ADAPTING AGAZZI SISTERS' THEORY TO THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN AN EARLY YEARS CLASSROOM. VOCABULARY ACQUISITION IN AGAZZI AND CONVENTIONAL CLASS METHODOLOGIES

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Abstract

The introduction of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) into early years Catalan classrooms can be done in several ways. The focus of this research is to work on vocabulary acquisition through a non-conventional methodology in Catalonia, the Agazzi sisters' methodology. Moreover, in this paper several sessions of conventional EFL classroom methodology are going to be described, to see what strategies or approaches are carried out. The main objective of this project is to analyze what are the differences between both methodologies, and observe how children acquire vocabulary within the sessions, but specifically focusing on the Agazzi sisters' methodology. I am going to observe the possibilities that this methodology can offer inside the classroom, especially when learning vocabulary in a second-language when carrying out the didactic proposal. Two data collection instruments are going to be used and analyzed using a socio-critic paradigm: structured observations with its field diary, and 3 group interviews. Furthermore, the analysis of this research provides the information regarding the data collected through the sessions of both methodologies, and the discussion allows it to be contrasted with the theoretical framework. The results of this study show that the Agazzi sisters' methodology can be used to acquire vocabulary knowledge in a Catalan language immersion classroom, and it is as effective, or even more, than through following a conventional EFL class methodology.

Keywords: English as Foreign Language, Agazzi sisters' methodology, conventional EFL class methodology, vocabulary acquisition.

Resum

La introducció de l'anglès com a llengua estrangera a les aules catalanes de cicle infantil, es pot fer de diverses maneres. L'objectiu d'aquesta investigació és treballar en l'adquisició de vocabulari mitjançant una metodologia no convencional a Catalunya, la metodologia de les germanes Agazzi. A més, en aquest treball també es descriuen diverses sessions d'una metodologia d'aula on s'ensenya l'anglès com a llengua estrangera de manera convencional, per tal de veure quines estratègies o enfocaments es duen a terme. L'objectiu principal d'aquest projecte és analitzar quines són les diferències entre ambdues metodologies, i observar com els infants adquireixen vocabulari durant les sessions, però el treball està concretament centrat en la metodologia de les germanes Agazzi. Observaré quines maneres i possibilitats ofereix aquesta metodologia dins l'aula, especialment quan

els alumnes aprenen vocabulari en una segona llengua, com és l'anglès, a l'hora de dur a terme la proposta didàctica. Per a la recollida de dades s'utilitzaran i analitzaran dos instruments, tot mitjançant un paradigma sociocrític: observacions estructurades amb un diari de camp, i 3 entrevistes de grup. A més, l'anàlisi d'aquesta recerca proporciona informació sobre les dades recollides a través de les sessions d'ambdues metodologies, i la discussió permet contrastar-les amb el marc teòric. Els resultats d'aquest estudi mostren que la metodologia de les germanes Agazzi es pot utilitzar per adquirir coneixements de vocabulari en una aula d'immersió en llengua catalana, i és tan eficaç, o fins i tot més, que seguint una metodologia d'aula on s'ensenya l'anglès com a llengua estrangera de manera convencional.

Paraules clau: Anglès com a llengua estrangera, metodologia de les germanes Agazzi, metodologia d'aula on s'ensenya l'anglès com a llengua estrangera de manera convencional, adquisició de vocabulari.

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1.   Introduction

Nowadays, the introduction of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) into early years Catalan classrooms, has been potentially growing. But what methodology is being implemented in these Early Childhood Education schools? During the four years of the degree in education, I have studied some methodologies and ways of introducing English into a classroom where this language is not the first, even the second language. So, I want to focus on discovering what are the possible benefits of introducing it to early year students, and how can this new language be learned in class, as I'm going to be a future teacher. Moreover, as I know that EFL can be introduced in several ways, I'm going to focus on a specific theory, and observe the ways and possibilities that this methodology can offer inside the classroom. This theory is the Agazzi sisters' methodology, a method where the child learns by intuition, using realistic objects, and doing activities that come from everyday life. This method creates an emotional environment and it is based on games because it motivates the child to have fun and allows him/her to create and develop significant learning, values, and makes them capable of acting on their own initiative, as games are part of their everyday routine.

Instead of observing how children acquire English as a second language in the classroom following the Agazzi sisters' methodology, I am going to focus the objective on observing how children acquire some basic vocabulary following this strategy, and what are the differences when learning it on their conventional English class methodology. So the research question that I have created to develop this dissertation is, "How can we adapt Agazzi sisters' methodology for the learning of EFL focusing on vocabulary acquisition in a Catalan language immersion classroom?"

I wanted to focus this dissertation on that question because, despite the children's acquisition of the English language and its vocabulary development on a conventional English class, the Agazzi sisters use a methodology that I had not explored before, and so it is clear that I start from the knowledge I already have of the acquisition of the English language, to evaluate if the Agazzi sisters method is efficient and effective to acquire vocabulary in English, and compare it to the conventional method that I have been exposed to during my last years as a student at school, and university.

As I have always been interested in creating a project where I had to investigate, do an in-depth research, and also having to carry out a practical part, where I had the opportunity to observe a real situation in a classroom of Early Childhood Education, the methodology that is going to be carried out is an investigation - action. The main objective of this project is

to analyze what are the differences in both methodologies, the Agazzi sisters' method, and conventional EFL teaching strategies, and observe how children acquire vocabulary within the sessions, but specifically focusing on the Agazzi sisters' methodology. Thus, the aims of this Final Degree Project are the following:

- Know and analyze diverse information about the Agazzi sisters' theory, and connect it to the learning of vocabulary in English as a Foreign Language for Early Childhood Education.

- Implement activities to immerse children in English that complement the scheduled classes following the Agazzi sisters' methodology.

- Describe several class observations on how the students are developing in the classroom with the Agazzi sisters' methodology, and analyze if it is useful to learn vocabulary aspects in English in a nonconventional way.

Regarding the structure of this dissertation, it firstly presents a compilation of theories and studies of some important researchers that contribute to the topic of the study. In some cases, the theories do not relate directly to the study but are necessary for the reader to make sense of the information that follows. Next, you can find a description of the activities I developed during the didactic sequence in the classroom where this study has been done, the tools used and how they were designed, and its observations. There is a methodological part with its objectives, a contextualization of the school, the analysis, and also the discussion of the whole process where the reader is going to find the answer to the research question. In addition to this information, the results of the study are presented. Finally, the limitations encountered while developing the research, and conclusions, close the dissertation with a brief reflection on the research objectives.

2.   Theoretical framework

This paper intends to deeply work on the Agazzi Sisters' methodology and develop an intervention following their principles because it is a method that has not been yet implemented in a Catalan classroom, nor used to learn English vocabulary in an English as a Foreign Language class. As it is a new methodology for me, I want to start this theoretical framework introducing some general concepts about the fundamental pillars about the acquisition of a second language, and specifically, its vocabulary learning.

Once these key concepts are defined, the Agazzi Sisters' methodology is going to be introduced. They are going to be placed biographically and historically, defining their pedagogical principles followed in their *Scuola materna,* and we are going to study and define the concepts related to language acquisition within their methodology.

2.1.   Children's second language acquisition: general overview

Children use language every day, they grow with it and at the same time it makes them grow. It is a lifelong process and as they begin to use it metaphorically, it develops their creativity and imitation skills when learning and acquiring language. For children, language is a powerful tool for understanding the world that is surrounding them. They question everything that appears in their lives, and so they become active participants to comprehend and learn everything new. At the same time that children develop their ability to use language, the better they understand how to manage some social situations and become more independent, because they learn how to control their own actions and thoughts. Learning a second language is as complex as acquiring the first one, but with a wide variety of variables added. Learning a second language after the first one depends on many variables, and the same strategies used for first-language acquisition are used for subsequent language learning. However, it is obvious that learning a second language is strongly influenced by the mother tongue (Clark, 2000; Collier, 1995).

Clark (2000) argues that developing a new language is a process that happens gradually, and has an impact on the child's cognitive capacity, because learning a new language happens for a purpose. Children are always playing or working, and so they learn and extend their language abilities through the development of these activities. It is easier for children to acquire new vocabulary in a playful environment, because it is introduced in a nonconventional way and allows children opportunities to express their point of view, to

solve disagreements, and to induce peers to work and collaborate together. Playing and learning a language at the same time when they are young, will help them during their lifelong process of working on their new language acquisitions.

McLaughlin (1984) states that a child's language is constantly developing and changing, in consequence as they grow, they learn to communicate, and they are beginning to engage in communication. The child is an active part of the language-learning process and in the process of making sense of language (Clark, 2000). They are experimenting and while they begin to interact with others, they acquire the background to relate language to the sound and meaning of it. Children naturally obtain a communicative competence, intrinsically understand the rules of grammar, and gain knowledge of the rules of using language. Linguistic structure comes through the child's own cognitive and social activity (McLaughlin, 1984). The same author states that the learner's social skills and styles are also important characteristics to take into account when the children are learning a second language. Children are given lots of opportunities in their immediate context to interact with others who speak the target language, and these situations promote their language learning. Collier (1995) describes a model composed of four components that are interdependent when learning a second language. These are the social and cultural processes, language, cognitive and academic development. They take place at school, and the heart of it is the sociocultural process, because it is the most important part when acquiring new bits of knowledge and it strongly influences the child. The development of the language, cognitive and academic aspects comes after and related to it (Collier, 1995).

Cole & Cole (1993) explain that when children are at school, they reach an amazing language ability level in a seemingly effortless way. Nevertheless, children must be exposed to language, and that happens when they interact with others. Still, the amount of conversations they are exposed to, is extremely variable. Nevertheless, being introduced into the teaching and learning process of language for children is a very important factor to take into account when the purpose is to acquire a second language, and very young children, before entering to school, are just involved into informal conversations which with the help of its teaching and learning through the years, will become the overall development of children physically, socially, and cognitively (McLaughlin, 1984).

There is, however, much more variation in how well and how quickly individuals acquire a second language. There is no evidence that there are any biological limits to second-language learning or that children necessarily have an advantage over adults. There is no simple way to explain why some people are successful in second-language learning

and some are not. Social and educational variables, experiential factors, and individual differences in attitude, personality, age, and motivation all affect language learning (García Mayo, M. del P., & García Lecumberri, M. L., 2003). Nonetheless, McLaughlin (1984) states that children will adapt their language to their reality and needs. So, if they have the necessity to communicate in one language, they will use the knowledge that they just have about that language, but if they have the necessity of communicating in two languages, it is when they become bilingual, because both languages cohabitate in children's reality. Engaging children in real-life situations is an effective way to enrich their language experience.

2.1.1. Vocabulary acquisition

When children are learning a second language many factors play an important role, as it has already been pointed out. One of these factors is the learning of vocabulary of the second language. First of all, as Neuman, S,. and Wright, T. (2014) argue that without vocabulary knowledge, words are just words without meaning, most oral vocabulary development grows from a massive immersion in the world of language. Children are most likely to learn the words they hear the most, and the frequency of exposure strongly predicts word learning and seems to have long-range consequences for later language and reading levels. Regarding reading, for children that are just learning to do so, it is impossible to pretend that they understand anything. We have to provide them a strong foundation in oral vocabulary development. If we are to help children take on seriously challenging texts, then we need to give them word and world knowledge to bring them closer to texts. Regrettably, I could not apply this kind of knowledge to my didactic proposal, due to the kids with whom I developed it were 4 year olds, and so they did not know how to read yet. Nonetheless, I want to talk about the importance of reading to acquire word knowledge, because as a future teacher, it is a concept that I have to take into account, and so I want to develop it in this dissertation.

Blocker (2017) states that depending on the background of the child, its literacy exposure can change, and teachers have to take into account the different opportunities that children have before entering school. Nevertheless, the exposure that a child has before entering preschool builds the base of their vocabulary knowledge, so when this stage begins, the teacher has to know how is the children's vocabulary knowledge, and from there, build upon it and help them to develop vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction has both oral and print forms, and the greater a child acquires vocabulary knowledge, the easier it will be for them to read

a text and to decode words that they might have not seen before. This vocabulary instruction can be taught in five different ways according to Blocker (2017):

- Giving opportunities for children to hear words a lot of times in a meaningful context. This helps to solidify the link between a word and its meaning, and also to know how it is used to communicate with people.

- Hearing the word within the context of a familiar word. This allows children to make the unfamiliar word more relevant for them.

- Having conversations with adults. They encourage kids to talk and give meaningful feedback on their speaking.

- Presenting words in a meaningful context for them.

- Giving explicit definitions of words, and provide them several times to facilitate the task of the child when building the knowledge of a word.

Being aware of the different ways to develop a child's vocabulary and what kind of instruction to provide in the classroom can help teachers to know what will be most beneficial in building a preschooler's vocabulary. Vocabulary is something preschoolers are exposed to on a daily basis. And, of course, vocabulary instruction needs to be in place within the preschool curriculum, because it is an optimal time for a teacher to set up interventions and help those children who have a smaller vocabulary range, and make the gains they need (Blocker, 2017).

Fast mapping is the notion that words can be learned based on a single exposure. It works to explain the extraordinary rate at which children seem to pick up words early on through a minimal exposure to them (Neuman and Wright, 2014). As the authors state, children can also learn words by predicting relationships between objects and sounds, which become more accurate over time. Word learning in most cases requires many exposures over an extended period of time, and with this additional exposure, the word may become incrementally closer to being fully learned. Vocabulary explosion or word spurt is the dramatic ability of young children to acquire new words (Neuman and Wright, 2014). They establish that word learning is cumulative. So, as teachers we should immerse our students for extended periods in oral and written vocabulary experiences throughout their instructional years, to promote as much as acquisition of vocabulary as possible.

Neuman and Wright (2014) point out that children need both explicit and implicit instruction and state that children benefit more from explicit instruction. That is, children who are given child-friendly definitions of words or other attributes of the words to be learned are more likely to remember them. Explicit instruction involves diagnosing the words learners need to know, presenting words for the first time, elaborating word knowledge, and developing fluency with known words (Hunt, A. & Beglar, D., 1998). Neuman and Wright (2014) state that rich explanations should include as much information as possible about the new word, including information conveyed through defining, providing synonyms, pointing to illustrations, and using the words in other contexts. Ongoing professional development is essential, because children may need planned, sequenced, and systematic vocabulary instruction. This means selecting words, concepts, and ideas that matter most to children right from the very beginning of schooling. If we provide them this input of vocabulary that is significant for them, children will be willing to learn new words, and produce that output that we are waiting for.

Vocabulary plays an important role in Second Language Acquisition because it exists a relationship with the ability to communicate, and at the same time when learning a second language, the student has perceptions about the relative importance of vocabulary. Barcroft (2004) distinguishes between three points to emphasize the importance of vocabulary acquisition in the second language, and also draw into question where the focus of L2 instruction should be:

1) The absence of vocabulary often impedes the transmission of meaning completely.

2) Significance of L2 vocabulary concerns the importance that students attribute to vocabulary knowledge and their ability to function in an L2.

3) Relationship between vocabulary and how grammatical knowledge is stored in the minds of learners and language users.

Incidental vocabulary learning occurs when learners acquire new words from the context when they are not even intending to do so, for example, picking up new words during free reading (Barcroft, 2004). It is the one that requires that teachers provide opportunities for extensive reading and listening (Hunt, A. & Beglar, D., 1998). On the contrary, intentional vocabulary learning, refers to learners acquiring words while intending to do so, such as studying a list of new words or completing activities in a workbook for a set of target words (Barcroft, 2004). Nevertheless, defining vocabulary learning as purely incidental or purely intentional does not represent learning vocabulary in a realistic manner. On the one hand,

according to Nation (2002), English vocabulary should be taught systematically because the focus of teaching is essential for learning to take place. Hunt and Beglar (1998), on the other hand, suggest that vocabulary should be taught in a way that combines both explicit and incidental learning and the strategies for learning vocabulary should be introduced to learners.

Another aspect described by Barcroft (2004), is the lexical input processing, and it refers to how learners process words and lexical phrases to which they are exposed. But to refer to the input of individual words only we can address to the term named word-level input processing. In order to learn a word incidentally or intentionally, the learner must have access to the words form and meaning. These elements form the lexical input processing, but their nature can be different depending on the way we process them, for example, in a text.

Barcroft (2004) defines five principles in his article, of how L2 vocabulary instruction can be effective:

1) Present new words frequently and repeatedly in the input

2) Use meaning-bearing comprehensible input when presenting new words

3) Limit forced output during the early stages of learning new words

4) Limit forced semantic elaboration during the initial stages of learning new words

5) Progress from less demanding to more demanding vocabulary-related activities.

These principles emphasize lexical input processing as a framework for understanding L2 vocabulary acquisition. In general terms, the five principles emphasize the provision of input and opportunities for input processing as positive driving forces in L2 vocabulary acquisition. Input processing occurs and promotes the development of linguistic competence at multiple levels- at the level of discourse, sentences, words, and individual sounds. Each different level of input processing contributes to successful Second Language Acquisition overall. The five principles discussed here emphasize how presenting words as input and giving learners adequate opportunities to process new words are critical to effective vocabulary instruction (Barcroft, 2004).

According to the study of Cambridge by Nation (2001), if we want to learn vocabulary in a long-term course, we can focus on these three items to plan how much vocabulary do we want to acquire:

1) The number of words in the language

2) The number of words known by native speakers

3) The number of words needed to use the language.

These points sum up that even native speakers do not know all of the language, but it is always interesting to know how many words are in a language. As well as it is also important to ask what do we count as a word. There are many issues that discuss this idea of differentiating between one word or more (Nation, 2001). The low-frequency words are the type of vocabulary that is less used by the native speakers, and there are also the high-frequency words, which are the most important ones. To learn this high-frequency vocabulary Nation (2001, p.16) states different ways of learning and teaching:

● Direct teaching, which is the teacher explanation, and peer teaching.

