the enhancement of language processing capabilities, thereby leading to improved retention and comprehension outcomes. The attainment of these competencies has enabled the development of age-appropriate, sophisticated cognitive capabilities.

15.1 Issues and limitations of this study

This section delineates the limitations and issues of this case study.

i. Sample

A case study is focused on a specific context, group, or scenario, thereby challenging the generalisation of findings to wider populations. The results detailed in chapters 8 to 13 demonstrate that learner autonomy was developed and achieved through a range of methods applied within the specific context of this research. Nevertheless, strategies that demonstrate efficacy in one educational setting may be ineffective in another, attributable to variations in cultural, socioeconomic, or institutional contexts. The findings may be specific to the selected cohort and not necessarily representative of a broader trend.

ii. Causality

This case study comprehensively analyses intricate occurrences, rendering them especially useful for comprehending subtle educational dynamics. The figures presented in Chapter 14, Figures 14.1 to 14.8, present seven cause-and-effect relationships. Nevertheless, establishing conclusive causal relationships may remain uncertain. This constraint occurs due to the influence of numerous linked variables in educational settings, including student demographics, teacher efficacy, institutional regulations, and socio-cultural contexts, which interact in complex and challenging ways to untangle. Similar to other case studies, this study depends on naturally existing situations, complicating the isolation of the direct effects of a particular intervention or methodological adjustment.

iii. Inconsistency across cohorts

Chapter 8 elucidated the preliminary stages of the research and emerging themes, and demonstrates that every cohort of student participants is distinct due to language proficiency and other factors, including age of pupils, diverse abilities and attitudes towards the language, as well as their distinct learning styles. All of these factors directly influenced the execution of this study and need to be considered in future research with similar characteristics. In my role as participant-observer researcher, through my input and support, I supported the teachers and was also sensitive to the students' needs.

Besides the diverse needs of the pupils, the starting point of the teachers' readiness to modify their instructional methods in this case study was also inconsistent. The successful implementation of this case study depended on the educators' readiness to adapt and on a degree of flexibility and attention to tone, needs and pace was needed, especially in the initial implementation phases. My consistent input and constant support during the focus groups and individual meetings mitigated this aspect.

iv. Time factor

During the discussions held regarding the future implementation of the proposed methodology, teacher participants emphasised that despite their confidence in the adaptations they implemented and their perceived effectiveness, the time factor in planning and implementing the proposed adaptations was a concern. The participants felt that this pedagogy necessitated a larger time commitment than allocated for planning the lessons for Maltese before the case study (elaborated on in Chapter 8), when reference was made to the book and content from the book was covered during the lesson. Whilst acknowledging that planning activities and the creation of resources can be utilised again, the careful and detailed organisation involved in planning were characterised by the teacher participants as labour intensitive.

Participants also mentioned the time factor for implementing follow-up lessons to the project presented in Chapter 12. To mitigate this, I suggested that teachers consider integrating outcomes from different subjects into their site visit planning, as explained in Chapter 7, Section 7.2. Integrating outcomes not only gives a holistic approach to learning but is also time-efficient.

v Logistics

Teacher participants in Grade 3 articulated concerns regarding the potential logistical challenges associated with the utilisation of school-based resources, such as the LEGO kit, which may hinder their implementation in the classroom. It was noted that if another educator requires the LEGO kits during the week when students are constructing their buildings and composing their narratives, it would pose a significant challenge. As a result, it became clear that the implementation of internal logistical planning at the school level is essential. It is imperative that resources be reserved for the week once the activity is planned.

vi. Union Directives

To consolidate the research findings, I proposed to the school which participated in this research that a developmental framework of observations and development sessions be held during the following scholastic year of the case study. Following the training given to all the educators in the primary sector at the beginning of the following academic year, the school was going to embark on a whole school action plan in line with promoting learner autonomy whilst implementing the learning outcomes. However, one significant limitation encountered in implementing this plan stemmed from the influence of Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) directives. On a national level, the MUT, as the primary representative body for educators in the country, issued directives restricting or suspending formal classroom observations and monitoring teachers' planning, including schemes of work. Consequently, the intermittent suspension of observation practices hampered the follow-up to this research.

vii. Variables

Data revealed that various factors impacted the development of the modifications and the pace at which they were implemented. These variables include age-appropriateness to the pace and process of the way the stages of the study developed; the availability of in-class support systems such as learner support educators and availability of resources; cognitive or emotional preparedness of student participants; readiness of teacher participants to embark in a change in methodology and planning practices; time constraints for implementation and preparation of lessons; the level of language proficiency of students; and the initial adaptability of both students and teachers to the different modifications.

15.2 Recommendations for subsequent initiatives and future research

Building on this study's findings and insights, this section outlines key recommendations to inform future initiatives and guide further research in the field. The following recommendations are intended to support practitioners, policymakers, and academics in enhancing practice, addressing existing gaps, and fostering a more comprehensive understanding in this area of study.

i. Standardisation of Data Instruments for Measuring Learner Autonomy and Teaching Effectiveness

There is an urgent need to develop and validate standardised instruments to evaluate learner autonomy and teaching effectiveness accurately. Future research should focus on creating robust, cross-contextual tools that ensure consistency while adapting to contextual nuances. This standardisation would enhance comparability, facilitate longitudinal studies, and strengthen the empirical foundation of autonomy research.

Future research initiatives could build upon this study by critically evaluating the extent to which their contextual circumstances align or diverge from those presented here. As mentioned in Chapter 14, by positioning their settings along a spectrum of contextual similarity, researchers and practitioners can make informed decisions about the transferability and applicability of the findings to their educational environments. Adopting the tools designed for this study as instruments within similar or diverse educational contexts would validate their effectiveness, enhance their applicability, and foster cumulative knowledge in the specified area. Contexts can differ by changing the type of school (different to the church school context used in this study), the age of the students, and the gender of the students.

ii. Learning Outcomes Integration Within and Across Disciplines

An investigation centred on integrating learning outcomes within particular subjects and across disciplines would augment transdisciplinary competencies. Research may examine curricular frameworks, instructional methods, and assessment strategies that promote interdisciplinary learning, ensuring coherence and improved knowledge generation while maintaining subject-specific rigour and alignment with overarching educational objectives. Thus, when educators impart specific content, they recognise intersections with other disciplines. This may reduce the time required to address the content, as it will also be encompassed within different subjects. Cross-disciplinary site visits and evaluation methods,

including standardised assessment criteria for common projects, can be implemented to enhance the efficiency of educational processes.

iii. Future Longitudinal Studies on Students of Teachers Implementing the Proposed Methodology

Compelling research could enhance this study with longitudinal investigations monitoring student improvement over more than one academic year under teachers utilising the proposed methodology. Such studies would provide deeper insights into the sustained impact on student learning, skill development, and autonomy, offering robust evidence to refine pedagogical approaches and inform long-term educational policies.

iv. Teacher Development and Pedagogical Adaptation Over Time

A longitudinal study may also investigate how educators modify and enhance the recommended methodology over time. Examining teachers' changing instructional techniques, professional development, and the problems they face would provide critical insights into effective professional development models, assuring ongoing enhancements in teaching practices and student results across many educational settings.

v. Comparative Analysis Across Educational Contexts

Future research may examine the longitudinal impacts of the suggested methodology across diverse educational environments, including public and private institutions, as well as varying cultural and socio-economic circumstances. This comparative research would identify contextual elements affecting efficacy, aiding in developing a more flexible, evidence-based framework for widespread use in many educational systems. 391

15.3 Final reflection – Il-Miss tatna l-power (The teacher gave us power.)

In my present capacity as an academic and researcher, along with my experience collaborating with educators in independent, state and church schools in Malta, this case study has afforded me insights previously unknown to me. I contend that they are significantly beneficial for both educators and researchers focused on assessing the efficacy of a learning outcomes curriculum while promoting learner autonomy skills in students. Learner autonomy encompasses the ability to perform tasks autonomously and fundamental abilities such as critical thinking, self-regulation, and metacognitive awareness, which are crucial in educational and professional settings. Examining the influence of diverse pedagogical approaches within a framework centred on learning outcomes is essential for ensuring that students meet mandated targets while fostering their ongoing learning capacity.

This study suggests that learner autonomy goes beyond academic performance and task completion, contributing to students' preparedness to engage with real-world challenges with greater resilience, confidence, and adaptability. A meticulously designed curriculum aimed at achieving learning outcomes may significantly enhance student empowerment by elucidating expectations and defining learning objectives, as presented in this study, and creating learning activities that foster autonomy. However, in the absence of appropriate support structures, the desired level of autonomy may remain more of a goal than a reality. Investigating how learners practise independence within this structure can yield a significant understanding of the circumstances and the nexus of class dynamics relationships that foster its growth most effectively. This can subsequently inform the creation of educational structures, teaching methodologies, and assessment techniques, guaranteeing that students receive tailored knowledge and the flexible skills necessary for personal and professional growth in an ever-evolving global landscape.

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APPENDIX

1

Assent/consent forms

APPENDIX 1.1 Student Assent Form (English Version)

APPENDIX 1.2 Student Assent Form (Maltese Version)

APPENDIX 1.3 Teacher Consent Form (English Version)

APPENDIX 1.4 Parents/Guardians Consent Form (English Version)

APPENDIX 1.5 Teacher Information Sheet (English Version)

APPENDIX 1.6 Parents'/Guardians' Information Sheet (English Version)

Appendix 1.1 Student Assent Form (English Version)

Student Assent Form (This will be read to students. They will also be given the opportunity to ask anything after the explanation of the process)

Dear students

During the upcoming months, I will be visiting you during your lessons of Maltese. During my visits, I will be observing you and the way you learn and involve yourself during the lessons. I would like to ask your permission as to whether I can observe you during the lessons and whether I can observe your work. I will also take photos of these lessons and of your work.

❍ Write YES below if you give permission. 	❍ Circle the word NO below if you do not wish to give permission.  NO

Appendix 1.2 Student Assent Form (Maltese Version)

Dikjarazzjoni għall-istudenti (Din tinqara lill-istudenti. Wara li tinqara, ikollhom opportunita` isaqsu dak li jridu)

Għeżież studenti

Matul ix-xhur li ġejjin, se nkun se niġi nżurkom aktar mis-soltu, l-aktar waqt il-lezzjonijiet tal-Malti. Se nkun qed nosserva kif titgħallmu kif ukoll kemm qed tinvolvu ruħkom waqt il-lezzjonijiet. Għalhekk, nixtieq insaqsikom permess jekk inkunx nista' niġi nosservakom kif ukoll nieħu ritratti waqt li qed taħdmu u anke` ta' xi xogħol li tkunu għamiltu.

❍ Ikteb IVA u pinġi l-wiċċ ferħan t'hawn taħt. 	❍ Agħmel ċirku madwar il-kelma LE jekk ma tixtieqx li nosservak u neħodlok ritratti  LE

Isem u Kunjom:……

Data: ……

Appendix 1.3 Teacher Consent Form (English Version)

1 October 2021

Educator's Consent Form

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in the study conducted by Ms Audrey Galea. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to accept to participate or to refuse or stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be erased.
3. I also understand that my participation in this Action Research project will involve allowing Ms Audrey Galea to:
    - Observe and participate in class activities related to the teaching of Maltese on a regular basis for the duration of one scholastic year (2021-2022)
    - Conduct a questionnaire before and after the implementation of the programme with a view to analyse the impact and effectiveness of the programme;
    - Organise regular meetings whereby regular communication is held related to the implementation of the Learning Outcomes programme
    - Take photos of the sessions or part of the sessions in class
4. I understand that my participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.
5. I understand that there is the following direct benefit to me: an opportunity for professional development through the collaborative Action Research process. I also understand that my participation in this research may benefit others by creating insights and a better understanding of the impact of an autonomous pedagogy during the teaching of Maltese in a Learning Outcomes Approach Programme.
6. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
7. I understand that all data collected will be stored and presented in an anonymised form through the use of pseudonyms and will be erased after the finalisation of the PhD process.
8. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

_____ _____

Participant's name (in block) Researcher's name (in block)

_____ _____

Participant's signature Researcher's signature

Date: _____

Appendix 1.4 Parents/Guardians Consent Form (English Version)

1 October 2021

Consent form for parents/guardians

I, _____, give my consent to my child's participation in Ms Audrey Galea's Action Research project.

I understand that my child's participation in this study will involve Ms Galea:

- Observe and participate in class activities related to the teaching of Maltese on a regular basis for the duration of one scholastic year (2021-2022)
- Take photos and/or video record some of the sessions or part of the sessions in class

I understand that my child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that she can be withdrawn from this study at any time, without giving a reason and without any consequences to me or my child.

I understand that her participation will be treated confidentially and all information will be stored anonymously and securely. All information appearing in the final thesis will be anonymous, through the use of pseudonyms.

I understand that the researcher and her supervisors are the only ones who can access this information, and that all data will be deleted after the finalisation of the PhD process.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time and I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the outcome of this study.

Kindly fill in the blanks below.

I _____ (Please write one of the following on this line: '*give consent'* or *'do not give consent'*) for my child to be audio recorded.

I _____ (Please write one of the following on this line: *'give consent'* or *'do not give consent'*) for my child to be video recorded.

Name of Child: _____ Class teacher: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 1.5 Teacher Information Sheet (English Version)

1 October 2021

Information Letter to Teachers

Dear Teacher,

As part of my personal and professional development, I have decided to pursue my studies. I am currently a student at the University of Malta, currently reading for a Master of Philosophy leading to a Ph.D with the Faculty of Education. I am presently conducting a research study for my thesis titled *'To implement and investigate the impact and effectiveness of autonomous learning pedagogy when teaching Maltese using the learning outcomes approach'*, which is being supervised by my main supervisor Professor Antoinette Camilleri Grima and my co-supervisor Dr Karen Ni Chlochasaigh. This letter is an invitation for you to participate in this research project. Below you will find information about the study and about what your involvement would entail, should you decide to take part.

The aim of my study is to understand the current practices used in the classes where the learning outcomes approach has been implemented. The following constant discussions with the teacher the importance of the development of student autonomy is further discussed and developed in the classroom setting. In order to do this, I will need to administer a questionnaire to all educators before and after the action research period and observe your class on a weekly basis for the period starting November 2021 until mid-May 2022. The focus of my observations will be on teacher-student and student-student interaction and the development of student autonomy during lessons and activities. During the observations, I will be taking field notes and I will be discussing with you, ways to how student autonomy could be developed whilst teaching in a learning outcomes approach curriculum. Along the discussions, I will be sharing with you, pedagogical ideas as to how student autonomy is promoted during language learning lessons.

With your permission and with the children's parents' permission, I would like to take field notes during the lessons and also take photos of students whilst working. It is important to note that photos will be taken from the back of the students and will not feature their faces. The aim of the photos will be to feature the work produced by the students and their interaction when working as a group. If photos are taken of students when giving presentations, their faces will be blurred. At no point in time are the school, teachers or students identified. The photos are only taken to provide evidence of the progress of the work produced and not to identify individuals. Besides obtaining the adults' consent, I would also like the children to indicate their assent for their participation in this research project. To this end, it would be appreciated if you could discuss my presence in the classroom with the children and ask them to colour in a child-friendly Assent form. This should occur at the beginning of the research process and, throughout the scholastic year, I will make it a point to ask the children if they are comfortable with me to observe their activities and, in some cases, taking photos of their work.

Since I will be adopting an Action Research methodology, a cyclical process which is essentially reflective and collaborative, I will need to share my research process with you and to get your input and reflections about the different stages of the project. I would also need to interview you at the beginning and at the end of the research process. Along the observation session, I will be meeting up with you once fortnightly for a feedback session. During this session, I will also be providing an insight as to ways of how student autonomy could be promoted and developed when teaching the native language. At no point in my research will your identity or the identity of the school and students be divulged. Throughout the year, should you wish to meet up with the other teacher of the same grade to further discuss the development of new strategies and the progress of this research project.

Your participation in this study should serve to contribute to a better understanding of how the teaching and learning processes should aim at student autonomy when using the learning outcomes approach and how educators can help their students develop skills which will help them become more independent whilst take ownership of their learning. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study. If you choose to participate, please note that the direct benefits of your participation will be your professional development through the collaborative Action Research process. Your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

Data collected will be handled in accordance with the strict ethical regulations stipulated by the University of Malta Research Ethics Board (UREC). Participants' contributions will be treated confidentially and will only be accessible to the researcher and her supervisors. As already mentioned, participants will also be guaranteed complete anonymity through the adoption of pseudonyms.

Please also note that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and, where applicable, ask for the data concerning you to be erased. All data collected will be stored on an external hard drive which will be stored safely by myself and the data will be deleted after the finalisation of the PhD process.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your questionnaires and my observations will be deleted.

Please keep a copy of this Information Letter for future reference. Kindly fill in and sign the Consent Form attached to this letter and return to the school secretary a week from the date you receive this letter.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail audrey.r.galea.95@um.edu.mt or [redacted]; you may

also contact my supervisor over the phone: [redacted] or via email: [antoinette.camilleri-grima@um.edu.mt].

Sincerely,

Audrey R. Galea

Appendix 1.6 Parents'/Guardians' Information Sheet (English Version)

Information letter for parents/guardians

15th October 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians

As part of my personal professional development, I have decided to pursue my studies. I am currently a student at the University of Malta and I am currently reading for a Master of Philosophy, leading to a Ph.D degree with the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. My research interest is the implementation of the learning outcomes approach when teaching Maltese to native speakers. The study is going to be held in the grades where the learning outcomes approach have been implemented, that is, Grades 3 and Grades 4. The title of my thesis is in fact: 'To Implement And Investigate The Effectiveness Of an Autonomous Learning Pedagogy When Teaching Maltese Using The Learning Outcomes Approach', and it is being supervised by my main supervisor Professor Antoinette Camilleri Grima from the University of Malta and my co-supervisor Dr Karen Ni Chlochasaigh, from the University of Limmerick, in Ireland.

As part of my research, I will be observing one to two lessons of Maltese a week in your child's class for the period starting November 2021 to mid-May 2022. During these observations, I will be observing teacher-student and student-student interaction and the involvement of students when learning Maltese in a learning outcomes approach curriculum. Since my chosen methodology is Action Research, I will be working in close collaboration with all the educators of the 2 year groups where the learning outcomes approach are being used. Besides observing and taking written notes of my observations, I will also at times take photos of class activities and of students' work. Photos will also be taken of students whilst working. It is important to note that photos will be taken from the back of the students and will not feature their face. The aim of the photos will be to feature the work produced by the students and their interaction when working as a group. If photos are taken of students when giving presentations, the face will be blurred. At no point in time are the school, teachers or students identified. The photos are only taken to provide evidence of the progress of the work produced and not to identify individuals.

Subject to parents'/guardians' consent, I also intend to seek the children's assent. This shall occur at the beginning of the research process when the teacher will discuss my presence in the classroom with the children and ask them to colour in a child-friendly Assent form. Throughout the scholastic year, I will make it a point to ask the children if they are comfortable for me to observe their activities and, in some cases, take photos. Please note that should you not consent to your daughter's participation in the study, this non-consent will not affect your daughter's education in any way. Your daughter will still be able to continue with his/her regular class activities and I will not include any observations that relate to him/her in my thesis.

All data which will then be presented anonymously through the adoption of pseudonyms.
I therefore write to request your permission for your child to participate in my study. My research will be carried out in accordance with the strict ethical regulations stipulated by the University of Malta Research Ethics Board (UREC). As the parent/guardian of a potential participant in my study, you are kindly asked to sign the Consent Form attached to this letter. Participation is of course voluntary and you or your child may wish to end participation at any point of the research process. As already mentioned, the information collected for this study will be confidential and children will be referred to anonymously, through the use of pseudonyms. Kindly note that you will be free to withdraw your child from this study if at any point you feel it should be necessary to do so, without any consequences to you or your child. All the data collected during this study will be available only to me and my supervisors. All data collected will be stored and kept safely on an external hard disc and will be deleted after the finalisation of the PhD process.

Your child's participation in this study will contribute to a better understanding of how the teaching and learning processes should aim at student autonomy when using the learning outcomes approach and how educators can help their students develop skills which will help them become more independent whilst take ownership of their learning. Once the project is completed, I would be willing to share my findings with you and the other participants of this research project. Please also note that the research has been approved by the Secretariat of Catholic Education and will also need the approval of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could return the signed Consent Form attached to this letter to your child's class teacher via child mail by not later than _____.

I thank you for your time and kind consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail audrey.r.galea.95@um.edu.mt or [redacted]; you may also contact my supervisor over the phone: [[redacted]] or via email: [antoinette.camilleri-grima@um.edu.mt].

Yours sincerely

Audrey R. Galea

APPENDIX

2

Approvals

APPENDIX 2.1 Approval Faculty Research Ethics Committee

APPENDIX 2.2 Approval Secretariat for Catholic Education

APPENDIX 2.3 Letter of acceptance from Communication liaison

Appendix 2.1 Approval to carry out research issued from Faculty Research Ethics Committee

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L-Università ta' Malta

Faculty of Education
University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080, Malta

Tel: +356 2340 3058/2932
educ@um.edu.mt

www.um.edu.mt/educ

18th October 2021

RE: Application for Research Ethics Clearance 9659_06092021_Audrey R. Galea

Dear Audrey R. Galea,

With reference to your application 9659_06092021_Audrey R. Galea for Research Ethics clearance, I am pleased to inform you that FREC finds no ethical or data protection issues in terms of content and procedure.

You may therefore proceed to approach potential informants to collect data using the tools/documents outlined in this application.

You are reminded that it is your responsibility - under the guidance of your supervisor - to distribute Information Letters and Consent/Assent Forms that are written in appropriate and correct English and Maltese.

Yours sincerely

Dr Joseph Gravina
Chairperson Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

Appendix 2.2

Approval to carry out research in a church school issued from Secretariat for Catholic Education

Segretarjat għall-Edukazzjoni Nisranija
16, Il-Mall, Furjana FRN 1472
Num. ta' Tel. 27790060

Secretariat for Catholic Education,
16, The Mall, Floriana FRN 1472
Tel. No. 27790060

The Head
Our Lady Immaculate

6th October 2021

Ms Audrey Galea, currently reading for a PhD at the University of Malta with the Faculty of Education Department of Languages and Humanities, requests permission to carry-out the following at the above mentioned school:

- Observe and participate in class activities related to the teaching of Maltese on a regular basis for the duration of one scholastic year (2021-2022).
- Conduct a questionnaire before and after the implementation of the programme.
- Organise regular meetings regarding implementation of the Learning Outcomes Programme.
- Take photos of the sessions or part of the sessions in class.

