

READY TO READ MODULE



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IC SPOLTORE (ITALY)
ANTARES (ITALY)

MELODY

METHODS FOR LEARNING
DISORDERS IN YOUTH



Table of Contents

“READY TO READ”	3
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	3
INTRODUCTION	3
LEARNING STYLES	4
MEANINGFUL LEARNING	4
METACOGNITION AND READING	4
READING AS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS	5
DIDACTIC AIMS AND STRATEGIES	5
OPERATIVE TASKS AND EXERCISES	8

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“Ready To Read”

A READING PROJECT

MODULE’S OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the Module is to help teachers to:

- recognise different learning styles,
- use different teaching styles,
- activate diversified and individualised teaching strategies,
- encourage meaningful learning,
- identify suitable tools to make teaching accessible to all and make the study method more profitable.

The specific learning aim of the Module is to provide teachers with a valid tool to:

- apply different reading methods (functional and expressive) based on general and specific educational needs,
- elaborate a “transversal reading mode” that can be used for all types of text and consequently also for all disciplines,
- convey information,
- stimulate and guide the students to recognise and identify the most important information.

Key concepts: *General learning disorders; specific learning disorders; quality of teaching; educational success and prevention; inclusion; metacognition; learning styles; reading strategies.*

Theoretical framework

Introduction

This Module can be applied to students with any generic learning disorder (LD), as the listed practices and methods will help all students with a LD to read more easily.

Nevertheless, the push to develop the following contents started with the need for Italian teachers to find teaching aids, to help students with DSA (Specific Learning Disorder) learn to read.

The remarkable growth of DSA (Specific Learning Disorder) certifications is a direct consequence of the law 170/2010 with which the school has assumed a role of greater responsibility towards the DSA students; in addition, the teacher training process and the growing teaching skills have led to an increase in the identification of suspected cases that are sent to the health facilities responsible for DSA certification.

In order to promote learning in the most effective way, the teacher should:

- starting from the knowledge of one's own cognitive styles that influence teaching methods.
- explore and make pupils learn about different cognitive and **learning styles**.
- build knowledge in a shared way; this is a circular process in which the student also has an active role.



- take into account the individual differences that underlie learning.

Access to information is the first phase of any learning understood as knowledge acquisition: each person has his own way of learning; each learning style requires a streamlined, effective access to information that is suited to the needs and characteristics of the learner.

Learning styles¹

- They are dynamic and promote adaptation, flexibility and negotiation;
- They represent a constantly evolving global person;
- Intervention on styles is closely linked to intervention on learning strategies.

Meaningful learning²

- It is a type of learning that allows knowledge to be given meaning, allowing the integration of new information with existing ones and the use of it in different contexts;
- It allows to develop problem solving, critical thinking, meta-reflection skills and to transform knowledge into real competences;
- It makes the students autonomous in their cognitive paths;
- It is opposite to mechanical learning;
- It uses the graphic representation of knowledge;
- It forces the subject to reflect on the nature of the knowledge and on the relationships between them;
- Has influenced J.D. Novak and D.B.Gowin to define the characteristics of a **conceptual map**;
- Implies previous knowledge, significant material and an aware decision to learn;
- It is based on constructivist theories and on the cognitive model;
- In the student, the ability to re-elaborate personal knowledge to connect new knowledge with those already possessed must be sought and built;
- The main cognitivist and constructivist authors who dealt with meaningful learning are Ausubel, Novak, Rogers, Jonassen.

Metacognition and reading³

Metacognition is an individual's awareness of his or her capacity and cognitive processes, and it can be broken down into 2 main components, Knowledge and Control.

Examples:

KNOWLEDGE

- Purpose of reading
- Reading strategies
- Characteristics of the various text types.

CONTROL

- While carrying out a reading task to promote understanding.

¹ Anna Tramontano, "Corso alta formazione in Tutor Didattico" 26/01/2019

² See note 1

³ See note 1



Reading as an evolutionary process

What are the theoretical models of reading? The classical theoretical models see a progressive acquisition (by stages) of the reading-writing skills, that allow the students to read the words through two main ways:

1. **The evolutionary model of reading by Uta Frith** (1985)⁴, indicates 4 stages of progressive acquisition of reading-writing skills: Logographic stage, alphabetical stage, orthographic stage, lexical stage;
2. **Max Coltheart's two-way reading model** (1978)⁵ indicates a direct access (lexical access route) for known words and an indirect access (phonological access route) for those not immediately recognizable.

