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Percorso didattico

Definire profili di uscita di lingua straniera al termine del primo ciclo di istruzione – A profile of students' learning outcomes

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- **Argomenti:** Interazione orale, Produzione orale, Produzione scritta, Inglese
- **Progetto:** Lingua, letteratura e cultura in una dimensione europea - Area lingue straniere
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- **Livello linguistico:** Livello A2
- **Lingue:** Inglese

Tematica affrontata: profili d'uscita di lingua straniera al termine del primo ciclo di istruzione.

La risorsa ha finalità che vanno dal riflettere sulla nozione di "profilo d'uscita" (e sulle sue caratteristiche) all'offrire occasioni per l'utilizzo di materiali anche teorici di riferimento; dal fornire spunti per l'elaborazione di test di ingresso da utilizzare in classe al guidare i docenti verso pratiche di lavoro cooperativo.

Tra gli obiettivi del percorso: guidare gli studenti a riflettere sulle loro modalità di apprendimento e a sviluppare nei ragazzi consapevolezza dei passi necessari per migliorare le loro prestazioni; fornire agli studenti occasioni di utilizzo delle conoscenze linguistiche e di sviluppo delle abilità e competenze.

A percorso concluso i docenti saranno in grado di formulare un profilo d'uscita al termine del primo ciclo; dal canto loro gli studenti saranno in grado di interagire con l'insegnante e con i compagni, di riflettere sui propri processi di apprendimento e di valutare le proprie prestazioni.

Nota redazionale: il percorso si basa sulle indicazioni 2007 tuttavia le attività e temi proposti sono utili anche alla luce dell'attuale normativa in considerazione dello sfondo comune dato dal QCER e dal livello linguistico proposto dalle attività

Revisione linguistica a cura del British Council, coord. dott.ssa K. Harris, J. Ritter

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Introduction

The learning path makes teachers reflect about their professional acting, providing both reference materials and examples of activities that can be tried out in the classroom.

Aims

Promoting professional development through reflection and co-operation.

Learning objectives – Teachers

- Guiding teachers to reflect about the profile of students' learning outcomes and its characteristics
- providing opportunities to use reference materials about learning outcomes
- providing opportunities to create entry tests to be used in the class
- guiding teachers to work together in a cooperative way.

Learning objectives – Students

- Guiding students to reflect on their learning;
- guiding them to develop awareness of the steps to improve their learning outcomes
- providing opportunities to use their language knowledge
- providing opportunities to strengthen their linguistic skills
- providing opportunities to increase their language competences.

Final Competences

Teachers

Teachers can formulate a profile for students' learning outcomes.

Students

- In familiar contexts, students can interact with the teacher and with classmates

- they can reflect on their learning
- they can self assess their performances.

Methodology and activity steps

The learning path aims to make teachers reflect about their professional acting, providing both reference materials and examples of activities that can be tried out in the classroom. Each step aims to provide possible connections between teachers' experiences and the activities offered in this path, so that potentially new suggestions can be easily put into practice and linked to "everyday teaching", this being the only way to promote reflection and change.

Teachers will:

- read the materials provided
- share the materials provided
- perform the activities
- co-operate to formulate a profile of their students' learning outcomes at the end of scuola media.

Teaching strategies

- Problem solving,
- Co-operative work,

After reading and sharing the material, teachers are asked to co-operate so that they can formulate a profile of learning outcomes at the end of scuola media.

Activity

Step 1 - Defining Learning Outcomes

Background

We will now deal with a Profile of Learning Outcomes (PLO from now on) for students at the end of *Primo Ciclo di Istruzione*.

Since a PLO defines goals for students,

- it is one of the main tasks teachers have to accomplish in a class
- provides a more meaningful context of use (a frame) for the definition of linguistic and/or cross curricular competence descriptors
- needs to be agreed upon with students themselves, regularly pointed out and reviewed during the school year(s).

Look at the map (see attachment Profile.ppt) to better visualize a PLO functions.

Task 1.1 – Teachers



The very first step is sharing the language: what is your idea of a PLO?

Write down a definition and discuss it with your group.

