

Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on
the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language
Awareness Programme

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Abstract

The Maltese islands have long been exposed to foreign languages apart from Maltese and English. Foreign languages are considered fundamental in all sectors, however in recent years an alarming situation arose in the educational sector. This involved a decrease in the number of Maltese students obtaining a Secondary Education Certificate in one or more foreign languages. Consequently, the number of pupils studying a foreign language at a higher level of education also diminished. Inevitably, strategies were implemented to improve this situation, such as the introduction of the Foreign Language Awareness Programme. This dissertation explores the perceptions of different stakeholders on this programme, which as from scholastic year 2017-18 has targeted Year 3 and 4 students attending Maltese primary state schools. Consequently, it identifies the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; records its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outlines its areas for improvement. By adopting a qualitative methodology, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the Programme Coordinator, the Assistant Director, a College Principal, two Heads of Schools and five FLAP teachers. Research findings suggest that participants are aware of the programme's aims and how it is being implemented. Participants outlined a number of perceived benefits of the programme, that link well to its aims, i.e. becoming aware of distinct foreign languages and cultures, acknowledging and accepting diversity and developing lifelong learning skills, amongst others. All involved stakeholders reviewed positively the programme, especially outlining a number of expected and unexpected positive outcomes. These include student's ability to communicate with others as well as to pinpoint and share learned information. Although participants encountered some difficulties with the programme, namely related to school logistics and a lack of human resources to teach the programme, they are looking forward for the continuation of the latter and offer various suggestions on how this can be accentuated.

Keywords: FLAP, primary schooling, plurilingualism, interculturalism.

I dedicate this dissertation to every person I crossed path with, for helping me grow into the person I am today and for helping me reach my destination.

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List of abbreviations

AD: Assistant Director.

CP: College Principal.

DCRILL: Department for Curriculum, Research Innovation and Lifelong Learning.

EVLANG: L'Eveil Aux Langues Dans L'ecole Primaire.

FES: Foundation for Educational Services.

FL: Foreign Language.

FLAP: Foreign Language Awareness Programme.

FREC: Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

FT1: FLAP Teacher 1.

FT2: FLAP Teacher 2.

FT3: FLAP Teacher 3.

FT4: FLAP Teacher 4.

FT5: FLAP Teacher 5.

HoS1: Head of School 1.

HoS2: Head of School 2.

ITS: Institute for Tourism Studies.

JALING: Janua Linguarum Reserata.

L1: First Language.

L2: Second Language.

LLC: Lifelong Learning Centres.

MCAST: Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology.

MEDE: Ministry for Education and Employment.

MQF: Malta Qualifications Framework.

MTL: Masters in Teaching and Learning.

PC: Programme Coordinator.

SEC: Secondary Education Certificate.

SMT: School Management Team.

SPA: Subject Proficiency Assessment.

UG: *Universal Grammar*.

UM: University of Malta.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Maltese islands are exposed to different languages. As a matter of fact, the Constitution of Malta (1964) posits that Maltese is the national language of the Maltese archipelago whilst also granting co-official status to English. Indeed, the Maltese islands are bilingual, specifically bilingual without diglossia, meaning that the two languages compete for use in the same domains (Camilleri Grima, 2000). However, the Ministry for Education and Employment¹ (2014b) states that Maltese is the preferred language for local television stations, local radio stations, churches, etc., whilst English is widely used in education, industry, commerce, entertainment, tourism, and the mass media. Nonetheless, both Maltese and English are equally taught in compulsory education and can be studied further at higher levels of education (MEDE, 2014b).

Additionally, foreign languages are also widely present in the Maltese islands. In fact, Brincat (2011) highlights that the Maltese population has been accustomed to foreign languages since 870 AD due to the island's unique position in the middle of three continents and its various settlers. Nowadays, Maltese citizens are still exposed to foreign languages as tourists visit the islands every year and since a high number of foreigners live within them (MEDE, 2014b). In spite of this scenario, up until a couple of years ago, Maltese students could only study foreign languages at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels (Pace, 2018b). Nowadays, in line with national and international policies, pupils attending most primary State schools (and some Church and Independent schools) are being made aware of different foreign languages during their primary schooling years.

¹ Henceforth, MEDE.

1.2 The Foreign Language Awareness Programme

Although learning a foreign language² helps pupils develop cognitively, academically, socially and personally (Marcos, 1998), a report published by the European Commission in May of 2017, stated that many students across Europe still lacked ambition to learn a FL. Unfortunately, Malta's situation isn't any different. Pace (2017a, p. 154) states that:

in the last five [Secondary Education Certificate³] examination sessions, from May 2012 to May 2016, around 32% of the cohort of students who turned sixteen (and therefore ended their compulsory schooling) failed to register for any foreign language [...]. Besides these, one must also take into account another 15-20% of students who every year, either register but fail to turn up for the examinations or fail to make the grade.

This is a worrying situation as “Malta's economy is dependent on human resources and foreign trade”, especially “tourism and digital gaming” (Pace, 2017c, no pagination). Moreover, employers struggle to find suitable candidates with good FL use (Caruana, 2017). In response to this situation, Schembri (2017) urges authorities and politicians to give foreign languages within the Maltese educational system the importance they deserve, whilst MEDE (2014a) insists on preparing Maltese citizens with the skills needed to compete in international markets.

Consequently, a number of strategies were implemented to improve these circumstances. Dr. Mario Pace⁴, together with other stakeholders, implemented the ‘Foreign Language Awareness Programme’⁵. This programme makes students aware of different foreign languages and cultures, but also helps pupils develop a positive approach towards plurilingualism and interculturalism (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department, no date). FLAP was

² Henceforth, FL.

³ Henceforth, SEC.

⁴ Dr. Mario Pace is a resident senior lecturer of Italian within the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta and advisor for MEDE on FL teaching and learning (Pace, 2018).

⁵ Henceforth, FLAP.

implemented in the scholastic year of 2017-2018 and it was offered to Year 3 students attending primary state schools. The following scholastic year saw the continuation of the programme with Year 4 pupils. Similar programmes are also being implemented in Church and Independent schools.

FLAP reflects international and national policies. In fact, the Council of Europe (2001, p. 5) affirms that “the aim of language education is no longer seen as simply to achieve ‘mastery’ of one or two, or even three languages” but rather “to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place” and that “the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence” is provided. This is in line with the *Barcelona: Presidency Conclusions* (2002) which expresses the need of having two foreign languages exposed to young pupils. It is also in line with *The Lisbon Strategy* (2000) which points out the necessity of improving FL teaching and learning in all levels of education across Europe. MEDE (2012, p. 34) also affirms that:

[i]n addition to Maltese and English as core languages, the introduction to foreign languages through a language awareness programme is deemed necessary in light of the political, geographical and historical context of the Maltese Islands and the EU’s emphasis on language learning and multilingualism.

1.3 Rationale and research questions

Given what I set out above, my dissertation seeks to answer one main research question, namely: *What are the perceptions of different stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme?* The following three sub-research questions help make the latter task more manageable and focused:

- i. What is FLAP according to the different stakeholders?
- ii. Which are the perceived benefits of FLAP?
- iii. What are the perceived outcomes (benefits, limitations and areas for improvement) of FLAP?

In order to accomplish the latter, this dissertation aims: (i) to understand the felt needs that led to the implementation of the programme; (ii) to give an overview of FLAP by identifying the programme's objectives and learning outcomes and highlighting how these are being implemented within Maltese primary state schools; (iii) to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; (iv) to record its impact as perceived by the participants of this study; and (v) to outline its limitations and areas for improvement.

This dissertation is essential as it investigates FLAP through the perceptions of different stakeholders and gathers in-depth information about the programme, its implementation, benefits, challenges and areas for improvement. This information can help better understand how different stakeholders perceive the programme; whether it is succeeding or not according to them; and whether it can be improved. It can also serve to encourage College Principals and Heads of Schools to implement the programme in their respective college or school. FLAP teachers that are interested in teaching the programme can also understand FLAP's implementation according to the different participants whilst parents and students are made aware of the perceived outcomes of the programme.

For this investigation, I chose the interpretive approach as it was the best approach that could answer appropriately the main research question. I adopted a qualitative methodology and collected data through 10 semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders, namely the Programme Coordinator, the Assistant Director, a College Principal, two Heads of Schools and five FLAP teachers. Other stakeholders, such as the class teachers, the LSEs, parents and students were not consulted since this research focuses on the outcomes of FLAP, a newly established programme, as perceived by its developers and implementers. Data was subsequently analysed using a thematic analysis, which helped me generate themes, discuss findings and ultimately answer the main research question.

1.4 Overview of the research study

This dissertation includes four main chapters, an introduction and a concluding chapter. In this chapter, the introduction, I provided a general overview of the linguistic situation of the Maltese islands, highlighting the role of Maltese, English and foreign languages. Moreover, I introduced FLAP and evidenced the research questions as well as the rationale governing this dissertation. I also made reference to the implemented methodology, data collection and data analysis processes.

In the literature review, I explain the theories and processes involved in first⁶ and second language⁷ acquisition whilst also discussing the benefits of FL learning, early acquisition of foreign languages, and the motivation behind FL learning. I also provide detailed information about the cultural and linguistic impacts of globalised societies on both individuals and communities. This information leads to an in-depth description on the sociolinguistic context of the Maltese islands, indicating the teaching and learning of Maltese, English and foreign languages. Most importantly I explore FLAP by explaining what language awareness is all about and presenting its proposed benefits. I also identify other FL awareness programmes implemented abroad.

In the methodology chapter, I describe the chosen paradigm for this dissertation, hence the interpretive paradigm, whilst also explaining this research's ontological, epistemological and methodological positioning. These lead to a detailed description on the choices and processes involved in collecting and analysing data. Additionally, I also rationalise how validity and reliability are ensured throughout the whole research process as well as give thorough details on the implemented ethical procedures. In the results chapter, I unveil the data that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. In the discussion chapter, this data is then evaluated and argued in the light of the literature presented in chapter two. In the concluding chapter, I display the main conclusions of this dissertation whilst also explaining its limitations and provide suggestions for further research.

⁶ Henceforth, L1.

⁷ Henceforth, L2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a review of pertinent literature is presented and discussed to shed light on important phenomena in the field of study, i.e. early FL awareness. Sections incorporate literature on language acquisition, FL learning, globalisation, the sociolinguistic context of the Maltese islands, and FLAP.

2.2 Language acquisition

All human beings have a natural ability of acquiring languages. In fact, Berk (2000) states that with language acquisition individuals can communicate ideas and perceptions through a learnt behaviour. Lemetyinen (2012, p. 1) in agreement with Berk highlights the remarkability of human beings to articulate “infinite ideas (sentences) with a limited set of symbols (speech sounds and words)”.

2.2.1 First language acquisition

The L1 refers to the primary language individuals are exposed to from birth, which can also be the national language of a country and therefore widely used by its population. Children acquire their L1 rapidly, even more so if they are exposed to it in a favourable and safe family environment. Lightbown and Spada (1999) state that children go through patterns known as ‘developmental sequences’ or ‘stages’ when they are learning their L1. In fact, newborns start their vocalisation journey by crying when they are in distress or feeling hungry, and by cooing and gurgling when they are content. Then, at about six months, babies start babbling the sounds of the languages

they hear, and when they are one, they manage to understand customarily repeated words and produce some of them, like for example, the names of familiar faces or objects. Up until their second birthday, infants are able to produce at least fifty words and form simple sentences, often leaving out articles, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs. At this stage, adults manage to understand what youngsters are trying to say as the words they choose form a meaning, for example, 'mummy juice'. Whilst growing up, children start combining words creatively on their own and by the age of four they are able to "ask questions, give commands, report real events, and create stories about imaginary ones- complete with correct grammatical morphemes" (Lightbown and Spada, 1999, p. 2).

There are three main theories that focus on L1 acquisition, namely behaviourism, innatism and interactionism. Skinner (1957), one of the pioneers of the behaviourist theory, believes that a language is learned through interaction with the environment; therefore infants imitate others and practice the language they are hearing. When doing so, children receive feedback from adults. Through positive conditioning they start forming habits of correct language use, for example, when a child asks his/her mother for milk and she smiles and gives him/her what was requested, the infant feels that the outcome was rewarding. This helps to enhance his/her language development (Ambridge and Lieven, 2011).

In response to Skinner's theory, Chomsky (1965), a supporter of the innatist theory, suggests that children can develop a language biologically just as any other biological function. Therefore, infants are born with a special ability, known as *Universal Grammar*⁸, that enables them to understand on their own the underlying rules of a language system. Additionally, innatists posit that environment also has a partial influence on the infant's linguistic progress. On the other hand, the interactionist theory affirms that children learn a language through the caregivers' linguistic input. Consequently, through interactions, children develop a language based on their own characteristics and the surrounding environment (Palmer, no date, p. 4).

⁸ Henceforth, UG.

2.2.2 Second language acquisition

The L2 is the language an individual learns after the L1 and which is widely used by the public, apart from the mother language. When individuals are exposed to an L2, they already are familiar with the process involved in learning a language. In fact, the theories concerned with L2 acquisition relate to the theories centred on L1 acquisition (Lightbown and Spada, 1999).

According to the behaviourist theory, as I indicate in the previous sub-section, an L2 is learned through imitation, practice, reinforcement and habit formation. Therefore, children use previous habit formations to develop new ones when learning an L2 (Lado, 1964). In regards to the innatist theory, there is no general agreement about UG's position in L2 acquisition. Schwartz (1993) and Krashen (1982) believe that the underlying systematic knowledge of the new language remains the same, even though learners are provided with metalinguistic information and error corrections. Conversely, the interactionists affirm that an L2 is learned through interactions. In fact, speakers modify their speech until interlocutors demonstrate they can understand the target language (Long, 1983).

2.3 Foreign languages

A FL is any language that is practised outside a community, society or nation. This differs from an L2 because this is practised within a country, just as the mother language. There are instances when a population communicates using only one language, the mother language, and therefore the learned L2 is also considered as a FL.

2.3.1. The benefits of learning a foreign language

There are different ways of learning a FL. Firstly, it can occur naturally, for example, within a family as they practice frequently the target language. Secondly, individuals can learn a FL through migrants that practice their own language within the host country. Thirdly, when individuals are made aware of different foreign languages, inevitably they are also learning different aspects of them; therefore in this case FL learning alludes to an academic learning process that furthers the learning of the foreign languages in question (Young and Helot, 2003).

Learning a FL has its benefits. In fact, Marcos (1998) explains that it helps pupils cognitively, academically, socially and personally. Students improve cognitively as they become more creative, able to solve complex problems and have better intellectual flexibility whilst they academically improve their reading and verbal abilities. Pupils also improve socially as they compete in international markets and have a better understanding of cultural diversity. On a personal level, learners are able to access different people and resources.

Pace (2017c) also affirms that learning a FL helps students cognitively, however he also suggests other benefits, such as being able to travel around the globe and engage with others through research work, trade and diplomacy. FL learning helps learners develop an intercultural awareness whilst also catering for the multilingual needs of the EU. Indeed, Article 2 of the *European Cultural Convention* (1954) encourages FL teaching and learning all across Europe.

2.3.2 Early foreign language learning

There tends to be a debate about the ideal age for initiating FL learning. Research evidences that early acquisition of foreign languages is beneficial; in fact, it suggests that children should learn more than one FL from a young age. Foreign languages are learnt best during the critical period, a time in which the brain is able to

acquire different languages successfully without hesitations up until puberty (Abello-Contesse, 2009). It is important to point out that the learned foreign languages will not harm in any way the acquired L1 and that adults find it difficult to learn a FL after the critical period.

In addition, since infants learn a FL informally and incidently, this is more embedded within them (Baker, 2000) and they acquire a more native-like competence in their speech (Muñoz and Singleton, 2011). Moreover, children can practice a FL as they like and without difficulties should they produce mistakes while speaking, whilst adults do not have this opportunity as they are expected to speak accurately a FL from the start of their learning process (Lightbown and Spada, 1999). Young learners are also advantaged as they learn a FL through the multisensory approach, meaning that students have the opportunity to use all of their senses and different type of resources during the teaching and learning process. Since this approach involves pupil's full participation, it has a more long-lasting effect on them.

Nonetheless, there are other researchers that are against early FL learning. Indeed, Singleton (1995) states that the existence of the critical period is still debatable. Therefore, both older children and adults have well developed cognitive skills that help them learn a FL quickly and efficiently (Baker, 2000). In addition, Vilke (1979, cited in Freudenstein, 1979) affirms that early FL learning creates motivational problems in children as they would view the learning of the FL as a long journey and thus become demotivated to study it along the way. Doyé (1999) also refers to a general view that early FL learning might go beyond the abilities of primary school students and so unnecessarily overloading the primary curriculum.

2.3.3 Motivation to learn a foreign language

Gardner (2006, p. 2) explains that a motivated person “is goal directed, expends effort, is persistent, is attentive, has desires (wants), exhibits positive affect, is aroused, has expectancies, demonstrates self-confidence (self-efficacy), and has

reasons (motives)". Children can easily become motivated individuals that learn foreign languages when going through five principal motivational or attitudinal dimensions (Dörnyei and Csizér, 2002, p. 432). The first dimension is integrativeness, meaning that students view positively the language and culture of the target community. In the second dimension, the instrumentality dimension, pupils discover the pragmatic benefits of learning the target language. In the third dimension, learners have direct contact with L2 speakers, thus viewing foreign languages as a necessity when meeting L2 pupils and visiting their country. In the fourth dimension, students become culturally interested in the products coming from other countries and available on the media. In the fifth dimension, pupils consider the vitality of the L2 community, i.e. the importance and wealth associated with the target community.

2.4 The cultural and linguistic impacts of globalised societies

As I state in the previous section, young students can learn distinct foreign languages and develop a positive approach towards different cultures. As a result, "[t]he language learner becomes plurilingual and develops interculturality" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 43). This contributes towards globalisation, meaning that people, companies and governments are able to interact and integrate more with one another. In fact, the European Union (2010, pp. 8-9) posits that "[a]s the world shrinks to become a global village and grows gradually into an international community of humanity, the need for intercultural dialogue and understanding becomes all the more pressing". For this reason, in the next sub-sections, I depict how multicultural societies need to be transformed into intercultural ones, which are multilingual but whose individuals are increasingly bilingual or plurilingual.

2.4.1 Multiculturalism

Globalisation gave rise to a number of multicultural societies in the 1900s. Jay (2011, p. 1) declares that globalisation changed “previously homogeneous cities or regions into complex meeting ground for different ethnic, racial, religious, and national groups, challenging the political and cultural system to accommodate this diversity”. Ted Cante, in an interview held in Cardiff on the 25th of October 2014, explains that this term did not however take into account the “diasporas and international events. It also took no account of other forms of difference like sexual orientation, gender, disability; a whole range of differences which people now experience” (Girishkumar, 2015, pp. 730-731).

According to Cante (Girishkumar, 2015), indeed, although the term ‘multiculturalism’ is still used nowadays, this should be replaced with the term ‘interculturalism’ as the latter recognises international changes both on a social and an economic level. Although both terms have the same features, ‘interculturalism’ goes a step beyond ‘multiculturalism’ because it does not only accept and accommodate diverse cultures within a community, but it also promotes cross-cultural dialogues and interactions.

