

*The Glottodrama method* is the outcome of a two-year multilateral project co-funded in 2007 by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. The project has been coordinated by the *Language Research Laboratory of Novacultur Publishing Company* and was aimed at developing and test an innovative methodology for teaching foreign languages through drama.

The method has been tested at the beginning with Italian as a target language and according with the project's plan its main outcomes will be made available for future applications to the teaching of other European languages. Therefore this project also represents a first step to establish a European network of educational institutions interested in applying Drama Theatre to language learning in the framework of a communicative approach with a humanistic orientation.

Carlo Nofri

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Guide to the Glottodrama Method

# Guide to Glottodrama Method

*Learn foreign languages  
through Drama*



€ 20,00

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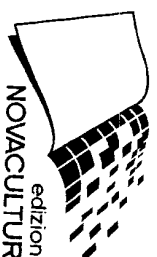
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This Guide to the Glottodrama Method crowns two years of collective work by the Linguistic Research Laboratory of Edizioni Novacultur. In its complete version, this text is a synthesis of the pedagogical experience realized by researchers, language teachers and Theatre&Drama teachers who have been the protagonists of the European project Glottodrama. A complete list of their names can be found on the Glottodrama's website: [www.glottodrama.eu](http://www.glottodrama.eu). As coordinator of the project, I personally thank all of them.

I also particularly thank Stefania Bucciarrelli and Carolina Drago, who wrote the Mannin Institute's case story for this book, and who edited the video-documentaries of Method Glottodrama; Patrizia Molteni and Tiziana Jacoponi for summarizing the Glottodrama experience at the University Paris I Sorbonne and Florinda Nardi for providing a report on the experimentation carried out at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata". A grateful mention, finally, is owed to Giulia Todini, secretary of the Project Glottodrama, who patiently coordinated communication within the partnership and creatively implemented our web site.

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## Carlo Nofri

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**Table 2 - Reference table to classify students' results in communicative performance**

| Foundation level<br>(CEFR A1 and A2)   | Intermediate level<br>(CEFR B1 and B2)   | Advanced level<br>(CEFR C1 and C2)   |
|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Distinction</b></p> <p>Work in which ideas and narratives are presented fluently and with enthusiasm and with a sense of ownership of the material. Verbal and non-verbal presentation will enable the listener to follow the thought processes being presented. The candidate will respond to questions aptly and accurately.</p> | <p><b>Distinction</b></p> <p>Work in which there is a strong sense of lively communication and conviction. Material will be well prepared and presented with authority and some flair. There will be evident use of complex language structures to convey complicated ideas and a sense of fluency and ease in conversation. Presentation skills will be well developed.</p> | <p><b>Distinction</b></p> <p>Work that shows an ability to handle the most complex ideas and diverse communication tasks with ease and rigour. There will be a satisfying integration of communication skills and a sense of total ownership of the material and control of the situation. Presentation skills will be highly developed and yet all work will be exemplified by naturalness and fluency.</p> |
| <p>Work that shows a genuine attempt to engage and interest the listener. There will be a sense of vitality and an ability to communicate ideas both in formal and informal situations. There will be a sound level of preparation and an imaginative if somewhat uneven level of presentation.</p>                                      | <p><b>Merit</b></p> <p>Work in which communication skills are well integrated and the material presented is secure. There may be some lapses in the use of language and the ability to respond to all questions, but the overall impression will be one of successful engagement with the listener.</p>  | <p>Work in which complex ideas are presented with authority and flair and in a way that engages the listener. Vocal variety and non-verbal communication will add to the sense of fluency and ease and the candidate will adapt successfully to different situations. There may be some lack of spontaneity and arguments may not always be fully developed.</p>   |
| <p>Work that shows some skill in communication although it may lack flair. Presentations and conversation will be clear and audible and there will be some ability to respond to questions fluently. Work is adequately prepared.</p>  | <p><b>Pass</b></p> <p>Work in which there is evidence of some preparation and some ability to convey information and mount a persuasive argument. Verbal and non-verbal skills will be sufficient to ensure audibility and some interest for the listener. There will be evidence of interpersonal sensitivity and an ability to relate to other people.</p>                 | <p>Work in which complex ideas are handled with some skill and there is an adequate response to conversation and questioning. Work will show some imagination in preparation and there will be sound use of verbal and non-verbal resources. Various visual and other aids will be used to some effect but the presentations may be adequate rather than stimulating.</p>                                    |