Then read the extract (see attachment 1-Def Learning Outcomes.doc) where different definitions of learning outcomes are quoted.

In this path we define the profile of learning outcomes as *the description of the competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) each student should achieve by the end of scuola secondaria di 1° grado. It has to be written in clear terms, so that students (and families) can understand what is expected of them.*

Step 2 - Defining Actions

Task 2.1 – Teachers



Think about your experience. Does your class year plan offer a definition of a PLO in terms of achievements for your students or does it consist of a taxonomy (i.e. a list) of aims and objectives? Compare your answers with your group. Then read the attached Learning Outcomes vs Objectives (see attachment 2-LOvsObjectives.doc).

Task 2.2 – Teachers



Here is a list of objectives referring to writing. Turn them into learning outcomes to be included in a PLO. Then compare them with the ones in the attachment (see attachment 3-task2_2.doc).

Writing - Objectives

- Spelling words correctly
- using appropriate words
- respecting grammar and syntax rules
- respecting the graphic conventions (when writing a letter)

The following table shortly describes the differences between objectives and learning outcomes referred to the previous language activity (writing).

OBJECTIVES	LEARNING OUTCOMES	DESCRIPTOR
Refer to an ideal model of student	Refer to student(s) of a certain level of proficiency /of age	<i>The student can write</i>
Do not take into account the context of the performance	Specify the context	<i>a short letter or a message,</i>
Do not consider the linguistic domain	Explicitly refer to the linguistic domain(s)	<i>concerning a familiar domain</i>
Provide a list of rules which have to be respected	Describe the quality of the expected performance	<i>using very basic /basic/appropriate lexical items, very basic /basic /simple and appropriate structures as well as linear /simple connectors to reach his/her communicative goal.</i>

<p>Are not concerned with the attitude of the student</p>	<p>Take into account the student's attitude</p>	<p><i>S/he finds it difficult to spell words correctly /can spell words quite correctly /correctly. S/he finds it difficult to respect /can respect the appropriate graphic conventions.</i></p>
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Task 2.3 – Teachers



In the attached exercise (see attachment TeachingLearning.zip). there is a list of actions teachers perform quite frequently. Analyse them and decide whether each of them focuses more on teaching (T) or learning (L). Discuss your answers with your group.

Clearly enough, the definition of a PLO implies a change of perspective as well as a revision of many practises teachers are familiar with: it calls for a reflective attitude about the relationship between the process of teaching and that of learning in order to adopt methodologies and strategies consistent and coherent with what is stated in the PLO itself. Look at the picture concerning the National Curriculum in GB (see attachment 4-Curriculum.qca.org.uk.pdf). Focus your attention on the very first column: it helps visualising the connections between the “what” and the “how” of teaching.

Task 2.4 – Teachers

The definition of the PLO requires teachers to collect as much information as possible about their students, not only in terms of “what” students already know and can do with the language, but also in terms of “how” they can work with the language. Let’s start then from the beginning of a school year of your choice, that is, from the very moment such a collection has to be started.



Brainstorm all the elements you should take into account in order to define a PLO. Think of the PLO as the result of a process: what are its inputs? What are the ingredients to cook a good PLO? Write down your

answer and discuss it with your group. Then look at the map (see attachment PLO 1.pdf).

Task 2.5 – Teachers

We will now focus on two of the elements we have considered as inputs: entry tests and teacher’s observations. Very often, all the L2 teachers test the same skills, proposing very similar activities. The question is if these activities are a resource for defining a PLO and how they can be used.




Think about an entry test you have used at the beginning of this school year with your third year students. Answer the following questions:

1. What was its purpose?
2. What language activities (writing, reading, speaking, oral interaction, listening) did it test?
3. Was it planned to test knowledge, skills or attitudes?
4. What information did it give you about students?
5. Was it consistent with your aims?
6. Was it designed to provide you with information useful for the definition of a PLO? How did you assess the results?
7. How did you use them?

Discuss your answers with your group.

Task 2.6 – Students

 Here is an example of a test that can provide diagnostic information about students.