The Secretariat for Catholic Education finds no objection for Ms Audrey Galea, to carry out the stated exercises subject to adhering to the policies and directives of the schools concerned.

Rev Dr. Charles Mallia
Delegate for Catholic Education

Secretariat for Catholic Education. 16, The Mall Floriana. FRN 1472. Tel:27790060
E-mail: charles.mallia@maltadiocese.org

Appendix 2.3 Confirmation from the communication liaison who was responsible for distributing consent and assent forms and information letters to teachers, students and parents.

Secretariat for Catholic Education
16 The Mall
Floriana FRN 1472
Tel: 27790060

Segretarjat għall-Edukazzjoni Nisranija
16 Il-Mall
Il- Furjana FRN 1472
Tel: 27790060

06.09.2021

To whom it may concern

Re: Ms Audrey Galea 429969M

I confirm that I can act as an intermediary and forward any questionnaires, consent/assent forms and information letters to teachers, students and parents.



Angela Charles
Service Manager- Curriculum Entitlement
Secretariat for Catholic Education, Floriana

angela.charles@maltadiocese.org

APPENDIX

3

Tools

APPENDIX 3.1 Lesson Observation Sheet

APPENDIX 3.2 Visual Analysis Sheet

APPENDIX 3.3 Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers

APPENDIX 3.4 Learner Autonomy Scale (LAS)

APPENDIX 3.5 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale (TLES)

APPENDIX 3.6 Questionnaires a (Pre-Research), b (Post-Research), c Anonymous Google form

APPENDIX 3.1 Lesson Observation Sheet

Date	
Class Code	
Lesson skills covered	
Number of students	
Organisational autonomy support –e.g., students are allowed some decision-making role in terms of classroom management roles	Examples during this session
Procedural Autonomy Support – e.g., students are given the opportunity to choose the use of different media to present ideas	Examples during this session
Cognitive Autonomy Support – e.g., students are directly involved in evaluating work possibly even through peer assessment	Examples during this session
Dependence manifestations	

Evidence

Evidence of autonomy in relation to the development of the lesson:
Evidence of the process of consciousness of the native language:

Photos:

Transcript of salient discourse:

APPENDIX 3.2 Visual Analysis Sheet

Visual Analysis Worksheet

Lesson Characteristic Analysis

Date :……

Class Code:……

Students are actively involved in the development of lessons.	1 2 3 4 5
Collaborative practices between students were encouraged.	1 2 3 4 5
Self/Peer assessment carried out.	1 2 3 4 5
The teacher used various sources for sharing knowledge.	1 2 3 4 5
Outcomes were clearly defined to the students: 1. At the beginning. 2. Along the lesson. 3. At the end of lesson.	1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
Students' achievement evident.	1 2 3 4 5
Educator took the back bench for most of the lesson.	1 2 3 4 5
Students feel free to participate.	1 2 3 4 5
	TOTAL
Rate of student involvement	

APPENDIX 3.3 Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers

Self-Evaluation Checklist for Teachers

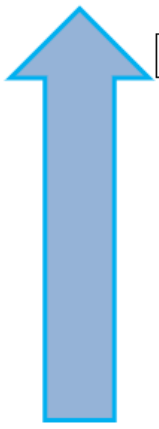
This template is a checklist for planning and after delivering a lesson. It aims to assist educators in planning their lessons in a way that promotes independent learning and higher-order thinking. Evaluating the delivery of the lesson will assist educators in analysing and improving the effectiveness of lesson delivery. This checklist can be used before and after the lesson. If so, the educator can fill in using two colours, one when evaluating before and one after.

Reflective Questions	Reflective Answers
☐ Does this lesson cater for all students?	Yes or No
☐ If not, in what way will the lesson cater for all students?	

1

Draw the arrow on the right to show which level of thinking this lesson will achieve. (Start from the bottom and move up)

Creating – Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole, reorganising elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning or producing
Evaluating – Making Judgements based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing
Analysing – Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organising and attributing
Applying – carrying out or using a procedure through executing or implementing
Understanding – constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarising, inferring, comparing and explaining
Remembering – retrieving, recognising and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory



High level thinking

2

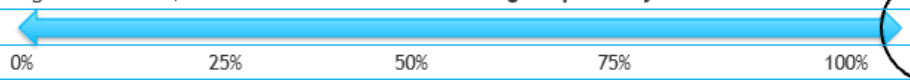
Low level thinking

Circle the action word which will most likely be achieved in the lesson.

How much of the lesson is based on:					
☐ Recall	1	2	3	4	5
☐ Imitation	1	2	3	4	5
☐ Repetition	1	2	3	4	5
☐ Student active participation	1	2	3	4	5

3

Throughout the lesson, how much were the students **learning independently** of the educators?



0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

4

Reflective Questions	Reflective Answers
Learning can also occur when learners copy or learn from a more knowledgeable source (More Knowledgeable Other)	
How much did the educator use:	
☐ Modelling	1 2 3 4 5
☐ Positive Reinforcement (to motivate desired behaviour)	1 2 3 4 5
☐ Negative Reinforcement (to withdraw unwanted behaviour)	1 2 3 4 5
☐ How much was the MKO used as a source of knowledge?	1 2 3 4 5
Who was the More Knowledgeable Other?	
Teacher	Yes / No
Technology	Yes / No
Expert / Guest	Yes / No
Other students	Yes / No
Learning occurs when learners are immersed in environments where the new learned behaviour can be applied	
How much was the exposure to learning based on immersion? In what ways?	1 2 3 4 5
☐ Experts invited	Yes / No
☐ Technology used	Yes / No
☐ Peer – teaching (Students themselves used)	Yes / No
☐ Videos used	Yes / No
☐ Information passed on through text	Yes / No
☐ Teacher is the MKO	Yes / No
☐ Site Visit	Yes / No
Assessment leads to learning.	
How was assessment planned:	
☐ Peer assessment	Yes / No
☐ Self-assessment	Yes / No
☐ Teacher assessment	Yes / No
Date:	
Outcomes Covered:	

Appendix 3.4 Learner Autonomy Scale

The learning environment created was conducive to:

Learning by doing	
Safe, warm, accepting, respecting, permissive climate	
The learner is responsible for their own learning by setting their own goals	
Learners is responsible for their own learning through discovering, identifying, and using own resources for learning	
Learners helping each other	
Discovery and solution of problems on the spot	
Freedom from extrinsic threats, rewards and/or punishments	
Learners are responsible for their own learning by planning their own programmes with students free to use material at any time	
Value of individuality	
Learners discover meaning for themselves	

Learners manifested the following traits:

Able to co-operate with others	
Learning to learn	
Independent and individual study	
Better ability to deal with problems	
Flexible, successful, creative, fulfilling behaviour	
Adaptive mode of approach to problem-solving	

Appendix 3.5 Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale

There is clarity of presentation suitable for the students' level of attainment
The content to be covered is clearly outlined.
Adaptations and learning environments created were conducive to the development of all students.
There is an effective use of group activities and paired work.
The use of prompts and questions is effective.
There is an opportunity to learn through various learning initiatives.
The quantity of content presented and the instruction pace are suitable for the student's attainment.
Students showed evident progress and attainment of outcomes.
Students show motivation and interest in learning to learn.
Students' attainment of outcomes
The Retention of the assimilation of knowledge is evident among students.

Filled in in the table as follows:

The Target	**Analysis of how it is manifested and achieved.**
TL1. There is clarity of presentation suitable for the students' level of attainment.	
TL2. The content to be covered is clearly outlined.	
TL3. Adaptations and learning environments created were conducive to the development of all students.	
TL4. There is an effective use of group activities and paired work.	

TL5. The use of prompts and questions is effective.	
TL6. There is an opportunity to learn through various learning initiatives.	
TL7. The quantity of content presented and the instruction pace are suitable for the students' attainment.	
TL8. Students showed evident progress and attainment of outcomes.	
TL9. Students show motivation and interest in learning to learn.	
TL10. Students' attainment of outcomes.	
TL11. The Retention of the assimilation of knowledge is evident among students.	

Teaching and Learning Effectiveness Scale(TLES)

Appendix 3.6 a) Collection of information from Educators related to the Implementation of the Learning Outcomes Approach when teaching Maltese (Pre-Research).

Age:	How long have you been teaching?:
1. Which Grade do you teach?	
2. The total number of minutes (weekly) dedicated to the Teaching of Maltese is.....	
3. How many students are there in class?	
4. Describe your class with respect to abilities, challenges, learning styles and any other aspect you feel is important.	
5. What are the biggest challenges you feel you need to face with the Learning Outcomes Approach curriculum?	
6. What, in your opinion is the change in pedagogy that one has to focus on, now that the Learning Outcomes have been implemented?	
7. In your opinion, what do you understand by the term Learner Autonomy?	
8. In your opinion, what was the biggest change you made in your preparation when planning the Maltese lesson now that the Learning Outcomes Curriculum has been implemented?	

9. Do you feel that you were given enough training regarding the Learning Outcomes Approach Pedagogy that makes you feel competent in how they should be implemented? If yes, describe the training given and what it consisted of.
10. If not, what other training would have assisted you to become a more effective teacher?
11. In your opinion, do parents understand the meaning behind the implementation of the learning outcomes approach?
12. What do you feel is the parents' priority when it comes to the implementation of the learning outcomes approach?
13. Do you feel that the student's involvement in the teaching and learning process changed, now that the Learning Outcomes Approach pedagogy has been implemented?
14. If yes, how?
15. If no, why do you think this is the case?
16. In what way can the Learning outcomes curriculum be implemented ?

17. How can you improve Learner Autonomy whilst using Learning outcomes as the source for your planning?
18. Please feel free to share any other concerns or opinion:

Thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences.

3.6 b) Collection of information from Educators related to the Implementation of the Learning Outcomes Approach when teaching Maltese (Post-Research).

Age:	How long have you been teaching?:
1. Which Grade do you teach?	
2. The total number of minutes (weekly) dedicated to the Teaching of Maltese is.....	
3. How do you feel this year has prepared you for the upcoming scholastic year?	
4. What challenges did you face this year?	
5. What adaptations do you make when teaching Maltese in a Learning Outcomes Approach curriculum when catering for students for the diverse abilities?	
6. After undergoing a process of discussing ways of how one can be a more effective practitioner when implementing teaching programmes using the Learning Outcomes Approach, what changes in methodologies do you feel need to be implemented when teaching in a learning outcomes approach curriculum?	
7. To promote learner autonomy, what are the main changes you feel you can make to your teaching and learning practices?	
8. What are the main changes you feel you can make to your preparation and planning practices?	
9. Do you feel the students' involvement during lessons/activities has changed?	

10. If you feel the students' involvement has changed, describe in what way this has occurred.
11. What should a practitioner focus on to ensure a high level of student involvement and how can students be constantly motivated to be more autonomous in their learning?
12. Any other comments or ideas are welcome.

Thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences.

Appendix 3.6 c Google Form Anonymous Evaluation

Please submit feedback in any honest way. This feedback will be used for the sole purpose of the research.

Your feedback is very valuable.

* Indicates required question

1. Class Profile - Number of students *

_____

2. If you had to describe your students, how many would be considered cognitively * challenged and why (give a short description of their difficulties):

_____

3. If you had to describe your students, how many would be considered of * cognitive average ability and why (give a short description of their strengths and areas which they could improve on):

_____

4. If you had to describe your students, how many would be considered gifted * cognitively and why (give a short description of their strengths):

_____

5. If you had to rank your students, how many would be:

Tick all that apply.

	Maltese Speaking	Maltese is their native language	Bilingual (use Maltese and English fluently)	English Speaking	Foreign students	Maltese but English is their first language
Between 1 and 5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Between 6 and 10	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Between 11 and 15	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Between 16 and 20	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Between 21 and 24	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. Tick the learning styles below which you feel best describe the learning style * adopted by your students. (A student could be predominant in one but also has more than one learning style):

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Visual Learners (Spatial)
- ☐ Auditory Learners (Audio)
- ☐ Physical learners (Tactile)
- ☐ Verbal Learners (Linguistic learners)
- ☐ Logical Learner (Analytical)
- ☐ Social Learners (Linguistic and Collaborative)
- ☐ Sequential Learners

7. Tick the learning styles below which you feel best describe your general teaching style : *

You can choose more than one. If you think you adopt a combination of styles please write what best describes your teaching style in the box under Other.

Tick all that apply.

- [ ] Visual (Spatial)
- [ ] Auditory (Audio)
- [ ] Physical (Tactile)
- [ ] Verbal (Linguistic learners)
- [ ] Logical (Analytical)
- [ ] Social (Linguistic and Collaborative)
- [ ] Sequential
- [ ] Other:

Learning Outcomes and Learner Autonomy

To Implement and Investigate the Effectiveness of an Autonomous Learning Pedagogy When Teaching Maltese Using the Learning Outcomes Approach

8. How has the curricular mandated learning outcomes programme affect your * teaching (in general)?

9. How has the curricular mandated learning outcomes programme affect the * assessment practices (in general)?

10. Level of effort *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not so much	Fairly prepared	Prepared	Very well prepared	Do not feel I need any further training
How much do you feel you were prepared to implement the learning outcomes programme at the beginning of the scholastic year?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

11. To what extent is teaching in a learning outcomes approach in the primary different to teaching a normal syllabus? (1 the least, 5 the most) *Mark only one oval.* *

	1	2	3	4	5
least ... most	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

12. Please explain *

13. Do you think you will benefit from more meetings? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

14. If yes, what assistance would you need from the meetings? *

15. In what way do you think you need assistance ? *

Mark only one oval.

- In planning
- To evaluate my lessons
- To help me assess the children

16. Which theoretical framework do you feel that is closest to your practices and * how?

17. In what way do you feel you need to amend your teaching practice (if you do * need to) to teach a learning outcomes approach curriculum effectively?

18. Do you think the learning outcomes approach promotes: *

Tick all that apply. learner

- [ ] collaboration learner
- [ ] autonomy reading ability
- [ ] progress in linguistic
- [ ] ability group work peer
- [ ] assessment cognitive
- [ ] development logical
- [ ] reasoning analytical
- [ ] thinking Other:
- [ ]
- [ ]

19. Do you feel that the children benefitted from your amendments in teaching * practices? (Please describe why in the other section labelled Other) *Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No Not so much
- Other:

End of year Project

Your class worked on an end of year project which saw students making their own choices regarding their learning.

20. Skill and responsiveness of the students *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Students found it easy to take ownership of their learning.					
Students still need a lot of guidance during the learning process.					
Students are accepting to work independently more with time.					
Students accept each other's opinion as a More Knowledgeable Other when working.					
Students refuse to take ownership of their learning					

Students are capable of assessing their own work.					
Students are capable of assessing their peer's work.					

21. What aspects of our meetings were most useful or valuable?

22. In what way would this year's experience change your planning for next scholastic year?

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Google Forms

APPENDIX

4

RESOURCE PACK

(presented as a booklet)

APPENDIX 4.1 DEFINITION OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

APPENDIX 4.2 LA CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAITS

APPENDIX 4.3 RECOMMENDED SCHEME OF WORK/WEEKLY PLAN

APPENDIX 4.4 COLLABORATIVE WRITING TASK PLAN

APPENDIX 4.5 PROJECT PLAN FOR OUTINGS

APPENDIX 4.6 HANDOUTS FOR OUTING TO NATURE PARK

APPENDIX 4.7 LEARNING OUTCOMES AND SUCCESS CRITERIA TEMPLATES

APPENDIX 4.8 WRITING CHECKLIST TEMPLATES FOR GRADE 3

APPENDIX 4.9 10 STEPS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS

APPENDIX 4.10 PRESENTATIONS USED FOR TRAINING

PROMOTING LEARNER AUTONOMY

RESOURCE PACK FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Audrey R. Galea

Contents Page

- Definitions of Learner Autonomy (p.3)
- Learner autonomy targets (p.4)
- Recommended SOW/Weekly Plan (p.5 - 6)
- Plan for collaborative writing (p.7)
- A project plan to plan projects (p.9 - 12)
- Handouts – a pack of resources for an outing to the nature park (p.13 - 21)
- Learning outcomes and success criteria templates (p.22 - 26)
- Writing tasks checklists templates (p.27-30)
- 10 steps for Teaching and Learning Effectiveness (pg.31)

Key Definitions of Learner Autonomy

Henri Holec (1981)
"Autonomy is the ability to take charge of one's own learning."

Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

David Little (1991)
"Learner autonomy is essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning—a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action."

Little, D. (1991). *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin: Authentik.

Antoinette Camilleri Grima (2007)
"Learner autonomy is not merely a matter of putting learners into situations where they have to make independent choices; it also involves helping them develop the skills and attitudes necessary to take responsibility for their own learning."

Camilleri Grima, A. (2007). Promoting learner autonomy through school-based initiatives: The Maltese experience. In Barfield, A., & Brown, S. H. (Eds.), *Reconstructing Autonomy in Language Education* (pp. 81–90). Palgrave Macmillan.

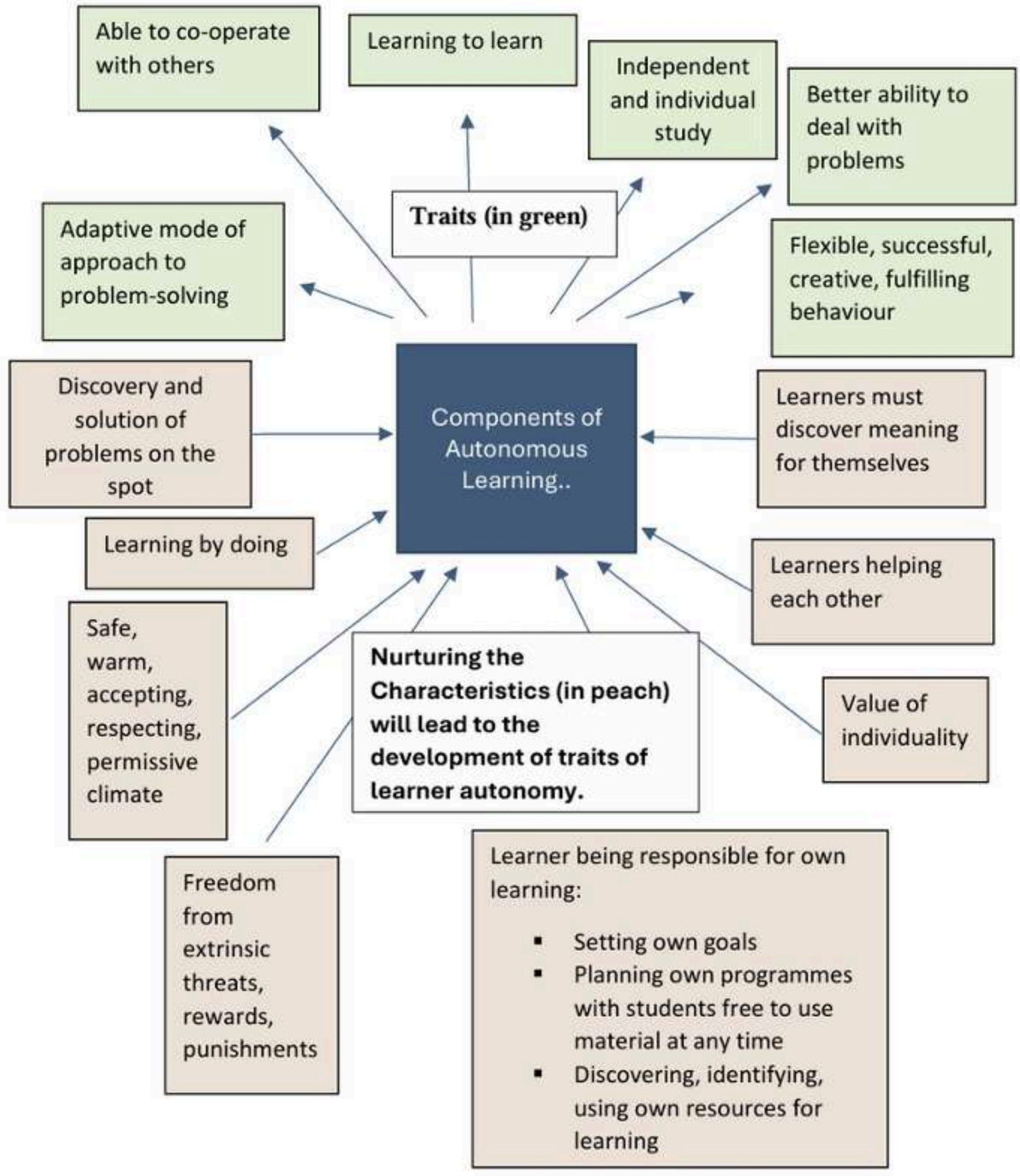
Phil Benson (2001)
"Autonomy is the capacity to control one's own learning."

Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning*. Harlow: Longman.

Leni Dam (1995)
"Autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes."

Dam, L. (1995). *Learner Autonomy 3: From Theory to Classroom Practice*. Dublin: Authentik.