## 4. Experimentation: the trial classes of the Glottodrama method

### 4.1 The European partnership

Glottodrama started with a two-year (2008/2009) multilateral research project approved and co-funded in 2007 by the new Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union. The international partnership is coordinated by the Language Research Laboratory of Novacultur Publishing Company and has involved till now 10 partners from 8 countries: ITALY, FRANCE, GREECE, ROMANIA, TURKEY, BULGARIA, PORTUGAL, SPAIN.

(For an updated list of partners refer to our web-site: [www.glottodrama.eu](http://www.glottodrama.eu).)

At the present time the method has been experimented for two consecutive years by some of the partners, who put Glottodrama courses in their Italian language plans of study, and in 2010 further experimentations will be performed by recently added new partners in the framework of a new project. From a technical point of view, experimentation has been organized comparing Glottodrama classes with control classes where other teaching methodologies, more based on grammar and written skills, were applied.

## 4.2 “Drama and modern language teaching”, the Frascati Conference

We have already mentioned that Glottodrama project was born from a survey on some national and international applications of drama and theatre in language learning. As a follow up to this work and in the framework of the European project Glottodrama, in December 2008 we organized in Frascati, a small town close to Rome renowned for its scientific research laboratories, a conference on this topic: “Drama and modern language teaching”<sup>1</sup>. This meeting gave all the participants a unique opportunity to reflect and confront on this pedagogical theme of growing interest and to know some experiences autonomously realized by teachers and researchers involved in developing innovative approaches in humanise language teaching.

Some “case stories” were illustrated in detail and the main outcome has been a widely shared recognition of some pedagogical benefits unfolded and developed by this interdisciplinary experiences: an effective solution to put in practice a more humanistic approach based on a holistic vision of the learning process where imagination, feelings and emotions play a key role, an outstanding contribution to reinforce motivation and psychological involvement both of adult and young learners, a way to stimulate spontaneity in inter-personal interaction removing psychological filters and boosting the improvement of oral skills.

A further outcome of the conference has been the common decision to create a network of teachers and institutions to

<sup>1</sup> *Tiempo e didattica delle lingue moderne* [Drama and modern languages teaching], see conference proceedings, review «Culturiana», n. 3/4 2008, Edizioni Novacultur, Roma.

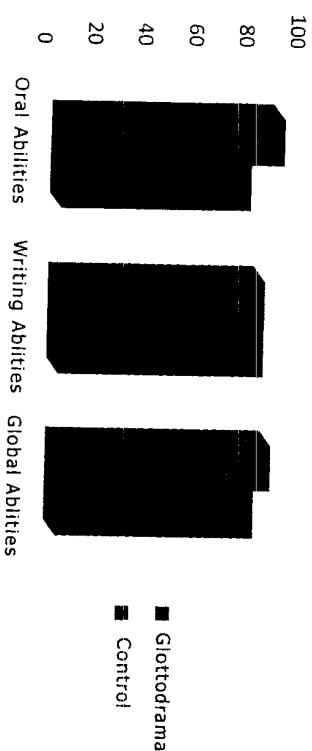
put in contact different experiences and exchange ideas and good practices.

This network is now in progress and more information on the conference are available for public consultation on the web site of our language review that published the proceedings: [www.culturiana.it](http://www.culturiana.it).

