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The chance of CLIL-based laboratories: A case study

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CHAPTER 13

Which Sardinian for education?

The chance of CLIL-based laboratories: A case study

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According to the UNESCO Atlas, Sardinian is an endangered language, and the debate about its promotion in Sardinia is lively and passionate (Moseley 2010). In fact, over the past two generations, the language vitality and vigour of the *limba* (in Sardinian: language) have been drastically reduced. Nowadays, youngsters tend to abandon the limba when the literacy process towards Italian starts in school. The OCSE-PISA 2012 reports that students in Sardinia are among the lowest in literacy within the Italian state: Bolognesi and Heeringa (2005) argue that youngsters are losing Sardinian without mastering the Italian language. In order to reverse this language shift, a common written standard, the Limba Sarda Comuna (LSC) was made official by the local government in 2006. However, the LSC is still contested: "plastic language", "Frankenstein monster idiom" are some of the epithets cast against it by the local press. In this contribution, we show a successful pilot experiment of a concrete application of the *limba* at school, that in our opinion could be easily applied on a wider scale in other parts of Sardinia. In fact, in the academic year 2014–15, three classes in a middle school of Orosei (Nuoro) took part in a laboratory where the *limba* was used both orally (local variety) and in written form (LSC, for the didactic material) following the so-called CLIL approach. Students learned Sardinian history in a Mediterranean and European perspective, using the LSC in reading and writing. No participant – L2 speakers included – rejected the LSC for being "artificial", even though the local variety is approximately 85% similar to the LSC, according to Bolognesi (2007). This pilot experiment shows that a concrete application of the LSC in schools is possible and desirable. A discussion on how to expand this pilot experiment in different settings will be provided.

1. Introduction

Sardinian is an endangered language (ISO-639 identifier: srd) mainly spoken on the island of Sardinia, in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, belonging to the Romance group (Eberhard et al. 2020, Moseley 2010). Politically, Sardinia is a

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Special Administrative Region of Italy. The sociolinguistic profile of Sardinia has changed radically in the last two generations: from a condition of stable diglossia (*à la* Ferguson 1959), where Sardinian in the past was normally used for informal, non-written contexts and in-group communication while Italian was reserved only for formal, written communication, Sardinian is now at risk of disappearing within one or two generations. This is particularly evident in cities and larger towns in Sardinia, where Italian is used in informal settings too. In other words, Italian challenges Sardinian as the domains of use traditionally reserved to the local language are no longer the prerogative of Sardinian only. Sardinian often survives in speech only in code-switching and code-mixing with Italian. This condition is called "dilalia" by Berruto (1993) and in the long run it threatens the very existence of the L-code, i.e. the language used in "lower" social contexts.

In language revitalisation programmes, youngsters are a group of special interest as they are tomorrow's parents: if tomorrow's parents will not use Sardinian with their future children, the intergenerational language transmission chain will be interrupted and therefore it will very difficult to guarantee that Sardinian will survive, as Fishman (1991) already pointed out. Thus, the role of the middle school in raising linguistic awareness should not be underestimated. This chapter aims to describe a research project on the use of Sardinian in the context of a middle school and its possible applications in other contexts in the island. The use of the Sardinian language in primary, middle and secondary schools is a topic of lively debate throughout the island and it is often proposed by Sardinian politicians and intellectuals to counter the language shift towards Italian. However, as far as the authors know, it seems that aside from generic appeals to bilingual and bicultural education, concrete experiences in the classroom where Sardinian is not only the topic in the class – addressed in Italian – but also the active language of instruction, are still lacking. In fact, the opportunity for bilingual and bicultural education concerns not only the regional language itself, but also has a stronger impact, if we take into account pedagogic and social implications: the territory and the cultural and linguistic background of learners is crucial in order to guarantee academic success.

Unfortunately, the OCSE-PISA 2012 report has made it clear that in the Italian context schools in Sardinia have a high dropout rate and very low literacy scores: many school children experience difficulties in reading and understanding even very simple texts (INVALSI 2012). Among the factors that can explain this situation, the current Italian-Sardinian situation of dilalia can play a role in speakers' linguistic uncertainty, as they are hesitant about the boundaries between the two languages, especially on a lexical level (Bolognesi and Heeringa 2005: 10). This linguistic uncertainty can impact both literacy in Italian and oral proficiency in Sardinian: younger generations are losing Sardinian without mastering Italian correctly (Cappai Cadeddu and Bolognesi 2002: 11).