LEARNER AUTONOMY TARGETS



Proposed Scheme of work aimed at planning lessons that promote learner autonomy

Section	Details – fill in or tick ✓
Unit / Topic	e.g. *Żmien il-Karnival* (Time for Carnival)
Week & Lesson number	e.g. Week 12 out of 32 (Lessons 1 to 3) Dates of lessons
Learning Outcome(s) Cross reference to Learning outcomes	1. K1 / S2 2. K2/ S2 3. T2/ T4
Success Criteria (co-created with learners) – links to end of module checklist	e.g. *When presenting.* *I will be able **to share ideas verbally** ..... topic.* *I will be able to **describe** a costume verbally..* *I will be able to **present** my writing to my peers.*
Activation of Prior Knowledge	🎯 Link to prior knowledge through games (physical or digital), questioning techniques and quizzes
Collaborative Structure	 Grouping: e.g. Group work to discuss vocabulary. Group work to create a fictitious character on the basis of the vocabulary chosen. Pair work for sentence structure.
Teacher & Peer Modelling	🎬 e.g, the teacher here plans questioning, prompts, and modelling of targets Peer tutoring: Student A explains their reasoning aloud while B checks for accuracy; roles switch on the next item. For independent peer tutoring, students can be guided to use the checklist (provided in template format) which can be presented as a hard copy or in digital format or as a class poster. This should include prompts like "Did you include descriptive words?" or "Can you say it another way?"or "Did you check your spelling?"
Digital Tools & Media	💻 App/Link (url to apps are included)_____ 📱 QR codes including the ones used for differentiated work and home-work

	🖥️ OtherCodes e.g. collaborative codes generated by collaborative software _____
Guiding Questions	1 ❓ _____ 2 ❓ _____ 3 ❓ _____
Learning Tasks	The aims of each learning task (digital or written) are listed. 🎮 Digital game: _____ 📱 QR quest: _____ 📝 Worksheet: _____ 📖 Book/notes page: _____
Autonomy Scaffold	🎨 Choice/pace checkpoints: Evaluation by making reference to LAS targets (Table 9.1)
Assessment for Learning	📹 Exit ticket (tool) suggested checklist refer to Sheet 2 and 3 on template attached 🧑‍🤝‍🧑 Peer feedback (students' work can be projected on the IWB and other students refer to success criteria rubric to assess their peer's work)
Reflection & Next Steps (refer to suggested digital template attached)	Student goal: I need to improve my _____ Teacher note: What worked? What challenged the smooth running of the lessons/activities? How can I improve?_____

Collaborative Writing Plan Template

Niktbu Flimkien

Kollha nistgħu nsiru kittieba



Aħseb f'titlu li jaqbel mal-ġeneru tal-ktiba 📝

X'se niktbu? Ħa niddiskutu u niktbu l-ideat fuq il-mini whiteboard!

- **Titlu:**
- **X'se jkun il-plott tal-istorja?:**
- **Min huma l-karattri?:**
- **Fejn se sseħħ il-ġrajja?:**

Noti: (Pinġi u ħażżeż l-ideat!)

Kulħadd jagħti sehmu 🎭

Min se jikteb: (Kitba tal-istorja waqt id-diskussjoni)

- Isem/Ismijiet:

Editur: (Min se jiċċekkja maċ-ċekkjatura u jagħti s-suġġerimenti)

- Isem/Ismijiet:

Illustratur: (Min se jpinġi jew juża t-tablet)

- Isem/Ismijiet:

Ideat: (Ħa nħabblu moħħna !)

- Isem/Ismijiet:

Ħa nippjanaw flimkien ⏰

Kemm se ndumu fuq kull parti tal-pjan!

- **Taħbil il-moħħ:** (Data):
- **L-ewwel draft:** (Data):
- **Tpinġija jew grafika u dižinn:** (Data):
- **Niċċekkjaw ix-xogħol:** (Data):
- **Draft Finali:** (Data):

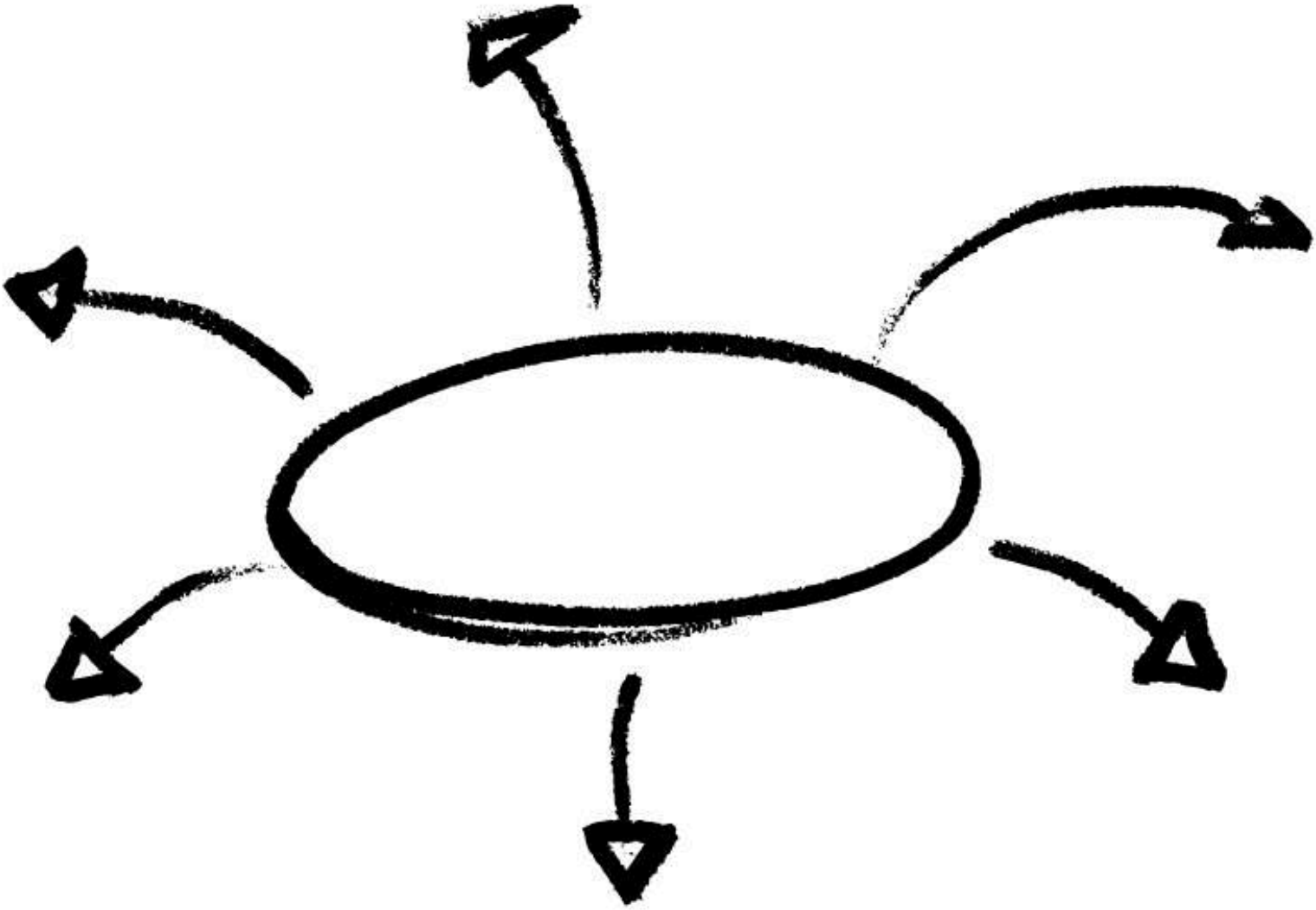
Niltaqgħu billi 🗣️

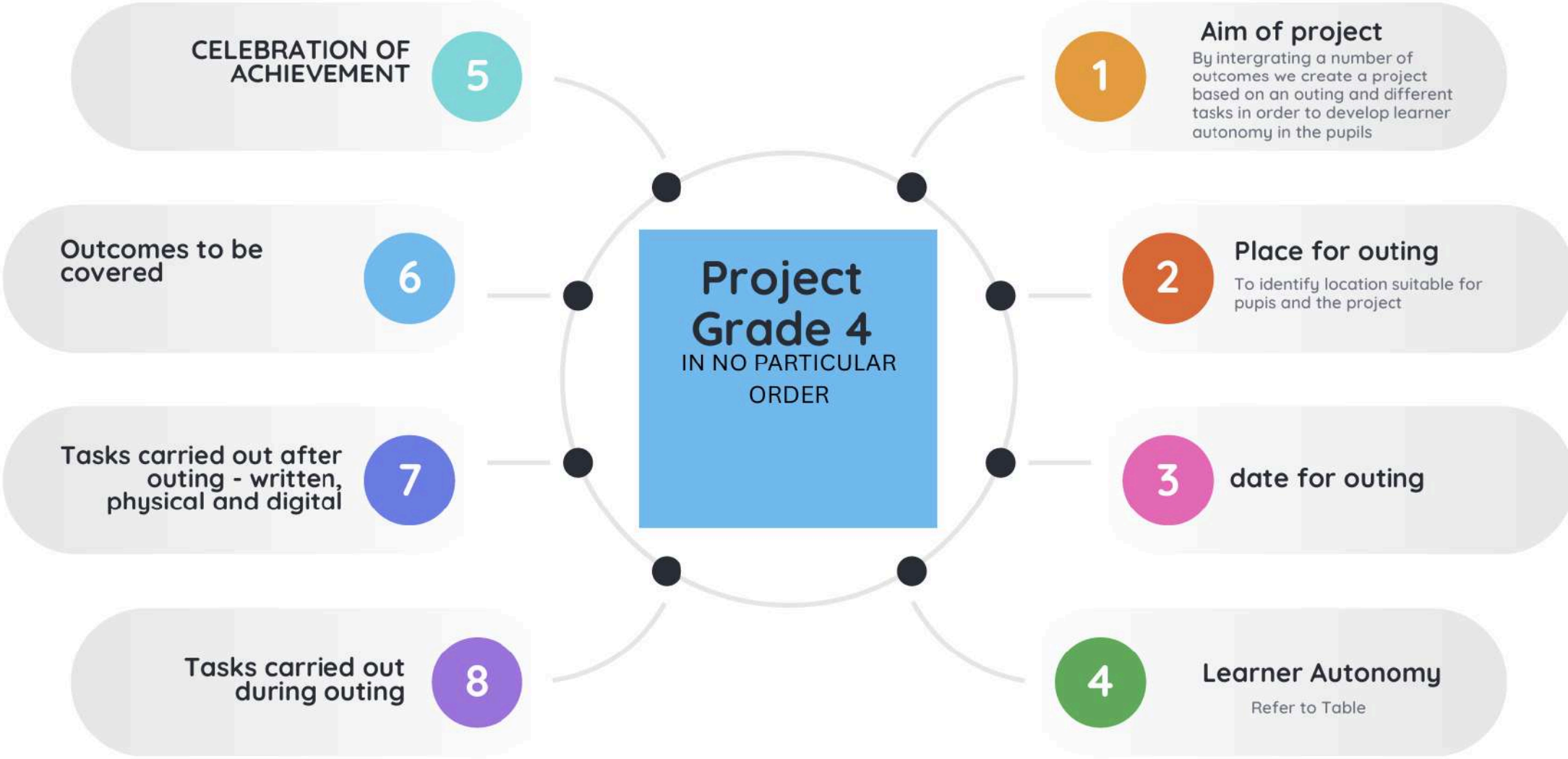
Nippjanaw kif se niltqagħu billi niddeċiedu:

- **Kif se niftehmu?:** (eż., fil-klassi, bit-teams?)
- **Kemm indumu?:**
- **Fejn se nżommu n-noti?:** (eż., karti jew onlajn)

Il-Proċess tal-Kitba ✍️

Ħa naħsbu u nippjanaw!

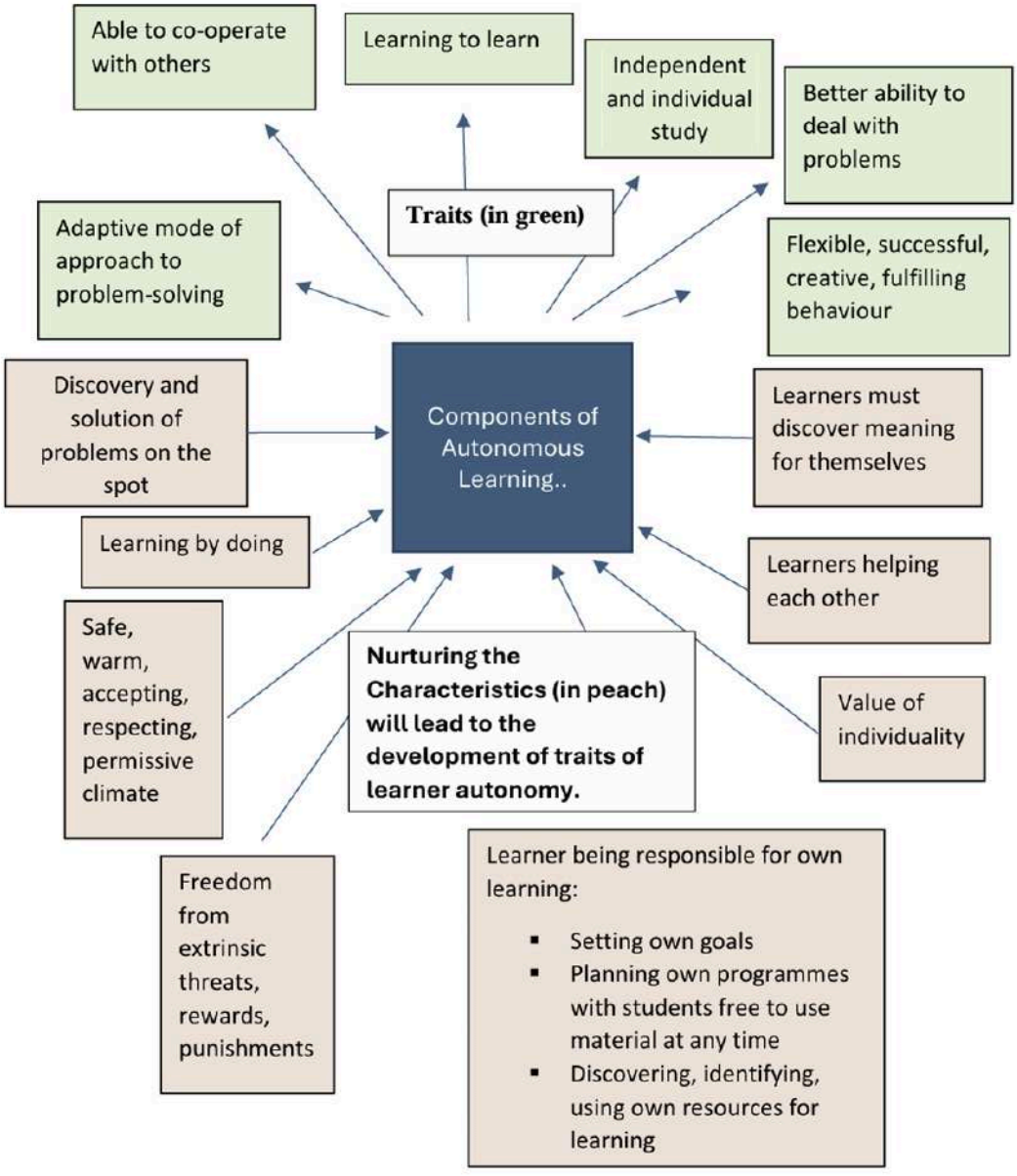


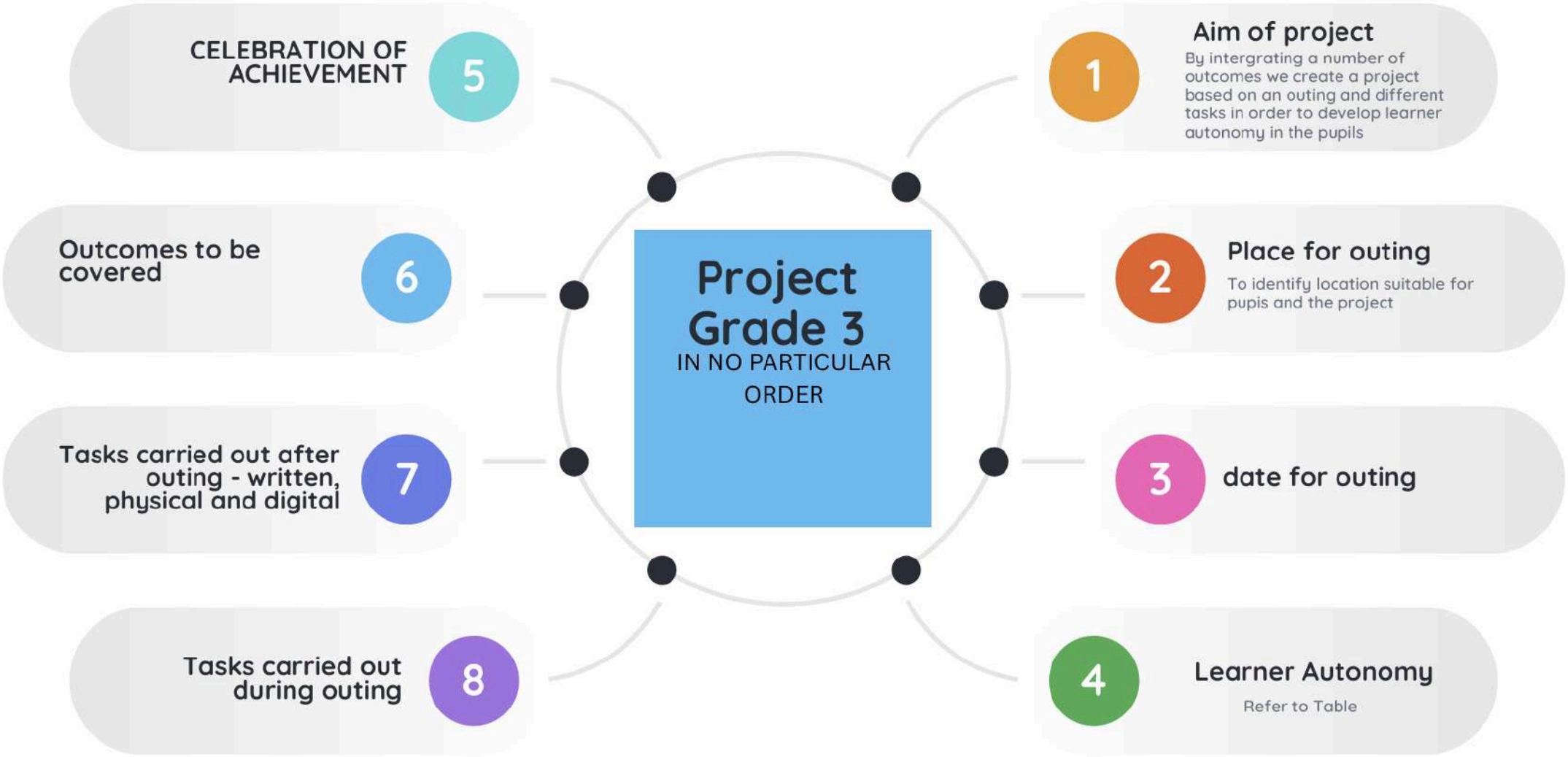

Project Grade 4
IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER
1
Aim of project
By intergrating a number of outcomes we create a project based on an outing and different tasks in order to develop learner autonomy in the pupils
2
Place for outing
To identify location suitable for pupis and the project
3
date for outing
4
Learner Autonomy
Refer to Table
5
CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT
6
Outcomes to be covered
7
Tasks carried out after outing - written, physical and digital
8
Tasks carried out during outing

PLAN TO REACH THE TARGETS

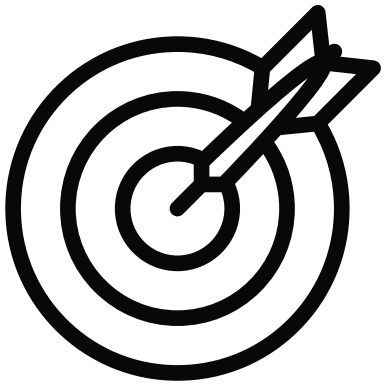


Grade 4

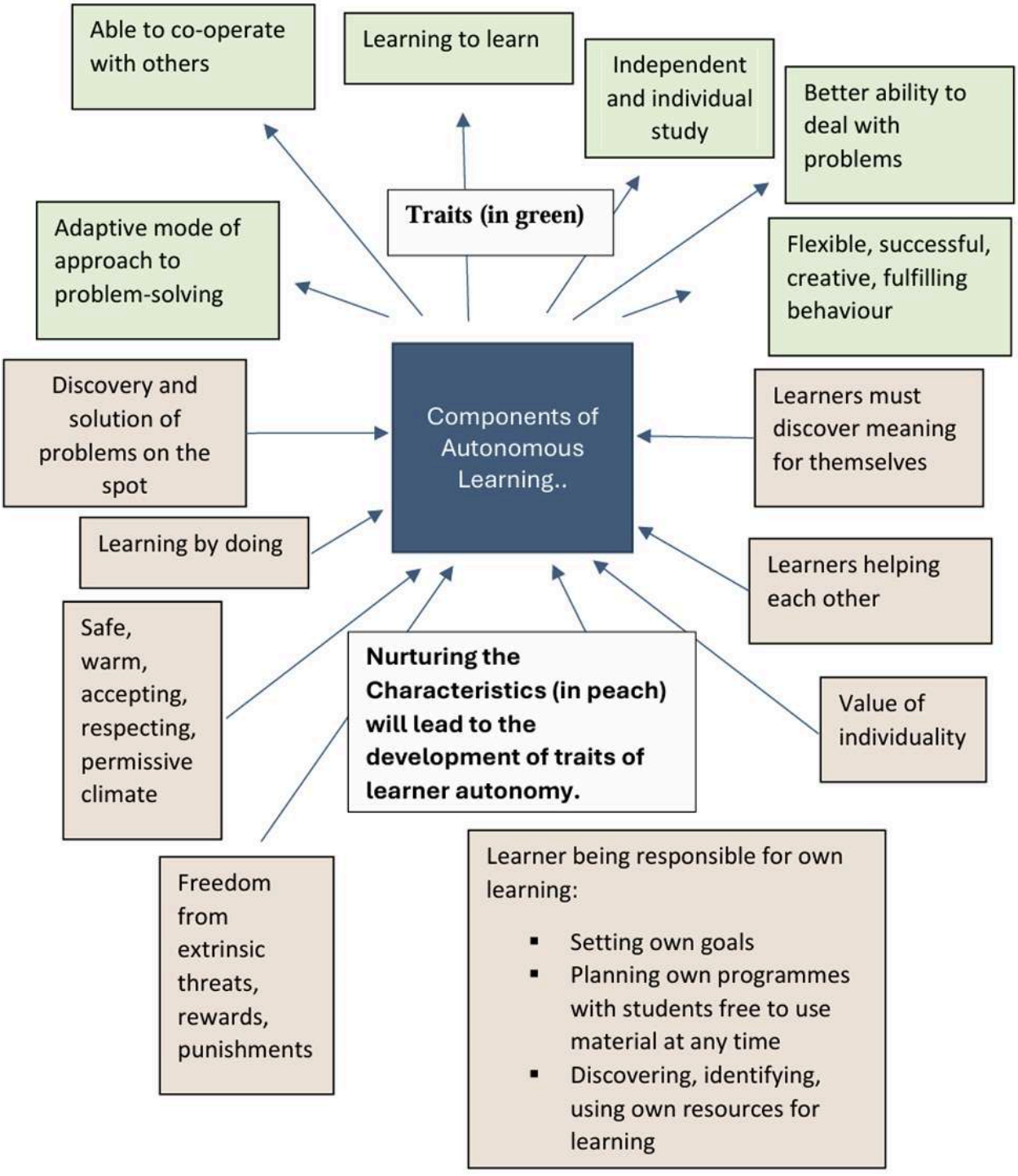



Project Grade 3
IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER
1
Aim of project
By intergrating a number of outcomes we create a project based on an outing and different tasks in order to develop learner autonomy in the pupils
2
Place for outing
To identify location suitable for pupis and the project
3
date for outing
4
Learner Autonomy
Refer to Table
5
CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT
6
Outcomes to be covered
7
Tasks carried out after outing - written, physical and digital
8
Tasks carried out during outing

PLAN TO REACH THE TARGETS



Grade 3





Se mmorru ħarġa sal-Park Naturali ta’ Pembroke.

