

Expressing a personal response to a creative text in the 'Maltese as a Foreign Language' class

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Abstract

This article discusses the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference's (CEFR) set of descriptors relating to 'personal response to creative texts' in the teaching of Maltese as a Foreign Language (MFL). The new volume of the *CEFR's Companion Volume*, published in 2018, included a number of new descriptors, among which are those related to learners' response to creative texts. As an initial application of this new set of descriptors to MFL, we created an intermedial video production involving poetry, music and dance, that brings to the fore issues of migration. The video stimulates a reflection on humanity's collective history, and suggests the idea that we all are descendants of people who came from the sea. In addition to the highly motivational aspect of the task, it has helped us estimate the difficulty of such a task in the context of MFL. We also obtained some insight into the application of the relevant descriptors for this part of the MFL syllabus.

Keywords: Video production, Maltese as a Foreign Language, CEFR, migration, multimodality

Introduction

This article tackles a new area in foreign language teaching, and of Maltese as a Foreign Language (MFL) in particular, i.e. that of learners' response to creative texts. This development in foreign language education appeared for

the first time in the new edition of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume with New Descriptors* in 2018, henceforth the CEFR. The authors of the CEFR consider creative texts, including literature, as part of a broad approach to mediation, understood as a (re)processing of an existing text in the foreign language. Mediating a text in a foreign language involves not only an emotional engagement, but also the processing and the reformulation of content by the learner, in the foreign language (Magnusson & Goodhe, 2019).

In this article we focus on how a creative text, in the shape of a fifteen-minute original video production, was constructed and used as part of an MFL course for adults. The teaching of MFL is still in its infancy, and here we will explain how and why this exercise was important in a scenario where we need to try out, analyse and propose best practices that inform curriculum development and classroom practice. Moreover, we chose the topic of migration for the video, as a form of intercultural dialogue to raise awareness about humanity's collective history, thus fostering comprehension and partnership between different world views.

The aims of this paper are threefold: firstly, to describe how the video production came together; secondly to illustrate how a small group of adult learners of MFL reacted to the video in relation to the relevant CEFR descriptors; and thirdly to discuss the application of the CEFR descriptors, and the insights obtained from this experience, to MFL. We will start by introducing the CEFR and the descriptors that were applied in this project. We will then explain the orchestration of the video production, and how its application in class ties in with Sociocultural Theory. Finally, we will report on the classroom data, and discuss the insights gained for teaching, and curriculum development.

The Common European Framework (CEFR)

The CEFR, which was originally published in 2001, is a Council of Europe document produced by language experts after a comprehensive process of piloting and consultation. It has now become a worldwide standard measure of foreign language proficiency (North & Piccardo, 2017; Leung & Jenkins, 2020). It provides descriptors, that is, statements of what a learner is able to do in a foreign language, in the different areas of language, such as, receptive skills (reading, listening), productive skills (speaking, writing) and strategies of interaction, among others. The aims of the CEFR are to provide a common set

of learning objectives and outcomes that are transparent across countries, and to assist curriculum developers and teachers in programme development. The lists of descriptors in the CEFR are a useful tool for teachers as they provide a structured approach to pedagogy, and especially as a clarification of what the learners are expected to achieve as they progress through a course in any second/foreign language.

The CEFR lists descriptors for most skills from the most basic level, referred to as Pre-A1, to the highest level, referred to as C2. The first three levels, Pre-A1, A1 and A2 are the Basic levels, B1 and B2 are the Intermediate levels, and C1 and C2 are the advanced levels. There are numerous advantages to the CEFR in second/foreign language education, such as its applicability as an international benchmarking resource for curriculum development and assessment (Leung & Jenkins, 2020), and its practical and action-oriented approach with scales and grids that are also useful for self-assessment (Yakışık & Gürocak, 2018). The CEFR has also provided the foundation to numerous education tools for coursebook designers, teacher educators, teachers, testers and other stakeholders, such as the European Language Portfolio and the Europass which have become indispensable supranational tools for mobility, in Europe and beyond. Furthermore, the CEFR gave rise to an action-oriented pedagogy which views the user/learner as a social agent functioning in a plurilingual environment (Piccardo, North & Maldina, 2019).

