LUND
UNIVERSITY

Grammatical gender in Italian by Swedish-speaking L2 learners: a third age perspective

Irene Lami

Supervisor: Petra Bernardini

Centre for Language and Literature, Lund University
MA in Language and Linguistics, Italian
SPVR01 Language and Linguistics: Degree Project – Master's (Two Years) Thesis, 30 credits

October 2016

Centre for Languages and Literatures

Språk- och litteraturcentrum (SOL)
Lunds Universitet
Helgonabacken 12
SE-223 62 Lund

Reception: +46 (0)46 222 32 10
Fax: +46 (0)46–222 32 11
Homepage: http://www.sol.lu.se/

October 2016

ABSTRACT

Irene Lami

Grammatical gender in Italian by Swedish-speaking L2 learners: a third age perspective

The language learning process by third age learners has recently become a field of interest for linguistic research. However, it has been studied mostly regarding psychological and cognitive considerations (stress, motivation, attention, memory, etc.), rather than according to language internal factors.

The present study aims to provide a contribution by investigating the mastery of Italian grammatical gender by third-age Swedish native speakers who are learning Italian as an L2.

The study wants to verify if there are any particular patterns in grammatical gender learning according to the age of the learners, with a focus on third age, especially regarding formal cues (such as phonology, morphology, syntax) vs. semantics.

Our research shows that elderly learners seem to be sensitive to semantics, while younger learners seem to be more sensitive to phonology and syntax; psychological factors seem not to play an important role.

Moreover, contrarily to our hypotheses, we found that elderly informants show a much greater homogeneity in their results, in comparison to young informants, and a greater ability in problem solving.

Another interesting finding is that, in general, elderly informants outperform younger ones who had spent an equal amount of time attending Italian lessons.

In sum: psychological explanations do not seem to justify an age differentiation in gender learning, while language internal factors seem to be at the basis of a general, age-dependent, differentiation.

Keywords: *Foreign language learning*, *age*, *Italian L2*, *grammatical gender*, *gender agreement*, *geragogics*, *gerontology*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the professional and personal help of so many people.

I express my deep sense of thanks and gratitude to Petra Bernardini, who knew how to guide each and every phase of this work with her enthusiasm and her competence.

I am extremely thankful to Verner Egerland for always being available and for having represented the key figure of my university studies here in Lund.

I also need to express my gratitude to Roberta Cella, whose invaluable teaching keep on being precious.

I thank all my informants, helpful and kind people.

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Carlo Miani (a.k.a. Winston Wolf), who simply solved my problems within less than 24 hours.

Thank you to Carina Nilsson De Rosa and Sofia Forte-Fredriksson, who were sincerely interested in my project and were very helpful in many different ways.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Kåre Ivarsson, who has been not only essential to this work, but also a very pleasant person who made my little trip to Göteborg a very nice and enlightning experience.

Deep gratitude goes also to Philip Witt, for his diligent and painstaking review.

Many thanks to Karin Rasmusson and Fanny Carlström Plaza, who contributed to this work with inestimable suggestions and loads of coffee.

I want also to thank my sweet Lindish Bucciantini for her precious help on graphic issues.

Thank you to Lund University and to all the professors that I had the chance to meet (among the others Jordan Zlatev, Mikael Roll, Valéria Molnár, Carita Paradis, Carla Cariboni Killander), who could only but confirm my love for research, and who really taught me a lot, also humanly. But also thanks to the fellow students I met on my path, whom I am honored to have worked with.

Huge thanks to Karoliina Louhema, Kat Riesner, Lorenzo Bindi and Lara Gregori for their very useful suggestions on Asperger syndrome, autism and language learning.

Deep thanks to my friends, for the inspiration, the laughter and the inspirational laughter.

Thank you to my brother for the review and the suggestions.

Thank you to my mother, who is close even when she is far away, and who is a rare example of strength and integrity.

Thank you to Leonardo, who represents an infinite source of serenity.

The greatest thanks to my husband, for all his patience, love and understanding. I owe everything to him.

On this, and on any other future work of mine, the utmost critical eye, the utmost suggestions and the utmost corrections are missing. They will be missed forever, you will be missed forever, Dad.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

All quotes from Italian references have been translated by the author.

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIRE = *Anagrafe degli Italiani Residenti all'Estero ("registry of Italians residing abroad")*

F = *feminine*

G = *gender*

L1 = *first language*, i.e. *mothertongue*

L2 = *second language*

M = *masculine*

pl. = *plural*

s. = *singular*

TA = *third age*

SOC = *Selective Optimization and Compensation*

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

There is much more acquisitional linguistics research available on children than adults. Countless are the studies defining children as the favorite subject for research on bilinguism, L2 learning, phonology, and all the aspects regarding acquisition/learning of a new linguistic code (cf. among many others: Dulay & Burt, 1974; Flynn & Manuel, 1991; Birdsong, 1999; Eubank & Gregg, 1999; Schwartz, 2003). Generally, children and adults are treated as two discrete groups: adults are supposed to learn languages in a different way than children do. But there is often no further distinction within such a wide human developmental stage (with a greater attention, though, towards adolescence, cf. among many others McKay & Wong, 1996; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Treating adults as a homogenous group of L2 learners is perhaps inappropriate: adulthood spans roughly 60 years (at least in Europe) and it may be untenable to assume that adult L2 learners learn second languages in some uniform fashion by virtue of their adherence to this wide age group. To test such an assumption, it is necessary to subdivide 'adults' in distinct age spans.

The purpose of the present study is then to focus on third age (TA from now on) learners: we will attempt to provide an overview on TA, acknowledging the non-trivial issue of defining constraints on age, and being well aware of the further issue of age in general, then we will compare TA learners (over 55) to young adult learners (16-24)[1]. We will offer an overview on all the aspects that define "senior learning"[2], from a neurological and cognitive point of view, paying attention to linguistic learning.

[1] For these age limits, cf. section 2.1.2 *Delimiting the age* and section 3.6.2 *Younger group*.

[2] Following countless policies and educational strategies arisen worldwide especially during the last decades, cf. section 2.1.3 *Characteristics of senior learning*.

We decided to focus on TA because it is around this age that working activity ceases: individuals may now dedicate to intellectual activities, and presumably have by now reached such a status to nurture interests that have no strictly practical goals (e.g. study of languages that can help to enter the work sphere). Therefore TA represents a period of life where language learning can be valued in its entirety, and is less likely to be obstructed by potential impediments for a linguistic research. We will take into consideration the fact that, in language learning, potential differences are maybe not even related to age per se, but rather with all the intrinsic features that age carries in itself (e.g. positive factors such as more time to focus on language learning, or accumulative experience that may help in learning patterns; or, on the other hand, negative factors such as memory deficits and hearing problems).

In order to research possible patterns in TA L2 learning in comparison to younger learning, we preferred an analytical approach, focused on the detailed study of a single grammatical phenomenon. We will focus on a specific trait of nominal morphology, i.e. grammatical gender (G from now on), since its realization differs largely in the languages we took into consideration (i.e. Swedish L1 and Italian L2[3]). We decided to focus on G learning because nominal morphology is the first feature that students have to learn when they approach Italian. G is also a single feature that can be easily verified with discrete tests (i.e. wrong vs. right). To investigate this trait, we searched for agreement G marks, sharing with Chini (1995) the view of G as a category which is primarily visible in syntax use. G has been shown to be difficult for adult learners to master (Chini, 1995) even at high levels of language learning (Gudmunson, 2012). Studying grammatical phenomena which are difficult to master is interesting because we can have a view on learning strategies and on the presence of possible patterns, in our case in relation to age. We have also to take into consideration that if it is true that G per se is a difficult feature to learn, especially for speakers of non-gendered languages, Italian G is a quite transparent feature, in comparison, for instance, to

[3] Although for many of our informants Italian is a third or fourth language, we will still use the expression "L2" to indicate a language learned in addition to the native language.

French (cf. Kupisch et al. 2002), so the results in this field can be particularly interesting. Moreover, as Kupisch et al. (2002) state, formal criteria regularities can be used to determine the G of a noun, so we want to determine the cue validity of different formal criteria and try to see which ones seem to be more relevant for TA learners in comparison to young learners.

We decided to have a battery of written tests: we are aware that spontaneous conversation could have given us different results. But we decided not to have a higher stress level for our informants, since stress has been proven to be a crucial factor in TA learners' performances[4]. Moreover, phonetic data are more time consuming to analyze, and therefore we decided not to include them in the thesis due to the lack of time. We also have to mention that the Swedish phonologic system has vowels such as /ɑ/, which, according to the Italian phonologic system, can be perceived as a middle ground between an /a/ and an /ɔ/; this could have represented a delicate situation, since *a* and *o* are two crucial endings for G morphology in Italian (even though the unstressed ending vowel o is pronounced /o/ in standard Italian, and not /ɔ/).

To avoid the emergence of difficulties in data analysis, and therefore in results, we decided to deal with only one L1 (i.e. Swedish). There are different views in how L1 can interfere with G in L2:

> even in its complexity, the acquisitional process of morphology results to be less subjected to interferences from L1, and so it can be considered as an aim to verify the degree of learners' autonomous elaboration, and so, the systemic development of interlanguages (Dogana, 2003:27).

But as Chini (1995) shows, L1 can be a discriminating factor in G learning, and this is also why we decided to focus only on one L1, i.e. Swedish. We will give an overview of G in both languages, describing also Italian G learning.

[4] Cf. section 2.1.3 *Characteristics of senior learning*.

We considered it appropriate to have beginner informants for both the older group and the younger group, because "in the long run younger learners appear to accomplish the same or better results in comparison to adults; but adults are faster in acquiring proficiency in a limited period of time" (cf. Villarini & La Grassa, 2010). This means that if elderly people do show specific patterns, these patterns should be clearer to see in the first stages of learning. We evaluated the level of proficiency of the informants through a self-assessment test that the informants had already taken in the different kinds of schools they attended at the moment of the test.

The significance of this study is given both by its original contribution to the theoretical body of knowledge in linguistic learning of G by TA learners, and by its practical significance for language teaching and TA teaching. The following research questions will be investigated:

1. Do Swedish-speaking L2 learners of Italian over 55 years show some peculiar patterns in G learning in comparison to Swedish-speaking L2 learners of Italian age 16-24?

2. If they do, which patterns and in which learning features are the patterns most clearly seen (e.g. transfer from Swedish; semantic cues clearer than syntactic cues, etc.)?

The thesis is organized as follows: in chapter 2 we will present an overview of TA and linguistic senior learning and we will provide some details about G in general, Italian and Swedish G, and Italian G learning; chapter 3 show the study conducted and the details of the study; chapter 4 shows data analysis and results; chapter 5 et seq. offer a discussion on further possible research, our conclusions, and references and appendices (with written and vocal tests, and tables with all the results) to conclude the thesis.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 THE THIRD AGE

Worldwide population is aging, and TA lays claims to its place among studies and definitions. United Nations reported that "the proportion of older persons is growing at a faster rate than the general population" (UNFPA, 2012: Ban Ki-moon introduction), with one in 9 persons aged 60 or over. This increasing proportion of older people cannot be ignored, and demands special research and policies. Today, in fact, gerontology studies are at their peak: geragogics, active aging, constant learning, successful aging (SOC) models, and so on, show not only a growing interest for elderly age, but also active policies in order to suggest to people how to actively live this phase of life and not surrender to it (cf. WHO, 2002; Ouwehand et al. 2007, Luise, 2014). While elderly age has often been (and sometimes still is) seen as a period of decline of body and mind, this is now proven not to be so true. Of course, "aging can be defined as a number of processes that lead to a progressive decreasing of functional supply" (Luise, 2014:444), but this does not necessarily mean a relentless decline of skills and capacities. Memory, for example, which plays a major role in language learning, has often been said to inexorably decline after adulthood, but recent studies (e.g. Villarini & La Grassa, 2010) prove that TA neurology is not as catastrophic as commonly thought. Developmental studies (cf. Schaie, 1996a) "have demonstrated that when there is evidence of intellectual decline, given appropriate intervention, the decline is reversible" (Glendenning, 1992:11). Also Villarini & La Grassa (2010) claim to keep the elderly minds 'active', as this is the way not to lose neurologic (and intellectual) potential. Moreover, as Tampubolon notes:

> while much is known about functional limitations accompanying ageing, very little is known about the positive aspects of life quality as people age. Beyond conceiving the possibility of positive ageing,

> widely associated with the idea of the third age (Laslett, 1989), work must proceed to devise a construct of positive ageing that is susceptible to empirical investigation. But in both developed and developing countries few empirical studies have examined changes in older people's life (Tampubolon, 2015:576).

Therefore, as we can see, TA is now seen as a specific phase of human life, with its features, characteristics, peculiarities and needs, from several points of view: physical, psychological and social. In this vision, retirement is now perceived not just as the end of working activity, but also as the greatest occasion to cultivate interests. More and more elderly people decide to begin an educational path after retirement: they start new practical courses, enroll in university courses and decide to learn a new language. In order to deepen the field of gerontological education, geragogics has developed as a growing research field, giving rise to much interesting and important research (e.g. the pioneering work of Berdes et al., 1992).

2.1.2 Delimiting The Age

Proposing strict delimitations of age is never a wise decision. Human growth and development is in fact gradual, and age is the result of several components: biological, behavioral and social. Many factors have a decisive role on the complex features of development stages: demographic changes in history, cultural development of a society, ecological factors, work conditions, immigration, psychological conditions, all determined, in turn, by the economic structure of a social group. Moreover, there is no common agreement on when the so called "TA" should start: some research pose a limit at 50 years old (cf. ELSA, 2015), some, including our research, at 55 years old (cf. Villarini & La Grassa 2010), some at 60 years old (cf. Bacha et al., 2010) and some other at 65 (cf. Barnes, 2011). Of course, all of these are conventional limits, and whatever definition we choose, it is hard to consider "older people" as a homogeneous group.

For instance, other subdivisions have been proposed within the category, such as "fourth age" (cf. among others Bales, 1998; Baltes & Smith, 1999, 2003; Gilleard & Higgs, 2010). In this perspective, while the TA (i.e. "the young-old") is seen as an ascending phase, fourth age (i.e. "the oldest-old"), contrarily, represents the latest years of human adulthood, characterized by vulnerability and decline of body and mind. Of course, we did not include such a differentiation in our research, as our older group voluntarily studies a foreign language, showing the opposite of a decline of their mind, rather a strong will to improve their knowledge. Moreover, part of our older group is still involved in working activity, which is one factor (even though not the only one) that characterizes the full control of one's life.

Well aware of these considerations, for our research, we decided to follow Villarini & La Grassa (2010) and to have 55 years as our limit age. First of all, this limit is the most conventional within European and American research. Moreover, European policies and projects refer to this limit age within the field of geragogics (and linguistic policies directed to this age, also, cf. Serra Borneto, 2007) and since our research deals with linguistic learning, we preferred to remain within this constraint. As we already mentioned, this limit has the problem of referring to both working and retired people, but we did not think that this would be an obstacle for our study; in fact, this is an opportunity to see if there are patterns in senior learning depending on age, and not on lifestyle or social behavior.

2.1.3 Characteristics of senior learning[5]

It is commonly said that young people, especially children[6], learn languages much better and much faster in comparison to adults. This is only partially true. Above

[5] For this section cf. Villarini & La Grassa (2010).

[6] Cf. the long-standing debate of critical period hypothesis (among many others and with different focuses: Lenneberg, 1967; Chomsky, 1969; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Cummins, 1991; Birdsong,

all, we have to keep in mind the different social situations in which young people live, i.e. "from a practical point of view, younger people usually worry less about interacting with their peers" (cf. Dogana, 2003). This means that young people usually show less problems with performing in front of people. And this plays a significant role in language performances. To really analyze the differences between "young learning" and "senior learning", in order to better understand how TA persons learn a language, we have to take into consideration several factors and consider multiple aspects of this question: neurological, cognitive, emotional and environmental. Brain aging is a complex phenomenon and it is, as well as learning, determined by biological, psychological and social dimensions, manifesting itself differently in different subjects.

Neurolinguistics, i.e. the study of physiological mechanisms in the brain that process linguistic information, can help to discriminate peculiarities of senior learning from a neural point of view. As age advances, a cerebral atrophy makes the brain gradually lighter (about 10-15% around the age of 80): this is related to a decrease in the number of neurons, starting around the age of 50, which reaches a loss percentage of about 40% after the age of 90. Not only do neurons reduce, but also synapses, responsible for the mediation of the information between one neuron and another, but as Villarini & La Grassa (2010) point out, these changes are not universally present, as they can be absent even in very old people (Ratti & Amoretti, 1991), or compensation processes can be activated (Annoni, 2001).

The relation between brain plasticity and cognitive abilities is still very unclear. Cognitive abilities are "a set of capabilities intervening in information processing, from the moment the information is available to the person, to the moment a proper answer is provided" (Amoretti & Ratti, 1998:31). As it is commonly known, in elderly people there is a general functional reduction of peripheral organs, first of all eyes and ears, that affects the capability of receiving external inputs. But this does not necessarily lead to less effective performances: decreased sensory perception can be balanced by compensative strategies (e.g. *perceptual*

1999; Paradis, 1999; Ramscar & Gitcho 2007), but an exhaustive list is beyond the scopes of this research.

constancy, by which it is possible to recognize a stimulus confiding in past experiences, cf. Cesa Bianchi, 2000:76). There is a difference between elderly people and young adults concerning performances dealing with distributed attention (i.e. attention given to global aspects of a single scene: opposed to focused attention, it refers to the capability to elaborate information from different sources at the same time, cf. Srinivasan et al. 2009), especially in complex tasks, but Villarini & La Grassa (2010) stress the importance of practice for the reduction of this variance. Regarding both distributed and focused attention, motivation seems to be a substantial factor: elderly people get much more distracted in front of unmotivating tasks (cf. Villarini & La Grassa 2010:32-33).

Memory is also an important aspect regarding age: it is commonly said that elderly people remember old information more clearly in comparison to new information, and an important role in this sense is given by *mnemonic reinforcement* (cf. Aveni Casucci, 1992), i.e. the phenomenon according to which reenactment of past events, through storytelling, for instance, would bring about more enduring memories. As Villarini & La Grassa (2010) explain, "in case of verbal inputs, what is heard can be quickly forgotten especially if sub-vocal repetition phenomenon is impeded, i.e. the received input is not unconsciously repeated by listeners" (Villarini & La Grassa, 2010:34). Villarini & La Grassa also state that:

> the memory system that more than others seems to change depending on age is the so called working memory, which belongs to the short time memory system. Differently from the latter, though, that only has the function of passively retaining information for a short time, working memory, described by Baddeley (1986), is of essential importance because it pertains to the execution of complex activities such as reasoning, language comprehension, learning and long term memorization of information [...]. Among the influential factors we have to consider: - speed - adopted strategies - emotional and motivational factors (Villarini & La Grassa 2010:35).

Speed, in particular, seems to be a discriminating factor: elderly people's performances decrease greatly as the time they have to answer the stimuli

decreases. With more time, in fact, subjects have more chances of sub vocal repetition, and so of memorizing inputs (cf. Amoretti & Ratti, 1998). Stress is also a very relevant factor:

> it has been shown, in fact, that cerebral areas affected by memory processes, specially hippocampus and prefrontal cortex, are linked to amygdalae, which is also involved in the emotional system: so in case of a stressful task, the emotional system will negatively influence the cognitive performance, determining in this way a lapse of memory that maybe would have not occurred in non-stressful conditions (Cardona, 2001). Emotional and motivational factors seem then to be interacting strongly with memory processes. (Villarini & La Grassa, 2010:36).

So, of course, since ecological factors are so important, exercise and specific strategies can stem this decay.

2.1.4 Linguistic interests in TA

As we have already explained, elderly people have emerged as new students, proving to be more and more interested in language learning. Of course, the phenomenon of elderly people learning languages was common also in the past, e.g. in the beginning of 20th century, when migrants from South and East Europe sought their fortune in the so called "American dream". But these situations, still present nowadays within the migratory phenomenon, where older people learn new languages thanks to the constant closeness to native speakers in their environment, deal with acquisition of a language and not with learning[7]. Acquiring a language, in fact, is focused on communication and it is an internalized process, similar to that of children when they acquire their mothertongue. Immersed in an environment of people speaking a foreign language, learners understand through practice and listening to acquire the L2.

[7] For the distinction between acquisition vs. learning, we followed the classic distinction proposed by Krashen (1981; 1982).

Learning, on the contrary, is a conscious study of the form of a language, under direct instructions of its rules. In this case, language learning is a relatively new phenomenon for TA people, at least in Europe.

A global internationalization is of course one of the causes (cf. Villarini & La Grassa, 2010): not only new technologies (like the internet), but also cultural media (television, books) are more and more open to other countries and so to other languages, so the perceived distance between countries is smaller; and regarding this, at least in this part of the world, the efforts of European Union (founded in 1993, with Sweden entering in 1995) have surely yielded results. This internationalization also includes immigration phenomenon, where an immigration led by young adults has an influence also on the older part of the population: grandparents are now getting used to having bilingual (sometimes even trilingual) grandchildren, and they are more than eager to learn more about the culture and the language of their in-laws. Moreover, human lifespan in developed countries has surprisingly extended its length: in Europe, in the year 1900 life expectancy was 42,7 years, in 2001 it shot up to 76,8 years (cf. Riley, 2005)[8]. This, of course, lead to an increased length of the period defined as "old age". Today, Europe is also a richer continent compared to a hundred years ago, so elderly people not only have more time, but also more money to spend on their needs. They also travel much more than in the past, experiencing other cultures and languages. Retirement, then, is not only the end of working activity, but the best occasion to nurture one's own interests, and linguistic interests are more and more common among the population. In sum, as Villarini & La Grassa (2010) point out, the long wave of internationalization has also affected elderly people, causing an increased linguistic interest in this age group.

[8] Of course, we have to take into consideration the very high mortality among newborns and children.

2.1.5 Swedish elderly people who want to learn Italian

In Sweden, language courses in Italian, French and Spanish are always offered in linguistic programmes specifically dedicated to elderly people. But why do Swedish TA persons want to learn Italian? One possible explanation is that Swedes of all ages travel frequently to Italy. According to a travel survey made by Resurs för Turism/Rese- och Turistdatabasen (TDB) based on 24,000 interviews, and published by Vagabonds Resebarometer, Italy was ninth among the world destinations that Swedes decided to visit during their leisure travels in 2013[9]. Not only do they seem to choose Italy for their holidays, but according to statistics from The Swedish Institute:

> in 2010, around 223,000 pensioners in more than 194 countries received payments from the Swedish pension system, an increase of more than 25% on 2005. The majority moves to other Nordic countries or to Germany, while many are also attracted to the warmer climes of France, Greece and Italy. (SI, 2013:3).

So, TA Swedes who decide to study Italian are probably familiar with Italian culture (they know about traditions, local practices, food, music, etc.), and this makes them more motivated in learning the language. Moreover, according to AIRE (the registry of Italians residing abroad), at the end of 2012 there were 9,666 Italians officially resident in Sweden[10] so we presume that these people had interaction with Swedes, maybe resulting in bilingual children, and Italian-Swedish grandchildren may be one of the reasons why TA Swedish native speakers have decided to study Italian.

---

[9] Vagabonds Resebarometer 2014, published on 3.VI.2014 and visited on 3.II.2016 at http://www.vagabond.se/artiklar/nyheter/20140603/vagabonds-resebarometer-2014-svenskarnaviker-inte-medelhavet

[10] Ministero dell'Interno: statistiche relative all'elenco aggiornato dei cittadini italiani residenti all'estero (AIRE), published on 31.XII.2012 and visited on 11.III.2016 at http://servizidemografici.interno.it/content/ripartizione-estera-stato-europa

2.2 GRAMMATICAL GENDER

Grammatical G is the "expression of the tendency to introduce some sort of differentiations, i.e. an order, in the sea of confusion of lexicon" (Chini, 1995:19). For its peculiarities, G has been the subject of countless linguistic studies. There is a lot of variety in whether G is realized within languages. In many of them it does not even exist, proving itself as an optional and discretionary feature.

The category of G is part of the lexical entry of nouns, and manifests itself in the agreement of a noun with a determiner and a modifier (cf. Corbett, 1991; Masullo, 2001; Masullo & Depiante, 2004; Bernardini, 2004); "both Italian and Swedish have G in this sense. In both languages, G appears in the agreement of the noun phrase in a two-party system" (Bernardini, 2004:58). As Kupisch et al. (2002) point out:

> one has to distinguish nouns, which have G as an inherent feature, and words which receive G by agreement, such as adjectives and determiners. The inherent, invariable characteristic of nouns is often called G attribution, in contrast to the variable characteristic of modifiers, which is defined as G agreement (Kupisch et al. 2002:108-109).

Already Aristotle highlighted these two aspects of G: as a system of noun classification, and as an agreement phenomenon (cf. *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*) (for a detailed study of G's twofold nature, semantic and syntactic, cf. Chini, 1995). In history, G has been identified with a semantic trait, in what Chini (1995) and Di Domenico (1997) define the "naturalistic hypothesis", very popular in 18th century and during German romanticism (cf. Grimm, 1831), or as an example of arbitrariness, an "accidental outcome of the linguistic development of some languages" (Ibrahim 1973: 102), in what Chini (1995) and Di Domenico (1997) define the "formalist hypotheses" (cf. Sapir 1921; Hjelmslev 1956). Di Domenico (1997), regarding this, claims to consider G as a culturally determined trait, introducing Marcus Terentius Varro's thesis, according to which noun classification is at the same time natural, motivated and arbitrary. She states:

> G in a language is never completely motivated (i.e. perfectly corresponding to a semantic trait), nor totally arbitrary, meaning that in every language that has a system of nominal classification, there are at least a part of nouns classified in a class according to a semantic criterion, a *semantic core* in Corbett (1991) words […]. G is an information that differs from a semantic trait, even if it is linked to it in a more or less indirect way […]. But the identification of G with its superficial expression is impracticable for several reasons. First of all, […] languages represent G information in a very different way on a superficial level (Di Domenico 1997:69).

