**Appendix 1**

**Summary and illustration of the thematic analysis process and inductive coding**

# Thematic analysis process in detail

The analysis is based on semi-structured interviews with teachers and headmasters of the selected Institutes in Trento. Participants included the two headmasters and, for each of the four schools, three teachers of Italian and history, two of religious education, two of mathematics, one of physical education, and two linguistic facilitators—42 participants in total.

The interviews are structured around three macro-topics. First, teachers are asked about their familiarity with the intercultural education paradigm. Second, they are questioned on the relevance of this paradigm in their daily work, specifically in terms of its practical application, importance, and actual use, especially when addressing linguistic and cultural diversity in their classrooms. The aim is to explore the types of practices they carry on and to empirically assess how, and the extent to which, this paradigm informs these practices and activities (first and second research questions). Thirdly, teachers are asked to explain how and why they decided to adopt certain practices, whether they are divergent from or compliant with the intercultural paradigm. This aims to provide insights into the processes, events, and underlying mechanisms that shape teachers’ practices (addressing the third research question). The two headmasters (one for each Institute) are also interviewed to assess their familiarity with and endorsement of the intercultural paradigm, considering the leadership role assigned to them by relevant legislation.

The responses are analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), enabling theoretical sensitivity and critical engagement with the data. I carried out the coding process (for answers related to each macro-question and relevant sub questions), following a six-step process (Braun and Clark, 2006): familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. After an initial reading-through phase and **familiarization** with the data collected, in **the coding phase**, I **coded all relevant segmented units following a purely inductive logic**, along the coding phase. This implied having a huge number of codes, each of them capturing a single idea. In this phase, when different teachers give similar or same answers, i.e., they expressed the same idea/views about the questions asked, I create new codes for each of them, thus creating severable double code records. Overall, the initial coding scheme produced contains quite long, similar and repetitive codes, all featuring a fairly low level of abstraction.

During the phase of theme generation and review, I grouped similar codes (identified during the earlier coding phase) primarily based on indictive, semantic criteria—that is, clustering together codes expressing similar meanings and content—and I removed duplicate records. In the phase of theme definition and naming, I further refined and ‘theoretically redescribed’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006) the emerging themes in light of the conceptual resources provided by the SLB literature. In simple terms, I read the themes initially emerged from indicative reasoning and analysis in the previous phases, in light of existing finding and concepts in this strand of research. The outcome, achieved during the writing-up phase, consists of a set of main themes—ideas or concepts that integrate the various findings from the previous phases and elevate them to a higher level of theoretical abstraction, firmly grounded in the concepts of the SLB literature. For certain themes, I also developed relevant sub-themes to reflect specific aspects associated with those themes.

For clarity and simplicity, I present here the final themes and their relevant sub-themes as they are structured for the reader after completing the different phases of analysis described earlier.

Namely, these are:

1. **Familiarity and Endorsement of the Intercultural Education**
2. **Organizational Characteristics**
   * Lack of specialised personnel to deal with Language barriers
3. **Client pressures:**
   * Pressures and complaints by parents
4. **Policy characteristics**
   * Policy vagueness
   * Policy unresponsiveness to schools’ reality
5. **Coping strategies and mechanisms**
   * Prioritization of unilateral language-learning activities
   * Arbitrarily Extending linguistic facilitators’ role
6. **Intercultural-oriented practices**
   * Debates and discussions on culturally significant or controversial topics
   * Exploring different languages and traditions across cultures.
7. **Practical Adaptations fostering Intercultural Goals**
   * Strengthening pupils’ native languages through foreign communities’ involvement
   * Intercultural exchanges through peer tutoring.

These are accompanied by examples of text extracts from the interviews that demonstrate how these themes and sub-themes are represented in the data.

