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### **Digitally transformed lifelong multilingual language learning: affective processes underlying the development of multilingual competence**

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Sladana Marić

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad; [sladjana.maric@ff.uns.ac.rs](mailto:sladjana.maric@ff.uns.ac.rs)

#### **Abstract**

*This paper reflects on the issues of informal and non-institutional practices of language learning in digital environments. In this qualitative and longitudinal case study, authentic language materials were used by two adult learners for their development of Italian language skills and multilingual competencies through Personal Multilingual Dictionary Design (Italian/English/Greek/Serbian). The authentic materials included three editions (500 episodes) of the most famous show “É sempre mezzogiorno” (“It is Always Noon”) by the Italian public television service “Rai” (2020/2023). The choice of the video materials, as learning materials, was based on the interests and personal preferences of the learners, highly interested, involved and committed to language learning and the development of multilingual literacy. Affective processes underlying the development of multilingual competence through collaborative learning tasks are examined and discussed. In conclusion, several areas of multimodal literacies are highlighted, with potential guidance in envisioning future research processes.*

**Keywords:** authentic video content, informal foreign language learning, Italian language, multilingual competence

#### **Introduction**

The nature of language learning continues to change as education evolves into new scenarios with the use of audiovisual materials and digital cultural heritage in learning, and these changes call for new learning methodologies. As the English language is firmly positioned as a lingua franca and translation applications and tools based on artificial intelligence (AI) are becoming of greater usability, questions may arise concerning the educational practices of learning a new foreign language or languages (apart from English) or even re-learning the languages from the personal educational background. From the early spring of 2020, the restrictions in travel, physical distancing measures and new forms of communication have had an impact on language education and learning. The emergency has highlighted how television, specifically public service broadcasting, acted as a driving force for television consumption and that “television still represents the central medium in the complex ecosystem of contemporary communication” (Carelli and Sfarдини 2022, 7).

Media can “strongly motivate people to learn languages through modalities which go beyond the official educational methods”, where it is useful to rediscover the importance of “TV programs and series that may arouse interest in other cultures and stimulate motivation to learn or revise languages” (Cappelli 2020, 283). The success of, for example, the tv serials “lies in its accessibility or in the linear discourses of simple people” or “the conquest of language occurs together with the conquest of culture” (Tullio De Mauro (1968), as cited in Cappelli 2020, 285). In connection to the previous, the TV Show “È sempre mezzogiorno”, chosen by the participants of this study represents an example of everyday discourses of simple people, about everyday issues - cooking and preparing food, seasonal events and festivities, current news and happenings, cultural and media events, all in the family like the environment of a large home, where everyone is welcome. The famous TV Italian television host and journalist Antonella Clerici conducted a TV show “La prova del cuoco” for almost twenty years (2000-2008, 2010-2018, Rome), although after her retirement in 2018, the show continued until the pandemic in 2020, and from September 2020, Ms Clerici returned to RAI and created a new show titled “È sempre mezzogiorno” placed in Milan studio of RAI1. The concept was similar, except in this title, the location of the show is transmitting live images of the forest surrounding the actual house of the TV host, therefore bringing nature of the forest, including flora and fauna (wild and domestic animals occasionally appearing depending on the weather and season), *peacefulness*, *tranquillity* and *family atmosphere* to the public. Triggering positive emotions of the public, and in this research, participants in a context of learning a foreign language.

In the field of applied linguistic research, studies on emotions in teaching and learning have been present since the 1970’s (Barcelos et al. 2022). According to Richards (2020), the “introduction of positive psychology in applied linguistics”, focusing on teachers and learners as participants in the social spaces of learning (classroom), “has broadened understanding of the range of emotions language teachers and learners experience and particularly the role that positive emotions can play in facilitating teaching and learning” (Richards, 2020: 226). In this research, we will adopt a definition by Jane Arnold (2009, 115), that “the term affect refers essentially to the area of emotions, feelings, beliefs, moods and attitudes, which greatly influences our behavior”.

In the research literature on language teaching, *emotions* have been viewed as examples of ‘affective factors’ in learning and teaching (Richards 2020). They are “a sociocultural experience primarily determined not only by individual characteristics but also by relationships and social contexts - not merely something that we *have* but something that we *do*” (Richards 2020, 226). Earl Stevick in his work “Teaching Languages. A Way and Ways” (1980, 4) affirms that “success [in language learning] depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on *inside* and *between* the people in the classroom” (Stevick 1980, as cited in Arnold, 2009), which must be considered in the contemporary discussions on digital language education and learning. Thus, “inside” refers “to individual factors such as self-esteem, anxiety, inhibition, willingness to take risks, learning styles, self-efficacy, and motivation” while “between”, refers to the “relational aspects” and “group dynamics” in the context of classroom (Arnold and Brown 1999, *A map of the terrain*, in “*Affect in Language Learning*” as cited in Arnold, 2009: 145 and 2011, 11). Steven Krashen (1981) “Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning”, introduced the “Affective Filter Hypothesis” which examines *motivation*, *self-confidence*, and *anxiety* as the three main categories of variables influencing second language acquisition. Apart from emotions and feelings, affective factors include *mood*, *manner* and *attitude* (Ni 2012, 1508).

