

**Alessandro Borri, Fernanda Minuz, Lorenzo Rocca, Chiara Sola**

# **ITALIAN LANGUAGE FOR ADULT MIGRANTS.**

**Syllabus and descriptors for illiterate, semi-literate and literate users.**

**From illiteracy to A1 level**





## **Preface – The viewpoint of CVCL**

As I started to work on a model of language certification for migrant students, 10 years ago, I realized I had to find some link between the field of language education for immigrants – even semi-literate – and the assessment of language competences.

I do not mean The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is of course an important link in itself; nor to the fact that the current laws link, or subordinate, language education in migration context to the assessment. I mean the need for working tools, to be shared among those who works on learning and teaching and those who works on assessment. These tools should be coherent and coordinated, and should link different fields and different goals from the beginning.

The CEFR – the result of rigorous scientific work – is a pedagogical instrument, essentially created meet these need.

However, produced as a reference work, it must be adapted to specific contexts and users, to specific motivation and goals of the learning process, which are not included in the European document.

John Trim describes its characteristics and goals as follows:

*What [the CEFR] can do is to stand as a central point of reference, itself always open to amendment and further development, in an interactive international system of co-operating institutions ... whose cumulative experience and expertise produces a solid structure of knowledge, understanding and practice shared by all.*

The CEFR needs to be completed as far as linguistics is concerned, as this aspect is totally lacking. Even the descriptors of abilities and skills presented in chapter 4 and 5 need to be revised or integrated, after more than 10 years of use and evaluations. Furthermore, the addition of new descriptors for a level below A1 which might address the migration context has long been felt necessary.

To that end, the European Council is promoting new projects and initiatives.

For the last 10 years, we in the CVCL have tried the approach “working on CEFR”, with projects and initiatives – in collaboration with the Language Policy Division of the European Council – in order to fill in the gaps of the European document.

In these 10 years, we have worked to provide the field of Italian as a foreign language with a toolkit that would help to link teaching, learning and assessment. Early in 2008, with *Percorsi per la certificazione linguistica in contesti di immigrazione* (Rocca 2008) we started to adapt the CEFR to migration contexts, an aspect that, as a general reference work, it obviously did not consider.

In the first half of the last decade, these projects created in collaboration with the Language Policy Division of the European Council led to the experimental manual *Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR*, and then to the publication of *Esempi di produzioni orali a illustrazione per l'italiano dei livelli del QCER* (Grego Bolli 2008) and of the seminal *Profilo della lingua italiana* (Spinelli, Parizzi 2010). The latter, based on the CEFR and its descriptors, describes the material which is specific to Italian language and allows the creation of guidelines, curricula and syllabuses.

*Profilo della lingua italiana* and the CEFR are also referred to by the work of Borri, Minuz, Rocca and Sola, which aims to define specific language content for learners at a lower-than-A1 level. Such users, coming from a situation of nearly absent schooling, are meant to start an education program that eventually provides them with the language skills and with the abilities, required by the A1 level.

From the viewpoint of CVCL – and in my personal opinion – this publication is now the most recent, the most important and useful result of the constant and systematic work of applied research, which started with the publication of CEFR at the beginning of the century.

Giuliana Grego Bolli

*(Director of Centro per la Valutazione e la Certificazione linguistica dell'Università per Stranieri di Perugia)*

## Introduction

Planning objectives, content, time, materials, learning activities and assessment tools, according to a methodology, is an essential aspect in the practice of teaching a language as second language. It is usually defined as curriculum planning.

A syllabus, like the following one, is part of the broad process of making educational decisions and especially concerns the “specification and the sequentialization of teaching materials, according to knowledge and/or capacity<sup>1</sup>.” In other words, a syllabus defines what to teach and in what order; thus, it represents an essential instrument to plan courses, to create teaching materials and to prepare diagnostic and achievement tests.

While planning a syllabus, the way in which language is presented (i.e. lexicon, grammar, texts, pragmatics and phonology) is based upon the learner’s needs, such as: level of proficiency, immediate and future language use, contexts of use and interlocutor(s), but also, linguistic and cultural background, previous knowledge, level of education and learning context<sup>2</sup>. That is to say, the learners have oriented the choices behind this work, concerning the early stages of L2 education for adult migrants.

This group is formed by heterogeneous learners, in terms of country of origin, culture and mother tongue (sometimes distant languages from that of the host country), level of education, biography, life conditions, job, expectations, type of immigration, as well as gender and age<sup>3</sup>. What the migrant learners have in common – and that makes them different from any other kind of learners – is the fact that they are adult women and men, who live, work, are socially active in the host country; they partake in the city life and learn the language in a multilingual context<sup>4</sup>. For this reason,

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<sup>1</sup> “la specificazione e la sequenziazione dei contenuti di insegnamento in termini di conoscenze e/o capacità”, in A. Ciliberti, *Manuale di glottodidattica*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1994, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning teaching in migration contexts in Europe, see R. Rossner, *Quality assurance in the provision of language education and training for adult migrants - Guidelines and options*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2008 ([www.coe.int/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants)); D. Little, *The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants: evaluating policy and practice, Document prepared for the intergovernmental conference to be held in Strasbourg on 24 and 25 June 2010*, Council of Europe ([www.coe.int/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants)); J.-C. Beacco, D. Lytle, C. Hedges, *Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrant. Guide to policy development and implementation*, Council of Europe, 2014 ([www.coe.int/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants)); European Commission – DG Home, *European Modules on Migrant Integration - Final Report*, European Commission, 2014 ([http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=40802](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID_ITEMS=40802)).

<sup>3</sup> The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports 232 millions of migrant in the World; 1 billion, considering internal migrations (<http://www.iom.int/cms/wmr2013>).

<sup>4</sup> Susi F., *I bisogni formativi e culturali degli immigrati stranieri. La ricerca azione come metodologia educativa*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1991; D. Demetrio, G. Favaro, *Immigrazione e pedagogia interculturale. Bambini, adulti, comunità nel percorso di integrazione*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1992; M. Barni, A. Villarini, *La questione della lingua per gli immigrati stranieri: insegnare, valutare e certificare l'italiano L2*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2001; L. Maddii (a cura di), *Apprendimento e insegnamento dell'italiano L2 in età adulta*, Atene, Edilingua- IRRE Toscana, 2004; F. Minuz, *Italiano L2 e alfabetizzazione in età adulta*, Roma, Carocci, 2005; L. Rocca, *Percorsi per la certificazione linguistica in contesti di immigrazione*, Perugia, Guerra, 2008, di seguito *Percorsi*, M. Vedovelli, *Guida all'italiano per stranieri. Dal Quadro comune europeo per le lingue alla Sfida salutare*, Roma, Carocci, 2010; J.-C. Beacco, *Adult migrant integration policies: principles and implementation*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2010 ([www.coe.int/lang-](http://www.coe.int/lang-)

course planning needs to take into account individual differences, as well as L2 contexts of use, usually unknown, or marginal, in language teaching – e.g. communication with the Public Administration.

Furthermore, the presence of socially vulnerable subjects is typical of the migration contexts: subjects, such as illiterate (who cannot read and write in their own mother tongue) or semi-literate people, who have very poor resources to study languages in formal contexts<sup>5</sup>. A language course addressed to them, must be supported by a literacy course – that makes them able to tackle written texts –; it must be appropriate in duration, as well as in teaching methods, to prevent the risk of marginalization from the education process. The course must consider the approaches used in adult education<sup>6</sup>, and especially those used in L1 literacy courses for adults, although it cannot entirely overlap with them<sup>7</sup>.

The present work considers Italy as a context and Italian as a second language; however, the following observations are applicable beyond the host country borders and apply to any language. Therefore, although the fruit of a national research, these observations might apply to similar situations, with a common Europe-oriented approach.

The need to identify descriptors of language proficiency for first levels in migration contexts – and, specifically, for levels that are lower than those of the Common European Framework<sup>8</sup> – has been increasingly felt, in relation to the daily situation of many member states of the

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migrants); R. Bozzone Costa, L. Fumagalli, A. Valentini, *Apprendere l'italiano da lingue lontane. Prospettiva linguistica, pragmatica, educativa. Atti del Convegno-seminario - Bergamo, 17-19 giugno 2010*, Perugia, Guerra, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Beacco, J-C., *The role of languages in policies for the integration of adult migrants. Concept Paper prepared for the Seminar «The Linguistic integration of adult migrants»*. Strasbourg, 26-27 June 2008, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2008 ([www.coe.int/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants)); Krumm, H-J, *Literacy*, [www.coe.int/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants). Si segnalano inoltre i seguenti siti: Council of Europe, *Linguistic integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM)*, [www.coe.int/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants); LESLLA, Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition (LESLLA) for Adults, [www.leslla.org](http://www.leslla.org). ; Università per Stranieri di Perugia – CVCL, CELI Integrazione, [www.celintegrazione.it](http://www.celintegrazione.it).