The CEFR has been such a successful pedagogical tool that it is implemented on a world-wide scale. Apart from the European context, its application and development is discussed in countries like Turkey (Yakışık & Gürocak, 2018), Vietnam (Van Huy, Hamid & Renshaw, 2016), the USA (Little, 2007), Canada (Piccardo, North & Maldina, 2019), and Australia (Leung & Jenkins, 2020). On the other hand, the CEFR cannot be considered as a finalised document that is easy to adopt. The implementation of the CEFR in any context requires a change in pedagogy, novel approaches to teacher training, and an adaptation to different languages. Several scholars argue that much more research needs to accompany the CEFR, for instance, studies about quality assurance (Piccardo, North & Maldina, 2017; 2019). Others emphasise the need for research about the relationship between the CEFR and Second Language Acquisition Theory, since the CEFR levels do not claim to correspond to a developmental hierarchy (Wisniewski, 2017). Also, a clearer interpretation is needed of what is intended by the new sections of the CEFR that focus on mediation (Corbett, 2021). Notwithstanding the need for further research, the

CEFR continues to be adopted and implemented in a wide range of language learning contexts.

EXPRESSING A PERSONAL RESPONSE TO CREATIVE TEXTS (INCLUDING LITERATURE)	
C2	<i>No descriptor available</i>
C1	<p>Can describe in detail his/her personal interpretation of a work, outlining his/her reactions to certain features and explaining their significance.</p> <p>Can outline his/her interpretation of a character in a work: their psychological/emotional state, the motives for their actions and the consequences of these actions.</p> <p>Can give his/her personal interpretation of the development of a plot, the characters and the themes in a story, novel, film or play.</p>
B2	<p>Can give a clear presentation of his/her reactions to a work, developing his/her ideas and supporting them with examples and arguments.</p> <p>Can describe his/her emotional response to a work and elaborate on the way in which it has evoked this response.</p> <p>Can express in some detail his/her reactions to the form of expression, style and content of a work, explaining what he/she appreciated and why.</p>
B1	<p>Can explain why certain parts or aspects of a work especially interested him/her.</p> <p>Can explain in some detail which character he/she most identified with and why.</p> <p>Can relate events in a story, film or play to similar events he/she has experienced or heard about.</p> <p>Can relate the emotions experienced by a character in a work to emotions he/she has experienced.</p> <p>Can describe the emotions he/she experienced at a certain point in a story, e.g. the point(s) in a story when he/she became anxious for a character, and explain why.</p> <p>Can explain briefly the feelings and opinions that a work provoked in him/her.</p> <p>Can describe the personality of a character.</p>
A2	<p>Can express his/her reactions to a work, reporting his/her feelings and ideas in simple language.</p> <p>Can describe a character's feelings and explain the reasons for them.</p> <p>Can say in simple language which aspects of a work especially interested him/her.</p> <p>Can say whether he/she liked a work or not and explain why in simple language.</p> <p>Can select simple passages he/she particularly likes from work of literature to use as quotes.</p>
A1	Can use simple words and phrases to say how a work made him/her feel.
Pre-A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>

Table 1: The relevant descriptors (CEFR, 2018: 116)

The Council of Europe has continued to be actively involved in revising the CEFR. In 2018, several new descriptors were added to those originally published in 2001. Some of the new entries refer to online learning, using telecommunications, sign languages, young learners and three new descriptor scales relevant to creative text and literature. The new scales relevant to creative text and literature are presented in three parts: reading as a leisure activity, expressing a personal response to creative texts, and analysis and criticism of creative texts. The CEFR considers that expressing a personal response to creative texts belongs to a less intellectual and a lower level than the analysis and criticism of creative texts, which is considered as more intellectual, and at a higher level (CEFR, 2018). This paper is concerned with the descriptors that refer to the ability of foreign language learners to express a personal response to creative texts.

Table 1 presents the descriptors from the CEFR relevant to our project. At Pre-A1 level there are no descriptors available because at complete beginner stage the learners would not be able to deal with a creative text in the foreign language. At C2 level there are also no descriptors because at that stage it would be possible to shift focus to the other set of descriptors which focus on the analysis and criticism of creative texts (CEFR, 2018).

For the purpose of this paper we will focus on the descriptors from level A1 to level B2 (Tables 1 & 2), because although the general linguistic ability of the MFL learners in our project was at A2 level, we wanted to see whether any of them could perform above that level. In fact, part of the exercise was intended to help us gauge the level of difficulty of the descriptors when applied to adult learners of MFL. We will return to the CEFR descriptors in a later section, but first, we will explain the video production which was the main tool in our implementation of the CEFR.