Didactic aims and strategies

The educational aim is focused on researching and proposing facilitating reading strategies for students with a learning disorder, to encourage a better understanding and development of the contents, thus achieving a higher educational result.

The proposed method operates in two different directions:

- 1) **research and application of strategies** to boost the motivation to learn, making the process effective;
- 2) **prevention**, as an educational success can avert the possibility of early school leaving (ESL).

The strategies proposed in this Module arise from different educational experiences, tested and applied to the entire class group to favour an inclusive process.

These didactic experiences are suggested by the indications contained in the **Lisbon Protocol** concerning the **key competences of citizenship**:

- Communication in the mother tongue,
- Communication in foreign languages,
- Mathematical competence and basic skills in science and technology,
- Digital competences,
- Learning to learn,
- Social and civic skills,
- Spirit of initiative and entrepreneurship,
- Awareness and cultural expression.

⁴ Uta Frith, (1985) Beneath the surface of developmental dyslexia. In K. E. Patterson, J. C. Marshall & M. Download at <https://sites.google.com/site/utafrith/publications-1/reading-spelling-and-dyslexia>

⁵ Max Coltheart (1978). Lexical access in simple reading tasks. In Underwood, G. (Ed.), *Strategies of Information Processing*. London: Academic Press.



DID YOU KNOW?

The ability to read (which does not mean speed, but the ability to understand the content) affects all text typologies and involves all disciplines.

Understanding the text through reading is the result of an activity that involves multiple levels of representation of the text, integrating the contents with the knowledge already possessed by the reader.

Understanding a text requires different operational processes:

- Understanding the structure
- Making inferences
- Know how to make connections
- Identify the text hierarchy
- Insert the text into your mental models
- Build a representation of the content, integrating old information with new information.

REFLECTION

Students with a learning disorder (LD) often have difficulty in completing a task because they don't understand exactly what to do.

School must encourage understanding of the texts, through various strategies:

- favouring a silent reading because it is easier and faster (however, the experience suggests that the effectiveness of the strategy is very subjective as some students with LD become more distracted);
- favouring reading methods that allow the students to learn the general meaning of the text within which, then, they can make a more analytical and/or selective reading;

Reading could then be turned into listening, using methods like:

- to listen to someone who reads homework deliveries, questionnaires or tests;
- to use digital books or vocabularies and voice synthesis;
- to use concept maps and a simplified text.



OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS, TO HELP A SELECTIVE READING:

1. stimulate questions before reading the text
2. integrate reading with a voice synthesis
3. simplify the tasks
4. select and reduce educational materials (exercises, tests, etc.)
5. cancel any kind of visual distractor, only detailing the section on which the student is working
6. highlight the essential information
7. provide a glossary of the specific language
8. create a map
9. use colours to highlight different communication levels
10. use specific fonts (eg.: "**black and white**" font).

SUMMARY

This chapter summarized the theoretical framework that lies behind the practice described in the Module, while giving operational strategies and tools to the teachers for helping students with LD.



Operative tasks and exercises

1) STIMULATE QUESTIONS BEFORE READING THE TEXT

When approaching a text, it is always a good idea to try to understand its general meaning and what is the content of the communication using the **5 W rule**.

This mainly concerns the understanding of narrative, expository, argumentative texts but it can also be applied to the understanding of regulatory texts, such as game regulations or deliveries of different nature.

The 5W rule consists of asking yourself 5 questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why?

The student can answer each question by tracking and highlighting each time the answer to the single question. This way, it is possible to select only the key information for the comprehension of a text (in this case news article), that makes the topic’s memorisation easier.

EXAMPLE: ANALYSIS OF A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE.

Read the text and identify the 5 W.

Tourists robbed at the Trevi Fountain.

A couple of boys aged 17 and 16, with a criminal record, were arrested by the Carabinieri at the San Lorenzo station on charges of aggravated theft. Both boys had become the nightmare of tourists visiting the Trevi Fountain in Rome. One young man approached the tourists distracting them, while the accomplice put his hands in their bags. Today, the last blow was fatal: the two approached an American tourist and took off his wallet. They then headed to a nearby street not noticing that a Carabinieri patrol had observed them during the theft. Promptly reached, the two were blocked.