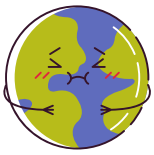
Isem u Kunjom

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ĦU GOST

fin-natura

Ikteb dak kollu li tara madwarek

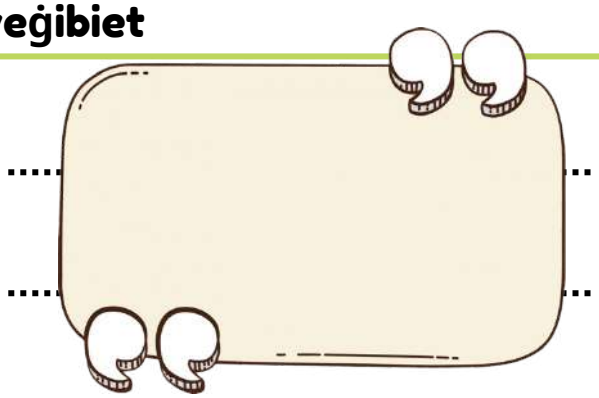
Tajjeb għall-ambjent 	Mhux tajjeb għall-ambjent 
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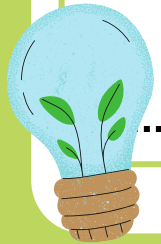


ĦU GOST

fin-natura

Agħżel ħabiba u morru kellmu lill-park rangers dwar ix-xogħol tagħhom. Staqsihom informazzjoni dwar kif jieħdu ħsieb il-post; kemm jiġu nies kuljum; xi fjuri jikbru fil-park; liema annimali jikbru fil-park; x'jagħmlu fil-maltemp eċċ. Aħseb f'aktar ideat.

Mistoqsijiet:	Tweġibiet
	
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....





ĦU GOST

fin-natura

Taf tilgħab charades?

Ikteb istruzzjoni ta' kif tilgħab charades.



Inqassmu fi grupp ta' 5.
Iktbu 5 kelmiet li tużaw għal-logħba ta' Charades u ilagħbu bejnietkom.
Tistgħu ssaqsu għall-għajnuna mill-għalliema jekk ikollkom bżonn.





ĦU GOST

fin-natura

Ivvinta logħba li taħseb li tkun tista' tilgħab ma' sħabek meta toħroġ magħhom fil-kampanja. Ara li ma tweġġgħux ! Agħtiha isem.







ĦU GOST

fin-natura

X'tiekol meta tmur xi piknik?

Ikteb istruzzjoni ta' kif tipprepara dan l-ikel.



....

....

....

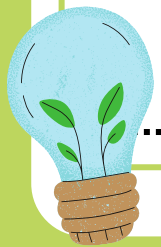
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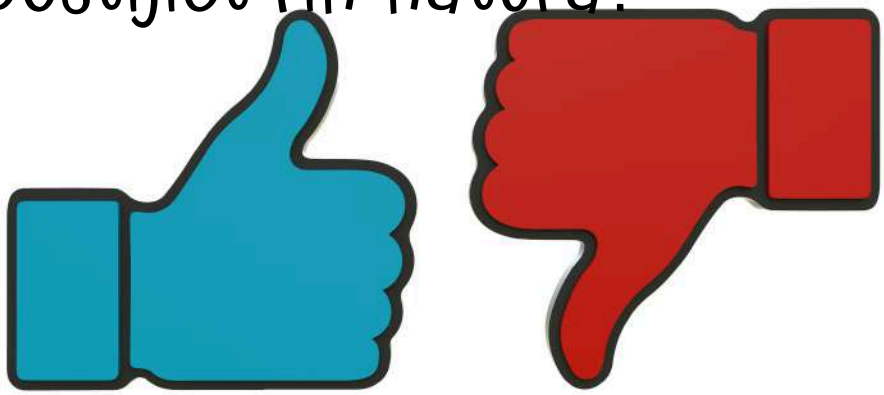
fin-natura

CAPTIONS - Aħseb ftit dwar xi captions li kieku int tpinġi fuq powster biex tpoġġi madwar il-park.





Kemm hi sabiħa l-arja friska ! Int tieħu gost tmur f'postijiet fin-natura?



Fin-natura nieħu gost għax :

Fin-natura ma niħux gost għax :







Agħżel ħabiba li tixtieq taħdem magħha.

Agħżlu oġġett wieħed minn dak li qed taraw.

Iktbu l-kelma: _____

Issa poġġu l-ittri taħt xulxin u iktbu vers b'kull ittra.



Success criteria. These templates can be used to display the learning outcome/s of the lesson or activity.

Sheet 1 includes the language skill, the language skill number and the learning outcome
Sheet 2 includes the pupils' success criteria;
Sheet 3 includes the pupils' ideas for improvement

QR Codes makes it possible for teachers to amend text in the template.

Il-Kodiċi QR tagħti aċċess lill-għalliem biex jaċċessa t-template u jagħmel l-emendi neċessarji.





Sheet 1



Sheet 2



Sheet 3

Il-Kisba tal-Lum

Grade 3 T2

Inwassal messaġġ sempliċi bil-fomm bla ma nħalli xejn barra





Stajt naqsam l-ideat tiegħi dwar....

Stajt niddiskrivi l-kostum.....

Stajt nispjega dak li ktibt.....





Se naħdem aktar fuq .....

Nista' nipprova aktar billi .....





Writing tasks checklists

Kitba deskrittiva - Karnival



Ċekkjatura

Ikteb jew immarka ✔

Kisba	Jien	Il-ħabib/a	L-għalliema
Iċċekkjajt l-ortografija 			
Iċċekkjajt il-punteġġjatura 			
Użajt kliem deskrittiv. 			
Dak li ktibt jaqbel mal-istampa. 			
Naf nispjega dak li ktibt. 			

Istruzzjonijiet: Din tista' tingħata lil kull student jew inkella tintuża bħala riżorsi għall-klassi kollha.

To promote autonomy, in extreme cases where language proficiency is very weak, a translation of the checklist can be provided to ensure that all students can understand it and can reflect on their work.

Iċċekkja dak li ktibt

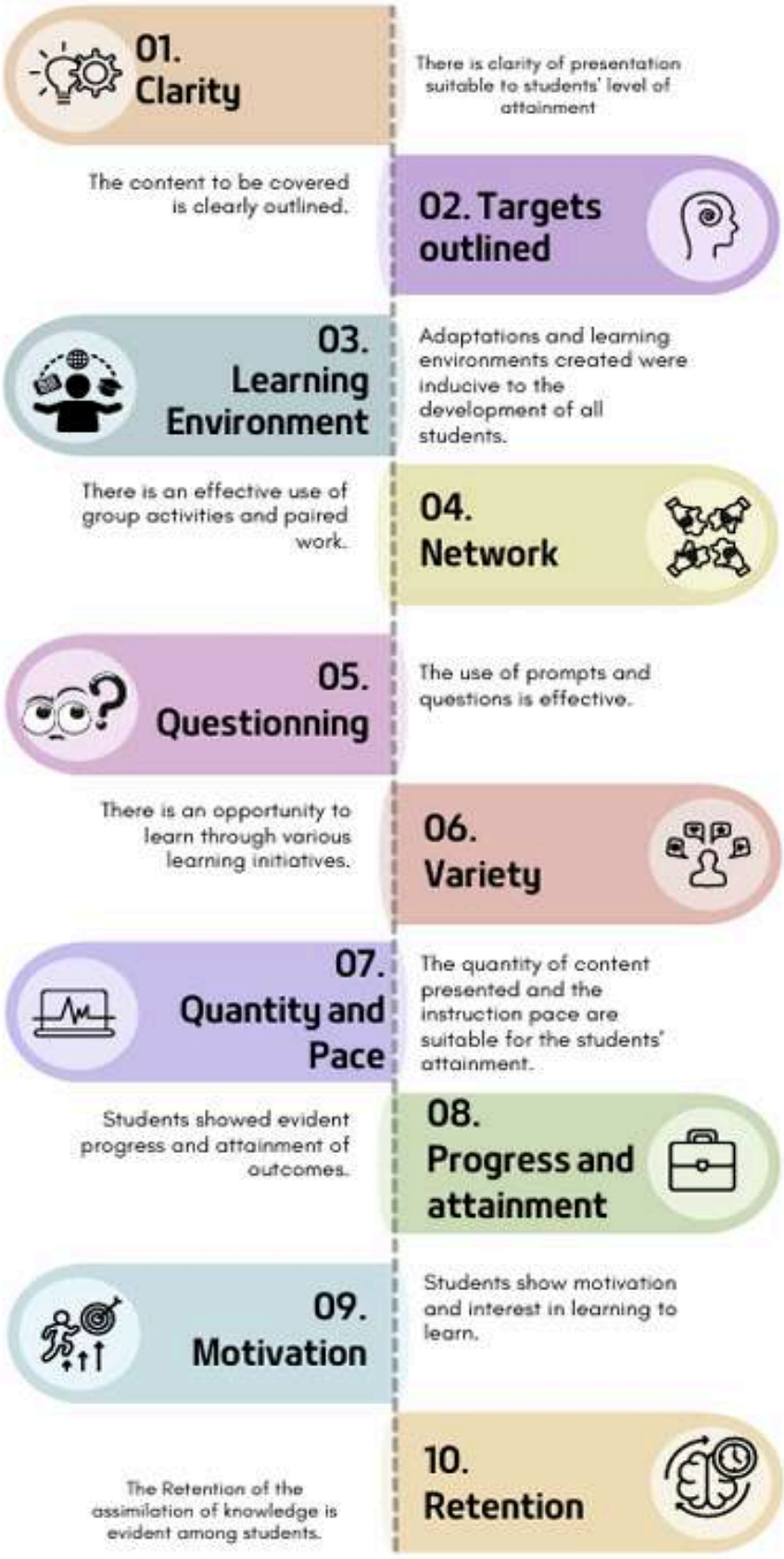
- **Ittri Kapitali**
  Fil--bidu tas-sentenza u meta ktibt isem ta' xi ħadd jew post ktibt ittra kapitali
- **Punteġġjatura**
  Ktibt comma u full stop jew question mark jew exclamation mark meta hemm bżonn
- **Preżentazzjoni**
  użajt paragrafi u ktibt pulit
- **Kif spellejt?**
  Qgħadt attenta għall-ispelling
- **Erġa aqraha u ara tagħmilx sens**

Writing checklist

- **Capital letters**
  I wrote a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence or when writing the name of a person or place
- **Punctuation**
  KI used a comma and a full stop or question mark or exclamation mark when needed
- **Presentation**
  I used paragraphs and wrote neatly
- **Spelling**
  I paid attention to my spelling
- **Does it make sense?**
  Re-read your sentences to make sure they are logical.

Istruzzjonijiet: Din tista' tingħata lil kull student jew inkella tintuża bħala riżorsi għall-klassi kollha.
Instructions: Provide each student with an individual writing checklist so they can practice independent proof reading their work.

10 STEPS TO BE more effective





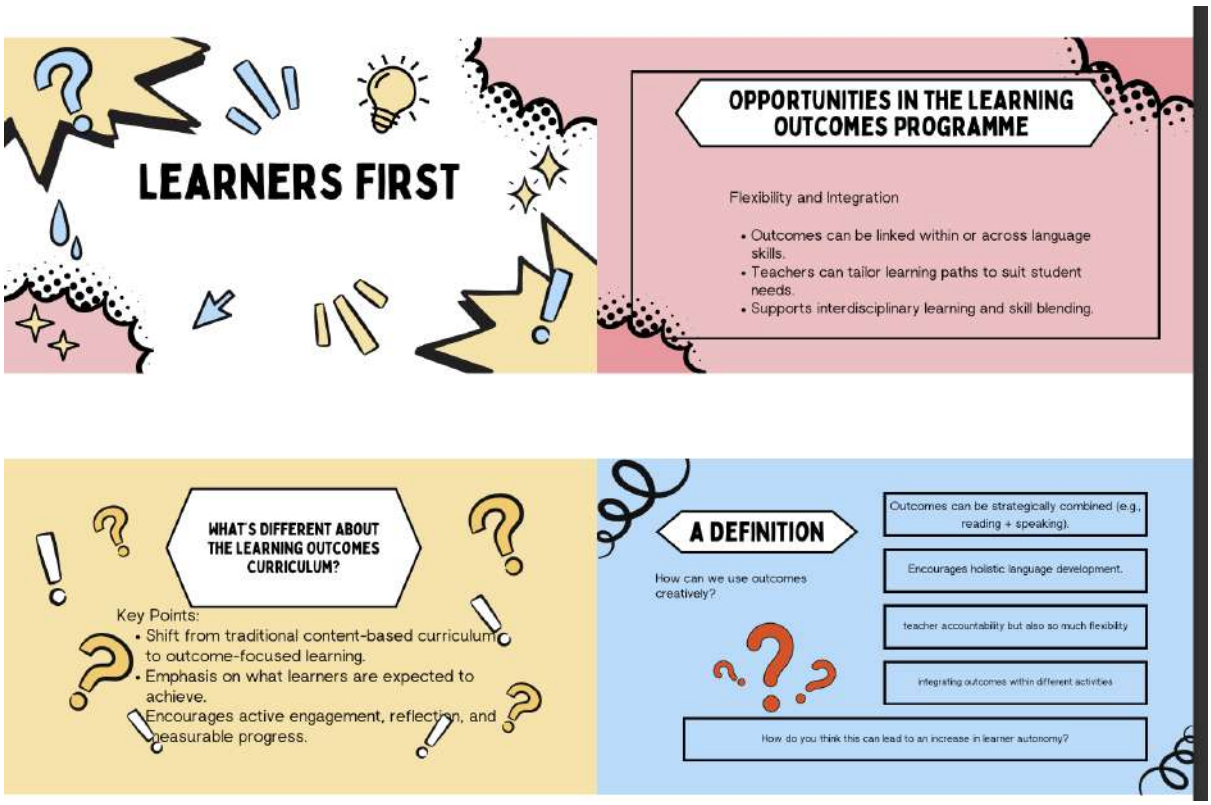
© ARG 2025

Appendix 4.10 Downloads of Presentations used during Focus Groups

The following presentation can be accessed through the following link:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGo6bTzIzk/6mFbUeQAfz7eAFNd5SOtHw/edit?utm_content=DAGo6bTzIzk&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

or by scanning the following QR code:



QUESTIONNING

How can questionning lead to more open-minded pupils ?

Għaliex?

Taqblu? Għaliex?

TAĊĊETTAWX Iva jew Le





GIVE EXAMPLES

Reflective questions (Kif stajt tiktibha jew tgħidha aħjar? How can you write it or say it better?) prompts learners to evaluate their actions and outcomes, promoting self-awareness and a growth mindset. This is also used when using checklist sheets (Ċekkjaturi).



GIVE EXAMPLES

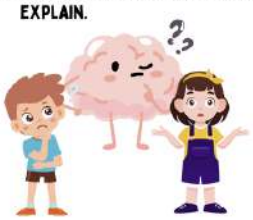


The use of open-ended questions (X'taħsbu li jiġri jekk ..? What do you think will happen if we try it this way?). Encourage learners to explore multiple possibilities and express their ideas, developing critical thinking and decision-making skills.



PROBING QUESTIONS (WHY DO YOU THINK ...? CAN YOU EXPLAIN FURTHER?) DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING AND ENCOURAGE LEARNERS TO ARTICULATE THEIR REASONING, BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ABILITY TO ANALYSE AND EXPLAIN.

GIVE EXAMPLES







CHOICE-ORIENTED QUESTIONS OFFER CHOICES GIVES CHILDREN A SENSE OF CONTROL OVER THEIR LEARNING, FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY:
PREDICTIVE QUESTIONS (WHEN USING OZOBOTS, CHILDREN WERE ASKED TO PREDICT WHERE THE CHARACTER COULD GO NEXT) ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO THINK AHEAD, MAKE DECISIONS, AND ANTICIPATE OUTCOMES, STRENGTHENING THEIR PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITIES.

GIVE EXAMPLES

INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR TEACHERS



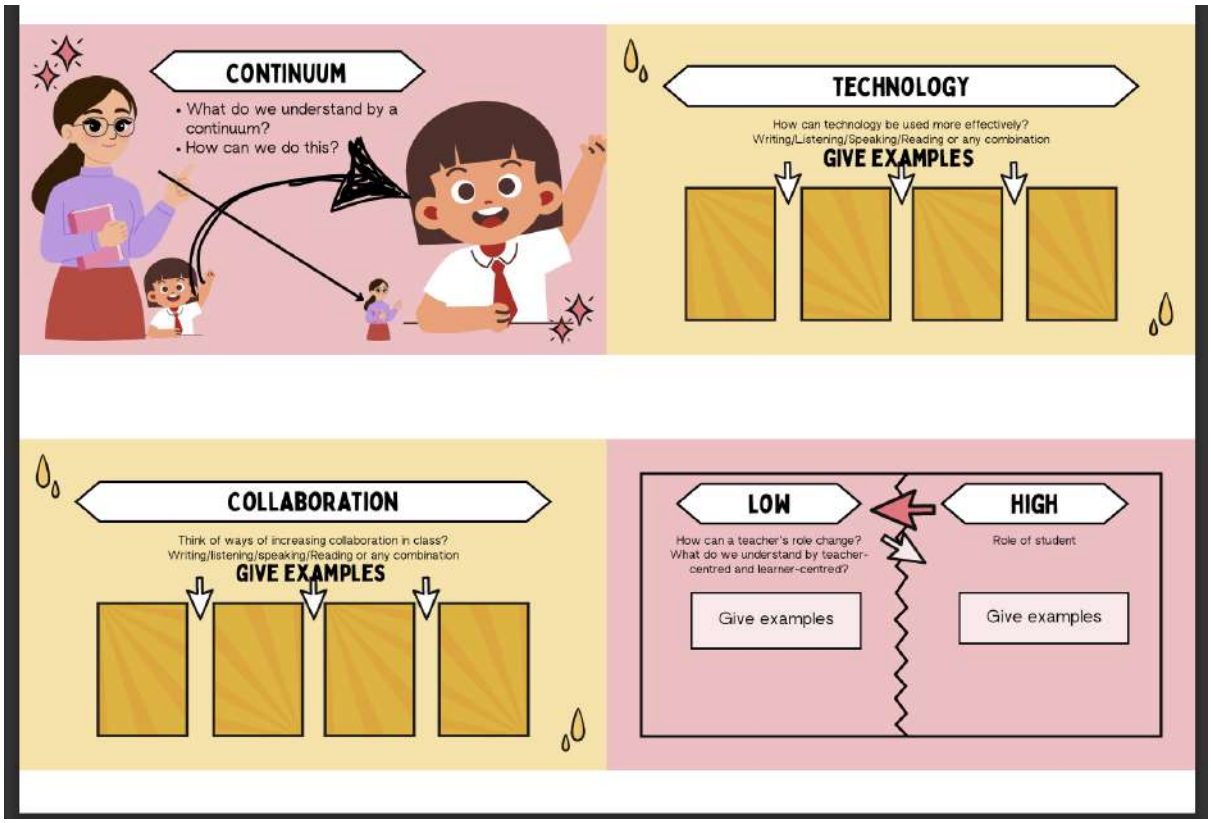
Probing and problem-solving questions, guide and do not dictate to students how to proceed. These questions help children develop strategies for overcoming challenges independently and build resilience and confidence.