The video production

Pedagogical innovation was at the heart of this project. While applying the relevant CEFR descriptors, we wanted to move away from a text-centred artifact to an orchestration of images, embodied modes, topography, music and poetry. The unifying feature of the multimodal video production is the theme of migration. This theme had already been chosen by colleagues like Galea (2012) and Xerri & Xerri Agius (2015), as a vehicle for consolidating empathy among Maltese learners, in the context of an unprecedented arrival of migrants to Malta who were not always welcomed by the population at large. Galea (2012) chose the reading of a narrative about a Maltese female migrant moving to Australia in the 1950s, 'as a provocation to open up a reflective space' (p. 226) for student-teachers. However, she reports that the students insisted that the experiences of Maltese migrants are different from those of present-day women from sub-Saharan Africa crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa to Malta and southern Europe. It seems that the narration of a story on its own had limited impact for galvanising empathy. On the other hand, Xerri & Xerri Agius (2015) used a poem in English in two classes of pre-university students following English studies as a vehicle for consolidating empathy. Xerri & Xerri Agius (2015) define empathy as 'a means of cognitively and emotionally understanding the experiences undergone by the other while engaging in self-awareness' (p. 71). Their aim was to advocate a more sympathetic attitude toward immigrants and their plight. They report that they seem to have had some success as their students described the poem as

revelatory, and it seems to have brought some transformation in the way their students expressed their attitudes to migrants, before and after the session dedicated to the poem.

The video we produced was choreographed in order to raise awareness about our collective history, as Europeans and as peoples of, and from, the sea. It is an intercultural dialogue that fosters comprehension and partnership between different views on the global issue of migration, diaspora and displacement. The goal was to break up epistemic and 'canonical' boundaries between languages, disciplines and the arts, in order to embrace an intricate and unpredictable multimodal dialogue, which reflects the complexity of today's wor(l)d societies. Aesthetics, in the sense of mindful attention to, for example, sounds and sights, is a form of sensory perception that leads to the acquisition of knowledge and meaning (Marini, 2020). The mixing of Maltese poetry with corporeal gestures and movements allows the interpreter of the work to experience and embody social, historical, literary and identity issues and concerns, in original and performative praxis. The production is a dance, a poem reading, and a visualising experience, that is meant to evoke a reaction, and that gives the learner the opportunity to ascribe meaning and significance to the theme, and to express this in various ways in the foreign language.

The Poetry

The literary lines in Maltese are taken from Maltese authors, namely Francis Ebejer (2011), Oliver Friggieri (2002), Simone Galea (2011), Carmel Borg (2018), and Terence Portelli (2008). The poems were chosen because they treat the topic of illegal migration, and they are very brief and dense with meaning – always echoing the predicament of the migrant, their perilous journey by sea, and the problematic arrival on land (Photos 1, 3 and 4). Another theme that is tackled is the analogy between the modern day migrant and the former occupants of the Maltese islands (Photo 2). This theme takes us back to the Neolithic and temple period, and links up with other later occupants such as the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Arabs, the Normans and the Knights of St John, and even the British, all of whom arrived in Malta by sea. The poems used for this project are reproduced in Appendix 1. These poetic verses create a sense of desolation, rejection and fear, but at the same time they intend to allow a ray of hope to emerge, in between the lines, in the act of a reader response when they empathise with the migrant.

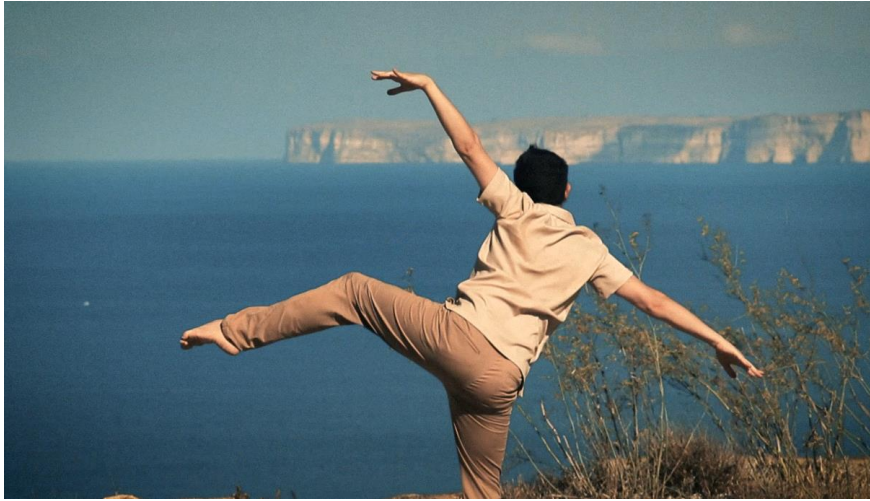


Photo 1: Representation of the instability in a migrant's life

For instance, in Photo 1, the performer who is also one of the authors (Mattia Mantellato), is giving his back to the audience, thus highlighting the theme of indefiniteness and non-recognition; he is barefooted, thus expressing the need for rootedness or a safe (standing) place.

