Teaching Maltese as a second language to adults

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Abstract

An increasing number of foreigners are coming to live on the Maltese Islands, especially after Malta joined the EU in 2004. For this reason, the country's Directorate for Lifelong Learning organises Maltese language courses for foreigners, specifically, the Malta Qualifications Framework Levels 1 and 2. However, many foreign learners complain about the overemphasis on grammar in these courses at the expense of their more urgent need to learn conversational Maltese. Therefore, this study investigated whether the courses met the learners' expectations in terms of the syllabi, teaching methods and learning materials. It also examined the teachers' needs, considering their key role in the success of course delivery and varying levels of training. Combined quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed to acquire the appropriate breadth and depth of information. Two questionnaires (one each for teachers and learners) surveyed their perceptions and suggestions for course improvement, complemented by face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, which sought more in-depth, qualitative information. Keen insights from two informant sources and different research instruments revealed syllabus-based, course discrepancies and unfulfilled requirements regarding content and delivery. The findings validated the students' criticism about the excessive focus on grammar, inadequate attention to the development of speaking skills, and the learning materials' failure to satisfy both learners' and teachers' needs and expectations. The teachers' requirements were also not addressed, given that the majority lacked training in teaching Maltese as a second language/foreign language (MSL/MFL). Based on the research results and other input from learners and teachers, three syllabi for MSL courses and the *Maltese for Foreigners* series were produced to cater to specified learning needs. Teaching and learning MSL/MFL is an emerging educational area demanding considerable work towards standardisation to attain the professional status it deserves. This PhD dissertation is the first step in that direction, which should be continued by relevant further research.

Statement of Authenticity

I, the undersigned, declare that this dissertation is an original piece of work, carried out by myself as a result of my own research and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged.

_____   _____14/1/2015_____

Charles Daniel Saliba   Date

Dedication

To all the foreigners who are interested in discovering the beauty of the Maltese language

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.

If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart".

Nelson Mandela

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I express my appreciation and gratitude to all the participants of this study: learners, teachers and an education department spokesperson. Special thanks go to the participants who imparted their views during the face-to-face, semi-structured interviews and gave me permission to record them. I am also indebted to all the officials from the education department, especially those from the Directorate for Lifelong Learning, with whom I worked hand in hand so that I could personally visit the centres where the lessons were being held in the different classes around Malta and Gozo.

Last but not least, I thank my partner and wife, Vanessa, who has served as a critical listener through my years of study, supporting and encouraging me to persevere in this educational venture.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
ACT	adaptive control of thought
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CLT	communicative language teaching
DLL	Directorate for Lifelong Learning
DM	direct method
DOI	Department of Information
EFL	English as a foreign language
EFNIL	European Federation for National Institutions for Languages
EILC	Erasmus Intensive Language Course
ERASMUS	European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
ES	education spokesperson
ESIQ	education spokesperson's interview question
ESL	English as a second language
ETC	Employment Training Centre
EU	European Union
ex.	example
FES	Foundation for Educational Services
FFI	form-focused instruction
FL	foreign language
FonF	focus on form
FonFs	focus on forms
GĦILM	Għaqda Internazzjonali tal-Lingwistika Maltija [The International Association of Maltese Linguistics]
G-T	grammar translation
IP	interview participant (learner)
L1	first language
L2	second language
LAD	language acquisition device

LIQ	learners' interview question
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MGSS	Malta Government Scholarship Scheme
MFL	Maltese as a foreign language
MFL-1	Maltese as a Foreign Language – Level 1
MFL-2	Maltese as a Foreign Language – Level 2
MQF-1	Malta Qualifications Framework – Level 1
MQF-2	Malta Qualifications Framework – Level 2
MSL	Maltese as a second language
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NF	not filled
O-level	ordinary-level
P	participant (learner)
P-A	participant in the advanced course
PPP	presentation, practice and production
SL	second language
SLA	second language acquisition
SLT	second language teaching
SLWP1	syllabus – learner written participation, MFL-1
SLWP2	syllabus – learner written participation, MFL-2
STIP1	syllabus – teacher interview participant, MFL-1
STIP2	syllabus – teacher interview participant, MFL-2
SVO	subject-verb-object
TBI	task-based instruction
TEFL	teaching English as a foreign language
TIP	teacher interview participant
TIQ	teachers' interview question
TP	teacher participant
TPR	total physical response
UG	universal grammar
UK	United Kingdom
VSO	verb-subject-object

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief introduction to Malta's history, leading to a discussion of how the Maltese language developed. This information makes it clear that Malta's geopolitical state of affairs has resulted in a particular bilingual situation that in turn affects the teaching of Maltese to foreigners. Teaching Maltese as a second and foreign language is discussed, showing the importance of developing this specialisation, especially since Malta has joined the European Union (EU). Apart from foreigners living in Malta, some of those studying Maltese abroad also wish to attend courses in Malta, so this chapter includes an overview of the most common Maltese language courses for foreigners in this country, showing how and why this research focused on one particular type of course. The factual details in this chapter help create a perspective that clarifies the data retrieved from learners and teachers through the needs analysis and frames the future research suggested in the conclusion of this thesis.

1.1 Malta

The Maltese archipelago lies in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea.[1] Although it is small, it has played a highly significant role in Mediterranean affairs from ancient times to the present day. The islands' geostrategic position has made them a vital cultural and commercial centre and at the same time, an important stepping stone for military and political expansion of various colonisers. Maltese history had been characterised by the colonial powers that had dominated it until the Maltese people gained their independence in 1964.[2] All the powers involved in Mediterranean affairs, especially those that conquered Malta, made cultural contributions and helped create a Maltese identity distinct from any other nation or culture (Blouet, 2004, p. 11). According to Mifsud (1995, p. 21), this "cross-fertilisation has emerged into an organic and homogeneous culture", including the Maltese language.

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[1]Malta lies 93 km south of the nearest point in Sicily, 288 km north of the North African coast (Tunisia), 1826 km east of Gibraltar and 1510 km west of Alexandria. The largest island is Malta itself, with an area of 245 sq km. Gozo, 6 km northwest of Malta, has an area of 67 sq. km. These two islands are densely populated with about 413,609 residents (Department of Information (DOI, 2011), while the other islands (except for four people living on Comino) are uninhabited.
[2]Dominating powers had been the Phoenicians (c. 800 BC–600 BC), the Carthaginians (c. 600 BC–218 BC), the Romans (c. 218 BC–530 AD), the Byzantines (c. 536–870), the Arabs (870–1091), the Normans (1091–1266), the Angevins (1266–1282), the Aragonese (1283–1410), the Castilians (1412–1530), the Order of St John (1530–1798), the French (1798–1800) and the British (1800–1964).

1.1.1 Il-Malti – The Maltese Language

The Maltese language mirrors Maltese history. When the Arabs (870 AD) conquered Malta, they brought with them an Arabic dialect, immediately acquired by the native Maltese people because their previous language, Punic, was Semitic, too. When the Normans conquered Malta in 1091 and especially when the Muslims were expelled in 1249, the islands' social culture moved abruptly from North African to Southern European, looking towards Sicily so that the Arabic dialect of the Maltese had to borrow new Sicilian terminology from these western Christian rulers. This Semitic-Romance fusion was reinforced with the arrival of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem who actually inhabited the islands they ruled, in contrast to their predecessors (Farrugia, 1998, p. 281). The British arrived in 1800 at the end of the two-year French rule, but contact with the English language was initially limited because of opposition from the Maltese upper class who were immersed in Italian culture. However, during WWII, the British and Maltese had to work together to defend themselves from the attack of the Axis powers (Farrugia, 1998, p. 287). This enforced alliance, together with the use of English as an international language, brought about the influx of lexical material that formed the English adstratum in the Maltese language. The adaptability and flexibility of the Maltese language reached its peak in 1934 when it became one of the two official languages of Malta (the other being English).[3] As Professor A. J. Arberry[4] rightly maintained (Aquilina, 1981), Maltese is:

> the unique link between Semitic and the Romance groups, with all the fertility that that marriage of widely different tongues naturally implies. When to this basic fact is added the long and varied history of the Maltese Islands, the prolonged and intimate contact with successive cultures and civilisations, it becomes obvious that Malta offers a wonderfully rich field for scholarly investigation (p. v).

In fact, this uniqueness of Maltese (Figure 1) still attracts a lot of linguistics scholars and students who (even if they are studying at universities in their own countries) should be able to read articles and textbooks in Maltese to gain a deeper understanding

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[3]Previously, the Maltese language was considered so unimportant socially and culturally that it was called 'Il-lingwa tal-kċina' ('the kitchen language'); people who spoke this 'vulgar colloquial' language had a low social status. Italian was considered socially and culturally the only language for cultivated writing. Later, English was considered socially equal to Italian until Mussolini declared war on Britain in 1940, at which point Italian was replaced by the people's native language.

[4]Sir Thomas Adams' professor of Arabic at Cambridge University.

of Maltese linguistics or culture. One example is a course on the Maltese language organised by the Institute of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures of the University of Heidelberg in Germany, called *Einführung in die Maltesische Sprache* (Carabott, 2011). Maltese had also been taught in the early 2000s in other foreign tertiary institutions, such as the "Sorbonne in Paris and the universities of Bremen and Osnabrük in Germany ... mainly for comparative purposes, due to its affinities with North African Arabic" (Euromosaic III, 2004). This enthusiasm can still be felt today, especially when in 2007, the International Associations of Maltese Linguistics was founded to stimulate the study of the Maltese language (Għaqda Internazzjonali tal-Lingwistika Maltija (GĦILM), 2007). More recently (2012), the Maltese Center at the University of Bremen was opened "to enhanc[e] the visibility of Maltese linguistic studies as an internationally recognized discipline" (University of Bremen, 2012).

Figure 1 shows a schematic diagram of the Maltese language.
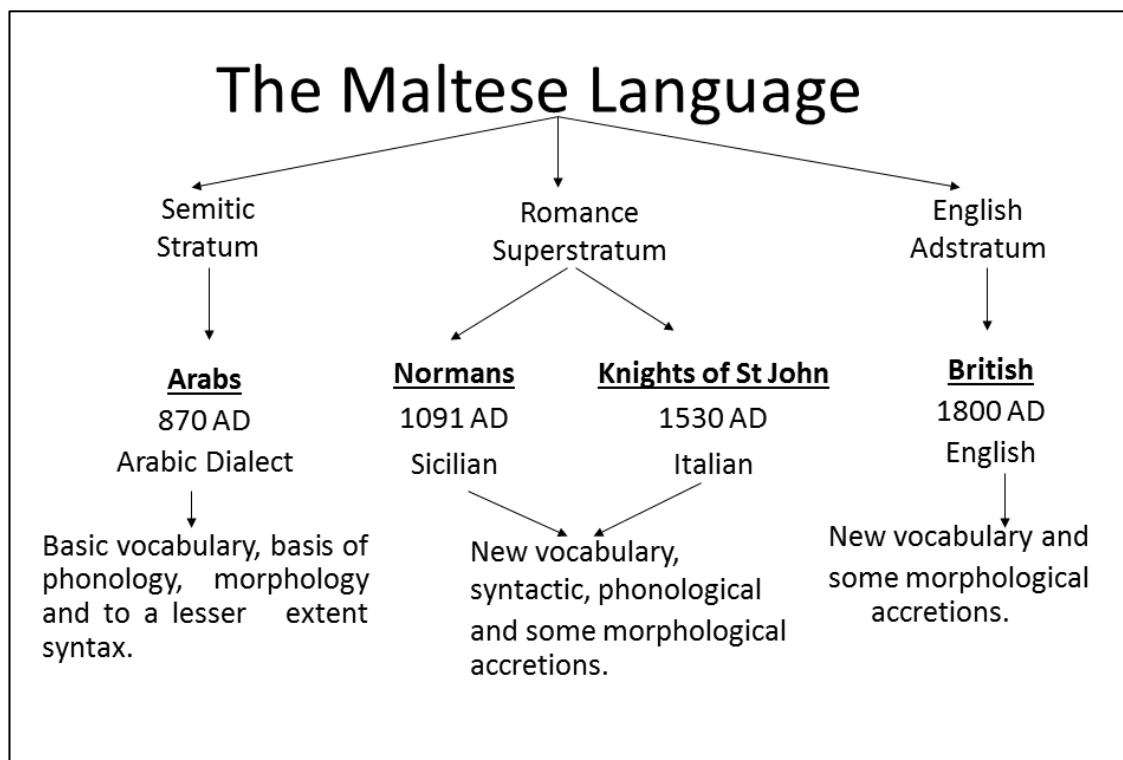
Figure 1. The Maltese language

1.2 Maltese emigrants

The Maltese language is spoken not only by the inhabitants of the Republic of Malta, but also by its many emigrants, whose numbers worldwide are roughly equal to the country's current population. Emigrants from Malta live mainly in English-speaking countries, such as Australia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom (UK) (Euromosaic III, 2004).

Many Maltese people and those of Maltese descent who live in communities abroad lament the lack of resources for teaching the Maltese language to family members, especially their descendants who have never lived in Malta. Similar issues were discussed in the Convention of Leaders of Associations of Maltese Abroad and of Maltese Origin, organised by Malta's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2000. Different speakers at the conference recommended that the Maltese government help the foreign communities to maintain their Maltese language and culture. One suggestion was to establish a Maltese language and culture course in Malta that could be available overseas on the Internet or by correspondence, under the direction of the University of Malta. Other recommendations were that (with the help of the University of Malta and the Malta Emigrants Commission) the Maltese government should offer children of Maltese people living abroad an opportunity to visit Malta during the Australian school holidays in December and January, to attend 8–10-week courses covering Maltese culture and language, as well as provide resources for coordinating similar courses in the Australian states (Borg, 2000, p. 166). Finally, other proposals included offering reviews of Maltese books for different classes (Mifsud, 2000, p. 170), along with teaching aid materials (Borg, 2000, p. 152–154), attractive educational tools about Maltese history and language (Cumbo, 2000, p. 181) and other resources, [the lack of] "which [was] the biggest problem the school face[d] continuously" (Mifsud, 2000, p. 170).

Ten years later, the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised another convention for foreigners to discuss the issues faced by Maltese living abroad. This event resulted in the realisation that many recommendations from the 2000 convention had never been put into effect. In her speech entitled "Living Online Teaching of the Maltese Language", Edwidge Borg (2010, p. 165), one of the main speakers at the

convention, clearly addressed these issues when she stated, "Various Maltese politicians and dignitaries on visits to my new homeland Australia, made undertakings, but somehow time dissolved these hard made promises". Once again, she echoed what the guest speakers from around the world pointed out, "The Maltese Communities' needs in Australia are these: syllabus and accompanying textbooks to teach Maltese as a foreign language appropriate for Australian conditions … and the adult learners" (Borg, E., 2010, p. 165). However, as Alfred Flask (2010) argued, these Maltese language textbooks should be written with a foreign audience in mind; they should not be monolingual because in Australia, people speak English and "books written in Maltese for Maltese are totally useless here" (p. 207). Flask also referred to the coursebook entitled *Sisien* (metaphorically, foundations of a wall), created along with teaching aids, as a project between the EU and the Department of Education. However, as it was written for Maltese adult native speakers, it was useless for foreigners. Another speaker, Bernard Scerri (2010, p. 559), recommended that courses from beginner to advanced levels be taught for a fee, with exams that could be taken online as mock tests; once students reached a certain level, they could travel to Malta to write their final exams.

Thus, the emigrants' demands are clear: offer beginner to advanced courses in Malta but make them available overseas via the Internet, with the option of taking exams in Malta; conduct intensive courses in Malta when Australians spend their school holidays (i.e., December–January) there; and produce syllabi and learning materials, including textbooks, with a foreign audience in mind. However, are there adequate infrastructure and resources in Malta to sustain these demands?

1.3 Malta as an EU member state

In 2004, Malta joined the EU, whose members have the rights to liberty of movement across their countries, as well as employment and residency. The EU had an estimated population of 500 million a few years ago (Borg, T., 2010, p. 5). In 1995, the European Commission proposed that "it [was] becoming necessary for everyone, irrespective of training and education routes chosen, to be able to acquire and keep up their ability to communicate in at least two Community languages in addition to their mother tongue" (Commission of the EU, 1995, p. 47). This development affected all the

EU member states. Since Malta joined the EU, the number of foreign students studying at the University of Malta as European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) placements or as direct entrants has increased the influx of foreigners, many of whom are interested in learning Maltese.

1.4 Situation in Malta

When Malta joined the EU in 2004, Maltese became an official language of the EU, and "this political decision was the end result of an evolution which has tended to reinforce the status of Maltese by affirming its national identity" (European Federation for National Institutions for Languages [EFNIL], 2014). The *Education Act* and the *National Minimum Curriculum* made the teaching of both official languages (Maltese and English) compulsory. Thus, "both Maltese and English are taught early on in school but exposure to the two languages in schools varies considerably, depending on the type of school concerned, namely, whether it is a state, church or private (independent) school" (EFNIL, 2014).

In relation to the position of Maltese in the home, from a series of five large-scale studies conducted by Lydia Sciriha, it emerged that "the overwhelming majority of respondents transmit Maltese to their offspring and openly declare that Maltese is an important language since they rank it number one from a list of seven languages that are taught at school" (2002, p. 104). Moreover, 90.4% of the Maltese respondents reported using Maltese only when interacting with family members (1993 survey). In 1999, Maltese was considered the most important language for a person living in Malta, and the 2001 survey showed that 98.6% declared Maltese as the mother language of the Maltese people (Sciriha, 2002, p. 95). Even in the 2011 census, 93.2% of the people (aged 10 and over) indicated that they could speak fluently in Maltese (Malta Census of Population and Housing, 2011). Regarding the non-Maltese students, who have increased in number with Malta's accession to the EU, there are no specific legal provisions; however:

> Discussions are under way on how to best deal with the situation and help foreign students to integrate socially, and especially linguistically, at all levels. This includes the development of resources for the teaching of Maltese as a foreign language. Children of migrants are subject to the same obligations as the Maltese with compulsory schooling until the age of 16 (EFNIL, 2014).

To promote the national language of Malta and to provide the necessary means to achieve this aim, the Maltese Language Council was established in 2005. Despite the threat from English in many contexts around the world, then, Maltese is in a relatively secure position in Malta.

Due to Malta's accession to the EU and other reasons indicated in this section, an ever-increasing number of foreign people are coming to live on the islands. Most Maltese are bilingual in Maltese and English, so foreigners who speak English have little difficulty in practical communication. However, at a social level, most people who cannot speak Maltese feel at a disadvantage and would like to learn the language to integrate fully in the Maltese community. As Sammut (2004) indicated in his thesis, *The 'Alien' Experience: Returned Migrants in Gozo Secondary Schools*:

> ... in the Maltese culture, everyone speaks Maltese. You can't sit there and babble in English and tell them how you feel. You do feel different. As much as you don't want to be, as much as you want to get on with the other people, you are different (p. 48).

On the other hand, for those who do not speak English, the situation is worse because they need to learn Maltese to survive in the target language-speaking community.

Another reason for learning the target language is for *special* or *specific* purposes. A case in point is for *occupational* purposes (Harmer, 2000, p. 2), for example, a foreigner working in Malta needs to communicate with Maltese customers and work colleagues. Other international, university students need Maltese for *academic* purposes or to be able to work or practise, for example, in Maltese hospitals, legal firms or schools. Till now, it is worth noting that foreigners who wish to take a full-time job within the government sector are sometimes required to obtain a Maltese Ordinary Level Secondary Education Certificate (*Malta Government Gazette,* 2011). Others are refugee immigrants who have escaped from their native countries to seek asylum abroad and need to integrate with the Maltese community. Others interested in learning the language are emigrants or their kin who return to Malta after a long time without contact with their native language and now wish to communicate as effectively as before. Moreover, due to specific circumstances, a limited number of Maltese citizens in the country do not know the Maltese language or did not learn it as their native tongue

and thus wish to learn it at this time (Borg and Mifsud, 1997, p. 10). All of these factors have to be framed in the light that:

> the status of this indigenous language has rocketed from rock bottom position during the time when it was dubbed 'the language of the kitchen' to the top place it now holds. Participants in this study clearly perceive Maltese to be the most important language for a Maltese living in Malta today (Sciriha, 2001, p. 34).

All of these reasons naturally lead to a demand for Maltese language courses, which is not fully satisfied, as such courses are not always available (especially in Gozo) or may not be in accord with a learner's aims.

1.5 Courses offered in Malta

The three most well-known institutions in Malta that provide Maltese language courses for the majority of foreigners are the University of Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology (MCAST) and the Directorate for Lifelong Learning (DLL). This section provides a brief overview of each course and the rationale for choosing the DLL courses for this needs analysis. The claims indicated on the DLL website, which are cited in subsection 1.5.3, will also be confirmed or disputed in the analysis and interpretation of data.

1.5.1 University of Malta

In 2010, when this research began, the University of Malta offered two courses: the Erasmus Intensive Language Course (EILC) and the Certificate in Maltese as a Foreign Language. The EILC, a 20-day, 60-hour course, targets ERASMUS students at the University of Malta and aims to provide "students with an opportunity to acquire knowledge of the Maltese language" (University of Malta, 2010), as well as culture and history (*Times of Malta*, 2009). The second course was more detailed. It was spread over three semesters in two years, and students attended the part-time course in the evening. Over three modules, learners (even those without a basic knowledge of Maltese) reached level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Visits to public institutions and historical sites complemented classroom instruction to allow learners to experience spoken and written Maltese (University of Malta, 2012).

The modules included classwork (20%), a presentation (30%) and a 1.5-hour exam (50%) (University of Malta, 2012). In the last module, learners were asked to produce an original project, for example, comparing the learner's country, people and mentality with Malta and Maltese culture. In addition to submitting the written project in Maltese, which accounted for 60% of the assessment, learners were expected to make an oral presentation (40%) (University of Malta, 2012). However, in 2014, the University of Malta announced that the Certificate in Maltese as a Foreign Language would be phased out.

1.5.2 Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology

The MCAST offers two courses for foreigners, which are delivered weekly and cover 40 hours of tuition. Maltese for Foreigners–Preliminary teaches learners the basics of communicating in Maltese in everyday life (MCAST, 2012a), while the Maltese for Foreigners–Beginners classes are task-based and emphasise using vocabulary and grammar structures for a vast range of real-life situations (MCAST, 2012b). Both MCAST courses include an optional informal assessment. However, students who attend 80% of the course receive an MCAST certificate of attendance, regardless of whether they take the informal assessment.

1.5.3 Directorate for Lifelong Learning

Under the education department of Malta, the DLL organises three courses for foreigners at the Lifelong Learning Centre or in specific local councils or schools around Malta.

1. Maltese as a Foreign Language–Malta Qualifications Framework Level 1 (MQF-1) is spread over 32 weeks and is intended primarily for learners who are at least 15 years old. It teaches basic vocabulary, basic Maltese grammar, elementary Maltese expressions and their usage, Maltese sentence structures and elementary written text. It also provides insights into Maltese culture and customs. The methodology includes role-playing, discussions, out-of-class activities, ongoing assessments (lifelong learning portfolio), oral and written exercises, presentations and a final assessment (DLL, 2012a, 2012b).

2. Maltese as a Foreign Language–MQF Level 2 (MQF-2) also lasts for 32 weeks and is intended for learners who have already acquired MQF-1. It teaches learners to use Maltese effectively for practical communication, describe aspects related to everyday life, respond adequately in direct interviews, understand short and concrete texts in standard speech, and read and write simple narratives in Maltese with correct grammar. An ongoing assessment (lifelong learning portfolio) is also included (DLL, 2012c, 2012d).

3. Maltese Language–Conversation is a 10-week course, lasting two hours each week, intended for those who have successfully completed MQF-1. Learners converse about Maltese culture and traditions; practise incidental conversation; express themselves in everyday life matters; express their thoughts verbally; pronounce words clearly; and interact in group discussions, role-playing, presentations or dialogues (DLL, 2012e).

For this research, the Maltese as a Foreign Language – Levels 1 and 2 (MFL-1 and MFL-2) courses that were taught in 2012–2013 were chosen for several reasons. These courses had the most participants because they were not only delivered in one location at one time (such as the courses at MCAST or the University of Malta) but were offered all over Malta and Gozo at different times and levels (claimed to cover the widest range, from beginner till MQF-2). Apart from this reason, these courses were sponsored by the EU; thus, they were the cheapest, compared to the others, and attracted learners from every background and social class. Consequently, being the most attended courses provided a more realistic representation of the learners and teachers of Maltese as a second language (MSL), making the research more generalisable. Since MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses were claimed to teach learners in the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), the Maltese conversation course was not included in this study as an independent course, unrelated to the MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses.

1.6 The research: Statement of the problem

Responding to the increasing demand for MSL courses, the DLL offers courses of various types and levels. However, it is commonly acknowledged that sometimes courses are taught by practically anyone who can speak and write Maltese, whether or not he or she is a qualified Maltese language educator. Despite the teachers' good intentions, I perceive that their lack of qualifications and resources inevitably leads to a certain degree of amateurism in the field, undermining the educational aspect of this enterprise. However, this issue could be counterbalanced by adequate syllabi, learning materials and teacher training. Therefore, it is important to investigate whether the MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses offered by the DLL meet the learners' expectations in terms of the course syllabi, teaching methods and learning materials. It is also essential to investigate the teachers' needs, considering that teachers are a determining factor in the success of the courses and that the amount of training they have received in language teaching varies.

1.6.1 Positioning of the Researcher

I earned three degrees from the University of Malta: a Bachelor of Education (Hons) in Maltese, Dip Arabic (Distinction) and a Master of Arts in Mediterranean Historical Studies. I started my teaching career 14 years ago, teaching Maltese to natives at Gozo College's Agius de Soldanis Lyceum Girls Secondary School in Victoria, Gozo, Malta. For the last five years, I have taught Maltese linguistics and literature at ordinary, intermediate and advanced levels at the Sir M. A. Refalo Centre for Further Studies in Victoria. I taught Maltese to foreigners at the Għarb Local Council between 2006 and 2008; I organised courses in Arabic language and culture at Gozo College, as well as various educational programmes (on Maltese language and teaching strategies) on local radio stations. I have published 26 books and two research papers on various areas of Maltese history and language. In 2007, I won a prize for my book *Realtà* in the prose for adolescents category at the National Book Awards. After conducting the needs analysis (as part of this doctoral research) with foreigners learning Maltese and instructors teaching Maltese to foreigners, I self-published a Maltese/English book series entitled *Maltese for Foreigners,* which was based on the

CEFR for languages, consisting of three levels: A1 (beginners–elementary), A2 (elementary–pre-intermediate) and B1 (intermediate), together with a CD containing the audio files linked to the books. I also developed a syllabus for each level based on the CEFR, which can be downloaded for free from my website, www.charlesdanielsaliba.com under the heading Maltese for Foreigners.

As the previous paragraph indicates, my relation to this research field stems from my experience in teaching Maltese to foreigners and the publication of my book series *Maltese for Foreigners*. Since the book series is based on this research and is thus its by-product, my prior concepts and experiences came from teaching foreigners. My experience in teaching MSL sharpened my perception that virtually everything, including syllabi, teaching methods and learning materials, depended on the teacher. When I taught Maltese to foreigners, I did not have a syllabus, second language (SL) theory/teaching methods training or any learning materials, such as textbooks or CDs. I decided which topics to cover, and my teaching methods were on a trial-and-error basis because I was only trained to teach Maltese to natives. I had to create my learning materials, which were various handouts. On request, I would narrate and record the written text from these handouts for students. I created around 10 handouts for every lesson, which required a lot of time and money. The lessons initially consisted of basic vocabulary and grammar rules; however, I attempted to elicit grammar from the context in some cases. The contexts were varied; however, dialogues were covered frequently. My views on teaching approaches are discussed again at the conclusion of the literature review.

1.6.1.1 Reflexivity

I had been awarded a Malta Government Scholarship Scheme (MGSS) scholarship to conduct this research, whose field of study was deemed a priority, thus showing its importance in addressing national needs. Although I was sponsored by the Maltese government to conduct research at the DLL, managed by the government's education department, which could suggest the need to comply with government expectations, it must be made clear from the start that I was aware that this must be an autonomous piece of work whose outcomes would be critiqued and discussed.

Since I had never been previously trained in SL and FL teaching and as already stated, I taught Maltese to foreigners, this fact in itself indicated my pre-existing beliefs, which could bias my research if not taken into account. For this reason, the main research areas stemming from the research questions – SL, SL adult learners, SLA theories and their corresponding teaching approaches, syllabi and learning materials – were discussed in the literature review to consider other researchers' statements and thus present different perspectives. This was intended to shed light about these areas and thus update my pre-existing beliefs, which in turn helped me be more critical in self-questioning while preparing the research instruments and also supported the findings and discussions emerging from this PhD research. All these outcomes were supported by data retrieved from several research instruments and sources.

1.6.2 Research Aims and Questions

This research addressed the following aims:

1. Obtain a snapshot of the conditions, attitudes and needs of learners and teachers attending or delivering MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses under the DLL.
2. Compare the learners' needs in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials with their perceptions of what is being offered in the course they are attending to determine if their needs are being satisfied.
3. Compare the teachers' perceived needs in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods, learning materials (in some cases, including the teachers' perceptions of learners' needs) and teacher training with their perceptions of the courses being offered by the DLL.
4. Gain insights into the similarities and differences between the teachers' and students' perceived needs and suggestions.
5. Evaluate the entire system and pinpoint what should be amended in the present teaching scenario.

This research aimed to explore the following main research question:

- Are there discrepancies between the current MSL courses offered by the DLL and the learners' and teachers' perceptions of what and how they should be taught?

and secondary questions:

Learners

- To what degree does the current programme meet the needs and expectations of its adult learners in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods and materials?
- What are the learners' perceived needs and suggestions regarding the MSL courses for adults in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods and materials?

Teachers

- To what degree does the current situation meet the teachers' needs and expectations in terms of the teacher training, syllabus, teaching methods and materials?
- What are the teachers' perceived needs and suggestions concerning the MSL courses for adults in terms of the teacher training, syllabus, teaching methods and materials?

1.6.3 Significance of the Research

Due to the ever-increasing number of foreign people coming to live on the Maltese Islands and the resulting demand for Maltese language courses (even from people living abroad), it is essential to analyse the courses offered by the DLL and to compare them to the learners' and teachers' needs and perceptions. This approach will help in evaluating the whole system and pinpointing what should be amended in the present teaching scenario. It is also anticipated that the findings and analysis from this study will be useful in understanding the learners' and the teachers' perceived needs, which in turn will help (if the need arises) in developing new syllabi and learning materials for the courses and offering the right training to update teachers on the latest pedagogical needs.

1.6.4 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 discusses the characteristics of an adult learner (one of the sources for this research) and presents different arguments about needs analysis. Then an overview of the major second language acquisition (SLA) theories and second language teaching (SLT) methodologies is presented to gain a better understanding of their ramifications on SL teaching. Literature on syllabi and teaching materials is also explored to provide foundations for the sections addressed in the interviews and questionnaires. Chapter 3 introduces the underlying research paradigms, together with the methodology, research design and investigative tools. The data collection, analysis and ethical considerations are also covered. Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings on the learning groups attending MFL − MQF-1 and MQF-2 and on their teachers to explain the situation in the courses in terms of the course syllabus, teaching methods and materials, while discovering their perceived needs and suggestions. Thus, these two chapters cover the research results and summaries for the MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses, respectively. Chapter 6 presents the synthesis and discussion, with reference to the literature, of common themes that emerged from the results for the MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses. The final chapter concludes this study, explains its limitations and suggests (with practical examples) what needs to be implemented to overcome some of the main problems found in this research field and what research issues can be undertaken in the future.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature related to the themes addressed in this research. The discussion provides the theoretical framework that guides the research, especially when constructing questions for this study's instruments and discussing data analysis and interpretation.

The literature survey starts by explaining the differences amongst first, second and foreign language learning. It then describes the characteristics and motivations of adult language learners – the group targeted by this research. Since this study consists of a needs analysis of adult learners and their teachers, this process is defined, including different sources that can contribute to needs analysis and the various questioning techniques available. The research instruments used in this analysis focus on four areas – syllabi, teaching methods, learning materials and, in the case of teachers, training. As a result, the analysis and interpretation cover the same subsections. An overview of major SLA theories and teaching methodologies is presented for a better understanding of their ramifications on the teaching and learning of MSL in MQF-1 and MQF-2 at the DLL. The literature related to syllabi emerging from the previously discussed theories – as well as coursebooks and other instruction materials – are also included to cover the remaining research areas. Teacher training is excluded from this literature review because the questions asked in the research instruments are about teachers' perceptions and comments related to the aforementioned fields such as adult SL learners, needs analysis, SLA theories and so on.

Although an effort was made to strike a balance between the scope and depth of this literature review within the word limit, it inclined more towards coverage to provide a broad overview of this particular research area in the Maltese context. Given that this is the first PhD research addressing the MSL issue, in a scenario where the University of Malta (the only university in the country) offers no specific course to train teachers or student-teachers in MSL or MFL, this stance intended to encompass the different areas stemming from the research questions. It also aimed to update my pre-existing beliefs (as indicated in section 1.6.1.1 Reflexivity) and those of future readers of this dissertation who might be interested in building on the themes indicated in the

conclusion of this research (Section 7.5.3 Future Thinking and More Research) or in MSL or MFL.

2.1 Differences between first language (L1) and second language (L2)

Since this doctoral research continually refers to first (L1), second (SL or L2) and foreign languages (FL), it is important to differentiate amongst these. During the research, it emerged that certain courses bear the title Maltese as a Foreign Language, yet these are delivered in Malta by Maltese native speakers. Thus, differentiation is essential to clarify any confusion.

The abbreviation L1 denotes the native language, that is, the first language that the learner acquires in infancy or early childhood (Stern, 1983, p. 10). It is alternatively referred to as the first language, native language, mother language, mother tongue or primary language. The abbreviation L2 refers to the second language and encompasses the learning of any language after the native language, regardless of whether it is the first, second, third and so on or whether it is acquired in natural settings or through formal instruction (Gass and Selinker, 2008, p. 7). Hence, L2 is "a term that denotes both conscious, instructed language learning and subconscious naturalistic language acquisition" (Klapper, 2006, p. 45). It is also referred to as the second language, non-native language, secondary language or foreign language. The L2 is learned for a variety of reasons, some of which are for travelling, access to foreign documents or literature, or communication with the native speakers of the language being learned (Stern, 1983, p. 16).

2.1.1 Differences between SL and FL

The main difference between SL and FL learning is that the former generally refers to learning a non-native language in a community where it is spoken (Gass and Selinker, 2008, p. 7), for example, Maltese speakers learning Arabic in Tunisia, Australian speakers learning Maltese in Malta or Greek speakers learning French in Morocco. Moreover, the SL has social functions in the country where it is learned

(Littlewood, 1984, p. 2), which can occur in natural settings or through formal instruction. On the other hand, FL learning generally refers to learning a non-native language, generally through formal instruction, "in the environment of one's native language" (Gass and Selinker, 2008, p. 7), for example, Maltese speakers learning German in Malta, English speakers learning Japanese in England or Spanish speakers learning German in Spain or Mexico. Generally, the language is learned for use outside one's own community (Littlewood, 1984, p. 2). The crucial difference is that SL learners have access to the language being learned through the environment in which they are living, while in the case of FL learners, generally based in their native country or in a country that uses their native language, such access is usually not possible (Gass and Selinker, 2008, p. 7). Therefore, "a second language usually has official status or a recognized function within a country which a foreign language has not" (Stern, 1983, p. 16). This generally implies that FL learning needs more formal instruction to compensate for the lack of language input in the environment. In contrast, in SL learning, the environment helps the learner a great deal, and some learners pick up the language from the environment in which they live without formal instruction (Stern, 1983, p. 17). However, this may not be the case in Malta, especially for English-speaking foreigners. Since Malta is officially bilingual, one can find an Anglophone everywhere. Thus, Malta's case contrasts with Stern's conclusion. Therefore, teaching Maltese to foreigners in Malta may require more formal instruction to compensate for the lack of language input from the environment; however, this will be determined later from the results of the needs analysis. In the context of this research, although both courses are named Maltese as a Foreign Language, the focus is on teaching MSL, that is, Maltese being taught to foreigners in Malta by Maltese native speakers.

2.2 Adult learners' characteristics and motivations

This study's participants comprised adult learners who were attending MFL lessons − MQF-1 and MQF-2, as well as their teachers. Although these courses are intended for adults, according to the courses' specifications, an adult refers to a learner who is over 15 years old. Although different teaching methodologies are employed in

the courses, which will be analysed later, the specific audience being taught is of particular consideration.

The ways in which children acquire their native languages and many adults learn[5] their second or third languages from everyday experience are an impressive proof of human beings' capacity for language acquisition. However, sometimes these phenomena serve as a source of frustration for those who are striving to learn or teach an SL in a classroom setting. The reason is that although the classroom environment helps in the learning process and is generally handled by competent teachers and equipped with instructional methods, textbooks and resources, not every learner who attends these classes will learn the skills needed to cope with the language demands in the outside world (Pica, 1987, p. 3). For this reason, using different theoretical frameworks, many scholars have researched and studied why certain individuals are successful while others fail, thereby attempting to understand what it takes to learn an SL.

Although L1 and SL learners have some things in common, acquiring the native language and learning the SL are not the same (see section 2.4, Three theoretical paradigms of second language acquisition). Adult SL learners differ from children acquiring their native language, both in learners' characteristics and the environments in which they obtain their language input. Borg and Marsh (1997, p. 195) analysed five studies – Brundage and MacKeracher (1980), Broughton *et al*. (1980), Jarvis (1988), Knowles (1980) and Rogers (1986) – and arrived at seven common characteristics of adult SL learners (although some of these points also apply to children):

- Adult learners bring their experiences and values to the learning situation. If they draw on these values and experiences, the learning situation becomes more interesting. Therefore, it is ideal to explore their experiences and use them as the basis of the language-learning work.
- Adult learners' years of educational experiences have given them expectations about the learning process. Teachers should take note of these expectations to make the learning experience more successful.

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[5] Krashen distinguishes between 'acquisition' and 'learning'. This is dealt with in section 2.4.3, Cognitive Tradition. However, the terms are used here according to Krashen's theory.

- The two preceding characteristics lead to the third point: adults need to be self-directing. The teacher should not adopt an authoritarian position but negotiate the process and content of learning so that the learners themselves are involved in the learning objectives.

- Adults have their own set patterns of learning, each different from those of the others. Their teachers should accommodate these differences by adopting a variety of language-learning tasks, thus ensuring that no learners are alienated and that the learning experience is as efficient as possible.

- The best learning comes from content that is relevant to life experiences or present concerns.

- Adults want to be able to apply immediately what they learn, so teachers should create realistic scenarios where the learners practise what they have learned.

- Because adults are intellectually mature, teachers should not treat them as if they were children. A mature teaching approach will reinforce the teacher-learner relationship and enhance the language-learning process.

McKay and Tom (1999) had a similar list of adult learners' contributions to class. Moreover, adult learners, whose ages may range from 18 to over 80, have different personal circumstances, some of which may affect their attendance, punctuality and concentration. Obviously having no control over the learners' circumstances, the teacher needs to be flexible and encourage a "sense of community in the classroom to provide a source of support" (McKay and Tom, 1999, p. 2).

The SL learners' age bracket is another issue because mature learners have well-developed cognitive skills and abilities to solve problems and talk about the language (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 29–30). Beyond these particular considerations, there are also age-related limitations in teaching adult learners. Their language-learning capacity seems to decline at a particular age. In fact, from studies on immigrant families, it was observed that children were capable of acquiring native-like fluency in the SL, but their parents did not succeed in mastering the language up to that level (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 68). E. Lenneberg's (1967, p. 176) *critical period hypothesis* referred to a time window where the brain would be "predisposed for success in language learning" (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 68). Although different ages have been suggested for the "critical period" (some researchers put it at the age of 12,

others say 16), this idea serves to explain why an adult learner is sometimes unsuccessful in SL learning (Littlewood, 1984, p. 7) or does not achieve native-like language proficiency. This case is especially true where pronunciation is concerned, because its "critical period" is around the age of six (Asher and Garcia, 1969, p. 340). Klapper (1996, p. 55–56) also maintained that few adult FL or SL learners achieve the proficiency that native speakers do. In fact, Lenneberg (1967) argued that after this period:

> most individuals of average intelligence are able to learn [an] SL after the beginning of their second decade, although the incidence of "language-learning-blocks" rapidly increases after puberty. Also automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear after this age, and [an] FL [has] to be taught and learned through a conscious and laboured effort. Foreign accents cannot be overcome easily after puberty. However, a person *can* learn to communicate in [an] FL at the age of forty. This does not trouble our basic hypothesis on age limitations because we may assume that the cerebral organization for language learning as such has taken place during childhood, and since natural languages tend to resemble one another in many fundamental aspects […], the matrix of language skills is present (p. 176).

This hypothesis has been the subject of debate for many years. However, some adult SL learners have succeeded in learning the target language proficiently and distinguished themselves for their mastery. Generally, even if an adult SL learner learns the language proficiently, there will always be subtle differences in word choice, accent and grammatical features between the mother tongue acquirer and the SL learner who learned the target language at a young age (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 68). Regardless of any hypothesis, other factors that make children more successful in SL learning have to be considered.

On the other hand, adult arguments are more complex, thus necessitating a higher language level. This means that adults may be embarrassed by their language level, which affects their motivation to engage in situations where they use the new language (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 68). However, adult learners learn the language differently from how the children do; generally, the former use "their meta-linguistic knowledge, memory strategies, and problem solving skills", thus taking full advantage of formal language instruction (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 68). Usually, the adult learner learns faster, especially in the early stages of SL learning (Marinova *et al.*, 2000, p. 12). To conclude, age does influence language learning, not necessarily due

to any critical period that limits the learning ability, but "because it is associated with social, psychological, educational and other factors that can affect L2 proficiency" (Marinova *et al*., 2000, p. 28).

Another argument is that as regards the language input, children acquiring their native languages receive long hours of exposure (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 32), while adults learning an SL, especially those learning it as an FL, receive only limited language exposure. In the latter case (which may also hold true for English-speaking foreigners learning Maltese as an SL), due to the bilingual situation in Malta, learners are only exposed to the language as it is taught in the classroom setting, which in many cases is more formal than the language used in other social settings (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 32). For this reason, learners need exposure to authentic language in the classroom, and the teaching materials they use should contain authentic texts so that they are introduced to a range of discourse types. Thus, the learners should not be exposed to a distorted classroom version of the language, because if they are not familiarised with the language used in the real world, they cannot learn it. As Lightbown (1985b, p. 265) stated, "the virtual absence of a particular form or structure in the input makes its acquisition impossible". For this reason, recently, many teaching practice resources and activities have been designed to reflect the "authentic" language that the learner will encounter in the real world to enhance success in SLA (Pica, 1987, p. 16). This reflects SLA theorists' agreement that to acquire a language, learners must be exposed to its spoken or written form in natural settings or formal instruction (Klapper, 2006, p. 62).

Thus, adult SL learners are more developed cognitively, possess greater problem-solving abilities, already communicate in their native language, have a mental picture of a language, have different motivations for learning a language and may not want to learn the language as proficiently as their L1 (Klapper, 2006, p. 55). One of the motivations for learning a new language is migration to a new country for various reasons. McKay and Tom (1999, p. 1) stated that some adults move to a new country to learn the language and culture, but the majority come to work, study, accompany their families or friends or escape from difficult conditions at home. They need to learn the new language to cope with daily life. Some attend classes for social reasons; they serve

as "a respite from the loneliness of staying at home in a strange country" (McKay and Tom, 1999, p. 1). Others learn languages so that they can communicate at work, find better jobs or advance in their careers. Adult SL learners may have different backgrounds, languages, cultures and aims, but all share a common goal – to learn the target language so that they can, as McKay and Tom (1999) put it, "function successfully in their new environment [… and ...] be able to speak to and understand the people around them as well as read and write" (p. 2).

Thus, as already indicated, age is not the only factor that determines a person's success when learning an SL. There are other criteria, such as exposure to a naturalistic environment, motivation, personality and others. Although it is true that many adult learners end up with lower than native-like levels of proficiency, this happens because some "fail to engage in the task with sufficient motivation, commitment of time or energy, and support from the environments in which they find themselves to expect high level of success" (Marinova *et al*., 2000, p. 27). Hence, motivation affects learners' success because "it provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process" (Csizér and Dörnyei, 1998, p. 203). Motivated learners (not only adults) perform better than their peers and succeed, although sometimes they learn under unfavourable conditions or are taught with methods that professionals consider unsatisfactory. This "internal drive" encourages learners to work to achieve their *short-term* and *long-term goals* (Harmer, 2000, p. 3). Short-term goals refer to aims that will be achieved in a brief period of time, such as passing the exam at the end of the semester; long-term goals are attained further in the future, such as a better job (Harmer, 2000, p. 3). Moreover, the learners' motivation may be divided into *extrinsically* and *intrinsically motivated* types. The latter refers to the individual's internal driving force and is performed for the interest or enjoyment in performing the task; it is therefore "performed for its own sake" (Harmer, 2000, p. 3). The former involves an impetus that comes from outside the individual; therefore, it is "an externally imposed form of motivation", for example, rewards such as good grades or financial gain, the avoidance of punishment, or pleasing someone (Klapper, 2006, p. 81). Although different studies have claimed that intrinsic motivation correlates more with learning success than extrinsic motivation, learners' motivation is a combination of both (Ehrman *et al*., 2003, p. 320).

Taking another perspective, Gardner and Lambert (1972) differentiated between *integrative* and *instrumental motivation*. In the former, learners demonstrate "a willingness to acquire [an] SL for the purpose of integrating, or becoming part of the SL community" (p. 215). On the other hand, the "*instrumentally* oriented language learner is interested mainly in using the cultural group and their language as an instrument of personal satisfaction [for reasons of advancement], with few signs of an interest in other people per se" (Gardner and Lambert, 1972, p. 15). These studies suggested that learners with an integrative motivation were more motivated and proficient in the target language than those with an instrumental motivation. Moreover, integrative orientation was practically impossible in FL settings (Ehrman *et al*., 2003, p. 320). Although these issues are much debated, the currently available evidence suggests that elements of both are found in every learner (Klapper, 2006, p. 83), including adults. Nonetheless, the learners who opt to study MSL in Malta will be at an advantage to a certain extent, compared to their peers who are learning MFL. The reason is that people learning in Malta have access to additional linguistic and cultural inputs, which their counterparts studying abroad have to compensate for through more formal instruction and self-teaching.

Learners' motivation can be affected either positively or negatively by other factors, including curiosity, desire for a new experience (Littlewood, 1984, p. 53), the learning place conditions, the methods used to teach the target language, the challenges faced in the activities and the success obtained (Harmer, 2000, p. 3), the lessons' content relevance to the learners' respective ages and abilities, a supportive atmosphere (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 64), enthusiasm of the tutor and an (un)favourable time slot (Klapper, 2006, p. 85). The learners' personalities also play a vital role in the SL learning process. For instance, if adult learners find themselves in a state of anxiety when trying to use the target language, this will be detrimental to their learning process. On the other hand, those learners who are willing to communicate in the target language with "tolerance of ambiguity" may benefit from increased proficiency in FL learning. Therefore, language tutors have to:

> ensure sufficient opportunities for communication exchange in small, non-threatening groupings [with appropriate safety nets such as prior rehearsal or permitting learners to refer to notes] and to impress on students the crucial importance of eliciting FL input at every opportunity from, in particular, native speakers of the FL (Klapper, 2006, p. 79).

Residing in the target-language country generally helps learners encounter more communicative opportunities, allowing for extra practice, thus leading to enhanced confidence and proficiency in the language being learned.

Citing Crooks and Schmidt's paper (1991), Lightbown and Spada (2006) listed three educational research areas where levels of motivation increased due to instructional methods: "motivating students into the lessons", "using co-operative rather than competitive goals" and "varying the activities, tasks and materials" (p. 65). The first one is done when the teacher remarks positively about forthcoming activities, the second when the teacher creates activities where learners have to work together and the third when the teacher varies the class routine to keep learners motivated. The design and use of learning materials to motivate learners are discussed later (See section 2.7, Coursebooks and other learning materials). Moreover, Csizér and Dörnyei (1998) proposed 10 commandments for motivating language learners:

1. Set a personal example with your own behaviour.
2. Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
3. Present the tasks properly.
4. Develop a good relationship with the learners.
5. Increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence.
6. Make the language classes interesting.
7. Promote learner autonomy.
8. Personalise the learning process.
9. Increase the learners' goal-orientedness.
10. Familiarise learners with the target language culture (p. 215).

The foregoing concepts bring us to the conclusion that to increase the learners' motivation, tutors have to present their students with adequate learning experiences and materials to meet "their needs for competence, relatedness, self-esteem and enjoyment" (Ehrman *et al.*, 2003, p. 320). Furthermore, McKay and Tom (1999, p. 2) suggested that teachers should use applications, formal tests and interviews to collect information about the students to help teach them better as individuals. This aspect was also pointed out by Nunan (1999, p. 322), who designed a needs analysis questionnaire to obtain information about the general needs of learners, their aims for learning the new target language and their methodological preferences.

Since the needs analysis is a crucial step and this research is based on this approach, the next section defines this process and notes its importance, as well as the aspects that need to be addressed.

2.3 Needs analysis

Needs analysis, also known as *needs assessment*, is the process of gathering information about the learners' needs to identify and then translate them into learning objectives. As already noted, these objectives serve as a basis for further development of learning programmes, learning activities, teaching materials, etc. (Brown, 2009, p. 269). Therefore, needs analysis does not constitute a syllabus but may provide inputs to construct one (Cameron, 1998, p. 204). Equally, Nunan (1990) defined needs analysis as "sets of tools, techniques and procedures for determining the language content and learning process for specialised groups of learners" (p. 149). Brown (2009) provided a more detailed definition:

> *Needs analysis* is the systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining a defensible curriculum. A *defensible curriculum* is one that satisfies the language learning and teaching requirements of the students and teachers within the context of particular institution(s) involved. Naturally, the *information necessary* to achieve this defensible curriculum includes all subjective and objective information, and any other types of information that turn out to be appropriate in the particular NA (p. 270).

From Nunan's and Brown's definitions, it emerges that a needs analysis should be conducted for every particular audience because every learning group has its own needs and should be considered a specialised group. Following this idea, Dublin and Olshtain (1986) recommended that before developing a new language programme, it would be crucial to assess the one currently in operation because new programmes would be created either to expand and improve the present ones or remedy their shortcomings. To survey existing programmes, they stated that five components should be analysed:

1. the existing curriculum and syllabus,
2. the materials in use,
3. the teacher population,
4. the learners and
5. the resources of the program (p. 27).

During this doctoral research, Dublin and Olshtain's advice was followed because (as mentioned in chapter 3, Research Design and Methodology) the teachers and learners

were two important sources of data in the needs analysis. Their opinions on the syllabi, teaching methodology, learning materials, resources and in the teachers' case, training, were collected and analysed vis-à-vis their perceived needs and suggestions.

Coffey (1984, p. 8) also showed the importance of needs analysis during course design. Indeed, he suggested that course design seemed to have an ordinary progression of operations, one aspect of which was needs analysis. West (1994, p. 1) pointed out that until John Munby published *Communicative Syllabus Design* in 1978, needs analysis aimed to evaluate the target situation for syllabus specifications; however, this aim was broadened to include teaching methods, learning strategies, practicalities and constraints, and even material selection. Nevertheless, although needs analysis is a key step for effective course design, "it would seem that most language planners in the past have bypassed a logically necessary first step: they have presumed to set about going somewhere without first determining whether or not their planned destination was reasonable or proper" (Schutz and Derwing, 1981, p. 30).

Using generic programmes or materials without a particular audience in mind will have ineffective and inadequate effects (Long, 2005, p. 1). For this reason, Wilkins (1976, p. 55) stated that the initial step for the development of language courses or syllabi was to outline the objectives, and wherever possible, these will be based on learners' needs that will be derived from a needs assessment. These "needs, in turn, will be expressed in terms of the particular types of communication in which the learner will need to engage" (Wilkins, 1976, p. 55).

Yet Singh (1983, p. 156, cited in Brown, 2009, p. 276) pointed out that to succeed in needs analysis, one has to set realistic goals and keep a balance between "what is needed" and "what is possible". In fact, Coffey (1984, p. 7) showed that the objections to Munby's comprehensive needs analysis system involved its complicated process, with insufficient time for its full implementation in the majority of cases, and once put into practice, it was done once and for all. However, such an analysis cannot be done once and for all because the learners' needs can change with time. Thus, it can be concluded that needs analysis is an ongoing process.

In the context of foreign-language teaching, West (1994, p. 5) indicated three possible points where needs analysis could be carried out: before, at the start of and during the course. In the first type, called *off-line* analysis, the course designer tries to

create a picture of the target situation through different methods, including questions to sponsors, teachers and learners. Nevertheless, West (1994) pointed out that "learners' perceptions of their own needs may be ill-founded, inaccurate or incomplete, and courses devised by off-line analyses of this sort may frequently have to be reviewed as learners' perspectives evolve" (p. 5). These disadvantages also apply to the second type, the *on-line* or *first-day* needs analysis. Although the information gathered can be more comprehensive and relevant, "its fullness, relevance and accuracy may be short-lived" (West, 1994, p. 5). To counterbalance these limitations, the third approach, analysis during the course, assesses the learners' needs and/or perceptions as they change and become clearer during the course. In fact, the needs analysis in this research was conducted in the last month of the courses they were already undertaking so that the participants had clearer perceptions; however, it brought about certain limitations (for more details, see section 7.3, Limitations of the study).

West (1994, p.8) also argued that during needs analysis, the data would vary according to the instrument used and the study's purpose. Citing Schutz and Derwing (1981), he stated that most of the following categories would be covered:

> general personal background (7%),
> occupational speciality or academic field (1%),
> language background (14%),
> attitudinal and motivational factors (8%),
> relevance of language to target use (10%),
> priority of basic language skills in target use (25%),
> functional registers and job tasks in target use (20%),
> course content and method of instruction (13%) and
> reaction to project (1%) (p. 37).

Schutz and Derwing (1981) also offered percentages for guidance when gathering data on learners. The research instruments in this study incorporated many of these suggestions.

Although some learners can provide useful and valid insights into their needs, it does not mean "that learners will necessarily constitute a reliable source, the best source, or the only legitimate source" (Long, 2005, p. 26). In needs analysis, it is vital to survey the teacher population because they are a determining factor in the success of new syllabi or learning materials. Brown (2001) echoed this point, asserting the importance of involving the teachers in all aspects of the needs analysis because they "are the people who will have to deliver the [syllabus] and live with it long after the

current students (and perhaps the needs analysts) have moved on. [Moreover,] we must never forget that teachers have needs, too" (p. 287). Additionally, Dublin and Olshtain (1986) suggested that a researcher should evaluate:

1. the teachers' command of the language [if they are non-native speakers; however, since all the teachers were native speakers, this did not apply in this particular study];
2. the teachers' training, background, level of higher education, exposure to ideas concerning the nature of language and language learning, teaching experience; and
3. the teachers' attitude towards change in the program (p. 31).

Aside from experienced language teachers, there could be other sources at hand, such as "graduates of the program concerned, employers, subject-area specialists" (Long, 2005, p. 27). In this study, the two primary sources were the learners and teachers attending and teaching both courses at the DLL; the information was gathered through questionnaires and face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. An education spokesperson from the education department of Malta, in charge of the DLL courses, was also interviewed to corroborate/contradict/supplement the data retrieved from the other two sources. However, as the next section demonstrates, different sources could bring about different challenges, which should be addressed to obtain valid and reliable information.

2.3.1 Sources for Needs Analysis

Some people think that the more participants there are, the more comprehensive the information will be. On the contrary, when using multiple sources and/or different methods, it is common to find discrepancies amongst various informants. Long (2005) claimed that in such cases, the majority of researchers report the inconsistencies and stop there; however, it is crucial to follow up with the question: "Which sources are right, or more likely to be, and which [are] to be followed when designing a program? [Are] none of them right? Or are all of them right (at least those involving different sources)?" (p. 30). This study adopted Long's perspective, that is, discrepancies were unveiled and where possible, analysed more deeply to obtain reliable and valid conclusions and considerations. Moreover, Chambers (1981) argued that having numerous sources, such as the student, the sponsor, the employer, the teaching organisation, "tend[ed] to exacerbate existing problems or even create new ones" (p. 26). From these numerous sources of needs analysis, he asked who would determine the

needs. Citing Drobnic (1978), Chambers contended that although they could be conscious of some aims, these "linguistically naive students should not be expected to make sound language decisions concerning their training" (1981, p. 320). Chambers elaborated that this case did not apply only to the learner but could also include the employer who might be incompetent in the field or even the teaching organisation that had expertise in teaching but not in other fields such as needs analysis. Furthermore, Chambers (1981, p. 26) noted that every party concerned would keep its interests in mind, which could conflict sometimes. He mentioned the case where for financial reasons, the sponsors would like a course to be as short as possible, while for the same reasons, the teaching organisation preferred the course to be as long as possible.

The different needs inputted from learners and other sources, some of which are objective while others are subjective, make triangulation a necessity during needs analysis. Triangulation aims to validate and hence increase the credibility of data interpretation (Long, 2005, p. 28). "Triangulation can involve comparisons among two or more different sources, methods, investigators or (according to some experts) theories, and sometimes combinations thereof" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, cited in Long, 2005, p. 28). Triangulation by *source* is when two different sources such as teachers' views and their students' views are evaluated via a questionnaire (Long, 2005, p. 28). On the other hand, triangulation by *method* is when teachers' views are evaluated via a questionnaire and an interview. A comparison of the teachers' views via an interview, students' views via a questionnaire, and document analyses of a particular exam is triangulation by *source* and *method*. Conversely, as Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 305) pointed out, when different views from the same source are compared, such as student views only, it is not triangulation but "multiple copies". As presented in chapter 3, Research Design and Methodology, triangulation by sources and methods was used. However, before discussing SLA theories and the methodologies derived from them, including syllabi and learning materials – two areas that formed subsections of the interviews and questionnaires, in addition to teaching methods – it is essential to review an important framework for needs analysis: Rossett's (1982) typology for generating needs assessment. Enhanced with the literature cited in this chapter, this typology provided insights into elicitation techniques and strategies that helped assemble the research instruments.

2.3.2 Rossett's Typology for Generating Needs Assessment

     Rossett (1982, p. 30) claimed that needs assessment is performed for as many as five particular purposes and that the researcher should identify the purpose of the specific query before assembling the instruments. She explained that each purpose corresponds to "a type of item", as follows:

	Purpose	Item type
1.	nature of the problem→	problem finding
2.	priorities within the problem→	problem selecting
3.	subject matter/skill→	knowledge/skill proving
4.	attitude towards [the problem] →	finding feelings
5.	cause of the problem→	cause finding (Rossett, 1982, pp. 30–32).

Problem finding

     Rossett (1982) pointed out that for the problem-finding type of questions, the researcher asks to find problems and seeks the details of a particular problem. Therefore, for such questions, one has to ask, "Is there a discrepancy?" "What is the discrepancy?" "What is the nature of the discrepancy?" (Rossett, 1982, p. 30).

Problem selecting

     For problem selecting, participants are asked to "prioritize and select from among several needs or facets of one need" (Rossett, 1982, p. 31). Rossett (1982, p. 31) also noted that in this type of needs assessment, the researcher should choose whether "to ask people to respond on the basis of their own needs and/or their perception of others' needs". Brown (2001, p. 33) made it clear that the priorities of different groups, even within the same language programme, may vary considerably and that "students, teachers, and administrators may see the world in very different ways". This view reinforces the idea that different triangulation sources should be used, which was done in this research.

Knowledge/skill proving

     Knowledge/skill proving could be used to diagnose the initial strengths and weaknesses of the learners by testing them or having them conduct a self-assessment. In fact, Brown (2001) stated:

In either case, this type of information can be very important for establishing a starting point for a given language program, and for delineating the top and down abilities in the total range of students. In short, questions about abilities are often important for getting a sense of the boundaries or scope of a language program (p. 33).

Finding feelings

Finding feelings seeks data about the learners' feelings, emotions and attitudes towards the language being studied, the elements of a language curriculum, and so on (Brown, 2001, p. 33). They help in finding out "if learners feel they are ready and competent to acquire the skills or knowledge" (Rossett, 1982, p. 31) that the language programme delivers. Brown (2001, p. 33) also pointed out that such questions are used by researchers to "describe and investigate the differences in attitudes of various groups of people".

Cause finding

Cause finding asks for the cause of the problem. As Brown (2001, p. 33) argued, this type of question is generally asked late in the survey, after the interviewees have thought about and expressed their views, in order for the interviewers to seek solutions to whatever perceived problems were uncovered.

To conclude, according to Rossett's (1982) theory, understanding a performance problem means:

finding answers about what needs exist, what needs are priorities, how learners feel about their needs, the cause(s) of the needs and whether learners are accurate in their judgments of themselves in relation to the problem (p. 32).

Rossett's typology has been examined to help formulate questions from the literature, which would be part of developing the research instruments. The next sections of the literature review provide the theoretical framework needed to evaluate the Maltese language courses at the DLL.

2.4 Three theoretical paradigms of second language acquisition

Although a lot of research has been carried out about language learning, no one knows exactly how languages are learned. Many scholars, the majority of whom have built on the theories of L1 learning, have developed SL learning theories that have had a

great impact on language pedagogy (Harmer, 2000, p. 31) and the resources used for this mission. Since in this research, needs analysis was conducted on the syllabi, teaching methods, learning materials and teacher training, SLA theories and research were examined because they could shed light on language acquisition and teaching and learning in education. This approach not only helped strengthen the findings but also served as a framework on which to formulate questions for the research instruments. Thus, this section leads to "the understanding [of] how second, including foreign, languages are learned, why adults often fail when children are so successful, the role of metalinguistic knowledge and of explicit and implicit learning, the role of the linguistic environment, and more" (Long, 2012, p. 135).

The SLA theories fall into three main categories: behaviourism, innatism and socio-constructivism. All of these theories are intended to account for "the ability of human learners to acquire language within a variety of social and instructional environments" (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 49). Each theory has led to the construction of different pedagogical approaches, practices and methods of SL teaching (Conteh-Morgan, 2002, p. 191).

2.4.1 Behaviourism: Empiricist

Before 1960, the study of language learning was dominated by the behaviourist approach. This theory is based on the belief that a person can train an animal to do something by following a three-step procedure: stimulus, response and reinforcement (Harmer, 2000, p. 32). The essence of the behaviourist approach to language was described by Burrhus Frederic Skinner in his book, *Verbal Behaviour* (1957), where language learning was considered a behaviour, not a mental phenomenon. According to his argument, language is a form of human behaviour, so it is learned through a process of habit formation, where children imitate the sound patterns they hear, people acknowledge the children's attempts and reinforce these actions by approval (in this case, positive rewards), and the children repeat this pattern to obtain more rewards. With time, these actions become habits, in which the child's verbal behaviour is shaped (conditioned) until it resembles that of adult models (Littlewood, 1984, pp. 5–6). This theory was applied to SL learning as well, which affected the methodology used in SL

classrooms. Classroom activities focused on mimicry and memorisation, and learners were instructed to learn dialogues and sentence patterns by heart so that they could form their habits. With this theory, Skinner opened the doors to a teaching methodology known as the audiolingual method (see section 2.5.3, Audiolingualism).

Thus, SL learning was also subject to behaviourist ideas. For behaviourists, the difference between learning an L1 and an SL is that in the former, the student is considered a "tabula rasa", but in the latter, the learner has already acquired habits in the mother language. For behaviourists, a "positive transfer" occurs when the learners' habits in the L1 help them acquire new habits in the SL. On the other hand, when the habits in the L1 hinder the acquisition of the SL, it is deemed a "negative transfer" or an "interference" (Littlewood, 1984, p. 17). Robert Lado (1957), one of the pioneers of the "contrastive analysis hypothesis", claimed that:

> the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult (p. 2).

However, in later studies (Odlin, 1989, p. 18; Zobl, 1980, p. 52), it became apparent that differences between the native language and the SL do not necessarily hinder the learner. On the other hand, similarities do not imply that the SL will be learned with no difficulty. Consequently, the influence of the mother language is much more difficult to foretell than was earlier thought. Apart from this, in a study conducted on adults learning English as a second language (ESL), the majority of errors observed in the speech and writing of L2 learners could not be attributed to the L1 (Hawkins and Towell, 1992, p. 99). Moreover, the contrastive analysis hypothesis, especially in the syntax area, could not be empirically validated (Newmeyer and Weinberger, 1988, pp. 35–36). The growing number of problems and contradictions that the contrastive analysis hypothesis could not resolve showed the need for a more sophisticated theory. Researchers and educators had to think about "universal difficulties in language and language learning", not focusing solely on the characteristics of their students' native languages (Pica, 1994a, p. 52). Consequently, as explained in the next section, psychologists and linguists strongly challenged the behaviourist theory's claims because these could not "account for the complexity involved in language learning" (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 49).

2.4.2 Innatism: Mentalist or Cognitivist

A swift change ensued when Noam Chomsky published a review of Skinner's *Verbal Behaviour*, emphasising that language did not simply involve "verbal behaviour". In fact, he argued that underlying this behaviour was a complex system of rules (competence) with which each individual could create an infinite number of sentences, some of which the same individual had never heard before. Thus, he discarded the idea of verbal behaviour, arguing that "competence" was different from the "performance" that people could actually observe and measure (Littlewood, 1984, p. 5). When learning a language, children acquire this "competence" (grammar rules), through which they can become creative language users (Harmer, 2000, p. 32). With his work, Chomsky rejected behaviourism and gave birth to mentalism, a theoretical framework through which he argued that "language acquisition [was] determined not by habit formation and the environment but by the mind and the thought processes" (Klapper, 2006, p. 46). This idea of "creative construction hypothesis" led other researchers to believe in children's innate ability to acquire a language, known as a language acquisition device (LAD). The LAD is said to operate only in humans from the early years until the age of 11, when children process the environmental input (the language they hear at home, school, etc.) from which they construct its underlying system (Littlewood, 1984, p. 6). These ideas are said to be reinforced when children make errors such as *he drinked* (for *he drank*) or *they eated* (for *they ate*). A mentalist will argue that these utterances are made not because children are imitating the speech of somebody else; instead, they are using their LAD to discover and learn the rules to which they have been exposed and re-applying them to create original expressions.

The paradigm shift in the scholarly approaches to the SL learning process was signalled by S. P. Corder (1967) in his paper, "The significance of learners' errors". Thus, SLA researchers moved away "from regarding the contrasting of L1/L2 as the primary source of information about SLA, to looking at the properties of L2 Learners' mental grammar in their own right" (Hawkins and Towell, 1992, p. 100). As the pioneer of the "error analysis", Corder maintained in his research that when a two-year-old child would say, *This mummy chair*, the listener would not interpret this as an error but would acknowledge it as part of the child's linguistic development. On hearing this, adults

would generally expand or rephrase the child's utterance: *Yes, dear, that's Mummy's chair* (Corder, 1967, p. 165). In the classroom scenario, providing the correct form immediately may not always be the most effective approach because it eliminates the possibility for the learner to test alternative hypotheses (Corder, 1967, p. 168). In fact, though this tendency towards instantaneous correction is highly emphasised in the audiolingual methodology, immediate error correction could actually "distort the learner's hypothesis formulation and can thus delay the learning process" (Zhang, 2005, p. 86). Therefore, ideally, the teacher leads the learner to discover the right form. Clearly, errors are an unavoidable and important part of the learning experience; they also provide evidence that children are not only mimicking exactly what they have heard. Committing errors is not only a device employed by children to acquire their mother tongue, but also a strategy applied by adults learning an SL. These errors help language tutors assess the progress that learners have made and what is still left to learn, provide evidence to tutors and researchers of how language is acquired or learned, and finally, they are beneficial to the learners themselves as a mechanism they use to learn, in the sense that "it is a way the learner has of testing the hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning" (Corder, 1967, p. 167). Selinker (1972) envisioned this learner's language system as having its own internal organisation, which was neither that of the native language nor the target language but could contain elements of both because of the continuum between L1 and L2; at the same time, sometimes this system might not be related to the L1 or L2 (Hawkins and Towell, 1992, p. 100). Selinker coined this system and its transitional stages towards the target language as "interlanguage" (Littlewood, 1984, p. 33). This phenomenon was also observed by Corder (1967) and Nemser (1971); the former referred to this system as "transitional competence", and the latter named it an "approximative system". Since interlanguage involves the formulation and testing of hypotheses about the rules of the target language, it is constantly changing. Although there are "acquisition sequences, they are not simply linear or cumulative, and having practised a particular form or pattern does not mean that the form or pattern is permanently established" (Lightbown, 1985a, p. 177). In fact, Chomsky and his followers have sought to identify the universal principles common to different languages, an area of study that has been termed "universal grammar" (UG). Considered to be part of an "innate biologically endowed language

faculty", UG is made up of linguistic principles that all human languages follow (White, 1989, p. 1; 2003, p. 2). Cook (1985) stated that UG:

> consists, not of particular rules or of a particular grammar, but of a set of general principles that apply to all grammars and that leave certain parameters open; UG sets the limits within which human languages can vary (p. 3).

According to this theory, language acquisition is "a process of hypothesis-testing in which the learner uses the LAD to match the grammar of L1 against the principles of UG" (Klapper, 2006, p. 54). The child's UG grows into adult knowledge as certain environmental "triggers" are provided in the form of linguistic input; hence, language acquisition is the growth of the LAD, which is activated by these environmental triggers (Cook, 1985, p. 4). Therefore, apart from having access to UG, to acquire a language, children must receive evidence from a particular language so that they can fix their parameters (Chomsky, 1981, p. 9).

According to this theory, once children hear linguistic evidence, their open parameters become fixed, which causes the LAD to grow, hence leading to the acquisition of the native language. In this light, the conclusion can be drawn that when learning an SL, learners' parameters have already been fixed by the first language. Although these issues are much debated in the SLA research field, the balance is in favour of the idea that UG is available to L2 learners, albeit in a more restricted form (Hawkins and Towell, 1992, p. 106). Indeed, Hawkins and Towell (1994, p. 74) maintained that L2 learners would transfer their L1 parameter settings into their initial L2 grammar. When the parameters are the same, the learner understands the grammatical properties of the L2. When the parameters are conflicting, the learner moves away from the grammatical properties of the L1, which can lead to the resetting of the parameter value; when the learner discovers an active parameter in L2 that has not been activated in L1, this is set. However, this theory focuses on the linguistic dimension of acquisition, concentrating mainly on syntax and leaving aside the psychological and social aspects of language learning. Due to this particular focus, it "does not seem to provide especially helpful insight for FL tutors" (Klapper, 2006, p. 57).

Klapper (2006, p. 46) concluded that the controversy between behaviourism and mentalism had brought researchers to a point somewhere in between these two extreme positions; they accepted the learner's innate ability (LAD) but at the same time, gave importance to environmental input.

2.4.3 Cognitive Tradition

The cognitive tradition employs a different approach, which is more focused on the learning aspects and is therefore more related to the pedagogical process of SLA. This approach emphasises the ways the mind perceives, retains, organises and retrieves data (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 34). In fact, within the cognitive theory framework, researchers view "SLA as the learning of a complex skill, one in which a range of sub-skills must be practised in 'controlled' processing until they can integrate into 'automatic' of fluent performance" (Klapper, 2006, p. 57). Therefore, the learner is regarded as a thinker and an active processor of data (Suharno, 2010, p. 48). One of the best-known general theories of skill acquisition, which served as an influential model, is Anderson's adaptive control of thought (ACT). According to this theory, skill acquisition is a transition from "declarative knowledge" (explicit, skill-relevant knowledge that is describable) to "procedural knowledge" (encoding in people's behaviour of that which they cannot describe in words because they are not consciously aware of it). This transition, which leads to proceduralisation:

> involves passing from a cognitive stage where rules are explicit, through an associative phase where rules are applied repeatedly in a consistent manner, to an autonomous stage where the rules are no longer explicit and are executed automatically, implicitly in a fast, coordinated fashion (Segalowitz, 2003, p. 395).