## 4.3 “Quantitative” results from experimentation

Exams involved over 200 students from 4 countries: Italy, France, Romania and Greece. Ages were different (from secondary school to adult education), as was the starting language level (from A1 to C1). Tests were administrated after completing a 90 hour teaching programme conducted by two teachers (1 for language and 1 for drama). Results were then compared to those of students from a same number of control classes, where the language was taught using different methods, but with a similar amount of hours. Exams were both written and oral and were reported on an homogeneous scale of 100 points per student. The global average for the 2008/2009 Glottodrama classes in the **written exams** was about **81,25/100**, just a few decimals higher than the control classes. Consequently the focus Glottodrama put on learning oral abilities did not weaken acquisition of writing abilities. Really remarkable were on the other hand the results for the oral tests, where Glottodrama students achieved an average of 88/100 against a control classes’ average of 75/100. A substantial **difference of 13/100**, which clearly testifies of a **better learning of oral abilities on the part of the Glottodrama students**.

### Comparison Exams Glottodrama Classes and Control Classes



#### 4.4 “Qualitative” results of the experimentation: students’ and teachers’ opinions

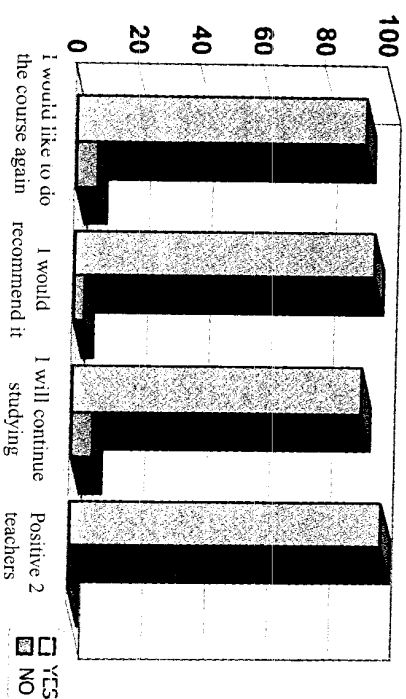
The psychological impact of the method on students was positive as well. In fact, the questionnaires the students filled in at the end of the course showed the following results: 93% would like to do this teaching experience again, and 96,5% would recommend it to other students; 93%, after the Glottodrama course, expressed their wish to continue studying the Italian language and 100% of the students found the co-leading of two teachers a good idea.

This proves perfectly the reinforcement effect produced on the students’ motivation by such a psychologically involving experience.

Therefore, the so far acquired data confirm the Method’s pedagogical assumptions and are consistent with the project’s predictions.

But also Glottodrama Italian language teachers’ opinions agree with the general successful impact of the method on stu-

#### 4. The experimentation of method Glottodrama



dents. In some cases they reported the feeling of having freed a personal hidden potential during this experience.

Furthermore, some of them found that the Glottodrama experiment was a “liberating” experience that has mirrored pedagogical beliefs they had before but they could not turn into practice by using other teaching approaches.

*«Glottodrama project has – apart from its specific aims – an other important merit: gathering young people and creating a studying environment which is very different from the traditional one. In a context like ours – a university where Italian has been taught from more than a century with excellent results inasmuch as many representative persons of the Romanian culture were students of our department – the academic way of studying is still considered the more appropriate. The method is based on learning grammar (which is not to be ignored) through books and sometimes, in order to “fare un viaggio e due servizi”<sup>2</sup>, through literary books. That led to the funny result of listening to a 19 years old girl speaking the language of*

<sup>2</sup> In English, “to kill two birds with one stone”.

Gianbattista Vico<sup>3</sup>. Differently, the Glotodrama method allows students to approach the studying process in a more confident way, sometimes they even don't realize that they are studying. A proverb says "Playing, you learn". That's true, if the game is serious and the rules very clear.