**Illustration of inductive coding**

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| **Main theme(s) and relevant sub-themes elaborated** | **Examples of significant quotes/text extracts from the interviews (coding units)** |
| **Familiarity and Endorsement of the Intercultural Education** | ‘When I was working in a school with barely any resources, I realised just how tough it can be to make intercultural education work properly. That experience really stuck with me, so now I’m focused on making sure we have what we need. We’ve brought in a bunch of linguistic facilitators—even hired some privately when needed—and we’ve set up training for teachers to help them feel ready to put these ideas into practice’  (Headmaster Trento 4 Institute).  ‘We’ve made sure that the policies on intercultural education are part of our *Piano Offerta Formativa*. But it’s not just about ticking boxes. We really want this to be something meaningful—something that’s woven into how the school works and how we support our teachers and students in dealing with cultural diversity’  (Headmaster Trento 4 Institute).  ‘I really believe in intercultural education—it just fits with the way I see teaching. I became a teacher also because I like spending time with people, getting to know new people, new traditions, every type of diversity…And it’s good to see that the school takes it seriously’  (Teacher from the Trento 4 Institute)  ‘I’ve always felt that intercultural education is just common sense in today’s world. It’s something I naturally incorporate into my teaching because it’s about respecting and valuing the different perspectives students bring into the classroom’  (Teacher from the Trento 4 Institute)  ‘I think most of us naturally embrace the idea of intercultural education. I man, cultural and linguistic diversity are such a big part of our day-to-day experience in the classroom that it feels completely normal to see intercultural education as the way to go, although it is not always so easy to embrace it in practical terms…’.  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute) |
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| **Material constraints hampering intercultural education implementation**   * + Language barriers;   + Lack of specialised personnel | ‘One of the hardest parts is dealing with the language barriers. Some kids come in and don’t speak a word of Italian, so even the basics, like explaining instructions or giving feedback, can feel like climbing a mountain’.  (Teacher from the Trento 4 Institute)  ‘It’s not just about teaching the subject—it’s teaching the language of the subject. Even students who’ve been here for years can struggle with things like understanding technical terms or writing essays, and that makes it hard to keep everyone on the same page’.  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘It’s a real challenge when the parents don’t speak Italian either. I’ve had situations where I needed to explain something important about their child’s progress, but we couldn’t communicate clearly, and that’s frustrating for both sides’  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘Even simple things like assigning homework can be tricky. Then, you have to consider that the variation in some classes is huge. You’ve got some students who’ve been in Italy for years and are doing fine, and others who just arrived and can’t even understand basic instructions. It makes planning lessons a real challenge’.  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘We only have two linguistic facilitators for the entire school, and it’s just not enough. They’re stretched so thin trying to help students from all these different language backgrounds, and it feels like we’re constantly playing catch-up. Without them, though, we’d be completely lost.  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘There’s just too much to cover for two facilitators. We’re working with students who speak so many different languages, and it’s impossible to give them the attention they need. Honestly, we really need more colleagues to share the load—it’s just not sustainable like this.’  (Linguistic facilitator from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘The lack of mediators and facilitators makes everything harder—not just for the students but for us, too. They’re the ones who help explain subject-specific content and even help us communicate with families. When they’re not available, we have to find ways to manage, and it’s really frustrating’  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘We don’t have as many facilitators as we need, but it’s still manageable. I think it’s because our headmaster really pays attention to this issue, he has actively promoted multiple calls for linguistic facilitators, including hiring private facilitators.’  (Teacher from Trento 4 Institute)  ‘Honestly, we could always use more facilitators, but at least here it doesn’t feel impossible. The facilitators we do have are really organised, and the school has done a good job prioritizing where they’re most needed, so things feel more under control.’  (Teacher from Trento 4 Institute) |