Moreover, the relationship between semantic trait and G is also differently motivated among languages. So, if G diverges both from a semantic trait and from a morphologic trait, it can be defined as by Corbett (1981) through its syntactic features. Lexical items "must have both semantic and syntactic features associated with them, [but] the two do not always coincide" (Corbett, 1981:62). In Harris (1991), we have three levels: a semantic level, where the concept of sex is relevant; a morphological level, where the concept of inflectional class is relevant; and a syntactic level, where the concept of G is relevant. But we have seen that among languages, a perfect correspondence of the three levels does not exist. As Di Domenico (1997) points out, varieties in the realization of G deal mainly with four dimensions:

> a) the number and the nature that it can assume (from a two values systems within Semitic languages and many Indo-European languages, to multiple classes in Bantu languages)
> b) the more or less direct relationship with a semantic criterion of noun subdivision
> c) its superficial expression
> d) its spread in agreement
> This creates many problems, mainly the identification of a single subject of study (Di Domenico 1997:3).

In linguistic studies within the field of G and nominal classification, linguists focus on one or another of these dimensions, proving again how difficult its definition is (cf. Greenberg 1978; Martinet 1961; Dixon 1982). Giving the

difficulties in its analysis and definition, G also proves to be a difficult feature to master in language learning.

2.2.1 Italian G[11]

Italian has two G: masculine and feminine (from now on, M and F), where M is unmarked. It has a semantic ground only for nouns with animated reference:

> on the one hand we have nouns with animated referents, like *ragazza* [F], *ragazzo* [M]; *zio* [M], *zia* [F], etc., for which semantic traits as masculine and feminine are relevant; while on the other hand we have all nouns with non-animated referents, for which it is difficult to imagine a semantic sex trait. For non-animated nouns, like *armadio* [M] and *sedia* [F], grammatical G cannot be considered as a factor that add conceptual information to its referent, but rather a semantically empty category (Gudmundson, 2012:5).

However, there can be semantic links which depend on G for nouns with non-animated reference, even if these cases are limited: the pair tree/fruit, with M tree and F fruit (e.g. *pesco* M; *pesca* F; and also with invariable nouns, with G visible only on the article *un/il noce* M; *una/la noce* F), with very few exceptions, such as *limone* M both for the tree and the fruit; the pair specific/general, with M specific noun and F carrying a more general meaning of the same referent (e.g. *tavolo* M; *tavola* F; *buco* M; *buca* F); the pair human/non-human, in case of nouns with both possible G for pl., where F represents [+ human] and M [- human] (e.g. *braccia* F [+ human] vs. *bracci* M [- human]). Due to etymological reasons, F suffix *-a* is in general associated with an augmentative or collective value (e.g. *cesto* M; *cesta* F or *frutto* M; *frutta* F) (cf. Schön 1971, Chini 1995). But the cases where G variation is systematic are basically limited to these. There are other cases where we have an apparent variation, but this is either completely random (e.g. *catasto* M; *catasta* F, where the words are not semantically related) or the variation is less

[11] For this section cf. Di Domenico (1997) and Chini (1995) for classification and examples.

transparent, following no particular schema (e.g. *foglio* M; *foglia* F). It is necessary to consider these cases as lexical creation through G suffixes rather than inflections. Moreover, there are tendential associations between G and semantic fields within hyponym/hypernym relationships, e.g. lexemes like *metallo* are M, so metals tend to be M (cf. Serianni, 1988; Chini, 1995), even though it is not always the case (e.g. *stagione* F, but *inverno* M, *primavera* F, *estate* F, *autunno* M). As we have already mentioned, some nouns have two forms (e.g. *ragazzo* M; *ragazza* F), while others have only one form, i.e. they are invariable (e.g. *sedia* F; *orologio* M). G can be marked on the noun through different suffixes or only on the article; when it cannot be inferred from noun ending, then particular suffixes, following phono-morphological criteria, may help to determine the G of the noun (Kupisch et al. 2002 state that these nouns comprise less than 10% of all nouns), e.g. *-tore* (M) vs. *-trice* (F); *-iere*, *-ile*, (M); *-zione*, *-aggine*, *-ite*, *-udine*, *-osi* (the latter not productive) (F). Many nouns can have what Gudmundson (2012) defines as "double G", i.e.:

> nouns that can be either M or F depending on referent's sex. These are nouns like *artista*, *giudice* or *insegnante*, i.e. nouns that can refer both to a man and to a woman. For these nouns, G assignment [...] depends on extra linguistic, semantic factors. If in the communicative context there is no specific referent, the unmarked G is M (cf. Gudmundson, 2012:18).

In these cases (e.g. *cantante* M or F) the G it is always specified in the article, both definite and indefinite (e.g. *un/il cantante* M; *una/la cantante* F), and other modifiers such as possessives, demonstratives, qualifying adjectives, etc. (e.g. *il cantante bravo* M; *la cantante brava* F). In some cases, we have F nouns that end with a typically M suffix (*-o*) and M nouns that end with a typically F suffix (*-a*): here article agreement follows of course the G (e.g. *una/la mano* F; *un/il gorilla* M). The G of some nouns can change in pl. form (e.g. *uovo* M s.; *uova* F pl.). A change from F to suffixed M with diminutive or augmentative suffixes is also common (e.g. *villa* F; *villino* M, although *villina* F is also accepted, cf. Grossmann & Reiner 2004).

M is generally the neutral form: when considering animals, for example, M indicates the referent with no sexual implication, while F stresses the sex of the animal (even if there are several exceptions e.g. the general referent *tigre* F). However for animals there commonly is one form (M or F), where the diminutive used for the cub is generally M, regardless of its G (cf. Chini, 1995). Finally, for couples conferred by some sort of social relevance,

> the system of heteronomy is applied, i.e. we have nouns with different roots, where grammatical G (which usually corresponds to natural G) represents redundant information from a semantic point of view: cf. *il padre* M [+ male] vs. *la madre* F [- male]. Similarly, heteronomic oppositions *marito/moglie*; *fratello/sorella*; *genero/nuora*. (Chini, 1995:85).

There is no agreement between subject and verb, with the exception of participle forms (e.g. *Mario è arrivato* M; *Lucia è arrivata* F). We can subdivide Italian nouns according to morphologic criteria, that are sometimes linked to one of the two G, but we have to remember that

> there is no fixed traditional classification for Italian noun classes: nothing comparable to the well-established declension classes used in the description of Latin or other inflecting Indo-European languages has ever been proposed for Italian (Dressler & Thornton 1996:1).

We will follow Chini (1995:80-83)[12] for Italian nouns classification, which partially corresponds to the one in Genot (1973) and Schwarze (1988) and refers "to the decreasing frequencies in which the lexemes of the respective classes appear in daily conversations" (Chini, 1995:81). It is important however to repeat that in our tests we will deal exclusively with written language, although this classification is very useful to illustrate the declension classes of Italian nouns.

[12] Cf. Chini, 1995:80-83.

Tab. 1- Declension classes of Italian nouns

Class	*S.*	*P.*	*G*	*Example*
I	-o	-i	M	libro - libri
II	-a	-e	F	casa - case
III	-e	-i	M or F	cane - cani ape - api
IV	variable	= s.	M or F	re - re città - città
V	-a	-i	M	problema - problemi
VI	-o	-i/-a M or F	M and F	osso - ossi/ossa
VII	-o	-i	F	mano - mani

Only the first two classes are clearly linked to a G., 3rd class is heterogeneous. 4th class contains invariable nouns: oxytones, monosyllabic, consonantal ending, borrowed, abbreviated nouns, and

> despite the fact that we can individuate some regularities within some of its subgroups (e.g. many borrowings are M; abstract nouns' suffixes *–tù* and *–tà* are mainly F [...]), this class, rather heterogeneous, is not clearly linked to either of the two G (Chini, 1995:81).

5th class consists of nouns derived from Greek, often belonging to erudite or sectorial vocabulary, and it is quite regular in G assignment (M), but can be confusing for the *–a* ending (as we saw, typically F); 6th class has words that can be M in s. and only F, or both M and F, in pl.; 7th class has very few nouns which exhibit highly irregular patterns (e.g. *mano-mani*) and compound words with variable inflection of the members.

2.2.2 Swedish G[13]

Also in Swedish there is a system of two G where one of the two is unmarked. Unmarked G, *common*, appears in the final consonant *-n* on the determiner; marked G *neuter* appears in the final consonant *-t* on the determiner (and on qualifying adjectives of undetermined determiner phrases, e.g. *ett stort hus*). Swedish also has M and F pronouns; there is actually a third pronoun, the gender neutral hen, artificially added to Swedish during the first half of 21st century (cf. Bäck et al. 2015; Gustafsson Sendén et al. 2015; Elrod 2014). Moreover, as Bernardini (2004) points out, Swedish names are subdivided into nominal classes (Källström, 1993): "two of them seem to correspond to masculine and feminine distinction, appearing in some nouns of human referents ending with a vowel. Nouns within masculine class often end with vowel *-e* while those in feminine class often end with vowel *-a*, e.g. pojk*e*, flick*a*" (Bernardini 2004:59). Bernardini (2004), referring to Teleman (1987), explains that the existence of a two G system, M and F, next to common and neuter, can be assumed to be derived from a semantic classification from one side (M/F/inanimate), and a grammatical one from the other (common/neuter). However, in Swedish, the subdivision into nominal classes is not as transparent as the Italian nominal system of declensions of nouns (cf. Chini, 1995).

As we saw, Italian G agreement is very regular, where each member of the noun phrase agrees with the G of the noun within the same morpheme (typically *-o* for M s. and *-a* for F s., and *-i* for M pl. and *-e* for F pl): on the contrary, in Swedish, G (and number) agreement in determined noun phrase is more irregular, where adjectives keep the same form and the determining suffix is added to the number suffix (e.g. *den röda bollen* and *det röda bordet*). Moreover, in Swedish, definiteness is a morphological feature, a suffix, while in Italian it is morphologically free from the noun, i.e. through definite article.

[13] For this section cf. Bernardini (2004) both for explanations and examples.

As Bernardini (2004) concludes, in Italian, G trait interacts with number trait, since the morpheme that expresses G also marks number (*-a*, *-e*). In Swedish, G trait seems not to interact with number (since it is not linked to number in a single morpheme), rather on definiteness trait (following Greenberg, 1966, according to whom G marking does not appear independently in the languages of the world, but it always interacts with something else):

> G is a formal feature that belongs to the lexical entrance of noun, [... but] while morpho-syntactic realization of G in Italian is correlated with number, in Swedish it is rather associated with definiteness (Bernardini, 2004:57).

In Swedish, G is marked together with the morpheme of definiteness in the indefinite article (*en bok* vs. *ett bord*) and in the definite suffix (*boken* vs. *bordet*). So, definiteness and G are included in the same morpheme (cf. Andersson, 1992; Bernardini 2004).

2.2.3 Learning Italian G

G is a particularly difficult feature to master for learners, at least in the earliest stages of learning, with different conclusions pertaining to its mastery at the ultimate attainment (cf. Chini, 1995; Bianchi, 2014). As Kupisch et al. state, in Italian "although […] the G of some nouns can be predicted on the basis of semantic cues, formal, i.e. morphological and phonological, cues are highly relevant for G attribution" (Kupisch et al. 2002:109). They continue:

> formal criteria are very important for G assignment in Italian. Italian nouns can be classified according to their endings […]. The ending of most nouns is associated with one particular G, (so that) the suffix provides a clear G cue […]. In summary, for 71,5% of all Italian nouns G is easily predictable on the basis of noun ending. Noun suffixes *–o* and *–a* can indeed be regarded as default endings for masculine and feminine nouns respectively (Kupisch et al. 2002:114).

According to Serratrice (2000) and Kupisch (2000), this clarity in Italian expedites the early acquisition of Italian articles by bilingual children, and facilitates the acquisition of G features according to Kupisch et al. (2002). However while G ascription as an intrinsic trait of nouns in the acquisition of Italian L1 is acquired before number agreement (cf. Chini, 1995; Bernardini, 2004), this is not the case for Swedish learners of Italian L2, where the opposite is true (cf. Bernardini, 2004). Carroll (1989) talks about a relexification of lexical words in L2 through transfer, where learners transfer G specification of their L1 into the one of L2 and, of course, since this specification (which means also an eventual lack of it) is different between languages, Bernardini (2004) assumes that the learner's task will be easier if G in L1 grammar is systematized similarly to L2 (although the minor is the typological distance from learner's L1 to L2, the higher is the probability that they apply transfer strategy and make many interference mistakes, cf. Opata 1989; Covino Bisaccia 1996).

According to Bernardini (2004), while Italian children seem to acquire G as an intrinsic feature of Italian nouns, in Swedish adult learners of Italian as an L2, G remains problematic. Moreover, transfer of the Swedish G specification of nouns could seems to occur in adult L2 learners, but not in bilingual children. So, there is a clear difference between acquisition and learning of G. In L1, G is acquired very quickly. As noted by Pizzuto & Caselli (1992) it is "not surprising if we remember that there is a great deal of consistent information for G categorization in this language" (Pizzuto & Caselli 1992:551). Chini (1995) explains further: "language-specific factors (the rather strong inflective character of the Italian language) seem to explain the precociousness of agreement's appearance" (Chini, 1995:129); she underlines that "the rich Italian morphology, relatively coherent and regular, constitutes not an obstacle, but rather an aid in its acquisition" (Chini, 1995:133). Difficulties in mastering G could be due to the fact that learners of an L2 "initially grasp only the most important elements from a semantic point of view, and use extra linguistic strategies and lexical material; only later do they start to consciously use grammatical morphemes" (Dogana, 2003:27). Using the wrong G, in fact, does not compromise communication, as an Italian native speaker can almost always infer the meaning from the context, sometimes even in

cases where the wrong ending actually forms another word with another meaning, e.g. *Oggi sono andata *al banco* (and not *alla banca*) *a ritirare i soldi*. Andersen (1984) explains the uncertainty of learners when facing G with the scarce functionality of this category. Paraphrasing Chini (1995):

> in the complex task of learning Italian G, different factors clearly contribute:
> 1) *phonetic-phonologic* factors (perceptibility of some phonemes associated to G mark, often unstressed and at the end of the word; unmarked phonologic form of Italian word, typically with vowel ending; possible harmonic mechanisms among endings);
> 2) *morphologic* factors (suffixes and declension classes associated to the two G; allomorphs);
> 3) *syntactic* factors (agreement of determiners, modifiers, predicatives [...] with nominal controller, according to G and number);
> 4) *semantic* factors (sex and animateness of nouns' referents; semantic fields associated to nouns [...]) and maybe also, broadly speaking, cultural factors (Chini, 1995:102).

There is also another consideration to be made: mastery of G could be influenced greatly by memory and, as we saw, working memory efficiency seems to be age-dependent. Of great interest is Chini's (1995) consideration about memorizing G:

> Interesting data are derivable also from studies on *inflection mistakes made by normal subjects* [italics in original] during experiments of memorization or free recollection of lists of declined Italian adjectives (in *-o/-a/-i/-e*; cf. Burani 1992). G, memorized better than number, seems to constitute a principle around which lexical entries are organized (also for adjectives), something that does not occur for number. Forms declined in M s. are memorized better than the others and easier substituted to others in mistakes: within lexical representation, then, M s. have a higher *status* than the others. (Chini, 1995:151).

CHAPTER 3. METHOD

3.1 RESEARCH METHOD

The study consists of 11 tests[14] on different aspects of G. Since our older group was not quantitatively numerous (23 informants), we decided to have many tests in order to have a qualitatively relevant research. We decided to have only written tests, except for the one where the interviewer (always the author) read a list of words and informants listened to them (but nevertheless they had to write down their answers). This decision is rooted in the importance of the "stress factor" regarding seniors' performances (cf. Villarini & La Grassa, 2010): we considered a written test less immediate and therefore less stressful for the older group. Moreover, due to the unstressed character and the final position of G morphemes, we thought that it was difficult to analyze acoustic data without an adequate equipment, precisely designed for these kinds of tests.

We allowed the informants to correct what they wrote as much as they wanted. This also leads to a greater certainty of the data: the subjects did not answer something that they eventually regretted. They were sure of their answers, even when they guessed, making the error more relevant to analyze, since it was not a momentary mistake. For these reasons, we decided to give the informants pencils and erasers, thinking that these little foresights could make the informants more comfortable. We also explained the importance of taking the time they needed.

[14] Cf. sections 3.3 and Appendices I and II.

3.2 TEST PROCEDURES

We wrote an introduction where we reassured the informants in many ways: first, stressing the importance of not being afraid of not knowing the answer, but encouraging them to try to answer anyway. Then, we told the subjects that the tests did not contain any trick questions: this is very important in order to focus their attention on relevant answers, and not making them afraid to pay attention to details that are not important. We also stressed the importance of the tests as an exercise and a chance to practice (so to increase their motivation). Both the general introduction and the instructions for each test have been written in Swedish, in order to avoid stress and misunderstandings.

Regarding readability measures, we decided to use a *sans serif* font for instructions (Myriad) and a *serif* font for the words in the tests (Minion), in bigger dimensions (14 pp.) with a line-spacing of 1,15 pp: these fonts and dimensions are suggested by a guidance by National Institute of Ageing (HHS, 2006). We printed the text using wide page margins, non-reflecting thick paper, black text on white background. For the importance of these factors with elderly or partially sighted readers, cf. AA.VV., 2005. Instructions and its related test were always on the same page, in order to easily go back to the instructions.

3.3 THE TESTS

We avoided to ask to directly write the G of a given word, because such a question could have confused the informants, who are not used to distinguish between M and F: we verified their G knowledge through the agreement with other elements. As Gudmundson (2012) points out, a distinction between G assignment and G agreement is quite problematic, since the only way to define assignment is through agreement, being assignment a “rather abstract process that

shows itself only in its agreement" (Gudmundson, 2012:8). As Chini (1995) points out:

> every Italian noun is compulsorily associated with one of the two G (M or F), with a few possible variations, which are not always linked to a clear change in meaning (cf. *orecchio* m. and *orecchia* f., partially synonyms; *ombrello* m. and *ombrella* f., the latter used above all in Northern area) (Chini, 1995:80).

Therefore, we avoided words that could have a variation, with the exception of *tavolo* in Test 2. In this case, though, we specified the ending of the word, so G agreement was rather easy to guess.

Among the determiners, we decided to deal with possessives determiners, excluding quantifiers, demonstratives and prepositional articles. Our informants were beginners and hence not familiar with quantifiers. Regarding demonstratives, we decided to exclude them because, as Chini points out, demonstratives production is particularly problematic for beginners (cf. Chini, 1995). Despite the fact that the informants previously studied prepositional articles, we considered them an unnecessary complication and did not include them in the tests. Several studies (e.g. Kupisch et al. 2002; Bernardini, 2004) show that they are problematic for learners. Possessive determiners seemed to be enough for having an overview on the agreement with determiners other than articles. Moreover, possessive determiners have a contrastive interest, since in Italian there is always an article before the determiner (either indefinite or definite, depending on meaning), while in Swedish definiteness is inherent to the possessive itself.

We did not include a test on subject pronouns. Italian is a pro-drop language, so their use is restricted to specific situations or with specific pragmatic functions. Secondly, subject pronouns *egli* and *ella* are now existent only in written form (with *ella* actually vanished also from written form), replaced by object pronouns *lui*, *lei*. This neo-standard variation is actually the preferred one regarding the language taught to foreigners, so we thought that a test on subject pronouns could have been problematic for informants who may be more used to *lui/lei* rather than

to *egli/ella*, or vice versa (for more information about neo-standard Italian, also regarding *egli/ella* vs. *lui/lei*, cf. among many others Cortelazzo, 2007; Serianni, 2007; Calvo Rigual, 2011). Adding to that, subject pronouns have been seen to be the least problematic feature of G acquisition, thanks to their semantic and phonologic clarity, contrary to direct and indirect object pronouns, that are particularly problematic, instead (cf. Chini, 1995).

We decided not to ask for definite articles because of the variation between the two M forms *il/lo* (s.) *i/gli* (pl.). Moreover, as we already said, Swedish creates the definition placing the morpheme *en* or *et(t)* as a suffix to the lexeme, and we thought that this morphologic difference could have created problems for our informants. In addition, M definite articles seem to represent a problem also in L1 acquisition of Italian monolingual children. As Chini (1995) underlines: "regarding the acquisitional path also phono-articulatory issues seem to be relevant (il, with consonantic ending, and gli, with initial palatal lateral, are in fact articulatorily less easy than la and le, with basic structure CV" (Chini, 1995:130). Moreover, there are several studies showing an earlier appearance of indefinite article in comparison to definite article in Italian learning (Chini, 1995), and also a greater degree of correctness (Berruto et al. 1990; Pfaff 1987). Regarding this, Chini (1995) gives a possible explanation in the major phonic body of the indefinite article, its frequent overlapping with the numeral, the existence of indefinite morphemes in the L1 of her informants (and in the L1 of our informants too), and the greater communicative saliency of a noun introduced by an indefinite article due to its value [-determinate]. Also Dogana (2003) assumes that the earlier appearance of the indefinite article may be linked to the numerical value attributed to it (also in Swedish). Moreover, in L1 acquisition of Italian monolingual children, indefinite articles seem to appear slightly later than definite articles, but perfectly agreed according to G (cf. Pizzuto, 1979). We have a test with definite articles, but we gave them as a clue to find possessive determiners *mio – mia*, and since we have the possessive after the article, the only possible form was il, since lo is used only before words beginning with <z>, <x>, semiconsonantic <i>, <s> + consonant, <gn>, <ps>, <pn> (even if forms such as il pneumatico are now also accepted), and l' is used before words beginning with

vowel and semiconsonantic <u> (even if for the same sound in borrowings, the form il is now prevalent, e.g. il web).

Tendentially, we preferred not to include nouns beginning with vowels for indefinite articles *un – una*, in order to avoid mistakes regarding the use of the apostrophe[15], with the exception of one word (i.e. *attrice*) in Test 3. In case of mistakes between the two allomorphs *un* and *uno* (both M), we decided not to mark them as errors. Previous studies (such as Chini, 1995) show that even in L1 acquisition of Italian monolingual children, the preferred form is *uno*, following the pattern of the typical Italian word (V)CV. Moreover, *uno* coincides with the numeral, and the form *un* appears later in acquisition.

In order to have a more in depth analysis we repeated the same nouns now and then, to see if there were any variation among the answers, showing a non-clear idea of the right G. It has in fact been observed that especially among beginner learners, the choice of the article with a noun is not always constant (cf. Chini, 1995). We analyzed the data test by test, and there were no repetitions in the same test, so we counted every occurrence as a single one.

3.3.1 Test 1: indefinite article

As we already explained: "G are classes of nouns reflected in the behavior of associated words" (Hockett 1958: 231), so we decided to ask for the most basic agreement in order to verify whether the informants knew the correct G, i.e. indefinite article. As Chini (1995) and Gudmundson (2012) underline, the article is the first syntactic clue of G, and producing the correct article for a noun basically means assigning the correct G to it.

On the basis of a list of 48 words, we asked to choose the correct indefinite article choosing between *un – una*, excluding elided forms with apostrophe (for the reasons previously stated).

[15] With words beginning with a vowel M *uno* becomes *un*, while F *una* becomes *un'*.

(1) ___*UN*___ bambino

We avoided the use of the allomorph *uno* not to create confusion. There are nouns with derivational suffixes with associate G (e.g. F -*ice*, -*anza*; M -*mento*, -*tore*); borrowings from other languages (e.g. *boomerang*, *computer*, usually M, cf. Correa-Zolli, 1973); words deriving from Greek (M even if the ending is -*a*); words with endings other than -*a, -o* (e.g. *bici*, *cane*). There are also double G words: in this way we will see if the groups show a common strategy in choosing one G rather than the other (i.e. they understand the importance of non-marked M) depending on age, or if they understand the possibility of choosing both G.

3.3.2 Test 2: adjective combination

Given a list of 13 words, we asked to choose an adjective among 6 to combine with the words.

(2) rosso – piccolo – gialla – alta – fredda – caldo

moglie → ___*ALTA*___

Studies (cf. Chini, 1995) show that in L1 acquisition of Italian monolingual children, even the youngest ones show a very high percentage of correct adjective inflection. So, it is a feature to be analyzed. Of course, our data are not quite comparable with the ones of monolingual children since here we deal not only with learning, and not acquisition, but also with a guided test: we didn't ask to choose simply an adjective, we asked to choose among preselected adjectives. We thought that giving too much freedom to the informants would have led to stress in the first place, and also to potential problems in data analysis: the informants could have made mistakes in such a way to have non existing words in Italian, and that could have been problematic for the identification of the G.

Obviously, in this test, there are also semantic considerations to be made, e.g. **una moglie gialla* is wrong from a semantic point of view, but perfectly fine

from a syntactic point of view. Anyway, here we did not value the correctness of the sentence from a semantic point of view. A semantically wrong agreement which is syntactically correct proves a syntactic competence in G attribution even more: if statistically relevant, it proves that G attribution comes even before semantic competence. We have excluded adjectives ending with *-e* in order not to confuse the informants. The list of words, instead, contains words with several endings, including a borrowing (i.e. *iceberg*).

3.3.3 Test 3: noun phrase

This test is about the whole noun phrase: the informants were asked to conform the indefinite article (*un* or *una*) with the ending of the adjective of a given word. We listed 12 phrases.

(3) __*UN*__ cane piccol__*O*__

This test aims to verify not only if the informants pay attention to the agreement article/noun or adjective/noun, but if they focus on the agreement of the whole phrase. We always placed the adjective after the noun, in order not to confuse the informants. We have only one F word starting with a vowel: *un'attrice*. In this case, we wanted to see if F were preferably marked with the apostrophe or with *-a*.

3.3.4 Test 4: plural

As we already said, morpho-syntactic realization of G in Italian is correlated with number, so it is good to have a test that focuses on it. The informants had to change 18 words from s. to pl. (without articles).

(4) dito → ___*DITA*____

We shall not pay too much attention to the accuracy of the answers regarding number, because G and number are two different features and number is not our topic of interest, but since in Italian number is important for G identification (cf. Bernardini, 2004), we thought that a test on number would have been relevant, since the two features are realized by the same morpheme in Italian[16]. We also included words that change G in changing number (e.g. *uovo* → *uova*) or that are invariable (e.g. *re*), and also one (invariable) borrowing (i.e. *box*).

3.3.5 Test 5: diminutives

This test deals with diminutives. We listed 16 words, asking the informants to use the suffixes *-ino* (M) or *-ina* (F) to create diminutive form.