**(Roxana Utale, Italian Language Professor, University of Bucharest)**

«Glotodrama gives the teacher a new perspective regarding the learning objectives; the use of body and space allows students to take possession of the language and to use it quickly; it also stimulates their personal reflection. Glotodrama method has been a pleasant discovery for us, teachers, as well; although we have classes on Saturdays, we are always happy when dealing with Glotodrama students. Working in such a dynamic, exciting context makes teachers forget tiredness, even if the work is hard. I believe that this "little miracle" is due to the different context and the effectiveness of the methodology: Glotodrama is the only method able to develop completely the French idea of "apprendre à apprendre". Through Glotodrama not only students learn how to use body and voice, how to express themselves in a correct way, but also teachers learn to listen and record the student's production without censor it (...) they learn to observe the details of the oral exposition and, a very interesting aspect, to work in a team context or in pair with the other teacher. Obviously, a well-according relation between the drama teacher and the language teacher is fundamental, otherwise lessons would be difficult to undertake and experimentation would not be so exciting. I have to say that all the colleagues who came to observe a Glotodrama class were enthusiastic and full of energy at the end. Therefore, why don't we think about using Glotodrama also as a sort of therapy to refresh teachers' motivation?»

**(Tiziana Jacoponi, Italian language assistant, University of Paris "Sorbonne I")**

<sup>3</sup> Ironic reference to the literary and old fashion Italian used by the philosopher G.B. Vico in XXVIII century.

«The humanistic-affective approach of teachers toward students creates a fluid learning environment, open to effective communication.

This context of "teaching-learning" facilitates the possibility for the student to encode his life, feelings and sensations by using directly the L2 and helps him to remove his affective filters. The drama teacher and I worked on elements that are usually ignored, such as the student's linguistic modalities of communication, interaction, gestures and proxemics. The co-presence of two teachers allowed us to concentrate more individual attention on the student who could quickly understand corrections and suggestions by the repetition of the performance»

**(Lucia Caioti, Italian language teacher, Local Center for Adults Learning, State School D.Mannin, Rome)**

«In my opinion, Glotodrama course has been very useful for students in the pilot class. It helped them to acquire a higher confidence in the use of the Italian language, also in those cases where there was a certain shyness at the beginning. It allowed all the students to achieve a good control of those aspects of language which usually are neglected in a traditional course, like intonation, gestures and facial mimic. In particular, it gave them the ability to recognize these communication aspects in an Italian speaker. These results were all achieved in a profitable, positive and pleasant atmosphere, which is encouraging them to continue studying Italian, going deeper and without stopping at the level of a pure grammar knowledge. Once again it's been proved that when work starts from the body and from the individual body's expression of the student, he feels he doesn't have to conquer a new and far away knowledge, but feels like he's finding it inside himself»

**(Tina Zogopoulou, Italian language teacher and director of the Language School "Perugia", Athens)**

«The method Glotodrama allows the development of communicative abilities in which the synergy between acting and linguistic activities



*encourages using para- and extra-linguistic elements, non verbal and contextual; suprasegmental traits make mutual understanding between speaker and receiver spontaneous. Evident improving in the language use can be noticed also with L1 students, very far from Italian language (Chinese and Turkish).*

*The humanistic and affective oriented communicative approach encourages the active participation on the part of the students and helps a cultural and linguistic exchange both with each other and in the relationship class-teachers. Confronting and discussion situations which arise in the pedagogical path involve the student, who, in a really socializing situation, succeeds to naturally improve his communicative fluency; his morphological and syntactic structures and the specific vocabulary. The writing of the script and the staging of the performance are practical examples of the achievement of the goals of the method. [...] In the case of the experimentation at University of Tor Vergata, many of the teachers who participated in the course in a traditional way and then saw the performance, set-up in only three intensive weeks, were amazed by the potential and most of all by the impact that such a method had on students, accelerating learning processes in an exponential way. At the end of the performance, as well as in subsequent occasions, they asked for information and hoped they could participate to training courses with a similar method, to prove themselves in Glottodrama learning classes»*  
**(Florinda Nardi, Italian language teacher, Faculty of Arts of the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”)**

