

**Review of the subject:** Curricolo nazionale della disciplina Lingua italiana per la scuola elementare e Lingua e letteratura italiana per la scuola media superiore nella lingua e nella scrittura della minoranza nazionale italiana nella Repubblica di Croazia (Modello A) = Nacionalni Kurikulum Nastavnoga Predmeta Talijanski jezik za osnovnu školu i Talijanski jezik i književnost za srednju školu s nastavom na jeziku i pismu talijanske nacionalne manjine u Republici Hrvatskoj (Model A).

**Reviewer: STEFANO ONDELLI**

<b>1. Are the learning outcomes and educational content appropriate for the developmental age of students?</b>			
1 – inappropriate	2 – appropriate to a certain extent	<b>X3 – mostly appropriate</b>	4 – completely appropriate
<p>As stated in the <i>Introduction</i> (page 6), the presumed target pupils and students include subjects whose mother tongue is either Croatian or the local Italian dialect, since standard Italian is only used at school or in the mass media but it is not a resource for everyday conversation within the local communities.</p> <p>As regards the local romance dialect, with the exception of generic mentions, reference is made to exploring the difference between national languages and local dialects since the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (3.2) but no specific or explicit strategy is outlined to exploit this romance variety so as to reflect the suggestions provided by GISCEL in the <i>Dieci tesi per l'educazione linguistica democratica</i> (1975 – items 8.3 and 8.4). Taking advantage of the pupils' linguistic background since their very first year of school and building on their previous knowledge to approach the study of standard Italian may prove useful.</p> <p>The gap is even greater when it comes to Croatian native speakers, since no mention is made of their specific needs with the exception of a few generic remarks provided in the introduction and one brief hint to comparative studies under item D.6.1. This educational curriculum should highlight the difficulties and opportunities encountered by Croatian mother tongue speakers since the very beginning and activities should be envisaged at all levels to tackle such difficulties at least during the first 8 years.</p> <p>For more details, please refer to question n. 9 below.</p>			

<b>2. Are the learning outcomes and educational content appropriate for the number of lessons?</b>			
1 – inappropriate	2 – appropriate to a certain extent	3 – mostly appropriate	<b>X4 – completely appropriate</b>

**3. Are the learning outcomes and educational content relevant and based on scientific knowledge of the subject area?**

1 – no	2 – to a certain extent	<b>X3 - mostly</b>	4 – completely
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The curriculum fully complies with the relevant guidelines at European level. However, the curriculum could go into more detail in terms of the linguistic background of pupils/students, with reference to the rather complex co-occurrence of one (or more) local dialects and a foreign national language. This combination adds to the absence of standard Italian as language commonly used in the local community, to which pupils/students can be exposed. Therefore, difficulties emerge in classifying the learning experience of students: is Italian (at least for the Croatian mother tongue speakers) comparable to an L2 (i.e. a foreign language learnt at school but not spoken in the country) or a second language (i.e. a language learnt within the community actually speaking it)? What are the repercussions of the linguistic environment on mother tongue speakers of romance dialect(s)? And how should this complex situation be tackled in terms of teaching activities and contents?

These remarks are linked to the contents of box n.1 above. For further details, please refer to question n.9 below.

**4. Are the domains that are necessary for the subject area well represented?**

1 – no	2 – to a certain extent	<b>X 3 - mostly</b>	4 – completely
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Since pupils and students cannot experience standard Italian directly in their family environments and local/national community, they need to be exposed to a broad range of text types since the very beginning of their school years. Although non-fictional texts are mentioned such as comics, films, newspaper articles, etc., the curriculum seems to be slightly biased towards creative writing and literature. Since the early years, it could focus more “practical” everyday texts such as instruction manuals, leaflets, restaurant menus, hotel brochures which they cannot read outside the school. The same holds true for oral texts.

More details under question n.9 below.

**5. Does the curriculum contain an adequate ratio of the breadth and depth of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the subject area?**

1 – no	2 – to a certain extent	<b>X3 - mostly</b>	4 – completely
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The only comment to be made in this section relates to the “attitudes”. It is unclear whether this word is translated as “approccio al lavoro” in the Italian curriculum (page 121 and 122), which refers to “responsabilità, collaborazione, intraprendenza, costanza”. No other mention is to be

found in the rest of the document. Consequently, assessing the breadth/depth ratio in this area is rather difficult

**6. Does the curriculum, especially as regards the proposals in chapters F and G (Learning and teaching, Assessment), enable the acquisition of the listed learning outcomes?**

1 – no	2 – to a certain extent	<b>X3 - mostly</b>	4 – completely
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With reference to the “attitudes” area, please refer to question n.5 above. Chapter G provides a rich list of books (which may be subject to modification) making up some sort of literary canon of Western civilization. Considering the linguistic and cultural background of the students, one should consider the possibility of increasing the number of Croatian authors, also for comparative linguistic purposes.