Most of the research studies on affective variables concentrate on formal language learning contexts and the classroom learning experience (Hurd 2002, Hauck and Hurd 2005). This paper, however, will aim to focus on the relevance of affective factors in independent (self-guided) and informal foreign language learning contexts, taking into account the role of digital media in language learning.

## **Methodology**

### **Aim of research**

This action research study aims to explore the affective side of language learning and use, more specifically to look at the dynamical cognitive-emotional-motivational processes that may influence the development of multilingual competence in informal language learning. Thus, we look at some of the interrelationships between affective variables, and their links with learner autonomy and cognitive styles and strategies of learning (Hurd 2002), all in the context of self-guided multilingual education. Furthermore, the aim is to analyse the process of using authentic video materials in the development of language skills and *multilingual competence* (learning Italian, English and Greek language).

### **Research design**

The action research study examines the three-year learning period of two adult language learners using digital media and the dynamical cognitive-emotional-motivational processes that underlie the development of multilingual competence in informal language learning. Learners have to be self-aware and knowledgeable about their role(s) and responsibilities, assessing their individual learning needs, strengths and weaknesses, abilities, and willingness to re-evaluate personal repertoire of strategies, learning patterns, attitudes and feelings in language learning (Hauck and Hurd 2005).

This research will examine self-management learning strategies and emotions as they relate to the experience of adult language learners, and seek to clarify the following questions: What sort of emotions did language learners in this study experience in their learning context? What circumstances prompted these emotions? How did they affect the processes of teaching and learning?

### **Participants**

The participants of the study included two family members (the author of the study and her mother Jelica), both interested in spending time learning languages through collaboration and interaction using digital media. Both participants in the study speak Serbian as L1. The first participant (mother Jelica), through her education, had language lessons in Latin and English, while the other learner (daughter) learned English and Italian. The learners have watched different programs conducted by Antonella Clerici, therefore they have a certain affinity level towards the main personality of the “È sempre mezzogiorno show”. Through the years, they have developed positive emotions towards the TV host, as they like her voice and style of using the Italian language in a positivistic, emotional and highly professional manner. Additionally, both learners are interested in learning the Greek language, mainly for communication purposes, through making interconnections of the basic vocabulary including culture, food, travel, lifestyle, education, arts and music. In relation to the previous, learners in this study are also active followers of vloggers and specialized channels of content in Greek, English (different language varieties) and Italian language, showcasing travel episodes and cultural events.

### **Language learning corpora**

The language learning corpus included the three editions (2020-2023) of the Italian public television service (Rai) show “È sempre mezzogiorno”, or translated in English as “It's always noon”, hosted by Antonella Clerici. The show was broadcasted daily during working days, and consisted of up to 90 minutes of presentation of Italian and international recipes, through cooking and preparation of dishes, chat, humour, music and songs, and different games (language games, knowledge games, games of lucky choice, etc.), nutritionist's recommendations, agricultural themes and topics, talks with visiting guests from the fields of media, literature, arts and theatre, music, and other fields, all in a scenery of a “family home in the woods where everyone is welcome”. The show occupies a peak time slot, every working day from 12 to 13.30h, from the end of September to the middle of June. Due to copyright issues, the live

transmission of the show is only available through the RaiPlay app in Italy, but not abroad, therefore the participants watched on-demand content in their leisure time through the “RaiPlay” application on a smartphone and computer from the year 2020 to 2023. In terms of duration, episodes range from 60 to 90 minutes. The corpus included more than 500 episodes (the first edition in 2020/2021 included 190 episodes; the second edition in 2021/2022 included 187, while the third edition included a total of 150 episodes, concluding with the Easter episodes in April 2023. Therefore, the overall language exposure was between 500 - 600 hours of active listening.

### Data and method of analysis

This *case study* research has the elements of autoethnography (ethnographic research methods), as learners are “writing a personal language learning history” (Godwin-Jones 2019, 14), guided by “self-motivational beliefs”, including intrinsic interest, goal orientation, self-efficacy, learning outcome expectations, and “self-regulation”, including active participation in their language learning. The collaborative learning tasks included five phases. The first phase, included watching with active listening, while the second, notetaking of the unknown words and writing the words in a diary notebook and an alphabetical notebook (index A to Z). The third phase, included immediate or postponed online research and reading, in various languages, about a specific word or group of words. The fourth phase, included additional multilingual translation of the words apart from Serbian (L1), to English (L2) and Greek (L3), using digital media tools, and the final, fifth stage, included the creation of personal multilingual flashcards (paper/digital), and a multilingual dictionary in a digital format (word document).

In this research, a *qualitative descriptive method* of content analysis of gathered data was applied. Data included all the available media products: 1) a diary notebook and alphabetical notebook, 2) a multilingual mini picture dictionary (in print), and 3) a multilingual dictionary in a digital format (word document). Therefore, using the *bottom-up* approach, the paper explores the actions conducted with the aim of personal vocabulary expansion in the Italian language and the development of multilingual (Italian, English, Greek) and intercultural competence of learners using digital media (authentic video content streamed on mobile devices, translation and text editing applications, etc.).