In this process, automaticity shows the final phase of the acquisition skill. This procedure, from controlled to automatic, also takes place in language learning through engagement in activities in which learners initially focus on verb and/or word endings, therefore on *how* they are using the language. When they reach the automatic stage, they start to focus on *what* they are saying, thereby reducing the burden on the working memory, speeding up performance, reducing error and at the same time, having a "channel capacity" for higher-order tasks (Klapper, 2006, p. 58). A U-shaped development can occur as learners progress from one stage to another in the development of the target language. This apparent backsliding happens when

encountering new forms because learners do not simply add them to those previously learned; rather, each stage brings about a new internal organisation and thus a restructuring of the whole system (McLaughlin, 1990, p. 117). The reason is that learning an SL involves "a process whereby controlled, attention-demanding operations become automatic through practice", where subskills are automated, leading to either an improvement in performance or restructuring. Therefore, restructuring is a process in which "more complex internal representations replace less complex ones", initially decreasing performance but increasing it again over time as skills become more expert-like (McLaughlin, 1990, p. 126).

For this reason, in his input hypothesis theory, Krashen (1982, p. 20) stated that ideally, SL learners should be exposed to interesting language that they would understand but at the same time would contain structures beyond their current levels of competence. This scaffolding theory, referred to as i+1, is similar to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Ariza and Hancock, 2003, p. 2). However, Krashen tried to differentiate between acquisition and learning. Acquisition is a subconscious process that results in the knowledge of a language to communicate, in which "language acquirers are not usually aware that they are acquiring the language" (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Conversely, learning is the conscious knowledge of an SL, such as knowing or being aware of the rules, that is, knowing *about* the language (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Krashen suggested that SL learning would need to be more similar to children's acquisition, claiming that acquisition was more successful than learning. Children are never consciously taught the language but do receive the language input, *roughly tuned* by their parents (Harmer, 2000, p. 33), which Krashen referred to as "caretakers' speech". This type of modified speech is "simpler", consisting of the language the children already know to aid comprehension and at the same time, includes other language aspects of a slightly higher level, tending to become more complex as the child progresses (Krashen, 1982, p. 22). Leaving aside the long time needed to acquire a language, as children do with their native languages, and many learners' limited number of hours to acquire an SL, all SLA theorists agree that to acquire a language, learners must be exposed to its spoken or written form and that comprehensive input is crucial for those acquiring an SL (Klapper, 2006, p. 62). On the other hand, exposure to large quantities of comprehensible input does not imply that one is learning a language more

successfully. In the affective filter hypothesis, Krashen (1982, p. 31) argued that affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety were related to SLA. Therefore, a learner who is not self-confident or is bored or anxious may "filter out" the language input, "making it unavailable for acquisition" (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 37). Presenting linguistic forms in the classroom also does not qualify as input because input is "what goes in", not "what is available for going in" (Corder, 1967, p. 165). Krashen's distinction between acquisition and learning has also been severely criticised because it is difficult to differentiate whether a person has acquired or learned elements of the language (Harmer, 2000, p. 38).

In conclusion, the cognitive approach views both declarative and procedural knowledge as important for the SL learner (Klapper, 2006, p. 62). A typical classroom scenario that represents this idea is one where rule learning is followed by practice; with time and enough practice, the procedural knowledge will overshadow the declarative knowledge, leading to automaticity (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 40).

Overall, the critique against the innatist approach (mentalist or cognitivist) is that researchers draw their conclusions from studies about proficient language users. Critics have argued that "it is not enough to know what the final state of knowledge is and that more attention should be paid to the developmental steps leading up to this level of mastery" (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 49).

2.4.4 Socio-constructivism: Interactionist

Although Krashen emphasised the importance of one-way comprehensible input, simply presenting students with language input alone is clearly inadequate. They should also be offered opportunities to activate their knowledge because language production helps them select from the input they have received, rehearse and especially in a classroom setting, receive feedback, allowing them to adjust their language, given the perspective they have received (Harmer, 2000, p. 40). For these reasons, interactionists elaborated on the innatist notion of comprehensible input by acknowledging the importance of two-way communication. Interactionist theorists such as Michael Long (1983) and Teresa Pica (1994) claimed that SLA would occur through conversational interaction; therefore, this would be an essential, if not sufficient, component

(Lightbown and Spada, 2003, p. 43; 2006, p. 43). During this conversational interaction between the learner and interlocutors, when problems arise in message comprehensibility, negotiation occurs, which leads to the modification and restructuring of the interaction (Pica, 1994, p. 494). Thus, when learners receive support from interlocutors to understand linguistic materials that are not in their L2 repertoire, the learners progress in their receptive and expressive capabilities in the SL (Pica, 1987, p. 5). In fact, Long (1983) agreed with Krashen's claim that comprehensible input would be necessary for language acquisition, but Long argued that with "modified interaction", the input would be more comprehensible (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 43). In fact, some interactionists argued that when learners were given the chance to engage in conversational interactions with their peers or tutors, they participated in meaningful activities that required them to "negotiate for meaning" and expressed themselves clearly to arrive at a mutual understanding (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 122) or to repair breakdowns in communication (Pica, 1994, p. 510), especially when native speakers interacted with non-native speakers because the former would avoid conversational trouble (Long, 1981, p. 265). At the same time, these interactionists claimed that with these conversational interactions, the learners also acquired language forms consisting of words and grammatical structures (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 122). Therefore, "when it comes to comprehension, negotiation appears to be a powerful commodity; even learners' being allowed only to observe negotiation can improve their comprehension" (Pica, 1994, p. 505). These conversational modifications, which may arise naturally during conversation, include repetitions, clarifications (Ariza and Hancock, 2003, p. 2), syntactic adjustments, changing words, modifying forms (Pica, 1994, p. 494), gestures, elaborations, slower speech, additional contextual clues, paraphrasing (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 144), rising intonation, conforming with or clarifying the meaning of a message (Pica, 1987, p. 5), using questions to make the non-native speakers' conversational roles easier (Long, 1983a, p. 181), expansion (Long, 1983b, p. 127), extractions and segmentations (Pica, 1996, p. 5), amongst others. As this list shows, modified interaction does not always contain linguistic simplification. Moreover, Pica (1994, p. 494) maintained that negotiation was not the only mode in which the interaction could be modified or restructured; it could be interrupted through a correction or rerouted to a new topic. Long's (1996) review of the

interaction hypothesis gave more prominence to the significance of corrective feedback during conversational interaction (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 44). Nonetheless, negotiation has always garnered more interest in the SLA field.

Although language input and negotiation are crucial, language output has generally been regarded as secondary. For instance, language output:

> has a contribution to make to language acquisition, but it is not a direct one: Simply, the more you talk, the more people will talk to you! Actual speaking on the part of the language acquirer will thus affect the *quantity* of input people direct at you (Krashen, 1982, p. 60).

However, in the output hypothesis, Swain (1995, p. 125) contended that producing language would help SLA in three ways: a) it would promote "noticing" and recognising the learners' linguistic problems, b) it would lead to the testing of hypotheses about language forms and structures, and if feedback is given, c) it could lead to the modification or "reprocessing" of the output and learners' self-reflection on their language output, which would empower them to internalise linguistic knowledge. Leaving aside the fact that language practice alone leads to fluency, Swain believed that all these three benefits would lead to accuracy.

Nevertheless, negotiation – including input and output – cannot account for all SL learning, first, because the negotiations generally focus on lexical items, not on grammatical morphology; second, if learners are not ready for something new, they may filter out the language input (Krashen, 1982, p. 31); and third, too many questions can be annoying (Pica, 1994, p. 519). Moreover, although most classrooms include a lot of learning interactions due to different daily activities, including group discussions, pair work, drills and others, research has shown that the interactions between the teacher and the students involve few restructuring moves (such as clarification requests), compared to native and non-native interactions outside the classroom (Pica, 1987, p. 8). This discrepancy can be due to various reasons:

- the learners view the teacher as an expert and evaluator and therefore act like subordinates;
- decisions on what knowledge and skills are to be demonstrated are generally the teacher's prerogative;

- the classroom discourse is not adapted towards two-way communication because time constraints prevent the teacher from negotiating with each individual;

- to meet predetermined objectives and to sustain order and organisation, many classroom activities avoid negotiation, which could have led to mutual understanding;

- during negotiation, students are presented with a linguistic level that needs little or no restructuring to achieve; and

- efforts to attain comprehension through interaction could be perceived as challenging the teacher's knowledge and thus his or her power and authority (Pica, 1987, pp. 8–13).

The critique against linguists working from an interactionist perspective is that the language input received by learners does not contain much of what they need. Therefore, critics placed greater importance on innate principles that learners could work with (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 49). However, extensive research makes it evident that the learning environment must "include opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful social interaction with users of the SL if they are to discover the linguistic and sociolinguistic rules necessary for SL comprehension and production" (Pica, 1987, p. 4).

2.4.5 Considerations about SLA Theories

The SLA theories attempt to give an explanation for language learning that helps teachers to "critically examine their own pre-existing language beliefs, interpret their classroom experiences and establish for themselves a methodological framework which facilitates better informed pedagogical definitions" (Klapper, 2006, p. 69). However, are the MSL teachers at the DLL knowledgeable about these learning theories? Are they trained in pedagogy, some of which are derived from these theories, to teach Maltese to foreigners? Otherwise, are these learning and teaching methods and materials a trial-and-error and sometimes a hit-and-miss approach? Therefore, in both research instruments (questionnaires and interviews), specifically in the training sections, teachers of both MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses were asked about these issues. Since different approaches and methods in language teaching are amongst the by-products of

SLA theories, these are dealt with in the next section, so from the SLA theories, the discussion leads to the classroom practice.

2.5 Influential approaches and methods of language teaching

Research on SLA has brought about different methodologies for SL teaching, and the influence of SLA can be observed in textbooks, teacher training programmes and curriculum designs (Lightbown, 2000, p. 438). For these reasons, language tutors should reflect on any proposed method to determine its objectives, whether it is practical and adaptable, adequate for their teaching situations and the types of learners, and to assess if they can handle the demands of working with a particular teaching method when considering their teaching load (Rivers, 1981, p. 27). Apart from this, there is a difference between "general-purpose" and "specific-purpose" language teaching. The former generally refers to the language courses offered to learners in schools, and the latter generally comprises language courses designed for a specific group of learners (Ellis, 2005, p. 3). This study focused on general-purpose language pedagogy.

Since two sections of the questionnaires and the interviews were about teaching methods and learning materials, it was crucial to review influential approaches and methods in language teaching, which helped to both develop the research instruments and supplement the findings with appropriate studies from the literature.

2.5.1 Grammar-Translation Method

As its name implies, the grammar-translation (G-T) method relied on teaching grammar and practising translation. This method was used in the teaching of Latin and Greek in Europe in the nineteenth century. Later on, it was used by Plötz in Germany to teach modern languages, and it swiftly spread to other countries (Rivers, 1981, p. 28). Until the 1960s, it was the standard method employed in most British secondary schools (Klapper, 2006, p. 105). In fact, certain textbooks used in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were based on the traditional expectations that had emerged from the teaching of Greek and Latin, and they therefore gave much importance to the detailed description of the grammar of the language concerned, written exercises, translation exercises and

bilingual lists. Hence, textbooks predominantly consisted of vocabulary lists and rule explanations (Bandl, 2007, p. 2). In fact, Titone (1968) stated that:

> nineteenth-century textbook compilers were mainly determined to codify the foreign language into frozen rules of morphology and syntax to be explained and eventually memorized. Oral work was reduced to an absolute minimum, while a handful of written exercises, constructed at random, came as an appendix to the rules (p. 27).

Therefore, with this method, "consideration of what students might do to promote their own learning had little or no place" (Griffiths and Parr, 2001, p. 247); everything was teacher centred and "the students [did] as she [said] so they [could] learn what she [knew]" (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 19). According to Rivers (1981, p. 31), this approach made it boring for the learners, due to the repetitive system used and the passive role given to them in learning the language.

Emphasis was placed on grammatical rules, which were explained in the classroom in the learners' native language, and on vocabulary of a literary nature, with the intention of leading the students to write the target language accurately and at the same time, to appreciate the text's "literary significance" while translating it into their native language. For this reason, the texts in the textbooks were not chosen according to the students' levels or tastes but were excerpts from the works of great writers, specifically chosen for their intellectual content (Rivers, 1981, p. 31). The G-T method emphasised teaching and writing skills (Griffiths and Parr, 2001, p. 247) but neglected oral communication skills, which meant no learning through practice (Klapper, 2006, p. 106). Most of the interaction was from the teacher to the students; thus, there was little or no student-student interaction (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 19). Apart from reading aloud and dictation, listening and speaking skills were overlooked; together with the absence of authentic texts (i.e., texts with real-life language input), this approach made it difficult for students to communicate effectively and thus did not prepare them for the real world. To make matters worse, new textbooks were modelled on their predecessors, which of course encouraged teachers to continue these traditions.

Despite the volume of repetitive exercises, this method was not too demanding for the teachers because much of the work could be corrected in class; in many cases, the lessons were used to follow the textbook's respective units. However, as Rivers (1981) rightly asserted, "such textbooks dominate[d] the work of the teacher whose

immediate aim [became] the completion of all the exercises in the unit and the covering of all the units in the book in a given period of time" (p. 29). Moreover, when students made errors, teachers supplied them with the correct answers (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 21). Any proactive teachers who tried to elicit conversations in class from these textbooks found the text inappropriate for such activities. Over a decade ago, the G-T method was still in practice to some extent but it lacked advocates because no linguistic, psychological or educational theory had been formulated to support or justify it (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 7).

2.5.2 Direct Method

The G-T's predominance for many decades required more active teaching methods to target the skills that it did not address, especially oral proficiency. Initially, this need (which also arose from new opportunities for communication amongst Europeans) led to the creation of various self-learning conversation books and phrase books (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 7). However, their inadequacy caused a revision of the language teaching methods, in which different scholars came up with the idea of natural learning principles. In turn, these led to the creation of the direct method (DM), which received "its name from the fact that meaning [would] be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids, with no recourse to the students' native language" (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 25). This method emphasised language input and output, that is, listening to the target language and expressing oneself with it; thus, the lessons were delivered in the target language. This method was intended to reflect the way children learned their native languages, so it aimed "to form a *direct* association of objects and concepts with the FL word, to avoid use of the mother tongue and to accord grammar a more subordinate, accompanying role" (Klapper, 2006, p. 106). Due to developments in phonetics studies, the target language sound system gained more attention, and teachers generally introduced target language courses by teaching their students the new sound system to help them develop correct pronunciation, without the interference of the native language sounds (Rivers, 1981, p. 32).

In contrast to the G-T method, grammar was not taught explicitly but learned through an inductive process, that is, through practice, observation and reflection. This

system shifted the focus of language teaching away from grammar (Klapper, 2006, p. 106). Students were also never told to translate the texts into their native languages (Rivers, 1981, p. 33). When the students or teachers read texts, usually aloud, the learners were prepared beforehand by discussing the subject; when they could not understand the meaning of some words or could not comprehend them from the context, the teacher tried to help by explaining the text in the target language or using pictures and gestures (Rivers, 1981, p.33). When errors occurred, the instructor tried to have the students self-correct whenever possible (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 31). In the DM, writing skills were developed through learning activities such as transcription, summaries of the readings and written accounts of the discussed materials that led to creative writing (Rivers, 1981, p. 33).

Language practice is a helpful activity that the G-T ignored. Thus, the DM syllabus was based on situations (e.g., at a hotel) or topics (e.g., weather) that emphasised vocabulary over grammar and viewed oral communication as basic (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 31). However, compelling students to express themselves freely in a certain argument without the appropriate structures in the SL and in a "relatively unstructured situation" could affect the acquisition process, especially fluency (Rivers, 1981, p. 33). The fact that the tutors did everything possible to avoid explanation using the L1 made the learning process lengthy. Moreover, in many aspects, their attempts to imitate native language learning made the process unrealistic, due to various factors already mentioned (see section 2.4, Three theoretical paradigms of second language acquisition). Learning an SL is a more restricted task than acquiring the L1, and even if this were not the case, it could not be learned from the classroom alone. To sustain such a system, the students have to hear and practise the language outside the classroom (Rivers, 1981, p. 33). Since the DM method emphasised the use of the target language, another possible drawback was that it "expose[d] those tutors who [were] not fully proficient in the target language and [felt] happier following the lead of a textbook" (Klapper, 2006, p. 107).

2.5.3 Audiolingualism

The audiolingualism teaching method also grew partly out of a response against the G-T method, but there were historical links as well. Due to the outbreak of World

War II, army personnel needed to learn FLs in the shortest amount of time possible so that they could communicate verbally (Griffiths and Parr, 2001, p. 247) with their allies during military operations and also understand their enemies. Later on, language schools and universities became interested in this methodology, and teaching materials, including new teaching aids with native-like speech, such as magnetic tapes and language laboratory equipment, were prepared by linguists and experienced tutors. Syllabi were made up of word lists and grammar lists, which were sorted across levels (Richards, 2006, p. 7). The methodology used, initially named "aural-oral", focused on the earlier stages of teaching communication skills, mainly listening and speaking, emphasising pronunciation and intonation, as a basis on which to build the other two skills of reading and writing (Rivers, 1981, p. 40), thus imitating how learners acquire their L1. This teaching method also emphasised interaction (Klapper, 2006, p. 108), and similar to the DM, it required language tutors' high competence in the target language, especially in pronunciation, or else they had to rely on the use of teaching aids. In fact, the teacher's role during such lessons was "like an orchestra leader, directing and controlling the language behaviour of her students" (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 44). In this methodology, the stimulus, response and reinforcement formed the basis of the idea. In fact, students had constant drilling followed by positive reinforcement if the utterances were correct, or negative reinforcement if mistakes were made. Contrary to what researchers think today, mistakes were perceived as obstacles in the learning process and were therefore avoided at any cost (Klapper, 2006, p. 108). Since this learning methodology had its origins in the behaviourist view, through this system, the students' "habit" was formed through repetition and the teachers' reinforcement (Harmer, 2000, p. 32). The audiolingual method, which emphasised the acquisition of structures, forms and patterns of everyday dialogue, gave instant results and taught the learners in the four skills. In contrast to the DM, the textbooks contained authentic, native-like dialogues with idiomatic expressions (Rivers, 1981, p. 31) and thus, not only emphasised real practice, but also offered an opportunity to understand culture through practice. However, one of the reasons this method failed was the belief that "drilling and practice alone were sufficient for learning to take place, [and] that there could be automatic transfer from classroom to naturalistic language use" (Klapper, 2006, p. 108). Although this memorisation for habit formation gave immediate results

and led to the "automatisation of basic language skills" (Klapper, 2006, p. 108), over the long term, it did not give way to an effective communicative ability because it ignored the role of context and knowledge: "students were able to parrot responses in predictable situations of use, but had difficulty communicating effectively in the relatively unpredictable world beyond the classroom" (Nunan, 1999, p. 71). Furthermore, repetitive drilling is boring, especially where adult learners are involved. This method is still used in many parts of the world but usually does not form the basis of the courses; rather, it constitutes a part of individual lessons (Taylor, 2011).

2.5.4 Communicative Language Teaching

After Chomsky rejected behaviourism, language learning came to be viewed differently. Furthermore, many "began to believe that the Chomskyan view of language competence needed to be supplemented by an account of communication and the cultural context of language use" (Klapper, 2006, p. 108). One of the pioneers who came up with the idea of "communicative competence" was Dell Hymes (1972), who argued that verbal structures were formed and modified by language use. He also stated that applying the language to particular situations in a meaningful way led to a "different kind of competence" (Danesi, 2003, p. 13).

The evolution of communicative language teaching (CLT) brought about a paradigm shift, which was reflected in syllabus design and language teaching (Klapper, 2006, p. 109). The syllabus, previously designed according to grammatical structure, changed to a functional notion type, where "notion" referred to a particular situation in which an individual would communicate (e.g., at the hotel) and "function" denoted a specific purpose in the context determined by the notion (e.g., greeting the hotel receptionist or asking him or her for one's room number; for more details, see subsection 2.6.3, Notional/functional syllabus). Consequently, the earlier idea of focusing on *grammatical* competence (a crucial part of learning but not all the learning needed in the target language) changed gradually to *communicative* competence, where learners would be expected to participate in classroom activities (Richards, 2006, p. 3). With communicative competence, the users should be linguistically competent (i.e., with a good grasp of grammar and vocabulary), socio-linguistically competent (i.e., able to speak with good manners as appropriate for the social situation in which they find

themselves), discursively competent (i.e., able to initiate, terminate or enter into a discussion with consistency) and strategically competent (i.e., capable of remedying the situation when communication problems arise so that they communicate efficiently (Bandl, 2007, p. 6).

However, although CLT is one of the most used methodologies today, no single version exists because it is flexible. It can be interpreted in different ways because:

> current communicative language teaching theory and practice thus draws on a number of different educational paradigms and traditions. And since it draws on a number of diverse sources, there is no single or agreed upon set of generally agreed practices that characterises current communicative teaching (Richards, 2006, p. 22).

Howatt (1984, p. 279) distinguished between a "strong" and a "weak" version of CLT. The strong version, in which L1 and L2 learning are viewed as involving the same processes (Klapper, 2006, p. 110), "advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself" (Howatt, 1984, p. 279). In brief, it uses the target language to learn it. Thus, language tutors have to provide activities and language input to facilitate the language processes so that the learners test their SL hypotheses and act accordingly when they receive feedback (Klapper, 2006, p. 110).

Although the L1 and L2 acquisitions have some things in common, there are many differences as well, especially on the learner's side, which brought about the idea of a weaker version of CLT. The weak version, which is a contemporary standard practice and can be briefly described as learning to use the target language, "stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English [or another L2] for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching" (Howatt, 1984, p. 279). In this version, although learning is still achieved through communication, classroom activities are more structured (Klapper, 2006, p. 110), and learners are able to practise the target language in different communicative situations with various functions. Through negotiations in the target language, they acquire it. Hence, such an approach generally involves the following: activities that provide two-way oral or written communication in the target language between the learners or interlocutors, where negotiations occur to

arrive at a mutual understanding; learner-centred approaches (Wesche and Skehan, 2002), with the tutor acting as a facilitator; information-gap exercises with the intention of compelling students to use the target language (Block, 2002, p. 19); introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation (Nunan, 1991, p. 279) so that the learners will tackle the language beyond their current levels of competence; individualised learning; tolerance of errors; learning grammar inductively through FL samples; integration of skills as done in real life; focus on meaning and its sequencing (Klapper, 2006, p. 112), with grammar introduced as much as needed to express meaning (Bandl, 2007, p. 7); focus on the learners' needs in order to get things done (Nunan, 1988, p. 26); linking formal language instruction with language activation outside the classroom (Nunan, 1991, p. 279); and giving students the feeling of learning the language for a purpose, leading to a phased development (Klapper, 2006, p. 111).

Some scholars, such as Michael Swain (1985a, 1985b), rightly argued that CLT had brought about dramatic changes in methodology. Language learning had become more exciting, and syllabus design had become more sophisticated. It encouraged less teacher-centred practice, helped teach the language of interaction and presented real-life conversation scenarios. Nevertheless, some failures remained. Swain (1985a) argued that CLT had a "theoretical confusion [that could] lead to practical inefficiency" (p. 11). In fact, Swain maintained that CLT failed to take into account learners' abilities, which they brought into the classroom from their L1 or everyday experiences. Swain contended that the native language played an important role in learning an SL because many learners already possessed some of the knowledge needed, such as meaning, uses and communication skills (Swain, 1985b, p. 85). The excessive use of the FL could also bring about an adverse effect on the learner, due to a buildup of tension, frustration and embarrassment (Klapper, 2003, p. 34).

Another criticism against CLT is its insistence on authentic materials. It is true that learners should be exposed to authentic materials for a "taste of real language" and therefore not be exposed to an impoverished version of the target language. However, there are also well-argued claims that not every text has to be authentic. Actually, Swain argued, "there is nothing wrong in itself with creating special text for specific purposes, and illustrating language use is a purpose like any other" (Swain, 1985b, p. 84). This

helps the tutor to present language items economically and efficiently, while maintaining control over the language input (Swain, 1985b, p. 84). The CLT is also criticised as having a "restricted view of linguistic competence" (Klapper, 2006, p. 114; 2003, p. 34). This limitation may be due to the unrealistic or idealistic content of some dialogues or make-believe simulations. "The embracing of a meaning-based pedagogy with little attention to form" (Klapper, 2006, p. 114; 2003, p. 34) is another problem with CLT. As Swain (1985b) claimed:

> Language is not only a set of formal systems, but it is a set of systems, and it is perverse not to focus on questions of form when this is desirable. Some points of grammar are difficult to learn, and need to be studied in isolation before students can do interesting things with them. It is no use making meaning tidy if grammar then becomes so untidy that it cannot be learnt properly (p. 78).

This view leads to the understanding that although communicative events are central to language development, it also requires attention to form (Savignon, 1991, p. 273). This finding is evident in Spada and Lightbown's (1989) research on CLT-based, intensive ESL programmes in Quebec (Canada) primary schools. Students in these programmes had a high level of fluency, compared to those in traditional programmes, because the former were extremely talkative, but they had numerous grammatical errors as well. Spada and Lightbown (1989, p. 24) justified this by reminding readers that "the focus of instruction was on communicating intentions and meanings, not on producing grammatically correct sentences and structures". This case suggests that grammatical instruction must also be included in CLT teachings (Millard, 2000, p. 47). Such concerns (and others) provoked theorists and practitioners to seek to amend certain elements of this approach (Klapper, 2003, p. 33). Apart from this:

> the quality of CLT also often depends on the quality of teaching materials. Unfortunately, only in the most commonly taught languages—such as English, Spanish, French and German—does an abundance of materials exist to support the development of communicative language abilities over a wide range of skills (Bandl, 2007, p. 22).

In recent years, the concern over grammatical instruction has brought about countermeasures to overcome these limitations, some of which are discussed in the next section.

2.5.5 Form-Focused Instruction

The need for the teaching of form led to form-focused instruction (FFI), referring to "any planned or incidental instruction activity that [would be] intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form", where the term "form" would include "phonological, lexical, grammatical, and pragmalinguistic aspects of language" (Ellis, 2001, p. 2). The FFI method includes both traditional and communicative approaches; in the former case, the teaching form is based on structural syllabi, and in the latter, the teaching form is elicited from meaning-focused activities (Ellis, 1991, p. 2).

The most effective way to teach grammar in CLT is subject to a lot of debate. Some academic experts maintain that if possible, communication should not be interrupted. Therefore, they advocate teaching grammar by means of corrective feedback. On the other hand, others maintain that grammar should be given separate attention, which can later be integrated into communicative activities (Sheen, 2002, p. 303). Long (1991) termed these two sides of the coin as "focus on form" (FonF) and "focus on forms" (FonFs). The latter involves teaching individual linguistic items out of context as part of the lesson, as used in G-T, audiolingualism and the weak version of CLT. Alternatively, in FonF, linguistic items are noticed incidentally or arise out of a meaning-based activity (Klapper, 2006, p. 116). Thus, FonFs is a more traditional pedagogical approach represented by the presentation, practice and production (PPP) model (Fuente, 2006, p. 268) in which the lesson follows this three-stage sequence. After tutors have identified their students' linguistic and learning needs, they draw the latter's attention to a specific form, structure (Klapper, 2006, p. 115), vocabulary or phrase through meaningful context to avoid unnecessary switches to the L1. Presentations can involve flashcards, PowerPoint presentations, dialogues and textbook readings, to mention a few, which help students assimilate words and phrases (Barnes *et al*., 2009, p. 69). Using question-and-answer techniques or repetition, tutors can drive the learners to produce the forms and structures learned under tight control (Klapper, 2006, p. 115). As can easily be predicted, this is a teacher-centred stage where the correction of errors is vital (English Raven, 2011).

The second stage is essential, where students internalise the language structure or form presented in the first stage and acquire confidence in the target language to

prepare for the third stage. Although this stage is also teacher led, this control gradually eases, leaving learners to practise, initially with controlled exercises (such as matching parts of a sentence or completing sentences) and later with less-controlled activities (such as dialogues with a classmate using pictures or other resources) or controlled role-play (Klapper, 2006, p. 115). At this stage, teachers still correct any errors; at the same time, through these activities, they can measure the students' accuracy (English Raven, 2011).

In the third stage, the learners have to consolidate what they have acquired during the previous stages. Therefore, they are no longer "controlled" by tutors but left free and encouraged to practise what they have learned and if possible, apply it to other contexts. Although this "methodological scheme, which is found in numerous language textbooks, has for some time been the stock-in-trade of many language trainers" (Klapper, 2006, p. 115), it has been criticised for being too teacher oriented and overly controlled (English Raven, 2011). Moreover, PPP gives the students an illusion of mastery because they can produce the language form in the classroom, but once outside the classroom, they cannot do so (Fuente, 2006, p. 269). Sometimes, the students cannot even use the "acquired" form in their classroom on a different occasion, which implies that the language forms have not entered the learners' interlanguage (Klapper, 2006, p. 115). This drawback has caused researchers to question the effectiveness of the PPP methodology in CLT. These concerns led to a search for a better methodology to provide the formal accuracy needed, but in a different paradigm.

By and large, various experiments to test the effectiveness of FFI showed that grammatical form was amenable to instruction, particularly when "learners were developmentally ready to acquire the target structure", and the freshly acquired knowledge was often long lasting but powerless to modify the acquisition order (Ellis, 1991, p. 2).

2.5.6 Task-Based Instruction

During the 1970s, there were continuous efforts to support CLT. As already stated, at that time, the idea that naturalistic input and output were prerequisites for language development emerged from this teaching approach. Nonetheless, the

importance of advancing the structural development of the language was also acknowledged. In a move that brought a radical change to pedagogic development, N. S. Prabhu proposed using task-based learning for FL teaching (Skehan, 2003, p. 1). In his educational project in Bangalore, Southern India, Prabhu theorised that his students in secondary schools could learn language structures without focusing directly on them. Therefore, he promoted the idea that the emphasis in class had to be on meaning, but the students would also learn structures through incidental learning (Harmer, 2000, p. 35) by performing tasks. Tasks are activities that "require learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective" (Bygate *et al.*, 2001, p. 11). As a result, Prabhu assumed that through a series of tasks and problem-solving activities (e.g., finding the way on a map, interpreting timetables or conducting an interview), learners would come into contact with the target language, such that while finding solutions to the tasks, they would be acquiring the target language (Harmer, 2000, p. 35). Well-timed feedback and the promotion of indices for negotiation (see "conversational modifications" in subsection 2.4.4, Socio-constructivism: interactionist) would enhance the acquisition process. Moreover, within this learning task, Long (see subsection 2.5.5, Form-focused instruction) noted the need for a "focus on form" to give language forms some priority without interrupting the naturalness of communication, leading to enhanced language development and thus increased accuracy, complexity and fluency (Skehan, 2003, p. 1). Hence, task-based learning is a refinement of CLT because it incorporates SLA principles into FFI theoretical insights. Therefore, its:

> proponents believe the communicative interaction characteristics of task-based work provide sufficient comprehensible input to "trigger" acquisitional processes … [but] insist that acquisition needs to be supported by instruction that ensures a certain attention to linguistic form, that initial fluency work should lead gradually to accuracy-focused activities (Klapper, 2006, p. 117).

Virginia Samuda (2001) suggested that in task-based instruction (TBI), the class should follow an interlocking three-stage sequence: input data, operations on data and outcomes. The output from each stage will serve as the input for the next stage, leading to a "meaning→form →meaning progression, that seeks to manage shifts in attentional focus as the task unfolds" (p. 121). Another tripartite structure approach, advocated by Jane Willis (1996, p. 38), follows this sequence: pre-task, task cycle and language focus. In the pre-task, the topic and task are introduced, the learners are exposed to the target language by listening to a recording of others doing the same task, or the tutor can

highlight useful words and phrases or read part of a text to lead to a task. Afterwards, the task is performed (second stage of the task cycle) in pairs or small groups, while the teacher monitors and encourages students. Then students prepare an oral or written report on the task, and the teacher helps them refine the report. Subsequently, the groups present their reports to their peers or exchange written reports, and the tutor acts as a chairperson and comments on the reports. In the third stage (language focus), the text that was read is analysed or the recording is transcribed. The specific features of the language used are discussed. This step is followed by practising new words, phrases and patterns, with a lot of emphasis on noticing.

However, all of these activities and tasks imply a more difficult role for the teacher. Apart from choosing tasks "based on an analysis of students' needs, that are appropriate to [their] level" (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 156), the tutor should be ready to help in a spur-of-the-moment interaction, which "presupposes a broader type of readiness for almost anything to occur, compared to the more comfortable ability to prepare for the pre-ordained structure-of-the-day" (Skehan, 2003, p. 11). This is one of the reasons why certain teachers "shy away" from this method; consequently, TBI is not widely used.

Moreover, the tasks themselves had been critiqued. Sheen (1994, p. 142) argued that tasks were still input dominated, the approach was controlled by Krashen's theories, and TBI's effectiveness remained to be proven by studies, especially when compared to traditional approaches such as PPP. Some scholars contended that since the students engaged immediately in communication, this approach was inadequate for beginners without sufficient linguistic support, since generally they were unprepared to produce such language output (Klapper, 2006, p. 120). Other researchers pointed out this method's predominant focus on oral expression (Bruton, 2005, p. 57). Another criticism was that during oral interactions, "since the students [were] in classes [that were] strictly homogeneous for native language, they tend[ed] to get masses of non-native input which [would] tend to confirm their own interlanguage hypotheses" (Lightbown, 1991, p. 208). Furthermore, the listening and reading materials used in TBI might be structurally or lexically limited, and language structures would not be covered

adequately without a linguistic syllabus (Klapper, 2006, p. 120). Klapper (2006) also argued that:

> TBI fail[ed] to take much account of cognitive views of the language learning process, neglecting the roles of declarative knowledge and proceduralisation in the mistaken belief that tasks [were] not only a necessary but also a sufficient condition of SLA (p. 120).

2.5.7 Other Methods

Alternative approaches have also been developed, including total physical response (TPR), the silent way, the natural approach, and suggestopedia, but many of them were never widely adapted. Nonetheless, some of them still contributed to the field of language teaching (for more details on some of the contributions, see Richards and Rodgers, 2001), although many had a short shelf life (Brandl, 2007, p. 5).

2.5.8 Considerations about Influential Approaches and Methods of Language Teaching

As indicated earlier, Rivers (1981, p. 27) recommended that language teachers should reflect on any proposed method to determine its objectives, practicality and adaptability; adequacy for their teaching situations and the type of learners; and their ability to handle the demands of working with a particular teaching method when considering their teaching load. However, to do so, teachers should be aware of the influential approaches and methods in language teaching. Nonetheless, were the MSL teachers at the DLL trained in these approaches, or were their teaching methods based on a trial-and-error or a hit-and-miss system? Therefore, in both the questionnaire and the interviews, teachers of both MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses were asked about these issues. Different questions were asked about the methods employed by the teachers to analyse the practices prevailing during the period of the study and to take note of the learners' and teachers' perceived needs.

Another element that is specifically linked to SLA theories and influential approaches and language teaching involves the syllabi. Generally, different types of teaching methods have different syllabi. Since two subsections in each research instrument are devoted to syllabi, it is worth reviewing the related terminologies and different perspectives of scholars specialising in this area. The next section starts with a discussion of the difference between curricula and syllabi, followed by a description of

different types of syllabi, which in turn will help in the analysis of the findings retrieved from the syllabi subsection of this study's research instruments.

2.6 Curriculum vs. syllabus

In some countries, certain institutions do not differentiate between the terms *curriculum* and *syllabus*. However, it is useful to make the distinction because a single curriculum can serve as the basis of a variety of syllabi with defined audiences, needs and objectives (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 35). In fact, according to them:

> a curriculum contains a broad description of general goals by indicating an overall educational-cultural philosophy, which applies across subjects, together with a theoretical orientation to language and language learning with respect to the subject matter at hand. A curriculum is often reflective of national and political trends as well (p. 34).

Conversely, a syllabus had been described as "the specification of aims and the selection and grading of content to be used as a basis for planning … courses" (Newby, 2000, p. 590). Similarly, the focal point of a syllabus is "what is taught" and in "what order it is taught" (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 54). Breen (1987a, p. 82) argued along the same lines and defined a syllabus as "what [would] be achieved through teaching and learning". It is also "a more detailed and operational statement of teaching and learning elements, which translates the philosophy of the curriculum into a series of planned steps leading towards more narrowly defined objectives at each level" (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 35).

According to Dublin and Olshtain (1986), the syllabus is the document with which policymakers "convey information to teachers, textbook writers, examination committees, and learners concerning the programs" (p. 28). They insisted that this document, sometimes named "plan", "curriculum", "course outline", etc., often failed to provide the necessary information because it might be too generic, leaving the teachers and learners without specific direction. This could lead to "a lack of cohesiveness in materials and examinations used within the system" (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 28). On the other hand, they asserted that an elaborate and detailed syllabus could contain problems in some of its components, such as unrealistic goals; in other cases, no syllabus existed. Furthermore, a section of the curriculum or syllabus "should reflect the philosophical approach and educational approach that guided the policy-makers" (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 28). Upon examination of such an approach, it is

recommended that decision makers question the continued suitability of syllabi to current learners' needs, learning materials and teacher training.

Therefore, a curriculum provides a statement of policy, generally with abstract general goals. In fact, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) of Malta envisages "a higher quality in the learning programmes and in the pedagogy with the scope of attracting learners to lifelong learning" (NCF, 2012, p. 31). On the other hand, a syllabus specifies details of course content. For this reason, one of the major tasks of syllabus designers is to turn the curriculum's abstract goals into concrete objectives in the syllabus (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 40). A syllabus is vital in providing transparency, since it clarifies the course objectives, contents and teaching methods to the parties concerned; in regularising teaching and learning, amongst other things; and in providing uniformity and guidance by offering the methodology for the content to be taught (Newby, 2000, p. 591). Breen (1987a, p. 82) also highlighted the importance of a syllabus because it would "provide an accessible framework of the knowledge and skills on which teachers and learners [would] work" and would offer a plan for teaching and learning, thus giving its learners direction and continuity. It represents a retrospective description of what has been done, ensures accountability to the parties concerned and helps with evaluation. To be ecologically valid, a syllabus must harmonise with (1) the wider language curriculum, (2) the language classroom and its participants and (3) the educational institution and the broader society (Breen, 1987a, p. 82).

According to Newby (2000, p. 590), a syllabus could be explicit, that is, exist as a separate document, while in some cases, it may be implicit. A case in point is a syllabus embedded in a textbook that emerges after a detailed observation of categories in the table of contents. To discuss this issue in more detail, the next sections deal with different types of syllabi, which in turn will help in the analysis of findings from the data retrieved from the syllabus subsection of the research instruments.

2.6.1 Types of Syllabi

Various scholars have distinguished amongst the different types of syllabi. Wilkins (1976) differentiated between analytic and synthetic syllabi. In the latter, "different parts of language are taught separately and step by step, so that acquisition is

a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up" (Wilkins, 1976, p. 2). The structural/grammatical/formal syllabus and the situational syllabus, amongst others, are considered synthetic types. Alternatively, the analytic syllabus is "organised in terms of the purposes for which people are learning the language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to meet those purposes" (Wilkins, 1976, p. 13). Therefore, this type of syllabus does not focus on the grammar system but on the communicative purposes. For this reason, amongst others, the task-based syllabus is considered an analytic type. In contrast, Nunan (1988, p. 27) categorised syllabi into product-oriented or process-oriented types. The first type focuses on the knowledge and skills the learners should acquire as a result of instruction; this type includes the structural/grammatical/formal, the situational and the notional-functional syllabi. The second type, which focuses on the learning experience, includes the task-based and the negotiated syllabi. White (1988, p. 44) distinguished between type A and type B syllabi. Type A has "an interventionist approach which gives priority to the pre-specification of linguistic or other content or skill objectives" (White, 1988, p. 45). Therefore, the criteria and content of what is to be learned are "a gift to the learner from the teacher or knower" (White, 1988, p. 44); this type includes the structural/grammatical/formal and the situational syllabi. On the contrary, type B does not view the teacher as the knowing expert but is concerned with how the language is learned and amalgamated with the learners' experiences (Abbaspour *et al*., 2012, p. 65); this type includes the task-based and the negotiated syllabi.

2.6.2 Structural/Grammatical/Formal Syllabus

The language content of a structural syllabus, also referred to as "formal" or "grammatical", consists of forms and structures sequenced in the order they should be taught. A positive point of this type of syllabus is its capability to account for all forms of a language and link them in a coherent way (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 56). According to Ellis (1993), it is probably one of the most common types of syllabi used, but its main problem is that of *learnability,* "the extent to which it is possible for learners to learn the structures they are taught" (p. 91). This point was also echoed by Robinson (2009): "SLA research has shown that the additive 'accumulation' of increasingly complex and accurate grammatical structures in a linear sequence is not what happens during SL

development, but this is what a structural syllabus would seem to predicate as evidence of learning in classrooms that employ it" (p. 296). Similarly, Klapper (2006, p. 67) argued that categorising the syllabus around grammar would repeat the errors of the G-T approach, where students would learn grammar but would lack fluency in speaking and writing. However, for Nunan (1988, p. 33), one way to overcome such problems is to expose learners to naturalistic samples of text, from which students are formally obliged to learn the grammatical items indicated in the syllabus; at the same time, the naturalistic samples of text would provide a richer context for learning.

2.6.3 Notional/Functional Syllabus

Until the early 1970s, the majority of syllabi were structural, consisting of lists of formal items to be mastered by the learners. However, as previously discussed (see subsection 2.5.4, Communicative language teaching), after the mid-1970s, due to the changes in methodological principles, language learning became associated with the principles of CLT (Newby, 2000, p. 592), and the notional/functional syllabus was created by D. A. Wilkins (1976). This type of syllabus (alternatively termed notional or notional/functional) does not present the material in an additive way like that of the structural form but "moves from general sets of functions to more specific functions, and from the most common linguistic realisations of certain functions to more varied or 'refined' realisations of these functions. The 'notion' aspect is concerned with concepts such as "time, space, movement, cause and effect", while the 'function' later describes and classifies "the intentional or purposive use of language"" (White, 1988, p. 75). Nunan (1988a) defined functions as "the communicative purposes for which we [would] use language" and notions as "the conceptual meanings expressed through language" (p. 35). Similar notions and functions were presented in the Council of Europe's *Threshold Level 1990* written by van Ek and Trim (1990). Based on this publication, "sequencing is from the general to the particular or more precisely, cyclic in nature" (Breen, 1987a, p. 89). However, the methodology employed was still PPP (Abbaspour *et al*., 2012, p. 67).

Research suggests that organising the language content in such a way is viewed as more relevant to what the learners "will need eventually to do with the language once they have learned it" (Widdowson 1990, p. 131), thus reflecting Wilkins' (1976)

ideology: "the process of deciding what to teach is based on consideration of what the learner should most usefully be able to communicate" (p. 19). However, a common critique for such syllabi is that it is problematic to determine the notions and functions of certain individuals (Long and Crookes, 1993, p. 16). For Widdowson (1990, p. 130), this type of syllabus is no more communicative than a structural one because communication is achieved according to the classroom activities, not how the syllabus is organised. Similarly, Nunan (1988) emphasised that "in courses based on principles of a communicative language teaching, it is important that these principles are reflected, not only in curriculum documents and syllabus plans, but also in classroom activities, patterns of classroom interaction, and in tests of communicative performance" (p. 8). Those students who attend a course based on a notional/functional syllabus and who do not complete it "will still be able to take away with them something useful in the form of a limited communicative ability in [the language studied]" (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 57).

Nevertheless, in theory, the structural and functional syllabi do not conflict with each other but are mutually complementary because:

> the functional perspective of a functional syllabus develops the structural syllabus by incorporating into it a component which is sensitive to the learners' communicative needs and provides them with units of communication as well as units of language form (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 57).

2.6.4 Situational and Topic Syllabi

The organising principle in a situational syllabus is the selection and grading of real-world situations (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 57), with the aim of teaching language that occurs in particular situations, such as at the grocer. A particular situation generally "involves several participants who are engaged in some activity in a specific setting. The language occurring in the situation involves a number of functions, combined into a plausible segment of discourse" (Reilly, 1988, p. 1). Generally, the situations are presented in the form of dialogues and role-plays. The dialogues are generally used at the beginning of the lesson, usually including listening, memorisation and role-play simulation, where the learners supply or fill in much of the language used in a particular situation (Abbaspour *et al.*, 2012, p. 67). One of the advantages of such a syllabus is that of tapping into students' knowledge of the world, making it more realistic and

motivating (Finch, 2000). However, it has two limitations: first, it is too tied to specific situations, and second, it is difficult to ensure that the structure of the language is adequately covered (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 57). These points were also reiterated by Finch (2000), who wrote about the topic-based syllabus sharing the same motivational potential of the situational syllabus. However, Finch maintained that both "[would] share the difficulties of defining and distinguishing situations and topics, dealing with the broadness of the concepts in materials design, predicting grammatical form, and grading and sequencing of content" (2000, p. 1). However, Abbaspour, Rajaee Nia and Zare (2012, p. 67) argued that this type of syllabus could serve as a foundation for other syllabi, such as the structural or notional/functional types.

2.6.5 Skill-Based Syllabus

A skill-based syllabus offers a collection of particular language skills that may play a role in language use. Since its aim is for students to learn specific skills, it groups "linguistic competencies (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and discourse) together into generalized types of behaviour, such as listening to spoken language for the main idea, writing well-formed paragraphs, giving effective oral presentations, and so on" (Reilly, 1988, p. 1).

This type of syllabus focuses on learning specific language skills. Its advantages (Richards, 2001, cited in Abbaspour *et al*., 2012, p. 73) include the use of each skill learned, applying it to many other situations and focusing on behaviour and performance. However, this type is criticised for being too limited in scope (Auerbach, 1986), and since it lists skills and micro-skills, teachers have little or no guidance in the selection of texts to use for learners' practice (Willis *et al*., 2005).

2.6.6 Task-Based Syllabus

The task-based syllabus, with Krashen's acquisition theory as its underlying primary learning principle (Krahnke, 1987, p. 59), intends to "organise and present what is to be achieved through teaching and learning in terms of *how* a learner may engage his or her communicative competence in undertaking a range of tasks" (Breen, 1987b, p. 160). This type of syllabus starts with a needs analysis to elicit a list of tasks in real-life situations (Nunan, 2001, cited in Abbaspour *et al*., 2012, p. 67). In fact, the "content is a

series of tasks that learners need to perform with the language they are learning" (Krahnke, 1987, p. 17). Advocates maintain that it motivates the learners through the use of real-life needs as learning experiences (Krahnke, 1987, p. 61), and task-based syllabi are ideal for learners with well-defined purposes, such as those attending ESL courses, helping students acquire the language instead of merely learning it (Abbaspour et al., 2012, p. 76). Conversely, Krahnke (1987, p. 61) pointed out that such syllabi would require a high level of creativity and initiative from the teacher, and the evaluation of such tasks could be difficult.

2.6.7 Combination of Syllabus Types

Although the list presented here is not exhaustive, it covers the main types of syllabi. However, certain institutions or course designers do not abide by one type of syllabus but adapt to their respective learning and teaching scenarios. In fact, Dublin and Olshtain (1986, p. 38) argued that course designers might also consider using different types of approaches to bring about positive change. Indeed, a course designer might deem it necessary that for the first few years of a course, a structural/situational syllabus might be useful, then it could move on to "a functional plan, followed by a notional/skill combination, leading to a full communicative design for the final [part] of the course" (Olshtain 1986, p. 38). Reilly (1988) argued along the same lines, stating that all actual language syllabi would use a combination of two or more syllabus types; therefore, "in discussing syllabus choice and design, it should be kept in mind that the issue [would] not [be] which type to choose but which types, and how to relate them to each other" (p. 1). Similarly, Klapper (2006, p. 131) mentioned that on the whole, advanced courses in higher education [would be] set up according to topics or themes. At the beginner and intermediate levels, the most common syllabus would remain structural, "even though it [might] sometimes be slightly camouflaged by additional functional and communicative elements" (Klapper, 2006, p. 131).

Furthermore, as already indicated, certain types of syllabi (such as the process syllabus) do not focus on what is taught and its order but on the learning process, involving continuous negotiations amongst the learners themselves and between the learners and their teacher to determine the course direction. Therefore, the focus is on the "process rather than the product" (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 54). Related to this

issue, Yalden (1983) earlier defined a syllabus as "replac[ing] the concept of 'method', ... an instrument by which the teacher, with the help of the syllabus designer, [could] achieve a degree of 'fit' between the needs and aims of the learner (as social being and as individual) and the activities which [would] take place in the classroom" (p. 14).

2.6.8 Considerations about Syllabi

Given this background, Newby's suggestion (2000, p. 591) was helpful; he claimed that an important step in syllabus design would be a needs analysis, from which the learners' needs for the target language could be elicited. In such exercises, amongst other things, the researcher could extract the situations and domains where the learners could use the language, the topics to be included, the skills needed by the learners, their desired achievement levels and the methodology with which they would wish to be taught. Moreover, in a needs analysis, apart from the learners, teachers and sometimes employers could also serve as informants. Another source of input would be the theoretical aspect, such as methodology or current thinking in education, which would be mirrored in the content specifications (Newby, 2000). In an earlier study, Brown (1995, p. 35) viewed needs analysis "as the basis for developing tests, materials, teaching activities, and evaluation strategies, as well as for re-evaluating the precision accuracy of the original needs assessment". Therefore, as Long (2005, p. 2) pointed out, familiarity with the history of a needs analysis (already noted in the first part of the literature review; see section 2.3, Needs analysis) would help avoid repeating past mistakes or reinventing the wheel. However, before ending this literature review and proceeding to the methodology chapter, it is essential to discuss issues related to learning materials, especially coursebooks, due to their particularly vital role in teaching and learning in the Maltese scenario.

2.7 Coursebooks and other learning materials

Coursebooks include not only textbooks and workbooks, but also other materials offered as a package by the publisher, such as recordings or visual materials (Woodward, 2001, p. 145). Ur (1996, p. 183) listed three perspectives about the usage of coursebooks: in some places they would be taken for granted, in others they would

not be used at all, and an in-between approach would use them selectively while extensively supplementing them with other materials.

Many teachers and course organisers consider coursebooks an essential component because they can be varied and valuable resources for teaching (Tudor, 1996, p. 75). Traditionally valued as an essential element in teaching and learning, the coursebook "is an almost universal element" and "no teaching‑learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook" (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, p. 315).

Coursebooks offer significant assistance for both students and teachers. They help teachers manage their lessons by giving direction, facilitating lesson delivery, serving as a source for homework, leading discussions and encouraging confidence and security. They also guide the teacher and provide a supportive environment during the disruptive and threatening process of change (for example, the introduction of new elements, including methodologies, areas of interest, approaches to syllabus design and concepts) because they introduce change gradually in a structured framework, thereby helping the teacher cope with novel contents and procedures. Thus, the "good textbook, properly used, can provide an excellent vehicle for effective and long-lasting change" (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, p. 323). Coursebooks can also serve as a source of supplementary materials, provide insights for classroom activities or even function as the curriculum itself (Garinger, 2002, p. 1). Additionally, the coursebook is generally an inexpensive and attractive resource, saving teachers time because it provides ready-made teaching texts and materials (Ansary and Babaii, 2002, p. 2); it is also convenient to use because it is bound, easy to carry and does not depend on hardware or electricity supply (Ur, 1996, p. 184). Therefore, many teachers have come to rely on the contents of coursebooks, as no hard-pressed classroom teacher could match the quality of well-presented materials without enormous costs in time, money and effort.

Some students even argue that without a coursebook, their learning is not taken seriously [by their teachers] (Ansary and Babaii, 2002, p. 1; Ur, 1996, p. 193), and some learners think that published material is more reliable than teacher-generated material (Sheldon, 1988, p. 237). They regard the coursebook as a helpful guide to learning, both inside and outside the classroom (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, p. 318), which gives

them a sense of progress because they can see what and how much they have accomplished in a course (Woodward, 2001, p. 146). Given a coursebook, a student who has missed a lesson can catch up by reading and working through the missed activities. Any student who finds lessons difficult can prepare in advance (O'Neill, 1982, p. 105) or double check one's understanding afterwards. The coursebook offers learning tools that are independent of the teacher's presence.

Notwithstanding these cited benefits of a good textbook, other researchers and language practitioners have reservations. One argument is that no single coursebook can cater equally to the requirements of every learning group, so they should be used judiciously (Williams, 1983, p. 251). In fact, Swan (1992, p. 1) believed that every coursebook would need adaptation and supplementation to make it suitable for a particular learning group because no coursebook could contain exactly what a specific individual or class would require. In fact, Masuhara (2011) wanted "coursebooks that [would be] so engaging, inspiring, flexible and effective that [he could] just teach without extra work" (p. 236). Moreover, some coursebooks have characters and situations that are inadequate for the particular learning group taught or are of no interest to the learners (Little *et al.*, 1995, p. 46). The coursebook should serve as a bridge for students because it is meant to facilitate learning, not to cause students to balk at it. Although the coursebook is designed for a general student audience, the class being taught is unique (Harmer, 2000, p. 258). O'Neill took the middle ground, arguing that while every learning group would have its own needs, there would often be "a common core of needs shared by a variety of groups in different places studying under different conditions at different times" (1982, p. 105).

Another criticism is that some teachers shirk from their responsibilities to take a critical approach in deciding what to teach and how to teach it, relying heavily on coursebooks instead (Swan, 1992, p. 1). Therefore, coursebooks can hinder teachers' creativity while providing the security, guidance and support for novice teachers, as they were designed to do.

Another practical problem is that some coursebooks are identified as 'beginner', 'intermediate' or 'advanced', without adequately describing the language levels of target groups (Sheldon, 1988, p. 239). Other books contain exercise pages without

sufficient writing space; some books omit a description of their course rationale that should state exactly who the target audience is or how the material is chosen and sequenced. Others contain textual density on each page for cost-effective reasons, while some teachers' handbooks are "a little more than the student editions with inserted keys" (Sheldon, 1988, p. 239).

Other scholars criticise coursebooks that do not contain authentic spoken and written language. The language presented is unnatural and does not sufficiently equip users with the vocabulary, language structure, grammar, expressions and conversational rules that are found in the real world. Some texts neither interest nor appeal to learners, while others are said to have inherent social and cultural biases. Many coursebooks contain extensive examples of stereotyping and gender bias (Litz, 2005, p. 7). The way the course materials are organised also affects learners. If the materials presented in the coursebook have the same pattern, the learner may get bored with the predictable lessons (Little *et al*., 1995, p. 46). On the other hand, the tutor's use of alternative resources poses the "risk that students will end up with an incoherent collection of bits and pieces of material" (Harmer, 2001, p. 305).

Moreover, some coursebooks are regarded as the "tainted end-product of an author's or a publisher's desire for quick profit" (Sheldon, 1988, p. 239). These coursebooks are marketed with great fanfare and grand claims yet tend to suffer many shortcomings (Litz, 2005, p. 8). Therefore, "coursebooks evoke a range of responses, but are frequently seen by teachers as necessary evils. Feelings fluctuate between the perception that they are valid, labour-saving tools, and the doleful belief that 'masses of rubbish [are] skilfully marketed'" (Brumfit, 1985, cited in Sheldon, 1988, p. 237).

Although many arguments are brought against coursebooks, they survive because they satisfy certain needs and prove the most convenient tools to provide the framework that the teaching and learning system requires (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, p. 317). A good coursebook should be as easy to use for the teachers as it is for the students. Its high-quality design, clarity and attractive appearance can help students, while the teacher's manual contains methodological guidance to help teachers operate more effectively (Henriques, 2009, p. 41). Before choosing a particular coursebook for a specific learning group, teachers and administrators should develop criteria to evaluate

all available (or at least affordable) coursebooks to find the one that best suits teachers and students linguistically, pedagogically, technically and structurally. The coursebook should "be at the service of teachers and learners but not their master" (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 7). Teachers should identify the coursebook's strengths and weaknesses and be ready to "take over where the textbook leaves off" (Williams, 1983, p. 254). Furthermore, the teachers are not the slaves of the coursebook:

> Teachers are trained professionals who know the capabilities of various classes and the objectives of their courses. The textbook provides the teacher with material which can be used in innumerable ways. It is essential to know what is in the textbook and to [be] able to select, omit, recombine, and supplement this material as the class situation indicates. The teacher should know the textbook well enough to be able to prepare students for what is coming, to refer quickly to other parts of the book when this is desirable, and to make up for any deficiencies (Rivers, 1981, p. 484).

Therefore, a systematic analysis of coursebooks is needed, not only to choose the most suitable one, but also to pinpoint its deficiencies so that the teachers could compensate with other materials.

Although different arguments are in favour of or against the use of coursebooks, they could have a vital role in SL or FL teaching and learning. They will continue to be used by the majority of teachers and students. In many instances, however, textbook selection is based on personal preference and may be affected by factors unrelated to instructional methods, such as limited budget, availability or awareness of available coursebooks (Garinger, 2002, p. 1). Some teachers are unaware of the existence of coursebook evaluation checklists and base their choices on the simplistic criteria of popularity, reasoning that if the coursebook is doing well in sales, then it must be effective. About 25 years ago, they would have been partially correct in doing so due to the limited literature on coursebook evaluation schemes back then. In fact, at that time, Sheldon (1988, p. 240) noted the scarcity of published materials for the interested teacher to check. However, Skierso (1991, p. 432) pointed out that before beginning the process of evaluation, one would need to establish the basis of comparison; thus, preliminary information would be needed about the audience, the teacher, the syllabus and the institution. From the audience, one could get an idea of the learners' backgrounds, learning aims and above all, the topics that interested them most. The topics "[might] come from questionnaires administered to potential students of the same

age group and interests as well as from open discussions with students at a similar level" (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 109). Regarding the teachers, Skierso (1991, p. 433) indicated that if the school board or the state would choose a coursebook, it would be important to obtain information on each instructor's linguistic background, training and preparation to disclose the text requirements. An experienced teacher can adapt to the learners' needs, but in many cases, a novice teacher "needs a text that has many and varied exercises to choose from and materials that are heavily annotated with suggestions for their use" (Ariew, 1982, p. 18, cited in Skierso, 1991, p. 433). A review of the course syllabus will reveal the required contents and presentation of the materials, and the information "concerning the basic linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical principles underlying methods of language teaching will have to be specified" (Skierso, 1991, p. 434).

Thus, teachers have to assess the coursebook being used and analyse the learners' needs and the aims of the syllabus to supplement the book with other learning materials. This approach will help learners feel interested and stay motivated. Moreover, the "interest" factor is also important for learning materials (Crooks and Schmidt, 1991, p. 491). Although "at [the] minimum, research on learning styles should make us sceptical of claims that a single teaching method or textbook will suit the needs of all learners" (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 59), Littlemore (2002, cited in Klapper, 2006) provided a list to help all language practitioners create interesting teaching materials to accommodate different learning styles at some particular time:

1. Use visual aids: illustrations, photographs, maps, diagrams, videos and films.
2. Encourage visualisation, generating and manipulating mental imagery.
3. Provide concrete examples to be reinforced by student-generated ones.
4. Make use of metaphor, analogy and paradox.
5. Employ language that makes a topic come alive.
6. Help students make connections between ideas.
7. Link the materials to students' lives and interests.
8. Provide opportunities for experimental, hands-on learning.
9. Make use of graphic organisers (flow charts, timelines, etc.).
10. Provide opportunities for multi-sensory learning.
11. Encourage creative writing.
12. Use music.
13. Employ creative dramatics such as simulation and role-playing.
14. Use video interactivity (prediction, empathy, etc.).

15. Use the total physical response approach (physically acting out the language) (p. 92).

2.7.1 Considerations on Coursebooks and other Learning Materials

This discussion about coursebooks and learning materials reveals varying perspectives of different researchers. For Harmer (2000, p. 258), typically, the coursebook is designed for a general audience, but every class is unique. Thus, it is essential to investigate what learners and teachers think of the learning materials in the course. Are some of Littlemore's (2002) suggestions being used in these courses when teaching the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)? When considering the teachers' backgrounds and training, do teachers and their learners need coursebooks and/or other learning materials to supplement the current teaching practices? In both research instruments in this PhD dissertation, the teachers and the learners of both courses were asked about these issues so as to analyse the practices employed during the period covered in the study and to take note of the learners' and teachers' perceived needs.

2.8 Conclusion

After reviewing the difference between SL and FL learning, the literature shows that the environment helps the SL learner a great deal. Since one can find an Anglophone everywhere in Malta, it is interesting to establish whether this is also the case in MFL courses (defined in this thesis as Maltese taught to foreigners in Malta by Maltese teachers). As shown in the courses' description, the two courses at the DLL are aimed at adult learners over the age of fifteen. Adult learners have their own characteristics, including experiences, values, different learning patterns, personalities and motivations, along with personal circumstances and limitations that may hinder SL learning. Course coordinators and teachers should gather information about their learners through needs analysis to obtain adequate information to teach students better as individuals by using the right syllabus, different learning activities and suitable learning materials. The literature also shows that when developing new programmes, it is essential to assess, improve on or remedy shortcomings in those currently used. In this doctoral thesis, the focus on needs analysis emerges from the literature surveyed.

This needs analysis should cover the existing syllabus, teacher and learner populations, teaching methods, learning materials and resources, and in the teachers' case, teacher training. The literature also shows that triangulation is necessary when different sources and instruments are used; thus, because different sources were used in this study, triangulation by source and method was applied in the needs analysis.

This literature survey shows that different SLA theories lead to different pedagogical approaches, which in turn lead to the development of different types of syllabi, teaching methods and learning materials. The behaviourist theory perceives language acquisition as the transfer of habits; however, innatism regards language acquisition as a mental process. Klapper (2006, p. 46) indicated that these contrasting views had brought researchers to a point somewhere in between these two extreme positions. In the cognitive tradition, learning is considered a complex skill, in which learners practise subskills until they arrive at an automatic performance; additionally, restructuring can occur during the learning process. In the interactionist theory, researchers emphasise the importance of opportunities to activate learners' knowledge through language production. Although SLA theories agree that learners must be exposed to comprehensive input to acquire the SL, the interactionists emphasise the importance of two-way communication. As the literature shows, different influential approaches and methods, the majority of which emerged from these SLA theories, affect not only classroom delivery but also the learning materials. Some of these methods include the following:

- grammar-translation – teaching grammar and bilingual vocabulary lists while practising translation and neglecting oral communication skills;
- direct method – listening to the target language and expressing oneself in it;
- audiolingualisim – habit formation through aural-oral practice through stimulus, response and reinforcement;
- communicative language teaching – in the strong version, the learner uses the language to learn, while the weak version provides more structured classroom activities to learn the target language;
- form-focused instruction – can be amalgamated with any of the previous approaches, with FonF focusing on form in context and FonFs focusing on forms out of context; and

- task-based instruction – activities in which learners interact with the target language while focusing mainly on meaning.

Different types of syllabi emerged from these influential approaches:

- Structural/grammatical/formal – consists of forms and structures sequenced in the order to be taught;
- notion/functional – moves from general sets of functions to more specific ones;
- situational/topic – comprises topics specific to teaching language;
- skill-based – focuses on learning specific language skills;
- task-based – contains a series of tasks to perform within the target language; and
- combination – mixes different types of syllabi.

In many language courses, coursebooks (textbooks and workbooks) and other learning materials (recordings and visual aids) complement these syllabi and teaching methods to assist learners and teachers in their learning/teaching ventures. As observed in this literature survey, different arguments are made in favour of and against coursebooks; however, coursebooks can have a vital role in instruction. The learning materials created by language practitioners must be interesting and accommodate different learning styles (Littlemore, 2002).

As indicated in the introduction to this thesis, I was not trained in SL teaching but in teaching Maltese to natives. However, the two-year period in which I taught Maltese to foreigners provided different experiences and challenges to be overcome. Because prior experience could bias research, information for this study was gathered from various sources using different research instruments, all of which underwent reliability and validity checks. The preceding literature review was also vital for various reasons. It provided an overview of SLA theories and methodologies, updated my pre-existing beliefs and helped with critical self-questioning, aided in the formulation of questions for this study's instruments and provided theoretical support during the discussion of the data analysis and interpretation.

This discussion of the literature helps provide a theoretical framework for SL teaching and learning practices. It also forms a basis for discovering the philosophies underpinning different teaching and learning scenarios, syllabi, methods and learning materials used in courses, which in turn help evaluate the MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses at

the DLL. Because this evaluation depends on the creation of specifically designed instruments, the next chapter discusses the research design and methodology.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the paradigms that influenced this research to provide a better understanding of why a certain methodology was employed to carry out this study. Thus, this chapter focuses on the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. It also presents the research design adapted in this study that was guided by the research paradigms. The data collection process and analysis are also discussed. Lastly, the ethical issues are addressed to show how all the participants' privacy and anonymity were taken into consideration, how access to the field was granted, written consent was obtained, and the recoded interview data were preserved in a safe place.

3.1 Research paradigms

Paradigms are ways of conceiving the world because they "are patterns of beliefs and practices that regulate inquiry within [a] discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished" (Weaver and Olson, 2006, p. 460). Every paradigm has its approach in answering the ontological question (i.e., the nature of reality), as well as its own epistemological assumptions (i.e., the relationship of the researcher with what is being researched) and particular research designs associated with it. However, Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated:

> Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which [they] define as the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways (p. 105).

For this reason, it is important to question the research paradigm of a study.

In the case of this doctoral research, two paradigms guided this investigation: the positivist and the interpretative types. Quantitative research methods are associated with the philosophical foundations of the positivist paradigm, while the qualitative methodology relates to the interpretative paradigm. The positivist view is more objective, in which one truth exists, while for the interpretative view, many truths and realities exist, with different persons having various needs and perceptions. Moreover, the interpretative paradigm's methodological approaches are associated more with providing an opportunity for research participants to be heard (Weaver and Olson, 2006, p. 463). As Patton (2002) stated, interviews yield "direct quotations from people about

their experience, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (p. 4). Harre (1981, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985) thought along the same lines:

> Where positivism is concerned with surface events or appearances, the [qualitative] paradigm takes a deeper look. Where positivism is atomistic, the new paradigm establishes meaning inferentially. Where positivism sees its central purpose to be prediction, the [qualitative] paradigm is concerned with understanding (p. 30).

The next section explains how both paradigms were used in this PhD dissertation. Their mixed methods help provide the ability to statistically analyse the data retrieved from the questionnaires from all sources, while deepening them with the face-to-face, semi-structured interviews.

3.2 Research methodology

Traditionally, many research traditions have distinguished between quantitative and qualitative research. According to Patton (2002), qualitative methods assist in studying details and issues in depth, while quantitative methods use standardised measures "to fit varying perspectives and experiences of people into a limited number of predetermined response categories, to which numbers are assigned" (p. 14). Furthermore, with a quantitative approach, the researcher can measure the reactions of a large number of people "to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and aggregation of data, [which] … gives a broad, generalizable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously" (Patton, 2002, p. 14). On the other hand, qualitative methods give a wealth of detailed information about a smaller number of people, which helps provide a deeper understanding of the situation but reduces generalisability (Patton, 2002, p. 14). Wimmer and Dominick (1994) also indicated this point: "whereas quantitative researchers strive for breadth, qualitative researchers strive for depth" (p. 140). Moreover, quantitative research is described as controlled, objective, outcome oriented and assumes the existence of 'facts' that are external to and independent of the researcher, while qualitative research assumes that all knowledge is relative, "that there is a subjective element to all knowledge and research, and that holistic, ungeneralisable studies, are justifiable" (Nunan, 1992, p. 3).

Mixed research is "recognised as the third major research approach or research paradigm, along with qualitative and quantitative research. [It is] an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple view points,

perspectives, positions and standpoints" (Burke Johnson *et al.*, 2007, pp. 112–113). Thus, it is a type of research in which a researcher combines elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain "breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (Burke Johnson *et al.*, 2007, p. 123). Citing different theoretical sources, Greene *et al.* (1989) listed five purposes of mixed-method evaluation designs:

> 1) triangulation, which seeks convergence, corroboration and correspondence of results from different methods;
> 2) complementarity, where elaboration, enhancement, illustration and clarification of results from one method are combined with the results from the other method;
> 3) development, which seeks to use the results from one method to help develop or inform the other;
> 4) initiation, which helps discover paradox and contradiction, gives new perspectives and helps in the recasting of questions or results from one method with those from the other; and
> 5) expansion, which extends the breadth and range of inquiry (p. 259).

The advantage of triangulation was also echoed by Patton (2002): "Studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method than studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks" (p. 248).

This research simultaneously employed quantitative and qualitative methods, with limited interactions between the two sources of information during the data collection stage, but the findings complemented each other at the data interpretation stage (Morse, 1991, cited in Burke Johnson *et al.*, 2007, p. 115). The mixed methods were not aimed at triangulation in any positivist sense and there is no claim to the research being able to arrive at "objective truths". However since this is the first PhD dissertation addressing MSL in Malta, the mixed research methods and different sources were employed to obtain richly illuminative insights into the phenomena being investigated, providing a detailed picture of the situation under study. Thus, this work offers indicative data that provides the first snapshot of MSL teaching and learning.

3.3 Research design

A needs analysis was conducted with the learning groups that were attending the MFL – MQF-1 and MFL – MQF-2 courses in 2012–2013, as well as with their teachers, to find out their perceived needs and suggestions in relation to MSL courses. The learners' needs in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods and materials were compared with their perceptions of what was being offered in the course they were attending to

determine if it satisfied their needs. Additionally, the teachers' perceived needs in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods and materials (and in some cases, including the teachers' perceptions of learners' needs) were compared with their perceptions of the courses that were then being offered by the DLL. The teachers' and the students' perceived needs and suggestions were also compared to gain insights into their similarities and differences. Its purpose was "to obtain a snapshot of conditions, attitudes, and/or events at a single point in time" (Nunan, 1992, p. 140), thus helping evaluate the whole system and pinpointing what should be amended in the teaching scenario. From the three possible points (West, 1994, p. 5) where a needs analysis could be carried out – before, at the start of and during the course – the last option was chosen because (as the literature review showed) of the participants' clearer perceptions at this stage; however, this brought about certain limitations (for more details, see section 7.3, Limitations of the study). In fact, this needs analysis was conducted in the last weeks before the end of the course.

Two sets of instruments were used in this study (questionnaires and interviews). As Brown (2007) explained:

> Language surveys are any survey research studies that gather data on the characteristics and views of informants about the nature of the language or language learning through the use of oral interviews or written questionnaires (p. 2).

For the first stage of the study, two questionnaires (one each for teachers and learners) were used to investigate their perceptions of the MSL courses at the DLL and some of the participants' needs and suggestions. At the second stage, these were complemented by semi-structured interviews, which sought more in-depth, qualitative information. These courses were intended for adults; therefore, the learners comprised the 15+ age group.