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We argue that the revitalisation of Sardinian can also bring benefits to proficiency in Italian among the younger generation, if Sardinian is used as a language of instruction alongside Italian. Even if Sardinia's status as a Special Administrative Region permits it to have laboratories of Sardinian at school, up to the time of writing (September 2017) there is still no comprehensive and effective plan to realise language revitalisation programmes – one that takes into account other historical minorities present in the Region, such as Catalan in Alghero and Ligurian in Carloforte and Calasetta. Initiatives left to single individuals and small groups often lack documentation, thus we have neither quantitative nor qualitative data or analyses for comparison. A notable exception is the case study of Pinna Catte (1997), but this is over twenty years old. Our case study in the classroom is only a pilot, as it is limited in time and space. However, we are confident that it can be inspiring for larger and deeper case studies in the near future.

2. The standardisation of Sardinian and its impact in education

The debate over the use of Sardinian in schools is linked to the debate around language standardisation. In fact, the use of a regional or minority language as the medium for instruction implies that there is some sort of agreement in the written variety. In general, teachers – and scholars as well – agree that oral communication should be done in the local variety that learners find familiar; on the other hand, it should also be said that, even if Sardinian shows a high degree of variation, there is a substantial homogeneity in the language, especially at the levels of morphology and syntax, once we exclude Gallurese (ISO-639 identifier: sdn) and Sassarese (ISO-639 identifier: sdc), considered as independent languages by the majority of specialists, with different identifiers in *Ethnologue* (Eberhard et al. 2020).

There is no general agreement on the description of the internal varieties of Sardinian by specialists: each analysis implies a certain degree of abstraction and it has immediate consequences in the language policy and planning approach to be taken. Lőrinczi (2001) already noticed that several classifications underline some linguistic boundaries while downplaying the role of others; in particular, the boundaries between the traditionally defined two macrovarieties of Campidanese (ISO-639: sro) and Lugodorese (ISO-639: src) Sardinian cannot be traced with confidence in the center of the island, so the whole distinction between these two macrovarieties should be problematised. What is relevant in our discourse is the fact that this uncertainty reflects on the teachers who want to use Sardinian at school: the temptation is somehow to transcribe the local variety, without a special attention to the metalinguistic aspects and the consequences of that choice. The study by Iannàccaro and Dell'Aquila (2010) of the spontaneous writing systems

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of Sardinian shows that a normative orthography should be adopted in order to represent and defend the vitality of local varieties. We argue that a shared orthography widely used could strengthen the sense of belonging of Sardinian speakers across the varieties of the local dialects. In particular, teachers and students who used Sardinian as a language of instruction could play an active role in this process.

The first attempt to have a Sardinian standard norm officially recognised was done in 2001, when the Region proposed the *Limba Sarda Unificada* (LSU), Unified Sardinian Language. The LSU was a complete standard, mainly based on the Lugodorese varieties, but was rejected by speakers of other varieties, who could not identify with it. In particular, the language planning was accused of being too "purist", according to Lugodorese the special status of the purest Sardinian, especially in the lexicon. This failure led to a revised plan whose main result was the *Limba Sarda Comuna* (LSC), Common Sardinian Language, adopted in April 2006 by the Region as an orthographic norm for the documents produced by the Region itself. The LSC is a transitional norm, that can be modified in the future according to the needs that emerge (Regione Sardegna 2006). After its launch, the LSC has been adopted by other agents such as publishing houses, web site administrators, and so forth. It should be emphasised that the LSC lets speakers be free in using the words of their own local varieties: for example, "to watch" in Sardinian can be *abbaidare, apompiare* and *castiare*. What should be respected is the rules of transcription defined in the LSC. For instance, the Sardinian word for "cat" is written *gatu* in LSC, and it can be pronounced ['gatu], ['ɣatu] ['batu] and ['atu] according to the different local varieties. In some cases, distinct language traits were adopted. For example, the very name of Sardinian in the language is *limba*: this word is quite different from *lingua*, which does exist in some varieties, but it has the disadvantage of being identical to Italian.