The Music

The music used in this video, 'Music of the Temples of Malta', is the work of a well-known Maltese composer, Charles Camilleri. Camilleri characterises Maltese music in terms of a Mediterranean 'soundscape' (Camilleri & Serracino Inglott, 1988, p. 9). His compositions evolved from his early influences by Maltese folk music to a musical form in which nothing is fixed and has a sense of fluency and inevitability. When writing about his own work, Camilleri stresses that he likes to use contrast, for example, between conventional scales and improvisation, and between tension and stress and contradictory rhythm (Camilleri, 1990). His melody 'does not become either chromatic or flowery; rather it is made to waver, as though caught in the throes of genuine indecision, of unfixed desire, of still undetermined choice. It gives the feeling of chaos searching for its own inner order' (Camilleri & Serracino Inglott, 1988, p. 23). This fits perfectly with our theme, that is, a migrant searching for a home while still undergoing a perilous journey, even once shore has been reached. Furthermore, Camilleri (in the interview by Bonello, 1990) admits that, 'the dry earthiness of the Maltese landscape, the rocks, the sea, the summer skies and the scorching sun all left their mark in me' (p. 11). Camilleri's musical texture fitted perfectly with our choice of a dry landscape to represent the aridity in the life of the migrant.

The Locations

Three locations were chosen for the three chapters of the video: Ta' Ħaġrat Temples, the Lippija Tower and Ġnejna Bay. These three contexts are intertwined with Malta's history, culture and land- and sea-scapes.

The first chapter of the video production is located at Ta' Ħaġrat Temples (Photo 2). The choreography dialogues at a distance with the Neolithic female statuettes that were found in most of the temples in Malta, and in particular with the Sleeping Lady of Malta. It is a tribute to the ancient history of the island and to its sacredness as one of the first human sites in the world. This chapter stimulates reflection about the concept of ethnogenesis. Together with the lines from Ebejer's (2011) *'Il-Ħarsa ta' Ruzann', il-ħarsa tagħha kienet ġejja mill-bogħod nett...tal-bidu nett* (the look in her eyes was coming from very far away...as far away as the beginning), it can be interpreted as a distant dialogue with the ancient inhabitants of the archipelago, passing through a reflection on the legacy of different dominations, and above all as an appreciation of our ethnogenesis. In fact, Ebejer's highly symbolic literary output has been commended for its search for the roots of a national identity (Falzon, 2009). Ebejer expresses a consciousness with his preoccupation with the present and past, and recognises that, 'it is when past and present are, like a Mobius strip, closely juxtaposed and their connections maintained that contrast and analogy, leading to wider meanings, come out better enforced (Ebejer, 1989, p. 37)



Photo 2: The Temple

The movements of the performer at the Temple articulate static and statue-like movements (Photo 2), thus evoking a reflection on a different way of conceiving humanity, i.e. through partnership and care (Eisler, 2002). In this sense, the dancer mixes rigid and stiff movements with slow and imperceptible rounding of the arms (*port de bras* in dance terminology) as if he wanted to embody the strength of a collective embrace, that is to say a distant link between the ancient populations of the island and today's world societies.

The second chapter is located at the Lippija tower. The filming took place at the end of summer when the landscape was brown and dry (Photo 3). The tower was built in 1637 by Grand Master Lascaris, of the Knights of St John. It is one out of a set of four, functioning as a look-out post to protect the island from pirates and corsairs at the time of the Knights. In their defence duties, the men in the towers, which were visible from one another, were responsible for signals or warnings. Various forms of communication were used, such as raising flags or lighting fires to raise the alarm in case of danger.