**7. Are the proposed learning outcomes and other elements of the curriculum in line with the European and global recommendations?**

1 – no	2 – to a certain extent	3 – mostly	<b>4 – completely</b>
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**8. Are the learning outcomes and educational content comparable with those in Your country?**

Italian curricula are drafted by individual schools for each educational level (primary: 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade; intermediate: 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade; high: 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> grade). Although a common starting point is provided by national guidelines reflecting the European and global recommendation, a comparison between the Italian and Croatian curricula is not viable.

**9. Please suggest other modifications if You consider them necessary.**

The introduction identifies the target students of the curriculum (page 6):

*allievi per i quali l'italiano è lingua materna (unica o accanto ad altre lingue) o chi considera l'accostamento alla cultura e civiltà italiane un'importante opportunità di formazione, arricchimento e crescita personale, favorita dalla peculiarità plurilingue del territorio.*

Therefore, the target audience includes Italian mother tongue speakers, although on page 5 additional remarks provide more details on the complexity of their sociolinguistic background:

*un contesto linguistico-sociale che non offre opportunità ulteriori di comunicazione, tenuto conto che la lingua italiana non è lingua veicolare nazionale.*

The logical consequence is that, presumably, even “Italian native speakers” actually grow up in an environment in which only the local romance dialect is used, but not standard Italian.

Another group (albeit never mentioned in the document) is made up of students whose mother tongue is Croatian, growing up in a community in which Croatian is used as the vehicular language, and they may come in touch with the local romance dialect but exposed to standard Italian only if they enrol in the Italian schools.

Therefore, three important issues should be identified and tackled:

1 - especially when it comes to oral communication, the romance dialect dominates the Italian community.

2 - Standard Italian may be defined as a foreign (i.e. studied only at school without any further exposure in the community) or second language (used also outside the school, if the local Romance dialect is considered) for some of the pupils. Admittedly, Croatian native speakers can be considered motivated (as stated in the curriculum) to study Italian when they enrol in Italian schools, with the ensuing additional effort required: however their specific needs should be considered explicitly in the curriculum. Reference could be made to the curricula of Italian in the Ticino Canton in Switzerland or South Tyrol province in North-Eastern Italy (with the usual caveat that the overall national guidelines are adjusted individually at local level).

3 - There is a lack of standard Italian in the local community: standard Italian is only used at school and in the mass media. A consequence is that the pupils need to be exposed to a broad range of texts, not limited to literary and fictional samples, since they lack the direct experience of everyday written and oral official text as experienced by their counterparts in Italy.

#### **1 - Focus on the local dialect.**

Page 5 of the introduction reads as follows:

*Particolare attenzione va prestata alla cura dell'espressione dialettale, scritta e orale, e al rafforzamento della consapevolezza del valore del dialetto quale patrimonio culturale a rischio di estinzione*

Despite this general statement of principles, no mention is made of the exploitation of the local dialect as a starting point to teach standard Italian. It is taken for granted that pupils start grade 1 and know what standard Italian is. The situation in Croatia is the opposite compared to Italy: in Italy a dominant standard language is threatening the survival of local dialects, while in Croatia it is the local dialect that dominates over standard Italian, with Croatian encroaching as the vehicular language.

Page 10: 4. Riflessione sulla lingua: *La riflessione sulla lingua fa riferimento alle strutture sintattiche delle frasi semplici e complesse, alle parti del discorso, agli elementi di coesione (i vari connettivi), al lessico e alle varianti più diffuse della lingua e dei dialetti italiani*

Reference is made to Italian dialects and their cultural importance in general: probably a focus on the local dialect and how it can serve as a starting point to teach standard Italian would be more fruitful. The same holds true when the different skills are described: lexis D.3.2., 4.2, D.5.2, D6.2, D.7.2, D.8.2; grammar D.8.1.

Mention is made of dialect under items D1.2 and D2.2. but the meaning is unclear (*valorizza il dialetto della propria regione*). Is *valorizza* to be interpreted as "the pupil builds on dialect to develop standard lexis"?