A schematic diagram (Figure 2) represents the research design.
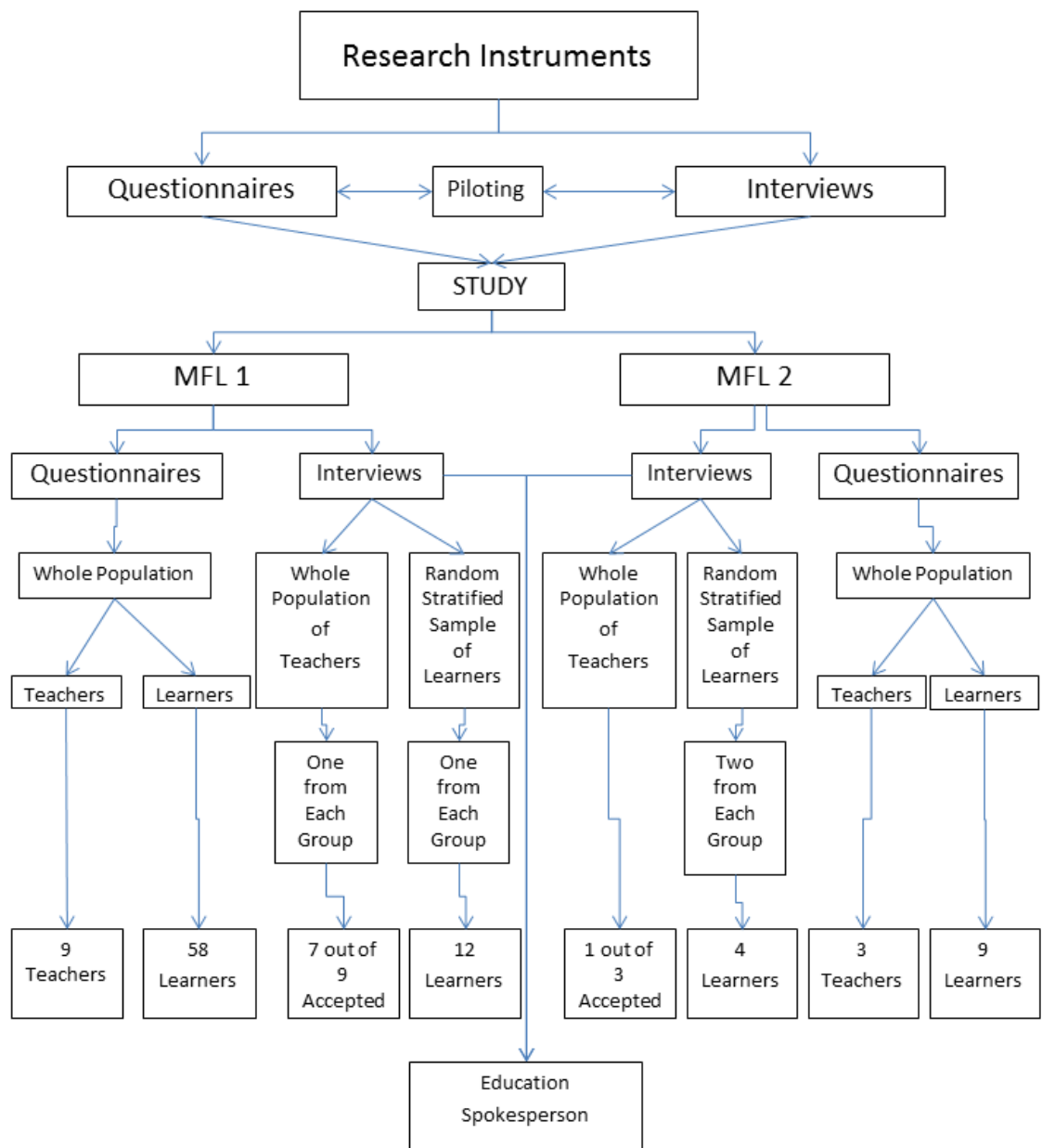
Figure 2. Research design

3.4 Questionnaire design

As indicated in the literature review, Dublin and Olshtain (1986, p. 27) recommended that before creating a new language programme, it would be crucial to assess the current one in operation because new programmes either expand and improve the present ones or remedy their shortcomings. To survey existing programmes, five

components should be analysed: the existing curriculum and syllabus, the materials in use, the teacher population, the learners and the resources of the programme (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 27). I adopted a similar approach but with an addendum consisting of teaching methods and teacher training. In fact, two questionnaires were developed, one each for learners (see Appendix A) and teachers (see Appendix B). The questionnaire for the learners was divided into three sections: Background Information, Current Course (with the Syllabus, Teaching Methods and Materials subsections) and perceived needs and suggestions (with the Syllabus, Teaching Methods and Materials subsections). The teachers' questionnaire contained four sections, similar to the three mentioned above to enable comparison, plus Teacher Training. The survey of the resources, as indicated by Dublin and Olshtain (1986, p. 27), was amalgamated with the materials subsection.

A common problem encountered by many researchers is determining what questions to ask so as to obtain useful data from participants. To overcome this problem, the University of Leeds (2013) suggested:

> A key link needs to be established between the research aims and the individual questions via the research issues. Issues and questions can be determined through a combined process of exploring the literature and thinking creatively.

For this reason, apart from the literature review from which different questions emerged, various specialised sources about elicitation techniques and instrument creation were consulted to lay the foundation for developing the questionnaires. These included Cohen *et al*. (2009, pp. 334–341), Nunan (1992, pp. 143–145) and Rossett's (1982) typology for generating needs assessments.

3.4.1 Background Information

The first section of the questionnaires consisted of 10 questions for the learners and seven for the teachers, which sought their background information. Some items offered dichotomous choices (*yes/no*), others were checklist questions, and others were to be filled in. These options made answering easy for the participants, who were also given the opportunity to add comments to some items. This section yielded information relating to the participants' personal and academic backgrounds, the courses they were attending or teaching, and the students' motivation for learning Maltese. As mentioned earlier, preliminary information was needed concerning the learners and the teachers

prior to the evaluation process. The learners' answers provided a snapshot of their backgrounds and learning aims (Skierso, 1991, p. 432), while the teachers' responses gave a snapshot of their backgrounds (e.g., experiences) and perceptions about their students' learning aims. The data obtained from this section helped in addressing certain issues and drawing certain conclusions, for example: Are the learners a homogeneous or heterogeneous group? Is it possible to classify the learners into homogeneous groups and organise a course specifically for them? Are the teachers and the learners on the same wavelength regarding the latter's aims?

3.4.2 Current Course

The second section of the learners' and the teachers' questionnaires consisted of Likert-scale questions, a few fill-in items and an open-ended question at the end. The five-point scale system used (e.g., all of the time, most of the time, often, rarely and never) "buil[t] in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response[s] while still generating numbers" (Cohen *et al.*, 2009, p. 325). The three subsections (Syllabus, Teaching Methods and Materials) reflected the three areas under study in the research questions. The open question gave the participants an opportunity to add any remarks regarding what should be changed in the course.

3.4.3 Perceived Needs and Suggestions about the Syllabus, Teaching Methods and Materials

The third section of the questionnaire asked the learners and the teachers (and in some cases, these included the teachers' perceptions of learners' needs) about their perceived needs and suggestions to seek their opinions on practices in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods and materials. The majority of the questions comprised Likert-scale items; a few were checklist questions or to be filled in. These were included to obtain information about the participants' ideals and thus to "prioritize and select from among several needs or facets of one need" (Rossett, 1982, p. 31).

3.4.4 Teacher Training

The teachers' questionnaire had an extra section, Teacher Training, which consisted of a Likert-scale question, a checklist question and another to be filled in.

In conclusion, the majority of the questions in these questionnaires could be analysed quantitatively. However, it might be argued that with Likert-scale or dichotomous questions, participants could not "add any remarks, qualifications and explanations to the categories, and there [would be] a risk that the categories might not be exhaustive and that there might be bias in them" (Oppenheim, 1992, cited in Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 321). To counter this limitation, the questionnaires also included qualitative data from the open question, and the questionnaires were supplemented by semi-structured interviews, which sought deeper, qualitative information because "while responses to closed questions [would be] easier to collect and analyse, one [could] often obtain more useful information from open questions. It [would] also [be] likely that responses to open questions [would] more accurately reflect what the participants [would] want to say" (Nunan, 1992, p. 143).

3.4.5 Piloting of Questionnaires

Piloting is an essential stage to avoid pitfalls (Nunan, 1992, p. 143). Thus, its principal aim is to increase "the reliability, validity and the practicability of the questionnaire" (Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 341). For this reason, two teachers and two learners were chosen to test the questionnaires. Both teachers hold a degree and a warrant to teach Maltese and another FL. Both teach Maltese to natives and MSL (one in a private school and the other in a state school), as well as another FL. On the other hand, the two learners had attended Maltese language courses at a local council. The first test run of the teachers' questionnaire was conducted with one teacher on 23 March 2013, followed by the testing of the learners' questionnaire on 26 March 2013 with one learner, then by another test on the teachers' questionnaire on 29 March 2013 with another teacher, followed by the second testing of the learners' questionnaire on 9 April 2013 with another learner.

In all cases, after the study's aim was explained, each participant was briefed on the procedure: he/she was to fill in the questionnaire at his/her own pace, and if something was unclear or if there was any difficult terminology, he/she was to mark it so that it could be discussed later. During the piloting of the questionnaires, special attention was paid to the time it took each participant to finish. Afterwards, the

participant was asked to comment on the clarity of the questionnaire design and whether there were any ambiguous questions and words that he/she did not understand.

In the first piloting, the teacher offered the following suggestions for improvement of the questionnaire's design. There should be no hanging instructions, the spacing between the statements should be consistent, and the numbers of the Likert-scale questions should all start from the same point and be lined up underneath each other. The questionnaire should be in booklet form to make it easier for the participant to view previous questions and to make the questionnaire more environmentally friendly. However, his/her major critique focused on section D, Domains and Situations, indicating its need to be redesigned to make it easier for participants to tick the situations. Regarding question ambiguity, he/she commented on the terms used in the five-point scale (e.g., not at all important, unimportant, indifferent, important, very important). He/she stated that the scales in the sections needed to be consistent—that is, if number 1 = *very important* in section A, then in all sections, number 1 must be associated with the best option of the scale. For this reason, he/she suggested that in the other two scales, 1 should represent *all of the time* and *very comfortable*. Another suggestion was that at the beginning of each section, the scale should be clearly defined, and since it was very important, it should be well designed. Moreover, if the scale would change for some questions, this should be clearly demarcated to eliminate much of the ambiguity, thus leading to more accurate results. As for terminology, he/she commented that although he/she knew the meaning of a portfolio, the key term that the teacher did not understand was "European language portfolio". To remedy this, its definition was inserted in a footnote. All these pieces of advice were followed because everything made sense. After redesigning the questionnaire with the help of a professional designer, the same participant was shown the new version, with which he/she was generally pleased. However, although agreeing that section D was now better designed, he/she feared that learners could still become confused. His/her reservation was noted, which was then tested in the next piloting with an adult learner. It is worth mentioning that the amendments to the teachers' questionnaire were also applied to the learners' questionnaire; both questionnaires were designed along the same lines to make it possible to compare responses.

The first learner commented that the questionnaire was well designed and very clear. However, similar to the teacher's feedback, he/she mentioned that section D, Domains and Situations, was complicated and difficult to fill in. He/she suggested that this section be removed altogether and that the request for the domains of interest to the learners be asked in the interview. Concerning ambiguity, the learner remarked that of the Likert-scale's terms (not at all important, unimportant, indifferent, important and very important), *indifferent* was not the right word to express his/her feelings. After this trial, I discovered that Cohen *et al.* (2009, p. 326) used *neither important nor unimportant* instead of *indifferent*, and instead of *very unimportant*, they used *not at all important*. To improve the terminology's relevance, the Likert-scale items were changed to reflect Cohen and colleagues' phrase choices. Similar to the teacher's confusion, the learner did not understand the term "European language portfolio" because he/she had never heard of it. This participant took about 35 minutes to fill in the questionnaire, 9 minutes more than the teacher participant did. However, during this time, he/she chatted a lot but still commented that the questionnaire should be shortened. After this trial, it emerged that the only problem with the questionnaire was section D. This learner's advice was taken and this section was removed, not only eliminating the previously faced difficulty but also shortening the questionnaire by 25%. However, it was compensated for in the interview section.

In the next piloting, the second teacher commented that the questionnaire was well designed, very well-spaced and symmetrical. However, this teacher found ambiguity in two titles. After a review of both questions, it emerged that both contained an inappropriately placed word, which was corrected. The only key term that the teacher suggested to be defined was the abbreviation (CEFR) used in question 27. Thus, it was defined in a footnote: "The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is a guideline used to describe the achievements of learners of foreign languages". The completion time for this questionnaire was 15 minutes, which meant that it was reasonable for participants. In the last piloting, the second learner commented that the questionnaire was well designed and very clear and he/she understood all questions clearly; however, he/she had also never heard of the term "European language portfolio". This participant took about 20 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. The quantitative data from the last two piloted questionnaires, which

comprised almost the entire finished instrument, were coded and entered in an Excel spreadsheet; from the data gathered, frequencies and percentages were drawn (descriptive statistics). Although the outcome was not as realistic as that of a real study due to the limited responses of only two participants per questionnaire, it gave a clear idea of how questions should be coded and statistics should be presented. Regarding the qualitative data from the questionnaires' open questions, although the responses were limited to those of the few pilot participants, the statements were coded and a theme was identified. Regarding the option of having more participants, it was nearly impossible in the case of the teachers because in Malta, very few teach Maltese to foreigners; thus, to balance the numbers of teacher and learner participants, two representatives from each side were recruited for the test runs.

3.5 Semi-structured interview design

As already noted, the questionnaires were supplemented by face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to retrieve more in-depth, qualitative information. As such:

> personal interviews allow for gathering data privately. As a result, you can establish a certain level of confidentiality and trust, which, if handled correctly, is more likely to lead to the 'true' views of the participants than, say group interviews (Brown, 2007, p. 5).

The semi-structured interview questions emerged from sources similar to those mentioned for the questionnaires. These included Cohen *et al*. (2009, pp. 356–359), Nunan (1992, pp. 149–153) and Rossett's (1982) typology for generating needs assessments. However, this time, three interview texts were created: one for learners, one for teachers and one for an education spokesperson (see Appendix C). The interview with an education spokesperson aimed to obtain additional information from another source concerning the courses offered from an administrative perspective. The education spokesperson was not given a questionnaire because he/she was not a Maltese language teacher and therefore could not appropriately answer it. However, the interview structure for the education spokesperson was developed along the same lines as those for the learners and the teachers to make comparison possible. Nonetheless, the questions for the education spokesperson generally focused on an administrative angle (e.g., "Who takes part in the decision-making process in developing the syllabus?"),

whereas the learners and the teachers were asked: "Were you involved in the decision-making process in developing the syllabus?"

All the interviews started with warm-up questions and had the three common subsections of Syllabus, Teaching Methods and Materials, reflecting the three areas being researched. This subdivision made complementarity possible between what was found on the questionnaire and what emerged from the interviews. However, the interviews with the teachers and the education spokesperson had an extra section on training.

3.5.1 Piloting of Interviews

Even in the interviews, piloting was essential. As Nunan (1992) mentioned, "this [would] give the researcher the opportunity to find out if the questions [were] yielding the kind of data required and to eliminate any questions [that might] be ambiguous or confusing to the interviewee" (p. 151), thus strengthening the instrument's reliability and validity. The teachers and the learners who piloted the questionnaires did the same with the interviews on the dates of the questionnaires' trial runs. The first teacher immediately understood the interview questions, and the qualitative information he/she gave was exactly what was needed for this study. He/she also elaborated on the issues addressed in the interview but pointed out that another question needed to be inserted at the start: "Is there a syllabus for the course/s offered?" Following this trial, the indicated question was added. In the first trial with one learner, the participant immediately understood the questions, and the qualitative information he/she provided addressed precisely what was needed for this study. Moreover, to compensate for the absence of section D on the questionnaires, two new questions for both the learner and teacher interviews were added:

- Which situations and topics are covered in this course?
- Which other situations and topics do you think should be covered?

These essential changes were made to the research instruments used with both teachers and learners, which necessitated a second piloting with another learner and teacher. The second teacher trial indicated that the newly added questions helped emphasise the situations and themes addressed during this course. With this amendment, the

participants also had the chance (if they wished) to suggest topics and/or situations that they felt could be added to the course. In the second learner trial, the participant immediately understood the questions, and the qualitative information he/she offered was exactly what was required for this study. Therefore, these research instruments were prepared for the next stage, that is, the research.

A schematic diagram (Figure 3) represents the study design.
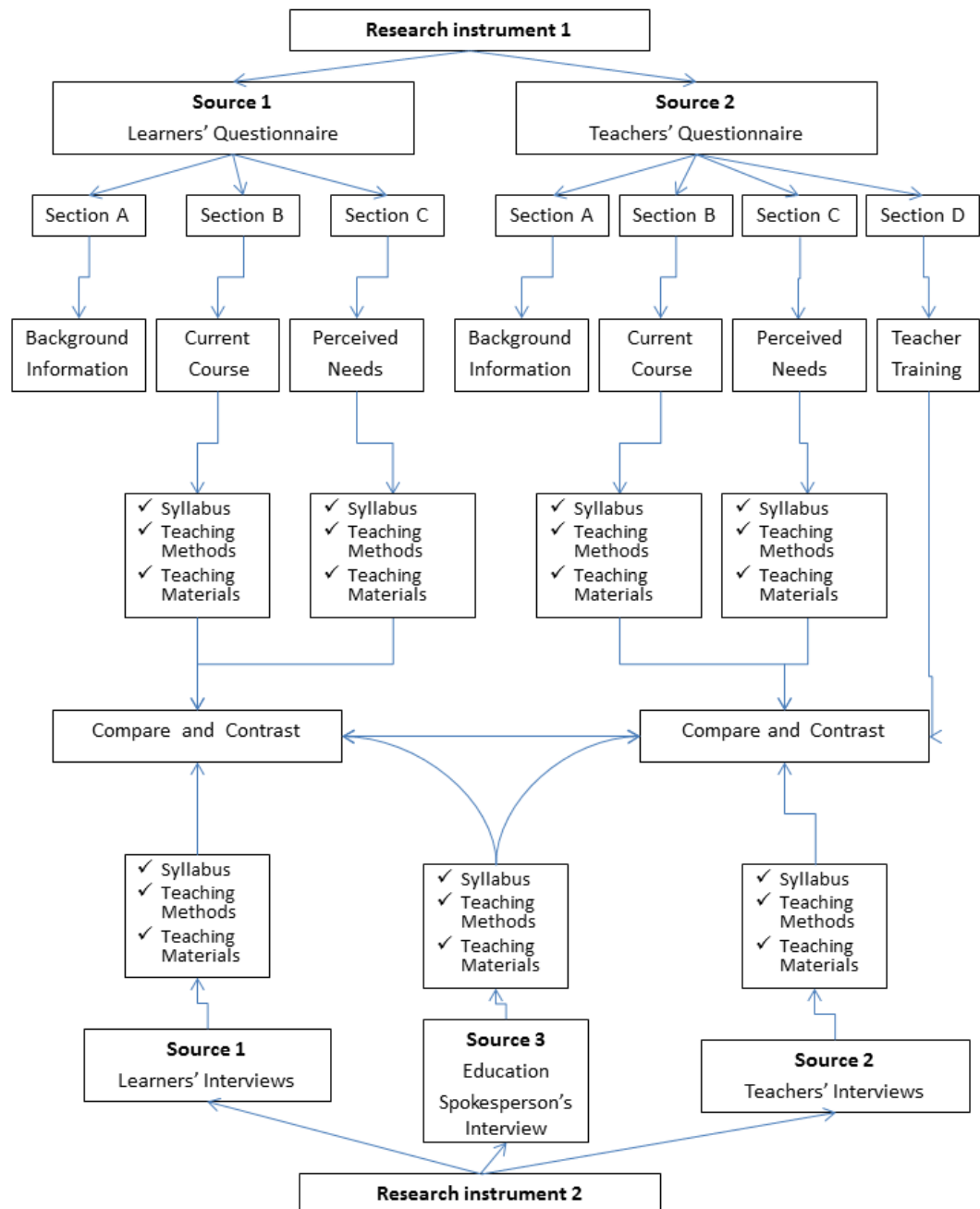
Figure 3. Study design

3.6 Data collection: Questionnaires

In this study, a group administration of the questionnaires to the whole population of teachers and learners in both courses was chosen as a "relatively efficient" method (Brown, 2007, p. 5). However, the self-administrative approach might make more sense with a wide geographic distribution or a large number of participants. The Maltese Islands are small; thus, geographic distribution was not a problem. Considering the number of persons attending these courses, it was possible to use the group administration approach. In fact, when this research commenced, there were 12 groups of MFL-1 learners, with one group based in Gozo, which together had 60 learners. From these, 58 participated in the survey questionnaire. Thus, from all the learners present, one underaged student did not participate in the study, and another who did not know the English language could not participate due to the language barrier. There were nine teachers for the 12 MFL-1 learning groups. On the other hand, when the study commenced, there were two groups of MFL-2 learners, totalling nine students who all participated in the study. Initially, there were three groups; however, one class was cancelled in May 2013. Nevertheless, all three teachers participated in the survey. It was evident that personally administering the questionnaires centre by centre would lead to a very high return rate because the researcher would have a captive audience (Brown, 2007, p. 5). Moreover, the researcher could respond to any queries and be aware of the conditions when the learners filled in the questionnaires (Brown, 2007, p. 5).

3.7 Data collection: Interviews

In the case of the semi-structured interviews, it was not possible to interview the entire population of learners in both courses because "interviews might be used effectively with a few of the participants in a language programme, [in contrast to] a survey [that] would be more effective for obtaining the views of all the participants" (Brown, 2007, p. 6). Thus, for the learners' interviews only, stratified random sampling was used, where:

1. the population of interest was identified,
2. the participants were selected randomly from each of the strata in the population and

3. the resulting sample was examined "to make sure that it [had] about the same proportion of each characteristic as the original population" (Brown, 2001, p. 73).

As regards condition 1, this needs analysis was performed with two levels, MFL-1 and MFL-2, with each level having different groups taught in various locations around Malta and Gozo, some of which were delivered by different teachers. Therefore, in the case of MFL-1, a learner from each group was interviewed; for MFL-2, two learners from each group were interviewed, since the former course had 12 groups, whereas the latter only had two groups. Thus, one or two learners from each group were chosen to give a realistic representation of the entire student population. Having a 'voice' from each group was a critical issue because (as found out later) in the case of MFL-1, the syllabus was too vast and generic, while MFL-2 had none. As Dublin and Olshtain (1986) maintained, an overly generic syllabus or its absence could leave the teachers and learners without a specific direction, while it could lead to "a lack of cohesiveness in materials and examinations used within the system" (p. 28).

As indicated in section 3.10 (Ethical issues), at the end of each questionnaire, those interested in participating in the interviews had to provide contact details so that they could be reached later. Afterwards, these reply slips were collected and drawn randomly, giving each participant from each group the same opportunity to be selected. However, in some cases, the learner interviewees were not sufficiently proficient in English and could not understand the questions, or even if they understood, their answers did not make sense or were limited to yes or no. In such cases, the interview recording was deleted and another interviewee was selected, using the same procedure. With the benefit of hindsight, this problem could have been avoided if the reply slip indicated that the interviewees were required to have a good command of English, in which the interview would be conducted. The same method was adopted for the interviews with the MFL-1 and MFL-2 groups.

Concerning the interviews with the teachers, since only 12 taught both groups, the aim was to interview all of them to obtain the whole picture from their point of view. However, the reply slips on the questionnaires revealed that from the nine teachers handling the 12 groups of MFL-1 learners, two did not show an interest to participate in the interview. On the other hand, from the three teachers teaching MFL-2

learners, only one accepted to be interviewed. In the teachers' case, no language problem was encountered because in the reply slip, they were given the option: "The interviews could be done in the language you prefer: Maltese or English". In fact, since the first questions in the interview were warm-up ones, initially, the majority of the teachers spoke in English; however, when the questions needed more elaborate responses, they switched to Maltese. The quotations taken from the teachers' and the education spokesperson's interviews were translated by me into English (see section 7.3, Limitations of the study).

All the interviews were recorded. As Bryman (2012) pointed out, "with approaches that [would] entail detailed attention to language, such as conversation analysis and discourse analysis, the recording of conversations and interviews [...,] to all intents and purposes [, would be] mandatory" (p. 482).

3.8 Data analysis

Some of the data used in both questionnaires used *nominal scales* (numbers that denote categories). Such questions included *sex* (*1 = male* and *2 = female*) and *age of the learners* (*1 = 20 years or younger*, *2 = 21–30*, *3 = 31–40*, *4 = 41–50*, *5 = 51–60*, *6 = 61–70* and *7 = over 70)*. Nominal data "denote discrete variables, entirely separate categories" (Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 502). However, the majority of the data in both questionnaires used *ordinal scales,* referring to a scale "that not only classifies but also introduces an order into the data" (Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 502), such as *1 = all of the time, 2 = most of the time, 3 = often, 4 = rarely* and *5 = never.* Both nominal and ordinal data, which are often derived from questionnaires and surveys, "are considered to be non-parametric", meaning that they "make no assumptions about the population, usually because the characteristics of the population are unknown" (Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 503).

For nominal and ordinal data, one can calculate frequencies and percentages and present them in a variety of forms. In this thesis, descriptive statistics were used to analyse the nominal and ordinal data on the questionnaires. As the term implies, descriptive statistics "describe and present data in terms of [the] summary of frequencies" (Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 503). Using the Excel program, data were entered,

then percentages were calculated and presented in a table for each question. Table 11 is reproduced here as an example from the MFL-1 learners' questionnaire:

Table 11. Participants' feedback about course organisation

Q. 12: Lessons during this course are organised according to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. grammar	27.6% (16)	44.8% (26)	24.1% (14)			3.4% (2)
b. topics	19% (11)	31% (18)	29.3% (17)	15.5% (9)		5.2% (3)
c. tasks	3.4% (2)	13.8% (8)	27.6% (16)	25.9% (15)	8.6% (5)	20.7% (12)
d. other methods	Yes P6: Time and numbers P13: Dining/sports/TV news P15: Listening comprehension P35: Number of students P37: Everyday life/on the bus/directions					

Since these questionnaires were used for learners and teachers of two different courses with varying populations for each group, percentages on their own "[could] mask the real numbers, and the readers [would] need to know the real number" (Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 509). For this reason, the frequency was enclosed in parentheses under each percentage. From Table 11, it could also be observed that in every question, the *not filled* (NF) category comprised a separate column, for four reasons. First, since the perceptions on what was offered in the course were compared to the needs of learners/teachers, plotting all the data made full comparisons possible. Second, providing all the data to readers, from which conclusions were drawn, was helpful because the "data provided [were] open to evaluative interpretation" (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 16). Third, in some cases, NF served as an indicator that the question was ambiguous or the participants were unwilling to answer due to sensitivity and privacy issues, such as hiding their identities. Fourth, in the Excel spreadsheet and even in the tables, all the frequencies obtained from all categories, including NF, were added, and the fact that 100% was reached served as a validity check that all the data were entered. In the majority of the tables, the participants were also given the option of *other reasons;* as indicated earlier, this was one of the techniques (others included the open question and

semi-structured interviews) used to limit the "risk that the categories might not be exhaustive and that there might be bias in them" (Oppenheim, 1992, cited in Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 321). The participants' open responses were also presented in the tables, accompanied by the corresponding code of each participant (e.g., P6 = Participant 6, Table 11).

The data in the teachers' and learners' questionnaires for both courses were analysed by using the same method. After the data in the Background Information section were presented, the data in the Current Course section were also plotted, using descriptive statistics. Since the last question in this section was an open one (What would you change in the course that you are currently taking?) and thus contained qualitative data, statements were coded, then these codes were grouped by similarity, and a theme was identified. Thus, themes were generated *a posteriori* and then plotted in a table with the themes and the corresponding participants' codes, indicating which theme each one chose (see Tables 23, 58, 98 and 133; MFL-1 Learners, MFL-1 Teachers, MFL-2 Learners and MFL-2 Teachers, respectively). These responses were also inserted in the comments linked to the corresponding tables in the Perceived Needs and Suggestions section that followed. In the latter section (Perceived Needs and Suggestions about the syllabus, teaching methods and materials*)*, data were plotted using descriptive statistics, which were compared to what was found in the corresponding tables in the previous section. Although with certain limitations (see section 7.3, Limitations of the study), this system made comparison possible between what the learners or teachers had (or teachers' perceptions of learners' needs) and what they needed. The teachers' questionnaires had another section, Teacher Training, and its data were also analysed by using descriptive statistics and the answers to the open question and the interviews.

In this part of the research, this statistical approach was used because this study did not aim to look for different variables but to obtain descriptive snapshots of the courses, together with the learners' and teachers' perceived needs. Moreover, as the literature shows, "when you start thinking of the various descriptive statistics in combination and start to realise how they work together to describe the distribution of responses, descriptive statistics come alive and become useful" (Brown, 2001, p. 33). Apart from this, due to the limited number of participants in courses such as MFL-2,

presenting the data according to certain variables would have jeopardised the participants' anonymity and in some cases, such as the MFL-2 teachers' population (three persons), the approach was impossible to consider due to the insufficient numbers; thus, this was eliminated. Unlike inferential statistics (which need to be tested for statistical significance), "simple frequencies and descriptive statistics may speak for themselves"; however, these "make no inferences or predictions [but] simply report what has been found" (Cohen *et al.*, 2009, p. 504).

In the majority of the cases, combined percentages were used for the comparisons because "combining categories [could] be useful in showing the general trends or tendencies in the data", while it "[could] also be useful in rating scales of agreement to disagreement" (Cohen *et al.*, 2009, p. 509). In examining the percentages and frequencies, "one also [would have] to investigate whether the data [were] skewed, i.e., overrepresented at one end of the scale and underrepresented at the other end" (Cohen *et al.*, 2009, p. 514). Although the necessary highlights were pointed out, plotting questionnaires' data in tables "[would be] open to evaluative interpretation" (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 16).

Semi-structured interviews were used to avoid the rigidity of a structured type. As already stated, to make compatibility possible with the questionnaires' data, the semi-structured interviews were split into three main sections, too (Syllabus, Teaching Methods and Materials), reflecting the subsections of sections B and C in each questionnaire. In the teachers' case, section D (Teacher Training*)* was also added. Moreover, the subsections and the prepared questions ensured that the interviews elicited appropriate answers, while giving the participants the chance to elaborate on what they deemed important or of interest. This approach is possible because "questions in a semi-structured interview are not nearly as 'fixed' as those in a structured interview… [Topic areas and questions] provide some structure to the interview but there is freedom to vary the course of the interview based on the participant's answers and the flow of the interview" (Schuh, 2009, p. 20).

Since all the semi-structured interviews were recorded, they were transcribed and analysed manually, and the data were presented according to individual responses. During the analysis, each interview question was presented chronologically under the corresponding section (Syllabus, Teaching Methods, Learning Materials and Teacher

Training), and the responses of all the interviewees were inserted after each question. When the interviewees elaborated on the theme being discussed, their direct quotations were included to support the discussion. Thus, all the participants' data from the semi-structured interviews were presented in a different section. In another chapter, these were then amalgamated or contrasted with what emerged from the questionnaires' tables and the open question. However, since these were semi-structured interviews, some of the learners and teachers went beyond the scope of the questions posed to them. Thus, these data were inserted under the question being asked but in the Discussion (Chapter 6), each item was placed under its relevant theme. Regarding the interview with the education spokesperson, the data were inserted in the Discussion chapter only to confirm, contrast or elaborate what emerged from the learners' and teachers' questionnaire and interview responses. A schematic diagram (Figure 4) represents the study design for MFL-1.
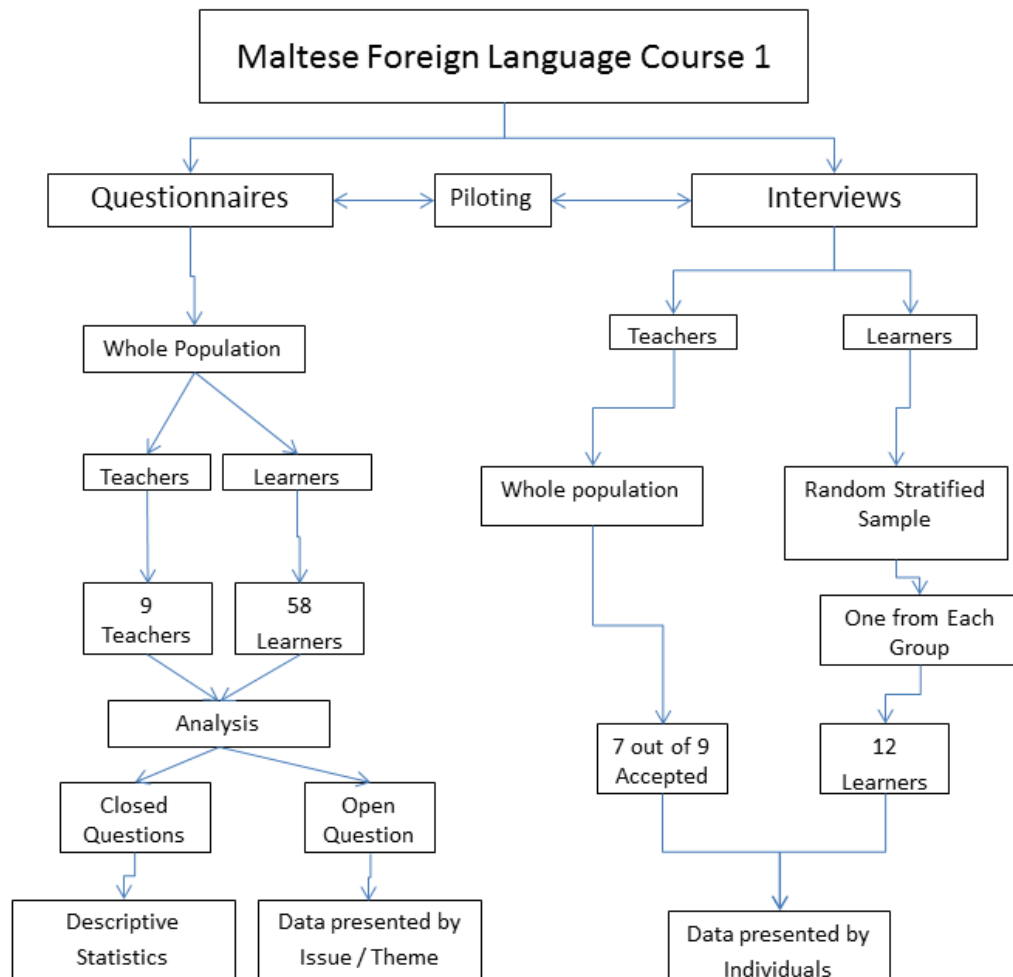
Figure 4. Study design of MFL-1

A schematic diagram (Figure 5) represents the study design for MFL-2.
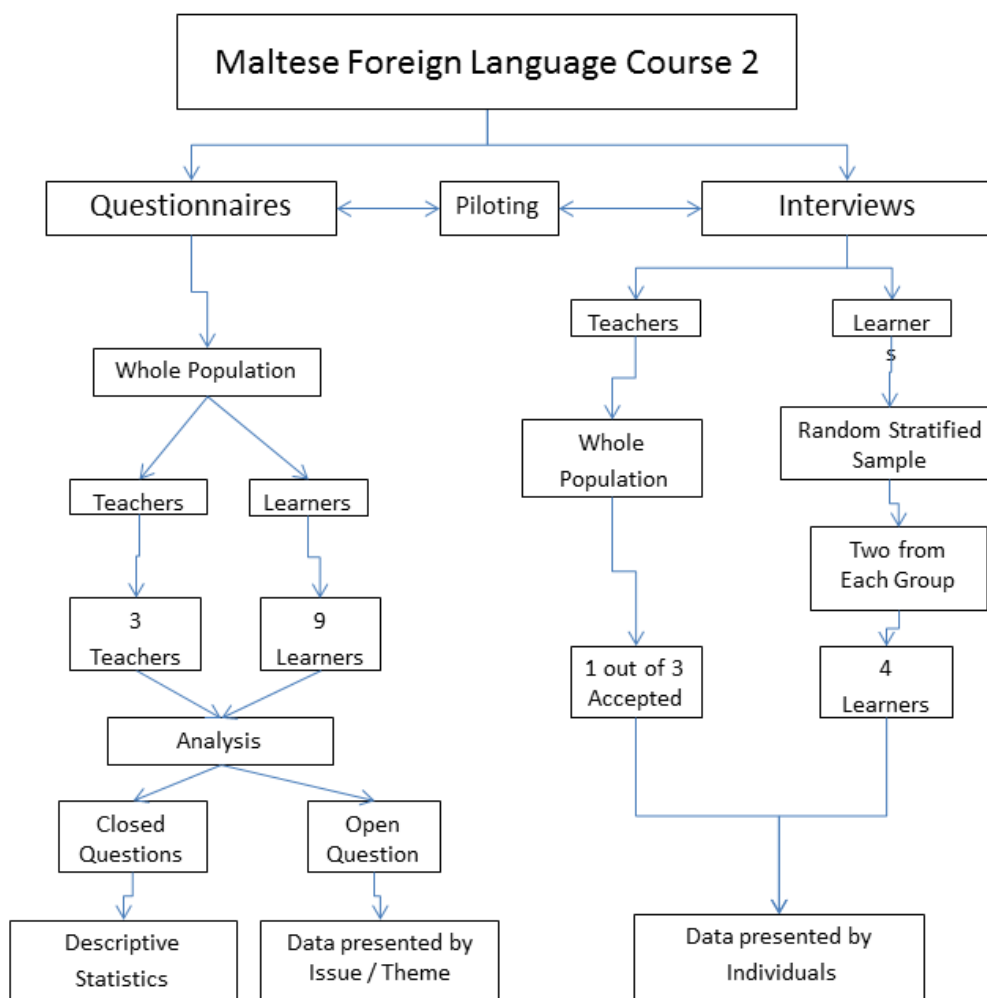
Figure 5. Study design of MFL-2

3.9 Validity and reliability

Although attaining absolute validity and reliability is an impossible goal for any research model (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p. 60), in this research with quantitative and qualitative data, and apart from the piloting of the instruments, measures were taken so the data would be both reliable and valid, externally and internally. Nunan (1992) described reliability as "the consistency of the results obtained from a piece of research" and validity as "the extent to which a piece of research actually investigates what the researcher purports to investigate" (p. 14).

"Internal validity refers to the interpretability of research" (Nunan, 1992, p. 15); thus, the findings should describe the phenomena being researched (Cohen *et al*. 2009, p. 135). Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 219, 301, cited in Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 136) indicated that one way to address this in a naturalistic inquiry [would be] to use triangulation of methods, sources, investigators and theories. In this research, a comparison of the teachers' views via a questionnaire and an interview and of the learners' views via the same instruments provided a triangulation by source and method. In the case of the interviews, another source was added to reinforce the gathered data. Triangulation aims to validate and hence increase the credibility (true value) of the interpretation of the data collected (Long, 2005, p. 28). In this study, the triangulation also helped in the external validation, that is, "the extent to which the results can be generalised from samples to populations" (Nunan, 1992, p. 15), because the questionnaires were distributed to the entire populations of teachers and learners. Thus, with this method, all the individuals had their chance to express their views. Concerning the other research method (the interview), stratified sampling (see section 3.7, Data collection: interviews) was used only with the learners' interviews, since there was a considerable number of them. Thus, such interviews were corroborated by the breadth of data obtained from the questionnaires; in turn, the interviews gave the much needed depth. Thus, "the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 5), while adding "rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to inquiry" (Flick, 1998, p. 231).This approach also helped the internal reliability, that is, "the consistency of data collection, analysis, and interpretation" and the external reliability or "the extent to which independent researchers [could] reproduce a study and obtain results similar to those obtained in the original study" (Nunan, 1992, p. 14). In fact, Cohen *et al*. (2009, p. 158) indicated the advantages of questionnaires over interviews, which would lead to increased reliability: anonymity (to the researcher), thus encouraging greater honesty, and economy in terms of time and money. However, they also cited the disadvantages, amongst others: low return rates, misunderstandings between the researcher and the participants, and if only closed items were used in questionnaires, these might lack sufficient coverage or authenticity. For this reason, they suggested that questionnaires be piloted and refined for their content, wording, length (Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 158) and

so on, which was cautiously carried out in this study (see subsection 3.4.5, Piloting of questionnaires). The fact that the questionnaires were administered centre by centre ensured a captive audience and led to a very high return rate, thus eliminating what Belson (1986) called "volunteer bias" and increasing validity. Furthermore, the researcher was present in the distribution of the questionnaires; thus, the participants had the chance to clarify any misunderstandings. Regarding the closed items, the questionnaires included open questions, too, indicating the chances where learners could add their own views. Cohen *et al*. (2009, p. 158) also pointed out sampling as a central issue concerning reliability and validity when administering questionnaire surveys, which was eliminated from this research due to the coverage of the entire population. On the other hand, one of the advantages of interviews over questionnaires is that interviews are conducted at an appropriate speed, while questionnaires are filled in hurriedly (Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 158). The fact that this research employed a mixed methodology of questionnaires and interviews ensured the best of both worlds on which to base the answers to the research questions. In fact, "the more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researchers' confidence" (Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 141).

3.10 Ethical issues

The methods used in this research allowed the participants to express their needs and expectations within a theoretical framework, which addressed the purpose of this study. Because this research involved human beings, it entailed "an intrusion into the life of the participant, be it in terms of time taken to complete the instrument, the level of threat or sensitivity of the question" (Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 317). Moreover, some participants might be from a different culture, which could mean their unwillingness to make critical statements or discuss certain topics (Nunan, 1992, p. 145). Other participants could be reluctant to participate. For these reasons, concrete steps were taken so that participants could be identified, approached and recruited with their consent.

3.11 Participants identified, approached and recruited

After clearance was obtained from the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee (Appendix D), permission was also secured from the education department

of Malta to conduct the research on the courses mentioned. The service manager of the DLL was contacted to work hand in hand with him/her so that I could personally visit the centres where the lessons were being held. He/she introduced me to the coordinator of these courses, who helped arrange my visits to the different classes around Malta and Gozo. On 15 April 2013, he/she emailed all the teachers concerned about my study and forwarded a note similar to the questionnaire's cover letter in order to provide enough details with which they could also inform their students beforehand. This step was taken to avoid physical and psychological harm; moreover, the research venue was where the participants attended classes and thus a familiar environment. This research did not raise any personal safety issues for me as well because the Maltese Islands are a safe haven with which I am familiar, having grown up here.

3.11.1 Obtaining Informed Consent for the Questionnaires

During my visit to each learning group, I introduced myself, explained verbally to the participants the nature and aims of the research, answered all their questions and explained their right to refuse to participate. This information was also explained in the questionnaire's cover letter, and for the sake of consistency with each learning group, before the participants started filling in the questionnaires, this letter was read to them to ensure that all the points were clarified. It is important to "explain as fully as possible, and in terms meaningful to participants, what the research is about" (British Sociological Association, 2002). Afterwards, written consent was obtained, using a specifically designed form that included my and my supervisor's contact details, the research aims and a declaration. The declaration stated that the participants' real names would not be used in the study, they were free to withdraw at any point, their responses would be treated with confidentiality, and the data would be presented in a way that would not connect their identities to specific published data (see Appendix E). These cautionary measures were undertaken because "every code of ethics designed to guide research involving human subjects gives primacy to the requirement of fully informed voluntary consent on the part of the individuals concerned" (Gregory, 2003, p. 35). Afterwards, each participant was given a signed copy of this consent form. As indicated earlier, although these courses are intended for adults, the DLL gives permission for students from age 15 to enrol. The participants under 18 years old were given a consent

form and another one for their parents so that after consulting the latter, they could participate in the study if they wished. These participants were also offered the possibility to complete the questionnaire at home and mail it in a given envelope with paid postage.

To show appreciation for the survey participants, each one was entitled to a chance to win a lottery for a weekend break for two in Gozo. This incentive boosted participation. When the participants were briefed about this study's aim, many were already happy that someone had come to ask their opinions of what should be done, but when told about the incentive, certain groups cheered up all the more.

3.11.2 Obtaining Informed Consent for the Interviews

Since the second step in this research was to conduct a semi-structured interview with some of the learners, the teachers and an education spokesperson, the participants (except the spokesperson who did not fill in a questionnaire because he/she was not a teacher) were advised about this in a reply slip at the end of the questionnaire. Those who wished to participate in the interviews filled in their details so that they could be contacted later. To show appreciation, every interviewee was entitled to another ticket to participate in the lottery. However, to avoid disappointment, the participants were advised that not everyone who volunteered could be included and they would be selected according to the study's exigencies. In fact, two learners who had indicated their wish to participate in the interview but were not chosen, asked about the basis for the selection. They were informed about the random stratified sampling used, and once they understood its underlying logic, they were satisfied. Before the selected participants were interviewed, they were briefed about the nature and aims of this part of the research and that it would be recorded, all their questions were answered, and their right to refuse participation was explained. Afterwards, written consent was obtained in another specifically designed form, which had the same contents as those of the questionnaires' consent sheet, but with an addendum in the declaration stating that the interview recording would be stored in a safe place and destroyed once the study was completed (see Appendix E). This note ensured a clear agreement with participants on how this recorded material would be stored, used and destroyed. The reply slip at the end of the questionnaire also informed the participants about the nature of the interview,

their right to refuse, the limited number of the interviews and their recording to make it easier for the researcher to recall what had been said. Once in my possession, the recordings were kept securely in a password-protected folder. To ensure confidentiality of personal data, the participants were made anonymous and their personal data were kept private. For this reason, pseudonyms (e.g., P1, P2) were used for this study, which will also be used for future conferences or meetings. This procedure was followed because this research was sponsored by the DLL under the education department of Malta, and the contract precisely requested "a hard copy and a soft version of the final thesis on publication". Therefore, the education department will fully know the research results. However, it does not imply that the participants' identities will be exposed; their anonymity will remain at all times. To put the participants' minds at rest, this declaration was added to the consent form: "My responses will be treated with confidentiality, and at all times, data will be presented in such a way that my identity cannot be connected to specific published data".

3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, the underlying research paradigms have been discussed, together with the methodology, research design and investigative tools used. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed to gain the appropriate breadth and depth of information. The data collection, analysis and ethical considerations were also covered. In the next two chapters, the needs analysis of the learning groups attending MFL – MQF-1 and MQF-2 and that of their teachers are presented to explain the situation in the courses, while finding out their perceived needs and suggestions.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

Maltese as a Foreign Language – MQF-1

4.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of a needs analysis of the learning groups that attended the MFL – MQF-1 course in 2012–2013 to discover their perceived needs and suggestions regarding the course. The learners' needs in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods and materials are compared with their perceptions of the course to determine whether it satisfied their needs. Additionally, the teachers' perceived needs (including the teachers' perceptions of learners' needs in some cases) in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods, materials and teacher training are compared with their perceptions of the course they taught. This needs analysis will also help evaluate the whole system and pinpoint what should be amended in the present teaching scenario.

Two sets of instruments were used in this study: questionnaires and face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. In the first phase of the study, two questionnaires for the whole population—one for teachers (nine participants) and one for learners (58 participants)—were used to investigate perceptions of the MFL courses at the DLL and some of the participants' needs. These questionnaires included some questions that were analysed quantitatively. Because Likert-scale or dichotomous questions would not allow participants to "add any remarks, qualifications and explanations to the categories, and there [would be] a risk that the categories might not be exhaustive and that there might be bias in them" (Oppenheim, 1992, cited in Cohen *et al*., 2009, p. 321), the questionnaires were balanced with some open-ended questions to generate qualitative data.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and learners to seek in-depth, qualitative information. Although the student interviewees came from the same pool (12 groups of MFL-1 learners), they comprised a smaller set that was chosen by stratified random sampling to represent all the groups. In all, interviews were conducted with 12 learners, seven teachers and the course education spokesperson.

This chapter is split into four main sections. The first section presents the responses that emerged from the learners' questionnaire. The second section includes the data retrieved from the learners' interviews; the third and fourth sections cover the teachers' questionnaires and interviews.

Since this chapter (Research findings, MFL – MQF-1) and the next one (Research findings, MFL – MQF-2) both present data retrieved from the needs analysis,

with the same criteria (i.e., syllabus, teaching methods, learning materials and teacher training), the literature is not referenced (except in some particular cases) to avoid repetition. The discussion in Chapter 6 includes references to the literature and provides a detailed analysis of the results for both courses.

4.1 Learners' questionnaire

In this section, the learners' responses on the questionnaire (See Appendix A) are presented and analysed in chronological order. Therefore, the first section covers the learners' background (section A on the questionnaire) and the second section presents the current course (section B on the questionnaire, with three subsections: syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials). The third section includes the learners' perceived needs and suggestions (section C on the questionnaire, with three subsections: syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials). Each question is plotted in a table indicating the number of participants who ticked each option and the percentage each represented. In some cases, the learners could also provide other reasons; in such instances, data are presented according to each participant, represented by an individual code (P and the corresponding number).

4.1.1 MFL-1 Learners' Background Information

In this section, preliminary information about the learners attending the MFL-1 course is presented and analysed to provide a snapshot of the student population during the research period. Providing the students' backgrounds and their learning aims is in turn helpful for the analysis of their needs and suggestions.

When this research commenced, 12 groups of MFL-1 learners existed, with one group based in Gozo. In all, 58 learners participated in the survey questionnaire; the learners are categorised by gender in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants by gender

Q. 1: Gender		
Legend	**Number**	**Percentage**
Females	40	69%
Males	18	31%
Total	58	100%

Table 2 shows the participants' nationalities. Notably, the majority of the participants were British, followed by Russian. This is due to several factors: Malta was a British colony; English is one of Malta's official languages; many consider the climate pleasing; and many British nationals retire on the Maltese Islands. Additionally, the number of Russians and other Eastern Europeans has increased in Malta over the past 10 years. The Malta National Statistics Office's 2011 census showed that the British comprised the largest number of foreigners living in Malta (6,653 of 20,289), followed by Somalis (1,041), Italians (947) and Bulgarians (850). Only 1,357 of all foreign residents lived in Gozo (Cooke, 2014, p. 6).

Table 2. Participants by nationality

Q. 2: Nationality		
Nationality	**Number**	**Percentage**
British/UK	17	29.3%
Russian	8	13.8%
Not stated	5	8.6%
Italian	4	6.9%
Belgian	3	5.2%
Bulgarian	2	3.4%
Nigerian	2	3.4%
Canadian	1	1.7%
Maltese	1	1.7%
Australian	1	1.7%
Filipino	1	1.7%
Trinidad & Tobago national	1	1.7%
Romanian	1	1.7%
Portuguese	1	1.7%
Slovakian	1	1.7%
Danish	1	1.7%
Polish	1	1.7%
Swedish	1	1.7%
Serbian	1	1.7%
Thai	1	1.7%
Lithuanian	1	1.7%
American	1	1.7%
Ukrainian	1	1.7%
Dutch	1	1.7%
Total	58	100%

Table 3 shows the participants' age ranges; please note that while no entry for 20 years old or under is given, learners of this age range were initially included in the

study. A 15-year-old girl opted not to participate in the study after consulting with her parents. The learners' ages varied considerably.

Table 3. Participants by age

Q. 3: Age		
Age Range	**Number**	**Percentage**
20 or under		
21–30	13	22.4%
31–40	20	34.5%
41–50	10	17.2%
51–60	8	13.8%
61–70	6	10.3%
Over 70	1	1.7%
Not stated		
Total	58	100%

Table 4 presents the learners' occupations, which also differed considerably. Many learners had blue- and white-collar jobs; retired people (19%) and housewives (12.1%) had the highest percentages and 19% did not state their occupations. Therefore, the teachers had the challenge of catering to this heterogeneous group's diverse learning needs. According to McKay and Tom (1999), "Every second-language class is in some sense multilevel in terms of language skills" (p. 20).

Table 4. Participants by occupation

Q. 4: Occupation		
Occupation	**Number**	**Percentage**
Retired	11	19%
Not stated	11	19%
Housewife	7	12.1%
Manager	4	6.9%
Unemployed	3	5.2%
Student	2	3.4%
Accountant	2	3.4%
English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher	2	3.4%
Self-employed	2	3.4%
Doctor	1	1.7%
Engineer	1	1.7%
Plumber	1	1.7%
Psychologist	1	1.7%
Customer service agent	1	1.7%
Secretary	1	1.7%
Administrative staff member	1	1.7%
Caregiver	1	1.7%
Hotel staff member	1	1.7%
Musician	1	1.7%
Animator	1	1.7%
Online moderator	1	1.7%
Volunteer worker	1	1.7%
Researcher	1	1.7%
Total	58	100%

Table 5. Participants by duration of residence in Malta or Gozo

Q. 5: Participants by length of residence in Malta or Gozo		
Years	**Number**	**Percentage**
1 or less	13	22.4%
2–5	25	43.1%
6–10	10	17.2%
11–15	8	13.8%
16–20		
21 or more	2	3.4%
Total	58	100%

As Table 5 shows, the highest numbers of participants were in the first two ranges (1 or less and 2–5 years). When prorated, the residents who had lived there no

longer than one year had the highest percentage of 22.4%, while four of the subgroups covered periods of four or five years each (e.g., 2–5, 6–10). As the length of residence increased, the percentage of students learning the language diminished. As McKay and Tom (1999, p. 1) demonstrated, some adults visit a new country to learn its language and culture, but the majority come to work, study, accompany their families and friends or escape from difficult conditions at home so they learn the language to cope with daily life. Table 5 reflects foreign learners' efforts to understand the Maltese language and culture, particularly those in their first five years of residence.

Because the learners' nationalities varied, their mother tongues also differed (Table 6). As expected, the language with the highest percentage was English, followed by Russian. Although Table 2 shows that 29.3% were from Britain/UK, 36.2% of the participants reported English as their mother tongue. Disregarding those who did not state their nationality (8.6%), the reason for this increase is that certain nationalities, such as American, Australian, and Trinidad and Tobago citizens, come from locations with English as an official language.

Table 6. Participants by mother tongue

Q. 6: Mother tongue		
	Number	**Percentage**
English	21	36.2%
Russian	11	19%
Italian	4	6.9%
Dutch	4	6.9%
Not stated	3	5.2%
Bulgarian	2	3.4%
Romanian	2	3.4%
Lithuanian	2	3.4%
Slovakian	2	3.4%
German	1	1.7%
Yoruba	1	1.7%
Tagalog	1	1.7%
Portuguese	1	1.7%
Polish	1	1.7%
Swedish	1	1.7%
Thai	1	1.7%
Total	58	100%

Table 7. Maltese language course(s) taken by participants

Q. 8: Have you ever taken a Maltese language course apart from this/these?		
	Number	**Percentage**
No	47	81%
Yes	11	19%
Total	58	100%

When the participants were asked if they had taken another Maltese language course, 19% answered yes (Table 7). Of these, three attended Maltese conversation classes (P1, P4 and P38), comprising 10 sessions of two hours each, to practise incidental conversation. Others reported that they attended a volunteer summer course (P24), MFL at the German Maltese Circle (P25), the *in lingua* course in 1998 (P31) or the University of Malta certificate course (P41). Another three indicated that they had repeated MFL-1 (P14, P15 and P37). Interestingly, one participant had already attended MFL-2 (P11), and another was attending a Maltese for Maltese course while repeating MFL-1.

Table 8. Participants' reasons for learning Maltese

Q. 9: Why have you chosen to learn Maltese?				
	Yes		**No**	
	Number	%	Number	%
a. To communicate with locals	51	87.9%	7	12.1%
b. To cope with daily life	37	63.8%	21	36.2%
c. For family literacy	26	44.8%	32	55.2%
d. To read newspapers and magazines	17	29.3%	41	70.7%
e. Other reasons	15	26.3%	42	73.7%
f. They use Maltese at work	10	17.2%	48	82.8%
g. It is a requirement to obtain a job	9	15.5%	49	84.5%
h. To pass the Maltese ordinary-level (O-level) exam	7	12.1%	51	87.9%

Most participants learned Maltese to communicate with locals (87.9%) and to cope with daily life (63.8%) (Table 8). Family literacy came next, with nearly 45%. Around 29% expressed their desire to read [Maltese] newspapers and magazines, and around 17% reported using Maltese at work. Since Malta is officially bilingual (Maltese

and English), it could be assumed that the majority of the learners did not learn Maltese as a requirement to obtain a job (15.5%) or pass the Maltese ordinary-level (O-level) exam (12.1%); thus, lower scores for these reasons would be expected. It is easy to find a job even if a person cannot communicate in Maltese. Moreover, the MFL-1 course is not specifically intended to prepare students for the O-level exam, although it is one of three courses that is supposed to lead learners there. The learners also mentioned the following reasons (other reasons, Table 8): he/she considered learning Maltese a challenge (P11); Malta was his/her home so it was important to learn Maltese (P6); it was fun (P12); to help him/her in volunteer work at Mater Dei Hospital (P22); to understand [communications on] TV and radio (P25); to understand Maltese people speaking with one another (P25); to speak with relatives (P26 and P53); to learn another language while living in Malta (P48); he/she preferred to use Maltese instead of English (P41); for himself/herself (P34); they considered it their duty as residents of Malta (P47 and P58); he/she loved languages and linguistics (P21); and to enter university and become a lawyer (P20).

Table 9. Most important reason for learning Maltese

Q. 10: Which reason from the above list is most important to you?		
	Number	**Percentage**
a. To communicate with locals	31	53.4%
b. To cope with daily life	7	12.1%
c. Other reasons	7	12.1%
d. Not stated	4	6.9%
e. It is a requirement to obtain a job	3	5.2%
f. To pass the Maltese O-level exam	2	3.4%
g. They use Maltese at work	2	3.4%
h. To read newspapers and magazines	2	3.4%
i. For family literacy		
Total	58	100%

Table 9 shows that the main aim for over half of the learners was to communicate with locals (53.4%), followed by those who needed to cope with daily life (12.1%).

4.1.2 Current Course

The following three subsections present information about the learners' views of the MFL-1 course, based on their responses on the questionnaire. The questions are

presented according to their order of placement on the questionnaire (See Appendix A). The Likert scale used in this section includes "all of the time, most of the time, often, rarely and never" choices. Each question is stated in a table, with the number of participants who ticked each option enclosed in parentheses, below the percentage each represents. When analysing the data, combined percentages are generally used to show "the general trends or tendencies in the data" (Cohen *et al.*, 2009, p. 509). However, when two criteria have the same percentage, they are placed in order according to their subcategories.

4.1.2.1 Learners' views on the MFL-1 syllabus

About 95% of the learners stated that all four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) were covered all of the time, most of the time, or often (Table 10).

Table 10. Participants' perceptions on skills coverage in the course

Q. 11: All four skills are covered in this course.					
All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
27.6% (16)	36.2% (21)	31% (18)	1.7% (1)		3.4% (2)

According to the learners, the lessons were organised according to grammar (96.5%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by topics (79.3%) and tasks (44.8%) (Table 11). The learners mentioned other methods of organisation; however, except for one learner's (P35) response, they all fell under one of the first three categories in Table 11. This learner (P35) noted that the number of students in the class (and by implication, interactive learning) determined the lesson's organisation. This is an interesting observation because interactive learning is more demanding for teachers; thus, it is performed when class numbers are small. However, the relevant literature notes that other methods, such as the G-T method, emphasise teaching and writing skills (Griffiths and Parr, 2001, p. 247) but neglect learners' oral communication skills. Such an approach, which overlooks listening and speaking skills and lacks authentic texts, does not prepare learners for the real world. Nonetheless, this method was not too demanding for the teachers because much of the work could be corrected in class.

Table 11. Participants' feedback about course organisation

Q. 12: Lessons during this course are organised according to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. grammar	27.6% (16)	44.8% (26)	24.1% (14)			3.4% (2)
b. topics	19% (11)	31% (18)	29.3% (17)	15.5% (9)		5.2% (3)
c. tasks	3.4% (2)	13.8% (8)	27.6% (16)	25.9% (15)	8.6% (5)	20.7% (12)
d. other methods	Yes P6: Time and numbers P13: Dining/sports/TV news P15: Listening comprehension P35: Number of students P37: Everyday life/on the bus/directions					

The learners perceived that this course tended more towards a linear progression (82.8%) than a cyclical progression (79.3%) (Table 12).

Table 12. Participants' feedback about course content

Q. 13: This course follows						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. a linear progression	19% (11)	36.2% (21)	27.6% (16)	8.6% (5)		8.6% (5)
b. a cyclical progression	10.3% (6)	36.2% (21)	32.8% (19)	12.1% (7)	1.7% (1)	6.9% (4)

However, the percentage for the cyclical progression was not significantly lower, indicating that while the materials covered during the lessons followed a linear progression, certain areas were revised during the course.

4.1.2.2 Learners' views on the teaching methods for MFL-1

Since the course leaned towards a grammar-oriented organisation, grammar practice had the highest percentage of frequency (94.8%, all of the time, most of the time and often), which was as expected, followed by vocabulary (91.3%), reading (81%) and writing practices (77.7%). Listening practice was next (74.1%), and speaking

practice and Maltese-culture awareness followed (both 62%) (Table 13). Notably, speaking was ranked the last of the four skills. The practice ranked last in frequency was out-of-class activities (5.1%). The fact that nearly 70% of the participants indicated that out-of-class activities were never performed contrasts with the DLL website's statement about the course: "The methodology includes role-playing, discussion and out-of-class activities" (DLL, 2012a, 2012b).

Table 13. Teachers' methods of instruction

Q. 14: Do you perform the following practices during your present course?						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. Grammar practice	34.5% (20)	50% (29)	10.3% (6)	1.7% (1)		3.4% (2)
b. Vocabulary practice	29.3% (17)	37.9% (22)	24.1% (14)	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)	3.4% (2)
c. Writing practice	19% (11)	25.9% (15)	32.8% (19)	19% (11)		3.4% (2)
d. Reading practice	15.5% (9)	27.6% (16)	37.9% (22)	17.2% (10)		1.7% (1)
e. Listening practice	12.1% (7)	24.1% (14)	37.9% (22)	24.1% (14)		1.7% (1)
f. Speaking practice	15.5% (9)	15.5% (9)	31% (18)	34.5% (20)	1.7% (1)	1.7% (1)
g. Maltese-culture awareness	1.7% (1)	10.3% (6)	50% (29)	29.3% (17)	5.2% (3)	3.4% (2)
h. Out-of-class activities		1.7% (1)	3.4% (2)	22.4% (13)	69% (40)	3.4% (2)

During the course, the learners stated that they usually worked individually (89.6%, all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by working in pairs (60.3%), large groups (46.5%) and small groups (31%) (Table 14). As the top-ranked category, working individually also complemented the grammar approach used in the course.

Table 14. Participants' interactions with other learners

Q. 15: During this course, how often do you work/learn						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. individually	13.8% (8)	53.4% (31)	22.4% (13)	5.2% (3)	1.7% (1)	3.4% (2)
b. in pairs		15.5% (9)	44.8% (26)	29.3% (17)	5.2% (3)	5.2% (3)
c. in small groups	1.7% (1)	8.6% (5)	20.7% (12)	41.4% (24)	22.4% (13)	5.2% (3)
d. in large groups	15.5% (9)	15.5% (9)	15.5% (9)	12.1% (7)	34.5% (20)	6.9% (4)

In terms of the learning methods used by participants, copying from the whiteboard garnered the highest percentage (94.9%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by getting a logical explanation (87.9%), rote learning (75.9%) and listening and taking notes (74.1%) (Table 15). Problem solving (62%) and finding information on your own (60.3%) were ranked last.

Table 15. Learning methods used by participants

Q. 16: During this course, you learn by different methods, such as						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. rote learning	6.9% (4)	32.8% (19)	36.2% (21)	13.8% (8)	5.2% (3)	5.2% (3)
b. finding information on your own	8.6% (5)	15.5% (9)	36.2% (21)	31% (18)	3.4% (2)	5.2% (3)
c. getting a logical explanation	19% (11)	37.9% (22)	31% (18)	6.9% (4)	1.7% (1)	3.4% (2)
d. problem solving	3.4% (2)	22.4% (13)	36.2% (21)	20.7% (12)	6.9% (4)	10.3% (6)
e. copying from the whiteboard	39.7% (23)	48.3% (28)	6.9% (4)			5.2% (3)
f. listening and taking notes	29.3% (17)	36.2% (21)	8.6% (5)	6.9% (4)	1.7% (1)	17.2% (10)
g. other methods	Yes P47: Homework P49: Worksheets P58: Using the *Teach Yourself* book and *Learn Maltese* by Joseph Vella					

Other participants indicated that they learned by doing the homework (P47), answering the worksheets (P49) and using a workbook (P58).

Table 16. Types of assessment given to participants

Q. 17: During the course, we are given						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. homework	24.1% (14)	27.6% (16)	17.2% (10)	27.6% (16)	3.4% (2)	
b. written tests	1.7% (1)	6.9% (4)	32.8% (19)	39.7% (23)	15.5% (9)	3.4% (2)
c. oral tests		12.1% (7)	15.5% (9)	43.1% (25)	20.7% (12)	8.6% (5)
d. use of the European language portfolio	10.3% (6)	20.7% (12)	10.3% (6)	20.7% (12)	31% (18)	6.9% (4)
e. others	Yes P31: The preparation of the portfolio is a waste of time					

Table 16 reveals that homework obtained the highest percentage (68.9%, all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by the European language portfolio and written tests (both 41.4%) and oral tests (27.6%). One participant (P31) considered the portfolio preparation a waste of time. The variations obtained in Table 16 reflect the inconsistencies amongst the learning groups. For example, a combined 31% declared that they used the European language portfolio all of the time or most of the time, while another 31% reported that they never used it.

4.1.2.3 Learners' views on the MFL-1 learning materials

The learners indicated that the most frequently (all of the time, most of the time and often) used materials were notes given by the teacher (96.5%), followed by word lists (68.9%), a coursebook (53.4%), recordings (37.9%), PowerPoint presentations (32.7%) and bilingual books (25.9%) (Table 17). The least-used materials were videos (12%) and books about Maltese history and culture (6.8%).

Table 17. Learning materials used by participants

Q. 18: In the course you are taking, do you use						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. notes given by the teacher	55.2% (32)	31% (18)	10.3% (6)	3.4% (2)		
b. a coursebook	13.8% (8)	22.4% (13)	17.2% (10)	17.2% (10)	25.9% (15)	3.4% (2)
c. bilingual reading books	5.2% (3)	6.9% (4)	13.8% (8)	20.7% (12)	46.6% (27)	6.9% (4)
d. word lists	17.2% (10)	15.5% (9)	36.2% (21)	13.8% (8)	10.3% (6)	6.9% (4)
e. books about Maltese history and culture		3.4% (2)	3.4% (2)	29.3% (17)	58.6% (34)	5.2% (3)
f. videos		1.7% (1)	10.3% (6)	19% (11)	62.1% (36)	6.9% (4)
g. recordings	3.4% (2)	8.6% (5)	25.9% (15)	27.6% (16)	31% (18)	3.4% (2)
h. PowerPoint presentations	8.6% (5)	10.3% (6)	13.8% (8)	12.1% (7)	46.6% (27)	8.6% (5)
i. other materials	Yes P6: Criteria g & h are constrained by the venue P10: The teacher prints out texts for us P25: Photocopies from the teachers P47: Verb lists P57: Website with materials compiled by the teacher					

One learner (P6) noted that due to venue constraints, recordings and PowerPoint presentations could not be used. Two participants (P10 and P25) stated that the teacher photocopied materials for the class; one reported that they were given verb lists (P47); and another (P47) mentioned that the teacher gave them access to a website, with materials compiled by the teacher. An analysis of the frequency of use reveals that the notes given by the teachers not only occupied the first place but also had a significantly higher percentage than the second-ranked word lists.

The learners indicated that the reading texts were used all of the time, most of the time or often to introduce vocabulary (91.4%), introduce grammatical items (88%), develop reading skills to access information (74.2%) and encourage reading for pleasure (37.9%) (Table 18).

Table 18. Uses of reading texts in the course

Q. 19: Reading texts in this course are used to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. introduce grammar items	19% (11)	41.4% (24)	27.6% (16)	6.9% (4)	1.7% (1)	3.4% (2)
b. introduce vocabulary items	29.3% (17)	39.7% (23)	22.4% (13)	3.4% (2)	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)
c. encourage reading for pleasure	5.2% (3)	15.5% (9)	17.2% (10)	37.9% (22)	19% (11)	5.2% (3)
d. develop reading skills to access information	12.1% (7)	19% (11)	43.1% (25)	15.5% (9)	6.9% (4)	3.4% (2)
e. other uses	No					

These findings corroborate the results shown in the previous tables that vocabulary and grammar were given the highest priority (Table 13).

In terms of the usage of texts, over 80% of the learners declared that the course texts were authentic and up to date all of the time, most of the time or often (Table 19). Nearly 80% reported that the texts were appealing to the learners' age all of the time, most of the time or often, while 77.6% said that the texts were challenging and 74.2% indicated that the texts came from varied sources all of the time, most of the time or often.

Table 19. Participants' feedback about the texts used in the course

Q. 20: The texts used in this course are						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. appealing to the learners' age	17.2% (10)	31% (18)	31% (18)	10.3% (6)	1.7% (1)	8.6% (5)
b. challenging, i.e., a step ahead of the learners' current level	15.5% (9)	39.7% (23)	22.4% (13)	12.1% (7)	3.4% (2)	6.9% (4)
c. varied (different sources)	12.1% (7)	29.3% (17)	32.8% (19)	13.8% (8)	1.7% (1)	10.3% (6)
d. up to date	13.8% (8)	36.2% (21)	31% (18)	12.1% (7)	3.4% (2)	3.4% (2)
e. authentic passages (taken from real life)	15.5% (9)	39.7% (23)	27.6% (16)	6.9% (4)	6.9% (4)	3.4% (2)

The learners reported that the most frequent listening method was listening to the teacher reading texts (86.2%, all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by listening to recorded materials (37.9%) and listening to songs (15.5%) (Table 20).

Table 20. Listening methods in class

Q. 21: During lessons, we listen to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. songs	3.4% (2)	5.2% (3)	6.9% (4)	13.8% (8)	67.2% (39)	3.4% (2)
b. recorded materials	3.4% (2)	19% (11)	15.5% (9)	20.7% (12)	39.7% (23)	1.7% (1)
c. the teacher reading texts	15.5% (9)	37.9% (22)	32.8% (19)	10.3% (6)	1.7% (1)	1.7% (1)
d. other resources	Yes P6: Items a and b are constrained by the venue P57: Dialogues between people					

An analysis of the frequency of use reveals that the teacher reading texts not only had the highest ranking but also had a significantly higher percentage than the second-ranked one. Nearly 70% of the participants claimed they had never heard a song in class, and almost 40% said they had never heard any recorded materials. One participant (P6) stated that it was not possible to listen to songs or recorded materials because of a lack of resources at the venue. Another participant declared that the class listened to dialogues between people (P57).

According to the learners, pronunciation exercises were the most frequently used (74.1%, all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by dialogues (70.7%) and oral presentations (44.9%) (Table 21).

Table 21. Speaking activities in the course

Q. 22: The speaking activities in this course include						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. pronunciation exercises	15.5% (9)	24.1% (14)	34.5% (20)	19% (11)	6.9% (4)	
b. dialogues	12.1% (7)	20.7% (12)	37.9% (22)	24.1% (14)	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)
c. oral presentations	6.9% (4)	12.1% (7)	25.9% (15)	29.3% (17)	22.4% (13)	3.4% (2)
d. other activities	No					

It is noteworthy that 25.9% (combined) declared that they rarely or never had pronunciation exercises, 27.5% (combined) rarely or never had dialogues and 51.7% (combined) rarely or never had oral presentations. These results and those of Table 20 confirm that listening and speaking skills were not given due importance, compared to the other skills. Even in this case, over 22% admitted that they never gave oral presentations, contrasting with the DLL website's claims that "oral and written exercises, presentations and a final assessment" were used in this course (DLL, 2012a, 2012b).

In terms of writing exercises, learners perceived that the majority of the exercises were fill in the blanks (98.4%, all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by complete the sentences (93%), choose the correct word (91.4%) and free writing (51.7%) (Table 22). One participant (P15) indicated that crossword puzzles

were used; another learner (P41) mentioned that students wrote sentences using what they learned.

Table 22. Types of writing exercises

Q. 23: The writing exercises in this course consist of						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. fill in the blanks	19% (11)	39.7% (23)	39.7% (23)	1.7% (1)		
b. complete the sentences	17.2% (10)	37.9% (22)	37.9% (22)	5.2% (3)		1.7% (1)
c. choose the correct word	13.8% (8)	43.1% (25)	34.5% (20)	5.2% (3)		3.4% (2)
d. free writing	1.7% (1)	12.1% (7)	37.9% (22)	37.9% (22)	5.2% (3)	5.2% (3)
e. other exercises	Yes P15: Crossword puzzles P41: Writing sentences using learned vocabulary and grammar					

The literature shows that learners must be presented with opportunities to activate their knowledge because language production helps them select from the inputs they have received, rehearse (especially in a classroom setting) and receive feedback, which allow them to adjust their language accordingly (Harmer, 2000, p. 40). This is supported by the findings shown in Tables 18–22. However, based on the rarely or never percentages shown in the previous five tables, in certain areas, especially those linked to listening and speaking, learners were not being offered these opportunities.

4.1.3 Perceived Needs and Suggestions about the Syllabus, Teaching Methods and Materials

In the following three subsections (syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials), the learners' perceived needs and suggestions regarding the course are compared with their perceptions of what it offered. This information will help evaluate the course and identify components that should be amended.

Although different Likert scales were used in this section of the questionnaire, the learners' codes are presented as in the previous section. During the analysis of

responses to the open-ended question "What would you change in the course?", some common themes emerged. Table 23 shows the course components that the participants wanted changed, with the corresponding participant numbers for each item. However, each item is addressed during the discussion of the relevant closed-ended questions in the next three subsections (4.1.3.1, 4.1.3.2 and 4.1.3.3).