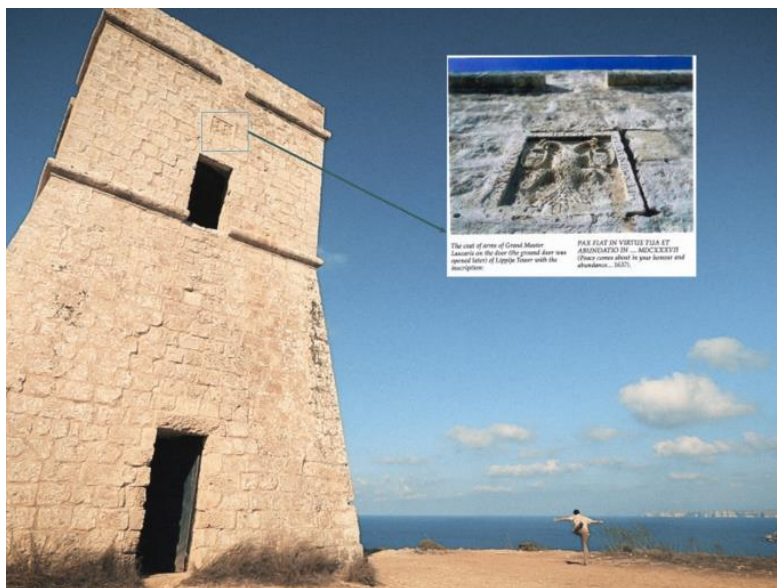


Photo 3: The Lippija Tower

On this tower there is the coat of arms of Grand Master Lascaris with the inscription in Latin meaning 'Peace comes about in your honour and abundance - 1637' (Freller & Cilia, n.d.). The tower is a symbol of duality: built for a military purpose but claiming peace, honour and abundance; aiming to protect the inhabitants of the land while keeping out people arriving by sea; it

was built by man but now it stands towering above him reducing the performer to insignificance, as can be seen in Photo 3; it was created for military purposes but sings praises for peace; it was functional in the past but has become merely a historical signpost. The precarious and unstable movements expressed by the performer under the prominence of the tower, with an expanse of blue sea as a background, queries the taken-for-granted transition between the danger of the sea and the safety of the land. It also alludes to the life-death, safety-danger continua.



Photo 4: The beach

The scene at the beach (Photo 4) provides the ending to the video production. Textually, the shore and the sea are oxymoron terms here because they represent respectively the symbols of earth and water, and therefore destination and non-destination. However, the video ends with a message of reconciliation, partnership and hope. The protagonist walks into the water, a symbol of the redemptive power of the sea that erases and forgets, and allows one to start anew. The final poetic verses by Friggieri (2002) in his poem 'Notturn', conclude with a yearning for partnership: 'If I wait for you again in front of the horizon tomorrow, will you speak to me?' (*Jekk nerġa' nistenniek quddiem ix-xefaq, għada tkellimni?*). And the audience is left with such a question to reflect on the conception of humanity's existence, and the sub-themes of ethnogenesis and migration.

The mixing of poetic lines, musical notes, colours, movements and gestures produced a deep internal cohesion within the work. In fact, the individual elements were interconnected in ways that became clearer to us through the reactions of the learners to the video, as they managed to 'read' more into it than we would have been able to explain ourselves beforehand. In order to relate the learners' views, let us now turn to the pedagogical aspects of the project.

Sociocultural Theory, the CEFR and MFL

Sociocultural Theory expounds the pertinence of artifacts to learning (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). Lantolf (2000, p. 14) explains that 'internalization is the process through which a person moves from carrying out concrete actions in conjunction with the assistance of material artifacts...'. Artifacts provide mediational support which, in turn, stimulate the development of psychological functions (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). Mediation is at the core of knowledge (co)construction (North, 2016), such that in foreign language learning the artifacts facilitate the conditions for communicating whilst passing on, simplifying or elaborating information. Literature, in particular, has a special potential to emotionally stimulate learners (Weber, 2018), and it leads them to participate in authentic communication. In line with this, multimodality acknowledges the full range of meaning-making resources (Newfield & D'Abdon, 2015) that could be available to the learner, including the spoken, written, visual, gestural and spatial dimensions. Once these semiotic modes are combined and orchestrated, they broaden the space for meaning-making (Jakobsen & Tønnessen, 2018). Furthermore, different modalities within multimodal communication have special affordances (Wandera, 2016), and such affordances are present in a non-hierarchic approach among the linguistic, visual and aural modes. As Magnusson & Godhe (2019) emphasise, the rapid digitalization of contemporary communication requires the nature of language teaching to evolve accordingly.

The CEFR's new sections on mediation were introduced as a result of this new understanding of the interrelationship between language and communication. They involve topics like mediating a text, mediating concepts and mediating communication. One of most prominent and innovative features is the attention given to plurilingualism, its role in mediating communication, and the understanding that communication is (co)constructed among interlocutors. This is based on the sociocultural view of learning, which respects the collaborative dialogue taking place among speakers of different languages,

private speech, and the interdependence of one on the other (North, 2016; North & Piccardo, 2017).

For our project, a selection of descriptors from the CEFR were chosen as a link to the video production, and as the organising principle for classroom activities (Table 2). One set of activities was carried out with a group of six adult learners of MFL at level A2 (Appendix 1), and a similar set of activities was carried out with a group of fourteen student-teachers and another group of thirteen teachers following a professional development course in teaching MFL. The classroom sessions consisted in showing brief excerpts from the video and asking the participants to react to the different elements, such as the music, the land- and sea-scape, and the movements and gestures. There were also moments of class discussion and individual reflection, a focus on poetry reading, and in the case of the MFL learners there was added attention to vocabulary, idiom, and grammatical structures. All the participants were asked to write some final comments about their opinion regarding the CEFR descriptors in relation to this aesthetic experience.