2.4.2 Interculturalism

As previously affirmed, ‘interculturalism’ not only acknowledges different cultures but also denotes intercultural dialogues between its interlocutors. Indeed, Wood et al. (2006, p. 9) claim that the main feature of interculturalism is communication which “facilitate[s] dialogue, exchange and reciprocal understanding between people of different backgrounds”. This term also implies understanding and accepting the values and beliefs of different social groups, such as their religious views, their taboos, etc.

Therefore, it is fundamental that individuals develop an intercultural competence which Deardorff (2006) defines as the faculty of acquiring the intended knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to effective and appropriate intercultural interactions. This, according to the Council of Europe (2001, pp. 104-105), can be reached by developing intercultural skills which involve:

the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other; [to have] cultural sensitivity and [...] to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures; [...] to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture [whilst also dealing] effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations; [and] to overcome stereotyped relationships.

An intercultural approach is thus recommended within educational institutions as pupils are encouraged to develop their personality and their sense of identity when coming into contact with other cultures. Additionally, children can also develop a positive approach towards different cultures, which can be especially reached through various intercultural dialogues.

2.4.3 Multilingualism

Globalised societies are also multilingual. This, as the Council of Europe (2015, p. 7) explains, refers to “the presence in a geographical area, large or small, of more than one ‘variety of language’ i.e. the mode of speaking of a social group whether it is formally recognised as a language or not”. For example, in one country, apart from the main languages used by its population, there can be minority indigenous languages and immigrants that live in a host country and practice their L1 (Cenoz, 2013). Furthermore, the Commission of the European Communities (2005, p. 3) state that multilingualism aims: “to encourage language learning and [promote] linguistic diversity in society; to promote a healthy multilingual economy; and to give citizens

access to European Union legislation, procedures and information in their own languages”.

This demonstrates that it is fundamental to learn different foreign languages, but especially to promote FL teaching and learning amongst students (Council of Europe, 2001). Pupils need to be able to communicate with individuals that practise distinct foreign languages in their country or when going abroad. It is hence essential to prepare plurilingual individuals that are able to use a variety of foreign languages to communicate within multilingual societies.

2.4.4 Bilingualism

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2004) delineates that bilingualism refers to an individual’s faculty of using at least two languages. The proficiency level of the languages learned is established by how much the individual uses or is exposed to them. Additionally, there are other domains that influence this proficiency level, such as experience, time, preference, etc. Lightbown and Spada (1999) identify two types of bilingualism: simultaneous bilingualism and sequential bilingualism. The former refers to an individual that has been exposed to various languages at the same time since birth, whereas the latter alludes to a person that has learned an L2 later on in life.

D’Acierno (1990) differentiates between three types of bilingualism, namely compound, coordinate and sub-coordinate. A compound bilingual individual acquires two languages simultaneously, therefore being able to state two different verbal expressions of the same notion. These two languages are interdependent, meaning that the individual needs both of them. A coordinate bilingual is an individual that has learned two languages in different contexts. Both languages are independent and do not blend. The learner acquires one system after the other but eventually uses them in parallel contexts. The sub-coordinate bilingual is a person that uses one language predominantly more than the other. The weaker language can be interpreted through

the stronger language. Although students can be bilingual from the types presented above, international and national policies recommend exposing different foreign languages within educational institutions, hence promoting plurilingualism rather than bilingualism amongst learners.

2.4.5 Plurilingualism

When individuals know and use different foreign languages they are known as plurilingual persons. In fact, the Council of Europe (2015, p. 7) affirms that plurilingualism:

refers to the repertoire of varieties of language which many individuals use, and is therefore the opposite of monolingualism; it includes the language variety referred to as ‘mother tongue’ or ‘first language’ and any number of other languages or varieties at whatever level of competence; in some multilingual areas some individuals are monolingual and some are plurilingual.

In addition, the Council of Europe (2001) explains that plurilingualism doesn’t treat languages and cultures as separate domains, but instead generates a communicative competence utilising all knowledge and experiences of language whilst also having languages interrelate and interact with one another.

Plurilingualism is very beneficial politically and socially. It helps human beings politically as they can use their plurilingual skills to take part in the political decision-making of the country and socially as they can communicate and interact easily with each other (Council of Europe, 2015). The Council of Europe is working hard to promote plurilingualism as a main objective of all educational policies. Indeed, the Council of Europe (2001, p. 5) posits that “languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence”. This competence allows pupils “to use all their linguistic resources when necessary, encouraging them to see similarities and regularities as well as differences

between languages and cultures” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 27). This is in line with the *Barcelona: Presidency Conclusions* (2002) and *The Lisbon Strategy* (2000) that promote FL learning so students can be able to communicate with each other and enter into intercultural interactions.

2.5. The sociolinguistic context of the Maltese islands

The linguistic situation of the Maltese islands was influenced by its position and history. During Malta’s last colonial period⁹, English was considered the country’s official language instead of Italian¹⁰. The Maltese language, that includes elements coming from other languages such as Arabic, English, etc. (Mifsud, 1995), was used predominantly in the spoken form and after a period of time it reached its standardised written form, leading to the declaration of both Maltese and English as the official languages of the Maltese archipelago in 1934.

Nowadays, Maltese is a widespread language in the Maltese islands. In fact, surveys conducted by Sciriha and Vassallo (2001, 2006) evidence that most Maltese nationals use Maltese as their spoken language. Nonetheless, in the written form, English is used as the texts used in educational institutions are in English. This demonstrates that the Maltese islands are bilingual, specifically bilingual without diglossia, hence two languages compete for use in the same domains (Camilleri Grima, 2000). Vella (2013) also suggests there are varying degrees to Malta’s bilingualism. In fact, this researcher affirms that a continuum of use of both Maltese and English exist in daily interactions.

MEDE (2014b, p. 13) states that Maltese is considered as “a symbol of national identity and pride” whilst English is perceived as key in “socioeconomic advancement and instrumental factors”. In fact, in local television stations, local radio stations, churches, etc. the Maltese language is used more than English, whilst in education,

⁹ The British were the last rulers of the Maltese islands. Their rule lasted from 1800 to 1964.

¹⁰ Italian had a fundamental role in the Maltese islands. Up until the early nineties many Maltese nationals learned Italian through Italian television channels (Caruana, 2003, 2006).

tourism, industry, etc. the use of English is preferred to Maltese (MEDE, 2014b). Moreover, code-switching between Maltese and English is frequent in the Maltese islands, especially during instruction (Camilleri Grima, 1995).

Apart from Maltese and English, foreign languages are also considered fundamental in the Maltese archipelago, especially because tourism and the Maltese economy depend on them. In addition, a high number of foreigners live in the Maltese islands and therefore Maltese nationals are exposed to various foreign languages on a daily basis. It was reported that in 2011 there were 20,000 foreigners living in the islands, who mostly came to Malta to seek asylum or employment (MEDE, 2014b).

2.5.1 The teaching and learning of Maltese and English in Maltese schools

It has already been noted that the Constitution of Malta (1964) recognises Maltese and English as Malta's official languages. It is therefore a prerogative to teach both Maltese and English to students from a young age. Indeed, in Malta, these languages are taught in all years of compulsory education, i.e. in the primary cycle (Year 1 to Year 6) and in the secondary cycle (Year 7 to Year 11). This system applies to all schools, meaning State, Church and Independent schools.

The aim of teaching Maltese in Maltese schools is to develop a sense of identity amongst Maltese students whilst also understanding, respecting and tolerating others within a globalised society. The aims of teaching English in Maltese schools "are defined by Malta's sociolinguistic situation, together with the acknowledgment that English is a global language, and thus important for communication and economical purposes" (MEDE, 2014b, p. 33).

In regards to post-compulsory education, Maltese and English can be chosen and studied in distinct sixth forms, namely at Advanced or at Intermediate levels. These courses tackle linguistic and literary components. They can also be studied at a tertiary

level, such as at the University of Malta¹¹; the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology¹²; and the Institute for Tourism Studies¹³.

At the UM, pupils can follow courses at a diploma, first degree and post-graduate levels. The *Centre for English Language Proficiency* at the UM supports all students in their English academic writing, even pupils that do not follow a language course. At MCAST learners receive support in literacy if they follow courses at levels 1 and 2 from the Malta Qualifications Framework¹⁴. Students also learn basic academic skills through specific Maltese and English courses. Pupils attending courses at higher levels are also trained in academic writing and are supported according to their field of specialisation. Learners attending ITS and following the fields of Hospitality and Tourism are offered language courses. Since languages are important in the field of tourism, these are integrated in each course (MEDE, 2014b). Maltese and English are also popular languages amongst adult learners attending Lifelong Learning Centres¹⁵.

2.5.2 The teaching and learning of foreign languages in Maltese schools

Within primary schools, specifically in most State schools, students are made aware of different foreign languages through FLAP. This topic will be discussed further in the next section. Almost all pupils of all secondary schools (State, Church and Independent schools) in Malta have to study at least one FL¹⁶. These learners have to choose a FL in the first year of the secondary level (Year 7) and another FL can be chosen in the third year of the secondary level (Year 9). Pupils can choose to learn “Arabic, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish”¹⁷ (MEDE, 2012, p. 62). In each FL, importance is given to its communicative aspect that is presented in its own cultural context. In the final year of secondary education, learners can sit for the SEC

¹¹ Henceforth, UM.

¹² Henceforth, MCAST.

¹³ Henceforth, ITS.

¹⁴ Henceforth, MQF.

¹⁵ Henceforth, LLC.

¹⁶ Some students are exempted from studying foreign languages because of specific learning difficulties.

¹⁷ In the past years, learners could also choose to study Chinese at a secondary level.

exam of the studied foreign languages. This exam assesses listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. A pass in foreign languages at a SEC level is required if learners would like to continue studying foreign languages in one of the various post-compulsory educational institutions.

At present Malta has an alarming situation in regards to FL learning. Pace (2017a, p. 154) states that in the SEC examination sessions of May 2012 to May 2016, “around 32% of the cohort of students who turned sixteen (and therefore ended their compulsory schooling) failed to register for any foreign language”. This corresponds to the Eurostat’s 2016 statistics which demonstrate that only 65% of 15 and 16 year old Maltese students learn two or more foreign languages. In order to help mitigate the situation, apart from FLAP, the Subject Proficiency Assessment¹⁸ programme was designed. This programme was implemented in 2014 to help Year 9 students in Maltese State, Church and Independent secondary schools, at risk of not acquiring a SEC level in the studied foreign languages, get certified in MQF levels 1 and 2 in Italian, German, French or Spanish. Students are taught in levels and according to the 4 skills. As a matter of fact, Pace (2017c) states that:

[t]he programme has the intent to set up a home-grown alternative assessment based on subject proficiency and seeks to provide a clear description of what individuals ‘can do’ with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context.

Pupils are assessed through a summative national examination (80%) and coursework (20%). Learners receive a certificate for every acquired skill.

Caruana (2017, no pagination) also highlights that figures for FL learning are “dropping further at the post-secondary level”. In fact, in 2017, from all the registered Maltese students sitting for examinations at a post-secondary level, only 4.5% of them sat for at least 1 FL at advanced level whilst only 6% of them sat for at least 1 FL at intermediate level (Pace, 2018b). At tertiary level, namely in the 3 most important institutions of Malta, hence UM, MCAST, and ITS, the situation isn’t any better. At UM,

¹⁸ Henceforth, SPA.

foreign languages are only offered at the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Arts and the Department of Interpretation and Translation Studies. Although all University pupils can do courses in order to obtain a certificate of proficiency in a FL at the Faculty of Arts, apart from their own chosen course, the number of students following these courses is extremely low. In addition, there is no FL Centre or Institute within the UM. MCAST has a similar situation as in the scholastic year of 2017-2018 only approximately 110 pupils decided to study a FL apart from their own chosen programme of studies, whilst in ITS, FL proficiency courses are still not compulsory (Pace, 2018b).

The above-mentioned decline in foreign languages at post-secondary and tertiary education is a result of societal changes. Students tend to prefer focusing their attention and efforts on their compulsory subjects rather than on foreign languages. The latter are considered difficult and less important than subjects like sciences and information technology (Pace, 2018b). Nonetheless, there is a different scenario when it comes to adult learners. The number of adults studying a FL at LLC has increased drastically. In academic year 2018-2019, until mid-August, there were 1054 adult learners who applied to learn a FL, with a high amount of pupils opting to study Spanish, followed by Italian and French (Pace, 2018b).

2.6 The Foreign Language Awareness Programme

MEDE (2012, p. 58) states that “foreign language learning is a strength in our local system which needs to be sustained”. One of the strategies involved in addressing the lack of students sitting for a SEC exam in a FL, was the implementation of FLAP within Maltese primary state schools. After briefly describing what language awareness is all about, a thorough description of the programme and its benefits will follow. Other FL awareness programmes in foreign countries will also be discussed.

2.6.1 Language awareness

Although Garrett and James (1993) claim that there is no exact definition of the term 'language awareness', Donmall (1985, p. 7) argues that it is "a person's sensitivity to a conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life". In addition, apart from the individual's conscious awareness of different languages, Young and Helot (2003) suggest that individuals are also made aware of different cultures. Therefore, language awareness programmes are not only aimed "at stimulating talk about language and linguistic diversity" (Garret and James, 1993, p. 110), but they also aspire to promote cultural awareness. The programme involves pupil's participation, social transaction, and tension that enable learners to view the world differently and to develop intercultural understandings (Tseng, 2002).

Hawkins, also known as "the 'father' of language awareness" (James, 2005, p. 80), was one of the pioneers behind language awareness programmes. After noticing a lack of success in literacy and in FL learning in England, as well as continuous prejudices within its communities (Hawkins, 1999), he concluded that language awareness programmes were the best solution in helping students become aware of different languages and appreciate distinct cultures. These programmes were introduced in primary schools and continued in secondary schools linking the mother tongue, English, with foreign languages. Hawkins's language awareness programme led to the implementation of other FL awareness programmes, like the one implemented in the Maltese islands.

2.6.2 An overview of FLAP

In the Maltese islands, the only language awareness programme provided throughout compulsory education on a large scale is FLAP. Since 2007, this programme has been offered to primary State (and some Church and Independent) schools,

namely to Year 5 and 6 students, as an introduction of the foreign languages taught at a secondary level. Pupils were introduced to a new language each term through a 30 minute lesson every week for the duration of eight weeks. Nowadays, the same previously described programme is still offered to Year 5 and 6 primary State (and some Church and Independent) school students, however it is now referred to as the 'Foreign Language Teaching Programme'. FLAP is alternatively being used to refer to the newly established programme offered to Year 3 and 4 students.

FLAP, indeed, aims to make Year 3 and 4 students in Maltese primary state schools¹⁹ aware of distinct foreign languages and cultures. These foreign languages can be both languages offered at a secondary level and languages known or used by the different students within the classroom. Pace (2018a) explains that this programme was introduced in the scholastic year of 2017-2018 to Year 3 primary students in six state colleges. During the current scholastic year of 2018-2019 the same colleges offered as a consequence a follow-up of the programme to Year 4 pupils. The remaining four colleges introduced FLAP as from this current scholastic year of 2018-2019 to Year 3 students. A FLAP educator delivers a 30 minute lesson once a week for the duration of ten weeks in every primary school.

FLAP required the input from a number of stakeholders for its creation, development and delivery, namely the Programme Coordinator, the Assistant Director, College Principals, Heads of Schools, and teachers. FLAP teachers are recruited through an internal call and according to MEDE (2014b, p. 36) they are "language graduates, who have followed the [Bachelor of Education (Honours)] or the [Postgraduate Certificate in Education] course at the University of Malta, and are secondary school teachers".

As evidenced in the article published by the news portal *Newspoint* (no author), dated 15 June 2017, this programme was previously offered throughout the academic year of 2016-2017 to Year 5 primary learners in one particular College. These students were exposed to various languages such as Arabic, Italian, Spanish, etc. This initiative

¹⁹ A similar programme to FLAP is also being implemented in some Church and Independent schools.

was taken care of by members of staff of the Department of Languages and Humanities at the Faculty of Education within the University of Malta. These sessions were carried out by students attending the Masters in Teaching and Learning²⁰ course. At the end of this programme, learners exposed examples of their work.

The policy document of the Department of Curriculum Management (no date) and in the article published by the news portal *Gozo News* (no author), dated 4 April 2017, also highlight the implementation of the programme in the scholastic year of 2016-2017 as a pilot project in Skolasajf and Klabb 3-16, which are after school classes offered by the Foundation for Educational Services²¹. The total duration of the programme was of 4-5 weeks with a maximum of 9 hours, having a 60 minute session twice a week. FLAP teachers were trained for the programme to help pupils reach the outlined learning outcomes. In their last FLAP session, children filled in a self-evaluation sheet stating what they had learnt and what they needed to improve in, as well as received a certificate of active participation. Other pupils who had attended a minimum of 80% of the offered sessions were given a different certificate of participation.

The policy document issued by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department (no date, p. 2) outlines the following objectives for FLAP:

[to] introduce foreign language awareness and appreciation at an early age; nurture a love for languages; develop plurilingual and intercultural competences; foster a positive attitude and respect towards a diversity of cultures; help learners understand their own language backgrounds; acknowledge language diversity; enhance learners' personal development; strengthen lifelong learning skills; [and] promote digital literacy for language learning.

The programme assesses students through learning outcomes. These are "statements of what a learner knows, understands, and is able to do at the end of a learning process; they are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences set

²⁰ Henceforth, MTL.

²¹ Henceforth, FES.

according to the categories of the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework” (Council of Europe, 2015, p. 17). Pace (2017a, p. 157) states that:

[t]his is in line with the belief that a Learning Outcomes Framework can be considered as a keystone for learning and assessment throughout the years of compulsory schooling, having as its main aim to free schools and learners from centrally-imposed knowledge- centric syllabi, and to give them the freedom to develop programmes that fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes.

The policy document issued by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department (no date) states that the learning outcomes of the Year 3 programme include listening and greeting others in distinct languages; understanding that different languages exist and have individual sounds; outlining a diverse range of languages and countries; naming people who speak different languages; establishing contact with foreign students; and listing distinct flags and houses in separate countries.

In addition, the learning outcomes for the Year 4 programme include greeting individuals in at least two foreign languages; mentioning a foreign story/ rhyme/ song/ tongue twister; comprehending that distinct countries have diverse currencies; knowing famous landmarks in foreign countries; contrasting distinct landscapes of different countries; celebrating different feasts; comparing distinct types of food; narrating past trips in foreign countries; and expressing desires of accomplishing future journeys.

As one can note, since the programme is flexible, schools can include other learning outcomes to a year group, according to the realities encountered within the classrooms (Pace, 2017a). These learning outcomes can best be achieved through the communicative approach, meaning that students learn a language by interacting with one another and by experiencing real communicative scenarios. Richards (2006) explains that this approach moves away from the traditional approach as now pupils develop the communicative competence. This means that learners use effectively and appropriately languages for communicative purposes; they have a safe environment

where they can experiment, interact and collaborate with each other; they have activities that are interesting and educational such as pair work, group work, etc.; and they are no longer individuals working alone but rather working together whilst the teacher facilitates the learning process. Therefore, this approach is student-centred, meaning that the learner is placed at the centre of the learning process. This leads to a positive learning environment which Barkley (2010) defines as a comfortable environment in which students can build a sense of rapport with their educators and peers and believe in their own success.