Time	Aims	Procedure	Interaction pattern
		Prepare in advance a list of jumbled sentences and load it on the Interactive Whiteboard (as an alternative, handle a	

		copy of the list to each student)	
5'	Collecting diagnostic information about grammatical competence	Ask students to put the words in the right order.	Individual work
10'	<p>Collecting diagnostic information about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lexical competence; semantic competence; students' attitude in taking "linguistic risks" (whether the student takes the risk of making mistakes in order to accomplish the task); students' autonomy. 	For each sentence, ask students to build up an appropriate exchange or a very short dialogue.	Individual work

Task 2.7 – Teachers



Here is another activity that can be used as entry test.

Time	Aims	Procedure	Interaction pattern
5'	Speaking	Make 4 or 5 students choose a picture from a selection you have loaded on the Interactive Whiteboard. Students do not have to let the class know the image they have chosen.	Whole class

5'	Preparing oral description	Each student has to prepare a 2 minute description of the image. In the meanwhile, the rest of the class can do another activity (a crossword, for example). You have to choose whether to allow students to write their description down, or to jot down a list of key words they will look at while speaking.	Individual work
15'	Speaking and listening	Each student tells his/her description; the rest of the class has to guess which image is being described.	Whole class

The activity can be carried out with the whole class during the same lesson, provided you make students do something else while the 4 or 5 selected ones prepare their description!

You can record students' performances with a video camera and use them for further development, such as, for example, a reflection on mispronunciation, inappropriate use of lexical items, structures, It could be a good starting point, for example, to analyse the most common "mistakes" applying the meaning of [inter-language](#) (see attachment).

As an alternative, ask students to record their performances using a mobile and then load the video on the Interactive Whiteboard!

Such exercises enable the teacher to collect diagnostic elements concerning the student's **production**:

- fluency
- accuracy
- lexical competence
- semantic competence
- pronunciation

Also to be considered would be elements concerning his/her attitude in taking "linguistic risks", his/her autonomy, his/her attitude towards the task, i.e. elements concerning the **process** of learning. Obviously, for each

exercise, the teacher has to make a selection of the elements s/he wants to gather diagnostic information about.

Task 2.8 – Teachers



With 4 or 5 colleagues of your group, prepare an entry test for reading for a class of your choice. Decide the type of information you want to gather and the competences (in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes) it should test. Is it valid and reliable? Discuss it with the other groups.

If exercises of this kind are carried out for as many linguistic activities as the teacher thinks necessary, they will provide information concerning not only the product (“what” our students can do), but also the process (“how” they work). Look at the iceberg which, according to [Luciano Mariani](#), can represent students’ competences:



The aim of entry tests is to let teachers “peep” into what lies **under** students’ performances: entry tests are not designed to certify students’ competences (they are not summative assessment tools), but to let teachers know how students can be successfully guided to achieve certain competences.


Besides entry tests, observation is a powerful tool to collect information about students. What follows is an example of a grid teachers can use when students are working on an individual task.

The student

- reads the instructions
- asks for further explanation
- asks for teacher’s help

- asks for classmates' help
- asks for help when needed
- pays attention until the task is completed
- keeps on looking around
- goes around the classroom
- completes the task autonomously
- has to be guided to accomplish the task
- finds it difficult to work with minimal classroom distractions
- respects all the requirements, included time requirements
- wants to finish his/her task as quickly as possible
- annoys other students
- gives up as soon as s/he finds something difficult
- ...

Task 2.9 – Teachers

 TEST the grid in one of your classes, observing four or five students each time. You can use the attached version of the grid (see attachment 5-Observation Grid.doc).

Task 2.10 – Teachers


Besides observation by the teacher, students' impressions can be very useful. What follows is an example of a very simple questionnaire the teacher can use on his/her students at the end of any activity.

I found this activity (easy/difficult) because

- *I do not know many words in English*
- *I know many words in English*
- *I don't like English and I find difficult to pay attention in class*
- *I easily recollect what I memorise*
- *I think it was quite simple*
- *I don't remember what I studied last year*
- *I like this type of exercise*

Each statement should focus on the student rather than on the activity, so that while answering, s/he can reflect on her/his strategies or even discover something new about him/herself. This kind of questionnaire helps students

to develop meta-cognitive attitudes, thus leading them to reflect about their performances and the results they are expected to achieve.