- WHO?
- WHAT?
- WHERE?
- WHEN?
- WHY?

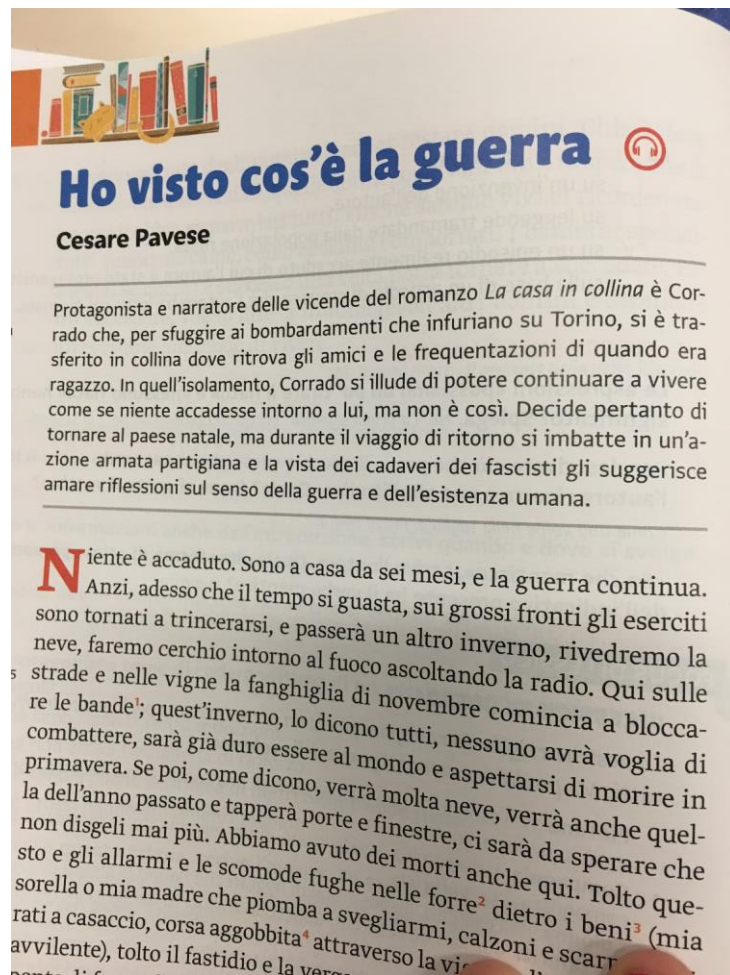


2) INTEGRATE READING WITH A VOICE SYNTHESIS

The vocal synthesis helps to understand tasks or concepts and makes reading more effective, by supporting it with listening: the pupil can use an MP3 recorder to record the lesson or the song and listen to it again as needed, emphasizing the words on the text key.

School textbooks often come with an audio CD or a registration code to access the contents online. Below is an example from an Italian textbook for middle school, prepared for the audio version of the contents. The texts are marked by the headphone icon.

IF APPLICABLE, INSERT AN IMAGE FROM A TEXTBOOK USED IN YOUR COUNTRY



3) SIMPLIFY THE TASKS

Many tasks are difficult to understand because they contain too much information and the syntax is too complex; the teacher can present a text with the main information already underlined, or she/he can re-write the text, simplifying it.

This strategy can be applied to any type of task, for example a grammatics exercise or a geometry problem.

In the picture:

Example n. 1 (ESEMPIO 1), the main information in the text (useful to understand the task) are underlined by the teacher;

Example n. 2 (ESEMPIO 2), the teacher writes a synthesis of what the student is required to do.