The teacher in each of the three classroom sessions was one of the authors (Antoinette Camilleri Grima). She prepared a worksheet based on the CEFR descriptors to relate the video to the learners' abilities to express themselves (Appendix 1). The worksheet was a useful tool to capture the learners' reactions upon viewing the video in parts, and as a whole. She also carried out the activity with MFL teachers and student-teachers, in order to introduce them to this set of CEFR descriptors, as well as to evaluate the potential of the video production as a teaching-learning tool.

The participants' reflections

The most salient features resulting from the written reactions of the student-teachers and teachers that we would like to highlight here relate to the appropriateness of a multimodal approach to the CEFR descriptors. Practically, all teacher participants mentioned that a video production was definitely more effective in stimulating reflection and empathy than if they had to rely only on one mode of communication. For instance, they thought that a multimodal production manages to reach deeper and wider meaning; deeper because it touches emotional chords that a single medium cannot reach; and wider because it leaves an impact on students with different learning styles. Furthermore, they reported that using digital technology that includes music, poetry, dance, and all the visual aspects/features, stimulated a level of

empathy with the migrant like they had never felt before. Overall, the teacher-participants' reactions justify the inclusion of the CEFR's set of descriptors related to creative texts, as part of a foreign language learner's educational repertoire.

B2	Can express in some detail his/her reactions to the form of expression, style and content, explaining what he/she appreciated and why
B1	Can explain briefly the feelings and opinions that a work provoked in him/her
A2	Can describe a character's feelings and explain the reasons for them Can say in simple language which aspects of a work especially interested him/her Can select simple passages he/she particularly likes.
A1	Can use simple words and phrases to say how a work made him/her feel.

Table 2: The chosen descriptors for the class activities

All six adult MFL learners were able to express their reactions in Maltese fluently to the descriptors at levels A1 and A2 identified in Table 2. With reference to the descriptor at A1 level, i.e. 'Can use simple words and phrases to say how a work made him/her feel', they wrote, for example, *gagħlni nirrifletti* (it made me reflect), *inhossni mdejqa* (I feel sad), *qed nempatizza* (I empathise), and *ħawwadni* (I feel confused). At level A2, the MFL learners selected two passages, and expressed why they found them particularly striking, interesting and effective. Their answers included, for example, *il-ħajku qawwi ħafna, bħal daqqa fl-istonku* (the haiku is pungent, like a blow in the stomach), *jevoka l-atmosfera ta' ħmar il-lejl* (it evokes the atmosphere of a nightmare), and *sempliċi imma veru* (simple but true). They were able to describe the character's feelings and to give reasons as to how his feelings were revealed:

<p><i>...iż-żeffien f'dan il-vidjow jittrasforma ġismu f'messaġġ...l-ikrah fi ġmiel, l-indifferenza f'azzjoni, id-disperazzjoni f'tama.</i></p>	<p>...the dancer in this video transforms his body into a message...ugliness into beauty, indifference into action, desperation into hope.</p>
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Jien naħseb dan il-karattru qed iħossu mdejjaq u solitarju fl-ewwel vidjow. Fittielet vidjow jien naħseb li kien qed iħoss it-tama. I think that this character is feeling sad and lonely in the first video. In the third video I think that he was feeling hopeful.

L-artist imdawwar bin-natura, bil-baħar u bl-istorja, storja komuni...ix-xenarju u l-poeziji jagħtu importanza lill-immigranti. The artist is surrounded by nature, by the sea and by history, our common history...the scenery and the poems give importance to the migrants.

The B1 descriptor ‘Can explain briefly the feelings and opinions that a work provoked in him/her’ was not beyond all the learners’ abilities to express themselves in Maltese. In fact, one learner wrote in Maltese, although the others switched to English:

Kif jistgħu ħsejjes sbieħ u poezija jerfgħu l-għajjat ta’ dawk li qed jegħrqu fil-Mediterran? L-għasel jista’ jsir metafora għall-velenu? L-arti tista’ ssir metafora għall-ingustizzja u l-mewt? Dan il-vidjow ċertament kien tentattiv onest biex tagħmel eżattament dak. How can the beautiful sounds and poetry carry the cries of those drowning in the Mediterranean? Can honey become a metaphor for poison? Can art become a metaphor for injustice and death? This video is certainly an honest attempt to do exactly that.

I like very much the choice of scenery, especially the Maltese sites, historical sites, the sea. A very particular thing is the golden light which gives to the movie a slightly dreamy character.