 Use the questionnaire in your class. Then read the students' answers and analyse them in your group. What kind of information do they give you? How can you use them to develop strategies consistent with a PLO?

The teacher will use other types of questionnaire according to what s/he wants to collect from students. If, for example, s/he wants to ask students about their LIKES/DISLIKES then s/he will use a questionnaire similar to the ones proposed in Mariani, Pozzo, *Stili, strategie e strumenti nell'apprendimento linguistico*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze, 2002, where different linguistic activities are listed and students are asked to indicate the ones they think are more useful and the ones they prefer.

All the elements collected through tests and observation will provide useful inputs to define a PLO. Such a task is better accomplished by a team: all L2 teachers should co-operate, defining specific subject related competences as well as cross curricular ones. Competences, so defined, have to be further tailored to the class, which is the task of another team: the class teaching team (*Consiglio di classe*). In this way two different settings of co-operation will simultaneously be at work: the one provided by L2 teachers, concerned with specific subject related competences and with their cross curricular aspects, and the one provided by the class teaching team, where cross curricular competences can be magnified and subject boundaries overpass. It goes without saying that the PLO has to be consistent with the curriculum designed and planned by the class team.

The slide used to visualise all the inputs of the process "Defining the PLO" can now be completed (see attachment PLO 2.pdf).

If such activities are carried out, teachers should not feel alone. Teachers' meetings would be real occasions for exchanging ideas and information, elaborating the class curriculum, designing the state of the art and planning further activities!

Task 2.11 – Teachers



Think about your own experience and answer the questionnaire (see attachment 5bis-The Class Team.doc)). Discuss your answers with your group.

The attached grid (see attachment 6–Comparing Actions in the Class Team.doc) might help co-operation in the class teaching team. As you will see, the grid makes a comparison between **actions performed by teachers**. Comparing actions is an easy way to find a common background for further development in order to improve students' performances and competences! The grid is about an activity any teacher is familiar with: the comprehension of a written text.

Task 2.12 – Teachers



Test the above mentioned grid with your school colleagues or, if you think it's a too tough job, test it with your group. Select 2 or 3 questions in each section (Pre-reading actions, While-reading actions, After-reading section)

When defining a PLO, some problems may arise. One question: has a PLO to be the same for each student or has it to be different? Such a question is about the difficulty of conciliating standards and individual results. If each PLO is different, there can not be any possible comparisons between students' performances in the class or even at a national (or international) level. No standards, no comparison! On the other hand, each student is different and teachers know that the very same results can not be reached by any of them at the same level. So, what do teachers have to do to square this circle?

Again, the CEFR can be of great help, since its global scale (see attachment 7-CEFR global scale.doc) can be of reference for a PLO and for its individualisation. Let's see how.

Step 3 - Implementing a PLO

As it has been pointed out in Path 1, students' level of proficiency at the end of *scuola secondaria di primo grado* should correspond to the A2 level as it is described in the CEFR global scale.

Level A2 needs to be tailored to each student on the basis of those very elements we have defined as inputs for the elaboration of a PLO, in particular the results of entry tests, the teacher's observations and the students' impressions. As already pointed out in Path 1, within the very same level (A2), there can be different results of performances in the different language activities (writing, reading, speaking, oral interaction, listening). A PLO has to account for such differences and the teacher has to highlight the individual results students will achieve in each of them, within the A2 level. A picture (see attachment A2 level.ppt) can help to visualise how individual differences can be registered within the same level.

If, for example, a student is not fluent when speaking, then the learning outcome expected in the PLO will be at a low level. It could be formulated using the following descriptor:

*In a familiar domain, the student can understand **very** simple questions and use **basic** lexical items, understand and use **very basic** structures as well as **linear** connectors to reach his/her communicative goal. S/He **often pauses to articulate words.***

The learning outcome could be reformulated during the year, provided the student has achieved it. A PLO is a dynamic tool that can account for students' **progresses**. It asks for another tool that enables students to register their progress: the portfolio, of course!

What follows is a list of words that may be used in the profile statements. They are taken from a publication by the [Nottingham City Council's Children's Services](#) website.