In fact, in the programme's guidelines (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department, no date, p. 3), teachers are encouraged to involve and support pupils to "become familiar with a repertoire of sounds (songs, rhymes ...) from other languages; express themselves through single words and phrases; discover aspects related to languages and cultures; work on enjoyable tasks within a collaborative environment; fill in self-evaluation sheets to keep track of knowledge, skills and competences/attitudes". Additionally, in the same document (no date, pp. 4-5), under the "[p]oints to note" section, teachers are given non-prescriptive teaching and learning examples, such as giving students the opportunity to share experiences related to foreign languages and cultures or for example, to create cross-curricular, collaborative, fun and interactive activities using audio-visual materials and online resources. MEDE (2014b) also claims that FLAP's learning outcomes should be achieved through play and that children are able to practice different foreign languages through songs and videos.

In addition, FLAP activities are featured also outside the FLAP classroom, for example, having school assemblies with intercultural aspects, storytelling, drama/role play activities, cooking sessions, etc. During these events, parents can be invited to participate as audience or as ambassadors of their own country of origin to effectively talk about their own national language and culture (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department, no date, p. 3).

2.6.3 The benefits of FLAP

Caruana (2015, no pagination) states that “meaningful language learning is more like a marathon: it requires time and resilience; a long preparation is necessary to reap results”. It is through FLAP that primary pupils can start this long journey of preparation and as Pace (2017b) mentions FLAP offers various benefits. The programme helps learners achieve the basic skills they require to learn different foreign languages and communicate with others. The Council of Europe (2015, p. 22) posits that language learning helps learners to:

use questioning, information, critical thinking, decision-making and memory to organise thoughts, ideas, feelings, and knowledge;
communicate with others and respond to how others communicate;
formulate, express and present their arguments, feelings and ideas in a persuasive manner; and appreciate and enjoy the literary heritage of the languages they learn.

Vella et al. (2018, p. 8) also affirm that young pupils manage to control language and gain flexibility through “correct and appropriate choice of words, by extending their vocabulary, learning how to assert themselves, and becoming aware of the subtle influence which language has on society”.

Additionally, students will develop their plurilingual and intercultural competences so they are able to use distinct languages in different scenarios and can accept positively all types of diversity. Indeed, Pace (2015) claims that this programme, apart from helping pupils develop an appreciation towards different languages and cultures, prepares learners to communicate with a diverse range of people and to tolerate diversity. Moreover, language learning should be promoted as it is “a lifelong task that is essential for economic competitiveness and inclusive societies” (Pace, 2017b, no pagination).

This demonstrates that FLAP also helps pupils see the world around them differently, thus serving as a bridge between school subjects and the outside world

(Pace, 2017b). Therefore, children can view foreign languages not as something that should be learnt 'by heart', but rather it improves "one's communicative competence and [makes] language learning an experience which continues to be useful throughout one's life" (Caruana, 2015, no pagination). Through FLAP, students are able to embark on careers that require the use of foreign languages.

2.6.4 Language awareness programmes in foreign countries

Like FLAP in the Maltese islands, there are other language awareness programmes in foreign countries and these are always increasing (Jones et al., 2005). In Table 2.1 below I present the names of some of these FL awareness programmes as well as briefly explain the context in which they were implemented and their main conclusions. In this table, I established that EVLANG was a programme aimed at helping students become conscious of distinct foreign languages and cultures. This led to the implementation of JALING, a programme that helped create language awareness material needed for distinct educational levels. The Alsace programme invited parents as 'ambassadors' to talk about their national language and culture. The Coventry programme wanted to help students acquire language learning skills, an aim that was successfully reached according to visiting inspectors. Learners in the Discovery Language project were presented with the basics of six languages and managed to understand how meanings are conveyed in distinct languages. The Springboard to Languages programme used Esperanto to develop language awareness sessions. In this programme, children were able to use the skills they had learned in Year 3 and 4 for the language they were meant to learn in Year 5. The Basingstoke project aimed to help pupils have a smooth transition in FL learning from primary to secondary schools. These learners managed to progress faster in the chosen FL at a secondary level.

Name of the programme	Context	Main conclusions
L'Eveil Aux Langues Dans L'ecole Primaire (EVLANG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme started in 1997 and ended in 2001. • This programme saw the involvement of teachers, pupils and researchers from Austria, France, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. • It dealt with “researchers’ concern about western ethnocentrism and the dominance of western culture in a culturally and linguistically diverse society” (Svalberg, 2007, p. 300). • Children in grade 5 and 6 from 150 classrooms across Europe were exposed to different languages, cultures and related tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme was a total success, in fact “the effects on attitude were deemed very positive, and there were indications that linguistic sensitivity had also been enhanced” (Svalberg, 2007, p. 300). • Greece issued materials and implemented language awareness programmes in 150 schools. • In Austria, materials were made electronically accessible to learning communities. • It also impacted the teaching programmes of Portugal and France (Candelier, 2005).
Janua Linguarum Reserata (JALING)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme started in 2000 and ended in 2003. • JALING was an extension of EVLANG. • It catered for primary and secondary schools coming from different countries, such as “Bulgaria, Iceland, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, The Czech Republic, The Netherlands, Russia and Sweden” (Masats, no date, no pagination), amongst others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EVLANG’s tasks were adapted to JALING and new material was created for different educational levels such as kindergarten, primary, etc.
The Alsace language awareness programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme was implemented by teachers in a primary school in Alsace, France. • The project lasted three years and it wanted to reduce the racist incidents happening at school. • It involved presenting over 20 languages and cultures to the pupils attending the school. • Native parents or parents that had firsthand experience of a particular country, language and culture were invited as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme was successful because at the end of it students were conscious of the distinct languages and cultures that surrounded them. • Learners could compare different linguistic norms to cultural ones (Young and Helot, 2003).

	‘ambassadors’ to talk to students about their language and culture.	
The Coventry language awareness programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2003, the Department of Education and Skills, gave Coventry a substantial amount of money to find a path for modern FL teaching and learning within primary schools. • This programme aimed to help Year 3 to Year 6 students develop language learning skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting inspectors noted that pupils under the scheme had already gained an A level equivalent on the Common European Framework (Hawkins, 2005).
The Discovering Language project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project, of the Secondary Heads Association, started in 2005 and ended in 2007. • Pupils from nine primary schools were presented with the basics of six languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learned how meanings are conveyed in different languages (Hawkins, 2005).
The Springboard to Languages programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A working party of the UK Esperanto Association implemented the programme in 2005. • The programme aimed at using Esperanto to develop language awareness sessions and thus improve FL learning from Year 3 to Year 10. • The programme aimed to improve students’ ability to learn distinct languages, increase global awareness, and accommodate links between English and foreign Esperanto schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the preliminary evaluation, it was concluded that Year 3 and 4 pupils were able to apply the transferable skills they had learned to the language they were meant to learn in Year 5 (Barton and Bragg, 2007, cited in Barton et al., 2009).
The Basingstoke Language Awareness project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This programme aimed to make the transition of language learning from primary to secondary schools easier. • Their principal aim was to promote foreign languages for communication purposes. • FL assistants and primary teachers delivered the classes focusing especially on the oral skill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This programme motivated students. • It helped pupils feel prepared to learn languages at a secondary level. • Learners progressed faster in the FL chosen at a secondary level (Barton et al., 2009).

Table 2.1: Language awareness programmes in foreign countries.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I reviewed pertinent literature related to this dissertation's main research question. I highlighted theories and/or policies concerning language acquisition, FL learning, globalisation, the sociolinguistic context of the Maltese islands, and FLAP. In the next chapter, I explain thoroughly the philosophical underpinnings of this study as well as evidence this investigation's methodological pathway.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

To answer this dissertation's main research question, namely, *What are the perceptions of different stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme?*, it is fundamental to create a plan of action. This helps firstly to identify this investigation's philosophical underpinnings, and secondly, to evidence the data collection and the data analysis process in relation to the posed research question. In fact, in this chapter, I start by outlining this investigation's ontological and epistemological positioning. The methodological pathway is also indicated, focusing on the research method, context and participants chosen. After highlighting the data collection and the data analysis process, the procedures that kept this investigation valid, reliable and ethically correct are also discussed.

3.2 Research paradigms

The research process is determined by the assumptions and views of how research should be conducted (Byram, 2004). These assumptions and views are what constitute the term 'paradigm'. Kuhn (1962) describes the term 'paradigm' as a shared way of thinking by a group of scientists to solve dilemmas in their field, thus having the same "commitments, beliefs, values, methods, outlooks and so forth shared across a discipline" (Schwandt, 2001, pp. 183-184). A paradigm consists of the following four components: ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods.

Grix (2004) states that research is built upon the foundations of ontology and epistemology. Ontology is the philosophical study of being, meaning it refers to "the nature of existence" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3), hence it evidences what is reality. Epistemology, on the other hand, is a philosophical study concerned with knowledge,

i.e. "its nature and forms, how it can be acquired, and how [it is] communicated to other human beings" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 7). However, it is through methodology that this philosophical framework relates to the entire process of research. Crotty (1998) states that methodology is a plan of action that validates the choice and use of certain practices. It is then through a specific method or methods that data is collected and analysed. As a matter of fact 'methods' are described as a "range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 47).

Dammak (2015) presents three research paradigms: the positivist approach, the interpretive approach and the critical approach. For obvious reasons of space, in this investigation I only portray the two major paradigms: the positivist approach and the interpretive approach. Seale (2000, cited in Dammak, 2015, p. 2) claims that positivists "are committed to value neutrality, statistical measurement, quantifiable elements, and observable events to establish causal laws". Therefore, these researchers see regularities, make predictions and ascertain scientific laws.

Their ontological positioning is that reality needs to be discovered as it is independent from the investigator (Pring, 2000), whilst epistemologically these inquirers hold an objectivist view. Indeed, a researcher observes reality; searches for facts; makes sure that the research at hand is value free; verifies it with experiments; and checks that the results can be generalised and replicated. Their methodology intends to explain relationships, for example, the cause and effect relationship. This is achieved through deductive reasoning, meaning that the investigator forms a hypothesis, and after examining different possibilities, he/she reaches a logical and a specific conclusion. As a result, data, normally numerical, is collected from a large number of participants through quantitative methods (questionnaires, surveys, etc.) and analysed statistically (Creswell, 2008).

The interpretive (or constructivist) approach, formed in opposition to the positivist approach in the late 1960s, is usually associated with Max Weber and Alfred Schutz. This approach, from an ontological point of view, sees reality as multi-layered and complex, since different people have different realities (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

In fact, epistemologically, inquirers give importance to the subjective views of people, that is, the individual's subjective meanings and interpretations of the world around them. Differently from the positivist approach, the knower and the object to be known have a relationship of involvement and interaction rather than detachment, especially since the researcher forms part of the social reality of its subjects. Neuman (2014, p. 104) states that this social reality is formed as people "interact with others in ongoing processes of communication and negotiation". Consequently, investigators accomplish their goals through the eyes of their participants in their natural context without intervening.

The chosen methodologies for this approach are qualitative, which usually involve a small number of participants. The different realities of these participants are understood using inductive reasoning, meaning that broad generalisations are made as a result of specific observations. Therefore, inquirers start with participants to collect data and view their interpretations of the world and as a consequence form theory from data (Dammak, 2015). The methods used in this approach involve purposeful sampling to gather rich information from individuals or sites. Creswell (2008, cited in Dammak, 2015) mentions the following qualitative methods to gather data:

observations (participant and non-participant), interviews and questionnaires (one to one interviews, focus group, telephone, and electronic mail interviews), documents (public and private records, newspapers, letters and personal journals), and audiovisual materials (photographs, videotapes, digital images, paintings and pictures).

Dörnyei (2007) claims that introspective methods are used for in-depth information, emotions, experiences and perceptions about a particular subject. These data collection methods acquire rich information through the trust that is established among the investigator and the participants.

My dissertation takes an interpretive approach to explore stakeholders' perceptions of FLAP. In view of this, a qualitative methodology is implemented by collecting data through 10 semi-structured interviews.

3.2.1 Ontological and epistemological positioning

It has already been highlighted that within the interpretive paradigm reality is multi-layered and complex. Therefore in this investigation the perceptions of FLAP offered by the different stakeholders are all fundamental realities of the world that need to be interpreted. Since there is no universal truth, all realities of the programme are treated as equally important. Moreover, knowledge is acquired through the subjective views of individuals and there is a rapport between the knower and what is meant to be known. Hence, the different stakeholders' perceptions form the nature and bases of knowledge. Participant's diverse subjective views and realities, and their experience of what is meant to be known, thus the programme, forms the knowledge that is aimed to be acquired in this dissertation. Indeed, knowledge is socially constructed by different stakeholders as they interact, communicate and negotiate with those around them.

3.2.2 Methodology

Various research studies have shown that participant's perceptions can best be explored through a qualitative methodology (Susuwele-Banda, 2005; Grundmeyer, 2012; Perez-Gore, et al., 2014). Svalberg (2016) also states that researchers predominantly use qualitative methods in language awareness research. In fact, in this dissertation, a qualitative methodology was adopted as different stakeholders can describe in detail their perceptions of the programme and provide significant meanings to the different episodes they experience (Merriam, 1998). This is achieved through inductive reasoning, meaning that as an investigator, I gather data and then formulate theories based on participant's perceptions. I chose inductive reasoning rather than deductive reasoning as it is a more open and exploratory process that helps me gather more in-depth data based solely on participant's perceptions rather than analysing data based on preconceived notions. This will help me answer better my research

question, enhance the quality of my data as well as keep data valid and reliable at all times.

3.2.3 The method used in this research study

Kvale (1996) describes an interview as the knowledge that is generated between individuals, often through conversation. Interviews were chosen for this dissertation because they are the best qualitative tool that can gather in-depth information on the perceptions of different participants. Participants, through interviews, are able to express themselves freely and also provide insights on more sensitive and personal issues. In addition, like Opdenakker (2006, p. 3), I believe that interviews are fundamental as they involve face-to-face communication with participants whilst also having the opportunity to notice “[s]ocial cues, such as voice, intonation, body language etc. of the interviewee [thus gathering] a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee on a question”.

Cohen et al. (2007) claim there are distinct kinds of interviews. These include structured interviews, semi-structured and group interviews. For this research study semi-structured interviews were selected. According to Smith and Osborn (2013, p. 58), these involve “a set of questions on an interview schedule, but the interview will be guided by the schedule rather than be dictated by it”. This means that in spite of having questions on the interview schedule, I could ask spontaneous questions according to the need of the conversation. I did not opt for other types of interviews as I wanted to focus attentively on individual participants comments as well as give them an opportunity to express themselves freely. This agrees with Newton’s (2010) statement that the investigator has to listen attentively, pause, probe and prompt appropriately. As a result, data is richer as participants can express themselves liberally and extend their responses.

3.3 Data collection, participants and transcriptions of interviews

Once the necessary permissions to conduct research in schools from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee²² and the Department for Curriculum, Research Innovation and Lifelong Learning²³ were granted²⁴, data was collected. Keeping in mind research validity, reliability and representativeness, I chose to do 10 semi-structured interviews to help me generate a clear image of FLAP through the perceptions of different participants. This helped me to appropriately answer the main research question.

Moreover, a non-probability sampling type was implemented, namely the purposive sampling type. This meant that not all individuals from the population had a probability of being selected but rather specified participants were identified according to the purpose of the study. Since stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of the programme were needed, the sample necessarily needed to include the Programme Coordinator, the Assistant Director, a College Principal, two Heads of Schools and five FLAP teachers. Gender, age, religion, etc. of participants did not represent an important criteria. Table 3.1 below indicates the number of participants, their roles and the codes that will be used in Chapter 4 and 5 as an acronym for each participant.

²² Henceforth, FREC.

²³ Henceforth, DCRILL.

²⁴ A more detailed review on the implemented procedures for ethical clearance can be found in section "3.6 Ethical Considerations" of this chapter.

The number of participants	The roles of each participant	The Codes for each participant
1	The Programme Coordinator	PC
2	The Assistant Director	AD
3	A College Principal	CP
4	A Head of School	HoS1
5	A Head of School	HoS2
6	A FLAP Teacher	FT1
7	A FLAP Teacher	FT2
8	A FLAP Teacher	FT3
9	A FLAP Teacher	FT4
10	A FLAP Teacher	FT5

Table 3.1: The selected participants for this dissertation.

The Programme Coordinator, the Assistant Director and the College Principal were contacted directly through information letters and, after obtaining consent to collect data, interviews were conducted in their own offices. I followed the same procedure with Heads of Schools, however firstly I sought approval to contact them through their respective College Principals. Consent from corresponding College Principals and Heads of Schools were also sought and granted before interviewing FLAP teachers. For logistical purposes, interviews with teachers were done in the secondary school they teach in rather than the primary school/s where they deliver FLAP.

Before every interview, I reminded stakeholders of the guarantees and the safeguards governing their participation in this research study. All interviews lasted about 45 minutes and included both generic and in-depth questions. Since interviews were semi-structured, I often asked interviewees to elaborate further, clarify points and/or give examples. The interview guide differed according to the role of the stakeholder. Accordingly, the guide for the Programme Coordinator and the Assistant Director included questions about the rationale of the programme; how the programme was being implemented; and what were its perceived outcomes,

challenges and areas for improvement. The College Principal and the Heads of Schools were asked about the reasons that led them to invest in such a programme. The interview with FLAP teachers focused more on how they were implementing the programme within FLAP classrooms and their perceptions of the latter.

Participants could refrain from answering questions that they were not comfortable with and/or terminate their participation without providing any justifications. In addition, confidentiality was promised and kept at all times with all participants. In the case of the Programme Coordinator and that of the Assistant Director, given their unique educational position and role, it was not possible to guarantee anonymity. This was clearly explained in the information letter and both participants gave their consent before conducting interviews.

The interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate transcriptions. In fact, nine participants were audio-recorded and transcriptions were made *a verbatim*. Cohen et al. (2007, pp. 367-368) argue that transcription is the translation of data from oral to the written language. They emphasise that when doing transcriptions it is essential not only to present what is being said but also to include where necessary:

the tone of voice of the speaker(s) [...]; the inflection of the voice [...]; emphases placed by the speaker; pauses [...] and silences; interruptions; the mood of the speaker(s) [...]; the speed of the talk [...]; how many people were speaking simultaneously; whether a speaker was speaking continuously or in short phrases; who is speaking to whom; indecipherable speech; and any other events that were taking place at the same time that the researcher can recall.

For this investigation, before I started the transcriptions, I wrote a brief summary of the participant's role, the date and place of the interview as well as the topics discussed. I then followed the above-mentioned guidelines of Cohen et al. (2007), especially mentioning non-verbal communication such as 'erm', 'haha', etc. in squared brackets. Participants could choose not to be recorded in interviews and, in fact, one participant opted not to be recorded. In this case notes were taken and double-checked with the participant. Field notes and audio-recordings were stored on a

password protected hard drive and will be destroyed once the study is submitted and evaluated.