IF POSSIBLE, INSERT AN IMAGE FROM A TEXTBOOK USED IN YOUR COUNTRY

ESEMPIO 1 (SOTTOLINEARE)

ESPRIMERSI CON PRECISIONE Sostituisci il maschile generico uomo con le parole o le espressioni più specifiche proposte qui sotto. Ricordati di adeguare opportunamente gli elementi della frase.

adulto • individuo • popolazione • specie umana • umanità

1. Non è chiaro quando l'uomo preistorico iniziò a usare un linguaggio con suoni articolati. specie umana 2. Non fidarti degli uomini sconosciuti. individui
3. Tutti gli uomini dovrebbero essere uniti da sentimenti di fratellanza e di pace. l'umanità
4. Gli uomini delle montagne sono laboriosi e tenaci. popolazioni
5. La psicologia dell'uomo è diversa da quella del bambino. adulto

ESEMPIO 2 (SEMPLIFICARE LA CONSEGNA RISCRIVENDOLA)

SOSTITUISCI LA PAROLA "UOMO" CON LE PAROLE PIÙ ADATTE CHE TROVI QUI SOTTO

adulto • individuo • popolazione • specie umana • umanità

1. Non è chiaro quando l'uomo preistorico iniziò a usare un linguaggio con suoni articolati. specie umana 2. Non fidarti degli uomini sconosciuti. individui
3. Tutti gli uomini dovrebbero essere uniti da sentimenti di fratellanza e di pace. l'umanità

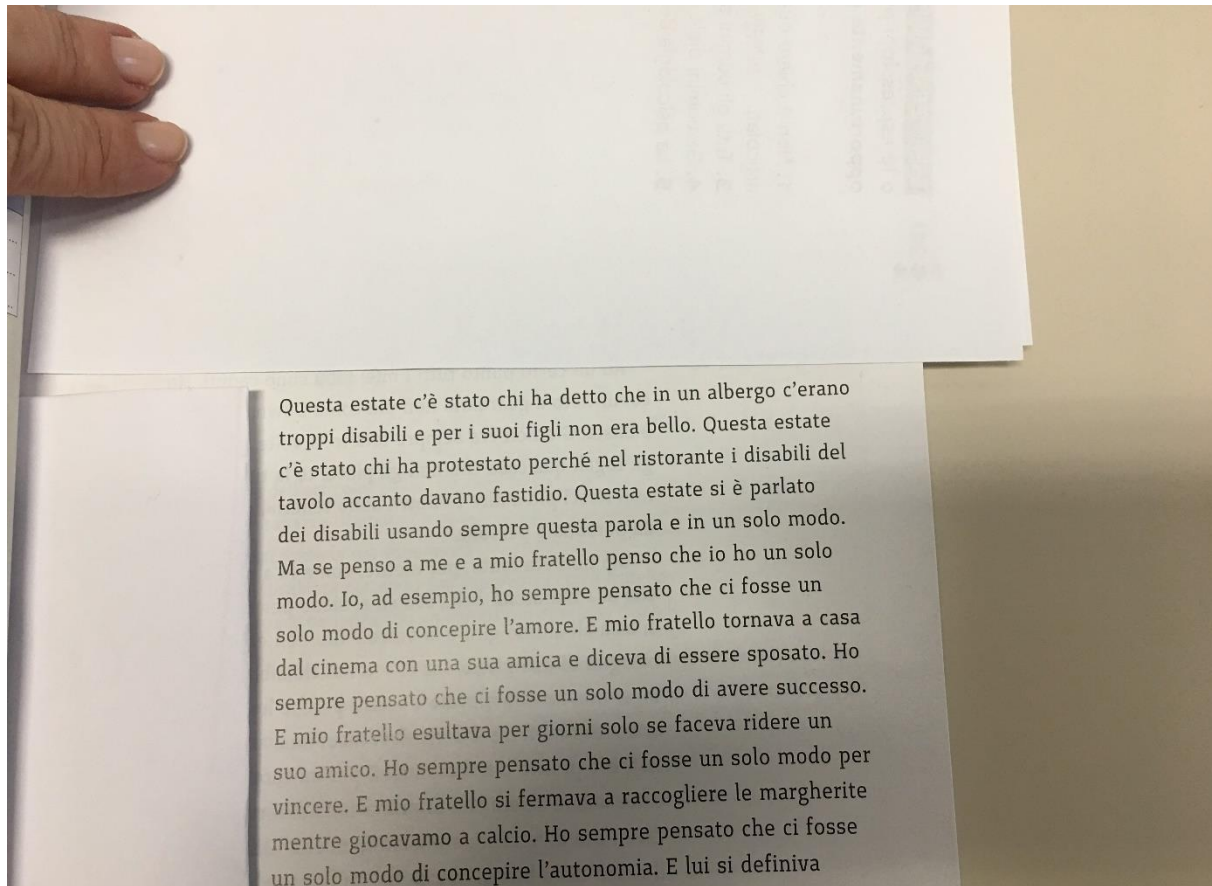
4) SELECT AND REDUCE THE EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

This strategy allows the teachers to give a small amount of work to the students, not compromising the quality of the results.

