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# The process of authentication as an appropriation of knowledge through reflection. A diary study on the analysis of print advertisements.

**Simona Magnini**

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Centre for Language and Communication Studies

University of Dublin

Trinity College

2008

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*To Anto,*

*Un brigante onesto è il mio ideale.*
Giuseppe Garibaldi

*The eye sees not itself,*
*But by reflection.*

William Shakespeare

# Declaration

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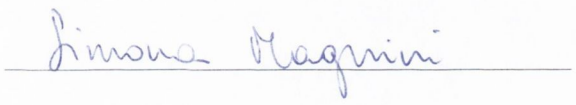

Simona Magnini, 7 April 2008

## Summary

Authentic materials have long been regarded as a precious source of linguistic input in L2 pedagogy but they have been made the object of a long-term (and on-going) debate starting from the inception of the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT) in the 1970s and characterised research in Second Language (L2) pedagogy until this day. As the name suggests, the CLT approach put communication centre-stage and argued that language is best acquired when the learner uses it as a means of communication rather than making it an object of analysis. Following this contention authentic texts, that is, texts created for a genuine communicative purpose, were regarded as central to this approach and were exploited communicatively for their content and not for their structure. While there seems to be agreement on the utility of authentic texts in L2 learning, the notion of authenticity and how it promotes language learning is still at the centre of the so-called 'authenticity debate'. A review of the literature shows the notion has been modified according to the predominant pedagogical trend and the recent shift towards learner-centred approaches has progressively homed in on the learner. The literature agrees on the fact that authentic texts are useful in language learning but it is also stressed that it is the learner who activates a dynamic process of 'authentication' in interacting with the text.

After reviewing the literature on the authenticity debate I argue in chapter 1 that this learner-centred notion of authentication is akin to the development of a mental attitude where the learner makes the best of authentic texts and exploits any occasions of exposure to the language to learn it. Authentication therefore can be regarded as an aspect of learner autonomy in relation to authentic texts. This, however, is not to say that text characteristics play a minor role in this process. On the contrary, I stress that the text characteristics and communicative intentions are not only to be taken into careful consideration in devising a learning activity rather that it is their communicative intentions that engender the activity in question. In fact, the text is the stimulus to the communicative exchange with the reader and functions as a springboard for

learning activities.

In other words, this thesis brings together the need for a text-responsive learning activity and the need for developing an autonomous attitude in the learner. I explore the notion of reflection and argue that that it represents the ideal link between the two: encouraging learners to reflect on the content of their study and on their learning process promotes learner autonomy and favours learning from authentic texts. Drawing on the constructivist perspective of learning I observe that learning from authentic texts, as for any kind of learning, is an appropriation of new knowledge: it means restructuring one's cognitive structure in order to accommodate new knowledge and make it one's own.

The empirical part of this study consisted in an eight-week course organised around the exploration of print advertisements characteristics through Italian. The constructed and multilayered nature of advertising communication makes the 'dismantling' of this genre of texts a 'text-responsive' activity and offers a real-purpose for language use. Data-collection was carried out using a structured diary whereby participants were asked to reflect on the course, its content and on their own learning process in the TL. The choice of the introspective method of the diary responds to a pedagogical aim and a research necessity: 1) the diary promotes and deepens reflectivity in the learner while simultaneously offering an additional opportunity for using the TL; 2) the diary lends a first-hand account of the learning process from the learners' viewpoint therefore it offers a privileged perspective on the process of appropriation of new knowledge in the learning context considered.

The analysis of diary entries reveal recurring patterns. Learners show three levels of reflectiveness which I characterise as *acquaintance*, *familiarisation* and *insight*. My contention is that these stages represent the learner's gradual *appropriation* of new knowledge, and with regard to the learning experience based on print advertisements, they characterise the process of authentication of such texts.

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# Introduction

Enhancing Second Language (L2)[1] learning through the use of authentic texts[2] has been a long-standing concern in L2 pedagogy as the so-called 'authenticity debate' shows. The most recent turn in the debate proposes that the concept of 'authenticity' should be applied to the learner's *response* to texts, rather than to the texts themselves. In this way the concept has 'a more satisfactory and universal application' (Mishan, 2005: 18) and captures the centrality of the learner in the learning process. The appearance of the term 'authentication' and its increasing recurrence in the debate marks a shift in attention from authenticity as a characteristic of texts, a static notion, to the learner's interaction with texts. A *dynamic* notion of 'authentication' captures the idea that learning from authentic texts is a *process* whereby new knowledge gradually becomes a part of the learner's cognitive structure. Learning, in this respect, consists in transforming experience into a 'part of who [we] are' (Little, 2001: 46).

Following this argument, this thesis links the notion of 'authentication' with the notion of 'appropriation' of texts and argues that learning from authentic texts is enhanced when such appropriation is systematically promoted. Both 'authentication' and 'appropriation' are semantically dense terms and need clarification. The notion of 'authentication' is grounded in the pedagogical perspective that places the learner centre-stage. The first chapter of this thesis reviews the literature on authenticity and summarises the main stages of the authenticity debate up to and including recent interest in the learner's role in the learning process in learner-centred pedagogy. What emerges from this review is that the focus of interest changed as predominant pedagogical trends changed. In the wake of learner-centred pedagogy the debate progressively focused attention on the learner and on his or her ability, will and intention to successfully learn from authentic texts. If it is the learner who activates the dynamic process of 'authentication' of texts, it is also true that characteristics of authentic texts may facilitate this process and promote

[1] L2 refers to the second or foreign language being learned. Throughout this thesis the terms 'foreign' and 'second' language are used interchangeably since this study applies to both.
[2] Unless otherwise specified, the term 'text' refers to any stretch of written or spoken language.

L2 learning, as the literature from SLA[3] research reveals. The arguments that support the use of authentic texts in L2 pedagogy are also presented in chapter 1.

Authentication is the ability of the learner to exploit these benefits fully and, on a more general level, to turn any situation of exposure to the Target Language (TL)[4] into an occasion for learning. In this sense authentication is symbiotic with learner autonomy, that is, with an attitude in the learner that leads him to orchestrate his learning in a responsible way and to make knowledge part of who he[5] is, that is, to make it his own (a notion I refer to as 'appropriation').

Learner autonomy therefore is closely related to effective learning from authentic texts, but how is it possible to promote it? Analysing the literature on learner autonomy it emerges that, besides responsibility and appropriate TL use, learner autonomy demands (and entails) a systematic reflective attitude in the learner (Little, 2001). On a closer examination reflection also appears as an indispensable factor in promoting a person's cognitive development, self-awareness and learning. A review of the psychology, pedagogy and philosophy literature on the subject, in chapter 2, reveals that reflection is akin to cognition and that it varies in sophistication and in depth. Metacognition is regarded as a 'deep' form of reflection and, in a constructivist approach, one that promotes learning through self-awareness and awareness of one's learning process. A review of the constructivist perspective on learning also supports the idea that learning is an act of appropriation since it consists in a reorganisation of a person's cognitive background under the stimulus of new knowledge through the mental operations of reflection. The deeper the reflective attitude the more profound the impact on the learning process and the cognitive development of the person. In sum, learning from authentic texts, as any other form of learning, is promoted by reflection which is a component of (and, in turn, promotes) learner autonomy. This awareness informs the design of the empirical study described in chapter 5 and the decision to use learner diaries.

---

[3] SLA stands for Second Language Acquisition.
[4] The TL or the language being learned.
[5] Of course, learners can be female and male. The use of possessive adjectives and personal pronouns throughout the thesis is therefore arbitrary.

At a deeper level authentication, as I have defined it, depends on the development of autonomy and proceeds from a systematic reflective activity. It is through reflection that learners reorganise their cognitive network, to use a constructivist metaphor, and take possession of new knowledge. Learning from authentic texts, however, is also favoured by a suitable learning activity, one that takes the communicative intention and characteristics of the text into consideration and builds on them. The communicative characteristics and intention of a text provide the most appropriate guidelines for devising suitable, that is, 'text-responsive', or 'authentic', learning activities. Thus, authentication is best viewed as an encounter or an exchange between the reader and the text. The empirical study described in chapter 5, i.e. the course on advertisements analysis through Italian, represents an occasion for monitoring the encounter between text and user as it emerges from the participants' diary entries.

It is important to consider the characteristics of a text and explain how they help to shape the process of authentication. In the case of advertising, the text genre I selected for this thesis, the high semantic density and attention-seeking nature of the texts stimulates an activity based on the analysis of how communication is achieved. As a matter of fact, advertising communication is an exercise in linguistic economy. It responds to a quest for rapid and 'effective' communication that leaves an impression in the viewer's mind. Its linguistic brevity, however, is in sharp contrast with its semantic density which is the result of the synergy of other components of the text. The semantic density of advertising is the result of the necessity to catch the readers' attention and communicate information in the shortest possible time.

Although advertising communication has become almost ubiquitous, readers pay less and less attention to it. The result of this discrepancy is that advertisers' efforts to attract people's attention multiply (advertisers draw on research in psychology, sociology, semiotics, etc.) and become increasingly sophisticated. A vast amount of money and energy goes into the production of an advertising campaign since the message needs to be both concise and capable of engaging the selected consumer 'target' at the same time. This translates into a 'painful' exercise in economy, such was a copywriter's description of this difficulty, where the

copywriter and the 'art director' struggle to condense a wealth of information about the product into a limited space and amount of words (personal communication). Yet, the delicate balance between conciseness and effectiveness in the message is to be struck each time.

It is important to remember that however attractive advertising may be, it performs a commercial, and some would say ideological, function in our society (with the exception of so-called 'social' advertising, which, however, constitutes a minority: a proportion that is represented in this thesis, too[6]). The eye-catching appearance of advertisements ultimately aims to influence people's behaviour, but conceals this fact behind an engaging or amusing facade. The co-existence of different communicative intentions is a prominent characteristic of advertising: a guided analysis can reveal a surprising degree of sophistication deployed by advertisers in conveying a multilayered message.

As a matter of fact, advertisements are readable at several levels of analysis. Drawing on the review of the literature on advertising in chapter 3 I follow several strands of enquiry and provide some basic concepts and ideas for analysing advertising. I focus on the notions of creativity, persuasion, rhetoric, and non-verbal communication, and finally adopt a Relevance-Theoretic approach to understanding advertising. My argument is that 'dismantling' the components of an advertising message and highlighting the strategies deployed in it result in a stimulating learning activity and encourages language production, but not only this. In fact, advertising analysis pursues a complementary educational goal of developing the learner's critical attitude toward advertising communication. Advertising analysis develops learners' awareness of such elements like, for example, advertisements informativity, how these texts strive to capture our attention, the social and economic function that advertising communication performs in our society, etc. This activity grants learners the opportunity to (critically) appraise the value attributed to the product or service by advertisements and be in a condition to make an informed choice when it comes to make a purchase. This offers learners a stimulating and real

[6] Social advertising promotes health and social issues and aims to bringing about positive behavior change. An example of social advertising is analysed in 3.3.5.

purpose for language use that revolves around the text.

In chapter 4 I give a foretaste of how stimulating the analysis of these texts can be for language production and also for the development of a critical attitude in the learner. I analyse four advertisements using the approaches discussed in chapter 3 and present some analyses carried out by learners of Italian L2 who participated in the empirical study described in chapter 5. Besides giving details of course preparation, materials, classes and participants, in chapter 5 I discuss the introspective methodology of the learner diary[7] and put forward the arguments that support its use in this research. In chapter 6, finally, I discuss the patters emerging from participants' diaries and argue that the process of appropriation of the text genre considered corresponds to three levels of increasingly reflective 'depth' into it. In the Conclusion I recapitulate the most prominent results of the whole study and suggest directions for further research.

All sixteen participants' names were abbreviated and abbreviations are employed whenever reference is made to them or to their texts. The list of participants' names were abbreviated as follows: AP, BE, BR, CA, CH, CN, GN, GR, IS, JA, KV, LN, MA, MC, SE and UR.

Appendices are contained in the CD attached to this thesis. A complete List of Appendices follows the Table of Contents. Throughout the thesis reference is made to the items contained in the Appendices. All references made to the Appendices start with a capital letter which indicates the relevant Appendix (A, B, C, D and E). Contents of each Appendix and reference system is explained below.

Appendix A contains forms and documents used to inform participants about the course, a sample certificate of attendance awarded to each participant and a document recording

[7] Throughout the thesis I use the terms *diary* and *journal* interchangeably. In addition, the terms *diarist*, *learner*, *participant* and *reader* typically refer to one person since that individual is functioning in all four roles.

attendance. Appendix B includes participants' individual questionnaires and Appendix C comprises the print advertisements that are cited in the body of the thesis independently of their specific use in the course. When reference is made to documents included in these three Appendices, i.e. A, B and C, the Appendix letter is simply followed by the file name and the page number, when applicable. For example, 'B, AP_Questionnaire; p. 2'.

Appendix D contains all materials included by participants in their portfolios, including their diaries. It comprises sixteen files, each for every participant in the course. Throughout the thesis, when extracts from the participants' portfolios are cited, a reference is given immediately. The reference contains the Appendix capital letter (D), followed by the participant's name abbreviation and the page number and (in the case of diary entries) the indication of the class when the entry was written. For example, the following reference 'D, KV, p. 6, IIIcl., means that the extract cited is available in Appendix D, in KV's folder at page 6 of the participant's file, and that the entry is included in the participant's diary of class 3.

Appendix E includes all course materials. It comprises seven folders which indicate the relevant course week (I, II, III, IV, V, VI and VII). Each Week folder contains individual files and sub-folders. Any reference to a document or file included in this Appendix therefore consists of the Appendix capital letter (E), followed by the Week numeral, the file (or, when applicable, sub-folder) number and the relevant file name. In the case of multiple page files an indication is given about the page. For example, a reference which reads 'E, II, 1 Questions and answers, p. 9', means that the text cited is available in Appendix E, week II, file 1 'Questions and answers', at page 9.

# Chapter 1. Authenticity and authentic texts in L2 learning

*Authenticity, like Sartre's notion of individuality, is not given, it has to be earned.*
(van Lier, 1996)

## 1.0 Introduction

This thesis proposes a model for the exploitation of print advertisements[8] in language teaching. Since advertisements are linguistic and cultural products of a specific social environment and have been created to convey a message to the members of that community, they qualify as samples of *authentic* texts, in that their initial function was not intended for teaching a language, rather for communicating with that community. The fact that authentic texts have been systematically used in L2 pedagogy in the last three decades is a clear sign of the consideration they enjoy in being regarded as a useful means for contributing to the creation of an effective language-learning environment, the research evidence for this coming from SLA and covered in detail in this chapter.

Despite a consistent use of authentic texts in L2 pedagogy, especially from the 1970s, the definition of authenticity has been the subject of controversy in the literature. To the reader of this 'authenticity debate' it may be striking to see how the notion of *authenticity* has been stretched and modified to suit the predominant pedagogic trend and related language-learning beliefs. This semantic shift of the term from one pedagogical current to the next has not always developed in an orderly manner and has generated a certain degree of confusion in the dispute. A telling judgement in this regard was expressed by Clarke (1989), who sarcastically observed: 'One point of interest is the degree of contradiction which exists' and signalled that 'even a cursory reading of the relevant literature will bring to light a confused and contradictory picture' (p. 84). Despite the daunting tone of Clarke's comment, an overview of the authenticity debate is a rich source of information and will be conducted with the purpose of: a) extracting from the

[8] The focus of this thesis is print advertising but considerations on the genre and pedagogical suggestions made with this regard can be extended and adapted to most types of advertising, as well.

debate the factors that have been called into play by this notion and b) showing how pedagogical developments have shifted the focus of the authenticity discussion from the characteristics of the texts to the intentions and the attitudes of the text's user: the learner.

This chapter consists of two sections. Section 1.1 sets out to offer an overview of the authenticity debate over the last three decades, which originated with the inception of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in the 1970s. Unlike earlier approaches, the CLT advocated the predominance of communication over form, of meaning over structure, and promoted the use of 'authentic' texts, texts that have been created for a genuine communicative purpose. This prompted the debate on the nature of authenticity and on the application of authenticity to language-pedagogy educational contexts, which continues to this day. The purpose of this overview is to show that, notwithstanding the mentioned disorderliness of the course of the debate, a clear shift in focus can be identified in the application of the term 'authentic' from the 'text as text', i.e. from the original appearance and visual characteristics of the text, to the 'text as process', i.e. to the process of interaction between the text and the user and his response to it, in more recent learner-centred pedagogy.

Section 1.2 reviews findings in support of the use of authentic texts in language learning based on evidence from SLA research. The arguments revolve around the role of input from authentic texts and on the impact of individual (affective and cognitive) variables in processing and exploiting it.

## 1.1 The authenticity debate

### 1.1.1 The primacy of communication

The use of authentic texts in L2 teaching is not a novelty, they had already been used in past centuries. 16th-century scholar Roger Ascham, for example, employed simple texts by Cicero for his teaching of Latin to the future Queen Elisabeth I (Jackson and Kaylor, 2002). Their importance, however, grew enormously in the 1970s, in parallel with the increased popularity of

the CLT approach, which followed growing dissatisfaction with previous language-centred approaches and shifted towards learner-centred approaches. The search for an alternative method was favoured by a number of developments in the social sciences and humanities in the 1960s as well as by socio-historical developments. Little (2007) usefully captures this concurrence of circumstances as follows:

> While the Council of Europe was promoting the democratisation of adult education and developing learner-centred tools for the design and delivery of adult language learning programmes, educational psychology was promoting the idea of learner-centredness in theory and practice. In the Council of Europe's work, learner-centredness arose from the notion that each adult language learner has a unique set of communicative needs. In educational psychology, on the other hand, learner-centredness derived overwhelmingly from constructivist theories. (p. 18)

Further, sociologists were developing communication models to explain how language is used to construct social networks and emphasis was laid on the communicative and social dimension of language and on the learner's communicative needs (a comprehensive analysis of the 'social turn', in the author's words, taken by SLA and language pedagogy is analysed by Block, 2003). In language pedagogy, the shift to learner-centredness was accompanied by an attention to the learner's communicative needs and CLT was a 'prototypical example' of a learner-centred method (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 113).

The central theoretical concept to the *communicative* approach was the notion of 'communicative competence', which socialised the rather abstract notion of Chomskian competence (a speaker's knowledge of the language) by indicating the ability to *use* language in a social context, that is to say, to use language in a useful, appropriate and feasible way and not as an abstract, decontextualised ability of an ideal Chomskian speaker (as described in Chomsky, 1965; see also Lyons, 1996: 24; Block, 2003: 59-62). 'Communicative competence' thus encompassed language use. As social anthropologist Hymes (1972) pointed out: 'There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless' (Hymes, 1972: 278). In other words, a person's communicative competence encompassed her knowledge of the language *and* her ability to use the language for achieving successful communication in a well-defined socio-cultural context (Brumfit and Johnson, 1979: 13-14). This notion of communicative competence is key to the CLT approach. Also important to the CLT approach was Halliday's (1973) work,

which provided a different perspective to language, highlighting its functional properties and social use. His theory of the functions of language complements Hymes's view of communicative competence (Brumfit and Johnson, 1979: 16).

The CLT approach essentially revolved around the observation that communication is central to human exchanges and that language is the means to that communication. This implied a reorientation of teaching priorities whereby emphasis is on the teaching of communication through language and not on the teaching of language through communication (Allwright, 1979: 167). If language is primarily used to communicate, it is through the attempt to communicate using the language that the language is acquired and not the other way round. Authentic texts, i.e. texts created for a genuine communicative purpose, were regarded as central to this approach and were exploited 'communicatively', for their content rather than for their linguistic structure. The strong link between authenticity and the CLT approach is explained by Little et al. (1994) as follows:

> From the beginning 'authenticity' has been one of the key concepts of the communicative movement in language teaching. After all, if we are primarily concerned with language as a medium of communication, we shall want to ensure that there is a strong thread of continuity between what goes on in our classrooms and the characteristic modes of communication in our target language community. (p. 45)

This bridge with the 'real world' has the additional advantage of being more appealing, therefore motivating for the learner, than specially contrived texts (this line of thought is pursued in 1.2.2 below). Besides the developments in the academic disciplines, a historical circumstance that also contributed to the search for an alternative method to language teaching was the formation of the European Economic Community (the Treaty of Rome was signed in March 1957), precursor of the current European Union. The EEC deliberately intended to favour trade and ease travel restrictions within Europe. The auspicated greater interaction among peoples within the Community led to the necessity of a function-oriented language-teaching pedagogy that would meet specific communicative needs of adult speakers. In 1971, the Council of Europe, a wing of the EEC, commissioned a group of European experts with the task of designing new ways to teach languages. The 'Expert Group', as Trim (2007: 16) calls it,

composed by Trim, van Ek, Richterich and Wilkins, produced a series of foundation papers that clarified the overall aims of the project, which were published in 1973 (and later republished in Trim et al., 1980). The full name of the project was Council of Europe Modern Languages Project, also known as the Threshold Level Project. The aim of this project was to create a detailed account of the basic language needs of adult learners and the linguistic material that would be necessary to satisfy those needs. The frameworks produced in this context were thus geared toward a learner-centred pedagogy and culminated in van Ek's (1975) Threshold Level. Wilkins's work led the way to that.

Drawing from psychological and linguistic insights, in 1972 Wilkins proposed a notional/functional syllabus, that is, a syllabus containing semantico-grammatical notions (e.g. frequency, dimension, location) and communicative functions (e.g. greeting, agreeing, disagreeing) (Trim, 2007: 19). The following year Van Ek (quoted in Trim, 2007) defined the concept of a general Threshold Level appropriate for all languages, and in 1975 created a Threshold Level specific for the English language (later extended to other languages and directed to children as well as adults. The studies by van Ek, Richterich, Trim and Wilkins were later republished in Trim et al., 1980). Van Ek's Threshold Level expanded on Wilkins's work and was based on a detailed needs analysis of basic communicative needs of European adult learners. Besides notions and functions, this syllabus also included topics as well as the grammatical structures that were identified as necessary to express them (Trim, 2007: 19).

Besides academic and socio-historical circumstances, technological developments also favoured more rapid exchanges between peoples making the knowledge of languages a prerequisite for economic and cultural growth. Hence the centrality of communication.

Unlike earlier language-centred methods, such as the much-criticised grammar-translation method and the audio-lingual method, the starting point for CLT was not structure but meaning in communication. Authentic texts, that is to say, texts that were not designed to foreground specific language features, rather to *communicate* a message, became essential to the learning of

a language. At this stage, an authentic text was one that had not been written for a language-pedagogic purpose or to illustrate a particular language feature. One, in other words, that would respect the semantic value of each component of the text. An almost obsessive attention to the intactness of the text was expressed by Grellet (1981) in the following terms:

> Authenticity means that nothing of the original text is changed and also that its presentation and layout are retained. A newspaper article, for instance, should be presented as it first appeared in the paper; with the same typeface, the same space devoted to the headlines, the same accompanying picture [...]. The picture, the size of the headline, the use of bold-face type, all contribute to conveying a message to the reader. (p. 8)

Following this contention, the lack of pedagogic intervention in the text would retain unaltered the communicative intention behind it and would reach intact the reader/student, since 'an authentic text [...]', Swaffar (1985) pointed out, 'is one whose primary intent is to communicate meaning' (p. 17), otherwise said, it is a text created for 'a real-life communicative purpose' (Lee, 1995).

Besides showing how authenticity was regarded as an intrinsic characteristic of the text, the above quotation from Grellet, also underlines the communicative role of the visual components of the text. The intrinsic communicative richness of every component of a text is a central tenet of the semiotic discipline where an effort is made to identify the semantic value of each *sign* in relation to a *code* of reference and to work out the deeper, or 'hidden', communicative message of texts (e.g. Chandler, 2001). The 'syncretic' nature of texts such as TV programmes, films and advertisements, as of all those texts that more explicitly combine visual and verbal components to convey a message, makes them a privileged object of semiotic analyses, as the famous analysis of the Panzani advertisement by Barthes (1977/1964) shows (see discussion on the connotative image in 3.3.2. Reference to semiotics principles is made in chapter 3). The subsequent shift of focus in the authenticity debate did not undermine the importance of the integrity of the text, but extended its communicative charge to include its original context and its cultural charge.

### 1.1.2 From text to context

Of course, the question of authenticity could not be limited to the features of visual presentation of the piece of language in question and to its communicative purpose and had to account for a cultural and social dimension inherent to texts. The transition from the text to its socio-cultural value was initiated by the realisation that an authentic text, in the sense defined above, does more than carry a communicative intention with it; it represents some social and cultural characteristics of the community where it was produced, that is to say, besides its *communicative* purpose, it also '[fulfils] some *social* purpose in the language community in which it was produced' (Little *et al.* 1989: 25; my emphasis).

This shift in attention coincided with a new socio-cultural sensitivity with regard to the learning of a language and the centrality of context. This is apparent in subsequent developments of Hymes' notion of communicative competence, mentioned earlier in this chapter, where it was given a more practical profile in order to suit the needs of the language classroom and a special focus was placed on the learning of social practices and conventions of the L2 community, that is to say, of the learning of a 'sociolinguistic competence' (the expression belongs to Canale and Swain [1980] who provided a pragmatic version of communicative competence that included four sub-competences as follows: Sociolinguistic, Strategic, Discourse and Grammar). This new sensitivity allowed practitioners to realise that a lack of attention to the socio-cultural context of authentic texts could be misleading and impact on the learners negatively; such was, for instance, Nostrand's (1989) stand, who warned that: 'Authentic texts from one culture may give a false impression to a student from another unless they are presented in an *authentic context* which makes it clear precisely what they exemplify' (p. 49; my emphasis).

These were also the years when context was assuming a central role within the field of pragmatics, particularly with the emergence of Relevance Theory as developed by Sperber and Wilson (1995/1986). A successful communication exchange, with a full comprehension of meaning by an interlocutor, such was their line of reasoning, could not spare the crucial

reference to the context in which it occurred. Sperber and Wilson (1995) define context as follows: 'The set of premises used in interpreting an utterance [...] constitutes what is generally known as the context. A context is a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world. It is these assumptions, rather than the actual state of the world, that affect the interpretation of the utterance' (p. 15).

When the spotlight fell on the social and cultural context of the text, however, the debate on authenticity encountered what looked like an insurmountable obstacle and a broadening of the debate. The complication was created by the realisation that a discrepancy exists between the context of production of the text and the context of exploitation of the text for learning and teaching purposes, so that what is authentic in the first case is not necessarily authentic in the second. Widdowson (1998) expressed this concern for a loss of text authenticity in terms of a loss of the text reality: 'Reality [...] does not travel with the text [...]. What makes the text real is that it has been produced as appropriate to a particular set of contextual conditions. But because these conditions cannot be replicated, the reality disappears' (pp. 711-712). The context of origin, such was the implication, is a unique thing: once a text is taken out of it, it loses the quality for which it was chosen in the first place, that is, authenticity: 'An authentic text', Morrow (1977) had insisted earlier on in the debate, 'is by definition a *unique* thing. It represents one speaker/writer's communication to one particular audience at a given moment' (p. 14; my emphasis). But if the original context of the text is a crucial component of its authenticity it would mean that it cannot retain its authentic communicative quality outside the context where it originated and for which it was meant. A new perspective on the question helped bypass this obstacle, as is shown in the next section.

### 1.1.3 From authenticity to authentication

The following statement by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) provides a useful starting point for the next phase of the debate:

> A text alone has no value. A text is a message from a writer to an assumed reader. In writing the text the writer will make a judgement as to the knowledge the assumed reader will bring to the text

> and the use the reader will make of it. The text, therefore, only assumes a value in the context of that knowledge and that use. A text can only be truly authentic, in other words, in the context for which it was originally written. (p. 159)

The conclusion this passage reaches would seem incontrovertible: the context of production of a text is a unique and inimitable occurrence. On the other hand, this passage also shows how the notion of authenticity is a non-static one, which does not reside within the text. Neither does it correspond to the context of creation and exploitation of that text. Rather, it is a dynamic and interactive meeting point between the variables of writer, reader, intention and use of the text under consideration.

Earlier on in the debate, a seminal terminological distinction made by Widdowson (1978) had pointed at a similarly *dynamic* notion of authenticity, one that is realised in the interaction between the text and the reader. The distinction was expressed as follows: 'Genuineness is a characteristic of the passage itself and is an absolute quality. Authenticity is a characteristic of the relationship between the passage and the reader and it has to do with appropriate response' (p. 80). The fact that this distinction was never universally adopted has left a persistent ambiguity within the debate. So much so that some years later, Widdowson (1983) himself observed that the notion of authenticity was still applying both to the text (in his words: 'to actually attested language produced by native speakers for a normal communicative purpose') *and* to the relationship between the user and the text ('to the communicative activity of the language user, to the engagement of interpretative procedures for making sense'; p. 30).

Despite the persisting terminological ambiguity, Widdowson's intervention had shifted the focus of the debate on a notion of authenticity as a *process* and not as a *state*. Adopting Widdowson's terms, the notion corresponded to a dynamic, in-progress process of 'authentication' realised by the reader/user in relating to a 'genuine' text (Widdowson, 1978: 80). This new perspective on the notion of authenticity had a positive implication for language pedagogy where that process may be replicated and (perhaps a new) authenticity created. Van Lier's (1996) concept of authentication was similarly dynamic. 'Authentication', he explained, 'is basically a personal process of engagement' and authenticity, like the notion of individuality

in Sartre's existential philosophy, he claims, 'is not given, it has to be *earned*' (p. 128; emphasis in the original), and added 'authenticity is not brought into the classroom with the materials or the lesson plan, rather, it is a goal that teachers and students have to work towards, consciously and constantly' (ibid.).

Thanks to this dynamic twist authenticity was becoming more and more associated with the way learners interacted with the text. The conditions for activating the process of authentication, however, are obviously hard to pinpoint and the research on 'tasks', which characterised the 1980s, pursued that goal. By task it was meant a learning activity in which the TL is used for a communicative purpose and to achieve a specific goal. This decade saw a progressive association of the question of authenticity with the notion of task and the related notion of task design. Breen (1985), for example, mentioned task in a set of domains connected with the term authenticity. He related authenticity to the actual text, the learner's interpretation of the text, the language-learning task based on the text and the 'actual social situation of the language classroom' (p. 61). In his reaction to this classification, Widdowson's (1990) expressed his concern that a generalisation of the word authenticity would make the term too general to be useful. He suggested that 'we retain the term to refer to the normal language behaviour of the user in pursuit of a communicative outcome' (p. 46). Notwithstanding the diversity of Widdowson's and Breen's opinions, a measure of agreement existed in their arguments and consisted in viewing authenticity as an on-going process of validation or 'authentication'.

Authenticity was now being associated with how the learner uses the language in interacting with the text. The pragmatic application of this new orientation of authenticity was linked with tasks that would favour language learning through language use. Task-based learning methodologies developed in language pedagogy from the 1980s onwards (e.g. Prabhu, 1987; Nunan, 1989; Willis, 1996). That the connection between authenticity and tasks was growing increasingly stronger is explained by Arnold's (1991) comment: 'Use of authentic materials does not simply imply that tasks will be authentic [...] it is what trainees or students DO that counts' (p. 238; emphasis in the original). The current notion of task as a pedagogical model

originated within the CLT approach to language teaching: 'the task model was in one sense the ultimate, logical extension of the Communicative approach', writes Mishan (2005: 68). Within this approach, it was said earlier, it is recommended that learners should perceive language as a medium to communicate, where 'meaning has priority over form' (Little et al., 1988: 24). The task-based methodology responded to the quest in pedagogy for a focus on meaning and language use. In Bygate et al.'s (2001) words, the task model represents 'what happens when meaning-based language teaching is carried out systematically and as an alternative to instruction which focuses on form' (p. 3). The underlying principle is that language is best acquired when the learner is focused on the completion of a task rather than on the language used in the process (Prabhu, 1987). The need for a communicative outcome of tasks is forcefully argued by Ellis (2003):

> Tasks involve a sleight of hand. They need to convince learners that what matters is the outcome. Otherwise, there is a danger that the learners will subvert the aim of the task by displaying rather than using language [...] the real purpose of the task is not that learners should arrive at a successful outcome but that they should use language in ways that will promote language learning. [...] A task seeks to engage learners in using language pragmatically rather than displaying language. It seeks to develop L2 proficiency through communicating. Thus, it requires a primary focus on meaning. (pp. 8-9)

While the definition of task is still quite elusive, Ellis's quotation above contains some of the core characteristics of the concept, which he derives from a comprehensive overview of definitions provided by the task literature (i.e. Long, 1985; Richards et al., 1985; Crookes, 1986; Prabhu, 1987; Breen, 1989; Nunan, 1989; Skehan, 1996; Lee, 2000; Bygate et al., 2001; in Ellis, 2003: 2-10) and condenses into 6 points: '1) A task is a workplan [...]. 2) a task involves a primary focus on meaning [...]. 3) A task involves real-world processes of language use [...]; 4) A task can involve any of the four language skills [...]. 5) A task engages cognitive processes [...]. 6) A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome' (ibid.: 9-10. For an example of task-based classes see Magnini and Maffei, 2008).

Of course, definitions may reflect the pedagogical trend of their time. For example, Prabhu (1987), one of the originators of the notion of task, defined it as 'an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought and

which *allowed teachers to control and regulate that process*' (p. 24; my emphasis). In fact, a shift in teacher-learner relationships and roles was occurring within the CLT approach (Nunan, 1989: 86) as the CLT approach gradually loosened teacher control in favour of a learner-centred perspective: 'the teacher fades out of later definitions, reflecting the switch of focus in pedagogy from the teacher to the learner as epitomised by the learner-centred approaches of the late 1980s' (Mishan, 2005: 68). This new trend towards learner-centredness in pedagogy is obviously reflected in the meaning attached to the notion of authenticity, as will be seen in the following section.

### 1.1.4 An authentic learner's response

A logical transition took place from the concern described above for the tasks that would promote authentication of texts to concern for the *learners'* authentication of the pedagogical situation. The comment made by Clarke (1989) on the subject of authenticity constitutes the framework for this most recent shift of focus in the debate: 'The notion of authenticity [...] has become increasingly relative, being increasingly related to specific learner needs and less and less concerned with the 'authentic' nature of the input materials themselves' (p. 73). As the decade progressed, language teaching and learning increasingly homed in on the learner. This is when approaches became more and more learner-centred, that is to say, the learner was seen to be at the centre of his learning process and his needs and objectives determined the course of that learning, including the choice and use of learning materials such as authentic texts. This is also when the notion of *learner autonomy* entered the debate. McGarry's (1995) study, *Learner autonomy: The role of authentic texts*, introduced authentic to learner autonomy, claiming that activities based on authentic texts offer 'unique opportunities for the development of learner autonomy' (p. 53). Similarly, Lee's (1994) *Text authenticity and learner authenticity*, had emphasised the importance of the learner's *response* to texts in language learning. Both these writings are typical of this new trend in the debate and of a new focus on the learner (see discussion in Mishan, 2005: 17).

Authentication of texts, as it is viewed under this most recent pedagogical perspective, depends on the learners' ability and desire to make full use of them, that is to say, to exploit the communicative charge of these texts fully. The gradual development in learners of an ability to cope with authentic texts, also independently of the teacher, is a central concern in the pursuit of learner autonomy (McGarry, 1995) and a pedagogical aim of the empirical study described in chapter 5. Learner autonomy, which is addressed in more detail in chapter 2, is not an *approach* to learning, rather a condition involving 'the internal psychological capacity to self-direct one's learning' (Benson, 1997: 25), which is 'a long and difficult process' (McGarry, 1995: 54). This means that, in order to achieve that condition, a learner needs to *be given* and to *accept responsibility* for the course of learning he is involved in (e.g. Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Dam, 1995). It also implies that a *reflective* attitude is requested of learners towards every stage of that learning course, since, as Little (2001) points out: 'it is impossible consciously to accept responsibility for anything, and then act on that responsibility, without thinking about what you are doing' (p. 51). The role of reflection in successful learning is further explored in chapter 2 where a connection with the model proposed in this thesis is established and pursued.

In sum, the overview of the debate on the notion of authenticity, from its inception within the CLT approach to the present pedagogic beliefs, has illustrated that despite the plurality and discordance of views, a general trend can be identified in the direction of an increasing centrality of the learner's role in 'activating' the benefits connected with authentic texts. The debate has reflected the permutations of pedagogical trends progressively bringing into focus different factors such as: the characteristics and the communicative charge of texts; the socio-cultural context of production and reception of texts; the relationship between texts and learners and the act of authentication and, finally, the agent of that authentication.

The complexity of the question of authenticity is also testified by the number of studies on authentic texts in SLA research. To this research I turn in the next section.

## 1.2 The case for using authentic texts in language learning

As the debate on authenticity suggests, it would appear that authentic texts are intuitively more appealing to learners than artificially produced ones because of their communicative *charge* and because they can stimulate learner curiosity towards the culture they represent and portray. In short, they appear to be more motivating than texts that were purposely contrived for the language classroom and this intuition is supported by research (e.g. Little et al., 1989: 19; 1994: 46; McGarry, 1995: 15-20; Peacock, 1997, reporting a classroom research project on the impact of authentic texts on motivation; Mishan, 2005: 25-27; see sections below). Nevertheless, assuming that authenticity might be motivating for learners, does it directly facilitate the learning of language, and if so, how?

There are two factors that emerge from an overview of SLA research in support of authentic texts: the characteristics and role of the input that authentic texts supply to learners and the way authentic texts involve learners in processing the input (both are discussed in the sections below). The learner's attention and willingness to make use of the authentic input from texts, however, still emerges as a precondition for activating the benefits that derive from authentic texts.

### 1.2.1 The role of input

The first claim in favour of the use of authentic texts is that they facilitate language learning because they provide a *rich* and *varied* linguistic input to L2 learners. Researchers such as Terrell (1991) and Little et al. (1989) support the idea that a rich amount of *comprehensible input* (explained below) plays an important role in the learning of a language and should be supplied in large amounts so as to attain a sort of language immersion ('language bath', say Little et al., 1989: 26) that recreates the condition of First Language (L1) learning. Little et al. (1989) claim that learners should be 'bombarded' with input from authentic texts so that the immersion situation, typical of a prolonged stay in the country where the TL is spoken, may be recreated (pp. 4-6. A related area of study investigates the role of reading as a source of rich

input in the L2, e.g. Elley, 1991; Devitt, 1997, and L1, e.g. Ingham, 1981; Krashen, 1989b; West et al., 1993; Krashen, 2004).

The conviction that abundant input facilitates learning is consistent with findings in SLA research that focus on the order of acquisition of language structures. There is evidence that learners acquire morpho-syntactic features of a language in a relatively fixed order, which depends on the TL rather than the L1 (Little et al., 1989: 8-9; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991: 307-309; Ellis, 1994: 635-636; Lightbown 2000: 442; Sharwood Smith, 1994: 184-185). The identification of the relevant acquisition stage would be obviously desirable for modelling course content on the learners' readiness for acquiring it. However desirable, this identification is still a long way from being attained and research continues to be conducted in the field (e.g. Jordan, 2005: 206-208; Sharwood Smith and Truscott, 2005). Given these findings, there seems to be little chance that what the learner is ready to acquire, i.e. fully internalise, is currently being taught. This is not to say that formal instruction should be banned: even when formal instruction (or corrective feedback) focuses on aspects of language that learners are not yet ready to internalise, i.e. their developmental stage has not yet reached the corresponding level, they can still store information to refer to when they need it and use it to make progress when the time comes (Lightbown, 1998; and Sharwood Smith, 1981)[9]. Additionally, there are indications that learners benefit from classroom opportunities to focus on language form (Spada, 1997; Norris and Ortega, 2000): compared to learners who are exposed to the TL primarily outside a classroom, students receiving formal instruction seem to move through developmental stages of language learning faster, although this does not mean that instruction permits learners to skip stages (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991). These findings and those reporting a mismatch between the structures focused on in class and the readiness of learners turn out to be a strong argument in favour of the use of authentic texts: these texts offer a greater range of potentially

[9] Devitt (1997), however, argues that 'form-focused instruction is not certain to lead to SLA, even when set in meaningful contexts. Many of the input enhancement studies [...], which provided direct form-focused instruction while maintaining a communicative context, have not been able to show genuine long-term improvement [...]' (p. 459). Nevertheless, he concedes that 'teaching approaches that combine natural interaction with a focus on form are inherently appealing at a theoretical level' (ibid.).

acquirable structures than texts created to draw learners' attention to a specific structure only (Little et al., 1989: 13). The larger the amount of comprehensible input, such as that supplied to learners in class, the greater the opportunity to encounter the structure learners are ready to internalise.

#### 1.2.1.1 Comprehensible input

All of the above does not imply, however, that abundant exposure alone would guarantee learning. In fact, Krashen's (1981; 1982; 1985) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis claimed that input needed to be made accessible or *comprehensible* to learners to be of use to them and to favour learning. According to the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses when he receives L2 input that is one step beyond his current stage of linguistic competence (although, as has been noticed, such a stage is difficult to identify). For example, if a learner is at a stage 'i', then acquisition takes place when he is exposed to comprehensible input that belongs to level 'i + 1'[10]. Although comprehensibility of input is considered fundamental for learning, many researchers have distanced themselves from Krashen's hypothesis in its strong version. An important criticism made of it is typified by a comment by Ellis (1994); he observed that comprehensible input 'facilitates' but does not 'guarantee' language learning (p. 279), that is to say, an active involvement of the learner is required in processing and internalising such input, as is discussed further in this section. Nevertheless, comprehensible input seems highly desirable for successful learning, but can input be manipulated in order to improve comprehensibility? And are such external interventions conducive to language learning? To these questions I now turn and begin with an illustration of two types of input modification: simplification and elaboration.

Alteration to a written text can take the forms of simplification or elaboration. Simplification of text input may operate at morphological and syntactical level, involving a reduction of clauses,

[10] Krashen (1981) differentiated the notions of 'learning' and 'acquisition' to refer to conscious and unconscious processes respectively (p. 1). This distinction, however, was never universally adopted in the literature (Ellis, 1994: 14). Following this lack of uniformity, the terms are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

shorter sentences, use of the canonical word order (see Yano et al., 1994: 199); at a semantic level, idioms and colloquialisms are reduced and high-frequency vocabulary is preferred (Vincent and Carter, 1991; Leow, 1993; Yano et al., 1994; Young, 1999); finally, at a phonological level, Yano et al. (1994) observe that simplification corresponds to the modified, slower, speech rate of native speakers addressing non-native speakers, emphasis of key words, etc. (p. 199). If simplification, as we have seen, often (although not only) entails reduction, elaboration essentially means adding to the text. Elaboration involves modifying the discoursal features of the text such as using paraphrases, repetition, etc. so that input from written texts ('pre-modified input', in Ellis's [2003] words) resembles input received from interaction with native speakers ('interactionally modified input', pp. 51-59). This second type of modification can thus be seen as a form of negotiation of meaning just like the process by which two persons try to resolve and *negotiate* their way out of a communicative breakdown. That interactionally modified input supports acquisition was originally claimed by Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1981) and links with that branch of SLA research identified as *negotiation* studies (e.g. Long, 1983a; 1983b; 1983c; 1996; Varonis and Gass, 1985; Scarcella and Higa, 1981; Pica, 1992; 1994). The fact that a text is adjusted so as to include a virtual interaction, almost a dialogic exchange, with another interlocutor leads us to a broader reflection on the utility of interaction on a deeper level both for the learning of a language, L1 *and* L2, as for self-development. This line of thought is pursued in chapter 2 in relation to the role of reflection in learning and personal development.

Going back to the changes of input, the literature provides two different answers, respectively less and more encouraging, as regards the impact of these modifications on language learning. Let us begin by the latter. Adding discoursal features to a text, i.e., elaborating it, such as paraphrases, repetition, contextual references, etc., may lengthen the text and increase its linguistic complexity. Nevertheless, several studies converge on the fact that elaborative modifications can improve comprehensibility and thus favour language learning (e.g. Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991: 134-138; Yano et al., 1994; Krashen, 1989a: 28; Ellis, 1994: 276).

The same, however, cannot be said for the other kind of text alteration. Research has shown that reducing the text not only does not necessarily improve comprehensibility, it may even be counterproductive for language learning because it runs the risk of impoverishing the text input and complicating the process of understanding (Krashen, 1989a: 28). Several studies have hinted at the fact that simplification may even inhibit language acquisition (Swaffar, 1985: 18; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991: 142; Nunan, 1991: 216; Yano et al., 1994; Young, 1999).

In sum, modifying the input to make it more accessible is not an uncomplicated process and, as these findings show, it seems that expanding, i.e. elaborating, the text should be preferred to reducing it in order to promote comprehension. Unaltered authentic texts, however, may appear an excessive endeavour to a learner, especially to one who has a low level of proficiency in the TL and, as Little et al. (2004) point out, this may well be the case 'if coping [with authentic texts] is a matter of word-for-word translation [...] But the comprehension on which effective language acquisition depends is not a matter of word-for-word translation – the child learning its first language cannot, after all, use translation as an aid to learning' (p. 47). An aid to effective use of authentic texts comes from task-based approaches where authentic texts are used profusely: rather than grading texts, and running the risk of impoverishing its contents, a suggestion is made to 'grade exercises' (Grellet, 1981: 8-9; Mishan, 2005: 62-63), thus maintaining a degree of challenge in the text without depleting it of its essential constituents (see also Guariento and Morley, 2001). Still, exposure to comprehensible input needs to be accompanied by a conscious role of the learner for successful language learning to take place. To this point I return in the next section.

#### 1.2.1.2 Noticing the input

A conceptual obstacle in dealing with input from authentic texts is that comprehension of language does not mechanically turn into acquisition. As noticed by Ellis (1994: 43), a problematic claim was made by Krashen (1985, 1994; quoted by Ellis: ibid.) when he argued that acquisition, in the sense of fully internalised language, will occur *automatically*, i.e.

unconsciously, if learners receive comprehensible input. This claim fails to distinguish the notions of *comprehension* and *acquisition* and ignores the fact that the transition from the first to the second does not rely on accessibility of input alone (see, for example, criticisms by Sharwood Smith, 1986; Færch and Kasper, 1986). Although little is still known on such transition, a set of fairly recent studies has placed emphasis on the active role of the learner in controlling the transition from comprehension of language to its acquisition. This active role of the learner, who has control over the input, is incompatible with Krashen's position that acquisition is a subconscious process but is consistent with the studies of the role of attention and consciousness in the acquisition of language (Schmidt, 1990; 1994; Schmidt and Frota, 1986). Schmidt (1990; 2001) has argued persuasively that attention to input is a conscious process. Drawing widely on research in SLA and cognitive psychology and on his own experience as a learner of Portuguese, Schmidt concludes that virtually no language learning would be possible without having attended to new forms in the input (Schmidt and Frota, 1986; Schmidt, 2001). In order to reflect on his own language learning experience and to give insights into the cognitive processes of noticing input Schmidt uses a learning diary (Schmidt and Frota, 1986).

This position is in harmony with studies that support the idea that L2 acquisition proceeds from *noticing* formal aspects of the language in the input and inductively working out the rules of grammar, i.e. consciousness-raising approaches (e.g. Tomlinson, 1998: 13–14; Willis, 1998: 45–46). Based on this idea, an approach within L2 learning can be identified which predicates the creation of the learning conditions for such 'consciousness' of formal features of language to arise naturally and adjust newly discovered aspects of the language system into one's current interlanguage (Tomlinson, 1998; Willis, 1998). The use of authentic texts harmonises with consciousness-raising approaches in that they provide learners with a rich and varied context where they can encounter new linguistic forms and work them out inductively.

It has been observed that an approach based on the inductive processing of grammatical rules may have its limitations, such as being unsuitable to non-analytic styles of learning and to

young or low-proficiency learners (Ellis, 1994). Nevertheless, using authentic texts for teaching systemic aspects of the TL has an advantage that suits all learner types and proficiency levels: it favours a perception that a grammatical rule is not an isolated item (as it may often appear to learners in traditional learning settings), rather that it interacts with other elements of the text and supports its overall comprehension:

> An examination of grammar in texts means that grammatical form is not an exclusive focus, for grammar is necessarily seen as part of a more complex social and textual environment and as realising specific functions in a purposeful context. A study of grammar in texts is a study of grammar in use. (Carter, 1997: 33-34)

In any case, what these findings on input suggest is that a rich and varied input, such as that offered by authentic texts, offers several opportunities to encounter, notice and acquire language. Input alone, however, is not enough to guarantee learning; in fact, other individual factors are involved in the process of learning. Motivation is crucial among them.

### 1.2.2 Authentic texts and motivation

Motivation is regarded as a key factor in any successful learning process. Its essential role has been consistently argued by prominent pedagogy experts (e.g. Montessori, 1965/1917) and psychological researchers (e.g. Maslow, 1971). In language learning, the same opinion is forcefully argued and is typified by a much-cited (and quite provocative) remark by Corder (1981): 'given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data' (p. 8). SLA research largely supports the proposition that motivated learners make better learners (e.g. Ellis, 1994: 508; Tobias, 1994; Hopkins and Nettle, 1994; van Lier, 1996: 98–122) and there is a strong link between authentic texts and motivation. That authentic texts are motivating is understandably a key argument in the literature in support of the use of authentic texts in L2 learning contexts (e.g. Swaffar, 1985; Bacon and Finneman, 1990; Little et al., 1994; Peacock, 1997). The very appearance of authentic texts in language-learning contexts is due to their intuited ability precisely to engage the learners' interest by bringing a strong communicative charge into the classroom and also by showing learners aspects of the culture and the society in which they were originally created.

Mishan (2005) effectively represents the communicative charge of authentic texts as 'the 3 C's' as follows: authentic texts incorporate and represent the culture from which they originate ('Culture'; pp. 44-54), they offer up-to-date linguistic forms and topics ('Currency'; pp. 55-60) and offer a stimulating challenge to learners provided that the task suits the learners' target-language proficiency ('Challenge'; pp. 60-64). The communicational and cultural value of authentic texts has been consistently considered as a key factor in making them more appealing to the learners than artificially contrived texts.

Despite agreement on its crucial role in learning and in human life, however, motivation is not easily defined (see, for example, overview by Deci and Ryan, 1985). If asked, most people would probably agree that motivation can be defined as a force that impels a learning behaviour and that is generated by different causes which may come from outside, e.g. the need to pass an exam, or from within the individual, e.g. enjoyment. This opinion reflects a well-known distinction between 'intrinsic' (or innate) and 'extrinsic' (environmentally-driven) motivation made in the second half of the last century (see works by Harlow, 1950; Hunt, 1971).

Going back to language-teaching contexts and the motivating drive of authentic texts, a useful distinction concerning motivation came from social psychologists Gardner and Lambert (1972). They identified the two kinds of language-learning motivation, 'instrumental' and 'integrative' (p. 5)[11]. Instrumental motivation is characterised as 'reflecting the practical value and advantages of learning a new language', that is to say, the instrumentally motivated learner would regard language learning as a means to achieve a practical goal, such as getting a job (ibid.). On the other hand, integrative motivation corresponds to a positive attitude towards (and possibly the desire to be part of) the target-language community and reflects 'a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group' (ibid.). Of the two, authentic materials may appear to correlate with integrative motivation more directly, providing

[11] It should be observed that the two pairs, however, do not coincide. Drawing on the work of Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1993), van Lier (1996) proposes a temporal perspective on the notion of motivation where the integrative and instrumental pair represents the future 'tense' of the intrinsic-extrinsic types of motivation (p. 105).

learners with contact with the culture they wish to integrate into (Bacon and Finnemann, 1990). Of course, there are variables in the learning context, such as immersion or non-immersion language learning, or in the learner's characteristics, such as learning styles, which need to be taken into consideration when assessing what kind of motivation is brought in by the learner and its influence on the learning process. On the other hand, the exploitation of authentic texts may also promote instrumental motivation; for instance, 'in raising learners' consciousness about the career and leisure opportunities that a competence in the language in question makes available' (Little et al., 1989: 18).

Whether motivation is instrumental or integrative, the selection of authentic texts will still need to take into account the variables of learners' individual interests and goals in order to promote learning; as Oxford and Shearin (1994: 23) argue: 'for motivation and progress to exist, instructional input to students must be challenging and relevant' (a contention supported also by Ellis, 1994: 515 and by Little et al., 1989: 16-18). This contention is consistent with pedagogical theories that place the learner's interests, characteristics and goals at the centre of his learning process and encourage him to direct it (see, for example, McGarry, 1995).

### 1.2.3 Affective variables and authentic texts

Other affective variables besides motivation are correlated with the learning process and may be linked with the use of authentic texts in language learning. The notion of 'affective filter' theorised by Krashen (1981) refers to the mosaic of affective factors that are called into play when learning a second language and that makes the learner more or less *receptive* towards learning. As the image suggests, a low affective *filter* drops individual resistance towards input and allows this to go through towards the learner so it is obviously desirable, while a high affective filter actually hinders or, even, impedes such transit. A low affective filter contributes to the creation of a stress-free, non-threatening learning environment where anxiety is reduced to a minimum and learning stimulated by topics and activities of interest to the participants such as group-work activities (see, for example, McGarry, 1995; Willis, 1996). According to Krashen

(1989a), authentic texts have an ability to lower the affective filter provided that they supply learners with 'comprehensible input on topics of real interest' (p. 29); this contention is also supported by other researchers (e.g. Swaffar, 1985; Shanahan, 1997) who believe that authentic texts may engage the learner affectively and create the conditions for lowering the affective filter. There are several factors that are responsible for the variations of the affective filter, which are considered in the following paragraphs.

When speaking of affective variables, the literature on the role of authentic texts refers to at least three interconnected concepts: interest, engagement and empathy (on affective variables see also Mishan, 2005: 27-29). It is believed that teachers may exploit learners' *interests* by selecting (or inviting learners to select) texts which appeal to them and possibly involve them in activities based on the texts (e.g. Ellis, 1994: 514-518; McGarry, 1995: 3-4). Although little research has been conducted to clarify the relation between interest and motivation (Ellis, 1994), it would seem reasonable to consider interest as 'a starting point' for developing motivation (Oxford and Shearin, 1994: 23) and one on which teachers can intervene (Ellis, 1993: 8-9). Another affective factor, which is closely related to (and possibly stimulated by) interest, is *engagement*. When learners are engaged in an activity they tend to relax, i.e. to lower the affective filter, and anxiety is reduced because the objective of language learning is now within their peripheral attention, which favours acquisition. Task design can have a crucial impact on the degree of engagement of learners in the activity (recall Ellis's [2003] quotation in 1.1.3 above) and because tasks are often group-based, they favour interaction and language use in a non-threatening classroom atmosphere (on the impact of engagement on learning see research: e.g. Harmer, 1996: 11-12; Little *et al.*, 1989: 5–6, 71–72). As for interest, engagement may be stimulated by selecting topics that appeal to the learner: 'the more texts are related to learners' personal concerns and interests the deeper and more rapid the processing will be' (Little et al., 1989: 71-72). Finally, *empathy* is regarded as a powerful affective variable in connection with language learning (Krashen, 1989a; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991; Ellis, 1994). It is an inclination to feel an affinity and identify with the target culture and language and can be found

at varying degrees in different individuals. Whether more or less endowed with this inclination, an individual's empathy still needs to be activated by the contact with texts that portray and communicate the culture in question.

Authentic texts are therefore powerful tools in interesting, engaging and activating empathy in a learner thus favouring language acquisition. McGarry (1995) argues that group-based project work maximises the learning benefits of using authentic texts that interest the learners and, ultimately, promotes learner autonomy:

> When classroom work is organised around projects it is easier for teachers to enable individual students or groups of students to work on topics of particular interest and relevance to them; [...] project work provides students with opportunities to gain experience in setting goals, devising and following schedules, and in monitoring and evaluating their progress (p. 33).

Of course, group work lends other advantages, such as providing a non-threatening environment where learners feel free to experiment with newly acquired linguistic forms, which explains the incorporation of group work into task-based methodologies (e.g. Willis, 1996: 7-8; Prabhu, 1987: 82-83).

### 1.2.4 Learning styles

Besides affective factors, the learner brings other behavioural and cultural variables into the classroom such as her own preferences in learning. While a discussion of each individual style is beyond the purpose of this overview, there are elements in the research on learning styles that are relevant to our focus on authentic texts (e.g. Skehan, 1989: 100-118; Little and Singleton, 1990: 14; Oxford, 1993: 213-215). A well-known work by Willing (1988; reported in Tudor, 1996: 114-116) identified four individual learning styles: 'analytical', 'communicative', 'concrete' and 'authority-oriented'. Each of these styles results not only from individual preferences but also from the socio-cultural background of the learner (Little and Singleton, 1990: 14; see also Skehan, 1989: 118), and some degree of overlapping may exist so that learners may simultaneously adopt more than one style. Further, an individual's learning style may vary over time (Little and Singleton, 1990: 14-16) and in accordance with the particular social and cultural situation of learning (Tomlinson, 1998: 17-18). This flexibility holds a

potential with regard to the use of authentic texts because, provided that texts appeal to learners, it may be expected that they adopt the learning style that is best suited to the exploitation of the text from a cultural and communicative viewpoint. Besides, authentic texts provide many kinds of input stimuli (e.g. visual and auditory) and can appeal to virtually all learners.