### Findings

Sufficient competence in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and related subsystems (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar) is required in any language learning (Bin-Hady and Al-Tamimi 2021, 108). In this research, a multidisciplinary approach to multilingualism (Kourtis-Kazoullis et al. 2019) was applied, covering the fields of foreign language, multilingual and multicultural language learning using digital media technologies. According to Stavans and Hoffmann (2015: 156), multilingual language use is an “outcome of multilingual competence” and “driving force” that dynamically changes during multilinguals’ lifespan, “depending on linguistic needs and opportunities within social and personal contexts” (Stavans and Hoffmann 2015, 156). In order to examine more deeply the everyday language practices and dynamical cognitive-emotional-motivational processes that may influence the development of multilingual competence in informal language learning, collaborative learning tasks will be discussed in the following part. In this research, *emotional competence* is understood as “the ability to understand and productively manage emotions in language learning and teaching” (Richards 2020, 225).

In the context of language learning, MacIntyre (2002: 46) acknowledges that motivation is “one of many motives a person can possess”, specifically putting the focus on two questions: “(1) Why is behavior directed toward a specific goal and (2) what determines the intensity or effort invested in

pursuing the goal.” The socio-educational model by Gardner and MacIntyre (1992 as cited in MacIntyre 2002, 47) is based on four major parts:

1. socio-cultural milieu,
2. individual differences (affective variables: attitudes and motivation, language anxiety and self-confidence; and cognitive factors including variables such as intelligence, language aptitude and language learning strategies);
3. learning acquisition contexts (formal, informal),
4. language learning outcomes.

### **Watching with active listening (purposeful informal language learning)**

*“Television offers important commentary on the way we live, the way we perceive the world and the way in which we articulate these ideas” (Barber et al. 2022)*

Television has developed the ability to align its models for transmitting information, knowledge and learning with the cultural objectives and new consumer behaviors of different groups of audiences, confirming the role “as a medium and language able to promote values and to act as a medium that problematizes the questions of life and their pedagogical effects” (Carelli and Sfardini 2022, 2). According to Codreanu and Combe (2019, 155), in the context of informal language learning “multilingual internet, YouTube offers significant potential for learning foreign languages”. New opportunities for autonomous or individual language learning through mobile devices or specifically smartphones (Godwin-Jones 2017), are increasing with the use of video and other authentic materials as “wide and personal learning resources” (Godwin-Jones 2019, 9). In the “individual language learning, as a complex ecological system”, Godwin-Jones (2019) identifies the learner as “a surfer”- whose “trajectory is susceptible to the kind of *initial conditions* (of the individual and the environment”, including background, initiative and competence), subject to constant change, where “successful outcomes are not assured”. Furthermore, we would argue that the learners in this study are more like *musicians* gathered with the initiative to play together, with different backgrounds and competencies, with one shared goal, to mutually enjoy the process of learning through interaction and creativity. In summary, learning can be affected by many factors including 1) the learner’s linguistic and educational background, 2) the availability and suitability of chosen or found online resources, 3) motivation, knowledge, and ability to use and re-use the resources productively; and 4) the degree to which the experience fits the learner’s self-concept in the present and for the future (Godwin-Jones 2019, 8).

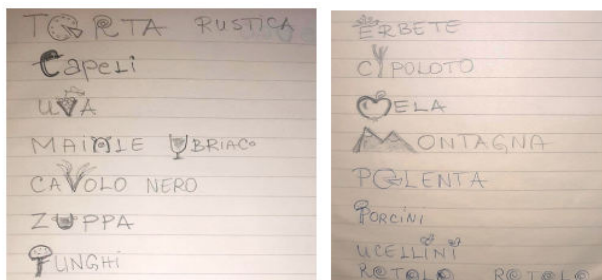
It is important to note that, during this three-year period participants were actively watching and listening to episodes with the intention of developing their Italian language skills (aural comprehension skills). The learning can be regarded as *purposeful* rather than incidental informal learning. The learners were not motivated by extrinsic achievements such as passing an exam or gaining official credentials and recognition. Therefore, in the learning environment learners in this study were *freely watching* the program without any fear of sudden questioning, testing or being graded.

Learning can be described as learning *with a lack of anxious mood* or *learning with the pleasure of learning*, with the interest in discovering other worlds and cultures, and with digital curiosity, having an opportunity to use new communication tools. Additionally, learners have control over the learning event, as they can pause, resume, and rewind the video if needed until they are ready to continue listening, as “emotion–memory effects go beyond the processing of isolated words” (Fuentes, Kroll and Torres 2022, 4).