3.4 Data analysis

For this research study data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach, which according to Braun and Clarke (2006) achieves meaningful, trustworthy and insightful findings. They posit that thematic analysis is “[...] a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). In line with this, Maguire and Delahunt (2017, p. 3352) argue that the aim of thematic analysis “is to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue”. This does not mean summarising data, but rather interpreting and making sense of it. As a matter of fact, after a detailed analysis of all transcriptions, specific themes were generated.

Data can be analysed following one of these two approaches: the top-down or deductive approach and the bottom-up or inductive approach. In the top-down approach “the researcher imposes [his/her] own structure or theories on the data and then uses these to analyse the interview transcripts” whilst in the bottom-up approach, the inquirer analyses data “with little or no predetermined theory, structure or framework and uses the actual data itself to derive the structure of analysis” (Burnard et al., 2008, p. 429). The latter approach was used in this dissertation as it allows the emergence of categories and/or themes which are unexpected. Consequently, research bias is reduced and meaningful themes and theory are extracted. The analysis was done manually, however as Burnard et al. (2008, p. 430) state, “there are several computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software [...] packages available that can be used to manage and help in the analysis of qualitative data”.

In this dissertation, data was analysed following the six-phase guide of Braun and Clarke (2006). These steps are highlighted in Table 3.2:

Step 1: Becoming familiar with data
Step 2: Generate initial codes
Step 3: Search for themes
Step 4: Review themes
Step 5: Define themes
Step 6: Write-up

Table 3.2: Thematic analysis: The six-phase guide of Braun and Clarke.

The first step towards analysing data was becoming familiar with the data at hand. Accordingly, I read and re-read transcripts and became familiar with all data. At this stage, I took rough notes and recorded early impressions. In the second step, using pens and highlighters, I followed a line-by-line coding meaning that every single line was coded by establishing distinct meanings to different parts of data. I also followed an open coding approach, that is, codes were created and adapted throughout the coding process. In the third step, I identified initial themes collating the codes that clearly fitted together. There is no restrictions of what forms a theme; however this should be significant to the research study. In addition, it was noted that some codes fitted into more than one theme. An example of a theme and its different codes formed in this step can be seen in Table 3.3 below:

Interview	Codes	Theme
<p>RESEARCHER: You decided to implement the Foreign Language Awareness Programme within your College. What led you to invest in this programme?</p> <p>THE COLLEGE PRINCIPAL: First of all because I love languages myself [...] I am a language person but more importantly we are living within an era of multiculturalism and I believe that it is very important for our students and for our schools to invest in languages and all foreign languages, if possible. I also believe that the younger the age of the students the better for them to learn a foreign language and it is important for each and every student to learn to love foreign languages and also appreciate foreign languages. As you must very well know as well, it's not only language but there is also the culture attached to the language so the more languages the students learn the better for them even to learn about different cultures, especially now that we are living in such a multicultural society.</p>	<p>Love for languages.</p> <p>Multiculturalism.</p> <p>Importance to invest in foreign languages.</p> <p>Young age is beneficial.</p> <p>Students learn to love foreign languages.</p> <p>Students appreciate foreign languages.</p> <p>Learning about different cultures.</p> <p>Multiculturalism.</p>	<p>FLAP and its perceived benefits.</p>

Table 3.3: An example of step 3 from the six-phase guide of Braun and Clarke.

In step 4, I organised data under each corresponding theme using the 'cut and paste' function of the word document. Data was found easily as I had previously re-marked all data with a particular colour relating to the different themes. Then I reviewed and modified the preliminary themes of step 3 by asking myself whether the established themes worked well in light of the gathered data. For example, although the identified theme in Table 3.3 above remained the same, I realised that data within this theme could easily be categorised into more specific sub-themes. Table 3.4 below highlights the listed codes of the previous table in two of these established sub-themes:

FLAP and its perceived benefits		
Foreign languages	Cultural awareness	Other perceived benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love for languages. • Importance to invest in foreign languages. • Young age is beneficial. • Students learn to love foreign languages. • Students appreciate foreign languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about different cultures. • Multiculturalism. 	

Table 3.4: An example of step 4 from the six-phase guide of Braun and Clarke.

In step 5, each theme was refined to “[...] identify the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). Therefore, I defined each particular theme and investigated the relationship between different themes and sub-themes. In step 6, a final write-up reporting findings was presented. This can be seen in the following chapter, and as Nowell et al. (2017) rightly affirm, I managed to understand the perceptions of the distinct participants, to compare and contrast findings and to generate unexpected insights.

3.5 Validity and reliability

If a study is invalid and unreliable it is insignificant, thus validity and reliability are essential in all research studies. Winter (2000, cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 133) claims that validity in qualitative research refers to the “honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher”. Bogdan and Biklen (1992, cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 149) define reliability as “a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched, i.e. a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage”.

In this dissertation, to ensure validity and reliability when answering the main research question, a qualitative methodology was implemented and data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. Valid and reliable data could only be achieved through triangulation of sources, which in this case is represented by the number of different stakeholders involved.

Cohen et al. (2007) highlight the magnitude of keeping in mind and avoiding at all times interview biases. I thus made sure to avoid the following: tampering data with my own attitudes, opinions and expectations; viewing participants in my own image; looking for specific answers that support preconceived notions; misperceiving participant's responses; and having respondents misunderstand questions asked. Interview questions were trustworthy and truthful as participants provided constant and repetitive answers during the interviews. Furthermore, through desk research, field notes and transcriptions, I made sure that data was precise and consistent all the time; that data was analysed thoroughly; and that gathered themes were compared attentively. Indeed, to honestly portray participant's perceptions, results which were contrary or unique to the main research findings were also identified.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are fundamental in all types of research. These include moral principles or codes of conduct governing what individuals do. Since every research study is prone to ethical dilemmas (Cohen et al., 2007), I planned and implemented attentively all procedures involved for ethical clearance. Therefore, after receiving approval of the research proposal from the Faculty of Education, I submitted Forms A²⁵ and B²⁶ to FREC summarising the objectives of this investigation and other essential information pertaining to the involved research process. Together with these

²⁵ Please refer to Appendix 1.

²⁶ Please refer to Appendix 2.

forms, I submitted the information letters²⁷; consent forms²⁸; and interview questions²⁹ to be used during data collection. When approval was granted, I submitted and received permission to carry out interviews in State schools from DCRILL³⁰. I also sent permission letters³¹ to College Principals and Heads of Schools to conduct research in schools and awaited FREC's final consent³² before carrying out research.

Information letters and consent forms were handed out to stakeholders before the interview. These forms helped participants better understand what the interview consisted of; that confidentiality of data was to be kept at all times; that their identity would remain anonymous³³; that their participation was voluntary and that they could end their involvement in the research study at any time without providing any justifications; and that they could choose whether the interview would be audio-record or not. Once participants gave their consent, interviews were conducted.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, it was noted that for this dissertation the interpretive approach was chosen as it constructs the reality of the world through the distinct perceptions of participants. These perceptions form the nature and bases of knowledge in relation to FLAP. As a result, a qualitative methodological approach was implemented and data was gathered using semi-structured interviews targeting different participants. Transcriptions of interviews were carried out and different themes were identified through a thematic analysis. The procedures involved in keeping this research study valid, reliable and ethically correct were also evidenced. In the next chapter, findings will be reported, highlighting the emergent themes and corresponding sub-themes.

²⁷ Please refer to Appendix 3.

²⁸ Please refer to Appendix 4.

²⁹ Please refer to Appendix 5.

³⁰ Please refer to Appendix 6.

³¹ Please refer to Appendix 7.

³² Please refer to Appendix 8.

³³ As stated above, the Programme Coordinator and the Assistant Director's identities couldn't remain anonymous due to their educational position and role.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings obtained as a result of the thematic analysis of the raw data. The latter, as I expose in the previous chapter, was collected from semi-structured interviews that were carried out with different stakeholders. Table 4.1 below outlines the emergent themes and sub-themes. These were linked to the three sub-research questions that will enable me to answer the main research question of this study, namely, *What are the perceptions of different stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme?*

Main research question: What are the perceptions of the different stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme?		
Sub-research questions	Themes	Sub-themes
1. What is FLAP according to the different stakeholders?	FLAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current local linguistic situation. • Previous projects. • The implementation of FLAP. • The aims of FLAP. • The teachers of FLAP. • FLAP inside the classroom. • FLAP outside the classroom.
2. Which are the perceived benefits of FLAP?	FLAP and its perceived benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign languages. • Cultural awareness. • Other perceived benefits.
3. What are the perceived outcomes (benefits, limitations and areas for improvement) of FLAP?	FLAP's perceived outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback and outcomes. • Encountered challenges. • Future considerations.

Table 4.1: The results.

4.2 What is FLAP according to the different stakeholders?

4.2.1 FLAP

‘FLAP’ emerged as a theme that clearly helps to answer the first sub-research question. This theme, as per Table 4.1 above, will be presented below through the different sub-themes.

4.2.1.1 *Current local linguistic situation*

Participants stated that most Maltese primary school students know and use Maltese and English. FLAP teacher 1³⁴, for instance, confirmed the use of “Maltese and English [in the classroom] because they already know [them]”. This corresponds with the Assistant Director's³⁵ statement that “[...] there is the language of schooling, there is Maltese and there is English, which may be languages that the learners there use every day, or not”. Head of School 1³⁶ claimed, however, that Maltese and English led to the detriment of other languages because they are highly prioritised in the Maltese society and in Maltese primary schools. Participants, such as the College Principal³⁷, FLAP teacher 3³⁸ and 4³⁹ emphasised the need of exposing foreign languages amongst pupils. In this regard, the CP explained that MEDE is working hard to promote foreign languages, apart from the foreign languages studied at a secondary level.

³⁴ Henceforth, FT1.

³⁵ Henceforth, AD.

³⁶ Henceforth, HoS1.

³⁷ Henceforth, CP.

³⁸ Henceforth, FT3.

³⁹ Henceforth, FT4.

4.2.1.2 Previous projects

Some participants spoke about previous projects which may be similar to the aim of FLAP. Indeed, the CP implemented one of the first projects that exposed primary school students to foreign languages and cultures. This participant highlighted that this programme was carried out in the academic year of 2016-2017 with Year 5 instead of Year 3 and 4 pupils, and was taught by students of a FL reading for an MTL at the University of Malta. The CP stated that at the end of the project, primary learners exposed the foreign languages and cultures they had learned through a presentation. This project, according to this participant, ended as “there were not enough students at University to help out with the programme”.

The CP, FT1 and FLAP teacher 2⁴⁰ posited that FLAP served as a pilot project in the scholastic year of 2016-2017 in collaboration with FES in Skolasajf and Klabb 3-16. FT2 explained that this project aimed to make Year 3 pupils aware of different foreign languages and cultures. The CP and FT2 praised this project because learners were being exposed to foreign languages after school hours. Indeed, the latter participants affirmed that parents and students were very content with the project. FT1 claimed this project ended with the introduction of FLAP during school hours in the scholastic year of 2017-2018.

The AD, the CP, Head of School 2⁴¹ and FT2 referred to another programme known as the ‘Foreign Language Teaching Programme’. According to the CP, this programme, which has been going since 2007, works on a rotation of eight weeks and is aimed for Year 5 and 6 pupils. FT2 explained that “every term is based on a particular language so you have a term on Italian, on French, etc”. The AD stated that these languages are the same ones that learners can study at a secondary level. FT2 highlighted that this programme “depends on the school and the amount of teachers there are who can give the FLAP lessons”.

⁴⁰ Henceforth, FT2.

⁴¹ Henceforth, HoS2.

4.2.1.3 The implementation of FLAP

A number of participants (the Programme Coordinator⁴², the AD, HoS1, HoS2, FT1 and FT3) outlined salient facts of the programme, namely that FLAP stands for ‘Foreign Language Awareness Programme’, that the programme commenced in the scholastic year of 2017-2018 in the primary state schools of 4 to 5 Colleges, that it is aimed for Year 3 and 4 classes consisting of seven to eight year old pupils, and that it works on a rotation of ten weeks with the implementation of a FLAP session once a week for 30 minutes.

FT4 suggested that FLAP is a flexible programme. Indeed, the PC stated that it is built on learning outcomes, or as explained by the AD, it is built on “can do statements [...], what will the learners be able to do by the end of the programme”. These learning outcomes are adapted according to the needs and likes of students. FT1, in fact, claimed, “they just gave us some [guidelines] but then we have ways where we can diverge, [...] if I think of something that it is interesting I can just go along with it”. The AD also posited that FLAP lessons are “exploring, [...] enquiring into what the teacher who enters [in the] class is able to bring to the class but then it is also how the teacher is able to meet the needs of the class there and their reality”.

4.2.1.4 The aims of FLAP

Every participant in this research study described the aims of the programme in his/her own words. The CP stated that one of the aims of FLAP is to make pupils aware of the different foreign languages that exist, in fact, according to the latter, teachers:

don’t teach the language itself, specific language, but they give them a taste of different languages [...]. They have topics and these are different, [for example] saying hello in Italian, in English, in French, [...] different

⁴² Henceforth, PC.

topics that the students can handle [...], they get a taste of the different sounds of the language, [...] different expressions used.

The PC agreed with the CP when positing that FLAP makes pupils “aware of the many languages that exist, the richness that exist in so many different languages and the beauty of having so many different languages”. HoS1 and FT4 also highlighted the above-mentioned aim. This aim is reflected in the Year 3 programme, which FT1 described as a programme “more concentrated on [...] ‘numbers’, how to say ‘hello’, ‘happy birthday’, ‘thank you’, [etc.]”. Moreover, FT1 remarked that students are exposed to the foreign languages they can choose at a secondary level like Italian, French, German, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese. The same participant also noted that when there are learners within the classroom who are of different nationalities or know other languages besides the ones mentioned above, the teacher is encouraged to include them through those very same learners.

FT3 highlighted another important aim of FLAP, that is, FLAP helps pupils become aware of different surrounding cultures:

This programme is about creating awareness that there are other cultures around us, it’s not just Malta, it’s not just even Europe, it’s all the world, that there are other cultures with their religions, with their traditions, with their food, with their currencies, which are different from each other, with their beautiful landmarks and with their flags.

FLAP teacher 5⁴³ agreed with FT3 stating that “this programme is about getting children aware of the different cultures around us”. This aim is evident in the Year 4 programme which FT1 stated is “more concentrated on culture”. FT2 also spoke about the Year 4 programme acknowledging that FLAP teachers:

are focusing more on relevant things if you had to go in that particular country like for example, the money which obviously you have to use and the climate, [...] the clothes to wear according to what weather you will find and obviously what kind of landscape it is, if it’s mountains or just plains, if there are volcanoes, etc.

⁴³ Henceforth, FT5.

The AD and HoS2 suggested that this programme also aims to address appreciation and acceptance towards diversity. In fact, the AD claimed that FLAP deals with “appreciation of languages and language diversity, acceptance of other cultures and all this discourse that is related to how we live together in a society which consists of language diversity and language cultures”. Thus this makes it clear that the programme aims to help children appreciate the benefits of knowing other languages and cultures apart from their own whilst also becoming curious to discover more information not only about their classmates but also about individuals in their local community. As a result students can accept, respect and tolerate diverse individuals.

4.2.1.5 The teachers of FLAP

The PC explained that FLAP sessions are taught by teachers who graduated in foreign languages and who currently teach in a secondary school. The AD also posited that the chosen educators are “teaching in secondary schools, who love languages, who already know [...] how languages are learnt, [...] that languages are linked to culture, and are not afraid to even use the different languages”. In addition, the PC highlighted that although FLAP teachers are assigned to a particular college, the latter might differ from the one they form part of when teaching at a secondary level.

Participants acknowledged not only that FLAP educators are competent and professional, but also that they are dedicated and hard-working in their jobs. HoS2 claimed that FLAP teachers “are very organised, they contacted us in ample time, [...] they come whenever they are suppose to come” whilst also devising a programme and following it as planned. The AD added that FLAP educators use appropriate teaching resources in line with their teaching and learning approach. The CP also emphasised that when delivering these sessions, FLAP teachers are “enthusiastic about the programme so the way they deliver it, the way they engage the students, that’s very positive”.

Different participants stated that FLAP educators collaborate and work together with other stakeholders. As a matter of fact, the AD mentioned that FLAP teachers work with educational officers: “there are links with [...] educational officers who are also in charge of the programme, [...] who will be able to discuss what is required and what [teachers] may be able to work with”. FT2, FT3 and FT5 highlighted that FLAP educators work also with the School Management Team⁴⁴ and other FLAP teachers when teaching in the same College.

FT1, FT4 and FT5 however highlighted that FLAP educators receive most support from class teachers who are always very welcoming and helpful. For example, FT1 posited that class educators stapled the sheets FLAP teachers were going to use in the classroom. Another example explained by FT5 is that when pupils weren’t able to print something from home for the FLAP sessions, class educators would print it for them. This participant also suggested that there are instances whereby class teachers plan classroom activities integrating information from the FLAP syllabus. FT2 and FT5 also valued LSEs presence in the classroom, deeming them essential for the smooth running of the sessions.

4.2.1.6 FLAP inside the classroom

The AD outlined important steps FLAP teachers go through when implementing the programme inside FLAP classrooms. FLAP educators start off their lessons by familiarising themselves with the school and its learning context. As I evidence in a previous sub-theme, the aims of FLAP are accomplished through a flexible programme built on learning outcomes. It is then the teacher’s prerogative to reach the programme’s learning outcomes by establishing lesson objectives based on the observed pupils in the classroom, their needs, their interests, etc. and linked to the content being covered by the class educator. Indeed, the AD claimed that the teacher “first familiarizes herself/himself with what is required in that particular school [...] and

⁴⁴ Henceforth, SMT.

what [...] aspects or issues the class teacher and the learners there are working on and to then be able to formulate [...] aims for that particular let's say number of lessons" whilst being able to "meet the needs of the class there and their reality". The AD also posited that FLAP educators need to investigate "what the learners might be interested in, what they are curious about" as well as "to incorporate elements that help the learners [...] feel at home in class".

FLAP teachers spoke about the teaching and learning approach, identifying the communicative approach as the most appropriate for their classrooms. FT3, for instance, said: "I use the communicative approach by involving students a lot, if maybe they went abroad in that particular place, their experiences, maybe there is a foreigner in class, I try to use those [...] languages". FT2 also stated that involving learners in the classroom is essential: "I believe that I have to give them something to do so that they feel that this lesson belongs to them". Also, FT1 and FT3 suggested that FLAP educators try to make FLAP lessons as interactive as possible by organising activities that involve play time, group work and friendly competitions. FT5 highlighted that lessons can be interactive by using various resources. Amongst the different resources described by participants, there was a recurring reference to the resources presented in Table 4.2 below.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawings • Songs • Videos • Games • Pictures • Posters • Handouts/ Booklet • PowerPoint presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashcards • Stories and narratives • Different coins and flags • Costumes and puppets • Maps • The whiteboard • The interactive whiteboard • Evaluation sheets
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Table 4.2: The resources used in FLAP classrooms.

FT1 posited that at the end of the FLAP sessions, teachers hand in evaluation sheets to pupils so that the latter can evaluate themselves as part of the formative assessment, thus assessing "what were the benefits of the programme, whether they have learnt, what they have learnt, and what they didn't".