#### **4.5 Frequent problems in applying the Glottodrama method**

Obviously, as in any experimentation, we had to face difficulties and unforeseen problems, particularly at the beginning,

and some adjustments of the original plans have been introduced during the work in progress. Therefore we think it is useful, for anyone who wants to apply the Glottodrama method in his own context (school or university), to take these problems into consideration:

1. **Acknowledgement of the course and of the acquired competence.** Glottodrama class students work should be officially acknowledged by the organising institution (school or university) and translated into **student credits** for those who successfully complete the course. Otherwise students' motivation decreases and the surrounding environment's regard for this experience becomes that of a complementary “less important” activity compared to the traditional ones. This is one of the reasons why all the students involved in the experimentation obtained a Certificate of Attendance issued together with the Coordinating Institute and the local Partner.
2. **Resistance to innovation.** Like any methodological innovation, Glottodrama too had to face a resistance initially from the school and the academic environment where it's been experimented. For this reason it is important to also involve the other language and drama teachers of the faculty and the school managers who are not directly involved in managing the Glottodrama course. This is important to let the principles and goals of the method be understood, underlining its flexibility and the fact that it can be easily integrated with already existing teaching programmes. For example, it's been very useful to involve teachers who worked with the “control classes” to explain that this experience should not be felt like a sort of “method contest”, aimed to question the already existing

## At last on the set

There is something deeply fascinating in setting up a scenic space. Actors have to face proxemics, be careful not to go out of frame, sometimes look into the camera, control movements and gestures, know their lines by heart. When the scene is ready we immediately enter into a solemn dimension, in which all that we are is left behind, and we put ourselves in the character's shoes. For the first time, the Manni's students are on a television set, and they face the troupe requirements: they need good shots to be used in the editing stage. We can do anything but consider them as actors, asking for discipline, rigour, care to nuances and a great emotional charge. In the two days of shooting, the students did their best. It was not granted, at all. In fact, even that day, none of them could forget their daily duties. Ali was late because he had to end his turn at the coffee bar, Jasmeeed could not miss a work interview, and Fouhad had an unexpected family problem. Nobody lost heart, however. We divided the separate act shootings considering all their requirements. Despite the lack of consistency of the scenes, the guys didn't lose their sense of stage playing. The mood was alive and adrenalinic, like that of a television set. Everybody knew we had to come out with a fiction and that it had to be perfect, just as if "Inspector Gatto's Cases" were to be broadcasted at television "prime time". During the shootings, the students really did their best, and the backstage shots prove it. A group of passionate students who, with their script in their hands, were trying to memorize their parts, repeating their lines together with their partner character. An extraordinary happening, in which, while we were shooting in the corridor the scene with the "school caretaker" and the "student", that is with Jasmeeed and Gianfranco, Maurizio and Lucia were testing pro-

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nunciation and insisting on grammar. Right to the end, even at the risk of exasperating the troupe, Italian language was never put aside.

"Inspector Gatto's Cases" was shot in six hours, divided in two afternoons. The editing lasted for a week. What resulted is a short but effective fiction. People who saw it, even without knowing the project, found it was amusing and congratulated them for their achievements. The video can be viewed on the following address: [www.glotodrama.eu](http://www.glotodrama.eu).

### **From writing a script to the performance.**

#### **The Glotodrama experience at the University of Tor Vergata**

*Report based on the account by Floriana Nardi, coordinator of the Glotodrama Project at the Faculty of Arts, University of Rome "Tor Vergata".*

#### **Promotion and organization of the course**

CLICI – Centre for Italian Language and Culture of the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" – organizes many Italian culture and language courses for foreigners throughout the year; therefore, in every occasion, and particularly when the courses were addressed to foreign students, this European project and the imminent opening of an Italian language course through Glotodrama methodology have been advertised. We informed the foreign PhD students of the University about the trial courses, also the Chinese students who participated in the intensive language programme "Marco Polo", and the foreign students who had attended previous CLICI's courses. The news of this course, and the relative

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information on the project, were also spread through the CLICIT's web site, billposting in all the University campus, and an e-mail campaign both to the teachers and to the foreign students (over 900) registered at the University.