● Direct learning, which is the study from word cards, and the use of the dictionary.

● Incidental learning, which is guessing from context in extensive reading, and the use in communication activities.

● Planned encounters, which are graded reading, and doing vocabulary exercises.

Despite the definition of these different ways of acquiring vocabulary through second language learning, the important focus on this dissertation is the methodology of the Agazzi Sisters, and their conception of vocabulary acquisition in the L2. Nevertheless, I considered important to describe how vocabulary is acquired when we are learning a second language, because a comparison of the results of both methodologies will be carried out in this dissertation. Up to this point, it has been described how children acquire vocabulary in a conventional English class, and from now on, the Agazzi sisters' methodology is going to be described, and specifically, what is their conception regarding vocabulary and second language acquisition is going to be outlined.

2.2. The Agazzi sisters' methodology

Rosa and Carolina Agazzi founded the *Scuola materna* in 1896 at Mompiano, Brescia. At the suggestion of Pietro Pasquali they decided to found a new nursery school. The Agazzi

method was very successful and served as a model for the birth of subsequent schools, the nursery schools, which arose under the name of the Agazzi sisters, and soon started to spread at a national level. In 1926 Rosa and Carolina stopped teaching, but the nursery schools that follow their methodology kept growing, and some of them started to appear across Europe (EcuRed, 2015).

Some of the kindergarten schools that are still working nowadays are around Italy, such as in Maranello[1], Brescia[2], or Trieste[3]. In its original country, these kinds of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) schools are more common than in any other part of the world. It is because their pedagogues are from Italy. The pedagogic principles that these schools follow are nearly the same as the ones that the educators created at their *Scuola materna* in Mompiano, stressing, however, also the importance of the environment: that is that the child must be able to behave in school as in their home, treated in the same way, and with the same affection. Above all, these schools assume the key points of the Agazzi sisters' proposal, but the school's teaching staff elaborated some improvements on their school aspects, as the aesthetic ones. There are also some other schools in Europe, such as the one in Croatia[4], that has the same characteristics.

2.2.1. Biography

Rosa and Carolina Agazzi are two Italian pedagogues born in 1866 and 1870 in Volengo, Verona. Both were trained at the School of Teaching in Brescia, Italy. They lived very tough times, because, at the beginning of the 19th century, Italy was fragmented into small states, and so the education had to be taught in different languages. In 1892, while they were running two kindergartens, they began to observe, analyze, and reflect on children's education in Italy until they managed to create their new method, known as the Agazzi methodology, whose bases were: the active participation of the child in all projects, the minimization of "hardness" in school regulations, and to enhance close treatment and affection for children to feel like a family. It was in 1895, while they were running the asylum

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[1] Web page of the school in Maranello, *Scuola dell'infanzia "Sorelle Agazzi"*. Retrieved from https://www.icstradi.edu.it/scuola-dellinfanzia-agazzi/

[2] Web page of the school in Brescia, *Scuola dell'infanzia Agazzi.* Retrieved from http://www.comune.brescia.it/servizi/scuolaeuniversita/scuoleinfanzia/Pagine/scuola-dell-infanzia-agazzi.aspx

[3] Web page of the school in Trieste, *Scuola Dell'infanzia comunale "Sorelle Agazzi"*. Retrieved from https://www.triestescuolaonline.it/index.php?0=bacheca&id=48

[4] Web page of the school in Croatia, *Dječji vrtić Zraka sunca*. Retrieved from https://www.zraka-sunca.hr/index.php/hr/

of Mompiano, in Brescia, when they decided to create their own Agazzian center with children of all social classes. This new center was called *Scuola materna* because they wanted to recreate the same atmosphere of a home. In 1926 they retired but still had an active role in the asylum of Brescia. Rosa died in 1951, a few years later than Carolina, who died in 1945[5].

2.2.2. Pedagogical principles of the Agazzi sisters' methodology

The Agazzi sisters' method was created at its beginning to help the most disadvantaged children, whose families could not afford their education. They managed to reduce economic expenses using cheap materials, which could be found in the classroom, in homes, or their surroundings. There was no need to buy specific materials for children to learn concepts, values , and ideas (EcuRed, 2015).

Leone (2009) states that the Agazzi sisters' methodology is not a system of didactic procedures that are already established to be strictly implemented, it is a system where the teacher must build everything, day after day, through real-life experiences and has to be based on the needs of their students.

Cirjan (2018) says that the method created by the Agazzi sisters is based on:

- Learning through the intuitive method thanks to the educator.

- The use of cheap and accessible objects and materials in children's daily environment and home, as a solution to the families economic problems.

- Provide children with a warm and emotional environment where teachers should have a "maternal" attitude.

- Promote language education through singing and body rhythm.

The Italian educational system had as a key point in the last century, sensory education, which was developed using the sizes, colors, and shapes of the objects of their environment (tree leaves, plates, school supplies, etc.). Italian educational system also focuses on

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[5] Some of the references I used to summarize the biography of the Agazzi Sisters are the following: https://www.ecured.cu/Rosa_y_Carolina_Agazzi ; https://prezi.com/d2e8xy78nwwk/hermanas-agazzi/ ; http://www.eligeeducar.cl/hermanas-agazzi-2 ; http://uvadoc.uva.es/bitstream/handle/10324/32236/TFG-G3069.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (See the complete references on the Bibliography section)

intellectual education that is based on letting children explore the environment and the natural perception of objects, and the final approach of this educational system was to focus on the education of feelings, which is developed by performing activities of religion, physical activity, and moral education. For the same reason in 1984, 74% of schools in Italy chose to use this new pedagogical method (Londoño, 2017).

Following these pedagogical principles, Rosa Agazzi uses her musical knowledge to make singing not a matter in itself, but an activity to perform throughout her teaching-learning process, because for the pedagogue, it is evident that from the music we can express ourselves, using our inner feelings and also to communicate with others. According to Cirjan (2018, p. 20), within this process, music has a series of functions that coincide with those of language:

- Cognitive: as a possibility of knowing, recognizing, and focusing perceptually on the acoustic reality that surrounds each person.

- Cultural: as an opportunity to develop fantasy, creativity, but also aesthetic, social, and religious intuitions.

- Critics: music develops perceptual abilities and it is proposed to develop the ability to react actively in critical terms for conditioning, the media and the dangers of a passive reception of the sonorous musical message and that of an interpretation, based on values Default cultural

- Expressive-communicative: when sounds are organized in music they transmit messages, give information, evoque emotions, describe experiences, etc.

- Aesthetics: music education also promotes the refinement of musical sensitivity.

Leone (2009) says that the Agazzi pedagogy, more than a method, therefore, is a set of didactic experiences, means and procedures that these sisters with their intuition, find and implement in educational practice. When placing it as a method, it must be clear that it is a research method: a method that does not impose rigorous procedures, but which intends to indicate and suggest them as suitable means for achieving certain ends. The Agazzi have a serene view, not veiled by intellectual complications. They see the order of things with transparency, they catch it with intuition. The method avoids a too sedentary life for children: they do not spend a huge amount of time in the classroom. Most of the day is intended to be doing free activities that require movement in the school and its outdoors. This fragment is a translation from an original text in Italian (see "Comune di Brescia", 2020). In their

Educational Offer Plan for the school year 2019-2020 document, the pedagogical principles followed by the Agazzi sisters at Brescia School are the following:

- Place the child at the center of the educational process, since it is intended to fully achieve and actively participate in its physical, intellectual, and moral development.

- The concept of "freedom in order", which characterizes the school day. The activity of the child is not limited to imitating the actions of the adult, they are free to do what they want but following some rules

- Acquisition of autonomy through the realization of activities of daily life.

- There is a relationship between child and nature, as it is the main element for the acquisition of ecological sense.

- The relationship between family and school, to meet and gain confidence and thus work in harmony together.

- Respect the child as a person, who needs to be heard and able to speak.

In an Agazzi methodology class, there is no division of children according to age, and thanks to this way of working, dialogue, solidarity, and responsibility are capacities that are favored. The two pedagogues wanted the children to feel happy and eager to discover the world without the need of the teacher to guide them. It is a joyful pedagogy, focused on the game that is the child's natural activity. Everything in school becomes a game that motivates, allowing them to have fun and lead to spontaneous learning. Educational games bring values to the training of the preschool child (Cirjan, 2018).

The Agazzi sisters agree on how important it is to maintain a good relationship between school and family because the learning of the child also occurs at home with their family, so they should be in contact with the teachers and the center in order to help the child. Families are free to go to classrooms and participate in the projects that are carried out by the school (Cirjan, 2018).

2.2.3. *Scuola materna*: general ideas

The Agazzi sisters, in collaboration with Pietro Pasquali, directed the asylum *Scuola Materna* in 1895 in Mompiano, Italy. This new center wanted to create a family atmosphere, and its environment not only constitutes the material space, suitable for the freedom of children, but above all because it expresses the teacher's personality, reflects the inner order, and evoke feelings of affection and simplicity among children, reviving them in the serene atmosphere

of a family community (Leone, 2009). Altea (2011), adds that this is a climate of love, affectivity and serenity, founded on harmonious cooperation between children. And thanks to this climate, the child will gradually transform into a small citizen of the world. The main mission of *Scuola Materna* is to work within society, so that it can belong to everyone without distinction, especially as regards the training of citizens. Rosa Agazzi believes that its high educational function must be given back to society, family, and school since this is a clear example of a modern pedagogy.

The *Scuola materna* is characterized by being immersed in a genuinely democratic climate, where dialogue is continuously exercised, and experiences are neither dispersive nor chaotic, and where the child, experiencing the meanings proposed by pedagogues, is defined within a universe of meanings. Rosa Agazzi highlights the need to create an atmosphere of peace in which the educator, infusing himself/herself with the game, seeks to achieve a first state of balance between the various manifestations of life. It is about getting the first feelings of life based on order, tolerance, generosity, and mutual respect (Cirjan, 2018).

According to Altea (2011), for the Agazzi sisters', the school's activities were not only conducted to develop the sensitive and intellectual faculties, but also to awake and reinforce the moral and religious feelings on children. And for this reason, the two pedagogues gave great importance to the practical life and its activities, such as singing, painting, or doing basic actions. For the realization of all the activities and tasks of the classroom, children could use various materials of their own environment, without the need of having materials created specifically for it, nor buying them. For the Agazzi sisters', everything they have in their environment can be considered didactic material, for example, tree leaves can be used to learn sizes or colors.

The *Scuola materna* school aims to be like a home for children, in which the typical lessons of the traditional school are reduced and exchanged for domestic work adapted to children, such as sweeping, washing, setting the table, etc. Over time, the school grows and gardening projects begin to be carried out, and they also incorporate a small farm with pets. The functions of these works, if carried out in a process of interaction with others, serve to develop and enrich the child's cultural heritage. Gardening, provides children the need of respecting nature and reflecting on the importance and value of it (Altea, 2011). However, the implementation of this kind of activities during my internship has been impossible to develop, since the school is located in a city center. In terms of doing domestic tasks, the school does not have enough resources, nor equipment to let the kids do it, either any

necessity, because there is a staff prepared to carry out them already. Nevertheless, as they were important tasks to be carried out at the Agazzi sisters' *Scuola materna*, I wanted to mention them in my dissertation, and even if they are not as important as they were before, they are key aspects that still characterize this methodology.

Inside the classroom, the "password method" is used. These passwords are drawings or symbols that are given to identify objects or people, and so children can classify their things and their space (Cirjan, 2018). A practical example of the methodology of the Agazzi sisters can be found in the School of the Agazzi Sisters at Brescia[6]. This school educational planning is based on the dialogue and observation of children, always respecting their times and needs. Within this planning, the use of the garden is also very important and valued. The environment within the schools, in both, is similar to that of a home where the child feels comfortable to explore and learn. This school interprets those indispensable elements that are the basis and structure of the Agazzi method: water, light, air, and earth. It also maintains and follows its general ideas, and families are involved as well during the whole process.

Another activity that was very important and common inside the classes that carry out an Agazzi methodology is spontaneous drawing. This concept helped with the formation of the infant. The drawing is a way for the children of expressing themselves, and let them manifest their interests, needs, worries, and learnings. It also helps the child to discover himself/herself and explore its inner worries. It promotes attention, observation and it is an essential activity to create discipline in school. Giving the child a paper and some drawing materials, makes them isolate themselves in their work, and enjoy their creation. The drawing educates the senses of touch and sight, and reaffirms intellectual aspects such as: distances, shapes, sizes, spaces (EcuRed, 2015).

Like the school in Brescia did, the other schools that I found that carried out the Agazzi sisters' methodology collected before (see section "2.2. The Agazzi sisters' methodology"), tried to maintain as much as possible the same pedagogical principles as the Agazzi sisters' established for their methodology on the *Scuola materna* in 1895.

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[6] The Portable Document Format of the school's educational project is retrieved from http://www.comune.brescia.it/servizi/scuolaeuniversita/scuoleinfanzia/Documents/POF%20Agazzi%20web%202020 19-2020.pdf

2.2.4. Environment: spaces and materials.

The spaces and materials on the Agazzi sisters' school help to create an environment which promotes a familiar environment, and makes children feel like a home. The ideal school has to have large classrooms with good ventilation and light. To reinforce positive feelings in children, activities related to household chores, gardening, etc. are carried out (EcuRed, 2015).

Materials of the child's environment are very important. They must be simple, easy to manipulate, and have to be adapted to children's heights. Children's environment has to promote an easy and comfortable place to move around for them. The environment in which the child develops its daily life, according to Leone (2009), is of great importance because:

- It constitutes the material space that is adapted to the needs and movements of children.

- Show the teacher's personality, its internal order.

- Satisfies the feelings of affection of children through creating a family atmosphere.

Rosa Agazzi argues that the materials they have are not always beautiful, they can even be dirty and ugly since they can have garlic, cloves, buttons, ribbons, fruits, etc. (Altea, 2011). Leone (2009) and Altea (2011) talk about the existence of the **"Museum of the Poor"**, that is used to store all of these materials collected daily. This is very important because it respects the spontaneity of the child by improving their natural tendencies. The museum is constantly changing and always adapting to the activities and needs of the classroom students. Teachers and children work together to create this space. It is important to know that the material of the museum must be searched and adapted and not used. According to Rosa Agazzi, this material can be divided into several sections depending on the use that is intended to be given and its function. It is divided into the following sections: materials for sensory education, for aesthetic education, for the observation of things and the acquisition of language, for playing and for the operations of practical and daily life, like the garden space. On my didactic proposal I recreated a kind of "Museum of the Poor", not exactly following the same characteristics that the original one had. I left a space in the class, where children classified different objects that they used to develop my proposal into some labels, such as colors, numbers, sizes, or shapes. So, the museum that I did was used during every session, and classified but with different sections than the original one.

2.3. The Agazzi Sisters' methodology on language learning.

Leone (2009) states that the Agazzi sisters' consider language as an expressive faculty. The activity that is connected to its learning must, therefore, be creative, and it must arise as a manifestation of needs and an expression of feelings. The child develops this faculty spontaneously and gradually in relation to the concrete possession of knowledge and the actions that the child performs. For language teaching, the Agazzi sisters' design a device that is both practical and ingenious: marking individual objects and items of each child's clothes. By repeating the names of the marked objects (for example, tree-leaf-horse etc.), children recognize their own things distinguishing them from those of the others. This fragment is a translation from an original text in Italian (see Leone, 2009), and it describes that this original activity implies many things:

- It clarifies the social meaning of language.

- It develops the right sense of ownership.

- It is used with precision and broadens the circle of interests of children, since each label corresponds specifically to the object represented and it becomes part of the teaching material.

Already with the museum of the poor and with the passwords, Rosa Agazzi supported the importance of language and said that with these activities the children learn to speak and communicate with each other. She also added that this helps the child to express and understand the messages through the suprasegmental phenomena of language (Vigilante, n.d.).

The Agazzi sisters' were the first pedagogues to support such a methodology, and where the acquisition of language was considered as a verbal message, not only centered on the word. Rosa pointed out that just learning the word was not enough. This means that the educator, for linguistic education, had to also be expressive, rich in humanity, had to use a cordial tone accompanied by gestures, and a serene attitude (Vigilante, n.d.).

Agazzi also said that the child learns to speak within its practical life, and in the pedagogues' *Scuola materna*, as well as in nowaday schools, practical life is considered an important training tool, and each activity is accompanied by dialogues and discussions. The teacher had to make the children reflect on words. This does not have to be done in a rigid or in a forced way, but through lively and fruitful conversations with the teacher and classmates. Another important aspect to take into account when learning language through this

methodology, is using the storytelling and singing or just listening to songs while developing some activities. Moreover, the Agazzi sisters' introduced and followed each activity with dialogues and games, where the children developed the language and learned new concepts. For example, one aspect of the Agazzi methodology was the use of games/activities that involved mathematical problems (Vigilante, n.d.).

Regarding these mathematical problems and vocabulary learning, down below, it is going to be explained how the role of the teacher in these areas, among other characteristics, have to be developed.

2.4. Comparison between Agazzi and Conventional teacher's roles.

On the one hand, the task of the teacher on the specific methodology that this dissertation is based on, the Agazzi Sisters' methodology, is quite different than the task that we are used to develop as teachers in a conventional EFL methodology classroom. Rosa Agazzi said that the educators are mainly cheerleaders, who organize, participate and encourage the child to "di fare de sè", that is, to do it for ourselves. Moreover, mentioned in Altea (2011), Rosa Agazzi through her words affirms that the traditional school is dedicated only to teaching cultural data and nothing else. She wanted to achieve the ideal of the teacher raised by Pietro Pasquali, and this approach is based on the fact that the educator can see beyond the children, in their movements, in their gestures, in their eyes and according to this, the teacher gets to know the needs, desires and feelings of the children. The teacher is the soul of early childhood education. She was also convinced of the importance of motivation and professionally growing, and considered it as the key element for the effectiveness of the teacher's work (Altea, 2011).