Unfortunately, just after its publication, the LSC was attacked in the regional newspaper *La Nuova Sardegna* and others as a "false" variety: "Frankenstein monster", "useless Esperanto", "a deception against the Sardinian people", "a plastic language", "a bureaucratic and artificial language" were some of the epithets casted against the legitimisation of the LSC. All these are false arguments. In fact, Bolognesi (2007) measured the Levenshtein distance of 77 varieties of Sardinian through a corpus-based analysis of the lexicon, showing that the LSC is a sub-standard variety of Mesania, a variety that is a natural point of encounter between the different varieties. However, even now graphisation is still considered not respectful enough of the varieties in the southern part of the island: in particular, the most contested decision addressed the exclusion of the flag character <x>, which is considered representative of the Campidanese varieties. In order to overcome this problem, Bolognesi proposed a variety of LSC called GSC. So far, no modification of the LSC has been implemented on an official level (at the time of writing: September 2017).

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Moreover, in the meantime, other intellectuals have adopted different orthographies: for instance, Mario Puddu uses the *Limba de Mesania* in the laboratories of Sardinian at the University of Cagliari; a writing system in which he published a normative grammar of Sardinian (Puddu 2008). In sum, there are three positions: first, some people want to adopt the LSC as it is; second, others want to have a modified version of the LSC, in order to be more acceptable to the southern part of the island; finally, a third group rejects the LSC and chooses to use other orthographic norms. This last position is not held by a coherent group, but covers a collection of different proposals, quite often used only by the proponent. Unfortunately, it is worth noting that, ten years after its publication, we have little understanding of how the LSC entered Sardinian society, outside its official use, as no surveys were conducted, at least to the authors' knowledge.

We argue that the LSC is the strongest candidate to be the orthographic norm of Sardinian. An important test is the acceptance of the LSC by the younger generation, which is a group of special interest for the reasons given in the introduction. For that reason, we adopted the LSC as it is, i.e. without any adaptation, in our case study.

3. The setting of the case study

The project *Cherimus su sardu in iscola* was realised in the school year 2014–2015 in three different classes in the G. A. Muggianu middle school in Orosei. Orosei is a small town (approx. 7,000 inhabitants) in the province of Nuoro, on the north-east coast of Sardinia. The local variety of Sardinian in Orosei has Nuoro as the main reference. According to our participant's observation, there is still a good level of intergenerational transmission. In that middle school there were no activity concerning Sardinian in any sense before our project. We had in mind two main research questions in proposing the project.

First, we wanted to test a CLIL-based methodology applied to Sardinian. Is it feasible to have a CLIL-based classroom in Sardinian? The term CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning, see Coyle et al. 2010) was introduced by David Marsh and Anne Maljers in 1994 in reference to foreign language learning, following the motto "the goal is language using as well as language learning". In fact, in using the foreign language as the language of instruction for a given content, students learn the language in context and at the same time they improve their competence in the language. In our case study, the setting is non-standard, as the language is not foreign but contested. We prepared a laboratory on Sardinian culture and history along the periods of the normal curriculum taught in Italian: the idea was to offer a different perspective on historical events – from a Sardinian perspective. We take

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as a standpoint that the languages of instruction are never neutral: for example, it is not the same to teach the history of the European continent in English, Italian, or Russian, as the perspectives are different. In particular, the narrative of some specific events concerning Sardinia is different if we use Italian or Sardinian. It is important to underline that we do not see these two perspectives in conflict but as complementary: in other words, Sardinia is often regarded as peripheral to the history of Italy, so a laboratory such as ours can introduce a level of detail that normally is not taught to the learners, usually concerning places that are familiar to them. The style of the written material prepared ad hoc for the three classes used a serious, high register: we carefully avoided *folkloricism*, i.e., viewing the regional language as being the flag of the "Good Old Times" and nothing more. Morevoer, events were put in a larger perspective, not only mentioning Italy but also other European realities, in particular Catalonia and Spain, for their historical connection with the island. While allowing learners to use Sardinian in the classroom – which is a formal context – they are forced to access the high register of the language, which is quite rare in the current situation of dilalia. In this way, they strengthen their proficiency in Sardinian while learning new facts about their island.