(5) cane → ___*CANINO*____

We decided to include diminutives for several reasons: first of all, with diminutives a change in G is not unusual (e.g. *villa* F → *villino* M), and also because suffixes *-ino*/*-ina* "turn nouns of unpredictable G [...] into nouns with predictable G. For example, *cane* becomes *canino*" (Kupisch et al. 2002). Despite the fact that also the augmentative form would have been of interests, we decided not to include it in our study. Augmentative suffixes are in fact *-one* M and *-ona* F, where F is perfectly clear, while M has an *-e* that might have been confusing for the informants; especially because F suffix *-zione* is one of the particular suffixes that can help to determine the G of the noun, and this could have been even more misleading.

[16] Cf. section 2.2.1 *Italian G*

3.3.6 Test 6: participle and predicative

Even if our informants are beginners, and hence not yet familiar with participle and predicative, we still decided to have a test on this topic to see if they realize the importance of G in this particular kind of phrase. We decided to have 16 sentences that perfectly show the referent's G (either through an article or through a proper noun). The informants have to make the agreement with participle or predicative.

(6) Maria è andat__*A*__ a casa

Some sentences are specifically thought to be problematic: there are proper nouns with an animate referent (e.g. *Maria Callas*) colliding with the G of the attribution (e.g. *soprano* M). We want to see if the informants choose the agreement according to the semantics of the referent or according to the syntactic clues that we have inserted (i.e. articles).

3.3.7 Test 7: transfer

Since Italian and Swedish have both a two-party G system with one unmarked G, we might observe a transfer phenomenon (cf. Carroll 1989) in the lexical entrance of a noun:

> transfer could be evident in the following way: the animated Swedish noun 'familj' (common G, unmarked); a Swedish learner of Italian L2 should assign the Italian G that the learner perceives as unmarked, i.e. masculine. This could appear in agreement mistakes in learner's Italian production, e.g. 'un famiglia' instead of 'una famiglia' (Bernardini, 2004:57).

For this reason, we deemed appropriate to have a translation test, deciding to 'mix' the words according to the unmarkedness of the two languages (i.e. F – common; M – neuter; M – common; F – neuter). The informants have to translate 16 words from Swedish to Italian: all the nouns are listed with indefinite article,

and the informants have to write the Italian indefinite article and the correct ending of the noun.

(7) en bok = __*UN*__ libr__*O*__

The morphemic root of the noun has been written, the informant have only to write the article and the ending: we decided to do so in order to avoid unnecessary stress and memory lapses, as well as to prevent informants from leaving the exercise blank. There are nouns ending with -*e*, M with ending in -*a,* or F with ending in -*o*. Especially in this test, we considered it very important to include the indefinite article due to its formal similarity in the two languages (contrarily to the definiteness feature[17]).

3.3.8 Test 8: possessive determiners

We considered it appropriate to have a test with possessive determiners. In this case we wrote the definite article, to see if the informants think about the clue we wrote for the agreement. The phrases are 8.

(8) La mi__*A*__ casa

We decided to have the definite article, and not the indefinite one, for several reasons: we were not afraid of misunderstandings in this case, because this test deals with reading and identification of the article, and not its production; but the indefinite article next to the possessive determiner (which in Italian confers the value of partitive indefiniteness) could have been misunderstood. Contrarily to what happens in Italian, definiteness is inherent to the possessive determiner in the informants' L1, so the definite article can ease the comprehension of the test without being misleading. It is a test that wants to verify the ability to pay attention to the element of the whole phrase, rather than the correctness in possessive production per se, since the article is a clear clue of G attribution.

[17] Cf. section 2.2.2 *Swedish G.*

3.3.9 Test 9: Italian pseudowords

This test is based only on phonologic cues: as we said before, G assignment to nouns in Italian often follows specific phonological criteria. We listed 14 words Italian pseudowords, and we asked the informants to identify the indefinite article. None of the informants was aware that those words do not exist in Italian.

(9) __*UN*__ gico

This test wants to check how informants react to a test made of words that they surely have not heard before, and which phonological clues they use to determine the G. As many linguists underline, G is a category "precociously and deeply rooted in grammar and lexicon of native speakers, only partially based on semantic grounds" (Chini, 1995:151). We wanted to analyze how this can be true for L2 learners, not only depending on age factors (i.e. if TA informants use different strategies in comparison to young informants), but also how these differences (if there are any) can be compared with native speakers' strategies. We decided to put all the pseudowords in a single test. We did not mix them among the others, also to check the informants' reaction to an exercise made only of completely unknown words (i.e. would they understand that the words do not exist and show it in some way? Would they leave some of them unanswered? Would they show any patterns in their choices?). As Corbett (1991) explains, G is not purely conventional: its assignment is made also on the basis of formal criteria. For instance, "native speakers assign a G to non-existent nouns (but also neologisms) in a rather uniform way, that responds to implicit and unconscious rules present in their lexical and grammatical competence, in their assignment system" (Chini, 1995:35). Since learners of Italian as an L2 cannot glean such rules from a native competence that they do not possess, we want to see which phonological cues are important for them, and if they show some patterns in their mistakes.

3.3.10 Test 10: minimal pairs with visual input

We decided to test minimal pairs as well, where G creates an opposition between two nouns that can be either etymologically linked or totally unrelated. As Chini stresses, "for most of inanimate referents, nominal G is not semantically motivated" (Chini, 1995:79). We added an animate referent, i.e. a whale, to see if the informants think about an unmarked M, as normally happens with animals, though not in this case, where *balena* is F. We elicit the G through 8 visual referents: we wanted to have a test where only G opposition creates two different meanings, and in order to avoid long sentences or textual cues (such as articles, adjectives, etc.), we decided to directly show the referent with a drawing. We gave two options after each picture, and the informants have to cross the option they believed is the correct one.

(10)  Melo ☐ Mela ☑

In order to avoid misunderstandings, the differentiation is only based on M ending *-o* and F ending *-a*.

3.3.11 Test 11: vocal input

We also wanted to have a test based on the recognition of G through vocal input: the informants have to decide the correct indefinite article (*un* vs. *una*) of the 16 nouns that the interviewer read[18].

[18] For the list of nouns, cf. Appendix II.

(11) 🔊 casa

☐ Un

☑ Una

Each word has been pronounced very slowly, because according to Villarini & La Grassa (2010) speed plays an important role and "as the speed of oral input presentation increases, elderly performance can decrease up to 5 times in comparison to youngsters" (Villarini & La Grassa, 2010:38). We decided to have disyllabic words with precise phonological structure (with the exclusive use of vowels *a*, *o* and *e*). Every word was paroxytone in order not to confuse the informants.

3.3.12 Summary

Tab. 2 - Summary of the structure of the tests

Test	*Element*	*Structure of the test*
1	Indefinite article	Choice of indefinite article for 48 nouns
2	Adjective combination	Choice of one among 6 adjectives for 13 nouns
3	Noun phrase	Choice of indefinite article and of adjective's ending for 18 noun phrases
4	Plural	Writing of pl. form for 18 nouns
5	Diminutives	Choice of diminutive suffix for 20 nouns
6	Participles and predicatives	Writing of ending for 20 participles or predicatives
7	Transfer	Choice of indefinite article and writing of ending for 16 nouns with Swedish translation
8	Possessive determiners	Writing of ending for possessive determiners of 8 nouns
9	Italian pseudowords	Choice of indefinite article for 14 fictional nouns
10	Visual input	Checking a box between 2 possible choices for 8 drawings
11	Vocal input	Checking a box with indefinite article for 16 nouns read by the interviewer

3.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Our main research questions are: do Swedish-speaking L2 learners of Italian over 55 years show some peculiar patterns in G learning in comparison to Swedish-speaking L2 learners of Italian age 16-24? And if they do, which patterns and in which learning features are the patterns most clearly seen (e.g. transfer from Swedish; semantic cues clearer than syntactic cues, etc.)?

We explained the characteristics of senior learning [19]: while there are no significant differences from a neurological point of view (except a general decrease in sensorial functions such as hearing and sight), social characteristics of senior learning can be instead different from the ones of young adults' learning. Summarizing, the points we assume senior linguistic learning differs from young students' one are:

1. a freer character of linguistic learning in elderly people. Typically it can be assumed that many older learners who have retired learn languages out of their own free will: they should be "far at this point from the competitive dynamics of the working life, without needs of formal certification or legal educational qualification, [...] without purely instrumental purposes" (Luise, 2014:447), if we exclude the instrumental purposes such as visiting the country whose language they are studying.
2. a freer character of the actual life of elderly students: it can also be assumed that, in comparison to young students, older learners, at least in the parts of the world that we're interested in here, have fewer obligations in their everyday life.
3. the way the language is supposedly taught to youngsters (i.e. mainly in school, with precise grammatical explanation and tests that aim to verify the grammatical knowledge of the students) contrasted to the way the language is supposedly taught to elderly people (i.e. mainly in private language schools, where greater importance is given to communicative functions and to

[19] Cf. chapter 2.1.3, *Characteristics of senior learning*.

entertainment). We assume for the purposes of this study that teaching to older learners is, in comparison to the younger learners, more geared towards communicative aspects of the target language and less to formal aspects. However, we have not studied this in detail, so the assumption rests on our own impressions.

Our impressions and knowledge about the learners involved in this study and their respective learning contexts, lead us to assume that, a part from the age difference, also other conditions for learning Italian are somewhat different in the two groups. However, it cannot be excluded that individual learners in the older and the younger group resemble each other with respect to individual features like motivation and previous learning experiences of Italian. Generally, we could assume that in TA learners the motivational potential is very powerful, but also the time of learning is more serene and less productivity oriented, something that would allow more creativity in the educational growing.

Our younger informants studied (or have studied in a recent past) Italian at school[20], having then specific motivations to learn the language. Villarini & La Grassa (2010) talk about an "instrumental motivation": students would show different results in their performances not bluntly because of their age: that would be too simplistic. Their performances could have been affected by current stimuli and demands that represent their immediate goals. TA students, on the contrary, would lay claim to a less formal teaching, so, in turn, to a learning where the primary function of the language would be communication rather than correctness. We assume that this might have an influence on the learning process. Therefore, our hypothesis is that, being the learning of elderly people influenced by these factors, we should be able to see a difference in their linguistic proficiency in the L2. This should be noticed in some patterns in the results of their tests.

Due to the assumed freer character of senior learning and motivation, we expect a greater variety among the mistakes made by the older group, less than what we

[20] Cf. section 3.6.2. *Younger group*.

expect from the younger group. Moreover, since getting the wrong G does not compromise communication, we expect our older group to be less sensitive to this feature, and so their performances might be poorer than the ones of our younger group. However, it might be the case that proficiency levels are not the same in the two groups.

As we already explained, since elderly people seem to be sensitive to stress[21], despite our effort in limiting it, we expect the older group to leave blank more exercises than the younger group: in fact, we assume that young people should be less anxious, or at least, should show less of their anxiety in their performances. Moreover, being used to answer exercises and tests in school, they should also be less afraid in hazarding a guess to their answers.

As a general consideration, since elderly people seem to be more proficient in using their past experience[22], we also expect that they will be more focused on semantics rather than on syntax. Previous research (Villarini & La Grassa, 2010) has shown that older learners rely on world knowledge as a problem solving strategy. Therefore we expect them to use world knowledge where this is relevant also to solve some of the gender tests: we assume that they should try, whenever it is possible, to establish a relation between linguistic unit and semantic unit (thinking about the referent or translating the word in their L1, for example).

After giving general hypotheses about our research, since every test looks at specific features of G learning, we will formulate specific hypotheses for each test. Of course the tests has been designed in a way that we had clear hypotheses on some aspects, while on others we did not know what to expect, and just wanted to see if there were some interesting, age-dependent, patterns.

[21] Cf. section 2.1.3, *Characteristics of senior learning*.

[22] Cf. section 2.1.3, *Characteristics of senior learning*.

3.4.1 Test 1: indefinite article

Since this test asks for the basic assignment of a noun to its correct G, the hypothesis for this test is our main assumption: we assume that elderly learners will show general patterns in G agreement, different from the ones showed by younger learners. In general, we expect more variety in the answers of the older group, for the reasons we already explained[23].

3.4.2 Test 2: adjective combination

Our hypothesis is that the older group's answers will generally not be incorrect from a semantic point of view, while they might be incorrect from a syntactic point of view; we also think that this might be the opposite in the younger group's answers. As we already said, elderly people seem to be good at using their world experience in problem solving strategies[24]: this test, concerning adjective combinations, is a test where we hypothesize that the older group will put this knowledge to use (e.g. it is more intuitive thinking about an iceberg that is cold, rather than small, so we assume that the older group will preferably choose *iceberg – fredda* rather than *iceberg – piccolo*, even if the G agreement will be wrong).

3.4.3 Test 3: noun phrase

Due to the difference between elderly people and young adults regarding distributed attention vs. focused attention, i.e. that elderly people's performances

[23] Cf. general hypotheses at the beginning of this section.

[24] Cf. section IV.3, *Characteristics of senior learning*.

would be poorer when the attention has to be given to different aspects of a single issue[25], we assume that TA learners might be less focused on the whole noun phrase. We think that they might make mistakes not only in G agreement, but primarily between the article and the noun's ending. On the contrary, we think that younger learners might pay more attention to the whole phrase, and so we should be able to see more congruence between the article and the noun's ending, in comparison to elderly people.

3.4.4 Test 4: plural

Because of what we previously assumed regarding the characteristics of senior learning[26], our hypothesis is to observe more variety in the results of nouns such as *box* or *re*, in comparison to younger learners. Moreover, not only due to the more homogeneity that we think we will see in the younger group, but also due to the more formal way to teach L2 to young students (that we assumed, but that it is important to stress that we did not verify), we expect to see more over-regularizations (e.g. *dito* → **diti*; *retroscena* → **retroscene*) in the younger group's results.

3.4.5 Test 5: diminutives

We do not expect the identification of G change in nouns such as *villa* or *faccia* (whose diminutive form are anyway considered admissible in the F form) in none of the groups, and we expect uncertainties in borrowings. We expect elderly informants to be more sensitive to the stress factor. Diminutives, in fact, are not a

[25] Cf. section 2.1.3 *Characteristics of senior learning* and the general hypotheses at the beginning of this section.

[26] Cf. section 2.1.3 *Characteristics of senior learning* and the general hypotheses at the beginning of this section.

studied feature at a beginner level. Hence, we think we will see more variety in the answers of TA learners due to stress, and we also expect them to leave more questions blank.

3.4.6 Test 6: participle and predicative

In case of problematic nouns (where we had a proper noun with an animate referent, e.g. *Maria Callas*, colliding with the G of the attribution, e.g. *soprano* M), our hypothesis is that the older group will choose preferably according to the semantics, while the younger group will preferably follow syntactic clues. Also in this case, our hypotheses stem from the assumption that elderly people should use their world experience in problem solving, and semantics of course deals with the real world, while syntax does not[27].

3.4.7 Test 7: transfer

Since all the informants are Swedish native speakers, we want to see if their L1 has an influence on G agreement depending on the age factor, i.e. if there are some general patterns in the way the older group shows transfer phenomena, contrasting to the younger group. We think it will be possible to see different patterns in the two groups, according to our general assumption. We also assume that the variety in the older group might be greater, due to the considerations we already made about senior learning[28].

[27] Cf. section 2.1.3 *Characteristics of senior learning.*

[28] Cf. section 2.1.3 *Characteristics of senior learning* and the general hypotheses at the beginning of this section.

3.4.8 Test 8: possessive determiners

We think younger learners might be more attentive than TA learners to the clue of definite article. Since fluid intelligence (which refers to inductive reasoning and novel problem solving) and distributed attention (i.e. the ability to focus on different aspects of the same situation, cf. Cattel, 1971; Jaeggi et al., 2008; Luise, 2014) decrease in elderly age, we believe that TA learners might show a poorer performance in this test, in comparison to youngsters, because they might pay less attention to the definite article as a clear clue of G assignment. In our hypothesis, younger learners should choose the possessive determiner according to the definite article.

3.4.9 Test 9: Italian pseudowords

We assume that TA learners might leave more questions blank: the psychological effect will probably be stronger, because informants will not have any clue nor memory of the words they will see, and they will not be able to rely on their world knowledge. In a situation like this, without any foothold, we expect elderly learners' problem solving strategies to collapse. For these reasons, we think that elderly learners might have more problems than youngsters, and that might show more variety in their results.

3.4.10 Test 10: minimal pairs with visual input

Since a visual input directly recalls an object of the world, and we have already talked about TA learners and the use their world experience in problem solving strategies[29], we think elderly learners might have better results in this test.

3.4.11 Test 11: vocal input

Since the last test does not show written nouns to the informants, but is based only on a vocal input, we assume that TA learners will have worse results and more questions left blank: not only could they have hearing impairments (which we have seen to be common among elderly people[30]), but we also think that a vocal input might be perceived as particularly stressful for our older group, that would not have any kind of written foothold. The stress factor could be showed by more answers left blank and also by a greater variety in the older group's results.

[29] Cf. section 2.1.3 *Characteristics of senior learning*

[30] Cf. section 2.1.3 *Characteristics of senior learning*

3.4.12 Summary

Tab. 3 - Summary of the specific hypotheses on the tests

Test	*Element*	*Topic*	*Hypothesis*
1	Indefinite article	General patterns in G agreement	General age differences E = variety
2	Adjective combination	Semantics vs. syntax	E = semantics Y = syntax
3	Noun phrase	Distributed vs. Focused attention	E = focused Y = distributed
4	Plural	General age differences Over-regularizations	General age differences E = variety Y = over-regularizations
5	Diminutives	Stress factor	E = more variety Y = less variety
6	Participles and predicatives	Semantics vs. syntax	E = semantics Y = syntax
7	Transfer	L1 influence	General age differences E = variety
8	Possessive determiners	Distributed vs. Focused attention	E = focused Y = distributed
9	Italian pseudowords	Stress factor	E = more variety Y = less variety
10	Visual input	World knowledge	General age differences E = better performances
11	Vocal input	Stress factor	E = more variety Y = less variety

E = elderly learners; Y = younger learners

However, we have to pay attention to the fact that there might be other intervening and/or confounding factors that might blur the results, at least on an individual level: for instance, the proficiency levels of the informants were not controlled through a test specifically designed for our purposes, but through a self-assessment test provided by the schools where the subjects studied Italian; the actual teaching has not been studied; moreover we do not have detailed

information about the learners motivation for studying Italian. So we are aware that our hypotheses rest on our own general knowledge and impressions.

3.5 FIELD OF OBSERVATION

Regarding our older group, all of them (except for one, who studied Italian in a university course at the moment of the test) attended Italian lessons in various private language schools of three different cities (Malmö, Lund and Ystad), with several different teachers. All of them then were fresh from their Italian studies at the moment of the test.

Our younger group consisting of Swedish youngsters (age 16-24), studied Italian in a public high school in Göteborg (except for one, who also studied Italian in a public high school in Göteborg, but who at the moment of the tests was studying at university, representing the only informant who was not fresh from Italian studies at the moment of the tests).

Both the older group and the younger group (except for the university student among the young informants) studied Italian weekly, during a lesson of two academic hours (i.e. 1 hour and 30 minutes per week). Both elderly and younger learners, besides their age, have been asked about their education level, the languages they had knowledge of (which ones and which level of competence they considered to have on the basis of a self-evaluation), and how often and in which way they were in contact with the Italian language. We have to take into consideration the fact that all of them studied Italian in Sweden, so they have less linguistic stimuli: the same research in language schools in Italy could have definitely given different results.

Only for one of the tests (Test 9), we have a control group composed by Italian native speakers, differentiated by age and region of origin.

3.6 INFORMANTS

3.6.1 Older group

We chose our subjects within beginner courses (A1-A2 according to the CEFR, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, cf. Council of Europe, 2011), because according to Bartning (2000), Dewaele & Veronique (2000; 2002), and Granfeldt (2005) there is a great difference in G agreement realization between initial learning phases and advanced ones. Their level has been determined by a self assessment test distributed by their language schools. In any case, their basic level is widely shown by their answers to the tests developed for this research. However it is important to underline that we did not verify, with a test specifically designed for our purposes, whether the difference among groups (and individuals too) were significant or not.

As we said before, it is true that G is very difficult to master at any level of language learning, even at the highest levels, but it is obviously at the lower levels that more uncertainties occur (cf. Gudmundson, 2012), so it is at lower levels that we expect to find a great variety; the greater the variety is, the greater are the chances to see if there are patterns in learning. So if there are characteristics which are peculiar in senior learning, it is perhaps easier to identify them in the first phases of learning. Moreover, we already mentioned that "in the long run younger learners appear to accomplish the same, or better, results in comparison to adults; but adults are faster in acquiring proficiency in a limited period of time" (cf. Villarini & La Grassa, 2010). We have to stress once again that, according to its very nature (i.e. TA persons), our older group is made of mostly retired people, and even in the case that they are still working, they surely do not need to learn Italian for work. The kind and degree of motivation could then be different within the two groups.

Tab. 4 - Older group's age and linguistic competence

Informant	*Age*	*Studied languages other than Italian and level of competence*						
		English	German	French	Latin	Spanish	Arabic	Classic Greek
A	56	I	B	B				
B	69	A	A	I	A			A
C	64	A	A	B	B			
D	71	I	A	B				
E	63	I	I	B				
F	71	I	I	B				
G	78	I	I	I				
H	67	A	I	I	I			
I	65	B		B				
J	70	A	I	B		B	B	
K	65	I	B	B				
L	66	A	B	B				
M	73	I	I					
N	64	B	B					
O	67	I	B	B				
P	68	A	I	A		I		
Q	60	I	B	I				
R	75	A	A	I				
S	69	A	A	I				
T	70	A	I	B				
U	67	A	I	I				
V	70	I	B					
W	74	I	B	B				

A = Advanced; I = Intermediate; B = Basic

The average age of our older group is 67,91 years.

As we can see in Tab. 4, all of them have at least basic knowledge of at least two languages other than Italian (and of course, their mother tongue). Therefore, linguistic interest and competence is evident throughout the whole older group (it

might be relevant to mention that their general cultural level is overall high). We also notice that everyone of them has at least basic competence in one gendered language: everyone except for one informant has knowledge of German (this informant is however familiar with French, instead); 86,95% of French; 13% of Latin, two informants of Spanish and one of Arabic. 82,60% has a competence in two or more gendered languages; 17,39% even of three or more gendered languages. It is important to underline that, as we already said, 86,95% of informants are familiar with French, a gendered Romance language, which may have had some influence on mistakes such as **una mare*, wrongly considered F by the 21,74% of the older group in test 11.

Tab. 5 - Older group's contacts with Italian language

Informant	*Contacts with Italian language*					
	Travelling to Italy	*Listening to Italian music*	*Talking with Italian native speakers*	*Looking at Italian movies*	*Reading Italian books*	*Reading Italian newspapers for interest in Italian news*
A	O	S	S	R	R	
B	S	S	S	R		
C	O	R	R	O	R	
D	R	R				
E	O		R		R	
F	S	R	R	R	S	
G	S	O	R	R	R	
H	S			R		
I	S	R	R	S		
J	S	S		S		
K	S		R	R		
L	O	S	S	R		
M	R	R				
N	S	R	R	R		

O	O	S	S			
P	S	O	R	R		
Q	S		R			
R	S	O	R	S		
S	O	O	S	R		
T	O	S	R	S		
U	S	O	R	S	R	
V	S	S	S	S		
W	O	S	R	S	O	O

R = rarely; S = sometimes; O = often

As we can notice in Tab. 5, the contacts that our older group has with the Italian language reflect their tourist interest: all the informants travel (at least rarely) to Italy. Their interest in Italian music and cinema is also to be mentioned, even though it cannot be considered as particularly influent in their linguistic ability. Different is the case of the reading of Italian books: although only 30,43% of the older group reads Italian books (of which 71,42% only rarely, with only one informant that has reading of both books and newspapers as one of the greatest pushes that motivate their interest in Italian language) it is right here that G is constantly present, visible, written and important, and may have an influence of the learners' competence in this area.

3.6.2 Younger group

Younger group: general considerations

All the informants of our younger group are age 16-24. These specific constraints of age follow research about neurologic and cognitive functions, regarding both physiological and pathological factors, and even social policies, that consider the age between 16 and 24 years as a specific phase of adulthood, i.e. the one of young adults, where the brain is at its full capacity (cf. Lawrie, Whalley,

Kestelman et al., 1999; YoungMinds, 2006a, 2006b; Roma, Bastianelli, Mineo, 2012; Thompson, Blair, Henrey, 2014).

As we already said, we have to underline that the young adults we have investigated in our study were upper secondary school students (except for one). The diversity of the psychological situation between the older group and the younger group, could then play a decisive role[31].

Tab. 6 - Younger group's age and linguistic competence

Informant	***Age***	***Studied languages other than Italian and level of competence***						
		English	*French*	*German*	*Spanish*	*Chinese*	*Kurdish*	*Norwegian*
Aa	24	A		A		B		
Bb	18	A						
Cc	18	A					I	
Dd	19	A						
Ee	19	A			B			
Ff	19	A	B					A
Gg	17	A						
Hh	18	I			B			
Ii	18	A	I					
Jj	19	I	B					
Kk	17	A			I			
Ll	18	A						
Mm	16	I						

A = Advanced; I = Intermediate; B = Basic

The average age of our younger group is 17 years. In Tab. 6 we can see that the linguistic interests of our younger informants are overall not as strong as our older group's ones. Besides their mother tongue, all of them speak English (43,48% at

[31] We already talked about the instrumental motivation that might guide young students to their learning. Cf. section 3.4 *Research questions and hypotheses.*

an advanced level); only 26,09% has competence (though 50% only basic) in another language besides English (gendered in all the cases), and only two informants speak two other languages (of which one is a gendered language in both cases: in fact, informant Aa has an advanced level of German, and informant Ff has basic competence in French). In general, 61,54% of the younger group has at least basic competence in one gendered language: 37,5% of them have at least basic competence in Spanish or French (none of them as an advanced level), one has an advanced level of German and one of Kurdish (this at least has been the definition given by the informant; for more information about Kurdish languages and dialects cf. among many others Izady, 1988; McDowall, 1996).