Not facing adult illiteracy could be seen as violating the article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. In this case, all adults population is considered, not only adult migrants; as a matter of fact, the need for funds and for a new educational programme to fight illiteracy also concerns L1 population, not only migrants, as illustrated in the investigation PIIAC – OCSE (OECD, *OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, 2013 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264204256-en>).

<sup>6</sup> From now on AEd.

<sup>7</sup> Literacy in L2 (Minuz, F., *cit*), i.e. language learning with literacy, can be considered a new branch in Language Education (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Konzept für einen bundesweiten Integrationskurs mit Alphabetisierung*, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Nürnberg, 2008); Suderland H., Moon P., *Teaching basic literacy to ESOL learners: Developments in teaching education in England*, in Young-Scholten M. (a cura di), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. Proceedings of the Third Annual Forum. Newcastle University, September 2007*, Durham, Roundtuit Publishing, 2008 ([www.leslla.org](http://www.leslla.org)); Guernier, M.-C., *Apprendre à lire à des adultes en langue maternelle et langue étrangère*, Synergies Brésil n° 10 - 2012 pp. 47-57. Concerning Adult Education, see Freire P, *La pedagogia degli oppressi* (1970), Torino, EGA-Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 2003, Lucisano P., *Perché una ricerca sull'alfabetizzazione*, in Costa Corda M., Visalberghi A., (a cura di) *Misurare e valutare le competenze linguistiche*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze, 1995, pp. 233-268; , Demetrio D., *Manuale di educazione degli adulti*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1997; Alberici A., *L'educazione degli adulti*, Roma, Carocci, 2002; Marchioro S. (a cura di), *Gli standard nell'Educazione degli adulti*, IRRE ER, Bologna, 2003; Knowles M., Holton E.F., Swanson R.A. *Quando l'adulto impara. Andragogia e sviluppo della persona*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2012<sup>9</sup> (Knowles, Malcolm; Holton, E. F., III; Swanson, R. A. (2005). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development (6th ed.)*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier.

<sup>8</sup> Council of Europe/Conseil de l'Europe, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, Cambridge University Press, 2001. From now on, CEFR.

Council of Europe. On the one hand, they are required by teachers and by educational institutions; on the other hand, it is required by the obligation to provide language certification and language learning: this has been introduced ‘for migrants’ purposes’, i.e. as requisite for residence permits, long term residence permits, or to obtain citizenship<sup>9</sup>. Proof of knowledge of the host country language is often requested by law: as an indirect consequence, ‘hidden users’ become partially visible. Since tests and exams are distributed to all, without exception, the exam population is no longer filtered by the candidate’s free desire to sign up for the certificate test. In Italy, for instance, where A2 level is required, course design and teaching materials must be organized so as to achieve this level<sup>10</sup> within the prescribed term, by all learners; even by those who need longer time to learn a language because of their linguistic background or because of a low level of education.

*Italian language for adult migrants. Syllabus and descriptors for illiterate, semi-literate and literate users. From illiteracy to A1 level*<sup>11</sup> aims to be an instrument for a flexible and inclusive education. As far as method is concerned, it endorses the CEFR approach, especially the notion of communicative language competence as a multidimensional competence and part of a more general action competence. The individual is considered a social agent and is primarily described according to language performance on specific themes, with specific tasks and in specific domains<sup>12</sup>.

As far as teaching materials are concerned, the work is based on *Profilo della lingua italiana. Livelli di riferimento del Quadro A1, A2, B1, B2*<sup>13</sup>. The book is the result of a project, developed simultaneously for several European languages and should be used as a support for the CEFR. It provides “the language content that a learner of Italian, from A1 to B2 level, should know in order to develop the capacity to act in the language, as defined by the descriptors in the CEFR”<sup>14</sup>. *Syllabus* organizes the content specified in *Profilo* for A1 level and adapts it to the previous stages. The syllabus created for the CELI Impact *i* (A1) certification for low educated learners has been considered for the pre-A1 stage; the A1 level syllabus for the migration context proposed by the four institutes for Italian certification is specifically considered<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Extramiana C., Pulinx R., Van Avermaet P., *Linguistic Integration of adult migrants: Policy and practice. Draft Report on the 3rd Council of Europe Survey*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2014 ([www.coe.int/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants))

<sup>10</sup> Art. 4-bis Legge 94/ 2009 (“Disposizioni in materia di sicurezza pubblica”, GU n. 170 del 24/7/2009); Ministero dell’Interno, “Modalità di svolgimento del test di conoscenza della lingua italiana”, D.M. 4.6.2010 (G.U. n. 134 del 11/6/2010); art. 6 del DPR 179/2011 (“Regolamento concernente la disciplina dell’accordo di integrazione tra lo straniero e lo Stato”, G.U. dell’11/11/2011).

<sup>11</sup> From now on, *Syllabus*.

<sup>12</sup> Council of Europe/Conseil de l’Europe, *cit.*, p. 9-14. See also Ciliberti A., *Dal concetto di competenza linguistica quello di competenza comunicativa e competenza d’azione*, A. Carli, D. Larcher, S. Baur, (ed. by) *Interkulturelles Handeln | Agire tra le culture Neue Perspektiven des Zweitsprachlernens / Nuove prospettive nell’apprendimento della lingua seconda*. Bolzano, AlphaBeta, pp. 146-157.

<sup>13</sup> Spinelli B., Parizzi F., *Profilo della lingua italiana. Livelli di riferimento del QCER A1, A2, B1, B2*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia 2010, di seguito *Profilo*. Per il programma di lavoro “Reference Level Descriptions (RLD) for national and regional languages”, cfr. URL: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/DNR\\_EN.asp#P42\\_6426](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/DNR_EN.asp#P42_6426).

<sup>14</sup> “i contenuti linguistici dei livelli, da A1 a B2, per l’italiano che un apprendente deve conoscere al fine di sviluppare una competenza appropriata ad agire linguisticamente, così come indicato dai descrittori del QCER”, in Spinelli B, Parizzi F., *cit.* [http://www.lanuovaitalia.it/profilo\\_lingua\\_italiana/origini.html](http://www.lanuovaitalia.it/profilo_lingua_italiana/origini.html).

<sup>15</sup> See Rocca L., *cit.*; Enti certificatori dell’italiano L2 (ed. by), *Sillabo di riferimento per i livelli di competenza in italiano L2: Livello A1*, 2011. The Centres for Language Certification acknowledged by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs are: Università per Stranieri di Perugia, Università Roma III, Università per Stranieri di Siena, Società Dante

In order to develop descriptors and objectives for language learning and literacy, practical experience in Italian educational institutions, as well as tools for course planning, created on an international level, have been used. These include *Canadian Benchmark 2000 – ESL for Literacy Learner*, as well as European syllabuses and curriculums, endorsing the CEFR and focussing on literacy in relation to the teaching of English, French, Dutch and German as L2 in migration contexts<sup>16</sup>. Although these instruments are differently organized, they share the view of the education needs of illiterate or semi-literate learners. They also share the idea of literacy as a kind of education which, leading to the acquisition of instrumental competences, is a way to decode a wider range of socially relevant meanings – conveyed in written language-, in order to integrate even usually marginalized people<sup>17</sup>.

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Alighieri; this *Syllabus* written by Ambroso S., Arcangeli M., Barni M., Grego-Bolli G., Luzi E., Masillo P., Menzinger C., Orletti F., Rocca L. is available in a number of institutional locations ([www.celintegrazione.it/insegnanti/risorse](http://www.celintegrazione.it/insegnanti/risorse)).

<sup>16</sup> Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners*, Ottawa, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks and The Government of Manitoba, 2001 ([www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca); anche in francese); Department for Education and Skills (DfES), *Adult ESOL Core Curriculum*, London, DfES, 2001; Beacco J.-C., de Ferrari M., Lhote G., Tagliante C., *Niveau A1.1 pour le français. Référentiel et certification (DILF) pour le premiers acquis en français*, Didier, Paris, 2005, Fritz T., Faistauer R., Ritter M., Hrubesch A., *Rahmencurriculum*, Universität Wien, Institut für Weiterbildung - Verband Wiener Volksbildung, AlfaZentrum für MigrantInnen der Volkshochschule Ottakring, 2006; Beroepsoderwijs en volwasseneneducatie, *Raamwerk Alfabetisering NT2*, Cito, Arnhem, 2008 ([www.cito.nl](http://www.cito.nl)), Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Konzept für einen bundesweiten Integrationskurs mit Alphabetisierung*, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Nürnberg, 2009 (the former temporary version was written in 2007 [www.bamf.de](http://www.bamf.de)); also see D. Little, *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the development of policies for the integration of adult migrants*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2008 ([www.coe.int/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants)); idem, *The linguistic integration of adult migrants and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2012 ([www.coe.int/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants)).