STRENGTHS

- can
- is
- has

- is able to
- is willing to
- is beginning to
- shows interest in
- enjoys
- takes part in
- independently
- tries to
- is developing

DIFFICULTIES

- is unable to
- has difficulty
- is reluctant or hesitant
- is inconsistent
- requires peer support
- finds it difficult to
- is unaware of
- resists or refuses to
- has not yet developed

Once a PLO has been defined, it is important to tailor teaching on it. This will ask for different actions:

COMMUNICATING

The PLO has to be shared with both students and family. If students know what is expected of them, they will be more easily guided to develop meta-cognitive attitudes and appropriate strategies to achieve the results. Similarly, the PLO will work as a reference for families, a shared background for meetings with the teacher.
(see Task 3.1)

DOCUMENTING

The PLO has to become one of the documents teachers will use during the school year. It will not be paper written and forgotten (as it often happens with the so called *Programmazione*), but a resource for the teacher, the students, their families, the head teacher and even for a supply teacher, if necessary.

Furthermore, it promotes the use of Portfolio.

RECOLLECTING

The PLO will have to be referred to often so that students will always know what is expected of them. Even the teacher will have to refer to it in order to be sure his/her planned actions are consistent with it. Remember! The PLO is dynamic: unlike objectives, it can be corrected and adapted during the school year, every time the teacher thinks necessary.

PLANNING ACTIVITIES

When planning an activity, the teacher should ask him/herself questions of this kind:

1. Is the activity consistent with the PLO?
2. Am I offering students a variety of activities to meet different styles of learning?
3. Are the objectives clear to the students?
4. Is time properly defined?
5. Is the activity bound to what students already know / are familiar with?
6.

ASSESSING

Assessment has to be consistent in the PLO, not only with what is stated in it, but with the meaning of PLO itself: it's assessment **for** learning, rather than assessment **of** learning.

This means that

- tests have to be consistent with the PLO
- tests have to be of different types, so that the teacher will collect real and useful information about students' progress (and students will be aware of their progresses, as well)
- assessment criteria have to be consistent with the PLO and with the descriptors used to certify students' final competences.

(see Task 3.2)

REVIEWING

Since a PLO points to what students should achieve, it is a dynamic tool that can be changed at any time of the year, in accordance with students' progress.

Task 3.1 - Teachers



Working with 4 or 5 colleagues of your group, plan a presentation to illustrate the PLO to your third year students; or a presentation by your students in which they illustrate the PLO to their parents.

In both cases, use the attached layout (see attachment 8-Illustrating the PLO.doc).

Task 3.2 - Teachers



The attached exercise (see attachment 9-PLOandAssessment.zip) is a description of actions connecting assessment and PLO. It is a mixed-up sentence exercise. Put the sentences into the right order. Then discuss the result with your group.

Testing Tasks

Testing Task 1

Starting from your own experience, co-operate with the other colleagues of the class to formulate a PLO for a second year class. Start from the inputs of such a process (the "ingredients!")

The task concerns the overall result of the training activity in terms of the *effect* it has produced on teachers. It concerns the **outcome** of the activity.

Testing Task 2

You are required to register your observations, while accomplishing the previous Task, on the blog, using it as a diary.

Unlike the first task, this one does not concern a **product**, but the **process** of training itself.

Besides providing a useful feedback about the training, the blog/diary aims to promote

- thinking about what has been accomplished
- reflection about activities while performing them (meta-cognition)
- self consciousness about one's professional habits
- learning by doing
- reflection about learning. Which is another competence for.

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Websites

[Learning Paths - Tante vie per imparare](#)

[Cambridge Esol Examinations](#)

[Quality Improvement Agency](#)

[Teaching Expertise](#)

[Enchanted Learning](#)

Sintesi in italiano

Obiettivi - Docenti

- Guidare i docenti a riflettere sulla nozione di profilo d'uscita e sulle sue caratteristiche;
- fornire occasioni per l'utilizzo di materiali, anche teorici, di riferimento;
- fornire spunti per la elaborazione di test d'ingresso da utilizzare nelle classi;
- guidare i docenti verso pratiche di lavoro cooperativo.