Tab. 7 - Younger group's contacts with Italian language

Informant	***Contacts with Italian language***				
	Travelling to Italy	*Listening to Italian music*	*Talking with Italian native speakers*	*Looking at Italian movies*	*Reading Italian books*
Aa	O	O	R		
Bb	R		S	S	R
Cc		S	R		
Dd	S				
Ee	R		R		
Ff			R		
Gg			S		O
Hh					
Ii					
Jj	S			R	
Kk			S	R	
Ll					
Mm	R	R	S		S

R = rarely; S = sometimes; O = often

As we can see in Tab. 7, the contacts that the younger group has with the Italian language are not many: 30,77% of our informants do not have any contact at all with the language besides the lessons. Listening to Italian music and watching Italian movies does not seem to be particularly influential in their linguistic ability. Five informants said to travel to Italy at least rarely. Among those who do have contact with Italian, 88,89% of them stated to talk to native speakers, and three of them also to read Italian books (one of them even often). We wonder if the informants understood that we meant both talking and reading in Italian, and not in other languages.

Younger group: informants with Asperger syndrome

Bb, Cc, Dd, Gg, Hh, Ii, Jj, Kk, Ll, Mm have Asperger syndrome, which is:

> a disorder of uncertain nosological validity, characterized by the same type of qualitative abnormalities of reciprocal social interaction that typify autism, together with a restricted, stereotyped, repetitive repertoire of interests and activities. It differs from autism primarily in the fact that there is no general delay or retardation in language or in cognitive development. This disorder is often associated with marked clumsiness. There is a strong tendency for the abnormalities to persist into adolescence and adult life. Psychotic episodes occasionally occur in early adult life. (cf. "F84.5 Asperger syndrome". WHO, 2015[32]).

We did not consider this as an obstacle for our research: Asperger syndrome, in fact is a neurodevelopmental disorder of social interaction, communication, and a restricted range of behaviors or interests, i.e. a social disability which is not associated with intellectual disability (cf. Woodbury-Smith & Volkmar, 2009), where individuals affected by the syndrome "do not have considerable learning difficulties" (cf. Wire, 2005:124). Moreover, many questions and controversies

[32] This definition comes from ICD, a section within the international classifications on health on the website of World Health Organization: ICD defines the universe of diseases, disorders, injuries and other related health conditions. Visited on 10.VII.2016. http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2015/en#/F84.5

remain about the aspects of this syndrome (cf. Woodbury-Smith &Volkmar, 2009), especially regarding the wide variation in symptomatology among individuals (cf. Woodbury-Smith &Volkmar, 2009; and this is indeed something that we had the chance to notice during our test). Furthermore, Klin & Volkmar warn us: "the psychiatric label [of Asperger syndrome] should never be assumed to convey a precise preconceived set of behaviors and needs" (Klin & Volkmar, 1995:1). Also diagnostic criteria represent a delicate issue:

> there are [...] indications that AS is currently functioning as a residual diagnosis given to normal-intelligence children with a degree of social disabilities who do not fulfill criteria for autism [...]. Possibly the most common usage of the term AS is as synonymous or a replacement to autism in individuals with normative or superior IQs. This pattern has diluted the concept and reduced its clinical utility. Empirical validation of specific diagnostic criteria is badly needed [...]. (Klin 2006:s9).

This means that some of our elderly informants could in theory have a similar social disorder but never have been diagnosed. This has to be kept in mind also considering what Attwood (2008) points out, i.e. the 30-50% of the cases is not even diagnosed, due to the difficult identification of the syndrome.

Regarding language, individuals with Asperger syndrome have generally good language skills in form (syntax and phonology), normal language acquisition and sometimes even an early language development (contrary to autism, where children do often show a speech delay), but impoverished skills in content and use (cf. Bishop, 2000; Ozonoff & Griffith, 2000; Rourke & Tsatsanis, 2000.). The communication disorders that Asperger syndrome involve, then, primarily concern pragmatic functions: individuals with the syndrome have an

> odd communication style [...], which is often overly formal and may take the form of an in-depth monologue about a topic of special interest regardless of whether their interlocutor is interested or not. [...] In AS speech is often verbose and tangential. There may also be peculiarities to the speech itself [...]. For example, it may lack the normal prosody and may also be odd in terms of volume, rate or

> rhythm. Sometimes pauses reflect the difficulties people with AS have in formulating answers to questions and structuring their discourse (Woodbury-Smith & Volkmar, 2009:3).

As we can see, these clinical characteristics regard primarily the social function of the language, and so they did not lead us to believe that the syndrome would have had any effect on the learning of a single grammatical feature such as G. Moreover, we have already seen the potential abnormalities of the language of individuals with Asperger (i.e. poor prosody, one-sided and egocentric conversational style, failure to respond to interlocutor's signals, marked verbosity, incapability to come to a point or a conclusion), and we noticed that these deal with spoken language and free conversation (i.e. where the social function of the language is prominent): our test is written, and made of specific questions, often to be answered in a discrete fashion (e.g. *un* vs. *una*; *ino* vs. *ina*, and so on). It would of course have been different if we had to research the use of G in a spontaneous, spoken, linguistic exchange, but this was not the case.

Regarding L2 learning in individuals with Asperger syndrome, it is again affirmed the absolutely individual characteristic of these persons. There is not much research on the topic, but it is important to stress that their intellectual level is standard. There are many students with Asperger syndrome who can learn another language very easily and there are just as many who struggle. Some of them love learning another language and some others do not. It is the same as in the general population of school students (Tullemans, 2008). If they differ from the norm in any way, they would do so positively, then: thanks to their attention to rules, they might find the mechanical learning of a foreign language relatively easy and might quickly assimilate the sounds, the grammatical rules and rapidly learn new vocabulary (even though, since the individuals with Asperger syndrome differ much one to another, this cannot be considered at all as a general rule). They might also have a very good memory that should in any case help in L2 learning (regarding our research, at least, it should help in the learning of G), in sum they should not have problems in a second language related to the syndrome. The problems that they could have, as we have already seen, concern the social use of

the language, rather than its learning: communicative purposes and interpretation of the interlocutor's signals (for more information regarding L2 learning in individuals with Asperger syndrome, cf. Baso, 2008).

We did notice though that some of our informants with Asperger (not all of them), were particularly sensitive to the stressful situation of the test: one of them needed the teacher to sit next to them during the test; one of them needed to be asked to finish the test two or three times before actually doing it; more than one had to stop the test several times, go out, take a break, and come back; etc. One of the main issues for persons with Asperger syndrome is in fact anxiety, that can lead to a lack of concentration (cf. Wire, 2005): the interviewer was a completely new person who asked them to perform a likewise completely new task, and we believed that this constituted a stress factor for them. This surely had an influence on the performances (e.g. many left blank the exercises they were not sure of), and it represents a limitation to our research. Of course, these limitations concern the social situation of the test, rather than L2 competence per se, but nevertheless they might have affected the results.

3.6.3 Italian native speakers control group

In only one test, i.e. test 9[33], we used a control group composed of Italian native speakers. As we already explained, this test deals with words that do not exist in Italian, but that do sound Italian: they have typical Italian endings, which are more or less strictly linked to a specific G, and their G can be more or less obvious to native speakers thanks to phonologic cues. In order to compare the strategies to assign a G to non-existing words between TA learners and young learners, we needed a sort of 'key of evidence', constituted by a control group of 14 Italian native speakers. This control group is made of informants of different ages, geographical origin and social background. We thought that especially the social

[33] Cf. section 3.3.9 *Test 9: Italian pseudowords*.

background could have been relevant especially for pseudowords that sound like having a Greek etymology (e.g. *nistema* and *noma*), M in Italian despite the fact that they have an ending *-a* which is normally an F indicator[34]: people that have a background of classical or medical studies, for instance, may be more inclined to recognize an apparent Greek etymology and decide for a M article.

Tab. 8 - Native speakers control group

Informant	***Age***	***Italian region of Origin***	***Education level***	***Field of education***
α	27	Liguria	Bachelor	Literature
β	25	Veneto	Bachelor	Psychology
γ	36	Toscana	Master	Chemistry
δ	30	Toscana	High School diploma	Science
ε	38	Toscana	Master	Law
ζ	37	Toscana	Master	IT
η	25	Campania	Bachelor	Languages and Literatures
θ	55	Marche	Master	Education Sciences
ι	44	Abruzzo	Professional training course	Journalism
κ	21	Lazio	Bachelor	Political Science
λ	69	Sardegna	Doctor of Medicine	Medicine and surgery
μ	18	Lombardia	Junior High School	Art
ν	29	Calabria	Master	Literature
ξ	32	Veneto	High School diploma	Science

[34] Cf. section 2.2.1 *Italian G*.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Each test has been analyzed separately. After the analysis of each test, we proceeded making conclusions on the basis of the general results. The criterion of the analysis has been the same for each test: we transcribed the results onto different tables (cf. Appendix IV) and ordered them according to the cue validity of the words. Generally, the tokens have been considered correct in case of inappropriate article forms within the appropriate G/number paradigm (e.g. **uno bambino*, instead of *un bambino*) and in case of spelling mistakes (eg. **nonina* instead of *nonnina*).

In general, the results of the younger group seem to be more random: contrarily to our hypotheses, while TA learners have showed a great homogeneity in their results, the answers of the young learners have had a greater internal variation. Moreover, the younger group has generally preferred to leave blank the exercises they did not feel sure about. Sometimes several of them left only one token blank, while in other cases a whole test has been skipped: in the first case, we considered the token as a mistake, in the other case, we removed the informant from the total calculation of the percentage of the test. We believe that Asperger syndrome played a significant role in this: where the stress of the test was too much, the informant(s) preferred not to deal with it. This of course constitutes a limit for our study. It is always specified in the description of the results of the tests if an informant left the whole test blank.

One consideration that has to be made, but that lies outside of the purposes of this study, and that deals more with psycholinguistics than with a specific study on L2 learning, is that many informants of the older group expressed their discontent regarding not knowing the meaning of many nouns in the test many times, explicitly affirming the difficulty in assigning G to unknown words; on the contrary, more than one youngster asked the interviewer to read the nouns,

affirming the difficulty in assigning G to written words without having them heard pronounced by a native speaker.

Now we will explain the specific analysis and results of each test[35].

4.1 TEST 1: INDEFINITE ARTICLE[36]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 74,20%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 62,76%. We excluded 4 tokens from the calculation of these percentages, which are the double gender nouns: for the words excluded from these calculations, cf. Tab. 11 for Older group's results and Tab. 12 for Younger group's results.

As we already said, the impression is that elderly people associate G to the meaning of the word (i.e. when they learn a lexeme, they associate it with its G, and they tend to remember it together with its G: for instance, we clearly remember at least three informants repeating in a low voice things that they surely studied, e.g. "the days of the week are always M except for Sunday", etc.), even though drastically irregular words (such as *mano*) have shown many mistakes anyway.

Youngsters, on the other hand, seem not to have paid specific attention to the meaning, and also with very common words, they did not give much importance to G; they might have known the meaning of the words, but they did not associate it with its G (e.g. *cane*, *sole*, *stazione*). Only in the case of *bambino* vs. *bambina*, where the noun was declined both in the M form and in the F form, we have had a clear distinction: all the informants, both in the older group, and in the younger

[35] Cf. section Appendix IV for the detailed results.

[36] Cf. Tab. 11 for Older group's results and Tab. 12 for Younger group's results.

group, identified the correct G. Contrarily to the older group (where other nouns were correctly identified by all the informants), there have been no other noun where the younger group unanimously agreed.

Even for nouns where the meaning was perfectly clear, or anyway, perfectly known by the informants, the fluctuation in G assignment has been quite of interest: especially the couple *padre/madre* is relevant (it is important also to mention that the two nouns have been put next to each other, in order to be even clearer), where *padre* has been identified by 92,31% of the younger group, while *madre* only by 76,92% (moreover, one of the informants who assigned the wrong gender to madre said to have an intermediate knowledge of Spanish, where the same word not only is also F, but it is also written in the same way). Also the noun *sole*, very common and mentioned to a great extent in the students' textbooks, and recognized as M by 95,65% of the older group, has been correctly assigned only by 30,77% of the younger group (in this specific case, we have to take into consideration the personalizations deriving from the Germanic mythology, especially the Norse mythology, where Sól is the sister of the moon both in Poetic Edda and in Prose Edda; nevertheless, we wonder how familiar young students are with Norse mythology, and in any case, we wonder why this should have not been misleading for the older group as well); and *cane* with better performances than *sole*, but nevertheless less recognized by the younger group in comparison to the older group.

Young learners generally seemed to be less sensitive to derivational suffixes. Regarding their cue validity, we can see how *-mento* and *-tà* have a high cue validity for both groups, while *-trice*, *-tore*, and *-iere* are less clear for youngsters than for TA learners. The suffixes *-one* and *-aggine* are not particularly clear for any of the groups.

The case of double G nouns is interesting: *turista* saw the clear prevalence of the choice of F in both groups (surely thanks to its ending in *-a*), while *portoghese* the prevalence of M, sharper in the older group. *Cantante* and *minorenne* witnessed a slight propensity for M in both groups, approximately to the same degree:

cantante is M to 65,22% of the older group vs. 69,23% of the younger group, and *minorenne,* to a slightly lesser extent, is M to 60,87% of the older group vs. 61,54% of the younger group.

So, it appears that there are some age-dependent patterns in the basic agreement of a noun to its G. In this sense, our hypothesis seems to be corroborated, but the hypothesis according to which we would have assist to a greater variety of answers in the older group seems to have been falsified, instead.

4.2 TEST 2: ADJECTIVE COMBINATION[37]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 68,56%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 56,41%.

The exercise has not been understood by several informants: some of them chose the adjectives adapting their G in order to link them to the nouns. Nevertheless, this does not jeopardize the outcomes of the test. Informant Ll of the younger group left the whole test blank, therefore has been excluded from the total calculation. Informant Cc answered only to 5 tokens, but has been included in the test, considering as mistakes the tokens (s)he did not answer to, both syntactically and semantically. In the (rare) cases where the informant chose several adjectives for the same token, we considered the token correct if all the adjectives were syntactically correct, and we considered it incorrect if even only one of them was incorrect (this in fact show that the G did not play a significant role).

As we already said in the section explaining the test, we did not consider semantic mistakes as incorrect answers: if the informant chose an adjective considering

[37] Cf. Tab. 13 for Older group's results and Tab. 14 for Younger group's results.

only syntactic features, we counted the token as correct from the grammatical point of view. Of course, we did make our considerations also on the basis of semantics, but the percentage of correctness is based only according to the correctness of G.

Once again, the younger group proved to be less homogeneous than the older group. The older group did not make many mistakes regarding semantics, less, anyway, in comparison to the younger group: 78,26% of the older group made at least one semantic mistake, vs. 100% of all the informants of the younger group. The average of semantic mistakes has been of 1,35 for each informant of the older group, while the average of semantic mistakes for the younger group has been of 4,16 for each informant. We can see once again that semantics seems to play an important role to the older group, at least more than to the younger group. The cases of *iceberg* and *guerra* are of interest, in this sense. *Iceberg* (M) has been associated to the adjective *fredda* (F) by 69,57% of the older group, despite the fact that in test 1 they proved to know that the great majority of the borrowings are M; *bar* and *tram* have been correctly identified as M by 100% of the older group, *boomerang* has been considered F by only one informant, and *computer* by two informants (cf. Tab. 13). In the case of *guerra*, 60,87% of the older group did not recognize the expression *guerra fredda* (also present in Swedish, i.e. *kalla kriget*), and decided to choose F nouns that were wrong from a semantic point of view (especially *alta*, but also *gialla* and *rossa*). This seems to show that when the informants in the older group did not know a referent, they chose considering syntax, while when there was a semantic logic, instead, this seemed to prevail on the syntactic one. And this seems also confirmed by the fact that two informants of the older group chose several adjectives for the same noun, that were perfectly fine from a semantic point of view, but were of mixed G. This general tendency may be found in the younger group as well (cf. also the case of automobile F that has been considered rosso M by 78,26% of the older group and by 66,67% of the younger group: clearly, rosso is the paradigmatic color for a car for both groups, and it would have been interesting to have giallo M and rossa F instead, to see how this would have changed the results), but to a lesser extent, also because the younger group proved once again to be less homogeneous. Anyway, also

considering the greater randomness of their answers, they seem to be less sensitive to semantics than the older group. These results seem to corroborate our hypothesis, that elderly informants would be more influenced by semantics than syntax.

4.3 TEST 3: NOUN PHRASE[38]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 68,46%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 52,88%.

We considered the token incorrect if there has been no agreement in the whole phrase, and if either the article or the ending has been left blank. We did not considered the token as a mistake if the article was correct but the ending was not clearly linked to any of the G (e.g. *un* + *-e*). In the case of the older group, informant C used definite articles instead of indefinite ones: nevertheless, they made the agreement in the whole phrase, and therefore we considered their answers correct. Once again, some informants of the younger group preferred not to answer to some of the tokens. We considered their results, considering the tokens they left blank as mistakes.

The older group generally made the agreement for the whole phrase: only 17,39% of the informants chose an M article for an F ending, and some of them to a greater extent than others (i.e. informant E in 5 out of 18 tokens; informant I in 3; informants F and V in 2). Unexpectedly, informant I used a termination in *-e* for the adjective, together with the M article *un*. This suggests an overextension of the M for the article, even if the informant thought that the ending would have been F. This would agree with Chini (1995), according to whom the less marked forms would appear before the marked ones. Regarding the younger group, almost half

[38] Cf. Tab. 15 for Older group's results and Tab. 16 for Younger group's results.

of the informants did not respect the phrase agreement article/ending, and contrarily to what happened with the older group, it seems that there was not a preferred G for the article. The mistakes are more creative.

In the test there were also two double G nouns, i.e. *giornalista* and *parente*. In these two cases, TA informants seem to be more homogeneous: *giornalista* has been considered F by 95,65% of the informants, only one admitted the possibility of both G, even if they left the M article *un* (contributing to think about an overextension of M article); *parente* has been considered M by 86,96% of the informants, and one informant considered the possibility to have a F ending but left M the article (an overextension, also in this case). The informants of the younger group were more divided: *giornalista* was considered F by 76,92% of the informants, and one chose the M article for a F ending; *parente* has been considered M by 30,77% of the informants, while two informants chose the F article for a M ending, two the M article for a F ending, and two left the token blank. The younger group seemed also to be less sensitive in comparison to the older group to suffixes, in cases like *attrice*, *pompiere*, *città*. Two TA informants used the apostrophe to define the F in *un'attrice bella*, while none of the young informants did so.

These results seem to falsify our hypotheses that elderly informants would have been focused on the single elements of the phrase and would have not posed much attention to the whole phrase agreement: on the contrary, they proved to make less mistakes in the phrase agreement in comparison to young informants.

4.4 TEST 4: PLURAL[39]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 74,87%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 65,81%.

[39] Cf. Tab. 17 for Older group's results and Tab. 18 for Younger group's results.

We did not consider spelling mistakes as incorrect (e.g. **bottilie* instead of *bottiglie*). We considered the token correct in the cases where it was easy to have an over-regularization that nevertheless has not been written (e.g. *dito* → **dite*; *uovo* → **uove*), not even where it would have been actually correct (e.g. *mano* → **mane*); in the case of *re*, *box*, and *retroscena* we considered the token correct in the case of an over-regularization of M pl. even if this was actually incorrect (i.e. **ri/*rei*, **boxi* and **retrosceni*), though we did not considered correct the token if the informant wrote *reo, that shows indeed the typical M ending, but in the s. form and not in the pl. form.; on the other hand, we considered the token incorrect in the cases where the criterion was not transparent (e.g. *situazione* → **situazione*, where the explanation could be a tendency to leave the nouns as invariable, rather than G considerations). So, of course, correct tokens could actually be incorrect from the point of view of the informant: e.g. *mano* → *mani* could have been thought to be M by the informant, even if the result is actually correct. Therefore, for this test it is very important to check detailed results for qualitative considerations.

TA informants often signaled uncertainties on the tests, with question marks or notes. They used the unexpected strategy of considering many nouns invariable, even when they were not: e.g. *bicchiere*, *scrittore*, *situazione* (so, also nouns with specific suffixes). This strategy proved to be efficient with the borrowing *box*, correctly considered invariable by 69,57% of the older group vs. 15,38% of the younger group. Nevertheless, it did not prove to be useful for an actual invariable noun such as *retroscena*, whose pl. has thought to be **retroscene* by 91,3% of the older group (compound nouns follow anyway unclear rules and are problematic for learners, cf. Chini, 1995). Some of the informants, even though not many, decided for an over-regularization of the plural form of *box*, i.e. **boxi*. However, a tendency to an over-regularization of borrowings (normally invariable), it is present also in the lowest diastratic variation of Italian, where a prop vowel is added at the end of a consonantal borrowed noun (typically, *-e* for s. and *-i* for pl., as in our example), cf. among many others Migliorini, 1990; Dardano, 1994. Often, the older group did not recognize pl. with different endings (e.g. *dita*, *uova*): nevertheless, they often showed to have realized that something

unexpected happens with those nouns (e.g. 17,39% of the informants wrote **dite* and **uove*, two wrote **uve* and one **uovè*). We considered these case correct from a G point of view. However, these nouns seem to be problematic for the younger group as well, despite the fact that they decided in a much greater extent for the over-regularization *diti* (present in Italian, with a sense of specificity, e.g. *i diti indici*, cf. Serianni, 1989).

Regarding the younger group, we can see unexpected individual strategies, particularly with uncertain nouns: informant Ee widely used a strange form with the final *-si* (e.g. *bottiglia* → **bottigasi*; *squadra* → **squadrasi*, etc.); informant Hh used various forms with the letter *n* (e.g. *bottiglia* → **bottigiorna*; *squadra* → **squadona*); informant Ii decided to have all the nouns M; informants Jj and Kk changed the ending into others that are typical for s., instead. We cannot attribute this peculiarity to Asperger syndrome: informant Ee in fact, has not Asperger syndrome and widely used a strong individual strategy.

Our hypothesis to see many over-regularizations in the younger group seems to have been corroborated by this test (over-regularization seems to be a strategy also in L1 acquisition by monolingual children, cf. Chini, 1995), but the age dimension seems not to be particularly relevant. Our hypothesis to see a great variety of results in the older group in comparison to the younger group, seems to have been falsified, instead: young learners have showed more individuality.

4.5 TEST 5: DIMINUTIVES[40]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 81,16%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 72,22%. We excluded 2 tokens from the calculation of these percentages, which are the diminutives that could have bee

[40] Cf. Tab. 19 for Older group's results and Tab. 20 for Younger group's results.

made with both G: for the words excluded from these calculations, cf. Tab. 19 for Older group's results and Tab. 20 for Younger group's results.

We did not consider spelling mistakes as incorrect (e.g. **frattellino* instead of *fratellino*). There are cases of particular adjustments (e.g. **villaina* instead of *villina*), but we considered them as correct if the G was correct. Regarding the noun *macchina*, we noticed that 25% of all the informants (i.e. considering both the older group and the younger group) used *macchina*, instead of *macchinina*, for the diminutive. We did not consider this as a sign of invariability, and hence a mistake, because it would have been an odd strategy for a common noun, and since it may be found in so many informants we thought it is much more probably to be a case of haplography, so we considered it as correct. *Film* and *computer* have been considered not subject to diminutive by 3 informants in the older group (this strategy of leaving a noun as unvariable, evident also in test 4, has not been used by younger learners): in these cases we considered the token as incorrect. Within the older group, informant I used endings in *-e* and *-i*: we considered them as incorrect, because even if they were correct from the point of view of a possible pl. (e.g. *piedini* instead of *piedino*), this was not clear. Within the younger group, informant Ee wrote *nasino* instead of *nonnino*. We do believe that (s)he simply confused the tokens but did not make a mistake: contrarily to the token *naso*, where (s)he wrote **nasina*, getting the G wrong, here (s)he changed G instead, so (s)he probably focused on the ending leaving the root of the previous token, in a homeoteleuton rather than a G mistake. Therefore, we considered the token correct.

Despite the fact that their counterparts were present, *sorella* and *nonno* appeared to be slightly more difficult for the younger group in comparison to the older group. Also in the case of apparently easy nouns such as *naso* and *macchina*, the younger group seems to have had more problems than the older group (that nevertheless had more problems with the likewise easy *busta*). *Chiave*, *mano* and *dente* have been problematic for both groups, as one would have expected.

Also in this test, younger learners showed some peculiar individual strategies: informant Ee sometimes removed a consonant from the ending (as in *pomodoro* → **promodino*; *salame* → **salaino*); informant Hh sometimes added a syllable in what it seems to be a dittology (e.g. *faccia* → **faccinina*; *villa* → **villanina*); informant Ii, on the contrary, cuts parts of the nouns in a haplography (e.g. *piede* → **pino*; *salame* → **salino*). We considered all these cases correct if the G was correct.

Regarding the nouns that can have both an M and an F termination for diminutive, such as *faccia* and *villa*, we noticed a slightly superior homogeneity in the older group. The diminutive of *villa* has considered to be *villina* by 100% of the older group vs. 84,62% of the younger group; the diminutive of *faccia* has considered to be *faccina* by 91,30% of the older group vs. 84,62% of the younger group.

This test seems to corroborate our hypothesis regarding the absence of the identification of a G change in nouns such as *villa* or *faccia* and uncertainties in borrowings (though in a greater extent in the younger group rather than in the older group). Contrarily to what we thought, TA learners did not leave any question blank and did not seem to show any particular sign of stress. In this sense, our hypothesis seems to have been falsified. Moreover, we did not have any specific hypothesis regarding individual strategies, because we thought that the informants would have followed the pretty schematic rule of removing the last vowel and adding the diminutive ending (or simply adding the ending); we have noticed a greater individuality of the strategies adopted by the young learners, instead.

4.6 TEST 6: PARTICIPLE AND PREDICATIVE[41]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 68,84%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 59,72%. We excluded 2 tokens from

[41] Cf. Tab. 21 for Older group's results and Tab. 22 for Younger group's results.

the calculation of these percentages, where two forms could have been admitted: for the words excluded from these calculations, cf. Tab. 21 for Older group's results and Tab. 22 for Younger group's results.

Within the younger group, informant Jj decided not to answer the whole test, and therefore has been excluded from the calculation. Informant Bb did not answer to the most problematic questions, but we included this informant in the whole calculation, because he did answer to some of them. In the case of compound tenses where the informants have mistaken either the auxiliary verb or the past participle, we considered the whole token as incorrect.