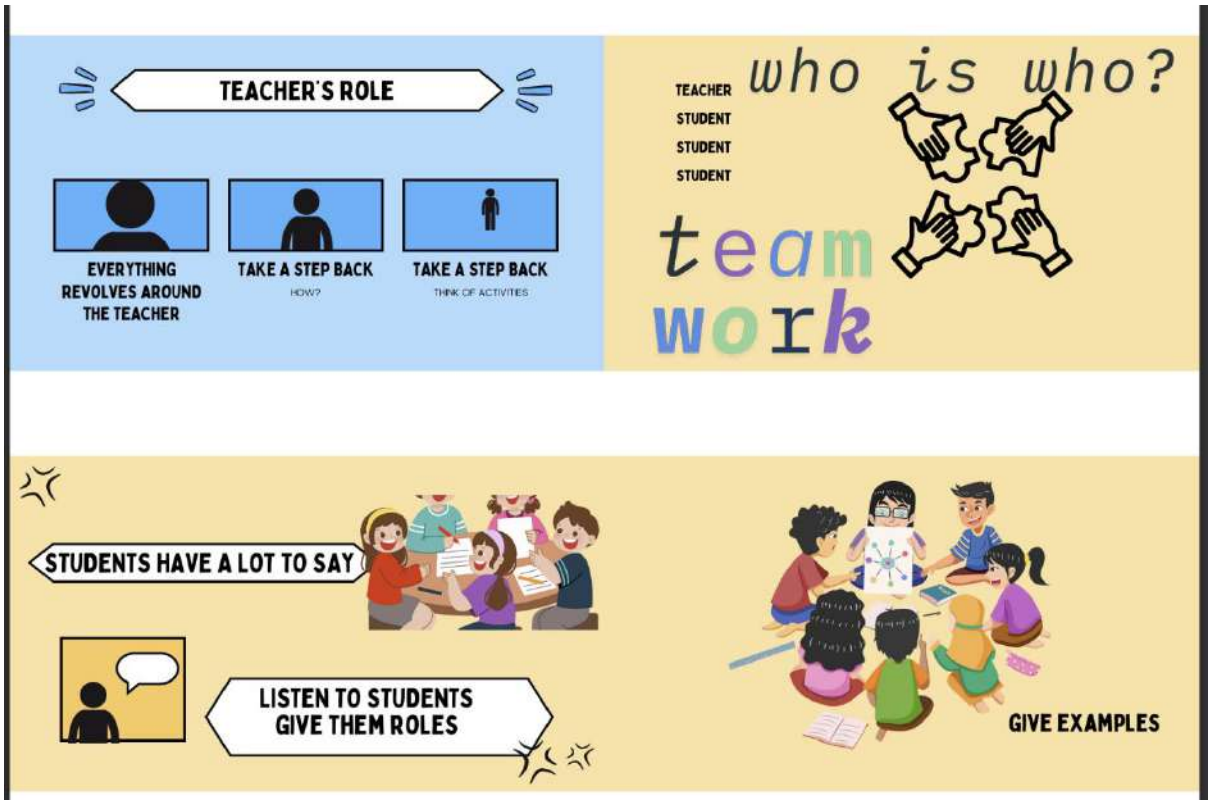
GIVE EXAMPLES



WHY?

- Teachers are more responsible for ensuring learning outcomes are met.
- Greater emphasis on tracking student progress and adapting instruction.
- Accountability integrated throughout the implementation phases and explored in the case study.


CONTINUUM
• What do we understand by a continuum?
• How can we do this?
TECHNOLOGY
How can technology be used more effectively?
Writing/Listening/Speaking/Reading or any combination
GIVE EXAMPLES
COLLABORATION
Think of ways of increasing collaboration in class?
Writing/listening/speaking/Reading or any combination
GIVE EXAMPLES
LOW
How can a teacher's role change?
What do we understand by teacher-centred and learner-centred?
Give examples
HIGH
Role of student
Give examples

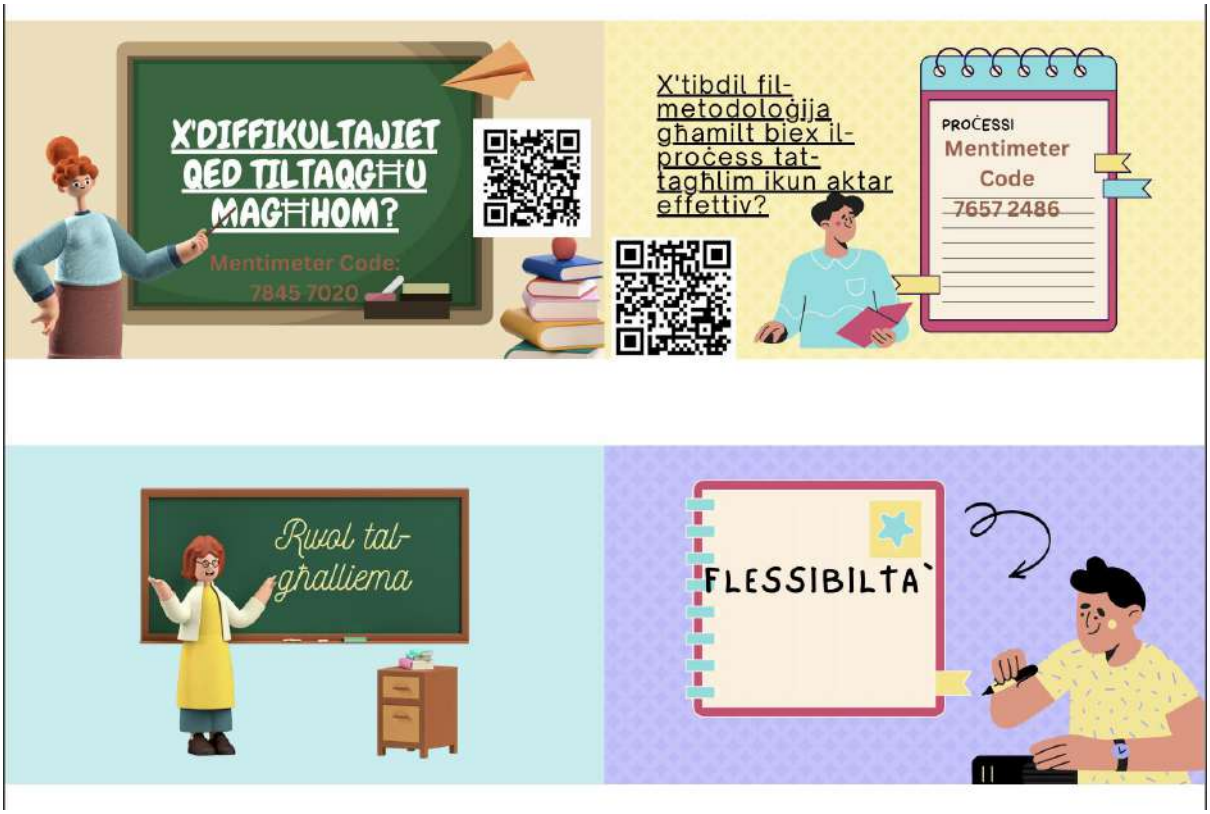

TEACHER'S ROLE
EVERYTHING REVOLVES AROUND THE TEACHER
TAKE A STEP BACK
HOW?
TAKE A STEP BACK
THINK OF ACTIVITIES
who is who?
TEACHER
STUDENT
STUDENT
STUDENT
team work
STUDENTS HAVE A LOT TO SAY
LISTEN TO STUDENTS
GIVE THEM ROLES
GIVE EXAMPLES

The following presentation, which was used during teacher training, can be accessed through the following link:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAFdSScUUXc/DsCnlWeZTkNzaEQ0w55QxQ/edit?utm_content=DAFdSScUUXc&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton or by scanning the following QR code:






X'DIFFIKULTAJIET QED TILTAQGĦU MAGĦHOM?
Mentimeter Code:
7845 7020
X'tibdil fil-metodoloġija għamilt biex il-proċess tat-tagħlim ikun aktar effettiv?
PROĊESSI
Mentimeter
Code
7657 2486
Ruol tal-għalliema
FLESSIBILTÀ`


KIF SE TAĦDEM BIL-KISBIET
• Importanti tkun tafhom sew. Tant li tibda tgħaqqad kisba ma' oħra.
• Importanti tkun taf il-kisbiet ta' suġġetti oħra sew dak li tgħallem int u sew dak li jgħallem ħaddieħor.


Raba' Sena Is-smigh fil-ħajja ta' kuljum, it-thaddim tal-grammatika u l-letteratura

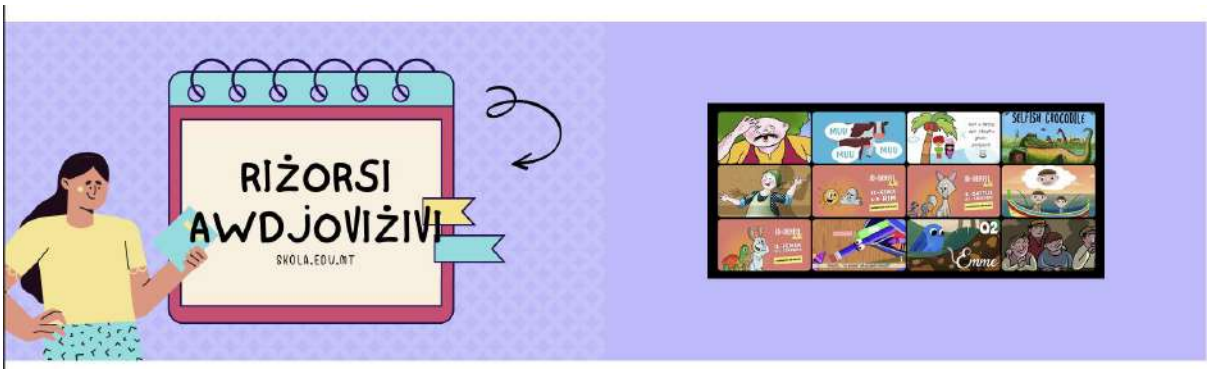

SPIRALI -
Sibu eżempji konkreti mis-sillabu tal-kisbiet mit-tagħlim fis-suġġett li tgħallmu
Is-smigh fil-ħajja ta' kuljum, it-thaddim tal-grammatika u l-letteratura
Kisba mis-7 sena
Nagħraf tonijiet, vuċijiet u ġesti differenti mħaddma fil-ħajja ta' kuljum fl-irrakkontar ta' stejjer, qari ta' poeżiji, reċiti, aħbarijiet, diskorsi formali u informali bħat-ton ironiku u sarkastiku.



KISBIET (IKTEB IL-ĦILA. IRREFERI WKOLL GĦAN-NUMRU TAL-ĠENB). AQTA' SING TAĦT IL-PARTI LI SE TIFFOKA FUQHA FIL-LEZZJONI.















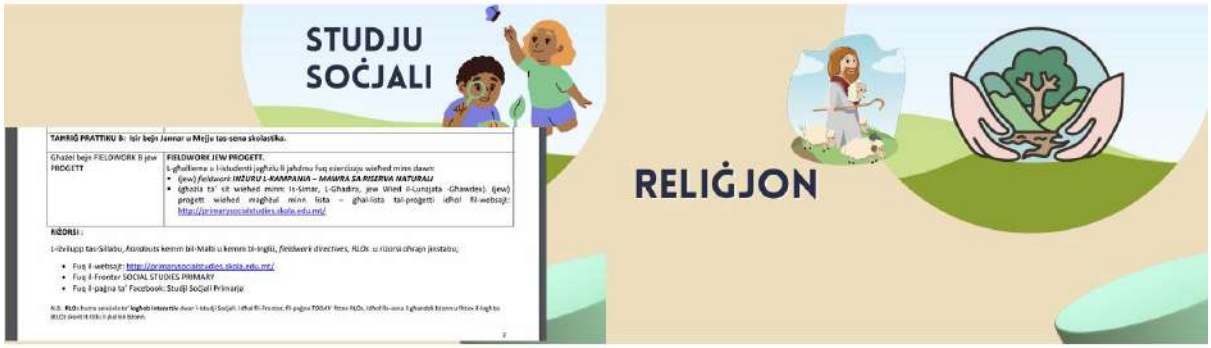




DAWN IRIDU JIĠU INTEGRATI FLIMKIEN

ĦA NIEĦDU EŻEMPJU

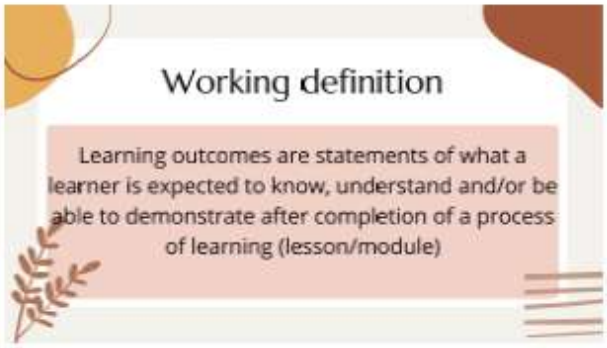


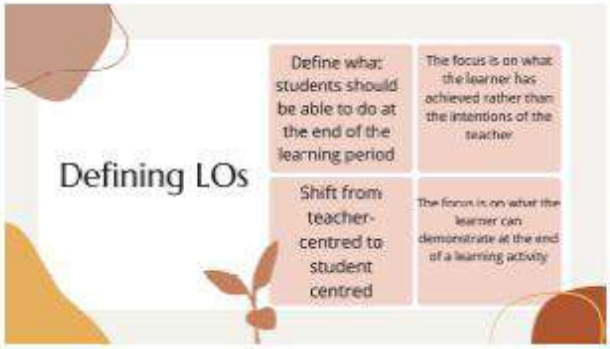


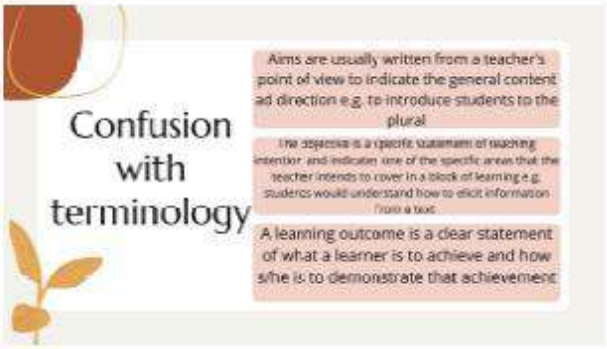
Il-Mira/L-Aspetti tas-Suġġetti nr. 5: L-Ghaqda: miegħi nnifsi, mal-ohrajn u m'Alla	1) Kapaċi - nitħarreġ fis-sileenzju għal mumenti qosra u hekk nizviluppa fiha l-valur u l-attitudni li nitgħallem nisma', nirrispetta u jkolli kuntatt miegħi nnifsi, mal-ohrajn u ma' Alla.	1-2 5-6	1.1 1.3.
	2) Kapaċi - nikteb tarbiet qosra biex nidieb għalija nnifsi u għal-ohrajn, waqt li nagħraf li meta nkun qed nitlob, inkun qed nitkellem ma' Alla.	63-64	4.7
	3) Kapaċi - nosserva kemm l-ħolqien ta' madwari hu sinjur u nimfetti fuq dan bħala prova ta' kemm Alla jħobb lil u lill-ohrajn u ta' kemm hu swiġieb fejja u leġi l-ohrajn.	1-2 21-22	1.1 2.2

	1) Kapaċi - nagħmel mal-mistoqsijiet dwar Alla	21-22 71-72	2.2 6.2
	Skeda/Ritika ta' evalwazzjoni ta' x-xogħol: pożittiv, ħsejjes u perikli.	21-22 27-28	2.2 2.5
Il-Mira/L-Aspetti tas-Suġġetti nr. 7: Il-Kelma t'Alla u l-Bibbja	1) Kapaċi - nurrispetta u nisma leġi il-Bibbja bħala l-Kelma t'Alla mistiedna.	13-14	1.7
	2) Kapaċi - nifhem u nuża l-istruttura Maqsuba (il-Bibbja għal-Tfal).	13-14 15-17	1.7 1.8
	3) Kapaċi - nesplora Ġenesi 1 u 2 u nirrifletti fuq Alla l-Ħallieq u fuq il-Ħolqien Tiegħu bħala rigal għalija u għall-ambjent.	31-32	2.2
	4) Kapaċi - nimlaħaq mal-immaġini tar-Raġħaj il-Ġdejjem kif imsemmi f'Salm 23 u fl-Evanġelji.	60-61	3.6
Il-Mira/L-Aspetti tas-Suġġetti nr. 8: Ghal fini dawl tal-Insenjament Kattoliku u l-	1) Kapaċi - nirrifletti fl-episodju mill-Evanġelju meta Ġesù għallem 'il Missiemu' fit-tempju.	60-64 63-64	4.7 4.7










It-Tielet Sena


It-Tielet Sena


It-Tielet Sena


It-Tielet Sena


Ir-Raba' Sena


Ir-Raba' Sena





As one can see since the learning outcome is concerned with what the students can **do** at the end of the learning activity, all of the verbs are action or active verbs.



In this hierarchy, each level depends on the student's ability to perform at the level/s that are below it.

6. Evaluation
5. Synthesis
4. Analysis
3. Application
2. Comprehens on
1. Knowledge

Bloom identified 3 domains of learning

- cognitive
- affective
- psycho-motor

When planning lessons:

When teaching and assessing students one should bear in mind that learning is a process and that the teacher should try to get the thought processes of the students to move up into the higher-order stages of synthesis and evaluation

In this hierarchy, each level depends on the student's ability to perform at the level/s that are below it.

Higher level thinking



Lower level thinking

Another important aspect to consider when planning is the fact that

learning occurs when learners are immersed in environments where the new learned behaviour can be applied (Schell and Black, 1997).



The use of real-life settings makes learning more relevant and also more transferrable. Here learning needs to also go beyond the teacher and learners and needs to go beyond the boundaries of the class walls.

Give examples of how learners can be immersed in environments where the new learned behaviour can be applied.

During the learning process, are the students being given opportunities for developing their :

- Creativity?
- Independent learning skills?
- Problem-Solving skills?
- Higher level thinking skills?
- Application skills?
- Listening and Oracy Skills?
- Sharing / being part of a team?

Modes of teacher - student interaction

- Imitation
- Modelling (where students can observe, enact, and practice with help from the teacher or educator)
- Repetition
- Reinforcement - Negative or Positive

When planning educators are encouraged to create contextualised learning situations which present learning as a social practice in a real life world.

During your lesson Who/What is the

MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE OTHER?





APPENDIX

5

Project Timeline

A Pedagogical Transition Towards Learner Autonomy in Maltese Language Teaching: A Case Study

Project Plan - Implementation of the Case Study

	TASK TITLE	DATE
1	**Term 1**	
1.1	Apply for permission from SfCE	January 2021
1.2	Get clearance from FREC Ethics Committee	January 2021
1.3	Start Literature Review	June 2021
1.4	Prepare and organise the distribution of information letters assent/conent form	September 2021
1.5	Start analysing Learning Outcomes Grade 3 and linking common strands to the Grade 4	July-Sept 2021
1.6	Brainstorm activities in line with Learner Autonomy Learning Outcomes	June 2021
1.7	Organise meetings with the teachers	October 2021
1.8	Schedule focus groups (at least for Term 1)	October 2021
1.9	Schedule lesson observations (at least for Term 1)	October 2021
2	Plan individual meetings with each teacher after each lesson observed	Along Term
2	**Term 2**	
2.1	Continue focus groups and lesson observsations.(Collaboration and Technology)	Along Term 2
2.2	Literature Review	Ongoing
2.3	Data collected from LOS, VAS and IM	Ongoing
2.4	Analyse Data collected in Term 1 to discuss during IM	Ongoing
3	**Term 3**	
3.1	Plan project Grade 4	For implementation in March/April
3.2	Plan project Grade 3	For implementation in March/April
3.3	Organise end of year interviews with students	June 2022
3.4	Questionnnaires teachers	end June 2021
3.5	Questionninaires teachers anonymous on google form	July 2022
4	**Phase 4 - Summer**	
4.1	Start analysing field notes from transcripts	

APPENDIX

6

Grade 4 Work produced by pupils during the outing project presented in Chapter 12

APPENDIX 6.1 EBOOK

APPENDIX 6.2 SCANS OF WRITING TASKS GRADE 4

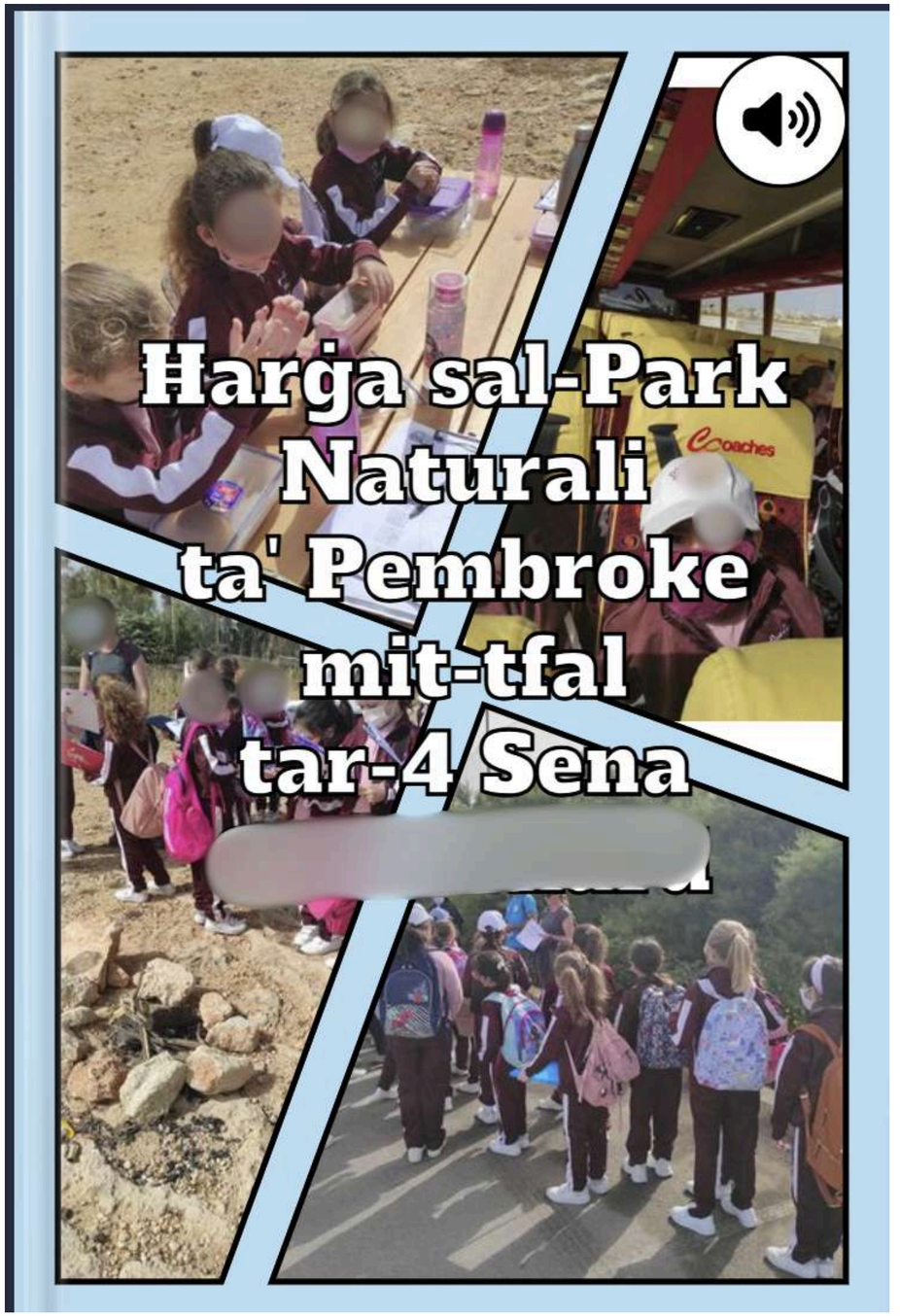
APPENDIX 6.3 Self-assessing Checklists prepared by teachers