Example: the teacher gives the students a homework based on a series of grammatical exercises. The student with a LD can be asked to perform only a half of each exercise, in order to work on their skills in the same way as the other students, avoiding the fatigue due to an excessive amount of work.

5) CANCEL ANY VISUAL DISTRACTOR

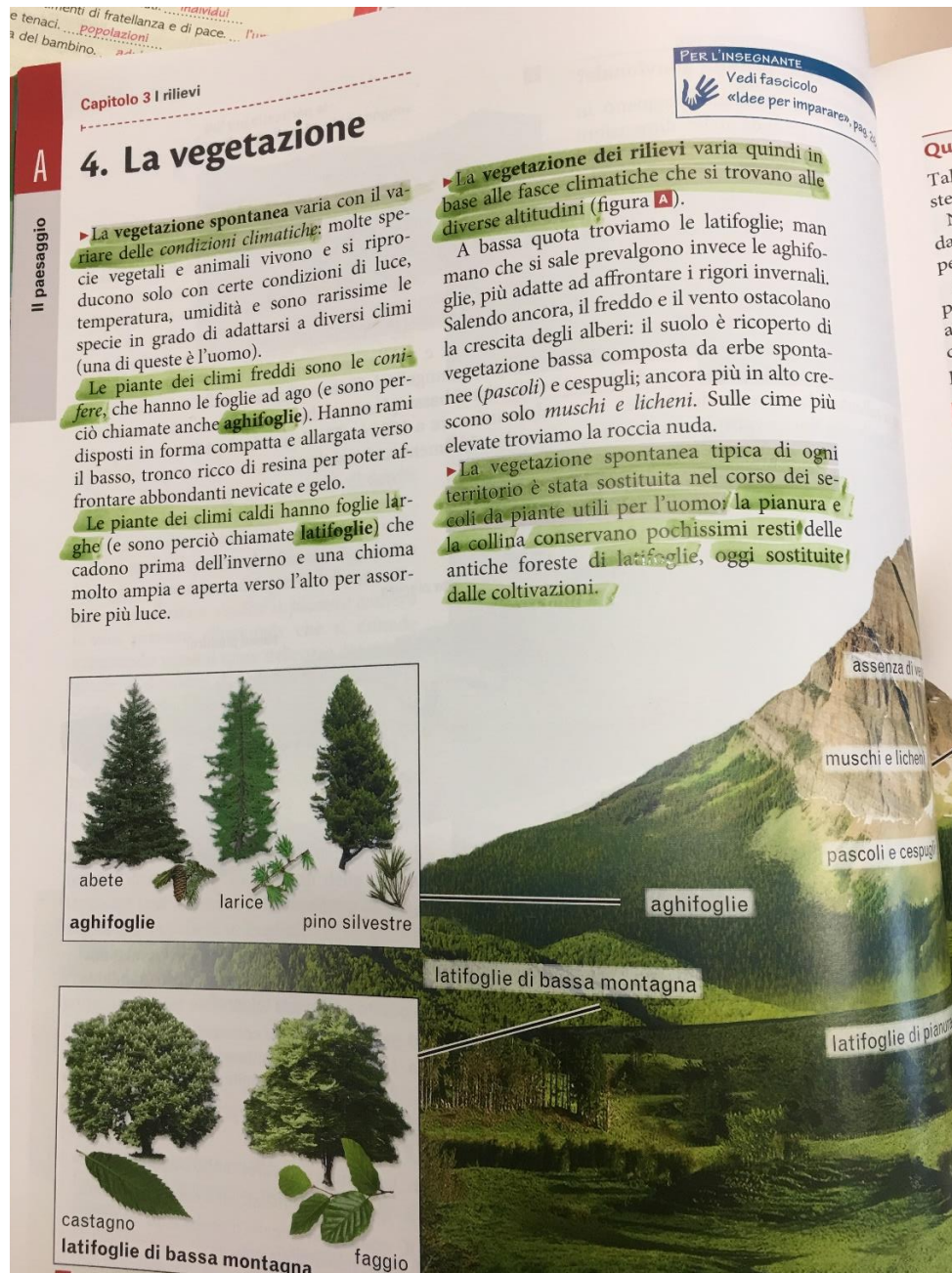
In order to help the student's focus, it is possible to highlight the text's section on which the student is working by "isolating" it, ie. covering the remaining text. It can be done using a blank sheet, or folding the book so as to leave readable only the page of interest.