The second Pilot Class of the Glottodrama Project took place during the Summer Italian Language and Culture School organized by CLICIT, in July 2009. These Summer courses, from their first edition in summer 2004, have always been marked by a great flow of students coming from European and Extra-European Universities. Since these courses feature a methodology combining the Italian language and culture teaching by offering a programme of touristic and cultural itineraries based on guided visits and excursions to places of interest, candidates have always been students with an intermediate and advanced level of linguistic competence. In fact the basic requirement to attend our summer courses is to possess at least a B1/B2 level of knowledge according to the scale of the Common European Framework for Languages. Therefore, all the students of both pilot and control classes were up to this standard.

At the first welcome day of the course, all the students were given an identical progressive entry level test, capable of exploring knowledge and competence in the grammar and communicative structures from level A1 to level C1. After the written test came an individual and informal interview with the teachers, aimed to verify the levels of linguistic competence of the students, combining the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the written test results with the oral skills assessment. We tried therefore to put into both classes students with a similar level of linguistic competence, distributing them in a homogeneous way, according both to their starting competence and to their communicative attitude and psychological profile.

Both classes of students showed an average linguistic competence higher than level B1 of the CEFR. Since the students' level was so advanced, classes were not big (maximum 8 students), with competence allocated from level B2 to level C1 of CEF, a global heterogeneity balanced with the insert, in each class, of some students equally skilled to assure an equivalent "average competence" for each group.

The "theatre" classroom of the Faculty was chosen for the Glottodrama course. This classroom has a large elevated platform similar to a stage, and all the seats are removable to easily adapt the space to the various workshop requirements. The classroom was equipped with a cdrom/dvd recorder and a video projector connected to a personal computer as well. The teacher's desk was moved each time according to the stage requirements, and it was also used for the activities of "grammar corner".

### Designing the course. Syllabus and target-activities

The course, consisting of 90 hours overall, was carried out from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, with the lessons in the mornings and some afternoon activities. An intensive schedule which led to the rehearsal and staging of a performance that took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July at the Auditorium of the Faculty of Arts, with an audience of hundreds of students, teachers, friends and relatives of the students involved.

Since it was a first experience of the partnership with such a high level class, we preferred developing original inputs, born from the cooperation between teachers and students.

Thanks to the synergy between language and acting teachers, and to an accurate phase of course planning, aiming both at the final language exam and to the theatre performance, it's been

possible to apply a syllabus of language and theatre contents carried out and accomplished in parallel with the one scheduled by the control class' teacher and agreed with him. All the teaching inputs and the related activities were therefore an original product of the teachers of the University, agreed in advance, when planning the course, with the director of the project and his staff. Various activities were produced, based first of all on the need to establish some grammar structures and in second place on the linguistic needs emerged from a deeper knowledge of the class members. A great deal of these activities were designed by the language teacher, together with the acting teacher, thinking about the linguistic goals and the related ways to achieve them on stage with situational inputs and self-produced text material. Other activities were based on the adaptation of some short texts, taken from works by Achille Campanile<sup>2</sup>, which particularly fitted for a language teaching and acting exploitation, due to the variety and style of the language employed and the wealth of linguistic games. Throughout the whole course, the video-camera has been a daily technological guest. Placed most of the time on a stand for fixed camera shots, it caught the spontaneity of life in the classroom, but it's been often used also to allow the students to watch and comment upon their performances.

