
Defining Italian Grammar Laboratory Model First Results from a Participatory Research

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Context

Can we speak about laboratory in Italian language teaching as L1?

| Starting points | Motivations |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few studies and experiences on active teaching • The laboratory concept not yet defined | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity of the epistemic status of the subject: grammar, basic language skills, literature, semiotic (Bertocchi 2005) • Praxis of a transmissive teaching and mnemonic learning (e.g. Italian grammar) |

The Indire proposal

2016-2018 school years

**“Teaching *Grammatica valenziale* (Valency grammar):
from the theoretical model to the laboratory of grammar in the classroom”**

participatory research study

replacing traditional praxis of Italian grammar teaching with a scientific grammar model like Valency Grammar

defining a teaching and learning grammar laboratory model

Numbers:

- 5 schools in Palermo
- 22 teachers of Italian L1
- about 400 students from first primary to secondary school (ages 6 to 16)

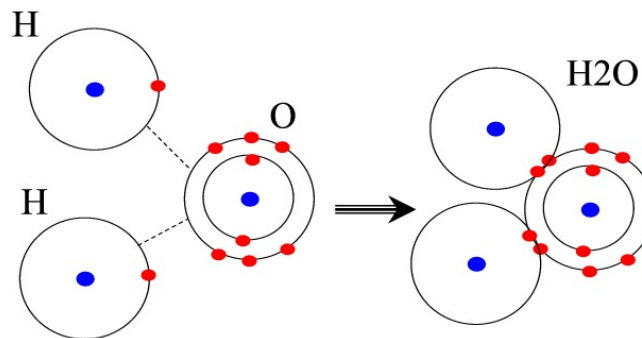
What is Grammatica valenziale?

What is *Grammatica Valenziale* (GV)?

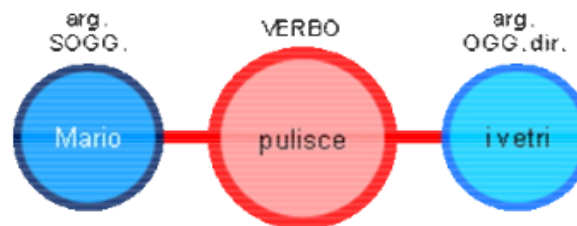
Explanatory model of the structure and function of a linguistic system based on both the semantic and syntactic approach (Sabatini 2004)

The verb, and its meaning, is the heart of the sentence

“Valence” the ability of the verb to attract a fixed number of sentence elements to form an expression with meaning (*nucleus* of sentence)