Leone (2009) explains that the educator should be only an observer prepared to take advantage of key moments where he or she can encourage the free development of the child, awakening their interest to participate in new projects and games. They are responsible of encouraging children to adapt an active role in the classroom, and teachers should also know when they can intervene, trying not to disturb in the child's work. It seems clear then, that for the Agazzi sisters, teacher training was very important. They considered that it is necessary to provide special courses to give children adequate knowledge from the didactic, pedagogical and psychological point of view, and providing them the knowledge to solve different school problems. On an Agazzi's class, the teacher must behave with seriousness, humility and devotion to its work, leaving no space for signs of apathy,

selfishness or disaffection. The teacher will only offer its help in the moments of logical-mathematical and vocabulary learning on their linguistic development (Alioto, 2014). The activities created by the teacher following this method, must be built based on the day by day activities, and living experiences.

On the other hand, the role of the teacher in an EFL classroom is the following. Teachers should perform these three main roles according to Richards and Rodgers (2001):

- Selector and sequencer of tasks. The language teacher has an active role in choosing, adapting and designing tasks, because these tasks must keep with the learner's needs, expectations, interests, and language skill levels.

- Preparing learners for tasks. Some training for pre-task is prominent for language learners. These training activities may include topic introduction, specifying task instructions, assisting students in learning or recalling beneficial words and phrases to make the task accomplishment easy, and offering partial display of task process.

- Consciousness-raising. The teacher deploys an amalgamation of form-focusing techniques, covering attention-focusing pre-task activities, examining the given text, guided exposure to similar tasks, and employment of highlighted material.

On an EFL classroom as we know, the teacher just focuses on giving tasks to children, when this one wants their students to acquire some learning. According to Benson (2004), the skills of the teacher on an EFL classroom must be the following:

- Pedagogue, a teacher who is able to teach through theory and establish conclusions from children's interventions during the class. Grows in confidence, and adopt a researcher role.

- Interactive communicator, the teacher has to know the trends of different generations, and using their characteristics to scaffold the students language acquisition through its social and cultural knowledge.

- Translanguaging facilitator, encouraging student's ability for language, and perform flexible and purposeful code teaching, using all available linguistic resources.

Above all, a teacher should be a communicator, educator, evaluator, educated human being, and agent of socialization (Fillmore, L. W., & Snow, C. E., 2000). It is clear that in traditional and Agazzi method, teachers should let children do things for themselves and never force

them to do activities and tasks they don't want to. But all of the characteristics developed by the teachers on an EFL classroom are the ones that I am used to see as a student on my last years, and the ones that I am supposed to develop as a future teacher. What I really wanted to discover through the Agazzi methodology is the teacher's role inside its classroom, because I have never seen the implementation of such a methodology before in any Catalan classroom, and I was curious to see how it could be developed, once I knew what this methodology was about. Now that I know that it is a completely new methodology that has not been implemented in Catalonia before, I have enough knowledge to carry it out as a future teacher, but if I do not have the opportunity to develop it as it really is, at least I have more knowledge than I had before concerning the University classes, and Practicums during my career. It has been very useful because getting deeply to know more about the Agazzi sisters' methodology had given me the opportunity of adding it into my future professional career as a teacher, and has helped me to construct and find my own identity, because it has allowed me to get in touch with a methodology I didn't know before.

3. Performance: Implementation of my Didactic Proposal

Both methodologies and its strategies to acquire vocabulary in English, among other relevant characteristics have been described on this dissertation, and on this section, I am going to focus on the Agazzi sisters' methodology, and how I have implemented it during the didactic proposal. I have tried to maintain as much as possible the principles of the pedagogues, but I had some limitations, and the most important one is the fact that the school where I developed this proposal is located in the middle of a city, what meant that I could not achieve the essence of the Agazzi sisters' *Scuola materna*, which is to bring nature and the objects of the school's environment inside the classroom, as well as developing most of the activities outdoors. Nevertheless, I conducted a deep research to find if there still exist some schools that carry out the Agazzi methodology, and thanks to it, I have been able to develop this didactic proposal, adopting the principles of these schools to mine.

I distributed the classroom with 6 tables to create 5 corners or spaces, and I wanted to work different specific vocabulary items in each one of them. The vocabulary that I wanted them to acquire or reinforce was the one that they already worked at the English subject, or the one that they were going to work further on. These are the colors, numbers, sizes and shapes. To work on these tables within the Agazzi methodology, I followed the pedagogues idea, which states that children have to go outside of the classroom to work and learn from the objects that they find on their environment. As the school does not have an environment as rich as the *Scuola materna* had, and the kids are neither allowed to go outside of the school, I decided to work with the objects that children had inside their classroom. The intention is that depending on the table students decide to work, they pick up any object they want from the classroom, and classify it following the vocabulary item that is worked on each table. Later on, they have to remove it from the table so other children can play there, and leave the object on the "Museum of the Poor" they have created over the sessions. To create this kind of museum, I previously introduced them the topics that they were going to work on the tables, and how do they work, so they knew what were they going to do with the materials that they have around the classroom, and that on the following sessions, they would have to place and classificate them onto different sections. I asked them at the end of each session, to differentiate all the materials that they had used into colors, numbers, sizes and shapes (which are the labels that they have chosen to classify the museum), and so in every session the museum grew thanks to the students' classification. They used the materials that they had already discovered and put there, or if they prefered to, they could

investigate and get new objects placed in their classroom. These materials could be used on the following days if they wanted to, but they were free to discover new ones.

I distributed as well the quantity of children that could be playing on each table simultaneously, because otherwise, if too many children were on any table, it would be impossible to work well, and focused on the activities. Organizing the space like this, increments the possibilities among the sample group of students of acquiring the knowledge that is intended to be worked on each table. Each session lasted for 45 minutes, and children were free to move around the space to work wherever they wanted to, but following my instructions of how many children could be in each table.
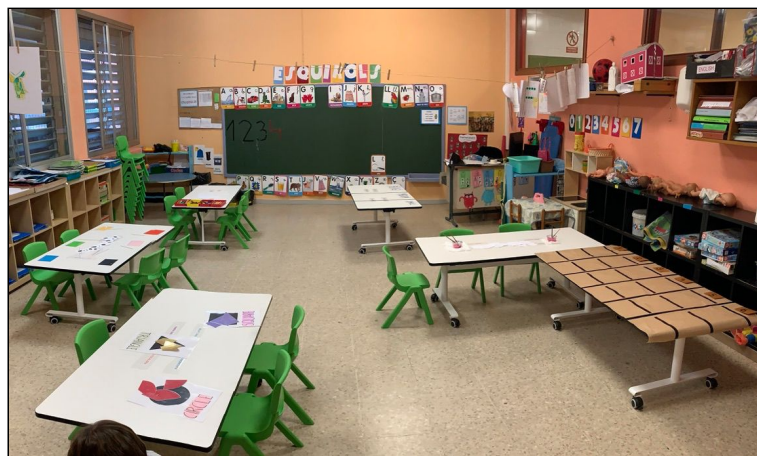

Fig. 1. Picture of the distribution of the classroom where I developed the didactic proposal following the Agazzi methodology. Author: Mar Hidalgo

A brief description of each table's performance, and some important aspects regarding the methodology are included below.

Numbers

Firstly, to work the numbers I used two tables. On one of them I draw out a template on a brown paper roll as big as the table, where I made lines to make a chart and place at the top of each column a label with a number, from 1 to 6. On the three empty spaces of the columns below each number label, students placed as many things as the number that was on the top of it indicated. In order to know which number were they going to work with, on the other table I put two pots filled with water and a drop of paint inside each on of them to make it colored, and two brushes for each pot. I also made as many papers as empty spaces were on the chart of the other table, and on each piece of paper I wrote a number with a white crayon, so when children painted the paper with the colored water, the number appeared, and they picked up as many objects as the number that was written on the paper,

and placed them on the chart spaces. This table was thought for 4 students to be working there simultaneously.
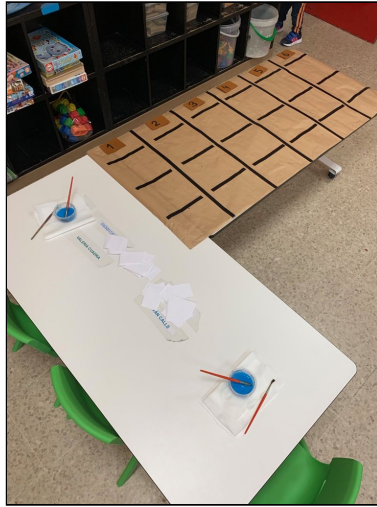
Fig. 2. A picture of the two tables where children worked on numbers. Author: Mar Hidalgo

Colors

Then, to work on colors, I just used one table. There, children found 6 colored plastic-coated papers attached to the table, different colored papers painted with black crayon, so the color could not be seen, because it was under that black layer, and 6 sticks to scratch on them. The idea was that 6 kids could be simultaneously playing on that space freely, and each of them got a stick to scratch on any piece of paper. When students saw the color that was behind the black layer, they had to go and look for an object around the classroom or in the museum, that matched the color and place it on top of the colored plastic-coated papers that were attached to the table. Once they have checked that it matches they had to remove the object from the table and put it on the corresponding section of the "Museum of the Poor" they had created. They could do it as many times as they wanted to.

Fig. 3. A picture of the table where children worked on colors. Author: Mar Hidalgo

Shapes

Thirdly, on another table children worked on shapes. As they just had to work on three shapes (triangle, square, and circle), it was thought for 3 kids playing on it simultaneously. There, they found 3 plastic-coated papers were it was drawn a different shape on each, and separately, the same shape, but cut into 3 pieces. The aim of this table was that children were able to correctly place the cut shapes, completing a kind of puzzle, on the one that was drawn at the biggest paper, and afterward, they had to find an object around the classroom or at the museum, match it with the shape putting it on the top of the plastic-coated paper sheet. Once they had checked that it matched, they had to remove the object from the table, and put it on the corresponding section of the "Museum of the Poor" they had created. They could do it as many times as they wanted to.
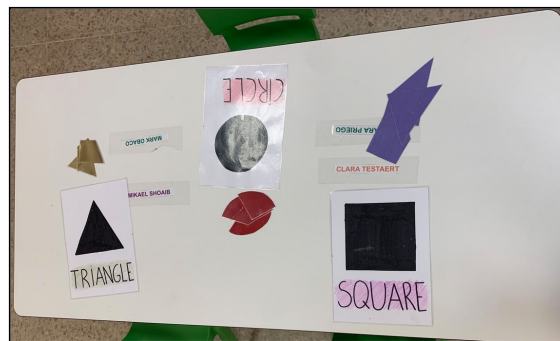
Fig. 4. *A picture of the table where children worked on shapes. Author: Mar Hidalgo*

Sizes

On the fourth table, children worked on sizes. To do it, I placed on a table 3 plastic-coated paper sheets with different labels written on it, big, medium, and small. These labels had different sizes according to the name that was written on each of them, to make it easier for the students, due to the fact that they do not have acquired any reading skills yet. To divide the 3 spaces on the table, I used black adhesive tape to make 3 columns, and this table aimed to find objects that had different sizes around the classroom, or in the museum, get them, and place them on the correspondent space. Children were free to develop this activity as many times as they wanted to, and there was no limit of students to play in this space simultaneously. Once they had placed three different sized objects, they had to remove them and put them on the corresponding section of the "Museum of the Poor" they had created.
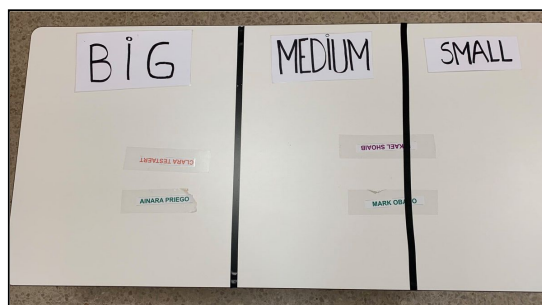
Fig. 5. A picture of the table where children worked on sizes. Author: Mar Hidalgo

Free drawing

Finally, on the last corner I left a table for children to practice free drawing, as it was a concept worked by the Agazzi sisters. On that table the sample group of students had an amount of white paper sheets to draw on, and every two sessions I changed the kind of materials that children could use on the table. In one session they could draw with pencils, crayons, color markers… And on the other one, I put 6 plates with the same paint colors that they were going to work on that session on the table of colors, so they could practice the same ones. Furthermore, on each plate there was a brush and 3 shaped sponges, a squared one, a circular, and a triangular, so they could work as well on shapes and colors while they were free drawing. On that table I just put 4 chairs, so there could be just 4 children drawing simultaneously.

Fig. 6. A picture of the table where children developed free drawing with color pencils, markers and crayons. Author: Mar Hidalgo

Fig. 7. A picture of the table where children developed free drawing with paint. Author: Mar Hidalgo

Songs

During the sessions, I played some music related to the vocabulary that children were working on the proposal, because Rosa Agazzi believed that music intervenes in our development, and that as students, it helps us to acquire more knowledge than without it. To select the songs, I asked for some help from the English teacher, and she told me that the

English department staff of the school, did have a list of songs to work these vocabulary items according to their age. I had a look at it, and decided to change some of the lists' songs, because some of them were too long. I finally chose four songs, one per each vocabulary section, and played the whole list with four songs during the realization of every session. The list of the songs is attached at Appendix 1.

4. Methodology

This research is based on a sociocritical paradigm, as the role that I have to develop is double, because I have to invest and at the same time, be the invested subject. What I am doing with this didactic proposal, as its name says, is transforming the reality directly with my performance. I am self-experimenting myself because I am developing my proposal. The method that is going to be carried out within this research is the investigation-action, because I am doing it myself, and carrying out the research as well.

The idea of the Action Research was developed by Kurt Lewin. Lewin (1946) states that it is a method in which the researcher intervenes in, and during the research. This has two purposes: firstly, it is going to bring positive results, and secondly knowledge and theory are going to be generated. The professor identified four phases in the action research (planning, acting, observing, and reflecting), and imagined it based on principles that could lead "gradually to independence, equality, and cooperation," (Lewin, 1946). According to Lewin (1946), scientific research is best achieved through cooperation between the researcher (academic) and the people in the work field (practitioners). Stenhouse (1987), quickly connected Action Research and his concept of the teacher as the researcher. Later, Elliot (1990) popularized action research as a method for teachers researching in their classrooms. W. Carr and S. Kemmis (1983), define this approach as a set of activities aimed at curricular development, promotion, and professional improvement; the improvement of school programs, development of educational planning and educational systems, through the identification of planned action strategies, which must be put into practice systematically subject to observation, reflection and change thanks to the implication that every one of the participants have in the activity. The Investigation - Action method is to implement an idea when you try to improve or change something, trying to have a real effect on the situation (Kemmis, 1983).

From the techniques that I am going to use to develop my didactic proposal and collect the data, we can say that it is a qualitative research. First of all, I am going to carry out a group interview with the English teachers of Early Childhood Education of the school where I was doing my performance, to explain to them what it is going to be about, to ask them if they can be as observers while I am developing my didactic proposal (just in some sessions), and also if I can take notes and be as an observer in their English sessions, as I have to compare how children acquire vocabulary through the Agazzi sisters' methodology, with how do children conventionally acquire vocabulary, that is to say, in their English classes. I will do

these interviews three times: Before starting the proposal, while I develop it, and at the end of it. In this focus group, I also want to know what kind of vocabulary are children learning, which is the one that they already know, and the one that they are going to acquire in the future, so I can adjust my performance to the students' knowledge. I have decided to develop a kind of focus group with just the English teachers of Early Childhood Education, that are 2, of the school where I developed the didactic proposal because according to "Data Collection Methods for Program Evaluation" (2018), the group dynamic can provide useful information that individual data collection does not provide. Discussing with both teachers helps me to get more in-depth information on perceptions, experiences, or their beliefs, as they have been working as teachers for more years than me. To plan these kinds of interviews, I am firstly going to develop the guide, where I have written the information I am going to introduce to the teachers, the one that I want to obtain from them, and discuss about the sample group of students that I have chosen. In each session, I am going to develop a mixed role between a facilitator, because I will guide the discussion, and a note-taker, because I am going to observe and collect all the information that children provide me. These focus groups will be conducted in person, and are thought to last for an hour more or less.

Furthermore, during the development of the sessions, I will carry out some observations about how the kids are working on the spaces I have created, if they understand its mechanics, and what is more important, checking if it is useful to learn vocabulary following the Agazzi sisters' methodology. These observations will be noted in a field diary. According to "Data Collection Methods for Program Evaluation" (2018), observation advantages are some as collecting data where and when an activity is occurring, does not rely on people's willingness or ability to provide information, and allows me to directly see what people do rather than relying on what people say they did. So, I am going to carry out direct observation, that is when you watch interactions, processes, or behaviors as they occur, and at the same time, indirect because I am going to see the results of their actions ("Data Collection Methods for Program Evaluation", 2018). I have chosen to use this instrument to collect the data because I am trying to understand an ongoing process or situation that children are going to be immersed while developing both strategies, to help them with the acquisition of vocabulary in English. To plan these observations, I first have to determine the group, then I am going to design a system for data collection through some observation guides, and use the field notes. I also have to select the place where the activity is going to be carried out, and it is also important to time the observation appropriately.

4.1. Research question and objectives

The research question that I have proposed to develop this dissertation is "How to adapt Agazzi sisters' methodology for the learning of EFL focusing on vocabulary acquisition in a Catalan language immersion classroom?"

The aims for this dissertation are the following:

- Know and analyse diverse information about the Agazzi sisters' theory, and connect it to the learning of vocabulary in English as a Foreign Language for early childhood education.