Table 23. Course components that participants want changed

Q. 24: What would you change in the course?	
Themes	**Participants**
Syllabus	
New, realistic day-to-day topics and situations	P7, P10, P19, P20, P21, P22, P32, P37, P38, P52
Syllabi for different learning abilities, with a proper exam system for the levels	P6, P17, P31, P54
Standard detailed syllabus	P4, P17, P25
Syllabus is too vast and difficult	P22, P31, P54
Teaching Methods	
More conversation during the course (day-to-day dialogues)	P1, P4, P7, P12, P13, P19, R 20, P21, P22, P26, P28, P35, P37, P39, P41, P45, P46, P47, P48, P49, P52 , P56, P57
Less copying from the board, more interactive methods	P12, P20, P29, P48, P52
More homework	P2, P26, P50, P52, P53
More tests, including dictation	P52, P2, P25, P38, P52
Less emphasis on grammar	P13, P37, P39
More emphasis on grammar	P14, P31, P50
More vocabulary lists and exercises	P46, P50
Portfolio not really clear/not well organised	P15, P31
Work in small groups/pairs	P2, P38
Once topic is initiated, finish it	P38
Materials	
Specifically designed coursebook	P10, P11, P17, P29, P30, P48
Audiovisual materials	P20, P48, P53, P58
A library/online programme with the course notes for support	P10
Bilingual notes	P27
More reading materials	P52
Others	
More intensive learning	P20, P24, P29, P58
No change of tutor	P16, P23
No 3-hour sessions, they should be less	P33, P34
Later sessions, after 7 p.m.	P10
More revision	P44
More revision on the exam	P53
More emphasis on current situation, history and culture	P20
Out-of-school activities	P29

The learners stated that the most difficult or moderately difficult skills were speaking (67.2%), listening (48.3%), writing (44.9%) and reading (8.6%) (Table 24).

Table 24. Most difficult skill to learn in the Maltese language

Q. 25: Which Maltese language skill do you find most difficult?					
	Most difficult	**Moderately difficult**	**Slightly difficult**	**Least difficult**	**NF**
a. listening	20.7% (12)	27.6% (16)	17.2% (10)	13.8% (8)	20.7% (12)
b. speaking	43.1% (25)	24.1% (14)	13.8% (8)	6.9% (4)	12.1% (7)
c. reading	1.7% (1)	6.9% (4)	17.2% (10)	51.7% (30)	22.4% (13)
d. writing	25.9% (15)	19% (11)	29.3% (17)	5.2% (3)	20.7% (12)

In terms of the Maltese language skill that the learners wanted to improve most, the majority indicated speaking (67.2%), followed by listening (8.6%) and writing (3.4%) (Table 25). No learner mentioned the need to improve reading. These findings follow the pattern seen in Table 24; when a skill was more difficult, the learners had to practise more. However, they stated that in the course, speaking was the least practised of the four language skills (Table 13) and 23 out of 58 participants expressed the need for more conversations in the course ("What would you change in the course?"; Table 23). This indicated that speaking was not given due importance, as perceived by the learners; thus, it was considered a course deficiency.

Table 25. Maltese language skill that participants most want to improve

Q. 26: Which Maltese language skill would you like to improve the most?		
	Number	**Percentage**
a. **speaking**	39	67.2%
b. **NF**	12	20.7%
c. **listening**	5	8.6%
d. **writing**	2	3.4%
e. **reading**		

Additionally, over 96% of the learners deemed it very important or important to practise the four language skills (Table 26). It is noteworthy that none of the participants

marked it unimportant or not at all important, indicating that the majority wanted a course based on all four skills.

Table 26. Participants' feedback on practising the four language skills

Q. 27: To study a language, one has to practise the four skills.					
Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
81% (47)	15.5% (9)	1.7% (1)			1.7% (1)

Revisiting Table 10 (subsection 4.1.2.1), which corresponds to Table 26, the four skills were covered in the course, with a combined percentage (all of the time, most of the time and often) of 94.8%; however, as indicated in the comments related to the previous table, speaking was not being given the desired share of attention.

For the learners, the most important organisational method was grammar topics (84.5%, combined very important and important), followed by topics (70.7%) and tasks (60.4%) (Table 27).

Table 27. Participants' feedback on course structure

Q. 28: How important is it for you to … have lessons organised according to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. grammar topics	46.6% (27)	37.9% (22)	6.9% (4)	5.2% (3)		3.4% (2)
b. topics	36.2% (21)	34.5% (20)	19% (11)	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)	5.2% (3)
c. tasks	20.7% (12)	39.7% (23)	24.1% (14)	5.2% (3)	1.7% (1)	8.6% (5)
d. other methods	Yes P13: Listening and speaking the language P21: Dialogues P50: Skill oriented P54: Dialogues					

An analysis of the percentages of the corresponding Table 11 reveals that all of the time, most of the time or often, the course was organised according to grammar (96.5%), topics (79.3%) and tasks (44.8%).

Comparing this to Table 27 shows that the learners kept the same ranking order in terms of importance. However, three of the participants who filled in the other methods option indicated that it was important to have lesson organisation according to activities related to speaking, such as dialogues (P21 and P54) and listening and speaking the language (P13) (Table 27). One participant (P50) declared that the syllabus must be skill-oriented. Thus, in the course organisation, grammar was perceived as very important or important by the majority of the learners; however, as indicated previously (Tables 24–26) and in comments related to Table 27, speaking and listening should not be neglected. Changes in the course syllabus were mentioned in the answers to question 24, which was open ended (Table 23); the learners stated that the syllabus was too vast and difficult (P22, P31 and P54). To address this issue, some learners suggested a standard detailed syllabus for all the groups (P4, P17 and P25) with different learning abilities and a proper exam system for the levels (P6, P17, P31 and P54), with new, realistic day-to-day topics and situations (P7, P10, P19, P20, P21, P22, P32, P37, P38 and P52).

Table 28. Participants' preferences for a linear vs. a cyclical progression

Q. 29: Have a course with a						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. linear progression	32.8% (19)	29.3% (17)	31% (18)			6.9% (4)
b. cyclical progression	46.6% (27)	29.3% (17)	10.3% (6)	1.7% (1)	1.7% (1)	10.3% (6)

The combined percentages of very important and important rankings show that it was very important or important for the learners to have a course with a cyclical progression (75.9%) instead of a linear progression (62.1%); however, the latter was also given due importance (Table 28), indicating that the learners envisioned a course with both types of progression.

Table 12 (corresponding to Table 28) shows that linear progression had a combined percentage (all of the time, most of the time and often) of 82.8% for the course, while cyclical progression had a combined percentage of 79.3%, indicating that both types of progressions were present in the course.

Table 28 (with the exception of two learners who declared that cyclical progression was unimportant or not at all important) thus shows that the learners perceived that both types of progression were important and that more revision during the course increased in percentage in terms of importance.

Revision and its related issues also emerged in question 24, which was open ended. One participant (P44) emphasised the need for more revision, and another (P38) commented that once a topic was started, the teacher must finish it. Two learners (P16 and P23) lamented that new tutors were assigned to the course more than once, with one participant stating that three new tutors were assigned. Another learner (P53) indicated that more lessons should be covered in the exam. Four learners expressed their desire for more intensive learning (P20, P24, P29 and P58). However, two of the learners preferred shorter lessons that were not three hours long (P33 and P34), and one learner (P10) indicated that he/she favoured lessons starting after 7 p.m.

4.1.3.2 Learners' perceived needs regarding the teaching methods for MFL-1

For the learners, speaking was the most important practice; it obtained 100% with the combined percentages of very important or important rankings (Table 29). The next highest-ranked practices were listening and vocabulary (both 93.1%), grammar (89.6%), reading (86.3%), writing (75.9%), Maltese culture awareness (60.4%) and out-of-class activities (29.3%).

Table 29. Participants' feedback on methods of instruction

Q. 30: How important is it for you to include the following practices during second-language teaching:						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. grammar practice	51.7% (30)	37.9% (22)	6.9% (4)	1.7% (1)		1.7% (1)
b. vocabulary practice	67.2% (39)	25.9% (15)	5.2% (3)			1.7% (1)
c. writing practice	46.6% (27)	29.3% (17)	19% (11)	3.4% (2)		1.7% (1)
d. reading practice	46.6% (27)	39.7% (23)	5.2% (3)	8.6% (5)		
e. listening practice	70.7% (41)	22.4% (13)	6.9% (4)			
f. speaking practice	86.2% (50)	13.8% (8)				
g. Maltese-culture awareness	13.8% (8)	46.6% (27)	25.9% (15)	13.8% (8)		
h. out-of-class activities	13.8% (8)	15.5% (9)	25.9% (15)	27.6% (16)	13.8% (8)	3.4% (2)

The most prominent point that emerged was that for learners, speaking and listening practices were more important than anything else; however, Table 13 (the corresponding table for the course) reveals that these were performed less regularly in the course than all other criteria, except for Maltese culture awareness and out-of-class activities. Moreover, as indicated earlier, 23 of 58 participants expressed the need for more conversations in the course in their answers to the open-ended question (P1, P4, P7, P12, P13, P19, P20, P21, P22, P26, P28, P35, P37, P39, P41, P45, P46, P47, P48, P49, P52, P56 and P57) (Table 23). It should be kept in mind that the learners' priorities were to communicate with locals (53.4%) and to cope with daily life (12.1%) (Table 9); thus, speaking practice was vital for day-to-day activities, and the learners perceived the need for more conversation and requested opportunities to activate their knowledge (Harmer, 2000, p. 40). They also indicated that the focus should be on listening and speaking exercises to address these course deficits.

In their answers to the open-ended question (Table 23), some learners indicated that they preferred less emphasis on grammar (P13, P37 and P39), while others noted the opposite (P14, P31 and P50). Two participants wanted additional vocabulary lists

and exercises (P46 and P50). The fact that three learners declared a desire for more grammar and an equal number stated the inverse reflects Brown's (2001, p. 33) view that different groups, even within the same language programme, may vary considerably in their preferences.

The combined percentages of very comfortable and comfortable rankings as regards interaction preferences show that learners preferred working in pairs (89.6%). Working individually (84.4%) was ranked second, followed by working in small groups (81.1%) and working in large groups (55.2%) (Table 30).

Table 30. Participants' interaction preferences with other learners

Q. 31: How comfortable do you feel when you work/learn						
	Very comfortable	**Comfortable**	**Indifferent**	**Uncomfortable**	**Very un-comfortable**	**NF**
a. individually	53.4% (31)	31% (18)	10.3% (6)	5.2% (3)		
b. in pairs	29.3% (17)	60.3% (35)	8.6% (5)	1.7% (1)		
c. in small groups	34.5% (20)	46.6% (27)	12.1% (7)	5.2% (3)		1.7% (1)
d. in large groups	19% (11)	36.2% (21)	25.9% (15)	13.8% (8)	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)

Table 14 (corresponding to Table 30) shows that in the course, the learners worked individually (89.6%), followed by in pairs (60.3%), in large groups (46.5%) and in small groups (31%) all of the time, most of the time or often.

Although 17.2% of the learners indicated that they felt uncomfortable or very uncomfortable working in large groups (Table 30), this practice happened regularly in the course (Table 14). It is important to note that learners felt more comfortable working in pairs rather than individually (Table 30). However, pair work fell behind when compared to individual work in the course (Table 14).

In Table 31, over 93% of the learners strongly agreed or agreed that they learned best by rote learning, followed by getting a logical explanation (86.2%), finding information on your own (79.3%), listening and taking notes and problem solving (both 70.7%) and copying from the board (58.6%). One participant's (P6) mention of trying and not being afraid to make mistakes is remarkable. Errors not only help language tutors assess learners' progress and note what is left to learn but also benefit the students

themselves by learning from their mistakes: "it is a way the learner has of testing the hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning" (Corder, 1967, p. 167).

Table 31. Learning method preferences of participants

Q. 32: You learn best by						
	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**NF**
a. rote learning	63.8% (37)	29.3% (17)	3.4% (2)			3.4% (2)
b. finding information on your own	19% (11)	60.3% (35)	15.5% (9)	3.4% (2)		1.7% (1)
c. getting a logical explanation	43.1% (25)	43.1% (25)	8.6% (5)	3.4% (2)		1.7% (1)
d. problem solving	25.9% (15)	44.8% (26)	20.7% (12)	5.2% (3)		3.4% (2)
e. copying from the board	10.3% (6)	48.3% (28)	22.4% (13)	17.2% (10)	1.7% (1)	
f. listening and taking notes	25.9% (15)	44.8% (26)	13.8% (8)	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)	10.3% (6)
g. other methods	Yes P6: Trying and not being afraid to make mistakes					

Table 15 (corresponding to Table 31) reveals that copying from the whiteboard (combined percentage of all of the time and most of the time, 88%) was ranked first; however, it was rated last in Table 31. This finding reflects several learners' responses to open-ended question 24 (Table 23), expressing their wish to copy less from the board in favour of more interactive methods (P12, P20, P29, P48 and P52). The fact that other learning methods obtained a combined percentage (strongly agree and agree) of over 70% (Table 31) indicates that learners must continue to be presented with similar teaching methods.

In Table 32, the learners indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed with being given homework (89.7%), oral tests (75.9%) and written tests (74.1%) and with using the European language portfolio (29.3%). One participant (P12) also mentioned that assessment could be done by completing projects and conducting research. Some learners offered other ideas; one participant (P10) stressed the importance of online

support with access to forums and tutors; another cited talking and using the language (P13).

Table 32. Types of assessment preferred by participants

Q. 33: For assessment purposes, do you prefer to						
	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**NF**
a. be given homework	50% (29)	39.7% (23)	3.4% (2)	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)	1.7% (1)
b. have written tests	36.2% (21)	37.9% (22)	19% (11)	5.2% (3)		1.7% (1)
c. have oral tests	39.7% (23)	36.2% (21)	13.8% (8)	6.9% (4)	1.7% (1)	1.7% (1)
d. use the European language portfolio	13.8% (8)	15.5% (9)	50% (29)	5.2% (3)	10.3% (6)	5.2% (3)
e. other assessment types	Yes P10: Online support with access to tutors and forums P12: Projects and research P13: Talking/listening and using the language					

Table 16 (corresponding to Table 32) shows homework in the top position, with 68.9% of the learners declaring that it was used all of the time, most of the time or often, followed by the European language portfolio and written tests (both 41.4%) and oral tests (27.6%).

Comparing the tables shows that homework, the learners' preferred method, was used regularly in the course (68.8%). However, although written tests and oral tests were equally preferred, the former was used more than the latter in the course (41.4% and 27.6%, respectively; combined all of the time, most of the time and often) (Table 16). However, 41.4% declared that the European language portfolio was used in the course (combined all of the time, most of the time and often) (Table 16) but the least preferred. In open-ended question 24 (Table 23), two participants reported on the portfolio's lack of clarity and organisation (P15 and P31). It is important to note that one participant (P31) indicated that preparing the portfolio was a waste of time (Table 16). Thus, the statistics and the comments indicate problems with this assessment.

In the open-ended question (Table 23), other learners also indicated their desire for more homework (P2, P26, P50, P52 and P53); others mentioned wanting more tests, including dictation (P52, P2, P25, P38 and P52).

4.1.3.3 Learners' perceived needs regarding the MFL-1 learning materials

Regarding learning materials, the notes given by the teacher garnered the highest percentage (96.6%) as a very important or important resource, followed by word lists (96.5%), a coursebook (87.9%), bilingual reading books (75.9%), recordings (67.3%), books about Maltese history and culture (48.3%), PowerPoint presentations (46.5%) and videos (43.1%) (Table 33). One participant indicated newspapers as an important resource, too (P29), while another mentioned quizzes and tests (P52).

Table 33. Learning materials' importance for participants

Q. 34: In this language course, it is important to have the following resources:						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. notes given by the teacher	75.9% (44)	20.7% (12)				3.4% (2)
b. a coursebook	53.4% (31)	34.5% (20)	8.6% (5)	1.7% (1)	1.7% (1)	
c. bilingual reading books	34.5% (20)	41.4% (24)	13.8% (8)	8.6% (5)	1.7% (1)	
d. word lists	60.3% (35)	36.2% (21)	3.4% (2)			
e. books about Maltese history and culture	12.1% (7)	36.2% (21)	31% (18)	12.1% (7)	6.9% (4)	1.7% (1)
f. videos	20.7% (12)	22.4% (13)	34.5% (20)	17.2% (10)	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)
g. recordings	34.5% (20)	32.8% (19)	13.8% (8)	17.2% (10)		1.7% (1)
h. PowerPoint presentation	29.3% (17)	17.2% (10)	32.8% (19)	10.3% (6)	1.7% (1)	8.6% (5)
i. other learning materials	Yes P29: Newspapers P52: Tests and quizzes					

Comparing Table 33 to Table 17 (its corresponding table) shows the first three resources (notes given by the teacher, word lists and a coursebook) as the most used

ones in the course (96.5%, 68.9% and 53.4%, respectively; all of the time, most of the time and often). However, although notes given by the teacher and word lists were nearly equally preferred in importance, the former was used more than the latter in the course (96.5% and 68.9%, respectively; combined all of the time, most of the time and often) (Table 17). Although the coursebook was also perceived as a very important or important resource (nearly 90%, Table 33) in the course, only 53.4% indicated that it was used nearly all of the time, most of the time or often (Table 17).

Although recordings, PowerPoint presentations, bilingual reading books, videos and books about Maltese history and culture (Table 17) were not used as regularly as the others in the course, Table 33 shows that they were given due importance. In open-ended question 24 (Table 23), some learners indicated the need for a specifically designed coursebook (P10, P11, P17, P29, P30 and P48), more audiovisual materials (P20, P48, P53 and P58), an online programme with course notes (P10), bilingual notes (P27), more reading materials (P52) and more [emphasis on] the current situation and history (P20) and on culture and out-of-school activities (P29). As indicated by Crooks and Schmidt (1991, cited in Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 65), varying tasks and materials is a pedagogical practice that increases learners' motivation levels. However, although some classes used the coursebook regularly, some learners perceived a need for a custom-made one, thus indicating that the textbook/s used might have been inadequate.

For the learners, texts were important to introduce vocabulary items and introduce grammar items (both 96.6%), develop reading skills to access information (75.9%) and encourage reading for pleasure (70.7%) (Table 34).

Table 34. Participants' preferred use of reading texts in the course

Q. 35: How important is it for you to have texts to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. introduce grammar items	50% (29)	46.6% (27)	3.4% (2)			
b. introduce vocabulary items	62.1% (36)	34.5% (20)	1.7% (1)			1.7 % (1)
c. encourage reading for pleasure	37.9% (22)	32.8% (19)	20.7% (12)	6.9% (4)	1.7% (1)	
d. develop reading skills to access information	43.1% (25)	32.8% (19)	15.5% (9)	3.4% (2)		5.2 % (3)
e. other texts	No					

Table 18 (corresponding to Table 34) shows that the main use of texts in the course was to introduce vocabulary items (combined percentage of all of the time and most of the time, 91.4%). Texts were also used to introduce grammar items (88%), develop reading skills to access information (74.2%) and encourage reading for pleasure (37.2%).

Because Table 34 shows that the learners gave each criterion a combined percentage of over 70% in the very important and important levels, all these practices must be continued and reinforced.

The very important and important rankings in Table 35 show that it was vital for the learners to have texts that were authentic (81%), varied (77.6%), up to date (77.6%), challenging (65.5%) and appealing to the learners' age (43.1%).

Table 35. Participants' suggestions about the texts used in the course

Q. 36: How important is it for you to have texts that are						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. appealing to the learners' age	17.2% (10)	25.9% (15)	46.6% (27)	5.2% (3)	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)
b. challenging i.e., a step ahead of the learners' current level	31% (18)	34.5% (20)	27.6% (16)	5.2% (3)		1.7% (1)
c. varied (different sources)	37.9% (22)	39.7% (23)	19% (11)	1.7% (1)		1.7% (1)
d. up to date	31% (18)	46.6% (27)	19% (11)	3.4% (2)		
e. authentic passages (taken from real life)	44.8% (26)	36.2% (21)	10.3% (6)	3.4% (2)		5.2% (3)

Table 19 (corresponding to Table 35) shows that learners declared that all of the time, most of the time or often, the texts used were authentic (82.8%), up to date (81%), appealing to the learners' age (79.2%), challenging (77.5%) and from varied sources (74.2%).

Comparing these two sets of results reveals that the prevailing usage of texts in the course should be kept because it was very important or important to the learners. Only 43% indicated that it was very important or important that the texts be appealing to the learners' age, showing that certain learners were ready to make an exception for this.

The most important listening activity for the learners was the teacher reading texts (82.8%), followed by listening to recorded materials (75.9%) and listening to songs (36.2%) (Table 36). One participant added that it was essential to listen to conversations outside the classroom (P13).

Table 36. Participants' suggestions about listening methods in class

Q. 37: How important is it for you to listen to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. songs	10.3% (6)	25.9% (15)	39.7% (23)	10.3% (6)	10.3% (6)	3.4% (2)
b. recorded materials	36.2% (21)	39.7% (23)	15.5% (9)	5.2% (3)	1.7% (1)	1.7% (1)
c. the teacher reading texts	41.4% (24)	41.4% (24)	13.8% (8)	1.7% (1)		1.7% (1)
d. other resources	Yes P13: Conversations outside [the classroom]					

Table 20 (corresponding to Table 36) shows that the learners listened to the teacher reading texts (86.2%), recorded materials (37.9%) and songs (15.5%) all of the time, most of the time or often in the course.

The percentage of importance shown in Table 36, especially for the first two criteria, demonstrates the learners' perceived need to keep the same practice of the teacher reading texts, while increasing the use of recorded materials.

Table 37 shows that all the learners agreed that dialogues were very important or important (100% combined score), followed by pronunciation exercises (98.2%) and oral presentations (86.2%).

Table 37. Participants' suggestions about speaking activities in the course

Q. 38: How important is it for you to do speaking activities such as						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Un-important**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. pronunciation exercises	74.1% (43)	24.1% (14)	1.7% (1)			
b. dialogues	77.6% (45)	22.4% (13)				
c. oral presentations	51.7% (30)	34.5% (20)	12.1% (7)			1.7% (1)
d. other speaking activities	NO					

Table 21 (corresponding to Table 37) shows that the learners declared that the speaking activities in the course included pronunciation exercises (74.1%), dialogues (70.7%) and oral presentations (44.9%) all of the time, most of the time or often.

The high percentages of importance assigned to these speaking activities (Table 37) and lack of any marks indicating that these activities were unimportant or not at all important indicate the perceived need for more speaking activities, which also appeared in the open-ended question (Table 23).

In terms of writing exercises, choose the correct word was very important or important for the learners (combined score of 94.9%) (Table 38). Complete the sentences was ranked second (93.2%), then fill in the blanks (93.1%) and free writing (86.2%).

Table 38. Participants' suggestions about types of writing exercises

Q. 39: How important is it for you to do writing activities such as						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. fill in the blanks	48.3% (28)	44.8% (26)	5.2% (3)	1.7% (1)		
b. complete the sentences	46.6% (27)	46.6% (27)	6.9% (4)			
c. choose the correct word	55.2% (32)	39.7% (23)	5.2% (3)			
d. free writing	53.4% (31)	32.8% (19)	12.1% (7)			1.7% (1)
e. other writing activities	NO					

Comparing Table 38 to its corresponding Table 22 shows that the first three categories indicated in Table 22 were performed nearly all of the time, most of the time or often, with the following percentages: fill in the blanks (98.4%), complete the sentences (93%) and choose the correct word (91.4%). The learners perceived these

three criteria as important or very important, with a combined percentage of over 90% for each (Table 38). Free writing (performed 51.7% in the course) followed, with over 86% in importance. These results indicate that these writing exercises that were already offered in the MFL-1 course should be retained and free writing should be reinforced.

4.2 Learners' interviews

The next three subsections present information gathered about the MFL-1 course syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials, as well as the learners' perceived needs for these three areas, based on their interview responses. The interview questions are abbreviated with the code LIQ (learners' interview question), followed by the number of each one. The learners' responses are assigned with the code IP (interview participant) and the number for each participant (e.g., IP1).

As indicated in the methodology chapter, the interview data are presented chronologically according to each question, followed by the learners' responses, so that all the data are provided clearly to readers. It is helpful to do so to be "open to evaluative interpretation" (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 16).

The data from the MFL-1 learners' questionnaires and interviews are combined in Chapter 6 (Discussion), where the common findings from these two research instruments are compared or contrasted to the findings that emerge from the MFL-1 teachers' data. The different themes that emerge are discussed with reference to the literature and to the MFL-2 learners' and teachers' data.

4.2.1 Learners' Views on the MFL-1 Syllabus and their Perceived Needs

Learners enrol in a particular language programme for different reasons. Knowing the learners' reasons could help teachers and course designers address their needs. When the MFL-1 learners were asked, "Why did you enrol in this particular course?" (LIQ2), they gave various responses. Six interviewees wanted to communicate with locals (IP5, IP6, IP8, IP9, IP11 and IP12); others desired to communicate with colleagues at work (IP2, IP4, IP9 and IP11). Three learners gave individual reasons: to speak to her husband in Maltese (IP9), to help him find a job (IP12) and to take the first step that would eventually lead to other steps necessary for the O-level (IP6). Other

learners did not elaborate on why they wanted to learn Maltese (IP3, IP7 and IP10); one specified, "I live in Malta and it is a nice thing to learn the language" (IP1).

To determine if this particular course catered to all the learners' needs, they were asked, "Are you taking any other course in Maltese apart from this? If yes, why?" (LIQ3). One participant disclosed his/her simultaneous attendance at an Employment Training Centre (ETC) beginners' course to review what he/she had studied in MFL-1 (IP5). Another reported taking Maltese conversation classes "to improve speaking" (IP8), while another mentioned attending the Maltese for Maltese course. The reason given by the latter involved the teacher:

> I was taking other courses and comparing [teachers] ... some teachers deliver lessons well, while others use the board only, and [this is the reason] why many [students] leave the class (IP11).

As Ehrman, Leaver and Oxford (2003) noted, tutors must present their students with adequate learning experiences and materials to increase the learners' motivation and meet "their needs for competence, relatedness, self-esteem and enjoyment" (p. 320). Otherwise, as the participant quoted above stated, learners would opt out of the course. Several interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the MFL-1 course syllabus:

> [It] is very advanced for beginners, similar to a pre-intermediate or intermediate level … I cannot [yet] express myself naturally in Maltese (IP1).

> The problem of course is that [the lesson] goes too fast. It starts with bonġu kif inti? [Good morning. How are you?], and then we just read texts that are very hard to understand. I think it is also the core problem why we start out [with] 24 [students in class] and end up [with] seven. Also, [the course] that I took in Valletta went fast (IP3, referring to the German Maltese Circle).

> [It] is too advanced. I don't think it has been sufficiently revised. Going back to what you were doing at the beginning … the drop[out] rate is alarming at 70% of the students. I think that is to be expected. I think the one thing you should try, especially for beginners, is to make it simple for a little longer at the beginning because it seems that it scares them off (IP5).

> You learn something but it's difficult. [This course is] not [intended for] begin[ners] … I thought it was going to [start] from zero (IP7).

These quotations indicate a need for more revision during the course because it was seen as too advanced, leading to a high dropout rate.

Since some learners expressed dissatisfaction with the course, they were asked, "Is there a syllabus for the course offered?" (LIQ4). Two of the 12 participants said "yes" (IP4 and IP7), two responded "I guess" or "I hope" (IP1 and IP12), one answered "I don't know" (IP6) and seven replied "no" (IP2, IP3, IP5, IP8, IP9, IP10 and IP11). Of those who answered "no", two elaborated, "Nothing that you can look at and plan ahead for" (IP5) and "To be honest, I don't think there is a standard syllabus. For me, that's what I think should be the core [component]" (IP8).

A syllabus for MFL-1 does exist, but the learners could not access it because it is not available online and is written in Maltese. Therefore, if the present syllabus is to be retained, it is essential to translate it into English for the learners' benefit, thus making it accessible. Those learners who answered "yes" (IP4 and IP7) and "I guess" or "I hope" (IP1 and IP12) were asked, "Do you have access to the syllabus for the course offered?" (LIQ5). One of the participants stated "yes" (IP4) and another referred to the textbook as the syllabus (IP1). However, he/she stated, "I cannot read the textbook because it is too advance[d]", while the other two did not respond to the question (IP7 and IP12). IP1's comment about the advanced textbook indicates a problem with its adequacy, which is discussed in section 4.2.3.

When all the comments about the syllabus are read, the question that comes to mind (which was included in the interview) is, "Were you involved in the decision-making process in developing the syllabus or the course?" (LIQ6). Except for one interviewee, all said "no". This indicates that the syllabus was produced using a top-down approach, which explains why it does not reflect the learners' suggestions in certain instances.

To investigate in more detail the problems associated with the course, the learners were asked, "Do you feel that the syllabus of the course you are attending is adequate? Why?" (LIQ7). Various responses were given. Three interviewees answered "no" because of the advanced level of the course (IP1, IP2 and IP7). Two learners were unsure (IP9 and IP12); one indicated that the teacher was replaced and there was no prepared programme (IP12). Two participants responded with "yes" and "no"; one said "yes" in terms of grammar and vocabulary and "no" in terms of speaking (IP8 and IP10). Four participants replied "yes" (IP2, IP4, IP6 and IP11), with IP2 and IP11 reporting improvement, IP4 indicating improvement in grammar and vocabulary, and

IP6 not citing any reason. Another learner (IP3) preferred not to comment. Thus, the reservations about the course's adequacy involved its advanced level, the need for more speaking exercises, and logistical problems, such as turnover from one teacher to another.

The negative responses showed the learners' awareness that their learning could be affected. Moreover, when asked, "Do you think that by the end of the course, you will reach your aims? Why?" (LIQ8), nine of the 12 interviewees disagreed. Three of them indicated their concerns about speaking:

> [The course] does not focus on speaking the language (IP1).

> My main goal is speaking [Maltese]. I am not reaching that goal … I've learned much more than when I started, but I am not happy enough with the speaking [part]. I wish I could do more (IP8).

> [Maltese] is a very difficult language … and I want to speak it, not particularly write it (IP9).

The other six learners who replied "no" gave different reasons: "everyone speaks English everywhere you go" (IP3); "the course is only once a week, thus [it is] short" (IP3, IP5 and IP12); "I don't study" (IP3); "I don't have time to study" (IP4 and IP11); and "I need the O-level [exam]" (IP6). The point raised by IP3, that everyone spoke English, contrasts with findings from the literature review. Stern (1983, p. 17) and Gass and Selinker (2008, p. 7) indicated that the environment would help the SL learner a great deal, with some learners picking up the language from the environment in which they lived without formal instruction. However, this is not the case in Malta; since it is officially bilingual, one can find an Anglophone everywhere. Therefore, teaching Maltese requires instruction that is more formal to compensate for the lack of language input in the environment. With this in mind, the claim about the short course makes more sense (Table 24). IP6's claim that he/she would not reach his/her aims because he/she would not attain the O-level exam was true because as indicated (see subsection 1.5.3, Directorate for Lifelong Learning), this was not part of the course goals.

Statements such as "I don't study" show the learner's lack of motivation. Together with the claim that "I don't have time to study", these responses confirm McKay and Tom's (1999, p. 2) argument that adult learners, whose ages might be

anywhere from 18 to over 80, would have different personal circumstances, some of which might affect their attendance, punctuality and concentration.

Since different learners expressed disappointment about certain areas in the course, it appears that they were not consulted before the course commenced. When the learners were asked, "Before you began this language course, did you complete a survey about your goals and needs? If yes, what were the contents of the survey?" (LIQ12), all the participants said "no" and another replied, "I don't remember" (IP9). An evaluation during or at the end of the course would significantly help in obtaining feedback. This was covered in one of the interview questions, "Did you complete a survey to evaluate the course, either during or at the end of the course?" (LIQ21). Of the participants, 11 responded "no" and one responded "yes". However, considering that this learner did not communicate well in English, it may be that he/she did not understand the question or considered the questionnaire used for this study to be the evaluation survey.

Because the learners stated that the syllabus was generic and there was no needs analysis or feedback system, they were asked in the interview, "Which situations are covered in the course?" (LIQ9). They expressed a variety of responses, including recipes (IP1); kitchen, garden, vegetables, transport, in a restaurant and everyday expressions (IP3); greeting and introducing oneself (IP4); daily routines and hobbies (IP6); travelling (IP6, IP7 and IP9); food (IP6); sports (IP6, IP3 and IP12); shopping (IP7, IP9 and IP12); renting an apartment, going to the market and common expressions (IP8); vessels and birthdays (IP9); and family, house, furniture and basic words (IP12). When asked, "Are the situations covered in the course suitable for your learning aims? Why?" (LIQ10), seven of the 12 declared "yes" and cited different reasons, such as "I improved" (IP1), "suitable for me" (IP3), "I am a beginner" (IP4), "I encounter these situations" (IP6) and "day-to-day topics" (IP7 and IP8). Three deemed the situations quite suitable or mostly suitable (IP5, IP11 and IP12), and one participant explained, "I think [that] sometimes too much time is spent on false situations because most of the time [for example], if you are going to Gozo, you will just talk in English" (IP5). However, this learner did not consider other foreigners who did not speak English. Another participant did not say whether the situations were suitable or not but expected that he/she would be able to speak to people in Maltese and understand the language. The remaining participant did not answer this question. When asked, "Which situations

do you think should be covered?" (LIQ11), the learners indicated topics such as general consultation and schools (IP1); at the grocer (IP3); interview and work terminology (IP4); ordinary daily conversations (IP5); weather (IP6); asking about time and location (IP8); supermarket and pharmacist (IP10); particular events and daily life (IP11); meeting a friend, at the restaurant and taking an order (IP12); and shopping (IP1, IP11 and IP12). Teachers should take note of these expectations to ensure a more successful learning experience (Borg and Marsh, 1997, p. 195). Course organisers, syllabi designers and coursebook creators should also consider these suggestions to achieve the learning aims.

Problems and tentative solutions emerged again when the learners were asked in the interview, "What would you change [in the syllabus] so that it better reflects your language needs?" (LIQ13). The topics mentioned most often were increased day-to-day conversations (IP1, IP8, IP10 and IP11) and pronunciation practice (IP12). Other suggestions included the following: set up with the CEFR (IP12), be easier (IP7), more oral and written tests (IP3 and IP6), online support (IP9), more pictures (IP7 and IP12), an easy textbook with vocabulary and grammar "because we have to write everything" (IP4), and lessons learned until the end of the course must be physically written (IP12). Another participant indicated that learners should be given "an overview of what they are going to learn, an overview of the syllabus" (IP3).

4.2.2 Learners' Views on the Teaching Methods for MFL-1 and their Perceived Needs

The learners were asked about the different teaching methods used in the course and their needs and suggestions. During the interviews, they were asked, "Which learning activity/activities do you like most in the course that you are currently taking? Why?" (LIQ14). Various responses included writing (IP1); speaking (IP2, IP3 and IP10); "because I use the language", especially when "You sit in pairs and you [start] to speak, but still not in front of the whole class" (IP3); vocabulary (IP4); conjugating verbs (IP5); reading exercise, "translate, read [it] yourself and listen to it being read" (IP5); listening (IP6); "see pictures and their names because it is simple" (IP7); "reading and speaking because [these are] crucial for me" (IP8); writing texts and discussing them (IP9); "reading because I learn new vocabulary" (IP11); and using the smart board, photocopying [lesson materials] and working on different exercises (IP12). Many interviewees opted not to give any reason for their answers.

The learners were also asked, "Which learning activity/activities do you dislike most in the course that you are currently taking? Why?" (LIQ15). The participants had different answers, with few offering an explanation. The responses included "listening, because it is not real" (IP1); "speaking in front of the whole class, because I am shy" (IP2); "listening activity where you don't understand what they're saying and then you're supposed to answer" (IP3); "the thought of having to make conversations" (IP5); "there should be more written homework" (IP5); "writing, because it is the most challenging" (IP6); "dialogues, because I am lost since I don't study" (IP7); "grammar" (IP9); "reviewing for the exam" (IP10); "when we start something and never finish it" (IP11); and "nothing" (IP4, IP8 and IP12). IP2, IP3 and IP11 made the three most striking comments. The point raised by IP2 was the importance of creating a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom to motivate language learners (Csizér and Dörnyei, 1998, p. 215). As for IP3's concern, it would be essential for teachers to present tasks properly (Csizér and Dörnyei, 1998, p. 215) in order to sustain learners' motivation. Regarding the issue of not completing a task raised by IP11, completing the task would be crucial to increase learners' goal orientedness (Csizér and Dörnyei, 1998, p. 215) for them to realise that they were reaching their aims and thus would remain motivated.

The learners were asked, "What types of assessment did you complete during the course to give you feedback about your Maltese language learning progress?" (LIQ16). They provided the following responses: portfolio (IP3, IP4, IP5, IP8 and IP10); homework (IP2, IP9 and IP11); oral/short test (IP6 and IP12); and filling in the blanks, completing the sentences and finding words (IP9). Two learners admitted that they had not undergone any assessment (IP1 and IP7). Some of these responses contrast with the DLL website's claim that an "on-going assessment (lifelong learning portfolio), oral and written exercises, presentations and a final assessment" occur (DLL, 2012a, 2012b).

Suggestions and perceived needs emerged during the interviews when the learners were asked, "Based on your experience and in speaking with your colleagues, what would you change about the teaching methods used in the course?" (LIQ17). One learner (IP12) stated that everything depended on the teacher handling the class; when their teacher was replaced, they lost more than half the group. This idea was echoed by

IP11, who suggested more activities and games, similar to those the other groups experienced. These findings indicate that the methodology depends on the teacher delivering the course; ideally, teachers should set a personal example with their own behaviour, meaning that they should provide learners with adequate opportunities to keep them motivated (Csizér and Dörnyei, 1998, p. 215). Other learners recommended various approaches such as more pair work, group work and task-based activities (IP1); a skill-based approach (IP6); the teacher engaging the students more (IP8); online support (IP9); and going through the course more slowly and conducting more revision tests (IP3). Other learners proposed extra teaching materials, such as more songs (IP7) and films with subtitles (IP5). Along the same lines, two learners (IP5 and IP10) recommended that the teachers be given a standard syllabus because "we've seen the exam papers and some of the things are not even what we know" (IP10). The latter also suggested a book to read during the course that would be the basis for the exam. Another learner (IP4) indicated that learners should be informed about the topics to be covered the following week so they could prepare at home. All these responses confirm the observations in the literature that adult learners bring their experiences and values to the learning situation. Thus, it is ideal to explore their experiences and use them as the basis for language-learning work (Borg and Marsh, 1997, p. 195).

4.2.3 Learners' Views on the MFL-1 Learning Materials and their Perceived Needs

Learning materials are vital in a language programme. Therefore, to investigate what learning materials were used in this course, the learners were asked, "What types of resources and materials are used during the language course you are currently taking?" (LIQ18). The responses included handouts, newspapers and read[ing] extracts (IP1); book (IP2); photocopies (IP3, IP4, IP10 and IP12); PowerPoint presentations (IP3, IP5, IP6 and IP12); descriptions and dialogues (IP4); films (IP5); the book *Merħba bik* [*You are welcome*] (IP6); pictures and CDs (IP7); books for foreigners, but "Many books for foreigners do not have English [translations] so it's not worthwhile to buy them" (IP8); texts and questions (IP9); book, notes and dictionary (IP11); and the Internet (IP12). Afterwards, the learners were asked, "What do you think of the materials and resources used in the course?" (LIQ19). Six of the 12 participants declared that they were fine, okay or good (IP2, IP3, IP7, IP9, IP11 and IP12). One interviewee claimed that the class used children's books (IP9), and three said they were

not inadequate, not the best or not bad (IP5, IP8 and IP10). One replied that they were okay for reading and writing but not for listening and speaking (IP1), and two reported that they needed more resources (IP6), including "a small easy book with grammar rules and vocabulary" (IP4). The last two learners anticipated the next question: "What types of resources and materials do you need right now to help you learn the Maltese language more effectively?" (LIQ20). The responses included more listening resources (IP1); "I think I need 20 good sentences on tape that I can use in everyday life and practice, and then I also [need] them written down" (IP3); a small easy book with grammar rules and vocabulary (IP2, IP4, IP5 and IP12); grammar and vocabulary exercises with answers (IP6); DVDs and pictures (IP7); more audio recordings, video recordings, activities like taking us shopping and dining out, and telling us to repeat (IP8); a good dictionary (IP9 and IP10); "my kid's book" (IP10); communication, dialogues, listening and repetition (IP11); and structured syllabus (IP12).

Once again, reviewing these suggestions shows the learners' need for listening and speaking resources, more visual resources, a syllabus and an adequate book for beginners because some learners did not use one (e.g., "we need an easy textbook with vocabulary and grammar because we have to write everything", IP4). Other learners were unhappy with the books used; IP1 stated, "I cannot read the textbook because it is too advanced" and IP8 noted, "Many books for foreigners do not have English [translations] so it's not worthwhile to buy them". Comments such as "we need a good dictionary" (IP9) show the learners' need for guidance on which dictionary to buy.

This list echoes the majority of the points raised in the cited literature, such as Littlemore's (2002) suggestion about how language practitioners could create teaching materials to accommodate different learning styles.

4.3 Teachers' questionnaires

In this section, the teachers' responses are presented and analysed. The sections follow the chronological order of the questionnaire (See Appendix B), including the teachers' backgrounds (section A on the questionnaire), the current course (section B on the questionnaire, with three subsections: syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials), the teachers' perceived needs and suggestions (section C, with three subsections: syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials) and teacher training

(section D on the questionnaire). The teacher participants are coded with TP (teacher participant) and a number representing each one (e.g., TP1).

4.3.1 MFL-1 Teachers' Background Information

In this section, preliminary information about the teachers who taught the MFL-1 course is presented and analysed to provide a snapshot of the teaching population. Knowledge of the teachers' credentials, including experience and educational background, and of their learners' aims will be valuable during the analysis in the other sections.

In all, nine teachers taught 12 learning groups. Three of these teachers taught two groups each. Table 39 shows the classification of the teachers by gender.

Table 39. Teacher participants by gender

Q. 1: Teacher participants by gender		
Legend	**Number**	**Percentage**
Females	6	66.7%
Males	3	33.3%
Total	9	100%

Table 40 shows the teachers' age ranges. None of the teachers was 20 or under, over 55% were between 21 and 30, nearly 11% were between 31 and 40, and over 30% were over 60.

Table 40. Teacher participants by age

Q. 2: Teacher participants by age		
Age Range	**Number**	**Percentage**
20 or under		
21–30	5	55.6%
31–40	1	11.1%
41–50		
51–60		
Over 60	3	33.3%
Total	9	100%

All these teachers taught MFL-1; one of them taught Maltese to foreigners at a government secondary school (TP1) (Table 41).

Table 41. Maltese foreign language course(s) delivered by teacher participants

Q. 4: Do you teach Maltese to foreigners in other institutions?		
	Number	**Percentage**
No	8	88.9%
Yes	1	11.1%
Total	9	100%

Four of the nine participants were teaching the course for the first time, while five had more experience in the field (Table 42). Having nearly 45% of the teaching staff being new for this course is not a typical situation. It is noteworthy because an experienced teacher can adapt to learners' needs, but in many cases, a novice teacher "needs a text that has many and varied exercises to choose from and materials that are heavily annotated with suggestions for their use" (Ariew, 1982, p. 18, cited in Skierso, 1991, p. 433).

Table 42. Teacher participants' teaching experience

Q. 5: How long have you been teaching Maltese to foreigners?		
Years	**Number**	**Percentage**
1 or less	4	44.4%
2–5	2	22.2%
6–10	3	33.3%
11–15		
16–20		
21–25		
26 or more		
Total	9	100%

Table 43 shows that the two main reasons the teachers gave for their students' desire to learn Maltese were to communicate with locals (88.9%) and to cope with daily life (77.8%). Family literacy also scored high (66.7%). Nearly half of the teachers (44.4%) thought that the learners' reason was that they used Maltese at work. Many teachers were aware that because of the bilingual situation in Malta, many learners were not learning Maltese as a requirement to obtain a job (22.2%). Only one of the nine teachers (11.1%) thought that learners might want to read newspapers and magazines. The teachers also showed full agreement that their students did not intend to pass the

Maltese O-level exam (100%). As indicated in the introduction of this thesis, this course is not intended for this exam.

Table 43. Teachers' responses on why learners chose to learn Maltese

Q. 6: Why do you think your learners have chosen to learn Maltese?	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
a. To communicate with locals	8	88.9%	1	11.1%
b. To cope with daily life	7	77.8%	2	22.2%
c. For family literacy	6	66.7%	3	33.3%
d. They use Maltese at work	4	44.4%	5	55.6%
e. It is a requirement to obtain a job	2	22.2%	7	77.8%
f. To read newspapers and magazines	1	11.1%	8	88.9%
g. To pass the Maltese O-level exam			9	100%
h. Other reasons			9	100%

For the next question, the teachers believed that the learners' most important reason for learning Maltese was to communicate with locals, followed by to cope with daily life (Table 44). One teacher chose "other reasons", specifying both to communicate with locals and to cope with daily life.

Table 44. Teachers' responses on the most important reason for learners to learn Maltese

Q. 7: What do you think is the learners' most important reason, from the above list, to learn Maltese?	Number	Percentage
a. To communicate with locals	5	55.6%
b. To cope with daily life	3	33.3%
c. Other reasons	1	11.1%
d. To pass the Maltese O-level exam		
e. It is a requirement to obtain a job		
f. They use Maltese at work		
g. For family literacy		
h. To read newspapers and magazines		

These responses are consistent with McLay and Tom's findings that learners learn the target language to function successfully in a new environment (1999, p. 2).

4.3.2 Current Course

In the following three sections, information is presented about the MFL-1 course from all the teachers' questionnaire responses. The data retrieved from the Likert-scale items are analysed, similar to the sections on the learners' questionnaire responses.

4.3.2.1 Teachers' views on the MFL-1 syllabus

As indicated in Table 45, all the teachers stated that all four skills were covered all of the time, most of the time or often, with only 11.1% choosing often.

Table 45. Teacher participants' perceptions on skills coverage in the course

Q. 8: All four skills are covered in this course.					
All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
22.2% (2)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)			

The teachers indicated that the course was organised according to grammar (100%), topics (100%) and tasks (44.4%) (Table 46).

Table 46. Teacher participants' feedback about course organisation

Q. 9: Lessons during this course are organised according to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	NF
a. grammar	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)			
b. topics	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)			
c. tasks		33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)
d. other methods	Yes TP8: Sentence building, understanding what the native Maltese are saying					

Although TP8 noted that the course was organised according to sentence building and understanding what the Maltese were saying, both fall under one of the first three categories in Table 46.

Table 47. Teacher participants' feedback about course content

Q. 10: This course follows						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. **a linear progression**	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)			
b. **a cyclical progression**	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		

The teachers perceived that this course had a linear progression (100%) rather than a cyclical progression (88.8%) (Table 47). This indicates that teachers adopted both approaches, depending on the materials covered during the lessons.

4.3.2.2 Teachers' views on the teaching methods for MFL-1

In the teachers' responses about teaching methods, vocabulary practice had the highest percentage of frequency (100%, combined all of the time and most of the time*),* followed by grammar, writing and speaking practices (all 100%, all of the time, most of the time and often). Listening and reading practices had nearly the same percentages (88.8%), trailed by Maltese culture awareness (55.5%) and out-of-class activities (11.1%) (Table 48).

Table 48. Teachers' feedback on methods of instruction

Q. 11: During the course that I am currently teaching, I present activities for the following practices:						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. **grammar practice**	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)			
b. **vocabulary practice**	22.2% (2)	77.8% (7)				
c. **writing practice**	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)			
d. **reading practice**	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)		
e. **listening practice**	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)		
f. **speaking practice**	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)			
g. **Maltese culture awareness**		11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)		
h. **out-of-class activities**			11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	

The teachers stated that the learners worked individually (88.9%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by working in pairs (88.8%), small groups (66.7%) and large groups (44.4%) (Table 49). The high rating for working individually reflects the grammar approach in this course, in which "consideration of what students might do to promote their own learning had little or no place" (Griffiths and Parr, 2001, p. 247).

Table 49. Teacher participants' feedback on learners' interactions

Q. 12: During this course, how often do learners work/learn						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. individually	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		
b. in pairs		44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)		
c. in small groups		11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	
d. in large groups		33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	

In terms of learning methods, rote learning earned the highest percentage (88.8%, all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by copying from the whiteboard (77.8%), getting a logical explanation (77.7%), listening and taking notes (55.5%), finding information (55.5%) and problem solving (33.3%) (Table 50). It is important to note that finding information and problem solving, which would involve more effort on the learners' part, came last.

Table 50. Learning methods used by teachers

Q. 13: During your course, how often do learners learn according to methods such as						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. rote learning		44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)		
b. finding information themselves		22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)		
c. getting a logical explanation		33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)		
d. problem solving		22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	66.7% (6)		
e. copying from the whiteboard		11.1% (1)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	
f. listening and taking notes	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		33.3% (3)
g. other learning methods	No					

Concerning the types of assessment given to learners, the teachers ranked homework first (88.8%, used all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by oral tests (55.5%), the European language portfolio and written tests (both 44.4%) (Table 51).

Table 51. Types of assessment given to learners

Q. 14: During the course, the learners						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. **are given homework**		44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)		11.1% (1)	
b. **have written tests**		11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	
c. **have oral tests**		33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	
d. **use the European language portfolio**	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)
e. **other assessment types**	Yes TP1: Media and IT are not accessible in my classroom. (This issue is dealt with in Table 52.)					

4.3.2.3 Teachers' views on the MFL-1 learning materials

The teachers indicated that notes given by them (100%) and word lists (88.9%) were used all of the time, most of the time or often. A coursebook and recordings (both 55.5%) and PowerPoint presentations (44.4%) were ranked next. These were followed by bilingual books and videos (both 33.3%) and books about history and culture (11.1%) (Table 52). One teacher (TP4) cited the use of CDs, while TP5 reported using the interactive whiteboard at his/her own risk because he/she had no permission to do so, indicating that certain teachers also faced logistical problems.

Table 52. Learning materials used by teachers

Q. 15: In the course you are taking, do you use		All of the time	Most of the time	Often	Rarely	Never	NF
a.	notes given by yourself	55.6% (5)	44.4% (4)				
b.	a coursebook	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	
c.	bilingual reading books	11.1% (1)		22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	
d.	word lists		33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)		
e.	books about Maltese history and culture		11.1% (1)		66.7% (6)	22.2% (2)	
f.	videos		11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	
g.	recordings		22.2% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	
h.	PowerPoint presentations	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)
i.	other materials	Yes TP4: CDs TP5: Interactive whiteboard (I do not have permission to use it.)					

The teachers indicated that the reading texts were used all of the time, most of the time or often to introduce vocabulary and to develop reading skills to access information (both 100%), to encourage reading for pleasure (88.8%) and to introduce grammar items (55.5%) (Table 53).

Table 53. Teachers' views on the uses of reading texts in the course

Q. 16: Reading texts in this course are used to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. introduce grammar items	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)		
b. introduce vocabulary items	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)			
c. encourage reading for pleasure	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		
d. develop reading skills to access information	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)			
e. other uses	No					

In Table 54, nearly 90% of the teachers reported that the texts used were appealing to the learners' age all of the time, most of the time or often. Over 88% declared that they were varied and up to date all of the time, most of the time or often. Nearly 78% noted that the texts were challenging. Nearly 67% claimed that all of the time, most of the time or often, the texts were authentic.

Table 54. Teacher participants' feedback about the texts used in the course

Q. 17: The texts used in this course are						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. **appealing to the learners' age**	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		
b. **challenging, i.e., a step ahead of the learners' current level**	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)		
c. **varied (different sources)**	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		
d. **up to date**	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		
e. **authentic passages (taken from real life)**	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)		

The most frequent listening method used during the course was listening to the teacher reading texts (88.8%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by recorded materials (66.6%) and songs (22.2%) (Table 55). One participant (TP9) stated that the class listened to dialogues between people. As indicated in Table 52, some venues limited the teachers' use of the appropriate resources for listening activities.

Table 55. Teachers' views on listening methods in class

Q. 18: During lessons, we listen to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. **songs**		22.2% (2)		55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	
b. **recorded materials**	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)		
c. **the teacher reading texts**	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)			11.1% (1)
d. **other resources**	Yes TP9: dialogues					

As for speaking activities, the teachers checked dialogues and pronunciation exercises as the most frequently used methods (both 88.8%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by oral presentations (77.7%) (Table 56).

Table 56. Teachers' views on speaking activities in the course

Q. 19: The speaking activities in this course include						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	NF
a. pronunciation exercises		44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)		
b. dialogues	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		
c. oral presentations	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)		
d. other speaking activities	No					

In Table 57, the teachers revealed that the most frequent exercises used were complete the sentences and choose the correct word (both 100%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often), fill in the blanks (88.8%) and free writing (55.5%).

Table 57. Teachers' views on types of writing exercises

Q. 20: The writing exercises in this course consist of						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	NF
a. fill in the blanks		44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)		
b. complete the sentences		66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)			
c. choose the correct word		55.6% (5)	44.4% (4)			
d. free writing	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	
e. other writing exercises	No					

4.3.3 Perceived Needs and Suggestions about the Syllabus, Teaching Methods and Materials

In this and the following sections, the teachers' perceived needs and suggestions, and in some cases, the teachers' perceptions of learners' needs in the course are compared with their perceptions of what it offered to determine if their needs were being satisfied.

Although different Likert scales are used in this section of the questionnaire, the teachers' codes are formulated and the data are presented similar to those of the previous section. During the analysis of the responses to the open-ended question, "What would you change in the course?", some common themes emerged. Table 58 shows the course components the participants wanted changed, with corresponding participant numbers for each item. However, each item will be addressed during the analysis of the relevant closed-ended questions in the next four subsections (4.3.3.1, 4.3.3.2, 4.3.3.3 and 4.3.3.4).

Table 58. Course components that teachers want changed

Q. 21: What would you change in the course?	
Themes	**Participants**
Syllabus	
Syllabus is too vast and difficult	TP1, TP2, TP3, TP7
Syllabus for different learning abilities with a proper exam system for the levels	TP1, TP3, TP7
Standard detailed syllabus	TP9
Teaching Methods	
Less emphasis on grammar	TP2, TP3
Portfolio not really clear/not well organised	TP1
Materials	
More resources (especially custom-made coursebook)	TP1
Others	
More intensive learning	TP9
More emphasis on current situation, history and culture	TP9
Out-of-school activities	TP9

4.3.3.1 Teachers' views about perceived needs regarding the MFL-1 syllabus

The teachers believed that foreign learners found speaking the most difficult skill to learn, followed by writing, listening and reading (Table 59).

Table 59. Teachers' responses on the most difficult skill to learn in the Maltese language

Q. 22: Which Maltese language skill do you think that foreign learners find the most difficult?					
	Most difficult	**Moderately difficult**	**Slightly difficult**	**Least difficult**	**NF**
a. listening		22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)
b. speaking	77.8% (7)	11.1% (1)			11.1% (1)
c. reading			11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)
d. writing	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)		33.3% (3)

There was a strong feeling amongst the teachers that their learners needed to improve speaking the most, followed by listening (Table 60). None of the teachers mentioned that their learners needed to improve reading or writing. The teachers' first choice is logical because they picked speaking as the most difficult skill to learn (Table 59). However, since they identified writing as the second most difficult skill in the previous question, for the sake of consistency, they should have ranked it similarly in this question.

Table 60. Teachers' responses on the Maltese language skill that foreign learners want to improve the most

Q. 23: Which Maltese language skill do you think that foreign learners would like to improve the most?		
	Number	**Percentage**
a. **speaking**	6	66.7%
b. **NF**	2	22.2%
c. **listening**	1	11.1%
d. **reading**		
e. **writing**		

Nearly 80% of the teachers thought it was very important or important to practise the four skills when studying a language (Table 61). The corresponding table

shows that all the teachers stated that all four skills were covered all of the time, most of the time or often (100%) (Table 45).

Table 61. Teachers' feedback on practising the four language skills

Q. 24: To study a language, one has to practise the four skills.					
Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)			11.1% (1)

It is interesting to note that the teachers did not mark any of the four skills as unimportant or not at all important.

Table 62. Teachers' feedback on the course structure

Q. 25: How important is it for you to have lessons organised according to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. grammar topics	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)			
b. topics	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)			
c. tasks	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)		
d. other methods	No					

The most important organisational methods for the teachers were topics and grammar topics (both 66.7%, combined very important and important), followed by tasks (44.4%) (Table 62).

Table 46 (corresponding to Table 62) shows that all of the time, most of the time or often, the teachers organised the course by grammar topics and topics (both 100%), followed by tasks (44.4%) (Table 46).

However, when considering only the very important category, teachers perceived that it was very important to organise lessons more by topics than by grammar topics (Table 62). This shows that although grammar was considered important, the teachers

wanted to place less emphasis on it, as indicated by the responses of TP2 and TP3 to the open-ended question, "What would you change in the course?" (Table 58).

Table 63. Teachers' preferences regarding a linear vs. a cyclical progression

Q. 26: Have a course with a						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Un-important**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. linear progression	22.2% (2)	66.7% (6)		11.1% (1)		
b. cyclical progression	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)		

Nearly 90% of the teachers considered a course with linear progression very important or important, while almost 78% indicated that a cyclical progression was very important or important (Table 63).

Table 47 (corresponding to Table 63) shows that a linear progression (combined all of the time, most of the time and often, 100%) was used more in the course than a cyclical progression (88.8%). Thus, in this aspect, the course catered to the teachers' needs.

Furthermore, for open-ended question 21, some teachers mentioned that the syllabus was too vast and difficult (TP1, TP2, TP3 and TP7) (Table 58). Keeping the "too vast" comment in mind, the teachers would tend by default towards a linear progression to cover everything in time.

4.3.3.2 Teachers' views about perceived needs regarding the teaching methods for MFL-1

For the teachers, the most important practice to include in SL teaching was vocabulary practice (100% combined percentages of very important and important), followed by listening, speaking and reading practices (all 88.9%), grammar practice (66.7%), Maltese culture awareness (55.6%), writing practice (44%) and out-of-class activities (33.3%) (Table 64).

Table 48 (corresponding to Table 64) shows that vocabulary, grammar, writing and speaking practices were performed all of the time, most of the time or often (100%).

Listening and reading practices (88.8%) were followed by Maltese culture awareness (55.5%) and out-of-class activities (11.1%) (Table 48).

Table 64. Teachers' feedback on methods of instruction

Q. 27: How important is it for you to include the following practices during second-language teaching?						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. grammar practice	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)			
b. vocabulary practice	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)				
c. writing practice		44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)			
d. reading practice	22.2% (2)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)			
e. listening practice	66.7% (6)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)			
f. speaking practice	66.7% (6)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)			
g. Maltese-culture awareness		55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)		11.1% (1)	
h. out-of-class activities	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)

Analysing the "all of the time" or "most of the time" subcategories in Table 48 reveals that grammar was the second most practised activity in the course. However, in terms of importance to the teachers, it fell after vocabulary and three of the four language skills (Table 64). As indicated in the comments related to Table 62, two teachers wanted to place less emphasis on grammar (TP2 and TP3, Table 48).

Another striking point is that writing practice was done all of the time, most of the time or often in the course (100%) (Table 48). However, in terms of importance, it was ranked one of the last two criteria after Maltese culture awareness (Table 64). Related to this, one teacher expressed the need for more emphasis on the current situation, history and culture (TP9, Table 58), while simultaneously indicating the need for more intensive learning and out-of-school activities.

In terms of learners' interactions, the teachers perceived that the learners worked most comfortably when given pair work (88.9%), followed by working individually (77.8%), working in small groups (55.2%) and working in large groups (22%) (Table 65).

Table 65. Teachers' perceptions on learners' interactions

Q. 28: How comfortable do you think that learners feel when they work/learn						
	Very comfortable	**Comfortable**	**Indifferent**	**Uncomfortable**	**Very uncomfortable**	**N F**
a. individually	11.1% (1)	66.7% (6)	22.2% (2)			
b. in pairs	22.2% (2)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)			
c. in small groups	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		
d. in large groups		22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	

Table 49 shows that nearly 90% of the learners in the course worked individually or in pairs all of the time, most of the time or often, followed by working in small groups (66.7%) and large groups (44.4%).

The teachers perceived that the learners felt most comfortable working in pairs and individually; these were used most in the course. Working in small groups and in large groups were regarded as less comfortable, and these were practised to a lesser extent.

Table 66 shows that the teachers strongly agreed or agreed that their students learned best by rote learning (88.8%), followed by listening and taking notes and copying from the board (both 77.8%), getting a logical explanation and finding information themselves (both 66.7%) and problem solving (55.5%) (Table 66).

Table 66. Teachers' perceptions on learning methods

Q. 29: Learners learn best by						
	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**NF**
a. **rote learning**	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)		11.1% (1)		
b. **finding information themselves**	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)			
c. **getting a logical explanation**	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)			
d. **problem solving**	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		
e. **copying from the board**	11.1% (1)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)		11.1% (1)	
f. **listening and taking notes**	11.1% (1)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)		
g. **other methods**	No					

Table 50 shows that in the course, the students learned all of the time, most of the time or often by rote learning (88.8%), copying from the whiteboard (77.8%), getting a logical explanation (77.7%), listening and taking notes (55.5%), finding information (55.5%) and problem solving (33.3%) (Table 50).

These tables clearly show that the teachers perceived that the students learned best by using certain methods rather than others (Table 66) and that these methods, which the teachers perceived as better, were used more frequently in the course (Table 50).

Table 67. Teachers' perceptions on types of assessment

Q. 30: During the course, the learners prefer to						
	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**NF**
a. be given homework		22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)		
b. have written tests		11.1% (1)	77.8% (7)	11.1% (1)		
c. have oral tests		55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)		
d. use the European language portfolio		11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)
e. other assessment types	No					

Regarding the types of assessment, the teachers strongly agreed or agreed that the learners preferred oral tests (55.6%), homework (22.2%), written tests and the European language portfolio (both 11.1%) (Table 67).

However, according to the ranking given by the teachers in the corresponding table, the learners were given homework (88.8%), took oral tests (55.5%), used the European language portfolio and had written tests (both 44.4%) all of the time, most of the time or often (Table 51).

Although Table 67 shows that the teachers perceived that the learners preferred oral tests, for some reason, they did not offer this assessment method more than the others. The fact that the teachers perceived that the European language portfolio was least important (Table 67) and that one teacher (TP1) indicated that the portfolio was not well organised (Table 58) indicates problems with this assessment tool.

4.3.3.3 Teachers' views about perceived needs regarding the MFL-1 learning materials

The teachers believed that the teacher's notes were a very important or important resource (88.8%) for their learners, followed by a coursebook (77.7%), word lists and videos (both 66.6%), bilingual reading books, PowerPoint presentations, recordings and books about Maltese history and culture (44.4% each) (Table 68).

Table 68. Teachers' perceptions on learning materials

Q. 31: How important is it for the learners to have the following resources during the course?						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. notes given by the teacher	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)				11.1% (1)
b. a coursebook	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)			
c. bilingual reading books	44.4% (4)		33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)		
d. word lists	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		
e. books about Maltese history and culture	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)		
f. videos	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		
g. recordings	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)		
h. PowerPoint presentations	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		11.1% (1)
i. other resources	No					

In the course, the teachers indicated that the resources used all of the time, most of the time or often were notes given by them (100%), word lists (88.9%), a coursebook and recordings (both 55.5%), PowerPoint presentations (44.4%), bilingual books and videos (33.3%) and books about history and culture (11.1%) (Table 52).

Thus, out of eight criteria, the first three resources considered very important or important were teacher's notes, coursebook and word lists (Table 68); these were used frequently in the course, especially the teacher's notes and word lists (Table 52). Although the coursebook lagged behind, nearly half the groups used it regularly. However, in the open question, one teacher (TP9) indicated the teachers' need for additional resources (specifically a custom-made coursebook), including more information about Malta's current situation, history and culture (Table 58). This teacher's response echoes one of Csizér and Dörnyei's (1998) 10 commandments for motivating learners: "Familiarise learners with the target language culture" (p. 215).

The teachers perceived that for the learners, texts were very important or important to encourage reading for pleasure (100%), introduce vocabulary items (88.9%), develop reading skills to access information (88.8%) and introduce grammar items (77.7%) (Table 69).

Table 69. Teachers' perceptions on the use of reading texts in the course

Q. 32: How important is it for the learners to have texts to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. introduce grammar items	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)			
b. introduce vocabulary items	66.7% (6)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)			
c. encourage reading for pleasure	55.6% (5)	44.4% (4)				
d. develop reading skills to access information	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)			
e. other uses	No					

The corresponding table shows that the teachers indicated that the reading texts were used all of the time, most of the time or often to introduce vocabulary and to develop reading skills to access information (both 100%), to encourage reading for pleasure (88.8%) and to introduce grammar items (55.5%) (Table 53).

These two tables (Tables 69 and 53) clearly show that all criteria considered very important or important, with percentages over 75% (Table 69), were practised in the course to various degrees (Table 53). Since other tables (such as Table 48) show that grammar was given priority in the course, it is important to note that only 55.5% of the teachers used texts to introduce grammar items, a possible indication that grammar was taught out of context. However, nearly 80% of the teachers declared that it was very important or important to do so (Table 69), showing that they perceived the need for teaching grammar in context.

The teachers believed that for the learners, it was very important or important to have texts that were appealing to the learners' age, varied and up to date (all 88.9%), authentic (77.8%) and challenging (66.6%) (Table 70).

Table 70. Teachers' perceptions about the texts used in the course

Q. 33: How important is it for the learners to have texts that are						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**N F**
a. **appealing to the learners' age**	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)			
b. **challenging, i.e., a step ahead of the learners' current level**	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)			
c. **varied (different sources)**	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)			
d. **up to date**	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			
e. **authentic passages (taken from real life)**	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)			

The corresponding table reveals that nearly 90% of the teachers reported that all of the time, most of the time or often, the texts used were appealing to the learners' age, varied and up to date (Table 54). Nearly 78% noted that the texts were challenging, while nearly 67% claimed that the texts were authentic.

These two tables (Tables 71 and 54) show that all the criteria that were very important or important, with percentages over 66%, were practised regularly in the course (Table 54).

In terms of listening methods, the teachers believed that it was very important or important for their learners to listen to the teacher reading texts (100%), followed by recorded materials (77.6%) and songs (44.4%) (Table 71).

Table 71. Teachers' perceptions about listening methods in class

Q. 34: How important is it for the learners to listen to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. songs	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)		
b. recorded materials	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)			
c. the teacher reading texts	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)				
d. other resources	No					

Table 55 (the corresponding table) reveals that the teachers read texts all of the time, most of the time or often (88.8%), followed by recorded materials (66.6%) and songs (22.2%). In terms of importance and the use of these listening methods in the course, these had the same ranking pattern. Thus, these were practised in the course in proportion to their perceived importance.

The teachers all agreed that for the learners, dialogues were very important or important (100%), followed by oral presentations (88.9%) and pronunciation exercises (77.7%) (Table 72).

Table 72. Teachers' perceptions about speaking activities in the course

Q. 35: How important is it for the learners to do speaking activities such as						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. pronunciation exercises	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)			
b. dialogues	55.6% (5)	44.4% (4)				
c. oral presentations	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			
d. other speaking activities	No					

Table 56 (the corresponding table) reveals that the teachers perceived that dialogues and pronunciation exercises were the methods used most often (both 88.8%), followed by oral presentations (77.7%). These two tables (Tables 72 and 55) show that all these criteria were very important or important, with percentages over 77%, and practised regularly in the course (Table 56).

In terms of writing exercises and considering the combined percentages of very important and important rankings, the teachers agreed that free writing was the most important writing exercise for the learners (100%). This was followed by choose the correct word (88.9%), complete the sentences (77.8%) and fill in the blanks (66.6%) (Table 73).

Table 73. Teachers' perceptions about types of writing exercises

Q. 36: How important is it for the learners to do writing activities such as						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. **fill in the blanks**	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)			
b. **complete the sentences**	22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)			
c. **choose the correct word**	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			
d. **free writing**		100.0% (9)				
e. **other writing exercises**	No					

Table 57 (the corresponding table) reveals that the teachers thought that the exercises used most frequently were complete the sentences and choose the correct word (both 100%), fill in the blanks (88.8%) and free writing (55.5%).

A comparison of these two tables (Tables 73 and 57) shows that although all the teachers agreed that free writing was a very important or important writing exercise in the course, it was the least practised amongst the criteria, with 44.4% declaring that it

was practised rarely or never (Table 57). This indicates that writing needs to be reinforced while the frequencies of all the other practices should be retained.

4.3.4 MFL-1 Teachers' Training

Table 74 shows that five out of nine teachers had not attended any training. Of the three that had, TP6 did not take a course specialised in Maltese for foreigners, although he/she attended the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) course. The other two teachers completed a course organised by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) (TP3) or an in-service course (TP8); however, they did not specify any other details.

Table 74. Specialised course in teaching Maltese to foreigners

Q. 37: Have you attended any specialised course in teaching Maltese to foreigners?		
Legend	**Number**	**Percentage**
No	5	55.6%
Yes	3	33.3%
NF	1	11.1%
Total		100%
Courses named: TP3: Foundation for Educational Services TP6: TEFL (Skylark) TP8: In-service course (Education Department)		

Table 75. Participants' feedback about training to teach Maltese to foreigners

Q. 38: To teach Maltese to foreigners more effectively, I would like						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. to be trained in second-language acquisition (SLA) theories.	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)			
b. to learn about influential approaches and methods in second-language teaching (SLT).	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)			
c. to learn more about adult second-language learners.	33.3% (3)	66.7% (6)				
d. to learn about learners' needs analysis.	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)			
e. to learn about different learning styles.	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)			
f. to learn about the CEFR.	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		11.1% (1)
g. to learn more about the European language portfolio.	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	
h. to learn about textbook evaluation.	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)			
i. Others	No					

Table 75 shows the teachers' desire to receive training on adult SL learners (100%), SLA theories (88.8%), different learning styles (77.8%), influential approaches and methods in SLT (77.7%), learners' needs analysis (77.7%), textbook evaluation (44.4%), the European language portfolio and the CEFR (both 44.4%).

4.4 Teachers' interviews

The next four subsections present information about the MFL-1 course syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials, teacher training and the teachers' perceived needs, and in some cases, the teachers' perceptions of the learners' needs for these areas, based on the interview responses.

In this section, the interview responses are presented according to their corresponding subsections. The interview questions are indicated with the code TIQ (teachers' interview question), followed by the question number. The teachers' responses are coded with TIP (teacher interview participant) and a number for each participant (e.g., TIP1).

As in the case of the learners' interviews, the data are presented chronologically according to each interview question, followed by the teachers' responses. However, as indicated earlier, the different themes that emerge are discussed with reference to the literature and to the MFL-1 and MFL-2 learners' and teachers' data in another chapter (Chapter 6, Discussion).

4.4.1 Teachers' Views on the MFL-1 Syllabus and their Perceived Needs

The first question posed to the interviewees was, "Is there a syllabus for the course offered?" (TIQ2). All the teachers responded in the affirmative and were then asked, "Do you have access to the syllabus for the course offered?" (TIQ3), which all the teachers confirmed. When the teachers were asked, "Do you feel that the syllabus of the course/s you are delivering is adequate for your learners? Why?" (TIQ5), six of the seven teachers (all except TIP2) commented that it was too vast for beginners. Two teachers suggested, "There should be a shorter course for those [who] do not know a single word of Maltese" (TIP1) and "Topics such as literature and trades should not be included" (TP3).

The only teacher who believed that the syllabus was adequate commented, "Not everyone wants [the lessons] that we offer … they want to learn more practical [things]" (TIP2). This response indicates that although this teacher approved of the syllabus, he/she was aware that it was not as practical as some learners would expect. Thus, the teachers were aware that the syllabus was too vast and difficult for beginners, leading to the learners' repetition of the course or an alarming dropout rate. However, the teachers could not do anything because of the requirement to follow the syllabus. In fact, one teacher commented:

> The syllabus is not adequate because it is too vast; literally you have to skim the topics because there is no time to go into detail … I feel that I am taking learners for a ride … we only [hold classes] three hours per week, and the grammar syllabus for Maltese natives and that for foreigners are the same … the syllabi for MFL-1 and MFL-2 are the same … this is not good … they should not be the same … you can't cover everything. I can't perform miracles. [Starting with] a group of 19, I finished with seven (TIP7).

This statement, indicating that foreigners were taught grammar in the same way that natives would be taught, was not an isolated comment. For this reason, the teachers were asked, "Were you involved in the decision-making process in developing the syllabus?" (TIQ4). They gave a unanimous negative response.