In the context of classroom teaching and learning the appropriate use of *humor* may influence the students to relax and “be more willing to take part in lessons, giving them greater confidence and

increasing their motivation” (Senior (2011), as cited in Richards 2020, 230). Apart from using humor in speech dialogues, learners noticed elements of humor in writing. In terms of new vocabulary, and practicing vocabulary retention, learners in the research study noted down in drawings some interesting visual representations of certain letters in recipe titles written on the /lavanja/ “lavagna” or “blackboard” in the studio, such as, “uVa” - letter “V” shaped as “grapes”, and other examples presented in the Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** “Words/letters drawings” presented on the TV show blackboard and noted in a notebook by the learners



According to Deborah Capelli, “from a psychological standpoint, the learner is engaged in a great effort of concentration on language in order to mentally enter the context presented” (Capelli 2020, 295) - in this case in the episode of the TV show. Therefore, we acknowledge that in the game “Il gioco di cinque indizi” (“The Game of 5 Clues”) (Table 1) the learners' curiosity increased and sparked their need for a deeper understanding of the language. Although the learners were not able to enter the competition, watching it from abroad and on demand, and possibly winning great prizes, this factor of anticipation and playing, brought *positive emotions* and the *feeling of success*, especially when the learners knew the right answer to the puzzle.

**Table 1.** Examples of the game “Il gioco di cinque indizi” (“The Game of 5 Clues”)

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Example 4
1. FISCHIA, MA NON PER FAR COMPLIMENTI; 2. PRIMI ERANO A VAPORE; 3. SI DICE PASSI UNA VOLTA NELLA VITA; 4. SE FAI TARDI LO PERDI; 5. PER CELENTANO ERA DEI DESIDERI.	1. È SEMPRE DI LUNEDÌ, 2. È PERFETTA PER LA GITA FUORI PORTA; 3. SOLITAMENTE NON SI VA A LAVORO; 4. PER TRADIZIONE SI PASSA CON GLI AMICI; 5. VIENE SUBITO DOPO LA PASQUA.	1. È LA SETTIMANA DEDICATA ALLO SCI; 2. È LA CASA PIÙ FAMOSA DEGLI USA; 3. È LA BANDIERA DI CHI SI ARRENDE; 4. È LA CARTA DELLA BERLINGUER; 5. QUELLA “NEVE” STAVA CON I SETTE NANI.	1. NASCE A VERONA; 2. A MOLTI PIACE FARCITO; 3. È COPERTO DA UN VELLO BIANCO; 4. NON HA CANDITI; 5. È IL “RIVALE” DEL PANETTONE.
TRENO (Train)	PASQUETTA (Day after Easter)	BIANCA (White)	PANDORO (Golden Christmas Bread/Cake)

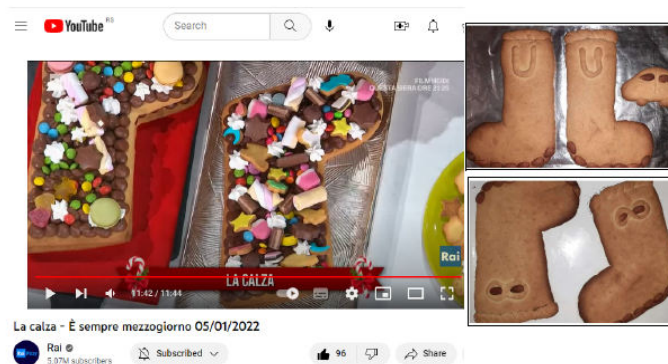


### Notetaking - a diary notebook and an alphabetical notebook (index A to Z)

As noted by Kroll and Mendoza (2022), in “bilingual’s two languages are continually active, creating a dynamic interplay across the two languages” (Kroll and Mendoza 2022, 1), therefore, in multilingual learning situations, learners are continually active in creating a dynamic interplay across many languages. The learners discussed and agreed to develop their “system” of writing the unknown words. Therefore, a method of *diary* or *keeping a record of experiences* was applied, specifically 1) a *notebook* was used for immediate notetaking of words, comments and recipes, and 2) a *Serbian Latin alphabetical notebook* (index A to Z), as a “personal dictionary”, was used for writing the unknown words with their translations into Serbian.

In the alphabetical notebook, the words were written in *phonetic spelling* and in an alphabetical order using the learners’ L1 (*Serbian Latin script*) with the initial letter categories in the following order: A, B, C, Č, Ć, D, (dž), Đ, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, (lj), M, N, Nj, O, P, R, S, Š, T, U, V, Z, (ž) + ž. The letters in the brackets (dž, lj, ž) were excluded, as there were no equivalent words with these “initial sounds” registered during the listening phase. However, participants decided to use the following letters - ć, č, đ, j, k, nj, š, for the words they recognized to have an equivalent sound in Italian and to add a *new special symbol* “ž” (letter z with a dot above), for the words with the initial sound, as in “*zucchine, zia, zucchero, zucca, zuppa*”, etc. Additionally, learners gathered some of the recipes from the show in a mini recipe book, only those they have considered as interesting and easily replicable dishes they wish to prepare or already have put into practice of making (e.g. “La calza” or “Stocking”, “Panettone gastronomico”, etc.) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2** . È sempre mezzogiorno”: “La calza”<sup>4</sup> - Screenshot (left) episode on January 5th, 2022; (middle and right) “Gingerbread Cake Stockings” made by the learners/research participants