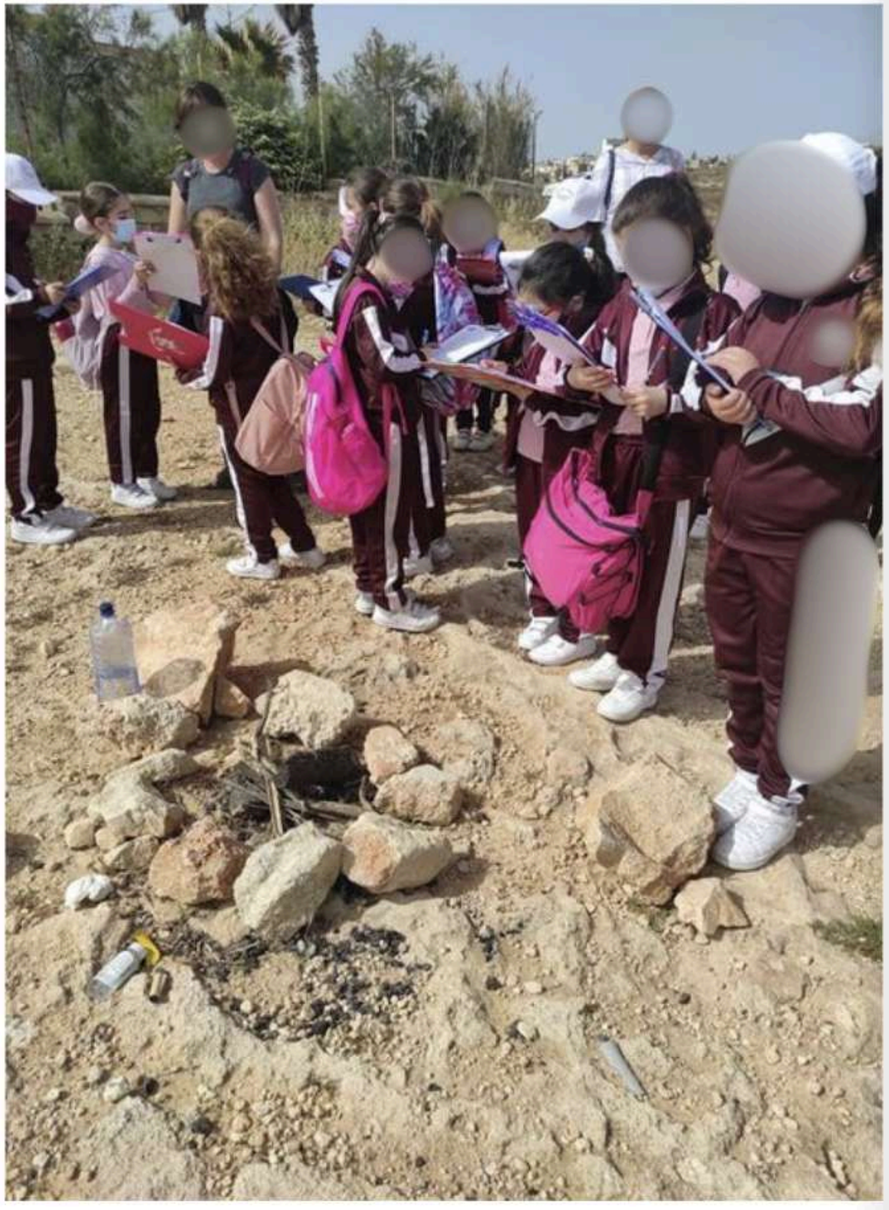
APPENDIX 6.1 EBOOK

In line with ethical protocols, the eBook is presented as screenshots of each page. Blurring has been used to protect the identity of participants.

The original eBook has sound features which turn the eBook into an audio-visual book. Similarly to a book, one can also turn the pages of the eBook by clicking on an arrow at the side.

In line with ethical procedures and protocols, to ensure anonymity, the eBook is being presented as screenshots that have been blurred as needed.





KONTENUT	Paġna
Introduzzjoni	2-3
Mappa	4-9
Ritratti	10-11
Djarju minn [illegible]	12-13
Deskrizzjoni minn [illegible]	14-15
Djalogu minn [illegible]	16-17
Djalogu minn [illegible]	18-19
Intervista minn [illegible]	20-23
Ritratti	24-25
Istruzzjonijiet minn [illegible]	26-27
Riċetta ta' Ftira biż-żejt miktuba minn [illegible]	28-29
Istruzzjonijiet bie[illegible]ħba Charades minn [illegible]	30-31
Suġġerimenti min[illegible]	32-33
Poeżija Akrostika miktuba minn [illegible]	34-35
Ritratti	36-37
Slowgans minn [illegible]	38-39
Logħba	40-41
Ittra ta' Ringrazzjament miktuba minn [illegible]	42-43
TMIEM	44-45



Nhar it-Tlieta 29 ta' Marzu 2022, morna ħarġa mal-għalliema Ms [redacted] u l-LSE [redacted]

Kienet ġurnata l-ġmiel tagħha.

Tlaqna mill-Iskola [redacted]

dħalna fil-karozza tal-linja u rħejnilha sal-Park Naturali ta' Pembroke.

Kemm konna eċitati !!


PEMBROKE

Meta wasalna lura l-iskola, bħala tifkira ta' din il-ġurnata, iddeċidejna niktbu kitbiet differenti u nippublikawhom f'dan il-ktejjeb. Nisperaw li permezz tal-kitbiet tagħna tieħdu togħma żgħira ta' dan il-post sabiħ.




KEMM HAWN SABIĦ !!

DJARJU - KITBA TA' G[redacted] U [redacted]É

Għażiż djarju it-Tlieta li għadda
marna Pembroke nature Park. Kemm
tadna gost!!

L-ewwel meta wasalna r-raggers tal-park
galuna x'għandna biex ngħinu in-natura.
Imbagħad galuna li se morru bilke
imbagħad galuna li ta marru scavengerhunt
tal-fjuri. Abna sibna fjura li ma kinietx
fuq il-karta. Taf kemm kienet rari u
taf kemm tadna gost. Wara marna

Nieklu kemm xelna ġuħ! Wara marna lura
fejn ġejna u marna l-iskola. Wara
l-għalxema galtina biex inpenġu xi ħaġa
li niftakru fuq il-natur park.

Vera xelina ġurnata mimlija daqs bajda

twinkl.co.uk

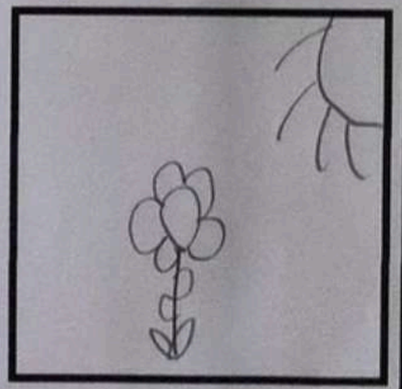


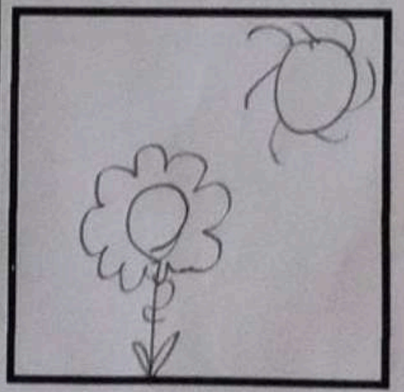


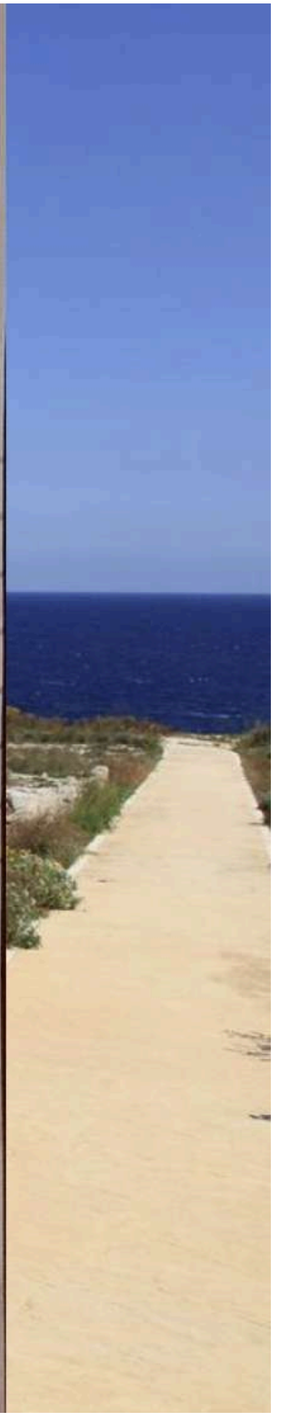
Is-Sit Naturali ta' Pembroke!

Fis-sit naturali ġewwa Pembroke hemm ħafna affarijiet x'tista' tara u tagħmel!

1. F'Pembroke ma tistax taqta' fjuri.
2. Iekk taqta' fjuri l-annimali ma jkollhomx x'jieklu.
3. F'Pembroke tista' tara iż-żwiemel.
4. Naraw wkoll ħaxix u għasafar.
5. Ma nistgħux narmu iż-żibel barra.
6. Ma nistgħux iqabbdu l-kelb jiġri immejnistgħu nieħdu pjaċir.
7. Ma tistax tqabbad in-nar.
8. In-natura nistgħu ngawdu hà u nistgħu nilgħbu ħafna logħob differenti.

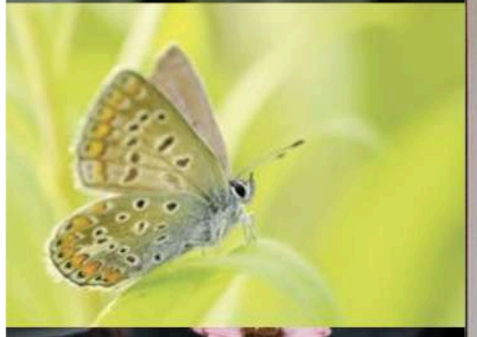


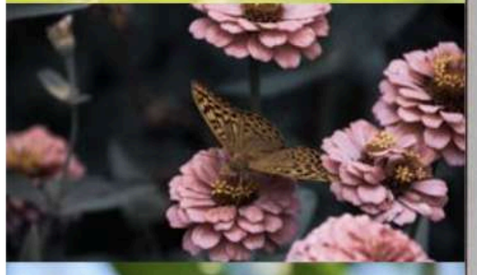


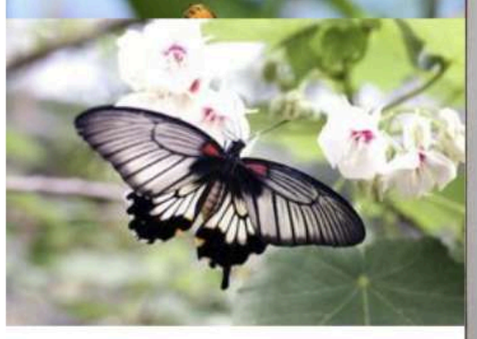


DJALOGU MIKTUB MINN K[redacted] U E[redacted]









Farfettu u Kamaleontina

Għadha kemm għaddiet il-ġurnata u Farfettu u Kamaleontina tgħidx kemm jinsabu kuntenti għaliex illum kellhom żjara mill-istudenti ta[redacted]!

Bonġu! Jiena Lola l-farfett.

Bonġu! Kif inti farfett Lola!

Jiena tajba u int?

Jien jisimni Lexi l-kamaleont[redacted]

Rajtkom illum it-tfal fl-iskola ta[redacted]

Kemm huma bravi u bilgħaqal!

Illum veru ħadu pjaċir f'din iż-żjara!

Kemm nixtieq jerġgħu jiġu!



DJALOGU MIKTUB MINN A[redacted] U E[redacted]





Ħarġa fin-natura. Nibżgħu għall-ambjent!!

Ġurnata sabiħa ħarġet u l-istudenti t[redacted]
school marru sas-sit natural ta' Pembroke!

A[redacted]: Kemm naħna pjaċir f'pembroke.

[redacted]: veru ta', nixtieq nerġa' mmur.

A[redacted]: Int Liem, l-iktar parti għoġbitek?

[redacted]: Jien għoġbitni li meta morna infittex u l-fjuri u meta sibna l-fjuri li ma kinux fil-lista.

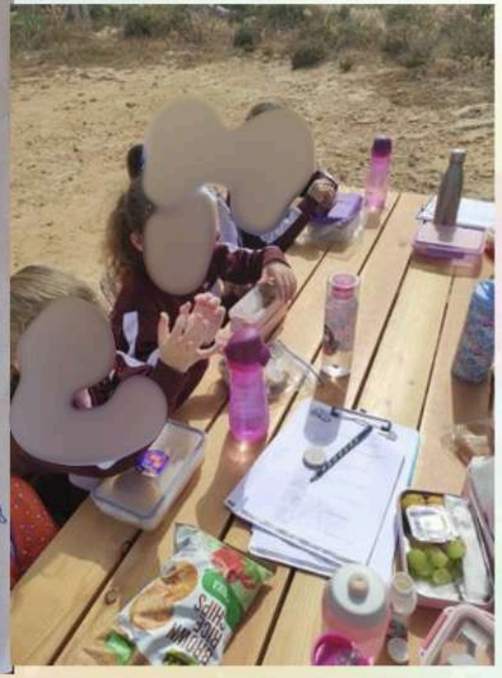
A[redacted]: Anke jien u għoġbitni fejn għamilna dik il-logħba tal-cards.

[redacted]: U tiftakar meta konna qegħdin niekklu u r-rangers qalu lir-raġel talla' l-klieb mingħajr ċinga'

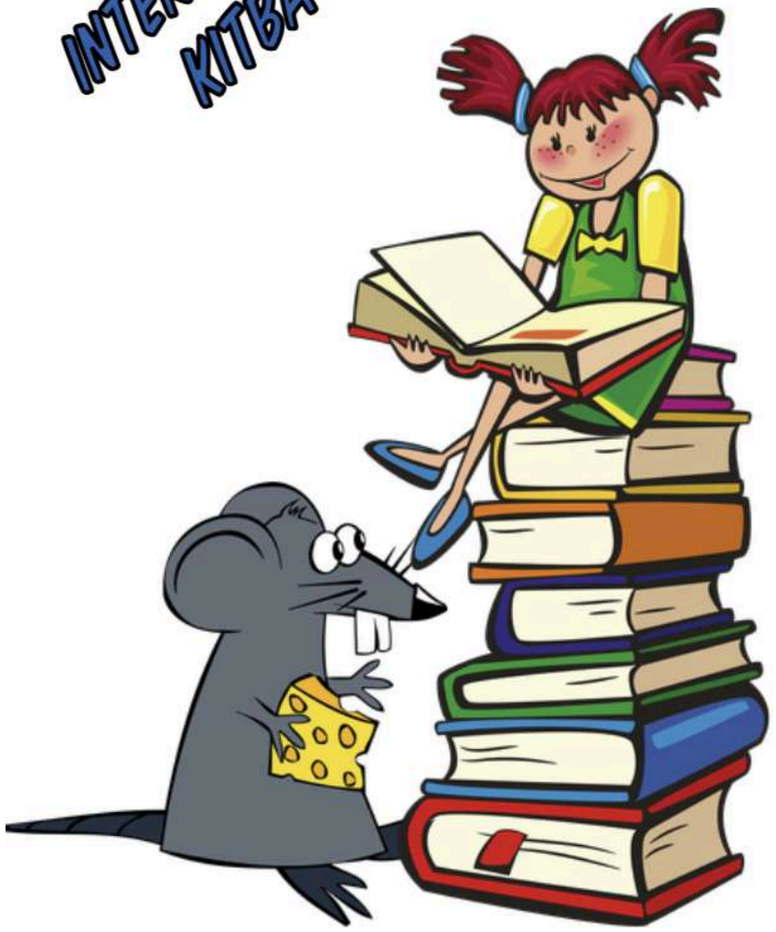
A[redacted]: Iva, niftakar sew.

[redacted]: Naħseb aħjar nitilqu għax qed isir il-ħin.





INTERVISTA MA' ĠURDIENA - KITBA TA' [illegible]



Ġurdiena tiġi ntervistata!!

Qalb il-ħaxix irnexxielna nsibu lil ġurdiena li ma beżgħetx minna! Għalhekk ħadna l-opportunita' nagħmlulha intervista dwar fejn toqgħod!

Mistoqsija: X'insibu ~~varjeta~~ fil-Park ta' Pembroke?

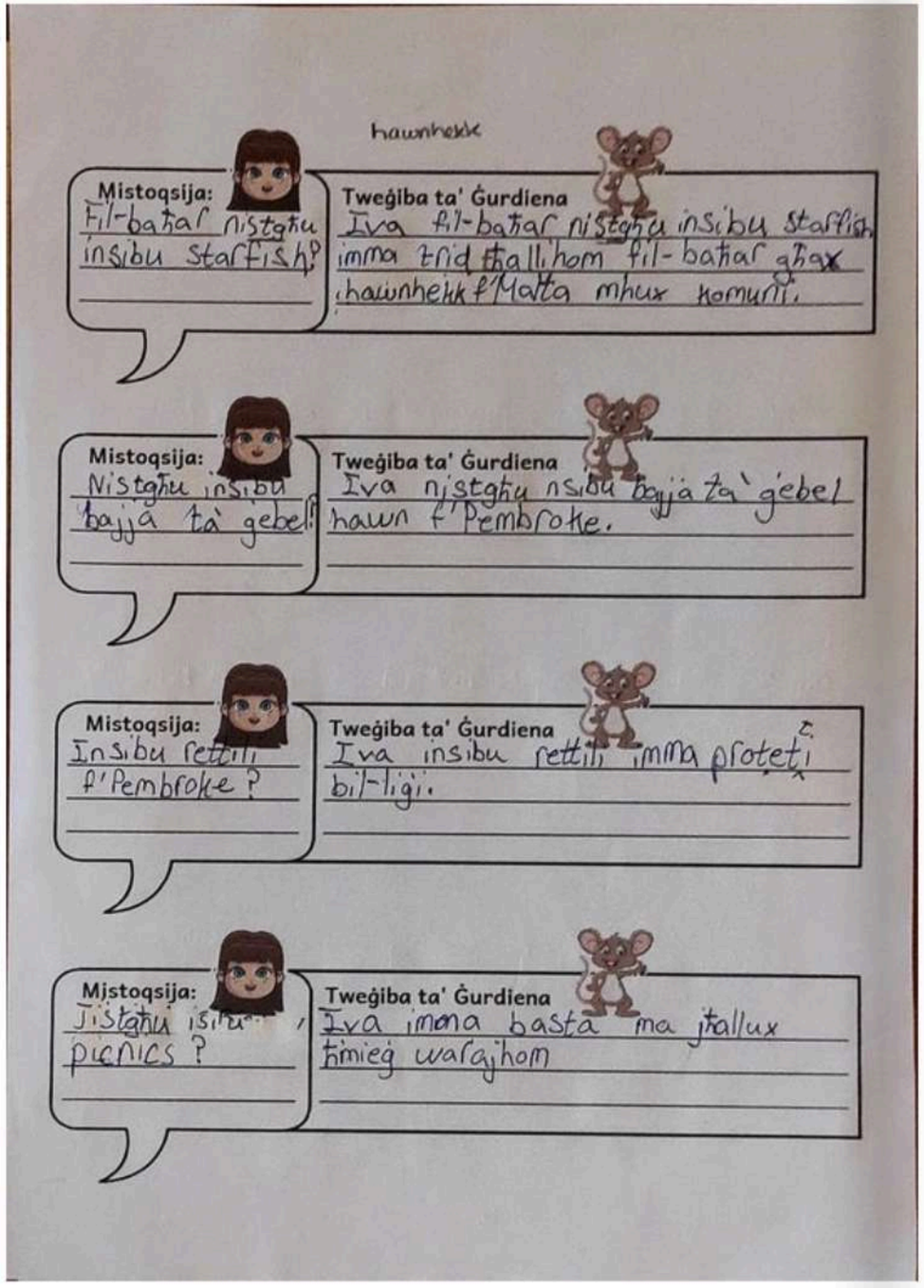
Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena Insibu varjeta ta' flora u fawna.