Because the teachers stated that the syllabus was vast, they were asked, "Which situations are covered in the course?" (TIQ6). The teachers gave various responses, including "Who are we?", at the restaurant and speaking to the neighbour (TIP1); in a shop, in a restaurant, day-to-day activities and everyday expressions (TIP2); transport, sports, colours, days, months, seasons, fruits and vegetables, parts of the body and culture (e.g., *Karnival* [Carnival], *festi pubbliċi* [public feasts]) (TIP4); food, at the vegetable shop, shoe shop, colours, clothes, in a restaurant, house furniture, phoning and booking and culture (*Għid* [Easter], *Milied* [Christmas]); weather report and person (TIP4); greeting, normal conversations and ask[ing] for something (TIP5); the situations in the book, *Merħba bik* (TIP6); and daily life situations (TIP7). These findings indicate that these topics were covered in the course; however, a problem arose from the lack of consistency amongst the groups because the syllabus did not clearly indicate the required minimum for course coverage by the teachers. When the teachers were asked, "Are the situations covered in the course suitable for your learners' aims? Why?" (TIQ7), five of the seven said "yes"; two of the teachers explained that they decided

which topics to cover (TIP1 and TIP3); two shared that they chose topics after discussing them with the learners (TIP2 and TIP4); one reported following the topics in the book (TIP6); and another claimed that there were too many topics (TIP7). One teacher stated that sometimes the topics were suitable, while other topics were inappropriate because they were not based on real-life situations (TIP5). As the literature shows, adults want to apply what they learn immediately, so teachers should create realistic scenarios in which learners practise what they have learned (Borg and Marsh, 1997, p. 195).

When the teachers were asked, "Which situations do you think should be covered?" (TIQ8), they indicated topics including personal situations, such as family and work (TIP1); culture (TIP3); more authentic listening (e.g., news) (TIP4); real-life situations such as licences, work and home situations (TIP5); at the market, at the shop and at the airport (TIP6); and animals, continents, seas, vegetables and how to fill in a form (TIP7). The solution to this problem would be that the syllabus should not be as generic and vast but be more specific to establish a minimum for all the courses taught.

To worsen the situation, no official policy exists regarding the analysis of learners' needs before or at the beginning of the language course (TIQ9: "Before you begin a language course, what type of needs analysis do you conduct with your learners?"). However, six of the seven teachers interviewed (TIQ20: "Do you survey your learners, either during or at the end of the course, to evaluate the course?") received oral feedback from the learners after each lesson (TIP1 and TIP3–TIP7); one teacher shared that he/she gave learners an information sheet to complete (TIP2). This feedback mechanism helped the teachers understand the learners' goals.

To determine how the teachers would amend the course, they were asked, "What would you change in the present syllabus?" (TIQ10). One teacher answered,

> [I would] eliminate a lot of grammar. I would emphasise conversation. Yes, I know that there are conversation classes … but they sign up for this course with the idea that it will be more conversation based instead of grammar oriented, and as I said … we have too much grammar (TIP7).

As stated in the introduction, conversation classes comprised 10 sessions of two hours each to practise incidental conversation, but these were not linked directly to the MFL-1 course. Therefore, it was not a follow-up course.

When answering question TIQ10, other teachers referred to similar problems with the actual syllabus:

[I would include] realistic situations in which [learners] find themselves because these [are the] sort of things [they] want (TIP2).

All the centres have to follow the same book … because [the way the syllabus is], I can cover certain [grammar] topics, e.g., the first form [of the trilateral verb], and when I speak with [another teacher], he/she says, 'I have covered all the forms [of the trilateral verb]' (TIP3).

I would split it into different levels because it seems that there is one syllabus for everyone, and I would also include more realistic things … I prefer a topic and then I elicit things such as grammar from it, instead of a list of grammar [rules] to cover (TIP4).

It is important to limit [the grammar] and cover the [basic things] so that [learners] could have a good grasp of [the lessons] because [this syllabus] binds the teacher to teach everything, but [one] could not cover the things in detail (TIP5).

The point raised by TIP3 that "All the centres have to follow the same book" is interesting. Since the teachers found the syllabus inadequate in certain areas, this teacher suggested using a textbook to guide the teachers during their classes.

4.4.2 Teachers' Views on the Teaching Methods for MFL-1 and their Perceived Needs

When the teachers were asked, "Which learning activity/activities do your students dislike most in the course? Why?" (TIQ12), four of the seven teachers cited grammar (TP1, TIP3, TIP5 and TIP7) because of the many exceptions to grammar rules. The other three indicated free writing (TIP2 and TIP4) and exams (TIP6). On the other hand, when the teachers were asked, "Which learning activity/activities do your students like most in the course? Why?" (TIQ11), four of the teachers mentioned conversation (TIP1, TIP2, TIP4 and TIP7), with one teacher stating that "they feel best when they are capable of finishing the activity" (TIP2) and another specifying that they liked "to bring a postcard or a photo of their country and discuss it" (TIP7). Other favourite activities mentioned were using flashcards (TIP1), listening to songs and singing them (TIP3), listening comprehension [exercises] with fill-in-the-blanks questions (TIP3), vocabulary and writing (TIP5) and grammar explanations (TIP6). The responses to both questions highlight different learners' diverse tastes and learning styles; thus, language practitioners need to create interesting teaching materials to accommodate such variety (Littlemore, 2002, cited in Klapper, 2006, p. 92).

When asked, "What types of assessment do you use with your learners during the course to give them feedback about their Maltese language learning progress?" (TIQ13), the teachers responded that they used portfolios (TIP1, TIP4 and TIP5), with TIP5 elaborating, "I don't feel that the portfolio is that important"; assessment after each homework assignment (TIP2 and TIP6); oral practice exercises (TIP7); and instant correction during a conversation (TIP3). Concerning TIP3's answer, Corder argued that it might not always be the most effective form of correction because it would eliminate the possibility for the learner to test alternative hypotheses (1967, p. 168).

4.4.3 Teachers' Views on the MFL-1 Learning Materials and their Perceived Needs

When the teachers were asked, "What types of resources and materials do you use during your present course?" (TIQ14), they responded that they used the *Merħba bik!* workbook (TIP1, TIP2, TIP4 and TIP6); *Ċavetta*, a workbook for Maltese natives (TIP1); *Learning Maltese: Why Not?* (TIP4); an interactive whiteboard (TIP5); CDs and PowerPoint presentations (TIP2); handouts (TIP5 and TIP7); flashcards (TIP3); real-life objects (TIP3); and pictures (TIP3 and TIP5). One teacher remarked that the workbooks used were all outdated (TIP4). Another teacher commented, "I wished to take [my students] to a coffee shop [and communicate in Maltese to have coffee] but I didn't have time" (TIP3). Regarding TIP3's comment and as indicated earlier, the broad scope of the syllabus influenced the methodology employed by the teachers and in turn affected the learners.

TIP5 described another problem that he/she encountered: "Most of the time, I use the interactive whiteboard, but unfortunately, I don't have permission to do so". It should be noted that certain courses were held in the local council offices, which were equipped as offices and therefore lacked resources such as a sound system and an interactive whiteboard. TP13 also referred to this issue (Table 52). On the other hand, in TIP5's case, the lessons were taught in a primary school after school hours. As explained by this teacher, an issue might arise regarding whether the primary grade teacher or the adult learners' teacher would be responsible for the interactive whiteboard if it broke down. For this reason, this teacher admitted that he/she was advised not to use the interactive whiteboard and that doing so would be at his/her own risk. A similar case was observed in this study, in which the primary school children's exercises

written on the board left the language teacher very little space to write. He/she explained that the primary teacher forbade her from erasing the exercises because they would be used the following day. Cases such as this would not instil motivation in the teachers, although these could be tackled with common sense.

When the teachers were asked, "Who decides which resources and materials are used in the present course?" (TIQ15), all answered that they did (TIP1–TIP7). When asked, "Which of the resources and materials mentioned above are specified by the Department of Education?" (TIQ16), three teachers said "none"', two mentioned receiving 15 handouts with exercises (TIP4 and TIP5), and two reported that they were given two books named *Sisien* (coursebook and workbook), intended for Maltese native speakers (TIP3 and TIP7). TIP7 complained about this text's difficulty for learners. *Sisien* is listed in the MFL-1 syllabus as a main text; however, it is not intended for foreigners. As mentioned in chapter 1, Alfred Flask (one of the speakers at the 2010 convention for foreigners) pointed out that Maltese language textbooks should be written with a foreign audience in mind. Referring particularly to the *Sisien* series, Flask commented that "books written in Maltese for Maltese [were] totally useless" in teaching Maltese to foreigners (2010, p. 207). The handouts were emailed to all the teachers of the course. However, a set of 15 handouts was insufficient for them.

The demand for more resources emerged again during the interviews when the teachers were asked, "Based on your experience and in speaking with your colleagues, what resources and materials do teachers need to deliver these courses more effectively?" (TIQ17). Nearly all the teachers reported needing a book (TIP2–TIP7), with TIP7 adding, "When we use primary books, [the learners'] children use them, too, and they get demoralised". Other participants cited their need for maps (TIP3), charts (TIP2) and games (TIP1). However, TIP3 made it clear that "for the sake of consistency, all the groups should have the same resources". This view reflects Dublin and Olshtain's (1986) argument that an overly generic syllabus could leave teachers and learners without specific direction and could lead to "a lack of cohesiveness in materials and examinations used within the system" (p. 28).

4.4.4 Teachers' Views on the MFL-1 Teacher Training and their Perceived Needs

Since teacher training is an integral part of the teaching profession, the teachers were asked, "Were you offered any training by the Department [of Education] to teach

this course?" (TIQ18). Five of the seven teachers responded "no"; the remaining two replied "yes", with TIP6 citing an in-service course and TIP2 mentioning a two-day course. Interestingly, TIP4 noted that he/she "already taught a group of foreigners at a higher level to work as translators at EU institutions". The teachers were also asked, "What teacher training do you need, if any, to perform your duties more effectively?" (TIQ19). They responded that they needed a TEFL-type course for Maltese (TIP3 and TIP7), an in-service course (TIP6) and a mentor to guide them on how to teach (TIP5). TIP1 revealed, "We need realistic training, not too much rhetoric as [it is not] practical". However, two teachers indicated that training was unnecessary; instead, TIP2 required "sharing of ideas", while TIP4 cited resources because "we don't have time to prepare, due to the paper work we have to do".

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter investigated whether the MFL-1 course met the learners' expectations in terms of the course syllabus, teaching methods and materials. Apart from the learners' needs, it also examined those of the teachers, as a determining factor in the success of the course. The following schematic diagram (Figure 6) represents the perceptions of course deficiencies:

Perceptions of course deficiencies				
	Learners	**Learners**	**Teachers**	**Teachers**
	See related comments in the following tables:	See related comments in the following questions:	See related comments in the following tables:	See related comments in the following questions:
Syllabus				
✓ Speaking is not given due importance	Tables 24–26	LIQ7, 8		
✓ Syllabus is too vast and difficult	Table 27	LIQ3, 7	Table 63	TIQ5, 10
✓ More revision	Table 28	LIQ3, 17		
✓ Less grammar			Tables 62, 64	TIQ10
Teaching Methods				
✓ More listening and speaking	Tables 29, 36–37	LIQ8, 13, 19–20		TIQ10
✓ Less copying from the whiteboard, more interactive methods	Table 31	LIQ17		
✓ Problems with the portfolio	Table 32	LIQ16	Table 67	TIQ13
✓ More homework, more tests	Table 32	LIQ17		
Learning Materials				
✓ Specifically designed coursebook	Table 33	LIQ18, 19–20	Table 68	TIQ17
✓ More resources	Tables 33 and 36	LIQ13, 18–20	Table 68	TIQ17
Teacher Training				
✓ Teachers' desire to receive training			Table 75	TIQ19

Figure 6. MFL-1 course deficiencies

The data revealed that for the learners, the most important reason to learn Maltese was to communicate with locals, followed by to cope with daily life. Although there was no official policy about a needs analysis at the beginning of the course, the teachers knew perfectly that the two cited reasons were the learners' priorities. Nearly one-fifth of the learners had taken another MSL course because (as indicated in the questionnaire responses and corroborated in the interviews) the MFL-1 course was too fast paced and advanced for beginners and would thus need revision. The teachers were aware of these problems; the majority of them shared the same opinions but could not do anything because they were required to follow the syllabus. This situation led to a high dropout rate amongst the learners, as well as resignations amongst the teachers, with nearly half of the staff replaced for the MFL-1 course during the 2012–2013 school year (LIQ3 and Table 42).

Moreover, teachers and learners expressed their wish for a standard, detailed syllabus to accommodate different learning needs, with a proper exam system and day-to-day topics and situations. Regarding teaching methods, although the learners acknowledged that the course focused on grammar and vocabulary, all of them desired to shift the emphasis to speaking, followed by listening, because they found these skills the most difficult to learn and wanted to improve them the most (especially since in Malta, English is spoken everywhere). At the same time, they wished to continue with the grammar and vocabulary lessons already being taught. The teachers agreed that the course concentrated on grammar, but they would prefer to highlight day-to-day topics, prioritise other areas or extract the grammar from the topics. They admitted giving priority to vocabulary and grammar. The learners also perceived that in this course, the primary teaching method used was copying from the whiteboard but they claimed that it was the least effective means of learning. However, according to the teachers' perception, the students learned best by rote learning, then by copying from the whiteboard. Moreover, the learners noted the importance of additional resources, especially a custom-made book. The teachers' perceptions on this matter corroborated the learners' most vital needs. The teachers also highlighted their need for a suitable book to deliver the courses more effectively.

Finally, concerning teacher training, the majority of the teachers did not receive any; some of them who reported undertaking training did not receive it in MSL/MFL but in TEFL.

This chapter presented the data about what the MFL-1 course offered and whether it satisfied the learners' and teachers' expectations in terms of the course syllabus, teaching methods, materials and for the teachers, teacher training. The data were retrieved from two sources (learners and teachers) with two research instruments (questionnaires and semi-structured interviews). Chapter 5 presents a similar needs analysis of the learners and the teachers involved in MFL-2.

Chapter 5

Research Findings

Maltese as a Foreign Language – MQF-2

5.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of a needs analysis of the learning groups that attended the MFL – MQF-2 course in 2012–2013 to discover their perceived needs and suggestions regarding the course. The learners' needs in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods and materials are compared with their perceptions of the course to determine whether it satisfied their needs. Additionally, the teachers' perceived needs (including the teachers' perceptions of the learners' needs in some cases) in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods, materials and teacher training are compared with their perceptions of the course they taught. This needs analysis will inform the evaluation of the entire system and identify particular components in the existing syllabus, teaching methods, learning materials and teacher training that need revision or upgrading.

Two sets of instruments were used in this study: questionnaires and interviews. In the first phase of the study, two questionnaires – one each for teachers (three participants) and for learners (nine participants) – were used to investigate their perceptions of the MSL courses at the DLL and some of the participants' needs. The majority of the questions on the questionnaires were analysed quantitatively. The questionnaires also included some open-ended questions to generate qualitative data. It is important to point out that since the participants included only three teachers and nine learners, the data retrieved from these few numbers could only be indicative. This is discussed in more detail in section 7.3, Limitations of the study.

Semi-structured interviews with four learners (two each from the two MFL-2 groups) and a teacher were conducted to seek in-depth, qualitative information. Although the student interviewees came from the same pool of learners, they comprised a smaller set, chosen through stratified random sampling to represent both groups.

Similar to the previous one, this chapter is organized in four main sections: learners' questionnaire responses, learners' interview responses, teachers' questionnaire responses and teachers' interview responses.

This chapter also presents the data retrieved through the needs analysis. Therefore, the literature is only referenced in some cases to avoid redundancy. However, Chapter 6 provides a discussion with reference to the literature, in which the results for both courses are analysed in detail.

5.1 Learners' questionnaires

The learners' questionnaire includes three sections (See Appendix A): the learners' background (section A on the questionnaire); the current course (section B on the questionnaire, with three subsections: syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials); and the learners' perceived needs and suggestions (section C on the questionnaire, with three subsections: syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials). This section presents and analyses the learners' questionnaire responses in the order in which they appeared, similar to the previous chapter. However, each learner is represented by the code P-A (participant in the advanced course), inserted with an assigned number (e.g., P1-A).

5.1.1 MFL-2 Learners' Background Information

In this section, preliminary information about the learners attending the MFL-2 course is presented and analysed to offer a snapshot of the student population. Providing the students' backgrounds and learning aims will in turn be helpful during the analysis of their needs and suggestions.

When this study commenced, two MFL-2 groups existed, with a total of nine students. Interestingly, the MFL-1 course had 12 groups of learners (as noted in Chapter 4); however, at the next level, the number of groups decreased to three, with one class cancelled in May 2013. It should also be noted that no MFL-2 courses were taught in Gozo. The learners' genders are presented in Table 76.

Table 76. Participants by gender

Q. 1: Gender		
Legend	**Number**	**Percentage**
Females	7	77.8%
Males	2	22.2%
Total	9	100%

Similar to the demographics for the previous course (MFL-1), the MFL-2 classes comprised learners from different nations, speaking various languages and with varying ages, professions and educational backgrounds (Tables 77–80). Catering to learners from diverse cultures, generations and backgrounds made the teachers' mission more difficult.

Table 77. Participants by nationality

Q. 2: Nationality		
Nationality	**Number**	**Percentage**
Not stated	2	22.1%
British/UK	1	11.1%
Russian	1	11.1%
Arab	1	11.1%
Bulgarian	1	11.1%
German	1	11.1%
Mexican	1	11.1%
Maltese	1	11.1%
Total	9	100%

Table 78. Participants by age

Q. 3: Age		
Age Range	**Number**	**Percentage**
21–30	2	22.2%
31–40	3	33.3%
41–50	2	22.2%
51–60	1	11.1%
Not stated	1	11.1%
Total	9	100%

Table 79. Participants by occupation

Q. 4: Occupation		
Occupation	**Number**	**Percentage**
Clerk	2	22.2%
Doctor	1	11.1%
Housewife	1	11.1%
Manager	1	11.1%
Not stated	1	11.1%
Software engineer	1	11.1%
Translator	1	11.1%
Veterinary surgeon	1	11.1%
Total	9	100%

Table 80. Participants by mother tongue

Q. 6: Mother tongue		
	Number	**Percentage**
English	2	22.1%
Not stated	1	22.1%
Bulgarian	1	11.1%
Cantonese	1	11.1%
German	1	11.1%
Romanian	1	11.1%
Russian	1	11.1%
Spanish	1	11.1%
Total	9	100%

The learners' lengths of residence also varied (Table 81). It could be argued that a person who has lived in Malta for 10 years or more should have automatically learned the language. However, this is not the case in Malta because the majority of Maltese people can communicate in English; therefore, foreigners who speak English are not compelled to learn Maltese in order to cope.

Table 81. Participants by duration of residence in Malta or Gozo

Q. 5: Length of time residing in Malta or Gozo		
Years	**Number**	**Percentage**
1 or less		
2–5	2	22.2%
6–10	3	33.3%
11–15	1	11.1%
16–20	1	11.1%
21 or more	1	11.1%
Not stated	1	11.1%
Total	9	100%

The fact that none of the MFL-2 learners belonged to the first category (1 year or less) makes sense because passing Level 1 is a prerequisite for Level 2 (see Table 82). It follows that every learner in Level 2 has likely resided in Malta or Gozo for at least a year.

All the learners who attended the MFL-2 course declared that they had attended a previous Maltese language course (Table 82). This complies with the regulation for this particular course stating, "Learners need to have successfully completed the course in Maltese as a Foreign Language at MQF Level 1" (DLL, 2012c, 2012d).

Table 82. Maltese language course(s) taken by participants

Q. 8. Have you ever taken a Maltese language course apart from this/these?	Number	Percentage
Yes	9	100%
No		
Total	9	100%

Table 83. Participants' reasons for learning Maltese

Q. 9: Why have you chosen to learn Maltese?				
	Yes		**No**	
	Number	%	Number	%
a. To communicate with locals	6	66.7%	3	33.3%
b. They use Maltese at work	4	44.4%	5	55.6%
c. To cope with daily life	4	44.4%	5	55.6%
d. For family literacy	4	44.4%	5	55.6%
e. Other reasons	3	33.3%	6	66.7%
f. To read newspapers and magazines	2	22.2%	7	77.8%
g. To pass the Maltese O-level exam	1	11.1%	8	88.9%
h. It is a requirement to obtain a job			9	100%

Similar to the responses in MFL-1, the top reason given was to communicate with locals. Keeping in mind that all these learners passed MFL-1, 66.7% still felt the need to learn the language to communicate with locals, while 44.4% were still learning it to cope with daily life. Four participants (44.4%) reported that they wanted to use Maltese at work, mostly to understand their colleagues' conversations. Another 44.4% wanted to learn it for family literacy. In these cases, their children learned Maltese in school with their peers; for example, as a parent, P1-A felt compelled to learn the language so he/she could understand his/her children and help them with their studies. Only two participants answered that they were learning Maltese to read newspapers and magazines, and three gave other reasons. Of these three, one participant stated that

Malta was his/her home; therefore, he/she had to learn the language. Only one participant was learning Maltese to pass the Maltese O-level. All nine participants agreed that knowing Maltese was not a job requirement. However, one learner indicated that this was the most important reason for him/her because he/she worked with people of a certain class who did not know English; when those people phoned him/her, he/she had to converse in Maltese (IP3-A). These findings fit with McKay and Tom's (1999, p. 1) assertion that some learners learn the target language so they can communicate at work, find better jobs or advance in their careers.

Table 84. Most important reason for learning Maltese

Q. 10: Which reason from the above list is most important to you?		
	Number	**Percentage**
a. To communicate with locals	4	44.4%
b. Other reasons	2	22.2%
c. Not stated	2	22.2%
d. They use Maltese at work	1	11.1%
e. For family literacy		
f. It is a requirement to obtain a job		
g. To cope with daily life		
h. To pass the Maltese O-level exam		
i. To read newspapers and magazines		
Total	9	100%

As Table 84 shows, communicating with locals was given the most weight (four of the participants). The person who needed to talk on the phone with people of a certain class indicated that they wanted to use Maltese at work. The participants who checked other reasons cited several factors, including for personal interests, to understand his/her children (P1-A) and to communicate with friends (P9-A).

5.1.2 Current Course

The following three subsections present information about the MFL-2 course, based on the entire student population's questionnaire responses. The questions are presented according to their order of placement on the questionnaire (See Appendix A).

5.1.2.1 Learners' views on the MFL-2 syllabus

All the learners (100%) declared that the four skills were covered all of the time, most of the time or often (Table 85).

Table 85. Participants' perceptions on skills coverage in the course

Q. 11: All four skills are covered in this course.					
All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
11.1% (1)	77.8% (7)	11.1% (1)			

Table 86 shows that the course was mainly organised based on grammar (100%), followed by topics (88.8%) and tasks (11.1%). This indicates that the course was inclined towards the grammar approach.

Table 86. Participants' feedback about course organisation

Q. 12: Lessons during this course are organised according to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. grammar	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			
b. topics	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		
c. tasks			11.1% (1)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)
d. other methods	NO					

The learners perceived that this course tended more towards a linear progression (100%) than a cyclical progression (66.6%) (Table 87). However, some participants indicated that a cyclical progression was used, indicating that certain topics were revised during the course.

Table 87. Participants' feedback about course content

Q. 13: This course follows a						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. linear progression	33.3% (3)	66.7% (6)				
b. cyclical progression	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)		11.1% (1)

5.1.2.2 Learners' views on the teaching methods for MFL-2

Table 86 shows that this course focused on grammar. This is also reflected in Table 88, with 100% of the participants indicating that grammar practice was performed all of the time or most of the time. Vocabulary practice was ranked second (88.9%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often), while reading and writing (77.7%) were practised recurrently but not as often as grammar and vocabulary. The percentages for listening, Maltese-culture awareness and speaking ranked lower (66.6%), compared to the previously mentioned skills, and out-of-class activities were rated last, with 66.7% claiming that these were never performed. Even in this course, grammatical rules and vocabulary were emphasised, and practices to develop the learners' oral communication skills were given less importance, in their perception.

Table 88. Teachers' methods of instruction

Q. 14: Do you perform the following practices during your present course?						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. grammar practice	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)				
b. vocabulary practice	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		
c. writing practice	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)		
d. reading practice	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	
e. listening practice	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)		
f. speaking practice	22.2% (2)		44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)		
g. Maltese-culture awareness	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)		33.3% (3)	
h. out-of-class activities	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)			66.7% (6)	

As Table 89 shows, the learners primarily worked individually (77.7%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often*).* Working in pairs (44.4%) was ranked next, although it was not performed regularly. Working in large groups (33.3%)

or in small groups (22.2%) was seldom done, indicating that the learners rarely worked in these configurations.

Table 89. Participants' interactions with other learners

Q. 15: During this course, how often do you work/learn						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. individually	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	
b. in pairs			44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	
c. in small groups		11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	
d. in large groups	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)

With regard to the learning methods used by the participants, copying from the whiteboard obtained the highest ranking (88.8%, all of the time, most of the time and often). Getting a logical explanation and problem solving followed (each 77.7%). Listening and taking notes, rote learning and finding information obtained the same combined percentage of 66.7% (all of the time, most of the time and often) (Table 90).

Table 90. Learning methods used by participants

Q. 16: During this course, you learn by different methods, such as						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. rote learning		55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)		
b. finding information on your own		44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)		
c. getting a logical explanation	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		11.1% (1)
d. problem solving		44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)		
e. copying from the whiteboard	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		
f. listening and taking notes		55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			33.3% (3)
g. other methods	No					

In terms of learning methods, Table 91 shows that the learners were given homework (66.6%, all of the time, most of the time and often); however, 33.3% declared that it was done rarely or never. Although the European language portfolio was used with the learners (44.4%, all of the time, most of the time and often), an equal, combined percentage of the participants declared that they rarely or never used the portfolio. Written tests seemed to be administered less frequently than the other assessment methods (44.3%); 55.5% of the participants claimed that the tests were rarely or never used. Oral tests were even less frequent (33.3%), with 66.6% of the participants indicating that these tests were rarely or never given.

Table 91. Types of assessment given to participants

Q. 17: During the course, you						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. are given homework		33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	
b. have written tests	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	
c. have oral tests	11.1% (1)		22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	
d. use the European language portfolio	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)
e. other assessment types	No					

5.1.2.3 Learners' views on the MFL-2 learning materials

The learners indicated that the materials used most often were notes given by the teacher (100%, all of the time and most of the time), followed by word lists (55.5%, all of the time, most of the time and often; offset by 44.4%, combined rarely and never), PowerPoint presentations (44.4%; offset by 55.5%, rarely and never), recordings (44.4%; offset by 66.6%, rarely and never), videos and books about Maltese history and culture (both 33.3%; offset by nearly 67%, rarely and never). Bilingual reading books and the coursebook trailed behind (22.2%; offset by nearly 78%, rarely and never)

(Table 92). All the rankings on the negative side of the scale indicate that the main resources used were notes by the teacher and to a certain extent, word lists.

Table 92. Learning materials used by participants

Q. 18: In the course you are taking, do you use						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. notes given by the teacher	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)				
b. a coursebook		22.2% (2)		44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	
c. bilingual reading books	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)			77.8% (7)	
d. word lists		44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (1)	
e. books about Maltese history and culture			33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	
f. videos			33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	
g. recordings			44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	
h. PowerPoint presentations		11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	
i. other materials	No					

As mentioned, almost 80% declared that bilingual reading books were never used, due to their rarity in Malta, with children as their target readers. In terms of the 22.2% who reported using bilingual reading books, the queries raised during the questionnaire distribution indicated that they misunderstood the question and considered dictionaries bilingual. However, the question clearly referred to bilingual reading books and not bilingual scripts or references.

Table 93. Uses of reading texts in the course

Q. 19: Reading texts in this course are used to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. introduce grammar items	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			
b. introduce vocabulary items	22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)			
c. encourage reading for pleasure	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	
d. develop reading skills to access information	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	
e. other reading texts	No					

The learners perceived that the reading texts were used to introduce grammar items and vocabulary items (both 100%, all of the time, most of the time and often), encourage reading for pleasure (66.6%) and develop reading skills to access information (55.5%) (Table 93). Analysing the subcategories for these results shows that grammar was given the most attention, followed by vocabulary.

Table 94. Participants' feedback about the texts used in the course

Q. 20: The texts used in this course are						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. appealing to the learners' age	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)		
b. challenging, i.e., a step ahead of the learners' current level	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)		
c. varied (different sources)	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		
d. up to date	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)			11.1% (1)
e. authentic passages (taken from real life)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)		

The learners believed that all of the time, most of the time or often, the texts were varied and up to date (over 88%). Furthermore, 77.7% agreed that the texts were challenging and appealing to the learners' age all of the time, most of the time or often (Table 94). The statistics show a mixture of authentic and non-authentic materials.

Table 95. Listening methods in class

Q. 21: During lessons, you listen to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. songs			11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	77.8% (7)	
b. recorded materials		11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)
c. the teacher reading texts	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)		11.1% (1)	
d. other resources	No					

The learners reported that listening to the teacher reading texts was the most frequent listening method (88.8%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by recorded materials (22.2%) and songs (11.1%) (Table 95). The use of songs during lessons seldom happened, with nearly 80% of the learners reporting that they had never heard a Maltese song in class. This low ranking of recorded materials also appeared in Table 92.

Table 96. Speaking activities in the course

Q. 22: The speaking activities in this course include						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. pronunciation exercises	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	
b. dialogues	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)		11.1% (1)	
c. oral presentations	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)	
d. other speaking activities	No					

According to the learners, the dialogues (88.8%) were used all of the time, most of the time or often, followed by pronunciation exercises (77.7%) and oral presentations (33.3%) (Table 96). It is noteworthy that 11.1% of the participants reported never using dialogues, 22.2% (combined) declared that they rarely or never had pronunciation exercises and 66.7% (combined) rarely or never had oral presentations. These results and those in Table 95 could be an indication that listening and speaking skills were not given due importance, compared to the other skills.

Table 97. Types of writing exercises

Q. 23: The writing exercises in this course consist of						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. fill in the blanks	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)		
b. complete the sentences	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)				
c. choose the correct word	11.1% (1)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)		
d. free writing	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	
e. other writing exercises	No					

The learners perceived that the most frequent exercise used was complete the sentences (100%, combined all of the time and most of the time), followed by fill in the blanks and choose the correct word (both 88.8%, all of the time, most of the time and often) and free writing (66.6%) (Table 97).

5.1.3 Perceived Needs and Suggestions about the Syllabus, Teaching Methods and Materials

In the following three subsections (syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials), the learners' perceived needs and suggestions regarding the course are compared with their perceptions of what it offered. This information will help evaluate the course and identify components that should be amended.

Some common themes emerged during the analysis of the responses to the open-ended question, "What would you change in the course?" Table 98 indicates the course components the participants wanted changed, with the corresponding participant numbers for each item. However, each item will be addressed in the analysis of the relevant closed-ended questions in the next three sections (5.1.3.1, 5.1.3.2 and 5.1.3.3).

Table 98. Course components in MFL-2 that participants want changed

Q. 24: What would you change in the course?	
Themes	**Participants**
Syllabus	
New, realistic, day-to-day topics and situations	P2-A, P5-A
Syllabus for different learning abilities, with a proper exam system for the levels	P1-A, P6-A
Standard detailed syllabus	P1-A
Syllabus is too vast and difficult	P6-A
Teaching Methods	
More conversations during the course (day-to-day dialogues)	P2-A, P7-A, P9-A
Less emphasis on grammar	P2-A, P5-A
More homework	P6-A
More tests, including dictation	P7-A
Less copying from the board and more interactive methods	P7-A
Materials	
Specifically designed coursebook	P1-A
Others	
More emphasis on current situation, history and culture	P7-A

5.1.3.1 Learners' perceived needs regarding the MFL-2 syllabus

The learners admitted that the most difficult or moderately difficult skill for them was speaking (66.6%), then listening (55.5%) and writing (22.2%) (Table 99).

Table 99. Most difficult skill to learn in the Maltese language

Q. 25: Which Maltese language skill do you find most difficult?					
	Most difficult	**Moderately difficult**	**Slightly difficult**	**Least difficult**	**NF**
a. listening	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		33.3% (3)
b. speaking	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)			33.3% (3)
c. reading			22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)
d. writing	22.2% (2)		22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)

Over 44% of the learners disclosed that they wanted to improve their speaking skills, followed by writing (22.2%) and listening (11.1%) (Table 100). None of the learners mentioned the need to improve their reading skills.

Table 100. Maltese language skill participants most want to improve

Q. 26: Which Maltese language skill would you like to improve most?		
	Number	**Percentage**
a. **speaking**	4	44.4%
b. **writing**	2	22.2%
c. **NF**	2	22.2%
d. **listening**	1	11.1%
e. **reading**		

These findings follow the pattern shown in Table 99 that the three skills the learners found difficult revealed their need for improvement in these areas. However, as seen in Table 88, speaking was the least practised of the four language skills in the course. In the open-ended question, "What would you change in the current course?" (Table 98), some learners (P2-A, P7-A and P9-A) revealed a desire for more conversation practice. The learners favoured more emphasis on speaking skills.

Table 101. Participants' feedback on practising the four language skills

Q. 27: To study a language, one has to practise the four skills.					
Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
66.7% (6)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)			

Almost 90% of the learners deemed it very important or important to practise the four language skills (Table 101). It is noteworthy that none of the participants checked the unimportant or not at all important levels, indicating their strong preference for a course based on all four skills.

Table 85 (corresponding to Table 101) shows that the four skills were covered in the course with a combined percentage of 100% (all of the time, most of the time and

often). However, as shown in the previous tables, the learners found some skills more difficult than others and thus wanted to practise them more so they could improve.

Table 102. Participants' feedback on course structure

Q. 28: How important is it for you to … have lessons organised according to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**N F**
a. **grammar topics**	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)			11.1% (1)	
b. **topics**	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)		
c. **tasks**	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		
d. **other methods**	Yes P1-A Topics on everyday life situations					

For the learners, the preferred organisational method was by grammar topics (88.9%, combined very important and important), followed by tasks (66.6%) and topics (55.5%) (Table 102). Although the topics category is included in this table, one participant (P1-A) emphasised the importance of "everyday life situations" under other methods.

Table 86 shows that in the course, lessons were organised all of the time, most of the time or often according to grammar (100%), topics (88.8%) and tasks (11.1%).

Comparing Table 102 to Table 86 shows that the learners did not keep the same ranking order to indicate the importance of the various methods. Table 102 shows that it was more important for the learners to have lessons based on tasks instead of topics. Thus, the high percentage of importance obtained by the tasks in Table 102 indicates the learners' desire to engage in target-language contact through a series of tasks and problem-solving activities. As Table 86 shows, this was rarely or never done in the course. Thus, learners perceived the need for more balance amongst grammar, topics and tasks.

Table 103. Participants' preferences for a linear vs. a cyclical progression

Q. 29. Have a course with a						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. **linear progression**	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)		11.1% (1)		
b. **cyclical progression**	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)		33.3% (3)		

The combined percentages of very important or important rankings show the importance of a linear progression (88.9%) over a cyclical progression (66.7%), but the latter was also given due importance (Table 103).

Revisiting Table 87 shows that in the course, a linear progression (100%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often) occurred more than a cyclical progression (66.6%); however, both were used. Table 103 shows that it was important for the learners to take a course using a more linear progression, which the course offered.

Other problems related to the syllabus emerged in the responses to open-ended question 24 (Table 98); the learners stated that the syllabus was too vast and difficult (P6-A) and related the need for a standard, detailed syllabus (P1-A), as well as for different learning abilities, with a proper exam system for the levels (P1-A and P6-A), and with new, realistic day-to-day situations (P2-A and P5-A).

5.1.3.2 Learners' perceived needs regarding the teaching methods for MFL-2

For the learners, listening practice and vocabulary practice took priority (both 100%, combined very important and important) (Table 104). Speaking practice and reading practice (nearly 89%) came next, followed by grammar practice (77.8%), writing practice (77.8%), Maltese-culture awareness (66.9%) and out-of-class activities (33.3%).

Table 104. Participants' feedback on methods of instruction

Q. 30: How important is it for you to include the following practices during second-language teaching?						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. grammar practice	77.8% (7)		22.2% (2)			
b. vocabulary practice	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)				
c. writing practice	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)		
d. reading practice	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)			
e. listening practice	88.9% (8)	11.1% (1)				
f. speaking practice	66.7% (6)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)			
g. Maltese-culture awareness	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		
h. out-of-class activities	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	

Table 104 shows that listening, vocabulary and speaking practices were more important for the learners than grammar practice, which was ranked first as being practised all of the time or most of the time in the course (100%) (Table 88). These results corroborate the perceived need for more conversation exercises, as revealed in several replies to the questionnaire's open-ended question (P2-A, P7-A and P9-A, Table 98). In response to this open-ended question, two learners also shared that they wanted less emphasis on grammar (P2-A and P5-A), while P7-A indicated his/her wish for more out-of-school activities and more emphasis on current situations, history and culture. The latter's inclusion of culture echoes one of Csizér and Dörnyei's (1998) 10 commandments to motivate learners: teachers should "familiarise learners with the target language culture" (p. 215).

Table 105. Participants' preferences regarding interactions with other learners

Q. 31: How comfortable do you feel when you work/learn						
	Very comfortable	**Comfortable**	**Indifferent**	**Un-comfortable**	**Very un-comfortable**	**NF**
a. individually	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)				
b. in pairs	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			
c. in small groups	11.1% (1)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)		
d. in large groups	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)		

The combined percentages of very comfortable and comfortable rankings showed working individually (100%) in pole position. Working in pairs (89.9%) came second, followed by small groups (77.8%) and large groups (33.3%) (Table 105).

Table 89 reveals that learners worked individually all of the time, most of the time or often in the course (77.7%), then in pairs (44.4%), large groups (33.3%) and small groups (22.2%).

The course offered individual work, with which most of the learners felt most comfortable. Although working in pairs and in small groups obtained high percentages in terms of comfort level, they were not used regularly in the course. Keeping in mind that the learners expressed the desire for more speaking activities, working in pairs, in small groups and in large groups gives the learners the opportunity to engage in conversational interactions. However, the results show that the learners felt more comfortable working in pairs and in small groups over large groups. It might be the case that in larger settings, they felt shy or embarrassed; because the learners were uncomfortable working in large groups, this type of interaction should be kept to a minimum. According to the affective filter hypothesis, affective variables, such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety, are related to SLA (Krashen, 1982, p. 31). Therefore, a learner who is not self-confident or is bored or anxious may "filter out" the language input, making it inaccessible for acquisition (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 37).

Table 106. Learning method preferences of participants

Q. 32: You learn best by						
	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**NF**
a. rote learning	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)			11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)
b. finding information on your own	22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			11.1% (1)
c. getting a logical explanation	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)				
d. problem solving	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)			
e. copying from the whiteboard	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		
f. listening and taking notes	22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			11.1% (1)
g. other methods	No					

All of the learners strongly agreed or agreed (100% combined) that they learned best by getting a logical explanation, followed by problem solving (88.8%), rote learning, finding information on their own and listening and taking notes (both 77.8%) and copying from the whiteboard (55.5%) (Table 106).

Table 90 (corresponding to Table 106) reveals that copying from the whiteboard occurred most commonly, with a combined percentage of 88.8% (all of the time, most of the time and often). However, this was the least preferred method by the learners (Table 106). On the open-ended question (Table 98), P7-A made it clear that he/she wanted less copying from the board and more interactive methods.

The learners' preferred way to learn was getting a logical explanation (Table 106). All the other activities shown in Table 106 (except for copying from the whiteboard) obtained over 77%, thus indicating that these activities were important for the learners and that their use in the course should be continued.

Table 107. Types of assessment preferred by participants

Q. 33: For assessment purposes, do you prefer to						
	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**NF**
a. be given homework	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)		11.1% (1)	
b. have written tests	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)			11.1% (1)	
c. have oral tests	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)		
d. use the European language portfolio	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)
e. other assessment types	No					

The learners indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed with having written tests (88.9%), being given homework and having oral tests (both 66.6%) and using the European language portfolio (22.2%) (Table 107).

Table 91 (corresponding to Table 107) shows that the learners were given homework (66.6%, all of the time, most of the time and often), had written tests and used the European language portfolio (both 44.4%) and had oral tests (33.3%).

Comparing these two tables shows that the learners' two most preferred assessment methods (Table 107) were the most practised in the course (Table 91). Although oral tests were given the least ranking amongst the other assessment methods (Table 91), the learners preferred them as much as homework (Table 107). Therefore, oral tests should be given more regularly. The European portfolio ranked low in terms of occurrence in the course and the learners' preference. In open-ended question 21 (Table 98), P6-A indicated the need for more homework and P7-A mentioned more tests, including dictation.

5.1.3.3 Learners' perceived needs regarding the MFL-2 learning materials

Considering the combined percentages, notes given by the teacher and videos garnered the highest percentages (88.9%) as very important or important resources, followed by a coursebook and recordings (nearly 78%), then word lists and PowerPoint presentations, books about Maltese history and culture and bilingual reading books (55.5% each) (Table 108).

Table 108. Learning materials' importance for participants

Q. 34: In this language course, it is important to have the following resources:						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. **notes given by the teacher**	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)		11.1% (1)		
b. **a coursebook**	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		11.1% (1)	
c. **bilingual reading books**	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	
d. **word lists**	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	
e. **books about Maltese history and culture**	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	
f. **videos**	22.2% (2)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)			
g. **recordings**	22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)			
h. **PowerPoint presentations**	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)		
i. **other resources**	No					

Re-examining Table 92 (corresponding to Table 108) shows that the teacher gave notes all of the time, most of the time or often in the course (100%). This practice should be continued since it was of importance to the learners. However, recordings (44.4%), videos (33.3%) and a coursebook (22.2%) were not used that often in the course (Table 92). As shown in Table 108, these resources were important for the

learners; therefore, it is essential to increase their usage. For open-ended question 21, P1-A also mentioned his/her need for a specifically designed book for this course.

Table 109. Participants' preferred use of reading texts in the course

Q. 35: How important is it for you to have texts to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. introduce grammar items	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)			
b. introduce vocabulary items	55.6% (5)	44.4% (4)				
c. encourage reading for pleasure	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)				
d. develop reading skills to access information	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)			
e. other uses	Yes P1-A: Texts can be given for home reading. Then we base [the] next lesson on them.					

For the learners, texts were very important or important to introduce vocabulary items and encourage reading for pleasure (both 100%), as well as to introduce grammar items and develop reading skills to access information (both 77.8%) (Table 109). It is significant to note that none of the participants marked the unimportant or not at all important levels. P1-A suggested that texts could be read at home and the next lesson could be based on the readings.

Revisiting Table 93 (corresponding to Table 109) reveals that the learners previously ranked the four criteria according to usage (combined all of the time, most of the time and often) in the following order: introduce grammar items and introduce vocabulary items (both 100%), encourage reading for pleasure (66.6%) and develop reading skills to access information (55.5%) (Table 93).

It is remarkable that all four were used in the course, although developing reading skills to access information and encouraging reading for pleasure were employed to a lesser extent. Considering their importance for learners (Table 109), all

these practices should be continued while enhancing the use of texts to develop reading skills to access information and encourage reading for pleasure.

Table 110. Participants' suggestions about the texts used in the course

Q. 36: How important is it for you to have texts						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. appealing to the learners' age	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)			11.1% (1)	
b. challenging, i.e., a step ahead of the learners' current level	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)			
c. varied (different sources)	66.7% (6)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)			
d. up to date	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)			
e. authentic passages (taken from real life)	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			

For the learners, it was very important or important to have texts that were challenging, up to date, authentic and appealing to the learners' age (all 88.9%), as well as varied (77.8%) (Table 110).

Table 94 (corresponding to Table 110) shows that the learners thought that all of the time, most of the time or often, the texts were varied and up to date (both 88.9%), as well as challenging, appealing to the learners' age and authentic passages (77.7% combined). Because approximately 80% of the participants stated that these were very important or important (Table 110), it is vital to continue presenting learners with texts having these characteristics.

Table 111. Participants' suggestions about listening methods in class

Q. 37: How important is it for you to do activities such as listening to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. **songs**		11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)		
b. **recorded materials**	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)			
c. **the teacher reading texts**	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)			
d. **other resources**	No					

For the learners, the most important listening activities were the teacher reading texts (77.7%), followed by recorded materials (66.7%) and songs (11.1%) (Table 111).

Table 95 (corresponding to Table 111) shows that the learners maintained the same ranking order. All of the time, most of the time or often, the teacher read texts (88.9%) and the learners listened to recorded materials (11.1%) but not to songs (0%).

The importance of listening exercises (as shown in Table 111) indicates the learners' perceived need to continue the practice of teachers reading texts while enhancing the use of recorded materials.

Table 112. Participants' suggestions about speaking activities in the course

Q. 38: How important is it for you to do speaking activities such as						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. **pronunciation exercises**	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)			
b. **dialogues**	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)		11.1% (1)		
c. **oral presentations**	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)		11.1% (1)	
d. **other speaking activities**	Yes P1-A: If there are site visits (e.g., museums), the group can be given a presentation in the Maltese language (though this may increase the cost).					

The majority of the learners agreed that dialogues, pronunciation exercises and oral presentations were the most important or important speaking activities (88.8%, 77.8% and 77.7%, respectively) (Table 112). P1-A commented that it was important to be given a presentation in the Maltese language during site visits, although he/she was concerned about the possible extra cost.

Table 96 (corresponding to Table 112) shows that dialogues, pronunciation exercises and oral presentations were performed all of the time, most of the time or often (88.8%, 77.7% and 33.3%, respectively).

The rankings of importance (shown in Table 112) for these speaking activities highlight the learners' need for the continuation of these practices while enhancing oral presentation.

Table 113. Participants' suggestions about types of writing exercises

Q. 39: How important is it for you to do writing activities such as						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. fill in the blanks	33.3% (3)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)			
b. complete the sentences	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)		
c. choose the correct word	44.4% (4)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)			
d. free writing	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)			11.1% (1)
e. other writing exercises	No					

For the learners, fill in the blanks and choose the correct word exercises were very important or important (both over 88%), followed by free writing and complete the sentences (both 77.7%) (Table 113).

Table 97 (corresponding to Table 113) reveals that complete the sentences (100%), fill in the blanks and choose the correct word (over 88%) and free writing activities (66%) were given all of the time, most of the time or often.

Considering the importance of these exercises to learners (Table 113), these practices should be continued. Because free writing is equivalent in importance as the other criteria, it should be practised accordingly.

5.2 Learners' interviews

The following three subsections present information about the MFL-2 course syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials, and the learners' perceived needs on these three areas, based on their interview responses.

In this section, the interview responses are presented according to their corresponding subsection. The interview questions are abbreviated with the code LIQ (learners' interview question), followed by the question number. The learners' responses are coded as IP (interview participant from the advanced course), with a number designated for each participant (e.g., IP1-A).

5.2.1 Learners' Views on the MFL-2 Syllabus and their Perceived Needs

In their answers to the first question, the interviewees showed their desire to communicate with locals. When asked, "Why did you enrol in this particular course?" (LIQ2), IP1-A responded, "I live in Malta. I'm going out with a Maltese girl [and] my friends are Maltese". Another participant explained that he/she took it as a challenge because:

> I used to learn Maltese before but [when I came back from abroad, I realised that] I have forgotten quite a lot. And I'm here more for the conversational [part] and the grammar (IP3-A).

Related to this, two other learners also indicated their aim to speak Maltese, stating "I don't feel my Maltese is good enough [and] I want to be sure I'm capable of speaking it properly [to reach] an adequate level of Maltese" (IP2-A) and "I want to practise speaking Maltese more" (IP4-A). When asked, "Are you taking any other course in Maltese apart from this? If yes, why?" (LIQ3), all the participants answered "no".

When the interviewees were asked, "Is there a syllabus for the course offered?" (LIQ4), IP1-A and IP3-A said "no", while IP2-A and IP4-A replied "yes". Because the latter two responded in the affirmative, they were asked, "Do you have access to the

syllabus for the course offered?" (LIQ5); IP2-A answered "no", and IP4-A responded, "I think so". When both were asked another follow-up question, "Were you involved in the decision-making process in developing the syllabus?" (LIQ6), they responded in the negative. Later, IP2-A elaborated, "We should have the syllabus so we know which topic we are going to cover so I could prepare beforehand". As the literature shows, a syllabus is an ideal tool with which policymakers "convey information to teachers, textbook writers, examination committees, and learners concerning the programs" (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 28). In reality, the course depended entirely on the teacher delivering it, and it would be difficult to achieve a certain consistency amongst the learning groups required to sit for the same exam.

In MFL-2, the syllabus was non-existent and teachers were instructed to refer to the MFL-1 syllabus. So although two of the interviewees answered that there was no MFL-2 syllabus, they still were asked, "Do you feel that the syllabus of the course you are attending is adequate? Why?" (LIQ7), three answered "yes". IP4-A indicated that they practised all the skills, IP1-A qualified that the course was "very strong in grammar" and IP2-A stated, "[in the sense] that it [was] a progression from level 1". On the other hand, IP3-A replied "no" and that it was "hard for beginners [and] emphasis [was] too much on grammar". More constructive criticism emerged when the learners were asked, "Do you think that by the end of the course, you will reach your aims? Why?" (LIQ8). Of the four participants, two said "no" and explained,

> The [scope of the] syllabus is too much for the length of the course; course 1 starts with the alphabet till verb forms, and it is impossible to learn all that, so it is based on understanding. At that level, you are presented with much more difficult things … [These lessons] are repeated at the higher level, [but] I [still] can't talk Maltese. I can understand it, I can read it, I can write basic texts … no, I can't say after I finish this course, I [can] speak Maltese (IP2-A).

> Not really. I did MFL Level 1 as well. I know quite a lot of Maltese … so for me it's not that hard, but for someone who is a beginner who doesn't know a word of Maltese, it's like squashing five years into one … There is too much grammar, rather than emphasis on everyday things … For most foreigners here learning Maltese, grammar is important, but you know, it's not [only grammar] because you do get it from [the context], you know (IP3-A).

Although the third participant did not answer "no", he/she seemed dubious and stated,

> Yeah, I guess so. I clearly can't learn the language in a year, unfortunately. It would be great if I could. I learned so much more than I knew in the beginning of the course. I

think I have a thing especially with this [teacher] … a lot of grammar and a very complete picture of Maltese grammar (IP1-A).

Participant IP1-A verified IP3-A's statement that grammar was given priority and that other components were not given similar weight. As these comments show, the learners were not happy with the situation, even though three of the four learners stated that they felt the syllabus was adequate (LIQ7) and two focused on the positive aspects of the course. Inversely, the other interviewee (IP4-A) stated that he/she was very happy with the course because it covered everything. However, this particular learner's background was different from those of the others, which gave him/her an advantage in this learning scenario. For this reason, in every course, preliminary information about the learners is collected to provide a snapshot of their backgrounds and learning aims (Skierso, 1991, p. 432). Although some of the learners had reservations regarding the course, they did not have access to an evaluation process in which they could give discreet feedback. This information emerged when the learners were asked, "Did you complete a survey to evaluate the course, either during or at the end of the course?" (LIQ21). All the participants answered "no". The following related question was asked: "Before you began this language course, did you complete a survey about your goals and needs? If yes, what were the contents of the survey?" (LIQ12). Three participants said "no", while the other replied, "I don't remember".

Coverage of different topics across different learning groups emerged when the learners were asked, "Which situations are covered in the course?" (LIQ9). They answered, "culture and Christmas" (IP1-A); "in the hospital, travelling, cooking and everyday situations" (IP2-A); and "talking about a vacation, talking to a friend, a telephone conversation and very simple tasks" (IP3-A). Another participant (IP4-A) did not mention anything in particular. When asked, "Are the situations covered in the course suitable for your learning aims? Why?" (LIQ10), all the participants replied "yes". The participants said a variety of things were done (IP1-A) and [they presented] everyday situations (IP2-A). IP3-A elaborated, "We don't do enough. I think it's better if we do more situations". On the other hand, IP4-A stated, "We do everything". When asked, "Which situations do you think should be covered?" (LIQ11), IP1-A and IP4-A did not mention anything in particular. IP2-A cited work-related situations but that if he/she wanted to learn the language specific to his/her work, he/she had to attend a specialised course. His/her point echoes Borg and Marsh's view that the best learning

comes from content that is relevant to life experiences or present concerns (1997, p. 195). Another participant shared a different view of his/her needs:

> I think it's not which [situations]. It's more [of] the more situations covered, the more vocabulary you'll be able to practise … because it's not … about words … like apple or orange … I need a lot of repetition, I need how I'm going to put this in a sentence, how you're going to structure a sentence, how you're going to ask a question … these are things that come with practice and repetition. But if you had to ask the question in a different situation, you'll get the gist of it more quickly (IP3-A).

Problems and tentative solutions emerged when the learners were asked, "What would you change in the present syllabus so that it better reflects your language needs?" (LIQ13). Aside from the comment of participant IP4-A (who claimed that everything was all right because he/she had no problem with conversation due to his/her background), the topics mentioned most often were conversation and the syllabus itself:

> It is heavily on grammar, reading and writing, but I live in Malta and what I want to do is speak to people around me … It would be nice to do a bit more conversation (IP1-A).

> I think there should be more than two years for the course. You don't expect someone to come three hours a week during a scholastic year to learn a language in two years. I think … with the first year, where they introduce … something of the culture, some basic words, some basic grammar structure, how to put sentences … [they should simply] focus on that. And that way, [learners] absorb more vocabulary (IP2-A).

> [It must be split into] three or four levels. Or you can actually cover from A to B, B to C [because] … which is our level? We are not beginners; we are not advanced; we don't speak Maltese … We are intermediate but that doesn't [mean] anything, so if we were to say when I did my first exam, I [had] a school certificate, which in my mind [equates] … me to a senior in Maltese who has spoken Maltese all his life … I don't have that level (IP3-A).

These statements show that the main problems for the learners were the broad scope of the syllabus, the need for a syllabus with adequate levels and more listening and speaking activities.

5.2.2 Learners' Views on the Teaching Methods for MFL-2 and their Perceived Needs

To obtain information about the teaching methods used, the learners were asked, "Which learning activity/activities do you like most in the course that you are currently taking? Why?" (LIQ14). Various responses included writing (IP1-A), grammar "because it builds a solid basis on which to build and speak properly" (IP2-A) and conversation "because it's practice" (IP3-A and IP4-A). It should be noted that three of the four interviewees mentioned conversation, reflecting the findings in the literature

that learners should have opportunities to "engage in meaningful social interaction with users of the SL if they are to discover the linguistic and sociolinguistic rules necessary for SL comprehension and production" (Pica, 1987, p. 4).

The learners were also asked, "Which learning activity/activities do you dislike most in the course that you are currently taking? Why?" (LIQ15). IP1-A made it clear: "I guess it's no good reason to dislike [anything] but I find listening very hard", while IP3-A found grammar very boring. IP2-A and IP4-A did not dislike anything.

In terms of the assessment methods used, the learners were asked, "What types of assessment did you complete during the course to give you feedback about your Maltese language learning progress?" (LIQ16). They responded with exercises and fill in the blanks with marks (IP1-A), portfolio used every week (IP2-A), an exam at the end of the course but "we don't have regular tests" (IP3-A) and homework (IP4-A). To solicit their perceived needs, the learners were asked: "Based on your experience and in speaking with your colleagues, what would you change about the teaching methods used in the course?" (LIQ17). IP3-A expressed the wish for a "more interactive teacher [and] more spontaneity", while IP2-A favoured more progression during the course. IP3-A's response reflects Littlemore's (2002, cited in Klapper, 2006, p. 92) suggestion that to motivate learners, language practitioners should employ language that makes a topic come alive and helps students establish connections between ideas. IP1-A and IP4-A did not want to change anything.

5.2.3 Learners' Views on the MFL-2 Learning Materials and their Perceived Needs

To investigate what learning materials were used in this course, the learners were asked, "What types of resources and materials are used during the language course you are currently taking?" (LIQ18). Various responses were given:

Pretty much everything you have on your survey … videos … increasingly now we're … listening … [to the] radio or [watching] TV … grammar sheets … readings (IP1-A).

A lot of papers for fill in the blanks, a lot of papers to read; we use the whiteboard for presentation, but at the end they don't give you anything (IP2-A).

Photocopies of exercises mostly and [grammar] notes that we copy from the board (IP3-A).

Handouts … pretty much everything (IP4-A).

These comments show that the resources used in a Maltese language teaching scenario depend on the teachers' dedication. Clearly, no standard is imposed across different classes with different teachers; this observation could be corroborated by the fact that IP1-A and IP4-A were from the same group. The points raised by IP3-A and IP2-A in particular bring to mind Harmer's (2001) argument that a teacher's use of alternative materials (instead of a standard coursebook) poses the "risk that students will end up with an incoherent collection of bits and pieces of material" (p. 305). These findings were supported by the learners' replies to the follow-up question ("What do you think of the materials and resources used in the course?" [LIQ19, Table 92]). The teacher brought a lot of resources (IP1-A). "We have … [photocopies] from several … books" (IP2-A). IP3-A stated, "I think we can have more" and IP4-A liked the resources being used.

To explore the resources these learners needed, they were asked, "What type of resources and materials do you need right now to help you learn the Maltese language more effectively?" (LIQ20). The responses included "a word list with 2000 to 5000 Maltese words" (IP1-A) and a coursebook because "[although] the teacher puts together her own notes … it's not a standard thing" (IP2-A). The third participant said,

> A textbook would be more structured … the teacher asked us … ['Have you done this last year?' Because] last year we were all in different classes, the level was a bit different for everyone. Some of us [said] yes; some [said] no (IP3-A).

IP4-A stated that having the book *Aċċess* (a grammar book for Maltese native speakers written by this researcher) was enough. Because of this learner's background, this type of book may be sufficient; however, for average foreigners, books intended for natives are not ideal.

5.3 Teachers' questionnaires

This section presents an analysis of the teachers' responses covering the following four areas: the teachers' backgrounds (section A in the questionnaire, see Appendix B); the current course (section B on the questionnaire, with three subsections: syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials); the teachers' perceived needs and suggestions (section C on the questionnaire, with three subsections: syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials); and teacher training (section D on the questionnaire).

The participants are assigned the code TP-A (teacher participant from the advanced course), with a number representing each (e.g., TP1-A).

5.3.1 MFL-2 Teachers' Background Information

In this section, preliminary information about the instructors of the MFL-2 course is presented and analysed to provide a snapshot of the teaching population. Knowledge of the teachers' credentials, including their experience and educational backgrounds, and their perception of their students' aims will be valuable during the analyses presented in other sections.

Initially, there were three MFL-2 groups of learners in Malta, and each group had a different teacher. However, one group was dissolved before this research commenced. Nevertheless, all three teachers participated in the survey questionnaire, and one of them consented to an interview. No MFL-2 groups existed in Gozo. Table 114 shows the breakdown of the teacher participants by gender.

Table 114. Teacher participants by gender

Q.1: Gender		
Legend	**Number**	**Percentage**
Females	2	66.7%
Males	1	33.3%
Total	3	100%

The ages of the participants varied, with two under 30 and the other over 60 (Table 115).

Table 115. Teacher participants by age

Q. 2: Age		
Age Range	**Number**	**Percentage**
20 or less		
21–30	2	66.7%
31–40		
41–50		
51–60		
Over 60	1	33.3%
Total	3	100%

All three teachers taught MSL only at the MQF-2 level, and none of them taught foreigners at another institution (Table 116). All three participants had taught Maltese to foreigners for a year or less (Table 117), thus indicating their lack of prior experience.

Table 116. Maltese foreign language course(s) delivered by teachers

Q. 4: Do you teach Maltese to foreigners in other institutions?		
Legend	**Number**	**Percentage**
No	3	100%
Yes		
Total	3	100%

Table 117. Participants' teaching experience

Q. 5: How long have you been teaching Maltese to foreigners?		
Years	**Number**	**Percentage**
1 or less	3	100%
Total	3	100%

Table 118. Teachers' perceptions on why learners chose to learn Maltese

Q. 6: Why do you think your learners have chosen to learn Maltese?				
	Yes		**No**	
	Number	%	Number	%
a. To communicate with locals	3	**100%**		
b. To cope with daily life	3	**100%**		
c. They use Maltese at work	2	66.7%	1	33.3%
d. For family literacy	2	66.7%	1	33.3%
e. To pass the Maltese O-level exam	1	33.3%	2	66.7%
f. To read newspapers and magazines	1	33.3%	2	66.7%
g. It is a requirement to obtain a job			3	**100%**
h. Other reasons			3	100%

Table 118 shows that the teachers unanimously agreed that the learners chose to learn Maltese to communicate with locals and to cope with daily life. This unanimous agreement is corroborated by the teachers' responses shown in Table 119; they noted that these two factors were the most important reasons to learn Maltese. Although the official languages in Malta are Maltese and English, some foreign nationals (generally from Eastern Europe) do not know English very well and have to communicate in

Maltese. This could be one reason why the teachers thought the learners used Maltese to cope with daily life. Two of the teachers perceived that some learners studied the language to use it at work, two thought that learners studied it for family literacy, and one reported that students learned the language to read newspapers and magazines. One participant declared that students learned Maltese to pass the Maltese O-level exam because MFL-2 is the second of the three courses that lead learners to that level. All the teachers believed that the learners did not require Maltese to obtain a job (Table 118).

Table 119. Teachers' responses on the most important reason for learners to learn Maltese

Q. 7: What do you think is their most important reason, from the above list, to learn Maltese?		
	Number	**Percentage**
a. To cope with daily life	2	66.7%
b. To communicate with locals	1	33.3%
c. To pass the Maltese O-level exam		
d. It is a requirement to obtain a job		
e. They use Maltese at work		
f. For family literacy		
g. To read newspapers and magazines		
h. Other reasons		

In terms of priorities, the teachers indicated that the learners' main concern was to cope with daily life and then to communicate with locals (Table 119).

5.3.2 Current Course

The following four sections present information about the MFL-2 course from the teachers' responses to the questionnaire. The data is analysed in the same manner as in the previous chapter.

5.3.2.1 Teachers' views on the MFL-2 syllabus

All of the teachers perceived that the four skills were covered all of the time or most of the time (100%) (Table 120).

Table 120. Teacher participants' perceptions on skills coverage in the course

Q. 8: All four skills are covered in this course.					
All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				

The results in Table 121 indicate that the course was primarily organised by grammar (100%), followed by topics (100%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often) and tasks (66.7%).

Table 121. Teacher participants' feedback about course organisation

Q. 9: Lessons during this course are organised according to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. grammar	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
b. topics	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)			
c. tasks			66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)		
d. other methods	Yes TP1-A: Vocabulary					

These findings reinforce the idea that the course was based on grammar and topics. One teacher indicated that the course was organised according to vocabulary (TP1-A).

Table 122. Teacher participants' feedback about course content

Q. 10: This course follows						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. a linear progression		66.7% (2)				33.3% (1)
b. a cyclical progression	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				

According to the teachers, the course was more inclined towards a cyclical progression (100%) (Table 122). However, linear progression (66.7%) was also reported as practised most of the time. This indicates that the teachers adopted both approaches in this course.

5.3.2.2 Teachers' views on the teaching methods for MFL-2

Table 123 shows that vocabulary practice was the focus of this course; all the teachers indicated that it was done all of the time, most of the time or often. Grammar, speaking, writing and reading practices followed (all 100%, combined most of the time

and often). Listening practice and Maltese cultural awareness were ranked next (both 66.6%, most of the time and often). Out-of-class activities were ranked last, receiving 0% in the first three criteria on the scale (all of the time, most of the time or often).

Table 123. Teachers' feedback on methods of instruction

Q. 11: During the course that I am currently delivering, I present activities for the following practices:						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. grammar practice	66.7% (2)		33.3% (1)			
b. vocabulary practice	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
c. writing practice		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
d. reading practice		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
e. listening practice		33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)		
f. speaking practice	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)			
g. Maltese-culture awareness		33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)		
h. out-of-class activities				66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	

Vocabulary practice and grammar practice were the first- and second-ranked criteria, respectively, signifying the course's emphasis on them. However, the teachers also indicated that the four skills were also practised regularly (Table 123).

Table 124. Teacher participants' feedback on learners' interactions

Q. 12: During this course, how often do learners work/learn						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. individually	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
b. in pairs		66.7% (2)		33.3% (1)		
c. in small groups				100% (3)		
d. in large groups				66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	

In terms of the learners' interactions, the teachers stated that the majority of the time, their learners worked individually (100%). This was followed by working in pairs (66.7%); working in small or large groups was seldom or never practised (both 100%, combined rarely and never) (Table 124).

Table 125. Learning methods used by teachers

Q. 13: During your course, how often do learners learn according to methods such as						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. rote learning	66.7% (2)		33.3% (1)			
b. finding information themselves			66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)		
c. getting a logical explanation		100% (3)				
d. problem solving			100% (3)			
e. copying from the whiteboard	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
f. listening and taking notes	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)				
g. other methods	Yes TP2-A: Role-play					

The teachers chose listening and taking notes, copying from the whiteboard and getting a logical explanation as the top three teaching methods (combined percentage of 100%, all of the time and most of the time) (Table 125). Rote learning and problem solving received a combined percentage of 100% all of the time, most of the time and often, followed by finding information (66.7%). One teacher mentioned role-play as another teaching method used in his/her class.

Table 126. Types of assessment given to learners

Q. 14: During the course, the learners						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. **are given homework**		33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)			
b. **have written tests**		33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)			
c. **have oral tests**		33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)			
d. **use the European language portfolio**	33.3% (1)		33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)		
e. **other assessment types**	Yes TP2-A: Classwork					

In terms of assessment methods, the teachers indicated that homework, written tests and oral tests were given most of the time or often (all 100%) (Table 126). One teacher answered that the European language portfolio was used all of the time, another indicated that it was used often, and the third said it was used rarely, thus indicating the diverse range of opinions amongst the three teachers (Table 126). One teacher also cited class work as another assessment method used.

5.3.2.3 Teachers' views on the MFL-2 learning materials

The first three learning materials mentioned in terms of use in the MFL-2 course were notes given by the teacher, word lists and a coursebook (all 100%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often) (Table 127).

Table 127. Learning materials used by teachers

Q. 15: In the course you are teaching, do you use						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. notes given by yourself	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)			
b. a coursebook		33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)			
c. bilingual reading books			33.3% (1)		66.7% (2)	
d. word lists		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
e. books about Maltese history and culture			33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)		
f. videos		33.3% (1)		66.7% (2)		
g. recordings		33.3% (1)		33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	
h. PowerPoint presentations	33.3% (1)			33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	
i. other learning materials	No					

Bilingual reading books, PowerPoint presentations, videos, recordings and books about history and culture (all 33%) were all ranked on the lower end of the scale, with only one teacher using them regularly.

Table 128. Teachers' views on the uses of reading texts in the course

Q. 16: Reading texts in this course are used to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. introduce grammar items		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
b. introduce vocabulary items	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
c. encourage reading for pleasure		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
d. develop reading skills to access information	33.3% (1)		33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)		
e. other uses	No					

The teachers indicated that the reading texts were used primarily to introduce vocabulary, introduce grammar items and encourage reading for pleasure (all 100%). The texts were also used to develop reading skills to access information (66.6%) (Table 128).

Table 129. Teachers' feedback about the texts used in the course

Q. 17: The texts used in this course are						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. appealing to the learners' age		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
b. challenging, i.e., a step ahead of the learners' current level		33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)			
c. varied (different sources)	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
d. up to date	33.3% (1)		66.7% (2)			
e. authentic passages (taken from real life)		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			

Table 129 shows that 100% of the teachers declared that the texts were varied all of the time or most of the time. All the teachers reported that all of the time, most of the time or often, the texts used were up to date, appealing to the learners' age, authentic and challenging (100%).

Table 130. Teachers' views on listening methods in class

Q. 18: During lessons, we listen to						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. songs			33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	
b. recorded material s	33.3% (1)			66.7% (2)		
c. the teacher reading texts		33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)		33.3% (1)	
d. other resources	Yes TP2-A: Listening comprehension					

In terms of listening methods in class, the teacher reading texts was common, with two teachers (66.6%) declaring that this method was used most of the time or often. However, another claimed that this method was never used. Two teachers reported that recorded materials were rarely used (66.6%), while another declared that they were used all the time. Two teachers indicated that songs were rarely or never used during lessons (66.6%), while another used them often. One teacher added that listening comprehension was another method used.

Table 131. Teachers' views on speaking activities in the course

Q. 19: The speaking activities in this course include						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. pronunciation exercises		100% (3)				
b. dialogues	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
c. oral presentations		33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)		
d. other speaking activities	No					

The speaking activities used in the course were dialogues and pronunciation exercises (100%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by oral presentations (66.6%) (Table 131).

Table 132. Teachers' views on types of writing exercises

Q. 20: The writing exercises in this course consist of						
	All of the time	**Most of the time**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**NF**
a. **fill in the blanks**		100% (3)				
b. **complete the sentences**		33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)			
c. **choose the correct word**	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
d. **free writing**		33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)			
e. **other writing exercises**	Yes TP3-A: Comprehension					

The most frequent writing exercise was choose the correct word, followed by fill in the blanks, complete the sentences and free writing (all 100%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often) (Table 132). One teacher included comprehension exercises.

5.3.3 Perceived Needs and Suggestions about the Syllabus, Teaching Methods and Materials

In this and the following sections, the teachers' perceived needs, suggestions and perceptions of the learners' needs regarding the course are compared with their perceptions of what it offered to determine if their needs were being satisfied.

Some common themes emerged during the analysis of the responses to the open-ended question, "What would you change in the course?" Table 133 presents the course components the teachers wanted changed and the corresponding participant numbers for each item. Each of these items will be addressed during the analysis of the relevant closed-ended questions in the next four subsections (5.3.3.1, 5.3.3.2, 5.3.3.3 and 5.3.3.4).

Table 133. Course components that teachers want changed

Q. 21. What would you change in the course?	
Themes	**Participants**
Syllabus	
Standard detailed syllabus	TP1-A, TP2-A
Materials	
Specifically designed coursebook	TP1-A, TP2-A, TP3-A
Others	
Communicate with other teachers and share ideas and resources	TP1-A

5.3.3.1 Teachers' views about perceived needs regarding the MFL-2 syllabus

The teachers thought that their students found speaking the most difficult or slightly difficult skill to learn, followed by writing, listening and reading (Table 134).

Table 134. Teachers' responses regarding the most difficult skill to learn in the Maltese language

Q. 22: Which Maltese language skill do you think that foreign learners find most difficult?					
	Most difficult	**Moderately difficult**	**Slightly difficult**	**Least difficult**	**NF**
a. listening	33.3% (1)		33.3% (1)		33.3% (1)
b. speaking	66.7% (2)		33.3% (1)		
c. reading				66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)
d. writing		66.7% (2)			33.3% (1)

The majority of the teachers thought that their learners wanted to improve their speaking skills, followed by writing (Table 135). None of the teachers mentioned that their learners desired to improve reading or listening skills. The teachers' choices are logical because they selected speaking and writing as the most difficult or moderately difficult skills (Table 134).

Table 135. Teachers' responses regarding the Maltese language skill that foreign learners want to improve the most

Q. 23: Which Maltese language skill do you think that foreign learners would like to improve most?		
	Number	**Percentage**
a. **speaking**	2	66.7%
b. **writing**	1	33.3%
c. **listening**		
d. **reading**		
e. **NF**		

Table 136. Teachers' feedback on practising the four language skills

Q. 24: To study a language, one has to practise the four skills.					
Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
100% (3)					

All the teachers believed that it was very important to practise the four skills when studying a language (Table 136). For the MFL-2 course, they stated that the four skills were covered all of the time, most of the time or often (100%) (Table 120). It is interesting to note that the teachers did not mark any of the four skills as unimportant or not at all important.

Table 137. Teachers' feedback on the course structure

Q. 25: How important is it for you to … have lessons organised according to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. **grammar topics**	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
b. **topics**		100% (3)				
c. **tasks**			100% (3)			
d. **other methods**	No					

The most important organisational methods for the teachers were grammar topics and topics (both 100%, combined very important and important; important) but they were neutral about tasks (Table 137).

Re-examining Table 121 (corresponds with Table 137) reveals that the current course was organised all of the time, most of the time or often by grammar topics and topics (both 100%) and then tasks (66.7%).

Analysing these two tables (Tables 137 and 121) reveals that the teachers kept the same ranking order; the most important methods to them were practised the most during the course. However, it is also noteworthy that all the teachers considered tasks neither important nor unimportant.

Table 138. Teachers' preferences regarding a linear vs. a cyclical progression

Q. 26: Have a course with a						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. linear progression		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
b. cyclical progression	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				

The combined percentages of very important and important rankings show the teachers' preference for a cyclical progression (100%) over a linear progression (66.7%); however, the latter was also given due importance (Table 138).