The adjective *belga* created problems for everyone, both in the older group and in the younger group, and the over-regularization **belgo* has been widely used. The older group also in this case seems to be more homogeneous: 5 tokens have been correctly identified by 100% of the informants, while there is no token that have been identified by the totality of the informants of the younger group. The unexpected strategy of using the ending *-e* sometimes appears, but this does not seem to be dependent on the age of the informants. Generally, TA learners did not mix the G in the compound tense between auxiliary verb and past participle (except for one informant in only two cases), while this seems to be more common among the informants in the younger group, with no clear preferences in the G of the auxiliary verb or the past participle. In general, the older group seems to have good problem solving abilities, as also shown by second thoughts and erasures. The impression is that they tried to find a logic system: it seems that they answered impulsively, then they saw clues such as articles or proper nouns, they erased and rewrote the correct answer. However, this is only an impression that cannot been confirmed with certainty. Despite this fact, in the case of problematic nouns (where the referent of the noun collided with the G of the attribution, e.g. *Maria Callas/soprano*) the older group made more mistakes because chose according to semantics, while the younger group did follow syntactic clues. This seems to corroborates our hypothesis.

4.7 TEST 7: TRANSFER[42]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 78,26%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 54,87%. We excluded 1 token from the calculation of these percentages, which is a double G noun: for the word excluded from these calculations, cf. Tab. 23 for Older group's results and Tab. 24 for Younger group's results.

If the article was correct but the ending was not, we considered the token correct and underlined the variation. However, we did consider the token as incorrect in case of a correct article but a typically marked ending, e.g. *un *cetriola*. Many tokens have been left blank, especially by the informants within the younger group. Two informants within the older group chose to use the allomorph of the article *un*, adding what they considered a euphonic *o*, exclusively in the case of *bambino*, in a surface rhyming phenomenon. We considered the token correct.

Younger learners seemed to show the phenomenon of hyper characterization to a greater extent: on 4 nouns that showed this phenomenon (i.e. *moglie*, *cane*, *problema* and *mano*), we can see that 39,13% of the informants of the older group chose *una *moglia*, vs. 53,85% of the informants of the younger group; 17,39% of the older group chose *un *cano* vs. 38,46% of the younger group; 8,7% of the older group chose *un *problemo* vs. 15,38% of the younger group; and 4,35% of the older group chose *una *mana* vs. 15,38% of the younger group. Only one young informant admitted the possibility to have *una bambina*, while all the others chose the unmarked M form.

In general, TA learners seem to have had better results, but neither the older group nor the younger group seem to have been particularly influenced by Swedish transfer. Only one noun seemed to be problematic for both groups, i.e. *un pacchetto*: despite the fact that it seems to be subject to transfer (it is M in Italian,

[42] Cf. Tab. 23 for Older group's results and Tab. 24 for Younger group's results.

but neuter in Swedish), this mistake seems to be contradicted by another problematic word, i.e. *una gamba* (F in Italian and neuter in Swedish), where the phenomenon of transfer does not find any explanation; also un cetriolo has been problematic for young learners (but not particularly for TA learners), and also this case it is not explicable with transfer phenomenon. Especially within the older group, which, as we already said, performed better in comparison to the younger group, there is no evidence of a correspondence of common/neuter - M/F in the translation from Swedish to Italian. The nouns that seem to have this correlation (e.g. *un pacchetto*) are contradicted by others where the common/neuter - M/F ratio was inverted but that nevertheless have been perfectly individuated (e.g. *una famiglia*, *un francobollo*), or by others where the common/neuter - M/F ratio has simply been ignored and have been mistaken anyway (e.g. *una gamba*). Our hypothesis to witness general patterns can have a corroboration in the general tendency of younger learners to hyper-characterize nouns with uncertain endings; our hypothesis to have more variety in elderly informants' results seems to be once again falsified, instead.

4.8 TEST 8: POSSESSIVE DETERMINERS[43]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 78,26%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 63,46%.

This test has been particularly interesting: none of the two groups showed particular attention to the clue of the article, which is very important in the identification of the G of the possessive determiners, since in Italian it is not possible to have **il mia*, or **la mio*. In the case of nouns where the ending was particularly misleading, e.g. *il mio problema*, *la mia mano* we had many mistakes in both groups (although TA learners' performances seem to have been better in

[43] Cf. Tab. 25 for Older group's results and Tab. 26 for Younger group's results.

this test too); one informant even corrected the article already written in the printed part: (s)he was sure that it was the interviewer who made a mistake.

However, while only 23,08% of the younger group showed to have followed the article (because they did not make any mistake at all, even with nouns that have been problematic for them in previous tests), 34,78% of the older group proved to have followed the article when writing the test. Although the difference is not enormous, nevertheless this seems to falsify our hypotheses, according to which TA learners would have had poorer performances in comparison to youngsters because they would have paid less attention to the article as a clue of G assignment.

4.9 TEST 9: ITALIAN PSEUDOWORDS[44]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 67,82%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 59,92%. For the calculation of these percentages, we used only the tokens on which Italian native speakers had an agreement of 100%, i.e. 4 tokens: for the word excluded from these calculations, cf. Tab. 28 for Older group's results and Tab. 29 for Younger group's results.

Regarding this test, we cannot talk about a "correctness criterion", since these words are merely fictional, and so do not have a universally conventional G assigned to them. Hence we used a control group of native speakers that worked as our criterion of comparison for the two Swedish groups. Native speakers' answers are naturally more homogeneous than the ones of our Swedish groups. But there are nevertheless some nouns where we did not reach a total agreement. The suffixes *-mento*, *-trice*, *-zione* and *-itudine* proved to have the maximum of

[44] Cf. Tab. 27 for Italian native speakers' results, Tab. 28 for Older group's results and Tab. 29 for Younger group's results.

cue validity, since 100% of the informants agreed with their attribution. The suffix *-iere* instead, which we thought would have been assigned to M in 100% of the cases too, has been considered F by two informants. **Gico* too, i.e. a disyllabic noun ending with *-o*, proved to be a 100% cue validity word, though the same cannot be said about **siolo* or **traco*, both dysillabic nouns ending with *-o*, where one informant in the first case and two in the latter, chose F. No word has been assigned to F at 100%: both **fenta* and **fana* have one informant (and not the same one), that considered them as M. **Nistema*, **bame*, **noma* and **tole* have been more problematic: **nistema* and **bame* show however a rather pronounced preference for M; while **noma* and **tole* have been considered F by slightly more than 50% of the informants. In the case of **nistema* and **noma* it is the pseudo-Greek phonology that influenced the choices of our informants: while *nistema is heard more 'Greek', also because traces the existent (and indeed deriving from Greek) noun **sistema*, in the case of **noma*, the pseudo Greek root is less evident, this is probably why the group has been more divided in their answers. It is important to underline that the most original answers, that distances themselves from the majority, are not always written by the same informant: the answers that might appear quite odd are homogeneously distributed among the informants.

Regarding our Swedish groups, it is relevant to notice that for both groups the word **fenta* is 100% F (so there is more agreement than in the Italian group, where we saw that one informant considered the noun as M). Also **fana*, **traco* and **siolo* have had a general agreement in both groups, while **gico*, **tole* and **bame* see a slightly greater agreement in the older group than in the younger group: **gico* is M for 100% of the older group vs. 84,62% of the younger group; **tole* is M for 82,61% vs. 46,15%; **bame* is M for 78,26% vs. 69,23%. We can see that uncertain words (ending with *-e*) are considered mainly M by both groups, contrarily to the Italian control group, according to whom **tole* was F in 64,29% of the cases. The suffix *-mento* seems to be the one provided with more cue validity for both Swedish groups (only one informant for each group considered **cefrimento* F). The suffix *-iere* is also a good indicator (78,26% of the older group and 76,92% of the younger group considered the word **deliere* M). The suffix *-itudine*, on the contrary, seems not provided with cue validity for any

of the Swedish groups (probably also because of its scarce productivity in Italian, contrasted for instance to the much more common *-ità*, *-età* and *-ezza* (cf. Iacobini & Thornton, 2016). This seems to corroborate what Stevens (1984) says about the identification of some endings, i.e. that the identification of some typically M endings normally precedes the one of some typically F ones (cf. Stevens, 1984). Interesting are the cases of the suffixes *-zione* and *-trice*: while *-zione* seems to be provided with more cue validity for the younger group than for the older group (**frillazione* has been considered F by 69,23% of younger learners vs. only 39,13% of TA learners), *-trice* seems to prove the contrary (69,57% of the elderly learners considered **dumatrice* F vs. 38,46% of the younger learners). None of the Swedish groups seems to be sensitive to the pseudowords that sound like having a Greek etymology, with a slight difference between the two words in the older group, according to which **nistema* and **noma* were M respectively for 17,39% and 4,35% of the informants vs. 15,38% of the younger informants for both words. We saw that, a part from some differences between the two groups, also in the case of pseudowords:

> G assignment is quite coherent and regular: it is not only pure memorization of the G item per item [...;] some suffixes and derivative morphemes more than others work as G clues, i.e. are provided with greater cue validity (cf. Chini, 1995:202).

However, elderly learners seemed not to have had hesitations answering this test, as after all nor did younger learners, only one informant in the younger group wrote beside the test that (s)he did not understand any of the words, but nevertheless completed all the tokens, so our hypothesis that they would have left many questions blank seems to have been falsified. Moreover, the older group seem to have been more homogeneous; so not only their problem solving strategies did not collapse, but they proved to be up to the task.

4.10 TEST 10: MINIMAL PAIRS WITH VISUAL INPUT[45]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 72,28%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 52,88%.

Here, the younger group seems to have less homogeneity than the older group, and it seems to be a difference among the nouns whose G was clear to the informants, and those whose was not. With a visual input the older group seems to have had better performance. It seems that with a visual input younger learners lost their interest to communicate G, and probably decided to have a guess, instead. However, despite the fact that we did not put limits of time for our test, the fact that the test was the second to last could have caused a certain haste, especially in the subjects with Asperger syndrome, that, as we already explained, are particularly sensitive to stressful situations; so they could have decided to just hazard a guess in order to finish earlier, still with a 50% of probability to guess the right answer. We have no evidence of this, but if this has been the case, this of course constitutes a limitation to our research.

Our hypotheses, that the results of elderly learners would have been better, seems to have been corroborated, and also, they seem to have applied some logic, especially in the case of *balena*: seeing an animal, they preferred to choose M, and so in this case only 26,09% picked the correct answer. This is of course a mistake, since *balena* is F, but since nouns referring to animals are often M when unmarked[46], this seems to show that elderly reasoning is mainly semantic. However, this is only an assumption.

[45] Cf. Tab. 30 for Older group's results and Tab. 31 for Younger group's results.

[46] Cf. section 2.2.1 *Italian G*.

4.11 TEST 11: VOCAL INPUT[47]

The mean percentage of correct responses in the older group was 60,05%. In the younger group the mean correct score was 48,07%.

Once again, we can notice a greater homogeneity of the older group's results: they were 100% agree on 5 tokens (*casa*, *gioco*, *cavo*, *crema* and *pelo*), and they have been unanimously mistaken by one token (*flebo*), and almost unanimously by two (*moto* and *tema*). The major difficulties, which may be found in both groups, predictably concern nouns with Greek roots (*flebo* and *tema*), abbreviations such as *moto*, irregulars such as *mano*, and names of animals that are M but ending with *-a*, such as *cobra*. *Papa* has been correctly identified by 82,61% of the older group vs. 38,46% of the younger group: it seems that elderly learners use their knowledge of the word and apply them to problem solving strategies (in this case: *papa* is probably the Pope, who is a man, so it must be M).

With a vocal input, it seems that younger learners thought more about phonology, and so about the final vowel of the words, making more mistakes. If our assumption that elderly informants, instead, thought about semantics in the first place, is true, this seems to have been efficient, since their performances have been better. Our hypothesis that they would have had worse results and more questions left blank because of a potential hearing impairment, or more stress, has been falsified (anyway, it is worth to mention that none in the control group left any token blank either).

[47] Cf. Tab. 32 for Older group's results and Tab. 33 for Younger group's results.

4.12 SUMMARY

Tab. 9 - Summary of the results of the tests

Test	*Element*	*Topic*	*Hypothesis*	*Percentage of correctness and general results*
1	Indefinite article	General patterns in G assignment	General age differences E = variety	E = 74,20%; Y = 62,76% E = semantics; less variety H partially corroborated and partially falsified
2	Adjective combination	Semantics vs. syntax	E = semantics Y = syntax	E = 68,56%; Y = 56,41% E = semantics H corroborated
3	Noun phrase	Distributed vs. Focused attention	E = focused Y = distributed	E = 68,48%; Y = 52,88% E = distributed attention H falsified
4	Plural	General age differences Over-regularization	General age differences E = variety Y = over-regular.	E = 74,87%; Y = 65,81% E = less variety; Y = over regular. H partially corroborated and partially falsified
5	Diminutives	Stress factor	E = variety Y = less variety	E = 81,16%; Y = 72,22% E = less variety H falsified
6	Participles and predicatives	Semantics vs. syntax	E = semantics Y = syntax	E = 68,84%; Y = 59,72% E = semantics; Y = syntax H corroborated
7	Transfer	L1 influence	General age differences E = more variety	E = 78,26%; Y = 54,87% E = less variety; Y = hyper characterization H partially corroborated and partially falsified
8	Possessive determiners	Distributed vs. Focused attention	E = focused Y = distributed	E = 78, 26%; Y = 63,46% E = distributed attention H falsified

9	Italian pseudowords	Stress factor	E = more variety Y = less variety	E = 67,82%; Y = 56,92% E = less variety; no particular signs of stress H falsified
10	Visual input	World knowledge	General age differences	E = 72,28%; Y = 52,88% E = better results due to world knowledge H corroborated
11	Vocal input	Stress factor	E = more variety Y = less variety	E = 60,05%; Y = 48,07% E = less variety; no particular signs of stress H falsified

E = elderly learners; Y = younger learners; H = hypothesis

As we can see in Tab. 9, our corroborated hypotheses are:

1. our main hypothesis, i.e. to see general patterns in G assignment depending on the age (tests 1, 4, 7, 10); in particular, a tendency to over-regularization (test 4) and hyper-characterization (test 7) in the younger group.
2. TA learners to be more influenced by semantic factors than syntactic ones (tests 2, 6).
3. the use by TA learners of their world knowledge in problem solving (test 10).

On the other hand, falsified hypotheses are:

1. TA learners to show much variety in their results (tendentially, all the tests).
2. TA learners to be more sensitive to stress factors, e.g. leaving more questions blank (tests 5, 9, 11).
3. younger learners to be more competent in distributed attention (tests 3, 8).

We see that the opposition between semantics vs. syntax and the use of world knowledge as a strategy of problem solving seem to work as explanations for a more general age difference in G learning. On the contrary, stress factors and the opposition between focused vs. distributed attention seems not to be a valid explanation. We can say that psychological explanations seem not to have been verified as factors that can justify an age differentiation in G learning, while language internal factors seem to be the explanations of a general differentiation between the groups. The only psycholinguistic explanation, that nevertheless overlaps with a linguistic explanation, is the one dealing with the use of world knowledge in problem solving strategy: it would corroborate an opposition semantics vs. syntax, and it would prove to be a reliable strategy especially in the test with visual input (test 10).

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

As we already said, our studies had some limitations due to time and resources limits, so it could constitute a good starting point for further research deprived of these limitations. There is a disparity regarding our fields of observation: elderly informants all come (except for one) from private schools, where they pay to be taught Italian language; younger informants come from a public school (except for one that attended university, but nevertheless studied Italian in a public school)[48]. The degree of motivation then, which is also an intrinsic feature of age variation in learning, is different, since paying for having lessons constitutes per se a reason to be motivated. Moreover, motivation is a factor that has not been measured here, so it is difficult to have precise answers on it. Then, we have already talked about the languages the informants had knowledge of: it would be interesting to study informants that have knowledge of the same languages.

Both groups have their Italian courses in Sweden. It would probably be of interest to study also TA learners who are learning Italian in Italy. Moreover, the person who administered the test (and eventually analyzed it) was the Italian teacher of a few of the elderly informants, so the degree of stress could have been different: they could have felt the pressure of having good results, studying more before participating in the test (even if none of the informants was aware that the test dealt with G), or anyway being more anxious during the test itself (even though the performances of these informants have been impressively good), or on the contrary, being more relaxed since they know the person. We could not measure stress levels in our research, so also in this case it is difficult to have precise answers.

Another limitation could have been constituted by the fact that a remarkable part of our younger group has Asperger syndrome. We already enumerated the

[48] Cf. section 3.5 *Field of observation*, 3.6.1 *Older group* and 3.6.2 *Younger group.*

peculiarities of this syndrome that could have represented a limitation for our study; though, we still should bear in mind that "the psychiatric label [of Asperger syndrome] should never be assumed to convey a precise preconceived set of behaviors and needs" (Klin & Volkmar, 1995:1). We did notice though that some of our informants with Asperger (but not all of them), were particularly sensitive to the stressful situation of the test[49], and this probably influenced their performances (e.g. many left some exercises blank), and it represents a limitation to our research.

[49] Cf. section 3.6.2 *Younger group*.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS[50]

In general, we can say that both groups appear sensitive early on to the most regular formal aspects of morphological paradigms, i.e. *-o* M, *-a* F (cf. Chini, 1995, also regarding L1 acquisition), with a slight tendency to an overextension of M[51]. Moreover, Swedish G and its markedness/unmarkedness criterion does not seem to constitute an obstacle, as we did not observe transfer phenomenon in either of the groups[52]. Elderly learners, though, show more homogeneity in their answers[53].

We have already explained the general freer character of senior learning and their focus on the communicative aspects of the language[54]: due to the great variety of interests, reasons and motivations to study Italian, as well as G peculiarities (i.e. a feature that, when mistaken, does not compromise the communication), we expected more variety among the mistakes made by the older group. Our hypothesis in this sense seems to have been falsified. Elderly learners seem also to be more semantics and morphology oriented, while youngsters seem to be more sensitive to phonology, where every word follow an internal criterion, rather than looking for generalizations like subdividing nouns in borrowings, words ending

[50] As a collateral conclusion, that is however beyond the scopes of this research, we had the chance to possess an important amount of data from youngsters with Asperger syndrome. Since the interest within the field of L2 acquisition/learning by student with disabilities and/or developmental disorders is increasingly growing, we do believe that this amount of data constitutes a valuable basis for further studies. What we initially considered as an obstacle and a limitation for the present study could reveal as a precious resource for future research.

[51] Cf. Appendix IV.

[52] Cf. test 7 results in section 4.7 *Test 7: transfer* and Appendix IV.

[53] Cf. all the tests results in chapter 4 *Results*, and Appendix IV.

[54] Cf. section 2.1.3 *Characteristics of senior learning* and section 3.4 *Research questions and hypotheses*.

with *-tore* vs. *-trice*, and so on, as elderly learners appear to do[55]. This seems to be true especially in test 2[56]: given a list of adjectives, it seems that while the younger group made more mistakes regarding semantics, the older group seems to have looked for semantic agreement before the syntactic one. We assume then, that where the semantics did not help (because not immediately clear, or because the informants did not know the meaning of the words), syntax represented the secondary criterion. Elderly learners' grammatical generalizations could then have a semantic nature, and only in a second place a syntactic one: a paradigm like G, then, would be easily learned whenever it is possible to establish a relation between linguistic unit and semantic unit[57]. This seems to corroborate our main assumption. The falsified hypotheses all dealt with pshycholinguistic considerations, while the corroborated hypotheses are the ones dealing with language internal factors: linguistic differences, then, seem to explain a general age difference, while extra linguistic factors seem not to constitute a valid explanation.

We acknowledge the fact that this study has not been of a magnitude that provides unequivocal data concerning the way elderly Swedish-speaking L2 learners of Italian learn G; moreover, due to time and resources limit, it has not been possible to measure variables such as stress and motivation, that prove to be essential factors in elderly vs. young language learning. Our research, then, constitutes an attempt to provide an overview on senior L2 learning, an aspect that is unfortunately not much researched: this study provided a framework and some preliminary conclusions, that could represent a base for further studies.

We can say preliminary say, though, that language courses especially dedicated to TA learners could benefit from this research: in language teaching to elderly people, the teacher could focus on the meaning of the nouns while teaching G.

[55] Cf. all the tests results in chapter 4 *Results*, particularly Test 2, and section Appendix IV.

[56] Cf. section Appendix IV.

[57] Cf. Chini, 1995:117 regarding Slobin and his semanticist approach in children L1 acquisition.

REFERENCES

AA.VV. (2005). *Questione di leggibilità. Se non riesco a leggere non è solo colpa dei miei occhi*. Venezia: Edizioni Comune di Venezia.

AMORETTI, G. & RATTI, M.T. (1998). *Psicologia e terza età. Prospettive psicologiche sul tema dell'invecchiamento*. Roma: Carocci.

ANDERSEN, R.W. (1984). "What's gender good for, anyway?" In R.W. Andersen (Ed.) *Second languages: A cross-linguistic perspective*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, pp.77–100.

ANDERSSON, A.B. (1992). *Second language learners' acquisition of grammatical gender in Swedish*. Ph.D. thesis. Institutionen för Lingvistik, Göteborgs Universitet.

ANNONI, G. (2001). L'invecchiamento cerebrale tra fisiologia e patologia. *Federazione Leonardo*, pp. 81-92.

ATTWOOD, T. (2008). *Különös gyerekek. Kalauz az Asperger szindrómáról szülőknek és nevelőknek*. Budapest: Anonimus.

AVENI CASUCCI, M. (1992). *Psicogerontologia e ciclo di vita*. Milano: Mursia.

BACHA, M.L.; SANTOS, J.F.S. & STREHLAU, V.I. (2010). *A comparative overview of leisure time and third age people in AB and CD social classes in São Paulo: a study on habits, attitudes and psychographic profile*. Ed. São Paulo Vol. 1.

BÄCK E.A., LINDQVIST A., GUSTAFSSON SENDÉN M. (2015). "Hen can do it: effects of using a gender neutral pronoun in a recruitment situation". Paper presented at the The 8th Nordic Conferences on Language and Gender, Stockholm.

BALTES, M.M. (1998). "The psychology of the oldest-old: The Fourth Age". *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 11, pp. 411-415.

BALTES, P.B. & SMITH, J. (1999). "Multilevel and systemic analysis of old age: theoretical and empirical evidence for a fourth age". In: V.L. Bengston, K.W. Schaie (Eds.) *Handbook of theories of aging*. New York: Springer; pp. 153–173.

BALTES, P.B. & SMITH, J. (2003). "New frontiers in the future of aging: from successful aging of the young old to the dilemmas of the fourth age". *Gerontology 2003*:49, pp. 123-135.

BARNES, S. (2011). *Third Age - The Golden Years of Adulthood*. San Diego State University Interwork Institute.

BARTNING, I. (2000). "Gender agreement in L2 French: pre-advanced vs. advanced learners". *Studia linguistica*, 54(2), 225-238.

BASO, F. (2008). *Children with Asperger's Syndrome in primary school: difficulties with foreign language learning*. Tesi di Laurea. Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia.

BERDES, C.; ZYCH, A. & DAWSON, G. (Eds.) (1992). *Geragogics: European Research in Gerontological Education and Educational Gerontology*. New York: Haworth Press.

BERNARDINI, P. (2004). "L'italiano come prima e seconda (madre)lingua. Indagine longitudinale sullo sviluppo del DP". *Études romanes de Lund*, 71.

BERRUTO, G., MORETTI, B. & SCHMID, S. (1990). "Interlingue italiane nella Svizzera tedesca. Osservazioni generali e note sul sistema dell'articolo". In E. Banfi e P. Cordin (Hrsg.). *Storia dell'italiano e forme dell'italianizzazione*. Roma: Bulzoni, pp. 203–228.

BIANCHI, G. (2014). "Gender in L2 German". *Inquiries into Linguistic Theory and Language Acquisition. Papers offered to Adriana Belletti*. C. Contemori & L. Dal Pozzo (Eds.). Siena: Ciscl Press, pp. 130-144.

BIRDSONG, D. (1999). *Second language acquisition and the critical period hypothesis*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

BISHOP, D.V.M. (2000). "What's so special about Asperger syndrome? The need for further exploration of the borderlands of autism". In A. Klin, F. Volkmar, & S. Sparrow (Eds.) *Asperger Syndrome*. New York: Guildford Press, pp. 254-277.

BURANI, C. (1992). *Patterns of inflectional errors with reference to the Italian adjectival system*. «Rivista di Linguistica» 4, pp. 255-272.

CALVO RIGUAL, C. (2011). "Italiano standard e italiano dell'uso medio nei dizionari italiani monolingui dell'uso attuale". *Studi di Linguistica Teorica e Applicata, 40*(3), pp. 403-422.

CARROLL, S. (1989). "Second language acquisition and the computational paradigm". *Learning Learning*, 39, pp. 535-594.

CATTELL, R.B. (1971). *Abilities: their structure, growth, and action*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

CESA BIANCHI, M. (2000). *Giovani per sempre? L'arte di invecchiare*. Roma: Laterza.

CHINI, M. (1995). *Genere grammaticale e acquisizione: aspetti della morfologia nominale in Italiano L2*. Milano: Francoangeli.

CHOMSKY, C. (1969) *The acquisition of syntax in children from 5 to 10*. Oxford, England: The MIT Press.

CIPRIANI, P.; CHILOSI, A.; BOTTARI, P. & PFANNER, L. (1993). *L'acquisizione della morfosintassi in italiano: fasi e processi*. Padova: Unipress.

CORBETT, G.G. (1981). “Syntactic Features”. *Journal of Linguistics* 17, pp. 55-76.

CORBETT, G.G. (1991). *Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CORREA-ZOLI, Y. (1973). “Assignment of gender in American-Italian”. *Glossa* 7, pp. 123-128.

CORTELAZZO, M.A. (2007). “Evoluzione della lingua, percezione del cambiamento, staticità della norma”. *Lingua scuola e società. I nuovi bisogni comunicativi nelle classi multiculturali*. Hrsg. E. Pistolesi, Atti del convegno (Trieste, 6-7 ottobre 2006). Trieste: Istituto Gramsci del Friuli Venezia Giulia, pp. 47-55.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE (2011). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Council of Europe.

COVINO BISACCIA M. A. (1996). *I discenti francofoni e l'apprendimento dell'italiano. Frequenza di alcuni tipi di errori nella produzione scritta*. Perugia: Guerra Edizioni

CUMMINS, J. (1991). “Interdependece of first- and second-language proficiency in bilingual children”. In E. Bialystok (Ed.) *Language processing in bilingual children*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 70-89.