The second research question concerns the LSC and its applicability. We aimed to check the reaction to the LSC among youngsters – in many cases, participants had never seen a text written in Sardinian in their entire life. One of the criticisms levelled against the LSC concerns the structural distance between the LSC and local varieties of Sardinian: will young learners accept the LSC or, on the contrary, will they reject it as artificial or too distant? This problem is widely recognised in the literature of language planning of regional and minority languages (Dell'Aquila and Iannàccaro 2005: 146). In his analysis, Bolognesi (2007) shows that the Nuoro variety is 85% identical with the LSC. In other words, there is a considerable degree of distance between LSC and the local variety, therefore the fieldwork in Orosei proved to be a good test of the research question.

We also envisioned some goals concerning the contestedness of Sardinian in general. First of all, we wanted to see if the project could increase students' pride in being Sardinian and in particular being speakers of the language. Second, we wanted to see if the use of Sardinian as the language of instruction would have some consequences on the academic performances of the learners. Third, we wanted to prove to the teachers that it is possible to propose a multilingual education not only through the introduction of English as a foreign language but also and mainly through the valorisation of the linguistic repertoire of the learners, which in most cases include Sardinian in some form. One important point to verify was the reaction of students in class who were not themselves Sardinian and, coming from abroad, do not use Sardinian in the family. Would they feel discriminated against

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by the use of the regional language in class? This was one of the concerns of the teachers in the middle school.

The project was carried out in four different phases. The preliminary phase had two parts. First, we did a sociolinguistic survey, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, in order to depict the linguistic repertoire present in the classroom. The results of this sociolinguistic analysis will be presented in Section 4. Second, we prepared ad hoc material written in LSC for the three classes. Each class would cover a distinct period of history: students in the first class were 11–12 years old and they had to study history from the Byzantines (500 A.D.) to the Giudicati (circa 1300), the four independent states settled in the island; the second class (12–13 years old) covered the period from the Aragonese conquest of Sardinia (1323 A.D.) until the Spanish conquest (circa 1700); finally, the third class (13–15 years old) had to study the period from the Savoia domain on Sardinia until the Great War (1914–1918). We did not have a working example of such texts in Sardinian as nothing similar had been done before, to the extent of our knowledge; however, a somewhat similar case can be found in an acquisition planning experience regarding Mocheno, a Germanic minority language in Northern Italy (Ricci Garotti 2011). Some exemplary texts produced in LSC will be shown in the Appendix to this chapter. The texts were proofread by Roberto Bolognesi, who attested their validity from a linguistic point of view. Sometimes it was not easy to choose the "right" Sardinian lexeme in writing the texts, especially if they were technical terms not in use in the everyday language. Whenever possible, an autochthonous term was chosen, without relying on Italian: for example, instead of the borrowing *divisione amministrativa* (used in official texts written in the LSC), literally "administrative division", the Sardinian term *partidura* was chosen.

The operative phase was conducted in the classroom: only Sardinian was allowed in class, both for oral and written communication. The researcher acted as though she were a teacher. The participant's observation done during this phase will be illustrated in Section 5. Last but not least, in the control phase we asked the participants to evaluate the project through another test – see Section 6.

4. The sociolinguistic analysis

The sociolinguistic analysis began with a paper questionnaire given to the students in the preliminary phase. The questionnaire was designed to establish the students' competence in Sardinian and in Italian, particularly if Sardinian was their main language, i.e. the language they used more in oral communication, not only in the family but also with peers and in their social life in town.

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Table 1 shows the students who participated in the questionnaire. It is important to stress that four more students were added to the operative phase: those four students were not present the day the questionnaire was given. Basically, 47 students completed the questionnaire, while 51 participated in the operative phase.