## 1.3 Conclusion

This chapter has first dealt with some definitions of authenticity and has then discussed the arguments in support of authentic texts based on SLA research. Section 1.1 examined the course of the debate on authenticity showing that the discussion has reflected the pedagogical currents over the years focusing on elements of interest to a specific trend. A shift in the discussion was noticed from a focus on the text to a focus on the learner in this order: the characteristics of texts, the context where the text was produced, the relation between text and user and the active role of the learner. The last of these shifts reflects the contemporary interest in pedagogical environments for the central role of the learner in the acquisition process.

Section 1.2 put forward the arguments in favour of authentic texts based on SLA research. This overview revealed that there is a general recognition that authentic texts support language learning in various ways. The notions of quantity and quality have emerged as central concerns with regard to text input. A widespread contention that learners may not be ready for the abundant input provided by authentic texts is called into question by research on the order of acquisition of structures. Authentic texts provide learners with numerous opportunities to encounter language forms they are ready to internalise and that complement the grammatical focus of their educational contexts. Studies on inductive processing have revealed the importance of a rich linguistic context for learners to notice and work out grammatical rules. Additionally, the richness of input is revealed to be valuable in relation to comprehension: while comprehensible input in authentic texts is still regarded as a crucial condition for acquisition, simplification of input is called into question and an elaboration of input, in the form of an addition of discourse and interaction-like features, is shown to be potentially beneficial to

comprehension of input. Instead of grading texts and running the risk of depriving them of essential comprehension components, graded activities, or 'tasks', based on authentic texts are proposed as a form of mediation between the linguistic complexity of their input and the learners' processing abilities.

As regards the quality of input, authentic texts are culturally embedded in the target community and therefore provide a culturally rich input to learners and stimulate their interest. Research has revealed that authentic texts may activate the beneficial intervention of affective factors such as motivation and the related variables of interest, engagement and empathy in the learning process. As pointed out by McGarry (1995), authentic texts that are relevant to learners, are a powerful stimulus for activating processing strategies (e.g. inferencing) for 'unlocking the meaning of texts' (McGarry, 1995: 4). Finally, research on learning styles reveals that learning styles are not unchanging and that learners can adapt to the style that best suits a specific authentic text. On the other hand, the variety of stimuli, contents of authentic texts and the diversity of activities engendered by authentic texts are likely to suit most learners.

The benefits that accrue to learners from the use of authentic texts are therefore numerous, as this chapter on authenticity has shown. These benefits relate to both the quantity and quality of the input they supply. Nevertheless, as the overview on the authenticity debate suggested earlier in the chapter, these benefits may be left dormant until the learner activates them and initiates the dynamic process of *authentication* of texts. This calls into play the need for suitable pedagogical activities that favour such authentication without depriving materials of their challenging complexity. On a deeper level, however, the development of this authenticating ability is close to an act of *appropriation* of the learning material (a concept expanded in 2.2.5) and close to the capacity to turn any materials and situations into learning opportunities and, more generally, to be *in control* of one's own learning process as a whole, and throughout every stage of it; all of which are key features of an autonomous learner. The development of this ability is crucial in any learning context that revolves around the use of authentic texts and it is pursued in the following chapter. In other words, pedagogical activities based on authentic texts

besides providing learners with opportunities to use the language in a wide variety of interactions should also promote what McGarry (1995) calls 'responsible learning', i.e. setting goals, choosing topics of interest to the project-work [which she regards as a suitable activity in this respect], participants, etc. (pp. 6-7; project-based activities are described in detail at the pp. 33-45). My contention is that in order to promote responsible learning a systematic reflective activity is crucial.

Linking this chapter to what comes after, I have argued that besides 'responsible learning', i.e. learner autonomy, within the idea of authentication is implicated some level of appropriation of the text, an appropriation that should also be favoured in order to maximise learning from authentic texts. But how can we favour this 'appropriation' and also foster autonomy? A useful suggestion comes from McGarry's work mentioned in the previous paragraph. She suggests that learners should keep a journal in the TL documenting their learning process in order to enhance learning from authentic texts (as well as improving learners' writing skills) and promote learner autonomy ('a learner's journal is a key feature of most courses designed to promote learner autonomy', she reports, p. 46) since keeping a journal can encourage learners to *reflect* on their learning and so 'learn how to learn' (ibid.; my emphasis). Thus, authentication appears more and more connected with learner autonomy through the role of reflection and, borrowing Little's (2005) phrase, 'appropriate target language use' (p. 3). As was said earlier in this chapter, the development of learner autonomy entails responsibility, systematic reflection on one's learning process and appropriate TL use (Little, 2001). I turn in chapter 2 to how these notions interrelate and how they can be useful in promoting learning from authentic texts.

# Chapter 2. The role of reflection in learning

*And since you know you cannot see yourself,*
*so well as by reflection, I, your glass,*
*will modestly discover to yourself,*
*that of yourself which you yet know not of.*
William Shakespeare

## 2.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the literature on reflection and relates reflection to the learning process in light of recent developments in pedagogy. It begins by considering the notion that autonomous language learners are successful learners and summarises three notions (2.1) that pertain to the autonomous language learner – responsibility, reflectivity and appropriate TL use (Little, 2001) – but focuses on the characteristics and the function of reflection in particular. The argument is that the development of a reflective attitude in the learner favours the development of autonomous behaviour, especially through the increase of self-awareness and the acceptance of the learner's role within the learning process. The chapter further consists of two sections: section 2.2 explores the literature on reflection in several fields and finds some recurring elements that characterise it. More specifically, section 2.2.1 discusses the literature on reflection that identifies the existence of reflective 'levels' and 'stages'. The role of reflection is then considered in works emanating from the experiential learning domain (2.2.2), in relation to self-development in psychology (2.2.3) and in relation to the development of self-awareness (2.2.4). The link with learning is established through reference to the constructivist approach and a summary is given of this perspective in relation to what has been said in previous sections (2.2.5).

Section 2.3 builds on the overview in 2.2 and relates the findings more specifically to the function of reflection in learning. It identifies the characteristics of a 'deep' approach to learning and considers the related factors of openness, responsibility and a metacognitive attitude in attaining it (2.3.1). Section 2.3.2 extends the notion of reflection and learning to the language-learning domain through mention of Vygotsky's work. Section 2.3.3 goes back to a more

general perspective and considers the function of reflection to reach a deep level of learning, while some variables that affect a deep learning approach are considered in 2.3.4. The chapter concludes with a summary of its contents (2.4) and a conclusion to the chapters 1 and 2.

## 2.1 Learner autonomy and successful language learning

### 2.1.1 The autonomous learner triad

In a recent presentation on the subject of language education, Little (2005) noted that 'in formal language learning the development of learner autonomy depends on the operationalization of three principles [...]: learner involvement [...] learner reflection [...] appropriate target language use' (p. 3). Reflection is a fundamental component of learner autonomy, and learner autonomy is crucial for successful learning. In this section I first substantiate the claim that an autonomous language learner is a successful learner and then I identify reflection as one of the fundamental characteristics, mentioned in the introduction, of learner autonomy. The argument of this chapter is that the enhancement of a reflective attitude in the learner calls into play the development of autonomy and is therefore desirable for successful language learning as it is indeed for the learning of any subject.

The L1 acquisition process offers a useful viewpoint for pondering the contention that autonomous language learners are successful L2 learners (e.g. Lightbown and Spada, 2006). As a matter of fact, L1 acquisition is essentially an autonomous process (i.e. L1 learning takes place before formal education and is directed and controlled by the child) and, in conditions of normal cognitive development, a highly successful one. In other words, every individual has already learnt a language in their life, which makes language learning unlike any other learning in this respect. Experience tells us, however, that this early ability for autonomous language learning is often overlaid by time and formal education. Nevertheless, given the L1-acquisition precedent in every human being, it would seem reasonable to reactivate the individual's early ability for autonomous language learning in order to favour L2 learning. The most important implication of this contention concerns TL use. As for the L1, the L2 learner is to use the TL as

an instrument of spontaneous and genuine communication and interaction. As we have seen in the previous chapter (more specifically, in 1.1.1) this is a central concern in the communicative language classroom but it is also an essential characteristic of the autonomous language learner. Using the language to interact and communicate is how the child learns his L1 and how the L2 learner learns the TL; the processes of language learning and language use are 'essentially inseparable' (Little, 1997: 227). Of course, Little's (2001) characterisation of the autonomous language learner encompasses TL use, as the next paragraphs will show.

An autonomous language learner is an individual who accepts 'responsibility' for her learning, 'engages reflectively in all aspects of the learning process' and 'uses the target language as the principal channel of learning, including reflection' (Little, 2001: 47). TL use, responsibility and reflection may be regarded as a triad in which every element implies the other two and is implied by them in a closely related manner. Let us look at the way in which they relate to one another in this context.

The definitions of learner autonomy in the literature often reveal a connection with the notion of responsibility: 'The main characteristic of autonomy [...] is that students take some significant responsibility for their own learning over and above responding to instruction' (Boud, 1988: 23; see also Dam, 1995). Responsibility and control are also closely associated since successful learning entails a capacity to be in command of one's own course of study; for example, Holec (1981) claims that learner autonomy is 'to take charge of one's own learning' (quoted in Little, 1991), and the strong individualistic connotations of this attitude are expressed in Benson's (1997) definition of autonomy as 'the internal psychological capacity to self-direct one's own learning' (p. 25). Little's (1991) description of learner autonomy, which employs a sequence of three verbs ('planning, monitoring, evaluating'; p. 3), similarly implies that a learner needs to step out of her experience and adopt a controlling attitude towards it.

As a matter of fact, besides conveying a sense of the complexity of the notion of autonomy, the definitions just quoted also reveal the dualistic nature of the learning process in that they

associate responsibility and control with a process of detachment from the learning process, which is undertaken by the learner in order to better manage his learning. In other words, learner autonomy encompasses the learning activity and the monitoring-of-the-learning activity that comes with reflection. A learner who consciously acknowledges her own role in carrying out her learning is also one who necessarily thinks about her learning process and regards it with a critical eye. This is what is meant by metacognition which, as will emerge in this chapter, is a 'high' form of reflection.

The role of the TL in the overall learning process goes far beyond the fact of it being the subject matter of the course in question, and a distant goal to reach in the long run: it is the central medium of classroom communication and interaction (Little [2005] stresses the importance of 'appropriate' TL use, where appropriate refers to 'allowing the learner a maximally wide range of initiating and responding discourse roles') and encompasses the necessary reflective activity that an autonomous learning process entails. As already stated, in the L2 learning context successful language learning and (free and spontaneous) language use are inseparable: 'In the autonomous foreign language classroom, the more learners' proficiency develops, the more difficult it should be to distinguish clearly between language learning and target language use' (Little, 2001: 46).

### 2.1.2 Reflection as target-language use

Thus, target-language use is vital to language learning. As Little (1991) puts it 'language use is the indispensable channel of language learning' (p. 37). As for any human activity, we learn to do something by doing it and this includes language use. Quoting Rose (1997), Little (2003) usefully mentions the 'paradox of development' according to which 'any organism has simultaneously to *be* and *to become*' (lecture notes). The implication of this position is that we learn a language by using it (so, for instance, 'we learn to *speak* only by *speaking*' explains Little, ibid.; my emphasis): language learning and language use are 'inseparable' (Little, 1997: 227). As already mentioned, this finds support from observation of L1 learning where a child

learns a language by attempting to *use* it in order to communicate and interacting with the people surrounding him and also in other forms of naturalistic L2 acquisition (Little [2007] cites the example of 'a migrant worker 'picking up' the language of his workmates as a result of his daily interaction with them'; p. 21). Successful L2 use thus consists in genuine communication in the TL which, in turn, depends on the capacity to function autonomously:

> If language learners are to be efficient communicators in their target language, they must be autonomous to the extent of having sufficient independence, self-reliance and self-confidence to fulfil the variety of social, psychological and discourse roles in which they will be cast. (Little, 1994: 82)

And Little (2007) stresses the tight connection between language learning and autonomy 'the development of learner autonomy and the growth of target language proficiency are not mutually supporting but fully integrated with each other' (p. 15). The implication for L2 pedagogy is that

> We must create the conditions in which our learners can *learn* by *doing*, that is, by *communicating* [...] the communicative classroom should be capable of accommodating a wide variety of discourse types in order that learners have the opportunity of filling the widest possible variety of discourse roles *as they learn*. (Little, 1994: ibid, emphasis in the original)

Using the TL to communicate effectively, i.e. autonomously, equals to successful language learning. The social dimension of language learning is captured by Mishan (2005) as follows:

> If language use is indistinguishable from language learning, it follows that the latter is predicated on the capacity for independent interaction, as well as on the capacity to learn from interaction with others. (p. 37)

Language learning, as in any form of learning, certainly has an interactive dimension, but it also has an individual cognitive dimension (an argument I return to in 2.3.2). This suggests that language use also encompasses the individual dimension of reflection in its various forms. This interdependence of the social and the individual accounts for the elements of continuity and difference in learning and development: 'our biological nature encompasses the things we have in common with one another, whereas our social nature accounts for the variety of human societies and cultures', (Little, 2000: 35). According to influential psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978: 57, in Little: ibid.), the social dimension of learning is also related to cognitive abilities, in that higher cognitive functions are internalised from social interaction (ibid.). The crucial point made by Vygotsky is that language is inherent to this very process of internalisation of

cognitive functions as it is to learning. Little (2000) summarises this principle as follows:

> Just as higher cognitive functions are internalised from social interaction, so our capacity for 'inner speech' – *the thought clothed in language that we use to direct our actions* – is internalised from 'social speech' via 'egocentric speech'. (p. 35; my emphasis)

Besides stressing the social-interactive dimension of learning, this quotation makes the inextricability between language and thinking obvious (Little [2007] speaks of 'dialectic unity of speaking and thinking') although 'the transformations involved in [the] development [from social speech to inner speech] are not straightforward', notes Little (2007: 22-23). Language, according to this perspective, is the vehicle for thought and language use necessarily entails cognitive (and metacognitive) activities, such as reflection (the relation between thinking and reflection is explored in 2.2.1). Reflection, in turn, is an expression of a responsible and monitoring attitude to learning, especially metacognitive reflection.

As will emerge in this chapter, metacognition is regarded as a 'deep' level of thinking. This type of thinking, too, is integral to language use and integral to the development of target-language proficiency. Little (2001) makes this point clearly:

> Essentially, from the earliest stages we must engage our learners in forms of exploratory dialogue that require them to use the target language to express their own meanings. We must help them to construct and maintain multiple scaffolding in writing [...] and in speech. And we must include in appropriate target language use the reflective activities [*referred to earlier in the same article*]. Teachers sometimes dismiss this as a hopelessly ambitious undertaking; but *if we do not develop our learners' capacity to use the target language as a metacognitive tool, they will never progress beyond a relatively low level of proficiency*. (p. 52; my emphasis)

In the educational language-learning context, language is a means to an end and an end in itself. As this quotation suggests, the autonomous learning process calls for the simultaneous development of a cognitive and a metacognitive activity (constantly accompanied by target-language use): the first has to do with the learner's encounter with the object of his learning, for example the reading of authentic texts or the performance of learning activities (or the learning 'content'), and the second consists of thinking about, and therefore pondering and appraising, learning itself (the learning 'process'). As this chapter will argue, it is at this point that reflection becomes essential in bringing about new learning. Before dealing with this point, however, I will explore the literature on reflection in order to understand the notion of reflection

and the way it enhances learning.

## 2.2 A characterisation of reflection

### 2.2.1 Reflection: levels and stages

The notion of reflection is a complex one since it emanates from different disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, education, and also from professional training contexts (see, for instance, work on nurse training in Stockhausen and Kawashima, 2002). Despite the cross-disciplinary interest in this notion, however, only a few works attempt to cross the boundaries and give a more comprehensive account of the characteristics of reflection (e.g. Schön, 1983; Boud et al., 1985). An overview of the literature on reflection immediately reveals the recurring reference to the works of Dewey (1933), Habermas (1971), Kolb (1984) and Schön (1983). Besides contributing to the characterisation of reflection, the works of these authors have inspired subsequent research on reflection and influenced the terminology, as will become evident in this chapter in particular. Since reflection is closely associated with learning, and this will feature more evidently in the overview, a clarification of the concept is essential to appreciate its role in relation to pedagogical contexts such as the language-learning context at the centre of this study.

Both Dewey and Habermas held that reflection generates knowledge. John Dewey is normally considered to be a key originator of the concept of reflective thinking as an aspect of learning and education. His approach was psychological and educational in that he was interested in finding out about reflection as a human activity *and also* with a view to applying his insights to the educational context. His work (1933) draws on the ideas of a wide range of thinkers, from Plato to Aristotle, from Confucius to Solomon, to Buddha and so on. His definition of reflection, which is widely quoted, calls for the learner's active involvement in the learning process. Reflection, in his words, is

> active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to which it leads [...] it includes a

> conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of evidence and rationality. (p. 9)

Reflection is an active and deliberate cognitive process that involves the person's existing knowledge, ideas and beliefs and also challenges them regularly. The notion of reflection in Dewey's perspective is allied with thinking, more specifically: 'the kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious thought' (p. 13). The activities associated with this kind of thinking include chaining ideas, interconnecting them and taking previous knowledge and conclusions into attentive consideration. The sequence of cognitive activities, in Dewey's opinion, aims at a specific purpose which consists of the solution of an original 'perplexity'. It is this perplexity that is the origin of reflection and which moulds and directs all the cognitive processes connected to it (p. 16). In other words, Dewey regarded reflection as a special form of problem-solving activity allowing for doubt and perplexity. He made a distinction between a deeper level of reflection, which he termed 'critical reflection', and a less considered and more superficial kind. Linking this belief with the educational context he argued that a person who was not sufficiently critical could reach a hasty conclusion without examining all the possibilities and therefore regarded the development of this skill as a central educational concern.

The implication that reflection is a developmental characteristic of the individual can also be found in the philosophical work of Habermas (1971) on reflection. In accordance with Dewey, Habermas saw reflection as an activity not too different from thinking. He too, like Dewey, saw reflection as aiming to attain a determined purpose, in this case a purpose connected with the development of knowledge. Habermas investigated the nature or the 'constitutive interests' that shape distinct forms of human knowledge and he identified three of them. At the basis of technical knowledge, the first form, there is the desire to understand the reality in which man lives with a view to gaining control over the reality. The stimulus at the basis of knowledge in the humanities and to a certain extent the social sciences, on the other hand, is to seek an understanding of human behaviour and the meanings of human communication. Finally, Habermas identified a third form of constitutive interests, the emancipatory, which shape the

form of knowledge produced in social sciences and involve an understanding of the self, of the human condition and of the role of the self in the human context. The acquisition of this third form of knowledge is aimed at producing a transformation within the self or in his social situation.

The role of reflection in the Habermasian framework varies according to the kind of knowledge that is being developed. Concerning the first, it is suggested that Habermas implicitly assigned a minor instrumental role to reflection in relation to the construction of knowledge in the physical sciences (Barnett, 1994; but see Clarke et al., 1996, for a different perspective). As regards the modalities through which the other two kinds of knowledge are developed, Habermas suggested that man makes use of heuristic operations of integration and interpretation of ideas, especially in relation to the form of knowledge which relates to the fields of the arts and the humanities and, partially, of the social sciences. Reflection, however, becomes essential in the third case, that is to say, in relation to the workings and development of knowledge in the social sciences. While the social sciences partially operate as historic hermeneutic disciplines, thus making use of integration and interpretation of ideas, there is a level of enquiry in them that requests a critical stance on the part of the knower in order to better serve the emancipatory interests of social groups and this is where reflection is most specifically called into play. Since the subject who conducts the interpretation has an influence on the interpretation itself, Habermas stressed the importance of developing a method of investigation specifically for this field of knowledge. This method of investigation would require a critical questioning of the investigation itself, including an understanding of the role of the knower in the enquiry. The form of reflection that serves the development of the third form of knowledge is more profound than the other two in that it calls into play what von Wright (1992) refers to as 'metacognitive knowledge', that is 'reflective understanding of the process under consideration and of the actor's role in it' (p. 64). This is a characteristic of a deep form of reflection that recurs in the literature as a form that brings about new knowledge and 'change', as it will appear in other parts of this chapter. In the Habermasian model, the acquisition of knowledge of the self, the human condition and their

mutual relationship may produce a transformation of the self and possibly of the social situation.

A common characteristic of reflection, as the Habermasian scheme reveals and as it emerges in the work of several writers, is the hierarchical arrangement of the different levels of the reflective activity, ranging from something like a description of events to a more profound form of mental elaboration (e.g. van Manen, 1977; 1991; Mezirow, 1990; Hatton and Smith, 1994; Kember et al., 1999; Kember et al., 2000). Also, several studies suggest that the levels of reflection can also be viewed as stages in a developmental perspective and include the fostering of a reflective practice in an educational context. Several of these studies are considered below.

Van Manen (1977) proposed a three-level model of reflection, based on Habermas, which is often referred to in critiques of reflection (e.g. Gore [1987] and Pearson and Smith [1985] both make use of van Manen's hierarchy). He, too, links his perspective with education and analyses the state of curriculum development processes basing his scheme on the quality of reflection in each case: van Manen's first level corresponds to 'technical reflection'; the second is 'practical reflection' and the third is the level of 'critical reflection'. The third, deepest level of reflection involves processes that should question values and assumptions at the basis of curriculum development (Gore and Zeichner, 1991; Adler, 1991) in order to interpret 'the nature and quality of the educational experience' (p. 206).

A later much-cited model developed by van Manen (1991) records four levels of reflection of increasing sophistication: the first level corresponds to thinking and acting (the author makes a clear distinction between the two and the literature on reflection returns to this distinction, for example: Hatton and Smith [1994] and Court, 1988) on an 'everyday basis'. The second level is represented by reflection on incidents and events and may occur as the action unfolds (a similar 'reflection-on-action' notion was in Schön, 1983). The third level of reflection is more systematic than the previous two and represents a form of reflection of a higher (that is, 'deeper') level; it is exercised upon the experience of the individual and of others and may be the result of previous reflection therefore going beyond the event itself. The fourth and deepest

level of reflection in this model consists of reflection on the way one reflects, which, in van Manen's perspectives, leads to an understanding of knowledge and of the nature of knowledge (pp. 45-48). This work on the levels of reflection is more comprehensive than van Manen's earlier work (1977) in that it applies to pedagogical processes and is directed towards teachers, while his earlier work limits its scope to one portion of the educational process, that is curriculum development. In common with his earlier work, this distinction between 'levels' of reflection also implies a qualitative difference.

A qualitative distinction between levels of reflection is incorporated in the model provided by Mezirow (1991). Mezirow has written extensively on the subject of reflective thinking as an essential component of his model of transformative learning for adults. Drawing on the work of Dewey (1933), who used the term 'critical reflection' to refer to deeper, more thoughtful and profound reflection, Mezirow links the concept of reflection to action and draws a line between reflective and non-reflective *action*. He identifies three types of non-reflective actions: 1) 'habitual action' is an activity which has been previously learned; it is performed automatically or requires little conscious thought. Dealing with the education of professional figures, Schön (1983) called this type of behaviour 'reflection-in-action', which consists in a *routinised* way of dealing with a recurrent problem or case. 2) 'Thoughtful action' is a cognitive process which, despite making use of existing knowledge, does not assess that knowledge, i.e. it does not *reflect* on it, so that learning remains largely confined to pre-existing schemes and not much change occurs. 3) 'Introspection' refers to the affective domains and, in Mezirow's opinion, does not qualify as reflection (103-107; on critical reflection, see also Mezirow, 1998).

Mezirow's model includes two forms of reflective action: the less critical form of reflection includes a subdivision between process and content reflection, while the deeper form of reflection is one through which people act on the very meaning framework or, to anticipate a term used later in this chapter, on their cognitive 'structure'. Mezirow aptly names this 'premise reflection' and explains: 'Premise reflection involves us becoming aware of why we perceive, think, feel or act as we do' (Mezirow, 1991: 108).

A qualitative distinction is also integral to Hatton and Smith's (1994) model of the four types of written reflection as found in learning journals: 1) the first form, 'descriptive writing', is not really a form of reflection in that it consists of merely reporting the activity or incident; 2) the second form, 'descriptive reflection', attempts to provide reasons on the basis of one's own judgement or readings; 3) the third form, 'dialogic reflection', consists of a form of discourse with oneself where possible reasons are explored and 4) the fourth form, 'critical reflection' is the deepest form of reflection: this is where the diarist gives reasons for decisions or for events, taking into account the socio-cultural and historical context (pp. 37-43).

The privacy of mental processes such as reflection makes it difficult to conceptualise them. As the work of Hatton and Smith shows, the study of the levels of reflective skills and their development requests the availability of artefacts or representations of the reflective activity which take either written expression or oral form; these artefacts lend themselves to analysis, hence the frequent presence in these studies of written learning journals (e.g. Wong et al., 1995; Kember et al., 1999). For example, Kember et al. (1999) developed protocols for assessing the level of reflective thinking as found in the written journals of undergraduate and postgraduate learners enrolled in professional courses; the model was principally based on the work of Mezirow (1991). Kember et al.'s (1999) model applies to courses that require reflective journal-writing, while Kember et al. (2000) developed a four-scale questionnaire which can measure the level of reflective thinking and has a broader utilisation than the model based on courses utilising journals; for example, it can be used at two different moments of the learning process to determine whether reflective thinking is taking place or assessing the level of reflective thinking. This model contemplates four kinds of reflective thinking as follows: 'habitual action', 'understanding', 'reflection' and 'critical reflection' (pp. 383-385).

The presence of a developmental perspective in the conception of the different levels of reflection is well represented, for example, in the results of substantial empirical work (over ten years) by King and Kitchener (1994), which investigates the quality of the cognitive activity in reflective thinking. Like the work mentioned so far, King and Kitchener (1994) also propose a

hierarchical arrangement of reflection levels, which consists of seven stages, including three pre-reflective thinking stages. It is only the last two, however, that are indicated as the fully reflective stages, and the more advanced of these two they term 'reflective judgement'. This highest level of reflection is described as an advanced form of thinking where the person acknowledges the uncertainty of knowledge and recognises that there is not *one* right answer. This form of reflection appears as the result of a developmental progression and typically characterises adults (pp. 45-47).

Similar conclusions are reached by Belenky et al. (1986), who investigated the issues related to learning and knowing with a gender-based perspective, i.e. a mixed-age group of women. Based on the results of their study, the writers identify seven different categories and there is an implication that they represent progressive stages. The highest category in their research is the 'position of constructed knowledge'; women assigned to this category were able to recognise and accept the provisional nature of knowledge and to identify their own role in constructing it. The study also underlined that the search for self- and inner confidence (finding one's 'voice', in Costa and Kallick's terms; 2000: 60) was central to enabling these women to transform their way of knowing and giving them a sense of empowerment. The relationship with knowledge in the group at the other end of the scale was characterised by substantial passivity, i.e. they were seen as the receivers of knowledge from others, and their behaviour involved little reflection.

### 2.2.2 Experience and reflection

Other recurring issues with regard to reflection emerge from an overview of the literature. It is not always clear whether reflection is conceptualised as an exclusively cognitive activity (a specific kind of thinking, pondering, etc.) or how it relates to ongoing, past, or future events (e.g. Clandinnin and Connelly, 1991). It is a commonly held view that reflection facilitates learning; this view finds a correspondence in the literature and some writers contend that reflection is a *conditio sine qua non* in learning from experience especially in adults (Pearson and Smith, 1985; Burnard, 1991). Despite an acceptance that reflection facilitates learning from

experience, there is quite a multitude of meanings assigned to the concept of experience: these oscillate between the notion of contact with some kind of 'raw' experience, such as the physical involvement in a situation, and that of mentally returning to the situation and *re*processing it. While some researchers identify experience with a physical engagement or action (for example Kolb, 1984; Nyatanga, 1989; Kelly, 1994), others see it as encompassing exposure to abstract materials represented in written or spoken form, such as reading, listening to a source of data, following a lecture, etc. (Cunningham, 1983), while others extend the meaning to include activities such as, for example, a series of counselling sessions (Boyd and Fales, 1983). Boud and Miller (1996) allow for a broad interpretation of the concept of experience ('a workshop, a field trip, a lecture [...] an event arising from a personal study project or a totally unplanned occurrence in daily life': 26-27). Overall, it seems sensible to conceive of experience not as limited to pure activity but as something that also involves a cognitive work of re-processing the activity itself, for example in recounting it orally or in written form after the psychomotor involvement in it. Indeed, any experience is likely to be made up of both elements.

The term 'experiential learning', eloquently, refers to a domain of educational research where the relationship of experience and learning is most prominently valued (Gibbs, 1988, refers to it as based on the principle of 'learning by doing') and is represented by works of authors such as Kolb (1984) and Boud and Miller (1996). Kolb (1984) defines experiential learning as 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience' (p. 33). He represents experiential learning as a perpetuating cycle of four elements: 1) concrete experience; 2) reflective observation; 3) abstract conceptualisation, and 4) active experimentation. The cycle begins with an experience that the learner has had, followed by an opportunity to reflect on that experience. Then she may conceptualise and draw conclusions about what she has experienced and observed, leading to future actions in which the learner experiments with different behaviours. This begins the cycle anew as learners have new experiences based on their experimentation (pp. 36-38). Kolb views this cycle as one in which the learner alternately

assumes the point of view of actor and that of spectator. Underpinning this vision of the learning process there is a view of learning which is inspired by work on developmental stages by Piaget (1971), to which Kolb relates, and also a link with the notions of 'assimilation' and 'accommodation' in learning to which this chapter will return. Going back to the work of Kolb, besides expressing a relationship between experience and learning, his model assigns a crucial role to reflection in favouring the passage from experiencing to conceptualising. Unfortunately, however, Kolb does not deal with an explanation of this role of reflection in converting experiences into abstract concepts. The concept seems to be taken as understood. Nor does he differentiate between reflection and its outcomes in the encounter with an event or situation and reflection as the reprocessing of events and situations that have emerged from that event or situation.

Despite the lack of information on reflection as such, reflection figures as a key element in Kolb's cycle as in other studies dealing with experiential learning. Drawing on studies of the experiences of adult educators and counsellors, for example, Boyd and Fales (1983) see reflective learning as the 'key element in learning from experience' on the grounds that reflection represents 'the core difference between whether a person repeats the same experience several times [...] or learns from experience in such a way that he or she is cognitively changed or affectively changed' (p. 96). This leads us to believe that they regard reflection as more intimately connected with the phase of re-processing experience which bears new knowledge. Boyd and Fales's conceptualisation of reflection further accounts for a moment of 'possible transformation': this is the stage that follows the outcome of reflection, i.e. the resolution of the initial discomfort which engendered the reflective process.

Other works emanating from the experiential-learning domain report the view that reflection is a mental and teleological operation, that is to say, it takes place inside the individual's head when he experiences a problematic situation which he tries to understand and resolve. As it was mentioned earlier in this chapter, this is the perspective adopted in the work by Dewey (1933) as it is in Schön (1983), Adler (1991), Cutler et al. (1989; in Hatton and Smith, 1994), etc. In

accordance with Dewey's perspective, Atkins and Murphy (1993) identify 'uncomfortable feelings' at the source of reflection (p. 1192), and Boyd and Fales (1983), mentioned above, refer to 'inner discomfort' (p. 98). While Boud et al. (1985) agree with this perspective, they prefer to neutralise the negative connotation of the word 'problem' and indicate it as a 'deliberate' mental operation (p. 33). The neutralisation of the term problem accords with an observation of the role of group discussions or reflective journals: while these methods stimulate reflection based on practical events, often their end is more exploratory than deliberately directed towards the solution of practical problems. Boud et al.'s (1985) perspective of learning, like Boyd and Fales' perspective, also assigns a crucial role to reflection that acts upon already processed experience (on the relation of experience with reflection see also Boud and Walker, 1990).

However contradictory the characterisation of experience in the experiential-learning literature, mentioned earlier, it remains the source of learning on which the learner draws. The learner's role, though, is not uncomplicated either. Indeed, another aspect of the discussion on reflection concerns the role of the learner in the construction of experience. Eisner (1991), for example, calls into play the notion of the active role of the learner in selecting the very perceptions deriving from experience: 'getting in touch [*with reality/forming experience*] is itself an act of discrimination, a fine-grained, sensitively nuanced selective process in which the mind is fully engaged [...] *I believe* [...] *that the eye is a part of the mind*' (p. 5; my emphasis). His suggestion is that guidance may be offered to learners as to a way of assisting them to make sense of the experience. The same suggestion is made by Usher (1985) who thinks learners should be helped to learn how to reflect, that is to say, in selecting features of experiences 'outside' and aspects of their knowing and beliefs 'inside' their heads (pp. 63-68). The view of perception as a selective cognitive activity places considerable emphasis on the role of the learner in the learning process. This view harmonises with later work by Boud and Walker (1993) where their 1985 model of reflection was revised to accommodate a participatory, active role of the learner in constructing his experience; in this perspective the learner chooses to

notice and attend to some features of experience instead of others.

An account of reflection in the literature should necessarily refer to the role played by emotions and feelings. Boud et al. (1985) considered that Dewey had neglected the role of emotions in his study while they regard emotions as a central component of the reflective process and include them in their description of reflection, which corresponds to 'those intellectual and *affective* activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations' (p. 19; my emphasis). Boud at al. are interested in the role that emotions play in facilitating or blocking reflection since strong feelings may influence the process of reflection (for example, when writing a reflective journal) more strongly than other kinds of influence and perhaps facilitate or hinder the process of reflection.

The model they provide for representing reflection consists of three interrelated steps, the second of which makes explicit reference to consideration of the learner's emotional state. According to this model, first, the learner returns to the experience (for example, recounting it to others) and recaptures the learning event as vividly as possible; second, the learner attends to underlying feelings about the experience, positive or negative as they may be. The third step is seen as central to the process of reflection and also of learning: in this phase the learner stands back, re-examines and re-evaluates his old experience from the perspective of his current position and knowledge, integrates the insights gained into his conceptual framework and formulates a new view in light of both. As the writers propose, this stage consists in the cognitive operations of 'association' of new data to the old; 'integration' of ideas and knowledge, 'evaluation' of the outcomes of these operations and, finally, '*appropriation, that is, making knowledge one's own*' (pp. 67-70; my emphasis). The description of this last stage of reflection leads to associations with a constructivist view of experiential learning that the authors acknowledge and about which more is said in 2.2.5. Also importantly, we encounter here the idea that learning can be regarded as an act of appropriation of knowledge which is intimately connected with reflection. To this concept I return also in 2.2.5.

### 2.2.3 Reflection in self-development

Going back to experience, revisiting it in terms of feelings and thoughts in order to learn from it is a central concern not only in formal educational settings but also in other domains. Reflection is carried out, for example, in a desire to achieve self-development in psychotherapy or personal growth as part of one's professional development. As regards counselling, a major variable in describing the relation between the counsellor and the client is certainly the philosophy or the approach adopted by the practitioner. In very broad terms it may be described as oscillating between directive approaches, inspired by Freudian psychology, which emphasise the role of expert guidance of the subject, and non-directive approaches which follow Carl Rogers' (1961) psychology and which tend to empower the client on the grounds that he is capable of healing and improving his situation. Usually, an approach along these two extremes is chosen. Simplifying the issue, it may be said that the guidance of the process of reflection tends to vary in relation to the relevant philosophy or approach adopted in psychotherapy.

Of course, reflection may be conducted systematically in a situation where healing is not the purpose, but for personal growth. Personal growth is ultimately the purpose of all learning, in virtually any domain. Eraut's (1994) research on personal development shows the affinity between growth and learning. He makes a distinction between different kinds of personal knowledge and explains the role these play in the process of personal development. In this conceptual framework 'personal knowledge' consists in impressions and feelings a person derives from experience and may not be registered at a conscious level; 'self-knowledge' is the term assigned to self-awareness and to awareness of one's knowledge, skills and limitations. Both forms of knowledge contribute to self-development and are important elements of what Eraut terms 'control knowledge'. Although this research originates in consideration of personal development in professional contexts, its application may encompass many educational settings. Enlightening in this respect are the elements included in the characterisation of control knowledge as

> self-knowledge about one's strengths and weaknesses, the gap between what one says and one does and what one knows and does not know; self-management in such matters as the use of time, prioritisation and delegation; self-development in its broadest sense including knowing how to learn and control one's own learning; the ability to reflect and self-evaluate, that is to provide oneself with feedback; and generalised intellectual skills like strategic thinking and policy analysis, which involve the organisation of one's own knowledge and thinking. (pp. 16-17)

The notion that is implied in this description is one of empowerment and responsibility, and the ability to direct one's own personal development (and study process) effectively starting from an acknowledgment of oneself and an acceptance of one's own characteristics as a learner. All this starts with an exercise of introspection in order to achieve self-awareness. To this as a springboard for developing 'control knowledge' I turn in the next section.

### 2.2.4 Development of awareness

The literature reports several techniques or manners to develop self-awareness: Candy et al. (1985) suggest the use of the reading recorder; Harri-Augustein and Thomas (1991) propose using 'learning conversations' as a way to reflect and become aware of one's own current beliefs, feelings and state of mind, while Taylor and White (2000) report the experience of using group work in social workers' education also as a means to enhance self-awareness. The use of reflective journals for this purpose, however, is much more widespread.

As signalled by Eraut's study, it would also appear that the concept of self-awareness is not exhausted by the notion of being conscious of one's own conceptions, beliefs and experiences; it demands an attitude that calls those conceptions and beliefs into question in order to achieve self-development. Candy et al.'s (1985) stance provides a more detailed picture of what is implied by the notion:

> If people are aware of what they are presently doing and can be encouraged to reflect on it and to consider alternatives, they are in an excellent position to change and try out new ways of behaving [...]. If people's awareness of what is happening to them can be enlightened, and if they can internally examine life events, then they can make more of each experience. This is equally true of entering a new job, relating to a new marriage partner [... or] making contributions to a postgraduate seminar. (p. 103)

Besides extending the relevance of self-awareness to contexts other than educational and professional development settings, this quotation implies that attaining self-awareness does not automatically turn into self-improvement and that it is necessary to build on awareness in order

to 'make more of each experience'. In order to do that one has to take awareness a step further. An active stance in this respect was taken by Progoff's (1975) 'intensive journal' method. Progoff's experience is based on the use of reflective journals and workshops as a means to develop or restore, among other things, personal confidence in unemployed people. He found that journal writing gave his participants a clearer sense of their own strengths and skills and a concrete object to reflect on:

> [*The journal*] systematically evokes and strengthens the inner capacities of persons [...]. It establishes a person's sense of his own being by enriching his inner life with new experiences of a creative and spiritual quality. Since these experiences happen to him and are recorded by him in his Intensive Journal while they are actually taking place each person accumulates a tangible and factual validation of his personal growth as it is in process. (p. 11)

In Progoff's experience, journal writing and workshops move his subjects beyond self-awareness (Eraut's self-knowledge) and lead them towards personal growth. Another notion that is implied by this description is that reflection helps personal improvement through systematic observation of oneself from a 'distance'; in this case the diary provides a tangible representation of oneself upon which the person can reflect and which she can assess; also interesting is the personal and social dimension of the reflective process as a whole which journals have the potential of recording (this is what I call the *broad* dimension of journals. For a characterisation of the diary study see 5.3.1). The act of writing is itself an awareness-raising tool. Calderhead and James (1992) claim that journal writing helps students to identify those specific issues and situations that raise one's anxiety and to cope with those issues better. Also dealing with writing, Walker's (1985) study stresses the importance of the dualistic nature of reflection and contends that creative interaction is the basis for growth from the experience:

> The creative interaction between the person and the person's self-development helps incorporate new realities into that self-development. It can prevent the situation arising where new knowledge lies on top of old knowledge without integration taking place. Creative interaction with one's own development helps to ensure that new knowledge is incorporated in, and integrated with, existing knowledge. (p. 55)

Writing allows a fruitful separation between experience and personal interpretations and favours growth from the experience itself. Providing students with suitable questions is another way to prompt self-development and growth. Working with student nurses, Johns's (1994) research provides useful insights into the transition towards self-development. He developed a set of

questions to guide his students' reflection. Questions are aimed at understanding the experience or incident considered; exploring the intentions and reasons behind the students' actions; considering the impact of internal and external factors and knowledge in influencing the decision making; assessing one's performance and evaluating learning outcomes (pp. 71-75). Morrison's (1996) study similarly revolves around the use of structured questions and journals but his approach has the merit of adding consideration to the conditions that shape the reflective activity in a metacognitive perspective. Working in the field of teacher professional development he uses a combination of structured journals and discussions of journal contents with a named personal tutor. Teachers are thus led to reflect on professional experiences and to note the interaction between personal and professional development; also, they are encouraged to step back from their own learning process and to adopt a metacognitive stance (e.g. 'Have you seen your studies becoming easier, more difficult, much the same, and why is this?'; p. 318). Morrison reports that this method was satisfactory in that it led teachers to explore thinking they may not otherwise have done.

The implication that emerges from these studies and in the literature on reflection is that metacognition is a higher form of self-inquiry and a better way of achieving personal growth in that it can push the reflective process forward. With reference to the outcome of a perspective on reflection that makes use of a metacognitive stance, Mezirow (1990) speaks of 'perspective transformation'. This transformation corresponds to the process through which people become as follows:

> critically aware of how and why [*their*] presuppositions have come to restrain the way [*they*] perceive, understand and feel about [*their*] world, of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating and integrative perspective and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (p. 12)

Being critical of one's own framework or perspective of thinking triggers a reflective process that runs deeper, challenges the foundations of one's own thoughts and enables a constructive transformation, be it growth, learning or self-development. Barnett (1997), focusing his research on trainee teachers, makes the point that the development of an aware and critical stance needs to be a priority in higher education:

> What the modern world requires of higher education [*is*] to provide the basis of an emancipatory process in which students, by means of their own powers of self-reflection through their lifespan, come increasingly into themselves, maintaining their critical stance from the world around them while acting purposively in it [...]. Reflection, then is on the agenda of higher education in expanded form. (p. 88)

We can see why reflection is on the agenda of not just higher but also all other levels of education: it is connected with self-development and with successful learning.

The literature explored up to this point thus agrees in assigning reflection a central role in the development of a person. As shown in this section, awareness-raising methods emphasise the importance of a metacognitive reflective attitude in achieving a result, a 'change' or 'transformation', in the person. The purpose of the next section is to locate reflection within modern approaches to the learning process and to relate this notion of 'change' to the field of learning.

### 2.2.5 The constructivist approach: a learner-centred view of learning

Recent developments in L2 pedagogy have increasingly focused on learner-centred approaches which, in turn, have emerged from changed understandings of the nature of learning and, in particular, from a 'constructivist' theory of learning. In broad terms, constructivism is based on the belief that learners construct knowledge for themselves. The constructivist movement is built in part on Vygotsky's theories of cognition and development (1978, on which more in 2.3.2), usually associated with the social branch of constructivism, Dewey (1933, referred to above) and Piaget (1971); the formalisation of constructivist theory is attributed, in particular, to Piaget. Piaget's view of the learning process contended that through processes of *assimilation* and *accommodation*, individuals construct new knowledge from their experiences: when individuals assimilate, they incorporate the new experience into an already existing framework without changing that framework; accommodation, on the other hand, is the process of reframing one's mental representation of the external world to fit new experiences. From this perspective, students are the key initiators and architects of their own learning and knowledge-making, rather than (to use educationalist Paulo Freire's often-quoted metaphor) 'empty

vessels' who receive the transmission of knowledge from expert teachers (e.g. Hardcastle and Powers, 2004: 414).

Recent developments in educational settings have also been influenced by research by psychologists George Kelly and Carl Rogers, whose philosophies place the learner/person centre-stage. American psychologist Kelly proposed the 'theory of personal constructs' to represent the construed nature of men's reality: people develop constructs as internal ideas of reality in order to understand the world around them. This view also highlights the composite and constantly changing nature of each individual's understanding and view of the world and of the way this view undergoes constant alteration: 'The universe', Kelly wrote, 'is open to piecemeal interpretation. Different men construe it in different ways [...]. Man comes to understand his world through an infinite series of successive approximations' (Kelly [1963], quoted in Little, 1991: 17). On this view, the learning process is deeply influenced by the individual's 'system of constructs' and 'attitude towards learning' and, as Little (1991) explains: 'any learning task requires the learner to assimilate new knowledge to his current system of constructs' (p. 19). Both in psychotherapy and in teaching, Kelly argued the importance of making the patient or learner aware of their personal constructs so that they would take charge of their healing or learning process (Little, ibid.).

This 'constructivist' perspective is *learner-centred* in that it allows for an active role of the learner in developing her knowledge and as the determinant of what she learns. A corollary of this perspective is that the teacher's role is more appropriately regarded as that of facilitator of the learning process, which ultimately, however, rests on the learner. An important contribution was given to this view by the work of psychologist Carl Rogers whose name is associated with 'client-centred' (and, later, 'person-centred') and non-directive therapy and, indeed, with student-centeredness in education. Rogers began exploring his student-centred approach in his psychology research; as Barrett-Lennard (1998) reminds us, in his *Client-Centred Therapy* (1951) Rogers offered some general principles of his thought on learning and education (his research in person-centred education and facilitation was more extensively presented in a

dedicated work with the telling title *Freedom to Learn*, 1969). He expressed his conviction that teaching is really facilitation and that educators must allow the learner to relax in order to learn and feel free from any form of threat. A statement that captures the essence of his thought in Rogers' (1951) book and the shift from a directive to a non-directive approach to therapy and education is the following: 'We cannot teach another person directly; we can only facilitate his learning' (quoted in Barrett-Lennard, 1988: 184).

Both Rogers' and Kelly's perspectives are based on the conviction that self-improvement both in deficit, so to speak, situations (in counselling or therapy) and non-deficit situations (such as self-improvement and learning) arise from recognition of the person's own main role in the construction of his reality. This is where the notion of responsibility and the notion of empowerment of the learner, mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, are called into play in educational contexts and where the role of reflection becomes essential in bringing learners to fully realise what their role is.

To clarify this role further, it is useful to introduce the concept that, in a constructivist view, what we learn is influenced by what we know. Mezirow (1990) explains this process in detail:

> Learning may be defined as the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action. What we perceive and fail to perceive, and what we think and fail to think are powerfully influenced by habits of expectations that constitute our *frame of reference*, that is, a set of assumptions that structure the way we interpret our experiences. (p. 43; my emphasis)

The perception of the learner's existing knowledge that is implied in this context, is not a state, rather it is a dynamic and changeable network of conceptions, beliefs, feelings etc. and it is what, in a constructivist view, shapes any subsequent learning. In constructivist terms this is called the individual's 'cognitive network' and it is believed to determine how new learning is acquired (e.g. Ausubel and Robinson, 1969; West and Pines, 1985).

Extending the network metaphor, the process of learning may be described as that of mutual accommodation of new data and of the cognitive structure of the learner: the cognitive structure may change to fit the new idea or the new idea is modified to fit into the cognitive structure.

Learning thus produces a qualitative change in the learner not a quantitative one (Marton and Ramsden, 1988). Indeed, the view that learning is not a process of accumulation finds support in Little (1991) who, in contrast with this assumption in the 'popular imagination', writes: 'the learning process resembles more a process where each increment must be accommodated to what the learner already knows' (p. 20). This is why it may not always be smooth, Little warns, 'especially when major adjustments are required' (ibid.). Failing to relate new knowledge to one's cognitive network results in memorisation of isolated elements while *learning* contemplates an on-going process of cooperation, confrontation, compromise and settlement between old and new knowledge in a virtually infinite process. Learning, in Nicol and Pilling's (2000) description, sounds more like an appropriation of knowledge:

> Learning through memorisation and [...] reproduction does not result in knowledge that can be used to reason and to solve problems in new contexts. For this [...] to happen, students must learn by interacting with and *transforming received information so as to own it and make it personally meaningful*. They do this by actively constructing or reconstructing information input – i.e. modifying, revising, transforming, connecting, extending it, relating it to what they already know – in an effort to make sense of it. (p. 14; my emphasis)

It is not coincidental that Little (2001) also conveys a sense of appropriation of knowledge as a result of autonomous learning and refers to a situation wherein that which learners learn becomes 'a fully integrated part of what they are' (p. 46). Nicol and Pilling's words also give a measure of the multitude of operations that are requested of learners in the process of learning *meaningfully*. Within such a dynamic process the learner's place is centre-stage since she orchestrates what new knowledge will filter through and what not. And what goes through undergoes a process of transformation so that it conforms to the cognitive structure or vice versa. The selectivity of knowledge harmonises with Eisner's (1991) contention that a person actively influences how she perceives the world around her, starting from sensory perceptions. His research stresses the active role of the learner in the process of making meanings: 'I came to believe', he says, 'that humans do not simply *have* experience; they have a hand in its creation, and the quality of their creation depends upon the ways they employ their minds' (p. 5; my emphasis). If a learner is able to select information for himself, he will make sure that some ideas will not 'reach' him. This is where, according to Mezirow's (1990) study of perspective

transformation (discussed above), the educational process overlaps with personal development and growth and where educational intervention is crucial. Mezirow sees adult learners (whom his study chiefly concerns) as people trapped in their self-imposed restrictive view of the world and this, in his view, is what causes their inability to develop as people. The task of adult education would therefore become a kind of liberation with social emancipatory connotations, as was mentioned earlier in the chapter. Getting to know one's cognitive structure and realising the nature of one's frame of reference may lead to questioning and, in time, allow new knowledge to filter through. Reflection may thus produce such a change.

To sum up section 2.2, the overview of the literature has offered a variety of interpretations of reflection and has called into play a number of connected domains such as learning, personal development and growth. Overall, the literature on reflection supports the commonly held assumptions that reflection and cognition bear a strong affinity and that reflection is integral to learning. As was shown earlier in the chapter several writers have introduced a distinction of reflective levels, based on an increasing degree of sophistication of the cognitive processes involved, and which are hierarchically arranged from the superficial to the deep. Many also view levels as stages and suggest that progression from the low to the advanced can be facilitated and indicate appropriate awareness-raising techniques, such as the use of learning journals in Progoff's study (see above). The characterisation supplied of the deeper level of reflection is quite consistent across the studies and calls into play the role of metacognition, that is to say, the ability to recognise the existence and the workings of our own states and cognitive processes in order to direct them. Mention of constructivist theories in this section also emphasised the role that reflection plays in the process of mutual adaptation of old and new knowledge, a process of 'appropriation' (the same term was employed, non-coincidentally, to characterise the authentication of texts in 1.3). While the variety of terms to indicate the outcomes of this high level of reflection is diverse (emancipation, personal development, transformation, growth etc.), all refer to a progression the person makes in terms of his cognitive ability as a result of more sophisticated reflection.

## 2.3 Reflection and learning

### 2.3.1 Deep and surface reflection and learning

Learning too pertains to mind development (see 2.2.3) and it too can be deep or superficial. As section 2.2.5 has shown, the characterisation of learning emanating from constructivist theories makes a distinction between memorisation of unconnected bits of information and learning involving an adjustment of one's cognitive structure (what Mezirow [1990] called *transformative* learning) which becomes a person's property (recall the *appropriation* of knowledge in Nicol and Pilling, 2000). This distinction is well represented in the literature. Entwistle (1996) gives an overview of the studies that have focused on a distinction between learners' 'surface-' and 'deep-' level approaches to learning. In these studies learners were questioned as to how they would approach learning tasks such as reading an article; the results showed that learners were either focusing on the *whole*, e.g. understanding the meaning of the article, questioning the author's arguments, etc. (they would adopt a 'holist' approach, in Pask's [1976] terms) or for *elements* of the whole, such as memorising those parts of the article they considered important in view of an assessment (what Pask terms the 'serialist' approach and Svensson [1984] calls 'atomistic'). While deep learning involves relating new ideas to previous knowledge, evaluating arguments critically and becoming interested in the course content, in a word: in 'transformation', surface knowledge means memorising unconnected pieces of information without reflecting on the process or the purpose of the studying process (Entwistle, 1996). 'Deep' (Entwistle, 1996: 98), 'meaningful' (Nicol and Pilling, 2000: 14) or 'emancipatory' (Mezirow, 1991: 87) learning all require adjustments to one's 'frame of reference' (recall Mezirow's quotation in 2.2.5), or cognitive network, in order to accommodate new knowledge. It is, as it was said, a process of transformation, or reorganisation of one's personal constructs (in Kelly's terms). The learner's openness to change will favour this process; conversely, he may not allow it.

It is not coincidental that Rogers turned his attention to a notion of 'openness' in describing a

characteristic that would facilitate the 'good life' of an individual in psychological terms. Rogers (1961) listed 'growing openness to experience' among the characteristics of the 'fully functioning person', that is to say, of an individual who aims to fulfil their full potential since, as Rogers had indicated in an earlier (1951) work, the individual ('organism') 'has one basic tendency and striving and that is to actualise, maintain and enhance the experiencing organism' (p. 55). Deep learning, too, is a route to self-development and requires openness of the individual's cognitive structure to new knowledge if it is to be successful and if it has to lead to self-enhancement. Self-development and learning necessarily begin with the individual: 'learners', Rogers (1961) recommended, 'should be able to play a role in determining their own behaviour and so feel *responsible* for their own behaviour' (p. 87; my emphasis).

Responsibility figures in the literature as one of the most salient characteristics of the autonomous learner (e.g. Boud, 1988; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; 2001; Dam, 1995; see 2.1.1) and, as Little (2001), points out: 'Learners take their first step towards autonomy when they accept responsibility for their own learning' (p. 50). As it was said at the opening of this chapter, effective learning results from an autonomous learner, that is to say, a learner who has the ability to manage his own learning process efficiently from the planning stage to the evaluation stage. This entails a shift towards a learner-centred, empowering approach to education. Responsibility and reflection are closely associated, in fact, they are interdependent since, as Little (ibid.) explains: 'it is impossible consciously to accept responsibility for anything, and then act on that responsibility, without thinking about what you are doing' (p. 51). Accepting responsibility, however, is no small achievement:

> [the] acceptance of responsibility is not a single act but a gradually developing state of mind; it entails an attitude that generates learning behaviours shaped and guided by reflection. To this extent learner autonomy depends on a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action (Little, ibid.: 46).

The reflective attitude called for in this statement is one that brings about an ability to step back from one's own learning process, be critical about it, and manage it more effectively. The importance of a metacognitive attitude in the learning process is emphasised by von Wright (1992) in the following terms:

> The insights provided by self-reflection can help to integrate information belonging to different cognitive systems and thus mediate transfer [...]. Conscious knowledge of one's intellectual functions creates conditions for a wide application of specific competences and learned rules. In the terminology of cognitive science, self-reflection provides declarative access to procedural knowledge [...]. *Self-reflection is thus at the root of the notion of voluntary choice. It enables the person to see himself or herself as an actor with different alternatives. One cannot gain a measure of control over one's own thinking while one remains unaware of it.* (pp. 61-62; my emphasis)

The metacognitive stance described in von Wright enables the learner to take a critical overview and enhance understanding and knowledge of the situation or the self. As will be discussed in 2.3.3, deep learning involves a deep reflective activity. First, however, I will turn to the 'dialectic unity' (mentioned in 2.1.2) of language and thought.

### 2.3.2 The role of language

The emphasis on detachment from the self should not favour a view of cognition and learning as an exclusively intramental activity. Conversely, recent developments in theories of cognition and learning regard these activities as having both a social and an individual dimension (Little, 2001: 47-50). The passage of learning from the interactive plane to the intrapsychological plane emanates from the well-known theory of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. The interest of his approach also lies in the fact that he accounts for the role of language within this overall process of development and is thus relevant to language-learning educational settings as in this thesis. Vygotsky's thought is summarised in this section.

Learning and development are closely connected in the Vygotskian view and have a social and a mental dimension. This is apparent in Vygotsky's explanation of how children develop mental skills:

> Any function in the child's development appears twice or on two planes, first it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane, first it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. (1981: 163)

The Vygotskian 'zone of proximal development' arises out of the necessity to conceptualise an intermediate ('proximal') area between the absence of a skill and the mastering of the skill in the child. In this intermediate phase of development, the child succeeds in performing an activity thanks to the assistance of another human being, 'a more capable peer', in Vygotsky's

phrase, usually a parent or a teacher (p. 86). This intermediate area of learning therefore is located between a prior stage of interaction with another individual and a subsequent stage of independence of a tutor.

The novelty of this idea of learning by means of assistance provided by another individual consists in the role that language plays in it. In the Vygotskian perspective of human development, language permeates, supports and integrates every single stage of the process just described, and not merely as a rather external tool for communication but as an irreplaceable component and inherent in the very nature of that process. In so doing it merges with reflection and the capacity for detachment in a way that is described below.

In Vygotsky's view, language passes through and supports the actualisation of each of the three stages of the learning process. For each of the three stages of learning he identifies a specific kind of language or 'speech': 'social speech', 'private' (or 'egocentric') speech and 'inner speech'. A child is first 'talked through', or verbally accompanied, in carrying out a challenging task, by a more expert human being (this coincides with 'social speech'). Later, when the child is on her own, she can conduct a similar dialogue, but this time with herself in order to guide and control her action. This kind of language is not directed towards a listener, but to the speaker herself (the Vygotskian 'private speech') and has the function of assisting the child in her own attempt at performing the same task as before. Finally, when the gap between the lack of a skill and the child's accomplishment of a skill is filled in, the child can perform the task independently of her tutor; language now cohabits with thought, that is to say, it leaves any external manifestations and becomes internal to the child's mind (recall Little's [2000] description of inner speech as 'thought clothed in language' in 2.1.2). The mastering of new skills allows the creation of a new zone where other skills can be acquired and the process can continue in an expanding manner. Vygotsky's view of development and learning is symbiotic with a thorough use of language. This view has implications for the use of the TL in the language-learning domain. An appropriate use of the TL is advocated by Little (2001), who calls for the use of the TL as 'the dominant medium of communication in the classroom':

> This is much more than a matter of 'practising' the target language in role plays and other 'communicative' learning tasks; it means using the target language as the channel through which teaching and learning takes place – including the reflective processes of planning, monitoring and evaluation. (p. 46)

Learning diaries written in the TL have the advantage of integrating the use of language with the reflective process. The argument that learning diaries support reflection is further expanded in chapters 5 and 6. The following section returns to the subject of learning in any domain.