**Choice, working out and development of text materials and of activities on and off the stage**

Since the phase of planning of the course, taking into account the linguistic and communicative structure required by the target competence level, it was decided to start from the lit-

<sup>2</sup> Italian writer and comedy playwright.

erary input provided by some work by Achille Campanile, which, thanks to their articulation in theatrical and literary micro-units, allowed a flexibility particularly suitable for a deep textual analysis, and at the same time also allowed a textual adaptability which left a certain freedom to the students in defining the final script.

In fact, on one hand we started from some staging of sample exercises, which defined the dynamics on stage (exercises used to establish grammar and/or communicative structures, or to face new ones), on the other hand we offered very precise readings, connected not only because taken from the same author, Achille Campanile, but also because of the comic feature of their style (which allowed a deep reflection on the "different" sense of words and therefore a lexical and semantic investigation, more suitable for the linguistic level). Starting from these two elements, and from concerting those pieces of information that comedians of "Commedia dell'Arte" used to get from their "canovaccio", the students were asked to work out a script and write in detail every scene, giving consistency to the text and, at the same time, doing their best to define every single part it consisted of.

Once they chose a framework and a precise context in which characters would act, the students then split in small groups to start the writing of the scenes. Consequently, the final macro-text used to work with is the result of the autonomous work on stage and on the texts produced by the students during the whole course, which they fully managed to accomplish, in a completely autonomous way, combining acting techniques and exercises to be developed on stage with more complex contents worked out from given textual inputs.

## Monitoring the work in progress

The “Logbook” has been the primary tool for monitoring this experience, always supported by a constant talking with the students and, at the same time, with the control class’ teacher.

Moreover, a lesson register and a reference syllabus were used in order to follow a programme with precise teaching goals, and to keep a constant comparison with the control class as well. Fundamental was also the programme table created at the beginning of the course when a teaching path was designed based on drama techniques, but also linked to a detailed language syllabus, agreed with the control class’ teacher, aimed to consolidate and improve a B2 level with the goal of administering a final C1 level test at the end of the course. Made more expert by the previous experience and supported by a higher level of language competence than the previous experimental class, the drama teacher could avoid the critical points met in the first year of experimentation, basically connected to the students’ comprehension of a technical lexicon during the “actors studio” phase. There was no more need for the intervention by the language teacher, and it was even decided to exploit the co-presence of the two teachers to avoid “only verbal explanations” of the activities to be carried out, preferring to show them directly with explicative examples of performances. We therefore managed to turn all the critical points met in the first experimentation into advantages.

### Raise the curtain!

Students and teachers who were also taking part in other courses organized by CLICI (PhD students, Marco Polo students, Summer courses, extensive courses), were invited to the final performance on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July as an occasion to immediately

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spread the methodology and its experimentation, as well as to have an immediate feedback.

Many of the teachers who took part in the traditional courses and then saw the final performance – put up in only three weeks of intensive work – were amazed by the potential and, most of all, for the impact this methodology had on the students, accelerating the learning process with an exponential growth (*impressions confirmed also by the results of the final language exams, where the Glottodrama students scored better than the control group both in the writing skills and, mainly, in the oral skills*).

At the end of the performance, and in following circumstances as well, they asked for further information and said they wished to participate in training courses for teachers, in order to try themselves to lead Glottodrama classes. Similar were the students’ reactions. Those who took part in the course showed great satisfaction for being able, in such a short time, to achieve the tangible result of a self-produced stage performance and of such a good quality both in linguistic and theatrical terms, while those who were in the audience asked to attend in the future classes with the Glottodrama method to be scheduled in the future programme of CLICI at the University of Tor Vergata.

A filmed short version of the final performance is available on the project’s web site: [www.glottodrama.eu](http://www.glottodrama.eu).

### Comédie italienne with French students: instructions for use

*Edited by Patrizia Molteni, director of CREI, and Tiziana Jacoponi, Italian language lecturer at the University of Paris I Sorbonne*

More than for other cultures, Glottodrama was a challenge for the students of University Sorbonne Paris I. In order to understand