Table 1. Students who completed the questionnaire on the language repertoire

Class / sex	Third grade	Second grade	First grade
Female	4	7	6
Male	8	9	13
Total	**12**	**16**	**19**

The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions (multiple choice, yes/no, and open questions) and students had 30 minutes to complete it. Eight questions were devoted to the sociological profile of the students, such as gender, age, class; one of these questions asked if the student lived outside the Orosei community for a significant period of time, i.e. not just for holidays, but for a protracted period. One of the parameters we evaluated through the question was the linguistic habits of students' parents: as recounted by the students, 40.4% of the parents used only Sardinian with them, while only 25.6% used only Italian; both languages were used by 23.4%, while the remaining 10.6% used another language. The students were then asked which language(s) they received when they were children: 38.8% of the students considered Italian their L1 while 38.3% considered Sardinian their L1 (36.2% the Orosei dialect, and 2.1% the dialect of another town, always in the Nuoro area). Only 6.4% considered themselves early bilinguals in the two languages. Interestingly, gender played a role: a majority of the Sardinian L1 students were male (approximately a quarter more), while most early bilinguals were female (approximately two thirds). These data are not surprising: Sanna (1979) has pointed out that females tend to refuse Sardinian in order to have better opportunities in society, guaranteed by the Italian language. Finally, 17% of the interviewees declared that they had a different L1: some students came to Orosei from abroad. We will deal with this subgroup in the sociolinguistic analysis below. In any case, passive competence in Sardinian was acknowledged by 93.6% of the students, students from abroad included.

When asked to self-evaluate their active competence in Sardinian, 74.5% of the students said they could speak the language. Of course, this self-evaluation should be analysed more deeply, as there is no general agreement on what the statement "I speak Xish" actually means. For this reason, the most relevant part was devoted to analysing each student's language in their everyday life: in particular, we were interested in knowing if students were confident in the use of Sardinian in any domain or if they had to switch to Italian, and why. We divided the domains of use as follows: the language of interaction with teachers, school janitors, parents, siblings,

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grandparents, peers in school and friends in town. The fine-grained analysis shows that clearly the dominant language was Italian. In the domain of school, we found unsurprising data: teachers were addressed exclusively in Italian, while students used both languages with school janitors. Italian was also preferred in communication with peers in school (only 27,7% declared that they used both). In short, there was a clear stigma in using Sardinian in school: in this sense, the overall project we proposed was perceived as a complete novelty by students, if not a language revolution. These data were checked through a participant observation of their behaviour in the playground during breaks between class hours: Sardinian was used mainly by males when they played football, quite often in code switching or code mixing with Italian. Within the family, data are unsurprising too: Sardinian was dominant in use with grandparents and also with parents; on the other hand, students preferred to use Italian with siblings and peers, both inside and outside school.

We did not rely only on the emic approach. In fact, a third part of the sociolinguistic questionnaire was devoted to translation, in both directions, between the two languages. We compared the self-evaluations of the single students with their translations. Their command of Sardinian through such a written task is quite unstable, and full of Italianisms: for example, nobody translated from Italian the common adjective *giallo* ("yellow") with *grogu*, but they used the Italianised term *zallu*. Even students who had discretely mastered the morphosyntax of Sardinian often used Italianised terms. For example, the sentence "tomorrow I will paint the wall of the courtyard" was translated as *Cras apo a dipingere su muru de su cortile* using the Italian verb *dipingere* instead of *intunicare, pintare* or *tinghere*, all acceptable in Sardinian, even if the analytical syntactic form for the verb *apo + a + infinitive* was correct. Also, the Sardinian term for "courtyard", *corte*, was substituted with *cortile*. This phenomenon has already been noted by Paulis (2001), who pointed out that in the long run this relexification could lead to the disintegration of the Sardinian language. Though ours was only a pilot study of no statistical value, we agree that a dramatic change in the linguistic habits of the younger generation is needed as soon as possible if we want to actively preserve the Sardinian language.

On the other hand, when asked to decode sentences from Sardinian to Italian, the results were far more promising: only 21.3% showed little or no competence, while 34% of the students were highly competent. Here, the age variable plays a role: 50% of the students in the third class showed a high competence in Sardinian, while in the first class only 21,1% did. Other important data revealed by the questionnaire concerned students coming from abroad: all of them showed some competence in Sardinian. Our participant observation showed that they were highly motivated in increasing their proficiency, as Sardinian is the in-group language and they want to be included by their peers.