6) HIGHLIGHT THE ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

An adolescent with LD finds difficult to identify the essential information in a text or a task.

The teacher can outline the important information with a highlighter, supporting them with images.



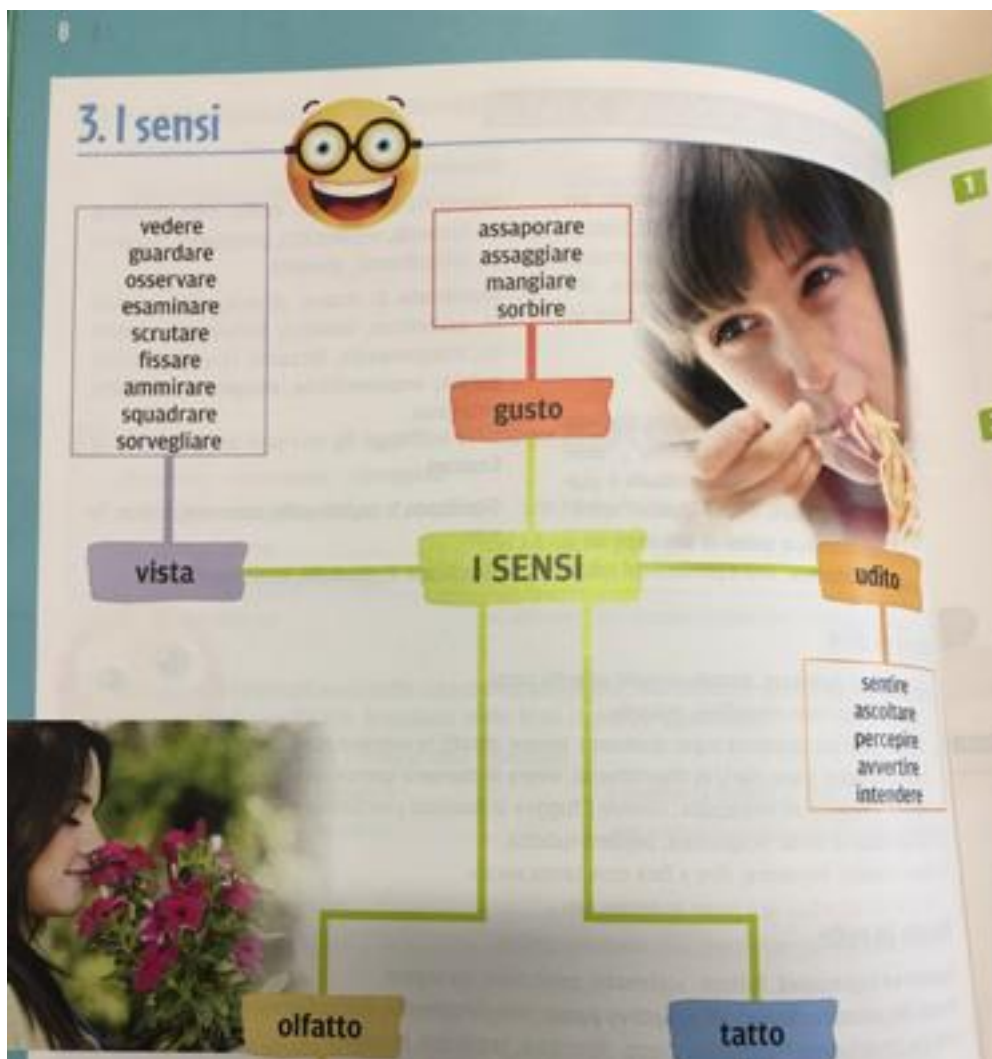
7) PROVIDE A GLOSSARY OF THE SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

From the lower secondary school (age 11-14), the study of different disciplines require a specific vocabulary, which is often difficult to understand and use for a student with LD.