Obiettivi - Studenti

- Guidare gli studenti a riflettere sulle proprie modalità di apprendimento;
- guidare gli studenti a sviluppare consapevolezza dei passi necessari per migliorare le proprie prestazioni;
- fornire occasioni di utilizzo delle conoscenze linguistiche;
- fornire occasioni di sviluppo delle abilità linguistiche;
- fornire occasioni di sviluppo delle competenze linguistiche.

Competenze finali - Docenti

I/Le docenti sono in grado di formulare un profilo d'uscita al termine del primo ciclo.

Competenze finali - Studenti

- In situazioni che sono loro familiari, gli studenti sono in grado di interagire con l'insegnante e con i compagni;
- gli studenti sono capaci di riflettere sui loro processi di apprendimento;
- gli studenti sono in grado di valutare le proprie prestazioni;

Metodologia

Il percorso intende promuovere nei docenti momenti di riflessione attraverso continui riferimenti al proprio vissuto professionale. Sono previste attività da svolgere in modo cooperativo nel gruppo in formazione e attività da realizzare in classe.

Orizzonte di riferimento

L'attenzione si focalizza sulle funzioni del profilo d'uscita:

- è uno dei compiti principali del docente;
- rappresenta il contesto di riferimento per la definizione dei descrittori di competenze linguistiche e trasversali;
- deve essere condiviso con gli studenti, richiamato nel corso dell'anno e ridefinito, quando necessario.

Step 1 – Profilo d'uscita: definizione

Viene condivisa una definizione di profilo d'uscita inteso come descrizione delle competenze (conoscenze, abilità e atteggiamenti) al termine del primo

ciclo. Si sottolinea la necessità di una formulazione chiara, di immediata comprensione per studenti e famiglie.

Step 2 – Definire le azioni

Si richiama l'attenzione dei docenti sulle differenze tra obiettivi e profilo d'uscita. Si propone di considerare la definizione del profilo d'uscita come un'attività processuale dai molteplici input. Tra essi, viene focalizzata l'attenzione sui test d'ingresso, sul loro valore diagnostico e sul loro utilizzo per la definizione del profilo d'uscita. Si forniscono due esempi di test d'ingresso che consentono al docente di ricavare elementi diagnostici relativi sia a ciò che gli studenti fanno e sanno fare, sia ai processi da loro messi in atto durante lo svolgimento di un'attività linguistica. Sono forniti esempi di griglie di osservazione per l'insegnante e di questionari per gli studenti tesi a sviluppare riflessioni metacognitive.

Si sottolinea che la definizione di un profilo d'uscita è un processo cooperativo che impegna i docenti, divisi per aree disciplinari prima, e per consigli di classe poi.

Per conciliare standard in uscita e individualizzazione di percorsi e profili, è indispensabile richiamarsi al *Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento*.

Step 3 – Realizzare le azioni richieste dalla definizione di un profilo d'uscita

Il livello di competenza globale previsto al termine del primo ciclo dovrebbe corrispondere al livello A2 del *Quadro*. Un profilo d'uscita dovrà necessariamente prevedere diversi gradi di raggiungimento di tale livello, così da rendere conto delle diverse prestazioni e delle diverse competenze raggiunte dagli studenti. Il profilo dovrà essere flessibile: dovrà cioè consentire successive riformulazioni nel corso dell'anno.

Sarà inoltre necessario che l'insegnante adatti il proprio stile di insegnamento a quanto viene richiesto agli studenti. Vengono elencate azioni che riguardano la comunicazione, la documentazione, la progettazione e ri-progettazione, nonché la valutazione.

Verifica e valutazione del percorso

Gli strumenti proposti per la verifica e la valutazione del percorso di formazione sono finalizzati a misurare gli output sia in termini di prodotto, sia in termini di processo.

Si richiede ai docenti di elaborare, divisi per gruppi, un profilo d'uscita per una seconda media (output in termini di prodotto).

La valutazione del processo viene invece proposta come riflessione sul percorso svolto: si richiede ai colleghi di compilare un diario di bordo utilizzando il blog che sarà attivato dall'Agenzia a supporto del percorso stesso.