<sup>17</sup> Benseman J., Sutton A., Lander J., *Working in the Light of Evidence, as Well as Aspiration. A Literature Review of the Best Available Evidence about Effective Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Language Teaching*. Wellington, New Zealand Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Learning Outcomes, 2005; Étienne S., *Compétence linguistique et alphabétisation des migrants, quelles approches?*, in Extramania C., Sibille J., *Migration et plurilinguisme en France*, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, Didier, Paris, 2008; Minuz F., *I Referenziali per le lingue e i livelli di riferimento per l'alfabetizzazione di apprendenti stranieri*, in Spinelli B., Parizzi F., *cit.*, , pp. 173-188; Dalderop K., Janssen van Dieten A.M.-, Stockmann W., “Literacy: Assessing Progress.” In van de Craats I. Kuvers J. (ed. by), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition Proceedings of the 4th Symposium- Antwerp 2008*, Utrecht, LOT, 2009, pp. 85-96; Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks -Centre des niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens, *Theoretical Framework for the Canadian Language Benchmarks and Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens*, Ottawa, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2013.

## 1. The Users

The users of *Syllabus* are primarily those who work in the different branches of education activity: for curricula, education authorities and directors of education institutes; for teaching material, authors of manuals and teachers; for course and class planning, teachers; for assessment, the organizers of diagnostic tests, exams and certifications.

## 2. The Learners

Adult migrants are a heterogeneous group, in which many different learning profiles can be identified. While developing the *Syllabus*, the substantial presence of non-European languages speakers was considered, since they require longer learning periods; moreover, a number of pre A1 levels were been introduced and related to the level of education; starting from pre-literate and the illiterate learners, to different levels of education and the educated learners<sup>18</sup>. Completely illiterate learners and literate learners obviously have different resources for learning in class: while the former can only rely to oral language, the latter can also rely on written texts, are able to use textual competence in their mother-tongue, can count on learning strategies and on study skills, legacy of education<sup>19</sup>. They can also develop and use explicitly metalinguistic rules, they even know and understand non-linguistic codes (numbers, maps, diagrams, etc.), still necessary to some communicative language skills. Last but not least, they are familiar with education practices and activities, including tests and exams<sup>20</sup>.

In the following pages each type of learner will be presented in relation to level of education and through case studies. Each type presents a combination of features that are usually to be found together, but individuals do vary from this general representation.

### 2.1 Differentiated Competences

*Syllabus* assumes that the incoming learner (i.e. someone who is beginning the educational programs) is at a minimum level of oral ability or is not able at all; therefore, defines sequences of language content that proceed in parallel in terms of written and oral abilities.

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<sup>18</sup> The identification of different kinds of literacy has been acknowledged since the early 1990s: *Ausländer – Alphabetisierung*, numero monografico di “Alfa-Rundbrief. Zeitschrift für Alphabetisierung und Elementarbildung”, Heft 17/18, 1991; H.S. Huntley, *The New Illiteracy: A Study of the Pedagogic Principles of Teaching English as a Second Language to Non-Literate Adults*, in ERIC, ottobre 1992.

<sup>19</sup> In 2012, the official survey administrated in 2015 national schools, which provided courses for adult learners, reported that 18,1% of students have no qualification, see INDIRE- Sezione Istruzione degli adulti, *Istruzione degli adulti. Rapporto di monitoraggio 2012*. Indire – MIUR – IdA, 2013 ([www.indire.it/ida](http://www.indire.it/ida)).

<sup>20</sup> Adami H, *The role of literacy in the acculturation process of migrants*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2008 ([www.coe.int/lang-migrants](http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants)); European Commission, *EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy. Final report. September 2012*, Luxembourg. Publication Office of the European Union, 2012; OCSE, *cit.* 2013

It should be made clear that the relationship between oral abilities and level of education, for adults illiterate in particular, is not yet fully understood. If one considers the connection between these two competences in L2 guided learning, the experience emphasizes that illiterate subjects most likely need longer time to learn oral language, than semi-literate or literate subjects. The practical data are confirmed by psycholinguistic research, although still at an early stages: illiteracy seems to be related to a lower ability to be aware of and to process linguistic forms (i.e. phonemes, morphemes, words), which influences the development of oral language. Moreover, illiterate people and people with low literacy skills cannot access the variety of texts and uses of language that reading and writing allow; the language input is less rich and varied<sup>21</sup>.

However, learners which are at the same level in all skills are only one of the possible profiles, actually rather rare. They generally present a dramatically non homogeneous profile, with differentiated skills: for instance, there are cases of illiterate people, with less than starter L2 reading level, whose speaking ability in everyday communication reflects a level that is close to B1. Regarding this point, it must be remembered that the levels should not be considered as unitary profiles, but as indicators of ability, on a case-by-case basis: the general idea of “level” must not undermine the necessity of a precise analysis of language needs<sup>22</sup>. While planning a course, it is necessary to consider all the competences of learners, in order to define individual profiles and develop an appropriate syllabus. The better understand language needs, so develop a more suitable educational programs for adult migrants education, it is now a common practice to collect information on personal and social variables that can influence learning, through the entry form: age, gender, linguistic and cultural background, education, Italian language context of learning, motivations<sup>23</sup>. This has recently been officially formalized in Italy in the *Linee guida*, established in 2012 by the Ministry of Education (Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca – MIUR): the number of 20 hours “to devote to welcome and orientation activities” is specified<sup>24</sup>, and this is again maintained in the ministerial document *10 passi verso i CPIA*<sup>25</sup>. In these first hours, an entry test should also be administrated, in order to define the linguistic profile of the new learner and then create class groups that are more homogeneous, in terms of existing competence<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Tarone E., Bigelow M., and Hansen K., *The impact of alphabetic print literacy level on second language oral acquisition*, “Annual Review of Applied Linguistics”, 25, 2005, pp. 77-97; Van de Craats I., Kurvers J., Young-Scholten M., “Research on Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition.” in Van de Craats I., Kurvers J., Young-Scholten M. (a cura di), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium, Tilburg University, August 2005*, Utrecht: LOT, 2006 (www.leslla.org), pp. 7–23, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Beacco J.-C., *cit.*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2008, p.23

<sup>23</sup> M. Vedovelli, S. Massara, A. Giacalone Ramat, (ed. by), *Lingue e culture in contatto*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2001; F. Minuz, *cit.*, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> MIUR, *Linee guida per la progettazione dei percorsi di alfabetizzazione e di apprendimento della lingua italiana*, 2012, p.6 (www.miur.it).

<sup>25</sup> MIUR, *10 Passi verso i CPIA*, 2013, p. 23 and attachment B2 ([www.miur.it](http://www.miur.it)). The CPIA- Centri Provinciali per l’Istruzione degli Adulti are Local Centres for Adult Education: national schools for adults on a provincial basis. Starting from the school year 2014/2015, they will gradually replace CTP -Centri Territoriali Permanenti (Local Permanent Centres), created in 1997 on a municipal basis. CTP are currently widespread in the whole Country: according to the last official survey of MIUR (2012), there are 512 active centres, with 4.000 national teachers.

<sup>26</sup> A sample entry test for migration contexts, with *Guida per l’insegnante* (teacher’s book) and *Vademecum per il somministratore* (handbook for administrators), was created and tested by CVCL in 2012 (<http://www.celintegrazione.it/pagine/test-di-ingresso-per-migranti>).

The following definitions describe types of learner in relation to their level of literacy skills and do not consider oral abilities, which are mentioned in the profiles within each type.

## 2.2 Pre-literate

No educated adults, whose mother tongue is not written or is not the medium of instruction in the country of origin. Sometimes these learners have not developed any notion of writing as a semiotic system; it is hard for them to understand that a written text, or a word, carries meaning. Apart from very early instrumental literacy, part of the teaching has to focus on the development of the concept of writing and of the word, for instance through activities that link iconic representation, pictures, written words and spoken words.

### Profile 1

*Abdi, a 45 year old Bantu man from Somalia. His mother tongue, a cuscitic sub-group, is an only spoken language. He entered the class as a refugee. His level of oral ability is starter; he has no contact with the outside world, except through mediators.*

## 2.3 Illiterate

Adults who cannot read and write in their own mother tongue and have never been educated<sup>27</sup>. In such cases, the educational process has different, though interconnected, goals: “technical” goals regarding instrumental literacy; communicative language goals, relating to the functional literacy<sup>28</sup>; “glottomathetic” goals, that develop the ability to study and the awareness of the learning process.

Among the first kind of goals the development of pre-requisites such as “the literacy principle” (i.e. the awareness of the relation between sounds and graphic signs), fundamental instrumental abilities, such as the ability to draw the letters, to match signs and sounds and then to connect them in order to form syllables and words.

The communicative language goals include a wide range of competences and abilities: knowing how to read and write words and simple sentences, attributing meanings to them and communicative intent; on the one hand, becoming aware of the role played by the written language in Italian and – more in general – in European life and; on the other hand, becoming aware of the social uses of the written language (sociolinguistic competence); starting to manage simple documents, signs, posters and the various written texts that make up the visual landscape, in order to gradually learn to rely on writing as means of communication with the external environment.

The third group’s goals concern the development of study skills (*learning how to learn*), such as knowing how to work in class group; recognizing format and goals of the learning activities; developing – gradually – the ability to identify and use regular linguistic structures; knowing how to act also in the educational domain.