4.2.1.7 FLAP outside the classroom

Participants outlined a number of FLAP activities that are implemented outside the FLAP classroom. The AD and the CP made reference to school exhibitions and assemblies. The CP described a special assembly that was carried out in one of the primary schools within the College. Erasmus partners, namely students from Austria, France and Italy, visited the school and Year 3 and 6 FLAP Maltese learners prepared an assembly in different languages to address the audience. Even HoS2 claimed that this year class teachers together with FLAP pupils will be presenting different foreign languages in the school's special assembly. FT5 also mentioned a multicultural awareness day in one of the schools whereby FLAP students demonstrated "different costumes and different languages to represent different nationalities. [...] The flags students had coloured in the classroom were also shown". In addition, the CP highlighted that in some primary schools, FLAP learners presented the different foreign languages they were exposed to as part of the prize day celebrations. Moreover, the CP stated that in some schools, parents, both native and foreign, were invited to the school to celebrate foreign languages. According to this participant, this was an extraordinary experience as parents came "in their folkloristic clothes, [brought] food, [...] they even brought their own recipes [...] and parents mixed and discussed amongst themselves".

4.3 Which are the perceived benefits of FLAP?

4.3.1 FLAP and its perceived benefits

The theme 'FLAP and its perceived benefits', as I clearly highlight in Table 4.1, emerged as a result of the thematic analysis of the collected data. This was linked to the second sub-research question. Hereunder participants' perceptions on the benefits

of the programme are documented and organised around three sub-themes, namely foreign languages, cultural awareness and other perceived benefits.

4.3.1.1 Foreign languages

The CP and HoS1 stated that the implementation of FLAP was considered crucial as students would become aware of different foreign languages. Participants perceived the programme as beneficial not only because familiar languages such as Italian, French, German, etc. were going to be presented, but also because students were going to be introduced to unfamiliar languages. Indeed, the AD claimed that these languages “are very much in touch with the type of learners in class, where they come from and what they already know”. This participant affirmed that pupils could also bring materials to class to expose these particular languages. Thus, for participants, exposing foreign languages to learners was considered both as an aim and a benefit of the programme.

Although participants love languages and this in itself made them perceive the programme as beneficial, they highlighted that the programme would help pupils fall in love with foreign languages at a young age. This, according to a number of participants, would lead to a series of benefits related to early FL learning. Their views are presented in Table 4.3.

- FT3 stated that "the programme would make young students aware of foreign languages [...], even appreciate them".
- FT4 posited that "FLAP, at least with the young ones, you make them aware that languages are important and they have a relevance in our world as well".
- FT1 highlighted that "young students become aware that certain languages derive from others, for example, [...] how Maltese is derived from Arabic".
- FT1 mentioned that "children understand that languages, like the word 'Hello', how you say 'Hello' in English and then 'Halo' in German, [...] are connected, they are inter-related".
- The PC affirmed that "research shows that the younger students fall in love with languages the easier it becomes for them to learn them".
- The CP outlined that "the younger the age of the students the better for them to learn a foreign language".
- The PC claimed that "with the programme, pupils will be more ready to study foreign languages".

Table 4.3: The benefits of early FL learning according to participants.

Moreover, the PC and FT4 affirmed that foreign languages would be treated equally in the programme. As a result, as claimed by the CP, it would help foreign pupils feel more integrated with native students. Additionally, learners would communicate with others since, as the CP suggested, "the more languages that are taught in schools the more students are equipped to communicate". This participant explained that learners would communicate "with their peers in class or in school, [...] outside school, neighbours, in the playing field, in their village" and also when going abroad. Helping students to communicate and to develop a plurilingual competence means also achieving the aims of the programme.

Learners would also feel more confident and at ease when choosing foreign languages at a secondary level. Indeed, FT2 claimed that pupils rather than being "forced by their parents to choose a particular language, they have an idea for themselves and they get acquainted to some words". Furthermore, the CP stated that students would be well equipped with certain skills for future society, like for example they would know various foreign languages and thus be prepared for their chosen career. This participant explained that these skills are especially looked for by employers in businesses and private institutions, especially if these companies work with foreign countries or are situated abroad. These skills are considered part of the lifelong learning skills mentioned in the aims of the programme.

4.3.1.2 Cultural awareness

Various participants, namely the AD, the CP, HoS1, HoS2, FT2, and FT3, believed the programme would be beneficial because it would make pupils aware of different cultures. This evidences one of the aims of the programme, i.e. of exposing different cultures to learners. The AD claimed that native students could be exposed to foreign cultures through the people they know or through foreign learners inside the classroom. This participant posited that sometimes pupils are not aware of the cultures surrounding them although there is a mixture of cultures within the classroom and therefore through FLAP students would be able to associate and integrate with their fellow classmates. FT3 also highlighted that the programme would help learners understand, respect and accept foreign cultures. Indeed, FLAP aims to help students develop intercultural competences and foster a positive attitude and respect towards cultural diversity.

As the AD and the CP affirmed, pupils would be able to understand that they are living in an era of multiculturalism. The AD posited that students would learn that “even if we are living in our small communities we are constantly in contact with people from other cultures”. According to the CP, since multiculturalism is part and parcel of the Maltese society, students would view and integrate more positively the different cultures that exist.

4.3.1.3 Other perceived benefits

HoS2 commented that this programme was also seen as beneficial because it would help pupils develop “higher order thinking skills that helps them do some kind of problem solving, to do something outside of the box, outside of their comfort zone”. FT2 suggested that this would help young pupils decide for themselves what they want

to do in their future. HoS1, FT3 and FT5 stated that children would also learn to work together, appreciate, respect, and accept everyone, no matter the differences.

4.4 What are the perceived outcomes (benefits, limitations and areas for improvement) of FLAP?

4.4.1 FLAP's perceived outcomes

The theme 'FLAP's perceived outcomes', as I clearly highlight in Table 4.1, emerged as a result of the thematic analysis of the collected data. This was linked to the third sub-research question. Hereunder participants' perceptions on the outcomes of the programme are documented and organised around three sub-themes, namely positive feedback and outcomes, encountered challenges and future considerations.

4.4.1.1 Positive feedback and outcomes

All participants involved in this research study reviewed the programme positively. Indeed, the PC, the AD, the CP, FT4 and FT5 stated that they received positive feedback on the programme from the SMT. The latter are satisfied with the programme and highlighted that it is very beneficial for students. The PC and HoS2 affirmed that FLAP teachers reviewed the programme positively as it is being implemented well. The CP, HoS1, HoS2, FT1, FT4 and FT5 posited that class educators gave positive comments on the programme whilst FT2 and FT5 received positive feedback from LSEs. According to these participants, class teachers and LSEs are content with the programme as they could see pupils' enthusiasm and the programme's benefits being accomplished. The PC, the CP, HoS1, HoS2 and FT4 evidenced that parents are also very pleased with the programme and these affirmed that FLAP is working well. Moreover, according to the PC, the CP, HoS2, FT1, FT3, FT4

and FT5, pupils are enthusiastic and looking forward for FLAP sessions. The above feedback, as exposed by the different participants, can be seen in detail in Table 4.4 hereunder. This feedback is centred on their perceptions as participants but also on the comments they received from other stakeholders.

<p>Participants exposed the positive feedback they received from the SMT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PC posited that “the feedback we have [...] from Heads of Schools of primaries [...] is very positive”. • The AD claimed that “there was no school that [...] said we do not have time for this programme. Heads of Schools would call to see if we may be able to offer it”. • The CP affirmed that “the Heads would have told me of negative feedback. [...] I am towards the end of the third term and I always ask for feedback. Last year I did that and [I received] very positive feedback”. • FT4 stated that “the SMT tells me the programme is interesting because they talk with their students and sort of they get to know what is going on”. • FT5 highlighted that “the feedback [...] received was very encouraging from members of the SMT as they saw how happy and beneficial the programme is for students”.
<p>Participants exposed the positive feedback they received from FLAP teachers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PC affirmed that “from the feedback we have from teachers teaching FLAP [...], it is very positive”. • HoS2 stated: “I have received positive feedback from the FLAP teachers themselves on the programme and how it is carried out”.
<p>Participants exposed the positive feedback they received from class teachers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CP posited that “the feedback was very positive. [...] The class teachers were very positive about it”. • HoS1 evidenced: “I have received positive feedback from our teachers. [...] Recently they were asking me whether we will have a FLAP teacher next year”. • HoS2 highlighted that “class teachers are happy with the programme”. • FT1 said: “I have positive feedback from

	<p>the class teachers themselves. They see various benefits being accomplished”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT4 claimed that “class teachers [...] are happy with the programme as they see students looking forward for the programme”. • FT5 affirmed: “the feedback I received was very encouraging [...] from the class teacher”.
<p>Participants exposed the positive feedback they received from LSEs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT2 evidenced that “some of the LSE’s said the lessons were very interesting”. • FT5 stated that “LSE’s liked the lessons and saw them as something positive”.
<p>Participants exposed the positive feedback they received from parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PC highlighted that “parents complained that the programme is too short and they wish that their children could have this [programme] all over the year” • The CP posited: “I received very positive feedback from parents. [...] I cannot remember one single instance where I received negative feedback about FLAP”. • HoS1 commented that “we did not have any complaints from parents so for us no news is good news. Unfortunately few people bother to praise but if they are not complaining then it means that it is positive”. • HoS2 claimed: “I haven’t received any feedback from parents. Most probably that’s a good sign because [...] if there is something wrong about it we will most definitely get a feedback from parents”. • FT4 said that “parents are happy with what I am doing”.
<p>Participants exposed the positive feedback they received from students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PC claimed that “students are enjoying these language sessions, which is very positive in itself”. • The CP posited that learners are “enjoying themselves [and] looking forward for the lessons”. • HoS2 affirmed that “children are learning and are happy about it”. • FT1 stated that “students really liked [FLAP]”. • FT3 evidenced that “the positive part was students’ enthusiasm. They enjoyed it, so if someone enjoys something even if it is something totally new you know

	<p>that it is working. They participated a lot, so participation shows that they are interested as well”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT4 highlighted that “from the students the feedback that I receive is their enthusiasm for the lesson”. • FT5 commented that “the feedback I received was very encouraging from the students [...]. Students were very excited for their next lesson”.
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Table 4.4: Participants’ positive feedback on FLAP.

Moreover, participants mentioned a number of positive outcomes that according to them were achieved with the implementation of FLAP. These outcomes are evidenced in Table 4.5 below. In the first column of the table I present most of the expected positive outcomes of FLAP which reflect FLAP’s aims and participants’ perceived benefits of the programme. These expected positive outcomes of FLAP according to participants include communicating with others using different foreign languages, acknowledging and accepting different people of distinct nationalities and cultures, and helping learners develop personally and holistically. In the second column of the table I expose the unexpected positive outcomes of the programme as perceived by the different stakeholders. These include achieving the programme’s learning outcomes through a positive teaching and learning experience within FLAP classrooms as well as the student’s ability to remember, pinpoint and share with others information learned through FLAP.

Expected positive outcomes of FLAP	Unexpected positive outcomes of FLAP
Communication	In the FLAP classroom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT5 claimed that learners “are listening to each other with different languages”. • FT1 highlighted that “students can mention different words, like the word ‘Hello’, in different languages”. • The CP posited that learners “felt at ease expressing themselves in a different language to their own”. • The CP stated that pupils “could communicate better with their [...] peers [and] the foreign students in their class”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AD affirmed that a positive outcome of the programme includes the “achievement of the learning outcomes and the can do statements of FLAP”. • HoS1 claimed that “in the classroom we always tend to teach and learn the traditional methods but through FLAP children had time to work together and to use resources such as videos, etc.”. • FT4 posited that the programme “is not like another subject that you have an

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AD evidenced that “they are using these languages outside of the classroom environment”. 	<p>exam that you need to study and that there is the pressure of the syllabus. In this case we do not have that pressure. In my honest opinion, it’s more [...] free. [...] I think it’s working because they do not need to study, it’s just awareness”.</p>
<p>Acknowledging and accepting diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PC highlighted that student’s “attitude towards languages is positive”. • HoS1 posited that “children fostered a positive attitude towards different languages [and] different cultures”. • FT2 stated that pupils “are more at ease with foreigners”. • HoS1 affirmed that “through these sessions pupils became aware that other pupils in their class, at home, they are speaking different languages and we have to respect each other more and be more sensitive”. • FT5 suggested that with FLAP “students respect and integrate more with their classmates on a daily basis”. • HoS1 claimed that the programme “helps students achieve a sense of belongingness”. • The CP said that learners “are living multiculturalism and plurilingualism in the classroom everyday on a daily basis”. • FT3 commented that children “appreciate more the fact that we are living in a multicultural society, even that in Malta we have loads and loads of people coming from different countries”. 	<p>The effects on students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT2 evidenced that learners “mentioned most of the languages so they remember a lot [and] they started pointing out certain songs”. • FT2 said that children “share with their parents what they are doing in this programme”.
<p>Personal development</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HoS2 affirmed that “the higher order thinking skills of our children is being stretched and therefore it is being developed”. • HoS1 evidenced that with the programme “students develop holistically”. • FT1 highlighted that pupils “find the programme useful for their future”. 	

Table 4.5: The positive outcomes of FLAP.

4.4.1.2 Encountered challenges

Participants encountered a number of challenges with the implementation of the programme which I present in Table 4.6 below. This table evidences three main categories of challenges, namely school logistics, human resources, and other encountered challenges. In the first category, participants stated that because of problems related to logistics FLAP is not being implemented in all schools. Indeed, according to participants, some Heads of Schools and school administrators find it difficult to include FLAP in the scholastic timetable because very frequently there aren't any available slots. FLAP teachers posited that because of time issues they are not carrying out all FLAP sessions and as a result, they cannot teach the way they want to. According to the different stakeholders, the implementation of the programme also disadvantages primary school teachers who are already tight with their syllabus and who cannot find time to make links with FLAP's syllabus.

In the second category, participants highlighted that FLAP is also not being implemented in all schools due to a lack of human resources. Participants claimed that, apart from the lack of professional FL educators in the country, there are a number of professional teachers who are not willing to teach FLAP because the programme is hectic or simply because they do not have time to teach it. In the third category, participants emphasised that secondary school teachers lacked the necessary training to teach primary school students. Participants also mentioned that it is very challenging to prepare the needed material for FLAP sessions; to continuously implement a positive pedagogy; and to use the foreign languages present inside the classroom.

School logistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The PC stated that “unfortunately due to some logistic problems [...] not all schools are yet implementing this programme”.• The CP claimed that “the Heads of Schools, who I must admit that initially they were a bit hesitant about this programme and they were hesitant not because they did not believe in it but because of timetable issues”.• FT4 posited that the biggest challenge in the programme is “to find the slots in the

<p>timetable because since I am teaching also in the secondary school, it is becoming very difficult for administrators to allot enough time so that I can go to primary schools”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT3 evidenced that “the difficulty is time, time constraints. Lessons are only 30 minutes, [...] and it’s difficult to fit them within the school timetable”. • FT1 highlighted that “we don’t have too much time. [...] Though we are meant to deliver ten lessons, usually because of the scholastic programme, we just deliver six or seven”. • FT5 said: “I believe not a lot of time is dedicated to the programme. I am currently teaching three sessions instead of six”. • HoS2 affirmed that “as a school we try to participate in as many activities as possible but obviously we can’t do everything because the fear is that then the time for teaching and learning will be diminished, so much so that then the teaching and learning will suffer and we don’t want that”. • FT3 suggested that time is influencing the teaching and learning process. Indeed, this participant commented that “we don’t have a lot of time for example to draw or to write”. • The CP explained that “in the primary classes nowadays we have a lot of subject lessons [...] and so the class teacher does not have enough time to cover the entire syllabus that needs to be covered across the year”. • HoS2 stated that “apart from the usual peripatetic subjects, now we got these FLAP lessons. [...] It’s quite challenging in primary schools to fit in everything”. • FT1 evidenced that “primary teachers [...] have so many things going on during the day that [...] sometimes in those 30 minutes they would have done something else with their programme”. • FT4 claimed that “sometimes it can be a little bit invading on the primary teachers. [...] They have 30 minutes that they are losing for this type of programme”. • FT5 affirmed: “I always advise the class teachers to continue on my work, but they usually can’t find time and try to avoid it since it’s not in the curriculum”.
<p>Human resources</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PC commented that “due to [...] human resource problems not all schools are yet implementing this programme”. • The AD stated that the programme is “not [implemented] in all schools but as soon as there are teachers who can work beyond Secondary, yes we will then implement it”. • The CP affirmed that “we are already experiencing a shortage of personnel who are equipped with foreign language skills in Malta”. • The AD highlighted that the difficulty is “finding the people available, even the teachers who are willing to teach the programme”. • HoS1 posited that “it’s human resources that’s lacking” and that “the demand is larger than the supply”. • FT5 said that “there aren’t enough teachers to teach FLAP. These teachers might be discouraged to teach the programme because it is hectic to prepare for it”. • The PC evidenced that the programme “depends on the availability of the teachers involved”.
<p>Other encountered challenges</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HoS2 stated that “the possible pitfall is that since these lessons [...] are taught by teachers from secondary, sometimes we fear that these teachers wouldn’t be able to go down the level of primary school children”. • FT3 highlighted that “at the beginning I was afraid of it because I had never taught in a primary school. This was my first experience in a primary school. During my years of

<p>teaching and even during my training at University I was always exposed to secondary school students”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PC affirmed that a challenge is “practically the preparation of material because teachers have to prepare the material themselves”. • The AD claimed that “the issue is that [...] we need them to experiment with finding materials themselves and their readiness to listen to something in another language”. • FT2 posited that “the most challenging part is to plan and to find things. It’s not easy. You have to look them up and it takes time. The thing is the fact that there is written, for example, just ‘landmarks’ and you have to see what it includes in it”. • FT3 evidenced that “the work involved is related to the research you need to do beforehand. For example, in order to prepare one lesson, it would take you about 4 to 5 hours, most of it going through videos and trying to find the correct ones”. • FT3 stated that “the challenge is to get the students to like what they are seeing; to have always a positive approach; to always go in and out of the class with a smile; to remember that you have a very young audience; to remember not to expect the impossible from them; to go down to their level but at the same time to treat them like intelligent people”. • The PC explained that “another challenge is that in some schools there are many foreign students. Teachers try to include as many languages as possible so the challenge becomes even bigger”. • The AD said that “the real issue is that it’s not the teaching of one language or a language that you are already familiar with”.

Table 4.6: Encountered challenges.

4.4.1.3 Future considerations

The CP and HoS1 claimed that they are excited for the re-implementation of the programme the following scholastic year. The AD affirmed that the target is to implement the programme in all schools (State, Church and Independent) as the programme works well and it is very fruitful and beneficial. Indeed, according to HoS1, the programme will:

help with the dwindling numbers. If we had to extrapolate we know that the number of students sitting for ‘O’ level Italian, French, German, etc. it’s on the decrease, but maybe something like this long-term could help. [...] Maybe this could also motivate them to participate in the SPA programme.