### 2.3.3 Deepening learning through reflection

Learning can proceed from the elaboration of the materials available for learning and also from the reprocessing of what was previously learned. In the latter case reflection is more directly linked with the creation of new meanings, and a change in one's cognitive structure, thus with what was termed 'deep' learning. This section expands on the link between deep learning and deep reflection.

The elaboration of knowledge through a complex mapping of relations and links with previous knowledge, (including the accommodation that it demands to become integrated into one's cognitive structure), requires reflection. This is the passage when reflection and learning are most closely associated with each other. It is also when the word *reflection* best matches its meaning of reiteration, signalled by the prefix *re-*, and the notion of 'bending' or *flexing* back over one's experience in order to 'grow' out of it. Operations such as relating previous and new knowledge, integrating meanings, evaluating thoughts critically in the light of new information, etc. are all accompanied by a re-*flective* activity. In turn, reflection is facilitated by an external representation of itself (since it may offer insights into the workings of the mind) through oral expression or in a written form such as in learner diaries.

The reprocessing of experience in order to derive new meanings from it is believed to deepen the level of learning (Moon, 1999) and a tangible representation of experience, such as the learning journal, may assist this process and, even, influence it (an additional slant to this notion is that, according to Eisner [1991], the representation we choose of the experience may

influence the way we construct meaning from it; see also Ramsden, 1992). Going over a text, for example, may result in further processing of what is already acquired in the light of new data, knowledge or information, and perhaps require further accommodation of the cognitive structure and thus further learning. The educational implication of this concept is that under appropriate guidance and through the fostering of a reflective attitude (for example, through journal writing) learners will reach higher stages of learning.

Learning representations are certainly helpful, if not indispensable, in providing an instrument to verify what level, or depth, of learning has been reached. An attempt at measuring the learning stage complexity, for example, is given by Biggs and Collis' (1982) taxonomy of 'structure of learning outcomes' where five distinct structures of learning are identified in written student samples; these levels are labelled as: 'pre-structural'; 'unistructural'; 'multistructural'; 'relational' and 'extended abstract' (pp. 103-105). It is notable that the intervention of reflective operations, such as the structuring and relating of ideas and concepts into a coherent whole, signals the passage from lower (pre-, uni- and multistructural levels) to higher structures of learning (relational and extended abstract). Hounsell's (1997) work on levels of learning is based on student essays: in a way similar to Biggs' and Collis' (1982) study, Hounsell sees the most sophisticated approach to essay writing as one involving an integration of new and old knowledge and where the study process itself is regarded as an object of reflection. In these cases, too, reflection elevates, that is, 'deepens', learning.

### 2.3.4 Variables that affect learning depth

A review of the literature brings to the fore the existence of several variables in relation to deep versus superficial approaches to learning. While *in time* learners can become more skilled at making knowledge meaningful to themselves through an appropriate assimilation and accommodation process, maturity is not always facilitating reflection and preconceptions may have an influence on depth of learning. Usher (1985), for instance, found that adult learners may resist the processing of knowledge that requires the contribution of personal experiences

because of the traditional conception of knowledge they possess. Analysing essays by adult learners Usher found that these texts were depersonalised and abstract and ultimately influenced by the concept of knowledge as reproductive and polarised between right and wrong.

Nevertheless, although age will not automatically bring *an increased capacity for learning*, the development of deep reflective capacities happens in time and some studies suggest that these capacities may not be entirely developed in students who are close to their twenties (King and Kitchener, 1994; see also stages of reflection in Belenky et al., 1986), which more strongly calls for the integration of reflection-inducing activities into the school curriculum.

Also, there is a suggestion that several variables may cause the use of deep or superficial approaches to learning, for example, the situation and the task in question. The purpose of the study may well affect the deployment of either approach. This is what Entwistle (1996) suggested in his study on learning approaches: he identified a 'deep' and a 'surface' approach to learning, and a third category represented by a 'strategic' approach to learning. The strategic learner is described as one who adjusts his learning to the requirements of an assessment in order to get the highest possible grade. This would imply that a learner has already managed to deepen his learning approach although at times he chooses to deploy a superficial one in response to the perceived demands of learning in relation to his ability and according to the assessment at hand. Also, it would imply that there is the possibility of movement between deep and surface approaches to learning. It seems, however, that learners tend to develop quite consistent patterns of study in one or the other direction (Entwistle, 1996).

A further slant on this perspective is given by the study by Biggs and Collis (1982). They suggest that a new and unfamiliar task will require that a learner goes through the various levels in their taxonomy, i.e. from the pre-structural to the extended abstract structure of learning, and this would happen in learners independently of their learning skill but according to the familiarity with the area of learning in question: when confronted with a task in an unknown area of knowledge a learner tends to start with a pre-structural approach. The more skilled

learners, however, tend to progress at a higher speed through the different learning levels (pp. 110-115).

Deep learning may be accompanied by strong emotional reaction as the study by Entwistle and Entwistle (1997) notes. The writers report comments made by students who have completed their revision for finals. Those learners who took a deep approach to learning referred to their learning experience in both cognitive and emotive terms. In reaching deep understanding, in particular, the learners' emotional response was quite strong: students described a sense of 'things clicking into place or locking into a pattern' (p. 147). The learners also reported that they had acquired a provisional sense of 'wholeness' of understanding but that they could envisage the possibility of further developing that understanding (p. 148). Linking these findings with what was said earlier on the role of reflection, the second stage envisaged by students may correspond to the stage of accommodation of new knowledge which brings about transformation.

## 2.4 Summary of chapter 2

The principles of responsibility, reflection and appropriate target-language use, mentioned at the opening of this chapter, are key characteristics of an autonomous learner, a learner who takes control of his own learning and manages it successfully (Little, 2001). This chapter has explored the interdependence of each element of this triad and stressed the importance of using the language for metacognitive activity (2.1). It has included an overview of reflection in the literature (2.2) and has then focused on its role in learning (2.3).

The literature surveyed in this chapter has shown that reflection produces knowledge and therefore betters the person. It is a useful concept in virtually any domain where the intellectual improvement of the person is actively sought and, of course, this includes the domain of education. Reflection varies in sophistication or depth according to the complexity of the cognitive processes involved and it was found that it reaches its highest level when it is capable of assuming a metacognitive stance on experience, that is to say, when it is capable of

acknowledging its own workings (2.2.1). Understandably, the level of reflection and the level of learning are in a proportionate relation.

Although the literature emanating from experiential learning does not attend to the manner in which reflection converts experience into knowledge and learning, there is an implication that learning derives from a further reprocessing of experience or situation rather than in a first encounter with it (2.2.2). The notion of reflection adopted from here onwards builds on this understanding of the notion and one that mirrors its etymon most faithfully: that is to say, a notion of mentally going back to experience (namely, *re-flecting*) in order to derive new insights and new knowledge from it.

When applied to a psychological context, reflection serves the purpose of facilitating healing in deficit situations or personal development and growth in non-deficit situations (2.2.3). The knowledge that is produced in these contexts is *self*-knowledge and ultimately aims at empowering a person through the development of self-awareness and the attainment of 'control knowledge'. As was observed in other contexts, control knowledge is achieved through metacognitive reflection, which also pertains to high-level reflective skills. A reading recorder, group work, appropriate questioning and, especially, personal learning journals are the awareness-raising methods mentioned in this chapter (2.2.4).

In the educational domain, the constructivist approach reveals that learning is facilitated by self-awareness and awareness of one's own learning process. In this respect reflection that aims at developing such awareness is key in promoting learning. On the constructivist perspective a successful learner is one who recognises his own role in the construction of knowledge thus facilitating it (2.2.5).

The overview of the literature reveals that reflection is tightly integrated with learning as it is with awareness, self-development, growth and empowerment and even emancipation. The outcome of a profound reflective activity is expressed in the literature reviewed in terms of 'change', 'transformation' and even 'emancipation'. The deeper the reflective activity the more

profound the change, i.e. the learning, that it produces: such transformation involves an adjustment of the cognitive network so that new knowledge is embedded into it and becomes a person's property or, better, a part of who they are. In short, this is a description of successful ('deep') learning as appropriation of knowledge.

Section 2.3 was more specifically concerned with an exploration of the relationship between learning and reflection: it stressed the relation, mentioned at the opening of the chapter, between responsibility, reflection and target-language use. Building on considerations made in 2.2, an understanding of the notion of deep learning linked it with the notion of responsibility through mention of Rogers' notion of openness (2.3.1). Mention of Vygotskian theory drew language into the picture of learning and of the development of a person, which has implications for L2 learning contexts such as the one this thesis is concerned with (2.3.2). The chapter then returned to the belief expressed earlier that reflection produces 'deep' learning when it acts upon already processed materials (2.3.3). The last section summarised some of the variables that may affect the production of deep or superficial knowledge as they may become useful in the analysis of journals later in this thesis (2.3.4).

## 2.5 Conclusion to chapters 1 and 2

In total, chapter 1 closed on the contention that the dynamic process of authentication of a text is really an act of 'appropriation' that calls into play the active role of the learner. At a closer look, the learning act of authentication showed to be akin to the notion of learner autonomy and to entail an active, responsible attitude in the learner in managing his learning, going back to it regularly and using the TL as both an interactive and intramental tool. What emerged from this chapter is that the notion of reflection promotes learner autonomy and favours what was called the process of 'appropriation' of learning, i.e. the transformation of new knowledge so that it suits the individual's cognitive structure and becomes part of him. Applied to this context this awareness implies that learning from authentic texts may be regarded as an act of active, self-directed appropriation of their high communicative and cultural charge, an appropriation which

is strongly favoured by a regular reflective activity as that promoted by learning diaries.

In the following two chapters (3 and 4) I turn to the exploration of the characteristics of one genre of authentic texts, i.e. print advertisements, and propose this exploration as a form of such appropriation-authentication, which has the added advantage of familiarising the learner with persuasive strategies in advertising communication and developing the learner critical attitude.

# Chapter 3. Advertising genre characteristics

*Advertising is regarded as a peripheral creation [...].*
*This is odd, because a stranger to our society (the proverbial Martian anthropologist?)*
*would probably be struck by the prominence and quantity of advertising [...].*
*Advertising is everywhere and nowhere.*
Cook, 2001

## 3.0 Introduction

While at a deeper level authentication depends on the development of learner autonomy, suitable pedagogical activities can of course be devised to promote learning from authentic texts. A useful set of guidelines for what she describes as 'task authenticity' is given in Mishan (2005: 70-83). She claims that the core governing principle is that tasks should be designed respecting the text original 'communicative purpose' (she identifies seven main communicative purposes in texts: 'informative', 'persuasive', 'soliciting', 'instructional', 'provocative', 'interactive', 'engaging', p. 79), which implicates a 'response' to this communicative intent with an 'appropriate' activity (for example, 'we rarely answer questions after reading a text', Grellet [1981] points out, 'but we may have to write a letter, use the text to do something [...] compare the information to some previous knowledge', p. 9. Quoted in Mishan 2005: 72). In short, a suitable learning activity should be engendered by the text characteristics and not imposed on it. After all, authentic texts are constructed to communicate and conceived with an interlocutor response in mind. Grellet (1981) captures this core principle as follows:

> An exercise should never be imposed on a text. It is better to allow the text to suggest what exercises are most appropriate to it. In other words, the text should always be the starting point for determining why one would normally read it, how it would be read, how it might relate to other information before thinking of a particular exercise. (p. 10, quoted in Mishan 2005: 75)

This chapter builds on this necessity for a task to be 'text-responsive' (Duff and Maley, 1990: 6) and explores the characteristics of one genre of authentic texts: print advertisements, with the purpose of considering learning activities based on this genre. Also, it provides some basic ideas, concepts and materials for the study of advertising communication. It draws on a number of disciplines but ultimately revolves around the core concept of communication. In fact, advertising is analysed from many standpoints since it is a characteristic of this *genre* (as Cook

[2001] describes it; pp. 9-24) of text to draw on many sources in order to constantly appeal to the audience. This semantic density gives this form of communication a complex and multilayered nature which calls for an in-depth analysis of its components. While it is not possible to cover every aspect of advertising, this chapter provides some groundwork for 'decoding' (borrowing a semiotics term) this tenacious and ubiquitous genre. Indeed, the compound nature of advertising communication lends itself to an operation of 'dismantling' (using a learner's term, see chapter 6), which has an educational outcome for the person who conducts it and may be carried out by native speakers as well as non-native speakers. In a similar spirit, Carpenter (2000, quoted in Fox, 2000) observed that TV advertisements are 'well-crafted messages' that may offer learners the opportunity to confront and resolve an authentic 'dilemma'. She proposed that the analysis of television advertisements has a potential for L2 educators and suggested that the study of advertisements may be conducted following a 'problem-based' methodology (discussed, for example, in Boud et al., 1997).

The analysis of advertisements thus represents an act of 'appropriation' of the text, which I referred to as 'authentication' in chapter 1. Of course, not every aspect of advertising communication is covered in this chapter since this is beyond the scope of this thesis. This chapter, however, provides groundwork for exploring these texts in an educational setting and several strands of analysis that can be further pursued (see List of references at the end of this thesis). For each theoretical perspective some examples are provided here as a practical illustration, while chapter 4 presents some analyses of print advertisements which gather the different approaches and combine them in a comprehensive analysis.

The purpose of creating advertisements is to persuade people, they are 'designed to affect the behaviours of others', according to Wilkins's (1976) explanation of the persuasive intention in his *Notional Syllabuses* (p. 46). A great deal of thought, research, planning and money goes into an advertising campaign with a view to attracting the audience and persuade them to purchase a product, change their opinion, etc. Thus a prominent characteristic of advertising communication is that it seeks to draw people's *attention* through innovation and originality. A

study of advertising texts cannot neglect the central role played by creativity in them and the persuasive effect of these texts. The link with creativity is explored in section 3.1 and it is proposed that learners familiarise themselves with ways to enhance creativity in order to gain a better understanding of the advertisements' workings.

Advertisers spend time and money trying to attract the audience's attention and make advertisements memorable, often exploiting rhetorical figures of language. Cook (2000) highlighted that the 'ludic' quality of advertising language makes it appealing material for language learning (p. 193). Although one assumes that advertising communication is powerful it is also difficult to pin down exactly what is meant by the influence of advertisements. Section 3.2 begins by discussing some criticisms received by advertising communication in the years that followed the Second World War, then illustrates four advertising theories and the persuasive principles behind them. Finally, it discusses how persuasion impacts on three components of advertising communication: a) the message, b) the message source and c) the audience.

Section 3.3 discusses the affinity between advertising and rhetoric and shows the presence of rhetorical figures in advertising copy, i.e. the linguistic part of the advertisement. After a short preamble on the characterisation of classical rhetoric (3.3.1) it is stressed that rhetorical figures are also identified in the advertisements' images: this calls into play Barthes' study on the connotative image (3.3.2) and Durand's (1970) classification of rhetorical figures in advertising images (3.3.4. The syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of the sign are discussed in 3.3.3). Using Durand's scheme section 3.3.5 exemplifies these rhetorical figures using samples of Italian print advertisements.

Unlike in earlier advertisements, images are a fundamental part of today's print advertisements and work with the bodycopy towards the common goal of attracting attention and conveying the commercial message. Section 3.4 considers non-verbal communication devices such as proxemy, body language (gestures, postures, etc.), photography techniques, etc.

Section 3.5 addresses the question of how advertisements carry out communication and discusses the semiotic and the linguistic perspectives in light of Sperber and Wilson's (1995) Relevance Theory. Given the pervasiveness of rhetorical figures in advertisements, the focus is on metaphors and puns and these two figures are exemplified with print advertisements collected from Italian magazines.

Having focused on separate aspects of the advertising message, the conclusion links with the four analyses of print advertisements which are carried out in chapter 4.

## 3.1 Creativity in advertisements

Creativity and advertising are closely related. It is not coincidental that advertising professionals are often referred to as 'creatives', that is to say, those people whose job is to 'create' an adequate idea which translates a well-defined persuasive strategy. The notion of creativity in this context is one geared to a very practical outcome. This contrasts with the traditional view of creativity as one carrying an aura of mysterious inexplicability. A suggestive example of creativity as an almost divine intervention is in Rudyard Kipling's reflections (1937) where he makes mention of a creativity 'Daemon' living in the writer's pen:

> My Daemon was with me in the Jungle Books, Kim, and both Puck books, and good care I took to walk delicately, lest he should withdraw...When your Daemon is in charge, do not think consciously. Drift, wait, and obey. (Kipling, 1937; quoted in Sternberg et al., 2002: 98)

Of course, this view of creativity is very different from the pragmatic and problem-solving understanding of creativity in the advertising industry where it bears an immediate relation with production. Indeed, effective advertising feeds on 'big' creative ideas and advertisers' professional training includes ways to enhance this capacity or skill: a 'big idea', write Moriarty and Robbs (1999), is one that 'breaks through the clutter and registers an impact that touches the target audience's minds and emotions' (p. 25). The process of 'bringing the creative concept to life' is not an easy task, though, but it is also indispensable (ibid.). Advertising legend David Ogilvy warned that 'unless your advertising contains a big idea, it will pass like a ship in the night' (quoted in Moriarty and Robbs, 1999: 24). And yet once the idea is found, there are still

numerous execution details to look at in order to take it from conception to the reality of headlines, body copy, photography, layout, and so forth. That is like saying that advertising creativity is not 'just' creativity for creativity's (or the artist's) sake, but using Bill Bernbach's words, it is a kind of 'disciplined creativity' (in Moriarty and Robbs, 1999: 27).

The function of this disciplined advertising creativity also consists in transforming (and often disguising) a strategy made of objectives, markets, targets and positions into an idea that is simultaneously eye-catching and memorable. When a strategy is converted into an effective creative idea, one might speak of a 'creative leap', in advertiser Otto Kleppner's words. An example of 'creative leap' is the long-running bunny in an advertisement for long-life batteries; another is the 'milk moustache', i.e. the creative leap linking the strategy, which imposed the repositioning of milk from a children's drink to one that adults drink too, to the 'creative concept', i.e. namely, the moustache (Moriarty and Robbs, 1999: 24).

Because ideas are not easily found, strategies have been devised by advertising professionals in order to generate ideas and are often inspired by psychology research. An influential creativity model is the one devised by psychologist Wallas (1926), which consists of four stages. In the 'preparation' stage the person gains knowledge of a problem and starts working at it until he encounters an obstacle. This is followed by a second stage of 'incubation': this corresponds to the period when the would-be problem solver sets his problem aside and occupies himself with something else. The third stage is crucial since it corresponds to a kind of 'illumination', that is to say, a moment when the solution is found as in a sudden insight. The fourth stage corresponds to the 'verification' of the validity of the solution (in Medin and Ross, 1997: 230–235).

Advertising professional Osborn's (1963) three-stage creativity model has resemblances with Wallas' model. Osborn proposed three stages in his Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model: fact-finding, idea-finding and solution-finding. This model has undergone numerous changes and additional stages have been added to the original Osborn's model (see Isaksen and

Treffinger, 1985: 16). As in Wallas, Osborn's model accounts for a preparatory phase of fact finding (later enlarged to include operations such as identifying the problem, gathering information on it, analysing the problem and 'compiling a bank of alternative ideas'), a phase of incubation and one of verification of ideas generated (Isaksen and Treffinger, 1985: 16). As pointed out by Medin and Ross (1997), however, the stage theory provides a 'phenomenology' of creative thinking, but not an account of the cognitive processes underpinning a creative solution, especially in relation to the incubation stage, which still is not clearly defined: 'these stages propose what it 'feels like' to go through creative thought, rather than what one is actually feeling' (p. 495). Despite the lack of a consensual understanding of the cognitive processes entailed by creativity, numerous techniques are proposed to favour it.

### 3.1.1 Favouring creativity

Creativity is a useful skill. While this is obvious in the advertising context, its advantages apply to other professional and non-professional domains ranging from creative writing contexts to less artistic daily problem-solving. Not only is creativity a fundamental component of advertising in the making but also a useful skill in general. Some techniques for enhancing creativity are included in the course described in chapter 5 so that participants gain a sense of the creative effort which is put into these texts. In fact, despite the lack of empirical support to prove the effectiveness of practical techniques to favour creativity, several writers have devoted attention to both developing and writing about ways to promote it 'in practice'. Among the 'pragmatists of creativity' (in Sternberg et al.'s words, 2002: 98–99.) De Bono's work is one of the best known (De Bono, 1970; 1992; 2000). De Bono's (1992) notion of 'lateral thinking' contends that creativity should be detached from the realm of artistic elusiveness:

> There is about creativity a mystique of talent and intangibles. This may be justified in the art world where creativity involves aesthetic sensibility, emotional resonance and a gift for expression. But it is not justified outside that world. More and more creativity is coming to be valued as the essential ingredient in change and in progress. It is coming to be valued above knowledge and above technique since both these are becoming so accessible. In order to be able to use creativity one must rid it of its aura of mystique and regard it as a way of using the mind – a way of handling information. This is what lateral thinking is about. (p. 11)

De Bono's 'lateral' thinking contrasts with the more established 'vertical' system of thinking; in

fact, it is a creative way of thinking: 'Lateral thinking', he writes, 'is closely related to creativity. But whereas creativity is too often the description of a result, lateral thinking is the description of a process. One can only admire a result but one can learn to use a process' (p. 12). Among the techniques he proposes, prominence is given to questioning pre-existing beliefs or 'challenging assumptions', or a way to see the problem from a different perspective (pp. 82–92). He explains that the use of this technique is to demonstrate that 'assumptions are not sacred and one can make use of them without being imprisoned by them' (p. 92).

Despite his large public success, De Bono's approach to creative thinking has been criticised for failing to investigate the theoretical nature of creativity. Nevertheless, his techniques enjoy a large consensus maybe just because in the absence of a supporting scientific theory, psychology does not offer any useful tools to promote creativity where it is most needed. A well-known technique designed for enhancing a creative approach to the thinking process is called the 'six thinking hats' where people are invited to metaphorically wear each of six hats in turn; every hat has a different colour and a related symbolic meaning, e.g. red for emotional thinking, black for a critical viewpoint, yellow for optimism, etc. (De Bono, 2000). The purpose of this exercise is that it encourages people to see a situation, issue or problem from different angles, thus gaining a different and possibly more useful perspective on it. This technique has also been employed in L2 teaching (Little et al., 2001: 58-62).

### 3.1.2 Brainstorming, mind mapping and free association

Other methods are employed to promote the generation of ideas in advertising. Brainstorming, mind mapping and free association are recurrent methods in the literature devoted to creativity. They all aim at generating ideas and for this reason their techniques sometimes overlap. Brainstorming is a group activity where people contribute ideas towards the finding of a solution, in fact, it has been described as the process of 'kicking ideas around' (Moriarty and Robbs, 1999: 26). It is a widespread form of ideation, especially within the advertising industry. It is not coincidental that advertiser Alex Osborn (1963) provided guidelines for a productive

brainstorming session. Osborn emphasised that brainstorming should generate a large number of ideas, however uncommon, and that criticisms should be suspended ('ruled out') so that unusual but effective ideas are created (pp. 300-301. Other examples of brainstorming activities are found in the literature, e.g. in De Bono (1992: 131-146) and Paul Paulus (1999: 781-782). This practice is so central to the process of advertising ideation that some agencies would even have dedicated rooms expressively called 'war rooms'.

Mind mapping is a diagram formed by interrelated ideas or concepts. The diagram centre is constituted by a 'central' item, e.g. a word or a drawing, that stimulates the association with other ideas which are linked to the first and are arranged radially around it. As with brainstorming, it may be used to encourage the production of many ideas in a quick way but, unlike brainstorming, it is an individual activity. The mind map may be seen as a graphic representation of the notion of 'semantic network', a notion associated with research in cognitive psychology by Collins and Quillian (1969) whose theory of human understanding is based on the cognitive relationships between categories of objects. Michalko's (1991) Lotus Blossom technique similarly organises concepts around the core of the blossom and is a way to represent and stimulate thinking, thus a form of brainstorming on paper, so to speak.

Another technique that often appears in the literature is random word association, a group activity. Both brainstorming and random word association are a form of free association, that is to say, a process where a thought or idea triggers another thought or idea and so on in a cycle. While brainstorming requests that participants access their own knowledge and come up with a concept, idea or thought triggered by the initial stimulus, in the random word association technique participants are assigned a new random word every time, which forces the mind to find a link between dissimilar things (e.g. Walsh, 2005: 135). The distance between the random word and the initial stimulus is such that the ideas and links thus generated are unusual and innovative.

The process to attain a creative idea is part of the making of an advertising text. As such the

techniques briefly outlined above were proposed to the participants of the course as a way to familiarise themselves with advertisements and activate an authentic response to the texts – a point that has been repeatedly reiterated by authors such as Widdowson (1978), van Lier (1996) or Davies (1984).

## 3.2 Persuasion

### 3.2.1 The advertising effects debate

An advertisement is conceived in such a way as to find a way to the reader's attention. While today we accept this statement and see the persuasive intention as part of the advertising message, on the contrary, the effects of this rapidly spreading commercial propaganda were felt as disquieting in the years that followed the Second World War. The incentive to conduct research on the mass-media and advertising communication dates back to the economic expansion of the 1950s and the 1960s when the stimulus to investigate the phenomenon of mass persuasion and to generate new research methodologies was felt as a particularly strong intellectual necessity after the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazism (see research by sociologist Codeluppi [2001: 77–78] and social psychologist Cavazza 1997: 18–19).

Being familiar with research in psychology, Packard (1981/1957) warned against the 'hidden persuaders' in modern society:

> Many of us are being influenced and manipulated – far more than we realise – in the patterns of our everyday life. Large-scale efforts are being made, often with impressive success, to channel our unthinking habits, our purchasing decisions, and our thought processes by the use of insights gleaned from psychiatry and the social sciences. Typically these efforts take place beneath our level of awareness; so that the appeals which move us are often, in a sense, 'hidden'. (p. 11)

According to Packard, the typical 20th century man closely resembled the main character in George Orwell's *1984*, without being fully aware of it (p. 12). Packard described advertisers as powerful and socially 'dangerous' individuals: 'These depth manipulators are, in their operations, beneath the surface of conscious life, starting to acquire a power of persuasion that is becoming a matter of justifiable public scrutiny and concern' (p. 16). A decade later, philosopher Marcuse (1986/1964) expressed a similar concern towards the mass media and

advertising.

Marcuse's analysis of modern society was characterised by unveiled hostility and suspicion. He alerted his readers to the dangers that mass communication could give rise to and anticipated a threatening mass-dependence:

> The means of mass transportation and communication, the commodities of lodgings, food, and clothing, the irresistible output of entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. (p. 12)

He found evidence of the manipulation of consumers in the treatment received by some aspects of language. In particular, he analysed the new 'voice of command' used by managers, educators, experts, and politicians and concluded that this style of address, typical of advertising, had 'a hypnotic effect' (p. 91). He observed that in mass-media communication the syntax was abridged and condensed, giving the language more directness and assertiveness. An assertiveness reiterated by the insistent use of 'you' and 'your' (p. 92) and the repeated use of certain images:

> [The] abridgment of syntax [...] cuts off development of meaning by creating fixed images which impose themselves with an overwhelming and petrified concreteness. It is the well-known technique of the advertisement industry, where it is methodically used for 'establishing an image' which sticks to the mind and to the product, and helps to sell the men and the goods. (p. 91)

Through these devices the mass media inoculate each audience member with the same message and this style of rhetoric creates the 'one-dimensional' citizen (mentioned in Marcuse's title), a person incapable of protest or refusal.

The fearful prophecies of Marcuse and Packard were scaled down by research conducted in sociology and psychology on the persuasive power of mass media and advertising communication. Schram and Roberts' (1971) opinion gives a measure of this change of perspective: 'People come to the media, as to other messages, seeking what they want, not what the media intend them to have' (p. 51; in Foxall and Goldsmith, 1994). This contention still finds consensus in modern research in social psychology, where consumers of the mass media are not regarded as passive recipients of whatever they read, listen and watch. In fact, it is

argued that people retain a large share of choice over the media offerings, to which they decide to expose themselves (e.g. Codeluppi, 2001; Cavazza, 1997).

While research in social psychology has scaled down the powers of advertising, the fact that its communicative intentions are meant to exercise an impact on the audience is hard to question. In fact, this planned 'impact' is part of its message. The route to the viewer's attention may be quite a complex one to reconstruct, as advertising analyses reveal, but also a stimulating one to follow. In fact, like creativity, persuasion is part of the text most prominent characteristics. Dealing with advertisements learners need to be made aware of the manners utilised by advertisers to grasp their attention and recognise them.

### 3.2.2 Advertising theories

According to the sociologist Codeluppi (2001), the development of theoretical approaches to advertising, including persuasive strategies, dates back to the decades between the 1930s and the 1960s and four theoretical approaches can be identified within this timeframe. Codeluppi's research takes work by sociologist Cathelat (1987 and 1993) into account in the characterisation of these four approaches. Surprisingly, this original theoretical framework has undergone only slight alterations and still informs today's advertising production (Codeluppi, 2001: 77). This section summarises the characteristics of these four theoretical approaches.

#### a) The consumer as a rational individual: Informative advertising

This phase corresponds to the early development of the advertising industry between the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the last century. The theoretical model that is associated with this phase is due to St. Elmo Lewis, who was a salesperson, not an advertiser in the modern sense. As early as 1898, he suggested a stair-step model, by which he claimed that, in order to be effective, salespeople must attract *Attention*, maintain *Interest* and create *Desire*. A few years later, Lewis added a fourth step to his process: *Action*, which a salesperson must also get from the consumer. The AIDA model in its simplicity 'is still one of the most referred

to in the advertising and personal selling literature concerning how people behave in responding to sales and advertising presentations' (Barry, 1987: 252).

The idea behind it was that the consumer was perceived as a rational and conscious being to be led through the first three progressive stages and, if all of the previous steps had been accomplished, this should lead the consumer to act, that is to say, to actually purchase the product. Advertising, therefore, was to be seen as a source of information and the verbal advertising message as an uncomplicated basic description of the characteristics of the sponsored item. Simply put, if persuasion was to be carried out, this could only proceed by rational argumentation. Descriptive or informative advertisements still exist. Advertisements created according to this type are found today in special-interest magazines, such as hobby magazines. In these contexts the consumer's interest is already defined by the choice of reading the magazine in question and he or she is regarded as an individual who is able to make a reasoned judgment on advertisement claims about cost, value, etc.

### b) The consumer as a conditionable individual: Mechanistic advertising

The criticisms addressed to the persuasive attitude of advertisements that was mentioned earlier on, the mounting of competition in the market due to the growing standardisation of products and the difficulty faced by industries in differentiating the products, resulted in the abandonment of a strategy which gave prominence to the objective qualities of the advertised article in favour of a different focus on the individual (see Codeluppi, 2001: 79-80) The transfer of interest to the individual was determined by Pavlov's findings on 'conditional reflex', the advancement of behaviourist theory in psychology in the 1930s and its influence in the discipline until the 1960s. This approach argued that the buying behaviour of the individual is neither rational nor conscious, but, rather, passive and submitted to the conditioning of external reality. The objective of this type of advertising was to create a reaction comparable to an automatism in the consumer. Verbal and graphic devices should thus obey the necessity of creating an emotional 'impact' rather than resorting to rational motives leading consumers to the

purchase. Slogans created accordingly employ a simple and extremely comprehensible language in order to favour a rapid and longer-lasting retention by the audience, (consider, for example, the contemporary L'Oréal slogan 'Because you are worth it'). It is not coincidental that the notion of USP (Unique Selling Proposition, i.e. advertising strategy according to which an appeal should focus on one single advantage offered by the product), dating back to the 1940s, was elaborated by advertising executive Rosser Reeves within the theoretical frame that informed this phase of the advertising strategy. The USP often took the form of memorable slogans such as Reeves' still famous M&M slogan 'The milk chocolate that melts in your mouth, not in your hand' (Johnston, 1984).

The limitation of this theory is that it disregards the active role played by the individual in making a purchasing choice. As Cathelat (1993) observed in this regard: 'The individual is a machine reduced to a group of external mechanistic determinants without mental energies of any sort (or, at least, these are not taken into account)' (pp. 97-98; see also Codeluppi, 1997: 12-13). Predictably, a further shift from the product to the consumer-as-individual was to follow.

### c) The individual and the unconscious: Suggestive advertising

The shift of attention onto the individual was the main characteristic of a 'suggestive' phase of the 1950s and the early 1960s. Psychology was clearly predominant in this approach. More specifically, it was influenced by psychological research on motivation. Motivation studies indicated that individuals' behaviours are guided by reasons that are deeply rooted in their inner selves and pointed the way to an advertising change of perspective, as Cathelat (1993) writes: 'Precedence was given to the individual over the group and the society itself, to the personality rather than its relations with the external environment' (p. 85).

Advertisers became aware of the ability their messages had in crafting (or 'suggesting') dreams and in conveying symbols of 'escape' (Codeluppi, 2001: 81). Assisted by psychological research, advertisers were to focus on the unconscious of the consumer. In contrast with the idea that informed the first advertising strategy of persuasion, it was argued that the conscious

reasons of consumption in the individual only affect the purchase after this has been made and that unconscious motives have the power of 'conditioning' the individual. Many of today's advertisements relate to this theoretical framework; these advertisements explore hidden or subconscious feelings and make subtle associations between the product and the situation represented, sexual symbolism may be exploited (on male voyeurism in advertising see Berger, 1972: 47). The visual imagery in this kind of advertisements may be blurred and suggest a dream-like or trance-like fantasy (see Hall and Whannel, 1964). The limit of suggestive advertising, though, consists in focusing on the psychological drives of consumers to the detriment of the product's qualities and in a lack of attention to the social and cultural environment of individuals.

### d) The consumer as a member of society: Integrative or sociological advertising

The lack of attention to the social life of the consumer was detected by later research. The sociological theory originated also in research conducted within the United States 'culturalist school' of the decade between the end of the 1960s and the end of the 1970s. The postulate behind sociological advertising was that the individual belongs to a social group, each having norms he wishes to conform to. As Cathelat (1993) wrote:

> Their central concept is that of 'value', an idealised collective model of thinking and behaviour which is abstract, general and supposedly universal. It replaces the concept of personal motivations and needs which is more contingent, anecdotical, subjective. (p. 88)

According to his description, the culturalist approach 'sees in the lifestyle a process of socialization by rallying individuals to collective norms of civilization, which guarantees them integration into a group' (ibid.). According to this line of argument, advertising persuasive strategies should take the social value of a purchase into account and favour the transfer of social group values onto the product. Such 'added value' might be represented by tradition, modernity, fashion, elitism, democracy and the like. Advertisements conceived according to these principles devote attention to the powerful role played by social norms, integration,

participation and acculturation in the consumer's life.

### 3.2.3 Persuasion applied to three components of advertising communication

A review of the literature shows that advertisers' strategies employ psychological devices in relation to at least three elements of the advertising communication: its message, the message source and the audience. This section deals with each of these elements in turn.

#### a) The message

Advertisers today seek to address consumers who, most of the time, are not active viewers of advertising and they need to find ways to overcome this low-attention state. The strategies devised thus consider the distinction between a central and a peripheral route to persuasion and the ways in which either can be exploited. This distinction draws on psychology research by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) who studied the circumstances under which individuals yield to a persuasive message, such as an advertising appeal, and proposed the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). They illustrate the difference between the two routes as follows:

> The first type of persuasion [is] that which likely [occurs] as a result of a person's careful and thoughtful consideration of the true merits of the information presented in support of an advocacy (central route). The other type of persuasion [...is] that which more likely [occurs] as a result of some simple cue in the persuasion context (peripheral route). (p. 3)

Today's advertisements are more and more frequently conceived in such a way as to attract the viewers without asking them to devote substantial mental effort to the evaluation of the message. In order to attract the audience's attention, advertisements make use of the peripheral or background elements in an advertising message. One of the attention-getting strategies, in fact, is to increase individual involvement with the advertisement before deploying one of the (subsequent) attention-holding strategies. Attention-grabbing devices range from loud noises to bright colours, from packaging shapes to the message structure, and from movement to striking images (Cavazza, 1997: 35).

Studies on memory have revealed the existence of two effects which are useful to advertisers for

the organisation of the message: the primacy effect and the recency effect. If shown a list of items to remember by heart, people seem to remember the first (primacy effect) and the last items (recency effect) more easily than the rest (see Deese and Kaufman [1957] and Murdock, 1962). Indeed, advertisements seem to conform to the notion that initial and final information (verbal and non-verbal) presented to the audience carry a higher impact on viewers. In a print advertisement the eye-catching function is carried out by the *headline* and the *visual* since these concisely convey the advertisement content and stimulate the audience's memorisation. The *bodycopy*, i.e. the text of a printed advertisement explaining in a more detailed manner the concise contents of the headline and the visual, also exploit the impact of the first and last information (Codeluppi, 2001: 83-84).

William (Bill) Bernach, working for one of the most successful advertising agencies in the 1960s, 'Doyle Bane Bernach', became particularly known for his 'negative approach' in the creation of advertising messages, a wholly different attitude an advertiser would take towards their products. While advertising had traditionally sung the praises of products, Bernach admitted their imperfections. This was the strategy informing a humorous and wry award-winning campaign for the Volkswagen 'Beetle' (E, II, 1 Questions and answers, p. 9). Again, the success of such a device rests on psychological findings. Despite natural hesitations about the utility of a 'two-sided appeal', it has been shown that incorporating arguments for and against the product or brand, may be even more effective than 'one-sided appeals' (see Hovland et al. 1953).

### b) The message source

Advertisements often appeal to the persuasive potential of the credibility of the source. Social psychologist Carl Hovland, who coordinated the research project on persuasion in the 1950s (later known as 'the Yale group' from the university where the researchers were based), conducted experiments on the effects that source credibility exert on people's convictions. He showed how people's beliefs are proportionate to their perception of the speaker's level of

expertise and of trustworthiness. Both marketers and advertisers thus feature highly credible sources in their advertisements, for example, doctors, nurses and pharmacists advertise health-related products, actresses advertise make-up and clothing, and so on: areas in which they are presumed to be experts. If 'experts' endorse a product, their opinion appears more trustworthy.

The psychological process according to which a subject tends to assimilate an aspect or a characteristic of another person and the partial or profound transformation of the subject according to that model is called identification. The process of identification is exploited in advertising strategies. Cavazza (1997) reports that psychological research has revealed that people are more easily influenced when they perceive in the speaker a physical or social similarity to themselves. Simply put, it seems that we like people who look like us. This would explain the profusion in advertisements of characters introduced as 'people like us' (p. 40). Additionally, Cavazza (1997) maintains that the facial features of advertising actors are selected to harmonise with the relevant advertising communicative intention. She mentions an analysis of facial features in actors involved in advertising and reports that those having childlike somatic features were employed in advertisements where trustworthiness and honesty had to be associated with the product. Vice versa, advertisements willing to convey a certain level of expertise featured mature-looking actors (p. 39). Finally, advertising's persuasive goals may account for the centrality of beauty in advertising appeals. As Cavazza explains,

> we tend to react in a favourable manner to people whose physical appearance is very agreeable and we tend to endow them with a whole series of other characteristics (niceness, goodness, kindness, etc.) which are however associated with beauty in a completely fortuitous manner. This device achieves a higher persuasive effect when the message is carried by an attractive source. (ibid.)[12]

Psychologist Cialdini (2001) includes 'liking' among his six principles of effective influence. Liking is based on the principle that people are more easily influenced by those they like and it consists of several elements: physical attractiveness, similarity, praise, contact and association. People tend to say 'yes' more easily to someone they like or want to identify with (pp. 144-

[12] Generalmente tendiamo a rispondere in maniera favorevole alle persone di aspetto fisico molto gradevole e tendiamo ad attribuire loro tutta una serie di altre caratteristiche (simpatia, bontà, gentilezza, ecc.) che sono associate alla bellezza in modo del tutto casuale. Questo si traduce in un maggiore effetto persuasivo quando il messaggio è veicolato da una fonte attraente.

156).

### c) The audience

In an extremely competitive market, consumers are grouped into (and described as) 'targets' according to variables such as social class, income, preferences, dislikes and so forth. Targets are identified and aimed at through research in sociology and psychology. Marketing strategies draw on sociology in order to tailor advertising campaigns to different 'lifestyles', while social psychology provides advertisers with information on the impact of advertising strategies on physical, social or personal characteristics.

Leon Festinger proposed the theory of 'cognitive dissonance' in 1957. 'Dissonance occurs whenever a person simultaneously holds two inconsistent cognitions (ideas, beliefs, opinions)' (Pratkanis and Aronson, 1991: 34). In this situation, the person tries to reduce dissonance (by dropping one position or strengthening another) in the attempt to make her beliefs and attitudes consistent. In terms of advertising, this situation occurs when consumers buy a product on impulse and then feel that they should not have bought it, but they want to feel that they made the right decision. Advertisers try to reduce cognitive dissonance as much as possible especially in the category of social advertising and more specifically in advertising campaigns whose aim is not persuasion (to buy, to familiarise the public with a product, etc.) but dissuasion from a habit (e.g. quitting smoking, reducing alcohol consumption, etc. See Cavazza, 1997: 40-44).

In sum, advertising strategies make use of psychological and sociological knowledge in order to tailor their communication to the audience's characteristics. Drawing learners' attention to these strategies facilitates their choice as consumers besides providing a stimulating prompt for discussion in class.

## 3.3 Rhetoric and advertising

### 3.3.1 Classical rhetoric

Advertising is a contemporary form of persuasive discourse. In this respect it bears resemblances to the Aristotelian definition of rhetoric as 'the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion' (quoted in Asa Berger, 2000: 53). Advertising, claims Corbett (1990) is 'the most ubiquitous form of persuasive discourse' (p. 5) and includes an analysis of a print advertisement in his introduction to a volume of classical rhetoric for students (pp. 5-10). It is easy to see how his aim is to attract the attention of students by showing them the usefulness of these oratorical strategies in relation to modern texts like advertisements, a notion that obviously tends to surprise. The affinity with rhetoric is also seized by Dyer (1982) when she observes that 'the word 'rhetoric' comes up frequently in any analysis of advertising since it refers to those techniques, usually verbal, that are designed and employed to persuade and impress people' (p. 158).

Following the Aristotelian division into 'genres' or 'species', rhetoric can be *forensic*, *epideictic* and *deliberative* ('The species of rhetoric are three in number', wrote Aristotle; quoted in Garver, 1994: 54). The forensic type of rhetoric (also referred to as *judicial* or *legal*) was used to accuse or defend someone's actions, mainly by lawyers in courtrooms. The epideictic (also *panegyrical*, *demonstrative* or *declamatory*), on the other hand, was the oratory of display, since, as Corbett (1990) explains, 'in this kind of discourse, one is not so much concerned with persuading an audience as with pleasing it or inspiring it' (p. 28). It is this pleasing characteristic which makes the panegyrical rhetoric the most 'ornate' and 'literary' of the three. Finally, the classical orator resorted to deliberative rhetoric (also known as *political*, *advisory* and *hortative*) when he had to exhort or dissuade on an issue of public concern such as going to war, levying a tax or building a temple (see Garver, 1994: 52-73). Corbett (1990) catalogues advertising as a form of deliberative rhetoric since 'deliberative discourse is that in which we seek to persuade someone to do something or accept our point of view' (p. 28). Interestingly,

Cardona (1974) observed that a prominent character of advertising is that, like oratory, it aims to please the audience. Its goal is *persuasio* (from *persuadeo* meaning 'to make thoroughly sweet [*suavis*] for someone'), which would make advertising a form of epideictic rhetoric. The two perspectives are not mutually exclusive and depend on what aim one sees as prevailing in advertising communication.

Going back to Aristotle's division, each of these three kinds of rhetoric occupied an area of interest, was concerned with a temporal dimension and employed specific strategies to achieve its ends as summarised in Table 1:

| ***Kind*** | ***Area*** | ***Temporal concern*** | ***Functions/Means*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Deliberative*** *(political, hortative, advisory)* | *Legislation, public interest* | *Future* | *Exhortation* |
| ***Forensic*** *(legal, judiciary)* | *Legal* | *Past* | *Accusation, defence* |
| ***Epideictic*** *(panegyrical, demonstrative or declamatory)* | *Ceremonial* | *Present* | *Praise or blame* |

**Table 1 Types of rhetoric, their area, temporal concern and function/means (based on Garver, 1994: 52-73)**

A further Aristotelian classification included the three modes of persuasion speakers could use to achieve their ends: 1) the rational mode where the speaker was appealing to the audience's reasoning and understanding, i.e. *logos*; 2) the emotional appeal, or *pathos*, and 3) the ethical mode of appeal that is based on the characteristics of the speaker and his credibility, i.e. *ethos*, as it was evinced in the speech itself. Regarding the ethical appeal, Corbett (1990) signals a significant remark:

> Aristotle recognized that the ethical appeal could be the most potent of the three modes of persuasion. All of an orator's skill in convincing the intellect [i.e. logos] and moving the will of an audience [i.e. pathos] could prove futile if the audience did not esteem, *could not trust*, the speaker. (p. 24; my emphasis)

This reminds us of the notion that the characteristics of the message source, such as credibility,

have on the audience (see 3.2.3 above).

Another influential classification is owed to the famous orator, statesman and rhetorician Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC). Following Aristotle in his general arrangement, Cicero proposed that the study of rhetoric should be divided into five parts: *inventio* ('invention' of arguments to achieve the orator's ends), *dispositio* (or arrangement of arguments discovered in the first phase), *elocutio* (or style, which included the use of tropes and schemes or figures), *memoria* (techniques to memorize speeches) and *pronuntiatio* (delivery of the speech including diction, voice management and gestures, i.e. *actio*). Many of classical rhetoric concepts are applicable to contemporary communication media like television, the press, advertising as well as to everyday discourse. This presence tends to take many by surprise since there is a tendency to locate linguistic techniques, such as tropes, in literary texts and to exclude by implication non-literary texts: 'we certainly don't see everyday talk as being the home of figures of speech [...] like metaphor' is Goddard's (2003) remark (p. 5). In fact, rhetorical figures, in particular, are so deeply rooted in language that it is almost impossible to find communicative situations where these do not occur. This might explain why, of the five categories in the tradition of rhetoric, knowledge of style, or *elocutio*, recurs most frequently in connection with modern media studies (e.g. Dyer, 1982: 161-182; Asa Berger, 2000: 53-70; Jensen, 2002: 352). Advertising is no exception, as it is shown in the following sections.

### 3.3.2 The connotative image

Advertising thus lends itself to rhetorical analysis, as it is shown by a conspicuous number of studies on the link between rhetoric and advertising (e.g. Appiano, 1991; McQuarrie and Mick, 1996; Codeluppi, 1997; Fabris, 2002; Smith, 2006). Interestingly, rhetorical figures can be found not only in the linguistic components of advertisements, i.e. the *headline* and *bodycopy*, but also in the visual component. A link between rhetorical figures and the image was established by several writers; for example, art historian Ernst Gombrich in 1962 described the relation between metaphors, symbols and the fine arts (in Dyer, 1982: 158-159). Nevertheless, it

was Barthes (1977/1964) who took a decisive step forward. Barthes' understanding of the word rhetoric was that of persuasion and argumentation ('as inventio') and also of rhetorical figures ('as style or elocutio', writes Joly, 1993: 72). He was the first to attribute to images a connotative power comparable to that of verbal signs. Barthes' discovery of the connotation of images justifies the concept of 'rhetoric of the image' (the title of his essay) and legitimates a process of decoding advertising texts in their entirety, especially advertising images where hardly any communicative intention is left to chance.

A semiotician, Barthes hypothesised the application of rhetoric to the mechanisms of signification of the image. As Joly (1993) explains:

> As regards rhetoric as *inventio*, as a persuasion mode, Barthes acknowledges in the image the specificity of connotation: a rhetoric of connotation – that is to say the faculty of provoking a secondary signification from a primary signification – proper to a full sign (p. 71).

In his influential essay *Rhetoric of the image* (1977/1964), Barthes deals with the semiotic process of signification as derived from the analysis of an advertisement for a brand of pasta called *Panzani* (C, Panzani). In his analysis Barthes isolates three different signs: the verbal sign, the coded iconic sign and the non-coded iconic sign and shows how these signs interact in the process of signification of the text as a whole. The strength of his essay consists in having identified and included the connotators of the image in his overall analysis, an enterprise complicated by the polysemous nature of the image (on the polysemy of the image see Joly, 1994: 81-85 and Joly, 1993: 95). More will be said in 3.5.1 on the issue of the polysemy of the image. Meanwhile, however, it is important to stress that Barthes' analysis extends the level of denotation and connotation from the verbal sign to include the visual sign. According to the semiotic distinction, the *denotation* is the relationship between the *signifier* (the material, physical form of the sign) and the *signified* (or first level of meaning, sometimes referred to as 'content'), while the *connotation* is a second level of signification derived by the further interpretation of the signifier/signified ensemble. Using Saussurean terminology, Barthes singles out in the *Panzani* advertisement a signifier, i.e. the photograph, and a signified, i.e. the onions, tomatoes, etc. As Joly (1993) explains, this first sign (the result of the combination

between signifier and signified) becomes in turn the signifier of a second order of signified, that is to say it links to a concept of 'fruits and vegetables from the Mediterranean area' as Barthes further develops the notion. This is how the connotation becomes a procedure of the image besides being one of the verbal components of the advertisement.

Barthes's analysis thus widens the scope of the denotation/connotation pair to include the visual sign, and as a result denies the customary assumption that any image, even photography, which is regarded as the most 'naturalising' image, is analogical or 'nude' ('adamitique', says Joly, 1993, meaning 'like Adam', that is, 'nude'). It is thanks to this semiotic finding that the analysis of an image, even the most life-like photograph, is not considered as a transposition or a manipulation of reality, but a sign, or, more exactly, 'a system of signs' ('un système de signes', writes Joly, 1993: 72).

### 3.3.3 The syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of the sign

It was just a short step from the conceptual formulation of rhetoric of the image to the individuation of figures of style, or figures of rhetoric. Both French critic Jacques Durand (whose work will be looked at in the following sections) and Barthes shared the conviction that images, just like language, communicate by articulating their signs according to the two levels of language: the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic. These two concepts, proposed by Saussure, are a crucial pair in the semiotic discipline and are illustrated below before discussing the use Durand makes of them.

Paradigmatic relations are those established between elements that share the same function. Perhaps the most eloquent way to elucidate this notion was given by Barthes himself in his essay 'Système de la mode' (1967; quoted in Dyer, 1982: 127). To introduce the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations he made reference to the modern system of fashion. He explained that in the semiotic system of garments a set of pieces that cannot be worn at the same time (his example is 'toque-bonnet-hood') are in paradigmatic relation. The syntagm, instead, consists in the juxtaposition in the same dress of different elements in an orderly combination (as for the

syntagmatic relation 'skirt-blouse-jacket'). The interaction between syntagms and paradigms is fundamental in semiotics since, as Chandler (2001) explains:

> The 'value' of a sign is determined by both its paradigmatic and its syntagmatic relations. Syntagms and paradigms provide a structural context within which signs make sense: they are structural forms through which signs are organized into codes. (p. 80)

Because the syntagmatic/paradigmatic distinction is a key one in semiotic analysis, it is easy to encounter alternative illustrations of it. Chandler's introduction to the basics of the semiotic discipline also helps to clarify this notion (unless otherwise stated the quotations that follow are from Chandler, 2001: 79-83). It is the aim of structuralist analysis, as set off by Saussure, to identify 'the constituent units in a semiotic system' (e.g. a text or cultural practice), and 'the structural relationships between them'. According to the Saussurean division, there are two kinds of oppositions or differences between signifieds and between signifiers: the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic. Chandler's approach makes this distinction clear in the passage reproduced below:

> The plane of the syntagm is that of the *combination* of 'this-*and*-this-*and*-this' (as in the sentence, 'the man cried') while the plane of the paradigm is that of the *selection* of 'this-*or*-this-*or*-this' (e.g. the replacement of the last word with 'died' or 'sang'). (p. 80, emphasis in the original)

The two kinds of oppositions between elements of a semiotic system are presented along two axes, the horizontal axis representing the syntagmatic relations and the vertical axis representing the paradigmatic relations. While the paradigmatic relation may be alternatively described as a 'membership' between sets (e.g. 'grammatical paradigms such as verbs and nouns' in the case of language), syntagmatic relations are possible combinations between sets. Chandler explains: 'In language, a sentence, for instance, is a syntagm of words; so, too, are paragraphs and chapters'. This applies to advertisements, too: 'A printed advertisement is a syntagm of visual signifiers' (p. 81).

### 3.3.4 Durand's classification of rhetorical figures

This section summarises the findings of French scholar Jacques Durand (1970) and his classification of rhetorical figures. Durand's classification, in particular, can be used with a

pedagogical intent for analysing rhetorical figures in advertising images. Almost a decade after publication of this work, however, Durand admitted being struck by the interest taken in his scheme as a pedagogical instrument of analysis:

> It is natural that specialists in semiology and mass communication took an interest in this work, particularly those who have studied the image, especially the advertising image. But I was also struck by the great interest manifested by the education sector: many pedagogues are aware of the necessity to open the school to the world of the image; they must have welcomed my proposal for a grid for the analysis of the image, all the more so since the grid is inspired by those techniques traditionally applied to a domain that will look familiar to them, i.e. the domain of literature and of language. (Durand, 1978:3)

Its application to advertising images is explored in detail in 3.3.5 while this section recapitulates how this scheme came to be constructed.

In the wake of the syntagmatic/paradigmatic distinction, Jacques Durand analyses thousands of printed advertisements to construct a comprehensive inventory of rhetorical figures as found in the visual components of these texts (Durand, 1970). But Joly (1993) alerts us to the fact that making exclusive reference to the classificatory enterprise of Durand's work wouldn't do justice to his work:

> This pursuit of a rhetorical figure is no more interesting if one does it only for its own sake without reconsidering it in terms of its signifying function. In that case it becomes no more than an inventory that closes in on itself. By contrast, carrying out such research while trying to understand what significations are induced by this kind of procedure is much more productive and indispensable to understanding the mechanisms of interpretation employed. (Joly, 1993: 73-74)[13]

Now, although Durand's classification of rhetorical figures was but a part of his broad interpretative framework, his formal research (i.e. the classification of rhetorical figures) gained more attention than the overall work. It is fair to mention that, in embarking on his project, one of his primary objectives was to find out the reason why these figures are so widely employed at the verbal and visual level of the advertising texts. The question he asks focuses on the two 'levels' of language as he describes them, i.e. the 'proper' and the 'figurative': since we can avail of 'proper language', he wonders, why then do we resort to 'figurative language'?

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[13] Cette pêche à la figure de rhétorique n'est guère intéressante si on la fait seulement pour elle-même et sans la repenser dans sa fonction de signification. Elle ne reste alors qu'un inventaire qui se renferme sur lui-même. En revanche, faire cette recherche en essayant de comprendre quelles sont les significations induite par ce genre de procédés est beaucoup plus productif et indispensable pour comprendre les mécanismes d'intérpretation mis en place.

While Durand is not the only one to ask such a question (see, for example, the extensive work on metaphors in language by Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), his answer is surprisingly original. Borrowing the notions of 'desire' and 'censure' from the terminological and conceptual arsenal of Freud, Durand elaborates a theory where the need to resort to rhetorical figures is justified by the pleasure-seeking nature of human beings. Rhetorical figures in advertisements intentionally break some rules (spelling, for instance, as in the famous Eau Perrier series such as 'H2Eau'; 'Eau-la-la'), codes of conduct (Joly mentions the ubiquity of the erotic component represented by the female body which accompanies almost any kind of product (Joly, 1993: 74), physical norms such as the disproportion of objects, the fantastically exaggerated size or weight (including impossible smallness or lightness) of a solid object, etc. Any such disobedience corresponds in the advertising text to a rhetorical figure. Durand (ibid.) observes how the breaking of rules in images often corresponds to altering the rules governing the physical world:

> Within the image the norms in question are principally those of physical reality as they are conveyed by the photographic representation. The rhetoricised image, in its immediate reading, is akin to fantasy, dream and hallucinations: metaphor turns into metamorphosis, repetition into doubling, hyperbole into gigantism, ellipsis into levitation, etc. (p. 72)[14]

A similar transgression, explains Durand, gives a kind of 'pleasure' to the reader because it presents him with a world where everything is possible, just as in dreams, after which he adds: 'on the other hand, though, even feigned transgression satisfies a forbidden desire and, because it is feigned, the satisfaction it brings goes unpunished (Durand, 1970: 71)[15]. 'According to a Freudian interpretation,' writes Dyer (1982), 'people will speak figuratively to satisfy a forbidden desire' (p. 58). Making reference to Durand's example (1970: 71), Dyer illustrates these (mock) violations of norms:

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[14] Dans l'image, les normes en cause sont surtout celles de la réalité physique, telles que les transmet la représentation photographique. L'image rhétorisée, dans sa lecture immédiate, s'apparente au fantastique, au rêve, aux hallucinations: la métaphore devient la métamorphose, la répétition dédoublement, l'hyperbole gigantisme, l'ellipse lévitation, etc.