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<sup>27</sup> Literacy is usually linked to schooling; however, literate people who learned to read and write without a regular education are not rare.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Functional literacy’ is the ability to use reading and writing in daily life situations and as a life-long learning tool (see the section “Semi-Literate”).

In the group of illiterate learners, one more distinction must be made, in relation to the writing system of the mother tongue and to the typological distance between L1 and Target Language<sup>29</sup>. This can make the learner feel familiar or detached, especially towards L2 written texts. Therefore, it is useful to distinguish:

- Non educated adults, who speak a language with a logographic writing system
- No educated adults, who speak a language with a non-Latin alphabetical writing system.
- No educated adults, who speak a language with a Latin writing system<sup>30</sup>.

Finally, the kind of contact with the host country language (only mediated; rare; usual; daily) and the domains in which it is used (private; public; occupational; educational) are other variables to be considered.

### Profile 2

*Hnia, a 70 year old woman from Morocco, no education in the country of origin. She has been in the host country for more than 5 years. Her oral ability in TL is limited, she doesn't answer simple questions, like "What's your name? Where are you from?" She has never used writing, so the first activities in class are pre-graphic ones. Her contact with the external environment is non-existent, every need, even personal ones, is handled by the family. She enrolled in the literacy course to get the certificate for a long-term European residence permit.*

### Profile 3

*Yu, a 49 year old woman from China, no education in the country of origin. She has been in the host country for two years, for occupational reasons. Her oral ability in TL is at A1 level; she has learned to read much of the Latin alphabet by herself. Her contact with the external environment are often mediated; she enrolled in the literacy course in order to read official correspondence, to reply to work deliveries and, in future, to sign up for driving lessons.*

### Profile 4

*Yamina, a 34 year old woman from a rural area in Morocco, was raised without any access to education. She doesn't write in her mother tongue, but she can speak a variety of Arabic (Moroccan) and Berber (Tamazight). She is in the host country due to family reunification. She has no oral ability in L2, her contact with the external environment are always mediated by the family circle and by friends. She enrolled in the literacy course because she wants to learn how to speak and write correctly.*

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<sup>29</sup> From now on, TL.

<sup>30</sup> The picture of writing systems is simplified: cfr: Iannàccaro G., *Si legge com'è scritto: modelli linguistici e scritture delle lingue*, in Bozzone Costa R., Fumagalli L, Valentini A., *cit.*, pp. 73-102.

### Profile 5

*Mohamed, a non-educated, 38 years old man from Morocco. He cannot read or write in his mother tongue, but is multilingual: he can speak a variety of Arabic (Moroccan), Berber (Tamazight) and French. He has been residing in the host country for more than 5 years, is employed and speaks TL at an enhanced A1 level. He needs the A2 certification to get the EU permit.*

### Profile 6

*Radu, a 42 year old man from Romania, no access to any education. He has been living in Italy for a decade, even if he sometimes spends periods in other places in Europe. He is currently employed and has frequent contact with the external environment. He learned L2 as a spoken language through full immersion, thanks to daily exchanges: his oral abilities are at A2 level. He has enrolled in many literacy courses to learn how to read and write, and then hopes to find a good and long-term job.*

## 2.4 Semi-literate

Adults who received a low level of education in their mother tongue (in general, less than 5 years of schooling) or partially lost the literacy skills because they do not read and write. They are learners who, although they have technical skills in reading and writing, are no longer able to use them in the most common situations of daily life.

This type covers a very large range of cases, in terms of level of mother tongue literacy skills, of reading and writing domains at the time of the course, and in terms of writing system of the L1 literacy process. Literacy or illiteracy are the extreme poles of a *continuum*, along which very different levels of proficiency can be observed. Moreover, the ability to understand or to write a text can also vary in relation to acquaintance with specific *genres*.

Concerning the writing system of the L1 literacy process and the distance between L1 and TL, also the semi-literate learners should be distinguished as:

- Semi-literate adults, who speak a language with a logographic writing system;
- Semi-literate adults, who speak a language with a non-Latin alphabetical writing system;
- Semi-literate adults, who speak a language with a Latin writing system.

In this case, too, other variables to consider are kind of contact with the host country language (only mediated; rare; frequent; daily) and the domains in which it is used (private; public; occupational; educational).

According to some scholars, course planning for the first group, and sometimes for the second, should be organized as the one for illiterate learners: indeed, in the latter case it is necessary to initiate the learners to the literacy principle, while in the former case to a different writing system<sup>31</sup>. On the other hand, some processes and abilities concerning reading and writing can be transferred from L1 to TL; for example,

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<sup>31</sup> This is how it is organized in Germany, due to practical reasons: it is impossible to identify specific kinds of illiteracy within a limited number of learners

acquaintance with a genre in L1 helps to learn how to read and write in the language of the host country, and some reading strategies are transferred to process of TL learning<sup>32</sup>.

For this group, as for illiterate learners, educational goals are of an instrumental kind - regarding the reinforcement of fundamental reading and writing skills - of a communicative language kind and a glottomathetic kind (*learn how to learn*). As far as the communicative language goals are concerned, these are all important aspects: learning the notion of sentence and to tackle the notion of text; guided support for the early study of grammar and lexicon; awareness of communicative functions and of domain of use of each genre; ability to decode the iconic and non-verbal messages included in texts or that substitute for texts (public transport maps, a timetable, a simple graph); awareness of the existence of different kinds of reading modality, in relation to text and to task (learn to scroll down a list of names in alphabetical order, for example)<sup>33</sup>.

#### Profile 7

*Li, a 30 year old woman from China. Low level of education, corresponding to 4 years of school. Logographic system of writing. She has been in the host country for 3 years for occupational reasons, but has no knowledge of spoken L2. Every contact with the external environment is mediated by the family circle and by friends. She enrolled in the literacy course because she wants to become autonomous.*

#### Profile 8

*Abbas, 17 years old, low level of education (3 years) in homeland (Pakistan) tend to relapse into illiteracy. The writing system of his mother tongue (Urdu) is alphabetical. He has been living in the host country for 5 months as an unaccompanied foreign minor. He is currently attending a vocational training course, but he has great trouble in understanding classes. His level is an enhanced A1 in spoken L2, and he can recognize at sight TL words, high-frequency words used in everyday life and in the educational context. He has regular contact with the external environment.*

#### Profile 9

*Cecilia, a 26 year old woman from Nigeria, had a low level of education in homeland (4-5-years) and tends to relapse into illiteracy. Her mother tongue is Igbo, but she also speaks, but does not write, English. She is in Italy for humanitarian reasons. She does not read in L2, but recognizes at sight some words relating to the environment where she lives. Her contacts with the external environment are limited, often mediated by professionals (mediators, social assistants, volunteers). The enrolment in the literacy course is part of a wider integration programme, planned by the Reception Centre.*

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(Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *cit.*, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Nürnberg, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> L. Condelli, *Effective instruction for Adult ESL Literacy Students: Findings from What Works Study*, Nottingham, University of Nottingham, 2004 ([http://www.nrdc.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc\\_54.pdf](http://www.nrdc.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_54.pdf)).

<sup>33</sup> It must be remembered that this kind of learners might not be able to accomplish daily tasks, like reading a clock, consulting a calendar, organizing a planner, putting a list in alphabetical order; all this must be taught.

## 2.5 Literate

Literate learners constitute a varied type, in terms of level of education, mother tongue, age, motivations and other personal and sociolinguistic variables; as far as learning LT as a written language is concerned, they do not need a preliminary course to compensate for low level of literacy skills and lack of study habits. In other words, the learning process can focus on the communicative language task from the beginning, can use text writing and reading, explicit explanation of grammar rules. As regards study skills, the course can make use of assessment test formats that prepare learners for the language certification exams.

The objectives are mainly those established on the basis of the CEFR for A1 level, with some relevant difference in relation to the specific needs of men and women living in Italy. While preparing *Syllabus*, much weight was placed to communicative language structures that are necessary to relate, even simply, to the public administration, the national health service and national education service (both for adults and young learners) and to the occupational context<sup>34</sup>.

Furthermore, when *Syllabus* is used in course design, great consideration should be given to cultural differences: the explicit ones, such as factual knowledge concerning the host country and, above all, the implicit ones embedded in language, such as the meanings of words, the organization of discourse and the structure of interaction in different contexts<sup>35</sup>.

For instance, daily language functions like thanking or to asking for a favour, are constructed in a culturally specific way; the different way in which social routines are performed may lead to misunderstandings. Moreover, in the occupational context, the capacity to express oneself in conventional terms (e.g. asking for time off, excusing an absences, job interviews), is an important aspect which influence the access to the job market<sup>36</sup>.