With regard to the B2 descriptor, ‘Can express in some detail his/her reactions to the form of expression, style and content, explaining what he/she appreciated and why’, again the same learner managed to express himself in Maltese well, while the others wrote in English, for example:

Film sabiħ ħafna mimli umanizmu. Mużika sabiħa, xenarju sabiħ, użat biex jirrifletti sitwazzjoni kerha. Jiena nsib dan A beautiful film packed with humanism. Lovely music, lovely

il-kuntrast estrem qawwi ħafna u assolutament impressjonanti. Nixtieq li jkun hemm aktar films b'hal dawn.

scenery, used to reflect a terrible reality. I find this extreme contrast very effective and absolutely impressive. I wish to see more films like this.

I love the style: the austerity of the images and the music. But also the 'raw' aspect. I love the mix between the arts.

The video production seems to have managed to create a sense of empathy with the migrant in an effective manner, and both the teacher-participants and the MFL learners were positive about the ability of this production to achieve its aims. The analysis in class, and the questions on the worksheet, were also aligned to the CEFR descriptors, as can be seen from the way the learners answered in Maltese, and then all but one learner, switched to English when the questions were beyond the A2 level, as is further discussed below.

Discussion

As a result of this experience we would like to highlight some relevant considerations for teachers and curriculum developers.

Undoubtedly, we would encourage the use of creative texts in MFL. It has a very high motivational value, and from a linguistic point of view it allows an easy integration of language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, and a lot of spontaneous and authentic interaction. As Early, Kendrick & Potts (2015) specify in their substantial review of multimodality in language education, 'multimodal practices deepen reading comprehension, mediate independent critical reasoning and problem solving, and support mastery of written genres' (p. 447). Our MFL learners wrote impressive reactions to the video, which also indicates their high level of comprehension.

On the other hand, the production of a video is a very time-consuming endeavour, and not all teachers would have the facilities or the skills necessary to create it. Therefore, we would like to suggest that while teachers could use readily available and authentic material on the internet, curriculum developers and resource teachers (teachers specifically employed to create teaching resources for Maltese), need to consider the production of similar multimodal

material for use in the MFL classroom, gauged at the different CEFR levels. Our advice to MFL teachers when planning to implement the CEFR descriptors shown in Table 1, is to be selective, rather than to include each and every descriptor, depending on the space and time allowed for this in the syllabus. Certainly, we recommend the inclusion of at least some of the descriptors.

We noticed that more clarification is needed in the descriptors because some of them are similar, albeit pitched at different levels (Table 1). For example, the descriptor at A2 level, 'Can say in simple language which aspects of a work especially interested him/her', and at level B1 'Can explain why certain parts or aspects of a work especially interested him/her', are alike. At B1 level the phrase 'in simple language' is excluded. But how are curriculum designers, textbook authors, teachers and learners able to distinguish between reactions in simple language vis-a-vis those at B1 level? Similarly, at A2 level, the descriptor 'Can express his/her reactions to a work, reporting his/her feeling and ideas in simple language', is only slightly different from that at B1 level, 'Can explain briefly the emotions he/she experienced at a certain point in the story...'. We would like to suggest that in order to clarify and distinguish between descriptors at the different levels, examples can be given to show what is meant by expressions like, 'simple language', 'in some detail', and so on. As North & Piccardo (2017) suggest, a template of principled guidelines would be helpful for an easier and similar interpretation by all the stakeholders around the world. On the other hand, what constitutes 'simple language' may vary according to language. Also, as can be seen from the examples we presented above, different learners following the same course are likely to have different abilities and levels of proficiency in the foreign language. Overall, while the CEFR levels in this case corresponded quite well with the adult learners' abilities in MFL, we could appreciate that one particular learner was able to perform beyond the others. This indicates that as teachers we need to always give an equal opportunity to weak and strong learners alike.

Conclusion

Scholars often argue (Wandera, 2016; Spaliviero, 2021; Yakişik & Gürocak, 2018) that the teacher plays a key role in creating an aesthetic and intellectual space and experience for learners, leading to transformative education (Raikou, 2016; Raikou, Karalis & Ravanis, 2017; Wandera, 2016). In this case, as teachers we can express an element of satisfaction in having managed to, at least introduce, the CEFR descriptors that refer to creative arts, and to have given learners of MFL, student-teachers and teachers the space to access multiple

perspectives in the investigation and interrogation of the world around them (Dallacqua & Sheahan, 2020). There can be no doubt that multimodal approaches 'can stimulate students' engagement, and challenge them to extend their perspectives to critically reflect on self and on the world' (Wandera, 2016, p. 323). The video production, was additionally useful as a means of working on the CEFR descriptors with teachers. The CEFR for us served as an appropriate and solid platform in order to gauge the level of linguistic difficulty for a particular group of learners, and above all to stimulate interest and authentic language learning and practise in MFL.