[15] Mais d'autre part, même feinte, la transgression apporte une satisfaction à un désir interdit, et, parce que feinte, elle apporte une satisfaction impunie (Durand, 1970: 71).

> Thus a statement like 'I married a bear' (Durand's example taken from a letter to a newspaper's agony advice column) violates legal, social and sexual codes of conduct. It is an improbable statement and has to be interpreted in the more plausible way 'My husband is beast-like', 'His behaviour is like a bear's'. (Dyer, 1982: 159)

This violation of norms is conducted not only at the level of language but also at the level of images, which brings us back to Durand's classification of advertising images. This classification begins with a description of the rhetorical figure and the identification of two principles of classification, i.e. the principle of 'operation' and the principle of 'relation':

> Taking the definition of rhetorical figure as an operation which, starting from a simple proposition, modifies some of the elements of this proposition, rhetorical figures will be classified along two dimensions: a) on one hand, the nature of this *operation*; b) on the other hand, the nature of the *relation* which unites the variable elements. (p. 72, quoted in Dyer [1982: 161]; my emphasis)

These two principles are associated with the syntagmatic and paradigmatic notions respectively and form the axes of a table (reproduced below: Table 2) where Durand accommodates 'one figure for each of the cases of the table as an example' while implying that other figures could be arranged within the same grid of analysis:

| *Relation between variable elements* | *Rhetorical operation* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Addition*** | ***Suppression*** | ***Substitution*** | ***Exchange*** |
| ***Identity*** | *Repetition* | *Ellipsis* | *Hyperbole*<br>*Litotes* | *Inversion* |
| ***Similarity***<br>***-of form***<br>***-of content*** | *Rhyme*<br>*Simile* | *Circumlocution* | *Allusion*<br>*Metaphor* | *Hendiadys*<br>*Homology* |
| ***Difference*** | *Accumulation* | *Suspension* | *Metonymy* | *Asyndeton* |
| ***Opposition***<br>***-of form***<br>***-of content*** | *Zeugma*<br>*Antithesis* | *Dubitation*<br>*Reticence* | *Periphrasis*<br>*Euphemism* | *Anacoluthon*<br>*Chiasmus* |
| ***False homologies***<br>***-ambiguity ('double sens')***<br>***-paradox*** | *Antanaclasis*<br>*Paradox* | *Tautology*<br>*Preterition* | *Pun ('calembour')*<br>*Antiphrasis* | *Antimetabole*<br>*Antilogy* |

**Table 2 Durand's classification of rhetorical figures (adapted from Durand, 1970: 75)**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the pedagogical application of this table for analysing advertising images was welcomed by Durand himself and provides a useful guide for selecting advertisements and for identifying rhetorical figures in them.

### 3.3.5 Visual rhetorical figures in Italian print advertisements

This section gives examples of a selection of rhetorical figures in the visual part of print advertisements and the identification of rhetorical figures proceeds from Durand's scheme described above. The advertisements selected to illustrate the rhetorical figures as found in the visual part of print advertisements were collected from Italian magazines. Before considering these instances in print advertisements, however, some observations are in order here. Advertising texts are 'syncretic' texts, i.e. they combine linguistic and visual elements, and an analysis of a print advertisement should take both into account. In the following examples a

definition of the figure in language is also given in order to favour comprehension of its mechanisms in the visual. The linguistic example may be drawn from different sources including advertising headlines, bodycopy, etc. Of course, rhetorical figures may appear in both the linguistic and visual components of print advertisements and the interaction between the two adds a further layer of meaning to the analysis of the whole text. Codeluppi (1997) observed that headlines and visuals may establish three kinds of relation with each other: repetition, completion and opposition (pp. 68-69). Also, more than one rhetorical figure may exist within the same visual. Additionally, the identification of rhetorical figures should account for an overlap due to similarity between figures and/or individual interpretation (e.g. metonymy and metaphor are often confused): a 'pure' instance of, say, a metaphor should not necessarily be taken as the norm, rather the reverse. As Chandler (2001) points out

> metaphor is so widespread that it is often used as an 'umbrella' term (another metaphor!) to include other figures of speech (such as metonymy) which can be technically distinguished from it in its narrower usage. Similes can be seen as a from of metaphor [...]. Some theorists see [synecdoche] as a special form of metonymy (p. 127: 132).

An analysis of advertisements should account for this flexibility.

## a) Figures of addition

*Repetition*

1. Advertised product: *Liquigas*

Probably easier to single out than the other rhetorical figures, repetition can be found at the crossroad between the syntagmatic operation called addition and the relation of identity. In the example chosen here, it is the trademark symbol of the butane gas company *Liquigas* which is repeated and occupies most of the page (in C, Liquigas). Durand makes an interesting remark in relation to the signification of spaces that separate identical images. He asserts that blank spaces take on a temporal meaning, i.e. the narrower the spaces the more frequent is their assumed use. Dyer (1982) explains this special temporal link as follows:

> Durand has suggested that if the spaces are narrow, the everyday use of a product is signified, while if the spaces are larger, a more widely spaced activity (e.g. seasonal or occasional use of a

> product) is indicated; if the images are fused together, the continuous use of a product is indicated. He also implies that a large border of white around an image of a product connotes high class (Dyer, 1982:162).

To return to our example, therefore, it seems appropriate to adopt both a temporal and a spatial approach to interpret it as aimed at conveying a capillary diffusion of the service whenever this is needed. If such interpretation was not sufficient, the headline 'repeats': *Liquigas. Dove serve, arriva. Quando serve è già arrivato*, i.e. 'Liquigas. Where it's needed it arrives. When it's needed, it's already arrived'. The *payoff* is the sentence that closes the advertisement and that embodies the 'philosophy of the brand' (famous examples are Nike's 'Just do it' and L'Oréal's 'You're worth it'). Here it is found under the logotype of the firm and reiterates the combination of space and time: *Liquigas. Sempre e dovunque*, i.e. 'Liquigas. Always and everywhere'.

*Simile or comparison*

2. Advertised product: *Monini* olive oil, sponsor of a climbing expedition to K2 by an Italian team 50 years after the first such expedition .

The image of a mountain (i.e. K2) and the bottle of olive oil are visually linked by their similar size. Each occupies exactly half page (see C, Monini). The comparison is also held by the headlines over the mountain picture *La montagna degli italiani*, i.e. 'The mountain of the Italians', and over the *Monini* bottle *L'extravergine degli italiani*, i.e. 'The extra virgin [olive oil] of the Italians'.

*Paradox*

Within verbal rhetoric, a paradox comprises 'a seemingly self-contradictory statement which yet is shown to be true [as in:] 'She makes the black night bright by smiling on it' (Lanham, 1991: 107). According to the definition given by Durand (1970), both paradox and ambiguity ('double sens') play on the opposition between appearance and reality: 'in ambiguity an apparent similarity hides a real difference; in paradox an apparent opposition covers a real identity' (p. 83).

According to Durand, the verbal component of the text should inform us of the real similarity between characters or objects within an advertisement, a function for which he borrowed Barthes's term of *ancrage*, i.e. the 'anchorage' function of words which is discussed in 3.5.1. The following are examples of rhetorical paradoxes, that is, they exhibit an 'apparent opposition' of forms but cover an identity of meanings.

3. Advertised product: *Gente Viaggi* magazine

In the advertisement for the travel magazine *Gente Viaggi*, the front cover of the advertised magazine is superimposed onto the front part of a travel case (C, Gente viaggi). The apparent opposition between case and magazine cover finds a resolution in the common function, i.e. they are both tools to explore the world. The headline echoes the concepts reading: *Solo 1,90 Euro per girare il mondo con Gente Viaggi*, i.e. 'Only 1,90 Euro to travel around the world with Gente Viaggi'.

4. Advertised service: *Due*, i.e. new evening tariff by *ENEL* electricity company

Sunflowers are represented as illuminated by the light of the moon and turned towards it as if they have found a new source of energy. The headline strategically positioned between the moon and the field of sunflowers announces: *Da ENEL nasce Due. Perché la più grande delle rivoluzioni è poter scegliere*; i.e. 'From ENEL is born Due. Because the biggest of revolutions is being able to choose'. The bodycopy expands on the headline describing the 'revolutionary' offer (i.e. a special tariff) made by *ENEL* to those who tend to consume more electricity at night or at weekends than in other parts of the day or of the week. The paradox in the sunflowers unusually following the moon is resolved in the headline that explains that this is a representation of freedom of choice like the freedom offered to ENEL customers in choosing the advantageous night (moon-lit) tariff (C, Due Enel).

5. Advertised product: *Amica* magazine, the issue is dedicated to Autumn-Winter fashion shows

The advertisement is almost entirely occupied by a picture of a model's legs. The rest of the

body is left out of the picture and the front cover of the magazine *Amica* is superimposed onto the model's skirt. This advertisement is not only paradoxical, but also plays on the words *sfilate* which may be interpreted both as a plural imperative *Sfilate in edicola*, i.e. '(Do) Catwalk to your newsagent' or as a less assertive statement expressed by the plural of the noun *sfilata*, i.e. 'fashion show': 'Fashion shows at your newsagent's'. The punning headline reconciles the opposition between the use of a magazine superimposed on that of a skirt and resolves the paradox (C, Amica).

## b) Figures of suppression

*Ellipsis*

6. Advertised product: *Crowne Plaza hotels* in Naples and Sorrento

Ellipsis, or the deliberate omission of one or more words from a proposition, is one of the most exploited figures of speech in advertising copy and certainly often utilised in the visual component of advertisements (an extensive account of the use of ellipsis in advertising copy and other contexts is in Wilson, 2000). Rhetoricians seem to agree on the fact that the omitted word (or words) should be promptly implied by the context. Corbett (1990) offers a variety of examples ranging from Shakespeare: 'And he to England shall along with you' (in Hamlet, III, iii, 4), to a student paper: 'The Master's degree is awarded by seventy-four departments, and the Ph.D. by sixty' (p. 433).

On a visual level of expression, the elliptical image is one where some elements, characters or objects, have been suppressed or concealed but are still readily implied by the context. As a consequence, 'The [resulting] image is perceived as being incomplete and it can be easily interpreted as an illustration of fantastic scenes (disappearances, levitation, invisibility, etc.)' (Durand, 1970: 85). In this example, the omitted elements of the scene are the guests of the advertised chain of hotels (C, Crowne Plaza). The picture shows two empty chairs and a small table situated on what seems to be a balcony facing an attractive panorama, a magazine placed

on a tray is ruffled by the wind. Empty chairs, table and magazine all imply the guests' presence. While the headline stimulates our curiosity labelling the scene: *Ritratto dei nostri ospiti in loro assenza*, i.e. 'Portrait of our guests in their absence', the bodycopy explains that the guests of their hotel are so busy experiencing the cultural, archaeological and culinary delights of the area that it is difficult to have them sit still even for the short time to have their picture taken.

*Suspension*

7. Advertised product: yoghurt mousse *Früüp* by *Müller*

Dyer (1982) describes suspension as follows:

> The figure consists in holding back part of the message. Ads that cover two sides of the same page in a magazine, and which present an enigmatic image or a question on the first and the answer on the second, are examples of this figure. (p. 170)

The advertisement is spread on two consecutive pages (C, Früüp). The strategy consists in attracting the reader's attention through a dream-like and quite puzzling image in the first part, i.e. a butterfly whose body is concealed except for a pair of lips which seem to fly towards something not yet disclosed to our curiosity. The headline reads: *Segui i tuoi sensi*, i.e 'Follow your senses'; the puzzle comes to a sudden solution after we proceed to leaf through the magazine: the second page shows the same two butterflies accompanied by one whose body is replaced by a nose, and one where the middle part consists of a human eye; the senses (tasting, smelling, seeing, etc.) are metonymically represented by the sense organs turned into dream-like creatures. Because these imaginary beings are all flying around the advertised product, a fruit yoghurt attractively displayed to 'our' senses, we come to understand the advertisement as a representation of a whole-sense craving for the product in question.

*Tautology*

8. Product advertised: Necklace and earrings by Alfieri & St.John

This figure is represented visually in those advertisements where a product is portrayed without

additional commentary, caption or headline. Dyer (1982) interprets tautology as follows:

> In tautology a word is repeated, and although it is used in a different sense the second time it looks redundant because the different sense is not obvious: 'A Volkswagen is a Volkswagen'. An advertisement can employ visual tautology where the product itself is visually represented as if its mere presence dispenses with any further commentary. (p. 171)

Dyer alerts us to the fact that visual tautology may 'look like' a 'pure' advertisement, that is to say, one where the photograph innocently presents the product as it is. This contention contrasts with Barthes' study on the connotation of images discussed in 3.3.2 above and is explained by Dyer as follows: 'although they appear to be transparent, ads based on the image of a product exclusively are, nevertheless, signs' (Dyer, 1982: 171). On the other hand, pure visual tautology does not exist in advertising since any advertising image is accompanied by some language, however minimal, such as the brand name (see Rose's discussion, 2001: 5-32). The advertisement exemplifying tautology advertises jewellery (see C, Alfieri & St.John). Bodycopy is reduced to a minimum and consists in the brand name and contact information printed in very small font.

### c) Figures of substitution

*Metaphor*

9. Advertised product: *Oxy* superfluous hair-removing cream

Perhaps the most familiar of rhetorical figures, i.e. metaphor, is also the most recurrent of the figures of substitution, as Durand calls them. The rhetorical operation consists in the suppression of an element (e.g. the woman's legs in the advertisement in C, Oxy) and the replacement of the missing element with another (e.g. a cactus plant in the picture below).

*Metonymy*

10. Advertised entity: *Ministry for Environmental Policy*

While metaphor is based on apparent unrelatedness, metonymy is a function which involves using one element to stand for another which is directly related or closely associated with it in

some way (e.g. effect for cause; object for user; substance for form, etc. see Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). A case of metonymy is represented by the advertisement of an emergency telephone number to prevent the risk of summer fires in forests. 'Metonymy is a substitution of a word for a related word, such as cause for effect, container for contained: 'The pen is mightier than the sword' (quoted by Quinn, 1993:103). The advertisement considered here is one of the few examples of social advertising mentioned in this thesis (in C, Ministry of Environment). In the photograph, the help invoked by people to signal any case of fire is metonymically represented by a fire extinguisher unusually tied to the trunk of a tree. The headline makes this appeal clearer: *La natura non può difendersi da sola. Aiutaci a proteggerla dal fuoco*, i.e. 'Nature cannot defend itself on its own. Help us to protect it from fire'.

*Litotes*

11. Product advertised: *Volkswagen Lupo*

Litotes is also a rhetorical figure characterised by the substitution of an element with another. The relation between the two, i.e. identity in this case, is given by an exaggeration of the same element (hyperbole) or an understatement of that element (litotes). Understatement, however, is not very popular in advertisements. Nevertheless, it can be very successful. As Dyer (1982) observes: 'understatement can be so surprising and humorous that it is in fact very effective' (Dyer, 1982: 175)

This advertisement conjoins a number of rhetorical devices in both its verbal and visual components (see C, Lupo). A *Volkswagen Lupo* is represented on a small scale on a white page left blank for the most part. The choice of a mainly blank space directs the reader's attention towards the minuscule size of the car. The strategy adopted here is to downplay the smallness of the car in order to emphasise, by contrast, the attention devoted by the constructors of *Lupo* to the details of this vehicle. Considering the space available, the size of the car is exceedingly miniaturised on the page, but it is exactly the strategy of the advertiser to put the accent on this characteristic and use it to convey the idea of perfection of details. The advertisement ironical

use of litotes cleverly pre-empts any would-be criticisms on the car's small size. The headline ironically asks a rhetorical question: *Terresti in casa un pesciolone rosso?*, i.e. 'Would you keep an oversized goldfish at home?'. This minimises possible criticisms and emphasises the convenience of a 'utility car' as it is described by bodycopy. The payoff reads: *Lupo. Piccolo è grande*, i.e. 'Lupo. Small is big'.

*Hyperbole*

12. Advertised product: *Samsung* printer

In the advertisement for a printer, the size of the advertised product is perceived as exaggerated since the printer is placed beside same-size skyscrapers (in C, Samsung printer). The slogan is in English and reiterates that Samsung is 'Big in business' (another example of visual hyperbole is in an advertisement of a TV screen, also by Samsung, in C, Samsung TV. Both advertisements were used in the course on advertising, see 5.2.2).

*Pun*

13. Advertisement for the Italian Communist Party website: www.diamocideltu.net

Pun is a quite generic term for those figures which play on words (Corbett, 1990: 447-448). The playful nuance of the notion of interplay between two meanings is perhaps better expressed in the French term used by Durand for 'puns': *calembours*. Puns are verbally and visually represented in advertisements, it would seem, quite often and section 3.5 analyses the presence of puns and of metaphors in advertising copy from a Relevance-Theoretic viewpoint. On Durand's scheme, the relation between the variable elements in puns is one of ambiguity ('double sens'). Puns and paradoxes, Durand explains, play on the same opposition between appearance and reality with a substantial difference: a paradox conceals a real identity under two opposite forms (see paradox above) whereas ambiguity rejoins two or more similar forms under a different content (Durand, 1970: 8). Visually translated, puns create a (formal) co-presence on the page between elements which are opposed in content.

The advertisement analysed here is an example of political advertising since it invites citizens to adhere to the Italian Communist Party (C, Rifondazione). In the advertisement for the Italian Communist Party, *Rifondazione Comunista*, two meanings of 'sensitive skins' are compressed together to fit on the same page. The interplay is generated by the words of the headline which recommends the 'product' (the lotion and the Communist Party) to sensitive skins (referring to sensitive people by way of a synecdoche): *Per pelli sensibili, tendenti al rosso*, i.e. 'For sensitive reddish skins'.

14. Social advertisement against abandonment of dogs

While the majority of advertisements considered in this thesis are commercial advertisements, there are some exceptions as in this case. The headline of this social advertisement reads: *Chi condanna a morte un amico si merita una condanna a vita. Abbandonare un animale non è solo un gesto ignobile. È un reato*, i.e. 'Whoever sentences a friend to death deserves a life sentence. Abandoning an animal is not only an ignoble act but also a crime' (see C, Dog abandonment).

This is another example of visual non-humorous pun playing on the ambiguity of a loop, which, first appearing to be a hangman's noose, is later recognised as a dog collar. Thanks to the visual pun, this message is highly eye-catching.

15. Advertised product: *Renault Mégane* automobile

Here the image is not easily recognised for its (bitterly) humorous content and at first appears as a 'standard' shot of the new product (see C, Rénault). It is only at a second look, and only after having read the headline, *Ti guadagnerai il rispetto di tutta la Famiglia*, i.e. 'You will gain the respect of all the Family', that it becomes an entirely different picture. At a first reading the headline seems to state simply that if you buy such a good family car, all your family will respect you and praise your choice. A second more attentive reading, however, situates the picture within an entirely different context. The car is the only thing spared to the gunshots in a clash between 'Families' as in mafia feuds; the capital 'F' alerts the viewer to the anomaly

implied by the advertisement. The interplay is between the two (apparently!) incompatible kinds of 'family respect' meaning either praise or protection from gunshots. The two meanings are visually combined to fit within the same page of this cleverly designed advertisement.

### d) Figures of exchange

*Inversion*

16. Product advertised: *Mastro Lindo Acquactive* floor detergent

Inversion is quite easily recognised. As Durand (1970) explains: 'it is visually rendered through the representation of a character from behind or upside down' (p. 88). The advertisement picture (in C, Mastro Lindo) shows the character associated with the detergent as being reflected by the spotless tiles. The character and his reflection (upside down) are the perfect reproduction of each other and it is hard to distinguish between them except for the reflection being upside down. The advertiser's implication is that the advertised detergent makes floors shine like glass.

Drawing this section to a close, although Durand's analysis may run the risk of being exceedingly formalistic it certainly assists in avoiding some of the limitations of an intuitive examination of advertising texts. From a pedagogical perspective, the identification of rhetoric in advertising is a useful way to draw attention to the constructed nature of advertisements, which was stressed by semioticians like Barthes, discussed in 3.3.2. Of course, there are other aspects to consider for the analysis of the visual part of advertising. A richer analysis can be carried out taking other layers of meaning into account. The next section deals with non-verbal ways to convey communication.

## 3.4 Non-verbal communication

While on the subject of visual communication, it is important to touch on the question of non-verbal and paralinguistic communication in order to give a sense of the wealth of information that can be drawn from advertisements. This is a very rich source of analysis stemming from

various disciplines such as semiotics, anthropology, pragmatics, to mention a few (e.g. Rose, 2001; Joly 1994; 1993; Panofsky, 1970). Some useful indications are explored in the literature. This section selects some perspectives of visual analysis on the basis of their applicability in a pedagogical context as emerged in the literature review on the study of advertising. The analysis of human relations appears as particularly stimulating and lends interesting insights into an understanding of the society as it is portrayed in advertisements.

### 3.4.1 Human subjects in advertising

A rich category of meanings is conveyed by human subjects in advertisements and factors such as an actor's appearance or activity have an impact on the overall message. Anthropologist Goffman (1979) observed that human beings in print advertisements tend to be represented in recurring facial expressions, poses and so on in order to communicate less ambiguously and rapidly, a phenomenon that he calls 'hyper-ritualisation' (p. 84). His analysis concerns the stereotyping of people with regard to gender. The comparison between the different representations of women and men raises stimulating analyses. Goffman argues that women are stereotypically represented as weaker and subordinate to men (what he calls 'the ritualization of subordination', see pp. 40-56). For example, women are represented as smaller than men most of the time, a reflection of their social status, authority, etc. (p. 28). Also, women tend to be more frequently represented as smiling than men and, as Goffman observes,

> go into uncontrollable ecstasies at the sight and smell of tables and cabinets that have been lovingly caressed with long-lasting, satin-finished, lemon-scented, spray-on furniture polish. Or they glow with rapture at the blinding whiteness of their wash [...]. The housewife in the Johnson's Wax commercial hugs the dining room table because the shine is so wonderful. (p. 68)

Additionally, the lowering of the head and the aversion of the eyes may be associated with dependency and submissiveness (pp. 57-68). In a similar spirit, Millum (1975) observed how it is especially the female body that tends to be dismembered into photographic shots of nails, lips, legs (examples of 'photographically cropped' bodies, as Millum defines the phenomenon [p. 83] can also be found in two of the advertisements discussed above, e.g. *Früüp* and *Amica* in 3.3.5). Gender representation and other analyses can also include movement, clothes, poses, and so on,

each adding meaning to the overall picture. For example, with reference to touch, Dyer (1982) observes that women are represented more than men as 'delicately fingering objects, tracing their outline, caressing their surfaces'. This 'ritualistic touching' differs from 'functional touching' like grasping or holding associated with men (p. 101; see also Winship [1981] for a discussion of women's and men's hands in advertisements and Goffman's [1979] section on 'the feminine touch'; pp. 29-31).

### 3.4.2 Distance and gestures

Other means of non-verbal communication are identified in the literature. Proxemy, or the meaning assigned to physical space in interpersonal communication, is focused on in the anthropological literature (e.g. Hall, 1969; Aiello, 1987) and useful in analysing advertisements, as well. In his classical study on proxemy, Hall (1969) identified four types of interpersonal distance and the related kind of relationships, activities, and sensory qualities in each. The types of distance in increasing order are: intimate, personal, social and public (pp. 37-39). Hall suggested that depending on context, people use these four distances in their interactions with others and that these four zones vary in terms of the quality and quantity of the interaction exchanged. Interestingly, he observed that these differences can lead to awkward social interactions between people whose understanding of zones is different, such as the case of people from different cultures (for example, social distance is interpreted differently in Northern and Southern Europe; ibid.). Observing distances among people in advertisements can help us to understand the nature of the relation represented. Millum (1975) suggested four categories that help to characterise the relationships among people in advertisements based on the direction of the subjects' gaze and on the intensity of their attention. He identified four kinds of attention: 'reciprocal', 'divergent', 'object-oriented' and 'semi-reciprocal' (pp. 96; 115-116).

Non-verbal communication obviously encompasses gestures and the multitude of variations among different cultures, and Italian paralinguistic communication is traditionally regarded as particularly rich. A useful tool of analysis is provided for Italian by Diadori's (1990)

classification and linguistic 'translation' of one hundred gestures and a final set of pedagogical activities based, among other texts, on print advertisements. Her classification includes a drawing of the gesture considered, a short description, an indication of the register (i.e. formal or informal) and finally the likely corresponding utterances that may accompany it. Dyer (1982) identifies three non-verbal means of communication that help the observer to understand print advertisements featuring human subjects. These are: 'appearance', including age, gender, national and racial characteristics, hair, body, size and looks; 'manner', encompassing facial expression and eye-contact (or aversion of eyes); 'activity', that is, touch, body movement, positional communication, pose and clothes (pp. 97-104). Several of the studies mentioned earlier in this section recur in her classification. Dyer's classification can be useful in the analysis of non-verbal communication.

### 3.4.3 Objects, settings, photography

Other visual elements play a role in constructing the meaning of advertisements besides human beings: objects, for example, are cultural as well as physical; settings can include weather conditions, interior styles, etc. Millum (1975) proposes a categorisation of three kinds of interiors: the familiar setting, the slightly unusual setting and the exotic, fantastic setting. He claims that the reader is likely to take different attitudes according to the setting and also to attribute a different level of reality to each (p. 93). Animals are also conveyors of cultural and social meanings: dogs are symbols of loyalty, different breeds can symbolise wealth and power, extravagance, outdoor activity, etc.

The advertising image is obviously dependent on the actual techniques employed in capturing the image on film or, more recently, digitally. The reading of photography opens up a whole array of analysing perspectives. 'Reading photography' is the subject of dedicated publications (e.g. Pieroni, 2003). The organisation of space, for example, guides the reader's gaze on the page (Codeluppi, 2001: 85); line and colour are also dense in meaning (Joly, 1993; 1994; Codeluppi, 1997: 76-77) as well as shape (Codeluppi, 2001: 87). Chandler (2001) usefully

classifies and illustrates the meanings usually associated with elements such as camera angle, types of shot, close-ups and the model's pose (pp. 61-62; 161-166; 99-100).

The constructed nature of images, particularly of advertising images, explored by Barthes (1977/1964) and referred to earlier in the chapter, enriches the analysis of advertisements with additional meanings; other communicative devices are employed in the visual part of advertisements to get the intended message across as this section has shown. The degree of intentionality that advertisers place on virtually every element of this semantically dense form of communication justifies a detailed analysis of its 'layers' from several viewpoints. Of course, not all perspectives are represented here as this is beyond the scope of this work. The directions proposed above, however, serve as a springboard for classroom-based exploration of advertisements, as will be shown in the following chapter and in chapter 5. Additionally, they offer a starting point for teacher preparation. The next section returns to the ways advertisements construct meaning exploring the mechanism of implications and inferences in the verbal message as described from a Relevance-Theoretic viewpoint.

## 3.5 A Relevance-Theoretic approach to advertising language with a focus on puns and metaphors

### 3.5.1 The meaning-making process: the semiotics approach

The question of how advertisements make meaning has been approached from the perspectives of semiotics, linguistics and pragmatics. This section discusses their arguments in light of a recently developed theory stemming from pragmatics: Sperber and Wilson's (1995) Relevance Theory. The first approach considered stems from semiotics.

The semioticians' claim is that communication is a process of encoding and decoding a message that is carried by a system of signs. Language, according to this view, is the prime example of a semiological system (e.g. Culler, 1983: 73). Barthes' analysis of the *Panzani* advertisement (already mentioned in 3.3.2) is a well-known example of semiotic analysis because of Barthes'

identification of the elements that constitute the comprehension process. Barthes' intuition that one can derive several items of information from a single advertisement is an important insight. However, his claim that the iconic signs (coded and non-coded, according to his classification) and their messages are disentangled merely by the linguistic message encounters an obstacle: linguistic messages are highly polysemous and cannot act in any simple way as the only *ancrage*, i.e. 'anchorage', to the iconic ones in the selection of the appropriate intended meaning, as Barthes seems to believe (see Tanaka, 1994: 2-4). In other words, Barthes' account emphasises the role of verbal messages within the advertisement considered, but his analysis runs up against their polysemous nature. Besides, he gives no adequate explanation for the widespread use of puns in advertising, where their potential multiplicity of meanings (their intended polysemy) is clearly exploited as a system to seize the audience's attention: a polysemous slogan was used in the print advertisement *Amica* magazine, analysed in 3.3.5 (the issue of polysemy in the visual component of a print advertisement is investigated by Joly, 1994; the relation between the visual and the verbal signs is investigated by Joly, 1993).

Williamson's approach to the language of advertising (Williamson, 1978) also stems from a semiotic perspective. Her intuition is that messages are not completely encoded and that the interpretation process involves more than just decoding. She considers the importance of context for comprehension and posits that the audience's own connections in processing an advertisement are essential to the whole process, but fails to set up criteria as to how the audience is supposed to select what she calls an appropriate 'system of meaning' and reject those which are inappropriate (Williamson, 1978: 19). Although Williamson is aware that the audience's knowledge is involved in filling the gap between the message obtained by decoding an advertisement and the one that the addressee actually recovers, she does not set up any criteria as to how the relevant knowledge is to be selected in the process of utterance interpretation (see Tanaka, 1994: 4-6).

A similar impediment is encountered by semiolinguistic investigation of print advertisements carried out by Harris (1989). He claims that in understanding advertisements 'what allows one

to discriminate among observations and also to evaluate the trustworthiness and validity of [...] observations is 'canons of judgement', which is questionable. The concept of 'canons of judgment', (attributed to Hymes, 1977), suffers from a degree of vagueness similar to Williamson's notion of pre-existing 'systems of meaning' which would allow the 'reference system', hence communication, to work (Williamson, 1978: 99-100). Although Harris's recovery of the intended meaning of selected print advertisements sounds intuitively plausible, it does not specify how the reader is supposed to select one interpretation and discard another.

### 3.5.2 The meaning-making process: the linguistics approach

Stemming from a linguistic perspective, Vestergaard and Schrøder's analysis (1985) of advertising language clarifies some aspects of the question of how communication takes place in advertisements. They point out that advertisers promote certain types of behaviour implicitly and establish them as the norm. An example could be deodorant advertisements. Rather than encouraging people to carry out frequent and thorough personal hygiene, advertisers 'canonise' the use of long-lasting and odour-concealing deodorants. A phenomenon Vestergaard and Schrøder label as 'implied behavioural normalcy' (using odour-suppressing deodorants) and of 'problem reduction', i.e. here: body odour: (pp. 141-145). The problem with their approach, as pointed out by Tanaka (Tanaka, 1994: 6-7), consists in labelling both notions as 'semantic processes', whereas extra-linguistic, namely contextual, information is involved in utterance understanding, particularly in the recovery of the intended interpretation.

In Relevance-Theoretic research (in particular Carston, 2004), it has been argued that a sharper line divides the pragmatics and the semantics approach than initially supposed. Semantics is the study of sentence meaning: it is concerned with the sentence as a formal linguistic entity considered independently of situation and context. As Carston explains: 'the semantic representation, which is context-free and invariant, entirely determined by principles and rules internal to the linguistic system [...] provides input to the pragmatic processor [which] has wide access to extra-linguistic 'contextual' information' (p. 3). Sperber and Wilson claim that there is

a gap between the pure linguistic meaning of a sentence and its possible interpretations in a well-determined situation. Their argument is that the reason why this gap is usually filled in is due to the role played by inference in deriving the right interpretation out of a set of (contextual) assumptions. The origin of assumptions is diverse. Sperber and Wilson describe them as 'thoughts treated by the individual as representations of the actual world' (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 2): they might derive from the given context, from our encyclopaedic knowledge, our perceptual system, our religious beliefs, etc. Irrespective of their origin, however, their function is to provide the hearer with an adequate quantity of information so as to enable him/her to select an appropriate interpretation of the utterance and to sustain the communicative exchange he or she is engaged in. The argument here is that it is not a semantic but a pragmatic approach (that is, when extra-linguistic as well as linguistic factors are taken into account), which is capable of accounting for the process of utterance interpretation in advertising.

The fact that Vestergaard and Schrøder rely on Williamson's notion of 'reference systems', suffers from the same extent of indefiniteness already described with regard to Williamson's approach. Furthermore, the need to clarify the choice of context in their analysis of advertisements is particularly evident when they speak of the underlying concept of 'nature' observing that 'it is not the 'same' nature which is referred to throughout' (pp. 156-160). Beside this indeterminateness in defining the context, their analysis of the comprehension of advertisements seems to take place in an order where, first, the context is established, and, second, the interpretation process takes place, and then, possibly, relevance is assessed. Sperber and Wilson, however, suggest a complete reversal of this order. In their words: 'It is not that first the context is determined, and then relevance is assessed. On the contrary, people hope that the assumption being processed is relevant [...], and then try to select a context which will justify that hope: a context which will maximise relevance' (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 142). Therefore, context is the variable, while it is relevance which is treated as given (pp. 137-142).

Also approaching the issue from a linguistic perspective, Pateman (1983) maintained that, in order to understand an advertisement, it is necessary to consider it as a goal-defined activity. He

argued that it would be impossible for us to understand an advertisement without prior knowledge of it as such (Pateman, 1983: 189); but, as Tanaka objects, 'if advertisers are to depend entirely upon their audience's recognition of their goal' – namely, convincing the audience to purchase their product – 'their chances of success will be slim' (Tanaka, 1994: 9). It is true, and this was mentioned earlier in this chapter, that advertisers have to compensate for the readers' lack of attention (and, often, of trust) with creative devices such as irony, puns, metaphors, etc., not to mention a rich battery of visual devices. Nevertheless, from a Relevance-Theoretic perspective, the identification of an advertisement as such is not a prerequisite for understanding it, as argued by Pateman; it is the presumption of relevance which makes processing worthwhile and not the recognition of the communicative goals of advertising. Sperber and Wilson contend that processing starts when the hearer recognises that a speaker (here: an advertisement) is engaging in communication because this 'act of ostension' is a guarantee of 'optimal relevance' (p. 50). The notion of 'optimal relevance' has been explained by Blakemore (1992) in these terms:

> The presumption of relevance carried out by every act of overt communication has two aspects: on the one hand, it creates a presumption of adequate effect, while on the other it creates a presumption of minimally necessary effort. Taken together, these presumptions define a level of *optimal relevance* – a presumption that the utterance will have adequate contextual effects for the minimum necessary processing. Sperber and Wilson call the principle that give rise to the presumption of optimal relevance the principle of relevance. (p. 36)

In sum, the Relevance-Theoretic approach claims that communication works thanks to the 'principle of relevance' and in consideration of the relative set of premises called 'contextual assumptions' which apply to each situation. Following this line of argument, relevance is achieved when, in processing the information, the effort the hearer has expended is compensated for by adequate contextual effects or, so to speak, by a 'reward' which results in the alteration of the reader's cognitive environment (pp. 118-171).

### 3.5.3 Puns and metaphors in advertising

Going back to the typical lack of trust towards advertising on the part of the viewer, Tanaka (1994) introduced the concept of 'covert communication'. In her words this is 'a case of

communication where the intention of the speaker is to alter the cognitive environment of the hearer, i.e. to make a set of assumptions more manifest to her, without making this intention mutually manifest' (p. 36). Advertisements aim to engage in covert communication is twofold: firstly, to make the audience forget about the ultimate purpose of selling, and secondly, to avoid social consequences for some implications derived from some advertisements. Humour is widely used in advertisements in order to break down the audience's scepticism (Crompton [1987] stated that one of the main strategies in advertising is 'Make 'em laugh'; p. 59). The use of amusing word play, puns, and metaphors, is a way of attracting the audience's attention. Equally important, amusing linguistic techniques retain the attention of the viewer for longer, thus seeking to be more memorable. The following sections give some examples of puns and metaphors in advertising communication according to the Relevance-Theoretic approach.

### 3.5.3.1 Metaphors in advertisements

Sperber and Wilson (1995) point out that literal use of language is not the norm and that metaphorical utterances are rife in ordinary language, as is also argued by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Advertising language is no exception to this and metaphors abound in these texts. The utility of metaphors in ordinary language as in advertising, lies in the fact that often the most economical way to convey a speaker's thoughts is through the use of a non-literal use of language. Both metaphors and puns use humour as a means of attracting attention.

The Italian magazine for women, *Donna Moderna* (04/2003), carried advertising text (1) for Findus, a company which sells fish products (see C, Findus):

(1) *Dai al tuo cucciolo il pesce migliore*

(1) Give your pet the best fish

This advertisement employs the metaphor of baby-as-pet. The words are accompanied by the picture of a pelican in the unusual act of passing a fish finger to its newly-born chick. Since the advertiser is using the example of a mother-child relation, the assumptions and 'implicatures' (using Sperber and Wilson's terms [1995: 182]) are kept in this area, as the illustration suggests

(in Relevence Theory, implicatures are defined as 'propositions which are not developments of the logical form, but rather are constructed according to a combination of contextual information and the proposition expressed by the utterance' [Yus, 1999: 494], see also Carston, 2000: 100). The reader presumably knows that the advertised product, fish fingers, is not only intended for children.

Given this context, the reader may be expected to recover the following assumptions:

(1a) Fish is healthy food.

(1b) Healthy food is the best food.

(1c) A caring pelican mother feeds its offspring with the best fish.

(1d) A caring mother feeds her child with the best food.

These assumptions, combined with the picture of the loving pelican mother attitude in the act of feeding its chick with a Findus fish-finger, could lead the reader to derive fairly strong implicatures such as:

(1e) If you feed your child with Findus fish fingers, you give her or him the best food.

(1f) Findus fish fingers are the best way you can feed your child and look after her or his health.

(1g) If you feed your child with Findus fish fingers, you are a caring mother.

In the search for optimal relevance, that is, to recover adequate contextual effects for no unjustifiable effort, readers establish the resemblance between (1) and the context provided by the picture.

The extra processing effort caused by caption (1) may be compensated for by additional contextual effects. These might be derived by weighing the caption against the extra contextual information contained in the picture such as the seemingly content expression of the pelican chick and also of its mother (e.g. Findus fish-fingers make you happy), or the chick's particularly shining white colour (e.g. Findus fish-fingers make you 'shine').

Further, less strong implicatures compensate for the increased processing effort left to the

audience. The advantage offered to advertisers here by the use of a non-literal expression is that it attracts the audience and involves them in the processing task. Consequently, the audience's attention is sustained for a longer period of time, which makes the advertisement more memorable. Additionally, the choice of a humorous illustration is consistent with the idea that the audience has to be both attracted and entertained by advertisements.

The magazine *Il Venerdì di Repubblica* (12/2002) carried another metaphorical slogan. The product advertised is a moisturiser produced by the well-known Swiss brand *Clinians* (see C, Clinians). The wording of the advertisement is as follows:

(2) *Una preziosa sorgente per dissetare il tuo viso*

(2) A precious spring to quench your face's thirst

The readers will probably browse their encyclopaedic knowledge for the words *sorgente* ('spring' or, metaphorically, a 'source' of water) and *dissetare* which translates 'to quench one's thirst'. The metaphor employed here is quite conventional and corresponds to the notion of spring as 'source' or 'origin' of the new.

The text is accompanied by the picture of a young and attractive model's face. The illustration is printed on two pages: on the left page, the woman's face is depicted with an expression that combines a relaxed and seductive attitude, especially since she is photographed in the act of gently stroking her cheek with her hand (one of the recurrent women's attitudes in advertising pictures, according to Goffman's analysis mentioned in 3.4). The right page carries the utterance in (2) and, in lowercase, a description of more characteristics of the product where the repeated word *idratazione* ('moisture') is clearly highlighted. Below this description, the illustration shows the jar containing the moisturiser. Both the jar and its content are green in colour. Behind the jar, and slightly out of focus, there is a picture of two halves of a green apple. The colour has a widespread symbolic connotation of youth, as well as the word 'green' itself, as the Italian expression indicating youth suggests: *anni verdi*, i.e. 'green years'. In addition, a green fruit can be described using words such as 'fresh' or, 'vital', which, in turn, bear further

metaphorical associations.

The context thus provided and the background assumption that dry skin needs water just like a thirsty person, lead the reader to the following quite strong implicature:

(2a) This Clinians product is a precious source of water for dry skin.

The association of (2a) with the image of both the young and attractive model's face and the ripe and green apple invite the reader to yet other possible implicatures such as:

(2b) This Clinians product is a source of youth and beauty.

(2c) This Clinians product will make you as young and attractive as the model.

The number of further assumptions, although less strongly implicated, is possibly infinite, but the hearer will stop once optimal relevance has been reached.

In sum, advertisements are cleverly crafted messages. As these examples show, breaking advertising communication into a sequence of steps reveals how advertisers try to get their messages across. Also, it reveals the kind of assumptions which readers are likely to bring into the act of processing those messages and how these assumptions are exploited by advertisers to achieve their aims. It emerges from this section that dismantling advertising communication helps the viewer to enhance awareness of these mechanisms and to make a better informed choice, which supports the use of this activity within an educational setting (this is captured by KV's comment about *L'Oréal* advertisement in 6.2.3).

### 3.5.3.2 Puns in advertisements

Puns exploit the fact that a single word or phrase can communicate two meanings. They constitute an essential characteristic of communication in advertisements and, together with humour, another way of attracting the audience's attention. Apart from serving the purpose of amusing sceptical readers, puns succeed in sustaining their attention for a longer period of time. The success of the communication, as Sperber and Wilson point out, depends on the hearer's recovery of the intended meaning, not on the recovery of the linguistic meaning of an utterance

(p. 23). In the case of puns, just as in ordinary language, comprehension involves the processes of disambiguation, reference assignment and free enrichment (expanding the sentence given on the basis of contextual information), which are present to some degree in ordinary language as well. Indeterminacy, however, is always resolved in context.

In the case of puns in advertising, the audience recognises multiple interpretations and processes the sentence as a pun. From a Relevance-Theoretic viewpoint, in puns two or more interpretations are intentionally 'triggered' by the speaker (Tanaka 1994: 62). The hearer may, and usually does, reject one interpretation in favour of a more acceptable one. Frequently, however, a pun may convey more than one interpretation simultaneously. In this case, the essence of the pun lies precisely in the fact that one can access more than one interpretation at the same time. Advertisers, in fact, use the indeterminacy in the meaning of puns in order to attract the audience's attention and amuse them, as in the two examples that follow.

The Italian magazine *La Repubblica delle Donne* (04/2003) carried an advertisement for a cake produced by the company *Mulino Bianco* (C, Mulino Bianco). The illustration is printed on two pages and shows a bright picture of the advertised cake. The predominant colours are different shades of orange, brown and yellow. The picture is extremely bright and eye-catching and the cake looks inviting.

The advertising text reads:

(3) *La Dolce Vista*

(3) The sweet view

The reader will first recognize the title of the well-known Fellini film *La dolce vita*, which has become an internationally known expression associated with a wealthy, carefree and 'sweet' (*dolce*) life (*vita*). This expectation is then surprised by the recognition of the word *vista* (view) replacing *vita* so that the literal translation is 'The sweet view'. The pun rests upon the sound similarity of the words *vita* and *vista* together with two possible interpretations of the word *dolce* as 'sugary' and 'easy'. The readers are invited to recover the proposition in (3a) and

combine it with (3).

(3a) The sweet life

This interpretation would yield a number of contextual effects, which include (3b) and (3c):

(3b) Eating this Mulino Bianco cake is an invitation to a tasty experience.

(3c) Eating this Mulino Bianco cake is an invitation to an easy, carefree life.

Unlike other puns, described as 'nonsensical' because the hearer is expected to identify two or more meanings and then reject the one which is nonsensical, this is an example of a pun with two communicated meanings (see Tanaka, 1994: 78-82). In other words, the utterance in (3) communicates both interpretations.

The same can be said about the caption for a book by the Sicilian writer Vitaliano Brancati issued by the newspaper *La Repubblica* in *La Repubblica delle Donne* (in C, Brancati). The text might refer to the book, the writer or both. The illustration shows the book on one page and the wording on the other:

(4) *Siculamente ironico*

(4) *Sicilianly ironic

The word *siculamente* is not attested in Italian. It is an adverb derived form the adjective *siculo*, Sicilian for 'Sicilian' (standard Italian is *siciliano*). Italian adjectives ending in *–lo* form the corresponding adverb by replacing the ending with *–lamente*. The meaning of the word may thus translate 'ironic in a Sicilian way' or '*Sicilianly ironic'. The word *siculamente* closely resembles the word *sicuramente*, i.e. 'surely', 'definitely'. The readers expect to find the word 'surely', but their expectation is puzzled by finding another word in its place. This will activate two different interpretations:

(4a) Surely ironic.

(4b) *Sicilianly ironic.

Both interpretations are intended by the advertisers here and may lead to an implicature that

combines them:

(4c) Surely ironic in a Sicilian way.

In sum, these examples have shown that puns usually depend on the contrast between two or more quite clear interpretations, which are often related through similar or identical sound (homophones) or correlated concepts. Metaphors, on the other hand, involve the interpretation of a single 'portion' of information but appear to yield a bigger number of weak implicatures. Although metaphors and puns work in different ways, both achieve the effect of catching and retaining the attention of the audience, thus becoming more memorable because of the longer time the audience takes to process them. According to the Relevance principle, in order to derive further implicatures from these interpretations, the reader might keep searching for further contextual effects that outweigh his or her processing effort.

In trying hard to look for as many interpretations and implicatures as possible, many were obviously found. This is consistent with the search for optimal relevance in that a larger amount of processing effort yields a larger number of contextual effects, that is, implicatures. Those stated, however, were the most accessible. The Relevance-Theoretic approach accounts for a degree of individuality in carrying out interpretations that might escape the advertisers and be a double-edged weapon. The slogan used by an Italian furniture company reads: 'Our strength is price', which may lead to implicatures such as 'Because our strength is the price our weakness is the quality'. Nevertheless, these implicatures are usually avoided in the majority of cases through careful message construction (copywriter's personal message).

Additionally, metaphors as well as puns place a greater responsibility on the audience with respect to the derivation of implicatures. This shows yet another aspect involved in the communication carried out by advertisements, in that 'advertisers treat their audience as potentially creative and resourceful, once they have managed to gain their attention' (Tanaka, 1994: 106).

## 3.6 Conclusion

Advertisements are multipart and complex messages. As this chapter has showed a most prominent characteristic of advertising is creativity, which is often based on intertextuality, that is, it feeds on other types of visual and linguistic texts (Cook, 2001: 193-196). Producing an advertisement involves a combination of market research, professional skills, creativity, knowledge; it demands time and money to attract our increasingly fugitive attention. To achieve this goal advertisements are amusing, entertaining and attractive or (often deliberately) banal and, even, repulsive (Corbett (1990) calls it an 'inescapable' part of our environment [p. 5] and Cook [1992] 'a prominent discourse type in virtually all contemporary societies', p. 5). All within a limited physical textual space. Such a prominent attention-seeking characteristic and such a low attention level on the part of its interlocutors makes the creation of advertising an exercise in communicative economy. The result is a highly dense linguistic and communicative, yet succinct, text.

It is important to remember that however eye-catching and attractive advertisements are, they perform an economic and ideological function in our society. Ultimately, their aim is to persuade, they are designed to affect our behaviour but, as Mishan (2005) points out 'in this endeavour [to persuade] other communicative intents are often deployed. These might be *provocative* [...] and [...] *engaging*' (p. 80, emphasis in the original). In other words, the prevailing communicative intent of advertising, i.e. persuasive, is often covered by other 'apparent' intents. Thus, 'advertisements are deliberate and consciously articulated messages' (Dyer, 1982: 13) where the predominant persuasive aim co-exists with other aims. An appropriate pedagogical activity based on advertisements can be the analysis of how their communicative intent is achieved. The approaches illustrated in this chapter provide a starting point for such analysis, an analysis that focuses on the communicative characteristics of this text and provides learners with a language-rich environment and a real purpose for language use. 'Stripping the leaves off' advertising has at least several other educational advantages: first, it raises the analyst's awareness of the constructed nature of images and text and encourages an

analytical attitude that may extend to other forms of catchy and persuasive communication (e.g. political speech, newspaper headlines, etc.). In other words, it may develop the learner's critical attitude. Second, by revealing the strategies used to attract and persuade, this analysis allows a learner to neutralise them and favours a more balanced interaction between advertising and the audience. Besides, Mishan (2005) feels justified in studying how persuasion is achieved on the grounds that 'interfering with a genre whose *raison d'être* is exploitation of the consumer can be done with a fairly clear conscience' (p. 188). Third, an analysis that utilises the tools provided in this chapter may lend to unexpected (non-immediate) interpretations which are gratifying to the analyst.

It was claimed at the opening of this chapter that the learning activity should be engendered by the text communicative intention. This chapter has shown that the constructed, multilayered nature of advertisements calls for an analysis of its layers of meaning. It is important to stress again the fact that it is the text that supplies the guidelines for the interpretation. Thus, advertisement analysis may result in a stimulating activity that engages learners and favours language production. My argument is that while an analysis of advertising communicative covert intentions can be carried out through single tasks (such as those suggested by Mishan, 2005: 189-194), structuring a course around them has the additional advantage of developing learners' analysing expertise and favour an 'appropriation' of learning through reflection. Learners' personal impressions combine with developing expertise and result in increasingly articulate and original analyses. This is what I called authentication in earlier parts of this thesis: an encounter between the text and the reader-learner. While this chapter characterised advertising as a creative and persuasive form of communication and supplied the groundwork for its analysis, the next chapter shows how advertising analysis can be a stimulating activity with interesting results.

# Chapter 4. Four advertisements analysed and interpreted

*I feel the course in some way empowers you, in that you get a chance to* dissect *the strategies used on us everyday to influence our choice of product.*
*(D, CN, p. 24, IIIcl.)*

## 4.0 Introduction

Chapter 4 is intended to provide a link between Chapter 3 (which provided groundwork for advertising analysis) and Chapter 5 (which describes the course based on such analysis). The print advertisements selected for the analysis in this chapter were also employed in the course (described in 5) and commented by the course participants. Some participants' comments have been quoted within the analyses that follow in order to provide a foretaste of how stimulating these texts can be for language production and to show that interesting insights can be derived through analysis. In the same spirit a selection of the participants' analyses are included at the end of this chapter (4.5).

As was said in chapter 3, advertisements try hard to catch their audience's attention by being humorous, provocative, inviting, and so on. Their aim is to attract and hold the reader's gaze for as long as they can so that she will recognise and perhaps purchase the product they are promoting. Because of their aim, advertising messages are carefully constructed, their intentions are both obvious and covert, making their analysis both complex and, sometimes, surprising. Exploring the means by which these texts convey their message can yield interesting and even surprising insights; more importantly, it raises the learner's awareness about the persuasive techniques employed by the advertiser.

Drawing on the perspectives outlined in chapter 3, this chapter offers four analyses of print advertisements (4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4). Of course, other viewpoints could be adopted to delve into the meaning of these texts further. Still, these examples show how some less obvious connotations emerge from texts and how insights into the advertisements' mechanisms and

intentions are gained. As already said, the advertisements focused on here were discussed in class, so throughout the chapter I quote extracts from participants' diaries.

Print advertisements were chosen because they are relatively easy to collect, transport and use in class, but of course, other forms of advertising can also be employed for language educational purposes (a recent example is in Lombardo et al. [2005] who utilise Italian TV advertisements for language learning activities). Print advertisements are complex texts that combine visual and verbal stimuli and an analysis of their message needs to take both into account. In the analyses that follow a global 'reading' of the text precedes an analysis of its components: in the preliminary phase the reader's gaze is left roaming spontaneously over the page guided by its components (described in E, II, 1 Questions and answers; p. 7) as designed by the advertisers. The general impressions raised in this preliminary phase may then be checked against the results of subsequent analysis (Serre-Floersheim, 1993). The variety of possible perspectives is extremely rich because it emanates from numerous research perspectives with relevant aims. The analyses presented in this chapter do not conform to one field of analysis but aim at a global understanding of the text communication by utilising a combination of approaches offered by disciplines such as rhetoric, semiotics, psychology, etc. While most advertisements were taken from Italian magazines, some of those used for the analysis were found in Irish, English and, in one case, American magazines. The Minute Maid advertisement, described in the following section, was taken from the American magazine *Look*.

## 4.1 Minute Maid

The Minute Maid advertisement in question (in C, Minute Maid) has a quite classical 'funnel' structure (larger on top and smaller at the bottom), which, as Codeluppi (1997) observes, is encountered in advertisements for anglophones more frequently than in Italian advertisements. This particular advertisement was found in the US magazine *Look*. The visual component occupies most of the page and functions as an attention-grabbing device, but it also suggests that the process of analysis should start from the top (that is, from the 'visual' part) and continue

towards the bottom of the page. The reader will thus be guided from the picture to the language of *headline* (or *slogan*), of *bodycopy* and then return to the synthesis of the advertisement represented by the *pack shot*, the brand *logo* and the *payoff*.

According to the primacy and recency effect (discussed in 3.2.3), the photography and the pack shot together with the payoff are more likely to stay in the reader's mind. The picture represents a scene of family life and aims to appeal to the audience by means of identification with the situation portrayed (it is the 'people-like-us' appeal discussed in 3.2.3). This also explains the chromatic predominance of light and warm colours which produce the sensation of a clean and reassuring environment. Additionally, the colours in the picture are different shades of orange since the advertised product is orange juice. The choice of terracotta floor, wooden furniture and flowery decorations on the kitchen tiles strengthens the impression of a warm, comfortable place to be. The light coming through the window, which occupies a central position in the picture, not only adds a further layer of warmth to the room, it also symbolises vital energy as found in a harmonious family. The association between warm colours and the 'warmth' of a family environment is also observed by learners: 'Colours tend to form a sort of family 'nest' in the photograph' (*I colori possono formare come il nido della famiglia nel foto*, MC; this and the subsequent extracts in this section are taken from MC's diary, available at D, MC, p. 26).

The picture is also a source of social analysis. First of all, the reader recognises the three individuals in the picture as being a family: a mother, a teenage daughter and a younger son. There are no men in the photograph but a 'father' is an implied presence (as in an ellipsis, see 3.3.5) since the mother is wearing a wedding ring and there is a fourth empty chair in the kitchen. In sum, this is a traditional family, one that is accepted by social canons ('this is a typical family', writes one participant, i.e. *la famiglia è tipica*). Nevertheless, this is a predominantly female setting where the mother is stereotypically represented in the act of educating her younger child, that is, the child that needs more protection (this recalls Goffman's notion of hyper-ritualisation, see 3.4). The woman's posture reminds us of the iconographic tradition in the religious representations of motherhood and conveys an impression of shelter

and, simultaneously, fierceness. ('The woman is portrayed in the habitual act of taking care of her children', i.e. *La donna sempre si vede che prende cura dei suoi figli*, MC).

The position of the mother and child is symmetrical to the teenage daughter who, unlike her mother and her brother, who are sitting, is standing at the right of the table. Several elements contribute to highlight her activity, that is, drinking the advertised juice. First, she is placed on the right, where the reader's gaze traditionally terminates. Second, she is the only character standing and she is portrayed from below, a point of view that is used to 'give importance' to the subject of a portrait. Third, her clothes and books mean that she is about to leave while the other two characters will probably stay at home.

The portrait of the girl is one of independence, which is understandable in a Western society where adolescents are progressively acquiring a status of their own. This is reinforced by the fact that she is not looking at the other two characters and the other two characters are not looking at her. Nevertheless, the girl is still in a phase of physical growth and the headline refers to her: 'This orange juice is so good, you can feel it in your bones'. The slogan recalls the idiomatic expression employed to express an instinctive response to something; in this case it is a positive attitude towards the goodness of the orange juice. The expression can be interpreted as a synecdoche where a part of the body, here bones, stands for a diffused, however difficult to locate, impression 'from within'. The mention of bones is not only idiomatic, but also literal since the orange juice in question is 'fortified with calcium' and calcium is of crucial importance for bones.

On a closer look one discovers that the headline refers to the teenage girl but is addressed to her mother. The target of this advertisement is a traditional ideal caring mother (or a mother who would like to live up to these expectations), such as the one portrayed in the photo in the act of educating her younger child. This prototypical figure of the Western world has to juggle many responsibilities (e.g. housework, child care and, maybe, a career) mainly on her own (the father figure is still only implied) but may risk neglecting the proper feeding of her children, especially

in the difficult teen years. That middle-aged mothers of adolescent children are the intended 'target' of the advertisement finds its confirmation in the bodycopy. Here it is made explicit that in order to comply with the responsibilities of a good mother, the interlocutor of this advertisement has to 'make sure she [i.e., her daughter] gets the proper nutrition' and the advertised product may function as an (adequate?) substitute. Ultimately, the advertisement employs a psychological appeal that plays on a mother's sense of guilt for failing to fulfil an ideal role.

Advertisers very frequently resort to this 'nurturing' appeal (see the Findus advertisement analysed in 5.3.1). Other widespread appeals include the desire to be beautiful and socially accepted, being healthy and maintaining well being (see Elinder, 1965, cited in Clark, 1988: 44). The contrast between the relatively static posture of the mother and her younger child and the dynamism of the teenage girl is observed in these terms by MC: *Tutto nel foto fa pensare che la giovane ragazza deve crescere e 'andare su'. Lei in piedi e le altre due siedono con calma*, i.e. 'Everything in the picture makes one think that the young girls needs to grow up and 'go up'! She is standing and the other two are sitting calm'.