Revisiting Table 122 (corresponds to Table 138) shows that the course was inclined towards a cyclical progression (100%) more than a linear progression (66.7%).

These results indicated that it was important for the teachers to maintain the status quo. It might be the case that they preferred a cyclical over a linear progression because they viewed "SLA as the learning of a complex skill, one in which a range of sub-skills must be practised in 'controlled' processing until they can integrate into 'automatic' of fluent performance" (Klapper, 2006, p .57).

In relation to this subsection and in response to open-ended question 21, two of the three teachers indicated the need for a standard detailed syllabus (TP1-A and TP2-A) (Table 133).

5.3.3.2 Teachers' views about perceived needs regarding the teaching methods for MFL-2

All the teachers ranked grammar, vocabulary, listening and speaking practices as very important (100%) to include in SL teaching. Reading practice, writing practice and Maltese-culture awareness received combined percentages of 100% as very important or important. Finally, one teacher ranked out-of-class activities as important, the second rated them as neither important nor unimportant and the third deemed them not at all important (Table 139).

Table 139. Teachers' feedback on methods of instruction

Q. 27: How important is it for you to include the following practices during second-language teaching?						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. **grammar practice**	100% (3)					
b. **vocabulary practice**	100% (3)					
c. **writing practice**	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
d. **reading practice**	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)				
e. **listening practice**	100% (3)					
f. **speaking practice**	100% (3)					
g. **Maltese-culture awareness**		100% (3)				
h. **out-of-class activities**		33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)		33.3% (1)	

Table 123 (corresponding to Table 139) shows that vocabulary practice was conducted all of the time or most of the time. Then grammar and speaking practices

(100%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often) were followed by writing and reading practices (both 100%, most of the time and often), listening practice and Maltese cultural awareness (both 66.6%, most of the time and often). Out-of-class activities were ranked last, with none of the teachers stating that these were conducted all of the time, most of the time or often.

Tables 139 and 123 show that although teachers ranked all the methods of instruction as important, except out-of-class activities (Table 139), listening practice and Maltese cultural awareness were not undertaken regularly (as the other criteria) in the course (Table 123). Therefore, the use of these two activities should be increased, while the frequencies of all the other practices should be maintained.

Table 140. Teachers' perceptions on learners' interactions

Q. 28: How comfortable do you think learners feel when they work/learn						
	Very comfortable	**Comfortable**	**Indifferent**	**Un-comfortable**	**Very uncomfortable**	**N F**
a. individually	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
b. in pairs		100% (3)				
c. in small groups		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
d. in large groups		33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)		

Regarding the learners' interactions, the teachers perceived that the learners felt very comfortable or comfortable working individually and in pairs (both 100%). These rankings were followed by working in small groups (66.7%) and in large groups (33.3%) (Table 140).

In Table 124 (corresponding to Table 140), the teachers stated that the learners worked all of the time, most of the time or often individually (100%) or in pairs (66.7%) but rarely or never worked (100%, combined) in small or large groups.

The teachers perceived that the learners felt most comfortable working individually and in pairs; these types of interactions were used the most in the course, with the former more than the latter. Working in small or large groups was viewed as less comfortable and practised to a lesser extent.

Table 141. Teachers' perceptions on learning methods

Q. 29: Learners learn best by	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	NF
a. rote learning	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)			
b. finding information themselves		66.7% (2)		33.3% (1)		
c. getting a logical explanation	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)				
d. problem solving		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
e. copying from the whiteboard	33.3% (1)		66.7% (2)			
f. listening and taking notes	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)				33.3% (1)
g. other learning methods	Yes TP2-A: Dictations					

The teachers strongly agreed or agreed that their students learned best by getting a logical explanation (100%); rote learning, listening and taking notes, problem solving and finding information themselves (all over 66%, with one teacher in the last criterion expressing disagreement); and by copying from the whiteboard (33.3%, strongly agree) (Table 141). TP2-A noted that they also learned by dictation.

Table 125 shows that the teachers indicated that listening and taking notes, copying from the whiteboard and getting a logical explanation occurred all of the time or most of the time (100%). These rankings were followed by rote learning and problem solving all of the time, most of the time or often (100%) and finding information (66.7%).

Although copying from the whiteboard was used all of the time or most of the time in the course (100%) (Table 125), only one teacher expressed agreement that it is the best way for learners to learn while two were neutral about it (Table 141). On the other hand, getting a logical explanation rose to the first ranking. This could indicate that copying from the whiteboard should be minimised.

Table 142. Teachers' perceptions on types of assessment

Q. 30: During the course, the learners prefer to						
	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**NF**
a. be given homework		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
b. have written tests		33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)			
c. have oral tests	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
d. use the European language portfolio	33.3% (1)		66.7% (2)			
e. other assessment types	No					

The teachers perceived that their learners preferred to have oral tests (100%, combined strongly agree and agree), be given homework (66.7%), use the European language portfolio and have written tests (both 33.3%) (Table 142).

Table 126 (corresponding to Table 142) shows that homework, written tests and oral tests were given most of the time or often (all 100%), while the European language portfolio was used 66.6% all of the time or often.

A comparison of Tables 142 and 126 shows that all the indicated assessment methods were used in the course, although the teachers perceived in some cases that the methods were not the learners' preferences.

5.3.3.3 Teachers' views about perceived needs regarding the MFL-2 learning materials

The teachers believed that word lists (100%) were a very important resource for their learners, followed by a coursebook, the teacher's notes and bilingual reading books (66.7%, very important or combined very important and important); videos (66.7%, important; 33.3%, unimportant); PowerPoint presentations (33.3%, very important); and books about Maltese history and culture and recordings (both 33.3%, important, with

one teacher indicating that the latter was unimportant). Videos and recordings were the only two criteria deemed unimportant by one teacher (Table 143).

Table 143. Teachers' perceptions on learning materials

Q. 31: How important is it for the learners to have the following resources during the course?						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Un-important**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. notes given by the teacher	66.7% (2)					33.3% (1)
b. a coursebook	66.7% (2)		33.3% (1)			
c. bilingual reading books	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)			
d. word lists	100% (3)					
e. books about Maltese history and culture		33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)			
f. videos		66.7% (2)		33.3% (1)		
g. recordings		33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)		
h. PowerPoint presentations?	33.3% (1)		66.7% (2)			
i. other learning materials	No					

For the MFL-2 course, the first three learning materials mentioned as being used all of the time, most of the time or often were notes given by the teacher, word lists and a coursebook (all 100%) (Table 127). PowerPoint presentations, videos, recordings, books about history and culture and bilingual reading books followed (all 33%).

Thus, the three resources considered very important or important were word lists, a coursebook and teacher's notes (Table 143); all three were used frequently in the course (Table 52). The fact that all the teachers expressed the need for an adequate coursebook in their responses to open-ended question 21 (Table 133) could indicate that

the books used were insufficient for the learners. The resources with lower percentages in terms of importance (Table 143) were used to a lesser extent in the course (Table 127). In response to the open-ended question, one teacher (P1-A) related the desire to share ideas and resources with his/her colleagues (Table 133). This need might have arisen due to Malta's limited resources for teaching Maltese to foreigners.

Table 144. Teachers' perceptions on the use of reading texts in the course

Q. 32: How important is it for the learners to have texts to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. introduce grammar items	100% (3)					
b. introduce vocabulary items	100% (3)					
c. encourage reading for pleasure		100% (3)				
d. develop reading skills to access information	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
e. other texts	No					

The teachers perceived that for the learners, texts were very important to introduce vocabulary items and grammar items (100%), develop reading skills to access information and encourage reading for pleasure (100%, combined very important and important) (Table 144).

The teachers stated that the reading texts were used in the course all of the time, most of the time or often to introduce vocabulary, introduce grammar items and encourage reading for pleasure (all 100%). The texts were also used to develop reading skills to access information (66.6%) (Table 128).

Tables 144 and 128 show that all these criteria were ranked very important or important (100%) by the teachers and were practised regularly in the course, indicating that their usage should be maintained and that reading skills to access information should be reinforced.

Table 145. Teachers' perceptions about the texts used in the course

Q. 33: How important is it for the learners to have texts that are						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. appealing to the learners' age	66.7% (2)		33.3% (1)			
b. challenging, i.e., a step ahead of the learners' current level		66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)			
c. varied (different sources)	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)				
d. up to date	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)				
e. authentic passages (taken from real life)	100% (3)					

The teachers thought it was very important for the learners to have authentic texts (100%). They also considered it very important or important to have texts that were varied and up to date (both 100%), appealing to the learners' age (66.7%, very important) and challenging (66.7%, important) (Table 145).

For the MFL-2 course, all the teachers stated that all of the time or most of the time, the texts were varied. Moreover, all of the time, most of the time or often, the texts used were up to date, appealing to the learners' age, authentic and challenging (all 100%) (Table 129).

Tables 145 and 129 show that although not all the criteria had the same rankings of importance, texts with these characteristics were used regularly in the course.

Table 146. Teachers' perceptions about listening methods in class

Q. 34: How important is it for the learners to do activities such as listening to						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. songs			66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)		
b. recorded materials	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)			
c. the teacher reading texts	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
d. other resources	No					

The teachers believed that for their learners, it was very important or important to have the teacher read texts (100%) and to listen to recorded materials (66.7%). Listening to songs was not considered important (Table 146).

In the MFL-2 course, listening methods included listening to the teacher reading texts (66.7%, combined most of the time and often), recorded materials (33.3%, all of the time) and songs (33.3%, often) (Table 130).

In terms of importance and the use of these listening methods in the course, the teachers ranked the methods similarly. This pattern indicates that these methods were practised in the course in proportion to their perceived importance.

Table 147. Teachers' perceptions about speaking activities in the course

Q. 35: How important is it for the learners to do speaking activities such as						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. pronunciation exercises	100% (3)					
b. dialogues	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)				
c. oral presentations		100% (3)				
d. other speaking activities	No					

The teachers agreed that the learners considered pronunciation exercises very important, dialogues as very important or important and oral presentations as important (100%) (Table 147).

The speaking activities used in the course were dialogues and pronunciation exercises (100%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often), followed by oral presentations (66.6%) (Table 131).

Tables 147 and 131 show that all these criteria were very important or important (100%) and were practised regularly in the course.

Table 148. Teachers' perceptions about types of writing exercises

Q. 36: How important is it for the learners to do writing activities such as						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Unimportant**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. **fill in the blanks**	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)				
b. **complete the sentences**	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)			
c. **choose the correct word**	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)				
d. **free writing**		100% (3)				
e. **other writing activities**	No					

All the teachers agreed that for the learners, fill in the blanks and choose the correct word were very important or important writing activities (both 100%), followed by free writing (100%, important) and complete the sentences (66.6%) (Table 148).

The most frequent writing exercise used in the course was choose the correct word, followed by fill in the blanks, complete the sentences and free writing (all 100%, combined all of the time, most of the time and often) (Table 132). One teacher included comprehension exercises.

A comparison of Tables 148 and 132 shows that all the criteria that were considered very important or important were practised regularly in the course.

5.3.4 MFL-2 Teachers' Training

Table 149 shows that none of the teachers had attended any training related to teaching Maltese to foreigners. In response to the open-ended question, one teacher (P1-A) related the desire to communicate with other teachers and share ideas and resources (Table 133). This indicates that the teacher was trying to compensate for deficits in training by taking and giving mentoring advice while sharing resources.

Table 149. Specialised course in teaching Maltese to foreigners

Q. 37: Have you attended any specialised course about teaching Maltese to foreigners?		
Legend	**Number**	**Percentage**
No	3	100%
Yes		
Total	3	100%

Table 150 indicates the teachers' desire to be trained first in SLA theories and the CEFR (100%, very important and important), as well as learners' needs analysis (100%, important). Lastly, with nearly the same percentages, they expressed interest in learning about influential approaches and methods in SLT, adult SL learners, different learning styles, the European language portfolio and textbook evaluation (all over 66%, very important or important).

Table 150. Participants' feedback about training to teach Maltese to foreigners

Q. 38: To teach Maltese to foreigners more effectively, I would like						
	Very important	**Important**	**Neither important nor unimportant**	**Un-important**	**Not at all important**	**NF**
a. to be trained in second language-acquisition (SLA) theories	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
b. to learn about influential approaches and methods in second-language teaching (SLT)	66.7% (2)		33.3% (1)			
c. to learn more about adult second-language learners	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)			
d. to learn about learners' needs analysis		100% (3)				
e. to learn about different learning styles	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)			
f. to learn about the CEFR	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)				
g. to learn more about the European language portfolio	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)			
h. To learn about textbook evaluation		66.7% (2)				33.3% (1)
i. Other preferences	No					

5.4 Teacher's interview

The following four subsections present information about the MFL-2 course syllabus, teaching methods, learning materials, training and one teacher's perceived needs, and in some cases, the teacher's perceptions of the learners' needs in these areas, based on the interview responses.

In this section, the interview responses are presented according to the questionnaire's subsections. In the data presentation, each interview question is represented with the code TIQ (teachers' interview question), followed by its number. The lone teacher who consented to be interviewed is assigned the code TIP1-A (teacher interview participant in the advanced course).

5.4.1 Teacher's Views on the MFL-2 Syllabus and Perceived Needs

When the sole interviewee was asked, "Is there a syllabus for the course offered?" (TIQ2), the teacher (TIP1-A) replied "no" and explained, "We were informed to refer to the MFL-1 syllabus and go into more detail". Simply saying "go into more detail" would not attain an optimal level of learning for all groups and therefore would not lead to consistency, especially for the exam. The teacher was not asked questions TIQ3 and TIQ4 because they were based on an affirmative reply to the previous question. However, when asked, "Do you feel that the syllabus you are delivering is adequate for your learners? Why?" (TIQ5), he/she responded "no" and indicated a need for more speaking exercises:

> I believe that oral practice should be given more importance. Basically, we (teachers) are instructed that they should be taught grammar, writing and also a bit of literature, and we don't give much attention to speaking. From my experience with students, they learn grammar because we emphasise that a lot, but when it comes to speaking, they find it very difficult. We need to have more instruction so that when we get to teach it, we tackle it the right way (TIP1-A).

Similar to the question posed to the learners, TIP1-A was asked, "Which situations are covered in the course?" (TIQ6). He/she stated that different types were presented that were chosen by consensus with his/her learning group. This approach is consistent with Borg and Marsh's (1997) view that because learners can share their expectations, values and any lessons learned from years of experience, a teacher should

not adopt an authoritarian position but negotiate the process and content of learning so the learners themselves are involved in the learning objectives (p. 195).

When asked, "Are the situations covered in the course suitable for your learners' aims? Why?" (TIQ7), the teacher said "yes" and stated, "It is up to the teacher to create things so that he/she reaches the aims of the students". When asked, "Which other situations do you think should be covered?" (TIQ8), he/she did not specify any but indicated that oral practice should be given more importance because "when they go out on the streets … they need to communicate by talking". Although only one teacher consented to an interview, what he/she shared captured precisely the speaking and syllabus problems reported by the learners.

In response to the questions, "Before you began this language course, what type of needs analysis do you conduct with your learners?" (TIQ9) and "Do you survey your learners, either during or at the end of the course, to evaluate the course?" (TIQ20), the interviewee stated that he/she obtained feedback from the learners and in fact, did so after each lesson.

Finally, when asked, "What would you change in the present syllabus?" (TIQ10), he/she answered,

> The syllabus has to be more accessible in the sense that the students should be more active … I give students a topic, and they conduct a very basic presentation about the subject … to hone their speaking skills in Maltese. This will help learners to be more motivated and at the same time, contribute to their own learning.

Thus, the perceived needs that emerged from this section were more speaking practice and an adequate syllabus.

5.4.2 Teacher's Views on the Teaching Methods for MFL-2 and Perceived Needs

In terms of teaching methods, the teacher was asked, "Which learning activity/activities do your students like most in the course? Why do you think so?" (TIQ11). TIP1-A responded that his/her learners preferred listening practice, especially with a linked exercise that could be completed within minutes. When asked, "Which learning activity/activities do your learners dislike most in the course? Why do you think so?" (TIQ12), he/she indicated that writing practice was disliked because the learners found it difficult.

When asked, "What types of assessment do you use during the course to give them feedback about their Maltese language learning progress?" (TIQ13), the teacher replied, "portfolio".

5.4.3 Teacher's Views on the MFL-2 Learning Materials and Perceived Needs

TIP1-A's response to the interview question "What types of resources and materials do you use during the present course?" (TIQ14) included PowerPoint presentations, charts and flashcards. Without a specifically designed coursebook for foreigners, he/she used some coursebooks for Maltese natives, including *Sisien* and *Aċċess*. When asked, "Who decides which resources and materials are used in the present course?" (TIQ15), he/she answered that he/she did. In response to the question, "Which of the resources and materials mentioned above are specified by the Department of Education?" (TIQ16), he/she stated that they (teachers) were given the portfolio. The Department of Education also recommends the book *Sisien*, as stated in the syllabus offered for MFL-1 (none is available for MFL-2). Furthermore, when asked, "Based on your experience and in speaking with your colleagues, what resources and materials do teachers need to deliver these courses more effectively?" (TIQ17), the teacher replied that they needed more videos related to Maltese culture, more PowerPoint presentations and "a published book specifically made to teach Maltese to foreigners".

5.4.4 Teacher's Views on the MFL-2 Teacher Training and Perceived Needs

When the teacher interviewee was asked if the Department of Education had offered them any training to teach this course (TIQ18), TIP1-A responded "no", "except for a meeting of [a] few hours before the course commenced, in which we were told what we should cover and how to deliver the lessons". When asked, "What teacher training do you need, if any, to perform your duties more effectively?" (TIQ19), TIP1-A replied,

> I believe we need effective courses … [because] there is a difference between teaching a Maltese native student and teaching foreigners … in these courses, syllabi should be formulated among teachers for the benefit of the students, and a book must be published on how to teach the Maltese language to foreigners.

Thus, this teacher perceived the need for effective courses and a book specifically on how to teach foreigners the Maltese language.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the data to determine whether the MFL-2 course met the learners' expectations in terms of the course syllabus, teaching methods and materials. It also examined the teachers' requirements, given their key role as a determining factor in the success of the course. The following schematic diagram (Figure 7) represents the perception of course deficiencies. As already mentioned, the data were retrieved from a few participants and thus, could only be indicative.

Perceptions of course deficiency				
	Learners See related comments in the following tables:	**Learners** See related comments in the following questions:	**Teachers** See related comments in the following tables:	**Teachers** See related comments in the following questions:
Syllabus				
✓ Speaking is not given due importance	Table 100	LIQ8		TIQ5
✓ "Syllabus" is too vast and difficult	Table 103	LIQ8		
✓ More speaking	Tables 100, 104	LIQ13		TIQ5, TIQ8, TIQ10
Teaching Methods				
✓ Less grammar	Table 104	LIQ7, LIQ13		
✓ Less copying from the whiteboard, more interactive methods	Table 106	LIQ17	Table 141	TIQ10
✓ More homework, more tests	Table 107	LIQ16		
✓ Specifically designed coursebook	Table 108	LIQ20	Table 143	TIQ17

✓ More resources	Table 108	LIQ20	Table 143	TIQ17
✓ Teachers' desire to receive training			Table 150	TIQ19

Figure 7. MFL-2 course deficiencies

The needs analysis identified two classes handled by teachers with no prior experience in teaching MSL. The majority of the learners reported that their main priority was to communicate with locals. Although teachers' indicated that to communicate with locals was very important, their learners' priority was to cope with daily life. The questionnaire responses corroborated by the interviews showed the students' need for additional conversation practice to be integrated in the course to attain their learning goals. The learners emphasised that the course's undue focus on grammar must be changed to a more communicative approach, with less grammar concentration. The learners' comments revealed that this course would require a standard syllabus for different learning abilities, with a proper exam system and more day-to-day situations incorporated in the lessons. The need for more conversation was indicated by the teacher interviewed. However, issues such as the need for a standard syllabus also emerged from the teachers' questionnaire responses, corroborated by the interview with one teacher, thus implying the need for change – especially since the teachers delivered the course without a syllabus.

As for teaching methods, both learners and teachers perceived that the course focused on grammar and vocabulary. Although the majority of the learners and teachers noted the importance of practising the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), both identified speaking as the most difficult one for learners. Although copying from the whiteboard was recognised by the learners and teachers as one of the most often used learning methods, the learners agreed that it was the least effective type. On the other hand one teacher expressed agreement that it was the best way for learners to learn while two were neutral about it. Thus, it seems that there is the need for customised teaching materials to reduce the use of the whiteboard for more effective learning. In this regard, the learners expressed their wish for additional resources,

especially audiovisual materials and a coursebook to have standard notes. The teachers reflected the same needs, while holding their teaching notes in pole position.

All the teachers in MFL-2 reported not having taken any specialised training in teaching MSL. The absence of both teacher training and any course syllabus for this level implied a free-for-all approach by the teachers, who had been instructed to follow up on the MFL-1 syllabus.

This chapter presented data about what the MFL-2 course offered and whether it fulfilled the learners' and teachers' expectations in terms of the course syllabus, teaching methods, materials and for the teachers, teacher training. The data were retrieved from two sources (learners and teachers), using two research instruments (questionnaires and semi-structured interviews).

The next chapter presents the synthesis and discussion, with reference to the relevant literature, of common themes that emerged from the results for the MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Maltese as a Foreign Language –

MQF-1 and MQF-2

6.0 Introduction

Since both MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses had many common findings, the learners' and teachers' needs and expectations in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods, teaching materials, teacher training and other issues are summarised in this chapter, compared or contrasted according to different themes, with reference to the literature. This chapter also covers the practices that the learners and teachers believed were already included in the courses and needed to be retained and, in some cases, reinforced.

The data are presented under different headings, related to the respective issues being discussed. The interview questions and the learners' and teachers' responses for both courses are represented by the codes used in the previous chapters. An education spokesperson's views are also included in this chapter to confirm or contrast to the learners' and teachers' responses. This new source is represented by the code ES1 (education spokesperson 1); each question asked is coded ESIQ (education spokesperson's interview question), followed by its number.

6.1 Syllabus: Vast scope and difficulty

The MFL-1 learners indicated that the syllabus was vast in scope and difficult (Table 23). When they were asked about the situations covered in the course and those they wished had been included, it was evident that the groups did not cover the same topics because of the broad scope of the syllabus (LIQ9 and LIQ11); thus, the responses diverged. It could be argued that although covering different topics in different groups would not be harmful, a certain degree of conformity across the groups would be necessary because learners were being prepared for the same exam. Such conformity was generally indicated in the syllabus; however, this did not happen in the MFL-1 course. Similar criticisms also emerged from the interviews, in which the learners mentioned the lack of a prepared programme (syllabus), insufficient speaking exercises, and the course's advanced level, rapid pace and inadequate revision (LIQ3, LIQ4 and LIQ7).

Likewise, six of seven MFL-1 teachers commented in the interviews that the syllabus was too vast for beginners. Only one teacher believed that the syllabus was sufficient (TIP2). In the responses to the questionnaire's open-ended question, four of nine teachers replied that the syllabus was too vast in scope and difficult. Some teachers

also mentioned several topics that other groups, but not all, covered in the course, and several teachers commented that too many topics were covered while others stated that some topics did not reflect real-life situations (TIQ6–8). Furthermore, one teacher, who had more than one year of experience, revealed his/her demotivation to teach this course again, which was "impractical and boring due to its syllabus" (Syllabus – Interview Teacher Participant 1 [SITP1], Appendix F).

This sentiment reflected the teachers' shared opinions regarding the inadequacy of the syllabus, which made it difficult to accomplish their task and led to a high teacher dropout rate (TIQ5). The learners also indicated a high dropout rate (LIQ3). Ideally, an effective syllabus should include "the specification of aims and the selection and grading of content to be used as a basis for planning … courses" (Newby, 2000, p. 590). This syllabus failed in providing the necessary information because it was too generic and left teachers and learners without a specific direction, which led to "a lack of cohesiveness in materials and examinations used within the system" (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 28). To counter these deficits, both learners and teachers suggested a standard, detailed syllabus to meet the different abilities within all the groups and a proper exam system for different levels (LIQ3 and LIQ20, Tables 23 and 58). The learners also mentioned new, realistic, day-to-day topics and situations (LIQ10, Table 23).

In MFL-2, the learning groups covered different situations in the absence of a specifically designed syllabus for this course, as noted in the learners' divergent responses in the interviews (LIQ9 and LIQ11). With regard to the situations the learners wished were included, one particular learner indicated:

> It's not which [situations] … it's more [situations] … I need a lot of repetition. These are things that come with practice and repetition. But if you had to ask the question in a different situation, you'll get the gist of it more quickly (IP3-A, LIQ11).

During the interview, all the learners confirmed that the situations covered in the course were suitable for them.

Criticism about the adequacy of the 'current syllabus' emerged from the interviews, in which one participant replied that he/she would not achieve his/her learning aims due to the course's advanced level and emphasis on grammar (LIQ7). In

the questionnaire's open-ended question, one learner noted the vast scope and difficulty of the syllabus. Two learners suggested a standard, to meet the different abilities within all the groups and an exam system appropriate for the level being taught, while two proposed realistic, day-to-day topics (Table 98). Similarly, two of three teachers expressed their wish for a standard syllabus, and all indicated the need for a specifically designed coursebook. Another mentioned the need to share ideas and resources with other teachers (Table 133). All these suggestions highlighted the need for standardisation. Regarding which situations were covered in the course (TIQ6, Table 120), it was evident that the learning groups did not have the same topic coverage because there was no syllabus specifically for MFL-2. However, the learners were happy with the situations covered because the interviewed teacher indicated that he/she chose the topics with the consensus of his/her students. For this reason, he/she also considered these situations suitable for the learners (TIQ7). When asked about other situations that should be included, he/she did not specify any but stated that emphasis should be on oral practice (TIQ8).

The MFL-2 teacher responded in the negative when asked whether a syllabus was available for the course (TIQ2); however, he/she indicated that the teachers were "informed to refer to [the] MFL-1 syllabus and go into more detail". When presented with the criticism that the current course did not have a syllabus, the education spokesperson interviewed said that the Department of Education was "negotiating to put Level 2 on par with the [MQF] framework" (ES1 in ESIQ4). A syllabus is necessary in language courses such as this, in which different learning groups are taught throughout Malta by different teachers with varying degrees of experience and qualifications, because the focal point of a syllabus is "what is taught" and in "what order it is taught"(Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 54). Moreover, the syllabus must not be developed with a top-down approach but with information gathering in a needs analysis, in which learners' needs are identified and translated into learning objectives. These objectives will serve as a basis for the further development of learning programmes, learning activities, teaching materials, etc. (Brown, 2009, p. 269). Thus, it is essential to have an appropriate syllabus for this course with "a more detailed and operational statement of teaching and learning elements, which translates the philosophy of the curriculum into a

series of planned steps leading towards more narrowly defined objectives at each level" (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 35).

6.2 Syllabus/teaching methods: Speaking skill deficit

The MFL-1 learners' interview and questionnaire responses showed that the most important reason to learn Maltese was to communicate with locals (Table 9 and LIQ2). These results are to be expected in a beginner's course because "although newcomers represent many countries, first languages, and cultures … to function successfully in their new environment they need to be able to speak to and understand the people around them, as well as read and write" (McKay and Tom, 1999, p. 20). However, the results from both research instruments showed that the current course did not cater to this need. There was a strong feeling among learners of their inability to achieve their learning aims for various reasons, including speaking (LIQ8)

In another interview question (LIQ13), five of 12 interviewees indicated a need for more day-to-day conversations or pronunciation practice. This clear demand for more conversations was also expressed by 23 of 58 participants in response to the questionnaire's open-ended question. Even though the majority declared that speaking was the most difficult or difficult skill (Table 24) and that they wanted to improve it the most (Table 25), it was the least practised of the four language skills (Table 13). One learner who attended the DLL's conversation course noted that the materials it covered were not related to the scope of MFL-1 and that although he/she learned a lot, its 10-week duration was too short. Therefore, the conversation course should be an integral part of MFL-1 throughout the year to cover the four skills adequately (IP8). Thus, the learners showed the need for more language production. As stated in the output hypothesis (Swain, 1995, p. 125), producing language helps SL acquisition because it promotes "noticing" and recognising the learners' linguistic problems. Language production leads to the testing of hypotheses about language forms and structures, and with feedback, it can also lead to the modification or "reprocessing" of the output and to learners' self-reflection on their language output, enabling them to control and internalise linguistic knowledge.

The majority of the MFL-1 teachers also perceived that their learners found speaking the most difficult skill (Table 59) and that foreign students would like to

improve speaking the most (Table 60) to communicate with locals (Table 44). Moreover, five of seven teachers indicated in their interviews that speaking was one of the learning activities preferred by their students (TIQ11). The teachers declared that speaking was practised all of the time, most of the time or often (Table 48) in the course, with 90% of them considering it a very important or important practice (Table 64). Only one teacher stated that he/she would decrease grammar and increase conversation: "I know that there are conversation classes … but they sign up for this course with the idea that it will be more conversation based instead of grammar oriented" (TIQ10). A conflicting issue in MFL-1 was that the teachers seemed aware of the learners' perceived need but still did not offer enough speaking practice. As discussed in section 6.10, a needs analysis will help the teachers recognise better the learners' needs and address these during the course. An evaluation at the end of the course will be useful in that teachers will have learners' feedback on what to adjust. As Nunan (1990, p. 269) and Brown (2009, p. 70) noted, a needs analysis is imperative for every type of group under study; every learning group has its own needs and should be considered on its own merits.

Similar to the MFL-1 learners, the MFL-2 students indicated in the interviews and questionnaires that the most important reason to learn Maltese was to communicate with locals (Table 84 and LIQ2), and speaking was the most difficult or difficult skill (Table 99) that they wanted to improve the most (Table 100). However, they perceived that of the four language skills, speaking practice occurred the least often (Table 88). Likewise, two of four interviewees admitted that they would not achieve their learning aims for various reasons, including their inability to speak Maltese and their need for more context instead of grammar, thus referring to a more communicative approach (LIQ8). Once again, when the learners were asked what they would change in the course, the syllabus and conversation practice were mentioned most often, with two of four participants requesting more conversations (LIQ13). This clear demand for more conversations also emerged from three of nine participants' responses to the questionnaire's open-ended question (Table 98). To reiterate, the earlier findings from this research showed that Malta's bilingual situation would require students learning MSL to have more formal instruction to compensate for the lack of language input from

the environment. Thus, the learners indicated that they were not presented with enough input and opportunities for output.

The MFL-2 teachers also noted on the questionnaire that their learners found speaking the most difficult skill (Table 134) and that the foreign students would like to improve it the most (Table 135) to cope with daily life (Table 119). In this regard, the teachers perceived that speaking was practised all of the time, most of the time or often in the course (Table 123), and 100% of them considered it very important or important. However, the only teacher interviewed indicated that the syllabus was inadequate for learners because they needed more speaking exercises (TIQ5) and that "oral practice should be given more importance" (TIQ10, TIP1-A). As for what he/she would change in the syllabus, he/she discussed placing emphasis on conversation by giving tasks to learners, such as a presentation in the Maltese language about a topic (TIQ10, Table 120). As interactionists argue, learners' engagement in dialogues with their peers or teachers immerses them in meaningful activities that require "negotiat[ing] for meaning" and facilitate clear self-expression to arrive at a mutual understanding (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 122). The dynamic exchange can also repair breakdowns in communication (Pica, 1994, p. 510), especially when native speakers interact with non-native speakers because the former will avoid conversational trouble (Long, 1981, p. 265).

6.3 Teaching methods: Less grammar, more interactive methods

Regarding instruction methods, the MFL-1 learners perceived that the course mostly focused on grammar (Table 13). Although grammar was important to them and should be practised as well, they indicated that the most important practices were speaking and listening (Table 29) and must therefore be prioritised. When the learners were asked about the learning activities they liked most (LIQ14,), various responses were received, but speaking was the most popular. In terms of the activities they disliked most, many of the answers were also related to listening and speaking, such as the lack of authentic listening activities, the learners' unpreparedness (for various reasons) to participate in dialogues or listening activities and their shyness and nervousness to speak in front of the class (LIQ15). Klapper (2006) indicated that when practising communication skills, teachers must prepare safety nets to accommodate

learners' unpreparedness or nervousness to "ensure sufficient opportunities for communication exchange in small, non-threatening groupings and to impress on students the crucial importance of eliciting FL input at every opportunity from, in particular, native speakers of the FL" (p. 79). Thus, this approach will help create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom to motivate language learners (Csizér and Dörnyei, 1998, p. 215).

The MFL-1 teachers also indicated that although grammar was important to them, they prioritised topics over it (Table 62). Two teachers noted as well that they would decrease grammar lessons in the course (Table 58). Their desire to increase topics and to a lesser extent, tasks, showed a preference for a more communicative approach but without neglecting grammar. As indicated in the literature review, tasks "require learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective" (Bygate *et al.*, 2001, p. 11); however, as both learners and teachers indicated, tasks were rarely used in the majority of the classes (Tables 10 and 46). The teachers elaborated in the interviews that they would eliminate a lot of grammar from the syllabus. One teacher would split the syllabus into different topics while eliciting grammar from the context (TIQ10). Over half of the interviewees noted that grammar was the learning activity their students disliked the most (TIQ12).

The MFL-2 learners perceived that the course was mainly organised according to grammar and that it was practised all or most of the time (Tables 86 and 88). However, they expressed a need for more balance amongst grammar, topics and tasks (Table 102). Listening, vocabulary and speaking practices were more important to them than grammar practice (Table 104). Furthermore, two of four interviewees admitted that they would not achieve their learning aims because of the vast scope of the syllabus, especially regarding grammar (LIQ8).

When the learners were asked what they would change in the course (LIQ13), three of four indicated the heavily reliance on grammar and two suggested a change in the syllabus, with one adding that it must be divided into three levels. Conversation was mentioned again when the learners were asked in the interviews about the learning activities they liked the most (LIQ14). For two interviewees, conversation constituted practice; one cited grammar, indicating that it laid the foundation for speaking, and

another preferred writing. As for the most disliked activities, one learner noted grammar (LIQ15).

The MFL-2 teachers perceived that the course was mainly organised according to grammar and topics (Table 121); in terms of importance, they kept the same ranking order (Table 137). To a certain point, this finding showed the MFL-2 teachers' desire to maintain the status quo, with which the learners disagreed. Regarding the 'syllabus', the sole teacher interviewed said that "it [was] adequate in the sense that it continue[d] to build on level 1. However, ... [for] someone [who] did not attend level 1, it [was] difficult, especially in terms of grammar" (TIQ5). In fact, he/she thought that the 'syllabus' was insufficient because it did not focus on speaking but on grammar and writing, adding, "… we need to have more instruction so that when we get to teach [grammar], we tackle it the right way" (TIP1-A). This comment demonstrated the course's concentration on grammatical rules and vocabulary, echoing the G-T approach of emphasising teaching and writing skills (Griffiths and Parr, 2001, p. 247), while neglecting learners' oral communication skills. Moreover, this teacher's statement contrasted with the more optimistic view (discussed in the next paragraph) held by the education spokesperson, who anticipated the potential to expand the teaching orientation and vision beyond the narrow focus on grammar.

When asked how he/she would classify the syllabus approach to Maltese language instruction for both courses (ESIQ5), the education spokesperson answered that it was a combination but that:

> the culture with my teachers was very much grammar based unfortunately. [However,] we're open to change that culture. It takes time and it's a bit difficult for some people who are not used to it, but the idea is there, the goal is there, the vision is there. So we're moving towards it.

In this regard, the literature shows that certain institutions do not adhere to one type of syllabus. In fact, Dublin and Olshtain (1986, p. 38) argued that course designers could consider using different approaches to bring about positive change. As Reilly (1988) advised, a combination of two or more syllabus types could be used; therefore, "in discussing syllabus choice and design, it should be kept in mind that the issue [would] not [be] which type to choose but which types, and how to relate them to each other" (p. 1). However, Klapper (2006) believed that at the beginner and intermediate

levels, the most common syllabus would remain structural "even though it [might] sometimes be slightly camouflaged by additional functional and communicative elements" (p. 131). When the education spokesperson was asked if teachers were advised on which teaching methods to employ (ESIQ10), he/she answered that they were inclined towards the grammar approach but the department was trying to change the culture. As seen in the literature, everything is teacher-centred in this grammar approach and "the students do as she says so they can learn what she knows" (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 19). According to Rivers (1981, p. 31), this method makes classes boring for students because of the repetitive system used and the passive role assigned to them in learning the language. However, to adopt the education spokesperson's suggestion, the syllabus "should reflect the philosophical approach and educational approach that guided the policy-makers" (Dublin and Olshtain, 1986, p. 28), which the syllabus failed to convey. Additionally, teachers and learners would need learning materials and resources and in the case of teachers, training, which the course lacked.

6.4 Teaching methods: Less copying from the whiteboard, more interactive methods

In terms of the learning methods in the MFL-1 course, the learners indicated that they wanted to continue practising the methods mentioned on the questionnaire (Table 31); however, many showed reservations about copying from the whiteboard. Although it was the most often used practice in the course (Table 15), it was the least favoured when the learners were asked about which method helped them learn best (Table 31). In the interviews as well, one learner commented, "Some teachers deliver lessons well, while others use the board only" (IP11 and LIQ3). In response to the open-ended question, the learners wanted less copying from the whiteboard and more interactive methods (Table 23). This issue regarding the method of instruction emerged again from the interviews (LIQ17, Table 31), in which the learners indicated their desire for the teachers to strengthen the learners' engagement through activities and skill practice; to do so, the teachers must be equipped with the right teaching materials and syllabus.

The MFL-1 teachers also indicated that copying from the whiteboard was used frequently (Table 50). In contrast to the learners' point of view, the teachers strongly agreed or agreed that of the six criteria on the questionnaire, their students learned best

first by rote learning, followed by listening and taking notes and copying from the board (Table 66). These three top-ranked methods reflect G-T principles, in which teacher centeredness is a priority and "the students do as she says so they can learn what she knows" (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 19). As already indicated, the G-T method emphasises teaching and writing skills (Griffiths and Parr, 2001, p. 247) but neglects learners' oral communication skills. Most of the interactions in this course were from the teacher to the students; thus, the limited student–student interaction – or its absence – (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 19) reinforces individuality. However, the relevant literature also shows that interactive teaching, such as a task-based approach, presents a more difficult role for teachers because they must be ready to help during spur-of-the-moment interactions, which "presuppose a broader type of readiness for almost anything to occur, compared to the more comfortable ability to prepare for the pre-ordained structure-of-the-day" (Skehan, 2003, p. 11).

For the MFL-2 course, the learners also ranked copying from the whiteboard highest in terms of usage (Table 90) but the least preferred method to help them learn best (Table 106). In response to the open-ended question (Table 98), one learner (P7-A) wanted less copying from the board and more interactive methods. However, the learners indicated that the other teaching methods used were important to them and should be continued in the course (Table 106). During the interviews (LIQ17), the learners expressed their desire for the teachers to engage them more through interaction and spontaneity, while giving the course more gradation and making a syllabus available.

The MFL-2 teachers also indicated that copying from the whiteboard was used regularly in the course (Table 125). However, the teachers perceived that of all the methods used, this method was amongst the least effective (Table 141). This could indicate that copying from the whiteboard should be minimised. The relevant literature (Krashen's critiques, see section 2.4.4) shows that presenting students with language input alone is clearly insufficient. Learners should also be given opportunities to activate their knowledge because language production helps them select from the input they have received, rehearse and receive feedback, especially in a classroom setting, which allows them to adjust their language based on the fresh perspective offered to them (Harmer, 2000, p. 40).

6.5 Teaching methods: Problems with the portfolio

Although the MFL-1 learners indicated in their questionnaire and interview responses that the assessment methods should be maintained and reinforced, especially homework and tests (Table 23, LIQ17), they expressed reservations about the European language portfolio, one of the most used assessment methods (Tables 16 and 23, LIQ16). In the questionnaire's open-ended question, two learners responded that the portfolio was not clear or well organised. The MFL-1 teachers also gave negative feedback about the portfolio; therefore, the problems with this assessment tool emerged from two sources and instruments. The teachers also indicated that the portfolio was the learners' least preferred type of assessment (Table 67); one teacher noted that the portfolio needed to be changed as it was neither clear nor well organised (Table 58). Another elaborated, "I don't feel that the portfolio is that important" (TIP5 in TIQ13).

Similarly, the MFL-2 learners stated in their questionnaire and interview responses that the assessment methods should be kept and strengthened, particularly homework and tests (Table 98, LIQ16). However, they ranked the European language portfolio low in terms of occurrence in the course (Table 91) and last in terms of their preference (Table 107). Regarding the portfolio's usage in the course, the three teachers expressed a diverse range of opinions (Table 126), with one teacher indicating that the portfolio was the main tool used to assess learners' progress (TIQ13). However, the teachers perceived that the portfolio was one of the least preferred assessment tools for the learners (Table 142).

When the education spokesperson was asked if there was an official policy regarding the types of assessment to be used during and/or at the end of the course to give learners feedback about their Maltese language learning progress (ESIQ11), he/she responded, "the course outline states … 5% for attendance, 10% for the portfolio and the rest for the written paper and the oral/aural section". Because the DLL offers the portfolio – defined as "the collection of the course work [and] all the formative assessment done" (ESIQ14) and claimed as part of an "on-going assessment" (DLL, 2012a, 2012b) – as a resource, the teachers are compelled to use it as a course requisite even though the teachers and learners are not fond of it. Thus, the portfolio may cause the learners to "filter out" the language input, making it inaccessible for acquisition (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 37).

6.6 Learning materials: More resources (coursebook and audiovisual aids)

Although different learning materials were used in the MFL-1 course, the most used ones were notes given by the teacher, with the other resources lagging behind (Table 17). This finding strongly indicated that all the teachers produced their notes because the DLL offered very limited resources. Some of the books used in this course and the *Sisien* series suggested by the MFL-1 syllabus are not designed for foreigners. Thus, one learner noted, "many books for foreigners do not have English [translations], so it's not worthwhile to buy them" (IP8). The preparation of the learning materials depended on the teacher, and the learners had different opinions regarding the adequacy of these resources (LIQ19). The learners indicated during the interview and on the questionnaire that in addition to the notes given by the teacher, they needed a specifically designed coursebook and more audiovisual resources (Table 23, LIQ5 and LIQ20). Coursebooks can serve as a guide during learning, both inside and outside the classroom (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, p. 318), thus giving learners a sense of progress when keeping track of what and how much they have accomplished in a course (Woodward, 2001, p. 146). Supplying these resources will thus increase the learners' level of motivation (Crooks and Schmidt, 1991, cited in Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 65).

The same perceptions emerged from the MFL-1 teachers' questionnaire and interviews. The teachers revealed that the DLL offered a set of 15 handouts and two books in the *Sisien* series for Maltese native speakers (TIQ16); thus, the teachers decided what resources to use in their classes (TIQ14 and TIQ15). The teachers' need for more resources re-emerged in the responses to the questionnaire's open-ended question (Table 58). Although all the teachers suggested different resources during the interviews, six of seven teachers indicated the need for a coursebook for foreigners (TIQ17), with one teacher elaborating that all centres should use the same book (TIQ10). This finding supports research results that coursebooks help teachers manage their lessons by giving direction, serve as a source of supplementary material, as an insight for classroom activities or even as the curriculum itself (Garinger, 2002, p. 1).

The education spokesperson confirmed that the DLL offered a textbook, a student book (*Sisien*) and the portfolio. However, "books written in Maltese for Maltese are totally useless" in teaching the language to foreigners (Flask, 2010, p. 207).

Learning materials should be linked to students' lives and interests (Littlemore, 2002, cited in Klapper, 2006, p. 92) to inspire them in their efforts to meet their educational goals. Additionally, adult learners are intellectually mature; therefore, teachers should not treat them as if they were children. A mature teaching manner reinforces the teacher–learner relationship and enhances the language-learning process (Borg and Marsh, 1997, p. 195), thus "[making] the language classes interesting" (Littlemore, 2002, cited in Klapper, 2006, p. 92). Because the Maltese language council changed some orthography rules over the last five years, many books have become outdated. When asked about this, the education spokesperson recommended the use of a previous edition of the books, justifying it with the claim: "I am able to take a backdated edition and arrange it to my needs today". However, the "interest" factor is also important for learning materials (Crooks and Schmidt, 1991, p. 491), and using old editions is not an effective way to "make the language classes interesting" (Littlemore, 2002, cited in Klapper, 2006, p. 92).

The MFL-2 learners indicated as well that the main learning materials used in the course were notes given by the teacher (Table 92), trailed by other resources. Such reliance on the teacher's commitment to prepare the materials also emerged during the interviews (LIQ18); two of four interviewees, who attended lessons with a particular teacher, responded that the teacher used "pretty much everything you have on your survey" (IP1-A and IP4-A). The other two, who attended classes under a different teacher, indicated that the teacher used:

> A lot of papers for fill in the blanks, a lot of papers to read; we use the whiteboard for presentation, but at the end they don't give you anything (IP2-A).

> Photocopies of exercises mostly and [grammar] notes that we copy from the board (IP3-A).

Thus, the learners had different views regarding the adequacy of these resources; one stated, "We can have more" (LIQ19). The most mentioned learning material was a coursebook because it "would be more structured" (IP3-A), while one participant indicated a preference for "a word list of 2000 to 5000 words" (IP1-A, LIQ20 and Table 108). In response to open-ended question 21, one learner also cited his/her need for a specifically designed coursebook (Table 98). This need was also prominent in the questionnaire responses; when the learners were asked about the importance of eight

items, the top-ranked ones were notes given by the teacher, audiovisual resources and a coursebook.

The MFL-2 teachers also indicated that notes given by the teacher, word lists and a coursebook were used all of the time, most of the time or often in the course (Table 127). However, the other resources were not used as often. The teachers perceived that word lists, a coursebook and teacher's notes were very important or important for learners (Table 143). Nonetheless, all the teachers expressed the need for an adequate coursebook in their responses to open-ended question 21 (Table 133). The lone teacher interviewed indicated that teachers needed more videos related to Maltese culture, more PowerPoint presentations and "a published book specifically made to teach Maltese to foreigners" (TIQ17). Possibly, many teachers have come to rely on the contents of textbooks because they cannot match the quality of well-presented material without spending enormous amounts of time, money and effort (Ansary and Babaii, 2002, p. 2). Moreover, an experienced teacher can adapt to the learners' needs, but in many cases, a novice teacher "needs a text that has many and varied exercises to choose from and materials that are heavily annotated with suggestions for their use" (Ariew, 1982, p. 18, cited in Skierso, 1991, p. 433).

6.7 Teaching materials: Continuation and reinforcement of current practices

Both sources for both MFL courses showed that the learning materials could be amalgamated with the present reading, listening, writing and speaking activities, which the learners thought should be retained and in some cases, reinforced (Tables 34–38 [MFL-1], Tables 109–113 [MFL-2]). The learners' and teachers' perceptions were aligned, as revealed in various tables. With the exception of one criterion (listening to songs Table 71 [MLF-1], Table 146 [MFL-2]), none of the teacher participants regarded these activities as unimportant or not at all important for their learners (Tables 70–73 [MFL-1], Tables 144–148 [MFL-2]), indicating that these practices should not only be continued but also strengthened.

The learners' preference for more resources, along with the continuation and reinforcement of certain practices, conveys their desire for increased exposure to spoken or written language in natural settings or formal instruction (Klapper, 2006, p. 62). This support will help learners advance through several phases, from the conscious learning

of rules to their repeated application and tacit yet confident execution (Segalowitz, 2003, p. 395). However, as Littlemore (2002) suggested, language practitioners must create teaching materials to accommodate different learning styles. Littlemore's recommendations included using visual aids, such as illustrations, photographs, maps, diagrams, videos and films; encouraging visualisation by generating and manipulating mental imagery; employing language that makes a topic come alive; helping students make connections between ideas; linking materials to students' lives and interests; providing opportunities for experimental, hands-on learning; offering opportunities for multisensory learning; using graphic organisers; using music; employing creative dramatics, such as simulation and role-playing; using video interactivity; and applying the total physical response approach.

6.8 Teacher training: Desire for training

The interviews and questionnaires for the MFL-1 course showed that except for two teachers, the rest did not attend any specialised courses to teach Maltese to foreigners. One teacher attended an in-service course (three half-day sessions organised by the education department) and a two-day course by the Foundation for Educational Services (Table 74, TIQ18). However, the teachers indicated a desire to be trained in different areas in this field of specialisation (Table 75), with two of seven elaborating in the interviews that they needed a TEFL-type course specifically for Maltese. Another teacher suggested an in-service course. However, one teacher made it clear that realistic training was needed instead of rhetoric; another suggested a teaching mentor. However, two teachers contradicted their questionnaire responses (Table 75) by indicating that they did not need training (TIQ19).

All the MFL-2 teachers reported that they did not attend any specialised courses to teach Maltese to foreigners (Table 149). The same response emerged from the interviews (TIQ18), with one teacher qualifying his/her answer, "except for a meeting of a few hours before the course commenced, in which we were told what we should cover and how to deliver the lessons" (TIP1-A). However, the teachers indicated various areas in which they would like to be trained. None of the topics mentioned for this question were marked as unimportant or not at all important on the questionnaire (Table 150). When the sole teacher interviewed was asked what training he/she needed

(TIQ19), he/she suggested effective courses specialised for Maltese for foreigners, in which syllabi could be formulated, as well as a book on how to teach the language.

When the education spokesperson was asked if he/she received any feedback regarding the type of training teachers needed and if the education department offered such training opportunities (ESIQ16), he/she "received suggestions from teachers, especially when it came to the final assessment test". He/she indicated that teachers would need training to use the interactive whiteboard effectively. The DLL offers a three-hour session on this topic; however, the voluntary attendance led to a low turnout. Since many of the current teachers "were not born in the digital world, it is difficult for [them] to catch up, so they need training and practice [but] in training, we [the DLL] are very poor". Moreover, the University of Malta, the only university in the country, does not offer any training in MSL or MFL; however:

> [when] the state begins to recognise Maltese as a foreign language, the Faculty will, in all probability, cater for this need … [At present, the University of Malta is] not considering any of this at all because it is not the way the State of Malta defines Maltese … [However,] it is unacceptable to have someone teaching a foreign language without proper training (Micallef-Cann, 2013, p. 141).

All this information must be considered in the light that some teachers do not have degrees in Maltese. When the education spokesperson was asked about the required qualifications for teaching these courses (ESIQ2), he/she answered, "preferably, [the teachers] have to be graduates [and] graduates in Maltese as well". However, sometimes these types of teachers are not available to teach the morning courses; therefore, the DLL fills the posts with the best people it can find, such as individuals with certificates in proofreading or translation, those with an Advanced Level Standard certificate in Maltese or pensioners whose "only teaching experience would be with the directorate" (ESIQ2). Teachers without adequate qualifications in the Maltese language and others without training in MFL employ the trial-and-error or hit-and-miss approach. As gleaned from the literature review, SLA research has introduced different methodologies that can be learned from textbooks, teacher training programmes and curriculum designs (Lightbown, 2000, p. 438). Thus, teachers should be trained in SLA-related areas to enhance their ability to determine the objectives of a proposed method and whether it is practical, adaptable and adequate to their teaching situations and the type of learners. This training can also help teachers assess their capacity to manage the

demands of working with a particular method, depending on their teaching load (Rivers, 1981, p. 27).

6.9 Logistical problems encountered by teachers

Some MFL-1 teachers indicated that they did not have adequate resources in the premises where they taught or did not have permission to use them. One case in point was the use of local council offices as classrooms that were not equipped with sound systems or interactive whiteboards (TP13 and Table 51). Another teacher (TP5) reported using the interactive whiteboard at his/her own risk and without permission; indicating that certain teachers also faced logistical problems. Cases such as this do not instil motivation in the teachers, although these problems could be solved with common sense. This view contrasts with the DLL's vision, as articulated by the education spokesperson, "since we are moving towards a digital world, [we encourage] the use of the interactive whiteboard". However, he/she also cited the teachers' need for training and the inadequacy in this area (ESIQ15), unaware of the logistical problems. This issue also corroborates Brown's (2001) recommendation that teachers should be consulted in a needs analysis in consideration of their own needs (p. 287).

6.10 Needs analysis/course evaluation

This needs analysis shows that the department of education, represented by its spokesperson, was unaware of some of the learners' and teachers' perceived needs. Moreover, the teachers did not realise certain learners' needs in some instances. Even the MFL-1 syllabus was developed using a top-down approach instead of information gathered from a needs analysis in which learners' and teachers' needs would be identified and translated into learning objectives. This was confirmed in the education spokesperson's reply to the question of who participated in developing the syllabus (ESIQ8): "the coordinator [of the courses], an education officer and [then it would be approved by] the service manager". This reflects that Schutz and Derwing's observation is still valid:

> it would seem that most language planners in the past have bypassed a logically necessary first step: they have presumed to set about going somewhere without first determining whether or not their planned destination was reasonable or proper (1981, p. 30).

As the education spokesperson confirmed, no standard formula exists for either course that the department or teachers can use to gather data about learners to accommodate

(ESIQ7) or at least discover their particular needs. Additionally, no evaluation is conducted during or at the end of the course (LIQ21 and ESIQ20).

Using generic programmes or materials without a particular audience in mind will produce ineffective and inadequate outcomes (Long, 2005, p. 1). Therefore, conducting a survey before the course will help identify the learners' goals and needs. These findings confirm that a needs analysis is an important step in effective course design. West (1994, p. 5) proposed conducting a needs analysis during three phases: before, at the start of, and during the course. A course evaluation with a brief questionnaire should also be conducted at the end of the course so the learners' needs can be identified and translated into learning objectives for further development of the learning programmes, learning activities, teaching materials, etc. (Brown, 2009, p. 269). Thus, these learning objectives, which are generally incorporated in the syllabus, only comprise a minimum standard for achieving consistency amongst the various learning groups in Malta and Gozo, which have to sit for the same exam (MFL – MQF-1 or MFL – MQF-2). Furthermore, the creation of learning materials based on the needs analysis outcomes will support the teachers, many of whom are not trained in MSL/MFL pedagogy (see section 6.8) and have no prior experience in teaching foreigners (see Tables 42 and 117). Although every coursebook needs adaptation and supplementation to make it suitable for a particular learning group (Swan, 1992, p. 1), there is often "a common core of needs shared by a variety of groups in different places studying under different conditions at different times" (O'Neill, 1982, p. 105). Moreover, the course evaluation will help in the adaptation and supplementation. Arguably, certain learners' needs may lack a clear vision or be impossible to fulfil. Nonetheless, a needs analysis must set realistic goals and maintain a balance between "what is needed" and "what is possible" (Singh, 1983, p. 156, cited in Brown, 2009, p. 276). Learners should not be the only information source for the course evaluations; a questionnaire given to teachers will identify their needs, too.

6.11 Conclusion

The learners and their teachers agreed about the syllabus' inadequacy in MFL-1 and the lack of a specific course syllabus for MFL-2 to cater to the learners' main needs. The MFL-1 syllabus should be amended according to the learners' and teachers'

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perceived needs, and an MFL-2 syllabus must be created to meet the learners' and teachers' needs and decrease the high dropout rates. The teachers should be trained in foreign language teaching (particularly those in their first year of teaching foreigners) to equip them with the skills necessary to employ different pedagogical strategies and better accommodate the learners' perceived needs. Various resources, especially coursebooks with audio materials, are also required to supplement the syllabus and the teachers' efforts and to satisfy the learners' needs. At the same time, a minimum standard should be established to create a level of consistency amongst the learning groups throughout Malta and Gozo, which in turn will help students prepare for exams.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the key results of the research on MFL-1 and MFL-2 to address the main and secondary research questions and this study's limitations, as well as offer tangible solutions for some of the main problems found. Additional recommendations provided for the MSL/MFL areas need to be implemented to improve professionalism. Finally, further research in the field and its practical implications are discussed, together with my personal insights.

7.1 Addressing the main research question

This research aimed to explore the main research question:

- Are there discrepancies between the current MSL courses offered by the DLL and the learners' and teachers' perceptions of what and how they should be taught?

Different sources and research instruments revealed discrepancies in the syllabi, teaching methods, learning materials and teacher training between the MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses at the DLL (as of the 2012–2013 school year) and the learners' and teachers' perceptions of their needs. The teachers and learners were aware of the problems, and this needs analysis showed that in the majority of the cases, they shared similar desires concerning improvement. These are discussed in more detail in the following sections addressing the secondary research questions.

7.1.1 Learners' Responses (MFL-1 and MFL-2) to the Secondary Questions

This research aimed to explore the following secondary questions:

- To what degree does the current programme meet the needs and expectations of its adult learners in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods and materials?
- What are the learners' perceived needs and suggestions regarding the MSL courses for adults in terms of the syllabus, teaching methods and materials?

7.1.1.1 Syllabus

Both the questionnaire and interview responses demonstrated the failure of the existing MFL-1 syllabus and the 'adapted' MFL-2 syllabus to meet the learners' needs and expectations, for various reasons. Mainly, the syllabus was vast in scope and vague;

thus, it did not offer a standard guide for all the groups. It did not focus on speaking skills as much as the majority of the learners wanted, and the course content needed more revision.

For these reasons, the learners expressed their need for a standard syllabus for different levels, practice in the four skills (especially speaking), inclusion of day-to-day topics while retaining grammar and vocabulary lessons, enhanced content with more tasks and repetitive lessons for reinforcement.

7.1.1.2 Teaching methods

Both research instruments indicated that for the teaching methods, the programme did not meet the learners' needs and expectations in some instances; in fact, the main issue (which also emerged in the syllabus section) was that the course did not emphasise speaking skills as much as the majority of the learners wished; rather, it was heavy on grammar. Additionally, when practising such skills, the teachers must prepare safety nets to accommodate the learners' unpreparedness or nervousness. The learners perceived that copying from the whiteboard was the learning method used most often during the course; however, it was their least preferred one. Moreover, the European language portfolio, as used in this particular course, was the least favoured assessment method.

The learners gave various suggestions to compensate for the deficit: more speaking and listening activities without ignoring the practices already used, more homework and tests, less copying from the whiteboard and more engagement from the teacher.

7.1.1.3 Learning materials

The questionnaire and interview responses cited instances in which the learning materials did not meet the learners' needs and expectations, except for the teachers' notes. The learners suggested that the teachers' notes be retained and reinforced by a coursebook, word lists and extra listening resources. Thus, these resources could be amalgamated with the present reading, listening, writing and speaking activities, which the learners thought should be continued, strengthened and used more effectively.

7.1.2 Teachers' Responses (MFL-1 and MFL-2) to the Secondary Questions

This research aimed to explore the following secondary questions:

- To what degree does the current situation meet the teachers' needs and expectations in terms of the teacher training, syllabus, teaching methods and materials?

- What are the teachers' perceived needs and suggestions concerning the MSL courses for adults in terms of the teacher training, syllabus, teaching methods and materials?

7.1.2.1 Syllabus

Both the questionnaire and interview responses showed that for various reasons, most of the teachers thought the syllabus did not meet their needs and expectations. The MFL-1 syllabus was vast in scope, vague and based too much on grammar. The teachers were aware of the learners' desires to concentrate on speaking lessons. For MFL-2, the sole teacher interviewed indicated that speaking was not given importance and needed to be enhanced.

The teachers also expressed the need for a standard syllabus for different levels, practice in the four skills, inclusion of day-to-day topics while retaining grammar (to a lesser extent) and vocabulary topics, and enhancing content with more tasks.

7.1.2.2 Teaching methods

Both the questionnaire and interview responses revealed that in relation to teaching methods, the programme did not meet the teachers' needs and expectations in a few instances. For MFL-1, the teachers noted problems with the European language portfolio as used in this course, while some of the MFL-2 teachers perceived that learners needed less copying from the whiteboard.

The teachers suggested that engaging in more interactive methods, without ignoring the practices already used, would help students achieve their aims.

7.1.2.3 Learning materials

Both the questionnaire and interview responses indicated cases in which the learning materials did not satisfy the teachers' needs and expectations. Leaving the production and usage of learning materials in the hands of individual teachers leads to different standards amongst learning groups.

Thus, the teachers suggested retaining the notes they provided, supported with a custom-made coursebook, word lists and audiovisual resources. These resources could be combined with the present reading, listening, writing and speaking activities, which the teachers agreed should be retained, reinforced and used more effectively.

7.1.2.4 Teacher training

In both the questionnaires and interviews, most of the teachers reported that the prevailing situation did not meet their training needs and expectations; they gave various suggestions to compensate for the deficit.

7.2 Synopsis

The learners and teachers agreed about the syllabi's inadequacy to cater to the learners' main needs of communicating with locals and coping with daily life. This needs analysis shows that the syllabus should be amended according to the learners' and teachers' perceived needs in order to decrease the high level of dropouts. The teachers should be trained in SL/FL teaching to improve their skills in applying various pedagogical strategies and accommodating learners' perceived needs. Moreover, diverse resources, including coursebooks with audio materials, are required to supplement the syllabus and teachers' efforts and to satisfy learners' needs. At the same time, a minimum standard should be established to create a level of consistency amongst learning groups all over Malta and Gozo, which in turn will help students prepare for the exams.

7.3 Limitations of the study

West (1994, p. 5) indicated that a needs analysis could be carried out before, at the start of or during the course. The last option was utilised in this study because participants would have a clearer perception of the entire course. Although the timing was one of the strengths of this research, its limitation was that conducting it in the last weeks of the course did not allow early dropouts the opportunity to complete the questionnaire or participate in the interview. If this research were to be conducted again, I would ask the DLL to provide the addresses of students who dropped out so they could be sent the questionnaire to obtain their opinions. However, if this were to occur, the questionnaire should ideally include a special section for dropouts out to investigate what compelled them to leave.

The use of different sources and methods benefited this research. In both courses, the teachers and learners were given questionnaires, supplemented by semi-structured interviews, which sought deeper, qualitative information. However, a limitation of the MFL-2 questionnaire was the small number of participants, comprising three for the entire teacher population at that time and nine for the entire learner population. Prior to this research, the data on the DLL website about the learning groups that would be formed (if the minimum number of 10 students was reached) showed that there would be more groups, thus more participants for the research. However, when the research commenced, not all the groups were formed and from those formed, there were many dropouts, with one group being dissolved. Thus, the data retrieved from these few numbers could only be indicative; for example, in the teachers' case, an additional three might have responded differently. Another limitation of the same course was that of the three teachers, only one consented to be interviewed. However, both the quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to keep the MFL-2 data coherent with the MFL-1 learners' and teachers' data to enable comparison and contrast. Furthermore, because the teachers' (MFL-1 and MFL-2) and the education spokesperson's interviews were conducted in Maltese, I transcribed all the recordings and translated them to English. With the benefit of hindsight, I could have overcome this limitation by sending these interviewees the translated excerpts so they could confirm if their intended meaning was conveyed.

Finally, related questions on the questionnaire led to overlapping information about certain issues in different sections, which was reflected in the findings. Additionally, all the feedback obtained from the participants and thus the findings were based on their perceptions. With the benefit of hindsight, this could have been overcome by adding another research method incorporating observations, although this could have led to other limitations, such as teachers not consenting to be observed. However, this was not possible because of the number of courses held at the same time and the limited period available for collecting data.

7.4 Contribution to knowledge

The literature reviewed shows that the environment helps the learner a great deal in SL learning and that some learners pick up the language from their environment without formal instruction (Stern, 1983, p. 17). However, this research proves that this

is not always the case. As already indicated, Malta's geopolitical conditions and history have resulted in a bilingual situation. This research shows that the ability to find an Anglophone anywhere does not positively affect Maltese instruction for foreigners.

Learning a language in the native country does not automatically lead to more language input. Therefore, in places with a lingua franca as an official language, this can affect the learning process; thus, teaching the language may require more formal instruction to compensate for the lack of language input from the environment.

This PhD dissertation helps evaluate the MFL courses at the DLL and pinpoints the main issues that should be amended in the present teaching scenario:

- problems related to the vast scope and difficulty of the syllabus,

- lack of a specific syllabus for MFL-2,

- speaking skill deficit in the courses,

- less focus on grammar (except MFL-2 teachers),

- less need of learners to copy from the whiteboard,

- problems with the portfolio,

- desire for teacher training,

- need for more resources to teach and learn Maltese and

- necessity for needs analysis and course evaluations.

As discussed in section 7.5.2 and Appendices F, G and H, another contribution of this study to current knowledge involves the three syllabi for MSL courses, the first of this kind for MSL teaching in the Maltese educational system. Together with these, resources (six books and audio materials) were created for these syllabi to cater to the different needs expressed by learners and teachers.

Another contribution constitutes the research instruments themselves. This is the first PhD research focusing on teaching MSL so the instruments were created specifically for the Maltese scenario. With minor modifications to these research instruments, they can be used for other courses offered in Malta. Moreover, section C of

the learners' questionnaire (Perceived needs and suggestions about the syllabus, teaching methods and learning materials) can be adapted as a survey before the start of any MSL/MFL course in Malta or abroad to help identify learners' goals and needs.

7.5 Recommendations: Policy, practice and research

7.5.1 Policy: Needs Analysis, Course Evaluation and Teachers' Training

For every MSL/MFL course, a short needs analysis questionnaire should be distributed to the learners before or during the first lesson to obtain information about their backgrounds, aims and teaching method preferences. If this step is not performed, the teachers should obtain oral feedback from the learners.

A course evaluation should also be distributed at the end of the course so the learners' needs can be identified and translated into learning objectives to serve as a basis for further development of learning programmes, learning activities and teaching materials (Brown, 2009, p. 269). As shown in the literature review, particularly in the needs analysis (section 2.3), learners' needs can change over time. Thus, a needs analysis is an ongoing process.

Furthermore, many of those who teach Maltese for foreigners have never received any specialised training in the field. Regardless of a local subject expert's definition of Maltese (see section 6.8), one of the factors that seems to hinder the education faculty at the University of Malta, I suggest that all teacher trainees be taught about MSL/MFL as an important emerging area during the Bachelor of Education courses at this university. They should be trained in areas including SLA theories, different methodologies for the four language skills, the CEFR and culture and assessment methods, such as the European language portfolio. This requirement also applies to graduate teachers who are already teaching; they should take an in-service course on these topics.

7.5.2 Practice: New Syllabi and Learning Materials

While conducting this research, especially when analysing the data, I became aware of certain issues in the courses that needed to be amended. Thus, I was ethically bound to address these shortcomings so the next courses, which began in October 2013, would have better resources and syllabi. The resources were published (see Appendices

F, G and H), although they were not tested formally in schools due to time constraints. One of the main problems at both levels involved the syllabi. For this reason, the information gathered in this needs analysis, together with new input from the learners and teachers, was used to develop three syllabi for MSL courses based on the CEFR. The drafts of these syllabi were given to different learners and teachers attending or delivering MSL courses to obtain feedback, which in turn was used to refine them. However, because this was not the main focus of this research but rather its by-product, the process involved in the creation of the three syllabi is discussed in Appendices F and G. While these syllabi need to be tested, this is the first step in helping set a minimum standard amongst the various learning groups in Malta and Gozo.

The learners and teachers also gave various suggestions on preferred teaching methodologies, which concentrated on speaking and listening activities, more pair work, less copying from the whiteboard, deeper engagement in the language, retaining the notes given by the teachers and support from a coursebook and word lists. To address these needs, learning materials were produced to support the teachers (who were not trained in this field) and learners. As in the case of the syllabi, because educational resources were not the main focus of this research, Appendix H describes the learning materials (six books and a CD for the series) published in October 2013, which encapsulate the learning goals in the newly created syllabi for MSL courses and the learners' and teachers' methodological preferences. Their aim is to help in the learning and teaching process in preparation for the exam. These materials could be amalgamated with the current reading, listening, writing and speaking activities, which (from the learners' and teachers' perspectives) should be retained, reinforced and used more effectively.

7.5.3 Future Thinking and More Research

After publishing the syllabi and resources, I had various meetings and correspondence with several leaders, including Dr Joseph Muscat (the Prime Minister of Malta), several ambassadors, Mr Evarist Bartolo (the Education Minister of Malta) and Dr Joe Vella Gauci (the Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO), who were impressed by the work being done in the field. Moreover, positive feedback about these resources began to arrive from around the world (see Appendix I). However, further

research is needed, not only to test these syllabi but also to create additional ones for students who want to advance to level C2. As one of the learners in this study suggested, a checklist of the communicative aims, vocabulary and grammar lessons taken from each syllabus should be created as part of the self-assessment process, which in turn could be integrated with the learners' portfolio.

Similar to courses for other languages, learners could attend specialised courses when they reach the intermediate level. Through research, specialists in the field must produce customised syllabi for teaching Maltese for special purposes, such as commerce, industry, diplomacy, emigration, law and medicine. However, a prerequisite for these courses should be the learner's attainment of a pre-intermediate level. A more ambitious project could be a two-year diploma in Maltese for Functional Purposes, organised by the University of Malta, to teach learners the appropriate use of the language in different sectors within the country. Once learners have obtained this diploma and reached a certain level, they could proceed to the Bachelor of Arts in Maltese offered for Maltese natives.

Under the direction of the University of Malta, the country's premier teaching institution, intensive, 6–8-week MSL courses based on the CEFR levels should be organised. This is important for foreigners who want to learn Maltese within a short time to integrate into our society, including those who come for a brief visit to learn the language. This need was suggested by various participants and a speaker at the Convention of Leaders of Associations of Maltese Abroad and of Maltese Origin. This speaker proposed that the children of Maltese people living in Australia be given an opportunity to visit Malta during their school holidays from December to January and to attend 8–10-week courses, covering the Maltese language and culture (Borg, 2000, p. 166). The idea of using syllabi based on the CEFR is practical because a learner can prepare for the particular level he/she requires (e.g., level A1 from any institution that offers such instruction, including private lessons; once ready, he/she can take the exam). Each learner must still go through each level and cannot apply directly to a higher one. Thus, other institutions, such as the DLL, MCAST or the university itself, should continue to organise MSL courses. However, I suggest that all the institutions in Malta cover the same syllabi and prepare for the same exams so everyone uses the same yardstick. Although some critics may argue that this approach risks losing flexibility to

respond to learners' needs, the syllabi are intended as the minimum standard; thus, teachers can add topics or lessons to address learners' needs. Using the same syllabi has many advantages, especially for the language of a small nation such as Malta. This practice is beneficial because the courses are offered at different institutions at different times, thus giving learners more opportunities for when and where to learn. Stronger competition amongst different institutions will result in better performance, increased attendance and higher revenues for leading institutions. Learners have the choice of a private tutor, which allows them to select their preferred teacher. Preparing for the same exam(s) gives publishing houses an incentive to invest in coursebooks and resources for this educational venture. This increased attention will result in positive outcomes; tougher competition amongst publishers leads to higher quality and more options of publications. Another advantage involves diverting the demand for resources from the Maltese government to the free economic market. However, a wider selection can make it more difficult to choose the right coursebook. Therefore, it is essential to create a checklist and review each published book to help teachers or teaching boards choose the appropriate coursebooks for the target learners (Mifsud, 2000, p. 170).

To complete common syllabi for all the teaching institutions, it is important to have the same type of exams. Because the University of Malta uses examination boards, the exams are ideally produced by the same university, thus implying endorsement by means of the check-and-balance system in the country's highest academic institution. Moreover, when the exam papers or aural/oral recordings are collected, the university's researchers can analyse these scripts for the common errors associated with each level and the typical vocabulary used. For the latter, the university should use the data to produce a glossary of the vocabulary and phrases for each level.

As mentioned in the introduction, the Maltese government was asked to provide resources for coordinating Maltese language and cultural courses in Australia (Borg, 2000, p. 166). More than once, stakeholders expressed the need for a "syllabus and accompanying textbooks to teach Maltese as a foreign language appropriate for Australian conditions … and the adult learners" (Borg, 2010a, p. 165). For these reasons, and keeping in mind Maltese-Australians' desire to attend courses and take exams in Malta, having syllabi based on the CEFR system will improve standardisation not only in Malta but also abroad. Schools in Australia can download the syllabi for free

and use these to teach their adult learners. They will then have two options. Once a certain level is reached, students may travel to Malta to sit for their final exams (Scerri, 2010, p. 559). Another possible solution will be to partner with a foreign examination centre to which papers will be sent for printing; learners may take the exam there, and the written exams will be corrected in Malta. The aural/oral exercise can also take place in Australia, and the marks can be added to the corrected exams. Setting aside the courses for adults, which can be accommodated by the CEFR syllabi, the quotation above referred to "Australian conditions", including other exams available in Australia. Because their aims and methods of assessment may vary, the conditions should be analysed through contact with the appropriate entities by the future board or person in charge of MSL/MFL teaching, who must analyse the problems and suggestions and find solutions. Thus, this future board or person will also serve as a reference point for MSL/MFL teaching and learning. The necessary course resources can be created or available materials can be bought directly from Malta through online websites. This situation leads to the conclusion that the University of Malta requires one or more specialists in this field (MSL/MFL) in the Maltese Department or at the Institute of Maltese to perform the following tasks:

1. offer expert advice;
2. conduct further research on different areas, especially regarding student error analysis, and create a glossary of words for different teaching/learning levels;
3. offer intensive courses at the same university;
4. guide other Maltese institutions in the creation or use of available syllabi;
5. set up the right infrastructure, which has not been done;
6. offer courses online or abroad to foreigners; and
7. coordinate or collaborate on teaching Maltese in other countries, such as Australia and Germany.