### Immediate or postponed online research and reading

Several examples of immediate or postponed online research and additional reading, visual comparison, and will be presented in the following section. In one of the episodes, a specific conversation was proposed by the TV host on the meaning of the words “barbabetola” and “rappa rossa”, with the intention of clarifying the meaning of these words, and therefore, this intrigued the learners to research further, the term */barbabietola/ BARBABIETOLA = beet = /panzari/ παντζάρι = repa (šecerna repa, cvekla, blitva)* and the term */rapa rosa/ RAPA ROSSA = beetroot = /panzari/ παντζάρι = cvekla*. Furthermore, in the bakery section of the TV show, the phrase “ciccioli di maiale” /čićoli di majale/ was researched as the learners had recognized through the image on the screen that this phrase has its equivalent in Serbian, the word “čvarci”. Learners were not sure if such food is also present in other cultures, the English and Greek, therefore, they needed to later do additional research on social

<sup>4</sup> Link to the You Tube video: RAI “La calza - È sempre mezzogiorno”, 05/01/2022, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cV9l\\_cBMhWo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cV9l_cBMhWo) (screenshot taken from the video)

media and interact with friends - native/fluent speakers of these languages, to provide an image and explanation, in order to receive the answers.

In introducing a Sicilian dessert, two new local words were introduced for a sesame bar or sesame seed candy (a traditional Sicilian dessert made with honey, sugar and sesame seeds), where the word /*đirđulena*/*“giuggiulèna”* refers to the “sezamo - sesame - /susami/ σουσάμι - susam”, while the word /*kubajta*/*“cubbaita”*, to the shape of blocks (“crocante siciliano al sesamo”; “kocke ušćerenog susama”). Participants have tasted a similar product in the Greek island of Rhodes, where it is called ΠΑΣΤΕΛΙ /*pasteli*/, therefore, this word had an effect of triggering memories from personal travel experiences and cultural encounters. Another interesting and frequently used words was “*involtino*”, referring to different types of savoury food, having “a rolled shape”, using different types of meat, leaves of vegetables or even pasta, with the filling of (boiled) meat, covered with white sauce and baked in the oven (Serbian explanation of *involtino* = “rolnice od mesa, povrće, ili testa punjenog (kuvanog) mesom, poređane u tepsiji, prelivene bešamel sosom i zapečene u rerni”).

In introducing local dishes and culture, for example, a typical pasta dish of the Italian province of Piacenza, called “*pisarei e fasò*”, was presented in one episode. This dish consisted of gnocchi made of flour and breadcrumbs served with beans. The learners noted the procedure of making it in the target language (Italian) and translated it to L1, as follows:

*“(IT) gnocchettino piacentino fatto di pane grattugiato, farina e acqua calda (150 g pane grattugiato, 150 g grano tenero tipo 00, 170 ml di acqua bollente/latte/brodo)” = (SR) “njoketino”, oblik testa razvuče testo, iseče na trake, svaku traku oblikuje u glistu, seče svaki na 2 cm i prstom pritiska, tanji da se testo samo urola kao cevčica = (EN) type of gnocchi pasta thinned on long stripes, each shaped in long worms and cut on 2 cm each, then pressed with two fingers so that it rolls itself.*

Specifically effective in bringing the positive emotion-language link was *the choice of music and songs* in the TV show. The music examples included popular themes from the Classical Music Repertoire (instrumental music by J. Strauss, V.A. Mozart, G. Rossini, A. Vivaldi, The Nutcracker, Op. 71: Waltz of the Flowers by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, etc.), film music themes (“Breakfast at Tiffany’s”), and Italian songs such as “Rimini, Rimini, Rimini, Rimini...” (motive song of “Zia Chri”), “Tanto pe' canta” (the entry song for a chef from Rome), “Romagna mia”, “Questa è casa mia” by Gigliola Cinquetti, “Gira e va” sung by A. Clerici, “Finche la barca va” by Orietta Berti, “Gondola Veneziana”, Neapolitan songs, songs for children (Il Piccolo Coro dell'Antoniano, Zecchino d'Oro), traditional, popular songs (in Italian, English, French, etc.), or contemporary and new Italian songs, especially around the time of The Sanremo Music Festival.

### **Additional multilingual translation using digital tools and creation of multilingual dictionaries (picture dictionary and word digital dictionary)**

During the three years, learners gathered and created a digital personal *Italian - English - Greek - Serbian* dictionary consisting of a rather important corpus of terms (more than 1200 lexical items) and where possible, their possible multilingual translations. The idea of the learners was to foster a culture of multilingualism in the closest community of people, including family members and friends, and to help younger members in developing language affinity towards foreign language learning. With the proposed idea by the participant Jelica (mother), through *mutual actions*, a picture dictionary was developed (Figure 3), consisting of 5 notebooks, based on different topics, such as fruit, vegetables, food dishes, sweets, animals, etc.