In order to enhance the programme and to address the challenges identified in the above sub-section, FT3 highlighted that the programme developers and implementers could meet at the end of the academic year to discuss the programme

together, share ideas as well as apply changes as considered necessary. As a matter of fact, FT3 posited that “at the end of the year there could be a meeting and we can discuss together what we can add or what we can remove”. The AD, to reduce issues related to logistics and human resources, suggested that FLAP teachers could present FLAP in the primary classrooms but then it would be up to the class teachers to teach the content outlined in the programme. If this proposal had to be implemented, the programme would be eventually taught by the primary school teachers themselves and FLAP’s content would be integrated in the curriculum. In fact, the AD said that “we are not speaking here of teachers who come from the secondary years but the teachers themselves who teach in the primary classrooms who will be able to incorporate elements from the programme”. The PC and the AD are also discussing the possibility of extending FLAP to Year 1 and 2 classes, apart from Year 3 and 4. Consequently, the current learning outcomes would be adapted according to the student’s age.

4.5 Conclusion

The analysis of the raw data yielded the emergence of three main themes and a series of sub-themes which I have linked to the sub-research questions. This will enable me to discuss the results and eventually answer the main research question in the final chapter of this dissertation. In this chapter participants demonstrated they are aware of how the programme works and what it entails. They offered a number of perceived benefits of FLAP, most of which surfaced as positive outcomes of the programme. Unexpected positive outcomes, as well as challenges and recommendations outlined by participants were also highlighted. These research findings will be discussed further in the next chapter in light of the literature review presented in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to offer an in-depth discussion of the obtained results documented in the previous chapter. This chapter is essential as participants' perceptions of FLAP are discussed in the light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, thus helping me answer the main research question of this dissertation, namely, *What are the perceptions of different stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme?*

5.2 What is FLAP according to the different stakeholders?

5.2.1 FLAP

In Chapter 2, a general overview of what is FLAP according to literature was provided. This helped me as a researcher understand how the programme is being implemented and what is expected out of it. In the following sub-sections reference is made to the latter to discuss participants' perceptions of FLAP.

5.2.1.1 Current local linguistic situation

As I have previously indicated, the Constitution of Malta (1964) recognises Maltese as the national language of the Maltese archipelago whilst also granting co-official status to English. As a matter of fact, the Maltese islands are bilingual, specifically bilingual without diglossia, therefore Maltese and English are competing for use in the same domains (Camilleri Grima, 2000). Both Maltese and English are

equally taught to students from a young age, all through their compulsory education (MEDE, 2014b). All of the above makes it understandable why participants affirmed that both Maltese and English are the languages pupils know and use the most and are considered the languages of schooling.

The linguistic baggage of learners is essential, especially when they first start learning a FL. As exhibited in Lightbown and Spada (1999), students are already familiar with the processes involved in learning a language through their L1 and L2 acquisition. Through these language acquisition techniques pupils can make links between the languages they know with the FL they intend to learn and thus easily acquire a FL. This makes it clear that Maltese and English shouldn't be of detriment to foreign languages but rather are essential for students as they are equipped with the skills they need to acquire different foreign languages.

The CP also highlighted that MEDE is working hard to promote foreign languages, apart from “Arabic, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish”⁴⁵ (MEDE, 2012, p. 62) at a secondary level. I have already argued that the Maltese islands have suffered a decrease in the number of students studying foreign languages both at a secondary (Pace, 2017c) and at a post-secondary level (Pace, 2018b). Therefore MEDE has promoted foreign languages at a primary level through FLAP, which I will discuss further below, and through SPA. The latter helps secondary school learners at risk of not obtaining a SEC level in the studied foreign languages get certified in MQF levels 1 and 2 in Italian, German, French or Spanish (Pace, 2017c).

5.2.1.2 Previous projects

All the projects that were implemented before FLAP and mentioned by the various participants, namely the project implemented in a primary school within the CP's College, FLAP's pilot project with FES in Skolasajf and Klabb 3-16, and the 'Foreign Language Teaching Programme', also featured in two articles published by the news

⁴⁵ Chinese could also be studied at a secondary level.

portals *Newspoint* (no author), dated 15 June 2017, and *Gozo News* (no author), dated 4 April 2017, as well as a policy document (Department of Curriculum Management, no date). Indeed, in the article published by the news portal *Newspoint* (no author) we understand that the 2016-2017 project aimed for Year 5 learners was successful as its aims were achieved. This news article highlights the support and encouragement received from the Department of Languages and Humanities at the Faculty of Education that coordinated this project together with ten MTL students. The fact that it was coordinated by individuals that love languages, promoted in itself FL learning.

For the pilot project, in the article published by the news portal *Gozo News* (no author) confirmed that FLAP was primarily piloted in 2016-2017 with FES in 4 Klabb 3-16 centres. The duration of the project was of 4-5 weeks with a maximum of 9 hours, having a 60 minute session twice a week (Department of Curriculum Management, no date). This pilot project achieved its objectives and as a result FLAP was permanently established in 2017 in Year 3 primary state classrooms.

The 'Foreign Language Teaching Programme' was implemented in 2007 in primary State (and some Church and Independent) schools. Year 5 and 6 students are given a preview of the foreign languages they can choose at a secondary level. This helps pupils reap the benefits of learning different foreign languages and are more prone to study foreign languages at higher levels of education.

5.2.1.3 The implementation of FLAP

Participants' perceptions of FLAP's implementation tally with what I set out in the literature review. As a matter of fact, Pace (2018a, no pagination) states that:

Last scholastic year there were 6 State Colleges using FLAP in Year 3. In this current scholastic year 2018-19, the same 6 Colleges have FLAP in Years 3 and 4 whereas the other 4 Colleges have FLAP in Year 3 only. This means that there are 10 State Colleges [...] doing FLAP this year. [...] FLAP is performed on a 30 minute lesson per week for 10 weeks in each school.

Different stakeholders (the PC, the AD, FT1 and FT4) also noted two fundamental aspects of the programme, namely that it is learning outcomes based and is flexible. The Council of Europe (2015, p. 17) explains that learning outcomes are “statements of what a learner knows, understands, and is able to do at the end of a learning process”. This means, as Pace (2017a, p. 157) also affirms, that the programme avoids the traditional type of syllabus whereby knowledge is predetermined and established but rather gives communities of learning "the freedom to develop programmes that fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes". Therefore, teachers reach FLAP's aims through a flexible programme that they establish based on learning outcomes, meaning that they plan what pupils are going to learn but essentially even based on their needs, interests and abilities. This is in line with Pace's (2017a, p. 157) statement that although there are a set of learning outcomes listed in the programme, “schools are encouraged to add other outcomes in accordance to the realities of the students in each and every class”.

5.2.1.4 The aims of FLAP

Different participants (the PC, the AD, the CP, HoS1, HoS2, FT3, FT4 and FT5) suggested three significant aims of FLAP: (i) making students aware of different foreign languages, whether these are offered at a secondary level or known and/or practised by the students in the classroom; (ii) helping pupils become aware of different cultures; and (iii) instilling in young learners appreciation and acceptance towards foreign languages and cultures. Although the latter are fundamental aims of the programme at hand, participants failed to mention other essential aims of FLAP, namely, to:

[...] develop plurilingual and intercultural competences; [...] help learners understand their own language backgrounds; [...] enhance learners' personal development; strengthen lifelong learning skills; [and] promote digital literacy for language learning (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department, no date, p. 2).

All aims of the programme have to be reached for FLAP to be successful. According to the Council of Europe (2018), learners should acquire a plurilingual competence to be able to use their linguistic resources to see similarities and differences amongst different languages and cultures. Hence, it is fundamental that pupils acquire this competence through FLAP so they can be able to communicate and interact more easily with one another. The Council of Europe (2001) also recommends the development of an intercultural competence, which Deardorff (2006) explains as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to apposite intercultural interactions. Acquiring these intercultural skills will help students foster a positive approach towards others and develop their personality and sense of identity. All of the above caters for children's personal development and equips them with essential skills that are useful when meeting people of different nationalities and cultures, when pursuing a career which involves contact with foreign countries, when going abroad, etc. Digital literacy also needs to be promoted so students are able to learn languages independently. Indeed, learners will be able to learn languages by navigating different digital platforms and understanding, assessing and communicating through them.

FT1 and FT2 also stated that in the Year 3 programme students are more exposed to foreign languages whilst in the Year 4 programme learners work more on topics related to foreign cultures. This is in line with the policy document issued by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department (no date, pp. 4-5) which affirms that for the Year 3 programme pupils work on the following themes: "Saying hello in different languages", "Where do I come across languages?", "Language map" and "Colours of a country" whilst in Year 4 they work on the following: "Greetings", "What can I say about different countries?", "Celebrate with me" and "Travel". However, this separation of topics as highlighted by participants is indeed doubtful because in the themes "Colours of a country" of the Year 3 programme and "Greetings" of the Year 4 programme, learners are exposed to both foreign languages and cultures. Moreover, given the programme's flexibility, the teacher can experiment with different notions of languages and cultures, especially if he/she adds other learning outcomes related to both.

5.2.1.5 *The teachers of FLAP*

The PC and the AD explained that FLAP teachers are graduated in a FL and are already teaching a FL in secondary schools. In fact, MEDE (2014b, p. 36) states that FLAP educators are “language graduates, who have followed the [Bachelor of Education (Honours)] or the [Postgraduate Certificate in Education] course at the University of Malta, and are secondary school teachers”. In a call issued by the Directorate for Educational Services (2013, p. 2), there was also written that applicants needed to “have a minimum of three (3) scholastic years teaching a FL at secondary level; be in possession of an appropriate recognised qualification related to the language applied for; have an aptitude to teach at the primary level; and have an in-depth knowledge of the methodology of the teaching of foreign languages”.

Participants not directly involved in the delivery of the programme spoke very highly of FLAP teachers, highlighting that they are competent, professional, dedicated, hard working, well organised, enthusiastic, plan adequately a programme, as well as implement effectively a pedagogy that engages students. This confirms that educators follow the policy document issued by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department (no date) whereby teachers are advised to actively involve and support students by creating collaborative activities in the classroom using a variety of resources.

Participants also mentioned that FLAP educators collaborate with their Educational Officer, the SMT, other FLAP teachers, class teachers, and LSEs. This evidences that there is “competence, confidence and commitment on the part of all parties. Respect and trust, both for oneself and others, is key to collaboration. As such, patience, nurturance and time are required to build a relationship so that collaboration can occur” (Henneman et al., 1995, p. 108). This is fundamental because collaboration in such programmes is the key to success. All participants want the programme to be successful and therefore commit, respect and trust each other.

Class educators not only helped FLAP teachers by stapling papers for them or by printing papers for students, but they also included FLAP's teachings in their syllabuses. This means there is:

a move away from an exclusively subject based approach that favours fragmentation and compartmentalisation of knowledge to a more cross-curricular, thematic, interdisciplinary and collaborative approach that reflects real life situations and encourages transfer of skills from one learning area to another (MEDE, 2012, p. 31).

Thus, pupils are able to use the skills they learned in both instances and link them together for real life situations.

5.2.1.6 FLAP inside the classroom

The AD explained that like any other educator, FLAP teachers start off their teaching and learning experience by firstly getting acquainted with the premises of the community of learning and its students. The teacher can then establish a programme that is adapted to the needs and interests of pupils whilst also linking the content to be taught with the content already covered by the class teacher to facilitate learning. This corresponds to what Adams and Pierce (no date, p. 102) state, that is, effective educators "assess needs, abilities and preparedness on a class-by-class basis and respond to these needs accordingly" as well as "[organise] the material in such a way as to best facilitate learning".

Participants identified the communicative approach as the best teaching and learning approach to achieve FLAP's aims. In this approach, students learn a language by interacting with one another and by experiencing real communicative scenarios. This helps pupils develop the communicative competence. Hence, learners understand how to use the presented languages in FLAP for meaningful communication purposes; they feel safe to experiment, interact and collaborate with others in the classroom; they are involved in educational activities; and they work together as a class with the teacher's guidance to achieve the lesson's learning outcomes.

This approach reflects the policy document issued by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department (no date) which emphasises the need to involve and support learners as much as possible by helping them listen and express themselves in different languages, learn about different cultures and work on enjoyable tasks within a collaborative environment. MEDE (2014b) affirms that tasks in FLAP can be enjoyable if a collaborative environment is established through play and the use of various resources. All of the above stimulates a positive learning environment whereby pupils can build a sense of rapport with their educators and peers in a comfortable environment and also believe in their own success (Barkley, 2010).

5.2.1.7 FLAP outside the classroom

Several stakeholders (the AD, the CP, HoS2 and FT5) made reference to a number of activities which were carried out outside the traditional confinement of the FLAP classroom. Examples of the latter are: (i) school exhibitions, (ii) school assemblies, (iii) a multicultural awareness day, (iv) prize day celebrations and (v) parents invited to the school. This demonstrates that the programme's aims are fundamental for Year 3 and 4 pupils, so much so that they are implemented as part and parcel of the school's calendar of events. It also shows that FLAP's aims and its learning outcomes are linked to student's everyday life. Therefore, pupils are able to use the learned knowledge, skills and attitudes learned inside FLAP classrooms in real situations. This corresponds to Pace's (2017a, p. 157) affirmation, i.e. that the programme aims to provide "a clear description of what young learners 'can do' with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context".

Moreover, although participants listed a number of activities implemented outside the FLAP classroom, the policy document issued by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department (no date, p. 3) only mentions one activity participants made reference to, i.e. "school assemblies focusing

on intercultural aspects". Activities such as "story telling, drama/role play activities, cooking sessions, etc." were not mentioned by participants. These activities would help students listen more to each other and express themselves further in different foreign languages. In regards to the parents that were invited to schools, this document states that "[a]ll parents are welcome to attend either as an audience or as ambassadors of their respective countries, cultures and languages". This activity was also implemented in 'The Alsace programme' as I indicate in Chapter 2. In both events parents exposed their own language and culture to students, thus encouraging and enhancing plurilingualism and interculturalism amongst learners, both emphasised by the Council of Europe (2001).

5.3 Which are the perceived benefits of FLAP?

5.3.1 FLAP and its perceived benefits

In Chapter 2, the benefits of FLAP according to literature were identified. This helped me as an investigator understand what the programme's benefits were according to policy documents and the different authors. Reference is made to the latter to discuss participants' perceived benefits of FLAP. This discussion rotates around three main sub-themes, namely foreign languages, cultural awareness and other perceived benefits.

5.3.1.1 Foreign languages

The Council of Europe (2001) posits that becoming aware of various foreign languages is more beneficial than practicing only one as students increase their linguistic repertoire and develop all their linguistic abilities. This agrees with participants' perceptions, i.e. that the programme was perceived as beneficial because

it would expose pupils to a variety of languages. These languages were not only familiar languages which the students could choose at a secondary level like “Arabic, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish”⁴⁶ (MEDE, 2012, p. 62), but also included unfamiliar languages, such as Japanese, Romanian, Bulgarian, etc. The policy document issued by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department (no date) suggests this exposure of languages through the experiences and/or materials that students bring to the classroom.

Moreover, as seen in Table 4.3 of the previous chapter, participants perceived FLAP as beneficial because it would help learners fall in love with foreign languages at a young age. Students would acknowledge and appreciate foreign languages as well as understand that languages are connected and inter-related. Indeed, Pace (2015) confirms that FLAP would make students aware of and better appreciate foreign languages. Also, pupils would be able in a better position to learn a FL since foreign languages are learnt best during the critical period, a time in which the brain is predisposed for language learning (Abello-Contesse, 2009).

The above-mentioned perceived benefits of FLAP comply with some of the aims of the programme, i.e. “[to] introduce foreign language awareness and appreciation at an early age; nurture a love for languages; [...] help learners understand their own language backgrounds; acknowledge language diversity; [...] and] strengthen lifelong learning skills” (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department, no date, p. 2).

In addition, the programme equally treats all foreign languages and therefore better integrates foreign learners with their native classmates. Treating equally all foreign languages helps learners “develop an open disposition towards diversity and change” (Pace, 2015, p. 10) and thus view positively all foreign languages in a diversified and changing globalised society. The CP claimed that the programme would help students communicate with others inside and outside the classroom. This corresponds with the Council of Europe’s (2001) affirmation that all pupils should

⁴⁶ In the past years, Chinese is also being taught in secondary schools.

develop a plurilingual competence and thus be able to communicate with others. The programme also outlines the development of this competence as one of its objectives.

According to participants, students would also make an informed decision when choosing to study a FL at a secondary level and be prepared with the FL skills they need for their future. These skills comply with the 'lifelong learning skills' mentioned in the programme. Learners could use these skills when looking for a career because, as Pace (2017c) affirms, international markets require individuals who know a variety of languages. MEDE also (2014a) encourages pupils to learn different foreign languages so they can compete with foreign countries for job opportunities.

5.3.1.2 Cultural awareness

Participants (the AD, the CP, HoS1, HoS2, FT2 and FT3) highlighted that they perceived the programme as beneficial because it would help students become aware of distinct cultures. This is in line with Pace's (2017b, no pagination) declaration: "One of the greatest benefits for a child learning a FL is that of becoming aware of cultures distinct from one's own". Indeed, one of the programme's aims is to make students aware of different cultures. This links to one of the Council of Europe's (2001, p. 2) language policy aims which posits "that the rich heritage of diverse [...] cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding".

FLAP was also perceived as beneficial because it would help students associate and integrate with their classmates by understanding, respecting and accepting foreign cultures. As evidenced in the policy document issued by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department (no date, p. 2), this is indeed one of the programme's aims, i.e. to "foster a positive attitude and respect towards a diversity of cultures". When this aim is reached, learners develop an intercultural competence, which as Deardorff (2006) explains it means acquiring the

intended knowledge, attitudes and skills that lead to effective and appropriate intercultural interactions. The Council of Europe (2001) also recommends the acquisition of intercultural skills through intercultural dialogues.

Participants made frequent reference to the phenomenon of multiculturalism when outlining their perceived benefits and outcomes of FLAP. In Chapter 2, I argued that Jay (2011) claims that the term 'multiculturalism' refers to an area or region with individuals of different ethnic, racial, religious, and national groups. This term is not interchangeable with the term 'interculturalism' as it refers not only to the acceptance of diversity but also to the promotion of dialogue and interaction amongst individuals of different cultures (Wood et al., 2006). The reference that participants made to the term 'multiculturalism' could well be referring to 'interculturalism' instead as they spoke about acceptance and positive interaction with individuals of different backgrounds. Therefore through FLAP learners could understand that although societies are multicultural, individuals should foster interculturalism on a daily basis to positively integrate distinct foreign cultures.

5.3.1.3 Other perceived benefits

Participants mentioned other perceived benefits of FLAP. HoS2 posited that students would develop higher order thinking skills. MEDE (2012, p. 53) affirms that languages encourage pupils to develop "intellectual skills which allow learners to explore and effectively use questioning, information, critical thinking, decision making and memory". Thus learners would be able to develop intellectual skills that are essential not only for FLAP but also for future FL learning. Additionally, FT2 stated that students could think for themselves what they want to do in their future. Indeed, through FLAP, pupils are informed about their choices and acquire the skills they need to explore what mostly intrigues them.

Moreover, according to participants, learners would also comprehend how to work in a team. Scarnati (2001, p. 5) explains that teamwork is "a cooperative process

that allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results". Children could learn from a young age that successful results could only be achieved when respecting, trusting and organising work with others (Wilson and Bedford, 2008). This could only be achieved, as noted by Pace (2015), by appreciating, respecting and accepting others, no matter their diversity. All of the above-mentioned benefits of FLAP as perceived by the different participants link well with the programme's aims, namely enhancing students' personal development, strengthening lifelong learning skills, and acknowledging and fostering a positive attitude towards linguistic and cultural diversity (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department, no date).