DARDANO, M. (1994). “Profilo dell’italiano contemporaneo”. In Serianni, L. & Trifone, *Storia della lingua italiana* 1993-1994, Vol II, pp. 343-430.

DEWAELE, J.M. & VÉRONIQUE, D. (2000). “Relating gender errors to morphosyntax and lexicon in advanced French interlanguage”. *Studia linguistica* 54(2), pp. 212-225.

DEWAELE, J.M. & VÉRONIQUE, D. (2002). “Gender assignment and gender agreement in advanced French interlanguage: A cross-sectional study”. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 4(3), 275-297.

DI DOMENICO, E. (1997). *Per una teoria del genere grammaticale*. Padova: Unipress.

DIXON, R.M.W. (1982). *Where have all the adjectives gone?*. Berlin: Mouton Publishers.

DULAY, C. & BURT, M.K. (1974). "Natural sequences in child second language acquisition". *Language Learning*, 24, pp. 37-53.

DOGANA, M. (2003). *L'apprendimento della morfologia nominale in italiano L2*. Tesi di Laurea. Università degli studi di Verona.

ELROD, E.J., "Give us a Gender Neutral Pronoun, Yo!: The Need for and Creation of a Gender Neutral, Singular, Third Person, Personal Pronoun" (2014). *Undergraduate Honors Theses*. Paper 200.

EUBANK, L. & GREGG, K.R. (1999). "Critical period and (second) language acquisition: Divide and impera". In Birdsong, D. (Ed) *Second Language acquisition and the critical period hypotheses*, pp. 65-100. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

FLYNN, S. & MANUEL, S. (1991). "Age-dependent effects in Language Acquisition: an evaluation of 'Critical Period' Hypotheses". In F. Eubank (Ed.) *Point Counterpoint*.

GENESEE, F.; PARADIS, J. & CRAGO, M.B. (2004). *Dual language development & disorders: A handbook on bilingualism & second language learning*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Company.

GENOT, G. (1973). *Grammaire de l'italien*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

GILLEARD, C. & HIGGS, P. (2010). "Aging without agency: theorizing the fourth age". *Aging and Mental Health*, 14:2, pp. 121-128.

GLENDENNING, F. (1992). "Educational Gerontology and Gerogogy: a critical perspective". In C. Berdes, A.A. Zych & G.D. Dawson (Eds) *Geragogics: European Research in Gerontological Education and Educational Gerontology*. New York: Haworth Press.

GRANFELDT, J. (2005). "The development of gender attribution and gender agreement in French: A comparison of bilingual first and second language learners". In J.M. Dewaele (Ed.) *Focus on French as a foreign language: Multidisciplinary approaches*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

GREENBERG, J.H. (1966). "Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements". In J.H. Greenberg (ed.) *Universals of language*, 2 ed. Cambridge (U.S.): MIT Press.

GREENBERG, J.H. (1978). How does a language acquire gender markets. In J.H. GREENBERG, CH.A. FERGUSON, A. MORAVKSIK (Eds.) *Universals of Human Language* 3, Stanford: Standford University Press.

GRIMM, J. (1831). *Deutsche Grammatik* III. Göttingen: Dieterich.

GROSSMANN, M. & RAINER F. (2004). *La formazione delle parole in italiano*. Tübingen: Niemeyer XXI-658.

GUDMUNDSON, A. (2012). *L'accordo nell'italiano parlato da apprendenti universitari svedesi: Uno studio sull'acquisizione del numero e del genere in una prospettiva funzionalista.* Stockholm: Department of French, Italian and Classical Languages, Stockholm University, Forskningsrapporter/Cahiers de la recherche.

GUSTAFSSON SENDÉN, M.; BÄCK, E.A. & LINDQVIST, A. (2015). "Introducing a gender-neutral pronoun in a natural gender language: the influence of time on attitudes and behavior". *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6:893.

HARRIS, J.W. (1991). "The exponence of gender in Spanish". *Linguistic Inquiry* 22-1, pp. 27-62.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS). (2006). *Making Your Printed Health Materials Senior Friendly*. National Institute on Aging.

HJELMSLEV, L. (1956). *Animé et inanimé, personnel et non-personnel*. Paris: Travaux de l'Institut de Linguistique, 155-199.

HOCKETT, C.F. (1958). *A course in modern linguistics*. New York: Macmillan.

IACOBINI, C. & THORNTON, A.M. (2016). "Morfologia e formazione delle parole". In Lubello, S. (Ed.) *Manuale di linguistica italiana*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

IBRAHIM, M.H. (1973). *Grammatical gender. Its origin and development*. The Hague: Mouton.

IZADY, M. (1988). "A Kurdish lingua franca?". In *Kurdish Time* 2(2) Summer, pp. 13-24.

JAEGGI, S.M.; BUSCHKUEHL, M.; JONIDES, J.; PERRIG, W.J. (2008). "Improving fluid intelligence with training on working memory". In *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 105(19), pp. 6829-6833.

JOHNSON, J.S. & NEWPORT, E.L. (1989). "Critical period effects in second language learning: The influence of maturational state on the acquisition of English as a second language". *Cognitive Psychology 21*, pp. 60-69.

KÄLLSTRÖM, R. (1993). *Kongruens i svenskan*. Nordistica Gothoburgensia 16. Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

KLIN, A. (2006). "Autismo e síndrome de Asperger: uma visão geral". In *Rev. Bras. Psiquiatr.* [online]. vol.28(1), pp. s3-s11.

KLIN, A. & VOLKMAR, F. (1995). *Asperger's Syndrome: Guideline for Treatment and Intervention*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale Child Study Center. Published by the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

KRASHEN, S.D. (1981). *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.

KRASHEN, S.D. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.

KUPISCH, T. (2000). *Artikelauslassungen bei einem bilingual deutsch-italienischen Kind*. M.A. Thesis, University of Hamburg.

KUPISCH, T., MÜLLER, N. & CANTONE K.F. (2002). "Gender in monolingual and bilingual first language acquisition: comparing Italian and French". *Lingue e linguaggio* 1, pp. 107-149.

LAWRIE, S.M.; WHALLEY H.; KESTELMAN, J.N. *et al*. (1999). "Magnetic resonance imaging of brain in people at high risk of developing schizophrenia". *Lancet 353*, pp. 30-33.

LENNEBERG, E.H. (1967). *Biological Foundations of Language*. New York: Wiley.

LUISE, M.C. (2014). "Terza età e educazione linguistica. Narrazione e letterature come spazio per la memoria, la saggezza e la creatività". *LEA - Lingue e letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente*, 3, pp. 443 - 457.

M. TERENTI VARRONIS *De Lingua Latina Libri* 9.34.

(ELSA) MARMOT, M.; OLDFIELD, Z.; CLEMENS, S.; BLAKE, M.; PHELPS, A.; NAZROO, J.; STEPTOE, A.; ROGERS, N.; BANKS, J. (2015). *English Longitudinal Study of Ageing: Waves 0-6, 1998-2013*. [data collection]. 23rd Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 5050

MARTINET, A. (1961). *Eléments de Linguistique Générale*. Paris: Librairie Armand Colin.

MASULLO, P.J. (2001). *Genero y numero en la elipsis nominal en español*. Conference helded in the Departement of Romance Languages, Lund University.

MASULLO, P.J. & DEPIANTE, M. (2004). *Gender is in the Lexicon, Number is in the Syntax: Evidence from Nominal Ellipsis in Spanish*. Conference helded in the Departement of Romance Languages, Lund University.

MCDOWALL, D. (1996). *A Modern History of the Kurds*. London: I. B. Tauris.

MCKAY, S.L. & WONG, S.C. (1996). "Multiple Discourses, Multiple Identities: Investment and Agency in Second-Language Learning among Chinese Adolescent Immigrant Students". In *Harvard Educational Review: September 1996*, Vol. 66, No. 3, pp. 577-609.

MIGLIORINI, B. (1990). "Purismo e neopurismo". In *La lingua italiana nel Novecento*. Firenze: Le Lettere (reprint 2003), pp. 97-107.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING (NIA) (2007). *U.S. Health and Retirement Survey*. U.S. Department of health and Human services.

OPATA, D.U. (1989). "Some Tentative Axioms about Interference Errors". *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, Germany, XXVII, 4.

OUWEHAND, C.; DE RIDDER, D.T.D. & BENSING, J.M. (2007). "A review of successful aging models: Proposing proactive coping as an important additional strategy". *Clinical Psychology Review* 27. Utrecht, pp. 873-884.

OZONOFF, S. & GRIFFITH, E. (2000). "Neuropsychological function and the external validity of Asperger syndrome". In A. Klin, F. Volkmar, & S. Sparrow (Eds.), *Asperger Syndrome*. New York: Guildford Press, pp.72-96.

PARADIS, M. (1999). *Neurolinguistic aspects of bilingualism*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, pp. 59-60.

PFAFF, C.W. (1987). "Functional approaches to interlanguage". In C.W. Pfaff (Ed.) *First and Second Language Acquisition Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Newbury House, pp. 81-102.

PIZZUTO, E. (1979). *Further remarks on deixis and anaphora*. Unpublished typewritten document. Harvard University.

PIZZUTO, E. & CASELLI, M. (1992). "The Acquisition of Italian Morphology: Implication for Models of Language Development". *Journal of Child Language* 19, pp. 491-557.

RAMSCAR, M. & GITCHO, N. (2007). "Developmental change and the nature of learning in childhood". *Trends in Cognitive Science* 11(7), pp. 274-279.

RATTI, M.T. & AMORETTI, G. (1991). *Le funzioni cognitive nella terza età*. Roma: La Nuova Italia Scientifica.

RILEY, J.C. (2005). "Estimates of Regional and Global Life Expectancy, 1800–2001". Issue Population and Development Review. *Population and Development Review*. Volume 31, Issue 3, pp. 537–543.

ROMA F., BASTIANELLI M., MINEO S. (2012). *Invecchiamento e competenze. Il potenziale analitico dell'indagine OCSE-ISFOL* «PIAAC». Osservatorio ISFOL II, n° 2.

ROURKE, B. & TSATSANIS, K. (2000). "Nonverbal learning disabilities and Asperger Syndrome". In A. Klin, F. Volkmar, & S. Sparrow (Eds.) *Asperger Syndrome*. New York: Guildford Press, pp. 231-253.

SAPIR, E. (1921). *Language, an introduction to the study of speech*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

SCHAIE, K.W. (1996a). "Intellectual development in adulthood". In J.E. Birren & K.W. Schaie (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of aging* (pp. 266-286). New York: Academic Press.

SCHÖN, I. (1971). *Neutrum und Kollektivum. Das Morpheme –a in Lateinischen und Romanischen*. Innsbruck: Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwiisenschaft.

SCHWARTZ, B.D. (2003). "Child L2 Acquisition Paving the Way". In B. Beachley, A. Brown & F. Conlin (Eds.) *Proceedings of the 27th annual Boston University Conference on Language Development*, 1, pp. 26-50. Somerville, Mass.: Cascadilla Press.

SCHWARZE, Ch. (1988). *Grammatik der italienischen Sprache*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

SERIANNI, L. (1988). *Grammatica Italiana. Italiano comune e lingua letteraria. Suoni forme costrutti*. Torino: UTET.

SERIANNI, L. (1989). *Grammatica Italiana.* Torino: UTET.

SERIANNI, L. (2007). "La norma sommersa". *Lingua e stile 42*, pp. 283-298.

SERRA BORNETO, C. (2007). "Perché apprendere le lingue nella terza età?". In G. NATALIA, M. LIPPOLIS (Eds.), *Valorizzare l'insegnamento e l'apprendimento linguistico*. Il Label Europeo in Italia. Roma: ISFOL, pp. 73-83.

SERRATRICE, L. (2000). *The emergence of functional categories in bilingual first language acquisition*. PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh.

SRINIVASAN, N; SRIVASTAVA, P.; LOHANI, M.; BAIJAL, S. (2009). "Focused and distributed attention". *Prog Brain Res* 2009(176), pp. 87-100.

STEVENS, F. (1984). *Strategies for second-language acquisition*. Montréal: Eden Press.

SWAIN, M. & LAPKIN, S. (1998). "Interaction and Second Language Learning: Two Adolescent French Immersion Students Working Together". *The Modern Language Journal*, 82, pp. 320-337.

TAMPUBOLON, G. (2015). Delineating the third age: joint models of older people's quality of life and attrition in Britain 2002–2010. *Aging & Mental Health*, 19:7, pp. 576-583.

TELEMAN, U. (1987). *Grammatik på villovägar*. Stockholm: Liber.

THE SWEDISH INSTITUTE (SI). (2013). *Elderly care: a challenge for our future*. The Swedish Institute. https://sweden.se/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Elderly-care-low-resolution.pdf

THOMPSON J.J.; BLAIR M.R.; HENREY A.J. (2014). "Over the Hill at 24: Persistent Age-Related Cognitive-Motor Decline in Reaction Times in an Ecologically Valid Video Game Task Begins in Early Adulthood". *PLoS ONE* 9(4): e94215.

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA) (2012). *Ageing in the Twenty-First Century: A Celebration and A Challenge*. New York: UNFPA; London: HelpAge International.

VILLARINI, A.; LA GRASSA, M. (2010). *Apprendere le lingue straniere nella terza età*. Perugia:Guerra Edizioni.

WIRE V. (2005). "Autistic Spectrum Disorders and learning foreign languages". In *Support for Learning* 20(3), pp. 123-128.

WOODBURY-SMITH, M.R. & VOLKMAR F.R. (2009). "Asperger syndrome". In *Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 18 (1), pp. 2–11.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) (2002). *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework*. Madrid: Second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid

YOUNGMINDS (2006a). *Emerging Practice: Examples of Mental Health Services for 16–25 year-olds*. London: YoungMinds

YOUNGMINDS (2006b). *A Call to Action: commissioning mental health services for 16–25 year-olds*. London: YoungMinds.

APPENDIX I: THE WRITTEN TEST

Ålder: _____

Utbildningsnivå och kunskapsområde: _____

Yrke: _____

Språk som du studerat:

	Grundnivå	Mellannivå	Avancerad nivå
Engelska			
Franska			
Spanska			
Tyska			
Annat			

Hur ofta och på vilket sätt är du i kontakt med italienska?
Genom att:

	Aldrig	Sällan	Ibland	Ofta
Titta på italienska filmer				
Läsa italienska böker				
Resa till Italien				
Lyssna på italienska musik				
Prata med italiensktalande				
Annat				

Studien behandlar inte något personligt utan endast språket. Deltagarna är helt anonyma och kan närsomhelst avsluta sitt deltagande så att deras data plockas bort från resultaten.

Härmed godkänner jag att delta i studien om inlärning av italienska, utförd av Masterstudent Irene Lami från Lunds Universitet.

Datum Namnteckning

Hej!

Du kommer att läsa olika övningar.
Instruktionerna för varje övning ges före var och en av dem.

Var inte rädd för att fråga om något är oklart, och framför allt, var inte rädd för att göra misstag: dina misstag är mycket viktiga för mig!

Om du inte förstår några ord, oroa dig inte: det är viktigt att du försöker svara ändå. Övningarna konstruerade så att du kan svara även om du inte förstår innebörden av orden, och det är verkligen viktigt att du gör det.

Det finns inga kuggfrågor. Ingen fråga är här för att lura dig, så var inte för uppmärksam på frågor.

Känn dig fri att skriva, avbryta och skriva ett annat svar: ingenting är oåterkallelig (kanske, men stryk under ditt slutgiltiga svar).

Ta det här testet som ett tillfälle att öva dina italienskakunskaper, det är inte en utvärdering av vad du vet, snarare en chans att förbättra dina tankar om aspekter av det italienska språket.

Testet ska inte ta så lång tid, men ta den tid du behöver utan någon stress.

Din hjälp är värdefull både för forskningen i allmänhet och för mig.

Tack så mycket och ha en trevlig tid!

TEST 1

Välj obestämd artikel för substantiv mellan UN eller UNA:

ex. una casa; un vaso

- ____ bambino
- ____ bambina
- ____ padre
- ____ madre
- ____ prete
- ____ duca
- ____ re
- ____ lavatrice
- ____ pirata
- ____ cicatrice
- ____ pollice
- ____ costanza
- ____ stupidaggine
- ____ religione
- ____ rinascimento
- ____ stazione
- ____ ingegnere
- ____ lunedì
- ____ bar
- ____ ferro
- ____ falò
- ____ sole
- ____ boomerang
- ____ pittore
- ____ portaerei
- ____ turista
- ____ studentessa
- ____ speranza
- ____ bici
- ____ problema
- ____ diploma
- ____ cantante
- ____ cecità
- ____ minorenne
- ____ pace
- ____ solitudine
- ____ presidentessa
- ____ portoghese
- ____ libertà
- ____ trattore
- ____ genere
- ____ mano
- ____ cane
- ____ computer
- ____ rame
- ____ tram
- ____ luna
- ____ monumento

TEST 2

Välj rätt adjektiv bland följande alternativ att kombinera till substantiv:
ex. casa → gialla

rosso – piccolo – gialla – alta – fredda – caldo

- moglie →
- donna →
- cane →
- fuoco →
- mano →
- automobile →
- libro →
- tavolo →
- iceberg →
- borsa →
- fiume →
- cuore →
- guerra →

TEST 3

Skriv obestämd artikel (UN eller UNA) och rätt ändelse för substantiv (O eller A):
ex. una casa gialla; un vaso sporco

- _____ cane piccol___
- _____ macchina ross_____
- _____ pittore brav_____
- _____ duca ricc_____
- _____ vigile sever_____
- _____ libro ner_____
- _____ bicchiere pien___
- _____ bar storic_____
- _____ giornalista sportiv_
- _____ computer rott_____
- _____ moto vecchi_____
- _____problema gross_____
- _____ pompiere anzian_____
- ___professoressa arrabbiat__
- _____ attrice bell_____
- _____ canzone nuov_____
- _____ parente lontan_____
- _____ città desert_____

TEST 4

Byt från singulär till plural (INGEN artikel!): ex. casa → case; vaso → vasi

- dito →
- macchina →
- box →
- gatto →
- bottiglia →
- monte →
- squadra →
- licenziamento →
- collaboratrice →
- bicchiere →
- mano →
- uovo →
- pomodoro →
- re →
- retroscena →
- scrittore →
- duchessa →
- situazione →

TEST 5

Skriv ordets diminutiv med ändelser -INO eller -INA; es. casa → casina; viso → visino

- cane
- dente
- pomodoro
- mano
- faccia
- nonna
- sorella
- busta
- piede
- salame
- villa
- macchina
- esame
- naso
- nonno
- fratello
- uccello
- chiave
- film
- computer

TEST 6

Använd rätt ändelser för particip och predikativ. Du behöver inte tänka på particip eller predikativ, bara tänka på slutet!

Ex. la casa è stat<u>a</u> affittat<u>a</u>; Paolo è content<u>o</u>.

- Maria è andat___ a casa
- Il telefono è stat___ comprat___
- Il professore è stat___ licenziat___
- Maria Callas è un brav___ soprano
- A Bruxelles ho comprato del cioccolato belg___
- La nave è partit____
- Il missile è stat___ lanciat____
- Il ministro Margareth Thatcher è considerat_____ sever____
- La guardia Luigi Rossi è molto sever___
- Il ministro Anna Lindh è stat___ uccis____ nel 2003
- Leonardo è andat__ a casa
- Angela è onest____
- La studentessa è andat__ a studiare
- Il monumento è stat___ restaurat____
- Enrico è una brav____ persona
- Sua Santità, papa Francesco, è argentin___
- Sua Maestà, Carlo Gustavo, è amat_____ dal popolo svedese
- Carlo è content_____
- Cristina è un brav_____ chirurgo
- Il soldato Bianchi è una buon___ recluta

TEST 7

Översätt med obestämd artikel (UN eller UNA) och skriv slutet av ordet:
Ex. en katt = un gatto

- en bok = _____ libr_____
- en dag = _____ giorn_____
- en pojke = _____ ragazz_____
- ett problem = _____ problem_____
- en hund = _____ can_____
- en familj = _____ famigli___
- en banan = _____ banan_____
- en hand = _____ man_____
- ett ben = _____ gamb___
- ett hus = _____ cas___
- en fru = _____ mogli_____
- ett barn = _____ bambin_____
- ett rum = _____ stanz_____
- en gurka = _____ cetriol___
- ett frimärke = _____ francoboll___
- ett paket = _____ pacchett_____

TEST 8

Skriv ändelser av possessiva. Ex. il mio gatto; la mia mamma

- La mi_____ casa
- La mi_____ mano
- Il mi_____ amico
- Il mi_____ problema
- La mi_____ luce
- La mi_____ moto
- Il mi_____ cane
- Il mi_____ ferro

9 TEST

Skriv obestämd artikel UN eller UNA: ex. <u>una</u> casa

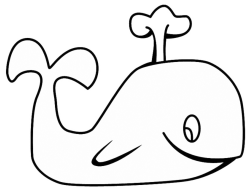
- _____ gico
- _____ tole
- _____ fenta
- _____ nistema
- _____ deliere
- _____ dumatrice
- _____ frillazione
- _____ cefrimento
- _____ noma
- _____ siolo
- _____ zeditudine
- _____ fana
- _____ bame
- _____ traco

10 TEST

Välj ordet. Ex. Caso ☐ Casa ☒

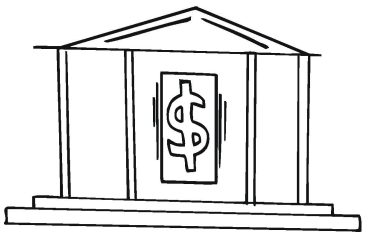
Melo ☐

Mela ☐



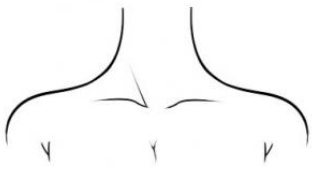
Baleno ☐

Balena ☐



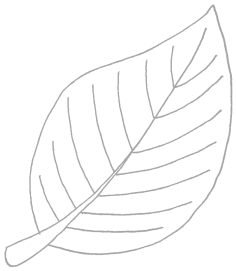
Banco ☐

Banca ☐



Collo ☐

Colla ☐

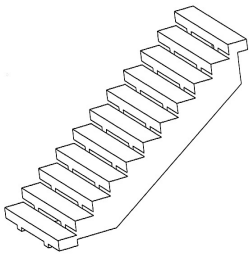


Foglio ☐

Foglia ☐

Cartello☐

Cartella ☐



Scalo ☐

Scala ☐

Tappa ☐

Tappo ☐

APPENDIX II: LIST OF THE NOUNS OF THE VOCAL INPUT

1. casa = due A femminile
2. gioco = due O maschile
3. moto = due O femminile
4. papa = due A maschile
5. foca = O-A femminile
6. cobra = O-A maschile
7. cavo = A-O maschile
8. mano = A-O femminile
9. mare = A-E maschile
10. chiave = A-E femminile
11. cuore = O-E maschile
12. mole = O-E femminile
13. tema = E – A maschili
14. crema = E- A femminili
15. flebo = E-O femminili
16. pelo = E- O maschili

APPENDIX III: ITALIAN NATIVE SPEAKERS' TEST

ETÀ:

REGIONE DI PROVENIENZA:

TITOLO DI STUDIO:

AMBITO DI STUDIO:

OCCUPAZIONE:

È importante che il test sia svolto AUTONOMAMENTE, senza chiedere pareri ad altre persone!
Grazie del tuo tempo!

Inserire l'articolo: UN o UNA.

- _____ gico
- ____ tole
- _____ fenta
- ____ nistema
- _____ deliere
- _____ dumatrice
- _____ frillazione
- _____ cefrimento
- ____ noma
- _____ siolo
- _____ zeditudine
- ____ fana
- ____ bame
- ____ traco

APPENDIX IV: RESULTS

Tab. 10 - Symbols used in the results

Symbol	*Meaning*
.	Correct answer
X	The informant did not answer the token
M	The informant answered M when the correct answer was F
F	The informant answered F when the correct answer was M
M	The informant chose M when both genders were correct
F	The informant chose F when both genders were correct
M/F	The informant chose correctly both the G
M[58]	The informant choose M when F is the grammatical correct form, but M is colloquially accepted
nouns written in black	The G of the noun is correct and the word is semantically correct too
nouns written in red	The G of the noun is wrong but the word is semantically correct
nouns written in blue[59]	The G of the noun is correct but the word is semantically wrong
nouns written in green	The G of the noun is correct but there is a minor mistake in the spelling of the word
nouns written half in red and half in blue[60]	The G of the noun is wrong and the word is semantically wrong too

Tab. 11 - Older group's results of test 1: indefinite article

Noun	*Informants*															
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**	**K**	**L**	**M**	**N**	**O**	**P**
bambino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
bambina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
padre	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
madre	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
re	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
costanza	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

[58] Only in test 6: participles and predicatives. Cf. Tabs 21 and 22.

[59] Only in test 2: adjective combination. Cf. Tabs 13 and 14.