The association between the product and the girl is carried out also on a chromatic level. The girl wears a jacket of a darker colour, a shade of blue, which is also the colour of the juice packaging. Given the chromatic predominance of light colours in the picture, this blue stands out and channels our attention to the girl and the product. The girl and product association is further reinforced by the presence of a big 'M', non-coincidentally the initial letter of the product brand name, on the girl's jacket.

## 4.2 My Platinum wedding rings

Unlike in the previous case, this advertisement has a descending cone structure that progressively enlarges as it reaches the bottom of the page (C, My Platinum). The reader's gaze starts from the top and sees a young bride with a classic white dress and veil, her veil opens behind the nape of her neck forming two oblique lines that open to 'embrace' a baby sitting on

her lap, his arms spread. The headline 'I have chosen' is placed just below the bride's neck, at the level of her heart. The photograph occupies most of the page and below the image one finds the name of the product advertised (here 'My Platinum'), two wedding rings and the payoff, that reads: 'My idea of love'.

The advertisement has an extremely catching chromatic texture, notwithstanding a quite limited chromatic variety: it plays on the tones of silvery grey and white, which are respectively the colour of the product and the colour of the bridal gown. The background of this advertisement is a plain, uniform grey. While grey may sometimes indicate boredom and monotony, in this case it serves a quite different function, that of a suitable background for the marble-like candour of the subjects (*Il colore, la testura dei vestiti della donna con il bambino: tutto è bianco e pulito per la purezza*, i.e. 'The colour, the texture of the woman's and the child's clothes: it is all white and clean to indicate their purity'. The extracts cited in this section are taken from CH's diary, see D, CH, pp. 1-2).

The model, in the foreground, is pictured from approximately thigh height. Her stance is serene, calm. She is dressed completely in white, a colour that our culture tend to associate with purity, innocence and honesty. The impression of candid simplicity is reinforced by other particulars. The luminous and spotless white is the colour of the bride's gown, veil and also of the child's bodysuit, the bride's veil appears to be made of a light, almost impalpable texture. This 'candour' establishes a bond between the bride and the baby so that one is brought to understand that the baby is hers. The baby smiles serenely.

There are no extreme colour shades, shapes, or expressions. Everything in the subjects' appearance conveys an idea of classical equilibrium and perpetuity. The colour white visually lifts them from a light grey background and gives them a plasticity, which reminds the viewer of a marble statue. In fact, considering the particular shade of the grey, it may be a chiaroscuro pencil draft of a statue. The bride's gown is very simple and without any ornaments; the woman's hairstyle is extremely tidy and she wears no makeup. The only jewel worn by the

bride is a simple platinum wedding ring.

Similarly, the baby is wearing a white bodysuit without any other details. Everything conveys a sense of candid simplicity and purity. The absence of details makes these two figures two archetypes of a mother and a son, they have a certain angelic quality, and seem unreal or, rather, ideal in many ways. This is not coincidental since the pose of the woman and the child recalls the iconography of motherhood in religious representations, such as Michelangelo's Madonna of Bruges (reminding the reader of advertising intertextual nature). Candour, simplicity and eternity are the characteristics of traditional marital love and the bond between mother and child. Both forms of love are 'eternal', simple and beautiful and so is the advertised product, i.e. platinum, in the advertisers' intentions. The reference to religious contexts is not immediately obvious to the analyst but creates a certain sense of surprise considering its commercial use: *Io e AP abbiamo fatto l'analisi della pubblicità di sposa con figlio. Abbiamo visto che non era solamente la sposa di oggi ma lei era la donna come del opera d'arte religiosa!*, i.e. 'AP and I have done an analysis of the bride and son advertisement. We found that she does not only represent a contemporary bride, but she is the bride of religious works of art!'.

The descending line gives a chronological connotation to the advertisement narrative. It synthesises the young woman's life in the space of a page. If we progressively uncovered the image from the top to the bottom, that is, following the suggested advertisement structure, we would first see a young woman's face that would not be immediately recognisable as a bride since her veil begins from her nape. Then we would recognise her as a bride. The headline 'I have chosen' is positioned slightly above her heart as if to indicate that that is where her decision came from, that is, it is a feeling-related decision. The reader might thus speculate that her decision relates to the fact that she has agreed to marry. As we uncover the rest of the image, we discover that her decision also meant that she decided to have a child with all the implications this has in terms of commitment, responsibility and, again, perpetuity. If we assign this vertical reading a chronological perspective, it means that the child was born after her wedding. Interestingly, the baby's arms are open wide and cover almost the entire width of his

mother's veil and thus interrupt any further chronological developments of this situation. He represents a turning point and attention is to be paid to him from now onwards or, alternatively, his birth represents the creation of a never-ending bond that escapes the effect of time.

Interestingly, however, the advertisement also supports and justifies another sequence of events concerning the woman's life, a sequence that stimulates the analysts' curiosity:

> Anche se la donna è fotografata come nell'arte religiosa, certamente è un contrasto che lei ha il bambino già. Forse è una strategia della pubblicità per dire che la donna moderna può sposarsi oggi anche quando lei già ha un bambino... (D, CH, pp. 1-2)

**Even if the woman is photographed as in the religious art, it is certainly a contrast that she already has a child. Maybe it is an advertisement strategy to say that today's modern woman can get married today when she already has a child...**

The baby was obviously born out of wedlock and the woman 'has chosen' to marry in order to comply with the dictates of religion. Either way, she ultimately chooses a traditional wife-and-mother role, and the advertisement cleverly encompasses both routes that led to it. Below the picture of the bride and the baby one sees a picture of two wedding rings, the brand name ('My Platinum') and the payoff: 'My idea of love'. Whatever her story, it ends in a stable, balanced conception of mother-and-wife's love, as stable and pure as platinum!

## 4.3 Voiello Pasta

The Voiello advertisement shows a plate of the advertised pasta on a predominantly black background (in C, Voiello). Most of the page is occupied by the photograph while the wording (payoff and bodycopy) and logo only occupy a minor space on the page. The chromatic contrast is sharp and is played between the saturated black and the vivid yellow of the product in particular. The advertisement is a two-page spread and the predominance of black is extremely eye-catching. Black, however, has no shape or form, it is a uniform black canvas from which the brilliance of the light-yellow pasta, the silvery grey of the fork, the red of the tomatoes, the green of the parsley and capers and the finely curved white line of the plate forcibly emerge with an almost three-dimensional characterisation. The chromatic contrast is only slightly moderated by the white steam shapes coming from the dish. The red, white and green colours

on a black background recall Barthes' identification of Italianness in his analysis of the Panzani pasta advertisement discussed in 3.3.2. The immediate reaction of the observer is that this plate looks very inviting: *Tutto il piatto è grande, la pasta che fuma, i pomodori etc. Il pubblico ha l'invito al piacere*, i.e. 'Everything in the dish is big, the piping-hot pasta, the tomatoes, etc. The audience is invited to this pleasure' (the extracts in this section are quoted from D, MA, pp. 16-17).

The pasta dish is photographically portrayed in a detailed close-up, which results in a hyper-realistic representation: it tends to give an illusion of maximum 'truth', but, as was said in 3.3.2, is actually carefully constructed in order to attract the reader's attention. Hyper-realism is achieved through the following devices: the enlargement of the objects' dimensions in the image, a rhetorical device that is identified as hyperbole (see 3.3.5); the point of view of the camera captures the dish from below, emphasising its size further; 'warm' light from a source above that illuminates only the object represented; a photographic technique that brings every single object into sharp focus, eliminates blur and shows any would-be imperfections in the objects represented. The result of these devices is an hypertrophic representation of the product. The purpose of this emphatic representation is to stimulate the hedonistic interest of the viewer in the dish, but because the photograph only represents the part that emerges from the plate, it invites him or her to mentally complete the image adding to it what was left out of the frame.

The organisation of space in the advertisement is both vertical and horizontal. The gaze proceeds from the top to the bottom of the two-page advertisement, but at each level (i.e., headline, fork, dish, plate, logo, payoff and bodycopy respectively), the viewer's gaze stops to follow the horizontal stimulus, visual or verbal, offered by every element. Given the chromatic preponderance of the saturated black that occupies most of the page from the top, the reader is attracted by the headline, placed on the left page just above the fork, which spells in white letters 'View of Naples'. These words have a disorientating effect on the reader: he may expect to find a typical image of the Bay of Naples below, which is a frequently used postcard image of the Neapolitan area. Unexpectedly, instead, he finds an inviting pasta dish which has a non-

coincidental wavelike movement, as will be explored further in this analysis. Pasta is typically associated with the Neapolitan tradition and may be seen as a symbol of the city's culinary tradition, that is, it functions as a part for the whole, i.e. a synecdoche. The contrast between the reader's expectations and the picture generates a humorous effect which has the advantage of holding his attention for longer.

The headline is metaphorically sustained by the fork and the fork's curved shape triggers a wavelike movement that is 'echoed' (visually) and amplified by the undulation of the dish and the plate below. The pasta type in question also has a curved shape that harmonises with the curved contour of the white porcelain plate and guides the reader's gaze towards the right, terminating on the Voiello logo. The overall impression is that of a similarity between the waves of the dish and the waters of the bay. This Neapolitan brand's logo utilises three symbols of Naples: the bay, the classical character Pulcinella (originated in the theatre tradition of the *Commedia dell'Arte* in the 17th century) represented in the act of eating a long-shaped pasta, the third Neaples symbol, similar to the type in the photograph.

The lower portion of the advertisement is occupied by the payoff that, as was said in chapter 3, is the brand motto and summarises its philosophy. Here, it asserts the brand's faithfulness to traditional Neapolitan pasta-making: 'Voiello. Since 1879, the great Naples pasta' and uses a pun on the word *grande*. The use of the word *grande* can be interpreted as great, as in 'high-quality', or literally 'big', which would hint at the hyperbolic representation of the dish on the page (*C'è la parola 'grande' che ha due significati di 'big' e 'great'. È il gioco di parole*, i.e. 'the word 'grande' has two meanings: one is 'big' and one is 'great'. It is a play on words').

Bodycopy words reinforce the idea that Neapolitan pasta is to be preferred, that Voiello conforms to high-quality standards which demand 'the best durum wheat' and bronze manufacture. As bodycopy further explains, bronze-drawn pasta is much appreciated by traditionalist and more demanding gourmets since its porous surface helps capture the sauces.

The advertising message revolves around the notion of sophistication and high quality which the

brand associates its products with. The idea of exclusiveness, sophistication and refinement is conveyed through several devices: an unusual vertical and horizontal arrangement of space that calls for a demanding 'reading'; the predominance of the intense and saturated black colour conveys an idea of sophistication and power: black is a classic colour for formal clothing and limousines, judges' robes, and priests' attire are all typically black. Black is also the colour of old photographs and evokes a sense of tradition, another central notion evoked by the advertisement. According to the stimulating suggestion of one of the course participants the point of view adopted to portray the dish, that is from below, creates the idea of a balcony that the reader wants to lean on to discover what is hidden from his view: *Il lettore non può vedere tutto il piatto e pensa che c'è una sorpresa dietro questo, come un balcone*, i.e. 'The reader cannot see the dish completely and thinks that there is surprise behind it, as [leaning] from a balcony'. Considering the headline and the reference to the Bay of Naples, this interpretation appears justified.

### 4.4 Mortadella

This is an advertisement for Mortadella, an Italian salami which is produced in the Emilia-Romagna region, whose capital is Bologna. It takes the form of a photographic mid-shot of a female model taken in the style of a Renaissance painting (in C, Mortadella). Although the model has modern features, the photograph is evocative of paintings such as the *Ritratto di gentildonna detto 'la muta'*, i.e. Portrait of a genteel woman, called 'the mute', by Italian painter Raphael. The painting in question dates from the early 1500s and it is also known as the Mute, since the subject's gaze is magnetic and capable of attracting the viewer's attention without words. Similarly magnetic is the lady's gaze in this advertisement. She appears to be in her forties, is portrayed from her waist up, her face is shown in three-quarters profile and her chin slightly lifted (*L'inquadratura era dal vita in su cioè al mezzo primo piano e la posa del modello era ¾*, i.e. 'The shot showed the woman from her waist up, that is, in a medium close shot and the model's pose was a ¾ profile'. Comments are extracted from IS's diary, available in D, IS, p. 37). She is wearing what appears a quite formal black dress that leaves her neck and

shoulders bare. The ruffles around her neckline decorate her shoulders and add gracefulness to her appearance. She wears very light, natural-looking make-up and her only ornament is a discreet earring. The model's hair is also groomed in such a way as to recall the Renaissance style. Her stance shows a pleased, proud attitude and she has a delicate (Leonardesque) enigmatic smile. This is not coincidental since Raphael's drawings often 'quote' Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* (e.g. Raphael's 'Portrait of Maddalena Doni'). Since her face is slightly turned to the right, she looks at the camera, and at the viewer, sideways. Her gaze thus appears more intentionally directed towards the reader and invites the reader to turn his attention to what she is confidently exhibiting: the woman surrounds the Mortadella with her left arm and shows a certain pride.

The pink colour of the product stands out against the black background provided by the woman's dress. Chromatically, the advertisement uses several tones of red that recall the product covering layer: a darker tonality of reddish-purple for the background, the cherries that decorate the product and a brighter tonality for the woman's lipstick and the strawberries. In Renaissance paintings it was quite frequent to find fruits carrying symbolic meanings, of a religious and mythical nature. Here, however, the fruit serves simply to reinforce the similarity with Renaissance paintings.

The structure of the advertisement follows a Zed-like line, which was observed by participants:

> [La pubblicità] mostrava una donna con un piatto di mortadella...Abbiamo deciso che la struttura dello spazio era a 'Z' chioè: la donna alla sinistra, con il piatto verso la destra e poi il testo verbale era nel fondo del'immagine - alla sinistra verso la destra. (D, IS, p. 37)

**The advertisement showed a woman holding a plate with mortadella...We decided that the space structure was like a 'Z', that is, the woman on the left, the plate towards the right and the verbal text over the background, from the right towards the left.**

The reader is first attracted by the woman's enigmatic gaze on the top left of the page, then reads the first part of the headline, continues to find the second part of the headline and, slightly to the left, the Mortadella salami. The reader's gaze will thus find the product's European certification of quality on the bottom left of the page and finally the logo Mortadella Bologna on the bottom right. The headline comprises two sentences, which are positioned respectively next

to the woman's face and next to the Mortadella, as if to refer to both in succession. The headline is a pun on the word *signora*, lit. 'Lady', but also, something 'sophisticated', 'high quality'. The first part of the headline reads: *Una signora Mortadella*, i.e. 'A lady Mortadella'; the second specifies: *Si chiama Bologna*, i.e. 'Her name is Bologna'. The readers first think that the 'Lady' in question is the noble-looking woman of the advertisement, then, following the Zed structure of the advertisement, they realise it is the Mortadella that is described as high quality: a 'Lady'. This has a humorous effect. The first part of the headline intentionally generates confusion. The lady's genteel appearance and contention, the capital 'M' for *mortadella* may suggest that she is the Lady, the *signora*, which the headline refers to. Following the oblique line from the top right to the bottom left, however, the reader finds that Bologna is the name of the Mortadella.

The allusion to the Renaissance painting is a way of attributing an idea of nobility, superiority and style to the making of this product. The bodycopy explains this at length and the payoff summarises this concept in two words: *Nobili Origini*, i.e. 'Noble Origins'.

In the majority of advertisements the models look directly at the audience, making eye contact. One of the main reasons for this is that it evokes the idea of looking at oneself in the mirror. It indicates an invitation to identify with the model or, as in this case, to pay attention to what she has to show. Eye contact is understandably a useful attention-grabbing device. The eyes have always been a significant communicator of messages and feelings. For example, the length of time for which eye contact is held, the position of the gaze etc. these all communicate different sentiments. The capturing, 'tempting' quality of this type of gaze was noted by participants: *La donna guardava lo spettatore con la coda degli occhi, in modo allettante*, i.e. 'The woman was looking at the spectator out of the corner of her eyes, in a tempting way'.

The participants' analysis also focused attention on the meaning of the lines and discovered a further similarity between the product and the woman: *Ci siamo accorti che le linee della mortadella erano curve, si riferendo alla femminilità della formosa signora (Mortadella!)*, i.e. 'We realised that the lines of mortadella were curved since they refer to the femininity of the

curvaceous lady (Mortadella!)'. While most advertisements tend to employ teenage, emaciated girls, this advertisement features a non-skinny woman in her forties, since some of her characteristics can be transferred to the product (!). Also, the magazine from which this advertisement was drawn aims at middle-aged women who have an interest in cuisine and money to spend on food products.

The following sections present eight analyses of advertisements carried out by the course participants.

## 4.5 A selection of participants' analyses

### 4.5.1 Pentax Optio X Digital Camera

(in C, Pentax)

> L'immagine principale umorosa. Distanza - intima. Lo sguardo semireciproco. Struttura Zeta. La linea obliqua ascendente verso destra = mobilità, dinamismo. La macchina fotografica ha queste caratteristiche. Si può usarla in un modo dinamico. È qualcosa divertente. Inquadratura - figura intera (anche se le persone non sono in piedi). Angolo di ripresa normale. La donna è di fronte a noi e ci vede. È come un invito - anche noi possiamo entrare nel divertimento. Possiamo usare questa macchina d'improvviso. Non è obbligatorio mantenere una posa, sorridendo per qualche minuto - si può usarla adesso, subito... (D, UR, pp. 27-28)

**The main image is humorous. Distance is intimate. The gaze is semi-reciprocal. The structure is like a Zed. The oblique line is ascending towards the right = mobility, dynamism. The advertised camera has these qualities. One can use it in a dynamic way. It is fun. The frame type shows the entire figure (although the people are not standing). The shot angle is normal. The woman is in front of us and sees us. This is like an invitation - we, too, can join in the amusement. We can use this camera suddenly. It is not obligatory to strike a pose, smiling for some time - we can use it now, immediately...**

### 4.5.2 Carte Noire Instant coffee

(in C, Carte Noire)

> Carte Noire
>
> Struttura a Z
>
> Il bianco e nero del immagine si fa in mente Parigi - atmosferico, serio - e anche il nome del prodotto 'Carte Noire'.
>
> Linea - dritta nella finestra. Dopo il caffè sentiamo che l'uomo si raddrizza.
>
> Angolo di ripresa - (interessante, c'è anche lo specchio) un po' verso l'alto.
>
> La posa - non è adesso. Lui sta bevendo un caffè e sta guardando se

stesso nello specchio. Noi lo guardiamo e sentiamo l'importanza del caffè per lui.

Inquadratura - piano americano.

Il gesto significa l'importanza di questa bevanda per svegliarsi.(D, UR, pp. 29-30)

Carte Noire

Zed structure.

The black and white of the image reminds us of Paris - atmospheric, serious - and also the name of the product 'Carte Noire'.

The window lines are straight. After drinking coffee we feel that the man straightens.

The point of view (interesting: there is also a mirror) is slightly upwards.

The pose: it is not now. He is drinking his coffee and looking at himself in the mirror. We are looking at him and feel the importance of coffee for him.

The shot frame is from thigh height.

His gesture means the importance of this drink for waking up.

### 4.5.3 Parmalat Milk

(in C, Parmalat)

Descrizione delle due pubblicità stampate

n. 1 Latte Parmalat

La prima cosa che attira la nostra attenzione è l'immagine principale: corpo femminile di una forma perfetta e, davanti, l'immagine del prodotto.

Gli elementi periferici sono: 1) il titolo, in cima alla pagina, seguito dallo slogan; 2) in fondo alla pagina la marca e il nome dell'azienda, seguiti dalla frase finale ('nutre la vita').

Per persuadere il consumatore la pubblicità usa l'impulso della bellezza (del corpo).(D, IS, pp. 2-3)

Description of two print advertisements

n.1 Parmalat milk

The first thing that catches our attention is the main image: a female body with a perfect shape and, in front of it, the pack shot.

The peripheral elements are: 1) the headline, at the top of the page, followed by the slogan; 2) at the bottom of the page the brand and the brand name are followed by the pay off ('Nourishes life').

In order to persuade the consumer, this advertisement uses the (body) beauty appeal.

### 4.5.4 Grigioperla perfume

(C, Grigioperla)

n. 2 Grigioperla

L'impulso dell'amore è usato per persuadere in questa pubblicità. L'immagine principale è una coppia che si trova nella (in?) prossimità intima. Il slogan 'forte e tenero' appare in cima; il titolo non c'è. Altri periferici: in fondo alla pagina appaiono l'immagine del prodotto e

la frase finale è semplicemente 'profumo per uomo'.(D, IS, p. 2)

The love appeal is used to persuade in this advertisement. The main image is constituted by a couple who are portrayed at an intimate distance [reference is to Hall's distance taxonomy, see 3.4]. The slogan 'strong and tender' appears at the top of the page. There is no title. Other peripheral elements: in the background we see the image of the product and the payoff simply reads: 'Perfume for man'.

### 4.5.5 Yamaha Scooter

(C, Issey Miyake)

Figura n.1

*Registro espressivo: formale o informale?* Direi che il registro espressivo della questa figura è formale.

*Che contenuto comunica?* La figura comunica un'espressione di dispiacere, lo sguardo è diretto ma freddo; l'incrocio delle braccia mostra la determinazione.

*Quali frasi accompagnano questo gesto secondo te?* 'I mean what I say', 'It's not a joking matter' or 'I'm not amused'.

*Scrivi un titolo per questa figura:* 'Il desiderio che si chiama lo SU scooter' (D, IS, pp. 23-24)

***Expressive register: formal or informal?*** I think the expressive register of this image is formal.

***What content does it communicate?*** The picture communicates an expression of sadness, the gaze is direct but cold; the man's folded arms indicate his determination.

***Which sentences might accompany this gesture?*** 'I mean what I say', 'It's not a joking matter' or 'I'm not amused'.

***Write a title for this image:*** 'The desire called SU scooter'

### 4.5.6 Newspaper photograph

(C, Bantam)

Figura n.2

*Registro espressivo: formale o informale?* Il registro espressivo è informale; la distanza tra le due è intima.

*Che contenuto comunica?* La figura comunica la comprensione tra la donna e il suo galletto e anche l'orgoglio e la felicità.

*Quali frasi accompagnano questo gesto secondo te?* Questo sguardo (e la volta) dice: 'Mio tesoro! Come sono fiera di te!'

*Scrivi un titolo per questa figura:* 'Il bellissimo Bantam'.(D, IS, pp. 23 and 25)

***Expressive register: formal or informal?*** The expressive register is informal; the distance between the two is intimate.

***What content does it communicate?*** The picture communicates an understanding between the woman and her Bantam chicken, but also pride and happiness.

***Which sentences might accompany this gesture?*** This gaze and the turn say: 'My treasure! How proud I am of you!'

***Write a title for this image:*** 'The beautiful Bantam'

### 4.5.7 Issey Miyake Perfume

(C, Issey Miyake)

Descrizione della pubblicità stampata

Questo è una pubblicità stampata per un profumo per uomo; è semplicissima; senza titolo. C'è solo l'immagine principale - di tipo assiale - del prodotto.

Solo un colore è usato e il testo di accompagnamento è minimo. La marca è molto discreta e la frase finale non c'è!

L'attrazione del'immagine è nella sua semplicità della forma e del colore (blu, per ragazzi!).

L'immagine è un'iperbole - il prodotto è grandissimo. Per magnificarlo e darlo importanza l'angolo di ripresa è verso l'alto. Le linee sono tutte dritte e si riferiscono alla virilità. Il prodotto è di fronte a noi, significando un invito a noi di comprarlo.(D, IS, pp. 46-47)

**Description of a print advertisement**

**This is a print advertisement for a man perfume; it is very simple and without headline. There is only the main image - of the axial type - of the product.**

**Only one colour is used and the bodycopy is reduced to a minimum. The brand is very discreet and there is no payoff!**

**The appeal of the image consists in its simplicity of form and colour (blue for men!).**

**The image is a hyperbole - the product is very big. In order to magnify it and to give importance to it, the shot angle tends towards the top. All the lines are straight and refer to virility. The product stands in front of us, inviting us to buy it.**

### 4.5.8 Miele Dishwasher

(C, Miele)

La pubblicità commentata: 'Miele'

L'organizzazione della pubblicità

In alto, a sinistra c'è una donna indossando un tailleur formale. In alto, a destra c'è il testo. Al centro a destra c'è una valigetta su un banco. Sotto il banco c'è la lavastoviglie di Miele. In fondo a destra c'è il nome/ il logo del prodotto. E sotto il logo c'è lo slogan.

È interessante come il banco fa una divisione nell'immagine. Gli spazi della foto sotto il banco hanno la struttura Zeta: donna - valigetta - lavastoviglie - logo/slogan .

La lavatrice è presentata dal fronte - assiale. Ovviamente perché è il prodotto della pubblicità.

Il banco è forse una metafora per la divisione tra la vita della donna nei affari e la sua vita a casa.

La persuasione:

Nell'immagine: la donna di affari fa un gesto che dice: 'Sono una donna importante. Chiedo la migliore lavatrice'. Nel testo: c'è la retorica - un gioco di parole: 'reached the top'.

Però bisogna dire che la pubblicità era tirata di una rivista del giardinaggio. Si nuota che una donna chi ha il dovere di lavare i piatti.(D, CA, pp. 1-2)

Commented advertisement: 'Miele'

The organisation of the advertisement

At the top left of the page there is a woman wearing a formal suit. At the top right there is the text. At the centre right there is a suitcase on a plane. Under the plane is placed the Miele dishwasher. At the bottom right there is the name/logo of the product and under the logo we find the slogan.

It is interesting that the plane creates a division of the image. The spaces of the photograph below the plane exhibit a Zed structure: woman - suitcase - dishwasher -logo/slogan.

The dishwasher is photographed from the front - in an axial structure. Obviously because it is the advertised product.

The plane perhaps is a metaphor of the division between the woman's work life and her home life.

The Persuasion:

In the image: the business woman makes a gesture that says: 'I am an important woman. I demand the best dishwasher'. In the text: there is a rhetorical figure - a play on words : 'reached the top'.

One has to say, however, that this advertisement was extracted from a gardening magazine. It may be observed how this implies that a woman has the obligation to do the dishes.

## 4.6 Conclusion

As this chapter showed, advertising analysis is a stimulating activity which encourages language production. Its linguistic density, intertextuality, multisensory stimuli and often hidden persuasive purpose can all be exploited in education to favour the development of a critical attitude in the learner and stimulate language production. This chapter also demonstrated that advertising analyses become more productive and rewarding as expertise increases. Developing expertise, however, cannot be exhausted in a single analysing task but, like any learning activity, requires some time. The decision to structure an 8-week course around advertising analysis (described in chapter 5) stems from this awareness.

In a sense, the development of expertise corresponds to equipping learners with tools for delving progressively into the text in order to find new meanings to combine with their own impressions. This means also that for carrying out a text-responding activity one requires a reasonable stretch of time. I believe that the analyses presented in this chapter are part of the process of learning as authentication-appropriation, which stems from the encounter between the text and the learner. As argued in chapter 2 this process is close to learner autonomy and is enhanced by systematic reflection as provided by learning diaries.

While the previous chapters provided suggestions on how to authenticate advertisements, in the next chapter I illustrate how all these suggestions were combined and translated into pedagogical practice.

# Chapter 5. The empirical study and the methodology

*Diario: Salvare, fissandoli, frammenti di tempo concreto.*
Morea, 1998

## 5.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the experiment of designing, setting up and teaching a course that was based entirely on the exploration of a specific genre of authentic text, i.e. print advertisements, through the medium of Italian as a FL. In the wake of recent pedagogical developments I have argued in the previous chapters that learning from authentic texts consists in an active process of 'authentication' of the text in question where the learner plays a central role and linked this process with the development of learner autonomy through reflection. Through reflection on the text and on the learner's cognitive and learning process, authentic texts are assimilated into the learner's cognitive structure and become part of who they are. This process I called 'appropriation' and suggested an observation of such process of authentication-appropriation through a classroom analysis of the advertising genre.

The most pervasive type of advertising conceals a predominant commercial purpose under an attractive appearance. The 'attention-seeking' nature of advertising accounts for its creative exploitation of visual and linguistic components and of a variety of references to aspects of our culture and society (this was discussed in chapter 3). The appealing, persuasive and creative nature of advertisements makes this genre particularly suitable for stimulating discussion and calls for an exploration of its communication strategies. As shown in chapter 3, advertising communication is achieved through many levels and, given the appropriate tools, many layers of analysis can be discovered. As a matter of fact, a lot of time and money go into the creation of advertising communication, advertisements are carefully constructed and hardly leave anything to chance interpretations. My argument is that studying advertisements from the points of view discussed in the previous two chapters allows the authentication and the appropriation of texts and the simultaneous learning of language for two intertwined reasons: firstly, learners use the TL for a 'real' process of discovery of advertisements' strategies of persuasion, thus

learning the language in the process; secondly, they progressively develop expertise in the analysis of advertisements, expertise that obviously is not confined to the L2 learning environment but is likely to become part of who they are. Since appropriation entails reflection on the part of the learner, learner diaries were introduced to enhance reflectiveness and also to observe how this process of appropriation takes place. Diary entries can offer participants' impressions about this process and also their reactions to the innovative nature of this course. To this end a structured diary, or journal, was employed for the course and the last portion of this chapter is dedicated to a discussion of this methodology .

This chapter consists of two descriptive sections (5.1 and 5.2) and an argumentative section (5.3). The first (5.1) describes the characteristics of the experiment and includes three subsections: 5.1.1 refers to the experiment design, objectives and lecturer; 5.1.2 presents the characteristics of the journal, and explains the adjustments made to it; 5.1.3 includes a description of additional methodological tools used throughout the experiment: teacher notes and video-recordings, and briefly alludes to the materials employed in the course.

Section 5.2 consists of two subsections: 5.2.1 gives a description of the course (location, duration, participant recruitment and the class size) and of the participants on the basis of a preliminary questionnaire which was administered prior to the start of the course; 5.2.2 summarises the contents and activities for each of the classes.

Section 5.3 is devoted to a discussion of the methodology used in the experiment. Its aim is to show how the characteristics of the diary study are the most appropriate for the empirical research described in this thesis. It begins by reviewing the literature with a view to recapitulating the main characteristics of the diary study and focuses on the pedagogical dimension of this research method (5.3.1). It then discusses some methodological issues connected to the diary study (5.3.2). Finally, it concludes that the diary harmonises with the exploratory nature of this study (5.3.3).

## 5.1 The experiment

### 5.1.1 Characteristics

*Design*

It was established that 16 adult students of Italian would attend a course based entirely on the study of advertising characteristics with a particular focus on print advertisements and that they would be taught exclusively through the medium of the TL, i.e. Italian. Also, it was proposed that each student would compile a journal for each class and report on aspects of language and content teaching and learning in addition to their own learning experience.

*Objectives*

Further to the theoretical discussion in chapters 1 and 2, this course was set up to observe the encounter between the text and the learner. More specifically, a fundamental objective of this study was to observe the modalities through which learners would 'authenticate' print advertisements, that is to say, how they would approach, interact with and learn from this text genre through a systematic reflective activity. Additionally, it was expected that reasonably proficient learners of the TL, in possession of a certain familiarity with language courses, would provide feedback on aspects of the course such as the following:

- Its content, or the '*what*' was presented (e.g. rhetoric in advertising): for example, its motivational appeal, its relevance to the analysis of advertising texts, the suitability of certain activities to the learning of the language, etc.;

- Its organisation, or the '*how*' it was presented: sequence of classes, the choice of activities, of texts, classroom management, etc.

- The participants' own perception of their learning process of language, content and the interweaving of the two.

*Research-Lecturer*

The lecturer of the course, who is also the writer of this thesis, is a native speaker of the TL and a qualified teacher of Italian L2 and English (with experience at teaching to adults and to secondary-level students, in particular). Her approach to the study of advertising roughly coincides with the initial stages of her doctoral research. As the course unfold, the teacher took notes on the organisational features of classes (e.g. sequence and type of activities) as an aide-memoir to this report (see 5.1.3). Throughout the thesis she is referred to as 'the researcher' or 'the teacher' according to the context. This choice of the third rather than the first person, however, is intended to distance the present writer from the study presented here and give it academic credibility.

*Data sifting*

Data sifting was carried out by the researcher at three consecutive times. In the first stage she tagged prominent elements, while in the second and third stages she identified recurring patterns. These patterns provide the structure for the discussion in the following chapter.

### 5.1.2 The Journal: characteristics and adjustments

Participants were asked to compile a structured journal for each of the classes reporting on several aspects of the course as suggested by the journal sections (A, Journal Italian version). The journal I used was modelled on a recent version of the journal originally created by Devitt and Czak (1981). This more recent version, in turn, was designed by Dr Seán Devitt and used in the Modern Languages section of the Higher Diploma in Education in the School of Education, Trinity College, over a period of four years, i.e. 2002-2006. The journal underwent slight changes in structure and more visible changes in format, font, layout, etc. It consists of a document booklet that the researcher adjusted in order to suit learners, following suggestions on their part, and/or to stimulate a lengthier or precise response from them, such as the last question of the journal that was added starting from class 2 (in A, Journal Italian version, p. 4)

and given more 'emphasis' starting from class 3 (in A, Journal English version; p. 3). Overall, however, the basic structure of the journal stayed the same throughout the course; in the journal the subjects were asked to reflect on and recapitulate: 1) class objectives and contents, 2) language and content 'items' learnt, 3) learning strategies and occasions where what was learnt would be (or was) 'recycled', and also (starting from the second class) also to write 4) a synthesis of 'the most salient aspects of the class'.

Given the intermediate/advanced proficiency of participants, it was established that journal entries would generally be written in Italian, but also that learners could switch to English whenever they wished. To enhance the pedagogical dimension of journal writing and simultaneously avail of precious learner comments, it was proposed that the teacher would collect weekly participants' journal entries for each class and give suggestions for the improvement of learners' writing skills and to enhance the reflective value of the diary.

More specifically, that the teacher collected diary entries weekly had three intertwined pedagogic purposes as it would enable her to: a) help individual participants to deal with formal aspects of the TL while simultaneously becoming aware of linguistic features she would have to focus on in subsequent lessons; b) stimulate learners' reflections and help them to appreciate the content topics that had been discussed in class; c) provide formal feedback and assistance as to the use of the TL for the writing of the diary genre. In addition to the comments made in relation to a), b) and c) on each participant's diary and in order to provide additional feedback and support to each learner, the teacher decided to write letters addressed to each participant (an example is in D, KV, pp. 13-20, IIIcl.). Here, she would provide learners with alternative viewpoints on the analysis of advertising communication, language input to help them rephrase concepts more clearly, point out linguistic mistakes, offer advice as to the writing of the journal in Italian, etc. Most learners replied to these letters with other letters so that a private teacher-learner correspondence, usually in Italian, was started and which went beyond the discussion of features of content and language aspects of specific classes (one of the learners chose to include her letter in her folder: see D, LN, pp. 3-4).

As one of the objectives of the course was to improve the participants' ability to monitor their progress in acquiring skills in both the language and in the analysis of the advertising text, the teacher invited participants to create a portfolio[16] where they would collect materials distributed in class, along with their diary entries, analyses of texts and sample advertisements (all portfolios are available in Appendix D).

*Adjustments made to diary*

With the intention to elicit more comments and writing from learners, the researcher decided to ask learners to write all entries in English only for class 3, and emphasised the importance of the final page where learners would recapitulate the 'salient aspects' of the class:

> This is the most important part of this scheda di riflessione [lit. 'reflection form', i.e. diary]. In this section I ask you to gather what you think are the most salient aspects of today's class. Please, remember there is no wrong or right answer to this. What counts is your candid and genuine recollection of facts. Grazie mille del tuo aiuto [i.e., 'thank you very much for your help']. (in A, Journal English version, p. 3)

The measure proved successful and a fourth section was added to the journal structure from this class on and throughout the course. Also, learners seemed to be more 'at ease' with the idea of using English for their entries if needed, nevertheless, the vast majority of entries in following diaries remained in Italian. The switch to English, however temporary, was effective in stimulating learners' writing and reflection not only on that occasion but also for the following classes.

The teacher also noticed that feedback on the diaries was certainly helpful but that students would sometimes benefit from a more specific, one-to-one elucidation of contents. Also starting from class 3, she decided to write personal letters to each of the students throughout the course and deliver them to the addressee with her or his previous week journal. In the letter, the teacher would explain (mostly in Italian, sometimes with some English sentences 'blended in', too), reassure, and most importantly, encourage participants to write generously and without restraint;

[16] The word 'portfolio' (inspired by the European Language Portfolio, Authentik, 2001) is used throughout the thesis to refer to participants' folders. Occasionally, the word 'folder' appears as an alternative.

in short, she would communicate with them in a more personal and direct manner (an example is attached to GR's folder in D, GR, p. 30, IIIcl.). By the end of the course, all students had received one or more personal letters, depending on individual circumstances (e.g. they needed further assistance; they replied to the letter, etc.). In addition to the pedagogic reasons expressed earlier on in this section, the choice of writing a personal letter was due to the necessity that the teacher felt to reassure participants that their comments on the course were all legitimate and useful. Learner letters all expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to attend this course and for the teacher's work. Not least, letters provided students with additional TL input and writing opportunity.

### 5.1.3 Additional methodological tools

*Teacher's notes*

The teacher also kept notes throughout the course. The aim of this document was recapitulative, a 'record of work'. The teacher would keep track of decisions and adjustments made to the syllabus and to journals and provide a summary of class events, mainly activities, for later recollection. These notes were meant to serve as an aide-memoir for the writing of the classes summary (which is in 5.2.2 of this chapter). The content of these notes is integrated into the present chapter (all teacher's notes are in Appendix E within folders I, II, III, IV, V and VI, file number for each folder is 0).

*Video-recordings*

Video-recordings were made of classes 4,5,6 and 7. Unfortunately, due to practical reasons, the films are often too defective to be of value. Their poor quality does not make them useful for the data analysis carried out in chapter 6.

*Materials*

Course materials mirrored, on a considerably smaller scale, the process of exploration of the

subject by the researcher herself. Advertisements were widely used in each class and were extracted from, mainly but not exclusively, Italian magazines and newspapers. Following practical reasons, advertisements were selected exclusively from print materials, i.e. magazines or newspapers. Advertisements were selected by the teacher prior to each class so that they would exhibit more obviously the characteristics focused on in each case (e.g. rhetorical figures). Besides print advertisements, course materials also included excerpts from research literature on advertising drawn from several disciplines as collected and studied by the researcher herself and which she had found particularly stimulating and productive for the analysis of advertising. Texts were summarised by the researcher in order to adapt to the time constraints and class objectives (see, for example, the introductory sheet on rhetoric in E, III, 1 Rhetoric Intro).

## 5.2 The course

### 5.2.1 Course description and the subjects

*Setting, duration and participant recruitment*

The course on advertising took place over 8 consecutive weeks, i.e. from April 11, 2005 to June 20, 2005 and was conducted by the researcher-teacher in the premises of the Italian Cultural Institute in Dublin[17]. Classes were held on Mondays from 5:30 to 7:00 pm with the exception of bank holidays. The experiment in the teaching of advertising communication through the means of Italian does not fit into the regular courses of the Institute but was accepted as part of its cultural activities.

The Institute organises courses of Italian L2 at various levels of proficiency thus providing the researcher with an ideal environment to recruit a substantial number of would-be participants in the planned course on advertising. Recruitment proceeded as follows: learners from intermediate and advanced classes were handed a flier giving information on the planned

[17] From here on referred to as IICD, i.e. *Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Dublino*.

course, i.e. *Il superitaliano*, i.e. 'The superitalian' (the levels refer to the arrangement of classes in the IICD: *Corso principianti*, i.e. Beginner Course, *Intermedio*, i.e. Intermediate course and *Avanzato* i.e. Advanced course). The course name, *Il superitaliano*, alludes to the widespread overuse of the prefix 'super-' in the advertising language in Italy as observed by Migliorini as early as 1937 along with other 'linguistic manipulations' (discussed in Tosi, 2000: 169-170; other linguistic 'manipulations' are discussed, with reference to Italian, in Altieri Biagi, 1979: 266-267, 303-309; 1980; Cardona, 1979: 34-38; Baldini, 1987: 31-48). The flier explained that the course was the empirical part of a doctoral study, synthetically explaining its content and intended aim, and giving practical details such as the course duration, location and the dates of the classes. The flier also specified that participation in the course would be entirely voluntary and a form was attached to it inviting students who wanted to take part in the course to give their contact details to the researcher (see A, Flier and Contact details form). Twenty-three students expressed an interest in joining the course – a number later restricted to a sample of 16 participants as explained in the next section.

Once participants of the course had been recruited, they were asked to give consent in writing to the treatment of data that would be elicited during the course. The consent form in question listed the data elicitation systems that would be employed throughout the course and made clear that the treatment of such data would be carried out according to the privacy legislation on the matter. The form also reiterated that participation in the course was entirely voluntary and made clear that possible withdrawal from it was not questioned; participants, however, were expected to participate in all classes and were invited to communicate to the researcher a decision to withdraw from the course as soon as possible. This specification was made in order to minimise the risk of dropouts from the course, which, fortunately, was limited to 2 subjects (Consent form is available in A, Invitation and Consent form).

*Class size*

The research focus on the qualitative content of language learners' individual perceptions on the

course entailed certain implications for the size of the learner sample to be investigated. Additionally, practical considerations favoured a project on a small scale. Firstly, the maximum class size, as determined by the institution hosting the course, counts 14 learners and may stretch up to 16 students per class. This numerical dimension matches the IICD necessity a) to ensure their learners get an adequate share of attention from the teacher and b) avail of sufficient room for student desks or chairs in group-based activities – activities contemplated in their courses and, suitably, in the planned course on advertising, as well. This meant that the sample size chosen for investigation would not exceed 16 participants[18].

Secondly, it was reasonable to anticipate that some students would naturally drop out of the course or fail to complete their diaries in a systematic manner, also in consideration of the extended duration of the course and its quest for regular commitment. In order to prevent the danger of being left with a scarce amount of data, out of the 23 people who expressed an interest in joining the course, the researcher selected the first 18 who had responded to the invitation, that is, 2 more than the maximum class capacity. This cautionary measure proved to be of help as two of the students who had been selected to participate in the course decided to abandon it for reasons related to their work, in one case (prior to course commencement), and impossibility to guarantee systematic commitment, in the other (after the first class).

Thirdly, given the open type of introspective data to be elicited and analysed, the researcher regarded 16 as a suitable class size for the provision of a manageable body of data for the purposes of detailed content and descriptive analysis. At the same time, the number was sufficiently large for the necessary tracing of underlying patterns in individual diaries and comparisons of common underlying patterns between learners.

*Preliminary questionnaire: aims and characteristics*

Once students had accepted to join the course and had given permission to the treatment of data,

[18] Class size is specified on the IICD website, available at:
http://www.iicdublino.esteri.it/IIC_Dublino/Menu/Imparare_Italiano/I_corsi_di_lingua/

they were administered a short questionnaire in English including closed and open-ended questions on the participants' linguistic profile and on expectations for the course (Questionnaire in A, Questionnaire (blank) with self-assessment grids in English and in Italian). The decision to use an introductory questionnaire to be completed prior to course commencement was based on the necessity to prepare learners to the content of the course, i.e. advertising communication, and to the habit of journal writing with its emphasis on self-assessment and monitoring of one's learning process. In the questionnaire, learners were invited to devote time to themselves, to reflect on their TL proficiency and on their expectations for the course.

The aim of the preliminary questionnaire was therefore to sensitise learners to the project; nevertheless, it also lends a portrait of the class as a whole. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to:

- write their name, nationality, native language/s and their familiarity with any other foreign language;

- qualify their level of competence in the TL according to the global scale of the Common European Framework (CEF) and, in particular, the self-assessment grid there provided and attached to the questionnaire in both English and Italian (Council of Europe, 2001: 26-27; see A, Questionnaire (blank) with self-assessment grids in English and in Italian, pp. 2 and 5);

- complete two grids concerning the formal instruction received in the TL language and the periods of time spent in Italy, ideally in a situation of 'full immersion', that is in a situation where the learner is completely immersed in the TL;

- write on what occasions they would use the TL outside the classroom;

- tick on a scale from 1 (not true) to 5 (very true) the reasons for learning the TL and things they like to do with the TL.

- Finally, as regards learners' expectations for the course, they were asked to answer in writing to six open questions concerning the subject of 'advertising' and 'communication'. This last section was again intended to stimulate learners' reflections on these two subjects and not as a test on their knowledge on the subject, therefore no clarification was added to the terms 'advertising' and 'communication'.

On each of these clusters of information it is commented on in the following sections with reference to the class as a whole.

*The subjects – general comment*

16 learners took part in the study described here, their age ranging from 30 to 70+ years, 12 were females and 4 males. 13 of them were Irish – with English as their native language. Of the 3 non-Irish participants, there was 1 Polish native speaker, 1 Spanish native speaker and 1 'Croatian + Irish-British' national, using the participant's words, who described herself as Croatian native speaker (see B, IS_Questionnaire; p. 1). The 3 non-Irish learners were all long-term residents in Dublin (for more than 5 years) and, from what the researcher could gather from personal conversations with them, considered themselves as highly proficient in English and well integrated in the Irish society.

The educational profile of participants was quite advanced: all but 2 had received third-level education. Their linguistic background was also quite promising in terms of interest in L2 learning since the majority of them, with the sole exception of one learner, had already embarked in the study of at least an L3 in the past as shown in Table 3 below:

| *No. of students* | *No. of languages learned besides Italian* |
|---|---|
| *7* | *Italian + 3* |
| *5* | *Italian + 2* |
| *3* | *Italian + 1* |
| *1* | *Italian + 0* |
| ***Total = 16*** | |

**Table 3 Languages learned besides Italian (L1 not included)**

Since a homogeneous degree of proficiency in the TL was obviously desirable for the planned course, the participants were recruited from 'High Intermediate' and 'Advanced' classes within the IICD. The students' participation in those classes favoured a certain consistency in their knowledge of the TL. Nevertheless, the researcher decided to ask participants to consider their proficiency of the TL based on the CEF grid for self-assessment (2001: 26-27). As already said, the grid was attached to the preliminary questionnaire.

Learners were asked to indicate a value between A1 and C2 with reference to 5 language skills, i.e. the receptive skills: 1) Listening and 2) Reading; and the productive skills: 3) Spoken interaction, 4) Spoken production, and 5) Writing. The result of this section of the questionnaire responded to expectations and the majority of participants assessed their own proficiency at 'Threshold' level, i.e. B1 (10 learners out of 16) and at 'Vantage' level, i.e. B2 (3 learners). One of the participants specified that he felt his average knowledge of Italian was accurately described as positioned between B1 and B2+ (i.e., plus; personal communication), while only 2 participants assessed their average knowledge of Italian as A2 and A2– (i.e. minus) respectively, i.e. at 'Waystage' level (terms indicating levels are from the CEF). The quite comfortable participation of these two learners in the course meant that their self-assessment was probably inaccurate perhaps due to lack of confidence or scarce attention to levels description attached to questionnaire. Table 4 below shows the participants' self-assessed

average proficiency of the TL (participants' questionnaires are available in Appendix B):

| *No. of students* | *Self-assessed proficiency in Italian* |
|---|---|
| *10* | *B1 (– AND +)* |
| *3* | *B2 (– AND +)* |
| *2* | *A2* |
| *1* | *B1-B2+* |
| ***Total = 16 students*** | |

**Table 4 Self-assessed proficiency in the TL**

The questionnaire also elicited information concerning a) the learners' previous study of Italian; b) the time they had spent in Italy; c) their contact with the TL outside the classroom; d) reasons for learning the TL; and e) things they like to do with the TL, e.g. writing, watching films, etc. Similarly to the previous section of the questionnaire, where learners were asked to reflect on which level they reckoned they had reached in the TL learning process, here they were invited to reflect on, and become aware of, which steps and choices had determined such TL proficiency.

As it emerges from questionnaires, most of the learners had studied Italian for 2 or 3 years (7 and 5 students respectively), with 4 years and 1 year as the upper and lower end (2 and 2 learners respectively) and had spent only very short periods of time in Italy, only sometimes in a situation of 'full immersion' in the TL environment, i.e. one or two weeks, with the exception of one participant who had taken a 5-month holiday/career break and spent it in Italy. Of course, the temporal quantification of TL study functions as a reflective stimulus for the learner and as a piece of information for the teacher but leaves out qualitative information on the various language-learning experiences.

Motivation for learning the language was in most cases 'integrative', using Gardner and

Lambert's (1972) words, which describe integrative motivation as 'reflecting a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group' (p. 132, quoted in Ushioda, 1996: 5). In fact, none of the learners had first chosen to learn Italian for work, although some would now consider this as a possibility ('It is mostly my hobby at the moment but I hope it will be useful at work in the future' – writes one participant, see B, JA_Questionnaire; p. 2). All students had initially approached the language for personal enhancement, such as the desire to 'learn a new language' (see B, MC_Questionnaire; p. 1), or because they had an 'interest in the country (e.g. B, JA_Questionnaire; p. 1). Consistently, the time they had spent in Italy coincided with vacation periods occasionally combined with the attendance of classes in loco (15 out of 16 students had been on holiday in Italy). Concerning present contact with the TL, although the occasions to interact with speakers of Italian in Dublin were limited, they all showed an interest in seizing occasions to be exposed to the language: '[I practise Italian] occasionally at home with my husband who is also studying Italian' (B, CN_Questionnaire; p. 2); ' [I practise Italian in] Interaction with native speakers in English-Italian conversation exchange (B, CA_Questionnaire; p. 2); 'I just practise it at home – listening to tapes and repeating' (B, KN_Questionnaire; p. 2).

Overall, the profile of learners, as it emerged from the questionnaires, responded to a quest for a quite homogenous proficiency in the TL and a positive motivational attitude towards the course. Expectations for the course, as it was elicited from the open questions on the last sheet of the questionnaire, ranged from general interest in advertising, especially for 'the tricks of the trade' as one student described it (B, KV_Questionnaire; p. 3), to well-defined questions, such as the following:

> Is [advertising] innovative as it is traditionalist? What are the extremes? The limits? What is effective for Italians? What attitudes come across regarding family, Europe, world, youth, age…? (B, GR_Questionnaire; p. 3)

This quotation gives an idea of the enthusiastic curiosity expressed by participants prior to the course. Overall, the pre-course questionnaire achieved its purpose of stimulating curiosity and anticipation through a foretaste of its content. Using the notions discussed in chapter 2 in

relation to reflection and learning, the questionnaire meant to prepare the learners' cognitive structure to process the new material for learning.

### 5.2.2 Outline of classes

Since countless layers of analysis can be adopted in approaching the subject of advertising communication, as was discussed in chapter 5, the syllabus for this course is the result of a selection operated by the researcher on the basis of her experience as a student of the subject of advertising. The selection also reflects the prominence of several slants on advertising as it has emerged in her review of the literature on the subject. Of course, not all research areas could be represented in the course due to time constraints.

Because every class was meant to give a flavour of a specific research area in its own right, it could be considered as an independent unit. Nevertheless, each class interrelated with any of the others in that a) it revolved around a single core subject-text, and b) the analysis of advertising benefited from the progressive accumulation of approaches to the subject. The use of the TL as the predominant means of communication in class also acted as a cohesive factors throughout the course. The course could thus function as a highly integrated unit.

The following outline was attached to participants' individual folders:

Outline of the course

1st week: six characters in search of an opinion, i.e. comments on advertising

2nd week: persuasion

3rd week: rhetoric

4th week: paralinguistic communication

5th week: reading some photography (photographic devices: colour, p.o.v. [i.e. point of view], perspective, etc.)

6th week: enhance creativity

7th week: Goffman and gender in advertisements + Project preparation: portfolio assessment, advertisements analysed

8th week: student presentation: portfolios, analyses of advertisements, learning experience.

The original sequence of classes underwent some changes, more specifically: class 7 was devoted exclusively to collective evaluation of portfolios (at the expense of a focus on Goffman's [1979] stimulating essay on gender in advertising, discussed in 3.4), while a small prize ceremony and the awarding of certificates of attendance, occupied class 8 entirely (A, Certificate of attendance). A summary of activities carried out in each class is given in the following sections.

#### 5.2.2.1 Class 1: Introduction to the course

In the very first 15 minutes of the class the teacher thanked learners for their participation in the course, introduced herself briefly and handed each of them a binder with loose sheets, which was referred to as their 'portfolio'. Each contained three sheets: a) a summative indication of how to use the portfolio (A, Portfolio: structure); b) an outline of classes to come (A, Outline of the course) and c) a blank journal form (A, Journal Italian version)[19]. The teacher explained that the journal should be compiled by learners after every class and would help them to recapitulate the most prominent aspects of their learning with regards both the class content and language. The teacher introduced each part and answered to a few questions as follows: a) students were invited to write their diary as much and as regularly as possible; b) Italian was preferable as a

[19] Page 4 had not yet been added to Journal structure, see discussion in 5.1.2 above.

language for writing but they may resort to English whenever they wished to do so; and c) their diary entries would be corrected by the teacher and returned to the learner on the following lesson. She then invited learners to introduce themselves to the rest of the class, which took no more than 10', after which class 1 began.

*Opinions on advertising*

The title of class 1 ('Six characters in search of an opinion') is a play on words on the title of the 1921 comedy 'Six characters in search of an author', by Sicilian playwright Luigi Pirandello, revolving around man's quest for an identity or an 'author' (two of the participants recognised and explained the play on words to the rest of the class). Class 1 ('Six characters in search of an opinion, i.e. comments on advertising'; April 11, 2005) was meant to function as an introduction to the course on advertising as a whole. The class was designed to expose learners to opinions and comments on advertising from a varied range of viewpoints and sources and to stimulate learners to express their own beliefs on the subject, explore conceptions and misconceptions on advertising and, ultimately, perceive it as a multifaceted, and complex, unit.

The class itself comprised 4 parts and was built around one preparatory and two core tasks as follows: 1) pre-task; 2) first task: 'ordering and sorting' (Willis, 1996: 150); 3) second task: write your opinion on advertising; 4) presenting results of tasks to the class.

*1)*

In a warm-up phase of familiarisation with the focus of class 1, i.e. opinions on advertising, the class was invited to generate a list of positive and negative aspects of advertising in a quite short time (10'). The brainstorm produced two sets of opinions, which the teacher wrote on the board as in Table 5 below:

| *LATI NEGATIVI*<br>*[Negative sides]* | *LATI POSITIVI*<br>*[Positive sides]* |
|---|---|
| *Influenza sui bambini*<br>*[Influence on children]* | *Novità*<br>*[Novelty]* |
| *Interrompe i film*<br>*[It interrupts films]* | *Qualità*<br>*[Quality. This was referred to the quality of advertising illustrations, animation, etc.]* |
| *Ubiquità*<br>*[Ubiquità]* | |
| *Sessismo*<br>*[Sexism]* | *Umorismo*<br>*[Humour]* |
| *Persuasione con i sentimenti*<br>*[Persuasion with feelings]* | *Immagini e colori*<br>*[Images and colours]* |
| *Informazione falsa/ambigua*<br>*[False/ambiguous information]* | *Danno un'informazione*<br>*[Gives information]* |
| *Volume alto*<br>*[High volume]* | *Modi di vita*<br>*[the full sentence read: 'it reflects ways of life']* |

**Table 5 Positive and negative aspects of advertising**

Besides listing some well-known characteristics of advertising, this activity familiarised learners with some of the vocabulary needed for the tasks that followed. Also importantly, this activity allowed learners to become aware of two structural characteristics of this type of communication and that can be found in its texts. As this brainstorming activity suggests, most negative characteristics listed by participants can be subsumed under the heading of 'persuasive communication with a commercial purpose', while positive characteristics are encompassed by a general 'creativity' notion attached to these texts. As was pointed out in chapter 3 the text characteristics are useful indication as to the type of activity to employ in response to the communicative intention of the text in question (see 3.0). Since advertising communicative purpose is to persuade (or, at best, solicit) the consumer to buy a product by means of an attractive appearance, the viewer may feel justified in responding to his 'interlocutor's' insisted solicitation by pondering the reasons behind such insistence and its true intentions. Analysing

advertisements communicative intention is a text-responsive activity since the course was based on this assumption, this brainstorming activity was placed at its start. As chapter 4 showed, the analysis of advertisements' communicative characteristics enhances the viewer's awareness of how the message is constructed to achieve its persuasive goal. The analyst comes to realise that advertisements are multilayered texts and each of those layers is carefully constructed to achieve the same persuasive goal. It is reasonable to expect that such awareness has an empowering effect on the analyst and allows him to make a more informed choice. Participants' diary entries in chapter 6 help to explore this question.

*2)*

This activity was meant to show that advertisements can be studied from various viewpoints. The class was divided into 6 groups and each was assigned a different poster introducing a specific character: 1) *Il polemico* (the controversial character), 2) *Lo storico* (the historian), 3) *Lo psicologo* (the psychologist), 4) *Lo scienziato della comunicazione* (The communication scientist), 5) *Il futurista* (the futurist), 6) *Il creativo ottimista* (The creative optimist). These characters were meant to represent a selection of approaches to the study of advertising that would be focused on in the course: opinions on advertising and how it had changed in time (class 1), its persuasive appeal (class 2), how it achieves communication through verbal and visual means (class 3, 4 and 5) and what lies at the heart of its creative manufacture (class 6). All these strands of enquiry were pursued in the course with a special focus on verbal and visual communication (in class 3, 4 and 5 described below).