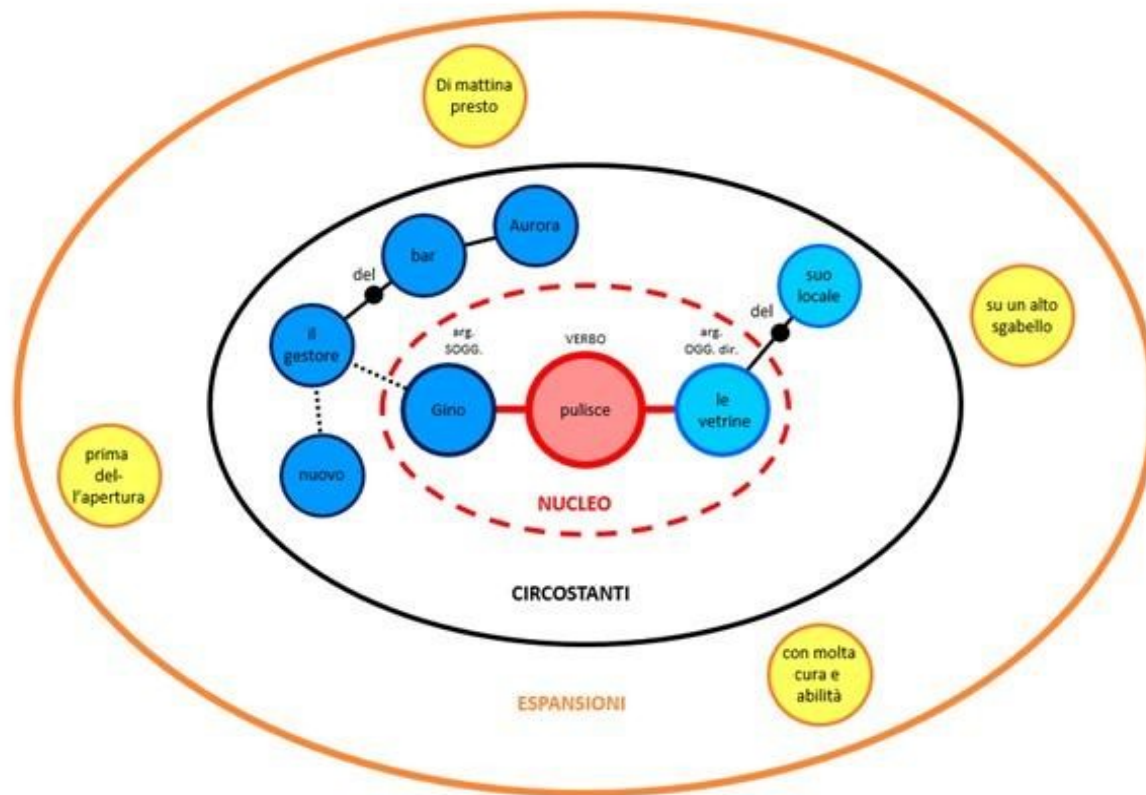
divalent verbs



(Sabatini 2013)

Radial Diagram of GV

Radial diagram for sentence analysis with GV



(Sabatini et al. 2011)

This language analysis model seems to function similarly to the mental system of sentence construction or “implicit grammar” (Sabatini 2004, Lo Duca 2005).

Research hypothesis and aims

The research hypothesis:

Can we transform the teaching method into a more active and laboratory approach by introducing a scientific and more reliable disciplinary content like GV?

Research aims:

to investigate what happens when we introduce GV in the teaching and learning process;

to experiment and validate a vertical GV curriculum from primary to secondary school;

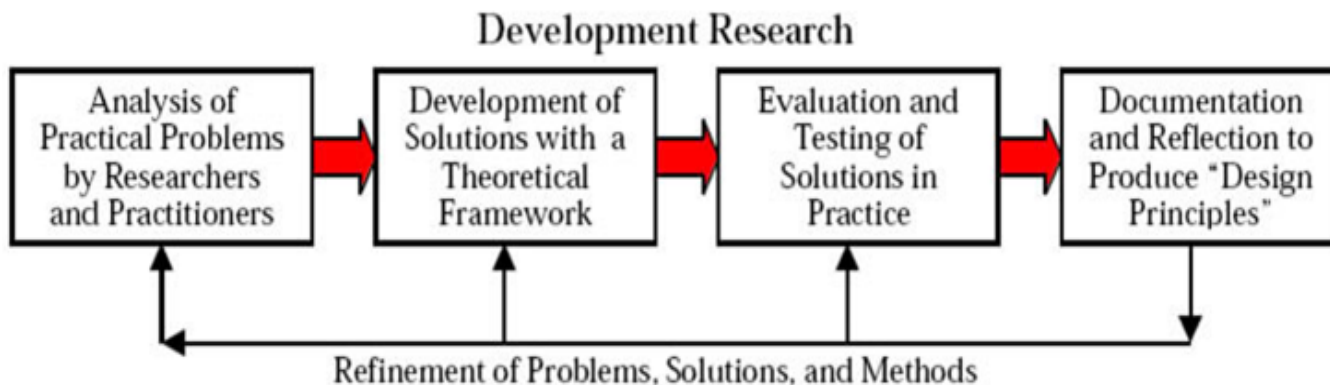
to identify and describe a laboratory model of GV

Design Based Research (DBR) (Kelly 2003)

It “attempts to engineer innovative educational environments and simultaneously conduct experimental studies of those innovations”

(Brown 1992)

- Situated
- Pragmatic
- Based on collaboration teachers-researchers
- Based on a close relationship between theory and practice
- Aimed to identify general principles and guidelines



(Reeves 2000)

Four different phases

| <i>January – February 2017</i> | <i>March 2017</i> | <i>late March – May 2017</i> | | | <i>late may – June 2017</i> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Self-analysis | Planning | Class experimentation | | | Final self-analysis |
| | | Implementation | Check/ re-planning | Implementation | |



Research tools

Tools to document and observe teaching practices:

- *logbook* for the documentation
- narrative document for *direct chronicle* for the observation in class;
- *structured grid* for observation
- *video interview* with teachers
- video interview with students
- *video record* of the lesson



Multiple Perspectives:

- Self-assessment
- Peer review
- Expert analysis

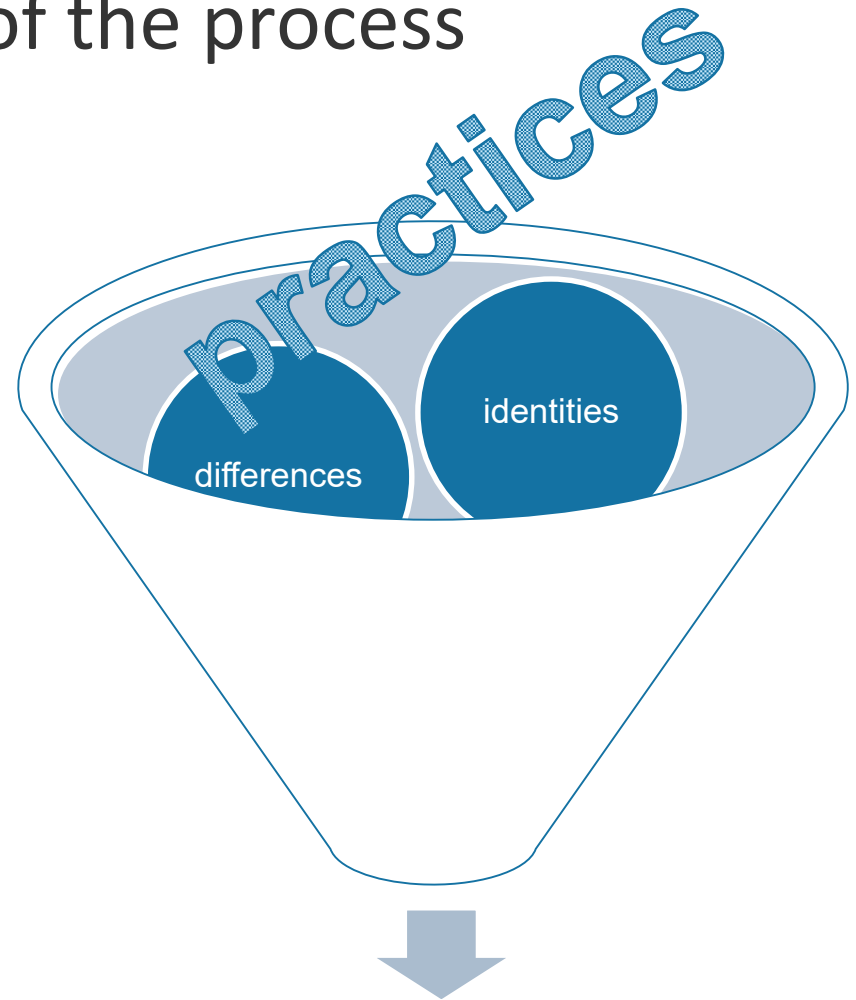


Analyzing teaching practices

Teaching practice = core of the process

3 main categories/domains

- ✓ Didactic
- ✓ Pedagogical
- ✓ Relational (Altet, 2015)



tools elaboration

data analysis

Lesson Model

First results

Didactic domain

immediacy and easiness in understanding GV concepts and approach

effectiveness of a graphical diagram of the sentence

Pedagogical domain

frontal lesson becomes a participated lesson

group work to do grammar lesson

GV lesson as science laboratory for manipulation of language

use of different strategies, media, tools

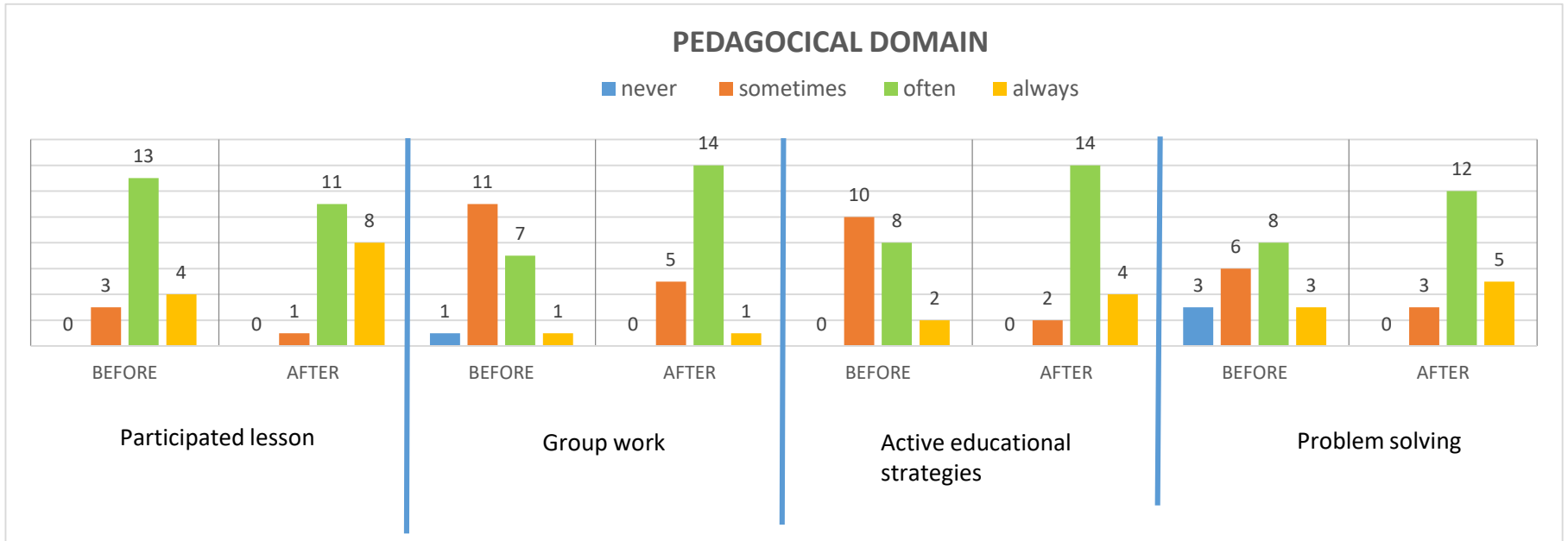
Relational domain

GV is "democratic" and potentially "inclusive"