| **Organizational constraints hampering intercultural education implementation**   * Policy vagueness * Policy unresponsiveness to schools’ reality | ‘Sometimes I wonder if the people who wrote these policies have ever actually stepped into one of our classrooms. And, to be frank, the same goes for our headmaster. The policies sound great on paper, but they don’t reflect what we deal with every day in the classroom. For example, linguistic facilitators are only supposed to work with kids who just arrived, but what about the ones who’ve been here for years and still struggle? They need support too, but there’s nothing in the policy to address that.’  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘We’re told to focus on intercultural education, but there’s no clear guidance on what that actually looks like in practice. Should I spend more time helping students with language skills or focus on broader activities that promote cultural exchange? It feels like we’re left to figure it out on our own.’  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘It is really hard to balance everything. If I slow down the lessons to help students with language issues, we fall behind the curriculum. But if I keep the usual pace, those students get left out. It’s a no-win situation, and the policies don’t really offer any solutions’  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘There is so much emphasis on intercultural education on paper, but no one explains how we’re supposed to do it. I want to do both—teach language and promote cultural exchange—but without clear strategies or resources, it’s really overwhelming’  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘I understand why some teachers feel frustrated, but the training we’ve had here at Trento 4 has made a huge difference. They gave us practical examples of how to balance language learning with intercultural activities. It’s not perfect, but at least I feel like I have a better idea of what to do.’  (Teacher from the Trento 4 Institute)  ‘One thing I appreciate about our school is that they’ve given us tools to navigate this dilemma. The training sessions showed us how to structure our lessons so that we’re addressing both language needs and cultural exchange without feeling like we’re sacrificing one for the other.’  (Teacher from the Trento 4 Institute)  ‘I know other schools struggle with vague policies, and we do too sometimes, but having concrete examples of how to apply intercultural education has been really helpful. It’s made me more confident about how to balance everything in the classroom’  (Teacher from the Trento 4 Institute)  ‘It’s still a challenge to decide whether to slow things down or keep the pace, but I feel like the training gave me a better sense of how to make those decisions. At least now I have some practical strategies to work with.’  (Teacher from the Trento 4 Institute) |
| **Client pressures**   * Pressures and complaints by parents | I have had parents, especially Italian ones, who complain that we’re spending too much time on this ‘intercultural stuff.’ They think it takes away from the core subjects, like math or Italian. It’s hard because you want to stand your ground, but at the same time, you don’t want to create more tension. Sometimes I just leave it out to avoid the argument’.  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘Some parents do not see the value in intercultural education either. In my experience, this often happens with families who have a migration background—I mean, families who came here years ago from another country, speak languages other than Italian, and so on. The main issues I’ve had were with some fathers of Pakistani origin. Maybe it’s because they have a different view of school and education based on how things are in their home cities or countries—I’m not really sure…  Many of them (not all, of course!) just want their kids to learn Italian and do well academically, and they think this is a distraction. It puts us in a tough spot—do I push back or just let it go? Honestly, it’s exhausting to deal with’  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘ I have had parents question why we’re doing intercultural activities, but I feel more confident addressing it now, thanks to the training we had. I’ll explain how these activities actually help their kids learn and grow, and that usually eases the tension. It’s not always easy, but I don’t feel like I have to avoid it anymore’.  (Teacher from the Trento 4 Institute) |
| **Coping strategies and mechanisms**   * Prioritization of unilateral language-learning activities * Arbitrarily Extending linguistic facilitators’ role | ‘Honestly, we end up focusing so much on teaching Italian because it’s what these kids need the most. I’ve even stayed late in the afternoons to run extra classes for students—and sometimes their parents too. I know we’re not doing as much intercultural stuff as we’re supposed to, but we just don’t have the time or people to do everything’  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘It feels like most of our energy goes into teaching Italian because, without it, these kids can’t follow anything else. I’ve even started staying after school to help students—and their families—work on basic language skills. I know we’re supposed to focus on intercultural activities too, but there’s only so much we can do with the resources we have’  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘Language is always the priority—it has to be, or these kids just get lost. I’ve volunteered extra time after school for Italian classes, but we’ve tried to keep it balanced by tying it into activities where all the students can connect, like storytelling or group projects. It’s hard, but we try to make it work’  (Linguistic facilitator from from the Trento 4 Institute)  ‘The guidelines say the facilitators should only work with recently arrived kids, but what about the ones who’ve been here for years and still struggle with the language? We can’t just ignore them. So yeah, we stretch the rules and include them too. It’s not ideal, I know, but it’s the only way to keep things moving’  (Teacher from the Trento 3 Institute)  ‘The rules say we should focus on the recently arrived students, but what about the ones who’ve been here a while and still can’t keep up with the language? We can’t just leave them behind. So, we find ways to include them too, even if it means bending the guidelines a bit. It’s not perfect, but it’s what we have to do to make sure no one gets completely lost’.  (Linguistic facilitator from the Trento 3 Institute) |