The teacher read out the profile of each character, as it was printed on the relevant poster, and explained vocabulary if needed, then she assigned each group a set of opinions on advertising, each printed within a blue callout. Each group was asked to adopt their character's viewpoint and decide which of the opinions would be likely to be expressed by their character. In the effort to reproduce as many viewpoints on the subject as possible, citations selected for the activity derived from different sources, such as newspaper articles and advertising analyses (e.g.

from Fabris, 2002; Ceserani, 1988; Baldini, 1987; Douglas, 1984; Packard, 1958 and 1981; Turner, 1952; see E, I, 1 Posters of characters and E, I, 2 Quotations for characters).

*3)*

As a conclusion to part 2), each learner was asked to enrich the given set of opinions by writing a positive and a negative opinion on advertising on callouts. These were then handed to the teacher. Learners could choose to sign them or leave them anonymous (see E, I, 3 Students' opinions on advertising).

*4)*

In the conclusive phase of the class, each group presented the results of their task of sorting. Groups became aware of the fact that opinions could be assigned to more than one character, i.e. similar opinions may be expressed by different viewpoints. On those occasions, two or more groups were asked to explain why they thought their character would be more likely to express that particular opinion than other characters. This raised some debate among groups. During the debate the teacher seized the occasion raised by the 'historian' group to show learners some old advertisements to the class (in E, I, 4 Old advertisements).

Finally, the teacher read out each student's opinions without revealing the student's name, if stated, and asked the class to think of a character for each of those opinions. Unfortunately, time was running out and a discussion could not follow those cases where different learners thought the opinion belonged to their groups. Students were reminded to compile their diary and bring it in the following lesson.

### 5.2.2.2 Class 2: the role of persuasion in advertising

Class 2 ('Persuasion'; April 18, 2005) was dedicated to the exploration of persuasion in advertising, in particular to the techniques that draw our attention to advertisements. This topic was a natural continuation of class 1 whereby concern and curiosity on the effects of

advertisements had emerged repeatedly and raised students' interest. As a matter of fact, persuasive strategies are a distinctive characteristic of advertising communication and also a stimulating topic that links with psychological research. The researcher herself had focused on this topic at the beginning of her study. This class consisted of a preamble to the topic and 4 activities as follows:

*1)*

In a warm-up preamble, learners were introduced to the focus of this class and some relevant vocabulary, words and phrases, were brainstormed and written on the board (*persuasione*, i.e. 'persuasion', *colpire l'immaginazione*, i.e. 'to catch someone's imagination', etc.).

*2)*

Every learner was handed a list of questions concerning the persuasive effects of advertising (for example: *Come fa un messaggio ad attirare la nostra attenzione?*, i.e. 'How does a message attract our attention?') and a few answers, different for every learner, which they had to match, individually, to the appropriate questions. This task required learners to scan the list quickly in search of the matching questions thus making them familiar with its contents. The teacher helped with vocabulary if needed (the list of questions and the answers is in E, II, 1 Questions and answers).

*3)*

In groups, learners were asked to find an answer to as many questions as possible out of the list in 15'-20' and therefore to interact with as many co-learners as possible within the class.

*4)*

After a brief summary of some of the findings on persuasion as emerged through the previous activity, the teacher presented groups with four print advertisements, one per group, and asked groups to consider how the message was meant to convince the reader (advertisements are in

Appendix II, 3 Advertisements class 2).

*5)*

To conclude, learners presented results of their discussion to the rest of the class. Two groups wrote their analyses on two posters (in E, II, 2, McVitie's; E, II, 2, Rénault_advertisement, and E, II, 2, Rénault_comment). Following a suggestion made by some learners, the list of questions and matching answers on persuasion was attached to each learner's folder (E, II, 3 Questions and Answers_synthesis).

### 5.2.2.3 Class 3: rhetoric

The aim of Class 3 (May 9, 2005) was contiguous to the question of persuasion but also more specifically related to advertising texts: it consisted in familiarising learners with rhetorical devices that are employed in both the language and the visual components of advertisements (a discussion of the role of rhetoric in advertising was in 3.3). The class included an introductory reading on rhetoric and three tasks focusing on 4 rhetorical figures which are habitually encountered in advertising: metaphor, simile, hyperbole and repetition.

*1)*

In the preliminary segment of the class the teacher asked some learners to read out a one-page summary on definitions and components of rhetoric as given by Aristotle and Cicero (E, III, 1 Rhetoric Intro). The teacher explained vocabulary, made comments on each paragraph as it was read out and asked questions to learners such as: 'what convinces you in a speech?', 'what is the impact of the personality of the speaker?', etc.

*2)*

The class was divided into groups and each group was assigned:

- a poster carrying four headings, each for every figure of speech taken into consideration

*Metafora*, *Iperbole*, *Similitudine* and *Ripetizione*, i.e. Metaphor, Hyperbole, Simile, and Repetition;

- two envelopes labelled as *D* for *Definizioni* (i.e. Definitions) and *E* for *Esempi* (i.e. Examples), containing sets of definitions and examples of rhetorical figures in Italian and in English. These were not the translation of each other but each carried a different definition or example.

Learners were then invited to sort definitions and position them under the relevant headings (E, III, 3 Definitions and examples; E, III, 2 Posters).

*3)*

As groups were completing the activity, the teacher distributed some print advertisements and invited students to reflect on their visual component. In particular, she asked them to decide which of the four figures of speech was represented by the illustrations. The teacher intentionally avoided emphasising this shift in attention from the verbal dimension to the visual dimension of rhetorical figures (visual rhetoric was discussed in 3.3.5) and left some minutes for each group to discover it by themselves, which was done without any apparent difficulties. Participants mentioned the presence of rhetorical figures in images in their diaries (e.g. CH who wrote: 'I learnt that rhetoric concerns not only language but imagery also', in D, CA, p. 16, IIIcl.). Groups were also left some time to justify their choice to the rest of the class (E, III, 4 Advertisements class 3).

*4)*

The last task consisted in creating a short dialogue or story trying to employ all four rhetorical figures. Each group read out their dialogue. The class found two dialogues particularly amusing and this is mentioned in some diaries (e.g. 'I [...] remember the story of a man buying a ring in the jewellers', in D, GR, p. 29, IIIcl.).

### 5.2.2.4 Class 4: paralinguistic communication

The focus of class 4 (May 16, 2005) was on non-verbal systems of communication. Learners were presented some principles of analysis of non-verbal communication then asked to apply these principles to analyse some advertisements. Groups were formed and each group was handed three texts:

- The first carried a description of non-verbal languages classified into 1) kinetic language, 2) objectual language, 3) gestural language and 4) proxemic language (see Comodi, 1995: 13-14). Also, it carried a description of 4 types of gaze: 1) reciprocal gaze, 2) divergent gaze, 3) gaze towards an object and 4) semi-reciprocal gaze (see Millum's [1975] study of magazine advertisements; pp. 96, 115, 139). Both classifications were printed on one page (see E, IV, 1 Non-verbal languages and Gaze);

- The second gave an account of four of the senses (with the exclusion of taste) which are involved in the description of distances (described in the next paragraph): smell, touch, sight and hearing and four sets of those verbs which often accompany them (E, IV, 2 Proxemy and Four senses);

- The third text gave a description of the 4 types of distance, as classified by Hall (1969) and the role played by senses in every one of them (also in E, IV, 2 Proxemy and Four senses): intimate distance, personal distance, social distance and public distance.

The class consisted of an introductory part to the subject of non-verbal languages and an analysing part, where students were invited to recognise non-verbal languages in specific texts. Both parts are described below.

*1st part*

This part included two tasks: 1) a preliminary warm-up session where the teacher invited students to brainstorm ways to communicate without resorting to the verbal system and wrote

students' suggestions on the board, such as *sguardo* (gaze), *gesti* (gestures), etc. 2) a reconstruction task where the participants were invited to form groups and each group was assigned jumbled sections of each of the three documents which they had to reconstruct (E, IV, 3 Jumbled text and jigsaws). Each document introduced the classifications described above. The reconstruction task pursued the aim of having students quickly capture the essence of each text, which they would summarise to the rest of the class. Since the document on proxemy described actual distances, the teacher gave each group some rulers so that they could determine which relation existed among them on the basis of the space that separated them, which added an element of amusement to the class.

*2nd part*

In the successive phase, learners were asked to employ the newly acquired information to analyse drawings, first, and advertisements, second. In both cases learners would be necessarily looking at non-verbal clues such as gestures, distances, type of gaze, clothes, etc. in order to interpret the situations.

First, students were asked to describe the situations represented in some drawings and 'give words' to the characters in them following a model, supplied by Diadori (1990; see pp. 22-60), involving the individuation of: 1) the communicative register, i.e. formal or informal, 2) the content expressed, 3) the possible verbal accompaniment (E, IV, 5 Diadori classification). The third component consisted in generating one or more sentences or, if applicable, a short exchange between characters to present to the rest of the class. While every student was given the complete list of situations to describe and could appreciate the outcomes of other groups' work, each group was assigned a distinct set of three drawings (E, IV, 4 Drawings).

Second, each group analysed the illustration of a print advertisement, along the lines employed in the analysis of drawings, and presented their findings to the others (E, IV, 6 Advertisements class 4).

### 5.2.2.5 Class 5: reading some photography

The centrality of photography within advertising communication, and particularly in print advertisements, is obvious. The aim of this class (May 23, 2005) was therefore to lay bare some of the essential components of the language of photography and equip students of advertising with another interpretative framework on the advertising text.

The class was opened by a short preliminary warm-up conversation on photography. Most of the class time, however, was occupied by a presentation of some rudiments of photography given by the teacher, who commented on figures, shapes and photographs projected on a screen using an overhead projector. That learners should familiarise with this prolonged theoretical segment of the class was necessary and needed to be carried out in class, which posed the question of finding a way to sustain learners' attention throughout this part while exposing them to both contents and relevant vocabulary. The teacher resorted to the stratagem of having learners follow the class at the same time as compiling a booklet of notes on the lecture itself. The four-page document (called 'gapped dictation') summarised the key notions introduced by the teacher and reproduced the images projected on the screen but left out some information, e.g. explanations or technical terms, which learners needed to complete. The stratagem was designed to stimulate participants to pay attention to the lecturing part thoroughly while actively being exposed to relevant vocabulary (see E, V, 1 Gapped dictation and E, V, 2 OHP acetates and photocopies. Learners' reaction to the dictation stratagem is in 6.3.2).

As a conclusion to the lecturing part, the teacher left time for learners to compare notes and ask questions if in doubt, then asked groups to comment on the photography of some print advertisements that she had selected for that purpose. Groups were informed that they would be asked to present their analysis to the rest of the class. The task therefore culminated in each group presenting the outcomes of their analysis to the rest of the class (see E, V, 3 Advertisements class 5).

### 5.2.2.6 Class 6: enhance creativity

Class 6 (May 30, 2005) aimed at drawing learners' attention to the role of creativity in the construction of advertisements. Despite the difficulty in finding a unanimous description of the concept it seems out of question that creativity is central to advertisements; in fact, it is often coupled with the notion of quality of the advertising genre, and methods for stimulating creativity are often devised and employed by advertising professionals (a discussion of the notion of creativity and of ways to stimulate it was in 3.1). The focus of this class was to introduce three techniques which are believed to stimulate 'creativity', i.e. to generate ideas on a specific subject or problem, and have learners use them to create a specific text.

The class consisted of a choral phase of familiarisation with three creativity techniques and a group-based phase of application of these techniques to the creation of texts and the presentation of results to the class. Both these parts are described below.

*1st part*

The teacher introduced three techniques, described below, in the following order.

- The 'Lotus Blossom' technique by Michalko (1992): this technique employs a diagram that involves starting from a central theme and working outwards, using widening circles which may resemble flower petals. The warm-up phase coincided with the utilisation of the 'Lotus' technique: the class was invited to generate thoughts on the notion of creativity itself, which was also the topic of the class. Besides making learners acquainted with the technique, the exercise resulted in many perspectives on this concept (diagram in E, VI, 1 Lotus diagram).

- The Six Thinking Hats by De Bono (2000): a framework for thinking using six metaphorical hats each indicating a specific type of thinking (e.g. positive, creative, pessimistic, etc.). The teacher explained the type of thinking emanating from each of the 'hats' in relation to the subject of 'marriage' (a topic suggested in Little and Perclová

[2001: 50-60]). The outcome of this exercise is in E, VI, 2 Six Thinking Hats_example.

- The Random-Word Method, also by De Bono (1992): a technique for stimulating associations between the question or topic considered and words randomly chosen, thus generating unusual perspectives on the topic itself. In order to familiarise learners with this technique, they were invited to extract a 'word-card' from a basket and to tell a story using that specific word (approx. 230 words chosen randomly from the dictionary, each with a translation into English on its back side). With each new word the story developed in an unexpected, yet coherent, way (E, VI, 3 Random-Word technique_samples).

*2nd part*

Once learners had become familiar with the functioning of the three techniques, they were divided in groups and asked to use a technique of their choosing to write one the following: a) an advertisement for a man perfume (*Profumo da uomo*); b) an advertisement for an anti-ageing cream (*Una crema antietà*); c) a text advertising the class to a new teacher (*La classe a un nuovo insegnante*); d) a child story (*Favola per bambini*); e) an advertisement for a multitasking robot (*Robot tuttofare*); f) a lullaby (*Una ninnananna*). Groups chose techniques 1) and 3), but none chose the Six Thinking Hats technique because, as several participants commented, it would demand more time than the other two. Finally, each group presented their text to the rest of the class. Four groups out of six presented their results using posters (E, VI, 4 Texts produced by students). The two pairs who did not use posters brainstormed ideas using the Lotus technique. Their task was to brainstorm ideas for an anti-aging cream advertisement (see D, UR, p. 25, VIcl. and D, MA, p. 10, VIcl.) and for creating a lullaby (D, KV, p. 69, VIcl.).

### 5.2.2.7 Class 7: summary of learning experience

There was a change of plans in the focus of class 7 (June 13, 2005) and of class 8. Because class 8, the last of the course, would be occupied by a small prize ceremony and student party, where

certificates of attendance would be given to every participant, the teacher chose to anticipate the reflection on learning experience, planned for class 8, to this class and to suspend the work on gender in advertising.

Groups were formed and the teacher handed to each group a collective journal to compile cooperatively. The aim of the class was to stimulate group discussion on the outcomes of the course through a recapitulation of classes content. The eight-page document was prepared using a format similar to individual journals, so that learners could recognise it readily but it was not meant as a data-collection system, rather as a recapitulation of topics covered in the course. Like individual journals, collective journals included five sections enquiring about: 1) the objectives of the previous classes, as distinguished from what was learned, 2) what participants had learned, 3) how they had learned (strategies, obstacles, etc.), 4) whether they would reuse what learned, and in which contexts and, finally, 5) a recapitulation of the most salient aspects of the course (E, VII, 1 Collective diaries).

Groups compiled their group diary consulting their own peers, their peers' folders and their own. Also, prior to class commencement, the teacher had prepared seven posters summarising the content of each of the previous classes and making materials used on those occasions available for consultation (E, VII, 2 Posters class 7). In addition to that, she had collected the portfolios of those learners who would be absent on that day and obtained their permission to let others consult it.

Groups employed most of the class time to discuss with their peers, consult available materials and to compile collective diaries. Not all sections were completed due to time constraints, but the task resulted to be a stimulus for language production. Also importantly, this activity stimulated learners' reflection on the course outcomes, which was precisely the objective of the last class. Shortly from the end of the class, the teacher encouraged a choral summing up of the course outcomes from the learners' point of view.

### 5.2.2.8 Class 8: certificates and prizes

Class 8 (June 20, 2005) was devoted to a small ceremony where two learners were assigned a small prize on the basis of their portfolios. The prizes, i.e. books in Italian and a CD with the reading of the book, were assigned to two participants, KV and CN, who had regularly compiled their diary, organised their folders systematically, included additional material and taken a critical stance in commenting both topics emerged in the course and, obviously, advertisements (KV's and CN's portfolios are in D, CN and D, KV). Additionally, all students received a certificate of attendance signed by the director of the IICD (A, Certificate of attendance).

## 5.3 The methodology

### 5.3.1 The diary study[20]

*General comment*

As it is clear from the first sections of this chapter, the principal research questions underpinning this study were defined in open-ended terms, targeted at the fundamental level of description and analysis, rather than at the level of specific hypothesis-testing or prediction. As it was outlined in earlier sections, the study set out to explore the viability of this authentication model and sought the participants' opinions and reactions. The exploratory nature of this study and the quest for a first-hand account of the learning experience under study had implications for the choice of structured diaries as a data-collection system.

The following sections explain the suitability of the methodology of the diary study for the purposes of the experiment. Section 5.3.1 begins with an outline of the diary study characteristics and advantages, it then focuses on the pedagogical dimension of diary writing and lists advantages it bears with this regard; section 5.3.2 anticipates some objections which

[20] This section is partially based on an article I published on the characterisation of the diary study (Magnini, 2007).

are frequently made to the diary methodology and includes responses to them. Finally, section 5.3.3 draws on the previous discussion to maintain that the diary is the most suitable method to the purpose of this study.

*Characteristics of the diary study*

A diary is a reflection of the self in time: it is a personal, broad and holistic account of a learning experience as documented over a substantial amount of time. It is explorative, that is, it serves the purposes of identifying patterns to characterise a specific research situation and of generating questions to investigate. Additionally, a diary study has a synchronic and a diachronic dimension: it offers a picture of a research situation at a specific time, but also gives the chance to monitor its progress in time. In this section each of the characteristics of a diary study is discussed and expanded.

*Personal*

Diary writing provides a personal, first-hand and (usually) first-person account of a learning experience. Bailey and Ochsner (1983) recommend that a diary should be written using the first person so as to achieve more credibility and help the reader to identify with the diarist's experience. Nevertheless, Bailey (1983) report on a few diaries written using the third person (e.g. diary by Bernbrock, 1977; in Bailey, 1983: 85). Despite the natural (chronological and cognitive) distance between the diarist's experience of the fact and its verbalisation, the diary is the closest match to the testimony of a person's perception on her learning process because the writer of a diary is also the protagonist of the events, opinions and feelings described. With their emphasis on the individual learning experience, diaries have been used in uncovering the role of personal variables such as, in Bailey and Ochsner's (1983) words, 'cognitive style, affective factors, decision making, sources of stress, and motivational factors' (p. 191. Diary studies are reported, for example, in Schmidt and Frota, 1986; Bailey, 1980; 1983; 1990; Jones, 1994; 1977a; 1977b; Long, 1980; Schumann and Schumann, 1977).

By choosing the events that are worth including, according to his individual discretion and disposition, the diarist reveals deep-seated traits in his personality, which may be unknown to the diarist himself. Private and often intimate aspects of the diarist's personality emerge. A sentiment of jealousy comes to the surface in Plummer's (1976) diary when she uses a bitter tone to describe a change in relationship with a classroom friend:

> He began sitting away from me and his attention was on another friend. I knew him better than anyone in the class so as a result I felt very much alone and isolated. I did not have much desire to communicate so my new language was useless. (quoted in Bailey, 1983: 91)

In a similar surge of spontaneity, Leichman's (1977) words reveal the affective impact of a bad test mark on her mood:

> As soon as the class ended, I left without looking at anyone. I was afraid someone might ask me how I had done, and I could not admit it. I found myself depressed for the remainder of the day, and was negatively affected in everything I tried to do. (Leichman, 1977; quoted in Bailey and Ochsner, 1983: 191)

This quotation also stresses the crucial impact of the affective dimension of any learning process.

*Broad and holistic*

Not only do diaries revolve around reflection, they also encourage reflection at multiple levels, such as on the context of learning, including its social and cultural components. Indeed one of the distinctive features of diary writing is precisely its ability to reflect the learning experience as a holistic, integrated process that involves the operation of all levels of the learner personality, conscious and unconscious, cognitive and affective motives or feelings (a position held, for example, by Rubin and Thomson, 1982). The writer of a journal adopts multiple perspectives in reporting her experience – shifting, more or less knowingly, from consideration of more observable, external factors to the less observable, affective and psychological characteristics of her experience. This broad dimension of journal writing is outlined by Bailey (1983):

> In keeping a language-learning diary, the researcher/learner records anything and everything perceived to be important to his or her current learning experience. The diaries often include early impressions of the people and culture of the target language environment, the teacher and the fellow students in a language class, comments about learner's fears and frustrations, and the

> difficulties or success experienced by the learner. (p. 71)

In short, a diary is capable of drawing elements of the outside world into the picture of an individual's learning experience.

*Explorative (Generates questions)*

Diary writing takes place over a reasonably long stretch of time and offers a substantial amount of data which are later reviewed by the researcher who identifies recurring patterns and significant events and tries to interpret them. An important characteristic of the diary study is precisely that it seeks to generate rather than to answer specific questions about L2 learning. According to Bailey and Ochsner (1983), specific research questions are identified in the sifting of data, a stage which precedes the final phase of interpretation and discussion of results.

*Synchronic and diachronic*

The sequential nature of the diary records allows the reader to adopt both a synchronic perspective and a diachronic perspective on the learner's experience. A diary entry provides a 'snapshot' of the self, his learning experience and its setting, along an imaginary chronological axis: it provides the reader, including the diarist himself, with a reflection of the diarist's impressions, beliefs and personality, at a certain moment in time. The broad dimension of the diary study, which was mentioned earlier in this section, makes this characterisation of the learning environment a comprehensive and varied portrait: besides providing the reader with impressions on the perceived human 'atmosphere' of the learning context and its dynamics, and on the learner's attitudes, the diary might make explicit reference to physical details of the diarist's learning surroundings, such as in a diary entry by Schumann and Schumann (1977) referring to her experience of learning Arabic:

> We lived in a 300 year old building in the medina (the Arab part of town near the souk). I was never able to adjust to the lack of hot water, comfortable furniture and a suitable place to put away my belongings. (quoted in Bailey and Ochnser, 1983: 195)

Also, it is clear from this quotation how details concerning the surroundings become helpful in contextualising problems experienced by the diarist in her learning of Arabic.

Writing a diary, however, is carried out in time; it demands and implies consistency over time. If we accept that a diary entry is a snapshot of the diarist's personality and thoughts on her experience and on her learning setting, we can see the diachronic value of the diary: it enables the reader (including the diarist herself) to follow the development of such perceptions in time. To exploit the photography metaphor further, a sequence of snapshots turns into a film. The length of a learning period is important in revealing trends and phases in the learning process. Although there are cases where the diary study lasts five weeks (e.g. River, 1983), the literature on diary studies seems to encompass studies lasting for a longer time span as in the experience described in this thesis (Bailey's [1983] study on affective variables in diary studies is also a useful overview of diary study characteristics such as the time span).

*Pedagogical dimension of the diary study*

Besides its advantages as a research tool, diary keeping has a powerful pedagogical dimension with benefits for the linguistic, cognitive and affective dimensions of the learner. A summary of advantages is given in the following paragraphs.

Diary keeping improves writing. We learn to write by writing, to speak by speaking, and so on: it is the so-called 'paradox of development' according to which 'we become what we are' (Little [2003], see also 2.1.2), which Rose (1997) explains as follows:

> any organism has simultaneously to be and to become, as when a newborn infant must be capable of sucking at the breast while at the same time developing the competence to chew and digest solid food (quoted by Little, 2003, lecture notes).

Applied to the learning of a language, it is through regular exercise and practice of an already existing skill that the learner improves his ability to write (and read, listen, speak) in the TL. Diary writing may therefore prove helpful in developing the diarist's writing skills and 'free-up writing' (Moon 1999: 192) because it implicates regular writing practice (see also Moon, 2006: 50).

Diary improves learning. Writing extensively on a specific subject is likely to favour the process of ordering and sorting the diarist's ideas on a specific topic. It focuses learning (Parker and

Goodkin, 1987), clarifies thinking (Fisher, 1990) and links academic learning with everyday experiences (Terry, 1984; all quoted in Moon, 2006: 45-46). Also, it may encourage the learner to expand his reflections and develop them further. Porter et al., (1990) found that teacher-students were encouraged, through the writing of their journals to link and elaborate ideas:

> The journal encourages students to go beyond learning course content in isolation and to strive to link this information to theories and knowledge beyond the particular assignment and the particular course. [...] In sum, it teaches them [...] to work to integrate new ideas with what we already know. (p. 240)

In constructivist terms, diaries stimulate to explore the self and understand her construction of the world and of her cognitive structure (an experience of 'journaling' for teacher-development is also explored in Devitt and Czak, 1981 and Brock et al., 1992). This is another advantage of diary writing. The diarist's awareness of himself thus progresses and has a positive empowering effect (e.g. Bailey, 1980; Porter et al., 1990; Brown, 1985a). More specifically, the diarist recognises recurring aspects of his learning personality and style: 'the nature of journal writing means that there is an exploration of self and the personal meanings and constructs through which one views the world' (Moon, 1999: 48). This has an empowering effect since individual difficulties in the language and/or any other subject are identified, which is the first step towards active solution. On a broader perspective, but in a similar wish to improve, journals are used to explore aspects of one's behaviour to bring under better control (e.g. Field [1952], quoted in Moon [2006:48]. A therapeutic effect on the learner, however, is attached to diary writing whether or not the learner systematically reviews the entries. See Bailey's [1983] article on this point).

Through diary writing learners thus develop their own ideas and take responsibility for their learning. This includes regular monitoring of one's learning process and the enhancement of reflectivity, whose advantages I discussed in chapter 2. Porter et al. (1990) stress the importance of writing in this respect: 'Autonomous learning is promoted by the very act of writing because writing both stimulates and shapes ideas' (pp. 233-234). In fact, writing and every other advantage connected with diary keeping can be summarised in the encouragement of learner autonomy through reflection, a contention discussed at length in chapter 2. In her extensive

work on learning journals Moon (2006) summarises the advantages of diary keeping in the following contention: 'Many of the purposes [of journals] listed here could contribute to the empower-mentor development of the self' (p. 48).

Besides the cognitive and linguistic learning advantages of writing and reflecting, the diary may also have a positive pedagogical impact on an interpersonal level. Referring to her young learners' logbooks, Dam (2000) highlights the communicative value of these documents in the following passage:

> For me diary is a tool for keeping track of the individual learner's work – for the learner, for me and for the learners' parents (if they are interested). It makes direct contact between all three parties possible. From day to day it is mostly used for contact between the learner and the teacher, but it comes in very useful at parents' meetings. (pp. 31-32)

As this quotation shows diaries can function as a communication tool between student and teacher and have three advantages. First, through their diaries, learners can articulate problems they encounter in the learning process and get help from the teacher. Second, the teacher receives useful feedback on teaching materials, techniques and practice and may improve them. Third, diaries which are regularly submitted to the teacher create a teacher-student interaction: they improve classroom atmosphere and favour learning. The following entries capture this function of journals effectively:

> For me, it's like a correspondence with someone who is at once mentor, colleague and friend.
>
> *
>
> Of course, the sad part is that our conversation will stop. Your comments (and interest) became a real motivating force (both comments quoted in Porter et al., 1990: 236)

In short, the practice of diary writing lends numerous advantages to both the learner and the classroom from a pedagogical and personal development viewpoint. As data collection systems, however, diaries raise objections regarding the validity of interpretations derived from them and the extent to which those can be extended to other learners and learning contexts other than those they belong to. Some of the issues connected with the diary study are considered below.

### 5.3.2 Methodological issues

Several objections are raised against the validity of the diary as a research tool. I anticipate at

least three observations to the diary study and include a response to them with particular attention to the context of the learning setting described in this thesis.

As other introspective methods, the diary study faces problems of generalizability: it is questioned how the conclusions derived from the analysis of data from a single subject can be extended to other learners. The idiosyncratic value of individual variables is also noticed by Schmidt and Frota (1986), who observe that:

> Each learner's biography is not only unique but also complex, so that the relative importance of variables hypothesized to be important in language learning cannot be completely unravelled. (p. 307)

The aim of the diary study, however, may not be generalizability. Individual variables, for instance, may be the focus of the diary study (see, for example, the learning experience of KV, GR, JA in this thesis, as commented in chapter 6). Also, the readers of the diary of a learning experience may identify with the diarist herself and find useful suggestions in the experience described in it for their own situation. The spontaneity of the diarist's entries, noted above, is an effective way of making her experience close to the reader and therefore believable.

On the other hand, a partial solution to the criticism of generalizability may consist in having several subjects compile individual diaries simultaneously (as in the present study) in order to establish the importance of certain variables through the extent of their recurrence in the journals. That is to say, the importance of certain variables is likely to be reinforced by their recurrence. In other words, the more diaries are written, the more comparisons are possible, the more variables identified and, the more 'trends' can be formed:

> As Weber (1864-1920) noted, aggregates of individuals can form a trend which, if not causally based, nevertheless involves more than a single (idiographic) subject (Ochsner, 1979: 76).

A demonstration of this contention is given by Brown's (1985b) experience that shows how a collection of diaries gave her, i.e. the researcher, a better opportunity to focus on aspects of the learning experience which may go otherwise undetected. Referring to a diary study where thirty-six participants kept individual diaries throughout the duration of a Spanish language course, she notices the methodological importance of availing of several 'journals'. In her

words:

> Time and scheduling was the single most-mentioned factor in the journals overall. While a single journal may not have made this societal influence clear as anything other than a personal variable, a collection of journals did. (p. 129; my emphasis)

A second objection to diary studies is that the results are challenged on the basis that the diarists are linguists themselves (as in studies by, e.g., Schmidt and Frota, 1986; Jones, 1994; Bailey, 1983) and that similar outcomes may not be expected were the diarists 'non-professionals' of the language (Nunan, 1992). While it may be conceded that linguists tend to reflect on the language frequently and that this could help in the acquisition of a L2 and in identifying the important events of a learning experience, some degree of metalinguistic awareness is expected in all adults, especially with a familiarity with L2 learning. While it could be true that the inexperience of linguistically 'naïve' learners with regards the analysis of a learning experience could be regarded as advantageously fresh and unbiased by diarist-researchers aims, it is also true that, as Schmidt and Frota (1986) observed, 'the observations that we think counted [in the analysis of the diary study] are not of a type that linguists alone make' (p. 313).

The study presented here involved 'non-professionals' of the language (with the exception of three language teachers) who had no previous preconception on the course or the methodology used. On the other hand, that participants of the study might possess the habit of reflecting systematically on the language and might therefore give a reasonably sophisticated feedback in this respect, was favoured by some characteristics they had in common, such as: the previous attendance of language courses; the previous study of foreign languages other than the TL; a quite homogeneous level of proficiency in the TL and a high level of education (third-level in most cases: see preliminary questionnaire in 5.2.1). This was also favoured by the average profile of students of the institution (IICD) from where the subjects were recruited and justified by a predominant cultural and touristic interest in the country. In short, it appeared reasonable to expect that participants may express an informed opinion on both structural and content aspects of the course. Nevertheless, they had to be gradually led to the habit of writing and of writing extensively. In order to increase the quantity of entries, for example, the diary was adjusted so

as to favour reflection on at least three focus areas besides a general comment (see 5.1.2 above).

Finally, it could be objected that the analysis of results is biased by the researcher aim. A solution to this problem may be to have someone other than the researcher read the data in search of recurring patterns and later compare results. On the other hand, other readings of the data are obviously possible. Some of the diary entries quoted in this chapter had sometimes been used by other authors in illustrating a different point. The breadth and depth of detail provided in the description, and the extensive use of verbatim extracts from the journals, however, and the presence of appendices reporting the journals integrally, provide substantial bases for any subsequent interpretation.

### 5.3.3 The suitability of the diary study

In the previous sections, firstly, a description of the diary study as a research tool was provided using the words: personal, broad and holistic, exploratory, synchronic and diachronic (5.3.1). The rationale behind each characteristic was expanded and discussed. Also, the fundamental pedagogical dimension of the diary study was commented and specific learning benefits, which may accrue to the learner, the teacher, and the relation between teacher and learner, were identified. Secondly, several objections to the methodology of the diary study were discussed and rejected with reference to the study presented here (5.3.2). Drawing on what has been said on the aims and characteristics of the diary study, and in consideration of the research objectives of the experiment on the teaching of advertising through Italian, it is argued here that diary study is an appropriate research method for the following reasons: the participants' perceptions on the course and on their own learning experience requested, almost by definition, a first-hand, personal account of each of the classes throughout the course. In defence of a subjective viewpoint, Jones (1994) argues:

> if the object of a study is to discover individuals' reactions to the learning process, then one might argue that subjectivity (how one perceives the process, what one chooses to record, etc.) is a prime research aim. More good fairy than bad, in other words. (p. 444)

Diaries, with their emphasis on the self and his learning process, are probably the closest match

to an individual's experience and were therefore suited to the aims of this study.

The verbalisation of an individual's experience would be difficult to render in any other way. As Nunan (1992) puts it: 'Notwithstanding [...] criticisms [of external validity and subjective account of events], it is difficult to see how the sort of data yielded by diaries and journals could be collected in any other way' (p. 23). On the other hand, that one could advocate an aggregation of results in the learning context studied in this thesis, is strengthened by the fact of availing of data from journals that were kept simultaneously throughout the same course.

It was expected that participants' feedback on the course would be holistic, that is that it would cover external and observable factors, such as the content of the course, the teaching approach, and the classroom dynamics as well as less observable, personal characteristics of the learning process. The broad dimension of the diary allows the inclusion of such information: from the learning setting and experience to the identification of variables regarding them.

The investigative nature of the diary study harmonises with the exploratory nature of the course: through the identification of recurring patterns in the participants' diaries, questions concerning an innovative pedagogical model can be generated and investigated; this provides the material for a first evaluation of the practicability of the model and suggests directions for improving it.

The synchronic and diachronic dimensions of the diary study allow the researcher to identify the patterns that occur, both simultaneously or consecutively, in the journals compiled throughout this course. The longitudinal aspect of the diary study adds a temporal dimension to the analysis of data so that the patterns identified can be followed in their sequential development. These additional perspectives on the data strengthen the exploratory nature of the diary study, which suits the aims of the empirical study described here.

The empirical investigation of the pedagogical model based on advertising is not separable from the pedagogical objectives of the course. The pedagogical multifaceted dimension of diary writing and of diary keeping is meant to support and enhance the educational aims of the course

on advertising. I have described this educational aim in the previous chapters as a process of authentication-appropriation of the authentic text through the enhancement of learner reflectiveness. The next chapter assesses this notion on the basis of patterns emerging from participants diaries.

Going back to this chapter purpose, it was meant to inform the reader about the characteristics of the empirical investigation. This consisted in setting up and teaching a course based on the exploration of the communicative characteristics of advertising texts that was taught through the medium of Italian L2 (5.1 and 5.2). Also, this chapter was written in order to assess the suitability of the diary study to achieve the aims of the experiment. To that end, a summary of characteristics and issues regarding this methodology was drawn on the literature and discussed with reference to the educational context set up for this study (5.3). In short, this chapter was about the 'how' of the study, the next chapter turns to the 'what'.

# Chapter 6. Diary patterns

*Interpretation can be understood as appropriation.*
*Through interpretation, we make one's own what was initially alien.*
Ricoeur, 1981

## 6.0 Introduction

Chapter 6 presents and discusses the results of the empirical study described in Chapter 5. The course explored the characteristics of print advertisements in Italian and involved 16 participants who were asked to compile a learning diary after each class for 7 weeks (6-week diaries, the 8th class consisted in a small class ceremony). This chapter addresses the question of how learners react to a focus on advertising-texts analysis through Italian L2. Through the diaries the participants offer a portrait of the learning context and content and, equally important, they give an account of their own learning process (reactions, strategies, etc.). The following sections are arranged according to the recurring patterns that emerged from the participants' diary entries. Section 6.1 focuses on the factual characterisation of the course described in the diaries; section 6.2 deals more specifically with how learners come into contact with, portray and elaborate on the course content; section 6.3 focuses on the diarists themselves: learners assess their own attitudes towards their learning process. The introduction to this chapter begins by recapitulating the theoretical approach at the basis of this study (6.0.1), then describes three levels of reflectiveness (6.0.2) and finally observes a progression in entries as the classes move forward (6.0.3). This is taken as evidence of the developmental character of learning and reflectiveness discussed in chapter 2.

### 6.0.1 Theoretical approach

This chapter builds on the notion of authentication, a concept characterized in chapter 1 as a dynamic approach to learning from authentic texts as opposed to the static connotation associated with the notion of authenticity. Also, the chapter revolves around a constructivist view of learning, which places the learner at the centre of his educational development and makes him the protagonist of authentication and learning activity. Authentication and learning

are often treated as synonymous in the pages ahead since authentication is aimed at learning from authentic texts. Diaries offer a varied range of viewpoints on the course and the patterns discernable in them allow us to observe how the process of authentication is carried out in that context. Of course, diary patterns do not simply report on the novelty of using advertisements in Italian but portray the diarists' learning process in a more holistic way. In fact, learning is a rich complex of cognitive and affective activities and variables which combine in the construction of knowledge by the learner. Chapter 2 used Piaget's (1971) notions of 'assimilation' of new material and its 'accommodation' into the learner's cognitive structure – a process that transforms new material into the learner's intellectual 'property' and ultimately aims at 'changing' him, bringing about development. Authentication is part of this process and merges with learning.

The function of language is inherent in the learning and development process, in chapter 2 it was demonstrated that it not only accompanies and supports growth, but also constitutes it. In this study, the learning experience was complexified and enriched by the use of Italian as the main medium of communication in class and in the diaries. Using Moon's (1999: 104) comprehensive expression, the course offered rich 'material for learning', including the TL. According to the constructivist perspective, it is the learner that makes sense of this rich variety of input, accommodating it into what was described as his or her cognitive structure: 'what he knows', in Moon's words (1999), or a network of 'facts, concepts, propositions, theories and raw perceptual data that the learner has available to him at any point in time' (Ausubel and Robinson, 1969: 108). The process of integration of new information into one's cognitive structure is not always smooth, it was said in chapter 2. Diaries, however, support such integration.

Diary writing forces the learner to explain something, thus to question his understanding of it, and to do so through Italian – a process of plaiting and weaving that some learners manage to seize in a metacognitive perspective (to which I associate the notion of 'epiphany', explained later in this chapter):

C'è una cosa notevole che non è facile descrivere. Il nostro lavoro è abbastanza complicato. Studiamo un argomento complesso (la pubblicità) per mezzo d'una lingua che stiamo ancora imparando. Anche, usiamo questo argumento come un mezzo per imparare meglio la lingua. Complicato, non? Eppure ogni settimana in classe c'è un'atmosfera meravigliosa, con benevolenza, cooperazione e divertimento. C'è un'energia, una forza dinamica che non capisco io, del tutto, ma di cui sono molto contento essere partecipante. È un'esperienza molto ricompesando. (D, KV, p.68, VIc1.)

**There is a remarkable thing which is not easily described. Our work is quite complicate. We are studying a complex subject (advertising) by means of a language that we are still in the process of learning. Also, we use this topic as a means to learn the language better. Complicate, isn't it? And yet every week in class there is a wonderful atmosphere, with benevolence, cooperation and amusement. There is such an energy, a dynamic force that I do not understand fully but I am very happy to be part of it. It is a really gratifying experience.**

This entry offers a glimpse of the complex process of assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge into the learner's cognitive universe and reveals the educational potential of reflective writing as it may be found in diaries. It is difficult to think of an alternative system for getting to know about the way learners react to an innovative pedagogical model and process new learning. With this awareness in mind, the chapter offers a portrait of this complex experience from the inside, i.e. from the learners' point of view, through diary entries. The sequence of entries is developmental (which often coincides with 'chronological'), as three stages of this experience were identified in the phase of data sifting: acquaintance, familiarisation and insight. My contention is that these stages represent the learner's gradual *appropriation* of knowledge, and with regard to the learning experience based on print advertisements, they characterise the process of authentication of these texts. A brief characterisation of each stage is given below.

### 6.0.2 Three stages of reflection: acquaintance, familiarisation and insight

Diary entries range from summary lists to more lengthy statements, elaborated comments and insights. On the basis of a recurring number of characteristics, including text length, three levels were identified: acquaintance, familiarisation, and reflective insight. These stages are characterised by different degrees of reflectiveness, which showed more frequently in diaries as time went by as evidence of the impact of a systematic reflective routine.

Several writers have proposed frameworks for assessing reflectiveness in writing, which prove a

useful reference in this context. Hatton and Smith's (1994) model in particular arises out of extensive empirical research and, although it originates in the context of teacher training and education, its analyses can be applied to other learning contexts as well. With regards to a developmental perspective on reflectivity, a perspective supported in chapter 2, Hatton and Smith (1994) make the important point that when learners approach a new area of knowledge they adopt a less sophisticated level of reflection and increasingly (i.e. as 'expertise' develops) refine it as they familiarise themselves with the subject, gradually developing reflective characteristics such as metacognition and criticality.

The writing on the state of things is referred to here in this thesis as the process of *becoming acquainted* with a new situation, learning setting, human environment and, more relevantly, with an approach to authentic texts which departs from traditional language learning approaches. It consists of a description of events, situations, etc. Diary entries that show a level of acquaintance with new knowledge have a factual orientation and often take the form of short phrases or sentences. These entries are sometimes arranged as a list and do not give explanations for events reported, and can be seen as corresponding to the first level of reflectiveness in Hatton and Smith's (1994) model (pp. 33-38). While it has a different role to reflection in writing, some description is necessary in a reflective account as it provides the background for reflection. Descriptive writing, therefore, cannot be rejected, especially if such description is carried out in a foreign language. The phase of acquaintance corresponds to the first encounter with the new material for learning. Besides authentic texts, the 'material for learning', in Moon's (1999: 112-115) broad definition, also includes factors such as the learning environment, involving the complex interaction of participants, atmosphere, location, etc. This phase is especially represented in diaries written after the first classes, especially the first two, when the impact of novelty was strong and therefore demonstrates Hatton and Smith's theory, summarised earlier on, on how learners approach a new area of knowledge. Factors such as the novelty of the area of knowledge (here: advertising communication through the medium of the L2) and of the reflective tool (the diary) are likely to have an impact on the degree of

sophistication shown in the entries. Sometimes a personal comment may signal a move towards the personal sphere, the *familiarisation* with experience, which ranks higher than acquaintance. The observation that personal comments move descriptions towards reflection (towards 'familiarisation') also harmonises with Sparkes-Langer et al.'s (1990) model for assessing reflectiveness. This includes three pre-reflective levels of description and identifies reflection as beginning from the 4th level which is described as 'explanation with tradition or personal preference given as the rationale' (p. 66). The entries that exhibit these characteristics therefore rank just above the level of description.

The level of familiarisation takes the stage of acquaintance a step further and shortens the distance between the event and the learner. This is achieved by means of association, comparison or simple linkage with events, situations and ideas previously experienced by the learner. This type of entry represents a substantial component of these diary entries. Like acquaintance, it is a description of events or situations but with an attempt to supply an explanation for what is reported. Also, some points are indicated for further reflection to follow but they are not always pursued. As regards textual length these entries go beyond the sentence dimension and present a certain stylistic variation. They begin to suggest a detachment from the experience or situation described and the influence of emotions and other factors may be acknowledged. Similarly, Hatton and Smith describe their corresponding 2$^{nd}$ level of 'reflectiveness' as a description enriched by an attempt to explain what is being reported (pp. 38-43).

The level of *insight* uses the event or situation as a starting point for further consideration. Sometimes the event itself is not represented and the writer jumps directly to his comment on it. It represents a step further than familiarisation in that it starts by going back to already processed material and derives a new understanding of it or insight. Alternative explanations may also be considered. In some cases the writer adopts a metacognitive stance on his own learning process and his insights cast a new light on the topic, experience, situation ('revelation') and perhaps on his learning process ('epiphany'). The third level of reflectiveness

in Hatton and Smith is called 'dialogic reflection' in that it involves an interactive reasoning within the self (43-46).

In chapter 2 I adopted a definition of reflection that is close to its etymological sense of *reflectere*, the act of bending back. This definition is based on the assumption that the process of learning from experience involves two consecutive stages: the first is when the person orders her thoughts about an event that has just occurred to her in order to assign it a function, status, place in her mind. The second is when the person returns ('bends back') to it and reprocesses it; this is what is meant by reflective activity. The act of reprocessing already processed material from a changed perspective (due to the effect of time, additional knowledge, etc.) brings about a new understanding of the experience, event, or situation in question (this was discussed in chapter 2). Based on this consideration the levels of familiarisation and insight are more accurately described as reflective.

Each of these three phases, however, represents a step in the process of learning new content and appears as an appropriation of new knowledge as described in 6.0.1. The learner first encounters and then processes the information he is given through a combination of the texts selected, mostly print advertisements, and 'appropriate' (in Little's [2005] sense, discussed in 2.1.1) target-language use. This learning process is represented in the diaries as one that proceeds through a phase where the learner becomes acquainted with the material for learning, one where he becomes familiar with it and one where he is deriving insights and new knowledge from it. Reading back the entries favours a re-elaboration of content, appropriation and learning in a process of virtually infinite recursion by effect of the 'deepening' function of reflection discussed in chapter 2. Through reflection the learner works with meanings and relates them to her understanding of the topic in a process of adjustment of her cognitive structure or of the new information, a process which puts the learner centre stage ('[diary writing] thrusts the student into an active role in the classroom', Jensen 1987: 333). In this respect learning functions as an act of appropriation since 'outside' knowledge is brought into the ownership of the individual. Also, it increases her active involvement in learning and

develops her ability to self-direct her learning process. Similarly, authentication, that is, learning from authentic texts, is a process of 'interaction' between the text communicative charge and the learner which promotes active involvement in the learning process and ultimately results in an appropriation of the text content. The sense of ownership encompassed by this notion of authentication is also strengthened by the description of effective learning as personalised, 'deep' learning which brings about 'change' or 'transformation' discussed in 2.

### 6.0.3 Some observations on the diary entries

Learners' diaries showed some degree of similarity but, of course were also different. Table 6 summarises how individual subjects responded in their diaries over the duration of the course, the number of diaries they compiled, the language used, the content and the quality of their language (see pp. a-r).

In reiterating class objectives at the level of acquaintance, students actually select what is worth mentioning and, equally important, what is not. From a constructivist perspective the construction of knowledge is a learner-driven process. As Butler-Wall (1979) has pointed out: 'It is not so much what you write about a given issue in the diary, as the fact that you write about it at all' (quoted in Bailey and Ochsner, 1983: 192). Indeed, far from being an innocuous factual report, this is a product of the learners' selectivity: it reveals how different learners' attention was directed to different aspects of the class, text, etc. rather than another (Eisner, 1991). As was shown in chapter 2, since this selection is a product of the learner's cognitive network, it reveals the diarist's perception of events and coherently draws on the characteristics of his own attention, interest and individuality. The following extracts demonstrate how, for instance, the balance of content and language learning objectives in Class 1 is variously perceived by different learners:

> Contenuti: * Primo abbiamo considerato 'Perché la pubblicità?'- * Dopo, abbiamo studiato gli 'noccioli (punto?) negativi e positivi della pubblicità.
>
> Lingua: -
>
> Altro: Mi è piaciuto molto considerare le sette punti di vista - il polemico, l'optimista etc. (D, CN, p. 4, Icl.)

Contents: First, we considered 'Why advertising?' - Then, we studied the positive and negative points of advertising.

Language: -

Other: I really liked considering the seven viewpoints - the controversial, the optimist, etc.

*

Contenuti: -

Lingua: Il linguaggio di pubblicità; parole chiavi; presentazioni.

Altro: -

(D, JA, p. 26, Icl.)

Contents: -

Language: The language of advertising /Keywords /Introducing ourselves

Other: -

*

Contenuti: Le linee generali del corso. Le opinioni degli studenti sulla pubblicità. Le opinioni di sei caratteri diversi sulla pubblicità.

Lingua: Come esprimere un'opinione. Come usare delle espressioni colloquiali - e.g. 'gli occhiali rosa'. Prendere l'occasione di fare un domanda. Fare dei rifletti sulla lezione. Parlare con gli altri studenti del suo gruppo sulle opinioni di uno carattere scelto per l'insegnante.

Altro: -

(D, CA, p. 18, Icl.)

Contents: General outline of the course. Students' opinions on advertising. The opinions of six different characters on advertising.

Language: How to express an opinion. How to use colloquial expressions such as 'rose-tinted glasses'. Seizing the occasion to ask a question. Making reflections about the lesson. Speaking to other students of your group about the opinions of the character chosen by the teacher.

Other: -

These entries reveal that a different share of attention was assigned by learners to the various parts of the first class, which recalls the notion that perception is selective and depends on the characteristics of individual learners.

Also, the length of entries chosen by students in reporting learning objectives as well as in compiling the rest of the diary is an aspect to consider since any reflective activity is more likely to occur in a lengthy text than in a couple of sentences. Some writers include length among reflectivity assessment criteria (e.g. November, 1996; Moon, 2006). In the first stages of the course, however, entries are short, probably because learners are intimidated by the page; sometimes the entries may constitute a brief succinct list:

Contenuti: Persuasione in pubblicità. Le componenti della pub. stampata. Impulsi che indirizzano il consumatore verso il prodotto.

Lingua: Le parole e espressioni che si usano per persuadere.

## Individual subjects' response to the course (1)

| **Participants** | AP | BE | BR | CA | CH | CN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of absences** | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| **Number of compiled diaries (out of 6 in total)** | 4/6 | 5/6 | 5/6 | 6/6 | 4/6 | 6/6 |
| **Teacher observations on**<br>**- content**<br>**- language** | | | | | | |
| 1st | Factual report of items focused on in class. Focus on vocabulary | Recapitulation of activities. Short sentences. Mentions group work and writing as useful ways to learn. | Compiles the first page of diary only. Short sentences. | Little writing. Classifies new vocabulary but does not list it. Interesting reflection on the use of images in advertising. No personalisation of contents except a few comments. | Briefly compiles the first two pages of the 1st class diary. Replaces diaries with a self-generated file where she recapitulates contents of each class in Italian (uses English for headings, e.g. My hopes for the course). This forces her to compose a | Writes extensively in her diary. Organises folder into different sections, one for each class. List new vocabulary and new content learned and adds short comments. Includes advertisements analysed in class in her |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | lengthy written text. Personalises contents through comments and associations to her job. | folder. |
| 2nd | Gives opinions on topics. Recapitulates how the TL was used to perform certain actions or carry out tasks. | Lists class activities with a factual language. Realises the importance of writing about classroom activities. | Compiles only the first page of the diary. Uses English to express a more complex thought. Answers to questions about persuasion in English at home. | Factual recapitulation of activities. Quite short sentences. Importance of reading, writing and a stress-free environment for learning. Assesses utility of activities but makes no reference to other classes. | - | List new words and phrases. Uses English to compile diary. Finds advertising analysis useful to learn vocabulary. Observes how the class becomes a group and the utility of this. Surprised to realise about her increased attention to advertisements. |
| 3rd | - | A NNS, she uses English to compile diary. Elaboration of | Compiles all the diary in Italian. Importance of atmosphere to | Compiled diary in English and her entries are longer than previous | Compiles the diary mostly in English. She is surprised to realise how | Compiles diary in English. Lists vocabulary. Observes |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | contents: gives her opinion on utility of topics and reflects on her learning preferences. | learn. Expresses positive attitude towards the course and the TL. | diaries. Expresses her preference for reading and watching films for learning. Observes her new attention to advertisements. Evaluates utility of activities for other contexts. | rhetoric is extensively used in pharmaceutical industry communication. On a separate file she considers the use of comparatives in the advertising language as a means to persuade. | cultural differences among countries. Expresses enthusiasm for the class. Notes that the analysis of ads 'empowers you' (p. 24). |
| 4th | Lists topics and new words – longer clauses – Considers how content is useful in other contexts | - | Longer sentences. Language learned: vocabulary. Importance of the atmosphere to learn. Uses diary to communicate with the teacher. | Classifies new vocabulary into categories. Evaluates techniques used for future classes. Recapitulates activities and adds comments. Importance of writing and diary writing. Group work. Observations about teacher. | Summarises contents of the class and points out why it is important to be aware of non-verbal communication in advertising. | Includes print advertisements from Italian magazines. Compiles diary in Italian (especially listing vocabulary) except for the last page where she gives a more extended comment. Here she establishes an association between non- |

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| | | | | | | verbal language and theatre and with her teaching job. Attaches advertisements where gestures are more obviously shown. |
| 5th | Considers how the TL was used in class to carry out learning activities (e.g. discussing in group; taking notes). Strong focus on vocabulary. | Appreciation for guided dictation. Focus on vocabulary. Realises usefulness of diary writing. | - | Elaborates contents. Utility of writing (taking notes and diary writing). Problem of interference from other languages. Utility of putting things into practice (analysing advertisements). Importance of vocabulary. | - | Compiles the diary in both Eng and Ita. Uses English to express her the link she makes with theatre and work. Includes samples from the textbook she uses in class where the focus is on the analysis of on advertisements (association with her work). Reinforces the link with her interest in |

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| | | | | | | theatre. |
| 6th | - | Focus on vocabulary. Longer sentences. Elaboration of contents through personal comments. Preference expressed for group work. Observes utility of diary writing for learning. | Longer sentences. Increasing awareness of how communication works (tells anecdote of Inis Orr) and how she learns. Sense of contentment for the outcome of the class (created a lullaby with KV). Enthusiastic gratitude towards the teacher. | Uses long sentences and personalises contents. Adds quite sophisticated analysis of an advertisement to her folder in addition to many print advertisements to which she adds a short comment. Expresses her opinion on class activities and considers their utility for other contexts (importance of a stress-free atmosphere). Reflects on her learning strategies and lists writing, reading and the analysis of advertising | Evaluates the use of techniques used in class. Adds interesting analysis (My Platinum) and additional material to her folder: print advertisements related to pharmacy products, her field of work, to illustrate rhetorical figures, the use of non-verbal communication, an essay in English on print advertising from the Internet. | Compiles all the diary in Italian but writes less. Considers using creativity techniques in her school. Includes self-generated learning material (theatre flyers to match with plots) for the class. |

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| | | | | among learning strategies. | | |
| 7th | Collective portfolios | | | | | |
| 8th | Small prize ceremony | | | | | |

**Table 6 Individual subjects' response to the course (1)**

## Individual subjects' response to the course (2)

| **Participants** | GN | GR | IS | JA | KV | LN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of absences** | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| **Number of compiled diaries (out of 6 in total)** | 6/6 | 6/6 | 6/6 | 4/6 | 6/6 | 5/6 |
| **Teacher observations on**<br>**- content**<br>**- language** | | | | | | |
| 1st | Makes draft copies of the diary entries. Attaches pictures of advertising billboards taken in France! Attaches two analyses of advertisements. Compiles only a few parts of the diary (in Italian) but leaves blank the rest. | Attaches a good number of advertisements that "drew his attention" (personal communication). All diary in Italian. Expresses his preference for group work. Recapitulates contents and adds comments. | - | Compiles diary very succinctly. Uses short sentences, sometimes just single words. Finds advertising a pervasive aspect of the society. Makes short comments. Refers to an article he has read in a magazine | Writes in Italian. Short sentences. Recapitulates items focused on in class. Does not dwell on contents for long. Re-contextualises new vocabulary. Describes his learning strategies and obstacles at length. | Includes a long personal letter in Eng in her folder. Diary compiled in Ita. Uses short sentences. Simple recapitulation of activities carried out in class. A few comments but no real personalisation, yet. |

| | | | | | | |
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| | | | | without reporting it. | | |
| 2nd | Lists vocabulary and topics in Italian. Compiles only the first page. | Diary entirely in Italian. Uses diary to communicate with teacher (asks for a list of answers). More personalised comments on advertisements used in class. Finds humour a useful way to draw viewers' attention. Considers out-of-class usefulness of contents. Preference for group work. | Croatian mother-tongue. Attaches a substantial number of analyses of advertisements to her folder. Makes draft copies of her diary entries, which she attaches to her diaries. Classifies new vocabulary. Focuses on learning strategies. Alternates Ita and Eng. Writes not extensively. | Did not compile diary. | Compiles all diary in Italian writing more extensively. Starts adding personal comments and impression to the contents deal with in class (e.g. surprise). Starts to realise that writing helps him to learn. Observes that knowing how advertising works is useful to understand its influence. | Blank for the most part. |
| 3rd | Writes much more extensively all over her diary in English (language | Compiles diary in Italian but switches to English in the last page (i.e., recapitulation). | Compiles all diary in Ita but uses Eng to refer to learning strategies. | Compiles all the diary in Eng. Writes extensively (=language flood). Uses a | Writes all diary in Eng. Uses additional pages to express his thought. | Writes in Ita and in Eng. Dialogues with the teacher to ask clarifications, |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | flood). Personalises content through associations, memories. Surprised at realising rhetoric is used in many contexts. Analyses ads outside class. | Expresses enthusiasm for the materials used, group work, activities. Importance of a relaxed atmosphere. | Classifies vocabulary. Writes extensively to summarise the content of an article she had read and that links with topics discussed in class. Prefers pair work to group work. | practitioner tone to discuss the utility of activities and make suggestions. Shows awareness of learning strategies and emphasises the importance of group work and organisation of the class. Attaches Polish advertisements that refer to the Italian culture. Also, two Polish advertisements that employ visual rhetoric. | 'Language flood'. Writes about his doubts on the intersection of Ita, advertising, etc., expresses his impressions on advertisements, narrates memories associated with advertisements. Strong realisation that writing is an effective learning strategy despite a different advice he was given. Considers the utility of advertising for language production. Feels extremely surprised about the depth of his | e.g. whether she should list new words in the diary. Considers her learning preferences. Repeatedly expresses surprise about the strategies deployed by advertisers. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | feelings on advertising. | |
| 4th | Compiles all diary in Italian. Lists vocabulary and comments on the utility of topics discussed in class. | Compiles diary in Italian. Vocabulary and phrases are listed. Observes JA's personality. Makes links between things learned and work and other contexts. | Writes in Ita and Eng (= strategies). Notes the utility of diary writing for learning. Classifies vocabulary. Writes at length to summarise class contents and associates contents to what she has read in magazines, etc. | Compiles at length all diary in Italian. Assesses the utility of activities from a practitioner viewpoint. Personalised recapitulation of contents through comments and links to everyday life. Greatly appreciates organisation of class, a relaxed atmosphere, utility of the contents, group work. | Uses Ita to write the diary. Writes extensively using longer sentences. Explains his learning obstacles. Associates content with his life ('growth work'). Utility of diary writing for TL learning. Reports of his increased attention to advertisements. | Writes in Ita. Classifies new vocabulary. Regrets the fact of not devoting enough time to studying. Personalises contents through comments and associations with her life and personality. |
| 5th | Compiles two pages in Italian. Lists vocabulary. | Diary all compiled in Italian. GR likes the combined use of visual and | Writes some parts of the diary in Eng, but most is in Ita. | Compiles diary in Italian. Produces longer texts. | Compiles all diary in Ita. Lists vocabulary. Writes lengthy | Diary in Ita. Classifies new vocabulary. Expresses her surprise at |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | verbal stimuli and dictation. Recapitulates contents using his own words. Makes links with outside world. | Summarises in her words the contents of the class. Writing is quite sophisticated and employs longer complex clauses. Stresses the importance of writing. | Expresses an expert opinion on techniques and activities used in class (e.g. recommends the use of the dictation in other courses). Stresses his enthusiasm for the utility of a relaxed atmosphere. Uses the diary to communicate with the teacher and express his enthusiasm. | texts in Ita, especially for the pages after the first. Personalised recapitulation of the contents of the class. Returns to writing as a preference and considers adopting other learning strategies such as reading. Reflects on his obstacles in speaking the TL. Adopts a narrative style in explaining why the topic of photography is meaningful to him and attaches three pictures which he comments upon. | having discovered the photography techniques used by advertisers. Importance of writing and dictation. Comments on JA's character. Surprised at realising she pays attention to advertising more often. Re-uses what she has learned in the class she teaches. |
| 6th | Compiles all diary in Italian. | Writes extensively in | The diary was compiled in | - | Diary written in Ita. Lists | Attaches advertisements |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Long sentences. Assesses the utility of activities and topics. Expresses surprise for the creation of a lullaby by other participants. Gives a summary evaluation of the contents of the programme. | Italian. Compiles all diary. Besides comments and recapitulation of contents and vocabulary, GR stresses the importance of group work for learning. Personalisation through enthusiasm and surprise for the activities carried out in class. Links with outside world. | Ita for the most part except one entry. Lengthy and elaborated texts. Recapitulates contents of class in her own words. Stresses the utility of writing. Expresses surprise for the lullaby created in class. Makes reference to other advertisements and a radio programme. | | new vocabulary. Focus on the pages after the first. Considers at length the contents of the class and expresses his doubts about the difference between two techniques presented in class. Clear realisation that diary writing, that is, reflection, helps him to develop new learning strategies. Uses the diary to communicate this enthusiasm to the teacher. Reflects on his preference for writing and vocabulary and considers | and an article in Italian. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | taking up writing his memories. Reflects on the mixture of language and content learning and on the learning atmosphere. Attaches some print advertisements that struck his attention. | |
| 7th | Collective portfolios | | | | | |
| 8th | Small prize ceremony | | | | | |

**Table 6 Individual subjects' response to the course (2)**

## Individual subjects' response to the course (3)

| **Participants** | MA | MC | SE | UR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of absences** | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **Number of compiled diaries (out of 6 in total)** | 3/6 | 4/6 | 2/6 | 6/6 |
| **Teacher observations on**<br>**- content**<br>**- language** | | | | |
| 1st | Compiles diary in Ita. Factual report of activities. Lists vocabulary. Makes a few comments as she recapitulates. | Writes only a few sentences in Ita and Eng. Adds short comments. | Compiles the first page of the diary in Ita. Mentions activities. Lists new words. | Compiles diary in Ita. Uses short sentences to note down activities done in class. |
| 2nd | - | - | Does not compile diary but notes down new words and concepts on a separate | Writes in Ita. Longer sentences. Recapitulates contents in her own words. Observes that she looks at |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | sheet. | advertisements with attention. |
| 3rd | Compiles diary in Ita and in Eng., code-switches often. Recapitulates activities and contents of class explaining why these are useful. Explains she has trouble with interference from other languages. Focuses on certain phrases she has learned in class and considers how they could be used to refer to her life. Realisation: | - | Same as previous class. | Diary in Eng. Observes the importance of vocabulary. Still quite succinct but adds comments on the utility of the topic, considers how she learns new words. Personalisation of contents passes through comments but no associations are made with her interest, life, etc. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | increased attention towards advertising | | | |
| 4th | - | Writes diary in Ita. Longer sentences. Obseves the importance of vocabulary but does not list it here. New words are in her notes, which she attaches. Realises, with surprise, about her increased attention to advertisements outside class. Observes that writing about the class is useful for remembering. Attaches advertisements about gestures. | - | Diary in Ita. Lists items (contents and areas of vocabulary) focused on in class. Includes those 'items' of content and vocabulary that she finds 'intersting'. Observes her increased attention to advertising after the beginning of the course. Attaches several print advertisements in relation to gestures. |
| 5th | - | Writes in Eng but not | - | Diary in Ita. Writes more |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | extensively. Mentions the utility of writing and dictation twice. Lists new phrases. Leaves blank most of the sections except the page where she lists new vocabulary. | | that in previous diaries. Itemises activities and new vocabulary covered in class. Mentions the utility of writing, reading, putting words into new contexts. Expresses her interest in analysing advertisements and on the predominant role played by the images. |
| 6th | Diary compiled in Ita. Focuses on vocabulary, phrases in particular. Recapitulates class contents and activities, | Lists activities and vocabulary. Most diary is compiled in Eng with some Ita blended in. Uses diary to communicate with teacher | Compiles parts of the diary in Eng and other parts in Ita. Interesting observations on the mix of language and content | Writes in Ita. Lists activities and new vocabulary. Besides noting what she finds interesting she also assesses the utility of creativity |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | especially her pair task. Assesses utility of the technique used in class. Observes the importance of writing about the class. Attaches an analysis of a print advertisement to her folder. | (here: apologising for arriving late to class and not compiling diaries regularly). Reflects on the utility of creativity techniques. Entries are more personal and longer. Attaches analysis of advertisement to her folder (Minute Maid). | and on the utility of the classes. | techniques using a slightly more personal tone. Attaches two analyses of print advertisements. |
| 7th | Collective portfolios | | | |
| 8th | Small prize ceremony | | | |

**Table 6 Individual subjects' response to the course (3)**

Altro: -

(D, IS, p. 5, IIcl.)