Learners who have been educated in a non-Latin writing system may initially need some time when language learning is supported by training for the new system; reading and writing speeds can be slower if learners usually read and write in logogram, even if

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<sup>34</sup> Educational needs of migrants in the occupational context will be considered in the forthcoming publication of the collected data and the observations on good practices relating the transnational project coordinated by the University for Foreigners Perugia *Formazione, lavoro e integrazione: dalla voce di datori di lavoro e lavoratori migranti alle buone prassi. Un percorso di ricercazione a livello europeo*, in collaboration with: Cambridge University ESOL, University of Lisboa CAPLE and Goethe Institut. (rif. FEI 2012 – AZIONE 8 PROG-104513).

<sup>35</sup> Kramsch C., *Language and culture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998; Bettoni C., *Usare un'altra lingua. Guida alla pragmatica interculturale*, Roma – Bari, Laterza, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Extramiana C., *Learning the language of the host country for professional purposes. Outline of issues and educational approaches*, Council of Europe, 2012 ([www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)); see also Mourlhon – Dallies F., *Quand faire, c'est dire: évolutions du travail, révolutions didactiques*, in Mourlhon – Dallies F., (a cura di) *Langue et travail, Le français dans le monde - Recherches et applications*, Clé International, 2007, p. 12-31; M. Grünhage-Monetti, E. Halewijn, C. Holland, *Odysseus – La deuxième langue sur le lieu de travail Les besoins linguistiques des travailleurs migrants: l'organisation de l'apprentissage des langues à des fins professionnelles*, Strasbourg, Conseil de l'Europe, 2004.

comprehension is good<sup>37</sup>. Rather than differentiated programs, those learners need the teacher to pay attention to different speed in processing the written code, which will be slower than the average of those who are literate in the Latin system.

#### Profile 10

*Xiao Jie, 18 years old, medium level of education in homeland (China). Her mother tongue (Putonghua) uses a logographic writing system. She has no knowledge of L2 as a spoken language. She reads the Latin alphabet with difficulty. Although she is attending high school, she has been included in the literacy course.*

#### Profile 11

*Liudmila, 48 years old, medium-high level of education (high school diploma). The mother tongue (Russian) has an alphabetic, but non Latin, writing system. She has been living in the host country for 4 months for occupation reasons and she is at a Pre-A1 level in speaking L2. She enrolled in the course to become autonomous and to comply with the requirements of the current law.*

*Table 1* illustrates some useful variables to describe learners' profiles.

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<sup>37</sup> Wade-Woolley L., *First language influences on second language word reading: All roads lead to Rome*, in *Language Learning*, 49, pp. 447-471, 1999.

Literacy	Mother tongue writing	Oral Ability	Mother tongue and other languages	Contacts	Domains
Pre-literate	none	Beginner		Only mediated	Personal
		A1		Rare	Public
		A2	Typologically distant languages	frequent	Occupational Educational
Illiterate	Latin alphabet	Starter	Romance	Only mediated	Personal
	Alphabetical	A1	Other European Languages	Rare	Public
	Ideogrammatic	A2 and beyond	Typologically distant languages	Frequent	Occupational Educational
Semi-literate	Latin alphabet	Starter	Romance	Only mediated	Personal
	Alphabetical	A1	Other European Languages	Rare	Public
	Ideogrammatic	A2 and beyond	Typologically distant languages	Frequent	Occupational Educational
Literate	Latin alphabet	Starter	Romance	Only mediated	Personal
	Alphabetical	A1	Other European Languages	rare	Public
	Ideogrammatic	A2 and beyond	Typologically distant languages	Frequent	Occupational Educational

*Table 1*

### 3. The Four Stages

*Syllabus* establishes four stages in the organization of the education program for adult illiterates in migration contexts, as illustrated in *Table 2*.

The Table explains the expected sequence from Pre-Alpha A1 to A1, in relation to users, education program and estimated time required.

Improvements in reading and writing and oral exchange are also briefly described: they are represented by the learner's key steps, moving from *recognizing*, to *succeeding* (early attempts) and *beginning to know-how* (development of competence), up to *knowing-how* (developed *can do*), as established by the CEFR. These passages concern the development of competences: according to concepts and capacities linked to literacy goals, the learner goes from *beginning to understand*, *understanding*, *having understood* (concepts) and *beginning to develop*, *developing* and *having developed* (ability).

In relation to the educational program, it must be specified that:

- Only those illiterate and/or pre-literate users who have problems of a 'slow' learning will pass through all the four stages. For other types of learner the program might start directly from a stage other than the first, using a non-linear access (*table 3*).
- With specific regard to pre-Alpha A1 users, education program will inevitably include goals of instrumental and functional literacy, that educated users do not require, though absolute beginners in L2.
- The learning goals of the scheme (recognizing → succeeding → beginning to know how → knowing how) are "exit levels", that is are meant to be achieved at the end of the education program. As far as the "entry" level is concerned, the reference is to an illiterate learner who is an absolute beginner, and also has a relevant gap between reading/writing abilities and oral exchange, so *recognizing* is a prerequisite for any further learning.
- These goals are imagined in a class context. That is to say: this progression, with specific reference to the use of determined strategies, will take place as long as there is a class environment which supports users and that these strategies are taught.
- The learners who have progressed all the stages, from Pre Alpha A1 to A1, may need more time for literacy and may not be able to attend classes of A1 level, especially in terms of reading/writing ability. Consequently, literacy classes might extend to A2 level, as well.
- The term *orientation* defines the exploration, discovery and observation of written language: it means noticing when writings are present in the world around the learner.
- The term *pre-literacy* defines the acquisition of visual/motor skills, such as drawing graphic signs; recognizing left and right, top and bottom; recognizing writing as a means of communication, producing meanings (and not only as a signifier); moreover, on a phonetics level, recognizing rising and falling intonation.

THE FOUR STAGES				
Stage	Pre alpha A1	Alpha A1	Pre A1	A1
Users	Pre-literate and/or illiterate with slow ability to learn	Illiterate	Semi-Literate	Literate
Program	Orientation and Pre-literacy	Orientation and Literacy	Close to CEFR	CEFR
Learning Hours	100	250	150	100
Progress	READING AND WRITING			
	Recognizing	Succeeding	Beginning to know how	Knowing how
	ORAL EXCHANGE			
	Succeeding	Beginning to know how	Knowing how (first and second phase)	

Table 2

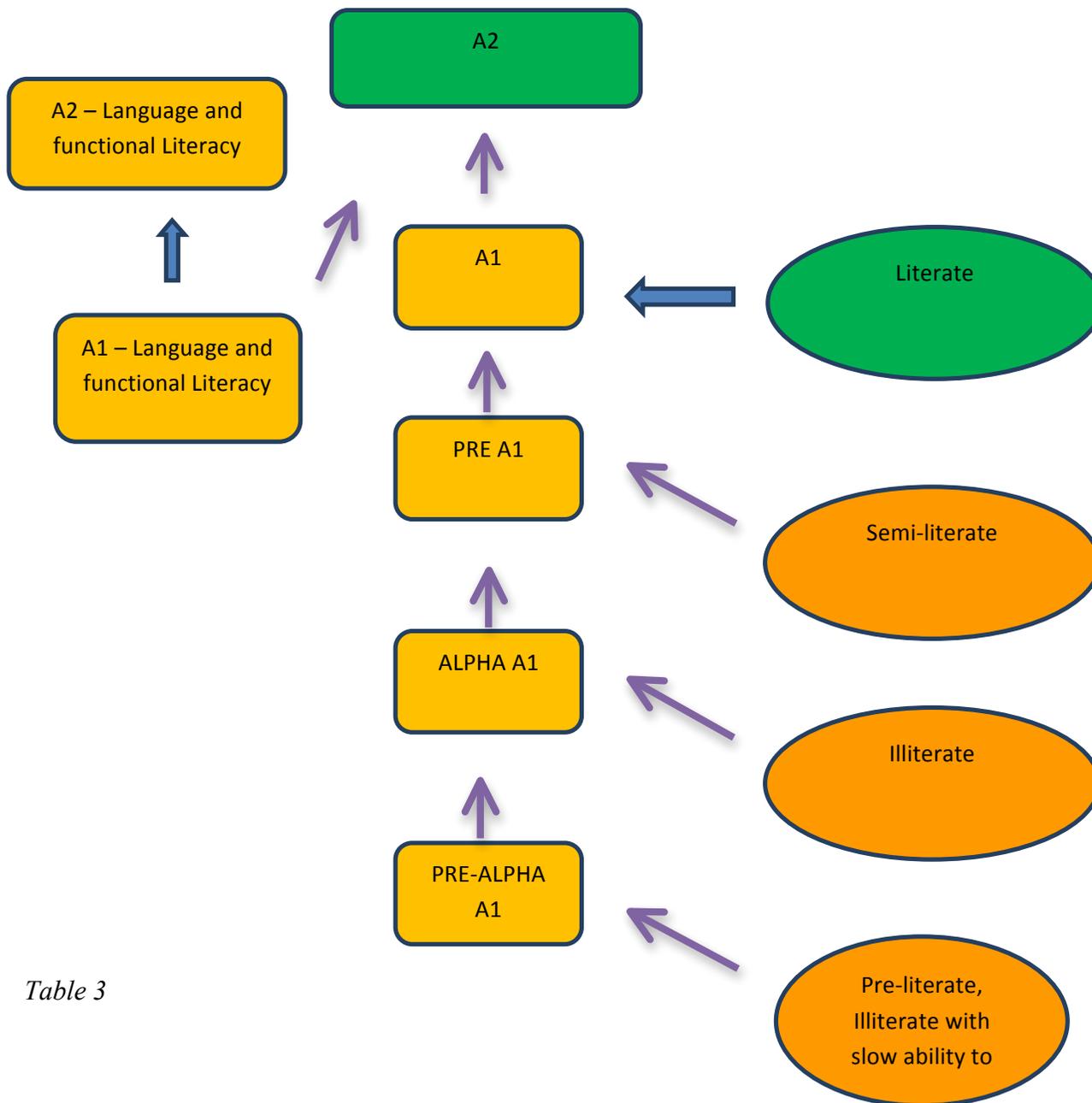


Table 3

#### 4. Total Learning Hours

The whole course requires 600 hours, for an average learner, for example corresponding to *Profile 2*. Educational institutions, on the basis of their own experience, and in the case of heterogeneous profiles (based on entry test) may modify the total learning hours. Especially weak users (e.g. *Profile 1* and *2*) may require longer time.