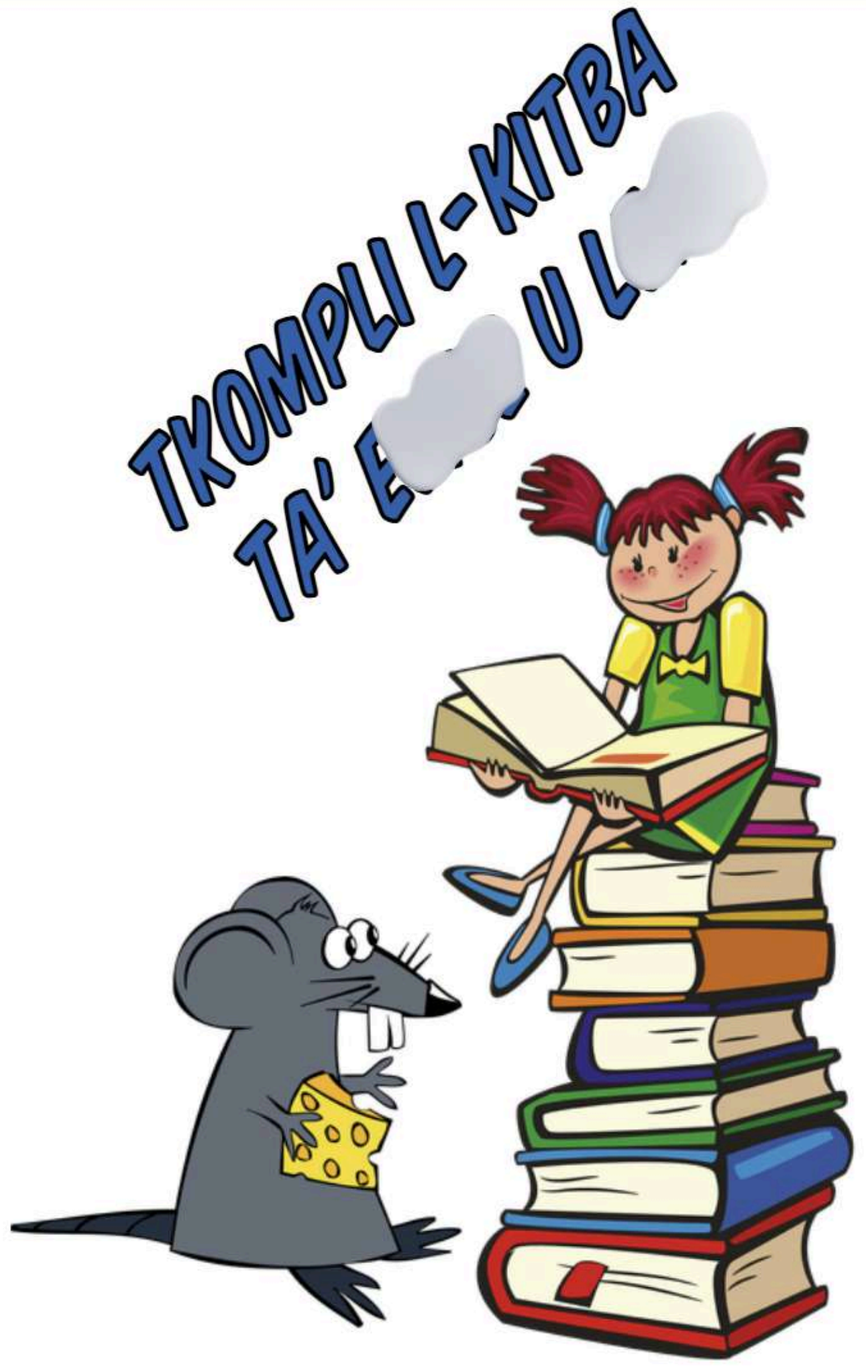
Mistoqsija: X'insibu fil-Park naturali ta' Pembroke?

Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena Insibu komunitajiet ta' steppa u xagħri.

Mistoqsija: Huma permessi l-karozzi f'dan is-sit ta' Natura 2000?

Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena Le. Karozzi mumkix permessi f'dan is-sit ta' Natura 2000.


hawnhekk
Mistoqsija:
Fil-baħar nistgħu insibu starfish?
Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Iva fil-baħar nistgħu insibu starfish imma trid tħallihom fil-baħar għax hawnhekk f'Malta mhux komuni.
Mistoqsija:
Nistgħu insibu bajja ta' gebel?
Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Iva nistgħu nsibu bajja ta' gebel hawn f'Pembroke.
Mistoqsija:
Insibu rettili f'Pembroke?
Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Iva insibu rettili imma protetti bil-liġi.
Mistoqsija:
Nistgħu insibu picnics?
Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Iva imma basta ma jħallux ħmieġ warajhom


TKOMPLI L-KITBA









KITBA TA' S[illegible] A[illegible] U K[illegible]

X'għandna nagħmlu meta nżuru s-sit Naturali ta' Pembroke!

Meta nżuru s-sit natural ġewwa Pembroke rridu nibżgħu għan-natura u l-ambjent! Ara x'għandek tagħmel int!



Man_ħamġux l-ambjent

Ma nagħġux fjuri



Ma nitfgħux fjuri



Ma ngħabbdux ~~fi~~ fin-nar





Meta jħammeġ il-ħeġ tiġbor tiġbru



Man_squx aqq il-ħaxix







RIĊETTA MIKTUBA MINN

Y[redacted] D[redacted]

U

L[redacted] G[redacted]



Min iħobb il-ħobż biż-żejt?

Fis-sit naturali ta' Pembroke hemm ħafna fjuri u pjanti differenti, fosthom pjanti ta' ħwawar li nistgħu nsajru bihom! Tridx nagħmlu ħobża biż-żejt?



Ingredjenti

- Ftira
- Bott kunserva
- Ftit żejt taż-żebbuġa
- Naqra Bżar u Melħ
- Ftit ħabaq imqatta
- Nofs bott tuna.

X'għandi bżonn

- Sikkina
- Purketta
- borża tal-plastik
- karta li timsaħ idejk fiha
- Platt
- board ta l-injam

Metodu

1. Aħsel idejk sew u tinsiex is-sapun!
2. Aqta' l-ftira min-nofs ara li jkun hemm adult ħdejk
3. Iftaħ bott kunserva u delqu mal-ftira kollha.
4. Aqbad il-borża tal-plastik u itfà ittuna ġo fiha.
5. Qib ftit ħabaq u aqtagħhu ġo biċċiet żgħar.
6. Biex iżżid ittoma, itfa ponta bżar u melħ.
7. Din ir-ricetta tajba quddiem l-baħar.
8. Pin l-ftira tajba ħafna u ser togħbok żgur
9. Hudu gost!



Logħba Charades Tan-Natura!

Inti thobb tilgħab? Fis-sit naturali ta' Pembroke lgħabna logħba charades marbutha man-natura. Tridux ngħidulkom kif tilgħabha?





X'għandi bżonn

- kards ta' charads
- kards tan-natura.
- Nuża mohi
-
-
-
-

Metodu

Ilum se ngħidulkom kif charades. Mela lewwel għanden bżonn kards ta' charades.

1. Mares lejn l-istampa u Rqha jkollok il-ritratt u int tagħmel dik il-haga.
2. Jekk trid tista' tuża l-affarijiet ta madwarek
3. Tista tagħmel iż-żfin mela int trid tagħmel l-azzjoni
4. Mela ibda agra sewwa li strazzjonijiet u ghamilhom.
5. Nispera li t-tfal jaqtgħu x' annimali qed timita.

SUĠĠERIMENTI

MIKTUBA MINN A[redacted] U K[redacted]

K[redacted] A[redacted]

Ejjew Ngħinu lin-Natura!

Le! Xi ħadd ħammeġ is-sit naturali ta' Pembroke! Issa x'se nagħmlu? L-istudenti ta'[redacted] għenu sabiex titnaddaf din is-sit naturali u anki għaddew xi suġġerimenti!





Suġġerimenti:

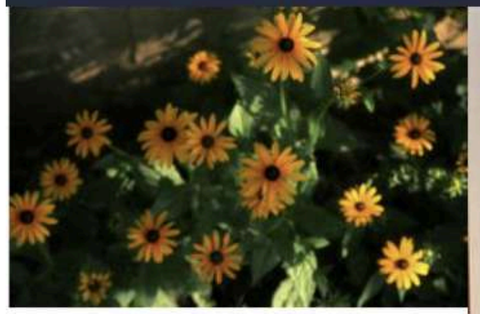
Kemm hawn ~~tnaqq~~!

Taraw ~~ta~~ il-ħxejjex tiegħek ma l-art

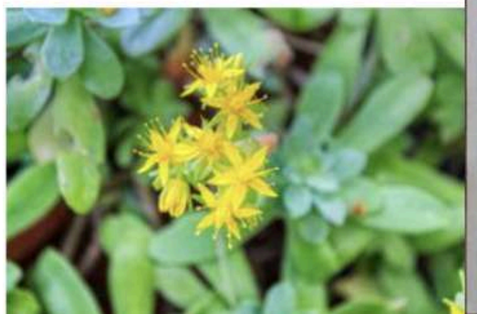
Hu ħsieb l-ambjent ~~tag~~ tak fjuri

Il-bjieġ iwegga lilek u l-ambjent

Kun ~~attiv~~ attiv.



KITBA TA' F[redacted] U M[redacted]



H[redacted] U E[redacted]

Natura Wisq Sabiħa!

In-natura wisq sabiħa u hekk se naraw f'din il-poežija akrostika dwar dak li għandna madwarna!

N aska wasla sa sit ta Pembroke.

A kna rajna fatna natura.

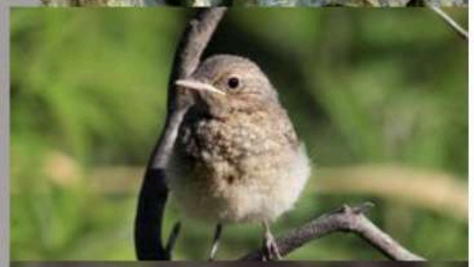
T ara fjuri ta' kull tip.

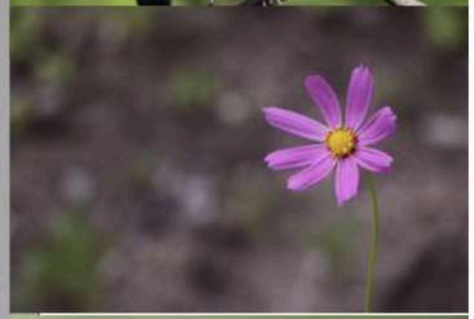
U Sigar kemm trid!

R ajna pjanti tal-buzbiez.

A jma ajma kemmajjejna f'targa twila, Kemmajjejna!















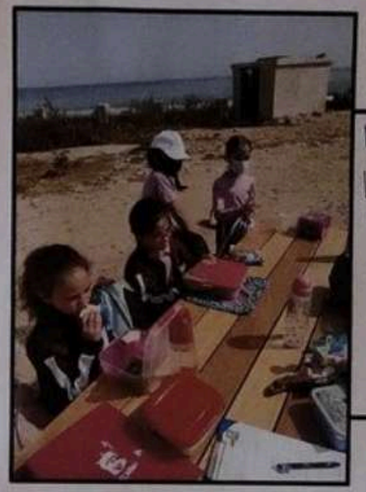


SLOGANS MINN D[redacted] U E[redacted] C[redacted]

Ma naqgħux fjuri u ma nirfsux pjanti.



Naraw il-fjuri u ma naqtgħuhomx ħalli in-nies igawdu minnhom.



Nieħol u ma nħammgux biex id-dinja tkun sabiħa.



Imxi-fuq il-passaġġ u mhux fuq il-ħaxix.

LOGĦBA

Isem

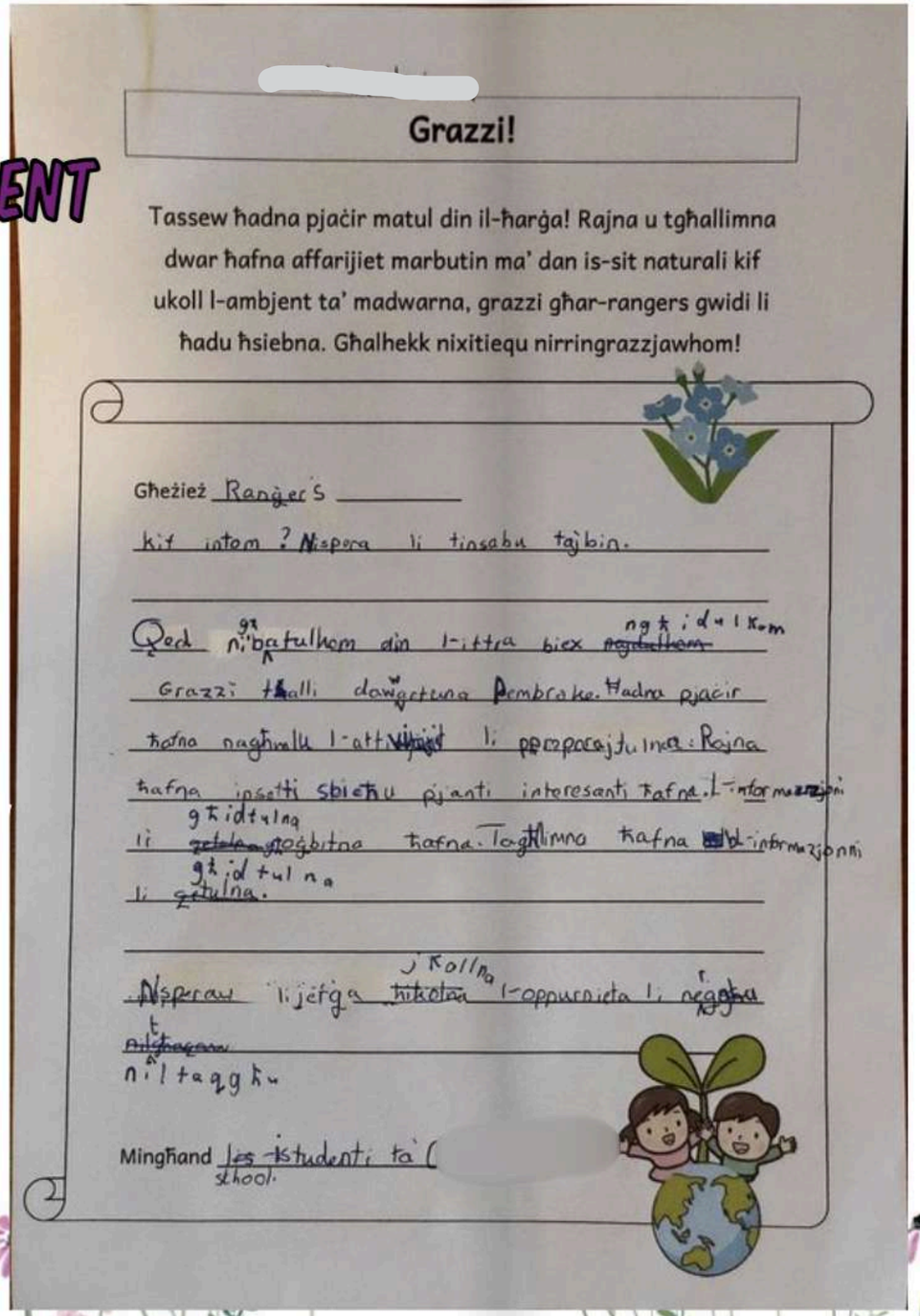
Sib il-Kliem t'hawn taħt

N	I	S	P	A	Z	J	U	F	N	N	E	W	K	T
B	A	B	W	J	Y	C	Ħ	J	P	M	U	U	X	V
A	A	T	D	R	P	U	A	U	K	C	L	J	L	S
J	A	N	U	A	C	N	X	R	L	U	T	Q	G	E
I	E	M	K	R	S	Z	I	I	R	F	S	S	K	R
R	X	B	K	I	A	G	X	I	R	E	G	N	A	R
M	J	A	X	Z	J	L	S	I	T	T	E	S	N	I
A	F	L	H	Q	R	I	E	C	Q	Y	R	N	Y	V
Ħ	Y	U	T	A	L	F	E	M	Z	A	H	J	L	I
L	K	R	Ħ	A	E	E	M	T	F	I	Y	B	X	R
G	E	A	B	T	S	L	B	A	N	D	E	J	J	P
N	B	I	G	L	N	W	S	E	F	T	E	H	S	C
G	T	A	M	A	T	A	W	W	Ġ	T	O	Y	C	R
E	D	G	Q	Ġ	Ħ	G	T	E	P	U	Z	G	I	D
S	O	Z	Q	G	F	Y	A	D	I	V	F	G	Y	L

arja
fjuri
għasafar
ħaxix
natura

baħar
friefet
ġmiel
insetti
ranger

ITTRA TA' RINGRAZZJAMENT



Grazzi!

Tassew ħadna pjaċir matul din il-ħarġa! Rajna u tgħallimna dwar ħafna affarijiet marbutin ma' dan is-sit naturali kif ukoll l-ambjent ta' madwarna, grazzi għar-rangers gwidi li ħadu ħsiebna. Għalhekk nixtiequ nirringrazzjawhom!

Għeżież Rangers

kif intom? Nispera li tinsabu tajbin.

Qed nirringrazzjawhom din l-ittra biex ngħidulkom

Grazzi tal-darba Pembroke. Ħadna pjaċir

ħafna nagħmlu l-attività li pprovajtu inna. Rajna

ħafna ipsetti sbieħ u pjanti interessanti ħafna. L-informazzjoni

li ġabitna ħafna. Tgħallimna ħafna informazzjoni

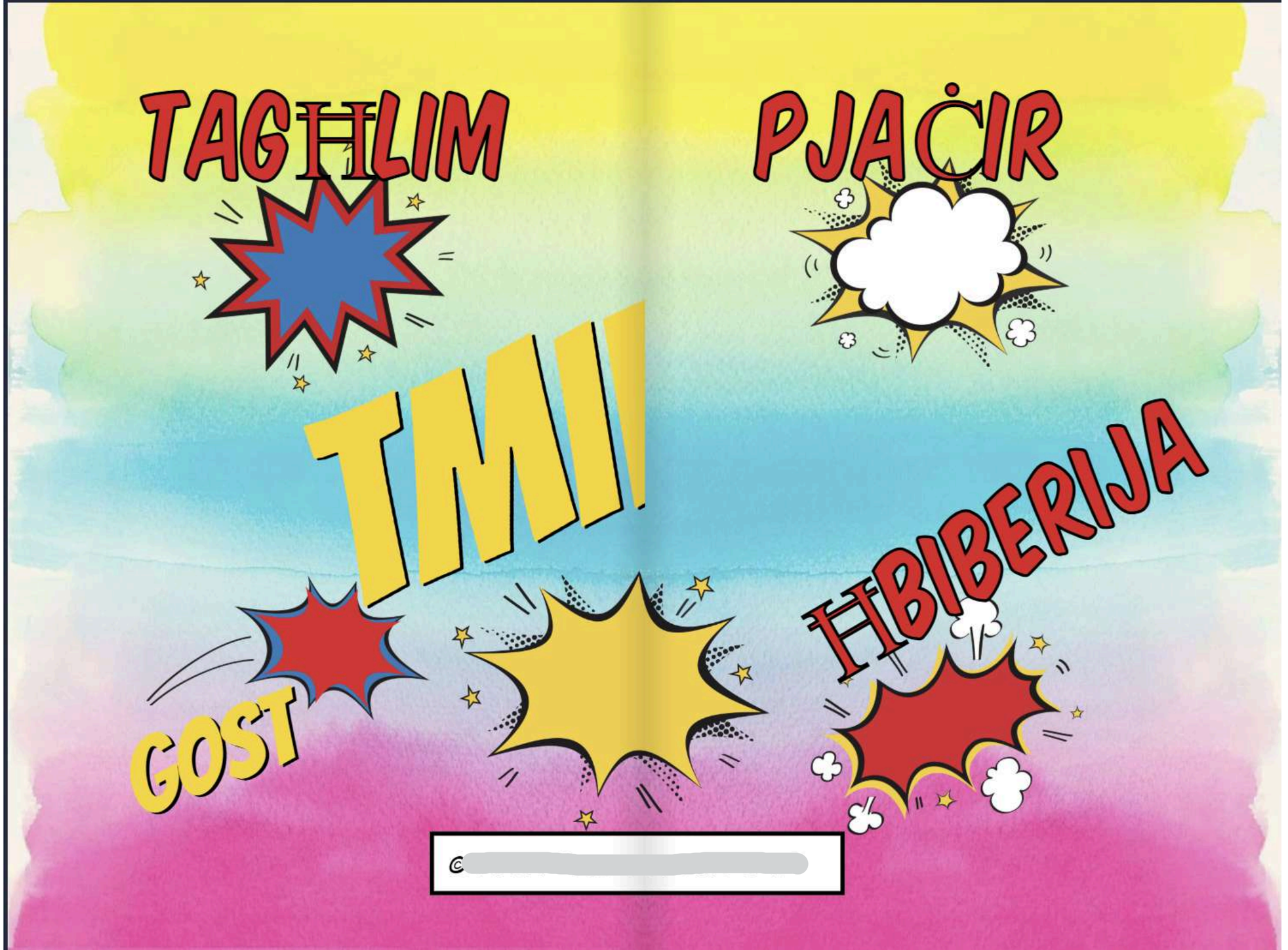
li ġdida.

Nispera li jerġa' jkollna l-opportunità li nagħmlu

nil-taqgħa

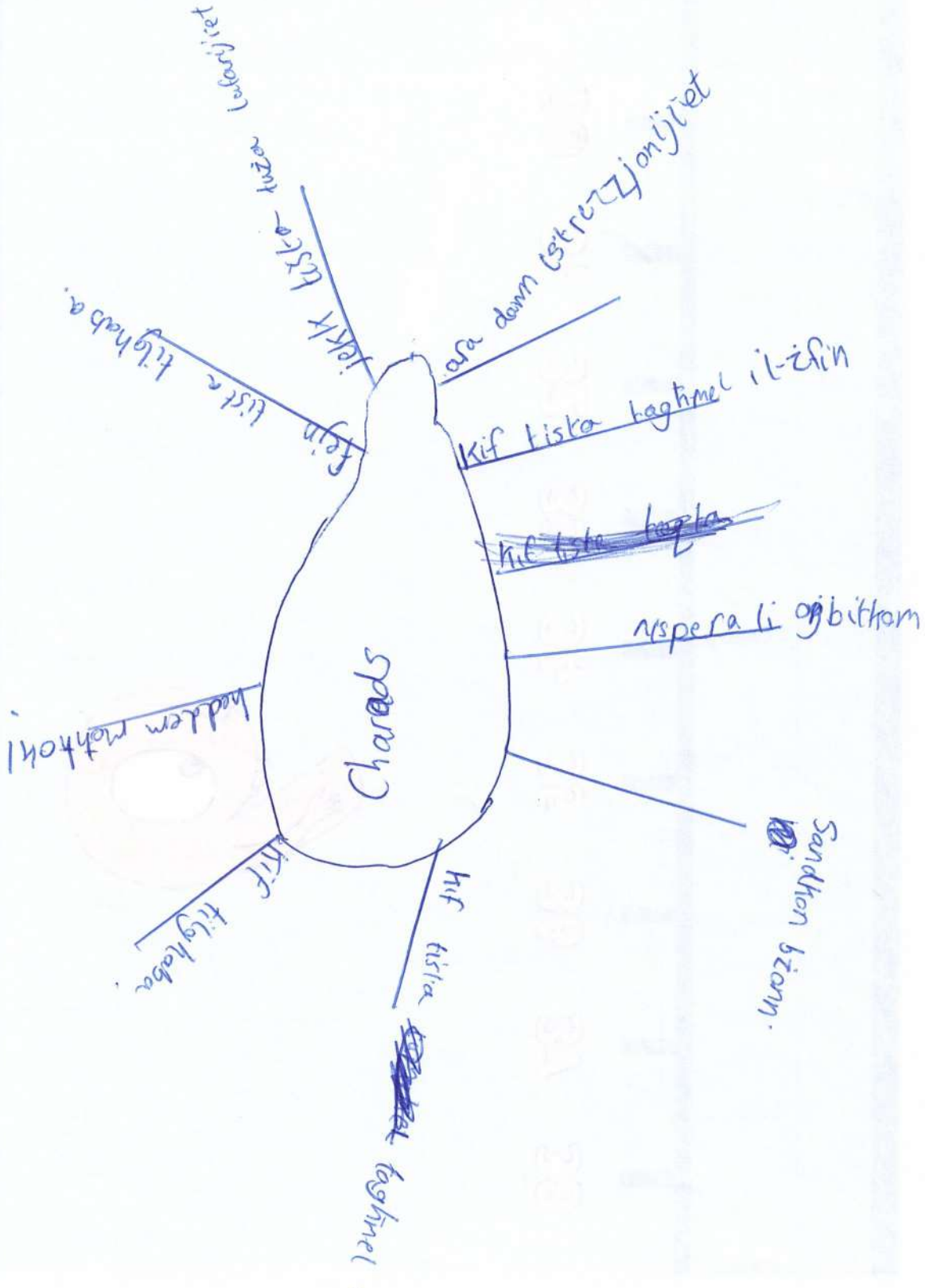
Minn ħand l-istudenti ta' (school.