Contents: Persuasion in advertising. The components of print adv. Impulses that draw the consumer to the product.

Language: The words and phrases that are used to persuade.

*

Contenuti:

Imparare come la pubblicità ci persuade- i mezzi che usa.

Lingua:

Il vocabulario di persuasione. (D, GN, p. 31, IIcl.)

Contents:

Learning how advertising persuades us - the means it uses.

Language:

The vocabulary of persuasion.

As the course moves forward, however, diary entries become longer and more personalised: they pass from short, matter-of-fact annotations or key words to longer, personalised sentences denoting what may be described as the 'entrance of the individual' into the contents of the diary. Personalisation thus leads to appropriation of contents. A personal comment introducing or following a short description or note signals the shift towards appraisal of an event or situation (see 6.0.2 above):

*Espressione sono sempre utilissimo*: mi si sono rizzati i capelli!

Stanno distruggendo i polmoni del mondo.

Sono al 7° cielo! ecc.

Il calcio ha 2 significati - *queste parole sono interessante e importante*. (D, GR, p. 26, IIIcl.; my emphasis)

***Idioms are always very useful*** - my hair stood on end!

They are destroying the lungs of the world.

I'm in the seventh heaven! Etc.

'Calcio' ['calcium' and 'soccer'] has 2 meanings - ***these words are interesting and important.***

This comment raises points for reflection without pursuing them further. Nevertheless, in signalling these points it acts as a direction for later consideration and begins to move beyond the basic level of descriptive writing described above as 'acquaintance'.

In a chronological perspective, diary entries not only show a change concerning the number of words, but also a more speculative attitude towards the topics considered – a shift in style that varies from concise compilation to narration and evaluation (a result also noted in learners'

diaries by Parkinson and Howell-Richardson, 1990):

> 1) Questa settimana l'insegnante ci ha dato delle foglie battute a riempire. Per me era un buon metodo di mantenere la concentrazione nel corso della lezione.
>
> 2) Il contenuto della lezione è diventato più interessante perché gli studenti avevano raccolto molte foglie della pubblicità, e le hanno commentate nel corso della lezione. Erano molto divertante. (D, CA, p. 10 Vcl.)

**1) This week the teacher gave us some typed sheets to fill in. For me it was a good method for holding attention throughout the class.**

**2) The content of the class has become more interesting because the students have collected many print advertisements and have commented on them in class. They were very amusing.**

At a higher (or more sophisticated) level of reflection, the style of entries may shift towards introspection. The entry that follows seems to reproduce the process of reflection of the learner in its making and its learning outcome:

> I was also struck by the page we got on RETORICA (about LA 'RETORICA' di Aristotele and about Cicerone) and how these men analysed, studied and wrote about rhetoric in such detail, and about how to best maximise its power. It is not just a recent invention, or a passing trend!
>
> I would not use the word 'Rhetoric' very often, and I would have thought of it as referring just to SPEECH-MAKING, oratory. Interestingly, I checked my dictionary to find it is somewhat broader than that. The definition is given as (1) The art of effective speaking or writing (2) Persuasive language that is empty or insincere. That is a nice little addition to my knowledge of words in English! (D, KV, p. 31, III)

Style and length are but two aspects of the characterisation of reflective writing in journals; other criteria may be considered such as, for example, the nature of explanation given (Sparkes-Langer et al., 1990), which of the three types of rationality identified by van Manen (1977) is used, i.e. technical, practical or critical (as Wedman and Martin [1986] suggest), etc. (other criteria are given in Boud et al., 1985; Hatton and Smith [1994] and Moon, 2006).

## 6.1 The broad dimension of the course

### 6.1.1 Activities, tasks and techniques

As would be expected, the participants used the diary to report on the course. This corroborates the 'broad' dimension of the diary discussed in chapter 5, that is to say, the capacity of diaries to receive (and attract) observations on the learning context as a whole, including the 'whats' and the 'hows' of the course, its social and cultural components, etc. In the diaries analysed in this

thesis these observations mainly take the form of comments of varying sophistication and length and address such aspects of the classes as content, teaching techniques, materials, specific learning tasks, etc. A selection of entries is cited below according to the respective focus of attention; there is inevitably a degree of overlap between them.

At a superficial level the informative character of these entries is quite limited. From a pedagogical perspective, however, and along an educational path, these entries represent the first stage of authentication of the 'material for learning' and a step towards knowledge appropriation. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the presence of comments, even the less elaborate, signals that the learner is 'going near' the experience:

> La pubblicità stampata era interessante per sapere come è usata una lingua straniera per la pubblicità. (D, AP, p. 6, IIcl.)

**Print advertising was interesting to know how a foreign language is used in advertising.**

> *
>
> Una granda gamma della pubblicità. Diversi prodotti; anche la pubblicità anticcisima dalle anni 1920 (ventanta?) con molte parole! Certamente il poppolo ha avuto più tempo per legere. (D, GR, p. 31, IIcl.)

**A wide range of advertisements. Different products; also, very old advertising from the 1920s ('twenties'?) with many words! Certainly people had more time to read them.**

> *
>
> Mi piace molto la pagina 'Retorica I II III': è chiaro, semplice; sono curioso delli gesti, l'arte di accompagnare il discorso con il corpo! (D, GR, p. 28, III)

**I really like the page 'Rhetoric I II III': it is clear and simple; I am curious about gestures and the art of accompanying speech with our body!**

> *
>
> The mixture of English and Italian quotations is very helpful to trace language similarities. Also an interesting point for comparing metaphors:
>
> It costs an arm and a leg (English)
>
> Costa un occhio della testa (Italian). (D, JA, p. 14, III)

Often, learners intend to offer a first-hand evaluation of the effectiveness of materials, strategies and activities proposed in class. This became particularly apparent in the diaries commenting on class 6 where learners had experimented with techniques for stimulating creativity. In this case, their comments stretch to include an evaluation of these techniques and of the activities that accompanied them. Overall, all diaries 'approve' of the activities used and entries vary in length and purpose ranging from a handful of words or a short sentence carrying an unequivocal

approval ('This class reached its objectives', D, GN, p. 41, VIcl.), to a more extended explanation where reasons are given for this appreciation:

> Mi piace usare le parole a casaccio per fare un conto perché l'immaginazione è stimolata e così si ascolta qualcosa divertente.
>
> Mi piace i cappelli colorati perché è necessario pensare in differenti modi. Tra questo metodo penso che sia possibile fare della pubblicità per un pubblico diverso.
>
> Penso che 'il fiore di loto' sia buono per suggere immagini per la pubblicità.
>
> Il fiore di loto è più adatto a fare gli immagini che gli altri metodi.
>
> (D, CA, p. 6, VIcl.)

**I like to use the words randomly extracted from the basket to make a story because our imagination is stimulated and we end up listening to something amusing.**

**I like the coloured hats because it is necessary to think in different ways. Thanks to this method I think it is possible to create advertising for a diverse audience.**

**I think the Lotus flower technique is good to suggest images for advertising.**

**The Lotus flower is more suitable for creating images than the other methods.**

> *
>
> Tre techniche per risvegliare la creatività, come segue: 1) La tecnica dei cappelli 2) La tecnica di 'Lotto'? 3) La tecnica delle parole. Non ho capito chiaramente la differenza tra 2) e 3). Mi sembra che in ogni caso pensiamo delle parole che associamo con l'argomento e poi usiamo queste parole per trovare una idea, una soluzione per trascendere il blocco/l'ostruzione. Con numero due, non è chiaro a me il significato di comminciare con una parola particolare al centro, e poi di sostituire questa parola con ogni delle altre parole di seguito. (D, KV, p. 66, VIcl.; my emphasis)

**Three techniques to awaken our creativity, as follows: 1) the hats technique, 2) the 'Lotto'? Technique, 3) the words technique. I have not understood the difference between 2) and 3) clearly. It seems to me that in either case we think of the words that we associate with the topic and then we use these words to find an idea, a solution to transcend the block/impediment. With number two, it is not clear to me the reason for starting from a specific word in the middle and then replacing this word with other words that follow.**

> *
>
> The methods for stimulating creativity lead you down paths you didn't anticipate which is good. It is difficult I anticipate the content of the class before or indeed during it - this is good. (D, SE, p. 1, VIcl.)

Similarly, diary entries carry opinions on the usefulness of techniques employed in class as the following examples show:

> Ho sentito/pensato che la tempesta di cervella e una strategia molto effettivo per allargare il vocabulario. (D, CN, p. 86, VIcl.)

**I felt/thought that brainstorming is a very effective strategy to enlarge our vocabulary.**

> *
>
> La tecnicha dil fiori di loto mi sembra più dificile e comunque penso che non la riutilizzerei mai; ma al contrario tanto la tecnicha dei cappelli come la tecnicha delle parole mi sembrano più utile, per essempio per

scrivere sul qualque cosa.

[...]

- Conoscere queste tecniche mi sembra utile e positivo.

- Il esserczizio con il gruppo de 3 personi, mi ha piaciuto moltisimo; la preparazione e doppo la presentazione alle classe. (D, BE, pp. 5-6, VIcl.)

**The lotus flower technique seems to me more difficult; anyway, I think I would not reuse it; on the contrary, both the hats technique and the words technique seem to me more useful, for example for writing something.**

**- learning about these techniques seems useful and positive.**

**- I really liked the group exercise with 3 people, the preparation and the presentation to the rest of the class.**

*

Tra le 3 techniche uno è forse migliore degli altri dipendare dal lavoro, la situazione, il tempo disponibile, le persone chi essere coinvolto.

Credo che sia un grande progetto, forse nella comunità la tecnica n. 1 - fiori di loto, come brainstorming è migliore per trovare idee forte. Anche, per la nostra favola (io, LN, GN), la tecnica 3 - delle parole, era creativa nella nostra immaginazione, fantasia per crearanno i immagini. (D, GR, p. 10, VIcl.)

**Of the three techniques, one is maybe better than the other two and this depends on the type of work, the situation, the time available, the people who are involved.**

**I think that for a large project, maybe in the community [in group?], the technique n.1, i.e. the lotus flower, is a better brainstorming to find strong ideas. Also, for our story (mine, LN's and GN's), technique 3, i.e. the words technique, was creative for our imagination and [stimulated] us in creating images.**

*

Apart from language I presume that the point is that these are 3 ways to encourage people, students to speak out; il cappello, il loto, le parole.

[...] I did find this interesting as a way to make me speak up. (D, MC, p.21, VIcl.)

*

Il temo, i colore il logico, l'immaginazione. La scelta delle parole che fanno una storia. La baloncina era veramente una lezione molta completa! (D, BR, p. 5, VIcl.)

**The theme, colour, logic, imagination. The choice of words that make up a story. The basket. Really, it was a complete class!**

On other occasions, learners' comments focus on learning tasks assigned in class such as the use of jigsaws:

Il sistemo di dare le pagine sulla prossemica tagliati in puzzle e strisce era buono. Si obbligano i studente leggere le pagine attentivamente. (D, CA, p. 12, IVcl.)

**The system of handing us the pages on proxemy cut into a jigsaw and stripes was a good one. Students are thus obliged to read the pages carefully.**

*

il puzzle con i linguaggi e lo sguardo era difficile a costruire immediatamente e c'eranno tante parole nuove a capire. Ma una buon idea! Era chiaro quasi subito! (D, GR, p. 21, IVcl.)

**the jigsaw with the different languages and gaze [=types] was difficult to**

**construct immediately and there were many new words to understand. But it was a good idea! It was clear almost straight away!**

The impact of practical factors on class success is also considered in some entries, for example, the use of the overhead projector:

> [were objectives clear?] Veramente chiaro. I disegni con l'organizzazione degli spazi e le linee sono simplice a capire. Il proiettore anche utile ti mettono sempre in posizione giusto! (D, GR, p. 17, V; my emphasis)

**Really clear. The pictures with the organisation of spaces and of lines are easy to understand. The projector is also useful: it always places you in the right position!**

In short, diary entries show their broad dimension (see chapter 5) in including aspects of the course such as techniques used, choice of tasks and sequence ('Interesting that the ads are given at the end of the class. Maybe they'd be a distraction if seen early, before all the points are understood', in D, GR, p. 29, IIIcl.), materials and tools.

### 6.1.2 Atmosphere

When learners' attention departs from such external aspects of the course as mentioned above and begins to explore the impact of factors such as atmosphere and participants' personality on learning, diary entries also take on a more personal tone. For example, some entries describe a generally encouraging classroom atmosphere and acknowledge its positive impact on the learning process:

> [most salient aspects of the class:] Una fantastica (Ottima!!) atmosfera durante la classe. Brava!
>
> (D, JA, p. 25, Vcl.)

**A fantastic (Excellent!) atmosphere during the class. Bravo!**

> *
>
> L'atmosfera nel corso è molto rilassata e 'non-threatening' e quindi tutti i partecipante sono disposti a dare opinioni e parlare. Per me questo è molto importante per cominciare a imparare. (D, LN, p. 15, IIIcl.)
>
> *

**The atmosphere in the course is very relaxed and 'non-threatening' so all the participants are willing to give their opinions and to talk. For me this is very important to start learning.**

> *
>
> L'inspira ad imparare; Sono in anticipa della prossima classe; Penso positivo della lingua italiana.
>
> *Ogni uno può chiedere una domanda con confidenza e indipendente durante la classe e si senta contenta con la risposta.*

E [=è] sempre una gioia ad imparare. (D, BR, p. 23, IIIcl.; my emphasis)

**The inspiration to learn. I am looking forward to next class; I think positive about the Italian language.**

***Everyone can ask a question with confidence and independently during the class and feels content with the answer.***

**It is always a joy to learn.**

Other comments stress the function that a positive atmosphere plays in favouring the creative processes and in focusing the learner's mind on the task:

> È anche importante che la atmosfera nella classe è ottima per usare l'imaginazione. Mi piace fare lo sforzo per trovare buoni soluzioni per problemi con cui ci confronti.
>
> [...] Io ho osservato che la nostra gruppa è molto apperta per discussione. Mi piace la lezione anche perché non c'è una barriera tra l'insegnante e gli studenti. (D, JA, p. 3, IVcl.)

**It is also important that the atmosphere in class is ideal to use our imagination. I like to make the effort to find the solution to problems you challenge us with.**

**[...] I have observed that our class is very open for discussion. I like the class also because there is not a barrier between the teacher and the students.**

The importance of a stress-free and non-threatening environment in creating favourable learning conditions was acknowledged earlier in this thesis (1.2.3), in conjunction with Krashen's (1981; 1989a) affective-filter hypothesis. The comments cited in this section demonstrate an awareness of the role of a non-threatening learning environment in fostering confident and active participation in the learning process. Also relevant in this respect is the emphasis in learners' diaries of a growing sense of kinship in the classroom. As participants establish a bond with each other they report an improved classroom atmosphere which they feel has a positive impact on the learning process:

> Vocabulary has been extended through discussion based on magazine advertisements.
>
> *Confidence has grown also, as we as a class become more familiar, with each other.* (D, CN, p. 16, IIcl.; my emphasis)
>
> *
>
> [*most salient aspects of the class:*]
>
> - le tre tecniche per risvegliare la creatività.
> - Il fatto che ogni studente parlava meglio possibile della parola cavata a cassaccio.
> - *Il fatto che ogni gruppo lavorava con entusiasmo e pieno di umorismo per fare insieme il loro compito.* (D, KV, p. 68, VIcl.; my emphasis)

**- three techniques to awaken creativity.**

**- the fact that every student spoke as well as possible of the word drawn out**

**of the basket.**

**- *the fact that every group worked with enthusiasm and full of humour to carry out their task together.***

As the 'participants' grow into a 'class', diary entries reveal an attention to peers' personality and also learning process. For instance, the personality of one of the participants (JA) is noticed in these entries:

> [what helps you learning:] Sono persona visuale, quindi i esempi dalle riviste ecc. o la pagina con i gesti mi piacconno. *Ricordo bene qualcosa buffa, così sempre quando [JA] racconta qualcosa!* (D, GR, p. 22, IVcl.; my emphasis)

**[what helps you learning:] I am a visual person, therefore I like the examples from magazines etc. or the page with gestures. *I remember well something funny, so I always remember it when [JA] says something!***

> *
>
> [most salient aspects of the class:] [JA] - mi piache come fonctiona il suo cervello! (D, LN, p. 6, Vcl.)

**[JA] - I like the way his brain works!**

Other entries may assess the overall performance of the relevant class ('The class of 23/5 was the most interesting and the most amusing of all the classes until now. We all had the possibility to comment on an advertisement for the others and we all learned more new words'; D, CA, p. 10, Vcl.) or specific groupwork-activity outcomes. These entries signal openness in the learners towards the external and are related to a more relaxed environment, thus to effective learning.

A further focus of attention in learners' diaries is on the personality of the teacher and the role it has in contributing a relaxed and productive learning environment:

> Another aspect is that it is a great variation from the usual language-classroom experience - it is another approach, another dimension to the learning of the language. *It works so well with an enthusiastic class and an enthusiastic and innovative teacher.*(D, KV, p. 31, IIIcl.; my emphasis)
>
> *
>
> Mi piace la lezione anche perché non c'è una barriera tra l'insegnante e gli studenti. (D, JA, p. 3, IVcl.)

**I like the class also because there is not a barrier between teacher and students.**

> *
>
> La dimostrazione e la spiegazione degli 4 tipi di sguardi dall'insegnante e degli studenti erano molto divertente. (D, CA, p. 14, IVcl.)

**The presentation and the explanation of the 4 types of gaze by the teacher and by students were very funny.**

> *
>
> Anche una grande scelta di metodi e il senso dell'umorismo

dell'insegnante erano molto importante. (D, JA, p. 23, Vcl.)

**Also a wide choice of methods and the sense of humour of the teacher were very important.**

*

[strategies:] (la ripetizione)- anche la tua energia - it's energising for me. (D, MC, p. 19, VIcl.)

**repetition - also: your energy - it's energising for me.**

The words 'humour', 'amusement' and 'fun' recur in the entries that allude to the positive impact of a relaxed atmosphere on learning, for example:

The exercise to invent some story using these examples of rhetoric was fun. Mixing and matching from those in front of us on the table created some amusing results. We created a silly but believable story of frustrated love between 2 characters. Simple and easy to remember. I also remember the story of a man buying a ring in the jewellers. (D, GR, p. 29, IIIcl.)

*

I rely on the visual and practical approach. Things tend to 'sink in' more effectively when those two aspects are combined. Humour helps greatly too, I find!

That's why I think this course is v. effective. (D, CN, p. 23, IIIcl.)

These entries are revealing on two levels. First, they convey a positive impression of the atmosphere of the course, an insight that would not be easily captured otherwise (as observed earlier, affective variables are important in the process of learning). Second, the impact on learning of factors such as atmosphere, may be underestimated by the teacher were it not for the communicative function carried out by the learning diary (this function was mentioned in 5.3.1). Of course, the principal aim of diary writing is to make the diarist herself aware of the importance of certain factors in her learning process. This is an aspect of deep learning that also favours self-awareness. Noticing aspects such as the function of the atmosphere and mentioning it in one's diary may reasonably be regarded as a movement towards awareness.

### 6.1.3 JA's reflective dialogue

When diary entries begin to accept and consider alternative viewpoints on events, the account takes on dialogic characteristics. This section analyses the dialogic reflection of one of the participants (JA). Besides showing a complexity of viewpoints on the experience described, his diary entries present distinctive characteristics and are worth mentioning separately.

JA takes a particularly personal evaluative stance towards the course and, in so doing, shows evidence of a deeply reflective attitude. As in many examples quoted so far, JA's entries allude to events that took place in class but his description serves the process of personal evaluation:

> I think it was a good and inspiring class. A very sound technical background followed by activities where you have to juggle 'flesh-and-blood' quotations and situations keeps you busy and attentive all the time.

The entries do not provide a straightforward account of classroom events, but an attempt to offer a personal response to the classes' contents. This is revealed in the effort to consider the learning situation from several perspectives:

> [strategies] Notazione (e molto bene per me); anche l'ultima idea - dettato mi piaceva molto. Penso che lo pottresti usare più spesso durante le lezioni, sembra molto efficace.
>
> [...]
>
> [most salient aspects of the class:]
>
> 1.Interessante forme di presentazione
>
> 2.Opportunità di parlare italiano (specialmente il linguaggio di pubblicità)
>
> 3.Molte parole nuove che normalmente non si impara così prima (quando si studia italiano durante un 'curso regulare'
>
> 4.Una fantastica (Ottima!!) atmosfera durante la classe. Brava!
>
> (D, JA, p. 25, Vcl.)

> **Taking notes (it is very good for me); also, the last idea, dictation, I liked a lot. I think you could use it more often in other classes; it seems very effective.**
>
> **[...]**
>
> **1.Interesting presentation forms**
>
> **2.Opportunity to speak Italian (especially the language of advertising).**
>
> **3.Many new words that normally one cannot learn like this otherwise (i.e. when studying Italian in a 'regular' class)**
>
> **4.A fantastic (Excellent!) atmosphere during the class. Bravo!**

There is a sense that the aspects reported are being pondered or mulled over, not just recounted. Also, other sources of information, external ideas are included in the evaluation. In this participant's case, it is his professional experience as a teacher that lets him adopt a new perspective on the events accounted for. When this occurs it is an indication that the situations and ideas are being subjected to reflection:

> I can share with you one very important observation. As I am, among other things, a qualified teacher of English (with university background), I have always appreciated the time that is given to students for team-work. They can work in a stress-free situation and prepare a presentation (not

necessarily by writing it down), a presentation which is richer in words and expressions than a similar presentation organized ad hoc.

Now, being a student of Italian I double-value that time that you give us (and used to give) during this and earlier courses.

It is definitely something that I miss during my conversation class.

Another strong point: organization of the time - we know where we start and where we are going. (D, JA, p. 16, IIIcl.)

In adopting a professional viewpoint, JA 'stands back' from the learning context and ponders it from a different perspective, one that allows him another view of the course and additional material on which to reflect. In short, his words sound as if he were moving around the event and perceiving it from different angles or simply through somebody else's eyes – incidentally, a technique that is recommended in reflective practice (e.g. Progoff, 1975).

JA's reflective account shows some analysis of the situation reported. There is the recognition of the value of exploring reasons for personal responses such as liking a situation:

Per me è molto importante che parliamo delle cose della vita quotidiana. Si succede che molti corsi della lingua offrono possibilità di parlare di materie molto soffisticate mentre noi dobbiamo communicare nel mondo pieno di pubblicità, mass-media, etc. È anche importante che la atmosfera nella classe è ottima per usare l'imaginazione. Mi piace fare lo sforzo per trovare buoni soluzioni per problemi con cui ci confronti. (D, JA, p. 3, IVcl.)

**For me it is very important that we talk about everyday things. It happens that many language courses offer the possibility to talk about very sophisticated subject-matter while we have to communicate in a world full of advertising, mass-media, etc. It is also important that the atmosphere in class is ideal to use the imagination. I like to make the effort to find the solution to problems you challenge us with.**

These entries show readiness to be critical of the situations the diarist is confronted with and of the ideas he associates with the event. Also important is that he categorises advertising analysis among 'everyday things'.

In short, this perspective on the learning situation is enriched through at least 'another' viewpoint. If pursued through systematic reflection and appropriate questioning (as discussed in 2.3.3) this attitude may gradually develop into a metacognitive stance which is an indication of a deep level of reflection and of learning.

When JA adopts the educational-practitioner frame of reference he shows attention for the organisation of the class ('Mi sempre piace il fatto che prima abbiamo una bella spiegazione di

che cosa parleremo durante la lezione. Bravo!', i.e. *I always like the fact that first we have a good explanation of what we'll talk about during the lesson. Bravo!*, D, JA, p. 1, IVcl.) and empathises with the teacher for her work ('È assolutamente notevole quanto lavoro devi fare per preparare le lezioni. Ma penso che vale la pena!', i.e. *It is absolutely remarkable how much work you have to do to prepare the classes. But I think it is worth it!* D, JA, p. 3, IVcl.).

In short, his writing takes the form of a dialogue between practitioners: JA's entries show that he is willing to contribute the empirical study with expert observations and comments. Interestingly, JA's entries vary in tone when the diarist switches from English to Italian and vice versa (most of his writing, however, is in Italian). This may be due to such factors as the diarist's higher competence in written English (a foreign language to him) but also to a perceived change of interlocutor – a variation that is recognised in the literature on reflective journals (e.g. Rainer, 2004; Holly, 2002; Gibbs, 1988). The sense of audience may influence the diarist's manner of writing and Elbow and Clarke (1987) make this point strongly: 'An audience is a field of force. The closer we come, the more we think about these readers – the stronger the pull they exert over the contents of our minds' (p. 19). In using Italian, he feels free to express his enthusiastic support to the project and the style of this entry is that of a personal letter:

> È difficile aggiungere qualcos'altro. Mi piacevo il corso molto molto. Grazie Simona per il tuo lavoro!!!! Siamo molto contenti, Spero che ci vediamo durante un corso di conversazione nel prossimo semestre. Grazie!! È quasi impossibile organizzare le lezioni meglio che tu lo facci. (D, JA, p. 25, Vcl.)

**It is difficult to add something else. I really really liked the course. Thank you, Simona for your work!!!! We are very happy. I hope I will see you during a conversation class in the next semester. Thank you!!! It is almost impossible to organize the classes better than you do.**

JA's more controlled tone in his English entries (see extracts above) may reveal an awareness that his words are directed to a third party outside this dialogue since he knows that his diary entries will form the experimental data for an academic study. For example, he increases control over punctuation and modifies his tone to suit a more formal interlocutor. This variation is recognised in the literature and gives rise to what has been described as a sort of 'schizophrenic style' in diaries (Bailey and Ochsner, 1983: 193).

### 6.1.4 Summary

The fact that the diary is also used as a mirror for factual events in the diarist's life is shown by many of the extracts quoted so far. A preliminary analysis of the data revealed that learners employ diaries to observe the 'world' around them. In the sections above it was suggested that entries show varying degrees of sophistication according to the diarist's reflectiveness and that authentication-appropriation of the material for learning is hierarchically arranged in the following sequence: acquaintance, familiarisation, reflective insight. Many of the entries personalise their observations with comments, which places them on the level of 'familiarisation'. The last section focused on a diarist's entries that exhibit characteristics of the third of these levels (reflective insights), and that engage in a dialogue with the reader.

The process of appropriation of the material for learning passes through a stage where the learner-diarist is able to take a step back and assess the situation from a less involved, yet more profound viewpoint. When this occurs reflection is called into play and exercises its deeper educating function, as will be noticed in subsequent parts of this chapter.

## 6.2 Focus on content

### 6.2.1 Premise

This section deals with the learning of advertising communication, characteristics, etc. as described in learners' diaries. As for the previous section, this process of learning of content shows varying degrees of reflectiveness depending on individual learners, which are indicated by the characteristics outlined above; additionally, technical expertise increases with the acquisition of analytical tools relevant to advertising and culminates in quite sophisticated analyses (a selection of analyses is presented in 4.5). The diaries chart the process of becoming accustomed to a new discipline in a relatively short period of time, especially the effort to integrate new and pre-existing knowledge and accommodate it into the learner's cognitive structure. This process requires a starting point which, as demonstrated in the entries cited

above, begins with the re-iteration of thoughts, ideas, etc. presented in class; for example, there appears an acknowledgement of the role of advertising in society:

> Viviamo nel mondo di pubblicità. È difficile evitare la discusione su questo tema. Anche, la pubblicità rifletta la nostra vita con le nostre usanze, tradizioni, umore, etc. (D, JA, p. 29, Icl.)

**We live in an advertising world. It is difficult to avoid discussing this theme. Moreover, advertising reflects our life with our habits, traditions, humour, etc.**

> Si puoi usare li punti positivi e negativi nel un discorso tra l'altri aspetti di vita. Quindi la pubblicità reflette le i cambi della società. (D, GR, p. 37, Icl.)

**It is possible to use the positive and negative aspects in a speech about other aspects of life. So advertising reflects the changes in society.**

Again the shift from the statement of how things are to a personalisation of content is signalled by the comment of the diarist, often in the first person, on the focus of a class. The following entry shows a learner's attention to single aspects of the advertising structure such as the role of images in them and enriches this attention with a first-person remark followed by an original consideration:

> Mi sembra utile. Mi fa pensare della pubblicità di punto di vista psicholigo [psicologico=psychological].
>
> Mi sorprendo come le immagini possano suggerire un mondo alternativo, e come questo mondo alternativo possa diventire una parte della realtà. (D, CA, p. 23, IIcl.)

**I find it [class content] useful. It makes me think about advertising from a psychological point of view.**

**It surprises me how images could suggest an alternative world, and how this alternative world could become a part of our reality.**

Reflections also focus on the function, the characteristics and the role of language in advertising, as in the following entry. The diarist observes her own interest in learning about how language is used in a specific context such as that of advertising communication:

> Nella lezione 3 abbiamo imparato circa il tipo di lingua usato in pubblicità. *Ho trovato questa lezione specialmente interessa perché mai ho analizzato o pensato a come la lingua è usata.* Ho trovato gli esempi visivi del similitudine, metafore, ripetizione e del hyperbole molto interessante.

**In class 3 we have learnt about the kind of language used in advertising. *I found this class particularly interesting because I have never analysed or learnt about how language is used in this context.* I found the visual examples of comparison, metaphor, repetition and hyperbole very interesting.**

Her reflection extends to the persuasive power of advertising and culminates in a criticism of its means which are not always 'fair':

La lingua ha un'influenza potente sopra la gente ed il loro comportamento. Questa è particolarmente vero nel marketing e pubblicità. La scelta della lingua per trasportare i messaggi specifici con l'intenzione dell'influenza la gente è molto importante. Publicite usano frequentemente metafore, similitudine, ripetizione e hyperbole per trasportare il loro messaggio.

La lingua di pubblicità è normalmente molto positiva e esagera che cosa un prodotto fa e come è migliore dei competitori. La lingua delle pubblicità non può essere sempre 'corregge' nel senso normale. Per esempio, i comparativi sono usati senza fare un confronto reale. Una pubblicità per un detersivo può dire che 'ottiene i vestiti più bianchi', ma più bianco di che cosa? (D, CH, p. 4, IIIcl.)

**Language has a powerful influence over people and their behaviour. This is particularly true in marketing and advertising. The choice of language to convey specific messages with the intention of influencing people is very important. Advertisements often use metaphors, similes, repetition and hyperbole to convey their message.**

**The language of advertising is usually very positive and exaggerates the uses of a product and how better it is than its competitors. The language of advertising may not always be 'correct' in the normal sense. For example, comparatives are used without making a real comparison. An advertisement for a detergent can claim: 'it washes whiter', but whiter than what?**

Questioning the subject as in the entry just quoted is indicative of a comprehension effort on the part of the learner in the appropriation of the subject matter. As mentioned in chapter 2 learning is a process of assimilation of new information and its accommodation into the learners' cognitive network, and this process is not always smooth. Diaries have the advantage of representing this effort of comprehension in its incremental development, as in the extract just reported.

In addition to recognising the inherent sophistication of both the visual and the verbal as two distinct and powerful components of advertisements, learners also appreciate their synergic action in advertising texts – words, images, etc.:

Le immagini, i colori, la totalità della pubblicità - tutti hanno una parte, non sole le parole. Ma le parole sono importante anche, soprattutto se c'è uno slogan ricordabile (memorable). Il testo di accompagnamento dev'essere (di solito) positivo, persuasivo perché il consumatore voglia comprare il prodotto. (D, UR, p. 6, IIcl.)

**Images, colours, the totality of advertising. Each has a role, not only words. But words are important as well, especially if there is a memorable slogan. Body copy has to be (usually) positive [and] persuasive if the consumer is to buy the product.**

*

[language objectives:] Come la lingua e gli imagine sono manipolati e utilizzati insieme efficacemente. (D, BR, p. 21, IIIcl.)

**How language and images are manipulated and used together effectively.**

This effort to summarise is also an indication of the processes of assimilation and

accommodation mentioned in chapter 2, two processes that, according to the constructivist view, lead to meaningful learning: new information undergoes modifications in order to fit pre-existing ideas or the cognitive structure is adjusted to fit incoming information.

### 6.2.2 Associations

The patterns of entries that are identified and laid out below demonstrate more closely how these cognitive processes were employed specifically in relation to this course, that is, through association. Before moving on to analyse those processes, two observations are in order. First, learning does not happen in a vacuum and is always the learning of something, that is to say, it is a contextualised activity. Its process is affected by individual variables, such as maturity, and personality traits, such as interest, curiosity and open-mindedness. The subject matter also interacts with the individual's cognitive structure and determines the process of learning, as Marton and Ramsden (1988) explain: 'There are ways of dealing with and reasoning about various aspects of subject matter and their character should be defined by the imperatives of the subject matter' (p. 113). This principle is applied in devising activities engendered by features of the authentic text. As shown in chapters 3 and 4, advertising is a composite form of communication which requires a kind of analytical deconstruction; the strategies used to 'dismantle' (see quotations below) its structure need to be learnt so that a satisfying analysis (and new learning) is attained from new insights. Learners obviously perceive this imperative and refer to it in their entries. In these cases, it is possible to read the entries as a product of the text characteristics:

> I contenuti mi sembra utile, perché una conoscenza più grande della pubblicità permettiamo la *smontare/analizzare* meglio e, di conseguenza, prendere decisioni più saggie. (D, KV, p. 27, IIcl.; my emphasis)

**I find the contents useful because a wider knowledge of advertising allows us to *dismantle and analyse* it better and, consequently, to make wiser decisions.**

*

> I feel the course in some way empowers you, in that you get a chance to *dissect* the strategies used on us everyday to influence our choice of product. (D, CN, p. 24, IIIcl.; my emphasis)

These entries take as their basis the recognition that the persuasive strategies of advertising may influence our choices, and therefore acknowledge the value of an analysis that 'dissects' the

advert's message and allows a more considered decision. The advertising genre calls for an analysis of this kind and harmonises with a concept of task appropriateness that Duff and Maley (1990) neatly summarize when they argue that learning activities should be 'text-responsive' (p. 6). Also, advertising demands attention and this, too, is a characteristic that diary entries account for.

Second, from a constructivist perspective and given the variety of stimuli and inputs in any learning context, the learner integrates these inputs into his cognitive structure and forms a coherent, valid and appropriately critical picture of events, ideas, etc. As was discussed in 2.2.5, the cognitive structure is unique to the individual and is constantly subject to change in order to accommodate new experiences, meanings, and facts; alternatively, the new ideas, meanings, etc. are modified in order to suit the cognitive structure. It will be useful to recall that the cognitive structure does not simply adjust in response to new material, but it also guides the selection of new material of learning. Furthermore, Mezirow (1990) contended that the very perception (or failure of perception) of meanings, ideas, and information is powerfully influenced by 'habits of expectation' which constitute our 'frame of reference' (p. 4; quoted in 2.2.5). The cognitive structure thus filters and processes new experiences according to its own parameters, that is, an individual's beliefs, experiences, feelings, etc. in the selection and processing of new material for learning since what we learn is influenced by what we know (2.2.5).

That individual characteristics of this network of ideas, convictions, beliefs, etc. guide the process of appropriation of new knowledge emerges clearly in the diaries. The diaries often document the process of adjustment of the learners' cognitive network. The most frequent form of assimilation of new knowledge with old knowledge is through an association with what learners already know, such as their work domains, memories, knowledge, interests, daily events and other advertisements. A selection of these associations is presented here, beginning with the participants' link with work:

> I work a lot with advertising companies (working with pharmaceutical industry). Before these lessons I never thought about the language used to communicate in advertising and also because often our products are

complicate, metaphors and similitudine are used a lot, but I had never thought about it before. (D, CH, p. 23, IIIcl.)

*

Currently, I am working with a group of children on an 8-minute presentation for a school concert, which involves choreography. I've found that the simplest movements/gestures are the most effective, as opposed to convoluted movements. (D, CN, p. 37, IVcl.; class IV dealt with body language)

*

A me è importante i linguaggi non-verbale. Nel mio lavoro incontro persone che non possono parlare con le parole. Per capirle si deve fare attenzione ai linguaggi non-verbale. (Qualche volta dimentico abbiamo avuto un conversazione senza le parole. La conversazione sembrava come fosse con le parole parlate). (D, AP, p. 10, IVcl.)

**Non-verbal languages are important for me. In my work I often meet people who cannot speak with words. In order to understand them one has to pay attention to non-verbal languages. (Sometimes I forget that we had a conversation without words. That conversation seemed to be one with spoken words).**

*

ho finito il corso con un 'class' di 5th years e la mia idea era di studiare un film questa settimana. Invece ho fatto un mini-corso sulla pubblicità. Loro volevano farlo sulla pubblicità alla TV, gli ho persuaso di cercare le pubblicità nelle riviste. I ragazzi non hanno portati neanche una, ma le ragazze erano molto entusiastiche e hanno portato molte. L'esercizio è andato benissimo, tutti si sono divertiti e hanno imparato molto. Grazie! (D, LN, p. 7, Vcl.)

**I have finished the course with a 5th year class and my idea was to study a film this week. On the contrary, I did a mini-course on advertising. They wanted to do it on TV advertising but I persuaded them to look for advertisements in magazines. The boys did not bring them, but girls were very enthusiastic and brought many advertisements to the class. The exercise went really well, everyone enjoyed it and learnt a lot. Thank you!**

*

In the primary school in which I teach, we follow an English language scheme called 'Streets Ahead'. Part of this scheme is a workbook. Each age level has a particular workbook. Each workbook is divided into sub-sections, e.g. Be an expert communicator, Be an expert editor, Be a poetry expert etc. One section is titled - 'Be a media expert'. In this section, the children are given the opportunity to study a variety of print advertisements, and to form opinions on them. (I have enclosed some examples from different age-levels in the series. [samples available in D, CN, pp. 52-77]).

I found the work we did regarding print/position of characters etc. v. useful in approaching some of this school work. (D, CN, p. 79, Vcl.)

A number of diary entries establish a connection with other contexts and modes of communication such as radio programmes, literary works and other advertising texts. The following entry shows an association with quite recently acquired information:

Questo è preso dal mio 'diario' di 17 maggio (nella mia cartella):

Ho letto in una rivista italiana che il fischio è una comunicazione non-verbale. Fischiare è un comportamento linguistico; esprime un'emozione senza parole ma con l'emissione di un suono. In Canarie (Gomeria) il linguaggio fischiato è composto di quattro vocali e quattro consonanti. Si possono fischiare 1. mille parole udibili a chilometro di distanza.

('The Irish Times'): la gente malata di aphasia non capiscono le parole

> ma capiscono quasi tutto che si 'dice' a loro attraverso il linguaggi non-verbali. (D, IS, p. 21, IVcl.)

**This is taken from my 'diary' of the 17 May (in my folder [D, IS, p. 17]):**

**I have read in an Italian magazine that the whistle represents non-verbal communication. Whistling is a linguistic behaviour; it expresses an emotion without words but with the emission of a sound. In the Canaries (Gomeria) whistled language consists of four vowels and four consonants. It is possible to whistle 1 thousand words that can be heard one kilometre away.**

**('The Irish Times'): people that suffer from aphasia do not understand words but they understand almost anything they are told through non-verbal languages.**

Memories are a rich source of association as well. The following two examples show a different degree of personal involvement in the association with memories. In the first entry the learner recognises how the class raises memories of his school life:

> It's interesting to identify the rhetoric devices in the real examples that you provide us with. It automatically revolves the memories of poem analysis that we used to do at school. (D, JA, p. 15, IIIcl.)

The second dives more deeply into memories and uses them as a prompt for writing. This process of knowledge 'appropriation' is signalled from the start:

> La lezione sulla fotografia ricicla molto per me.
>
> La fotografia mi ricorda sempre della macchina fotografica 'Kodak Box Camera'. Non faceva fotografia di ottima qualità, ma bastava per l'epoca, e era molto amata per ricordare gli eventi speciali. Per illustrare, includo qualche fotografia. Le foto di scuola sono di me (quello di bell'aspetto!) e mio fratello minore. Non era di prim'ordine. (Adesso capisci come non mi piaceva la lingua irlandese -gaelige-; non mi piaceva per niente la scuola!). L'altro foto è mio fratello maggiore sull'occasione quando è riuscito comprare la sua prima macchina. Gli piaceva moltissimo gli attori di Hollywood, per esempio Robert Mitchum, e si può vedere che posa come un prim'attore nella foto. Purtroppo, è successo che la macchina consumava più d'olio che di benzina (una perdita grande e incurabile!).
>
> Poverino! Ha dovuto rottamare la macchina.
>
> Memorie...memorie...tutto grazie a Kodak. CLIC! (D, KV, p. 58, Vcl.)

**The class on photography recycles a lot for me.**

**Photography always reminds me of the 'Kodak Box Camera'. It did not use to produce excellent-quality photography, but it was enough for the time, and it was very much liked to remember special events. To illustrate this, I include some pictures. The school picture is of myself (the good-looking one!) and of my younger brother. The school was not of the first rank. (Now you understand why I didn't like the Irish language -gaelige-; I didn't like the school at all!). The other picture is of my elder brother: the occasion is when he managed to buy himself his first car. He liked Hollywood actors very much, for example Robert Mitchum, and you can see how he poses like a first-class actor in the picture. Unfortunately, it happened that the car consumed more oil than petrol (a huge and incurable loss!).**

**Poor him! He had to have the car scrapped.**

**Memories...memories...all thanks to Kodak. CLICK!**

The associative process is well represented in this entry, where the learner uses the class content

as a springboard for recalling personal memories using a narrative style (which he also 'illustrates' attaching pictures of himself, his brother and the car, see D, KV, pp. 56-57, Vcl.). This association with memories represents the learner's self-generated elaborations of material for learning and indicates that deep processing is occurring. As was discussed in chapter 2, depth of processing and effective learning are intertwined (see 2.3.1). This is true not only for content learning but also for language learning, since language encompasses every aspect of the learning process both as a means of classroom communication and in connection with cognitive and reflective activities. In fact, it is recommended that learners are given the opportunity to use the TL in as many ways and 'roles' as possible (this was discussed in 2.3.2. Also, in its emphasis on the tight connection of language with content, this educational context is close to the CLIL approach as discussed, for example, in Coonan, 1999; 2002a; 2002b; 2003; Snow et al., 1989). Of course, the association of new material with personal memories is accompanied and enriched by emotional content. The value of this stance is given also by the ability to recognise the role of emotional content in shaping the views presented and indulging in them without losing sight of their role. This strategy is of the greatest educational value if it is accompanied by an ability to recognise the emotional charge of such memories, and to establish an objective distance from them. In fact, the learner shows some standing back from the process of representing an experience and considers it from another viewpoint (in this case it is the viewpoint of maturity) as it is for a high level of reflectiveness.

The active formation of associations within the learner's cognitive network are useful facilitators of learning. For example, there is an indication that emotions and affective connections increase the learner's memory of new information (Anderson, 1990). Anderson's report highlights the importance of generating multiple access paths in memory and greater connections to other information in successful learning. The resulting linkages and pathways are more complex and provide a means to more effective learning and recall. A considerable part of the person's cognitive structure is determined by his personal interests. The following learner repeatedly associates the class topics with her interest in acting and drama:

> I've made a link between gestures in advertising and stage-work, particularly mime work. Mime is at its most effective when it is simple - clear, direct body position and gestures (a raised eyebrow, a blink).
>
> It can convey a multitude, whereas the spoken word can 'blue' or confuse the message.
>
> Even the simplicity of traditional mime costume - black leggings and top, white face and gloves, is similar to a blank canvas on which each gesture/message is presented. The universal nature of mime theatre is of huge importance, especially in a multicultural society. (D, CN, p. 37, IVc1.)
>
> *
>
> I considered the posing positions of the model in the various advertising pictures and compared them to the various positions an actor can hold on stage. Certain body stances are 'stranger' than others for delivering key lines [...]
>
> Similarly, the stage/acting area is divided into different 'zones'. Some zones are stranger than others, and depending on the importance a) of the character and b) of their role in a scene, the director places the actor accordingly. (D, CN, p. 80, Vc1.)

The association process is explicit in these entries (e.g. 'I've made a link between gestures in advertising and stage-work'; 'I considered [...] and compared them to [...]'). This learner's folder includes a selection of flyers and plots of the plays in question. The learner intended to propose a class activity (for which unfortunately there was no time) where the participants would have to match plots and flyers on the basis of an analysis of the characteristics (visual and linguistic) in the two (samples in D, CN, pp. 88-106). It is reasonable to believe that in this case the association with personal interests may add a motivational aspect to the process of familiarisation shown in these entries. Additionally, the enhancement of knowledge is not unidirectional since the learner discovers a new angle from which she ponders the new domain and feels more 'at home' with it.

### 6.2.3 Conflicting ideas

A useful reference to understand the interaction between old and new knowledge that emerges from these entries is in Marton and Booth (1997). These writers make a distinction between 'external knowledge', that is to say, knowledge that is outside ourselves and that we want to assimilate (ideas, beliefs, objects, concepts, etc.), and 'internal knowledge', which corresponds to the experience that the learner brings to the learning situation and which is part of his or her cognitive network. When internal and external knowledge meet, the learning process involves

'negotiation' between these two forms of experience in order for the learner to develop her new perspective after a balance is achieved. The following section discusses the learners' descriptions of their own assimilation of external with internal knowledge.

It has been observed on several occasions in this thesis that the accommodation process may not be a smooth or straightforward one. In fact, it may cause some conflict and require considerable effort to carry out. Individual learners' personality traits do play a role in determining whether or not new ideas relate to their cognitive network. Some learners can be more open and receptive of new knowledge while others tend to accept new learning only if it accords with their pre-existing knowledge (Mezirow, 1990: 160). Also, age may have an impact on the assimilation and the accommodation of information into the cognitive structure; Eraut (1994) suggests that these may alternate over a person's life history and that older people may tend towards assimilation of information into unchanging cognitive structures. In this respect, he claims that our understanding of the world is unquestioned 'unless a special problem arises and even then we are unlikely to probe it very deeply' (p. 75). Similarly, Mezirow (1990) contends that most of the time 'we trade off perception and cognition for relief from the anxiety when the experience does not comfortably fit into [existing] meaning structures' (p. 168). He suggests that rapid change may be brought about by an 'eye-opening' event, e.g. a discussion, book, etc.

Advertisements often, if not always, aim to surprise. In fact, the advertising genre feeds on conflicting ideas. In order to draw the audience's attention it does not hesitate to transgress norms of verbal and visual behaviour in order to stir emotions and achieve memorability. This characteristic of the genre makes it a useful starting point for discussion. Its pervasive presence also renders it an important object for discussion beyond a course specifically focusing on advertising communication, as this diary entry shows:

> Years ago my wife used constantly to voice her annoyance about a radio ad. for Rank's flour, which featured a Dubliner doing a deplorable imitation of a French accent, as he introduced himself as PIERRE the baker and advertised the wonders of the flour. He was as false a Frenchman as you would get! My wife went so far as to complain about the stupidity of the ad. to a friend who was married to one of the Rank's executives. This woman smiled and explained that the complaint was a measure of the ads success! (D, KV, p. 30, IIIc1.)

Responding to the rule-breaking characteristic of advertising communication, diary entries sometimes express their antipathy and even disgust for the way advertising approaches consumers. This diarist continues to explore his reactions and attitude towards advertising in the same diary:

> 1.I noticed myself analysing ads. a lot more since we began the course. How I hate the ad. for the Danish beer. The punch-line is 'So good the Danes hate to see it leave' and we hear this as the very old woman pulls a switch, opening a trap-door, and the unfortunate truck driver plunges to some sort of horrible fate. It appears to me that this ad. appeals to our primal instincts/fears. It sickens me.
>
> 2.The LOREAL ad: 'Because you're worth it!' This ad. is too clever altogether! It purports to give you a pat on the back, while subliminally implanting the idea that if you don't spend the money it takes to buy these beauty products, then you are under-valuing yourself. In turn this suggests that your worth is dependent on your appearance, on your looks. This is fundamentally misleading, and I wouldn't allow this kind of advertising!
>
> 3.A pizza ad. This is a classic! It came through the letter-box. It advertises a local pizza restaurant, with the most unlikely person you could ever meet in your life being the happy one who can't wait to get his teeth into a pizza. It's a wonderful ad.., using absurdity to get the message across. I hope to bring it to the class soon - and I am putting a few words together in Italian to explain it. As if it needed any explanation [advertisement available in D, KV, p. 73]. (D, KV, p.32, IIIcl.)

The often provocative construction and subject matter of these texts tends to stimulate discussion, speculation and reaction. The diary in this case acts as a representation of the reflective activity in its making, diary writing offers an extension of the diarist's own thoughts and creates the space for fruitful 'interaction' in the writer's mind. The analyses provided in this extract show that an internal dialogue is taking place since the diarist tries to adopt the advertisers' viewpoint and compare it with his. The interactive nature of this perspective lends some interesting insights on the 'misleading' nature of the appeal in KV's example 2 above. Additionally, in the closing comment, the diarist takes a step back and considers his own reflective process in a metacognitive stance:

> All of the above have been 'sparked off' in me through the class we are doing. *I am surprised even myself at the depth of feeling I have about some of the ads.* (D, KV, p. 32, IIIcl.; my emphasis)

The diarist recognised that a quite intensive cognitive activity is taking place. His words also capture the emotional effect of putting some distance between himself and the argument just closed; in fact, they acknowledge the role of emotions in shaping ideas. As was discussed in

chapter 2, the capacity to stand back and observe one's own thinking in a critical manner is ranked highest in the models of reflectiveness that the literature provides (e.g. Hatton and Smith, 1994; van Manen, 1977) and is closely linked with deep learning.

Of course, the systematic attention to advertising texts throughout the course and the pervasiveness of these texts outside the classroom make learners observe advertisements in their environment with greater frequency (and expertise) than at the beginning of the course. Most learners take notice of their own analytical attitude and write it in their diaries. Often, as in the extract just quoted, this observation generates their surprise:

> I find that actually reading the ads (whether in an English or Italian language magazine) has become quite interesting and I find I'm relating them to the aspects we have focussed on in class [...]. In the various Italian language magazines that I buy from time to time, I find I'm paying more attention to the ads than I did before! (D, CN, p. 16, IIcl.)