[60] Only in test 2: adjective combination. Cf. Tabs 13 and 14.

rinascimento	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
bar	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
studentessa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
speranza	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
presidentessa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
cane	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
tram	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
luna	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
monumento	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
prete	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F
ingegnere	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.
ferro	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.
sole	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
boomerang	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.
falò	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.
cecità	.	.	.	M	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
computer	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
pollice	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.
trattore	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
genere	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.
libertà	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
rame	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	F	.	.	F
lavatrice	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.
lunedì	.	F	F	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	F	.	F	.	.	F
pittore	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	.	F
cicatrice	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	M	.	.	M	.	M	.	M
stazione	M	M	.	.	.	M	M	M	.	M	.	.	.	M	.	M
religione	M	M	.	M	.	M	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	.
problema	F	.	.	F	F	.	F	F	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	.
solitudine	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	M	.	M	.	M	.	M	M	M
mano	M	.	.	M	M	.	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	.
stupidaggine	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	.	M	M	.
diploma	F	F	.	F	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	.
duca	F	F	F	F	F	.	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
portaerei	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	.
pace	M	.	.	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
bici	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	.	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M

pirata	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
turista	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
portoghese	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M
cantante	M	F	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	M	M	M	M	M/F	M
minorenne	M	M	M	F	M	F	F	F	F	M	M	M	F	M	M	F

Noun	**Informants**							
	Q	**R**	**S**	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**Percentage of correctness**
bambino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
bambina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
padre	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
madre	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
re	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
costanza	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
rinascimento	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
bar	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
studentessa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
speranza	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
presidentessa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
cane	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
tram	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
luna	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
monumento	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
prete	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65%**
ingegnere	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65%**
ferro	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65%**
sole	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	**95,65%**
boomerang	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65%**
falò	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	**91,30%**
cecità	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**91,30%**
computer	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	**91,30%**
pollice	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	**86,96%**
trattore	F	.	.	F	.	.	.	**86,96%**
genere	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	**86,96%**
libertà	.	M	.	M	.	M	.	**82,61%**
rame	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	**82,61%**
lavatrice	M	.	M	.	.	M	.	**78,26%**

lunedì	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**73,91%**
pittore	.	F	.	F	.	F	.	**73,91%**
cicatrice	M	.	M	.	.	M	.	**65,22%**
stazione	.	.	.	.	.	M	M	**56,52%**
religione	.	M	M	.	M	M	.	**30,43%**
problema	F	F	.	F	F	F	.	**30,43%**
solitudine	M	.	M	.	M	M	.	**30,43%**
mano	M	M	.	M	M	M	.	**30,43%**
stupidaggine	M	.	M	.	M	M	M	**26,09%**
diploma	F	F	.	F	F	F	.	**21,74%**
duca	F	F	F	F	.	F	.	**17,39%**
portaerei	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	**17,39%**
pace	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	**17,39%**
bici	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**13,04%**
pirata	F	F	F	.	F	F	F	**4,35%**
turista	F	F	M	F	M	F	F	**91,30% F** **8,70% M**
portoghese	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**91,30% M** **8,70% F**
cantante	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	**65,22% M** **30,43% F** **4,35% M/F**
minorenne	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	**60,87% M** **39,13% F**

General average correctness: 74,20%[61]

Tab. 12 Younger group's results of test 1: indefinite article

Nouns	***Informants***													
	Aa	***Bb***	***Cc***	***Dd***	***Ee***	***Ff***	***Gg***	***Hh***	***Ii***	***Jj***	***Kk***	***Ll***	***Mm***	***Percentage of correctness***
bambino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
bambina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**

[61] For every table, we always excluded double gender nouns from the calculation of the general average correctness.

padre	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**92,31%**
bar	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**92,31%**
ferro	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**92,31%**
falò	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	**92,31%**
studentessa	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**92,31%**
speranza	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	**92,31%**
monumento	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	**92,31%**
pollice	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**84,62%**
costanza	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	**84,62%**
rinascimento	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	**84,62%**
boomerang	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	**84,62%**
cecità	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	**84,62%**
presidentessa	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	**84,62%**
libertà	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	M	.	.	**84,62%**
computer	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	**84,62%**
tram	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	F	.	.	.	**84,62%**
luna	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	M	**84,62%**
madre	.	.	M	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	M	.	.	**76,92%**
lunedì	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	F	**76,92%**
re	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	F	**69,23%**
cane	.	F	F	.	F	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	**69,23%**
ingegnere	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	F	F	.	.	.	F	**61,54%**
solitudine	M	M	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	M	**61,54%**
trattore	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	F	.	F	F	.	.	**61,54%**
genere	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	F	F	F	F	.	**61,54%**
prete	.	.	F	F	F	.	F	F	.	.	.	.	F	**53,85%**
stazione	M	.	.	.	M	M	.	.	M	.	M	M	.	**53,85%**
rame	.	F	F	F	.	F	.	F	F	.	.	.	.	**53,85%**
lavatrice	.	M	M	M	.	.	M	M	M	.	M	.	.	**46,15%**
stupidaggine	.	M	M	M	.	.	.	M	M	.	M	.	M	**46,15%**
pittore	.	F	F	.	F	.	F	F	F	.	.	.	F	**46,15%**
cicatrice	.	M	M	M	.	M	.	M	.	.	M	M	M	**38,46%**
sole	F	.	F	.	F	F	F	F	.	.	F	F	F	**30,77%**
pace	M	.	M	.	M	M	.	M	M	M	.	M	M	**30,77%**
religione	M	M	M	M	.	M	.	M	.	M	M	M	M	**23,08%**
portaerei	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	.	.	M	M	**23,08%**
bici	M	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	.	.	M	M	**23,08%**

duca	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	F	**15,38%**
pirata	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	F	**15,38%**
problema	F	F	.	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	**15,38%**
diploma	F	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	F	**15,38%**
mano	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**0%**
turista	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	**92,31% F 7,69% M**
portoghese	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	F	F	M	**76,92% M 23,08% F**
cantante	M	M	M	F	F	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	**69,23% M 30,77% F**
minorenne	M	M	M	M	F	F	M	M	M	F	F	F	M	**61,54% M 38,46% F**

***General average correctness:* 62,76%**

Tab. 13 - Older group's results of test 2: adjective combination

Nouns	***Informants***							
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**
donna	alta	gialla	fredda	alta	alta	alta	alta	alta
tavolo	alta	alto	piccolo	piccolo	rosso	rosso	piccolo	piccolo
fuoco	caldo	caldo	caldo	rosso	X	caldo	gialla	rosso
guerra	piccolo	rossa	fredda	alta	gialla	fredda	alta	fredda
cane	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	gialla
fiume	fredda	freddo	caldo	rosso	caldo	piccolo	caldo	caldo
cuore	caldo	fredda	caldo	caldo	rosso	caldo	rosso	caldo
libro	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	rosso
borsa	rosso	rossa	gialla	alta	rosso piccolo	gialla	rosso	gialla
moglie	X	giallo	alta	caldo	alta	X	alta	piccolo
mano	caldo	calda	fredda	piccolo	piccolo fredda caldo	caldo	fredda	piccolo
iceberg	fredda	alto	piccolo	fredda	fredda	piccolo	fredda	fredda
automobile	rosso	rosso	rosso	rosso	rosso	rosso	rosso	rosso

Nouns	***Informants***

	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
donna	alta	alta	alta	alta	alta	piccolo	alta	gialla
tavolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	rosso	rosso	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo
fuoco	rosso	caldo	caldo	caldo	rosso	caldo	caldo	piccolo
guerra	alta	alta	fredda	piccolo	fredda	alta	alta	gialla
cane	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	rosso	piccolo	alta	piccolo	alta
fiume	caldo	piccolo	caldo	fredda	piccolo	caldo	X	caldo
cuore	rosso	caldo	rosso	caldo	rosso	fredda	caldo	fredda
libro	gialla	alta	piccolo	rosso	piccolo	gialla	piccolo	piccolo
borsa	rosso	gialla	gialla	gialla	gialla	piccolo	gialla	alta
moglie	piccolo alta	piccolo	alta	rosso	gialla	rosso	alta	piccolo
mano	fredda	piccolo	caldo	caldo	piccolo	fredda	piccolo	caldo
iceberg	fredda	fredda	fredda	fredda	fredda	fredda	piccolo	alta
automobile	alta	rosso	rosso	rosso	rosso	rosso	rosso	rosso

Nouns	***Informants***							
	Q	**R**	**S**	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**Percentage of correctness**
donna	fredda	alta	alta	alta	alta	alta	piccola	**95,65%**
tavolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	rosso	piccolo	piccolo	**95,65%**
fuoco	caldo	rosso	rosso	giallo	caldo	caldo	rosso	**91,30%**
guerra	fredda	alta	fredda	alta	fredda	alta	fredda	**91,30%**
cane	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	piccolo	**86,96%**
fiume	piccolo	rosso	caldo	rosso	caldo	caldo	piccolo	**86,96%**
cuore	fredda	caldo	caldo	rosso	gialla	caldo	caldo	**78,26%**
libro	rosso	rosso	rosso	giallo	alta	gialla	gialla	**73,91%**
borsa	gialla	gialla	gialla	gialla	rosso	piccolo	piccola	**69,57%**
moglie	alta	alta	alta	alta	alta	alta	alta	**56,52%**
mano	rosso	caldo	fredda	caldo	fredda	caldo	freddo	**30,43%**
iceberg	fredda	fredda	caldo	caldo	fredda	fredda	fredda	**26,09%**
automobile	piccolo	rosso	piccolo	rosso	piccolo	rosso	gialla	**8,70%**

***General average correctness:* 68,56%**

Tab. 14 – Younger group's results of test 2: adjective combination[62]

Nouns	*Informants*							
	Aa	**Bb**	**Cc**	**Dd**	**Ee**	**Ff**	**Gg**	**Hh**
fuoco	piccolo	piccolo	X	alto	caldo	caldo	rosso	caldo
donna	alta	piccolo	alta	piccola	rosso	alta	fredda	gialla
tavolo	rosso	rosso	X	freddo	fredda	piccolo	piccolo	fredda
borsa	gialla	gialla	X	alta	rosso	gialla	gialla	alta
moglie	fredda	alta	X	caldo	piccolo	alta	gialla	alta
guerra	gialla	alta	X	alta	rosso	gialla	fredda	caldo
cane	rosso	rosso	rosso	gialla	fredda	piccolo	alta	fredda
cuore	rosso	gialla	X	piccolo	caldo	fredda	rosso	fredda
libro	piccolo	piccolo	gialla	giallo	gialla	rosso	caldo	alta
iceberg	fredda	fredda	fredda	freddo	alta	fredda	alta	piccolo
fiume	caldo	fredda	X	rossa	piccolo	caldo	caldo	gialla
mano	rosso	caldo	piccolo	piccolo	gialla	piccolo	piccolo	rosso
automobile	piccolo	rosso	X	rosso	piccolo	rosso	alta	rosso

Nouns	*Informants*				
	Ii	**Jj**	**Kk**	**Mm**	**Percentage of correctness**
fuoco	rosso	caldo	rosso	caldo	**91,67%**
donna	alta	rosso	alta	alta	**75%**
tavolo	rosso	rosso	piccolo	piccolo	**75%**
borsa	caldo	alta	alta	gialla	**75%**
moglie	gialla	alta	caldo	gialla	**66,67%**
guerra	alta	fredda	piccolo	fredda	**66,67%**
cane	piccolo	fredda	piccolo	piccolo	**58,33%**
cuore	piccolo	piccolo	rosso	gialla	**58,33%**
libro	gialla	gialla	gialla	rosso	**50%**
iceberg	fredda	caldo	caldo	caldo	**41,67%**
fiume	rosso	fredda	fredda	alta	**41,67%**
mano	gialla	piccolo	fredda	caldo	**25%**
automobile	rosso	rosso	rosso	rosso	**8,33%**

General average correctness: 56,41%

[62] The informant Ll did not answer this test.

Tab. 15 - Older group's results for test 3: noun phrase[63]

Nouns	*Informants*													
	A	**B**	**C**[64]	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**	**K**	**L**	**M**	**N**
un cane	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
piccolo	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
un libro	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
nero	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
un bar	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
storico	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
una macchina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.
rossa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.
una professoressa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
arrabbiata	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
una città	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
deserta	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
un computer	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.
rotto	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	-e	.	.	.	F	.
un'(a) attrice[65]	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	un'	.	.	M	.	.
bella	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.
un pompiere	.	F	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.
anziano	.	F	.	.	F	.	.	.	-e	.	F	.	.	.
un vigile	.	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	.	.	F	.	.
severo	.	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	.	.	F	.	.
un pittore	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	F	F	F	F	.	.
bravo	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	F	F	F	F	.	.
un bicchiere	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	F	M	F	F	.	.	.
pieno	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	F	F	F	F	.	.	.
un problema	F	.	.	.	F	M	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
grosso	F	.	.	.	F	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
una canzone	.	.	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	M
nuova	.	.	.	M	F	M	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	M

[63] We considered M and F basic endings in –o and –a. We specified where other endings (such as –e) have been written.

[64] Informant C used definite articles instead of indefinite ones.

[65] Where not specified, the informant did not use the apostrophe, but choose the basic form with vowel ending.

un duca	F	F	F	F	F	.	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
ricco	F	F	F	M	F	.	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
una moto	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
vecchia	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
un/a giornalista	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
sportivo/a[66]	F	F	F	F	F	M/F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
un(a) parente	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
lontano(a)	M	M	M	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M

Nouns	***Informants***									
	O	**P**	**Q**	**R**	**S**	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**Percentage of correctness**
un cane	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
piccolo	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
un libro	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
nero	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
un bar	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
storico	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
una macchina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65%**
rossa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
una professoressa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65%**
arrabbiata	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	X	.	
una città	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65%**
deserta	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
un computer	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	**86,96%**
rotto	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	
un'(a) attrice	.	.	M	un'	.	M	M	.	.	**78,26%**
bella	.	.	M	.	.	M	M	.	.	
un pompiere	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	F	**78,26%**
anziano	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	F	
un vigile	.	.	.	.	F	.	F	F	.	**73,91%**
severo	.	.	.	.	F	.	F	F	.	
un pittore	.	.	.	F	.	F	F	M	.	**60,87%**
bravo	.	.	.	F	.	F	F	F	.	

[66] In double gender nouns, if the informant did not make the agreement article/adjective, the token has been considered mistake (i.e. red)

un bicchiere	F	F	.	F	.	F	.	F	.	**56,52%**
pieno	F	F	.	F	.	F	.	F	.	
un problema	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	.	.	**30,43%**
grosso	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	.	.	
una canzone	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	**26,09%**
nuova	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	
un duca	F	F	F	F	F	F	.	F	.	**17,39%**
ricco	F	F	F	F	F	-ha	.	F	.	
una moto	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**0%**
vecchia	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	
un/a giornalista	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	**95,65% F**
sportivo/a	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	
un(a) parente	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**86,96% M**
lontano(a)	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**8,70% F**

General average correctness: 68,48%

Tab. 16 – Younger group's results for test 3: noun phrase

Nouns	***Informants***										
	Aa	**Bb**	**Cc**	**Dd**	**Ee**	**Ff**	**Gg**	**Hh**	**Ii**	**Jj**	**Kk**
un cane piccolo	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	M	.
	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	F	.
un libro nero	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	F
	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	F
una professoressa	.	.	M	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.
arrabbiata	.	.	M	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.
una macchina rossa	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	M	.	F	.
	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	M	.	M	.
un pittore bravo	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	.	M	F
	.	.	.	.	M	F	.	.	.	F	M
un vigile severo	.	F	.	.	F	.	F	.	.	.	.
	.	-e	.	.	F	.	F	.	.	.	.
un bar storico	.	X	.	.	F	.	.	F	.	.	.
	.		.	.	F	.	.	F	.	.	.
un computer rotto	.	X	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	F	F
	.		.	.	M	.	.	.	.	F	F

una città deserta	. .	X	M F	. .	M F	. .	. .	M M	. .	. .	. .
un pompiere anziano	. .	X	M F	. .	. .	F F	. .	F F	. .	. .	F F
un'(a) attrice bella	M M	X	. .	. .	M M	M M	. .	M M	M M	M M	. .
un bicchiere pieno	. .	F -e	M F	F F	F F	F F	F F	F F	F F	F F	. .
una canzone nuova	M M	M M	M M	M M	F M	M M	M M	M M	. .	F M	. .
un duca ricco	F F	. .	F F	F F	. .	F F	F F	F F	F F	F M	F F
una moto vecchia	M M	M M	F M	M M	M F	M M	M M	M M	. .	M M	. .
un problema grosso	F F	F F	M F	F F	F M	F F	F F	F F	F F	F F	. .
un/a giornalista sportivo/a	F F	F F	F F	F F	M M	F F	F F	M M	F F	F F	F F
un/a parente lontano/a	M M	X	M F	F M	F M	M M	F F	F F	M M	F F	M F

Nouns	***Informants***		
	Ll	**Mm**	**Percentage of correctness**
un cane piccolo	. .	. .	**84,62%**
un libro nero	. .	. .	**84,62%**
una professoressa arrabbiata	. .	. .	**84,62%**
una macchina rossa	. .	M M	**69,23%**
un pittore bravo	. .	. .	**69,23%**
un vigile severo	. .	F F	**69,23%**
un bar storico	. .	F F	**69,23%**

un computer rotto	. .	. .	**69,23%**
una città deserta	. .	. .	**69,23%**
un pompiere anziano	F F	F F	**46,15%**
un'(a) attrice bella	M M	M M	**30,77%**
un bicchiere pieno	F F	. .	**23,08%**
una canzone nuova	X	. .	**23,08%**
un duca ricco	F F	. .	**23,08%**
una moto vecchia	M M	M M	**15,38%**
un problema grosso	F F	. .	**15,38%**
un/a giornalista ***sportivo/a***	F F	M M	**76,92% F** **23,08% M**
un/a parente lontano/a	X	M M	**30,77% M** **23,08% F**

General average correctness: 52,88%

Tab. 17 - Older group's results for test 4: plural

Nouns	***Informants***					
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**
mani	.	.	.	.	.	.
macchine	.	.	.	.	.	.
gatti	.	.	.	.	.	.
pomodori	.	.	.	.	.	.
bottiglie	.	bottilie	.	.	.	.
squadre	.	.	.	.	.	.
licenziamenti	.	.	.	.	.	.
duchesse	.	.	.	.	.	.
box	.	.	.	.	.	.

re	X	rei	rei	.	rei	.
monti	.	.	.	.	.	monte
bicchieri	.	.	.	bicchiere	.	bicchiere
scrittori	.	.	.	scrittore	.	.
collaboratrici	.	.	collaboratrice	.	.	.
situazioni	.	.	situazione	situazione	situazione	.
uova	uovi	uovi	uve	uovi	uovè	.
dita	diti	diti	diti	diti	diti	.
retroscena	retroscene	retroscene	retroscene	retroscene	.	retroscene

Nouns	***Informants***				
	G	**H**	**I**	**J**	**K**
mani	.	.	.	.	.
macchine	.	.	.	.	.
gatti	.	.	.	.	.
pomodori	.	.	.	.	.
bottiglie	.	.	.	bottigli	.
squadre	.	.	.	.	.
licenziamenti	.	.	.	.	.
duchesse	.	.	.	.	.
box	boxi	.	.	boxi	.
re	rei	rei	.	ri	.
monti	.	.	monte	.	.
bicchieri	.	.	.	bicchiere	.
scrittori	.	.	scrittore	.	scrittore
collaboratrici	collaboratrice	.	collaboratrice	.	collaboratrice
situazioni	situazione	.	situazione	situazione	situazione
uova	uovi	uovi	uovi	uove	uovi
dita	diti	diti	diti	diti	diti
retroscena	retroscene	retroscene	retroscene	retroscene	retroscene

Nouns	***Informants***				
	L	**M**	**N**	**O**	**P**
mani	.	.	.	.	mane
macchine	.	.	.	.	.
gatti	gatte	.	.	.	.
pomodori	.	.	.	.	.

bottiglie	.	.	.	.	.
squadre	squadri	.	.	.	squadri
licenziamenti	licenziamente	.	.	.	licenziamente
duchesse	.	.	.	.	duchessi
box	.	boxe	.	boxi	boxi
re	ri	reini	.	rei	rei
monti	.	.	monte	.	.
bicchieri	.	bicchiere	bicchiere	.	.
scrittori	.	scrittrice	.	.	.
collaboratrici	collaboratrice	.	.	.	.
situazioni	.	situazione	.	situazione	.
uova	uove	uovi	.	.	uovi
dita	diti	diti	diti	diti	dite
retroscena	retroscene	retroscene	retroscene	retroscene	retrosceni

Nouns	***Informants***				
	Q	**R**	**S**	**T**	**U**
mani	.	.	.	mane	.
macchine	.	.	.	.	macchini
gatti	.	.	.	.	.
pomodori	.	.	pomodore	.	.
bottiglie	.	.	.	.	bottigli
squadre	.	.	.	.	.
licenziamenti	.	.	.	.	.
duchesse	.	.	.	.	.
box	.	boxe	.	.	boxe
re	ri	ri	rí	rei	rea
monti	.	monte	.	.	.
bicchieri	.	.	.	.	bicchiere
scrittori	scrittore	.	.	.	.
collaboratrici	.	.	.	collaboratrice	collaboratrice
situazioni	situazione	situazione	situazione	.	situazione
uova	uovi	uovi	.	uovi	uove
dita	diti	diti	.	dite	diti
retroscena	retroscene	retroscene	retroscene	retroscene	retroscene

Nouns	***Informants***	

	V	W	Percentage of correctness
mani	mane	.	**100 %**
macchine	.	.	**95,65 %**
gatti	.	.	**95,65 %**
pomodori	.	.	**95,65 %**
bottiglie	.	.	**91,30 %**
squadre	.	.	**91,30 %**
licenziamenti	.	.	**91,30 %**
duchesse	duchessi	.	**91,30 %**
box	.	.	**86,96 %**
re	ree	.	**86,96 %**
monti	.	.	**82,61 %**
bicchieri	.	.	**73,91 %**
scrittori	scrittore	.	**73,91 %**
collaboratrici	.	.	**69,57 %**
situazioni	.	.	**43,48 %**
uova	uove	uovi	**43,48 %**
dita	dite	.	**26,09 %**
retroscena	retroscene	retroscene	**8,70 %**

General average correctness: 74,87%

Tab. 18 - Younger group's results for test 4: plural

Nouns	***Informants***					
	Aa	**Bb**	**Cc**	**Dd**	**Ee**[67]	**Ff**
pomodori	.	.	.	.	.	.
mani	.	.	.	.	mana	.
gatti	.	.	.	.	gatta	gatte
bicchieri	.	.	.	.	.	.
scrittori	.	.	.	.	.	.
situazioni	.	.	situzioni	.	.	.
monti	.	.	.	.	montse	.
bottiglie	.	.	bottigle	.	bottigasi	.
licenziamenti	.	.	.	.	licenziamesi	.

[67] Due to the peculiar individuality of the answers of this informant, we considered nouns such *licenziamesi* or *collaboratrisi* as wrong forms, and not only simple spelling mistakes.

collaboratrici	.	.	.	.	collaboratrisi	.
re	ri	X	reo	.	ri	ri
squadre	.	.	.	.	squadrasi	.
duchesse	.	duchessi	duchessi	.	duchessa	.
box	boxi	X	boxi	.	boxo	boxe
macchine	.	.	macchini	.	macchino	.
retroscena	retroscene	retroscene	retrosceni	retroscene	retrosceni	retroscene
dita	diti	diti	diti	diti	dite	diti
uova	uove	uovi	uovi	uovi	uovi	uovi

Nouns	***Informants***				
	Gg	**Hh**	**Ii**	**Jj**	**Kk**
pomodori	.	.	.	.	.
mani	.	mane	.	.	.
gatti	.	.	.	.	.
bicchieri	.	.	.	bicchiera	bicchiero
scrittori	.	.	scritti	scrittoro	scrittoro
situazioni	.	.	.	situaziona	situaziona
monti	.	montiano	.	.	monto
bottiglie	.	bottigiorna	bottigli	bottigio	.
licenziamenti	.	licenziamenono	.	licenziamenta	.
collaboratrici	collaboratric	collaborariceno	.	.	collaboratrico
re	ri	.	ri	reo	ra
squadre	.	squadona	squadri	squadro	squadro
duchesse	duscesse	.	duchessi	duchessi	.
box	boxi	boxiano	boxi	boxa	boxo
macchine	.	maccinano	macchini	macchino	macchino
retroscena	retroscene	retroscene	retrosceni	.	retroscene
dita	diti	diti	diti	.	.
uova	uovi	uovi	uovi	uovo	uovi

Nouns	***Informants***		
	Ll	**Mm**	**Percentage of correctness**
pomodori	.	pomodore	**92,31 %**
mani	.	mane	**92,31 %**
gatti	.	.	**84,62 %**
bicchieri	.	.	**84,62 %**

scrittori	.	.	**84,62 %**
situazioni	.	.	**84,62 %**
monti	.	.	**76,92 %**
bottiglie	.	.	**69,23 %**
licenziamenti	.	licenziamente	**69,23 %**
collaboratrici	.	.	**69,23 %**
re	ri	ri	**69,23 %**
squadre	.	.	**61,54 %**
duchesse	.	.	**61,54 %**
box	.	boxi	**53,85 %**
macchine	.	macchini	**46,15 %**
retroscena	retroscene	retrosceni	**38,46 %**
dita	.	diti	**30,77 %**
uova	uovi	uove	**15,38 %**

General average correctness: 65,81%

Tab. 19 - Older group's results for test 5: diminutives[68]

Nouns	***Informants***								
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**
nonnina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
nasino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
fratellino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	frattellino
uccellino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	uccelino
pomodorino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
sorellina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
macchinina	machinina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
nonnino	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	F
canino	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	canine
bustina	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
piedino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	piedini
salamino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	salamine
computerino	.	F	.	computino	.	.	.	.	computer
filmino	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	film

[68] We considered M and F basic endings in –ino and –ina. We specified where peculiar forms have been written.

chiavina	.	M	.	M	M	M	.	.	chiavini
dentino	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	dentine
esamino	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	esamine	esamini
manina	M	.	M	M	M	.	M	M	manine
villina/o	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
faccina/o	F	F	F	F	F	F	facciaina	F	F

Nouns	***Informants***						
	J	**K**	**L**	**M**	**N**	**O**	**P**
nonnina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
nasino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
fratellino	.	.	frattellino	.	.	.	.
uccellino	.	.	.	ucellino	.	.	.
pomodorino	.	.	F	.	.	pomodino	.
sorellina	M	.	.	.	.	.	.
macchinina	macchina	macchina	.	.	macchina	.	.
nonnino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
canino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
bustina	.	.	.	.	.	.	M
piedino	.	F	.	.	.	.	.
salamino	.	.	F	F	.	.	.
computerino	computino	computino	computer	.	.	computer	.
filmino	F	.	film	.	F	film	.
chiavina	.	.	.	.	M	M	M
dentino	.	F	F	F	.	.	.
esamino	ensamina	F	.	F	.	.	.
manina	M	M	M	M	M	M	.
villina/o	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
faccina/o	M	F	F	F	facchina	F	F