- Implement activities for immersing children in English that complement the scheduled classes following the Agazzi sisters' theory.

- Describe several class observations on how the students are developing in the classroom with the Agazzi sisters' methodology, and analyse if it is useful to learn vocabulary aspects in English in a nonconventional way.

4.2. Contextualization of the school

The school where I did the practical part of this dissertation is a semi-private school in Catalonia, located in a city center. The city that we are talking about is quite big, and county capital. In 2019, there were 61.275 inhabitants, for a city that has an area of 14,87 km^2 (Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya, 2020). Around the inhabitants of it, there is a huge level of multiculturality, but concretely in the school where I have developed my practicum, there is not a lot of multiculturalism among the children. It is a really big school, and on it's building we can find Early Childhood and Primary Education. On each course there are 4 lines, and in addition, there is an average of 25 students per class, so we are talking of 900 students on the school more or less. In the school's website, we can find the information that concerns the teaching staff, there are 17 teachers on Early Childhood Education, and 37 for Primary Education. In the school, there are also the coordination and management teams, and the administration and services staff.

According to the website of the school where I developed my didactic proposal, the school follows learning itineraries throughout the children's schooling. These are a set of competency learning contents, planned according to the systemic model, contextualized and significant for the students that work in small groups, and start from a challenge or problem,

that ends with a final product with the maximum possible social repercussion. Moreover, their pedagogical project is defined as the students are the center and meaning of the school, and build their development to become transformative, and competent people by fostering skills within attitudes.

To offer quality education, the school's website states that they keep up permanent teacher training to be up to date on pedagogical questions, as well as they are constantly collaborating with all the sectors that make up the educational community (Families Association, City Hall, Cultural Associations...).

It is clear that this school where I had to develop my didactic proposal bears no resemblance to the model of the Agazzi school. On the one hand, the pedagogues founded a school surrounded by nature so that children could go outside, discover and learn through and from their environment. In this school, on the other hand, children are surrounded by urban constructions, and they do not have the possibility of going outside, as there are many students on the school, and they need permissions to be able to do so.

4.3. Analysis of the data collected

Through the techniques mentioned before (see section "4. Methodology") and during 9 weeks, I had the opportunity to analyze different aspects of vocabulary acquisition in English as a Foreign Language through two different methodologies. The observation grids, the diary written through the observation, and the English teacher's interviews have helped me to extract meaningful conclusions, the first more than the second. In general, according to the collected data, we can regard that there has been an increasing use of English vocabulary among the sample group of students. In a general overview, it is seen that all children have done an improvement process in terms of the English output produced. Obviously, there are some differences between the students.

Furthermore, the observation grids attached at Appendix 2, show how students acquire vocabulary following the Agazzi sisters' methodology during the sessions, the Appendix 9 shows how their knowledge has increased during the proposal, and at Appendix 3, there is collected information of how the sessions of conventional EFL classroom methodology were developed, and how students acquired vocabulary through them. These three appendices show the observations done during the sessions; but below, you will see how they evolved in a general way according to both methodologies.

4.3.1. Agazzi sisters' methodology

When applying this methodology to children inside the class, as I distributed it in sections of different tables, and worked on each one of them a different aspect of vocabulary, I am going to analyze the data collected on the observation grids (see Appendix 2), and the data that the graphics offer of the results that describe how the students' learning has increased (see Appendix 9). On the one hand, in the general observation grid (see Appendix 2, p. 68), there is written the different vocabulary that the group class did acquire within every session. To collect that data, I made discussions with the whole group class after every session, but before tidying up the classroom, so students could have a look at the materials that they have been working with during the session, in order to make it easier for them to remember the vocabulary worked. But besides, doing it collectively could also lead their answers to be conditioned by their mates'. The grids of the pretest and the closing session (Appendix 2, p. 69-70) are done in an individual way. In that first session I asked every student to tell me what they knew of every vocabulary aspect I was going to work on the following sessions. And in the closing session, I prepared a table with some of the objects they have classified in the "Museum of the Poor" during the development of the didactic proposal, and they could pick up the one they preferred to. Then, they had to individually describe it following the vocabulary items that they remembered that were worked on the didactic proposal of the Agazzi sisters. To facilitate that task, and promote their autonomy in their answers, I have left the material that they have been working during the sessions stuck on the blackboard, to make it visible and easier for them to remember it (see Appendix 7). In this closing session, children were not forced to classify an object following all the vocabulary categories worked on that didactic proposal, they were invited to describe an object, trying to do their best. On the other hand, the graphics where are collected the results of the students' acquisition of vocabulary, are divided into nearly the same sections as the observation grids do, and their description, and analysis is going to be divided into the different sections also found in Appendix 9.

As the observation grids and the graphics of the results are divided into the vocabulary sections worked, I am also going to analyze them separately on the different contents: colors, numbers, shapes, and sizes.

Colors

In terms of this vocabulary item, it is true that since the beginning of the course kids start working on it, and so they had a wide range of knowledge about it. I intended to reinforce it

and to broaden their vocabulary regarding colors. In this section I prepared a table where children could work on 6 colors per session. I changed them frequently because I added new ones, repeated these, and the ones that were not already assimilated by the students.

SESSIONS	COLORS
1st Session (6 / 2)	purple, red, blue, yellow, green, pink
2nd Session (11 / 2)	purple, red, blue, yellow, green, orange
3rd Session (13 / 2)	red, blue, yellow, green, pink, black
4th Session (18 / 2)	purple, blue, green, pink, orange, white
5th Session (20 / 2)	purple, red, blue, yellow, black, brown
6th Session (25 / 2)	blue, green, pink, black, white, brown
7th Session (27 / 2)	red, yellow, green, white, black, brown
8th Session (3 / 3)	red, orange, white, black, brown, grey
9th Session (5 / 3)	blue, yellow, orange, white, brown, grey

Grid 1. The colors I distributed during the 9 sessions. Author: Mar Hidalgo

The reason why I distributed the colors in this way during the sessions is because children already knew some of them, and until the fourth session, I did not introduce new ones, because I first wanted to reinforce the ones that they knew. As is reflected in Appendix 2 (p. 68), after each session I asked them what colors did they know, but since the beginning of the didactic proposal, on the pretest session, students knew the same ones. However, as I started to introduce new ones and repeat them, these new colors started to appear in children's answers, as it happens with white, brown, and grey (see Appendix 2, p. 68). In the colors results graphic (see Appendix 9, p. 95), it is seen that the amount of known colors increases a 27% over the initial knowledge about vocabulary that the sample group of students had before. The acquisition of the first color appears in the fourth session with its 9%, the second color acquired is in the fifth session, increasing the total amount of knowledge a 17%, and finally, in the eighth session, all the desired vocabulary to be acquired is achieved.

Numbers

Before doing my intervention, the sample group of students that were going to develop my didactic proposal, already knew the numbers from 1 to 10 in order, but what they did not know was to recognize its written symbol, neither counting a set of objects and say the total

amount of them in English. So, what I wanted them to learn in this section is the number correspondence to a set of objects. That is why I did the material already described above (see section "Performance: Implementation of my didactic proposal"), because the aim here is to recognize a written label of the number, to be able to count a set of objects in English, and know the name of the total amount of it, but in English. Day by day, children started to recognize the numbers that appeared on the blank sheets when painting them (see section: "Performance: Implementation of my didactic proposal"), without having the necessity to count starting from 1, and little by little, when they counted how many objects did they have to put on the chart, the numbers they produced were in English as well. As we can see in the general observation grid (see Appendix 2, p. 68), what I asked them when we finished every session, was to count the numbers from 1 to 10, to see if they remember them, and what was surprising, was that they ended up counting up to 15. Even in some sessions they counted up to 11, 12, 13, or 14. The evolution of the students' answers has varied during each session, as shown in the graphic of the numbers results (see Appendix 9, p. 96). Even so, the results of the closing session, in comparison with the pretest session, are very positive (see Appendix 2, p. 69-70), and the visual comparison of it is found on the graphics of both sessions (see Appendix 9, p. 96), where it is shown that the acquisition of numbers' vocabulary across the sample group of students, has increased a 12% between both sessions (pretest, and closing session). When I finally asked the children to count a set of objects, or to recognize its written figure in the las session, the majority of the class was able to say the correspondent name in English. To work on numbers during the closing session (see Appendix 7), as they had only to describe one object, I placed another objects of the same category, so children could see a relation between the one that they chose, and the similar ones that were placed on the table, in order to count them, and say the number of the total amount in English, which was on of the main aims of this vocabulary section.

Shapes

The aim of this vocabulary block was to teach three shapes, since at the beginning the sample group of students did not even know how to say any shape in English. I purposed myself to teach the triangle, square and circle shape, since they are basic and the ones that are acquired first for children. To teach them I also created some material as the one shown and described above (see section "Performance: Implementation of my didactic proposal"), so children had to correctly develop the activity proposed, and afterward, try to remember the name of the shapes they worked on. When analyzing the general observation grid (Appendix 2, p. 68), we can see the increasing learning of this vocabulary among children

during the pass of the sessions and the weeks. It is from the fourth session that the group class showed their knowledge of how these three shapes are called in English, and it increases a 100% from that session to the last one (see Appendix 9, p. 96). From that moment, we can see on the general observation grid that children are able to recognize these new words. In addition, in the grids of the pretest and closing sessions (Appendix 2, p. 69-70), we can see that nearly all of the classroom students have acquired the vocabulary of shapes from the Agazzi sisters' methodology, because they did not know it before, and they have not work it on any other class. The number of children who have acquired these new concepts is of the 95% over the 100% of the students of the class (see Appendix 9, p. 99).

Sizes

Regarding the learning of this vocabulary item, we can nearly observe the same evolution among children than with shapes vocabulary acquisition described before. The sample group of students did not know at the pretest session (Appendix 2, p. 69) any size name in English, but through the development of the sessions, they started to acquire this vocabulary knowledge. If we have a look at the sizes results graphic (Appendix 9, p. 97), we will see how children increased their knowledge from the second session a 33% of the total, and then on the fourth session keeps growing form a 66% up to a 100% of the acquisition of this vocabulary section at the end. Following the Agazzi sisters' methodology, children had to collect objects placed around the classroom, and classify them according to their size. This is a playful and more motivational way of working on the concept of sizes, than working it in any other way, and it has helped children to know what is big, medium, and small, in a language which they did not know before. When comparing the pretest session with the closing session (Appendix 9, p. 99), we can see that the learning of this vocabulary has grown the 76% regarding the initial knowledge of the sample group of students, and that is thanks to the Agazzi sisters' methodology, because these concepts have not been worked before in any other subject at school. We can also see on the general observation grid (Appendix 2, p. 68), that children acquire this vocabulary in a progressive way. They have first acquired the concept of small, later on, the concept of big, and finally, the medium one. This improvement is also described in the graphic analyzed before in this same section, but in percentages.

The children's reaction to this methodology of the Agazzi sisters has been very positive from the first day on the pretest session, to the last one on the closing session. They have shown a very positive attitude when I introduced the didactic proposal, and during its development, children were motivated to acquire the vocabulary knowledge worked on the different

sections of the class, and above all, they tried to communicate with me, and to say the vocabulary in English the whole time. Since the beginning of the didactic proposal, I spoke to them in English, and they knew that if they wanted me to understand them, it must be in that language, and not in any other. This behavior and desire to acquire the new vocabulary and to reinforce the one that is already learned, is reflected in Appendix 2 observation grids, the graphics of the results in Appendix 9, and also in Appendix 4, where I asked individually to every child which table did they like the most, and even if the most popular was the one where they could do free drawing, in this space they were working as well on the vocabulary from the other tables, which are shapes, sizes, colors, and numbers. On that space, I sometimes asked the children to explain their drawings, and involuntarily, when describing it, they expressed how they were acquiring the vocabulary worked on the whole proposal, as drawing shapes painted with different colors, and saying those names in English (see Appendix 6). Some of the results of these creations and the children's descriptions are collected in Appendix 6. To collect this data, after the discussions did when we finished each session, I took some of the drawings and asked their owners to explain to me what they have drawn on them. Looking at the descriptions given by the children, we can see that they were learning, they were acquiring the desired vocabulary, and what is more important, is that thanks to the methodology of the Agazzi sisters, which states that the kid should be able to do spontaneous drawing whenever they want to, it is demonstrated that they also learn when they are drawing autonomously and freely. Children unconsciously put into practice what they were working on the different tables within the sessions, in that space. An example of a children's description of one drawing is given hereunder:

És una tele de colors. L'he fet amb els colors pink, green, brown i blue. És com la que tinc a casa, però a dins he dibuixat ratlles perquè volia fer servir els colors i no dibuixar la patrulla. La meva és molt gran, com aquesta és big. Ah! I mira, la forma que té és com del square que fem allà en aquella taula!

When analyzing this extract of a child's answer, we can see that the infant knows the names of the colors he/she has used, as well as the sizes and shapes, because it is seen how the name of big and square appear in the description. Even if it is clear that the child is describing a television, to describe it to me, he/she uses the vocabulary worked in the proposal in English, so it is seen that through this table children reinforced the vocabulary acquisition.

4.3.2. Conventional EFL class methodology

The sessions done by the English teacher during the 8 weeks of my internship, have been fully observed and collected in Appendix 3. In these sessions, children have worked on many vocabulary aspects such as the weather, colors, animals, the objects of the classroom, and of the house. To work on them, the teacher has used different methodologies such as the Total Physical Response Approach, storytelling, also doing some worksheets, interactive play between students, or listening to songs. These ways of acquiring vocabulary are definitely different from the Agazzi sisters' methodology, except for listening to songs. As it is already explained, the pedagogues believed in the acquisition of knowledge through music, and so at the end of some sessions, the English teachers made children listen to songs about the vocabulary that they have already learned, or the one that they were going to acquire on the following sessions. However, the English teachers of that school did not use these songs because of the Agazzi sisters' pedagogical principles, they did use them to make the children reinforce the vocabulary acquired in a more entertaining way for children. Apart from listening to songs, the English teachers always tried to vary the ways of teaching vocabulary. As it is mentioned before in this section, they used different strategies for teaching and this caused that children had to constantly face different proposals when wanting to acquire some new knowledge. Due to this constant changing of approach when teaching, the sessions became more varied, and so teachers had to create and provide more material, in order to complement them. The material they propose for the activities is varied and so children do not get bored of using it for so many repeated times. They use storybooks and bring some objects to complement the storytelling to make it more dynamic.

The sessions are one time per week, and the time spent on each one is not always the same. This is because the English teacher that I observed, has 45 minutes to do the session, but depending on the items she wants to work on that day, she spends from half an hour to forty-five minutes. When she begins the sessions, she does an introduction where she explains to the children what are they going to work on that day, and sometimes she also does a closing discussion, to see what children have acquired in terms of vocabulary during the session. Nevertheless, the sessions are quite targeted most of the time, and children do not learn freely. She tries to express herself most of the time in English, but she sometimes translates some words or sentences into Catalan, so children can understand her better.

To evaluate the students, I have seen that the English teacher has asked the children some of the vocabulary aspects that the sample group of students had worked during the

semester, nearly the eight weeks that I have been doing my didactic proposal at the same time, individually to every child. These aspects are colors, numbers, and objects of the classroom. She showed them different flashcards that had written on them the numbers from 1 to 3, the primary colors, and the objects of the classroom worked until that day (see Appendix 3, p. 74). That was how the English teacher evaluated the same sample group of students as a conventional EFL methodology classroom.

4.4. Discussion

This section aims to contrast the information of the theoretical framework with the collected data already analyzed in the previous section of this Final Dissertation. As many aspects have been taken into account in the realization of this paper, this section is going to follow a structure to facilitate comprehension. First of all, the ideas related to the Agazzi sisters' methodology are going to be discussed, and afterward, the concepts discussed in the EFL conventional classroom. These are the two big blocks worked within the whole process, but inside of these blocks, we find some subcategories that are going to be mentioned and discussed below. Before starting, I wanted to remark an idea from García Mayo, M. del P., & García Lecumberri, M. L. (2003), which is that there is no simple way to explain why some people are successful at second-language learning, and some are not. Social and educational variables, experiential factors, and individual differences in attitude, personality, age, and motivation, affect language learning. That's why I decided to start with this Final Dissertation, to deeply know and research on what kind of strategies do teachers use in an EFL conventional classroom, to make children acquire vocabulary in a second language, and to compare it with another methodology, that was unknown for me before starting this process, to see if it is more useful than the conventional one, or not.

Down below you will first see the discussion related to the methodology of the Agazzi sisters and all its aspects regarding the theoretical part and the analysis of the data collected, and consecutively, the same with the conventional EFL classroom methodology.

4.4.1. Agazzi sisters' methodology

Leone (2009) states that the Agazzi sisters' methodology is not a system of didactic procedures that are already established to be strictly implemented, but it is a system where the teacher must build everything, day after day, through real-life experiences, and has to be based on the needs of their students. During the implementation of my didactic proposal following the Agazzi sisters' methodology, I asked the children from the first day to the last

one about their needs and interests, and to build the proposal, I wanted to know about the knowledge of vocabulary they had, and set up the classroom from there, changing the materials every week, or the objects that were not functioning well for instance. For example, in the first session I noticed that the material I have created for the table of sizes was not working as I imagined, and so I created a different one. Or another idea that I constructed at the beginning, was to change the material on the free drawing table on every session, because it was their favorite space, and I wanted them to feel free to explore it, having as many resources as possible. Leone (2009) also states that the Agazzi Sisters' methodology is a research method: a method that does not impose rigorous procedures, but which intends to indicate and suggest them as suitable means for achieving certain ends. That is why I decided that the children had to freely explore the space, and I also wanted them to feel invited to go and work on any proposal that was in the classroom. I did not impose any procedure to the sample group of students, I just remarked how many of them could be simultaneously playing in the same table. Related to this idea of the freedom of the child, Cirjan (2018) states some pedagogical principles followed by the Agazzi sisters on Brescia School, such as the concept of "freedom in order", that characterizes the school day. Agazzi sisters' said that the activity of the child is not limited to imitating the actions of the adult, that children are free to do what they want to, but following some rules. And as I have mentioned before, this proposal has just one rule about the students' distribution around the space.