**Figure 3.** Multilingual Picture Dictionary (in paper)





The other participant, worked on the creation of similar “digital flashcards” using “Instagram Story” as a tool, for the development of an interactive form of a digital dictionary, enabling multiple answers quiz questions, insertion of symbols and emoticons such as flags for indicating the language, addition of interactive text and sound inserts, to personal photos or videos of food, objects, and places. This interactive form of the dictionary will be presented in detail in future research studies. The efforts of creating this interactive dictionary, reflect the participants' understanding of the importance of pedagogical work with young people in family education and helping in developing and nurturing the desire to learn foreign languages.

The first strategy in multilingual translation, suggested by Jelica (mother) was the creation of *multilingual charts* (Table 2). The charts were divided into 4 columns, each for every language (Italian, English, Greek, Serbian). The pronunciation of words was written using the *Serbian alphabet (Latin)*, rather than the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet, (Table 1). The reason for this can be found in the agreement of the learners, regarding that they both find it more appropriate to use lower letters of the Serbian alphabet, such as /š/ instead of /sh/, or /c/ instead of /ts/, etc. It was also in accordance with their main aim of developing listening skills (aural comprehension skills), primarily in Italian language. For example, /mecođorno/ MEZZOGIORNO = NOON = /mesimeri/ ΜΕΣΗΜΕΡΙ = PODNE or /pentola/ PENTOLA = COOKING POT = /kacarola/ ΚΑΤΣΑΡΟΛΑ = ŠERPA. As mentioned earlier, the letters “ć, č, đ, j, k, š” were used for the words they recognised to have an equivalent sound in Italian. Additionally, one new special symbol “ž” was introduced (letter z with a dot above), for the words, such as: zucchini, zia, zuppa, etc. The same model was applied to the pronunciation of Greek words.

**Table 2.** Multilingual Chart (an extract from a list of more than 1200 words)

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	GREEK	SERBIAN
<b>/akva/</b> AQUA	WATER	<b>/nero/</b> ΝΕΡΟ	VODA
<b>/aranča/</b> ARANCIA	ORANGE	<b>/portokali/</b> ΠΟΡΤΟΚΑΛΙ	NARANDŽA
<b>/bosko/</b> BOSCO	WOODS	<b>/dasos/</b> ΔΑΣΟΣ	ŠUMA
<b>/čokolato/</b> CIOCCOLATO	CHOCOLATE	<b>/soholata, sokolata/</b> ΣΟΚΟΛΑΤΑ	ČOKOLADA
<b>/čizkejk/</b> CHEESECAKE	CHEESECAKE	<b>/cizkejk/</b> ΤΣΕΙΣΚΕΪΚ	ČIZKEJK
<b>/domani/</b> DOMANI	TOMORROW	<b>/avrio/</b> ΑΥΡΙΟ	SUTRA
<b>/đirasole/</b> GIRASOLE	SUNFLOWER	<b>/iljotropio/</b> ΗΛΙΟΤΡΟΠΙΟ	SUNCOKRET
<b>/ezato/</b> ESATTO!	TRUE! (RIGHT!)	<b>/sosta/</b> ΣΩΣΤΑ	TAČNO!
<b>/farina/</b> FARINA	FLOUR	<b>/alevri/</b> ΑΛΕΥΡΙ	BRAŠNO
<b>/gjanda/</b> LA GHIANDA	ACORN	<b>/velanidi/</b> ΒΕΛΑΝΙΔΙ	ŽIR
<b>/insenjamento/</b> INSEGNA MENTO	TEACHING	<b>/didaskalija/</b> ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΙΑ	NASTAVA I UČENJE
<b>/jogurt/</b> YOGURT	YOGURT	<b>/jaurti/</b> ΓΙΑΟΥΡΤΙ	JOGURT
<b>/kanela/</b> CANNELLA	CINNAMON	<b>/kanela/</b> ΚΑΝΕΛΑ	CIMET
<b>/limone/</b> LIMONE	LEMON	<b>/lemoni/</b> ΛΕΜΟΝΙ	LIMUN
<b>/mecođorno/</b> MEZZOGIOR NO	NOON	<b>/mesimeri/</b> ΜΕΣΗΜΕΡΙ	PODNE
<b>/mela/</b> MELA	APPLE	<b>/milo/</b> ΜΗΛΟ	JABUKA
<b>/Natale/</b> NATALE	CHRISTMAS	<b>/Hristujena/</b> ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥΓΕΝΝΑ	BOŽIĆ
<b>/njoki/</b> GNOCCHI	GNOCCHI	<b>/nioki/</b> ΝΙΟΚΙ	NJOKE
<b>/olio/</b> OLIO	OIL	<b>/ladi/</b> ΛΑΔΙ	ULJE
<b>/orto/</b> ORTO	GARDEN	<b>/lahanokipos/</b> ΛΑΧΑΝΟΚΗΠ ΟΣ	BAŠTA, POVRTNJAK
<b>/pane/</b> PANE	BREAD	<b>/psomi/</b> ΨΩΜΙ	HLEB
<b>/pentola/</b> PENTOLA	COOKING POT	<b>/kacarola/</b> ΚΑΤΣΑΡΟΛΑ	ŠERPA
<b>/ravaneli/</b> RAVANELLI	RADISHES	<b>/rapanakja/</b> ΡΑΠΑΝΑΚΙΑ	ROTKVICE