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5. Sardinian in the classroom

The operative phase took place in the classroom. All special activities to be done in the ordinary school hours, like our language laboratory, had to be previously approved by the board of the school: we were allowed only twelve contact hours in total, four hours for each class. The language used in class in our project was only Sardinian: the researcher, herself local, spoke the local variety to the students, while she prepared the texts in LSC in advance, for the purpose of this research. Students who already had confidence in Sardinian could improve it through their work, while students who were not confident took the occasion to get introduced to the language. Cooperative learning between the two subgroups was encouraged, so that nobody had any feeling of exclusion, regardless of their competence. It is important to note that all students used Sardinian in class in peer-to-peer communication to the best of their abilities, without any explicit instruction by the teacher. Sardinian was freely accepted as the language of instruction during the laboratory. In other words, nobody in class rejected Sardinian, both in oral and written use.

During the first contact hour of each class, the researcher presented herself in Sardinian, and then presented the structure of the laboratory. In other words, she used no Italian during the laboratory. Very few students were already informed of the existence of the LSC, and nobody had any previous experience, even in reading a text. Therefore, a brief and simple introduction of what is the LSC was needed. In our opinion, awareness of the existence of the LSC should be given greater emphasis by local administrations in the future. The introduction of the LSC was done through the presentation of the written material. Different tasks were proposed, according to the level of the students: for instance, students had to describe the historical maps of Sardinia through "concept maps" (Novak and Cañas 2006) and compare the topics of the laboratory with the ones already encountered during the hours devoted to history in Italian throughout the school year. Our approach was "learning by doing": students were asked to describe actively the Sardinian society of the time, and to explain the processes that led to the results put in the right contexts. In doing so, students were encouraged to problematise historical events using the language in an active manner.

The linguistic goals we set in advance for the students were the following: first, to understand the global meaning of the topics in history proposed through the active use of Sardinian in class; second, to analyse the texts written in the LSC, extracting the key concepts and thus increasing the students' lexicon in Sardinian; and third, to improve their oral competence in the language in a formal setting. Throughout the contact hours the researcher was aware she should use simple sentences and ask control question to prevent any major misunderstandings. Students were asked to read aloud the texts written in LSC, and they did so using the pronunciation of

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their local variety. We did not ask them to write in LSC as the contact hours were only four, and students were not accustomed to writing in Sardinian at all.

Participant observation showed that all the activities were received positively by all students. In the first two hours female students were reluctant to participate for the reasons we already presented above; probably the fact that the researcher in class was a young woman helped them to feel more comfortable in using Sardinian in the classroom. Several times students asked why Sardinian was not included in their normal activities in any form: we argue that there is an active interest among the younger generation in approaching the Sardinian language in the classroom as a normal part of the curriculum, and that such activities, if done regularly, could be beneficial for all students. In fact, some of the students fluent in Sardinian normally tended to fail in their academic tasks, as the teachers told the researcher on site. We argue that the fact that Italian is not the main language of this subgroup parallels their tendency to fail in their tasks in school, as it is a medium of instruction that they are not confident with. On the other hand, latent competences in Sardinian were activated in the students who initially declared that they had low or no competence in the language. We did not have enough contact hours to classify this sub-group as "ghost speakers"; but it is important to note that they were the first ones to be surprised by themselves when they started to answer the researcher and their peers in the language.

A word should be said about reaction to the LSC. Frankly, our experience shows that most of the debate by specialists and intellectuals about the "right" way to write Sardinian is simply pointless: students effortlessly compared their oral variety with LSC, and sometimes they pointed out the differences. No hostility in any form was shown: we want to report in particular that one of the students bluntly said that "it is like British and American English: there are some differences, but it is the same language". We should admit that the reading style of students relied a lot on their local variety, and therefore it could be considered not optimal if we compare it with the phonological rules of the LSC. However, students did not encounter any difficulties in reading the texts written in LSC, as confirmed by the last questionnaire they completed. Nonetheless, we are confident that a more structured activity through an entire school year could overcome this problem easily. In sum, not only did the LSC prove to be a good fit for the linguistic needs of the students, but also it was a valid instrument for metalinguistic awareness. In particular, students coming from abroad were actively involved, referring to their own repertoires. The family languages spoken by this subgroup were Moroccan Arabic, Chinese, Romanian, and Spanish. With the help of the researcher, they could compare different linguistic forms for the same communicative needs in Sardinian, Italian and their languages. That strategy was particularly effective when dealing with Romanian and Spanish.