Linguistic structure comes through the child's own cognitive and social activity (McLaughlin, 1984). Collier (1995), also describes that the sociocultural process is the most important part when acquiring new bits of knowledge, and it strongly influences on the child. Furthermore, regarding the speaking competence of the child, Blocker (2017) states that vocabulary instruction can be taught in five different ways, and one of them is through having conversations with adults. They are the ones that encourage kids to talk and give meaningful feedback on their speaking. Moreover, Vigilante (n.d.) argues that the Agazzi sisters introduced and followed each activity with dialogues and games, where the children developed the language and learned new concepts. And Cirjan (2018) adds that the *Scuola Materna* is characterized by being immersed in a genuinely democratic climate, where dialogue is continuously exercised. During the implementation of my didactic proposal I did a discussion at the end of every session with the students, to promote dialogues. Moreover, during the sessions, children could speak with me in English because as an adult, and their teacher, I always gave an answer to their questions and had conversations with them, to give them as much output as possible. Neuman and Wright (2014) state that word learning in most cases requires many exposures over an extended period. They establish that word

learning is cumulative. So that is why I kept on working the same type of vocabulary without changing it frequently, nor adding new one, because the more the same vocabulary was repeated, the more the children acquired it. For instance, children also had constant conversations between them, while playing and learning together on the didactic proposal.

Regarding this idea of playing, Clark (2000), states that through this activity, children learn and extend their language abilities. The author says that it is easier for children to acquire new vocabulary in a playful environment, because it is introduced in a nonconventional way, and allows children to have different opportunities to express their point of view, to solve disagreements, and to induce peers to work and collaborate. Cirjan (2018) relates this concept to the Agazzi sisters' methodology, and says that the two pedagogues wanted the children to feel happy and eager to discover the world, and so their pedagogy is focused on game, that is the child's natural activity. Everything in their school becomes a game that motivates, allowing children to have fun, which leads to spontaneous learning. This is a concept that I have taken into account when planning the proposal, and it is remarked previously (see section "Performance: Implementation of my didactic proposal"), and already analyzed in this paper (see section "4.3.1. Agazzi sisters' methodology"), that my main idea was to promote learning in a joyful environment, so kids could acquire vocabulary while playing on the different tables.

The distribution of the spaces and materials around the class is also an idea argued by the Agazzi sisters'. Leone (2009) says that the method is related to the intelligent use of objects in the children's' daily environment. Altea (2011), adds an important idea followed by the pedagogues, which is that for the realization of all the activities and tasks of the classroom, children can use various materials from their environment, without the need of having materials created specifically for it, nor buying them. Leone (2009) gives some complementary information about this idea, which is that materials of the child's environment must be simple, easy to manipulate, and also adapted to children's heights. Children's environment has to promote an easy and comfortable place to move around for them. Finally, Londoño (2017) also explains that the Italian educational system focuses on intellectual education, which is based on letting children explore the environment and the natural perception of objects. On the didactic proposal based on the pedagogues' principles, I first explored the classroom environment, and selected some appropriate materials to do the different activities. I had to adapt some of the materials, and place them at a manageable height for children, so they were free to explore all the possibilities that offered their classroom environment.

A very important idea related to this methodology, is the implementation of a museum inside the classroom, the "Museum of the Poor", where children classified the objects of their environment, following some characteristics with different labels, and passwords. According to Cirjan (2018), the passwords are drawings or symbols that are given to identify objects or people, and so children can classify their things and their space. Leone (2009) and Altea (2011) talk about the existence of this concept, and they say that it respects the spontaneity of the child by improving their natural tendencies. The authors say that the museum is constantly changing, and always adapting to the activities and needs of the classroom students', where the teacher and the children work together to create this space. By the way, I did not implement this museum, nor the passwords for the objects purely following the principles of the Agazzi sisters', as it is already mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation (see section "2.2.4. Environment: spaces and materials). Nevertheless, Vigilante (n.d.) explains that Rosa Agazzi supported the importance of language, and said that with these activities children learn to speak and communicate with each other. The pedagogue also added that this helps the child to express itself and understand the messages through the suprasegmental phenomena of language. I really took into consideration this idea when adding the museum into the classroom, as I knew that I will not do it following the pedagogues' same characteristics, but I wanted children to acquire vocabulary, and communicate with each other and with me, when creating and using the museum and its passwords. They first had to discuss how did they wanted to organize it, and day by day, the museum grew, and so children sometimes had to reorganize it. This promoted the communication between them, because they all had to come to an agreement regarding to the museums' structure, and as I was the one who wrote down the passwords' label, the children had to tell me what did they wanted me to write, so they had to communicate with me as well.

Promoting language through singing and body rhythm is a key concept about the Agazzi sisters' methodology (Leone, 2009), as well as singing, or just listening to songs while developing some activities (Vigilante, n.d.). Rosa Agazzi uses her musical knowledge to make singing not a matter in itself, but an activity to perform throughout her teaching-learning process, because for the pedagogues, it is evident that from the music we can express ourselves abroad, using our inner feelings and also to communicate with others. Within this process, music has a series of functions that coincide with those of language (Cirjan, 2018). That is why I used a list of songs while children were developing the didactic proposal (see Appendix 1). Music has been part of this didactic sequence, and this made children sometimes sing the songs unconsciously while they were drawing, or working at any

other table. It was the first time that the sample group of students had heard these songs, but as they were repeated all the time, the majority of children ended up almost knowing all the lyrics of the songs.

On the one hand, when I read the theoretical framework of this dissertation, I could relate some information regarding two tables of my didactic proposal. These are the sizes and shapes one, because I used written material on them. As Blocker (2017) states, vocabulary instruction has both oral and print forms, and the greater a child acquires vocabulary knowledge, the easier it will be for them to read a text and to decode words that they might have not seen before. As it happened with the labels written on some papers placed on that tables, such as big, medium, or small for the sizes' table, and triangle, square, and circle for the shapes' one. Besides, Blocker (2017) argues that hearing the word within the context of a familiar word allows children to make the unfamiliar word more relevant for them. When children asked me about the meaning of the words written on the labels put on the tables of sizes and shapes, as they had not acquired this vocabulary knowledge before starting the didactic proposal, I contextualized the meaning of the words, and I also provided examples of them, to help children understand the words better. For the Agazzi sisters', everything they have in their environment can be considered didactic material (Altea, 2011). And the Italian educational system stated that sensory education was developed using the sizes, colors, and shapes of the objects of their environment as well (Londoño, 2017).

On the other hand, I also have included in the theoretical framework of this dissertation some information regarding the free drawing table, that I placed in the classroom, and this section of the proposal played had played a very important role among their vocabulary acquisition. McLaughlin (1984) states that children adapt their language to their reality and needs. And related to this idea, there is the concept of incidental vocabulary learning, which occurs when learners acquire new words from the context, and they are not even intending to do so, for example, picking up new words during free-guided activities (Barcroft, 2004). This concept is found in the free drawing table of my didactic proposal. For instance, the Agazzi methodology carries out inside their classes the spontaneous drawing. Through the realization of this activity, the formation of the infant in the Agazzi system is based. The drawing is a way for the children to express themselves, because they manifest their interests, needs, worries, and learnings. It also helps the child to discover itself and explore its inner worries. It promotes attention, observation and it is an essential activity to create discipline in school. Giving the child a paper and some drawing materials, makes them isolate in their work and enjoy their creation. The drawing educates the senses of touch and

sight, and reaffirms intellectual aspects such as: distances, shapes, sizes, and spaces (EcuRed, 2015). In Appendix 6 there are collected some of the child's drawings and their descriptions, and it is demonstrated that this space reinforced the vocabulary acquisition for children. I had also observed that they really kept their attention on their drawing, they were focused on it, and at the end, they knew that they had drawn something related to the vocabulary worked over the didactic proposal, so it is clear that this space did reinforce language learning.

I consider it important to talk about the teacher's role inside the classroom, following the Agazzi sisters' methodology. Rosa Agazzi said that the educators are mainly cheerleaders, who organize, participate and encourage the child to "di fare de sè", that is, to do it for ourselves. She was also convinced of the importance of motivation and professional growing, and considered it as the key element for the effectiveness of the teacher's work (Altea, 2011). Moreover, Leone (2009) explains that the educator immersed in an Agazzi methodology class should be only an observer prepared to take advantage of key moments where he or she can encourage the free development of the child, awakening their interest to participate in new projects and games. This figure should also know when it can intervene, trying not to disturb the child's work. This author adds that teachers are responsible for encouraging children to adopt an active role in the classroom. Also, Alioto (2014) states that on an Agazzi's class, the teacher must behave with seriousness, humility, and devotion to its work, leaving no space for signs of apathy, selfishness, or disaffection. The teacher will only offer help in the moments of logical-mathematical and vocabulary learning on their linguistic development. To correctly develop my role as a teacher recreating an Agazzi's class, I have considered all of these principles. As it is mentioned, I could offer my help when children wanted to learn some vocabulary, which is the same as saying during the whole proposal, as its main aim was that the sample group of students acquired vocabulary. Apart from this idea, I also followed these principles of letting the children work and explore autonomously among the development of the didactic proposal, being an observer, so children felt freer than in another methodology.

The discussion of the Agazzi sisters' methodology is developed until here, but I also wanted to highlight some key ideas written above at the theoretical framework on this dissertation, because it is found on both methodologies. This concept written by Barcroft (2004), defines 5 principles of how L2 vocabulary instruction can be effective, but the one that I wanted to highlight above all of them, is presenting new words frequently and repeatedly when children are giving the input. Both in the Agazzi sisters' methodology and the methodology used by

the English teacher in an EFL conventional classroom, had constantly received input of children. Even so, there are some differences over this idea, because, in the Agazzi methodology, children reproduced repeated input but in a completely autonomous and freer way, and in the methodology carried by the English teacher, it was more targeted, because she was the one that made students repeat the vocabulary several times, doing it compulsory.

4.4.2. Conventional EFL class methodology

Regarding the methodology used by the English teacher during the sessions (see Appendix 3), and relating it with the theoretical framework of this Final Dissertation, I want to discuss some aspects. Blocker (2017) argues in his article that the vocabulary instruction can be taught in five different ways, and regarding the EFL conventional class methodology, I am going to highlight two of them. First of all, the author relates teaching vocabulary to give opportunities for children to hear words a lot of times in a meaningful context. This helps to solidify the link between a word and its meaning, and also to know how it is used to communicate with people. Another strategy to teach vocabulary according to Blocker (2017), is giving explicit definitions of words. This could be done through including explanations of the functions of an object or a picture, for example. Explicit definitions need to be provided several times to facilitate the task of the child in building the knowledge of a word. These strategies are executed by the teacher when children asked her about the meaning of any word, she even provides examples of them, gives some definitions, and includes it in a meaningful context for children.

Moreover, what this teacher also does when she wants the sample group of students to acquire vocabulary, is giving them worksheets, or making them repeat a word several times until children interiorize the vocabulary, or at least intend to do so. According to Barcroft (2004), intentional vocabulary learning refers to learners acquiring words while intending to do so, such as studying a list of new words or completing activities in a workbook for a set of target words. Another aspect related to this teaching methodology is the one that mentions Nation (2001) in his article. The author argues that there are different ways of learning and teaching, and I want to highlight the two most similar ones to this conventional EFL class methodology, that is the direct teaching way, which is the teacher explanation, and peer teaching; and the direct learning way, which is the study from word cards, and the use of the dictionary. When the English teacher wanted to teach some vocabulary, she provided her

students some explanations about it, while showing flashcards (not written), and students had to learn from that exposure to the repetition of words.

Neuman, S,. and Wright, T. (2014) argue that without vocabulary knowledge, words are just words without meaning, most oral vocabulary development grows from a massive immersion in the world of language. By the way, this teacher does not believe in giving children a huge amount of input in the second language, because in this specific situation, it was the first year that the sample group of students were introduced to that language that is English. She progressively introduced more instructions and explanations in that second language, because otherwise, she said that children did not understand her. Even so, she did speak in English most of the time, and just switched to the target language when necessary.

Another aspect that this teacher took into account during all the sessions was to introduce what children were going to develop on that day. She also included on that explanation the type of approach that the students were going to follow to acquire the aims of the session. So, according to Hunt and Beglar (1998), the strategies for learning vocabulary were introduced to learners.

The teacher's role is also important to take into account, and I have collected some aspects of the theoretical framework of this dissertation, to discuss thereupon. The role of the teacher in an EFL classroom according to Richards and Rodgers (2001) should be threefold. It must be a selector and sequencer of tasks, preparing learners to do them, and be consciousness-raising among children. The language teacher has an active role in choosing, adapting, and designing the tasks, and then building them trying to keep with the learner's needs, expectations, interests, and language skill levels. As a language teacher, she knows what are the students' needs, interests and language skill levels, and according to that, even if she does a general explanation for all the students, she sometimes adapts some tasks to children who can not do the estimated task, because of their learning skill levels, and she had sometimes come to the classroom with an idea of activity, that she ended up doing differently, because of the students' behavior on that day. She shows interest in knowing how are their students learning within the sessions.

Benson (2004), gives definitions for the skills that a teacher on an EFL classroom must have. The author says that the teacher must be a pedagogue, which acquires a researcher role, because it has to be able to teach through theory, and establish conclusions from children's interventions during the class. The language teacher has to be also an interactive communicator, because he/she has to know the trends of different generations, and to

scaffold the students' language acquisition through its social and cultural knowledge. Finally, for this author, the teacher has to be a translanguaging facilitator, encouraging student's ability for language, and perform flexible and purposeful code teaching, using all available linguistic resources. First of all, the observed English teacher during this research has always been giving definitions of new vocabulary, and explaining the theory of the blocks worked within the sessions to students. She has also been aware of the students' preferences among the trends of the moment, and had sometimes adapted the class to them. Moreover, she translated some words if necessary when children did not even understand their definitions nor examples in the second language. But above all, as Fillmore, L. W., & Snow, C. E. (2000) state, a teacher should be a communicator, educator, evaluator, educated human being, and agent of socialization.

4.5. Results

The implementation of the Agazzi sisters' methodology in a conventional school to make the children acquire vocabulary, has shown very positive results. According to the observation grids (see Appendix 2), and the graphics of the results (see Appendix 9) already discussed in the section "4.3. Analysis of the data collected", within the other instruments used to develop this Final Dissertation, the results of this didactic proposal are going to be accurately evaluated, therefore. Firstly, the results of each vocabulary table are going to be discussed, with its pictures attached in Appendix 8, and these results are going to be contrasted with the observation grids (see Appendix 2), and the graphics of the results (see Appendix 9). Finally, I am going to mention how I have used the interviews with the group of the English teachers.

As it is collected in Appendix 8, the sample group of students has increased its knowledge towards the vocabulary worked during the five weeks that have lasted the development of the didactic proposal based on the Agazzi sisters' methodology. Through the observations I did over the sessions, I could see that if any classmate did one activity wrong, it is clear that I did not intervene, because one of my main aims was to let them freely discover the vocabulary and the activities of the different tables, but the children did help each other. And that happened in all of the tables. What is more interesting is that when they corrected each other, they spoke in English.

First of all, regarding the table of colors, it can be seen that the pieces of paper spread around the table in the first week were black, and in the following weeks were white with a black spot in the middle (see Appendix 8). This is because these papers are thought to be

scratched by children with a stick, to make the color underneath this layer appear. I first bought color papers and paint them with a black crayon, but it did not give good results, because it was hard to see the color underneath the black layer. I did a little bit of research and found that it has to be a white paper painted with a color crayon and paint another layer over it with black crayon. This way, the children could scratch it with a stick, and as a result, the color did appear underneath. I changed it during the second week and what the sample group of students did, was to classify each color paper into its correspondent colored plastic-coated papers attached to the table, and once they had all together accomplished that goal, they went to look for objects around the classroom, and classified them also into the big colored plastic-coated papers. When we compare the images of the Appendix 8 to the observation grids in Appendix 2, and their graphic of the results (see Appendix 9, p. 95), we can see that apart from correctly performing the activity of that table, they did acquire the desired vocabulary through the sessions, as I introduce it bit by bit.

Secondly, on the table of numbers, we can see in Appendix 8 that in the first week I have also committed a little error. That was to put watercolors to paint the blank papers, which caused that children drew the number they wanted, and even if they did classify it afterward, the purpose was to let the children discover what number was already drawn on that white papers with just some colored water, to see if they were able to recognize its written figure, and classify it on the chart. From the second week until the end of the didactic proposal, I changed that watercolors to two pots filled with water and a drop of paint to make it colored. This decision improved the development of the activity, because then the kids had to recognize the number drawn on the white paper when painting it with the colored water, classify it on the chart, and go and look for the same number of objects that were written on the white paper. As it is seen at the images attached in Appendix 8, over the sessions, the sample group of students correctly developed the activity, and if we look at the observation grids (see Appendix 2) we see that they have also acquired the main aim of it, that is to reinforce the vocabulary, and to make children able to recognize the written figure of a number, and a set of objects, because they were not able to do it before starting the proposal. Nonetheless, I want to remark that the main aim of this vocabulary section was not the one that is collected neither in observation grids (see Appendix 2), nor the one in the results of the number graphic (see Appendix 9, p. 96), which are the following. The vocabulary output of the child begins in the third session, with the 20% of growth, a 13% in the following, and it stops in the fifth session. The results seem to be declining, but in the sixth session children increase their learning again by 26%, later on by 20%, and in the last three sessions, children end up producing a 33% of new vocabulary concerning numbers,

which is the 100% of the total learning regarding this category. But these results are not as important as the main objective of this vocabulary section, which is already described above in this dissertation (see section "4.3.1. Agazzi sisters' methodology").