ITALIAN	ENGLISH	GREEK	SERBIAN
<b>/rizo/</b> RISO	RICE	/rizi/ PYZI	PIRINAČ (RIŽA)
<b>/sabja/</b> SABBIA	SAND	/amos/ ΑΜΜΟΣ	PESAK
<b>/sole/</b> SOLE	SUN	/iljo, iljos/ ΗΛΙΟΣ	SUNCE
<b>/širopo/</b> SCIROPPPO	SYRUP	/siropi/ ΣΙΡΟΠΙ	SIRUP
<b>/šoljere/</b> SCIOGLIERE	MELT	/ljono/ ΛΥΩΝΩ	TOPITI
<b>/šue-šue/</b> “Sciuè Sciuè”?	“(in a ) hurry”	/grigora-grigora/ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΑ-ΓΡΗΓΟΡΑ	BRZO-BRZO
<b>/takino/</b> TACCHINO	TURKEY	/galopula/ ΓΑΛΟΠΟΥΛΑ	ĆURKA
<b>/uovo, uova/</b> UOVO, UOVA	EGG, EGGS	/avgo, avga/ ΑΥΓΟ; ΑΥΓΑ	JAJE, JAJA
<b>/uva, uveta/</b> UVA, UVETTA	GRAPES, RAISINS	/stafili, stafides/ ΣΤΑΦΥΛΙ, ΣΤΑΦΙΔΕΣ	GROŽĐE, SUVO GROŽĐE
<b>/volo/</b> VOLO	FLIGHT	/ptisi/ ΠΤΗΣΗ	LET
<b>/zbaljato/</b> SBAGLIATO	WRONG	/latos/ ΛΑΘΟΣ	GREŠKA, POGREŠNO
<b>/zia; cia/</b> ZIA	AUNT	/tija/ ΘΕΙΑ	TETKA/UJNA/STRI NA

For the translation of words in English and Greek, participants mostly used the mobile app Google Translate or Google Search, for checking if the translation corresponds to the visual representation of such, such as in the example of “quaglia” or “quail” (English), or “prepelica” in the native language of the learners. Furthermore, in learning about specific regional dishes, for example, bread or a cake titled “Resta di Como”, learners noted only a descriptive translation in the L1 (Serbian) and English, the Greek translation was omitted, as the learners are at the beginning level of learning this language. In this situation, the translations was written as follows: */resta di komo/ Resta di Como = (EN) A traditional Italian sweet bread from the Lake Como area (Lombardia, Italy), usually made with a combination of flour, butter, raisins, sugar, candied fruit, yeast, eggs, honey, lemon zest, and salt. = (SR) Tradicionalni italijanski slatki hleb iz oblasti jezera Komo (Lombardija, Italija), napravljen od brašna, butera, suvog grožđa, šećera, kandiranog voća, kvasca, jaja, meda, malo korice limuna i soli.*

### Discussion

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, language-teaching methodology has centered on language use, and listening competence may be regarded as one of the main gateways to foreign language learning. Research evidence has shown that in formal and informal language learning, *engagement* and *motivation* are “crucial factors”, and in order to face motivational challenges “teachers and researchers have used a variety of software and applications” (Web tools, services, applications, games, MUVes,

communication tools (Panagiotidis, Krystalli and Arvanitis 2023, 71). In this research study, the learners had a clear vision of benefiting from “the multimodality of the environment and maximizing their learning possibilities” (Codreanu and Combe 2019, 155). The paper illustrated the actions conducted with the aim of personal vocabulary expansion in the Italian language and the development of multilingual competences using digital media (authentic video content). The participants of the study included two family members (the author of the study and her mother), both interested in spending time learning languages through collaboration and interaction using digital media.

In a research study by Damanik and Katemba, findings confirmed that acquiring new vocabulary through “a worldwide application of everyday life”, specifically, an on-demand movies and series video streaming service titled “Netflix”, provided college students with “an interesting approach to learning new vocabulary” (Damanik and Katemba 2021, 65) and developing language skills in English. In connection to the previous, the authentic materials used in the research study were the three editions of the Italian public television service (Rai) show “È sempre mezzogiorno”. The learning activities were enacted from the end of September 2020 and continued to the Easter episodes in April 2023. The authentic and methodologically non-adapted language learning material included up to 600 hours of exposure to the Italian language. The choice of the show, as the learning material, was based according to the interests and personal preferences of the learners. In this research, positive emotions were as stated in Richards (2020, 231) “the driving forces of motivation in second language learning, leading to feelings of success or achievement, enhancing the learner’s sense of self-esteem, encouraging learners to invest further in their learning”. There were no negative emotions noted down by the participants, therefore, there was no evidence of disappointment, failure, discouragement, boredom, concern, fear (of making mistakes), confusion, or a sense of frustration of *not being able to use/understand/improve/perform*. *Positive emotions* included different feelings such as being amused, calm, confident, curious, engaged, enthusiastic, interested, excited, happy, interested, joyful, passionate, pleased, relaxed and satisfied. In accordance with the affective filter hypothesis, and the three factors: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety, the results indicate that the two language learners, as participants of this study, had high levels of motivation and self-confidence in their learning journey, with the non-existing level of anxiety, therefore, enabling the learners to “receive and take in plenty of input” (Ni 2012).