#### 5. The syllabus: thematic areas

The *Syllabus* consists of six thematic areas, further divided into domains based on the notions established in *Profilo*. These areas, or macro sections, are organized in a sequence that mirrors the improvements of the learner's abilities. They also function as frameworks: each one will be developed in a number of Learning Units<sup>38</sup>, which will be divided, structured and coordinated throughout the course as the teacher decides. These decisions will be based on particular features of each group.

##### Personal domain

<b>Number of thematic area</b>	<b>Title of thematic area</b>	<b>Specific notions</b>	<b>Other related notions</b>
1	Myself	Personal introduction	Daily routine / spare time and entertainments / relations with other people / actions and feelings / surroundings / services / socio-political structures / jobs
2	My Home	House and Home environment	Daily routine / spare time and entertainments / relations with other people / actions and feelings / surroundings / food and drink / health and personal care

<sup>38</sup> From now on, LU.

### Public domain

<i>Number of thematic area</i>	<i>Title of thematic area</i>	<i>Specific notions</i>	<i>Other related notions</i>
3	My life in the host country: services and offices	Services / socio-political structures / relations with other people	Travel / surroundings / actions and feelings / routine and daily life
4	My life in the host country: shopping	Household shopping / food and drink / health and personal care / relations with other people	Surroundings / actions and feelings / routine and daily life / spare time and entertainments

### Occupational domain

<i>Number of thematic area</i>	<i>Title of thematic area</i>	<i>Specific notions</i>	<i>Other related notions</i>
5	My job and me	Jobs / working space and environment	Surroundings / actions and feelings / daily routine / relations with other people / socio-political structures

## Educational domain

<i>Number of thematic area</i>	<i>Title of thematic area</i>	<i>Specific notions</i>	<i>Other related notions</i>
6	The host language and me	Education / roles / educational structures / educational equipment and personal equipment	Surroundings / actions and feelings/ daily routine / relations with other people / jobs/ socio-political structures

## 6. The Descriptors

Three types of Tables (A, B and C) and a list of related words have been drawn up to describe *Syllabus*:

- The A Tables reflect the CEFR approach and analyse the progression, as in *Table 2* (see Appendix excerpt from TTA relating to descriptors for written reception).
- The B Tables reflect the *Profilo* approach and present the descriptors in terms of communicative functions, notions (general and specific), textual genre, grammar, phonetics and orthography (see Appendix and excerpt of TTB1 relating to communicative function). They too refer to *Table 2* and stress the progression throughout the four stages using four different fonts:
  1. *Comic*: the common parts repeated in all the columns (from Pre-Alpha A1 up to A1).
  2. *Courier*: what is not included in the first column and is repeated in the following three.
  3. *Verdana*: what is not included in the first and the second column and is repeated in the following two.
  4. *Times New Roman*: what is not included in the first, second and third column and then is typical of A1 level.
- The Table C reflects the literacy goals and specifies the basic pre-literacy and literacy skills in terms of technical skills, as well as in terms of study skills.

Each type is included in one Transverse Table<sup>39</sup> which covers the whole six thematic areas (i.e. a TT represents the entire *Syllabus*). As regards progression, specific notions and genres, a Specific Table<sup>40</sup> is connected each thematic area, to integrate and complete TTs.

In conclusion, the work is organized as follows:

## **TABLES A**

1 TTA (Transverse Table concerning progression).

6 STA (Specific Tables concerning progression and relating to the six thematic areas): STA.1, STA.2, STA.3, STA.4, STA.5 and STA.6.

## **TABLES B**

### **B1 – COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS**

1 TTB1 (Transverse Table concerning communicative functions).

### **B2 – GENERAL NOTIONS**

1 TTB2 (Transverse Table concerning general notions).

### **B3 – SPECIFIC NOTIONS**

1 TTB3 (Transverse Table concerning specific notions).

6 STB3 (Transverse Table concerning specific notions and relating to the six thematic areas): STB3.1, STB3.2, STB3.3, STB3.4, STB3.5 and STB3.6.

### **B4 – GENRES**

1 TTB4 (Transverse Table concerning genres).

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<sup>39</sup> From now on, TT.

<sup>40</sup> From now on, ST.

6 STB4 (Transverse Table concerning genres and relating to the six thematic areas): STB4.1, STB4.2, STB4.3, STB4.4, STB4.5 and STB4.6.

Text plays an important role in the CEFR approach<sup>41</sup>, as oral or written texts are used whenever a task implies linguistic activities<sup>42</sup>: e.g. authentic texts included in manuals, texts selected by teachers or brought to class by students as language *input* and texts built up in group, during interactive language classes.

In case of semi-literate or illiterate learners, the selected texts consists of one word, or several words in conventional formats (lists, forms), phrases or common phrases, often without a verb. In any case, they are texts which learners encounter in their daily environment.

## **B5 – GRAMMAR**

1 TTB5 (Transverse Table concerning grammar).

For this Table, a note on the formulaic language use of particular structures has been included, with a distinction between reception and production, as proposed in *Percorsi per la certificazione linguistica in contesti di immigrazione*.

In the early stages of literacy (Pre Alpha A1 and A1), explicit teaching and discursive knowledge of grammatical structures do not appear: however, through oral exchange the implicit development of a number of TL morphosyntactic elements and rules takes place, although the latter could be incorrect. The grammar content in TTB5 is often used in learners' speech and can be taught through constant oral exchange in class, with no need for explicit explanations of rules. Acquisition will be supported by the confirmation of the correct forms and absence of confirmation of the incorrect ones. For the Pre A1 stage, explicit grammatical explanations are generally not recommended.

## **B6 – PHONETICS and ORTOGRAPHY**

1 TTB6 (Transverse Table concerning phonetics and orthography).

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<sup>41</sup> Council of Europe/Conseil de l'Europe, *cit.*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.164-165

<sup>42</sup> Council of Europe/Conseil de l'Europe, *cit.*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 14.

Perception and the Pronunciation of L2 sounds and prosody are strongly influenced by learners' L1; they have to develop perception and production skills which generally sharply differ from the existing ones. Therefore, the capacity to discriminate and segment spoken sounds is in itself a descriptor for L2 learning. This is a complex process for all learners, above all for illiterate ones. This last group have trouble in isolating sounds within words, since they have never developed any awareness of phonology, a legacy of literacy and essential for the development of reading skills. The Table shows that for illiterate learners the syllabic complexity and number of graphemes increase in parallel with decoding and pronunciation skills. However, all learners, whether illiterate or literate, have the same trouble in accessing writing in a new language and in learning how to be able to convert graphemes into phonemes, pronunciation and the various syllabic combinations, as shown in the Tables. Furthermore, the descriptors consider the specific difficulty of Arabic-speakers and Chinese-speakers who received an education in their own mother tongue. In relation to listening skills, it should be specified that the materials for the three initial stages include only texts in standard pronunciation or texts which are diverge only slightly from the standard. Meanwhile, the materials for A1 level also include texts with (macro) regional accents, in order to “practice” comprehension in the diatopic language varieties.

## TABLE C

1 TTC (Transverse Table concerning literacy goals).

This Table is divided into instrumental literacy and goals relating to study skills - an expression which defines a number of metacognitive strategies, knowledge and competences used to facilitate the learning process<sup>43</sup>.