Next, on the table of sizes there have also been changes regarding the material used in it, from the first week to the following weeks. During the first session, I wanted to work the concepts on a big white cardboard, with black lines to separate the different sizes by making areas of big, medium, and small, and also, its written names inside the areas. Working with this material was hard for the sample group of students because it was a little bit small to work on, and having to place some objects on top of them. It was chaotic, and they did not even know what they were working on that space. So I changed the material there, and I just divided the table into three spaces with black adhesive tape, placing on the top of each column a written label of the different sizes. The size of these flashcards was according to the name written on them, to make it easier for children to understand what was written, due to the correspondence of it with its size. In the images attached in Appendix 8, we can see how the sample group of students understood the development of this table from the second week to the last one, and on the Appendix 2 of the observation grids, we can see how they have builded this vocabulary from scratch, because before starting the proposal, they did not know any word worked on that space of sizes. These results are also collected in the sizes graphic (see Appendix 9, p. 97) and described in a previous section (see section "4.3.1. Agazzi sisters' methodology").

Finally, on the table of shapes, even if I did not need to change any material, during the first week, the sample group of students did not develop the activity as I thought they would do. Children did complete the puzzle of the shapes that were on the table, but afterward, they did not pick up any object to compare it. It was from the next week that the sample group of students realized that they also had to play and work with the objects that are around their class environment, as they did in the other tables. This improvement is seen in the last four weeks images (see Appendix 8), because they placed some objects which are the same shape over the 3 plastic-coated papers, where it was drawn a different shape in each. As the sessions went by, they did that activity better, and it is collected in the images from Appendix 8. Moreover, when comparing it to the observation grids of Appendix 2, we can see that they build this vocabulary knowledge from scratch, as well as it happens with the sizes vocabulary. Before starting the didactic proposal they had not acquired this knowledge, and after it, it is seen that they had, thanks to this didactic sequence following the Agazzi sisters'

methodology. Children increased their vocabulary knowledge a 100% when they finished the proposal, over the initial knowledge they had (see Appendix 9, p. 96).

Concerning the results attached with graphics in Appendix 9, we can see on its general graphic results (see Appendix 9, p. 98) that the acquisition of new vocabulary has increased a 100% in shapes' and sizes', a 27% in colors', and a 33% in numbers' over the knowledge that children already had. Furthermore, in the second graphic of this appendix section, we can see how the evolution of the vocabulary acquisition has been increasing during the sessions, and over the different items worked in the proposal followed by the Agazzi sisters' methodology. It is clear then, that through this methodology children do acquire new vocabulary, and besides, they reinforce the one that they already knew. The Agazzi sisters believe in a joyful pedagogy, and so it is also demonstrated that children do learn through playing, as they have been doing in this proposal. Furthermore, the pedagogues also establish that communication is very important when wanting to acquire word knowledge. They boost a pedagogy centered on conversations, dialogues and discussions between students and teachers, and it is seen in that didactic proposal, that the conversations between classmates during the sessions when doing the activities proposed, and the discussions did after each session with me as a moderator, took a very important place also on the children's acquisition of vocabulary. Important aspects that have been crucial in this improvement on vocabulary acquisition, have been the songs played during the development of the sessions, the execution of the "Museum of the Poor" and its passwords because without this idea the Agazzi methodology can not be understood, and even if I did not develop it in the way that the pedagogues used to do it in their Scuola materna, its creation and implementation within the proposal has helped the students to acquire vocabulary, and finally, another aspect to take into consideration is the free drawing table, since this space has helped children to concentrate on their autonomous work, and freely express the vocabulary they were acquiring through the other spaces, as it is included in the children's' descriptions of their drawings (see Appendix 6).

The results I got from the observations of the conventional EFL class methodology, carried by the English teacher, have been the ones that I expected from the beginning. Since I can remember, the second-language classes have nearly followed always the same structure. In this case, the teacher does change the approaches she uses to teach vocabulary, keeps on changing the material so it is more motivating for the students, and does follow a good structure of the class, introducing the activities, performing them, and closing them with a cooperative discussion, but it is still a targeted session, where the main aim is to produce

output as soon as possible. By the way, these observations have helped me to contrast the differences with the Agazzi sisters' methodology, and at the time of doing this Final Dissertation, they have been very useful.

Regarding the use that I have given to the interviews done to the English group of teachers (see Appendix 5), I can say that they have been useful to improve my performance as a future teacher, and to solve some aspects of how to manage the class. At the beginning of the Final Dissertation, I thought that they could be more useful regarding the didactic proposal, and that they would provide me some more information, but this has not occurred. It is true that the interview done while I was developing the didactic proposal, has helped me to improve during the following sessions, but as I already said, in terms of developing my role as a teacher. However, their advice as experienced language teachers, have helped me a lot to improve my future task as a teacher to organize the sessions following a good structure (introduction, development, and discussion of the activities developed), on how to manage a heterogeneous group of students, and different methodologies about how to introduce a foreign language into early years children.

To conclude, I would also like to comment on how important the closing session (see Appendix 7) has been to evaluate the whole didactic proposal and its results among the sample group of students. I have first planned it, and then organized the classroom setting. During its implementation, children have been completely focused on describing the object they wanted to, as better as they could, and the results of it (see Appendix 2. p. 70) are greater than the results obtained during the pretest, before starting the proposal (see Appendix 2, p. 69), because the majority of the sample group of students have acquired most of the vocabulary taught, following the Agazzi sisters' methodology. This is also collected in Appendix 9, where both sessions (pretest and closing session) are compared with two graphics. The graphics show that over the different vocabulary sections, the sample group of students has increased their knowledge. Regarding to colors, it does not have been any change towards how many students know this vocabulary section, but what changed concerning their knowledge, is the amount of colors they ended up knowing, because, at the end of the proposal, the sample group of students acquired 3 new vocabulary words, a 27% over the total known words (see Appendix 9, p. 95). About the numbers vocabulary, before beginning the proposal, a 59% of the group-class knew some numbers, but when finishing it, the 71% of the students had acquired more knowledge towards numbers, and what is more important, is that inside this 71% of the students knowledge of how many numbers they knew, it is shown as well the capacity that they have acquired with the implementation of the

proposal, about recognizing a written number and a set of numbers. In the last two vocabulary sections, almost the whole group-class built this knowledge from scratch. A 77% more of the students ended the proposal knowing three new words of shapes (triangle, circle, and square), and a 76% of them improved their knowledge in sizes vocabulary (see Appendix 9, p.99).

After completing the observation grid of the closing session, where I asked individually to every child about the vocabulary aspects worked during the proposal, I wanted to do a group discussion, to close the proposal with all of the students in that same session. To do it, I placed three objects on the floor that I had previously chosen, so they could classify them following some vocabulary aspects, in turns of one by one. Children helped each other when they did not know how to describe an object, and they even added vocabulary that perhaps another partner had not said before, and all of this, following their turns, and creating a good atmosphere of collaboration. This has also demonstrated that the Agazzi sisters' methodology does work to acquire vocabulary knowledge, even in a different school or class environment, and different groups of children, than the ones at the pedagogues' *Scuola materna*.

5. Limitations

It is necessary to remark some limitations found while carrying out in my dissertation. But to begin with, it is necessary to say that I have just collected the data in one school, over a shorter period than a research of this kind would need. This means that any results that I have found are not necessarily transferable to any other school, even if in this case have been positive. After having mentioned this, I now realize that a research of this kind needs a lot of time, and during this Final Dissertation elaboration I have faced some limitations.

I think that the production of the theoretical framework has been correct, and what is more important is that I have done it before carrying out any data collection for the methodological part. Regarding this second part of the dissertation, one of the instruments employed has not been profitably used. That are the interviews done with the English teachers, because even if the discussions were conducted as I previously planned, I could have changed its focus, and drive the teachers closer to the performance of my didactic proposal, so I could have taken more benefits from the interviews. Even so, the teachers' timetables were not very flexible and we could not meet on many occasions, as well as they could not observe my sessions as many times as I planned to.

If I could repeat this process, I would start to break down data as soon as I have collected it. Doing research takes a long time, having to describe its methodological part, with its analysis, discussion and results is hard, and if I could change a thing, it would be this one.

The Agazzi sisters' methodology establishes some principles which I knew since the beginning that would be less possible to accomplish during the implementation of my didactic proposal. The pedagogues created their *Scuola materna* surrounded by a natural environment and also gave a lot of importance to gardening. However, the school where I developed this didactic performance is surrounded by human constructions. Also, children are not allowed to leave the school without permission, and so I did not have any opportunity to let them explore their school's environment, even if it is not natural neither. There is not a possible relation between the children and nature, which is one of the most important pedagogical principles of the Agazzi sisters' method. Regarding to gardening, apart from the common playground that the school has for their 900 students, there are no more outdoor areas, and I was neither allowed to make a garden inside the classroom. So it is clear that both aspects are forbidden and outdated for this Final Dissertation, and I had to adapt the proposal to these characteristics that I had to face.

More aspects that the Agazzi sisters' take into account in their pedagogical principles, but I had not been able to take into account in this Final Dissertation, are the students' families relationship with the school, and the aim of the school to be like a home for children, in which they carried out domestic work. Even if it was possible to collect that data, I considered that this information would not be relevant to the implementation of my didactic proposal, and so I did not include it in my methodological part.

All in all, this has been a very good contact with the field of research, and now I know that research is not easy. The methodology carried out in this dissertation takes time, and that is why organizing the research is the first step to go forward. Being constant and the need of time are the most important things I have learned during this process. Doing this Final Dissertation was a good experience, and without any doubt it will be useful for me as a future teacher.

6. Conclusions

At the beginning of my Final Dissertation, I raised a question wondering if it could be answered at the end of the research. Through the theoretical framework and the practical application, I could say that the Agazzi sisters' methodology is useful for the learning of English as a Foreign Language, focusing specifically on vocabulary acquisition. So, answering my dissertation research question: How to adapt Agazzi sisters' methodology for the learning of EFL focusing on vocabulary acquisition in a Catalan language immersion classroom? It can be stated that through this methodology children actively play while learning and acquiring vocabulary knowledge. It is a way of learning new vocabulary in a joyful way, as children are free to produce English output according to their needs. Furthermore, by being active while playing, children start to familiarize with the language, and acquire it without too much effort. They are totally autonomous while they carry out every session, and that promotes that children explore their environment, however, and whenever they want to. Implementing this new methodology to a Catalan language immersion classroom has made children discover a new way of working through their own environment materials, and even if it is not similar to the Agazzi sisters' Scuola materna, I have learned that it is possible to conduct it, focusing on what you have around, and not on what you could have.

The main objectives established at the beginning of this proposal are, first of all, know and analyze diverse information about the Agazzi sisters' theory, and connect it to the learning of vocabulary in English as a Foreign Language for early childhood education. I can say that this first objective is totally achieved, as the information is already collected in the theoretical framework of this Final Dissertation, and it has helped me to learn more about this methodology. Secondly, implement activities for immersing children in English that complement the scheduled classes following the Agazzi sisters' theory. This objective is totally achieved as well, as it is demonstrated during the section "3. Performance: Implementation of the Didactic proposal" and the section "4. Methodology", where I explain the sessions I am developing with the sample group of students, related to the Agazzi sisters' methodology, and the EFL conventional sessions are collected as well. Finally, describe several class observations on how the students are developing in the classroom with the Agazzi sisters' methodology, and analyze if it is useful to learn vocabulary aspects in English in a nonconventional way. I can say that these observations have been carried out successfully, and they are collected in Appendix 2, and the results are analyzed through

different graphics in Appendix 9. To see if applying this methodology to acquire vocabulary is useful, the results section solves this question.

This research helped me to discover that, as a future teacher, I am interested in exploring different methodologies to teach, and promote effective teaching and learning in young students while using English as a Foreign Language. Being in contact with this new methodology really opened my eyes to the amount of teaching possibilities there are on Education. I have never heard before during my degree about these pedagogues, and when I had the opportunity to do this kind of research and get to know who they were, and how they worked, I did not have to think it twice. I like researching about anything new, and see if it works or not, but I have never done any research related to Education. As I want to be a teacher in the future, and I like this kind of methodology, I went to take up the challenge. To be in contact with the Agazzi sisters' methodology has encouraged me to see that everything is possible if you try. Furthermore, now that I know more about their methodology, I even think about the possibility of basing my future teaching on the pedagogues' principles. Hopefully, I desire to continue my research soon when becoming a real teacher in a real context. But for the moment, I also consider important to know about different and new pedagogies before finishing my degree at university, because it enriches our knowledge as students, and as I already said, it has made me focus on what I have around, and not on what I could have, learn from it, and go forward with it.

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8. List of figures and grid

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9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix 1. Songs

In this appendix we can find the bibliographic references of the songs that I used to reproduce while the sample group of students were developing the Agazzi sisters' didactic proposal, inside the classroom.

Little Baby Bum (n.d.). Big and Small song [Video]. Retrieved January, 23, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAMtgyiUhIo

Super Simple Songs. (2017, November 24). *Our Favorite Numbers Songs* [Video]. Retrieved January, 23, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_lgJgBbqWE (min- 0:00 - 2:43)

Super Simple Songs. (2014, December 29). *Shapes Songs for Children* [Video]. Retrieved January, 23, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnoNb2OMQ6s

Super Simple Songs. (n.d.). *What's Your Favorite Color?* [Video]. Retrieved January, 23, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxIpA5nF_LY

9.2. Appendix 2. Observation grids - Agazzi sisters' methodology

In this appendix we can find first of all the general observation grid, where the vocabulary acquisition over the sessions of the whole sample group of students is registered. Next, we find the pretest observation grid, where the individual knowledge of the sample group of students before starting the didactic proposal is collected. And finally, there is the data collected during the closing session.

General observation grid

	COLORS	NUMBERS	SHAPES	SIZES
Pretest Session (31 / 1)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, orange	1-10	Nothing	Nothing
1ˢᵗ Session (6 / 2)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, orange	1-10	Nothing	Nothing
2ⁿᵈ Session (11 / 2)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, orange,	1-10	Nothing	Small
3ʳᵈ Session (13 / 2)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, orange,	1-13	Nothing	Nothing
4ᵗʰ Session (18 / 2)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, orange, white	1-12	Circle, Square, Triangle	Big, Small
5ᵗʰ Session (20 / 2)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, orange, white, brown	1-10	Circle, Square, Triangle	Big, small
6ᵗʰ Session (25 / 2)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, orange, white, brown	1-14	Circle, Square, Triangle	Big, small
7ᵗʰ Session (27 / 2)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, orange, white, brown	1-11	Circle, Square, Triangle	Big, small, Medium
8ᵗʰ Session (3 / 3)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink,	1-15	Circle, Square,	Big, small, Medium

			Triangle	
9th Session (5 / 3)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, orange, white, brown, grey	1-15	Circle, Square, Triangle	Big, small, Medium
Closing Session (10 / 3)	red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, orange, white, brown, grey	1-15	Circle, Square, Triangle	Big, small, Medium

Pretest observation grid

PRETEST SESSION	COLORS	NUMBERS	SHAPES	SIZES
I1	no	no	no	no
I2	yes	yes	no	no
I3	yes	yes	yes	yes
I4	no	yes	no	no
I5	no	yes	no	no
I6	yes	no	no	no
I7	yes	yes	no	no
I8	no	no	no	no
I9	yes	no	no	no
I10	yes	yes	yes	no
I11	yes	yes	no	no
I12	yes	yes	yes	yes
I13	yes	yes	no	no
I14	no	yes	no	no
I15	yes	no	no	no
I16	yes	no	no	no
I17	yes	no	no	no

Closing session observation grid

CLOSING SESSION	COLORS	NUMBERS	SHAPES	SIZES
I1	yes	no	yes	no
I2	yes	yes	yes	yes
I3	yes	yes	yes	yes
I4	no	yes	yes	yes
I5	no	yes	yes	yes
I6	yes	yes	yes	no
I7	yes	yes	yes	yes
I8	no	no	no	yes
I9	no	no	yes	yes
I10	yes	yes	yes	yes
I11	yes	yes	yes	yes
I12	yes	yes	yes	yes
I13	yes	yes	yes	yes
I14	no	yes	yes	yes
I15	yes	no	yes	yes
I16	yes	yes	yes	yes
I17	yes	no	yes	yes

9.3. Appendix 3. Observation of the conventional EFL class methodology

In this appendix we can find the notes that I took during the observations I did at the English as Foreign Language conventional classes, done to the sample group of students through the eight weeks (one session per week) that I have been in the internship.

First session. 21/1/20 - 40 minutes

The teacher introduces the class in English, and explains what are they going to do. The session is going to be following the Total Physical Response approach. What they are going to do is, four children are going to hold each one a drawing of:

- Cloudy

- Sunny

- Raining

- Snowing

The teacher is going to keep saying cloudy, snowing, sunny, raining... and the rest of the class that is not holding any drawing has to walk to the kid that is holding the mentioned drawing. To make the kids understand the activity she first explains in English, but she ends up explaining the whole activity in Catalan.

When they finish this activity, the teacher puts some videos of songs about the weather. Afterward, she asks them to draw the weather they like the most.

Second session. 28/1/20 - 30 minutes

To introduce the work that children are going to do, she starts speaking in English, and then she ends up speaking in Catalan. She asks the children to sit down doing a circle, and what they have to do is to throw a dice that instead of having numbers, has a different color in each surface. One by one they throw the dice and depending on the color that appears, they have to say it out loud individually, and if they do not know it, their mates help each other. Once they have said the color they have to get a bottle plug that the teacher has put inside a box. Once they have all do it, they say in order individually the color that each kid has. The

teacher tries to conduct the session in English the whole time, but she gives some indications in Catalan.