These recommendations hint at further research necessary in the MSL/MFL area to achieve the following:

1. obtain feedback on the needs of teachers and learners in other courses held in Malta, including those at private institutions, through a needs analysis;
2. create the other levels of CEFR syllabi or other syllabi for specialised courses;

3. review all MSL/MFL published books and publish these reviews so they are accessible to everyone;

4. develop a checklist to analyse existing coursebooks;

5. produce a glossary of words for each syllabus level; and

6. create a register of student error analysis to note the learners' mistakes at each level.

Since the MSL/MFL research area in Malta is in its infancy, this PhD research is only the starting point to give MSL/MFL the professional impetus it deserves. Thus, this study indicated different directions (mentioned in the previous two lists) that future research could undertake to continue to tap this field of specialisation. Concerning the international research communities, this study on a particular language spoken by around 400,000 people serves as a contemplative exercise for researchers of languages used in small islands or states, especially for those who have not yet addressed SL and FL learning and teaching. They could obtain key insights into what and how to research while updating their pre-existing beliefs, too. Apart from this, large states that have successfully established a framework to teach and learn SL and FL might take advantage of the research carried out for this thesis by noting that it is able to gain insights from an undeveloped applied linguistics context, thus offering them the opportunity to revisit assumptions and critically reassess their own contexts in order to update their policies.

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7.6 Personal insights

This research has allowed me to grow personally and professionally for various reasons. Studying for nearly five years at this level, working full-time, publishing books, and coping with family routines and daily matters have taught me to handle the pressures, while adapting time management plans to perform all the tasks. Moreover, my first time studying in a university abroad has provided me an opportunity to meet people from diverse backgrounds, observe and compare their different methodologies with the ways taught in my country, and reflect on the best approaches so they can be adapted professionally.

As indicated in the introduction, before commencing this research, I taught Maltese to foreigners without any prior experience, training, a syllabus or adequate resources. The only learning materials I used were personally created, and the entire teaching experience was trial and error. Surprisingly, although this study was conducted five years later, some of the teachers at the DLL encountered the same issues. My extensive study of this educational area, along with the opportunity to contact all the DLL teachers and many learners and listen to their experiences and feedback, has allowed me to reflect on academic practices. Therefore, all the work has had an enriching effect on my pedagogical perspectives, leading to a new awareness of people's different needs and expectations related to syllabi, teaching methods and learning materials. Course coordinators, syllabi creators and learning material producers must consider learners' and teachers' needs so what they offer will be realistic and practical. The enrichment I have obtained during this dissertation is partially reflected in the syllabi, coursebooks and other resources produced, which are now being used in some DLL adult learning groups and in government, church and private schools in Malta, Gozo and abroad, especially in Australia.

7.7 Final note

Teaching and learning MSL/MFL is an interesting, emerging educational area within Maltese language and culture that has never been studied before at a PhD level. Although this needs analysis has provided enlightenment on certain issues that should be addressed and has led to beneficial by-products, considerable work is still required in this academic endeavour.

If this promising field is given the necessary political attention by the stakeholders and authorities concerned, especially politicians and educational bodies, it will attain the professional status it deserves. In turn, this recognition will promote Maltese culture and language worldwide, thus attracting more participants to the sector (learners, teachers, researchers, publishing houses and foreign educational bodies), which will generate much needed revenue for advanced research in this area of specialisation.

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Appendix A

Learners' Questionnaires

Questionnaire for learners
Teaching Maltese as a second language

Dear learner,

My name is Charles Daniel Saliba, and I am a PhD student at the University of Sheffield who is carrying out my research into *Teaching Maltese as a second language to adults*.

The aim of my study is to determine if there are any discrepancies between the Maltese Second Language courses at the *Directorate for Lifelong Learning*, as they currently stand, and the learners' and teachers' perceptions of how they should be.

If you would like to participate in this study, you can complete a questionnaire about the current course. It will only take about 15-20 minutes. However before you fill it in, it is essential to read and sign the consent form attached to the questionnaire.

Please note that all responses will remain completely anonymous. Your real name will not be used in the study and apart from me, only my supervisor will have access to personal data. The study has also been approved by The School of Education Ethics Review Panel in accordance with the University's research ethics policy and by the Education Division of Malta.

The second step in this research is to conduct a short interview of about 10 minutes with some of the learners. Those participants who wish to participate in the interviews can fill in their details in a specifically designed reply slip at the end of the questionnaire so that they could be contacted later.

Your voluntary participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. Since this research will provide us with an understanding of what you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the current courses, I believe that ultimately this will help the learners attending these courses.

Regards,

Charles Daniel Saliba
Mob: 9903 1969
email: charles.daniel.saliba@ilearn.edu.mt

If you are kind enough to participate...

To show you my appreciation for participating in this survey, you are entitled to participate in a lottery for a weekend break for two in Gozo. To participate fill in the lottery ticket attached to this questionnaire. The winner's ticket will be drawn on 30th July 2013 and announced on the website www.charlesdanielsaliba.com under the heading "Links." If you are the winner, you will be contacted so that you will be given the voucher.

Questionnaire for Adult Learners

SECTION A
Background information

In this section, you will be asked background information about yourself and your studies.

✋ Please tick [✓] or fill in the blanks where appropriate.

1. **Sex:**

   ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. **Nationality:**

   _____

3. **Age:**

   ☐ 20 years or younger ☐ 21–30 ☐ 31–40 ☐ 41–50
   ☐ 51–60 ☐ 61–70 ☐ over 70

4. **Occupation:**

   _____

5. **Length of time residing in Malta or Gozo:**

   ☐ 1 year or less ☐ 2–5 ☐ 6–10 ☐ 11–15 ☐ 16–20 ☐ 21 or more years

6. **What is your mother tongue? Please specify:**

   _____

7. **Which course(s) are you currently taking?**

   ☐ Maltese as a Foreign Language – MQF Level 1
   ☐ Maltese as a Foreign Language – MQF Level 2
   ☐ Other:

8. **Have you ever taken a Maltese language course apart from this/these?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   If yes, please specify which course(s):

   _____

   _____

   _____

3 – Questionnaire for Adult Learners

9. **Why have you chosen to learn Maltese?** (☝ You can tick [✓] more than one answer)
    ☐ To pass the Maltese O-level exam.
    ☐ It is a requirement to obtain a job.
    ☐ I use Maltese at work.
    ☐ To communicate with locals.
    ☐ To cope with daily life.
    ☐ To read newspapers and magazines.
    ☐ For family literacy (e.g. to help my children with homework).
    ☐ Other. (please specify):

    _____

10. **Which reason from the above list is most important to you?**

    _____

SECTION B

Current Course

*In this section, you will be asked questions about the course that you are **currently** taking.*

☝ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE:	1 – All of the Time	2 – Most of the Time	3 – Often	4 – Rarely	5 – Never

Syllabus

11.	**All four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening)** are covered in this course.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	**Lessons during this course are organised according to:**					
	a) grammatical topics (e.g. verbs, nouns).	1	2	3	4	5
	b) topics (e.g. sports, shopping).	1	2	3	4	5
	c) tasks (e.g. finding one's way on a map).	1	2	3	4	5
	d) others. (please specify)					

_____

13.	**This course contains:**					
	a) a linear progression (i.e. focusing on one item at a time and finishing it).	1	2	3	4	5
	b) a cyclical progression (i.e. revising a topic and coming back to it later).	1	2	3	4	5

Teaching Methods

☞ Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.

| NOTE: | 1 = All of the Time | 2 = Most of the Time | 3 = Often | 4 = Rarely | 5 = Never |

14. Do you perform the following practices during your present course?

a) Grammar practice	1	2	3	4	5
b) Vocabulary practice	1	2	3	4	5
c) Writing practice	1	2	3	4	5
d) Reading practice	1	2	3	4	5
e) Listening practice	1	2	3	4	5
f) Speaking practice	1	2	3	4	5
g) Maltese-culture awareness	1	2	3	4	5
h) Out-of-class activities	1	2	3	4	5

15. During this course, how often do you work/learn …

a) individually?	1	2	3	4	5
b) in pairs?	1	2	3	4	5
c) in small groups?	1	2	3	4	5
d) in a large group?	1	2	3	4	5

16. During this course, you learn by different methods, such as …

a) rote learning (i.e. repetition).	1	2	3	4	5
b) finding information yourself.	1	2	3	4	5
c) receiving a logical explanation.	1	2	3	4	5
d) problem solving	1	2	3	4	5
e) copying from the board.	1	2	3	4	5
f) listening and taking notes.	1	2	3	4	5
g) others. (please specify):					

_____

17. During the course, we:

a) are given homework	1	2	3	4	5
b) have written tests	1	2	3	4	5
c) have oral tests	1	2	3	4	5
d) use the European language portfolio [1]	1	2	3	4	5
e) others. (please specify):					

_____

---

[1] This is a document in which those who are learning a language can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences.

5 – Questionnaire for Adult Learners

Materials

| NOTE: | 1 = All of the Time | 2 = Most of the Time | 3 = Often | 4 = Rarely | 5 = Never |

18.   In the course you are taking, do you use:

a) notes given by the teacher?	1	2	3	4	5
b) a course book?	1	2	3	4	5
c) bilingual reading books?	1	2	3	4	5
d) word lists?	1	2	3	4	5
e) books about Maltese history and culture?	1	2	3	4	5
f) videos?	1	2	3	4	5
g) recordings?	1	2	3	4	5
h) PowerPoint presentations?	1	2	3	4	5
i) others. (please specify):					

Reading

19.   Reading texts in this course are used to . . .

a) introduce grammatical items.	1	2	3	4	5
b) introduce vocabulary items.	1	2	3	4	5
c) encourage reading for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
d) develop reading skills in order to access information.	1	2	3	4	5
e) others. (please specify):					

20.   The texts used in this course are . . .

a) appealing to your age.	1	2	3	4	5
b) challenging i.e. a step ahead of your current level.	1	2	3	4	5
c) varied (different sources).	1	2	3	4	5
d) up to date.	1	2	3	4	5
e) authentic passages (taken from real life).	1	2	3	4	5

Listening

21.   During lessons, we listen to:

a) songs.	1	2	3	4	5
b) recorded material.	1	2	3	4	5
c) the teacher reading texts.	1	2	3	4	5
d) others. (please specify):					

Speaking

22. **The speaking activities in this course include . . .**
    a) pronunciation exercises. 1 2 3 4 5
    b) dialogue. 1 2 3 4 5
    c) oral presentations. 1 2 3 4 5
    d) others. (please specify):

    _____

Writing

23. **The writing exercises in this course consist of . . .**
    a) fill-in the blanks. 1 2 3 4 5
    b) complete the sentences. 1 2 3 4 5
    c) choose the correct word. 1 2 3 4 5
    d) free writing. 1 2 3 4 5
    e) others. (please specify):

    _____

Other Suggestions

24. **What would you change in the course that you are currently taking?**

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

SECTION C

Perceived needs and suggestions about the syllabus, teaching methods and materials.

In this section, you will be asked questions about your perceived needs and suggestions during language learning and teaching. Please note that this section is about your suggestions and desires, not about the course you are presently attending. The latter has been dealt with in Section B.

Syllabus

25. **Which Maltese language skill do you find most difficult?**
    (☞ Rank them in order from 1 to 4, with 1 identifying the one you find most difficult.)

    ☐ listening   ☐ speaking   ☐ reading   ☐ writing

7 – Questionnaire for Adult Learners

26. Which Maltese language skill would you like to improve most? (☞ Please tick [✓])

☐ listening   ☐ speaking   ☐ reading   ☐ writing

☞ Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.

NOTE: 1 – Very Important 2 – Important 3 – Neither important nor unimportant 4 – Unimportant 5 – Not at all important

27. To study a language, one has to practice the four skills

(reading, writing, speaking and listening).   1   2   3   4   5

How important is it for you to …

28. have lessons organised according to:

	1	2	3	4	5
a) grammatical topics such as verbs, nouns?	1	2	3	4	5
b) topics such as sports and shopping?	1	2	3	4	5
c) tasks, such as finding one's way on a map?	1	2	3	4	5
d) others means (please specify):					

_____

29. have a course with a

	1	2	3	4	5
a) linear progression (focusing on one item and finishing it)?	1	2	3	4	5
b) cyclical progression (revising a topic and coming back to it)?	1	2	3	4	5

Teaching Methods

☞ Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.

NOTE: 1 – Very Important 2 – Important 3 – Neither important nor unimportant 4 – Unimportant 5 – Not at all important

30. How important is it for you to do the following practices during language learning?

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Grammar practice	1	2	3	4	5
b) Vocabulary practice	1	2	3	4	5
c) Writing practice	1	2	3	4	5
d) Reading practice	1	2	3	4	5
e) Listening practice	1	2	3	4	5
f) Speaking practice	1	2	3	4	5
g) Maltese-culture awareness	1	2	3	4	5
h) Out-of-class activities	1	2	3	4	5

☞ Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.

NOTE: 1 – Very Comfortable 2 – Comfortable 3 – Indifferent 4 – Uncomfortable 5 – Very Uncomfortable

31. How comfortable do you feel when you work/learn …

	1	2	3	4	5
a) individually?	1	2	3	4	5
b) in pairs?	1	2	3	4	5
c) in small groups?	1	2	3	4	5
d) in a large group?	1	2	3	4	5

Questionnaire for Adult Learners – 8

✋ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE:	1 – Strongly Agree	2 – Agree	3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 – Disagree	5 – Strongly Disagree

32. **You learn best by …**

a) rote learning (i.e. repetition).	1	2	3	4	5
b) finding information yourself.	1	2	3	4	5
c) getting a logical explanation.	1	2	3	4	5
d) problem solving.	1	2	3	4	5
e) copying from the board.	1	2	3	4	5
f) listening and taking notes.	1	2	3	4	5
g) others means (please specify):					

33. **For assessment purposes, do you prefer:**

a) to be given homework?	1	2	3	4	5
b) to have written tests?	1	2	3	4	5
c) have oral tests?	1	2	3	4	5
d) to use the European language portfolio?	1	2	3	4	5
e) others means (please specify):					

Materials

✋ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE:	1 – Very Important	2 – Important	3 – Neither important nor unimportant	4 – Unimportant	5 – Not at all important

34. **In this language course it is important to have the following resources:**

a) notes given by the teacher?	1	2	3	4	5
b) a course book?	1	2	3	4	5
c) bilingual reading books?	1	2	3	4	5
d) word lists?	1	2	3	4	5
e) books about Maltese history and culture?	1	2	3	4	5
f) videos?	1	2	3	4	5
g) recordings?	1	2	3	4	5
h) PowerPoint presentations?	1	2	3	4	5
i) others. (please specify)					

9 – Questionnaire for Adult Learners

Reading

35. **How important is it for you to have texts to …**

a) introduce grammatical items.   1   2   3   4   5
b) introduce vocabulary items.   1   2   3   4   5
c) encourage reading for pleasure.   1   2   3   4   5
d) develop reading skills in order to access information.   1   2   3   4   5
e) others (please specify):

_____

36. **How important is it for you to have texts …**

a) appealing to your age.   1   2   3   4   5
b) challenging i.e. a step ahead of your current level.   1   2   3   4   5
c) varied (different sources).   1   2   3   4   5
d) up to date.   1   2   3   4   5
e) authentic passages (taken from real life).   1   2   3   4   5

Listening

37. **How important is it for you to do listening activities such as listening to …**

a) songs.   1   2   3   4   5
b) recorded material.   1   2   3   4   5
c) the teacher reading texts.   1   2   3   4   5
d) others (please specify):

_____

Speaking

38. **How important is it for you to do speaking activities such as …**

a) pronunciation exercises.   1   2   3   4   5
b) dialogue.   1   2   3   4   5
c) oral presentations.   1   2   3   4   5
d) others (please specify):

_____

Writing

39. **How important is it for you to do writing activities such as …**

a) fill-in the blanks.   1   2   3   4   5
b) complete the sentences.   1   2   3   4   5
c) choose the correct word.   1   2   3   4   5
d) free writing.   1   2   3   4   5
e) others (please specify):

_____

Thank you for your time

If you would like to participate further...

A second step in my research is to conduct a short interview of about 10 minutes with some of the learners. It will consist of about 15 questions about the course you are attending. All participants will remain completely anonymous. To participate in this interview, please fill in the attached reply slip below. Please note that not everyone who volunteers can be included. Selection will be done according to the study's exigencies. The interviews will be recorded so that it could be easier for the researcher to recall what has been said. Those who volunteer are free to withdraw from the study at any point. Those interviewed, will be given another lottery ticket for the weekend break.

Detach the attached reply slip and fill it in.

Appendix B

Teachers' Questionnaires

Questionnaire for teachers
Teaching Maltese as a second language

Dear colleague,

My name is Charles Daniel Saliba, and I am a PhD student at the University of Sheffield who is carrying out my research into *Teaching Maltese as a second language to adults*.

The aim of my study is to determine if there are any discrepancies between the Maltese Second Language courses at the Directorate for Lifelong Learning, as they currently stand, and the learners' and teachers' perceptions of how they should be.

If you would like to participate in this study, you can complete a questionnaire about the current course. It will only take about 15-20 minutes. However before you fill it in, it is essential to read and sign the consent form attached to the questionnaire.

Please note that all responses will remain completely anonymous. Your real name will not be used in the study and apart from me, only my supervisor will have access to personal data. The study has also been approved by The School of Education Ethics Review Panel in accordance with the University's research ethics policy and by the Education Division of Malta.

The second step in this research is to conduct a short interview of about 10 minutes with some of the teachers. Those participants who wish to participate in the interviews can fill in their details in a specifically designed reply slip at the end of the questionnaire so that they could be contacted later.

Your voluntary participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. Since this research will provide us with an understanding of what you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the current courses, I believe that ultimately this will help the learners attending these courses.

Regards,

Charles Daniel Saliba
Mob: 9903 1969
email: charles.daniel.saliba@ilearn.edu.mt

If you are kind enough to participate...

To show you my appreciation for participating in this survey, you are entitled to participate in a lottery for a weekend break for two in Gozo. To participate fill in the lottery ticket attached to this questionnaire. The winner's ticket will be drawn on 30th July 2013 and announced on the website www.charlesdanielsaliba.com under the heading "Links." If you are the winner, you will be contacted so that you will be given the voucher.

Questionnaire for Adult Learners' Teacher

SECTION A

Background information

In this section, you will be asked background information about yourself and your students.

✋ Please tick [✓] or fill in the blanks where appropriate.

1. **Sex:**

   ☐ Male　　☐ Female

2. **Age:**

   ☐ 20 years or younger　　☐ 21–30　　☐ 31–40　　☐ 41–50
   ☐ 51–60　　☐ over 60

3. **Which course(s) do you teach?**

   ☐ Maltese as a Foreign Language – MQF Level 1
   ☐ Maltese as a Foreign Language – MQF Level 2
   ☐ Other:

4. **Do you teach Maltese for foreigners in other institutions?**

   ☐ Yes　　☐ No

   If yes, where?

5. **How long have you been teaching Maltese to foreigners?**

   ☐ 1 year or less　　☐ 2–5　　☐ 6–10　　☐ 11–15
   ☐ 16–20　　☐ 21–25　　☐ 26 or more years

✋ Please tick [✓], circle or fill in the blanks where appropriate.

6. **Why do you think that your learners have chosen to learn Maltese? (✋ You can tick more than one.)**

   ☐ To pass the Maltese O-level exam.
   ☐ It is a requirement to obtain a job.
   ☐ They use Maltese at work.
   ☐ To communicate with locals.
   ☐ To cope with daily life.
   ☐ For family literacy (e.g. to help their children with homework).
   ☐ To read newspapers and magazines.
   ☐ Other. (please specify):

7. What do you think is their most important reason, from the above list, to learn Maltese?

_____

SECTION B

Current Course

*In this section, you will be asked questions about the course that you are **currently** delivering.*

☝ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE:	1 = All of the Time	2 = Most of the Time	3 = Often	4 = Rarely	5 = Never

Syllabus

8. All four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening)

are covered in this course.	1	2	3	4	5

9. Lessons during this course are organised according to:

a) grammatical topics (e.g. verbs, nouns).	1	2	3	4	5
b) topics (e.g. sports, shopping)	1	2	3	4	5
c) tasks (e.g. finding one's way on a map).	1	2	3	4	5
d) others. (please specify)					

_____

10. This course contains:

a) a linear progression (i.e. focusing on one item at a time and finishing it).	1	2	3	4	5
b) a cyclical progression (i.e. revising a topic and coming back to it later).	1	2	3	4	5

Teaching Methods

☝ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE:	1 = All of the Time	2 = Most of the Time	3 = Often	4 = Rarely	5 = Never

11. During the course that I am currently delivering, I present activities for the following practises:

a) Grammar practice	1	2	3	4	5
b) Vocabulary practice	1	2	3	4	5
c) Writing practice	1	2	3	4	5
d) Reading practice	1	2	3	4	5
e) Listening practice	1	2	3	4	5
f) Speaking practice	1	2	3	4	5
g) Maltese-culture awareness	1	2	3	4	5
h) Out-of-class activities	1	2	3	4	5

Questionnaire for Adult Learners' Teacher – 4

12.   **During the course, how often do learners work/learn …**

a) individually?	1	2	3	4	5
b) in pairs?	1	2	3	4	5
c) in small groups?	1	2	3	4	5
d) in a large group?	1	2	3	4	5

13.   **During your course, how often do learners learn according to methods such as …**

a) rote learning (i.e. repetition)?	1	2	3	4	5
b) finding information themselves?	1	2	3	4	5
c) getting a logical explanation?	1	2	3	4	5
d) problem solving?	1	2	3	4	5
e) copying from the board?	1	2	3	4	5
f) listening and taking notes?	1	2	3	4	5
g) others? (please specify):					

_____

14.   **During the course, the learners:**

a) are given homework	1	2	3	4	5
b) have written tests	1	2	3	4	5
c) have oral tests	1	2	3	4	5
d) use the European language portfolio [1]	1	2	3	4	5
e) others. (please specify):					

_____

Materials

☞ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE:	1 – All of the Time	2 – Most of the Time	3 – Often	4 – Rarely	5 – Never

15.   **In the course, do you use:**

a) notes given by yourself (teacher)?	1	2	3	4	5
b) a course book?	1	2	3	4	5
c) bilingual reading books?	1	2	3	4	5
d) word lists?	1	2	3	4	5
e) books about Maltese history and culture?	1	2	3	4	5
f) videos?	1	2	3	4	5
g) recordings?	1	2	3	4	5
h) PowerPoint presentations?	1	2	3	4	5
i) others. (please specify):					

_____

_____

[1]   This is a document in which those who are learning a language can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences.

5 – Questionnaire for Adult Learners' Teacher

Reading

16. **Reading texts in this course are used to . . .**

a) introduce grammatical items.	1	2	3	4	5
b) introduce vocabulary items.	1	2	3	4	5
c) encourage reading for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
d) develop reading skills in order to access information.	1	2	3	4	5
e) others. (please specify):					

_____

17. **The texts used in this course are . . .**

a) appealing to the learners' age.	1	2	3	4	5
b) challenging i.e. a step ahead of the learners' current level.	1	2	3	4	5
c) varied (different sources).	1	2	3	4	5
d) up to date.	1	2	3	4	5
e) authentic passages (taken from real life).	1	2	3	4	5

Listening

18. **During lessons, we listen to:**

a) songs.	1	2	3	4	5
b) recorded material.	1	2	3	4	5
c) texts read by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
d) others. (please specify):					

_____

Speaking

19. **The speaking activities in this course include . . .**

a) pronunciation exercises.	1	2	3	4	5
b) dialogue.	1	2	3	4	5
c) oral presentations.	1	2	3	4	5
d) others. (please specify):					

_____

Writing

20. **The writing exercises in this course consist of . . .**

a) fill-in the blanks.	1	2	3	4	5
b) complete the sentences.	1	2	3	4	5
c) choose the correct word.	1	2	3	4	5
d) free writing.	1	2	3	4	5
e) others. (please specify):					

_____

21. What would you change about the course that you are currently delivering?

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION C

Perceived needs and suggestions about the syllabus, teaching methods and materials.

In this section, you will be asked questions about your perceived needs and suggestions for language learning and teaching. Please note that this section is about your suggestions and desires, not about the course that you are currently teaching. The latter has been dealt with in Section B.

Syllabus

22. Which Maltese language skill do you think foreign learners find most difficult?
(✍ Rank them in order from 1 to 4, with 1 showing the most difficult one for them.)

☐ listening   ☐ speaking   ☐ reading   ☐ writing

23. Which Maltese language skill do you think foreign learners would like to improve on most? (✍ Please tick [✓])

☐ listening   ☐ speaking   ☐ reading   ☐ writing

✍ Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.

NOTE: 1 – Very Important   2 – Important   3 – Neither important nor unimportant   4 – Unimportant   5 – Not at all important

24. To study a language, one has to practice the four skills

(reading, writing, speaking and listening).	1	2	3	4	5

How important is it for you to ...

25. have lessons organised according to:

a) grammatical topics such as verbs, nouns?	1	2	3	4	5
b) topics such as sports and shopping?	1	2	3	4	5
c) tasks, such as finding one's way on a map?	1	2	3	4	5
d) others means. (please specify):					

_____

26. have a course with a

a) linear progression (focusing on one item and finishing it)?	1	2	3	4	5
b) cyclical progression (revising a topic and coming back to it)?	1	2	3	4	5

7 – Questionnaire for Adult Learners' Teacher

Teaching Methods

☝ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE: 1 = Very Important   2 = Important   3 = Neither important nor unimportant   4 = Unimportant   5 = Not at all important

27.   How important is it for you to include the following practices during second-language teaching:

a) Grammar practice	1	2	3	4	5
b) Vocabulary practice	1	2	3	4	5
c) Writing practice	1	2	3	4	5
d) Reading practice	1	2	3	4	5
e) Listening practice	1	2	3	4	5
f) Speaking practice	1	2	3	4	5
g) Maltese-culture awareness	1	2	3	4	5
h) Out-of-class activities	1	2	3	4	5

☝ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE: 1 = Very Comfortable   2 = Comfortable   3 = Indifferent   4 = Uncomfortable   5 = Very Uncomfortable

28.   How comfortable do you think learners feel when they work/learn …

a) individually?	1	2	3	4	5
b) in pairs?	1	2	3	4	5
c) in small groups?	1	2	3	4	5
d) in a large group?	1	2	3	4	5

☝ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE: 1 = Strongly Agree   2 = Agree   3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree   4 = Disagree   5 = Strongly Disagree

29.   Learners learn best by …

a) rote learning (i.e. repetition).	1	2	3	4	5
b) finding information themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
c) receiving a logical explanation.	1	2	3	4	5
d) problem solving.	1	2	3	4	5
e) copying from the board.	1	2	3	4	5
f) listening and taking notes.	1	2	3	4	5
g) others means (please specify):					

30.   During the course, the learners prefer to:

a) be given homework	1	2	3	4	5
b) have written tests	1	2	3	4	5
c) have oral tests	1	2	3	4	5
d) use the European language portfolio	1	2	3	4	5
e) others. (please specify)					

Materials

☞ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE: 1 – Very Important 2 – Important 3 – Neither important nor unimportant 4 – Unimportant 5 – Not at all important

31. How important is it for the learners to have the following resources during the course:

a) notes given by the teacher?	1	2	3	4	5
b) a course book?	1	2	3	4	5
c) bilingual reading books?	1	2	3	4	5
d) word lists?	1	2	3	4	5
e) books about Maltese history and culture?	1	2	3	4	5
f) videos?	1	2	3	4	5
g) recordings?	1	2	3	4	5
h) PowerPoint presentations?	1	2	3	4	5
i) others (please specify):					

Reading

32. How important is it for the learners to have texts to …

a) introduce grammatical items.	1	2	3	4	5
b) introduce vocabulary items.	1	2	3	4	5
c) encourage reading for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
d) develop reading skills in order to access information.	1	2	3	4	5
e) others (please specify):					

33. How important is it for the learners to have texts …

a) appealing to their age.	1	2	3	4	5
b) challenging i.e. a step ahead of their current level.	1	2	3	4	5
c) varied (different sources).	1	2	3	4	5
d) up to date.	1	2	3	4	5
e) authentic passages (taken from real life).	1	2	3	4	5

Listening

34. How important is it for the learners to do listening activities such as listening to …

a) songs.	1	2	3	4	5
b) recorded material.	1	2	3	4	5
c) the teacher reading texts.	1	2	3	4	5
d) others (please specify):					

9 – Questionnaire for Adult Learners' Teacher

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Speaking

35. **How important is it for the learners to do speaking activities such as …**

a) pronunciation exercises.	1	2	3	4	5
b) dialogue.	1	2	3	4	5
c) oral presentations.	1	2	3	4	5
d) others (please specify):					

Writing

36. **How important is it for the learner to do writing activities such as …**

a) fill-in the blanks.	1	2	3	4	5
b) complete the sentences.	1	2	3	4	5
c) choose the correct word.	1	2	3	4	5
d) free writing.	1	2	3	4	5
e) others (please specify):					

SECTION D

Teacher Training

37. **Have you attended any specialized course about teaching Maltese to foreigners?**

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

    If yes, please specify?

    _____

    Which institution organised the course(s)?

    _____

☞ **Please circle the number that matches your opinion the best.**

NOTE: 1 = Strongly Agree	2 = Agree	3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 = Disagree	5 = Strongly Disagree

38. **To teach Maltese to foreigners more effectively, I would like …**

a) To be trained in Second Language Acquisition theories.	1	2	3	4	5
b) To learn about influential approaches and methods in second-language teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
c) To learn more about adult second-language learners.	1	2	3	4	5
d) To learn about learner-needs analysis.	1	2	3	4	5
e) To learn about different learning styles.	1	2	3	4	5
f) To learn about the CEFR.[2]	1	2	3	4	5
g) To learn more about European language Portfolio.	1	2	3	4	5
h) To learn about textbook evaluation.	1	2	3	4	5
i) others (please specify):					

_____

---

[2] Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – it is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages.

Thank you for your time

If you would like to participate further...

A second step in my research is to conduct a short interview of about 10 minutes with some of the teachers. It will consist of about 15 questions about the course you are delivering. All participants will remain completely anonymous. To participate in this interview, please fill in the attached reply slip below. Please note that not everyone who volunteers can be included. Selection will be done according to the study's exigencies. The interviews will be recorded so that it could be easier for the researcher to recall what has been said. Those who volunteer are free to withdraw from the study at any point. The interviews could be done in the language you prefer: Maltese or English. Those interviewed, will be given another lottery ticket for the weekend break.

Detach the attached reply slip and fill it in.

11 – Questionnaire for Adult Learners' Teacher

Appendix C

Interviews

C.0 Learners

1. What course are you presently taking?
2. Why did you enrol for this particular course?
3. Are you taking any other course in Maltese apart from this? If yes, why?

C.0.1 Syllabus

4. Is there a syllabus for the course/s offered?
5. Do you have access to the syllabus for the course offered?
6. Were you involved in the decision-making process in developing the syllabus?
7. Do you feel that the syllabus of the course you are attending is adequate? Why?
8. Do you think that by the end of the course, you will reach your aims? Why?
9. Which situations (i.e., vocabulary related to certain topics) are covered in this course?
10. Are the situations covered in the course suitable for your learning aims? Why?
11. Which other situations do you think should be covered?
12. Before you began this language course, did you complete a survey about your goals and needs? If yes, what were the contents of the survey?
13. Imagine that you were involved in the decision-making process in developing the syllabus. What would you change so that it better reflects your language needs?

C.0.2 Teaching Methods

14. Which learning activity/activities do you like most in the course that you are currently taking? Why?
15. Which learning activity /activities do you dislike most in the course that you are currently taking? Why?

16. What types of assessment did you complete during the course to give you feedback about your Maltese language learning progress?

17. Based on your experience and in speaking with your colleagues, what would you change about the teaching methods used in this course?

C.0.3 Learning Materials

18. What types of resources and materials are used during the language course you are currently taking?

19. What do you think of the materials and resources used in the course?

20. What types of resources and materials do you need right now to help you learn the Maltese language more effectively?

Others

21. Did you complete a survey to evaluate the course?

C.1 Teachers

1. What course/s are you presently teaching?

C.1.1 Syllabus

2. Is there a syllabus for the course/s offered?

3. Do you have access to the syllabus for the course offered?

4. Were you involved in the decision-making process in developing the syllabus?

5. Do you feel that the syllabus of the course/s you are delivering is adequate for your learners? Why?

6. Which situations (i.e., vocabulary related to certain topics) are covered in this course?

7. Are the situations covered in the course suitable for your learners' aims? Why?

8. Which other situations do you think should be covered?

9. Before you begin a language course, what type of needs analysis do you conduct with your learners?

10. Imagine that you were involved in the decision-making process in developing the syllabus. What would you change in the present syllabus?

C.1.2 Teaching Methods

11. Which learning activity /activities do your students like most in the course? Why do you think so?
12. Which learning activity/activities do your students dislike most in the course? Why do you think so?
13. What types of assessments do you use with your learners during (and/or at the end of) the course to give them feedback about their Maltese language learning progress?

C.1.3 Learning Materials

14. What types of resources and materials do you use during your present course?

15. Who decides which resources and materials are used in the present course?

16. Which of the resources and materials mentioned above are specified by the Department of Education?
17. Based on your experience and in speaking with your colleagues, what resources and materials do teachers need to deliver these courses more effectively?

C.1.4 Training

18. Were you offered any training by the Department to teach this course?
19. What teacher training do you need, if any, to perform your duties more effectively?

Others
20. Do you survey your learners, either during or at the end of the course, to evaluate the course?

- If 'Yes', what happens if you and your learners have different expectations of what should be taught in the course?
- If 'No', what oral feedback do your learners provide regarding what should be changed in the course?

C.2 Education Spokesperson

1. What courses do you presently coordinate?
2. How many teachers are currently employed to teach MQF-1and MQF-2?
3. What qualifications do teachers require to teach these courses?
4. What experience do teachers require to teach these courses?

C.2.1 Syllabus

5. Is there a syllabus for the courses offered? (If yes, can I have a copy so that I can get sense of what is covered?)
6. How would you classify your syllabus's approach to Maltese language instruction for both courses? (Grammar based? Topic based? Task based? Or a combination?)
7. Is there an official policy regarding the needs analysis of learners, before or at the beginning of the language course? If yes, what is the policy?
8. Who takes part in the decision-making process in developing the syllabus?
9. What feedback do you receive regarding the changes that should be made in the syllabuses?

C.2.2 Teaching Methods

10. Are teachers advised on which teaching methods they should employ?
11. Is there an official policy about the type of assessment to be used during and/or at the end of the course to give learners feedback about their Maltese language learning progress?

C.2.3 Learning Materials

12. What types of resources and materials do teachers use during their language teaching?

13. Who decides which resources and materials are used in the present course?

14. Which of the resources and materials mentioned above are specified by the Department of Education?

15. Based on your experience and in speaking with the teachers, what materials do teachers need to deliver these courses?

C.2.4 Teacher training

16. Do you receive any feedback regarding the type of training teachers need to perform their duties more effectively? If so, does the education department offer such opportunities?

Others

17. Do teachers survey the learners, either during or at the end of the course, to evaluate the courses?

- If 'Yes', what happens if the teachers and learners have different expectations of what should be taught in the language courses?
- If 'No,' what feedback do you receive from learners and teachers regarding what should be changed in the course?

Appendix D

Ethical Approval Letter

The University Of Sheffield.

The School Of Education.

Charles Saliba
PhD Malta

Head of School
Professor Cathy Nutbrown

School of Education
388 Glossop Road
Sheffield
S10 2JA

21 March 2013

Telephone: +44 (0)114 222 2180
Email: MPhil-PhD@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Charles,

ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER
"Teaching Maltese as a Second Language to Adults"

Thank you for submitting your ethics application. I am writing to confirm that your application has now been approved.

We recommend you refer to the reviewers' additional comments (please see attached). You should discuss how you are going to respond to these comments with your supervisor BEFORE you proceed with your research.

This letter is evidence that your application has been approved and should be included as an Appendix in your final submission.

Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Dan Goodley
Chair of the School of Education Ethics Review Panel

cc   Terry Lamb

Enc   Ethical Review Feedback Sheet(s)

Appendix E

Consent Forms

E.0 Research Consent Form for questionnaires

If you have any questions regarding my research, please contact me or my supervisor at

Name of Researcher: Charles Daniel Saliba

Mob: 9903 1969   **email**: charles.daniel.saliba@ilearn.edu.mt

Supervisor: Dr Terry Lamb

Tel: (+44) (0)114 222 8118 **email:** T.Lamb@sheffield.ac.uk

Aims of the research

The aim of my study is to determine if there are any discrepancies between the Maltese Second Language courses at the *Directorate for Lifelong Learning*, as they currently stand, and the learners' and teachers' perceptions of how they should be.

Declaration

I am participating in this research voluntarily with the conditions that:

1. The real name of the subjects will not be used in the study.

2. I am free to withdraw from the study at any point.

3. My responses will be treated with confidence and at all times data will be presented in such a way that my identity cannot be connected to specific published data.

Name of the Participant: _____

Signature: _____   Data:____/____/ 2013

Signature of Researcher: _____   Data:____/____/ 2013

E.1 Research Consent Form for Interviews

If you have any questions regarding my research, please contact me or my supervisor at

Name of Researcher: Charles Daniel Saliba

Mob: 9903 1969   **email**: charles.daniel.saliba@ilearn.edu.mt

Supervisor: Dr Terry Lamb

Tel: (+44) (0)114 222 8118 **email:** T.Lamb@sheffield.ac.uk

Aims of the research

The aim of my study is to determine if there are any discrepancies between the Maltese Second Language courses at the *Directorate for Lifelong Learning*, as they currently stand, and the learners' and teachers' perceptions of how they should be.

Declaration

I am participating in this research voluntarily with the conditions that:

1. The real name of the subjects will not be used in the study.

2. I am free to withdraw from the study at any point.

3. My responses will be treated with confidence and at all times data will be presented in such a way that my identity cannot be connected to specific published data.

4. Any recordings of the interview will be stored in a safe place and destroyed once the research is ready.

Name of the Participant: _____

Signature: _____   Data:____/____/ 2013

Signature of Researcher: _____   Data:____/____/ 2013

E.2 Parents Consent Form for questionnaires

If you have any questions regarding my research, please contact me or my supervisor at

Name of Researcher: Charles Daniel Saliba

Mob: 9903 1969   **email**: charles.daniel.saliba@ilearn.edu.mt

Supervisor: Dr Terry Lamb

Tel: (+44) (0)114 222 8118 **email:** T.Lamb@sheffield.ac.uk

Aims of the research

The aim of my study is to determine if there are any discrepancies between the Maltese Second Language courses at the *Directorate for Lifelong Learning*, as they currently stand, and the learners' and teachers' perceptions of how they should be.

Declaration

My son / daughter is participating in this research voluntarily with the conditions that:

1. His / her real name will not be used in the study.

2. He / she is free to withdraw from the study at any point.

3. The responses will be treated with confidence and at all times data will be presented in such a way that my child's identity cannot be connected to specific published data.

Name of child: _____

Name of parent or guardian: _____

Signature: _____   Data:____/ _____ / 2013

Signature of Researcher: _____   Data:____/ _____ /   2013

E.3 Research Consent Form for Interviews

If you have any questions regarding my research, please contact me or my supervisor at

Name of Researcher: Charles Daniel Saliba

Mob: 9903 1969   **email**: charles.daniel.saliba@ilearn.edu.mt

Supervisor: Dr Terry Lamb

Tel: (+44) (0)114 222 8118 **email:** T.Lamb@sheffield.ac.uk

Aims of the research

The aim of my study is to determine if there are any discrepancies between the Maltese Second Language courses at the *Directorate for Lifelong Learning*, as they currently stand, and the learners' and teachers' perceptions of how they should be.

Declaration

I am participating in this research voluntarily with the conditions that:

1. His/ her real name will not be used in the study.

2. He / she is free to withdraw from the study at any point.

3. The responses will be treated with confidence and at all times data will be presented in such a way that my child's identity cannot be connected to specific published data.

4. Any recordings of the interview will be stored in a safe place and destroyed once the research is ready.

Name of child: _____

Name of parent or guardian: _____

Signature: _____   Data:____/____/ 2013

Signature of Researcher: _____   Data:____/____/ 2013

E.4 Research Consent Form for Interviews (Feedback on syllabi)

If you have any questions regarding my research, please contact me or my supervisor at

Name of Researcher: Charles Daniel Saliba

Mob: 9903 1969   **email**: charles.daniel.saliba@ilearn.edu.mt

Supervisor: Dr Terry Lamb

Tel: (+44) (0)114 222 8118 **email:** T.Lamb@sheffield.ac.uk

Aims of the research

The aim of my study is to determine if there are any discrepancies between the Maltese Second Language courses at the *Directorate for Lifelong Learning*, as they currently stand, and the learners' and teachers' perceptions of how they should be.

Declaration

I am participating in this research voluntarily with the conditions that:

1. The real name of the subjects will not be used in the study.

2. I am free to withdraw from the study at any point.

3. My responses will be treated with confidence and at all times data will be presented in such a way that my identity cannot be connected to specific published data.

4. Any recordings of the interview will be stored in a safe place and destroyed once the research is ready.

Name of the Participant: _____

Signature: _____   Data:____/____/ 2013

Signature of Researcher: _____   Data:____/   / 2013

E.5 Research Consent Form for written feedback on syllabi

If you have any questions regarding my research, please contact me or my supervisor at

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Supervisor: Dr Terry Lamb

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Name of the Participant: _____

Signature: _____   Data:___ / ___ / 2013

Signature of Researcher: _____   Data:___ / ___ / 2013

Appendix F

Creation of Three Syllabi for MSL Courses

F.0 Introduction

This appendix focuses on the creation of three syllabi for MSL courses. From the needs analysis, it emerged that learners and teachers required an adequate syllabus as a countermeasure for the divergence found amongst the learning groups of MFL-1 and MFL-2. In fact, this needs analysis revealed that a syllabus should be drafted to accommodate the learners' needs, primarily to help them communicate with locals more effectively. Thus, this appendix discusses the process of how these syllabi were created and edited, including how feedback was adopted from the learners and the teachers attending or delivering MSL courses in Malta, to arrive at a consensus amongst different sources. The final versions of the syllabi were published in October 2013. Although these syllabi need to undergo trials, producing them is the first step in helping set a minimum standard for achieving consistency amongst the various learning groups in Malta and Gozo, which in turn will help them with their exam preparation. The participants are coded as STIP (syllabus – teacher interview participant) or SLWP (syllabus – learner written participation), followed by a number representing MFL-1 or MFL-2 (e.g., STIP1, SLWP2).

F.1 Syllabus Design

The needs analysis, based on different sources and instruments, pointed out the necessity for a new syllabus for each course. The teachers who participated in the piloting of the questionnaires were contacted again to discuss the feedback obtained from the needs analysis and how it should be implemented in the syllabi. As indicated in subsection 3.4.5 (Piloting of the questionnaires), these teachers teach MSL (one in a private school and the other in a government secondary school) and another foreign language. Although the syllabi would be created based on information from the needs analysis, the discussions with these two teachers helped eliminate any possibility of a

top-down approach by minimising the researcher's perspective. Thus, the first syllabi drafts were a product of these discussions. Afterwards, the drafts were also given to other teachers of MFL courses at the DLL and to learners who attended DLL then. They provided critical feedback, which was discussed again with the two teachers. When appropriate, the feedback was integrated into the next versions of the syllabi.

The teachers were both contacted by phone, and they agreed to continue helping with this research. The first meeting with them was held at the premises where one of the teachers taught the Maltese classes. After being briefed about the nature and aims of this part of the research, they were asked if they were ready to continue assisting in the development of the three syllabi, incorporating the information that emerged from the needs analysis. Both agreed and signed a consent form similar to that of the questionnaire (see Appendix E). After finding out the main points of the learners' needs, both teachers emphasised (as one of the learners also pointed out) that the syllabi must be based on the CEFR due to its wide use in the teaching of foreign languages in the EU, of which Malta is now a part. This made sense because using the CEFR standards would put MSL on par with other foreign language classes in the EU. The CEFR is:

> a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively (CEFR, 2001, p. 1).

Moreover, since different teachers employ various teaching methods, these CEFR-based syllabi are ideal. Metaphorically, the CEFR is a road map that presents different routes but does not denote which one to take, nor does it establish the length of the language learning journey. At this meeting, it was agreed that to cover the materials in MFL-1 and MFL-2, three levels of the CEFR would be needed: A1 (beginner/elementary), A2 (elementary/pre-intermediate) and B1 (intermediate). These divisions were based on the fact that in Malta, an O-level standard in a foreign language issued by the University of Malta is approximately equivalent to an A2-B1 standard. Therefore, since the scope of MFL-1 and MFL-2 is to prepare learners for the next course – the O-level standard in native Maltese (which also incorporates Maltese literature) – it is ideal that learners obtain the B1 Level before proceeding to the said next course. Using the CEFR and splitting MFL-1 and MFL-2 were points that emerged from the needs analysis that used

different sources and instruments. During the first meeting with the teachers, the CEFR criteria were selected for insertion according to the levels mentioned (A1, A2 and B1). This section, Communicative Objectives, focuses on the categories of *listening*, *reading*, *spoken interaction*, *spoken production*, *writing* and *sociolinguistic appropriateness* (see Appendix G). As the learners indicated, it was agreed that the syllabi be written in English, following the norm for other foreign language syllabi at the University of Malta, and because some learners desired access to them.

Based on the discussions held at the first meeting with the teachers, for the second meeting, the Communicative Objectives draft of the first part of each syllabus was created, using the CEFR. After reviewing this section again, we discussed another issue that emerged from the needs analysis. It was observed that teachers in different learning groups in MFL-1 and MFL-2 covered diverse vocabulary and grammar topics, but learners had to sit for the same exam. To overcome this problem, it was decided that two sections be included, one each for grammar and vocabulary, which should provide the minimum baseline of topics that should be covered so that the exam would be somewhat standardised to accommodate all groups; at the same time, this minimum requirement allowed leeway for teachers' and learners' autonomy. In this session, vocabulary was the only focus. The learners' and teachers' suggestions gleaned from the questionnaires and interviews were analysed, as were the topics being covered in the courses and in other MSL courses, mainly those offered at the MCAST and the University of Malta's Maltese for Foreigners Certificate programme (see chapter 1). A list of topics according to each syllabus level was also made.

At the third meeting, the grammar lessons covered in the MFL-1 and MFL-2 courses were discussed, and the topics were divided amongst the three syllabi, complementing the aims listed in the Communicative Objectives. Both teachers indicated the importance of maintaining basic grammar at the first level; for the second and third levels, the previous topics were revised and new ones were added. These changes made sense because during the needs analysis, the majority of the learners emphasised revision and reinforcement. For this reason, in each syllabus, we included the following statement:

This grammar level is a revision and continuation of Level A1/A2 (Syllabus A2/B1, 2013, p. 8).

A similar statement was also added to the vocabulary section:

This vocabulary level is a continuation and reinforcement of Level A1/A2 (Syllabus A2/B1, 2013, p. 12).

It was also decided that after the grammar topics were mentioned in the syllabi, examples should be given, with the details to be covered by the teachers indicated. The following is an example from syllabus Level A1:

Adjectives: Refer to the most common positive adjectives (ex., sabiħ, ikrah, oħxon, i.e., Grad Pożittiv – <u>do not</u> refer to comparative and superlative) (Syllabus A1, 2013, p. 9).

This change was made to impose a limit to the details to be covered by the teachers and to ensure a certain degree of conformity amongst groups. This step addressed the findings of the needs analysis about divergence amongst the different groups, not only in terms of the topics covered, but also in their depth of coverage.

At the fourth and final meeting with the teachers, a detailed draft of each syllabus was presented to them and discussed comprehensively. Each syllabus was revised to make sure that all its elements were corroborated and agreed upon by the teachers and the researcher. For example, initially, due to the difficulty in learning the numbers in Maltese (similar to those in Arabic), it was decided that only the numbers one to ten would be introduced. However, since one of the aims of the Spoken interaction section was "I can indicate time by such phrases as next week, last Friday, in November, three o'clock" (Syllabus A1, 2013, p. 9), to be practical, it was essential to cover more numbers so that the students could learn enough to be able to tell the time in Maltese. Other issues of syllabus presentation were also discussed; it was agreed that each syllabus would be printed in two colours to make certain points stand out. Since the teachers were not trained in MSL teaching, a short description of the CEFR document with the approximate teaching hours needed to cover each level would be included to give teachers and learners a snippet of the basis of these syllabi.

All these issues were taken into account to prepare the syllabi for review and feedback by other MSL learners and teachers.

F.2 Evaluation of the Syllabi

After the final drafts of the syllabi were ready, using random sampling from the reply slips at the end of the questionnaires, two teachers (one each from MFL-1 and MFL-2) and two learners (one each from MFL-1 and MFL-2) were selected and contacted via email. In the case of MFL-2, there was only one teacher interviewee; therefore, he/she was selected by default. In the email, they were briefed about the nature and aims of this research phase and asked if they were willing to review these three syllabi. In the learners' case, they were also asked to provide written feedback on the syllabi, and each was given a self-addressed, stamped envelope to return it. They were sent emails on 30 May 2013 to inform them that if they agreed to participate, they had to hand in their feedback by 20 June 2013 (see Appendix J). In the teachers' case, they were asked to participate in a recorded interview.

Since the learners were requested to give written feedback, they were also asked to sign a written consent form, with the same contents as those of the questionnaire consent form (see Appendix E). The teachers' written consent was obtained by using another form, similar to the interview consent form (see Appendix E). Each participant was given a signed copy of the consent form.

A specific reason lay behind asking the learners for their written feedback and the teachers for interviews. Initially, the intention was to conduct interviews with everyone; however, during the first set of interviews as a follow-up after the questionnaires, many learners expressed concern about the interview schedule due to their summer plans to go abroad by 20 June 2013. To eliminate this problem and not risk ending up without any interviews, especially from certain limited groups such as MFL-2, I opted for written feedback for the learners. On the other hand, the teachers "are the people who will have to deliver the [syllabus] and live with it long after the current students (and perhaps the needs analysts) have moved on. [Apart from this,] we must never forget that teachers have needs, too" (Brown, 2001, p. 287). Therefore, the

interviews were used to give them the chance to elaborate on their feedback as much as they needed.

Regardless of whether the participants provided written or oral feedback, they were asked the same questions. The teachers and learners were both asked the following seven questions, which are presented below with the respective summaries of their responses:

1. I am proposing the syllabus A1 for MFL-1, the syllabus A2 for MFL-2 and suggesting that a new level be created, named B1. B1 will build on the previous two levels. Do you think that this is a good idea? Why or why not?

For different reasons, all four participants agreed that this was a good idea. One of the learners cited using the CEFR as a basis for structuring the classes:

> I would get a clearer idea [of] what level of proficiency [would] be acquired. Moreover, when showing one's certificates abroad, they [would] be recognised easier. For me, it would be beneficial since I could compare my level of Maltese with the other foreign languages I have acquired (also to update my European CV accurately). In addition, it would be great if another follow-up course (B1) was created so I could further my Maltese language learning. This course would help me to get closer to my aim of sitting for the Maltese O-levels (SLWP1).

For the other learner, having another level "would help to further develop the language skills acquired in the first two levels" (SLWP2). For one of the teachers, splitting the courses into three levels would make the syllabi more realistic and practical. Furthermore, this teacher thought that the topics included in the syllabi would cater more to the students of this course (STIP1). The other teacher commented along similar lines, that everything was more structured and explainable in these syllabi and would thus "cater to the aims of the teachers and the learners" (STIP2).

2. Do you think that if syllabus A1 is used instead of MFL-1, things will change for the better? Why or why not?

Participant SLWP1 made it clear that:

Giving the course a different name does not automatically mean that things will improve. However, considering the attached suggested A1 syllabus, the aims for language acquisition at this level [are] stated clearly, which will surely help both educators and learners to monitor their teaching and learning aims, especially since the aims address all four skills, grammar and vocabulary. If the syllabus is made available to learners, they can monitor and assess their learning progress.

Likewise, one of the teachers stated that access to the syllabus would help the learners monitor their learning journey (STIP2). The other teacher also commented on this issue: "the fact that the syllabus is written in English will help learners to monitor their progress and their future destination" (STIP1). For the other participant (SLWP2), A1 Level seemed less ambitious than MFL-1. For him/her, this "is good as it is very difficult for a foreigner to assimilate so much in a new language in the first year. … there also seems to be more emphasis on spoken interactions in the new A1".

3. Do you see the syllabi as well paced in all of their aspects of language communication (listening, reading, speaking and writing), grammar and vocabulary? Why or why not?

All the participants agreed about the well-paced syllabi, with one learner commenting, "They build up on each other and include revisions and reinforcements of previous levels (such as the grammar and vocabulary sections). Moreover, their pace can be compared to other foreign language syllabi such [as those] of German, French or Italian" (SLWP1). One of the teachers mentioned that the revision and reinforcements were very important because after the summer recess, some learners would forget a lot of things, while others would skip a year or more between courses (STIP1); thus, the pacing of the new syllabi would definitely be beneficial to the students. The other learner explained, "Before, it was very discouraging for a new learner as [he/she would] jump to a higher level too quickly and there [was] usually a 50% dropout rate at MFL Level 1 and Level 2" (SLWP2). The other teacher noted that the pressure on teachers would be eased because these syllabi included a roadmap for the learning journey (STIP2).

4. Are the syllabi clear enough, that is, will every learner know exactly what will be covered at all the levels? Why or why not?

Both learners commented on the clarity of the syllabi, with SLWP1 adding, "Every learner can understand what will be covered [at] all levels and can use the syllabus as a checklist". This learner intuited a future addition to the syllabi – a checklist of the communicative aims, vocabulary and grammar taken from each syllabus, which would be part of the learners' portfolio. The other learner remarked, "It might be good to include a sample test at the end of each level so that the learner[s] would be aware of exactly what level [would be] expected of them at the end of the scholastic year" (SLWP2). This issue was also indicated by one of the teachers in the next question. Both teachers also agreed that the syllabi were clear, with STIP1 commenting that the vocabulary list would substantially help teachers and that the vocabulary topics selected were practical.

5. Do you think that anything should be added to any part of these syllabi?

One of the teachers noted that it would be a good idea to include cultural topics at Level B1, along with resources, so that teachers could have ideas to follow (STIP2). The other teacher and one of the learners remarked that sample exam papers should be included for each level (STIP1 and SLWP2). The other learner referred to the Sociolinguistic appropriateness section:

> For me as a learner, it would have been very interesting to get to know more about cultural conventions, such as gestures [that] are specific to the Maltese culture, what is considered as polite/impolite, etc., to avoid cultural misunderstandings – which often occurred to me and other foreigners (SLWP1).

6. Do you think that anything should be removed from any part of these syllabi?

All four participants agreed that nothing needed to be removed from the syllabi.

7. Please indicate any other comments that you might have about the syllabi.

One participant indicated that there should be an additional component to the summer conversation course, as:

an option in summer once weekly after each level to further help put the language into practice … perhaps a bit ambitious but the conversation course could be partly activity based, e.g., going to an actual supermarket/grocer and asking for things … Level B1 could be further supplemented by additional levels or if the students would be competent enough, perhaps after B1 they [could] be transferred to an O-level course [so] that students who would want to continue learning [could] do so (SLWP2).

The other learner noted that since the foreigners living and working in Malta were on the increase:

it is high time that the MFL levels are adjusted to the CEFR to provide clear and uniform recognition of language learning qualifications/certificates. Moreover, these syllabi are presented in a well-structured and straightforward way, so I believe that this research will be a step forward in the Teaching and Learning of Maltese as a Foreign Language (SLWP1).

Both teachers also commented positively about these syllabi, with one of them stating that he/she "believe[d] that [the syllabi would] be of great help to teachers and learners ... [due to] the revision done during the transition from one syllabus to another and then being certified with the level appropriate to the course that was compiled" (STIP2). The other teacher made a similar statement: "Well done for the recycling and reinforcement from one syllabus to another ... these [syllabi would] need to be implemented as soon as possible .... because I think that MFL [courses] are gaining a bad reputation" (STIP1).

From this feedback, it emerged that both learners and teachers needed these syllabi, and particularly for these four participants, it seemed that a balance had been achieved between the needs of teachers and learners. The following needs were identified: a sample exam paper for each level; the inclusion of cultural conventions, such as gestures specific to the Maltese culture, in the Sociolinguistic appropriateness section; cultural topics in Level B1; resources for teachers when using these syllabi; an optional conversation course; and additional levels for those who would want to learn more.

The points raised by these participants were all interesting and valid. Subsequently, the first two teachers who helped develop the syllabi were consulted again with these fresh data to find out their opinions on these issues. During the meeting, the first issues discussed with the teachers were about culture. It was agreed that cultural topics needed to be included in all the syllabi. In fact, new topics in the

Vocabulary objectives section of each syllabus were added, and there was a discussion of what could be included in the Cultural conventions section. When asked what they were then teaching about cultural conventions, they responded in the negative but added that it would be interesting to learn more about the theme for future implementation. Since the teachers, including myself, were born and bred in Malta, it was difficult for us to recognise these cultural conventions. After we thought about this subject, the only situations that came to mind were as follows:

1. It is a Maltese custom that in bars, locals tend to offer and pay for drinks for all their friends, whereas in many cultures, everyone pays for his or her own drinks.

2. When someone offers a drink to a Maltese person, the latter may decline it the first time. However, the former should insist two or three times because generally, the latter says 'no' only to be polite. Observe what the locals do in social situations and copy their actions.

3. Gift giving is appreciated. It is a Maltese custom for a guest at a party, a family gathering, etc., to offer the host a present, such as a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates. Particularly during the Christmas season, it is also typical to give a token of appreciation to someone who has done a person a special favour.

4. Kissing and hugging are normal. It is customary for the Maltese to hug and kiss a friend on both cheeks when they encounter him/her again after a long time. Generally, a foreigner is greeted with a handshake.

5. In the course of a conversation, making eye contact, speaking loudly, using hand gestures and sometimes touching another person's hand or shoulder constitute normal behaviour in Maltese culture.

6. Pointing the middle finger is considered an obscene hand gesture in many Western countries, including Malta.

However, it was agreed that these examples should be sent to the participant concerned to identify which of them were similar to his/her own social customs and to add any other cultural conventions that he/she had encountered in Malta. He/she confirmed that

items 1 and 6 were common in his/her culture and mentioned the following observations as well:

1. The Maltese gesture for *no* is made with the head.

2. *Come here* is expressed with a hand gesture amongst the Maltese.

3. The *Corona* hand gesture.

4. The Maltese answer the phone with *għidli* as their greeting, which literally means "tell me".

5. The Maltese count numbers by using their fingers.

To maintain balance with the other sections of the syllabi, we included the following general statements in the Sociolinguistic appropriateness section to cover the above-mentioned cultural topics but did not provide details:

> I know the basics about Maltese culture, including gestures and customs (Syllabus A1, 2013, p. 8).

> I know more about Maltese culture, including gestures, customs, Maltese food, popular feasts and well-known places around Malta and Gozo (Syllabus A2, 2013, p. 8).

> I know more about Maltese culture, including gestures, customs, Maltese products and Maltese recipes, and past traditions and folklore (Syllabus B1, 2013, p. 9).

However, it was agreed that these statements should be elaborated on in the resources that were produced to accompany the syllabus (see Appendix H). The issue of an optional conversation course was discussed, and strictly speaking, a conversation course is already available. However, the feedback obtained from the needs analysis revealed that although some learners attended the conversation course and learned a lot from it, they commented on its short, 10-week duration. Therefore, conversation should not be taught separately but be an integral part of the courses throughout the year so that the four skills can be covered (IP8).

Such comments immediately pointed to the need for adequate resources to make the courses successful. The resources should reflect the approach of the syllabus and also incorporate the grammar and vocabulary objectives. The resources should be based on the CEFR and offer the cyclical progression method to provide revisions and

reinforcement to learners. A CD containing the audio files linked to the resources would also be produced so that learners could listen to native Maltese speakers reading the text and the dialogues in standard Maltese. Sample tests should be included with these resources to cover the four skills. These materials are discussed in more detail in Appendix H, which presents the resources created for these syllabi.

F.3 Conclusion

This appendix has described the process involved in developing the three syllabi for the MSL courses. The discussion with the teachers who assisted in the pilot study, combined with the feedback of some learners and teachers attending or delivering MSL courses in Malta, led to a consensus amongst different sources about the scope and content of the proposed syllabi. Although these syllabi still need to undergo trials, as indicated earlier, this is a first step in the right direction to revamp the MSL courses in Malta.

Appendix G

G.0 Maltese for Foreigners syllabi

G.0.1 Level A1 (Beginner to Elementary)

Maltese for Foreigners

Syllabus

Based on the
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Level A1
Beginners – Elementary

Charles Daniel Saliba
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Malta 2013

The Author

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Apart from the sections Grammar Objectives and Vocabulary Objectives, and bullet points marked with an asterisk, the statements written in English on pages 5-7 in this syllabus were reproduced from

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages,

which can be accessed from:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

This syllabus is free of charge and can be downloaded from the website:
www.charlesdanielsaliba.com

2

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR)

This syllabus is based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. The CEFR, which is not language-specific, was published by the Council of Europe to provide:

> "a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis. [Moreover] it provides the means for educational administrators, course designers, teachers, teacher trainers, examining bodies, etc., to reflect on their current practice, with a view to situating and co-ordinating their efforts and to ensuring that they meet the real needs of the learners for whom they are responsible." (CEFR 2001, 1)

Metaphorically, the CEFR is a road map that presents different routes but does not denote which one to take, nor does it establish the length of the language-learning journey. The intention of this document is to specify what learners should be able to do at certain levels. In this way, teachers are guided by these levels in their teaching and in selecting their course books and resources (*Teacher's Guide to the CEFR*, 4). The abovementioned levels of proficiency are split into six levels, arranged in three bands: A denotes a basic user, B indicates an independent user and C represents a proficient user. Each of the six levels is accompanied by a corresponding descriptive term as shown in Table 1 (CEFR 2001, 23).

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Table 1

The levels of proficiency		
A Basic user	A 1	Breakthrough
	A 2	Waystage
B Independent user	B 1	Threshold
	B 2	Vantage
C Proficient user	C 1	Effective operational proficiency
	C 2	Mastery

Although it is difficult to count or imagine the number of hours a learner needs to achieve a particular level, the *Association of Language Testers of Europe* provides guidelines on the number of teaching hours needed to achieve a particular level, as indicated by the list in Table 2 (*Teacher's Guide to the CEFR*, 7).

Table 2

Approximate teaching hours needed to achieve each level	
A 1	90–100 hours
A 2	180–200 hours
B 1	350–400 hours
B 2	500–600 hours
C 1	700–800 hours
C 2	1,000–1,200 hours

With this global scale, achievement and learning could be measured across languages, and this could help tutors, academics, researchers and course book writers "to decide on curriculum and syllabus content and to choose appropriate course books" (*Teacher's Guide to the CEFR*, 4).

References

Council of Europe (2001) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Available from: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

Teacher's Guide to the Common European Framework. Available from: http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/cef/cefguide.pdf [Accessed 2nd August 2013].

4

COMMUNICATIVE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course you will be able to do the following:

Listening

I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.

- I can follow speech which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for me to assimilate meaning.

- I can understand instructions addressed carefully and slowly to me and follow short, simple directions.

- I can recognise and understand common words and very basic phrases related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

Reading

I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.

- I can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words, and basic phrases and rereading as required.

- I can recognise familiar names, words and very basic phrases on simple notices in most everyday situations (ex. Police, Welcome, No Smoking, No Entry).

- I can get an idea of the content of simpler informational material and short simple descriptions, especially if there is visual support.

- I can understand short, simple messages on postcards.

- I can read and understand common words and very basic phrases related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

5

Spoken interaction

I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.

- I can use basic greeting and leave-taking expressions.
- I can ask how people are and react to news.
- I can ask and answer questions about myself and also other people – where they live, people they know, things they have.
- I can ask people for things and give people things.
- I can handle numbers, quantities, costs and times.
- I can indicate time by such phrases as next week, last Friday, in November, three o'clock.

Spoken production

I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.

- I can very simply describe myself, what I do and where I live.
- I can describe my family.
- I can give basic personal information (name, surname, address, telephone, mobile, nationality, age and sex).
- I can produce simple, mainly isolated phrases about people and places.
- I can produce common words and very basic phrases related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

Writing

I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.

- I can write simple sentences about myself, where I live and what I do.
- I can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.

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- I can complete a form or questionnaire with my personal details.
- I can write a short, simple postcard.
- I can write numbers and dates, own name, nationality, address, age, date of birth or arrival in the country, etc., such as on a hotel registration form.
- I can write common words and very basic phrases related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section. *

Sociolinguistic appropriateness

- I can establish basic social contact by using the simplest everyday polite forms of greetings, farewells and introductions, and can use important phrases such as please, thank you, sorry, I don't understand, please repeat, etc.
- I know the basics about Maltese culture, including gestures and customs.*

PTO ►

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GRAMMAR OBJECTIVES

To reach the communicative objectives of level A1, you need to know most of these language areas:

Grammar

✓ **The Maltese alphabet**

Consonants and vowels and their sound:

i. Sun consonants (ċ, d, n, r, s, t, x, ż, z).

ii. Moon consonants (all the other consonants of the Maltese alphabet).

✓ **The definite article**

(l- or il- also assimilation of l-) Reference to the fact that the euphonic vowel, *il-vokali tal-leħen*, is eliminated when a word starts with a vowel or the word before finishes with a vowel.

Ex. *l-ors, l-art* ☑ not *il-ors, il-art* ☒.

For this level do not elaborate more on the euphonic vowel.

✓ **Particles**

Ex. *bi, fi, xi, ma', ta', sa, lil, għal, bħal*

Particles linked to the article ex. *bil-, fil-, mal-, tal-, lill-, għall-, bħall-*

Reference to the fact that the particles *ma' ta' sa* are shortened to *m', s', t',* in front of words starting with a vowel, għ or h.

Ex. *m'ommi, s'Għawdex, t'Anna.*

Also refer to:

a. Adverbs:

i. Of time (most common ex. *għada, imbagħad, illum, ilu, meta, pitgħada, xħin, x'ħin? xi drabi,* etc.).

ii. Of place (most common ex. *barra, ġewwa, fuq, hawn, hemm, ħdejn, taħt,* etc.).

iii. Of quantity (most common ex. *aktar, anqas, biss, biżżejjed, iżjed, iżżejjed, kemm? Kemm-il darba*).

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b. Conjunctions (most common ex. *biex, meta, imma, li, jew, u,* etc.).

c. Prepositions (most common ex. *bejn, fuq, isfel, quddiem, taht,* etc.).

d. Interjections: (most common ex. *ajma, ahh, jaqq,* etc.).

✓ **Adjectives**

Refer to the most common positive adjectives (ex. *sabih, ikrah, ohxon* i.e. *Grad Pożittiv* – <u>do not</u> refer to comparative and superlative).

✓ **Gender of nouns and adjectives**

Focus mainly on nouns and adjectives that form the feminine word by adding an *a*.

i. Nouns: ex. *hmar/a, kelb/a, avukat/a.*

ii. Adjectives: *ex. sabih/a, nadif/a, irhis/a.*

✓ **Singular and plural of nouns and adjectives**

From word lists, observe that in Maltese certain plurals are formed by adding suffixes at the end of the word (ex. *platt/i, wejter/s,* haddiem/*a, tajbin, ġellidin*) and others by breaking up the internal structure of the word (ex. *borma-borom, bidwi-bdiewa, dar-djar*). <u>Do not</u> go into too much detail about sound and broken plurals. For the time being, refer to different patterns in their plural lists and to the existence of two types of plural: *Plural Shih* and *Plural Miksur.*

✓ **Pronouns**

a. Personal:

i. Independent (*jien/a, int/i, hu/wa, hi/ja, ahna, intom, huma*).

ii. Pronominal suffixes (refer to the most common for this level; and refer to some of the variants also, but do not emphasize these too much, i.e., for nouns and prepositions *i/ija, ek/k/ok, u/h, ha, na, kom, hom,* for verbs *ni, ek/k, u/h, ha, na, kom, hom*).

b. Demonstrative (*dan, din, dawn, dak, dik, dawk*).

c. Interrogative (ex. *Min?, Xi/ x'?, Liema?*).

✓ **Basic Verbs** (see Common Actions in vocabulary section – <u>do not</u> refer to verb forms)

a. Imperative: refer to the formation by shifting the first vowel

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Ex. hataf ➡ ahtaf.

b. Present:

    i. It is very important to know/show the link between the imperative and the present. Ex. Imperative of *kiser* is *ikser* (singular) *iksru* (plural). To form the present, **generally**, one has to add the prefix:

    ii. n, t, j, t to the imperative singular to form the present.

    iii. n, t, j to the imperative plural to form the present.

    iv. Reference to the future (reference to particles *ser, sa, ha* in front of present to form the future, ex. *ser niekol, se nixrob, ha niġi*).

c. Past:

    i. Refer to the third person masculine singular and the roots of Semitic verbs (ex. hasel, kiser, wasal) and the stems of Romans (ex. poġġa) and Anglo-Saxon (ex. ipprintja) loan words (*mamma* and *gherq* or *zokk morfemiku*).

    ii. Show how common verbs like hasel, kiteb, (refer to *Common Actions* in vocabulary section) conjugate.

d. Negative:

    i. Reference to the very basics of the negative, i.e. adding ma in front and x attached to the verb, ex. ma kielx, ma wasalx.

✓ Numbers

For the time being, emphasize the difference between ordinal and cardinal numbers and how to use them. Do not go into too much detail for this level.

a. Cardinal:

    i. From 1–20 (ex. *wiehed, tnejn, tlieta, erbgha, hamsa, sitta, sebgha, tmienja, disgha, ghaxra, hdax, tnax, tlettax, erbatax, hmistax, sittax sbatax, tmintax, dsatax, ghoxrin*).

    ii. The hyphenated –il (11–19 ex. *11-il kelb, 12-il pitazz,* etc.).

    iii. Reference to compound numbers from 21 to 99 (ex. *wiehed u ghoxrin, tnejn u ghoxrin, tlieta u ghoxrin,* etc.).

b. Ordinal from 1–10:

    i. Ex. *l-ewwel, it-tieni, it-tielet, ir-raba', il-hames, is-sitt, is-seba', it-tmien, id-disa', l-ghaxar.*

    ii. Reference that the rest of the ordinal numbers are formed by

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adding the definite article to the cardinal numbers.

Ex. Ġejt *il-wieħed u għoxrin* fl-eżami.

c. Time words (ex. *neqsin kwart, u kwart, u nofs, nofs siegħa, ħames minuti oħra, ta' filgħodu, ta' filgħaxija*).

<div style="text-align: right;">PTO ▸</div>

VOCABULARY OBJECTIVES

To reach the communicative objectives of level A1 you need to familiarise yourself with these vocabulary topics:

Vocabulary

- √ Animals
- √ Clothes
- √ Colours
- √ Common actions
- √ Continents, countries and nationalities
- √ Days of the week, seasons, months
- √ Directions
- √ Food and drink
- √ Fruit and vegetables
- √ Home and furnishings
- √ In the countryside
- √ In the village/town

- √ My family and friends
- √ Numbers
- √ Opposites
- √ Personal information
- √ Public places
- √ Shops
- √ The body
- √ Time
- √ Towns and villages in Malta and Gozo
- √ Transport
- √ Useful expressions

Feedback

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Maltese for Foreigners

Syllabus

Based on the

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Level A2

Elementary – Pre-Intermediate

Charles Daniel Saliba

www.charlesdanielsaliba.com

Malta 2013

The Author

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2

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR)

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> "a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis. [Moreover] it provides the means for educational administrators, course designers, teachers, teacher trainers, examining bodies, etc., to reflect on their current practice, with a view to situating and co-ordinating their efforts and to ensuring that they meet the real needs of the learners for whom they are responsible." (CEFR 2001, 1)

Metaphorically, the CEFR is a road map that presents different routes but does not denote which one to take, nor does it establish the length of the language-learning journey. The intention of this document is to specify what learners should be able to do at certain levels. In this way, teachers are guided by these levels in their teaching and in selecting their course books and resources (*Teacher's Guide to the CEFR*, 4). The abovementioned levels of proficiency are split into six levels, arranged in three bands: A denotes a basic user, B indicates an independent user and C represents a proficient user. Each of the six levels is accompanied by a corresponding descriptive term as shown in Table 1 (CEFR 2001, 23).