It may be useful to provide a glossary of specific terms on the topic, in order to help the students to become familiar with new words.

In the following picture, there is a glossary model applicable to any area, that can be created in the form of a map or as a simple list of words.

SEE ATTACHED PAGE FROM AN ITALIAN SCHOOLBOOK, WITH A GLOSSARY OF WORDS RELATED TO A SUBJECT. IF APPLICABLE, USE AN IMAGE FROM A TEXTBOOK OF YOUR COUNTRY.



8) DRAW A MAP

The concept map helps all the students, and in particular those with LD, to visually focus essential information.

The teacher can provide:

- already prepared maps,
- maps lacking some information, that the student will complete with the help of the text whose keywords have been highlighted.

Table 1: already prepared maps

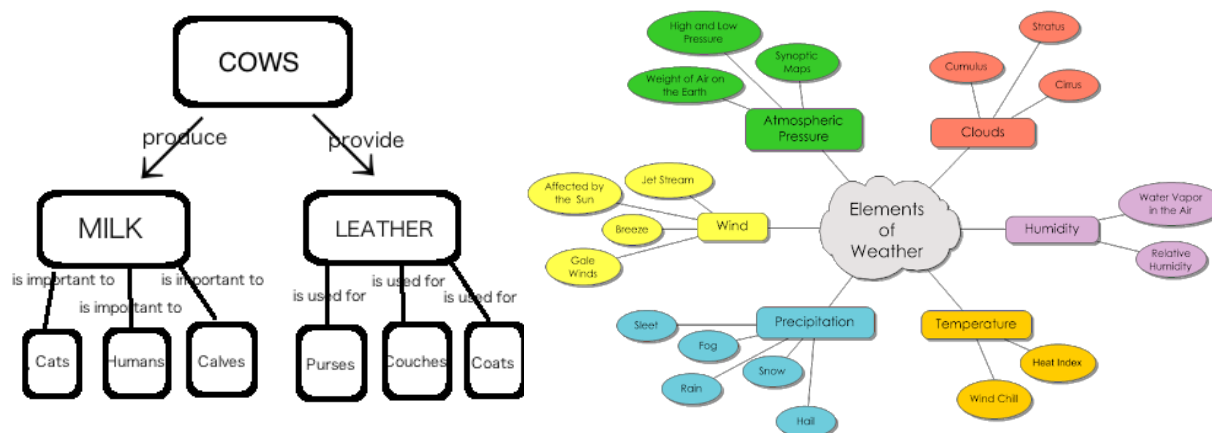
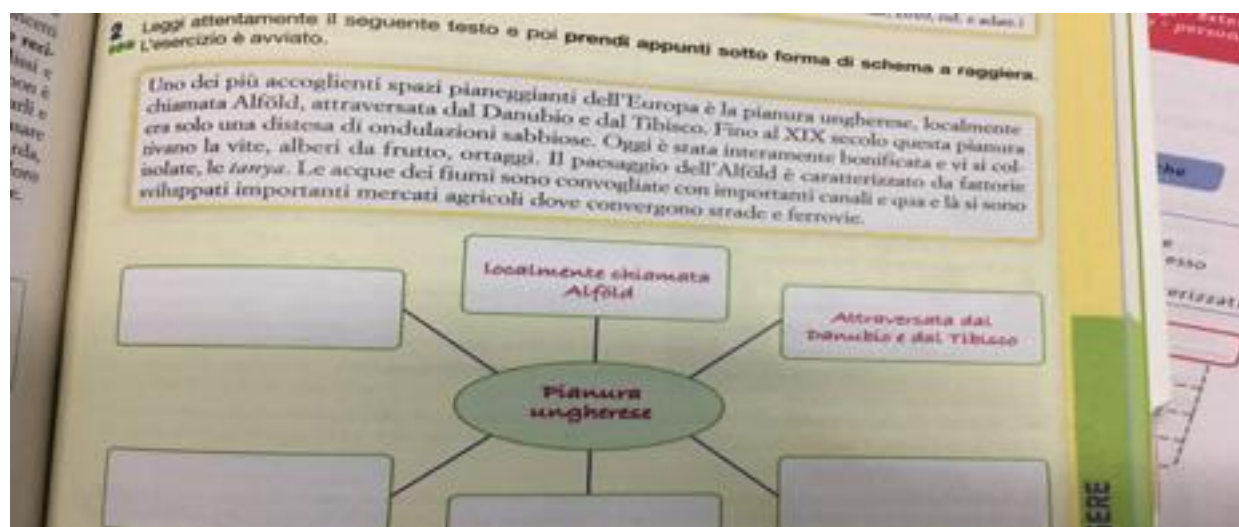