Third session. 4/2/20 - 30 minutes

In this session the English teacher starts introducing what the students are going to work on that day. Then, she disposes the whole group of children into a big circle around their tables, giving the orders to do so in Catalan, and afterward she starts the activity. She shows some flashcards to the students of the vocabulary of the class:

- Chair
- Book
- Pencil
- Table
- Rubber

She says the names out loud while showing its correspondent flashcards. Then she does the same but all the group has to repeat together what she says. Following, she asks individually to every student to say the name of an object of the classroom, showing its corresponding flashcard and reading it out loud, until he or she gets it correct. If they get wrong, she allows children to ask the rest of the classroom to see if anybody knows it. This makes the activity more cooperative, because they can help each other. When this round of questions finishes, she gives the students a blank sheet and asks them to draw with a pencil the objects of the classroom that they had just worked on, to see if they can still remember them.

Fourth session. 11/2/20 - 45 minutes

She starts introducing the task that the kids are about to do in English and Catalan. She asks the "maquinista" (the child that who is in charge of doing some important work, and who therefore changes every day) to distribute the pencils and worksheets. The task is to work colors by doing three series following three lines of two colors with stickers. The series are:

- yellow-blue

- red-black

- orange-green

To collect the worksheets the teacher has given the children orders in both Catalan and English. After doing this task, she has reproduced some songs in English through the computer.

Fifth session. 18/2/20

No English class because I am doing my didactic proposal.

Sixth session. 25/2/20 - 45 minutes

The English teacher starts the class telling a tale with puppets in English, "the three pigs", because the next week it is going to be the English Day and the children from 5th of Primary are going to come to their class and act out the story in English to them, so they have to be familiarized with the tale in English.

She speaks in English the whole time. During the tale, she asks the children to repeat some words that she says and afterward she gives them the translation in Catalan. Then, she explains to the children what kind of activity they are going to do during the English day, and she explains it in English.

She continues the session speaking in English, and explains to the students what songs are they going to dance to during the English day with the kids of 2nd of Primary. She plays the songs on the computer, and dances with the children to the songs. The list of the songs is the following:

- Wheels on the bus

- Follow me

- Freeze dance

- If you are happy

- One little finger

- Head, shoulders, knees and toes

- Walking in the jungle

- Finger family muffin

And the class finishes.

Seventh session. 3/3/20 - 45 minutes

The English teacher starts the class telling the tale "Where's Spot" in English. When she finishes she asks some questions to the kids about the places they remember that are mentioned in the story, about the animals that appear, and she keeps asking the kids to say this vocabulary in English and not in Catalan. Afterward, she has some bags with toy animals inside, and outside it is drawn a bed, stairs, a table… And so she asks "Is Spot under the bed?" and the kids say "No / Yes" and she takes out the toy that is inside and the kids say "It is a penguin". Some animals they guess the name in English, but just a few. It is even hard for them to understand what the teacher is saying in English.

When this activity finishes, she gives the children blank sheets and she asks the kids to draw what they remember about the story, any object or animal. If they finish early, she asks them to draw all the animals. While students are doing these drawings, she stays in the teacher desk, and asks every student to come individually, to evaluate them. In this evaluation she asks them the vocabulary items that they have worked during the semester such as numbers, colors, and objects of the classroom.

Eighth session. 10/3/20

No English class because I am doing the closing session of my didactic proposal.

9.4. Appendix 4. Preferable tables

In this appendix we can find the grid where there are collected the answers of the sample group of students when I asked them at the end of the last session of the didactic proposal about which table did they liked the most. The X marks their favorite table.

	COLORS	NUMBERS	SHAPES	SIZES	FREE DRAWING
I1	0	0	0	0	X
I2	X	0	0	0	0
I3	0	0	X	0	0
I4	0	0	0	0	X
I5	0	0	0	0	X
I6	X	0	0	0	0
I7	X	0	0	0	0
I8	0	0	0	0	X
I9	X	0	0	0	0
I10	0	0	X	0	0
I11	0	0	0	0	X
I12	0	0	X	0	0
I13	X	0	0	0	0
I14	0	0	0	0	X
I15	0	0	0	0	X
I16	0	0	0	0	X
I17	X	0	0	0	0

9.5. Appendix 5. Interviews with the English group of teachers

In this section we can find the three interviews that were carried out with the English teachers of the same school as the sample group of students chosen to do this Final Dissertation.

The first interview was done the 3rd February, and lasted for an hour. I introduced the Agazzi sisters' methodology to both teachers, I explained to them how I was going to set up the classroom, and on how many sessions I had planned to do.

Their recommendations after my speaking were the following:

- Don't speak in English during the whole session, otherwise kids will get lost, do it in a progressive way among the sessions.

- We will provide you a list of the songs that we used to learn this kind of things, so they are familiarized.

- We can adapt our classes so we can observe your sessions, and help you with whatever you need, during our English hour.

The second interview was the 18th February, and lasted for an hour as well. They first came to the session where I developed the Agazzi sisters' methodology with the children for 45 minutes on that day, and during the discussion afterward with them they told me some positive aspects, and some things to improve regarding what they had seen.

Positive

- Your performance during the session is excellent, as you are alone with the kids, and you try to talk in English the whole time.

- The kids try to communicate with you in English, and always look for your attention, so you can see that they have learned new vocabulary.

- You keep asking things to them so they are conscious that they are learning something through this kind of games, corners.

- You have planned different tables, so they can explore each of them in a session.

- The kids are really autonomous here, in comparison to when they are in another subject. They look freer.

To improve:

- It begins to be chaotic when all of the kids have already been in one table, because as they have did it once, they do not want to repeat it.

- They are sometimes stuck in the free drawing table

- Some kids just want to be in one table, and they do not move.

- Maybe doing it just for 30 minutes will be enough.

The last interview with the English teachers was the 10th March and lasted for an hour. They came as observers to the closing session I did with the sample group of students on that same day, and we had the discussion afterward. I wanted them to tell me about what did they think about they whole didactic proposal, and how have they seen the students improvement among the vocabulary acquisition, because they have noticed about it during the last closing session, where I got the results. They told me some positive considerations, and also some comments to improve in future research.

Positive:

- They knew many more things than at the beginning, so it's positive.

- They have learned a lot of vocabulary

- What you have done about putting the same flashcards that they have been using during all the sessions, in the blackboard, so they can see what you were asking for, has been very useful for them.

- It is very well prepared.

- Your role and performance in front of the class have been very good during the session. You have been patient, and acted as the kids attitude changed.

- I have seen that the kids incorporate the new concepts that they have acquired doing this project in the English subject.

To improve:

- When doing the final intervention, as it is individually, you need to make another activity for the children that are not doing anything

- It is hard for the kids to relate the character of the number to its English name, because they have just learn it in English.

- It is difficult to be understood by the kids all the time in English, it is difficult for them to follow the session.

9.6. Appendix 6. Students' drawings

This appendix collects some of the students' drawings, done in the table where they could freely draw with the material mentioned in the section "Performance: Implementation of my didactic proposal". The drawings are followed by the descriptions of the students when they explained to me what they had drawn on them.

Drawing 1

The student's description is: *"Això són ratlles purple, white, pink, green, blue i orange. Bueno, el blue és com un square dels d'allà, i és petit, osigui little, perquè les ratlles m'han ocupat tot el paper, i el tros blue és amb una esponja de la forma de square. En veritat és com el green i el orange, són de la mateixa forma però més grans, més big, com amb les joguines d'allà."*

Drawing 2

The student's description is: *És una tele de colors. L'he fet amb els colors pink, green, brown i blue. És com la que tinc a casa, però a dins he dibuixat ratlles perquè volia fer servir els colors i no dibuixar la patrulla. La meva és molt gran, com aquesta és big. Ah! I mira, la forma que té és com del square que fem allà en aquella taula!*

Drawing 3

The student's description is: *Aquesta ets tu com una fada, i la flor que he dibuixat és per tu. Mira he posat els colors orange, yellow, orange un altre cop però més fluixet, green, purple, blue, black, ai també blue, red, i green. I les rodonetes dels colors són circles petits!*

Drawing 4

The student's description is: *He escrit els números i he dibuixat amb la esponja. Mira hi ha blue, white, pink, purple, green i orange que són els números, el four i aquest mmmm… el eight, yes! Aquest triangle no m'ha sortit molt bé… I els green tampoc… Però aquests que són com circles sí!*

Drawing 5

The student's description is: *No és res aquest, són esponges de colors. Red, blue, yellow, green, orange i aquest nosé quin és… Ah! i les formes són les que ens has posat, són mmmm square, circle i triangle!*

Drawing 6

The student's description is: *Són molts colors i m'agrada molt com m'ha quedat! Mira el yellow, orange, blue, green, red i black. I he fet series com amb els taps, he fet cinc i tres, ai no, espera, in English és five i three. Les formes de les esponges que he agafat són les tres que hi havia, ai, three. Són el triangle, square i circle.*

Drawing 7

The student's description is: *És com un quadre de Picasso, però són totes les èpoques* (He mentions Picasso because they were working it in the school). *Aquí hi ha el blue i el pink, també el black i el green. El més gran és el de color blue, que és el big, perquè es la època que més m'agrada de Picasso.*

Drawing 8

The student's description is: *He dibuixat un firetruck i els firefighters* (L'infant menciona aquest vocabulari perquè li apassiona aquest món i va voler aprendre'l en anglès per dir-m'ho)*. El firetruck és així, molt big* (He points at the big red spot)*. He pintat també els colors red, que és el que més m'agrada, i yellow i orange. És el foc. El blue és l'aigua que tiren els firefighters.*

9.7. Appendix 7. Closing session

When I finished the didactic proposal I developed a closing session with the sample group of students on the 10th March. The English teacher was there as an observer, and I took the role of the teacher, I conducted the session. Before starting I set up the classroom, sticking on the blackboard the material that they have been working with through the sessions, and depositing some of the material they have classified at the "Museum of the Poor" on a table, because it was the one that they were going to describe. I also distributed the chairs for the students to make a half-circle shape, so they could all be able to see what their classmates were doing individually with me in front of the class.
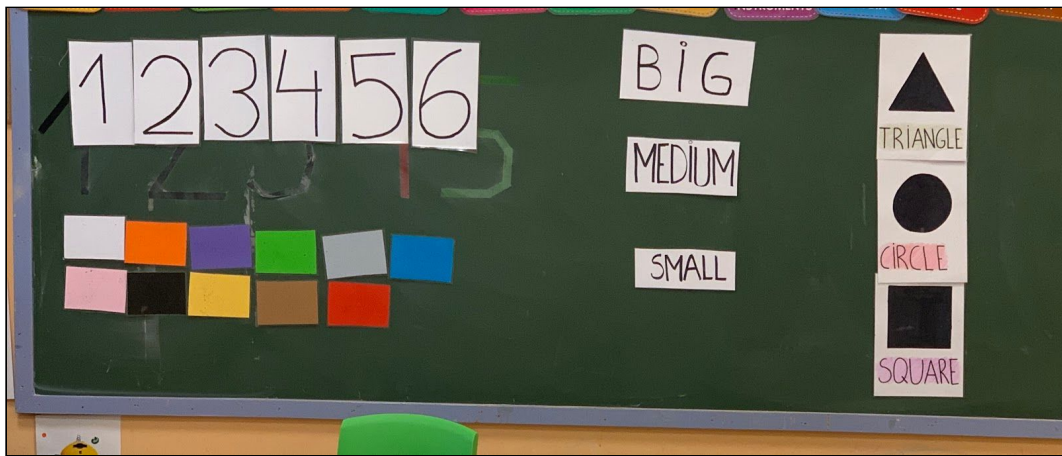
In this figure we can see the blackboard of the class, where I stuck the material which they have been working with during the sessions to acquire the vocabulary aspects (numbers, colors, sizes, and shapes).

In this figure we can see the table where I deposited some of the material organized at the "Museum of the Poor" to work on vocabulary aspects when doing the Agazzi sisters' methodology (numbers, colors, sizes, and shapes).

In this figure we can see how I distributed the classroom students by making a circle shape with the chairs. Children were facing the blackboard and the table with the materials.

In this figure we can see how children come at the front of the class in groups of four, but they pick up the object of the table they want to and describe it individually.

After having described the object they wanted to, I placed some objects on the floor, concretely 3 objects. I did this several times to see if they could classify them into the vocabulary items worked during the sessions. They came one by one when they wanted to classify them on any item and explained it in front of the class. If another student wanted to do another classification they were free to do it.

In these figures we can see two examples of how children came individually to classify the three objects according to the vocabulary criteria they wanted to.

9.8. Appendix 8. Results of the didactic proposal

In this appendix you are going to see some pictures of the children doing the activities of the different tables proposed to do this didactic proposal. They are going to be placed in chronological order respecting the week's order. These images are going to be divided into the different sections of the proposal: numbers, colors, sizes, and shapes.

Colors
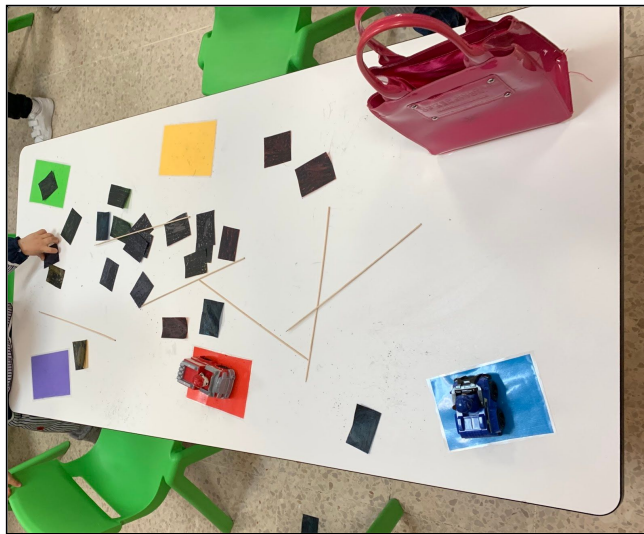
This is an image of children doing the activity of the colors' table during week 1.
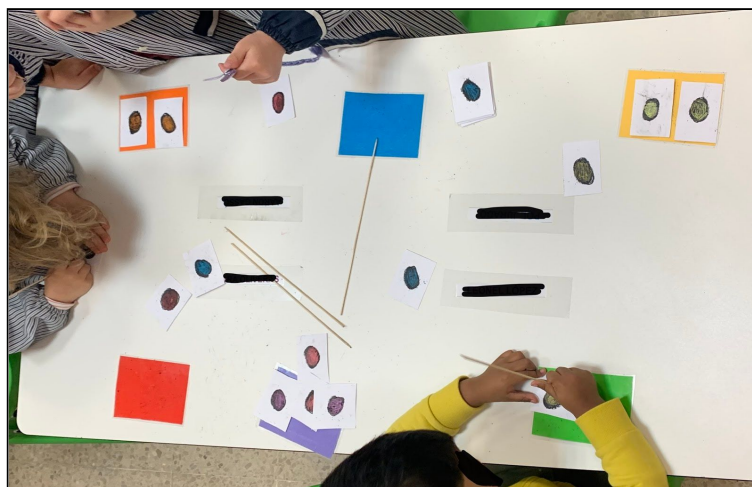
This is an image of children doing the activity of the colors' table during week 2.
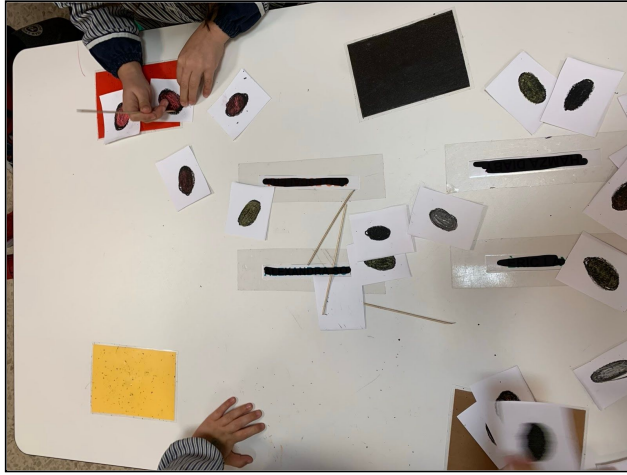
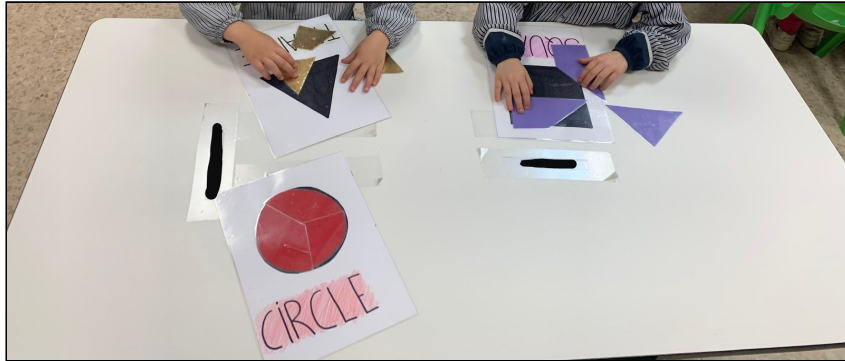This is an image of children doing the activity of the colors' table during week 3.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the colors' table during week 4.