Nouns	***Informants***							
	Q	**R**	**S**	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**Percentage of correctness**
nonnina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
nasino	.	nasoino	.	.	.	nasoino	.	**100%**
fratellino	.	.	.	.	.	fratelloino	.	**100%**
uccellino	.	.	.	.	.	uccelloino	.	**100%**

pomodorino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65 %**
sorellina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65 %**
macchinina	.	.	.	macchina	macchino	.	.	**95,65 %**
nonnino	.	.	.	.	.	nonnoino	.	**91,30 %**
canino	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	**86,96 %**
bustina	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	**86,96 %**
piedino	.	.	F	F	piedo	.	.	**82,61 %**
salamino	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	**82,61 %**
computerino	.	.	.	.	.	computino	.	**82,61 %**
filmino	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	**69,57 %**
chiavina	.	.	.	.	M	chiaveino	.	**56,52 %**
dentino	F	F	F	.	F	F	.	**52,17 %**
esamino	.	F	F	F	ensamina	.	F	**52,17 %**
manina	M	.	.	.	M	M	.	**30,43 %**
villina/o	F	F	F	F	F	villaina	F	**100% F**
faccina/o	F	F	F	facciaina	M	F	F	**91,30% F** **8,70% M**

General average correctness: 81,16%

Tab. 20 - Younger group's results for test 5: diminutives

Nouns	***Informants***						
	Aa	**Bb**	**Cc**	**Dd**	**Ee**	**Ff**	**Gg**
nonnina	nonina	.	nonina	.	nonina	.	.
bustina	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
canino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
pomodorino	.	.	X	.	promodino	.	.
fratellino	.	frattellino	.	.	fratelina	.	.
uccellino	.	.	.	.	uccelina	.	.
sorellina	.	.	.	.	M	.	.
piedino	.	.	.	.	F	.	.
salamino	.	.	F	.	salaino	F	.
macchinina	.	macchina	.	.	macchina	.	macchina
esamino	.	.	.	F	.	.	.
nonnino	nonnonina	.	.	.	nasino	.	.
nasino	nasonina	.	.	.	F	.	.
chiavina	.	M	.	.	chiaino	.	.

filmino	.	X	.	F	filino	.	F
computerino	.	X	F	.	F	.	F
dentino	.	.	.	.	F	F	F
manina	M	M	.	M	.	M	M
villina/o	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
faccina/o	F	F	M	F	F	F	F

Nouns	***Informants***						
	Hh	**Ii**	**Jj**	**Kk**	**Ll**	**Mm**	**Percentage of correctness**
nonnina	.	.	M	.	.	.	**92,31 %**
bustina	.	.	.	M	.	.	**92,31 %**
canino	F	.	.	.	.	F	**84,62 %**
pomodorino	.	pomodino	.	F	.	.	**84,62 %**
fratellino	.	.	.	F	.	.	**84,62 %**
uccellino	.	.	.	F	.	.	**84,62 %**
sorellina	.	.	.	M	M	.	**76,92 %**
piedino	.	pino	.	.	X	F	**76,92 %**
salamino	.	salino	F	.	.	.	**76,92 %**
macchinina	.	macchina	M	M	macchina	M	**76,92 %**
esamino	.	esino	F	.	esamia	.	**76,92 %**
nonnino	.	.	F	F	.	.	**76,92 %**
nasino	.	F	F	F	.	.	**61,54 %**
chiavina	.	.	.	M	chiaino	M	**61,54 %**
filmino	F	.	.	F	.	.	**61,54 %**
computerino	comperino	.	F	.	.	.	**61,54 %**
dentino	.	F	F	.	X	F	**46,15 %**
manina	M	mino	M	.	M	M	**23,08 %**
villina/o	villanina	F	M	M	F	F	**84,62 % F** **15,38 % M**
faccina/o	faccinina	F	F	M	F	F	**84,62 % F** **15,38 % M**

General average correctness: 72,22%

Tab. 21 - Older group's results of test 6: participles and predicatives[69]

Nouns	*Informants*															
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**	**K**	**L**	**M**	**N**	**O**	**P**
andata **(Maria)**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
partita	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
onesta	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
andata	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
contento	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
andato	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
stato	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	state	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
comprato	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	X	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
stato	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	state	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
restaurato	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	restaurat e	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
stato	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	state	.	X	.	.	.	.	.
licenziato	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	licenziat e	.	X	.	.	.	.	.
stato	F	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	state	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
lanciato	F	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	lanciate	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
brava	M	.	.	.	M	.	M	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.
severa	M	.	.	.	M	M	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	M	M
buona	M	.	.	.	M	M	M	.	M	M	.	M	.	.	.	.
bravo **(chirurgo)**	F	.	F	.	F	F	F	.	F	F	.	F	.	F	F	.
considerat	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	.	F	.	F	F	.
o severo	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	.	F	.	F	F	.
stato	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	.	state	F	.	F	.	F	F	.
ucciso	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	.	uccise	F	.	F	.	F	F	.
bravo **(soprano)**	F	.	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	.	F	.	F	F	.
belga	X	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M

[69] We considered M and F the basic forms of participles and predicatives. We specified where peculiar forms have been written.

argentina **(colloquial *argentino*)**	M	.	M	.	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	X	.	M	M	.
amata **(colloquial *amato*)**	M	.	M/ F	.	.	M	M	M	amate	M	M	M	.	M	M	.

Nouns								
	Q	**R**	**S**	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**Percentage of correctness**
andata **(Maria)**	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
partita	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
onesta	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
andata	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
contento	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
andato	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	**95,65 %**
stato ***comprato***	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	**91,30 %**
stato ***restaurato***	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	**91,30 %**
stato ***licenziato***	. .	. .	. .	. licenziate	. .	. .	. .	**86,96 %**
stato ***lanciato***	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	**86,96 %**
brava	.	M	.	.	M	M	M	**65,22 %**
severa	M	.	.	M	.	M	.	**60,87 %**
buona	.	.	M	.	M	M	M	**52,17 %**
bravo **(chirurgo)**	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	**30,43 %**
considerato ***severo***	F F	. .	F F	F F	F F	F F	F F	**26,09 %**
stato ***ucciso***	F F	. .	F F	F .	F F	F F	F F	**26,09 %**
bravo **(soprano)**	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	**21,74 %**
belga	M	M	belge	belghi	M	M	M	**4,35 %**
argentina **(colloquial**	M	M	argentine	argentini	M	M	M	**21,74 % F** **65,22 % M colloquial form**

***argentino*)**								
amata **(colloquial** ***amato*)**	M	M	M	amati	M	M	M	**21,74 % F** **65,22 % colloquial form** **4,35 % admitted both**

General average correctness: 68,84%

Tab. 22 - Younger group's results of test 6: participles and predicatives[70]

Nouns	***Informants***										
	Aa	**Bb**	**Cc**	**Dd**	**Ee**	**Ff**	**Gg**	**Hh**	**Ii**	**Kk**	**Ll**
contento	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.
onesta	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	oneste	.
andata (la studentessa)	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	andate	.
andata (Maria)	M	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	andate	.
bravo (soprano)	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	brave	.
brava	.	M	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	M	.
partita	M	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.
andato	F	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	.	F
stato restaurato	. .	. X	. F	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. restaurate	. .
buona	.	M	M	.	M	.	M	.	.	.	.
stato comprato	. .	state comprate	. .	. .	. F	. .	. .	. .	. .	state .	F .
stato licenziato	F F	. .	. F	. .	F F	. .	. .	. .	. .	F .	. .
stato lanciato	. .	X	. F	. .	F .	. .	. .	. .	. .	F .	F F
stato ucciso	F F	X	. F	. .	. .	F F	. .	F F	. .	state .	. .
bravo (chirurgo)	F	F	F	.	.	.	F	F	F	brave	.
considerato severo	F F	X	. F	. .	. .	F F	. .	F F	. .	considerate F	F F

[70] The informant Jj did not answer this test

severa	M	X	M	.	M	M	.	M	.	M	.
belga	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	M
argentina (ma colloquiale argentino)	M	M	M	M	.	M	.	.	M	.	M
amata (ma colloquiale amato)	M	M	.	.	.	M	.	M	M	M	M

Nouns	***Informants***	
	Mm	**Percentage of correctness**
contento	.	**91,67 %**
onesta	.	**83,33 %**
andata (la studentessa)	.	**83,33 %**
andata (Maria)	.	**75 %**
bravo (soprano)	.	**75 %**
brava	.	**75 %**
partita	M	**66,67 %**
andato	.	**66,67 %**
stato restaurato	F F	**66,67 %**
buona	.	**66,67 %**
stato comprato	F F	**58,33 %**
stato licenziato	F F	**58,33 %**
stato lanciato	F F	**50 %**
stato ucciso	F .	**41,67 %**
bravo (chirurgo)	.	**41,67 %**
considerato severo	F F	**33,33 %**

severa	M	**33,33 %**
belga	M	**8,33 %**
argentina (ma colloquiale argentino)	.	**41,67 % F** **58,33 % colloquial form**
amata (ma colloquiale amato)	M	**33,33 % F** **66,67 % M colloquial form**

General average correctness: 59,72%

Tab. 23 - Older group's results of test 7: transfer[71]

Nouns	***Informants***												
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**	**K**	**L**	**M**
common + M **(*un libro*)**	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
common + M **(*un ragazzo*)**	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
common + M **(*un cane*)**	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. -o	. .	. .	. .	. -o	. .
common + F **(*una famiglia*)**	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
neuter + F **(*una casa*)**	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
common + M **(*un giorno*)**	. .	. .	. .	. .	F F	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
neuter + M **(*un francobollo*)**	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
common + F **(*una banana*)**	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	un X	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
common + F **(*una moglie*)**	M M	. .	. .	M .	. .	. .	. .	. -a	. .	. -a	. .	. -a	. .
neuter + F **(*una stanza*)**	. .	. .	. .	. .	M .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .	M M	. .

[71] We considered M and F basic endings in –o and –a. We specified where peculiar forms have been written.

common + M	.	F	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	F	F	F
(*un cetriolo*)	.	F	.	.	-e	.	-e	.	.	.	F	F	-e
neuter + F	M	M	.	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	.	.	.
(*una gamba*)	M	M	.	M	M	.	-e	M	-i	M	.	.	.
neuter + M	F	F	.	F	.	.	.	F	F	.	F	F	.
(*un pacchetto*)	F	F	.	F	.	.	.	F	F	.	F	F	.
neuter + M	F	.	.	.	.	.	F	F	F	F	F	.	F
(*un problema*)	F	.	.	-o	.	.	F	F	F	F	F	-o	F
common + F	M	.	M	.	X	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
(*una mano*)	M	.	M	-a		.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
neuter + M/F	M	M	M	M	M	M	un(o)	M	M	M	M	un(o)	M
(*un/una bambino/bambina*)	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M

Nouns	*Informants*										
	N	**O**	**P**	**Q**	**R**	**S**	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**Percentage of correctness**
common + M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
(*un libro*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
common + M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
(*un ragazzo*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
common + M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
(*un cane*)	.	.	-o	.	.	.	.	-o	.	.	
common + F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
(*una famiglia*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
neuter + F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
(*una casa*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
common + M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65 %**
(*un giorno*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
neuter + M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	**95,65 %**
(*un francobollo*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
common + F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	**91,30 %**
(*una banana*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	
common + F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**91,30 %**
(*una moglie*)	-a	.	-a	-a	-a	.	.	-a	-a	.	
neuter + F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	**86,96 %**
(*una stanza*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	

common + M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	**69,57 %**
(*un cetriolo*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	F	.	
neuter + F	.	M	M	M	.	M	M	.	.	.	**43,48 %**
(*una gamba*)	.	M	M	M	.	-e	M	.	.	.	
neuter + M	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	.	.	**39,13 %**
(*un pacchetto*)	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	.	.	.	
neuter + M	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	.	.	**34,78 %**
(*un problema*)	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	.	.	
common + F	M	M	.	M	.	.	M	M	M	M	**26,09 %**
(*una mano*)	-e	M	.	M	.	.	M	M	M	M	
neuter + M/F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	un(o)	**100 % M**
(*un/una bambino/bambina*)	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	

General average correctness: 78,26%

Tab. 24 - Younger group's results of test 7: transfer

Nouns	***Informants***										
	Aa	**Bb**	**Cc**	**Dd**	**Ee**	**Ff**	**Gg**	**Hh**	**Ii**	**Jj**	**Kk**
common + M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
(*un libro*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
common + M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F
(*un giorno*)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F
common + M	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	F	.
(*un ragazzo*)	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	F	-i
common + M	.	.	.	F	F	.	X	.	.	.	.
(*un cane*)	.	-o	-o	-e	F	.		-o	.	-o	.
common + F	.	.	M	.	.	.	X	.	.	.	.
(*una moglie*)	.	-a	-a	-a	-a	.		-a	-a	-a	.
common + F	.	.	M	.	M	.	X	.	.	.	.
(*una famiglia*)	.	.	.	.	F	.		.	.	.	.
neuter + F	.	.	M	.	M	.	X	M	.	.	M
(*una casa*)	.	.	F	.	M	.		M	.	.	F
neuter + M	.	X	.	.	M	.	X	.	.	.	.
(*un francobollo*)	.		.	.	F	.		.	.	.	.
common + F	M	.	M	M	.	.	X	.	.	.	M
(*una banana*)	-e	.	F	M	.	-e		.	.	F	F

neuter + F	M	X	M	.	M	.	X	.	M	.	M
(*una stanza*)	M		F	.	M	.		.	M	.	-i
neuter + F	M	X	M	.	.	M	X	M	M	.	.
(*una gamba*)	M		M	.	.	M		M	M	.	-e
neuter + M	F	F	.	F	F	.	F	F	F	.	F
(*un problema*)	.	.	.	.	.	-o	.	.	.	-o	.
common + M	F	X	M	.	F	.	X	.	F	F	F
(*un cetriolo*)	F		F	.	F	.		.	F	F	-e
neuter + M	F	X	M	F	.	F	X	.	F	.	M
(*un pacchetto*)	F		-a	F	.	F		.	F	.	F
common + F	M	M	M	M	M	M	X	M	M	.	M
(*una mano*)	M	-e	M	M	M	M		M	M	-a	.
neuter + M/F	M	X	M	X	M	M	X	M	M	M	M
(*un/una bambino/bambina*)	M		M		M	M		M	M	M	M

Nouns	***Informants***		
	Ll	***Mm***	***Percentage of correctness***
common + M	.	.	**100%**
(*un libro*)	.	.	
common + M	F	.	**84,62 %**
(*un giorno*)	F	.	
common + M	.	.	**84,62 %**
(*un ragazzo*)	.	.	
common + M	.	.	**76,92 %**
(*un cane*)	-o	.	
common + F	M	.	**76,92 %**
(*una moglie*)	M	-a	
common + F	M	.	**69,23 %**
(*una famiglia*)	M	.	
neuter + F	.	.	**61,54 %**
(*una casa*)	.	.	
neuter + M	X	F	**61,54 %**
(*un francobollo*)		F	
common + F	.	.	**53,85 %**
(*una banana*)	.	.	
neuter + F	.	M	**38,46 %**
(*una stanza*)	.	M	

neuter + F **(*una gamba*)**	X	M M	**30,77 %**
neuter + M **(*un problema*)**	F F	F F	**23,08 %**
common + M **(*un cetriolo*)**	X	F F	**23,08 %**
neuter + M **(*un pacchetto*)**	X	F F	**23,08 %**
common + F **(*una mano*)**	M .	. -a	**15,38 %**
neuter + M/F **(*un/una bambino/bambina*)**	F F	M M	**69,23 % M** **7,69 % F**

General average correctness: 54,87%

Tab. 25 - Older group's results of test 8: possessive determiners

Nouns	***Informants***											
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**	**K**	**L**
mia (casa)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
mio (amico)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
mia (luce)	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
mio (ferro)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
mio (cane)	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
mia (mano)	M	M	.	.	M	.	.	M	M	M	M	M
mia (moto)	M	.	.	.	M	M	.	M	.	.	M	M
mio (problema)	F	F	.	.	F	.	.	F	F	F	F	F

Nouns	***Informants***											
	M	**N**	**O**	**P**	**Q**	**R**	**S**	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**Percentage of correctness**
mia (casa)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
mio (amico)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
mia (luce)	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**91,30 %**
mio (ferro)	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	**91,30 %**
mio (cane)	.	mie	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**91,30 %**
mia (mano)	M	.	M	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	**52,17%**
mia (moto)	M	.	M	.	M	.	M	M	.	.	.	**52,17 %**

mio (problema)	F	.	F	.	F	.	F	.	.	.	.	**47,83 %**

General average correctness: 78,26%

Tab. 26 - Younger group's results of test 8: possessive determiners

Nouns	***Informants***													
	Aa	**Bb**	**Cc**	**Dd**	**Ee**	**Ff**	**Gg**	**Hh**	**Ii**	**Jj**	**Kk**	**Ll**	**Mm**	**Percentage of correctness**
mio (ferro)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
mia (casa)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	**92,31 %**
mio (amico)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	**84,62 %**
mia (luce)	.	M	M	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	M	**69,23 %**
mio (cane)	.	.	F	.	F	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	**69,23 %**
mio (problema)	.	F	F	F	F	F	.	.	F	.	.	F	F	**38,46 %**
mia (moto)	.	M	M	M	M	M	.	.	.	M	M	M	M	**30,77 %**
mia (mano)	.	M	M	M	M	M	.	.	M	M	M	M	M	**23,08 %**

General average correctness: 63,46%

Tab. 27 - Italian native speakers' control group's results of test 9: Italian pseudowords

Nouns	***Informants***														
	α	**β**	**γ**	**δ**	**ε**	**ζ**	**η**	**θ**	**ι**	**κ**	**λ**	**μ**	**ν**	**ξ**	**Percentage**
****gico***	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**M 100%**
****cefrimento***	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**M 100%**
****dumatrice***	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	**F 100 %**
****frillazione***	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	**F 100 %**
****zeditudine***	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	**F 100 %**

***siolo**	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**M 92,86 % F 7,14 %**
***deliere**	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	**M 85,71 % F 14,29 %**
***traco**	M	F	M	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**M 85,71 % F 14,29 %**
***nistema**	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	F	M	M	**M 78,57 % F 21,43 %**
***bame**	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	M	M	F	F	M	**M 71,43 % F 28,57 %**
***fana**	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	**F 92,86 % M 7,14 %**
***fenta**	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	**F 92,86 % M 7,14 %**
***tole**	F	M	F	M	F	F	F	M	M	F	F	F	M	F	**F 64,29 % M 35,71 %**
***noma**	M	F	F	M	M	M	F	F	M	M	F	F	F	F	**F 57,14 % M 42,86 %**

***Tab. 28 - Older 's group results of test 9: Italian pseudowords*[72]**

Nouns	***Informants***																
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**	**K**	**L**	**M**	**N**	**O**	**P**	**Q**
***gico**	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
***fenta**	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
***siolo**	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
***cefrimento**	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
***traco**	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
***tole**	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M
***deliere**	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	F	M	M	F	M
***bame**	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
***zeditudine**	M	M	M	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	F	M	M	M	M	M
***frillazione**	M	F	F	M	M	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	F	F	F	M
***noma**	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F

[72] The underlined words are the ones whose gender was assigned by the 100% of Italian native speakers' control group. The general average correctness is based only onto these words.

fana	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
nistema	F	F	M	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	F
dumatrice	M	F	F	M	M	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F

Nouns	***Informants***						
	R	**S**	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**Percentage**
gico	M	M	M	M	M	M	**M 100%**
fenta	F	F	F	F	F	F	**F 100 %**
siolo	M	M	M	F	M	M	**M 95,65 %** **F 4,35 %**
cefrimento	M	M	M	F	M	M	**M 95,65 %** **F 4,35 %**
traco	M	M	M	F	M	M	**M 91,30 %** **F 8,70 %**
tole	M	M	F	M	M	F	**M 82,61 %** **F 17,39 %**
deliere	M	M	F	M	M	M	**M 78,26 %** **F 21,74 %**
bame	F	M	F	M	M	M	**M 78,26 %** **F 21,74 %**
zeditudine	F	M	F	M	M	F	**M 65,22 %** **F 34,78 %**
frillazione	M	M	M	M	M	F	**M 60,87 %** **F 39,13 %**
noma	F	F	F	F	F	F	**F 95,65 %** **M 4,35 %**
fana	F	F	F	M	F	F	**F 95,65 %** **M 4,35 %**
nistema	F	F	F	F	F	M	**F 82,61 %** **M 17,39 %**
dumatrice	F	F	M	M	M	F	**F 69,57 %** **M 30,43 %**

General average correctness: 67,82%

Tab. 29 - Younger group's results of test 9: Italian pseudowords[73]

Nouns	*Informants*													
	Aa	**Bb**	**Cc**	**Dd**	**Ee**	**Ff**	**Gg**	**Hh**	**Ii**	**Jj**	**Kk**	**Ll**	**Mm**	**Percentage**
***fenta**	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	**F 100%**
***cefrimento**	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	**M 92,31 %** **F 7,69 %**
***siolo**	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	**M 92,31 %** **F 7,69 %**
***traco**	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	**M 92,31 %** **F 7,69 %**
***gico**	M	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**M 84,62 %** **F 15,38 %**
***deliere**	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	**M 76,92 %** **F 23,08 %**
***bame**	M	M	F	M	M	F	M	M	M	F	M	F	M	**M 69,23 %** **F 30,77 %**
***dumatrice**	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	M	F	F	M	M	F	**M 61,54 %** **F 38,46 %**
***zeditudine**	M	M	M	F	F	M	F	F	M	F	M	M	M	**M 61,54 %** **F 38,46 %**
***fana**	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	**F 92,31 %** **M 7,69 %**
***nistema**	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	**F 84,62 %** **M 15,38 %**
***noma**	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	M	F	F	**F 84,62 %** **M 15,38 %**
***frillazione**	M	M	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	M	**F 69,23 %** **M 30,77 %**
***tole**	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	**F 53,85 %** **M 46,15 %**

General average correctness: 56,92%

[73] The underlined words are the ones whose gender was assigned by the 100% of Italian native speakers' control group. The general average correctness is based only onto these words.

Tab. 30 - Older group's results of test 10: minimal pairs with visual input

Nouns	*Informants*																	
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**	**K**	**L**	**M**	**N**	**O**	**P**	**Q**	**R**
mela	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
scala	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
cartello	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
banca	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.
tappo	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	F	.	F	.	.	F	.	F
collo	.	.	F	.	F	.	.	F	F	.	.	F	.	.	.	F	.	F
foglia	.	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	.	.	.	M	.	.	M	.	M
balena	M	M	.	.	M	M	.	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	M

Nouns	*Informants*					
	S	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**Percentage of correctness**
mela	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
scala	.	.	.	.	.	**95,65 %**
cartello	.	F	F	.	.	**86,96 %**
banca	M	.	.	.	.	**82,61 %**
tappo	.	.	.	.	F	**69,57 %**
collo	F	.	.	.	.	**65,22 %**
foglia	.	.	M	.	.	**52,17 %**
balena	M	M	M	.	M	**26,09 %**

General average correctness: 72,28%

Tab. 31 - Younger group's results of test 10: minimal pairs with visual input

Nouns	*Informants*													
	Aa	**Bb**	**Cc**	**Dd**	**Ee**	**Ff**	**Gg**	**Hh**	**Ii**	**Jj**	**Kk**	**Ll**	**Mm**	**Percentage of correctness**
Cartello	.	.	.	F	.	.	F	.	.	F	.	.	.	**76,92 %**
Tappo	.	.	F	.	.	.	F	F	.	.	.	F	.	**69,23 %**
Scala	.	.	M	.	M	.	M	.	M	.	M	.	.	**61,54 %**
Balena	M	M	.	M	M	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	M	**53,85 %**
Foglia	.	.	M	.	.	M	M	M	.	.	.	M	M	**53,85 %**
Mela	.	M	.	M	M	.	.	M	M	M	.	M	.	**46,15 %**
Collo	.	F	F	F	F	F	.	.	.	.	F	F	.	**46,15 %**

Banca	M	.	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**15,38 %**

General average correctness: 52,88%

Tab. 32 - Older group's results of test 11: vocal input

Nouns	***Informants***																	
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**	**K**	**L**	**M**	**N**	**O**	**P**	**Q**	**R**
casa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
gioco	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
cavo	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
crema	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
pelo	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
foca	.	.	.	.	.	X	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.
papa	.	F	.	.	F	.	F	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
mare	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	F	.	.	.	F	F	.
cuore	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	F	.	.	F	.	.	F
chiave	M	M	.	M	M	.	.	.	M	.	.	M	M	M	.	M	.	M
mano	M	M	.	M	M	.	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	M	M
mole	M	.	M	M	M	.	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	.	M	M	.
cobra	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	.	F	.
moto	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	.	M	M
tema	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
flebo	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M

Nouns						
	S	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**Percentage of correctness**
casa	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
gioco	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
cavo	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
crema	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
pelo	.	.	.	.	.	**100%**
foca	M	.	.	.	.	**86,96 %**
papa	.	.	.	.	.	**82,61 %**
mare	.	.	.	.	F	**78,26 %**
cuore	.	F	.	.	.	**73,91 %**
chiave	.	.	M	M	.	**47,83 %**
mano	.	M	M	M	.	**26,09 %**

mole	.	M	M	M	M	**26,09 %**
cobra	.	F	.	F	F	**21,74 %**
moto	M	M	M	M	M	**8,70 %**
tema	F	F	F	.	.	**8,70 %**
flebo	M	M	M	M	M	**0%**

General average correctness: 60,05%

Tab. 33 - Younger group's results of test 11: vocal input

Nouns	***Informants***													
	Aa	**Bb**	**Cc**	**Dd**	**Ee**	**Ff**	**Gg**	**Hh**	**Ii**	**Jj**	**Kk**	**Ll**	**Mm**	**Percentage of correctness**
cavo	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	**92,31 %**
casa	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	**84,62 %**
gioco	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	**84,62 %**
crema	.	.	M	.	.	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	**84,62 %**
pelo	.	.	F	.	.	.	.	.	.	F	.	.	.	**84,62 %**
foca	.	.	.	.	M	.	.	.	M	M	.	.	.	**76,92 %**
cuore	.	F	F	.	F	F	F	F	.	.	.	.	F	**46,15 %**
papa	.	F	.	F	.	F	F	.	F	F	.	F	F	**38,46 %**
mare	.	.	F	F	F	F	F	.	.	.	F	F	F	**38,46 %**
chiave	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	.	.	.	M	M	M	**30,77 %**
mole	M	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	.	.	M	**23,08 %**
tema	F	F	.	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	**23,08 %**
moto	M	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	.	M	M	M	M	**15,38 %**
cobra	F	F	.	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	.	F	F	**15,38 %**
mano	M	M	.	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**15,38 %**
flebo	M	M	.	M	.	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	**15,38 %**

General average correctness: 48,07%