| **Intercultural-oriented practices**   * Debates and discussions on culturally significant or controversial topics * Exploring different languages and traditions across cultures. | ‘Just a few weeks ago, for instance, a Pakistani girl came to school wearing a headscarf and traditional clothing. Some of the boys started teasing her, so I decided to pause the lesson and try to open a discussion, or at least encourage some shared reflection, on different religious customs and the importance of understanding them […]. I think it made some difference. The girl explained that no one had forced her—it was her choice—and she shared her reasons with us. It was really interesting. I think her classmates also gave it some thought afterwards’  (Teacher from Trento 4 Institute)  ‘Finding common ground, mediating, compromising with other people, learning to coexist and work together without necessarily, always, prevailing, that is what I try to teach them. It is not a defeat to mediate. And then, always related to that, I try to teach them to listen to each other’s opinions and to be able to adapt their behaviors, even their language to the different situations they face. If an Italian student thinks that his peer from Pakistan looks weird in the traditional clothes, then he must learn not to say it too explicitly, because this may be hurtful for the young girl, she does not feel appreciated and respected…and I might make several other examples like that. It may sound trivial but so many adults do not know how to do that, so it is very important to work on these children, especially in today’s increasingly multi-cultural world…’  (Teacher from Trento 4 Institute)  ‘We place great emphasis on playing games. Games are a key teaching strategy. We especially make use of role-playing games that allow students to put ourselves in other students’ shoes and understand their differences without prejudice. For example, I sometimes ask Italian students to pretend to be emigrants leaving Italy and settling in a very different country, like Pakistan. And then I ask them ‘how would you behave in such a situation?’. This is a way to overcome prejudice and to be more prone to dialogue, even with people who are very different from us, in terms of cultures, languages, habits and other. At this age, children still tend to get along well together but they have to learn now how to overcome prejudice so to apply that when they will be adults. Future societies will be increasingly diverse and multicultural, this is a fact’.  (Teacher from Trento 4 Institute). |
| **Practical Adaptations fostering Intercultural Goals**   * Strengthening pupils’ native languages through foreign communities’ involvement * Intercultural exchanges through peer tutoring | ‘At first, I simply asked X, a student born in Trento to parents from southern Italy, to help Y, who had recently arrived from Pakistan, with homework during class. But something more started happening. The two became inseparable, curious about each other’s lives—X wondering about Y’s traditional clothing and dietary restrictions, and Y asking about X’s lifestyle. They began visiting each other’s homes, bringing their families closer. X’s mother even started helping Y’s mother with Italian. One day, Y told me, ‘Teacher, our families are so similar! X’s parents migrated from Calabria and struggled to integrate because they spoke a different dialect, similarly to my family! And both our families have the same tradition of big Sunday lunches, it is amazing, isn’t?’  (Teacher from Trento 3 Institute)  ‘I’ve seen how pairing students as peer tutors can do more than just solve the language problem. It creates these moments where students from different backgrounds really connect. For example, I paired a Moroccan-born student who’s fluent in Italian with a recently arrived classmate who only speaks Arabic. They started working together on translations during lessons, but now they’ve become friends and even help each other with homework outside of class. It wasn’t my original goal—it just sort of happened—but it’s made the classroom feel more collaborative and inclusive’  (Teacher from Trento 3 Institute)  ‘At first, involving people from the same community as our migrant students was just a quick fix. We were short on facilitators, and this seemed like a practical solution. But over time, I realised it wasn’t just helping with translation—it was creating these moments of cultural exchange. It’s like we stumbled into something bigger without even planning it’  (**Facilitator from Trento 3 Institute**)  I have started asking siblings or even other members of the Moroccan and Pakistani community here in Trento, you know, we have pretty huge communities of those kind…yes, I have started involving them, I was saying, to help with the newly arrived students, and it’s been surprisingly effective. For example, one older brother of a new student who speaks both Urdu and Italian has been coming in twice a week to help translate and explain lessons. What’s even better is that it’s opened the door to organizing native language courses, like a small Urdu class we recently started, which we couldn’t have done before. It’s been a win-win for everyone.  (**Facilitator from Trento 3 Institute**). |