## LIST OF WORDS

Finally, there is a **Words List**, related to lexical goals. This entails:

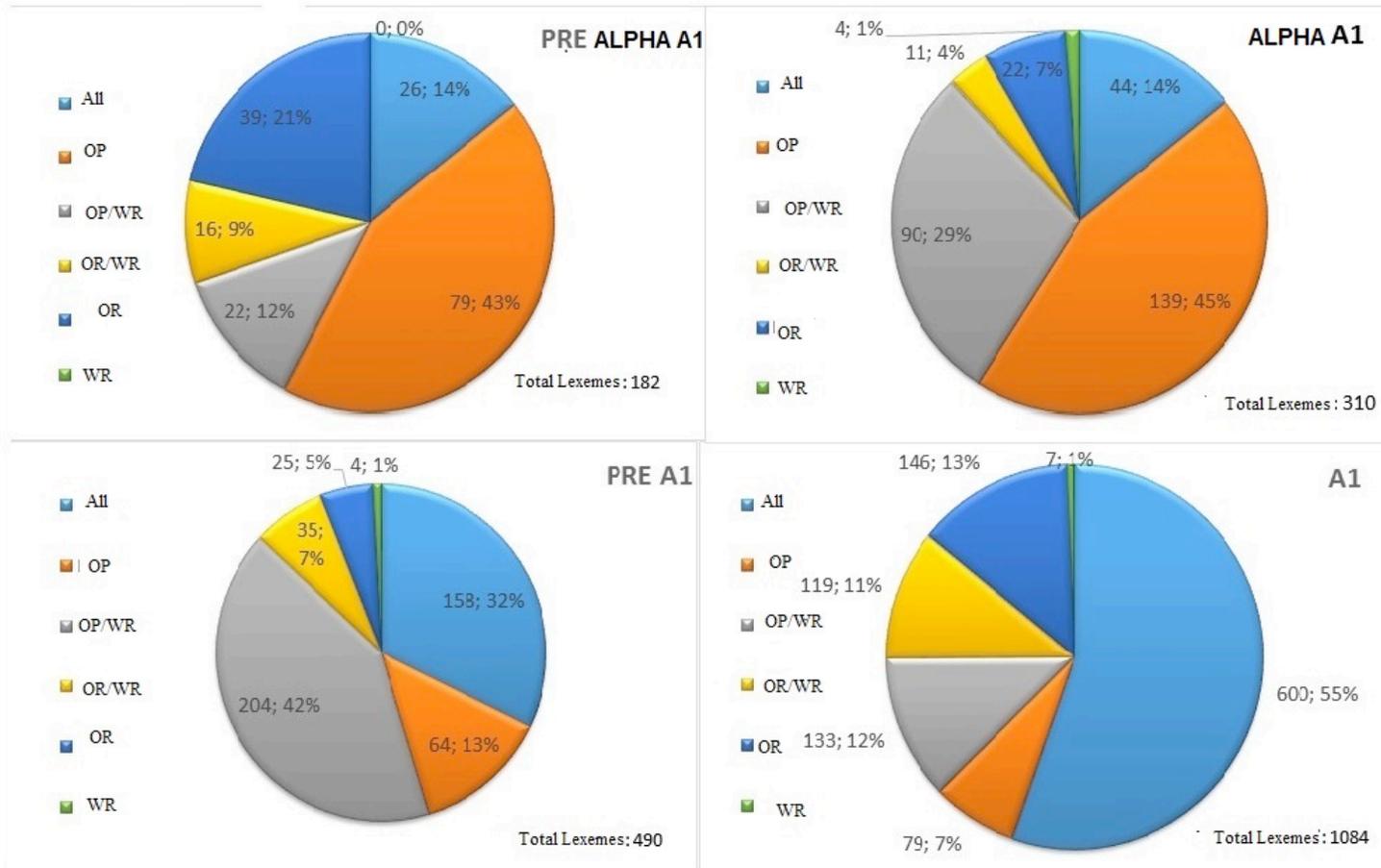
1. A distinction between:
  - a) OR lexemes, considered only in terms of Oral Reception (related only to listening macro-skills).
  - b) OP lexemes, considered only in terms of Oral Production (related to listening and speaking macro-skills).
  - c) WR lexemes, considered in terms of written reception (in this case related to speaking macro-skills).

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<sup>43</sup> The syllabus included in Casi P., *Fotografare la voce: un percorso dall'analfabetismo alla scrittura per adulti stranieri* (in Maddii L., *cit.*, p. 145-152) is taken into consideration.

- d) Lexemes also considered in written skills, relating to the all four language skills (*table 4*).
2. A number of OF, Open semantic Fields, with specific tips for teachers (according to *Profilo*: nationality, job, hobby, ect.).
  3. A number of S-words, i.e. Strategic Words, relating only to contexts of use concerning specific learners' profiles.
  4. A group of lexemes taken from *Profilo* and from *Percorsi*, integrated with collocations, abbreviations and acronyms relating to learners' everyday lives.
  5. The reference, when possible, to the use of fixed phrases, marked by *italic* font.
  6. Specification of the progression represented through the four different fonts (**Comic**, *Courier*, **Verdana**, Times New Roman), here related to the broadening of lexicon from Pre Alpha A1 to A1.

**Distribution of Lexemes in relation to Skills**



*Table 4*

In relation to the lexemes in Pre Alpha A1 and Alpha A1, it must be remembered that illiterate learners might have not developed any concept of word, which emerges from the reading/writing process; that is to say, they do not distinguish semantic units in the stream of speech, but attach meaning to the whole sentence; they do not distinguish the word (linguistic form) from its referent in the world. The very first words they

recognize have a strong semantic content and have a close link to the sensory world: they are usually are part of the open series and are multisyllabic<sup>44</sup>.

Therefore, as Pre Alpha A1 or Alpha A1 learners are able to write single words (not sentences), prepositions, conjunctions and articles are excluded from the written production.

Written production of lexemes belonging to all the grammatical categories is treated from Pre A1 level onwards; the literacy goal is the concept of “sentences”.

The need to practice the reading/writing of letters and syllables of a high number of words is also stressed: this helps learner awareness of how graphical signs and phonemes correspond and of how words can be formed, starting from a limited number of grapho-phonetic units. To that purpose, a separate column called “Words for the Classroom” was created.

The lexemes in the four columns are those needed for the progression described in the TABLES; meanwhile, the words in “Words for the Classroom” are suggestions for teachers to create exercises and class activities and are not included in the TABLES.

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<sup>44</sup> See Onderdelinden L., Van de Craats I., Kuvers J., “Word concept of illiterates and low literates: Worlds apart?”, in van de Craats I., Kurvers J. (a cura di.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition. LESLLA - Proceedings of the 4th Symposium - Antwerp 2008*, LOT, Utrecht, 2009, pp. 35-4

## 7. The Synoptic Table

Finally, this is the *Syllabus* Synoptic Table, structured according to the organization as described.

<i>Syllabus</i>	Thematic Areas						<i>Macro sections</i>
	Personal domain		Public domain		Occupational domain	Educational domain	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
<i>Descriptors</i>	TTA						<i>Progression</i>
	TSA.1	TSA.2	TSA.3	TSA.4	TSA.5	TSA.6	
	TTB1						<i>Function</i>
	TTB2						<i>General notions</i>
	TTB3						<i>Specific notions</i>
	TSB3.1	TSB3.2	TSB3.3	TSB3.4	TSB3.5	TSB3.6	
	TTB4						<i>Textual genres</i>
	TSB4.1	TSB4.2	TSB4.3	TSB4.4	TSB4.5	TSB4.6	
	TTB5						<i>Grammar</i>
	TTB6						<i>Phonetics and orthography</i>
	TTC						<i>Literacy goals</i>
	Word list						<i>Lexical goals</i>

Table 5

## 8. How to use Syllabus

*Syllabus* is intended for courses, materials and tests planning.

A syllabus does not define a teaching methodology, but proposes an idea of language, learning and teaching. As already mentioned, *Syllabus* endorses the CEFR approach: communicative language competence is understood as the learners' ability to act socially, using strategic language resources - in mother tongue and in second language – together with other available resources, such as cognitive, learning, personal, relational. As far as language is concerned, interaction in given contexts and situations involves reception and production of (written and spoken) texts.

Language knowledge, i.e. knowledge of grammar and lexicon, is an important part of the communicative language competence, but not the whole. The competence is *can do*: structures and forms create communicative acts; other abilities used to reach the goal are: saying, writing and understanding (receiving and producing texts) according to context; recognizing cultural aspects embedded in communicative exchanges among speakers of different languages; overcoming difficulties in second language communication thanks to strategies; being aware of the learning process, in study contexts and in daily contact with TL.

Teaching which draws on this view of the communicative language competence, above all when it is addressed to adult migrants, endorses the following principles:

- Teaching is orientated towards a situation in which learners use the TL and aims to allow them to accomplish their tasks to the best of their abilities: the working texts and situations are preferably those of learners' everyday lives.
- Teaching make use of learners' competences and knowledge, individual resources used to live in a foreign country and to speak a foreign language; communication in class, primarily oral, is a chance to know learners' previous experiences and to focus on those implicit and explicit cultural aspects related to interlinguistic communication.
- Teaching is flexible, is able to adapt to the needs of a heterogeneous group of learners, who often have very different linguistic profiles.