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6. Concluding remarks and directions for further research

After the operative phase, we sought feedback from the students. We accomplished this in two ways: through an explicit question at the end of the last contact hour, and through another questionnaire given to them on paper later. In the group, students proved able to collocate historical events not only in the regional panorama but in a broader Mediterranean and European context. They felt confident and proud of their work. Their individual feedback was very positive too: 52.1% of the participants found the project "very interesting", while 43.5% found it "interesting"; together, these percentages almost covered the totality of the participants. 80.4% of the participants declared that they did not experience difficulties in listening to the researcher's instructions. 76.1% of the participants declared they had no difficulty reading material written in the LSC. These last two values show that the two subgroups of students who had mastered Sardinian at a competent level and students with significant, even if mainly passive, exposure to the language did not find the structural distance of the LSC from the local variety an obstacle. The questionnaire allowed students who had encountered difficulties free to express the reason: in many cases, they declared that the main problem was the fact that they were not accustomed to using Sardinian actively. 82.6% of the students wanted to have such activity through the whole school year while 67.4% were convinced that they could learn any topic in Sardinian. We would suggest that such results are very positive and that students could profit from such an extension of the laboratory. Moreover, even though both questionnaires were written in Italian, many students decided to answer the open questions in Sardinian in the second questionnaire administered after the operative phase. We left a space for open comments and suggestions. Among them, many students argued that Sardinian should be studied like any other language, and that non-linguistic topics could be learned through that language. In other words, according to the students, a Sardinian-based CLIL-strategy with the LSC in the classroom proved to be potentially effective.

Using the results of the laboratory just presented, we can now check if the three goals illustrated above, concerning the contestedness of Sardinian in general, were fulfilled, and, if so, to what extent. The first goal concerns the sense of belonging to the Sardinian language and the sense of pride in being Sardinian. Results clearly show that an active use of Sardinian in the classroom has positive effects in this sense, not only for youngsters who feel attachment to the language as part of their family repertoire, but even for students coming from abroad, who perceive the language acquisition process as inclusive, being conducted in a formal setting such as the school.

The second goal concerns the academic performances of the learners. Also in this case, it seems clear that success or failure depends a lot on the level of confidence in the language of instruction used in class. In particular, students who

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perceive themselves as "losers" in the academic competition may find new confidence if the language that they use every day in an informal setting – Sardinian, in this case – is also used as the language of instruction in formal settings. Third, in spite of some initial skepticism among some teachers, who had not previously seen the CLIL applied with a linguistic medium different from English, the methodology proposed proved to be sound and effective, realising the general goal of multilingual education.

On the other hand, these results and their effect in achieving the three goals proposed should be applied in a wider project so as to be empirically tested with more robust data. In particular, we argue that it would be important to repeat the experiment in particular in the Southern part of the island, where there is more resistance to the LSC. We argue that this resistance is more ideological than structural, as the Nuoro varieties are as structurally distant as some Campidanese varieties. A wider application of the laboratory could be the testbed for the changes to be done to the LSC, if needed. We argue that the debate on the LSC in particular and on the revitalisation of Sardinian should be based on fieldwork data concerning the younger generation and not only on personal opinions.

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Appendix

Here below an extract of the text written in LSC for the first class; for the whole classes. Approximately, there were produced 4,800 words.

Dae sos Bizantinos a sos giudicados. In sa segunda metade de su sèculu X in Sardigna naschiat unu modellu istitutzionale nou: sos giudicados. Fintzas a custu perìodu su guvernu de s'ìsula fiat afidadu a ufitziales dipendentes dae Bisàntziu: su praeses chi teniat funtziones amministrativas e su dux chi aiat funtziones militares. In momentos de perìgulu mannu su pòdere podiat èssere unificadu in una persone ebbia: sos istòricos non ischint galu cale càrriga aiat pigadu su mandadu de s'àtera ma est seguru chi dae su sèculu VIII su pòdere fiat in manos de un'ùnicu iudex provinciae (o archon) chi istaiat in Càlari e teniat poderes siat tziviles siat militares. A su comintzu custa càrriga fiat eletiva e petzi pro sos Bizantinos, ma a bellu a bellu s'est furriada a ereditària e finas pro s'aristocratzia sarda.

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