As in this case study, there was no teacher-student interaction (Richards 2020), emotions were “the outcome of interactions between the learners, the media and language sources and materials used in the learning context”. Referring to the Gardner’s “Socio-educational Model”, motivation is “a combination of effort plus a desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitude towards learning the language” (Ni 2012, 1509), the results of the case study reveal that the *effort in acquiring foreign language* vocabulary was supported by *an intensive desire* of the participants to achieve their goal of learning foreign languages and develop digital competences through interaction in the learning processes. Learners used a variety of learning techniques in order to optimize their chances of acquiring new vocabulary and multilingual competence with the use of digital media and authentic language content. The collaborative learning tasks included (1) watching with active listening, (2) notetaking of the unknown words and writing the words in a diary notebook and an alphabetical notebook (index A to Z), (3) online research and reading, in various languages, about specific unknown words and phrases, (4) multilingual translation of the words into Serbian (L1), English (L2), and Greek (L3) using digital media tools, and (5) the creation of personal multilingual picture dictionary and a personal multilingual dictionary in digital format. Additionally, learners gathered a personal recipe book of interesting and easily replicable dishes, some of which they immediately put into practice of making.

Dörnyei (1994) using the concept of orientation introduced by Gardner and following Crookes’ and Schmidt’s initiative, developed a taxonomy of motivation, a framework of motivation in the language classroom comprised of the *language level* (motives and orientations), *learner level* (achievement and

self-confidence) and *learning situation level* (intrinsic and extrinsic motives). In correlation to the previous, learners of this study were motivated by intrinsic achievements, and not by extrinsic achievements such as passing an exam or gaining official credentials and recognition. They were *freely interacting with the learning content* without any fear of sudden questioning, testing or being graded. Negative emotions were not experienced and there was a complete *lack of anxious mood*.

Chosen digital media content offered *quality language input* and provided a positive atmosphere, leading to *learning with the pleasure of learning*. Learners were highly engaged in the effort of concentration on the language “in order to mentally enter the context presented” (Capelli 2020). The interest in discovering other worlds and cultures was evident in the duration of the learning period and activities enacted in the learning period. Learning was also guided by *digital curiosity*, exploring new ways of using different media in gaining full control over the learning event. Additionally, the use of humor and the factor of anticipation in playing different vocabulary games, brought positive emotions and satisfaction of successful understanding of the speaker and language being learned. In conclusion, with this research study, we aimed to contribute to a less researched intersection of the *linguistic wellbeing* of learners and the pedagogical research literature, where the term “linguistic wellbeing” is referred to as “a complex and dynamic system of developing, perfecting and strengthening skills of caring and responsibility for linguistic knowledge and use of language(s) in learning, education and different interactions between one’s experiences across all life domains” (Marić 2021, 24).

#### Final remarks

*“Riding the digital wilds successfully involves learner choices and actions, along with the further development of internal attributes of initiative, persistence, and creativity” (Godwin-Jones 2019, 19)*

Although four decades have passed, we may still agree with Brown (1973, 232), and his statement that “today there is an increasing awareness of the necessity to examine the human personality to find answers to perplexing problems in language learning”, and offer research findings that open new possibilities for rethinking independent informal multilingual language learning. The study can be of benefit to teachers and researchers in the fields of Lifelong Language Learning (LLL) and multilingual education, providing an opportunity to further examine the affective side of informal language learning and use and the importance of integrating and creating digital resources in the context of their teaching practice. The results could also guide course book writers and curriculum designers in providing quality online materials by integrating technology-based informal learning strategies.

The study might be limited in the number of research participants. Despite its possible limitations, the present study unveiled different learners’ strategies used to develop and enhance Italian language proficiency (aural comprehension and personal vocabulary expansion) and the development of multilingual competence, using digital media (authentic video content).

*“Neither linguistics nor psychology nor any other discipline alone will produce final answers.*

*The next decade should provide us with information about the human person which, when creatively interrelated with our accumulated knowledge in theoretical linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and the psychology of learning, will possibly enable us to construct a viable theory of second language acquisition.”(Brown 1973, 242-243).*

In conclusion, similar or comparative studies might be conducted in other contexts to examine further the link between the affective side in informal and multilingual language learning using digital media. It is hoped that the study has contributed to the research on *the affective side of language learning and use*, providing insight into the learning efforts of multilingual learners using digital media to make a difference in their language acquisition, during and after the epidemic outbreaks (from 2020 to 2023).

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