Assessment of communicative language competence, in terms of diagnostic assessment and of language certification, prioritizes what learners can do; considers if they can comprehend and accomplish a routine task in TL (e. g. understanding the timetable of public transport); as long as an error does not affect performance, a certain level of tolerance is accepted. "Pertinence and the communicative efficacy – not morpho-syntactic, orthographic and phonetic correctness – are significant (...). Emphasis should be placed on the accomplishment of the task, to the performance *itself*, not to the *way* it is achieved"<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> "L'appropriatezza e l'efficacia comunicativa – non già la correttezza morfosintattica, ortografica, lessicale e fonetica – risultano determinanti [...]. L'enfasi va posta sulla realizzazione del compito, sul *fare* e non sul *come*", *Enti certificatori dell'italiano L2* (ed. by), *cit.*, p. 39-40.

## 9. Pilot Study

*Syllabus* was piloted in a number of EdA Centres, in order to evaluate it as an instrument for assessment and planning, the efficacy of its descriptors and if it is user- friendly.

The trial focused on the development of writing ability, starting from instrumental and functional literacy, following the approach used in *Syllabus*. The trial was organized as follows:

### A. Collection of data on the participants

The Centres were asked to fill in these forms:

1. *Anagraphic form* for the EdA Centre.
2. *Learner profile form* to understand learners' communicative language competence and literacy.
3. *Teacher Form* to understand teachers' profile and teaching ability; class composition; course organization and learning priorities.

### B. Collection of samples of learners' written productions

Teachers were asked to collect samples of written productions (sheets of papers and copies of notebooks) in three different stages: in the first 5 hours of the course; in a period between the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 25<sup>th</sup> hour of the course; between the 50<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> hour of the course and/or at the end of the course. The pilot study produced a *corpus* of more than 400 pages of exercise books.

### C. Collection of oral productions

For a fuller view, the teachers were asked to record/ video oral productions, on a voluntary basis, with the same timing as for written productions.

### D. Data Analysis

The pilot study involved five Centres<sup>46</sup>, in three Italian Regions (Emilia Romagna, Marche and Calabria), where *Syllabus* was used for planning 6 courses.

The courses were attended by a heterogeneous group of learners, with whom teachers used differentiated learning techniques. Within the general planning, a number of specific programs were identified to meet the needs of particular groups of learners: whether illiterate or literate,

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<sup>46</sup> They are Centri Territoriali Permanenti (Local Educational Centres) for adult education in Castiglione dei Pepoli (Bologna), Castel San Giovanni (Piacenza), Senigallia (Ancona) and vocational institute CEFAL in Bologna, the Social Cooperative PRO ALTER 2000 in Melicuccà (Reggio Calabria).

whether with a starter or a B1 oral ability. The pilot study involved 77 learners, 39 men and 38 women, from 13 Countries and with 14 different mother tongues; 42 of them claimed they are able to speak at least one foreign language (English, French, Urdu, Berber, etc.).

The six teachers participated as volunteers and all had a long experience and/or specific training in the field of Italian as a second language. Before the study started, there was a meeting on the organization of work and on the learners group involved.

As regards the efficacy of *Syllabus* as an instrument for planning, the *know-how* descriptors and the language content were useful to define the stages of the improvement of communicative language and grammatical competences.

*Syllabus is functional and intuitive and actually helps to organize planning and specific works. In my opinion, establishing a context with “appropriate” goals helps teachers who are not used to groups of semi-literate learners, not to lose hope, to deal with one thing at a time and to be systematic.*<sup>47</sup>

The major problems reported by the participants were particularly about teaching organization: mixed classes, in one case overcrowded (38 participants of different levels), insufficient time, irregular attendance, lack of basic teaching equipment (CD player, pc, materials, etc.). Generally speaking, the data analysis confirmed the little attention to literacy in the most recent literature about adult education<sup>48</sup>. For example, the implementing CPIA regulation<sup>49</sup>, which re-define the organization of adult education, apparently excluded a work on basic skills. Literacy courses, sometimes confused with those for L2 learners on the lexical and conceptual level, are basically abolished, at least as far as teaching hours are concerned. An approach which is very far from that of *Syllabus*.

As far as the Italian context is concerned, we hope for a significant change in the structure of adult migrants' education, in order to meet the very different needs of learners<sup>50</sup> and to reconsider adult education from a European viewpoint as a priority in order to achieve language certifications and other qualifications, as well. This change might also allow *Syllabus* to be properly evaluated, as so far it has been impossible to fully pilot it, as in *Table 2*.

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<sup>47</sup> “Il Sillabo è funzionale e intuitivo da capire e aiuta effettivamente a impostare la progettazione e il lavoro concreto. Avere un contesto entro cui fissarsi degli obiettivi “realistici” da tenere in mente secondo me aiuta l’insegnante non abituato a gestire un gruppo di scarsamente scolarizzati e a non scoraggiarsi, a non mettere troppa carne al fuoco, a procedere con lentezza e calma e in modo non casuale” F. Patuelli, teacher at CEFAL (Bologna).

<sup>48</sup> From now on, AE.

<sup>49</sup> Local Centres for Adult Education (CPIA-Centri Provinciali Istruzioni Adulti).

<sup>50</sup> Attention to the heterogeneity of migrant users is claimed in various documents and European research projects. See H.J Krumm H., Plutzer V., *Tailoring language provision and requirements to the needs and capacities of adult migrants*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2008 ([www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)); Plutzer V., Ritter M., *Apprentissage des langues dans le contexte de la migration et de l’intégration. Enjeux et options pour les apprenants adultes*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2008 ([www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)). As regards the Italian debate on the need for more attention to illiteracy, see the monographic number *I segni nel cassetto. Le persone analfabete in Italia tra difficoltà ed esclusioni*, in Pollicino gnus, no. 220, ottobre 2013.

## Appendix

TTA –READING/WRITING PROGRESSIOIN				
	Pre Alpha A1 Ricognizing	Alpha A1 Succeeding	Pre A1 Starting to know how	A1 Knowing how
<b>Written reception</b>	<p>Recognize a limited number of familiar words, relating to the above mentioned domains.</p> <p>Can recognize familiar elements in simple forms and personal documents.</p> <p>Can recognize common nouns and words, as long as they are written in familiar formats, like signs and posters, and as long as can compare them with notes prepared by someone else</p> <p>Can recognize familiar documents on the base of formats and graphic signs.</p> <p>Can recognize, and, if guided, I can use illustrations and symbols to read meaning.</p>	<p>Can read familiar words relating to the above mentioned domains, when they are isolated or included in very short texts.</p> <p>Can read familiar words within simple forms and personal documents.</p> <p>Can manage to observe documents, for example recognizing places and abbreviations.</p> <p>Can read common nouns and words, as long as they are written in familiar formats, like signs and posters, and as long as I can compare them with previously prepared notes.</p> <p>Can identify short texts of <i>genres</i> which are familiar on the base of logographic and typographic elements and can extract some clues on the content.</p> <p>Can use illustrations and symbols to read meaning.</p>	<p>Start to read isolated sentences, identify familiar nouns, elementary words and expressions relating to the given domain.</p> <p>Start to read common simple words within simple forms and personal documents.</p> <p>Start to recognize very common phrases.</p> <p>Start to read short, simple instructions.</p> <p>Start to use different reading modes for different tasks.</p>	<p>Can read very short texts, mainly isolated sentences with a paratactic structure; can understand familiar nouns, elementary words and expressions relating to the given domain.</p> <p>Can read familiar words and very elementary expressions which are recurrent in forms and documents relating to a given domain.</p> <p>Can identify recurrent phrases.</p> <p>Can read short instructions. Can select different reading modes while tackling short texts of familiar <i>genres</i>.</p>

**TTB1 – FUNCTIONS**

	Pre alpha A1	Alpha A1	Pre A1	A1
<b>Interaction in relation to information</b>	<p>Identifying. Affirming. Replying to a question with confirmation or denial. Replying to a question by giving information on the place. Replying to a question by identifying sth.</p>	<p>Identifying. Affirming. Replying to a question with confirmation or denial. Replying to a question giving information on the place. Replying to a question identifying sth.</p> <p>Asking for information on an object or a person. Asking for information on the place. Asking for information on time. Asking for information on quantity. Replying to a question by giving information on the place. Replying to a question by giving information on time. Replying to a question by giving information as to grade and quantity.</p>	<p>Identifying. Affirming. Replying to a question with confirmation or denial. Replying to a question by giving information on the place. Replying to a question by identifying sth.</p> <p>Asking for information on an object or a person. Asking for information on the place. Asking for information on time. Asking for information on quantity. Replying to a question by giving information on the place. Replying to a question by giving information on time. Replying to a question by giving information as to grade and quantity.</p> <p>Replying to a question by giving information on modality.</p>	<p>Identifying. Affirming. Replying to a question with confirmation or denial. Replying to a question by giving information on the place. Replying to a question by identifying sth.</p> <p>Asking for information on an object or a person. Asking for information on the place. Asking for information on time. Asking for information on quantity. Replying to a question by giving information on the place. Replying to a question by giving information on time. Replying to a question by giving information as to grade and quantity.</p> <p>Replying to a question by giving information on modality.</p> <p>Replying to a question by giving information on cause. Describing.</p>

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