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Table 1

The levels of proficiency		
A	A 1	Breakthrough
Basic user	A 2	Waystage
B	B 1	Threshold
Independent user	B 2	Vantage
C	C 1	Effective operational proficiency
Proficient user	C 2	Mastery

Although it is difficult to count or imagine the number of hours a learner needs to achieve a particular level, the *Association of Language Testers of Europe* provides guidelines on the number of teaching hours needed to achieve a particular level, as indicated by the list in Table 2 (*Teacher's Guide to the CEFR*, **7**).

Table 2

Approximate teaching hours needed to achieve each level	
A 1	90–100 hours
A 2	180–200 hours
B 1	350–400 hours
B 2	500–600 hours
C 1	700–800 hours
C 2	1,000–1,200 hours

With this global scale, achievement and learning could be measured across languages, and this could help tutors, academics, researchers and course book writers "to decide on curriculum and syllabus content and to choose appropriate course books" (*Teacher's Guide to the CEFR*, 4).

References

Council of Europe (2001) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Available from: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

Teacher's Guide to the Common European Framework. Available from: http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/cef/cefguide.pdf [Accessed 2nd August 2013].

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COMMUNICATIVE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course you will be able to do the following:

Listening

I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.

- I can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated.
- I can generally identify the topic of discussion around me, when it is conducted slowly and clearly.
- I can understand simple directions relating to how to get from X to Y, by foot or public transport.
- I can understand and extract the essential information from short, recorded passages dealing with predictable everyday matters which are delivered slowly and clearly.
- I can recognise and understand words and phrases related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

Reading

I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.

- I can understand basic types of standard routine letters and faxes (enquiries, orders, letters of confirmation, etc.) on familiar topics.

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- I can understand everyday signs and notices: in public places, such as streets, restaurants, railway stations; in workplaces, such as directions, instructions, hazard warnings.

- I can identify specific information in simple written material I encounter such as letters, brochures and short newspaper articles describing events.

- I can read and understand very short, simple texts related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

Spoken interaction

I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.

- I can interact with reasonable ease in structured situations and short conversations, provided the other person helps if necessary.

- I can use simple everyday polite forms of greeting and address.

- I can make and respond to invitations, suggestions and apologies.

- I can say what I like and dislike.

- I can discuss what to do in the evening and at the weekend.

- I can agree and disagree with others.

Spoken production

I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.

- I can give short, basic descriptions of events and activities.

- I can use simple descriptive language to make brief statements about and compare objects and possessions.

- I can explain what I like or dislike about something.

- I can ask for and provide everyday goods and services.

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- I can get simple information about travel, use public transport (buses, trains, and taxis), ask and give directions, and buy tickets.
- I can produce phrases and sentences related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

Writing

I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.

- I can write very simple personal letters expressing thanks and apology.
- I can take a short, simple message provided I can ask for repetition and reformulation.
- I can write short simple texts related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

Sociolinguistic appropriateness

- I can handle very short social exchanges, using everyday polite forms of greeting and address.
- I can make and respond to invitations, suggestions, apologies, etc.
- I can socialise simply but effectively using the simplest common expressions and following basic routines.
- I can perform and respond to basic language functions, such as information exchange and requests, and express opinions and attitudes in a simple way.
- I know more about Maltese culture, including gestures, customs, Maltese food, popular feasts and well-known places around Malta and Gozo.*

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GRAMMAR OBJECTIVES

This grammar level is a revision and continuation of Level A1.

To reach the communicative objectives of level A2 you need to know most of these language areas:

Grammar

✓ **The Maltese alphabet**

Revision of vowels, sun and moon consonants, and their sounds.

✓ **The definite article** (*l-* or *il-* also assimilation of *l-*)

The euphonic vowel (more details about *il-vokali tal-leħen: l-imwejjed, l-iskola, l-isport*).

✓ **Particles** (ex. *bi, fi, xi, ma', ta', sa, lil, għal, bħal* and shortened forms *t', m', s'*)

Particles linked to the article (*fi + l- = fil-, bi +l= bil-* etc. also assimilation of *l-* ex. *mix-xatt, mas-surmast*).

Also refer to:

a. Adverbs:

    i. Of time (most common ex. *għada, imbagħad, illum, ilu, meta, pitgħada, xħin, x'ħin? xi drabi*, etc.).

    ii. Of place (most common ex. *barra, ġewwa, fuq, hawn, hemm, ħdejn, isfel, taħt*, etc.).

    iii. Of quantity (most common ex. *aktar, anqas, biss, biżżejjed, iżjed, iżżejjed, kemm? Kemm-il darba*).

    iv. Of negation (most common ex. *le, mhux, qatt, imkien, xejn*, etc.).

    v. Of affirmation (most common ex. *iva, tajjeb, veru, tassew, kollox sew*, etc.).

b. Conjunctions (most common ex. *biex, meta, imma, li, jew, u*, etc.).

c. Prepositions (most common ex. *bejn, fuq, isfel, quddiem, taħt*, etc.).

d. Interjections (most common ex. *ajma, aħħ, jaqq*, etc.).

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✓ **Adjectives**

Different comparative degrees of adjectives (preferably formed by one word):

a. Positive: *sabih, qadim, gholi.*

b. Comparative: *isbah, eqdem, oghla.*

c. Superlative: *l-isbah, l-eqdem, l-oghla.*

✓ **Gender of nouns and adjectives**

a. Masculine:

   i. Nouns and adjectives ending in a consonant:

     Ex. nouns: kelb, hmar, żarbun.

     Ex. adjectives: sabih, ikrah, qasir.

     Refer also to exceptions, ex. *Alla, art, għajn.*

   ii. Nouns ending in vowels i or u:

     Ex. noun: gidi, tosku.

b. Feminine:

   i. Nouns and adjectives ending in a.

     Ex. nouns: kelba, hmara, żarbuna.

     Ex. adjectives: sabiha, kerha, qasira.

     Refer also to exceptions, ex. *Alla, qmis.*

✓ **Numbers of nouns and adjectives**

a. Singular.

b. Dual: emphasis on body parts and time (*Għadd Imtenni: saqajn, sentejn*).

c. Plural:

   i. Sound plural (*plural sħiħ* formed by the suffixes: *a, an, at, ien, iet, i, ijiet, in, s*).

   ii. Broken plural (*plural miksur*: show different patterns).

✓ **Pronouns**

a. Personal:

   i. Independent (*jien/a, int/i, hu/wa, hi/ja, aħna, intom, huma*).

   ii. The negative of personal pronouns (for this level: *m'jienx, m'intix, mhux, mhix, m'aħniex, m'intomx, mhumiex*).

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iii. Pronominal suffixes (show the variants, i.e., for nouns and prepositions *i/ija, ek/k/ok, u/h, ha, na, kom, hom*, for verbs *ni, ek/k, u/h, ha, na, kom, hom*).

b. Revise demonstrative (*dan, din, dawn, dak, dik, dawk*).

c. Revise interrogative (ex. *Min?, Xi/ x'?, Liema?*).

√ Verbs

a. Imperative:

    i. Reference to trilateral and quadrilateral verbs of Semitic origin (ex. kiser, we*rw*er), Romance (ex. *eduka, bati*) and Anglo-Saxon (ex. *ipprintja, ixxuttja*) origin.

b. Present:

    i. Revise the rule: n, t, j, t to the imperative singular and n, t, j, to the imperative plural to form the present. Apply this rule to verbs of Semitic (ex. *israq, ifrah*), Romance (ex. *eduka, bati*) and Anglo-Saxon (ex. *ipprintja, ixxuttja*) origin with the imperatives starting with a vowel.

    ii. Refer to the conjugation of the imperatives which start with a consonant (ex. *werwer, poġġi*).

    iii. Refer to verbs where the conjugation prefix *t* assimilates with consonants ċ, d, n, s, r, x, ż, z (ex. *indawwar, iddawwar, idawwar, iddawwar, indawru, iddawru, idawru*).

    iv. Refer to verbs where the conjugation prefix *n* assimilates with consonants l, m, r (ex. *immur, tmur, imur, tmur, immorru, tmorru, imorru*).

    v. Conjugate a sample of the all the categories in the 1st Trilateral Verb Form (i.e., *L-ewwel forma: Shih, Shih Trux, Dghajjef Xebbiehi, Dghajjef Mohfi, Dghajjef Nieqes*). Do not mention other verb forms.

c. Past:

    i. Refer to the third person masculine singular and the roots of Semitic verbs (*mamma* and *gherq*) and the stem of Romance and Anglo-Saxon origin (ex. *mamma* and *zokk morfemikua*).

    ii. Show the conjugation of the 1st Trilateral Verb Form (i.e. *L-ewwel forma: Shih, Shih Trux, Dghajjef Xebbiehi, Dghajjef Mohfi, Dghajjef Nieqes*). Emphasis on the weak verb (*Verb Dghajjef Nieqes: mexa* ex. *mxejt, mxejt, mexa, mxiet, mxejna,*

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mxejtu, mxew).

    iii. Use the endings used in the conjugation of Semitic Weak Verb (*Dghajjef Nieqes*) to conjugate verbs of Romance (ex. refer to the *zokk morfemiku bat*: *batejt, batejt, bata, batiet, batejna, batejtu, batew*) and Anglo-Saxon (ex. *zokk morfemiku print*: *ipprintjajt, ipprintjajt, ipprintja, ipprintjat, ippritjajna, ippritjajtu, ipprintjaw*) origin.

d. Negative:

    i. Basic rules: *fetah=ma fetahx, beka=ma bekiex, waqa'= ma waqax*.

    ii. Negating the imperative: *tohrogx, tpejjipx*.

e. Future (the use of ħa, se/r ex. *ħa nohrog, se nohorġu*).

✓ Numbers

Revise:

a. Cardinal:

    i. From 1–20 (ex. *wiehed, tnejn, tlieta, erbgha, hamsa, sitta, sebgha, tmienja, disgha, ghaxra, ħdax, tnax, tlettax, erbatax, ħmistax, sittax sbatax, tmintax, dsatax, ghoxrin*).

    ii. The hyphenated –il (11–19 ex. *11-il kelb, 12-il pitazz*, etc.).

    iii. Reference to compound numbers from 21 to 99 (ex. *wiehed u ghoxrin, tnejn u ghoxrin, tlieta u ghoxrin*, etc.).

b. Ordinal:

    i. Ordinal (ex. *l-ewwel, it-tieni, it-tielet, ir-raba', il-hames, is-sitt, is-seba', it-tmien, id-disa', l-ghaxar*).

    ii. Revise that the other ordinal numbers are formed by adding the definite article to the cardinal numbers (ex. Ġejt *il-wiehed u ghoxrin* fl-eżami).

c. Revise *Time words* and consolidate with more examples (ex. *neqsin kwart, u kwart, u nofs, nofs siegha, hames minuti ohra, ta' filghodu, ta' filghaxija, nofsillejl, nofsinhar, billejl*, etc.).

VOCABULARY OBJECTIVES

This vocabulary level is a continuation and reinforcement of Level A1.

To reach the communicative objectives of level A2 you need to familiarise yourself with these vocabulary topics:

Vocabulary

- ✓ Aspirations
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Feelings
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Hobbies
- ✓ Jobs
- ✓ Living conditions
- ✓ Maltese customs

- ✓ Maltese food
- ✓ Media
- ✓ More animals and creatures of the earth
- ✓ More directions
- ✓ Opinions
- ✓ Popular feasts in Malta and Gozo
- ✓ Services
- ✓ Well-known places around Malta and Gozo

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Maltese for Foreigners

Syllabus

Based on the

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Level B1

Intermediate

Charles Daniel Saliba

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Malta 2013

The Author

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3

Table 1

The levels of proficiency		
A Basic user	A 1	Breakthrough
	A 2	Waystage
B Independent user	B 1	Threshold
	B 2	Vantage
C Proficient user	C 1	Effective operational proficiency
	C 2	Mastery

Although it is difficult to count or imagine the number of hours a learner needs to achieve a particular level, the *Association of Language Testers of Europe* provides guidelines on the number of teaching hours needed to achieve a particular level, as indicated by the list in Table 2 (*Teacher's Guide to the CEFR*, 7).

Table 2

Approximate teaching hours needed to achieve each level	
A 1	90–100 hours
A 2	180–200 hours
B 1	350–400 hours
B 2	500–600 hours
C 1	700–800 hours
C 2	1,000–1,200 hours

With this global scale, achievement and learning could be measured across languages, and this could help tutors, academics, researchers and course book writers "to decide on curriculum and syllabus content and to choose appropriate course books" (*Teacher's Guide to the CEFR*, 4).

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4

COMMUNICATIVE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course you will be able to do the following:

Listening

I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.

- I can understand straightforward factual information about common everyday or job-related topics, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided speech is clearly articulated in a generally familiar accent.

- I can generally follow the main points of extended discussion around me, provided speech is clearly articulated in standard dialect.

- I can follow in outline straightforward short talks on familiar topics provided these are delivered in clearly articulated standard speech.

- I can follow a lecture or talk within my own field, provided the subject matter is familiar and the presentation straightforward and clearly structured.

- I can understand simple technical information, such as operating instructions for everyday equipment.

- I can follow detailed directions.

- I can understand the main points of radio news bulletins and simpler recorded material about familiar subjects delivered relatively slowly and clearly.

- I can follow short talks related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

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Reading

I can understand texts that consist mainly of high-frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.

- I can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to my field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension.
- I can find and understand relevant information in everyday material, such as letters, brochures and short official documents.
- I can recognise significant points in straightforward newspaper articles on familiar subjects.
- I can identify the main conclusions in clearly signalled argumentative texts.
- I can understand clearly written, straightforward instructions for a piece of equipment.
- I can read and understand texts related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

Spoken interaction

I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and immediate need, or current events).

- I can communicate with some confidence on familiar routine and non-routine matters related to my interests and professional field. I can exchange, check and confirm information, deal with less-routine situations and explain why something is a problem. I can express thoughts on more abstract, cultural topics such as films, books, music, etc.
- I can follow clearly articulated speech directed at me in everyday conversation, though will sometimes have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases.
- I can maintain a conversation or discussion but may sometimes be difficult

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to follow when trying to say exactly what I would like to.

- I can express and respond to feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest and indifference.

- I can cope with less routine situations in shops, post offices, banks, e.g. returning an unsatisfactory purchase.

- I can deal with most situations likely to arise when making travel arrangements through an agent or when actually travelling, e.g. asking passengers where to disembark for an unfamiliar destination.

- I can find out and pass on straightforward factual information and describe how to do something, giving detailed instructions.

- I can provide concrete information required in an interview/consultation (e.g. describe symptoms to a doctor), but with limited precision.

Spoken production

I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.

- I can reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of one of a variety of subjects within my field of interest, presenting it as a linear sequence of points.

- I can relate details of unpredictable occurrences, e.g. an accident.

- I can describe events, real or imagined.

- I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions.

- I can develop an argument well enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time.

- I can give a clear, systematically developed presentation, with highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.

- I can depart spontaneously from a prepared text and follow up interesting points raised by members of the audience, often showing remarkable fluency

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and ease of expression.

- I can produce short discussions related to the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

Writing

I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.

- I can write accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions in simple connected text.
- I can write a description of an event or a recent trip – real or imagined.
- I can narrate a story.
- I can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
- I can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.
- I can convey information and ideas on abstract as well as concrete topics, check information and ask about or explain problems with reasonable precision.
- I can write notes conveying simple information of immediate relevance to friends, service people, teachers and others who feature in my everyday life, getting across comprehensibly the points I feel are important.
- I can take messages communicating enquiries and explaining problems.
- I can write texts on the themes listed in the vocabulary section.*

Sociolinguistic appropriateness

- I can perform and respond to a wide range of language functions, using their most common exponents in a neutral register.
- I am aware of the salient politeness conventions and can act appropriately.
- I am aware of, and look out for signs of, the most significant differences between the customs, usages, attitudes, values and beliefs prevalent in the

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community concerned and those of my own.

- I know more about Maltese culture, including gestures, customs, Maltese products and Maltese recipes, and past traditions and folklore.*

GRAMMAR OBJECTIVES

This grammar level is a revision and continuation of Level A1 and A2.

To reach the communicative objectives of level B1 you need to know most of these language areas:

Grammar

✓ **The Maltese alphabet**

Consonants and vowels:

    i. The vowels.

    ii. Sun consonants (*ċ, d, n, r, s, t, x, ż, z*).

    iii. Moon consonants (all the other consonants of the Maltese alphabet).

    iv. Liquid consonants (*l, m, n, r, gh*).

✓ **The definite article** (*l-* or *il-* also assimilation of *l-*)

    a. The euphonic vowel (*il-vokali tal-lehen: l-imwejjed, l-iskola, l-isport*).

    b. Particles linked to the article (*fi + l- = fil-, bi +l= bil-* etc.).

        i. Differentiate between: *lil / lill-, ghal / ghall-, bhal /bhall-*

✓ **Particles** (ex. *bi, fi, xi, ma', ta', sa, lil, ghal, bhal*)

    Also refer to:

    a. Adverbs of:

        i. Time (most common ex. *ghada, imbaghad, illum, ilu, meta, pitghada, xhin, x'hin? xi drabi*, etc.).

        ii. Place (most common ex. *barra, ġewwa, fuq, hawn, hemm, hdejn, isfel, taht*, etc.).

        iii. Quantity (most common ex. *aktar, anqas, biss, biżżejjed, iżjed,*

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iżżejjed, kemm? Kemm-il darba).

    iv. Negation (most common ex. *le, mhux, qatt, imkien, xejn,* etc.).

    v. Affirmation (most common ex. *iva, tajjeb, veru, tassew, kollox sew,* etc.).

    vi. Question (most common ex. *għaliex? mnejn? kif? għala?* etc.).

    vii. Manner (most common ex. *sew, sewwa, qajla,* etc.).

  b. Conjunctions (most common ex. *biex, meta, imma, li, jew, u,* etc.).

  c. Prepositions (most common ex. *bejn, fuq, isfel, quddiem, taħt,* etc.).

  d. Interjections (most common ex. *ajma, aħħ, jaqq,* etc.).

✓ Nouns

  a. Gender of nouns (include also similar examples: *serduk-tiġieġa; patri-soru,* etc.).

  b. Numbers:

    i. Revise and consolidate: singular, dual, sound and broken plural.

  c. The collective (ex. *serbut nemel, mazz karti, tadam, langas*).

  d. The formation of:

    i. Mimated nouns (ex. *miżbla, mixtla*).

    ii. Diminutive nouns (ex. *dwejra, trejqa*).

    iii. Verbal nouns (ex. *raqda, mixja, ġirja*).

  e. The construct stat (l-istat kostrutt ex. *dar Ġanni, mart Karmnu, bieb il-belt*).

✓ Synonyms (ex. **verbs:** *fiehem-spjega,* **nouns:** *gazzetta-ġurnal,* **adjectives:** *antik-qadim*)

✓ Pronouns

  a. Personal:

    i. Independent (*jien/a, int/i, hu/wa, hi/ja, aħna, intom, huma*):

      I. The negative of personal pronouns (*m'jienx, m'intix, mhux, mhix, m'aħniex, m'intomx, mhumiex*).

    ii. Pronominal suffixes:

      I. Nouns: *i/ja, ek/k/ok, u/h, ha, na, kom, hom.*

      II. Verbs: *ni, ek/k, u/h, ha, na, kom, hom.*

      III. Prepositions: *i/ja, ek/k, u/h, ha, na, kom, hom.*

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    b. Demonstrative (*dan, din, dawn, dak, dik, dawk*).

    c. Interrogative (ex. *Min? Xi/ x'?, Liema?*).

√ Adjectives

    a. Revise gender of adjectives.

    b. Different comparative degrees of adjectives (including *iżjed, anqas, aktar*):

        i. Positive: *sabiħ, bravu, nadif.*

        ii. Comparative: *isbaħ, aktar bravu, iżjed nadif.*

        iii. Superlative: *l-isbaħ, l-aktar bravu, l-iżjed nadif.*

    c. Diminutive adjectives (ex. *xwejjaħ, ċkejken*).

√ Verbs

    a. The trilateral verbs:

        i. Revise and consolidate the root form (The 1st form – the strong including *Shiħ Trux* and weak verbs i.e. *Xebbieħi, Mohfi, Nieqes*).

        ii. Derived forms of the trilateral verbs (2nd to 10th form).

    b. The quadrilateral verbs (the first form and the derived form).

    c. Verbs of foreign origin.

    d. The imperative.

    e. The imperfect/present (sample conjugated verb of each form).

    f. The perfect/past (sample conjugated verb of each form).

    g. Present participle.

    h. Past participle.

    i. The negative.

    j. Future.

√ The Numerals

    a. Cardinal:

        i. Cardinal numbers from 1–10 and their variations (ex.*wieħed/ waħda, tnejn/żewġ/żewġt, tlieta/tliet/tlitt/tlett*, etc.) and their usage.

        ii. The hyphenated –*il* (11–19).

        iii. Compounded numbers (ex.*wieħed u għoxrin, tnejn u għoxrin*, etc.).

    b. Ordinal (ex. *l-ewwel, it-tieni, it-tielet, ir-raba', il-ħames, is-sitt, is-seba', it-*

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tmien, id-disa', l-ghaxar. Please note the rest are like cardinal numbers, with the article before, except for 100, which is *mitt*).

VOCABULARY OBJECTIVES

This vocabulary level is a continuation and reinforcement of Level A1 and A2.

To reach the communicative objectives of level B1 you need to familiarise yourself with these vocabulary topics:

Vocabulary

- √ Travel and services
- √ Introduction to idiomatic expressions
- √ Differentiation between formal and informal greetings
- √ School surroundings
- √ Familiar objects at school
- √ Temperature
- √ Maltese products and recipes
- √ Health
- √ More feelings
- √ Time

- √ More useful expressions
- √ More detailed personal information
- √ Common expressions in emergency situations

Feedback

Any comments or suggestions on this syllabus? Please send your feedback to:

maltesecourses@yahoo.com

For additional resources to teach Maltese for Foreigners
(including other syllabi), go to:

www.charlesdanielsaliba.com

Appendix H

Resources

H.0 Introduction

      This appendix focuses on the creation of resources for the three syllabi for MSL courses, while catering to the different needs expressed by learners and teachers. Since the syllabi were based on a communicative approach, including a list of vocabulary and grammar objectives, the created resources encapsulate all these areas. The goal is to establish a minimum standard for all the learning groups in order to create a level of conformity, which in turn will simplify exam preparation for learners and teachers.

H.1 Synopsis of Main Needs Expressed by Learners and Teachers

      The learners and teachers expressed the former's need to practise the four skills, although learners were especially concerned with improving speaking proficiency. The research showed that this should be done through the inclusion of day-to-day topics. The grammar and vocabulary lessons should be maintained but enhanced with more tasks and repetitive lessons for reinforcement. Thus, different sources and methods indicated the need for additional speaking and listening activities, without ignoring practices already in use; there should be more pair work, less copying from the whiteboard and more engagement in language practice. Since there was a strong feeling that the learning materials used in the courses did not meet the learners' and teachers' needs and expectations, it was suggested that the notes given by the teachers be retained and reinforced by a coursebook, word lists and more listening resources. Thus, the newly created resources could be amalgamated with the present reading, listening, writing and speaking activities, which should be retained, reinforced and used more effectively, from the learners' and teachers' perspectives. Since culture should not be neglected, it was also included in this series.

H.2 *Maltese for Foreigners* Series: Snippet View

      Considering the needs expressed by learners and teachers during the research, a Maltese/English book series entitled *Maltese for Foreigners* was created (Figure 8). This series, which is based on the CEFR, consists of three levels corresponding to the three syllabi.

Figure 8. A schematic diagram of the Maltese for Foreigners series

Level A1 (Beginner to Elementary) consists of three books: *My First 750 Words in Maltese*, *Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context* and *Speaking Maltese 1*. These three books are intended for beginners.

Level A2 (Elementary to Pre-Intermediate) includes the book *Speaking Maltese 2*. The publishing of *Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context 2* has been postponed to receive feedback about the approach used in *Maltese Grammar Essentials 1*, which in turn will help in creating the grammar book for Level A2. However, *Speaking Maltese 2* was published to fill the lacuna in listening and speaking activities, as expressed by learners and teachers in the needs analysis.

Level B1 (Intermediate) includes two bilingual reading texts: *Reality* and *Rocco Learns Karate*. In the future, *Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context 3* will be published to complete this level.

The series contains a CD with the audio files linked to the books so learners can listen to native Maltese speakers reading the texts and the dialogues.

H.3 A Detailed View of Level A1 Books

H.3.1 My First 750 Words in Maltese

Since MSL learners in MFL-1 prioritised learning vocabulary, for the beginner level (A1), it is essential to have a workbook dedicated to frequently used words. Since the majority of MSL learners in Malta understand English, the workbook was written bilingually. However, to accommodate students who do not have a good grasp of the English language, every vocabulary section was reinforced with images corresponding to the terms. This workbook contains 20 topics retrieved from the needs analysis (Figures 9–12 show the first lesson as an example). Each topic has the following sequence: A set of new words per topic is presented on one page, with a picture of each word, the word in Maltese and its English translation (Figure 9), and the pronunciation of each Maltese word on the CD. The next two pages contain varied exercises (Figures 10–11). The last page provides the vocabulary list learned with the plural (or dual,

collective or female) form, the English translation of all the words and a practice section where learners listen to the CD and write all the new words (Figure 12).

Figure 9. Screen shot of page 7 of My First 750 Words in Maltese

Exercise 1

✎ Choose the Maltese word that matches the picture.

	a)	kuċċarina	sarvetta	sikkina
	b)	tazza	flixkun	borma
	ċ)	plattin	platt	kuċċarina
	d)	tazza	melħ	flixkun
	e)	inbid	ħall	melħ

Exercise 2

✎ Can you join the two halves of the words?

a) bor • • kun
b) flix • • za
ċ) imgħar • • ma
d) taz • • ti
e) plat • • fa
f) zok • • kina
ġ) kikk • • kor
g) sik • • ra

Exercise 3

✎ Match the Maltese words and their plurals.

a) kuċċarina • • kuċċarini
b) borma • • frieket
ċ) flixkun • • skieken
d) furketta • • imgħaref
e) imgħarfa • • platti
f) platt • • plattini
ġ) plattina • • tazzi
g) sarvetta • • borom
għ) sikkina • • srievet
h) tazza • • fliexken

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Figure 10. Screen shot of page 8 of My First 750 Words in Maltese

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Exercise 4

✎ See if you can find these 5 objects in the word search.

f	ħ	s	s	b	t	n	b
ż	u	a	i	q	n	ie	ż
m	ċ	r	k	j	i	m	a
e	a	s	k	m	p	l	r
l	ġ	għ	i	e	m	r	ħ
ħ	p	g	n	u	t	t	a
ċ	b	ż	a	f	u	t	l
s	a	r	v	e	t	t	a

Exercise 5

✎ Fill in the crossword.

N.B. The vowel *ie* and the consonant *għ* are considered as one letter, therefore they should be written in one box.

1. Cutlery piece used to cut. (7)
2. On the dining table, it is the pepper's partner. (4)
3. Made of fermented grape juice. (5)
4. Generally used to cook food. (5)
5. I stir my coffee with it. (9)
6. Used to wipe the mouth and hands. (8)
7. Sour liquid used as a salad dressing ingredient. (4)
8. Utensil used when eating soup. (6)
9. An alternative to a chopstick. (8)
10. Drinking vessel. (5)

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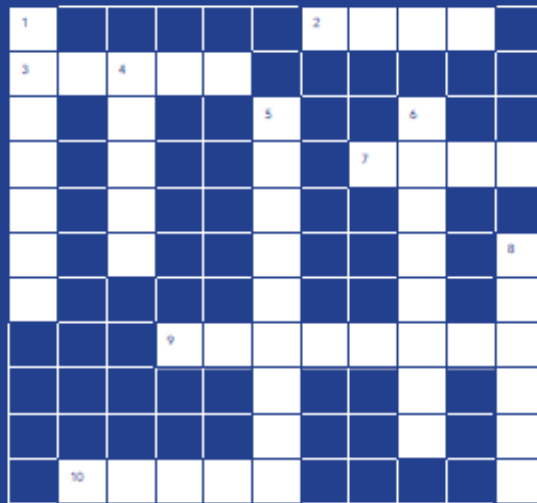
Figure 11. Screen shot of page 9 of My First 750 Words in Maltese

🎧 Listen to each word on your CD. (Track 1A)
💬 Now read the Maltese words aloud.

	Kelma	Plural	Traduzzjoni
1.	borma	borom	pan/s
2.	bżar		pepper
3.	flixkun	fliexken	bottle/s
4.	furketta	frieket	fork/s
5.	ħall		vinegar
6.	imgħarfa	imgħaref	spoon/s
7.	inbid	inbejjed	wine/s
8.	kikkra	kikkri	cup/s
9.	kuċċarina	kuċċarini	teaspoon/s
10.	melħ		salt
11.	platt	platti	plate/s
12.	plattina	plattini	side plate/s
13.	sarvetta	srievet	napkin/s
14.	sikkina	skieken	knife/knives
15.	tazza	tazzi	glass/es
16.	zokkor		sugar

☑ Let's see how much you learned.
🎧 Listen to the words on the CD. (Track 1A)
✍ Write them down.
✋ Before you start, close the book!

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Figure 12. Screen shot of page 10 of My First 750 Words in Maltese

Each topic covers the three skills of listening, reading and writing. In this book, pronunciation is prioritised over speaking. The exercises vary from topic to topic and become longer and more complicated as the book progresses to sentence building and learning grammar implicitly. A case in point involves the two exercises shown in Figure 13. In exercise 2, learners find the odd one out, leaving the singular word and its plural form. In this case, the plural forms given are all broken (irregular) types. In exercise 3, learners match the singular with the plural form of each word, but this time, the latter is formed by adding letters at the end of the word. In this case, the plurals given are the sound (regular) types. Thus, through implicit learning, students eventually comprehend that plural words in Maltese can be formed by breaking the word forms and inserting new letters or by adding vowels and/or consonants at the end.

Figure 13. Screen shot of exercises 2 and 3 on page 30 of My First 750 Words in Maltese

Culture is also implicitly included, as illustrated in Figure 14. While students practise the vocabulary pertaining to the colours of the flags or coats of arms, they learn about the flags used in Malta.

Figure 14. Screen shot of exercise 4 on page 57 of My First 750 Words in Maltese

Review sections consist of mixed exercises on the previous five topics covered and generally end with sentences. This is done to expose learners to interesting language that they understand; at the same time, the review section contains structures beyond the learners' current levels of competence (Krashen, 1982, p. 20).

The book also contains the answer keys to all exercises to help students learn on their own or practise before or after each lesson at their own pace. They can also review material on their own if they missed a lesson. The book was carefully designed to make it learner friendly and attractive. Since it is the first book in the *Maltese for Foreigners* series, students should have a pleasant learning journey at the start to motivate them to continue. Wherever possible (due to copyright issues, image resolution and adaptability to the book style), the images in this book are authentic pictures taken locally to promote Maltese culture implicitly. With this book, learners will discover the Maltese

language; enrich their vocabulary; learn Maltese expressions; improve their reading, writing, listening and pronunciation skills; and explore Maltese culture and geography.

H.3.2 Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context

Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context comprises 20 lessons covering basic grammatical concepts. Each lesson is composed of eight sections. The first part of each lesson is the *context*, which learners initially listen to on the CD and then read the text. Contexts vary from lesson to lesson, including authentic, semi-authentic and non-authentic situations. This section serves as the starting point for the key areas of Maltese grammar. Next, the *discussion and reflections* section is split into two parts. The first part tests whether the learners have understood the lesson topic. The second part consists of grammar questions to be addressed in the remaining part of the lesson.

In the third section, the *translation* of the context into English, the main aim is (if the need arises) to help learners understand the context without constantly looking up the words in a dictionary. Learners are advised beforehand that they should initially figure out the meaning on their own.

The *grammar explanation* section explains the grammar in a concise manner, generally in point form. Plenty of examples allow learners to become aware of certain analogies used in Semitic languages.

Cultural note is a section of about 120 words that addresses a topic related in some way to the lesson's main topic. This section aims to familiarise the learners with the Maltese culture and islands.

The *exercises* help learners practise what they have learned. Although initially the exercises are easy, as the lessons progress, they increase in complexity. In fact, the words in the sentences are not translated to compel learners to guess their meanings or consult the dictionary. This step forces them to proceed to the next cognitive level.

The next section, *self-assessment*, helps learners focus once again on the grammar aspect of the lesson. Its questions aim to give learners time to reflect on what was learned.

The *activity* section consists of various exercises related to the lesson's main topic or the grammar topic. The majority of these activities comprise brief, realistic dialogues. Learners can listen to the dialogues on the CD and then practise them in pairs.

The *speaking and listening reinforcement* section is found in the majority of the lessons. Its aim is to practise the particular context or grammar learned using a real-life scenario. For an example, see the second lesson shown in Figures 15–19.

Lesson 2

Deskrizzjoni: *Il-familja tiegħi*

🎧 **Isma' din id-deskrizzjoni fuq is-CD.** (TRACK 2)
🎧 *Listen to this description on your CD. (TRACK 2)*

David kiteb dan il-paragrafu fuq il-familja tiegħu:

> Il-familja tiegħi hija magħmula minn erba' (4) persuni. Jien it-tifel iż-żgħir tal-familja. Għandi għaxar snin (10) u għadni mmur l-iskola primarja tar-raħal. Għandi oħti ikbar minni. Jisimha Caroline u għandha erbatax-il sena (14). Hi tmur l-iskola sekondarja f'raħal ieħor. Ommi jisimha Marija. Hi għandha tmienja u tletin sena (38) u hija mara tad-dar. Missieri, Felix, għandu erbgħin sena (40) u jaħdem bħala veterinarju. Għandu l-klinika privata tiegħu. Aħna noqogħdu l-Mellieħa f'dar imdaqqsa. In-nanna Tereża kienet toqgħod magħna imma issa mietet. Għandna wkoll kelb jismu Niko.

💬 **Aqra din id-deskrizzjoni u wieġeb il-mistoqsijiet ta' wara.**
💬 *Read this description and answer the following questions.*

Discussion and reflections

1. How many people are in David's family?
2. What is his mother's name?
3. Where do David and his family live?

Now look at the first sentence of the following description: **"Il-familja tiegħi hija magħmula minn erba' (4) persuni."**

4. Which word in this sentence means "the family"?
5. Do you notice the first two letters that are attached to this word with a dash?
6. What is the function of this addition (il-) when it is added to a word?

Translation: *My family*

David wrote the following paragraph about his family:

> My family is made up of four (4) people. I am the youngest son of the family. I am ten (10) years old and I still go to the village's primary school. I have an elder sister. Her name is Caroline and she is fourteen (14) years old. She goes to a secondary school in another village. My mother's name is Marija. She is thirty-eight (38) years old and she is a housewife. My father, Felix, is forty (40) years old and works as a veterinarian. He has his own private clinic. We live in Mellieħa in a medium-sized

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Figure 15. Screen shot of page 15 of Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context

house. My grandmother Tereża used to live with us but now she is dead. We also have a dog named Niko.

Grammar explanation

The Article / *L-Artiklu*

➡ The Maltese article is formed by adding **l-** or **il-** to the beginning of a noun or an adjective.

Ex.

| a family | ➡ | familja | the family | ➡ | il-familja |
| a cousin | ➡ | kuġin | the cousin | ➡ | il-kuġin |

➡ Therefore, the article is used to define or determine a noun or an adjective.

➡ If the word after the article starts with a **vowel**, the **l-** must be used. Remember that the vowels are **a, e, i, ie, o** and **u**. Generally, this rule is also applied to the consonants **gh** and **h**.

Ex.

| the mother | ➡ | l-omm | the joy | ➡ | l-hena |
| the bird | ➡ | l-ghasfur | the brothers / sisters | ➡ | l-ahwa |

➡ In the Maltese alphabet, there are two types of consonants: the **sun consonants** and the **moon consonants**. The alphabet contains the following nine sun consonants: **ċ, d, n, r, s, t, x, ż** and **z**. The alphabet also contains the following 15 moon consonants: **b, f, ġ, g, gh, h, ħ, j, k, l, m, p, q, v** and **w**.

➡ If a word starts with a sun consonant, the article must correspond accordingly, i.e. the consonant l of **il-** or **l-** changes to match the first consonant of the word.

Ex.

the ring	➡	iċ-ċurkett	the house	➡	id-dar
the fire	➡	in-nar	the man	➡	ir-raġel
the taxi	➡	it-taksi	the scarf	➡	ix-xalpa
the oil	➡	iż-żejt	the sugar	➡	iz-zokkor

➡ The moon consonants take only **il-** or **l-**.

Ex.

| the sea | ➡ | il-bahar | the needle | ➡ | il-labra |

➡ The vowel **i** of **il-** is called *il-vokali tal-leħen* (euphonic vowel). As already indicated, if the word after the article starts with a vowel, gh or h, or if the word preceding the article ends with a vowel, the euphonic vowel is eliminated.

Ex.

1. Dan l-ors li rajt.
   This is the bear that I saw.
2. Dan huwa l-pitazz.   (Please note that due to the vowel preceding the article, the euphonic vowel had to be removed.)
   This is the copybook.

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Figure 16. Screen shot of page 16 of Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context

Cultural Note

The Maltese Families / *Il-Familji Maltin*

In Maltese culture, the family is given a lot of importance. Most families tend to remain close to each other, even when the children have grown up and are married. In fact, it is quite common for many families to gather for Sunday lunch at the parents' house. This happens even after the children are married and have children. Families tend to be very supportive towards the children's achievements and failures. Many grandparents take care of their grandchildren when parents are working. When the grandparents get sick or old, it is quite common for their children to take care of them. Such a culture is possible due to the small size of the islands, which makes daily contact possible.

Exercises

1) ☊ **Listen to the pronunciation of the words both with and without the article.**

➤ **Article in front of vowels.** (☊ TRACK 2A)

1.	arloġġ *(a watch)*	➡	l-arloġġ
2.	elf *(a thousand)*	➡	l-elf
3.	iben *(a son)*	➡	l-iben
4.	iebes *(hard)*	➡	l-iebes
5.	oħxon *(fat)*	➡	l-oħxon
6.	uffiċċju *(an office)*	➡	l-uffiċċju

➤ **Article in front of the sun consonants.** (☊ TRACK 2B)

1.	ċavetta *(a key)*	➡	iċ-ċavetta
2.	dudu *(a worm)*	➡	id-dudu
3.	nannu *(a grandpa)*	➡	in-nannu
4.	raġel *(a man)*	➡	ir-raġel
5.	sodda *(a bed)*	➡	is-sodda
6.	tieqa *(a window)*	➡	it-tieqa
7.	xadin *(a monkey)*	➡	ix-xadin
8.	żiemel *(a horse)*	➡	iż-żiemel
9.	zalza *(a sauce)*	➡	iz-zalza

➤ **Article in front of the moon consonants.** (☊ TRACK 2C)

1.	ballun *(a ball)*	➡	il-ballun
2.	friġġ *(a fridge)*	➡	il-friġġ
3.	ġnien *(a garden)*	➡	il-ġnien

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Figure 17. Screen shot of page 17 of Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context

4.	granċ *(a crab)*	➡	il-granċ
5.	għar *(a cave)*	➡	l-għar
6.	hena *(a joy)*	➡	l-hena
7.	ħabib *(a friend)*	➡	il-ħabib
8.	jott *(a yacht)*	➡	il-jott
9.	ktieb *(a book)*	➡	il-ktieb
10.	libsa *(a dress)*	➡	il-libsa
11.	mara *(a woman)*	➡	il-mara
12.	papra *(a duck)*	➡	il-papra
13.	qalb *(a heart)*	➡	il-qalb
14.	vapur *(a ship)*	➡	il-vapur
15.	wied *(a valley)*	➡	il-wied

2) ✎ **Read the above list and try to pronounce each word like the recording that you listened to before.**

3) 🎧 ✎ **Listen to** TRACK 2D **and choose the correct word.**

a)	hawha	☐	il-hawha	☐
b)	banana	☐	il-banana	☐
c)	lumija	☐	il-lumija	☐
d)	ċirasa	☐	iċ-ċirasa	☐
e)	għenba	☐	l-għenba	☐

4) ✎ **Add the correct article to the word.**

a) Dan _____ missier.

b) Din _____ omm.

c) Dawn _____ tfal.

d) Din _____ kelba.

e) Din _____ qattusa.

f) Din hi _____ familja kollha.

5) ✎ **Translate these words or expressions into Maltese.**

a) the family ➡ _____

b) the letter ➡ _____

c) a mother ➡ _____

d) a bow ➡ _____

e) a bird ➡ _____

f) the trunk ➡ _____

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Figure 18. Screen shot of page 18 of Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context

g) a van ➡ _____

h) the frog ➡ _____

Self-assessment

1. How is the Maltese article formed?
2. What happens if there is a vowel in the vicinity?
3. What happens if the word starts with a sun consonant?
4. Do you know all of the sun and moon consonants?

Activity

🎧 **Listen to the dialogue:** *My family.* (🎧 TRACK 2E)

🗣 **Practice these phrases in pairs.**

Kelliem 1:	Bonġu. X'Jismek?
Kelliem 2:	L-għodwa t-tajba. Jisimni _____. U int?
Kelliem 1:	Jien _____. Kemm fiha membri l-familja tiegħek?
Kelliem 2:	Il-familja tiegħi fiha _____. U tiegħek?
	(1= wieħed, 2= tnejn, 3=tlieta, 4=erbgħa, 5=ħamsa, 6=sitta)
Kelliem 1:	Tiegħi fiha _____.
Kelliem 2:	Tajjeb. Issa se nħallik. Nitkellmu għada. Narak.
Kelliem 1:	Narak. Saħħa.

Speaking and Listening Reinforcement

🗣🎧🗨 **Practice more …** *Speaking Maltese,* **Chapter 6,** *Waiting for the Arriva,* **page 21.**

Figure 19. Screen shot of page 19 of Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context

Many of the photos used in the book were taken in Malta. Some chapters contain sets of photos about prominent parts of the islands. Figure 20 shows sample pictures from the second lesson.
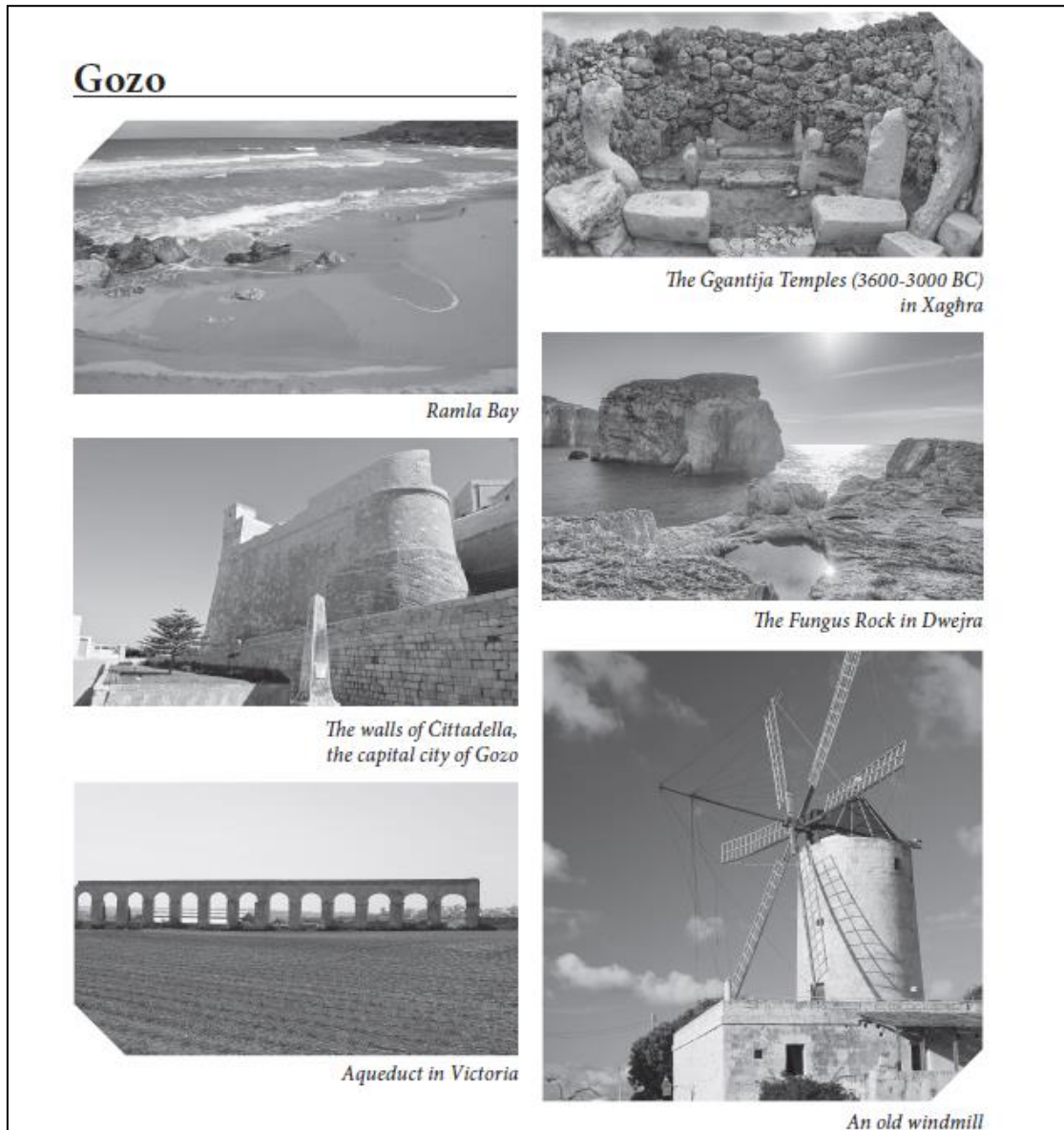
Figure 20. Screen shot of page 60 of Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context

The instructions in the book are initially bilingual and then progress in stages until they are all completely in Maltese. For example, the instructions for the context in the first two lessons are bilingual; however, from then on, since all the titles of the contexts are similar, they are written in Maltese. The same applies to the titles of the exercises and activities: from lessons 1−10, the instructions are in English only; from

lessons 11–15, they are bilingual; and lessons 16–20 are in Maltese only. Finally, two sample exams at the end of the book test whether the learner has reached Level A1 in the four skills. With this book, learners will discover Maltese grammar basics; continue to enrich their vocabulary; learn Maltese expressions; improve their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills; and explore Maltese culture and geography.

H.3.3 Speaking Maltese

Speaking Maltese is a bilingual book containing 22 real-life scenarios. Its dialogues are printed on a spread page, with the English version on the left-hand side and the Maltese version on the right side, as shown in Figures 21–22.

With the help of dialogues and important expressions, learners become more familiar with the Maltese language and culture. On the CD, they can listen to various dialogues being read in standard Maltese by native speakers. By reading the texts and imitating the native speakers' pronunciation, learners enhance their reading and pronunciation skills. Learners can opt to do the exercise as a role-play, thereby improving their speaking skills. After reading and practising a dialogue, learners are advised to try it with a native speaker. This idea emerged from the literature review. According to some interactionists, when learners are given the chance to engage in conversational interactions with their peers or tutors, they participate in meaningful activities that require them to "negotiate for meaning" and express themselves clearly to arrive at a mutual understanding (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 122). The activity also presents an opportunity to repair breakdowns in communication (Pica, 1994, p. 510), especially when native speakers interact with non-native ones, because the former want to avoid conversational trouble (Long, 1981, p. 265).

At the bakery

Baker:	Good morning. You're early this morning!
Marija:	Good morning. Yes, I woke up early to buy bread because I am going to Comino.
Baker:	What do you want?
Marija:	A small loaf, a bread roll and a bun, please.
Baker:	Here they are.
Marija:	Thank you very much. How much?
Baker:	You got a small loaf for seventy cents (70c), a bread roll for sixty cents (60c) and a bun for twenty cents (20c). They cost you one euro and fifty cents (€1.50) in total.
Marija:	Here it is; check if it's the exact amount.
Baker:	The right amount. Thank you. Good day.
Marija:	Thank you and good day.

IMPORTANT EXPRESSIONS (Listen to track 3a)	
Maltese Expression	**Translation**
1	Bl-eżatt.	The right amount.
2	Hawn huma.	Here they are.
3	Kmieni dalgħodu!	You're early this morning.
4	Xi trid?	What do you want?

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Figure 21. Screen shot of page 14 of Speaking Maltese

Għand tal-ħobż

Furnar:	Bonġu. Kmieni dalgħodu!
Marija:	Bonġu. Iva, qomt kmieni nixtri l-ħobż għax sejra Kemmuna.
Furnar:	Xi trid?
Marija:	Ħobża żgħira, bezzun u panina, jekk jogħġbok.
Furnar:	Hawn huma.
Marija:	Grazzi ħafna. Kemm?
Furnar:	Mela għandek ħobża żgħira sebgħin ċenteżmu (70c), bezzun, sittin ċenteżmu (60c) u panina, għoxrin ċenteżmu (20c). B'kollox għandek ewro u ħamsin ċenteżmu (€1.50).
Marija:	Hawn huma; iċċekkja għandekx bl-eżatt.
Furnar:	Bl-eżatt. Grazzi. Il-ġurnata t-tajba.
Marija:	Grazzi lilek u l-kumplament tal-ġurnata t-tajba.

NEW VERBS

	Verb fid-djalogu	Mamma	Imperattiv	Gherq / zokk morfemiku	Definizzjoni
1	iċċekkja	iċċekkja	iċċekkja / iċċekkjaw	ċekk	to check
2	nixtri	xtara	ixtri / ixtru	x-r-j	to buy
3	qomt	qam	qum / qumu	q-w-m	to awake
4	trid	ried		r-j-d	to want

15

Figure 22. Screen shot of page 15 of Speaking Maltese

At the end of each dialogue is a table with some of the verbs used in that dialogue. This information helps learners conjugate verbs in the present tense (imperfect tense). Knowing the word roots is also important in a Semitic language such as Maltese because it helps learners guess their meanings, and it is also useful during Maltese grammar lessons. Moreover, the verb definitions aid learners' understanding so they can avoid constantly looking them up in a dictionary. However, if a verb is not included in the table, learners have to read the parallel translations to work out the meaning or search for it in a Maltese dictionary.

Figure 23. Screen shot of page 60 of Speaking Maltese

After each dialogue, learners will find a box with typical expressions and their translations. These expressions are frequently used in day-to-day conversations. Related to this, at the end of the book are five round-ups, as shown in Figure 23.

These dialogues have also been recorded in dialect form. It is made clear that the dialect version is not intended for beginners. However, intermediate and advanced learners, as well as those who study Semitic languages, should listen to these dialogues since it is very common for Maltese people to switch to a dialect in informal discourse. With this book, learners will upgrade their knowledge of the Maltese language; expand their vocabulary; learn more Maltese expressions, names of places and people; hear each dialogue in both standard Maltese and dialect versions read by native speakers; enhance their reading, listening and speaking skills; and deepen their understanding of Maltese culture.

H.4 A Detailed View of the Published Level A2 Book

H.4.1 Speaking Maltese 2

Speaking Maltese 2 is a bilingual book containing 18 real-life scenarios that help learners achieve Level A2. The book structure is like that of *Speaking Maltese* (A1), except for the verb box, which has been eliminated at this level. The dialogues are more complex, reflecting Level A2, as shown in Figures 24–25. The learning objectives are similar to those of the previous book.

I need the service of an electrician

Marija: Hello. Is this Ruben Camilleri, the electrician?

Ruben: It's me. How may I help you?

Marija: I'm Marija Grima. We have that flat in Buġibba, remember? You did the electrical work on it.

Ruben: Yes, Marija. I recognised your voice. What's up?

Marija: This week we went to Buġibba to clean up the flat so that we could stay there for the summer. We discovered that during the winter, water seeped through the walls. In fact, when we tried to switch on the lights, the circuit breaker started going off. We thought it could be because of the water. I already talked to the plasterer so that he could mend the damage. Could you come to check things up, please? Because we cannot stay without electricity.

Ruben: OK. This evening after five (5pm), I will come to check things up.

Marija: Thank you.

***

Marija: Come in, come in.

Ruben: Let's see what happened... I'd say something is putting the circuit breaker off. Switch on the air conditioner only and switch all the other devices off... no, it seems this is not the problem... Switch on the computer... neither. The telly? That's it. So it's the problem. Most probably some water penetrated the telly. Be patient for now; don't turn on the telly because it won't work. Tomorrow call someone to mend it for you.

Marija: OK. Thank you very much. How much do I owe you?

Ruben: Ten euro (€10) in all, please.

Marija: Here you go. Thank you.

10

Figure 24. Screen shot of page 10 of Speaking Maltese 2

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Għandi bżonn is-servizz ta' elektrixin

Marija: Ħelow. Hemmhekk Ruben Camilleri, l-elektrixin?

Ruben: Jien hu. X'għandek bżonn?

Marija: Jiena Marija Grima, dik li għandna flett Buġibba u kont għaddejtilna d-dawl int.

Ruben: Iva. Marija. Issa għaraft leħnek. Xi nqala'?

Marija: Dil-ġimgħa nżilna Buġibba biex innaddfu l-flett ħalli ninżlu għall-vaganzi tas-sajf u indunajna li daħlilna ħafna ilma wara x-xitwa. Infatti meta ppruvajna nixegħlu d-dawl indunajna li s-salvavita bdiet taqa' kull darba. U ħsibna li jista' jkun tort ta' hekk. Jien diġà kellimt lill-kaħħal biex isiru t-tiswijiet neċessarji. Jimporta tittawlilna biex tiċċekkja ftit l-affarijiet? Għax nistgħux noqogħdu mingħajr dawl.

Ruben: Kollox sew. Illejla wara l-ħamsa (5 p.m.) ngħaddi nara ftit l-affarijiet.

Marija: Grazzi.

***

Marija: Idħol, idħol.

Ruben: Ħa nara ftit x'ġara... Ikolli ngħid għandkom xi ħaġa qed twaqqagħha. Ixgħel ftit l-*air condition* biss u itfi l-affarijiet l-oħra kollha... le jidher li mhux dan il-problema... Ixgħel il-kompjuter... Lanqas. It-televixin? Dak hu. Mela hu l-problema. Wisq probabbli daħlilkom xi ftit ilma fit-televixin. Ħudu paċenzja għalissa tixgħelux it-televixin għax jerġa' jagħmlilkom l-istess. Għada ċemplu lil xi ħadd biex isewwihukom.

Marija: Kollox sew. Grazzi ħafna. X'għandi ntik?

Ruben: Għaxar ewro (€10) kollox, jekk jogħġbok.

Marija: F'idejk. Grazzi.

IMPORTANT EXPRESSIONS (Ĝ Listen to track 2a)	
Maltese Expression	Translation
1	Idħol, idħol.	Come in, come in.
2	Xi nqala'?	What's up?

11

Figure 25. Screen shot of page 11 of Speaking Maltese 2

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H.5 A Detailed View of the Published Level B1 Books

H.5.1 Reality

Reality contains 10 short stories with parallel translations to help learners improve their reading and listening skills and spend some time reading and enjoying themselves without constantly having to look up vocabulary in a dictionary. The parallel translations are printed on a spread page, with English on the left and Maltese on the right, as shown in Figures 26–27. With this book, learners explore Maltese culture and place names; learn Maltese expressions, idioms and proverbs; hear each story being read by a native speaker; continue enriching their vocabulary; and improve their reading and listening skills. They also become aware of the problems that many young people face today, such as abuse of alcohol, drugs or steroids; obsession about weight; pregnancy out of wedlock; falling victim to usury and debt; contracting sexually transmitted diseases; encountering family issues; being bullied and giving up. The book also lists the Maltese support agencies that help individuals overcome these problems.

[1]

The pitcher that goes too often to the well gets broken!

Boomph! Boomph! Boomph! B-B-Boomph!

"Turn it down! I can't get a wink of sleep with you around!" Adilon's father yelled up the stairs.

Adilon had just turned sixteen and was addicted to techno music. He bought every download he could lay his hands on, and every spare minute was spent at the mixing desk making records for his friends and rehearsing for his dreamed-of emergence as DJ Lonnie. His father was deeply unappreciative of Adilon's frequent habit of turning up the volume high enough to murder sleep.

Adilon's friends, Lucjan and Savio, were hooked on techno too, so the trio were well suited to each other. At school, they talked of nothing but clubs, spending all week planning their Saturday entertainment.

[2]

For them, Saturdays started only an hour and a half before Sunday was upon them. At half past ten in the evening, they would appear at their first port of call, the local bar, so Lucjan and Adilon could lay the foundations of an alcohol-fuelled binge by drinking, just for a start, four beers followed by a shot or two. Over the next couple of hours, they would develop a fine sense of their importance and wisdom by alternating beer and spirits until nobody could understand a word they tried to say. Savio drank nothing but soft drinks: his Sunday morning job was to help his father in their shop.

The bar owner was Adilon's father's cousin and his conscience forced him to try, repeatedly, to make Adilon see sense.

6

Reality

Figure 26. Screen shot of page 6 of Reality

🎧 Listen to track [1]

Il-ġarra ġejja u sejra fl-aħħar tinkiser!

Bumm! Bumm! Bumm! B-B-Bumm!

"Baxxilu! Ma nistax norqod siegħa bik!" missier Adilon għajjat minn isfel.

Adilon kien għadu kemm għalaq sittax-il sena u kien imġennen fuq il-mużika tekno. Kien jixtri kull *download* li kien isib, u kull ċans li jkollu kien iqattgħu jagħmel ir-rekordings għall-ħbieb u jipprattika għall-ħolma li xi darba jkun DJ Lonnie. Missieru kienet taqbiżlu minħabba l-vizzju li kellu Adilon li jgħolli l-volum u jtellfu l-irqad.

Shabu, Lucjan u Savio, kienu ffissati fuq it-tekno wkoll, għalhekk it-tlieta li huma kienu aktar jingwalawha flimkien. L-iskola kienu jitkellmu biss fuq klabbs u kienu jagħmlu ġimgħa jippjanaw il-ħarġa tas-Sibt.

[2]

Għalihom is-Sibtijiet kienu jibdew biss siegħa u nofs qabel jibda l-jum tal-Ħadd. Fl-għaxra u nofs ta' filgħaxija kienu jitfaċċaw fl-ewwel bar fir-raħal fejn kienu joqogħdu huma stess, fejn Lucjan u Adilon kienu jibdew il-maratona tax-xorb, fejn inizjalment kienu jieħdu erbgħa birra segwiti minn grokk jew tnejn. Fis-sigħat ta' wara, kienu jibdew iħossuhom importanti u għaqlin billi jixorbu birra u spirti oħra sakemm ħadd ma jibqa' jifhem kelma milli jgħidu. Savio kien jixrob biss luminati għaliex l-għada l-Ħadd xogħlu kien li jgħin lil missieru fil-ħanut li kellhom.

Sid il-bar kien kuġin ma' missier Adilon u kien iħoss il-kuxjenza tniggżu biex iwissi ripetutament lil Adilon.

Figure 27. Screen shot of page 7 of Reality

H.5.2 Rocco Learns Karate

This storybook contains nine chapters with parallel translations printed on spread pages, as shown in Figures 28–29. As it is grounded in reality, it aims to help learners upgrade their reading and listening skills while enjoying themselves without having to constantly consult a dictionary. This book shares the learning objectives of *Reality*.
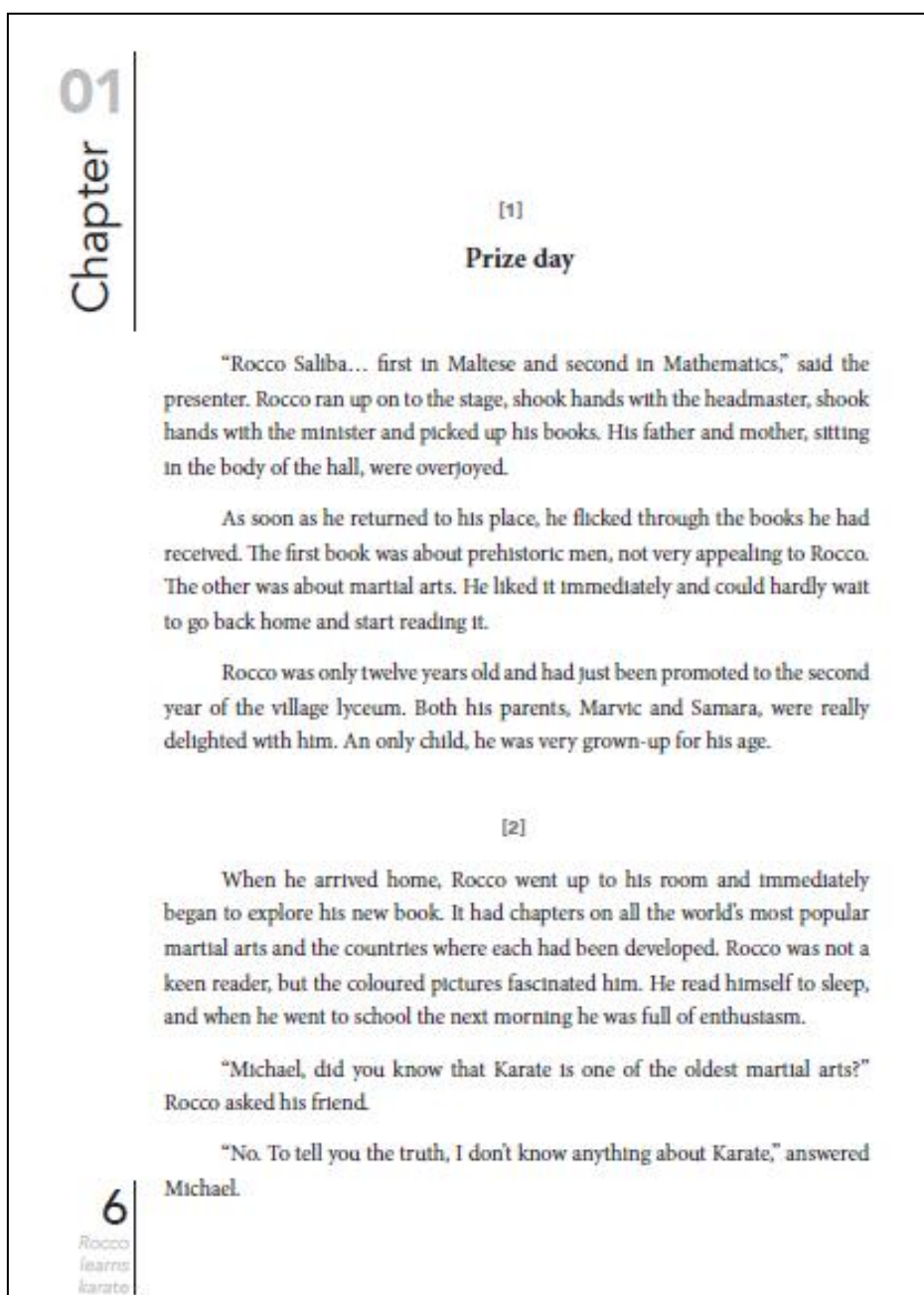

Figure 28. Screen shot of page 6 of Rocco Learns Karate

🎧 Listen to track [1]

Jum il-premjazzjoni

"Rocco Saliba... l-ewwel fil-Malti u t-tieni fil-Matematika," qal il-preżentatur. Rocco tela' jigri fuq il-palk, ħa b'idejn is-Surmast, ħa b'idejn il-Ministru u ġabar il-kotba. Missieru u ommu kienu preżenti fis-sala u kienu se jtiru bil-ferħ.

Malli niżel lura f'postu beda jifli ftit il-kotba li rċieva. L-ewwel ktieb kien fuq in-nies tal-preistorja u lil Rocco ma tantx laqtu. L-ieħor kien fuq l-arti marzjali. Dan mill-ewwel għoġbu lil Rocco u bi ħġaru kien qed jistenna l-mument li jmur id-dar ħalli jibda jaqrah.

Rocco kellu biss tnax-il sena u kien għadu kemm tela' fit-tieni sena fil-liċeo li kien hemm f'raħlu. Missieru Marvic u ommu Samara, tgħidx kemm kienu ferħanin bih. Hu kien l-uniku wild li kellhom u għalkemm kien għadu żgħir fl-età kien iġib ruħu bħall-irġiel.

[2]

Meta wasal id-dar Rocco tela' gol-kamra tiegħu u mill-ewwel beda jħarbex fil-ktieb. Dan il-ktieb kien jispjega fid-dettall mil-liema pajjiżi oriġinaw u żviluppaw l-arti marzjali l-aktar popolari fid-dinja. Rocco ma kienx xi dilettant tal-qari, imma dawk l-istampi kkuluriti li kien fih mill-ewwel affaxxinawh. Hu għadda l-lejl jaqra u l-għada mar l-iskola mimli entużjażmu.

"Michael, kont taf li l-Karatè hu wieħed mill-eqdem arti marzjali li jeżistu?" staqsa Rocco lil siehbu.

"Le, ngħidlek id-dritt jien ma naf xejn fuq il-Karatè," irrispondieh Michael.

Rocco jitghallem il-karatè

Figure 29. Screen shot of page 7 of Rocco Learns Karate

H6. Conclusion

This appendix has described the learning materials published in October 2013, by-products of this study's needs analysis. These resources, together with the syllabi, offer concrete solutions to some of the current problems, especially since teachers are not given appropriate training in MSL. Thus, these remedies are aimed to improve the chances of success of the MSL education venture. However, as indicated in the conclusion of this thesis, these resources need testing and feedback as a basis for developing the remaining learning materials.

Appendix I

Feedback on the Maltese for Foreigners series

Figure 30. Screen shot 1 of comments on the Maltese for Foreigners Series

Retrieved from:

http://gozonews.com/41079/maltese-for-foreigners-book-series-by-charles-daniel-saliba/

Figure 31. Screen shot 2 of comments on the Maltese for Foreigners Series

Retrieved from:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/mlsofnsw/10152222450119688/?notif_t=like

Figure 32. Screen shot 3 of comments on the Maltese for Foreigners Series

Retrieved from:

https://www.facebook.com/charlesdaniel.saliba/posts/674245399297000

Translation of the status (Figure 32)

I had a good meeting with Charles Daniel Saliba, who has done a lot of good work in the teaching of Maltese for foreigners. He has very good learning materials, which we can use to teach Maltese and to train the teachers to teach Maltese effectively (Mr Evarist Bartolo, Minister of Education and Employment).

Appendix J

Other correspondence

From: CHARLES DANIEL SALIBA

Sent: 01 June 2013 12:53

To:

Subject: Teaching Maltese as a foreign language - PhD research

Dear XX,

After I began analysing the information from the questionnaires and interviews, it emerged that we need new syllabi for the different levels to *Teach Maltese for Foreigners*. Apart from this, most learners emphasized that communication is of great importance in such courses. For these reasons, I have designed three different syllabi based on **The Common European Framework** (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf). They are named A1 (Beginner), A2 (Pre-Intermediate) and B1 (Intermediate). My intention is that the A1 syllabus will be used in MQF-1. A2 will be used in MQF-2 (i.e. the course you were attending) and another level will be created for level B1.

This week, I finished the three mentioned syllabi and I am hoping that some learners that attended these courses could give me some feedback on them. Through *random sampling*, your name was chosen as a possible candidate to view these syllabi.

Are you ready to view these syllabi (around 12 pages) and give me written feedback on them?

If you are, I am ready to send them to you by registered post to the address that you indicate. The written feedback (which can be sent by email) should include an answer to the following questions:

1. I am proposing the syllabus A1 for MQF-1, the syllabus A2 for MQF-2 and suggesting that a new level be created, named B1. B1 will build on the previous two levels. Do you think that this is a good idea? Why or why not?

2. Do you think that if the syllabus A1 is used instead of MQF-1 things will change for the better? Why or why not?

3. Do you see the syllabi as well paced in all of their aspects of language communication (listening, reading, speaking and writing), grammar and vocabulary? Why or why not?

4. Are the syllabi clear enough? That is, would every learner know exactly what will be covered the all the levels? Why or why not?

5. Do you think that anything should be added to any part of these syllabi?

6. Do you think that anything should be removed from any part of these syllabi?

7. Please indicate any other comments that you might have about the syllabi.

If you accept, I will guarantee (as written on the consent form attached to the syllabi) that your identity will remain anonymous. It is important that you keep all this information confidential because this is still a trial. The syllabi, the consent form and your comments will need to be collected by 20 June 2013 via mail (I will sent a self-addressed envelope with stamps too).

Are you ready to help me with this part of my research so that the courses for foreigners will be more adequate for learners?

I am waiting eagerly for your positive response.

Thank you very much!

Best regards,

Charles Daniel Saliba
Mob: 99031969

From: CHARLES DANIEL SALIBA

Sent: 24 June 2013 18:49

To:

Subject: RE: Teaching Maltese to Foreigners- PhD research

Dear XX,

Sorry for bothering you again but in your written response about the syllabi, you have raised a very important and interesting point that no one has raised and thus I have to follow up to elaborate on it. The point is:

"it would have been very interesting to get to know more about cultural conventions . . . to avoid cultural misunderstandings".

When I spoke with different teachers about what they teach about these "*cultural conventions*", they all responded they do not teach anything in relation with this theme and that it would be interesting to learn more about it so as to implement it. Since all the teachers, including myself, are born and bred in Malta, it is very difficult for them to recognise these cultural conventions. After thinking about this subject, the only situations that propped into my mind were as follows:

1. The Maltese custom that when in bars, Maltese people tend to offer and eventually pay drinks for all their friends, whereas in many cultures, everyone pays for his or her own drinks.
2. When you offer a drink to a Maltese person, sometimes a 'no' response is given. However, you should insist two or three times because generally the persons say 'no' to be polite. Observe what the others do and do like them.
3. The giving of presents is appreciated. It is a Maltese custom to take something, ex. a bottle of wine, a box of chocolate, with you when you are invited to parties, family meals etc. Apart from this, it is normal to give a present to

someone especially during the Christmas period when someone has done you a generally big favour without being paid.

4. Kissing and hugging is normal. It is a Maltese custom to hug a friend and to kiss on both cheeks when you encounter her after a long time. Generally a foreigner will be greeted with a handshake.

5. Eye contact during conversations, loud speaking, hand gestures and sometimes the touching of your hand or shoulder during speaking are normal things in the Maltese culture.

6. The middle finger is considered to be an obscene hand gesture in many Western countries including Malta.

Do you agree with the six statements mentioned above? Can you please indicate any other cultural conventions that maybe you have encountered?

Thank you very much for your patience and cooperation.
Kind regards,

Charles

Appendix K

Other Interviews

K.0 Syllabus – Learners' interview

1. I am proposing the syllabus A1 for MQF-1, the syllabus A2 for MQF-2 and suggesting that a new level be created, named B1. B1 will build on the previous two levels. Do you think that this is a good idea? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that if the syllabus A1 is used instead of MQF-1 things will change for the better? Why or why not?
3. Do you see the syllabi as well paced in all of their aspects of language communication (listening, reading, speaking and writing), grammar and vocabulary? Why or why not?
4. Are the syllabi clear enough? That is, would every learner know exactly what will be covered all the levels? Why or why not?
5. Do you think that anything should be added to any part of these syllabi?
6. Do you think that anything should be removed from any part of these syllabi?
7. Please indicate any other comments that you might have about the syllabi.

K.1 Syllabus – Teachers' interview

1. I am proposing the syllabus A1 for MQF-1, the syllabus A2 for MQF-2 and suggesting that a new level be created, named B1. B1 will build on the previous two levels. Do you think that this is a good idea? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that if the syllabus A1 is used instead of MQF-1 things will change for the better? Why or why not?
3. Do you see the syllabi as well paced in all of their aspects of language communication (listening, reading, speaking and writing), grammar and vocabulary? Why or why not?
4. Are the syllabi clear enough? That is, would every learner know exactly what will be covered all the levels? Why or why not?
5. Do you think that anything should be added to any part of these syllabi?
6. Do you think that anything should be removed from any part of these syllabi?
7. Please indicate any other comments that you might have about the syllabi.