Table 2: In this map, the book (or the teacher) omits some information and/or definitions, that the student will have to insert by deducing them from the written text. **IF POSSIBLE, INSERT AN IMAGE FROM A TEXTBOOK USED IN YOUR COUNTRY**



9) USE COLOURS TO HIGHLIGHT DIFFERENT COMMUNICATION LEVELS

This exercise allows to recognize and diversify the various levels of communication and information, according to the different recipients: the organisation by colours helps the communicative strategies and the use of the different linguistic registers.

1 Prendi un dizionario e cerca le parole *scrivere* e *scricchiolio*. **Risposta aperta**

1. In riferimento alla parola *scrivere* quanti significati vengono riportati? Riepilogali sinteticamente sul quaderno.

2. Trova velocemente la parola *scricchiolio* e trascrivine il significato sul quaderno.

3 Leggi il testo e seleziona con tre colori diversi le informazioni utili a un visitatore generico, a un architetto e a uno storico e poi colora la legenda.

Il Duomo di Milano, con la sua architettura e la sua storia, è una delle chiese gotiche più importanti d'Italia. La visita è gratuita per l'interno, ma si paga un ticket per fotografare; a pagamento la salita alla terrazza panoramica.

Il Duomo di Milano è il più importante monumento artistico e religioso della città. Con i suoi 11.500 metri quadrati di superficie occupata, i 158,5 metri di lunghezza, i 93 di larghezza e i 108,5 di altezza, questo edificio è realizzato in marmo bianco rosato proveniente dalle cave di Candoglia, in val d'Ossola.

Nel 1386, sotto Gian Galeazzo Visconti, iniziarono i lavori di costruzione, che si protrassero per oltre cinque secoli, ma, nonostante architetti, scultori, pittori, maestranze locali e europee si siano susseguite le une alle altre con tradizioni e culture differenti, l'originaria struttura gotica dell'edificio non è mai stata abbandonata.

www.ilturista.info

☐ Turista generico ☐ Architetto ☐ Storico

Dopo aver svolto gli esercizi, ho imparato che...

Scegli l'alternativa corretta tra le due proposte in corsivo.

La lettura selettiva è veloce / lenta e serve a trovare un'informazione precisa / approfondire.

È efficace quando è libera / segue specifiche modalità.

10) USE SPECIFIC FONTS

To help the readability of the text, students with LD usually use **Arial** and **Verdana**, which are so-called **High Readability Fonts**.

High Readability essentially acts on two levels:

1. the removal of typographic barriers,
2. the comprehensibility of the text.

Breaking down typographic barriers, which are a concrete obstacle to accessing content, means adopting all those long-established criteria that make the page more "friendly" for those who face it:

- **unjustified text**, with irregular length of lines to facilitate the passage from one line to another and to avoid division into syllables;
- **spaced paragraphs** that offer readers easy to reach reading goals;
- **cream-colored paper** that does not give reflections and a thickness that prevents transparency of the page;
- **the use of a specific print font** which guarantees maximum clarity and helps to confuse the letters as little as possible.

A GOOD PRACTICE: BIANCOENERO® FONT

Biancoenero® is a font designed by an Italian team led by Umberto Mischi (graphic designer), with the advice of Alessandra Finzi (psychologist), Daniele Zanoni (expert in study methods in learning disorders) and Luciano Perondi (designer).

Its peculiar characteristics makes it highly legible, especially due to the marked differentiation of pairs of characters which are generally very similar – and therefore more difficult to recognise by dyslexic subjects or those who in any case have difficulty in reading – as well as for the average width of letters and the greater spacing between words.

On the **Biancoenero®** website it is possible to download the font for free.

Link: <http://www.biancoeneroedizioni.it/font/>)



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