*

> Mi hai fatto guardare le pubblicità in modo differente. Non ci penso di solito. Stasera ho dato un colpetto a un rivista - stavo essaminando le pubblicità solo, non m'interessavano gli articoli! (D, MC, p. 5, IVcl.)

**You made me look at advertisements in a different way. I usually do not think about that. Last night I looked at a magazine and I found myself examining only advertisements: I wasn't interested in the articles!**

*

> [il contenuto] mi sembra molto utile perche vedo le pubblicità ogni giorno, e adesso gli guardo differamente. Adesso la pubblicita è diventata la parte la più interessante di una rivista o giornale. (D, LN, p. 7, Vcl.)

**I find [the content] very useful because I see advertisements every day and now I look at them differently. Advertising has now become the most interesting part of a magazine or a newspaper.**

*

> As regards 'la pubblicità', I now read and study advertisements that I would previously have ignored. (D, CA, p. 16, IIIcl.)

*

> Studio con molto di più attenzione le pubblicità per il linguaggio. È interessante vedere la lista dei quattro tipi e decidere quali sono importanti in ogni cosa. È lo stesso con gli sguardi. (D, UR, p. 13, IVcl.)

**I study with much more attention advertisements for their language. It is interesting to see the list of the four types and decide which are important in each case. It is the same with gazes.**

*

> Ho imperato di construire un pubblicità. La tecnica che si usa. Le parole. La mappa per construire un pubblicità. I colore - bianco (→fatti), nero (→logico), rosso (→non è logico) etc; e *ogni volta quando guardo la TV e la pubblicità mi sembra che ho una comprensione come era construito*. (D, BR, p. 4, VIcl.; my emphasis)

**I learnt the construction of an advertisement, the technique used, the words.**

The structure to construct an advertisement. The colour - white - (=facts), black (=it is logical), red (=it is not logical), etc. and *every time I watch the TV and advertising I feel I have an understanding of how it is constructed.*

From a factual perspective, looking at advertisements more often means finding out more about them. Indeed, the extracts just quoted lead to the next pattern of data, which deals with the discoveries participants make about how advertising works. The section is introduced by consideration of the role of reflection in facilitating discoveries.

### 6.2.4 Epiphanies about advertising

Diary writing allows the fruitful process of *reflectere* (see 6.0.2), of reading back about an experience and learning from it (recall the Kolbian cycle of experiential learning and the overview of similar research domains in 2.2.2). In the diaries analysed for this study participants had a week to record their experience and it is likely that the time span between the events and their recording allowed them to enrich their experience before they started writing the entries. This reprocessing activity may thus lend original insights and new learning on the workings of advertising, which can surprise the learner himself. Surprise has been noticed in connection with other reflective episodes and should be regarded as a sign of deep processing. As a matter of fact, the sudden enlightening nature of these reflective events may come as a surprise to the person who experiences them. This makes profound reflective events similar to the literary and philosophical notion of 'epiphanies' whereby the person has a sudden realisation or comprehension of the essence or meaning of an event, experience or concept. Consistently, the metaphorical representation of this event corresponds to an illumination on the focus of the learner's reflection. Of course, the surprising effect of these events is more obvious in the case of those insights that concern the diarist's opinions on the subject as in the following entries:

> Ho imparato che, per la maggior parte, quando vediamo persone di bell'aspetto fisico, crediamo di più in quello [che] ci dicono del prodotto - perché associamo alla bellezza tutta una serie di qualità positive.
>
> (*Io, personalmente, trovo questo quasi incredibile!*). (D, KV, p. 25, IIcl.; learner's emphasis).

I have learned that, for the majority of cases, when we see good-looking people we believe more in what they tell us about the product - because we associate beauty with a whole series of positive qualities.

*(Personally, I find this almost unbelievable!).*

A sense of amazement is also generated in the diarist when she realises that the insight she has thus obtained casts a different light on something that was right before her eyes all along:

> I work a lot with advertising companies (working with pharmaceutical industry). *Before these lessons I never thought about the language used to communicate in advertising* and also because often our products are complicated, metaphors and similitudine are used a lot, *but I had never thought about it before*. (D, CH, p. 23, IIIcl.; my emphasis)
>
> *
>
> Ho imparato le categorie dei 4 linguaggi non-verbali. (non ci ho pensato neanche in inglese). (D, MC, p. 3, IVcl.)

**I have learned the categories of the 4 non-verbal languages. (I never thought about it, not even in English).**

> *
>
> What we learn and discuss is not relevant just to la pubblicità but to how we ourselves try to influence and persuade others, and how others try to influence us. The aspects of rhetoric that we learned about in the class are also used by journalists, politicians - teachers even! (D, GN, p. 34, IIIcl.)
>
> *
>
> Secondo me gli aspetti più salienti di questa lezione sono:
>
> 1.I linguaggi non verbali:
>
> Questo è molto importante. Bisogna che ci rendiamo conto del fatto che, qualche volta, 'parliamo' senza dire una parola! Forse diciamo qualcosa che non abbiamo l'intenzione dire. (D, KV, p. 45, IVcl.)

**In my opinion the most salient aspects of this class are:**

**1. non-verbal languages:**

**This is very important. We need to become aware of the fact that sometimes we 'speak' without saying a word! Maybe we say something that we have no intention of saying.**

> *
>
> I found the whole idea that the designers of ads are 100 steps ahead of me when they create their ads - that they apply my psychology to know how to dupe me. (D, LN, p. 6, Vcl.)

When the insights apply to the workings of advertising but their effect is referred to the general audience rather than to the self, their emotive response weakens, which makes them more similar to 'discoveries'. The following entries assess the role of images compared to the role of words in advertisements:

> Quando ero in Francia recentemente era interessante guardare alla pubblicità sulle strade e realizzare che gli stili per attirare l'attenzione sono (? siano) onnipresenti. Si capisce la significa della pubblicità dagli aspetti non-verbali anche se non si capisce le parole scritte. (D, AP, p. 16, Vcl.)

**When I was in France recently it was interesting to look at advertisements in the streets and realise that the styles for attracting our attention are (subjunctive?) omnipresent. One understands the meaning of advertisements from the non-verbal aspects even if one does not understand the written words.**

*

Forse le immagini sono più importanti della lingua. Con una buona fotographia la gente capisce il messaggio, il prodotto senza leggere il testo. (D, UR, p. 17, Vcl.)

**Perhaps images are more important than language. With a good photography people understand the message and the product without reading the text.**

*

[most salient aspects] Il significato della posa del modello mi interessa.

Anche il tipo di inquadrature.

[...]

Questi due aspetti mi interessano molto. Ho studiato della pubblicità tenendo in mente le techniche che abbiamo studiato. *Mi sembra che la fotografia è più importante del testo. Se la fotografia non è interessante la maggioranza di gente non darsi la pena di leggere il testo.* (D, UR, p. 20, Vcl.; my emphasis)

**I am interested in the meaning of the model's pose. Also, the type of shot.**

**[...]**

**These two aspects interest me a lot. I have studied some advertisements keeping in mind the techniques we have studied. *I think that the photograph is more important than the text. If the photograph isn't interesting most of the people do not care about reading the text.***

These episodes of discovery run through the diaries and also concern the diarist's own learning process, as will be seen in subsequent sections.

### 6.2.5 Summary

To sum up, the entries that belong to this section deal with the content of the course and with the workings of advertising in particular. As in 6.1, diary entries range from bare acknowledgment of the role of advertising and of its components to more elaborate and personalised contributions in a process of appropriation and absorption of new contents (6.2.1). This appropriation of new knowledge is portrayed in all diaries as being characterised by a substantial recurring pattern: this consists of a process of linkage between the contents of the course and the diarists' personal, social and cultural background (6.2.2). Recurring domains of association are work, memories, interests and experiences and it was observed how the emotional resonance of some pre-existing experiences is likely to strengthen the linkage between old and new knowledge. These associations correspond to the adjustment of external ideas so as to suit internal experience – a process of assimilation, in Piagetian terms, that precedes accommodation into one's cognitive structure and gains the learner an insight into the

object of his reflection. It was said that the exercise of a reflective activity brings about insights into the content-subject of advertising. The sudden appearance of insights may surprise the learner. The entries that exhibited these characteristics were thus described as 'epiphanies'. The educational value of these associations is enriched by the pervasive use of Italian as the main means of expression and of elaboration of content.

Learning takes place in the interaction between external and internal experience, a flux that reminds us of the larger-scale perception of learning as a continuous reorganisation of personal constructs of Kellyan memory (Kelly, 1963). The characteristics of individuals' cognitive structures may hinder the learning process or favour it depending on the measure of conflict presented by the new knowledge. New knowledge, on the other hand, could be difficult to accept. Advertising almost by definition stirs emotions and raises debate in an effort to be heard and/or seen, and this is reflected in diaries' reactions to advertising messages. One of the reasons for choosing these texts for the course was to exploit this attention-grabbing and often provocative character of advertising as a point of departure for an analysis of its communication, an analysis that ultimately 'dissects' the text and neutralises it. In fact, an analysis of advertisements should take the feelings they raise into consideration since these feelings are part of the planned outcome and help to personalise observations as in KV's example in 6.2.3. Finally, some examples of what I termed 'epiphanies' were presented in 6.2.4.

## 6.3 Focusing on process

This section presents patterns in diary entries that explicitly focus on the diarists' learning process, thus dealing more closely with learner development than previous sections and offering observations on the learning process 'from the inside'. In other words, it portrays the way learners approach this specific learning context using their own learning process as a perspective on it. It begins by focusing on learning preferences and strategies. Group work, putting theory into practice, and contextualisation emerge as favourite routes to the process of learning (6.3.1). Many of the entries are dedicated to writing. Section 6.3.2 focuses on writing

as a learning system, section 6.3.3 considers it as a stimulus for reflection, while section 6.3.4 explores its learning value in relation to metacognition. Section 6.3.5 follows the learning development of a specific learner through writing and section 6.3.6 summarises and concludes chapter 6.

### 6.3.1 Learning preferences

An aspect of participants' consideration of the learning process consists in indicating learning preferences, strategies and hindrances. As regards language, many of those apply to vocabulary, a major focus in all diaries. Most students list all the new words and expressions heard in class, which suggests that they identify language learning with the enrichment of vocabulary.

Interference with other languages is one of the obstacles mentioned in connection with language learning ('Repetizione della grammatica mi aiuta imparare ma ho problema con ortografia perché voglio scrivere come in inglese', i.e. *The repetition of grammar helps me in learning but I have a problem with spelling because I want to write as I do in English*, D, MA, p. 2, Icl.); similarly, laziness is perceived as a hindrance:

> My main hindrance is myself! I need to go over material soon after first meeting it to consolidate what I have learned - but I don't do this enough - through laziness and lack of time. (D, GN, p. 33, IIIcl.)
>
> *
>
> I have never managed to do this [=diary writing] straight after the lessons - which is when I have the best chance to remembering the essence of the class. (D, MC, p. 20, VIcl.)

Learning strategies include writing, which is often mentioned as an aide-memoir or, more explicitly as a learning strategy:

> Per me, è più facile imparare qualcosa dopo la vedere e anche l'ascoltare. Allora, scrivo il più possible nella classe! (D, CN, p. 5, Icl.)
>
> **For me it is easier to learn something after having seen it or having listened to it. Therefore I write as much as possible in the class!**
>
> *
>
> [strategies:]
>
> My favourite technique is through re-writing what I have learnt or rather 'painting it'- drawing little pictures around words and phrases, planning them on a sheet of paper. (D, JA, p. 15, IIIcl.)

The re-utilisation of words in other contexts is a very frequent strategy associated with vocabulary learning:

> Provo di ripetere le frasi che ho imparato e uso a casa a parlando con mia suocera e il mio marito.
>
> In classe quando noi pensiamo e parliamo dei situazione usando le nuove frase è molto utile per imparare. (D, MA, p. 2, Icl.)

**I try to repeat the sentences I have learned and to use them at home talking to my mother-in-law or to my husband [who are Italian].**

**In class we think and speak about situations and use new sentences, which is very useful to learn.**

> *
>
> Quando possibile, metto le frasi nuove in 'sentences' differenti e altri contesti per li imparare. (D, CN, p. 5, Icl.)

**When possible, I put new phrases into different sentences and in other contexts in order to learn them.**

In some cases, diary writing is tactically used to re-contextualise new words and idioms. This is one of the cases in which diary writing becomes an occasion for TL use. The operation is especially effective if words and idioms are inserted within contexts that are close to the learner's interests, memories and daily life:

> For me, I learnt some useful phrases that I will try to practise in future, they are:
>
> È un secolo che ti aspetto (questo specialmente per il mio marito!)
>
> Mi si sono rizzati i cappelli (per i prezzi in ristoranti irlandesi)
>
> Mi piace questo tanto:
>
> Stanno distruggendo i polmoni di mondo - Kyoto protocol è importante!
>
> Altre esempi che abbiamo imparato:
>
> Ho la luna storta
>
> Sono nel 7° cielo
>
> Costa un occhio della testa
>
> Ora guardero e sentiro la publicita con occhi e orecchi aperte per l'uso di argomenti retorica. (D, MA, p. 8, IIIcl.)

**For me, I learnt some useful phrases that I will try to practise in future, they are:**

**I have been waiting for you for ages (This especially for my husband!)**

**My hair stood on end (for the prices in Irish restaurants)**

**I like this very much: they are destroying the world's lungs - Kyoto protocol! It's important!**

**Other examples we have learned:**

**I'm in a bad mood**

**I am in the seventh heaven**

**It costs a fortune**

**Now I'll be looking at and listening to the use of rhetorical devices in advertising with open eyes and ears.**

The strategy is further personalised in the following case where the new phrases are used to express the diarist's opinions on advertising (and, incidentally, class 1 focused on opinions on advertising):

> Ho imparato l'accuratezza della parola 'argomento' (non 'soggetto') in questo caso - i.e. trattiamo un argomento, non un soggetto.
>
> Frasi...modi di dire...
>
> -Uno su un milione...Nel Lotto, la possibilità è meno di uno su milione di vincere il premio grande.
>
> -In merito a...Non so molto in merito alla pubblicità.
>
> -Rendersi conto di...Mi sono reso conto d'el fatto che la pubblicità è un argomento molto interessante.
>
> -Farsi una opinione...Me ne sono fatto una opinione positiva.(D, KV, pp. 9-10, Icl.)
>
> *

**I have learned the accuracy of the word 'argomento' (not 'soggetto') - in this case - i.e. we are dealing with a subject ['argomento' in Italian], not a soggetto [subject, too, in Italian but less frequently used than 'argomento'].**

**Sentences ... Idioms ...**

**-one in a million ... in the Lotto the probability is less than one in a million to win the big prize.**

**-as regards ... As regards advertising I don't know much**

**-to become aware of ... I became aware of the fact that advertising is a very interesting subject.**

**-to form an opinion on ... I have formed a positive opinion on that.**

A major value of writing about one's learning strategies and issues consists in having written 'about [them] at all' (Butler-Wall, 1979: 15). This is to say that listing strategies and obstacles to writing brings them to the diarist's attention, stimulates further self-reflection and enhances self-awareness:

> Mi aiuta a imparare la lingua quando si racconta un conto interessante o divertente. Quando c'è un filo a seguire nel un conto è aiutata la concentrazione. (D, CA, p. 4, VIcl.)

**What helps me is to learn the language when somebody tells an interesting or amusing story. When there is a thread to follow in the story, concentration is improved.**

> *
>
> [what helps you learning:] Sono persona visuale, quindi i esempi dalle riviste ecc. o la pagina con i gesti mi piacconno. Ricordo bene qualcosa buffa, così sempre quando JA racconta qualcosa!
>
> [most salient aspects of the class:] La storia di [JA]! (D, GR, p. 22, IVcl.)

**I am a visual person, so I like the examples from magazines, etc. or the page about gestures. I remember something funny, so I always remember it when JA tells something!**

**[most salient aspects of the class:][JA]'s story!**

> I learn best through examples - they help me to remember things. Also, when things are made interesting (e.g. visual examples) I remember them better and understand them better. E.g. the visual examples and the other stories with metaphors etc. at the end of the class really demonstrated [this]. (D, CH, p. 23, IIIcl.)

Acknowledging one's learning preferences leads to a more conscious use of individual learning strategies. Additionally, there are at least two other pedagogical advantages in writing about learning preferences and obstacles. First, it focuses the learner's attention on the nature of a problem and allows him or her to formulate it in more accurate terms, that is to say, it represents a step towards the active search for a solution:

> I cannot learn lists of data that I don't fully understand […] *I have to fully understand what something means, then I find a way to memorise it usually by thinking of an example.* (D, CH, p. 23, IIIcl.; my emphasis)

As a matter of fact, entries like this sound like a learning reminder or as advice for the self to follow.

Second, in those cases where the teacher reads diary entries it makes her aware of learners' strategies and issues so that she may adjust her teaching to suit learners' needs and the situation at hand. This is where the diary functions as a means of communication in the class, as was envisaged by Porter et al. (1990; see also 5.3.1). The analysis of data in this study revealed individual learning preferences that may have gone undetected by the teacher were it not for the diaries. This applied in one case in particular: GR's predilection for group work. It emerged quite early in his diary entries as his ideal learning situation:

> [what helps and hinders learning] Quando *in grupo*, abbiamo mostrato le pubblicità diverse che abbiamo scegliato. Poi ce ne abbiamo parlato […] Certamente *quando siamo insieme in gruppi ci siamo aiutare con le nuove parole ecc.* (D, GR, p. 32, IIcl.; my emphasis)

**When, *in group*, we showed the different advertisements we had chosen. Then we have talked about them […] *Of course, when we are together in groups we can help each other with new words, etc.***

GR regards group-work activities as a source of understanding and a stress-free environment where interaction is easier and learning is better achieved:

> [objectives:] Siamo 16 in tutto nel classe abbiamo sentito le diverse mode di vita.
>
> [...]
>
> [strategies] Stiamo faccendo strategie chiari *insieme*. Stiamo parlando

*insieme* e sviluppando gli idea *insieme*.

[...]

[is there anything that helps you learning?] *Si quando si formanno i punti in gruppi insieme*. Come le strategie oggi - 6 impersonnagi, pos e neg. (D, GR, pp. 37-38, Icl.; my emphasis)

**There are 16 of us in the class: we have heard about different ways of life.**

**[...]**

**We are studying key strategies *together*. We are talking *together* and developing ideas *together*.**

**[...]**

***Yes, when the points are made together in group work,* like today - 6 characters, positive and negative.**

*

[strategies] Mi piace molto la pagina 'Retorica I II III': è chiaro, semplice; sono curioso delli gesti, l'arte di accompagnare il discorso con il corpo! *Quando siamo in gruppi insieme stiamo usando i metodi per persuasione e cercando i esempi, tutto è chiaro!* (D, GR, p. 28, IIIcl.)

**I really like the page 'Retorica I II III'. It is clear, simple; I'm curious about gestures, i.e. the art of accompanying the discourse with the body! *When we are [working] together in groups we apply methods of persuasion and look for examples; everything is clear!***

*

[most salient aspects of the class:] The game was great and we placed items under the 4 headings: metafora, iperbole, similitudine, ripetizione, it created a lot of discussion in the group. Questioning of exactly where to place an item, then agreeing some of them could be more open to interpretation. This created scenes of near violence! (scherzo! [= I'm joking])

If a new word appeared someone else might have seen/heard it before and so we exchanged some knowledge of words, [and of] forgotten grammar together. Very democratic.

The exercise to invent some story using these examples of rhetoric was fun. Mixing and matching from those in front of us on the table created some amusing results. We created a silly but believable story of frustrated love between 2 characters. Simple and easy to remember. I also remember the story of a man buying a ring in the jewellers.

[...]

It's great to see people presenting the examples (with very good Italian) and discussing the main points. The ad with woman who has 'cactus' legs was very strong image and thus easy to remember! Similtudine![21] (D, GR, p. 29, IIIcl.)

*

[strategies] Quando parliamo insieme tra che cose successo negli pubblicitari è facile a capire i punti principali che impariamo insieme.

[what helps you learning:] Esempi forti! Mi è divertito il esempio da KV! Mi sembra che siamo sempre discutere, stiamo provando a esprimere le cose che vediamo nelle pubblicità. Questa è ottima! (D, GR, p. 18, Vcl.)

**When, together, we discuss about things which relate to advertisements it is easier to understand the main points we are learning.**

**Striking examples [help me to learn]! I was amused by KV's example! It seems to me that we are discussing and trying to express things we see in advertising. This is excellent!**

*

[21] See Appendix C, Oxy.

> [strategies:] Discutere i metodi *insieme*. Guardare agli esempi *insieme*. Provare a capire *insieme* nel pari o in gruppi aiutare a chiarire qualsiasi problemi. (D, GR, p. 10, VIcl.; my emphasis)

**[strategies:] Discussing methods *together*. Looking at examples *together*. Trying to understand *together*: in pairs or in groups, this helps to clarify any problems.**

What these entries show is that a considerable portion of GR's learning process in this course passed through interactive discussions and analyses in the class and some of the entries (for instance, the last quoted) indicate that reasoning was facilitated in group work. Also, he mentions the amusement that accompanies group-work activities. Although the teacher had not realised about the centrality of group work for this learner, reading GR's diary entries made her aware of it.

Other entries refer to group work as a source of learning or as contributing to a positive learning environment. Many entries simply acknowledge the role of groupwork for learning while others evaluate it more closely. A selection of these entries is reported below:

> Io imparo meglio in classe con gli otri studenti e con mi insegnate (sa) che a casa; perche in classe poi scoltare e poi parlare più. (D, BE, p. 4, VIcl.)

**I learn better in class with other students and my teacher than at home because in class you can listen and speak more.**

> *

> [were the objectives of the class clear?] Sì, mi erano chiari; la clase ho stato molto interesante, bene organizata; *lavorare a grupi è una buona idea*. (D, BE, p. , Icl.; my emphasis)

**Yes, I found them clear; the class was very interesting, well organised; *group work is a good idea*.**

> *

> Erano tre persone nella mia grupa. Parlavamo l'italiano tra tutto la lezione. Questo mi ha molto piaciuta. (D, CA, p. 14, IVcl.)

**There were three people in my group. We spoke Italian throughout the class. I liked this very much.**

> *

> I brevi dialogi sono stati molto utili. *Potevamo lavorare insieme sui piccoli progetti*, quasi simili alle situazioni nella vita quotidiana [...] *Io ho osservato che la nostra gruppa è molto apperta per discussione*. (D, JA, p. 3, IVcl.; my emphasis)

**The short dialogues were very useful. *We could work together on small projects*, almost similar to daily life situations [...] *I have observed that our group is very open for discussion*.**

Another recurring observation in diaries is that learners enjoy when they can '[put] theory into practice' or see how techniques and devices are actually implemented in texts, as the following

examples variously show:

> *The examples of ads from magazines is great because then we can clearly see how what we've been studying is actually put into practice.* Interesting that the ads are given at the end of the class. Maybe they'd be a distraction if seen early, before all the points are understood. (D, GR, p. 29, IIIcl.; my emphasis)
>
> *
>
> Practical examples of advertisements used to illustrate various advertising techniques - I found these very effective. There was a wide range of materials available which proved a useful challenge as a basis/topic of conversation. I enjoyed this and found it helped vocabulary. (D, CN, p. 15, IIcl.)
>
> *
>
> Il contenuto della lezione è diventato più interessante perché gli studenti avevano raccolto molte foglie della pubblicità, e le hanno commentate nel corso della lezione. Erano molto divertante. (D, CA, p. 10, Vcl.)

**The class content has become more interesting because the students have collected many print advertisements and they have commented on them during the class. These were very funny.**

> *
>
> *Dopo la lezione ero molto contenta perché era la prima volta che ho fato qualche cosa veramente costruttiva. KV ed io abbiamo composto una ninnananna. Era la prima volta che ho metto la tecnica in azione che tu ci hai imparato in classe.*
>
> Il temo, i colore il logico, l'immaginazione. La scelta delle parole che fanno una storia. La baloncina era veramente una lezione molta completa! (D, BR, p. 5, VIcl.; my emphasis)

***After the class I felt really content because it was the first time I felt I did something really creative. KV and I composed a lullaby. It was the first time I put the technique you taught us in class into action.***

**The theme, colour, logic, imagination. The choice of words that make up a story. The basket. Really, it was a complete class!**

> *
>
> Techniche per aiutare con il processo della creatività. *Quando noi abbiamo cominciato ad usarle erano più chiare. Per me le parole, la technica che non mi piaceva ad inizio era utile quando i gruppi la hanno usata per l'esercizio.* (D, UR, p. 22, VIcl.; my emphasis)

**[We studied] the techniques that help the process of creativity. *When we started to use them they became clearer. The words technique, which I liked from the beginning, became useful when the groups used it for the exercise.***

Besides analysing advertisements, learners refer to other ways of putting theory into practice: writing a creative text (a lullaby in BR's case above) is a way of putting theory (here: a brainstorming technique) into practice, which the learners enjoyed (the lullaby is in Appendix D, KV, p. 69, VIcl.). Similarly, seeing a practical application of a technique in the activity that follows it in class is another such instance and, as UR's observations above revealed, a helpful clarification for the learner. Language, too, is contextualised and it is used for a meaningful purpose.

As a matter of fact, contextualisation is a key principle in this study. The TL is embedded within relevant discourse contexts: it is used to conduct advertising analyses, carry out tasks in class, write diary entries, etc. As in CLIL settings learners are exposed to a considerable amount of language while learning content and the advantage is that language-learning activities are contextualised and not artificial or meaningless exercises. The positive effect of contextualisation is also reported in relation to North-American educational contexts which, as in CLIL settings, focus on both the TL and content subject (e.g. Cloud et al., 2000; Snow and Brinton [1997] and in Brinton et al., 1989). Learners are taught useful language that is contextualised rather than as isolated language fragments. Telling, in this respect, is the entry from a diary:

> The language seems to be incidental in the class, i.e. the learning is easier. […]
>
> The use of advertising methods in a language class is obviously novel - are we studying advertising or are we studying Italian - I am not sure - this is a good sign - *after every class the method stays in my head - this is a very useful point of reference*. (D, SE, p. 2, VIcl.)

This impression finds support in the research on discourse comprehension processes, where it is shown that thematically organised material is easier to remember and leads to improved learning (Singer, 1990). As information is learned and recall of information improved ('the method stays in my head', says SE), the coherence and relatedness of this information with other content, within the given learning setting, allow for more complex language learning activities to follow. Contextualisation and relatedness of information are neatly captured in the following entry:

> Summing up the lesson helps me to remember the vocabulary as all the new words are put in a context. What also helps is the fact that new material to be learned is interconnected.(D, IS, p. 20, IVcl.)

The summing-up routine in writing employed by the diarists is also a crucial tool of reference, as a strategy and an aid to reflection. The centrality of its role and its repeated mention in diaries warrant it an individual section in this study.

### 6.3.2 Writing to learn

Writing about something is the same as elaborating it, even at the superficial level of a description as explained in 6.0.2. Professional educational literature shows that through writing the learner is brought to reflect on his experience and give it order (for example, King and Kitchener [1994] contend that writing helps us to deal with 'ill-structured material'; p. 11). Working with trainee teachers, Porter et al. (1990) found that through diary writing learners develop strategies to integrate new ideas with theories and knowledge beyond the focus of the course. Both experiences show that, from a constructivist perspective, diary writing helps the accommodation of new learning into the diarist's cognitive framework.

The function of writing in this study is particularly delicate. Here the goal is not only to learn about advertising communication but also to learn through the medium of a L2 (therefore learning the FL, too, in the process). Besides being a fundamental linguistic skill to develop as in any language-learning process, writing is a means of reflection and analysis in the diaries and often a form of communication in class.

Writing is of value to the learning process that is the focus of this study in a variety of ways. Besides the more obvious merit of enhancing writing skills in the TL, writing focuses learners' attention and aids concentration. In the study analysed here the attention to writing emerged in relation to several contexts, and its merits became quite obvious in conjunction with the guided-dictation activity in class 6. This is a form of note-taking that requested students to fill in missing parts of a teacher's presentation on photography techniques (see course narrative in chapter 5). Many diarists observed that the use of the written support enhanced their concentration and improved their learning:

> Questa settimana l'insegnante ci ha dato delle foglie battute a riempire. Per me era un buon metodo di mantenere la concentrazione nel corso della lezione. (D, CA, p. 10, Vcl.)

**This week the teacher gave us some typed sheets to fill in. I found it a good method to maintain concentration throughout the class.**

> *
>
> Era una lezione piacevole; durante la lezione abbiamo preso appunti e

> secondo me è stato un esercizio utile (perché abbiamo dovuto stare ben attenti a tutto). (D, IS, p. 36, Vcl.)

**It was an agreeable class; during the class we took notes and in my opinion it has been a useful exercise (because we had to pay close attention to everything).**

The value of writing is appreciated also in conjunction with a combination of various sensory stimuli and input:

> Ho imparato tanti nozioni di fotografia e penso che la idea di prendere apunti e molto buono per ascoltare e imparare ascoltando. (D, BE, p. 7, Vcl.)

**I learnt many photography notions and I think that the idea of taking notes is very good for listening and for learning through listening.**

> *
>
> Perché usavamo molti tipi di presentare contenuti (presentazione dall'insegnante, dettato, fare notizie) tutto doveva essere chiaro.
>
> [...]
>
> Mi piaceva specialmente la ottima idea di presentare la lezione (communque la lingua, ma anche la teoria) con dettato.
>
> [...]
>
> Notazione (e molto bene per me); anche l'ultima idea - dettato mi piaceva molto. Penso che lo pottresti usare più spesso durante le lezioni, sembra molto efficace.
>
> [...]
>
> I disegni, le illustrazioni e le altre attrazioni che riceviamo durante il corso mi aiutano imparare bene le lezioni. Anche una grande scelta di metodi e il senso dell'umorismo dell'insegnante erano molto importante. (D, JA, pp. 22-23, Vcl.)

**Since we used many ways to present the contents (teacher's presentation, dictation, giving news) everything had to be clear.**

**[...]**

**I especially liked the excellent idea of presenting the lesson (the language and the theory) using dictation.**

**[...]**

**Note-taking (is very good for me); also the last idea - the dictation, I really liked. I think you could use it more often during the classes, I found it very effective.**

**[...]**

**Drawings, illustrations and the other attractions [=lit.] that we receive during the course help me to learn the lessons well. Also, a great choice of methods and the teacher's sense of humour were very important.**

Also related to the subject of richness of stimuli, research on discourse comprehension processes has demonstrated the importance of verbal and visual representations of information to improve students' memory and recall; also, the use of graphic organisers and visual representation of content information is linked with improved learning (Paivio, 1986; Sadoski et al., 1991). Giving learners the chance to revisit information from a variety of perspectives,

including exposure to visual representation of information, is also supported in educational domains such as CLIL, whose key word is integration (Grabe, 1995; Mohan, 1986).

The entries quoted so far deal with various aspects of the course and indicate the direction of the learners' reflective activity. The relation between writing and reflection is quite complex since writing stimulates reflection but reflection may call for more writing in a mutually dependent relation. As was observed, writing is a stimulus for reflection and maintaining a diary-writing routine demands regular reflective exercise on the part of the diarist. This made diary writing itself a recurrent subject in diary entries. For example, the pedagogical utility of writing is assessed in several entries. Another interesting angle from which to view this relation is that writing may *represent* reflection, even reflection on the function of diary itself, in the making. How writing and reflection relate to time is also a perspective that may enrich the understanding of this question, for example in relation to the occurrence of those insights that were called epiphanies. It is not coincidental that research on the literary genre of personal journal identifies the relation with time as one of the defining characteristics of the genre (Morea, 1998).

Learning diaries carry a representation of learning in the making and, as the following entries show, demonstrate the diarists' realisation of their function as an aid to memory:

> Trovo molto utile di pensare anchora dopo la classe sui temi e contenuto che noi abbiamo fato. Posso ricordare più dopo. (D, MA, p. 12, VIcl.)

**I find it very useful to think again about the class, the topics and the contents we have covered. I manage to remember more afterwards.**

*

> Fare il questionario mi aiutata a ricordare la classe. (D, BE, p. 18, IIcl.)

**Doing the questionnaire [=diary] helped me to remember the class**

Also importantly, learners recognise that diary writing helps them to re-elaborate, thus to re-process, class contents:

> Mi aiuta partecipare alle lezione; fare gli essercizi, fare questo diario anche è dificile, ma perche è dificile mi aiuta a pensare; a ricapitolare, a riflessionare sur la lezione. (D, BE, p. 4, VIcl.)

**It helps me to attend classes; to do exercises, to write this diary even if it is difficult; since it is difficult it helps me to think, recapitulate and reflect on the class.**

*

[strategies:] At home: going over the text supplied + writing about it helps anchor the new material.

Credo che mi aiuti quando devo scrivere compiti sulla materia nuova. (D, IS, p. 34, Vcl.)

I think it helps me when I have to write homework about a new subject.

*

[What helps] also, is having to go over this 'scheda' while 'reflecting'. (D, IS, p. 20, IVcl.)

Reflection and writing are closely connected in these entries not only in a declarative manner. The very act of writing in order to consider the purpose, or ponder the utility, of writing implies making a metacognitive effort to step back from it. The use of the TL to conduct this process extends the learning value of this reflective activity. As was discussed in chapter 2, appropriate TL use is a prerequisite for success in language learning and linked with the development of learner autonomy. Writing about the utility of writing is a step in that direction.

### 6.3.3 Writing to reflect and reflecting to learn

The improvement of writing is understandably a frequent explicit reason for adopting diaries in any educational situation. Jensen's (1987) study, for instance, reports that diary writing helped physics students to improve their fluency in essay writing. This reason becomes even more manifest in L2 learning contexts. Writing has a particularly visible connection with language since it gives an enduring tangible form to language use. Its non-volatile format (which recalls the Latin adage *scripta manent*) makes it a form of expression which can undergo personal and external scrutiny, i.e. it can be read (and re-read) by the diarist and by others. It is not coincidental that learning journals may be employed in formal education as an assessment tool in addition to their pedagogical purpose.

A stimulating perspective on the function of written language is given by Parker and Goodkin (1987), who describe the role of language in first 'interpreting our interpretations' (p. 176). In this sense writing is itself a metacognitive activity since it reifies and translates a person's thoughts into written language (Olson, 1991; quoted in Little, 2001: 52). Journal writing thus draws attention to formal aspects of the language (L1 and L2) such as grammatical correctness, fluency, stylistic appropriateness and so on. The diary focuses the writer's attention on her

expressive means, that is to say, on her ability to use the language. This includes a metalinguistic attitude which is represented in the diaries in operations such as questioning the appropriateness of a term, pondering its connotations, checking the very spelling of words, etc.:

> Scrivere questi resconti della lezione mi aiuto molto perché devo consultare il dictionario e il libro di grammatica. (D, CA, p. 12, IVcl.)

**Writing these class reports helps me a lot because I have to consult my dictionary and my grammar book.**

> *
>
> Ho imparato alcune nuove parole che ho dovuto cercare nel dizionario per fare le risposte nel questionario [=diary]: il scopo; (nei) dettagli; è rimasto in mente. (D, IS, p. 42, VIcl.)

**I have learnt some new words which I had to look up in my dictionary to write the answers to the questionnaire [=diary]: il scopo [=aim]; (nei) dettagli [=in detail]; è rimasto in mente [=it stuck in mind].**

Writing, however, is also a powerful tool for enhancing reflectiveness and for learning from one's experience. Time needs to be set aside for writing and reflecting (Holly and McLoughlin, 1989); also, writing slows down thinking and can increase its effectiveness (Emig, 1977), for example, by helping the diarist to organise his thoughts on a single event, experience or situation. The advantage of writing, however, is that it can deal with already processed experiences and favour a metacognitive attitude, as well. The literature review in chapter 2 stressed the importance of metacognition as a high-ranking human cognitive function that is an integral part of successful learning. Writing has the power to encourage not only cognition but also metacognition. This is not easily achieved, especially in a short course. Nevertheless some of the entries get very close to metacognitive realisations or, using the researcher's label in the data-sifting process, 'epiphanies of oneself':

> [What have you learnt?] More about the deceptions of advertising and the gullibility of the audience.
>
> I suppose I was aware of most of today's revelations but because I had not discussed or articulated them I was not conscious of these in each ad. (D, LN, p. 14, IIIcl.)

The link between writing and these revelations is the development of a metacognitive attitude, which is discussed below.

### 6.3.4 Metacognition and learning

The ability to deliberate about one's cognitive processes is an essential characteristic of the

most sophisticated stage of reflective writing, as of any deep reflective activity (in the sense discussed in chapter 2). Achieving a moment of epiphany about one's own cognitive characteristics corresponds to deep reflection on the grounds that it involves metacognitive detachment and leads to more sophisticated learning.

The value of a metacognitive attitude in learning is high. For example, Paris and Winograd (1990) are among the writers who acknowledge the importance of metacognition in learning; they write: 'students can enhance learning by becoming aware of their own thinking' (p. 15). Reference was made in chapter 2 to the importance of a metacognitive attitude in connection with the development of learner autonomy. Similarly, Ertmer and Newby (1996) see reflection as the link between metacognitive knowledge and self-regulation: 'Reflection makes it possible for learners to utilise their metacognitive knowledge about task, self, and strategies during each stage of the regulatory process: planning, monitoring and evaluating' (p. 81). Additionally, McCrindle and Christensen (1995) contend that metacognition and the person's conception of the nature of learning influence the choice of cognitive strategy which is adopted for the task and that both these factors affect the person's learning performance. Weinstein (1987) explains that a metacognitive attitude allows comparison between a person's cognitive processes and the goals she is set to reach and that this information guides the person in her choice of learning strategies. These studies harmonise with what was said in chapter 2 on the controlling attitude of the autonomous learner with regard to her learning process.

Diary writing encourages metacognition and enhances learning. The underpinnings of this statement are rooted in cognitive psychology and explored by Little (2001: 47-50). He considers the social and the intramental nature of learning and development in modern theories of learning and development and traces their origins in the theoretical framework of Vygotskian developmental psychology (see 2.3.2). First, he attends to the social and the intermental dimensions of learning, quoting research by Trevarthen (1992) in relation to what appears as the innate inclination of the human being to interact with others (an innate 'intersubjectivity', quoted in Little, 2001: 49). Then, he turns to intramental cognitive activity and quotes research

by Bråten (1992) on the interactive nature of our minds (a notion that Bråten effectively captures in the phrase 'dialogic minds'; ibid.) to stress the fact that interaction in either form (intramental or intermental) is integral to the human mind and to its cognitive processes.

This concept is of course important for grasping the complexity of the cognitive effort of learning and its dialogic nature. Earlier in the same article, Little adds a further dimension to the dialogic-interactive process of learning. He mentions Ackermann's (1996) description of the learning process as a dance between immersion in the experience ('diving in') and distancing oneself from it (or 'stepping out') in a metacognitive perspective in order to learn from it (quoted in Little, ibid: 48-49). Writing encourages this change of the mind's perspective and, following Ackermann's reasoning, leads to cognitive learning and growth. The diary helps learning because it collects the person's thoughts in writing and helps him or her to dive into the experience, yet its tangible nature favours detachment from that experience and therefore reflection on it. One of the participants in particular discusses the function of and attention to writing, and his entries are analysed below.

### 6.3.5 KV's process of self-discovery

Writing emerges in KV's diary entries as a learning preference but its role increases in importance through the course emphasis on a regular writing-reflecting routine. Eventually, he pursues the activity of writing about writing, which is a pattern that often emerges in personal journals (Morea, 1998: 35). After class 2 he begins by noticing the increased frequency of his TL writing activity and appreciates its value:

> In classe, parlo italiano quanto possibile e trovo usare le espressioni che ho imparato.
>
> *A casa, adesso scrivo di più. Allora, questo corso mi aiutare con l'italiano scritto.* (D, KV, p. 26, IIcl.; my emphasis)

**In class I speak Italian as much as possible and I try to use the expressions I have learned.**

***At home I write more now. So, this course helps me with my written Italian.***

Further on in the course he observes that writing causes him to focus his attention and forces a learning activity in him:

> Perfino per completare la scheda, devo trovare molti altri parole, se la voglio completare in italiano. (D, KV, p. 43, IVcl.)

**Even to fill in the diary, I have to find many other words if I want to fill it in Italian.**

This comment strengthens the notion that the tangibility of writing entails higher attention to formal aspects of language. The entry that follows is a lucid analysis of an intramental debate generated by a piece of advice that ran counter KV's preference for writing:

> Another thing is, I like to write. Years ago I was advised not to write if I was learning a language, because it slows you down. More recently, I decided to disregard this old advice, and I have found that the writing really helps me. It makes me feel much more at home with the words, more confident, and they come back to me more easily. It may not help everyone, but it helps me. (D, KV, p. 30, IIIcl.)

KV enjoys writing and in this entry he rationalises how writing represents a strategy that helps him to learn better. The fact that he reports the old advice not to write, however, may carry a trace of his doubt about the effective benefit of writing. The diary offers him the ability to capture, at least in part, a portion of this internal debate and structure it on paper in a way that allows the diarist to re-consider and learn from it. It is notable that one advantage of writing is precisely that 'it slows you down', that is to say, that the activity itself demands more time and gives more time to think, thus increasing thinking effectiveness since, as Barnett (1997) says, it 'demands intellectual space' (p. 27). KV feels increasingly reassured about his decision to write more, and this confidence allows him to explore language through reading:

> Come ho detto, ho trovato recentemente che scrivere mi aiuta imparare. Da quando, allora, pensavo: perché non, anche leggere? Una lettera di aprile scorso, dal direttore, ci invita usare più la nostra biblioteca e, in particolare, la sessione 'Easy Reader'. Allora, spero comminciare a leggere presto.
>
> Anche recentemente, pensavo che è possibile che io provo troppo, cioè imparo a memoria e mi essercito a quello che voglio dire. Questo è perché sono ancora riluttante a comminciare a parlare in classe se non sono sicuro che posso finire la frase, o la storia. Mentre se parlo, per esempio, con un italiano chi non parla e non capisca bene l'inglese, credo che posso comunicare in italiano abbastanza bene. Allora, mi viene in mente che, se posso dimenticare/ignorare che l'altro persone sanno parlare inglese, forse mi sentirei più a mio agio.
>
> Probablemente questo è un tiro da lontano...ma, ci provo!
>
> *Queste riflessioni derivano tutti da questo corso sulla pubblicità!* (KV, V; my emphasis)

**Like I said, I have recently discovered that writing helps me to learn. Since then, then, I thought: why not reading as well? A letter dated last April from the Director invites us to use our library more often, and particularly the 'Easy Reader' section. So I hope to start reading soon.**

**Also recently, I thought that it is possible that I rehearse too much, that**

**is: I learn by heart and practise what I want to say. This is because I am still reluctant to start speaking in class if I am not sure that I can finish the sentence, or the story. Whereas if I speak, for instance, to an Italian who doesn't speak or understand English I think I can communicate quite well in Italian. So what I am thinking is that if I can forget about/ignore that other people can speak English, perhaps I would feel more at ease. Probably this is a long shot, but ... I'll try!**

***All these reflections derive from this course on advertising!***

It surprises the learner to find that a course that he understood to be ostensibly about advertising has encouraged him to explore his learning style, and analyse his obstacles and preferences. Crucially, he observes this process 'from a distance', objectifying it as a higher cognitive effort rather than a simple description. The last diary reports a complexified system of strategies deployed by the learner. KV has gained confidence in his predilection for writing and we are led to suppose that he has gained confidence in his ability to guide his own learning process:

> *Ho comminciato ancora un altro modo per imparare.* Scrivo i nomi degli oggetti su carte bianche e metto le carte con gli oggetti nella casa dove le vedo, per aumentare il mio vocabulario. Simona ha suggerito questa strategia in classe molto tempo fa, e mio figlio mi ha datto delle carte. Ma io avevo fatto solo uno sforzo meschino - usando solo due carte - uno per una poltrona e l'altra per un telaio. Niente di più! *Comunque, oggi ho scritto sei altre carte e continuerò ad aggiungere a queste. Allora, a questo punto, uso le strategie come segue: continuo ascoltare le cassette/CD. Come sempre. Inoltre scrivo, leggo, e commincio a usare le carte. Questo corso mi stimola a realizzare queste idee; senza il corso le idee sarebbero ancora latente. Allora, il corso è un grande passo avanti per me.* Brava Simona! Con queste strategie aggiuntive, ho l'intenzione di immergermi nel italiano quanto possibile, in preparazione per il mio prossimo viaggio in Italia. (D, KV, p. 66, VIcl.; my emphasis)

***I have started yet another way of learning.* I write the nouns of objects on white paper and I put the papers around the house where I can see them in order to increase my vocabulary. Simona suggested this strategy in class a long time ago and my son gave me some pieces of paper.[=Post-it notes] I had only made a poor effort using only two papers - one for the chair, the other for the frame. Nothing more! *Anyway, today I have written six more papers and I will continue adding to them. So, at this stage I use the strategies as follows: I continue to listen to cassettes/CDs. As usual. Additionally, I write, read and start using the papers. This course stimulates me to realise these ideas; without the course these ideas would still be latent. Therefore this course is a big step forward for me.* Bravo, Simona! With these additional strategies I have the intention of immersing myself in the Italian language as much as possible as a preparation for my next trip to Italy.**

In the last of KV's revelatory observations about the importance of writing for his development, diary writing and reflection are united hand in hand. He concludes his diary entries by stating his intention to explore creative writing:

> Amo molto le parole. In fatti, amavo le parole da quando ero bambino. Non le parole grande, ma la parola giusta, la parola appropriata. È sempre una gioia per me cercare e trovare la parola giusta. Secondo me, questa è la base d'una buona comunicazione. Quasi 20 anni fa, mi sono iscritto in una classe di scrittura. Per qualche anno scrivevo delle mie memorie d'infanzia. Alla fine, avevo scritto circa cinquemila parole. *Questo*

*corso della pubblicità risveglia il mio interesse nella scrittura, forse ricomincerò scrivere nel futuro con un obiettivo più chiaro.* (D, KV, p. 67, VIcl.; my emphasis)

I love words a lot. In fact, I have loved words since I was a child. Not the big words, but the appropriate word. It is always a joy for me to search and find the right word. In my opinion, it is the basis of good communication. For a few years I have been writing about my childhood memories. Eventually, I had written about five thousand words. ***This course on advertising re-awakens my interest in writing, perhaps I will start writing again in the future with a clearer aim.***

The extracts from this learner's diary together invoke an original learning process within the learning context presented here. His learning path is original in that it is strongly individual and it is driven by the characteristics of the learner's own way of relating to the course and, by extension, to learning. KV's diary entries gradually increase in length (with a peak after class 3 where participants were asked to compile diaries in English) and express a real enjoyment in the process of journal-writing. This is not coincidental since his predilection for writing emerges quite early, but it is not given much space at first. Throughout the classes KV gains confidence in writing as a legitimate learning strategy and uses it profusely to assimilate and accommodate the new knowledge of the course into his cognitive network. Using writing with a certain aesthetic enjoyment, the diarist analyses his own reactions to a selection of advertisements and tries to make sense of the integration of a new content-subject and a language that is still being learnt. Writing accompanies reflection and reflection generates more writing.

The integration of writing and reflection with learning becomes evident relatively early. By writing KV reprocesses material that he has already learnt and gains insights into it. The writing records KV's discovery and understanding of techniques, devices and concepts that surround advertising, often focuses on his own learning process, but eventually departs from the event or idea in question and lets writing guide itself in an exploration of thoughts, ideas, etc. Writing, in other words, becomes an end in itself, an interest that the learner rediscovers after, as he himself admits, a good number of years.

KV explores and assesses the various functions of writing, linking it to self-expression, learning, growth and self-exploration. The metacognitive nature of this activity boosts KV's self-awareness and gives him increasing confidence in his written reflection and in his ability to

guide his learning process, even to the point where he decides to take up writing again.

In short, KV recognises the value of accentuating his characteristic way of relating to new knowledge and thus focuses on it in the course, and, as a diarist, successfully captures his own development in his diary entries.

### 6.3.6 Summary and conclusions

Authentication, it was argued in chapter 1, is a dynamic learning process in which the learner actively interacts with authentic texts and derives new knowledge from them; this learning process places the learner centre-stage and can be facilitated by systematic reflection. In fact, reflection is a measure of learning. Diary entries were found to exhibit three levels of reflectiveness, arranged hierarchically: acquaintance, familiarisation, insight. The level of insight signals that the knowledge was re-elaborated and absorbed by the learner's cognitive framework at a profound level. As a matter of fact, the outcome of authentication-learning is *appropriation* of the 'materials for learning' and is clearly an individual process which follows the three stages just mentioned. The individual viewpoint is also offered by learning diaries in this context and several original paths have been discussed. On the other hand, patterns emerged from the data analysis and were sorted into three sections, each dealing with a focus of attention to this overall learning process. This categorisation also determined the structure of this chapter.

In line with what was discussed in chapter 2, reflectiveness is considered to be integral to learning. The introduction to this chapter illustrated how diary entries were also analysed in relation to the degree of reflectiveness exhibited. Section 6.1 found that learners' attention was drawn to factual aspects of the learning setting such as activities, tasks, techniques, atmosphere. The evaluative attitude that characterises these entries emerges more forcibly in a specific case, that of JA (this was discussed separately in 6.1.3). Section 6.2 followed the appropriation of course content and found that association is used by all diarists as a means to deal with new content. It was reported that emotive reactions, surprise and amazement recur in conjunction with discoveries ('epiphanies') provoked by course content. Section 6.3 shifted the focus of

attention to diary entries dealing with the diarists' learning process within this educational context. Learners share the common starting point of 'playing to their strengths' (recognising the most congenial way for them to learn) as they approach the new material to be learnt. Several strategies are mentioned in diaries: group work; 'putting theory into practice' and contextualisation are identified by learners as important sources of learning from this course. Writing is a major motive across the diaries because of the diary-writing routine that is embedded in the course. The patterns dealing with writing explored the directions that writing takes in supporting the participants' learning process.

# Conclusion

The notion of authentication proposed in this thesis is one that results from the exchange between the text and the learner-reader. The communicative charge of authentic texts makes them motivating and a suitable vehicle for new language input thanks to their 'acquisition-promoting content' (Little, 1994: 46). In this respect, the communicative intentions and the structure of advertisements offer a useful indication regarding a suitable, that is, text-responsive, language-learning activity. Text-responsive learning activities have been proposed in the literature (a comprehensive recent framework is by Mishan, 2005). On the other hand, it is the learner who initiates this process of exchange and exploits the communicative charge of these texts, as it is implied by the dynamic notion of *authentication*. This ability to exploit the communicative charge of authentic texts, as I have stressed in earlier parts of this thesis, may be seen as an attribute of the autonomous learner who seizes and takes advantage of exposure to the target-language for learning it. This affinity is recognised in the literature and the exploitation of authentic texts in L2 learning has been linked to the development of learner autonomy (for example in McGarry, 1995).

The thesis has emanated from the need to integrate rather than juxtapose the learner-autonomy perspective and the text-responsive perspective on the question of authentication. To this end I set up a course that revolved around the analysis of a specific type of text, i.e. print advertisements, through the medium of Italian and asked participants to keep a learning diary. The participants' reflective activity provided a 'portrait' of the learning experience thus created and patterns were analysed in chapter 6. Reflection functioned as the link between a focus on the learner and a focus on the text and favoured the 'exchange' between the two. Through re-elaboration of contents learners have gradually come to familiarise themselves with the techniques for analysing the text and also to appraise their process of learning in the context described in chapter 5. Drawing on the constructivist notions of learning as assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge, I described the overall process of responding to the text

characteristics and learning from them through reflection as an 'appropriation' of new knowledge. In fact, diary entries showed three levels of increasing reflectiveness: acquaintance, familiarisation and insight. The level of insight corresponds to a deep re-elaboration of concepts. This appropriation took place through the TL. The analysing and reflecting activity offered a real purpose for language use and an additional opportunity to focus on writing in the TL, which is recognised in the diaries.

The most prominent aspects of this study can be summarised in the points that follow. These are the elements that, in my opinion, can inform subsequent research on the process of authentication as 'appropriation' of knowledge.

- What emerges from the study is that the process of authentication consists in the encounter between the learner and the text. The learner activates it in beginning the process of understanding the text and, through reflection, accommodates new knowledge into her cognitive structure. Authentication thus becomes a process of autonomous *appropriation* of experience, where experience is intended here as the process of understanding and interpreting the text through reflection.

- On the other hand, comprehension and interpretation of the text are not simply subjective. The analyses of advertisements elaborated by the course participants incorporate a personal viewpoint on the characteristics of the communication considered (the text) but they are justified by the text structures and take into account the perceived communicative intentions of the text. Of course, the text's intentionality is supported by its formal structure. To explain a text is to bring out its structures and follow the direction these structures indicate. This creates the conditions for meaningful interaction in class in that it consists in an activity that *responds* to the text's intentionality. In the case of advertisements 'what is often most tempting [and fruitful] is to design a task where learners analyse *how* the communicative purpose/s of the advertisement is/are achieved' (Mishan, 2005: 80, emphasis in original). This work can

be done at several levels and involve different intensities of reflection since reflection can be 'superficial' or 'deep' (see chapter 6).

- Focus on a single genre of texts lends at least two interconnected advantages: first, the text exploration functions as a centripetal force which gives coherence to the course and makes it function as a highly integrated unit. All directions spring from the text but also return to it in what appears as a virtuous cirle. Each time the learner goes back to the text analysis he appears to add new meaning to it. In the diaries this appeared as the result of adding a new layer of meaning to the text thanks to the systematic re-elaboration of content. Second, learners develop expertise in tackling the text and progressively uncovering additional layers of meaning from it. The participants' analyses gain in depth as the course moves forward.

- The diary patterns discussed in chapter 6 revealed that a systematic reflective activity in writing facilitated what I have described as the process of appropriation. Through reflection learners take possession of the text's communicative intention and simultaneously develop an understanding of their own learning process. Therefore, appropriation can be understood in at least two senses. Firstly, through interpretation and analysis, learners come to understand experience; a process that consists in (borrowing Ricoeur's [1981: 181] words) 'making one's own what was initially alien'. Secondly, the process of appropriation actively involves the learner because the learner interacts with the text and simultaneously gains an understanding of himself in the process: the ultimate outcome of interpreting a text is self-understanding.

- As emerges from what was said above, reflection plays a central role in the process of authentication. Learning entails *re-flection*, in the sense of mentally returning to the situation and reconsidering it from 'another' viewpoint. Using a suggestive metaphor, Ackermann (1996) described learning as a 'dance' between 'diving into' experience and 'stepping out' of it. Being immersed in experience is crucial yet not sufficient to

achieve cognitive growth: 'there comes a time', Ackermann writes 'when [people] need to step back, and from a distance reconsider what has happened to them. They must take on the role of an external observer, or critic, and they must revisit their experience 'as if' it were not theirs' (p. 28). Such is the working of reflection, a true incentive towards development. People drift in and out of their own viewpoint and it is this 'dance' between the two that spurs learning, development and growth. Learning from authentic texts is no exception. Making the best of exposure to authentic texts similarly entails alternation between approach and detachment that leads to a new diving into the text in a circular fashion.

- The process of authentication-appropriation exemplified in this thesis favours language learning in that it puts the (in this case, target) language centre-stage. Not only is the TL the predominant medium of any communication in input and in production, language is the tool through which the appropriation of new knowledge takes place in the reflective stage of re-elaboration of contents. The re-elaborative function of language was noticed by Gadamer (1996) who argued that 'in order to be able to express a text's meaning and subject matter, we must translate it into our own language' (p. 396). The close relation of language and thought makes the reflective activity in the TL a fruitful moment of simultaneous language use and language learning. Additionally, this process of appropriation of a text offers a real purpose to target-language use: the exploration of the communicative features of advertising texts, an operation that the semantic density of the text engenders and stimulates. The use of the TL permeates every aspect of the learning process including the crucial moment of re-elaboration of content in the reflective stage. Advertising analysis becomes the organising principle of the course, which brings this study close to CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) educational contexts, where content acts as the core principle for curriculum organisation.

- This process of appropriation through reflection encouraged learners to develop an

exploratory attitude towards the specific text genre of advertisements, also outside the classroom. The increased awareness of how this communication is carried out stimulated them to apply the analysing tools to advertisements other than print (TV advertisements, billboards), in other languages (Polish, French and Spanish) and to other contexts of communication (e.g. theatre flyers, newspaper photography) and situations (several participants are teachers and reflected on the possibility to exploit their newly acquired knowledge of advertising analysis in their classes).

- The fact that the diary demands a monitoring activity over a period of time allows the learner to perceive that he learns as the result of combining notions, building up and accommodating new knowledge into his cognitive structure over a period of time. Gaining awareness and understanding of deeper level processes assists the development of learner autonomy while the self-monitoring attitude implicated by the diary stimulates the development of an effective approach to the text.

This thesis ultimately deals with a productive, effective interaction between the text and the user, which I called appropriation. Further research is needed to substantiate the claim as to the applicability of this pedagogical model to other text genres. The introspective nature of the diary study appears as an appropriate viewpoint for monitoring the feasibility of this model since it offers an individual and introspective account of the learning experience.

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