The metalinguistic use of dialect is first mentioned under items D.3.2.: it seems a bit late, especially since the lexical level is considered. Moreover, the area is described as an overall appreciation of the

difference between languages and dialects, while no specific comparison is made with the local dialect. Lexis remains the only linguistic level tackled in this respect until 8<sup>th</sup> grade (grammar D.8.1.), when a distinction is drawn between language and dialect at syntactic level.

The lack of previous contrastive analysis is liable to undermine the development of further competences as under C.3.1., C.4.1, C5.2. (Poetry) C.6.2 e C.7.2., C.8.2.

In grades 9-12 the focus on dialect comprises fictional and literary texts (B.1.1., 2.1., 3.1., 4.1.) as carriers of cultural heritage, but little attention is paid to linguistic analysis

Conclusively, although the curriculum contains numerous references to the complexity of the romance dialectal richness, also from the historical viewpoint, and pays constant attention to the co-existence of dialect and standard Italian, greater use of the native linguistic knowledge of the pupils could be made in the very first grades. In particular, rather than considering dialect a carrier of cultural values (and rightly so), the curriculum could make explicit how dialect can be used as a starting point or touchstone to develop/expand the knowledge of standard Italian.

## **2 – Focus on Croatian native speakers**

The introduction of the curriculum repeatedly mentions the multilingual background of the pupils/students but the generic description of the role of comparative linguistics to enhance communicative skills finds no actual repercussions in the rest of the document:

*acquisizione di abilità utili a migliorare la competenza comunicativa attraverso attività di confronto e riflessione sulle somiglianze e differenze tra sistemi linguistici di altre lingue parlate e/o studiate.*

*S'intreccia contemporaneamente con la riflessione sulle altre lingue studiate dall'allievo in un contesto bilingue e aiuta a sviluppare le capacità di categorizzare, connettere, analizzare, eseguire induzioni e deduzioni, usando di fatto un metodo scientifico*

The only mention is to be found under grammar D.6.1., and one may wonder why very specific lexical and morphological resources are mentioned.

*comprende il significato delle preposizioni e delle locuzioni e le usa adeguatamente, effettuando paralleli con la lingua croata.*

In Annex G the “systematic correlation to the Croatian language” is advised, although the meaning of “correlation” is unclear:

*In quanto al numero delle letture (si consiglia di effettuare una correlazione sistematica con la Lingua croata), potrà essere variato dal docente (numero consigliato da 3 a 5 annuali).*

The comparison with the registers and varieties of Croatian (to which also romance dialect native speakers are exposed daily) could be exploited more thoroughly to develop greater sensitivity to sociolinguistic variation.

Conclusively, although the curriculum describes the multilingual background of the pupils/students, more details could be provided to pinpoint the specific needs of Croatian native speakers who cannot exploit their dialectal background and – albeit presumably strongly motivated – probably call for additional and different teaching methods and activities.

### 3 – Focus on text types

Since standard Italian – especially in writing – is not present in the communicative exchanges of the local community, the need emerges for providing the pupils/students with a sufficient number of text samples describing all possible uses of standard Italian.

The curriculum does mention “different text types” in terms of goals and situations, e.g. in the introduction:

*L’acquisizione di competenza testuale, intesa come:*

*a) consolidamento, acquisizione e sviluppo di abilità e conoscenze implicate nella ricezione, valutazione, pianificazione, produzione e revisione di testi narrativi, regolativi, descrittivi, espositivi, argomentativi;*

*b) consolidamento, acquisizione e sviluppo di ottimali strategie di automonitoraggio e autoregolazione della comprensione di testi narrativi, regolativi, descrittivi, espositivi, argomentativi;*


*c) consolidamento, acquisizione e sviluppo di ottimali strategie di pianificazione, stesura e revisione di testi narrativi, regolativi, descrittivi, espositivi, argomentativi*

However, the main focus is on fictional and literary texts, in terms of both writing and reading skills. In addition to cognitive types (i.e. descriptive, narrative, expository, argumentative, etc.) also specific genres could be referred to as means to enhance the pupils’ sociolinguistic skills against a background of linguistic deprivation in terms of standard Italian. In addition to comics and films (C.3.2., C.5.1., C.5.2, C.6.1.), mass media (a. 4.2.), letters, postcards and emails (b4.2.), newspaper articles (C.4.1., C.8.1), other genres and varieties may prove useful: scientific, medical, legal, political discourse etc.

Furthermore, additional details may be provided on Italian for specific purposes (item D *collegamenti con le altre aree formative e con i temi interdisciplinari*), since the only specific varieties mentioned under item F (*valutazione degli esiti formativi*) only include comics, cinema and drama.

### 10. Your conclusion about the proposed curriculum.

Please refer to question n.9.



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