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Appendix 1: The worksheet used with MFL adult learners

1. Show video abstract

Ikteb 3 kelmiet jew frażijiet biex tesprimi kif qed thossok wara li rajt il-vidjow:

Write 3 words or phrases in Maltese to express how this video abstract made you feel:

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

2. **Aqra dawn il-versi poetiċi:**

Read the following poetic lines:

<p>Solitudni by Oliver Friggieri</p> <p>Jien għrejt mat-toroq kollha tal-belt tad-dinja tiegħi, Bla hadd m'għarafli wiċċi jew għogbu jiġi miegħi.</p> <p>Terraqt fis-solitudni tal-ibħra minsijin fejn hemm vapuri mgharrqa u ankri mmermrin.</p>	<p><i>I roamed along the roads Of the city of my world, Without anyone having recognised my face Or having chosen to accompany me.</i></p> <p><i>I walked along the roads in solitude Of forgotten seas Of sunken ships And decayed anchors.</i></p>
<p>...by Terence Portelli</p> <p>Għall-klandestini: Xtajta kemm hi 'l bogħod... U fond il-baħar.</p>	<p><i>Illegal immigrants: The shore very far away... The sea so deep.</i></p>
<p>Ma jridhom hadd by Carmel Borg</p> <p>Fuq qoxra telqu Bit-tama salpaw Mhux biċċa tagħna</p>	<p><i>They left on a craft Hopeful they sailed It's none of our business</i></p>

<p>Stajt xtaqt by Simone Galea</p> <p>Qatt rajt villaġġ tat-tined Immigranti Li m'għandhom imkien fejn imorru?</p> <p>Xtaqt tista' tghid kelma U tħassar it-timbru tal-mard li jtaqqal dawn l-iġsma moħlija? Tishet lil min tuġġhu qalbu li Malta timtela bid-dgħajjes ta' nies bla valur?</p> <p>Stajt xtaqt.</p> <p>Imma mhux daqs kemm xtaq l-immigrant Li jbigħ ruħu għal għaxxa ta' lejla Li jimrad biex xi hadd jiehu ħsiebu Li jerga' jaqbad id-dgħajsa Jehles għal dejjem minn dal-post li ma xtaqx.</p>	<p><i>Have you ever seen a village of immigrants' tents who have nowhere to go?</i></p> <p><i>Have you wished that you could utter a word, and rub off the stamp of illness that render heavy these wasted bodies?</i></p> <p><i>Do you condemn those whose heart aches when Malta is filled with boats of valueless people?</i></p> <p><i>You could have wished.</i></p> <p><i>But not as much as the immigrant wished to sell his soul for a pittance, For illness so that he could be looked after.</i></p> <p><i>That he boards a boat once again Get forever rid of this place in which he never wished to be.</i></p>
<p>Nottturn by Oliver Friggieri</p> <p>Jekk nerga' nistenniek quddiem ix-xefaq Għada tkellimni?</p>	<p><i>If I wait for you again tomorrow in front of the horizon Will you speak to me?</i></p>

Aghzel 3 versi li jogħġbuk l-aktar. Ikkwotahom fl-ispazju hawn taħt:

Select the 3 lines you like most from the above. Then quote them in the space provided below:

- iv. _____
- v. _____
- vi. _____

3. Liema poezija għoġbitek l-aktar u għaliex?

Please tell me which poem you like best and why.

4. Show full video

Ikteb ir-reazzjonijiet u l-ideat wara li rajt il-vidjow.

Write about your reactions and ideas after watching the video.

5. Kif taħseb li kien qed iħossu dan il-karattru?

How do you think this character was feeling?

6. Liema aspekt/i ta' din il-produzzjoni tinteressak l-aktar?

Which aspect/s of this production interests you most?

7. Tista' tikteb dwar xi esperjenza jew storja jew film li hu simili għal din l-istorja?

Can you relate this video to a similar experience or story or film?

8. Tista' tikteb dwar l-istil u l-kontenut ta' din il-produzzjoni?

Can you express your reactions in relation to the style and content of this production?

9. Tista' tikteb dwar l-izvilupp tal-plot, il-karattru u t-tema f' dan il-vidjow?

Can you write something about the plot, the character and the theme in this video?

10. Tista' tikkummenta dwar il-muzika u x-xenarju?

Can you comment about the choice of music and the scenery?