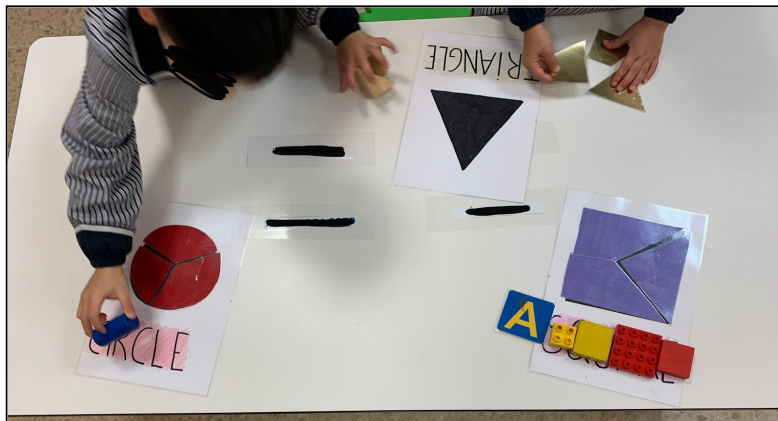This is an image of children doing the activity of the colors' table during week 5.

Numbers

This is an image of children doing the activity of the numbers' table during week 1.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the numbers' table during week 2.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the numbers' table during week 3.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the numbers' table during week 4.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the numbers' table during week 5.

Sizes

This is an image of children doing the activity of the sizes' table during week 1.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the sizes' table during week 2.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the sizes' table during week 3.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the sizes' table during week 4.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the sizes' table during week 5.

Shapes

This is an image of children doing the activity of the shapes' table during week 1.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the shapes' table during week 2.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the shapes' table during week 3.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the shapes' table during week 4.

This is an image of children doing the activity of the shapes' table during week 5.

9.9. Appendix 9. Graphic results of the Agazzi proposal

In this appendix there are going to be shown the results over the vocabulary acquisition in the sample group of students. These results are going to be grouped into the four different vocabulary sections worked during the implementation of the didactic proposal, following the Agazzi sisters' methodology (numbers, colors, sizes, and shapes). Moreover, there are attached the general graphics of the results that gather the four vocabulary items, and a comparison of the children's learning between the pretest and the closing session.

Colors

Firstly, we can find the evolution of the vocabulary acquisition over children during the development of the sessions. It grows slowly, because as it is seen in Appendix 2 (p.68), the three new colors that I want students to achieve are introduced slowly. In the 4th session, a new color is learned (white), in the following session another one (brown), and finally in the eighth session is acquired the last one (grey). I have accomplished my main aim, that was to make the children learn these three new colors, and also to solidify the knowledge they already had about the other 8 colors they knew (red, blue, yellow, black, purple, green, pink, and orange).
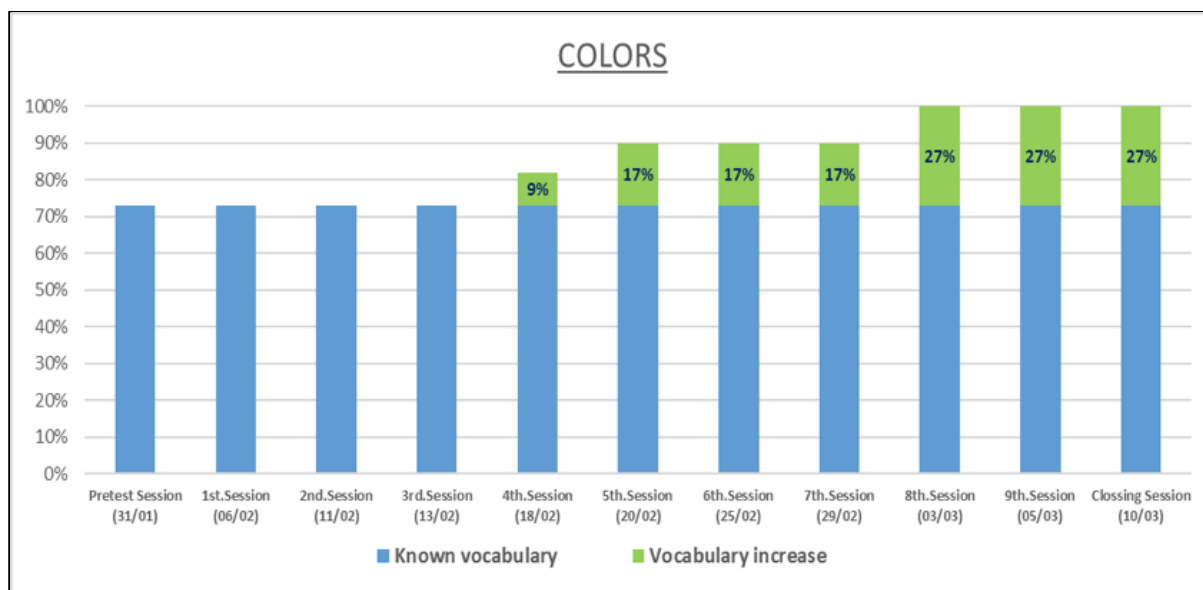

Numbers

Secondly, in this graphic it is shown how children acquired knowledge about numbers. I have to say that my main aim was not to make them learn numbers up to 15, as this graphic shows but to help them to recognize a written figure of the numbers from 1 to 6, and to say

the result of a set of objects without having the necessity to count them, as they do in their first and second language, but in English, as it is the language worked during the didactic proposal. Nonetheless, I wanted to do a graphic of the children's evolution related with up to how many numbers did children knew how to count in English, even if I did not work on them.
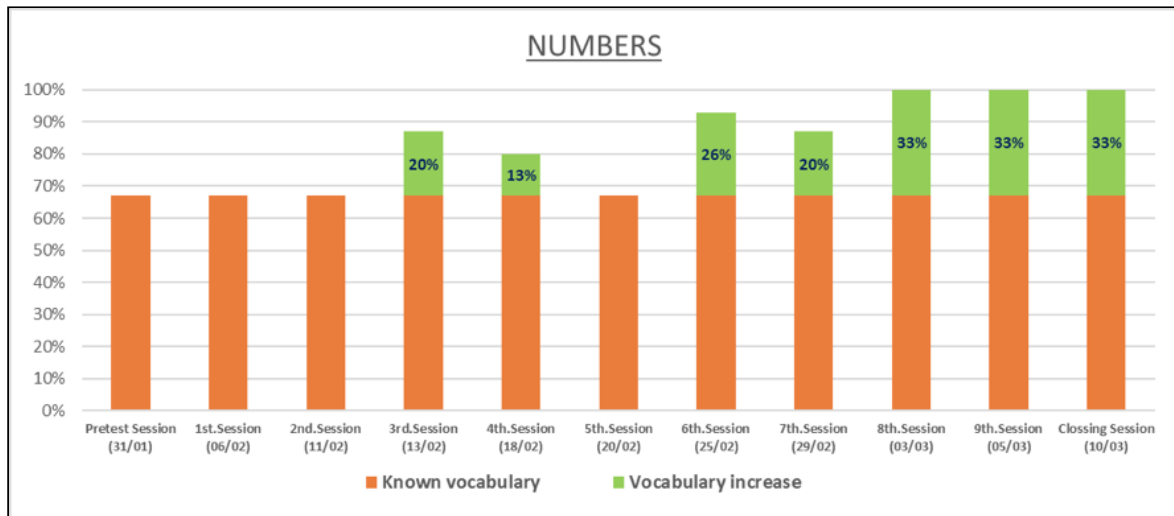

Shapes

Thirdly, in this graphic it is shown how children built from scratch their knowledge of shapes vocabulary in English. We can see through the sessions, that children slowly started to remember the names of the sizes worked on the didactic proposal, but is from the fourth session that the three names of the figures appeared every time we did a discussion with the whole group. It is clear that concerning this section of vocabulary, my main aim, which was to make children acquire the shapes names (triangle, square, cercle), is totally achieved.
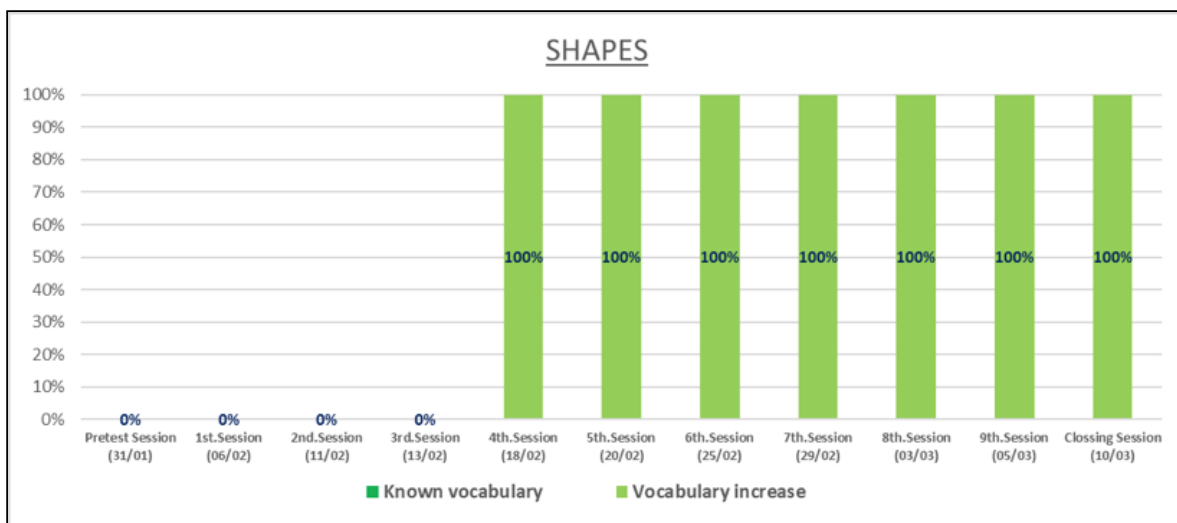
Sizes

Then, this graphic includes the information regarding the sizes' vocabulary knowledge of children. We can see that children also built their vocabulary from scratch, and at the closing session, they end up knowing all the vocabulary taught in that section. As it appears on the graphic, it is from the second session that the group-class remember about a word related to sizes (small), but it is not until the fourth session that children are able to recognize another one (big), and finally, from the seventh session until the last one, the sample group of students is able to recognize the three words worked on this vocabulary section of the didactic proposal.
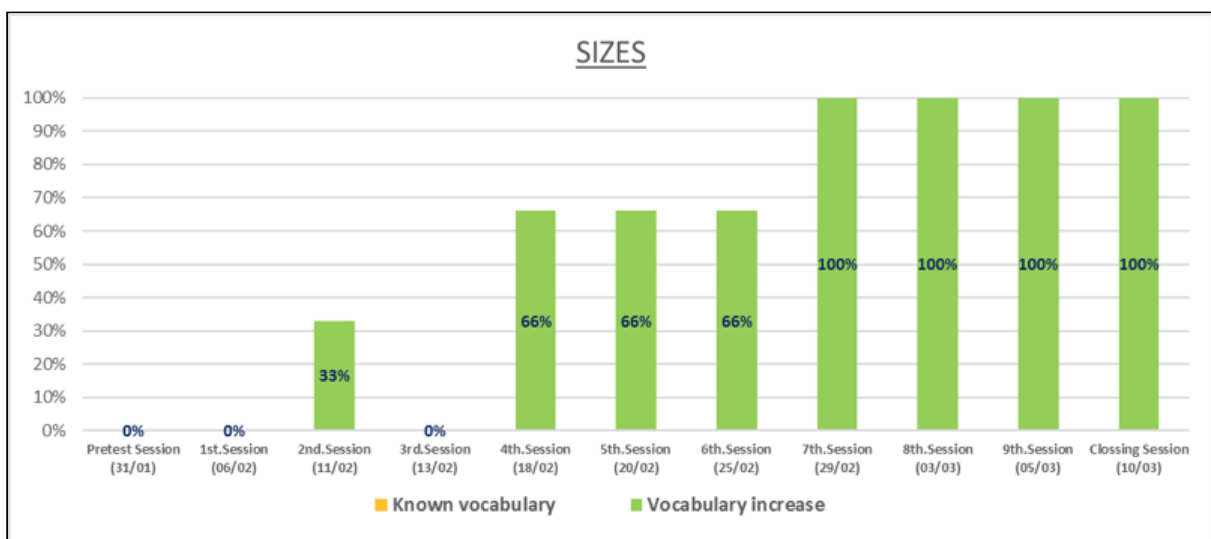

General results

On the one hand, there is the graphic that summarizes the whole learning process of the children over the didactic proposal. The results are collected in percentages according to the amount of new vocabulary that the sample group of students has acquired, compared to what they already knew. The vocabulary they have acquired thanks to the methodology of the Agazzi sisters is included in the graphic.

GENERAL RESULTS GRAPHIC
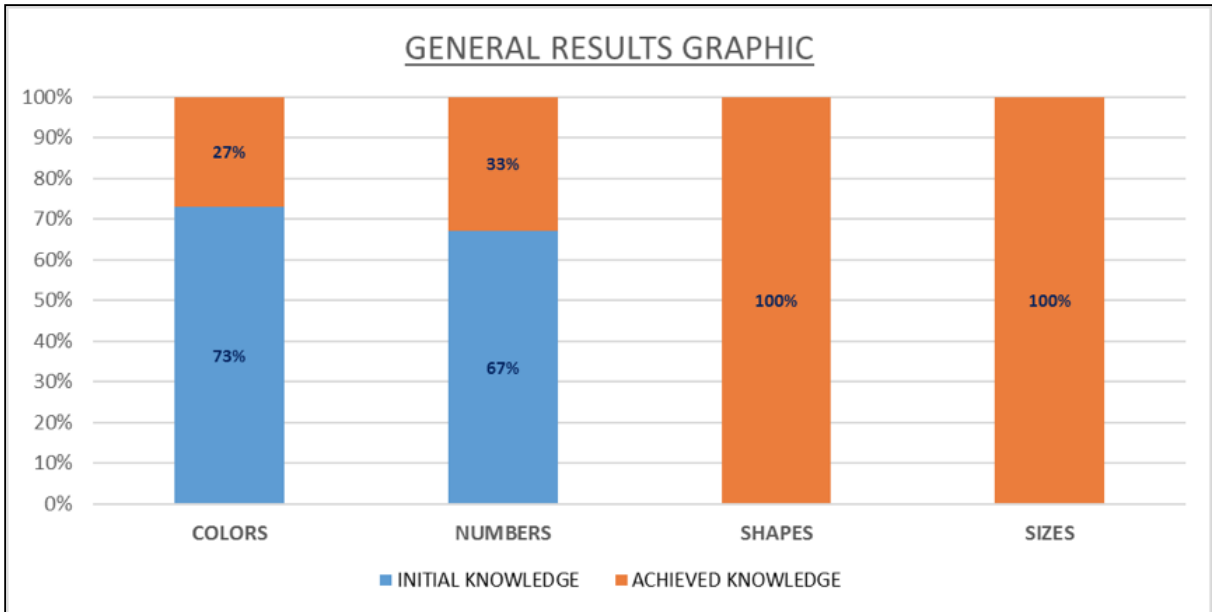
On the other hand, another graphic is attached, and shows the same results as the general observation grid collects (see Appendix 2, p. 68), but in a more visual way. In a similar graphic we can see the evolution of the acquisition over all the vocabulary items worked in the sessions following the Agazzi sisters' methodology that children have been through.

Vocabulary acquisition evolution over the sessions
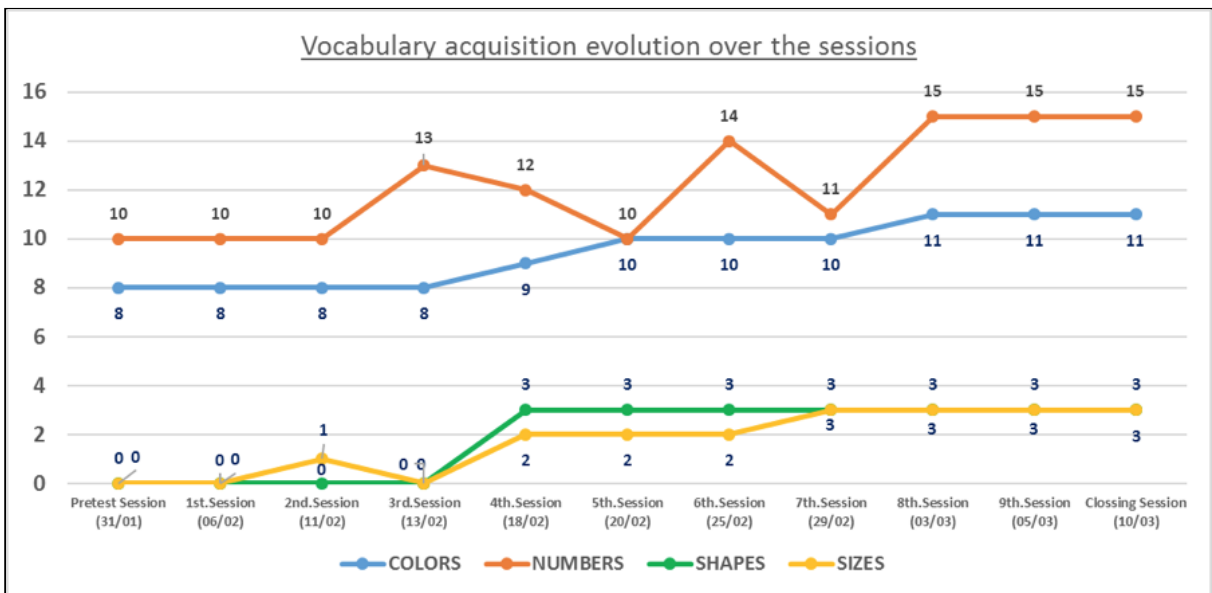
Pretest session & Closing session

Finally, on these two graphics we can see in percentages how the sample group of students has progressed individually. In the previous charts, we could see how the whole group of children grew as a group, but the data collected during these sessions (see Appendix 2, p.

69-70) was made individually to every student, what allowed me to draw concrete conclusions and results already written in this dissertation.