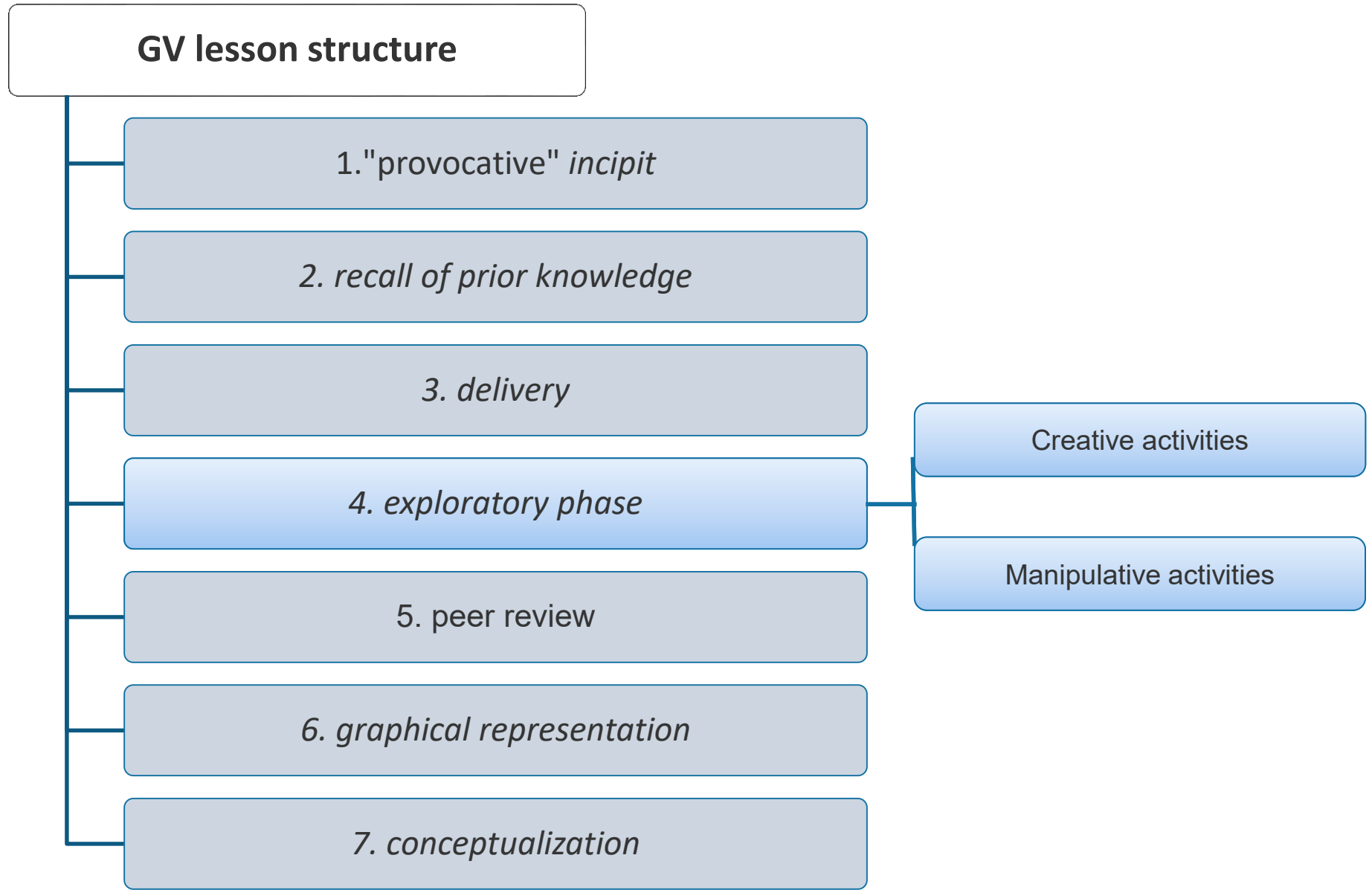
decentralization of the teacher's role

flexible use of space and time

First results



GV laboratory model



Images from classroom experimentation (video)

Images from classroom experimentation

“Teaching Valency Grammar: from the theoretical model to the laboratory of grammar in the classroom”

<https://youtu.be/YZi8PSiITjI>

Thanks for your attention