KITBA TA' K[redacted] U M[redacted]


TAGHLIM
PJAĊIR
TMI!
GOST
ĦBIBERIJA
©

Sample 1 – Logħba Charades fin-Natura

(Playing Charades in Nature)


Charades
Lwlanijiet
Ilkit Lista' wieħed
Kif tista' tagħmel
Ħaddem mohhok!
Ilkit tlugħobe
Kif tista tagħmel
Sandhom ġiemu.
Nispera li ġibtkom
Kif tista tagħmel

Logħba Charades Tan-Natura!

Inti tħobb tilgħab? Fis-sit naturali ta' Pembroke lgħabna logħba charades marbutha man-natura. Tridux ngħidulkom kif tilgħabha?





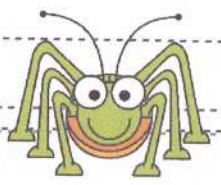
X'għandi bżonn

- Kards ta' chareds.
- Kards tan-natura.
- Nuża mohħi
-
-
-

Metodu

Ilum se nidlikhkom ngħidulkom kif tilgħab charades. Mela lewwel għandek bżonn kards ta' charades. Il-tieni ħaġa trid jkollok mohħok sew biex tilgħab charades.

1. Kif tista tilgħab il-logħba mela ikollok bżonn kards ħares lejn l-istampa u ħsieb
2. Jekk trid tista' tuża l-affarijiet ta' madwarek
3. Kif tista tagħmel iż-żfin mela int trid tagħmel dak il-azzjoni.
4. Mela ibda aqra dawn l-istruzzjonijiet u għamilhom
5. Mistenni li t-tfal jagħtu x'annimali qed timita.



Logħba Charades Tan-Natura!

Inti tħobb tilgħab? Fis-sit naturali ta' Pembroke lgħabna logħba charades marbutha man-natura. Tridux ngħidulkom kif tilgħabha?





X'għandi bżonn

- kards ta' Chareds
- kards tan-natura.
- Nuża moħi
-
-
-

Metodu

Ilum se ngħidulkom kif charades. Mela lewwel għanden bżonn kards ta' charades.

1. Hares lejn l-istampa u Rgħa jkollok it-ritrat u int tagħmel dik il-ħaga.
2. Jehn trid tista' tuża l-affarijiet ta madwarek
3. Tista tagħmel iż-żfin mela int trid tagħmel l-azzjoni.
4. Mela ibda agra dawn l-istrazzjonijiet u għaminom.
5. Nispera li t-tfal jagħtgħu x' annimali qed timita.



Istruzzjonijiet – Logħba Charades tan-natura

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb lista ta' affarijiet li jiena għandi nagħmel.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☑ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☑ Jien ktibt fil-kmand u tajt istruzzjonijiet ċari.
- ☑ L-istruzzjonijiet huma miktubin f'sentenzi u nnumerati f'ordni.
- ☑ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☑ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Sample 2 – Niktbu Poeżija bil-kelma Natura

(Writing an Acronym with the word Nature)

① Niktbu natura

② Niktbu sentenzi bi S-sens

③ Niktbu kliem Marbut mal-haġa tana fin-natura

④ Nipprezenta ix-xogħol tana pulit

⑤ Niktbu sentenzi importanti fuq in-natura

⑥ Nużaw kliem li fihom

⑦ PUNTEGĠJATURA!

Nasluwasla is-sit
bi ex.
ta pembrok u ~~Aċċettaw~~
Naraw in-natura

Nasla wasla is-Sit ta' Pembbokk u biex naraw in-natura

Anna rajna ~~hafna~~ natura.

~~hdar ħaxix fil-kampanja is-sib~~

ta kull tip

Tara fjuri ~~kemm trid. ħal ħaxix u sigar ħbargħalik~~

u sigar kemm trid!

Rajna pjanti tal-buzbiroz.

Ajma ajma kemm ajjejna fhalqa twila, kemm ajjejna

Natura Wisq Sabiħa!

In-natura wisq sabiħa u hekk se naraw f'din il-poeżija akrostika dwar dak li għandna madwarna!



aska wasla sa Sit ta Pembroke.



Ina fajna fatna natura.



ara fjuri ta' kull tip.



Sigar Kemm trid!



ajna pjanti tal-buzbiez



jma ajma Kemmajjejna f'targa twila, Kemmajjejna!

Poeżija dwar in-natura!

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb tajjeb kliem marbut mal-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum.

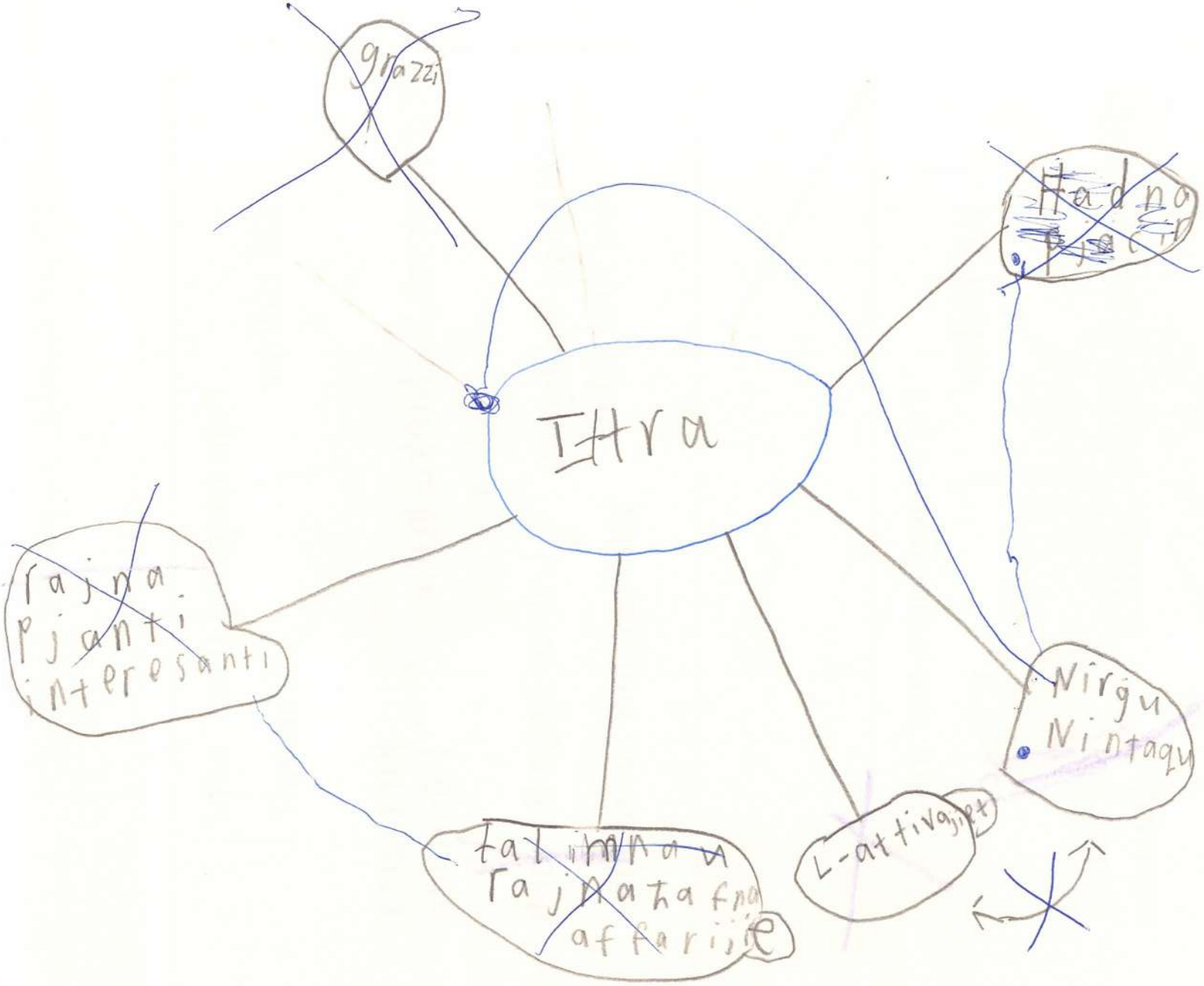
Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- [ ] Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- [ ] Jiena poeżija bi kliem marbut mat-tema tan-natura.
- [ ] Jiena ktibt poeżija interessanti u ċara li tagħmel sens.
- [ ] Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- [ ] Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



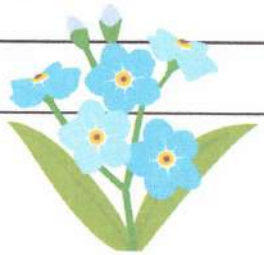
Sample 3 – Ikteb Ittra ta' Ringrazzjament lill-Park Rangers.

(Write a Thank you Letter to the Park Rangers)


Ithra

Grazzi!

Tassew ħadna pjaċir matul din il-ħarġa! Rajna u tgħallimna dwar ħafna affarijiet marbutin ma' dan is-sit naturali kif ukoll l-ambjent ta' madwarna, grazzi għar-rangers gwidi li ħadu ħsiebna. Għalhekk nixitiequ nirringrazzjawhom!



Għeżież Rangers

kif intom? Nispera li tinsaba tajbin.

Qed nirbatulhom din l-ittra biex ngħidulkom

Grazzi tħalli dawn artna Pembroke. Hadna pjaċir

ħafna nagħmlu l-attivitajiet li ppreparajtulna: Rajna

ħafna insetti sbieħ u pjanti interessanti ħafna. L-informazzjoni

li ġietulna ġdida ġdida ġdida ħafna. Tgħallimna ħafna l-informazzjonni

li ġietulna.

Nisperaw li jerġa jkollna l-opportunità li nagħmlu

nilħaqgħu



Minn hand Is-istudenti ta'
school.

Ittra ta' Ringrazzjament

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-idea t u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb kitba ta' informazzjoni mhux inqas minn 70 kelma b'tagħrif.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ✓ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-idea t tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ✓ Jiena indirizzajt għal min hi l-itrra.
- ✓ Jiena ktibt ittra f'ordni tajba u li tagħmel sens.
- ✓ Jiena qassamt l-ittra tiegħi f'paragrafi
- ✓ Jiena għamilt l-għeluq u ktibt mingħand min hi l-ittra
- Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ✓ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Sample 4 – Nintervistaw lill-ġurdiena.

(Interviewing a mouse that lives in the park)


Intervista
1. Studenta ittagat ma gurdien jithelem
2. Jekk 'nistaw ingibu klieb u, x'hamgħu
F'Malta
ghana xi
animali tá
Malta biss?
Studenti kellna F'Malta hawn annimali tá Malta
5. Il-plati
nhux kollha
tajbin u
dawn il-plati
nhux tá Malta
Il-Plati kollha tajbin ghax
kobbox
mhux Ċrieq
hux Vera?
Biex gib klieb
l-ewwel nett trid
talih fuq ċinga
lieq nett IGBOR IL-HMIEG
TAL-KLIEB TIegħu!

TIFLA: X'insibu fil-Park ta' Pembroke?
varjeta

Gurdiena: Insibu varjeta ta' flora u fawna.

X'insibu fil-park naturali ta Pembroke?
G insibu komunitajiet ta' steppa u xagħri

Tifla: Kartozzi permess biex f'dan ~~jistgħu~~ is-sit tá Natura 2000 ✓
Gurdiena: Le, kartozzi
Tifla: Fil-bahar nistaw nsibu ~~mhumiex~~ permessi f'dan is-sit tá Natura 2000 ✓
insibu starfish fil-bahar ✓
Gurdiena: Iva, fil-bahar nistaw insibu imma tid tallihom fil-bahar ghax ghawnek f'Malta mhux komuni. ✓

Tifla: Nistaw insibu bajja tá gebel ✓
Gurdiena: Iva nistaw insibu bajja tá gebel ✓
Tifla: Nistaw insibu rétilu fis-sit tá Natural fil-Pembroke
Gurdiena: Iva, imma protetti bil-ligi.
Tifla: Pjanics jistaw ~~tqattax~~ ~~bohom~~ ~~ta' dawn~~
Gurdiena: Iva imma isiru ħmieg waqt hom. basta ma jitfallux

Ġurdiena tiġi intervistata!!

Qalb il-ħaxix irnexxielna nsibu lil Ġurdiena li ma beżgħetx minna! Għalhekk ħadna l-opportunita' nagħmlulha intervista dwar fejn toqgħod!



Mistoqsija:
X'insibu ~~varjeta~~ fil-Park ta' Pembroke?



Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Insibu varjeta ta' flora u fawna.



Mistoqsija:
X'insibu fil-Park naturali ta' Pembroke?



Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Insibu komunitajiet ta' steppa u xagħri.



Mistoqsija:
Huma permessi l-karozzi f'dan is-sit ta' Natura 2000?



Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Le. Karozzi mhumiex permessi f'dan is-sit ta' Natura 2000.

hawnhekk



Mistoqsija:
Fil-baħar nistgħu insibu starfish?



Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Iva fil-baħar nistgħu insibu starfish imma trid tkallihom fil-baħar għax hawnhekk f'Malta mhux komuni.



Mistoqsija:
Nistgħu insibu bajja tà' ġebel?



Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Iva nistgħu nsibu bajja ta' ġebel hawn f'Pembroke.



Mistoqsija:
Insibu rettili f'Pembroke?



Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Iva insibu rettili imma protetti bil-liġi.



Mistoqsija:
Jistgħu isiru picnics?



Tweġiba ta' Ġurdiena
Iva imma basta ma jitallux ħmieġ warajhom

Intervista ma' Kreatura tan-natura !

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-id ıt u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi.
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji.
- ✓ Nikteb kitba ta' djalogu mhux inqas minn 70 kelma fuq temi marbutin mal-ħajja ta' kuljum

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☑ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-id ıt tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☑ Jiena ktibt intervista fejn hemm miktub x'intqal mill-persuni.
- ☑ Jiena ktibt intervista li tkompli u tagħmel sens.
- ☑ Jiena l-ismijiet ta' min qiegħed jitkellem fl-intervista.
- ☑ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☑ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Appendix 6.3

Teacher-prepared checklists for writing genres in line with Grade 4 Writing Learning Outcomes.

Djarju dwar il-ħarġa li kellna ma' tal-iskola

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi.
- ✓ Nikteb tajjeb kliem marbut mal-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum.
- ✓ Inżomm djarju bi ġrajjiet l-aktar importanti għalija tal-ġurata.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☐ Jien ktibt fil-passat u rrakkontajt dak li ġara waqt il-ġurnata.
- ☐ Jiena ktibt id-data ta' meta ġraw dawn il-ġrajjiet.
- ☐ Jiena użajt paragrafi sabiex inqassam ix-xogħol tiegħi.
- ☐ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☐ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Intervista ma' Krejatura tan-natura!

Jiena naf:

- ✓ **Nippjana** l-ideat **u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi.**
- ✓ **Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji.**
- ✓ **Nikteb kitba ta' djalogu mhux inqas minn 70 kelma fuq temi marbutin mal-ħajja ta' kuljum**

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ **Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt** l-ideat **tiegħi wara xulxin.**
- ☐ **Jiena ktibt intervista fejn hemm miktub x'intqal mill-persuni.**
- ☐ **Jiena ktibt intervista li tkompli u tagħmel sens.**
- ☐ **Jiena l-ismijiet ta' min qiegħed jitkellem fl-intervista.**
- ☐ **Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.**
- ☐ **Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.**



Djalogu bejn żewġt iħbieb!

Jiena naf:

- ✓ **Nippjana** l-ideat **u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi.**
- ✓ **Nikteb tajjeb kliem marbut mal-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum.**
- ✓ **Nikteb kitba ta' djalogu mhux inqas minn 70 kelma fuq temi marbutin mal-ħajja ta' kuljum**

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ **Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt** l-ideat **tiegħi wara xulxin.**
- ☐ **Jiena ktibt djalogu fejn hemm miktub x'intqal mill-persuni.**
- ☐ **Jiena ktibt djalogu li jkompli u jagħmel sens.**
- ☐ **Jiena l-ismijiet ta' min qiegħed jitkellem fid-djalogu.**
- ☐ **Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.**
- ☐ **Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.**



Djalogu bejn żewġ krejaturi tan-natura!

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi.
- ✓ Nikteb tajjeb kliem marbut mal-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum.
- ✓ Nikteb kitba ta' djalogu mhux inqas minn 70 kelma fuq temi marbutin mal-ħajja ta' kuljum

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☐ Jiena ktibt djalogu fejn hemm miktub x'intqal mill-persuni.
- ☐ Jiena ktibt djalogu li jkompli u jagħmel sens.
- ☐ Jiena l-ismijiet ta' min qiegħed jitkellem fid-djalogu.
- ☐ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☐ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Slowgans – Ngħaddu messaġġ importanti

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb tajjeb kliem marbut mal-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☐ Jiena ktibt messaġġ mhux twil li hu ċar.
- ☐ Jiena ktibt messaġġ li jiġbed l-attenzjoni u jwassal messaġġ.
- ☐ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☐ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Istruzzjonijiet – Kif nagħmlu l-ħobż biż-żejt

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb lista ta' affarijiet li jiena għandi nagħmel.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☐ Jien ktibt fil-kmand u tajt istruzzjonijiet ċari.
- ☐ L-istruzzjonijiet huma miktubin f'sentenzi u nnumerati f'ordni.
- ☐ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☐ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Istruzzjonijiet – Logħba Charades tan-natura

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb lista ta' affarijiet li jiena għandi nagħmel.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☐ Jien ktibt fil-kmand u tajt istruzzjonijiet ċari.
- ☐ L-istruzzjonijiet huma miktubin f'sentenzi u nnumerati f'ordni.
- ☐ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☐ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Istruzzjonijiet – Kif għandna nieħdu ħsieb is-sit naturali ta' Pembroke

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb lista ta' affarijiet li jiena għandi nagħmel.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☐ Jien ktibt fil-kmand u tajt istruzzjonijiet ċari.
- ☐ L-istruzzjonijiet huma miktubin f'sentenzi u nnumerati f'ordni.
- ☐ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☐ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Deskrizzjoni tas-sit Naturali ta' Pembroke

Jiena naf:

- ✓ **Nippjana** l-ideat **u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi.**
- ✓ **Nikteb tajjeb kliem marbut mal-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum.**
- ✓ **Nikteb kitba ta' informazzjoni mhux inqas minn 70 kelma b'tagħrif**

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ **Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt** l-ideat **tiegħi wara xulxin.**
- ☐ **Jien ktibt deskrizzjoni bl-użu ta' xi aġġettivi.**
- ☐ **Jiena ktibt deskrizzjoni bl-użu ta' xi espressjonijiet.**
- ☐ **Jiena użajt paragrafi sabiex inqassam ix-xogħol tiegħi.**
- ☐ **Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.**
- ☐ **Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.**



Messaġġ – Ngħaddu messaġġ importanti

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat` u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb kitba ta' informazzjoni mhux inqas minn 70 kelma b'tagħrif.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☐ Jiena ktibt messaġġ mhux twil li hu ċar.
- ☐ Jiena ktibt messaġġ li jiġbed l-attenzjoni u jwassal messaġġ.
- ☐ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☐ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Poeżija dwar in-natura!

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb tajjeb kliem marbut mal-ħajja tiegħi ta' kuljum.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt ' l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☐ Jiena poeżija bi kliem marbut mat-tema tan-natura.
- ☐ Jiena ktibt poeżija interessanti u ċara li tagħmel sens.
- ☐ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☐ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.



Ittra ta' Ringrazzjament

Jiena naf:

- ✓ Nippjana l-ideat u norganizzahom biex bihom nibni l-kitba tiegħi
- ✓ Nippreżenta ix-xogħol tiegħi b'mod ċar, pulit u bla żbalji
- ✓ Nikteb kitba ta' informazzjoni mhux inqas minn 70 kelma b'tagħrif.

Niċċekjaw ix-xogħol tagħna!

- ☐ Jiena ppjanajt il-kitba u poġġejt l-ideat tiegħi wara xulxin.
- ☐ Jiena indirizzajt għal min hi l-itrra.
- ☐ Jiena ktibt ittra f'ordni tajba u li tagħmel sens.
- ☐ Jiena qassamt l-ittra tiegħi f'paragrafi
- ☐ Jiena għamilt l-għeluq u ktibt mingħand min hi l-ittra
- ☐ Jien qrajt u ċċekjajt ix-xogħol tiegħi għal xi żbalji.
- ☐ Jiena użajt punteġġjatura tajba fil-kitba tiegħi.