5.4 What are the perceived outcomes (benefits, limitations and areas for improvement) of FLAP?

5.4.1 FLAP's perceived outcomes

In Chapter 2, I outlined what is FLAP and what were the programme's benefits according to literature. This helped me understand what the programme is all about and what is expected out of it. In the following sub-sections I compare the latter to participants' perceptions of FLAP's outcomes. This discussion rotates around three main sub-themes, namely positive feedback and outcomes, encountered challenges and future considerations.

5.4.1.1 Positive feedback and outcomes

As seen in Table 4.4 of the previous chapter, all participants involved in this investigation gave positive feedback on the programme. They also referred to the positive comments they received from members of the SMT, FLAP teachers, class

teachers, LSEs, parents and students. Participants highlighted that the programme is beneficial, positive and encouraging. Accordingly, as evidenced in Table 4.5 of the *Results* chapter under the column named 'Expected positive outcomes of FLAP', it would seem that the programme is reaching most of its aims and participants' perceived benefits of the programme.

One expected positive outcome of FLAP is communication. Participants acknowledged that learners are expressing themselves in different foreign languages, thus communicating better with their classmates but also with other individuals in society. This demonstrates that according to participants students are developing a plurilingual competence, just as emphasised by the Council of Europe (2001), and as a result are able to communicate better with others. It also seems that the programme's aims, i.e. making students aware of different foreign languages, helping them develop a plurilingual competence and strengthening their lifelong learning skills, are being reached.

Another expected positive outcome of FLAP is acknowledging and accepting diversity. This demonstrates that Pace (2015, p. 10) was right when affirming that: "[t]he aim of [the] programme is to inculcate respect and appreciation of other peoples' languages, traditions and cultures". Thus students view positively individuals of different backgrounds. Pupils seem to also be nurturing plurilingualism and interculturalism on a daily basis by making use of their plurilingual and intercultural competences. Through these competences, children can become increasingly motivated to learn other foreign languages and familiarise themselves with other cultures from a young age. All of the above comply with the programme's aims, i.e. that learners are: appreciating foreign languages from a young age; developing plurilingual and intercultural competences; fostering a positive attitude and respect towards a diversity of cultures; acknowledging language diversity; and strengthening lifelong learning skills.

Participants mentioned another positive outcome of FLAP, i.e. the personal development of students. Marcos (1998) affirms that through the exposure of foreign languages pupils develop personally as they can access different people and resources.

By implementing the communicative approach inside FLAP classrooms, learners are able to critically think on their own and with others to achieve the lesson's learning outcomes. Also, children are already deciding which languages they like and hence are already inclining towards the languages they intend to choose at a secondary level or even languages they will make use of in their future careers. Thus, FLAP will help students make an informed decision when studying a FL at a secondary level and be able to travel around the globe and engage with others through research work, trade and diplomacy (Pace, 2017c). These correspond with three of FLAP's aims, i.e. enhancing learners' personal development, helping students nurture a love for foreign languages and strengthening their lifelong learning skills.

It would also seem that FLAP is receiving similar feedback as the language awareness programmes implemented abroad. FLAP, like 'EVLANG', is helping students become aware of different foreign languages and cultures as well as helping pupils become more sensitive towards linguistic diversity (Svalberg, 2007). Like 'The Alsace programme', parents were invited to act as 'ambassadors' of their own country (Young and Helot, 2003). Also, like 'The Coventry programme' and 'The Discovering Language project', FLAP is helping pupils develop language learning skills (Hawkins, 2005).

From the unexpected positive outcomes of FLAP, evidenced in Table 4.5 of the previous chapter, it seems that all learning outcomes of FLAP are being accomplished. This is possible since FLAP teachers are dedicated and hard working and make sure to implement a pedagogy that engages students. As mentioned in Chapter 2, FLAP educators implement the communicative approach inside FLAP classrooms by planning lessons that are student-centred which as a result encourages the development of the communicative competence (Richards, 2006). In addition, it seems that the fact that students are only requested to fill-in a self evaluation sheet at the end of the programme instead of doing an exam has made learners enjoy more the programme. This can be seen in the fact that pupils remember and pinpoint learned information whilst also sharing it with their parents.

However, participants did not mention all of the programme's aims when describing FLAP's positive outcomes, i.e. they did not mention if learners

comprehended their own language backgrounds and whether or not digital literacy was promoted for language learning. In addition, not all benefits of the programme as perceived by the different participants were achieved. Indeed, participants failed to state whether learners were able to understand that certain languages derive from others and that languages are connected and inter-related. This demonstrates that although students are made aware of different foreign languages and acknowledge language diversity, they are not able to understand each other's language backgrounds and establish links between one language and another. Participants also did not mention the promotion of digital literacy during FLAP. This means that students may not be able to continue learning languages on their own using digital resources.

5.4.1.2 Encountered challenges

Collinson and Fedoruk Cook (2001, p. 266) state that "time is one of the greatest constraints to any change process, whether at the individual, classroom, or school level". Indeed, as seen in Table 4.6 of the previous chapter, time has been a major constraint for the implementation of FLAP. In fact, several schools have not yet implemented the programme since various stakeholders are finding it difficult to include FLAP sessions within the primary school timetable. This means that not all students are having the opportunity to learn from FLAP and reap its benefits.

FLAP teachers also stated that they are not delivering all planned FLAP sessions and as a result cannot properly involve their pupils through the communicative approach. This is a worrying situation because if students are not exposed to all FLAP sessions, they cannot entirely reach the programme's objectives and develop the plurilingual and intercultural skills emphasised by the Council of Europe (2001). Thus, the achieved outcomes of the programme so far may be lost. Also, Malta's current situation in regards to FL learning, i.e. that learners are not opting to sit for a SEC exam in foreign languages after completing their compulsory education (Pace, 2017a), will not improve much.

In addition, participants commented that FLAP sessions can be a burden for class teachers. According to FT5, class educators avoid linking FLAP's contents to their teachings as they already have a vast syllabus to cover for themselves. If the class educator doesn't deliver all of the content outlined in the primary syllabus, student's output and their teaching and learning process will suffer. This confirms Hare's (2016) statement, i.e. that time is a big issue for class teachers and that indeed when teachers are distracted from their own core work, the classroom suffers. Therefore, FLAP teachers and class educators should try to complement each other's materials as both syllabuses are fundamental for student's development.

Another encountered challenge within the programme as perceived by the different participants is a lack of human resources. Martin (2017) posits that there is a shortage of teachers in the Maltese islands. This confirms the CP's view that there aren't enough personnel to teach foreign languages. However, participants also claimed that from the already available educators teaching foreign languages, there still aren't enough teachers to teach FLAP. This is a serious situation because a lack in human resources will diminish the number of schools that can implement FLAP and thus will avoid reaching the programme's objectives.

Participants also evidenced that as secondary school educators they lack the necessary training to teach primary school learners. Although teachers that taught in FES before the implementation of FLAP had some training (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education: Curriculum Management Department, no date), this training process was never offered to all educators teaching FLAP. As a result, FLAP educators found the programme to be difficult, especially when preparing the necessary material for FLAP sessions, when trying to constantly offer a positive pedagogy and when using the foreign languages present inside the classroom. Boudersa (2016, p. 2) affirms that "[g]ood quality teacher training and professional development programs alongside motivating environments will have positive impacts on the teaching/learning improvement". Thus, this confirms that training FLAP teachers is essential for the programme to be successful.

4.4.1.3 Future considerations

As seen in Chapter 2, one of the reasons for implementing FLAP was to improve the number of students sitting for a SEC exam in foreign languages after completing compulsory education (Pace, 2017a). HoS1 believes FLAP will help improve this current crisis and that the programme will also motivate individuals to participate in the SPA programme. Pace (2017c) affirms that SPA was implemented in 2014 to help Year 9 students in secondary schools, at risk of not obtaining a SEC level in the studied foreign languages, get certified in MQF levels 1 and 2 in Italian, German, French or Spanish.

The programme could be enhanced and have its challenges addressed if, according to FT3, the programme developers and implementers could meet to discuss the programme and share ideas on how this can be improved. Tarricone and Luca (2002) state that key attributes for successful teamwork include commitment, communication, interdependence and interpersonal skills. Indeed, when developers and implementers commit themselves to the programme and refer to others their views and beliefs, they develop their interpersonal skills by trusting and communicating well with each other. An interdependent relationship is thus created by working together and by making sure that the programme reaches its goals and intended aims. FLAP teachers and class educators can also work in a team should the AD's proposal be implemented, i.e. that foreign languages are introduced by FLAP teachers and its content taught by class educators. Moreover, if the programme is extended to Year 1 and 2 students, as suggested by the PC and the AD, then the benefits which I highlight in Chapter 2 for early FL learning can further be accomplished. In fact, Abello-Contesse (2009) explains that it is very beneficial for students to learn foreign languages during the critical period, a time in which the brain is able to acquire different languages successfully without hesitations up until puberty.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I offered an in-depth discussion of the obtained results documented in the previous chapter whilst also comparing and contrasting research findings with the literature review. Participants demonstrated they are aware of FLAP's aims and how it is being implemented. Participants perceived a number of benefits for FLAP, such as becoming aware of distinct foreign languages and cultures, developing lifelong learning skills, amongst others. All involved stakeholders reviewed positively the programme, especially outlining a number of expected and unexpected positive outcomes. These include students' ability to communicate with others; to remember, pinpoint and share information; etc. Although participants encountered some difficulties with FLAP concerning school logistics and a lack of human resources, they are looking forward for the continuation of the programme and offer various suggestions on how this can be accentuated. In the next chapter, I will outline the main conclusions of this dissertation whilst also highlighting the limitations of this research study and the possibilities for further research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The main research question of this dissertation aimed to investigate Year 3 and 4 FLAP through the perceptions of different stakeholders, namely the Programme Coordinator, the Assistant Director, a College Principal, two Heads of Schools and five FLAP teachers. This could only be achieved by understanding how participants viewed the programme, the motives behind its implementation and the perceived outcomes so far. In this chapter, I am going to outline the main conclusions of this dissertation which will serve as a concise answer for this investigation's main research question. I will also underline the limitations of this research study and provide suggestions for further research.

6.2 Main conclusions

From the chapters of this dissertation it was established that Malta is a bilingual country with two main languages, Maltese and English that compete for use in the same domains (Camilleri Grima, 2000). In addition, Malta has proven to be historically and geographically linked to foreign languages (Brincat, 2011). Nowadays, the Maltese islands are still linked to foreign languages through the tourists that visit the country every year and due to a high number of foreigners living within them (MEDE, 2014b). Therefore, since in Malta foreign languages are considered fundamental, students can study foreign languages throughout compulsory education and at higher levels of education.

However, as seen in Pace (2017a) and in the Eurostat's (2016) statistics, Malta is currently in a crisis as students are not opting to sit for a SEC exam in foreign languages after completing their compulsory education. This means that a high number of learners will not further their knowledge in foreign languages at higher levels of

education. This will generate various difficulties for the Maltese islands as a high number of individuals will be lacking basic linguistic skills in foreign languages (Pace, 2017a); will influence Malta's economy as this depends on human resources and foreign trade (Pace, 2017c); and individuals will not develop plurilingual and intercultural skills as emphasised by both national and international policies such as MEDE (2014b), the Council of Europe (2001), the *Barcelona: Presidency Conclusions* (2002) and *The Lisbon Strategy* (2000), amongst others.

In light of this situation and as described by participants, FLAP was created to “inculcate respect and appreciation of [foreign] languages, traditions and cultures [amongst pupils] whilst hoping that [the latter] will be encouraged to further their studies in these languages at higher levels” (Pace, 2017a, p. 154). This programme started after the implementation of different projects, namely the project implemented in a primary school within the College Principal's College, the FES pilot project and the ‘Foreign Language Teaching Programme’. Moreover, FLAP was implemented in the scholastic year of 2017-2018 and presented a set of flexible objectives and learning outcomes. FLAP educators implement the communicative approach within FLAP classrooms and provide student-centred classes. Various activities are organised inside and outside FLAP classrooms to promote its aims.

Different stakeholders posited their perceived benefits of the programme. Research findings suggest that according to participants the programme would help pupils: become aware of different foreign languages and cultures; fall in love with foreign languages from a young age; communicate with others; take an informed decision when choosing which FL they would like to study at a secondary level; be prepared for their future careers; develop higher order thinking skills; and appreciate, respect and integrate diverse people; amongst others.

From the positive feedback received from participants it seems that most of FLAP's aims and their perceived benefits of the programme are being achieved. Indeed, participants mentioned various expected and unexpected positive outcomes of the programme. The expected positive outcomes of FLAP include the ability of students to communicate with others using different foreign languages; to

acknowledge and accept different people of distinct backgrounds; and to develop personally and holistically. The unexpected positive outcomes of the programme include achieving the programme's learning outcomes through a positive teaching and learning experience whilst also having learners remember, pinpoint and share learned information with others.

Nonetheless, participants also made reference to some challenges they are encountering within the programme. Amongst these challenges, participants highlighted two main challenges, namely concerning school logistics and a lack of human resources. All stakeholders are looking forward for the re-implementation of the programme in the next academic year. Participants suggested that FLAP could be enhanced and have its challenges addressed by organising meetings between the programme developers and implementers to discuss possible changes, for instance, the Assistant Director's idea to include FLAP's content in the primary syllabus to avoid issues related to logistics and human resources.

6.3 Limitations of this research study

This research, as I have repeatedly outlined, focuses on stakeholders' perceptions of the recently introduced FLAP. Indeed, since FLAP was only introduced in the scholastic year 2017-2018, I opted to explore creators' (the Programme Coordinator and the Assistant Director) and implementers' (the College Principal, two Heads of Schools and five FLAP teachers) views to better understand and grasp the philosophy of the programme; its workings and initial perceived outcomes. This excluded other important stakeholders, namely class teachers, LSEs, parents and students. Their views, although fundamental, did not contribute to the research question and the aims of this study. It also would have been impossible to include other stakeholders in this investigation because of its limited word count.

As I exposed in the third chapter of this dissertation, I opted for a qualitative methodology as it is the best approach to gather and analyse participants' perceptions.

I used interviews to gather data because through them I could collect in-depth information on the perceptions of different participants and their subjective realities. Other methods of data collection would not have contributed to the research question and would have unnecessarily exceeded the word count. I also focused on perceptions rather than a statistical quantifiable evaluation because I felt it was still premature to do so given that the programme is still in its second year running and since the programme hasn't been yet implemented in every school. This would have inevitably led me to invalid and unreliable data.

6.4 Possibilities for further research

Given the limitations outlined above and especially since this programme initiated two years ago, this field still offers ample opportunities for future research endeavours. Researchers, for instance, could delve more in the workings of FLAP by observing a set of lessons and maybe activities held outside the classroom, interview and/or question other stakeholders, namely FLAP teachers, parents and students. The SMT, class teachers and LSEs could also be interviewed on their perceptions and experiences of the programme.

In the near future, once FLAP is some years old, this dissertation's research findings could be compared and contrasted with further research. For instance, if the recommendations outlined by participants in this investigation are implemented, a research study comparing the present programme with the new programme could take place. Also, a more holistic evaluation of the programme's outcomes through a quantitative methodology could be achieved. Since quantitative methodologies involve a large number of participants, this approach could be used to evaluate whether or not FLAP has helped increase the number of students sitting for a SEC exam in foreign languages or even increase the number of students studying foreign languages at a post-secondary or tertiary level.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Form A

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

In line with the University of Malta's Research Ethics Review Procedures, if you are a University of Malta member of staff, student, or anyone else planning to carry out research under the auspices of the University, you must complete this form.

The first step is to read the University of Malta's Research Code of Practice and Research Ethics Review Procedures (both documents are available from <https://www.um.edu.mt/urec>) and make sure you understand them. Once you have done this, you should complete the self-assessment exercise that is contained in this form.

PART 2: PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR AND RESEARCH PROJECT DETAILS

FROM: <i>(name, address for correspondence)</i> [REDACTED]	TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme
TELEPHONE: [REDACTED]	
EMAIL: [REDACTED]	
STUDENT NUMBER: [REDACTED]	
COURSE AND YEAR: MTL COURSE (2017-2019) 1st YEAR.	
FACULTY/CENTRE/INSTITUTE/SCHOOL: FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF MALTA.	
PROPOSED DATA COLLECTION START DATE: SEPTEMBER, 2018.	SUPERVISOR'S NAME, EMAIL & TELEPHONE NUMBER: Please use University of Malta email address [REDACTED]
PROPOSED PROJECT END DATE: JUNE, 2019.	

ANTICIPATED FUNDING SOURCE (If applicable):
(Include grant or contract number if known)
NOT APPLICABLE.

Please give a brief summary of the purpose of the research, in non-technical language.
From scholastic year 2017-2018, Year 3 and 4 students attending Maltese Primary State Schools, were introduced to the Foreign Language Awareness Programme (FLAP), aimed to introduce foreign language awareness and appreciation at an early age amongst other objectives. The proposed dissertation will explore the perceptions of 5 teachers, 2 Heads of School, a College Principal, an Assistant Director and the Programme Coordinator on FLAP. This research will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement. This is in line with the policies that

Malta and other European countries have established for foreign language awareness. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5) affirms that the aim of language education is to create a linguistic depository in which all linguistic abilities have a place and not only proficiency in one or more languages. The National Curriculum Framework for All (2012, p. 34) also confirms its relevance due to the political, geographical and historical context of the Maltese Islands and the EU's emphasis on language learning.

PART 3: RESEARCH ETHICS AND DATA PROTECTION SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

Please consider your research proposal very carefully and check which sections are relevant in your case. If you are advised that you also need to complete Form B, this is available for download from <https://www.um.edu.mt/urec/notices/fullresearchproposalform>

Any breach of the Research Code of Practice or untruthful replies in this form will be considered a serious disciplinary matter.

ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS IN THE SECTIONS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO YOUR RESEARCH

All researchers to complete Section D

Research that involves primary data collection from human participants or their tissues	Complete Section A
Research that involves primary data collection from animals* or their tissues *non-human vertebrates (including independently feeding larval forms and foetal forms of mammals as from the last third of their normal development) & cephalopods	Complete Section B
Research involves use of Secondary Data	Complete Section C
All research	Complete Section D
<p>NOTE: <i>Primary data collection</i> - gathering information (data) directly (e.g., through measurement, observation, asking questions) for your research. <i>Secondary data</i> - using data already published or collected by somebody else</p>	

SECTION A Research involving PRIMARY DATA from HUMAN PARTICIPANTS		YES or UNSURE	NO
A.1	Will your participants be harmed in any way?	<input type="checkbox"/> In addition to this form, you also need to fill in & submit Form B to your FREC. GO TO A.2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO TO A.2
A.2	Are any of your research participants children, persons in institutions, persons with disability, victims of crime or abuse, substance abusers, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In addition to this form, you also need to fill in & submit Form B to your FREC. GO TO A.3	<input type="checkbox"/> GO TO A.3
A.3	Are the participants in your research identifiable in some way? Choosing "No" means that all the data from your research are anonymous or have been anonymised and that there is little risk that the data can be de-anonymised and linked with identifiable individuals.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO TO A.4	<input type="checkbox"/> GO TO A.5

SECTION A PRIMARY DATA from HUMAN PARTICIPANTS continued		YES or UNSURE	NO
A.4	Do you plan to collect personal data which reveals race or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, membership of a trade union, health, sex life, sexual orientation, genetic data, or biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		In addition to this form, you also need to fill in & submit Form B to your FREC GO TO A.5	GO TO A.5
A.5	Do you plan to employ deliberate deception (actively providing false or misleading information or passively withholding information with the intention of misleading subjects about the research)? Note: Incomplete disclosure (providing general but accurate information to participants in order to avoid the potential for biased results) DOES NOT constitute deliberate deception in terms of this question.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		In addition to this form, you also need to fill in & submit Form B to your FREC GO TO A.6	GO TO A.6
A.6	Do you need permission from a cooperating institution(s), school, hospital, organization, prison, or other relevant organization or another ethics committee?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		In addition to this form, you also need to fill in & submit Form B to your FREC. GO TO NEXT RELEVANT SECTION	GO TO NEXT RELEVANT SECTION

SECTION B | Research involving PRIMARY DATA from ANIMALS



Note: For the purposes of this section "animals" means non-human vertebrates (including independently feeding larval forms and foetal forms of mammals as from the last third of their normal development) & cephalopods.

B.1	Are you working with dead or live animals?	If dead	GO TO B.4	If alive	GO TO B.2
B.2	Will the animals in your research be harmed*? *killed or cause the animal a level of pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm equivalent to, or higher than, that caused by the introduction of a needle in accordance with good veterinary practice.	YES or UNSURE	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Complete the rest of this form and seek advice from your FREC. GO TO B.3		GO TO B.3	
B.3	Will the animals remain in their natural habitat in the course of your research?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO or UNSURE	<input type="checkbox"/>
		You may stop filling in this section and GO TO NEXT RELEVANT SECTION		GO TO B.4	
B.4	Will the animals be acquired legally ¹ or from a legal source ² ? ¹ If working with protected species, all necessary permits need to have been obtained. ² Legal sources may be licensed commercial outlets, donations by persons or institutions who have themselves obtained the animals legally and who are authorised to donate them.	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO or UNSURE	<input type="checkbox"/>
		GO TO NEXT RELEVANT SECTION		Complete the rest of this form and seek advice from your FREC	

SECTION C To be completed by those collecting SECONDARY DATA		YES	NO or UNSURE
C.1	Have the secondary data you are going to use been published?	<input type="checkbox"/> GO TO SECTION D	<input type="checkbox"/> GO TO C.2
C.2	Do you have the written permission of the owner of the data that you may use the data for your research?	<input type="checkbox"/> GO TO C.3	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete the rest of this form and seek advice from your FREC
C.3	Have the data you are going to use been collected from human participants?	<input type="checkbox"/> GO TO C.4	<input type="checkbox"/> GO TO SECTION D
C.4	Have you obtained a copy of the consent form signed by the participants where secondary use, communication and subsequent sharing of data collected is expressly provided for?	<input type="checkbox"/> GO TO SECTION D Consent forms need to be sent to FREC <u>before data collection starts</u> with the other research materials as per Note 1 on page 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete the rest of this form and seek advice from your FREC

SECTION D TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL		YES or UNSURE	NO
D.1	Is there significant foreseeable risk that your research can cause physical or psychological harm to people or harm to the environment or be misused by terrorists or military organisations?	<input type="checkbox"/> In addition to this form, you also need to fill in & submit Form B to your FREC GO TO D.2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO TO D.2
D.2	Is there any conflict of interest - financial or non-financial - that could benefit you or a relative or friend or business associate?	<input type="checkbox"/> In addition to this form, you also need to fill in & submit Form B to your FREC GO TO D.3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO TO D.3
D.3	Is there significant foreseeable risk to you as the principal investigator?	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete the rest of this form and seek advice from your FREC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO TO D.4
D.4	Is there any aspect of the proposed research which might bring the University of Malta into disrepute?	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete the rest of this form and fill in & submit Form B to your FREC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sign this form, ask your supervisor to sign it (if applicable), and submit to your FREC for filing. YOUR RESEARCH NEEDS NO FURTHER APPROVAL HOWEVER SEE NOTE 1 BELOW¹

¹NOTE 1: BEFORE STARTING DATA COLLECTION, copies of relevant research materials, including research proposal, consent forms (if used), copies of research materials such as questionnaires, discussion guides, stimuli, etc. need to be submitted to FREC for filing and audit purposes.

<p>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: <i>I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the University of Malta Research Code of Practice and the University of Malta Research Ethics Review Procedures and further declare that the information provided above is truthful.</i></p>  <p>Copy of Signature may be pasted in here</p> <p>SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</p> <p>DATE 18th June, 2018.</p>	<p>SUPERVISOR <i>I have reviewed the research proposal and hereby confirm that it abides by the University of Malta Research Code of Practice and that the answers to the questions above reflect the contents of the research proposal.</i></p>  <p>Copy of Signature may be pasted in here</p> <p>SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR</p> <p>DATE 18th June, 2018.</p>
---	---

Appendix 2: Form B

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Check list to be included with UREC proposal form

Please make sure to tick ALL the items. Incomplete forms will not be accepted.

		YES	NOT APP.
1a.	Recruitment letter / Information sheet for subjects, in English	✓	
1b.	Recruitment letter / Information sheet for subjects, in Maltese		✓
2a.	Consent form, in English, signed by supervisor, and including your contact details	✓	
2b.	Consent form, in Maltese, signed by supervisor, and including your contact details		✓
3a.	In the case of children or other vulnerable groups, consent forms for parents/ guardians, in English		✓
3b.	In the case of children or other vulnerable groups, consent forms for parents/ guardians, in Maltese		✓
4a.	Tests, questionnaires, interview or focus group questions, etc, in English	✓	
4b.	Tests, questionnaires, interview or focus group questions, etc, in Maltese		✓
5a.	Other institutional approval <i>for access to subjects</i> : Health Division, Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, Department of Public Health, Curia...		✓
5b.	Other institutional approval <i>for access to data</i> : Registrar, Data Protection Officer Health Division/Hospital, Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, Department of Public Health...		✓
5c.	Approval from person <i>directly responsible for subjects</i> : Medical Consultants, Nursing Officers, Head of School...	✓	

Received by Faculty office on	18/06/2018
Discussed by Faculty Research Ethics Committee on	03/07/2018
Discussed by university Research Ethics Committee on	

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

Request for Approval of Human Subjects Research

Please type. Handwritten forms will not be accepted

You may follow this format on separate sheets or use additional pages if necessary.

FROM: <i>(name, address for correspondence)</i> <div style="background-color: #cccccc; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>	PROJECT TITLE: Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme
TELEPHONE: <div style="background-color: #cccccc; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>	
E-MAIL: <div style="background-color: #cccccc; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>	
COURSE AND YEAR: MTL COURSE (2017-2019) 1st YEAR.	
DURATION OF ENTIRE PROJECT: from <u>SEP, 2018</u> to <u>JUNE, 2019</u>	FACULTY SUPERVISOR'S NAME: MS ALESSIA CILIA PORTELLI

ANTICIPATED FUNDING SOURCE: NOT APPLICABLE.
(include grant or contract number if known)

<p>1. Please give a brief summary of the purpose of the research, in non-technical language. From scholastic year 2017-2018, Year 3 and 4 students attending Maltese Primary State Schools, were introduced to the Foreign Language Awareness Programme (FLAP), aimed to introduce foreign language awareness and appreciation at an early age amongst other objectives. The proposed dissertation will explore the perceptions of 5 teachers, 2 Heads of School, a College Principal, an Assistant Director and the Programme Coordinator on FLAP. This research will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement. This is in line with the policies that Malta and other European countries have established for foreign language awareness. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5) affirms that the aim of language education is to create a linguistic depository in which all linguistic abilities have a place and not only proficiency in one or</p>
<p>2. Give details of procedures that relate to subjects' participation (a) How are subjects recruited? What inducement is offered? <i>(Append copy of letter or advertisement or poster, if any.)</i></p> <p>The proposed research requires the collaboration of different stakeholders. Subjects will be invited to participate through an information letter (attached) and an accompanying Consent Form (attached), which will be delivered to them by hand. The latter outline in detail the purpose of the study, procedures and safeguards. It is important to note that the teachers will only be contacted once the Head of School has given his/her consent for parts of the research to be carried out in his/her school.</p> <p>Consent Forms are to be returned to the Principal Investigator through the self-addressed envelope provided.</p> <p>No inducement is offered.</p>

(b) Salient characteristics of subjects—number who will participate, age range, sex, institutional affiliation, other special criteria:

The proposed study requires the participation of 10 subjects, i.e.

- 5 teachers of FLAP (Year 3 or 4), male/female, any number of years of experience, state primary schools.
- 2 Heads of School, male/female, any number of years of experience, state primary schools offering FLAP for Year 3 and 4 students.
- 1 College Principal, male/female, any number of years of experience, College housing primary state schools offering FLAP for Year 3 and 4 students.

(c) Describe how permission has been obtained from cooperating institution(s)—school, hospital, organization, prison, or other relevant organization. (*Append letters.*) Is the approval of another Research Ethics Committee required?

Once permission to conduct this research in state schools has been obtained from the Directorate of Curriculum Research, Innovation and Lifelong Learning (DCRILL) and FREC has given its consent to proceed with the research, Heads of School will be sent a permission letter (attached) to formally request permission to interview one or more teachers of FLAP for Year 3 and 4 in their respective school.

(d) What do subjects do, or what is done to them, or what information is gathered? (*Append copies of instructions or tests or questionnaires.*) How many times will observations, tests, etc., be conducted? How long will their participation take?

A semi-structured interview will be held with 5 teachers, 2 Heads of school, a College Principal, an Assistant Director and the Programme Coordinator. For each particular case, an interview guide (attached) has been prepared to reflect the position of the respective subject. Succinctly, the interview will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement. These interviews will be audio-recorded and will be held at the participants' respective institution at a time convenient for both the interviewee and the interviewer. Interviews will be approximately 45 minutes long.

(e) Which of the following data categories are collected?

Data that reveals – race or ethnic origin	YES / NO
political opinions	YES / NO
religious or philosophical beliefs	YES / NO
trade union memberships	YES / NO
health	YES / NO
sex life	YES / NO
genetic information	YES / NO

3. How do you explain the research to subjects and obtain their informed consent to participate? (If in writing, append a copy of consent form.) If subjects are minors, mentally infirm, or otherwise not legally competent to consent to participation, how is their assent obtained and from whom is proxy consent obtained? How is it made clear to subjects that they can quit the study at any time?

Information Letters (attached) and Consent Forms (attached) will be given to all participants in order to explain the scope of the research, procedures and safeguards and obtain their informed consent. Invited participants will be asked to return the signed Consent Form through a provided self-addressed envelop.

4. Do subjects risk *any* harm—physical, psychological, legal, social—by participating in the research? Are the risks necessary? What safeguards do you take to minimize the risks?

No perceived risks are involved, however, given that two of our participants are identifiable, namely the Assistant Director and the Programme Coordinator, in the Consent Form which will be presented to these two participants, we explicitly indicate that data will be attributable to them. For the rest of the participants a pseudonym will be used to guarantee their anonymity.

5. Are subjects deliberately deceived in *any* way? If so, what is the nature of the deception? Is it likely to be significant to subjects? Is there any other way to conduct the research that would not involve deception, and, if so, why have you not chosen that alternative? What explanation for the deception do you give to subjects following their participation?

Subjects will not be deliberately deceived in any way.

6. How will participation in this research benefit subjects? If subjects will be "debriefed" or receive information about the research project following its conclusion, how do you ensure the educational value of the process? (*Include copies of any debriefing or educational materials*)

There are no known benefits for the subjects participating in this research.

Subjects will not be "debriefed" and will not be receiving information about the research project following its conclusion.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR APPROVAL IN TERMS OF THE DATA PROTECTION ACT

- Personal data shall only be collected and processed for the specific research purpose.
- The data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the processing purpose.
- All reasonable measures shall be taken to ensure the correctness of personal data.
- Personal data shall not be disclosed to third parties and may only be required by the University or the supervisor for verification purposes. All necessary measures shall be implemented to ensure confidentiality and, where possible, data shall be anonymised.
- Unless otherwise authorised by the University Research Ethics Committee, the researcher shall obtain the consent from the data subject (respondent) and provide him with the following information: The researcher's identity and habitual residence, the purpose of processing and the recipients to whom personal data may be disclosed. The data subject shall also be informed about his rights to access, rectify, and where applicable erase the data concerning him.

I, the undersigned hereby undertake to abide by the terms and conditions for approval as attached to this application.

I, the undersigned, also give my consent to the University of Malta's Research Ethics Committee to process my personal data for the purpose of evaluating my request and other matters related to this application. I also understand that, I can request in writing a copy of my personal information. I shall also request rectification, blocking or erasure of such personal data that has not been processed in accordance with the Act.

Signature: *G. Zammit.*

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE:
I hereby declare that I will not start my research on human subjects before UREC approval

G. Zammit
DATE *18/06/2018.*

FACULTY SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE
I have reviewed this completed application and I am satisfied with the adequacy of the proposed research design and the measures proposed for the protection of human subjects.

Alida Tonelli
DATE *18/06/2018*

Return the completed application to your faculty Research Ethics Committee

To be completed by Faculty Research Ethics Committee

We have examined the above proposal and advise

Acceptance

Refusal

Conditional acceptance

For the following reason/s:

Signature

MT Fanga



Date *17/12/2018*

To be completed by University Research Ethics Committee

We have examined the above proposal and grant

Acceptance

Refusal

Conditional acceptance

For the following reason/s:

Signature

Date

Form B: The full parts of the two questions which couldn't fit in the form

1. Please give a brief summary of the purpose of the research, in non-technical language.

From scholastic year 2017-2018, Year 3 and 4 students attending Maltese Primary State Schools, were introduced to the Foreign Language Awareness Programme (FLAP), aimed to introduce foreign language awareness and appreciation at an early age amongst other objectives. The proposed dissertation will explore the perceptions of 5 teachers, 2 Heads of School, a College Principal, an Assistant Director and the Programme Coordinator on FLAP. This research will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement. This is in line with the policies that Malta and other European countries have established for foreign language awareness. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5) affirms that the aim of language education is to create a linguistic depository in which all linguistic abilities have a place and not only proficiency in one or more languages. The National Curriculum Framework for All (2012, p. 34) also confirms its relevance due to the political, geographical and historical context of the Maltese Islands and the EU's emphasis on language learning.

2. Give details of procedures that relate to subjects' participation

(b) Salient characteristics of subjects—number who will participate, age range, sex, institutional affiliation, other special criteria:

The proposed study requires the participation of 10 subjects, i.e.

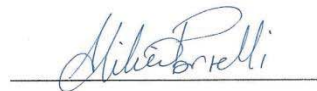
- 5 teachers of FLAP (Year 3 or 4), male/female, any number of years of experience, state primary schools.
- 2 Heads of School, male/female, any number of years of experience, state primary schools offering FLAP for Year 3 and 4 students.
- 1 College Principal, male/female, any number of years of experience, College housing primary state schools offering FLAP for Year 3 and 4 students.
- Assistant Director responsible for the provision of FLAP in Year 3 and 4 state schools
- Programme Coordinator of FLAP for Year 3 and 4 students.

Researcher's signature:



Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:



Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

Appendix 3: Information Letters

INFORMATION LETTER FOR THE PROGRAMME COORDINATOR

Dear Mr/Ms (name),

My name is Graziella Rose Zammit. I am an MTL student (2017-2019) within the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. In part fulfilment of the latter course, I am conducting a research study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*. This study, which is being supervised by Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli, lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement.

You are cordially being invited to take part in this research study. If you decide to accept this invitation, after reading this information letter carefully, please sign the attached *Consent Form* and return it through the self-addressed envelope provided.

As part of this study, you will be required to take part in a semi-structured interview that will explore your perception on the Foreign Language Awareness Programme; its implementation and the perceived motives that led to its introduction; its perceived benefits; challenges and areas for improvement. The interview shall not take longer than 45 minutes and will be audio-recorded in order to facilitate reporting. The recording will be stored on a password protected hard drive and destroyed once the study has been submitted and evaluated. If you wish to participate in the study but you do not want to be audio-recorded please specify this in the *Consent Form* attached. Furthermore, during the interview you have the right to refrain from answering all the questions and/or to terminate your participation without providing any justification. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

It is also important to note that given your position of Programme Coordinator, data will be easily attributable to you. Therefore, by consenting participation, you are also consenting to the fact that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Should you have any queries or require any further clarifications contact the researcher on [redacted] by sending an e-mail to the following address: [redacted] and/or the supervisor by sending an email to the following address: [redacted]

I thank you for your time and patience.

Yours faithfully,
Graziella Rose Zammit.

Researcher's signature:



Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:



Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

INFORMATION LETTER FOR THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Dear Mr/Ms (name),

My name is Graziella Rose Zammit. I am an MTL student (2017-2019) within the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. In part fulfilment of the latter course, I am conducting a research study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*. This study, which is being supervised by Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli, lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement.

You are cordially being invited to take part in this research study. If you decide to accept this invitation, after reading this information letter carefully, please sign the attached *Consent Form* and return it through the self-addressed envelope provided.

As part of this study, you will be required to take part in a semi-structured interview that will explore your perception on the Foreign Language Awareness Programme; its implementation and the perceived motives that led to its introduction; its perceived benefits; challenges and areas for improvement. The interview shall not take longer than 45 minutes and will be audio-recorded in order to facilitate reporting. The recording will be stored on a password protected hard drive and destroyed once the study has been submitted and evaluated. If you wish to participate in the study but you do not want to be audio-recorded please specify this in the *Consent Form* attached. Furthermore, during the interview you have the right to refrain from answering all the questions and/or to terminate your participation without providing any justification. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

It is also important to note that given your position of Assistant Director, data will be easily attributable to you. Therefore, by consenting participation, you are also consenting to the fact that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Should you have any queries or require any further clarifications contact the researcher on [redacted] by sending an e-mail to the following address: [redacted] and/or the supervisor by sending an email to the following address: [redacted]

I thank you for your time and patience.

Yours faithfully,
Graziella Rose Zammit.

Researcher's signature:



Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:



Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

INFORMATION LETTER FOR THE COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

Dear Mr/Ms (name),

My name is Graziella Rose Zammit. I am an MTL student (2017-2019) within the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. In part fulfilment of the latter course, I am conducting a research study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*. This study, which is being supervised by Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli, lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement.

You are cordially being invited to take part in this research study. If you decide to accept this invitation, after reading this information letter carefully, please sign the attached *Consent Form* and return it through the self-addressed envelope provided.

As part of this study, you will be required to take part in a semi-structured interview that will explore your perception on the Foreign Language Awareness Programme; its perceived benefits; challenges and areas for improvement within the College; as well as the perceived relevance seen behind the implementation of the programme in the community of learning. The interview shall not take longer than 45 minutes and will be audio-recorded in order to facilitate reporting. The recording will be stored on a password protected hard drive and destroyed once the study has been submitted and evaluated. If you wish to participate in the study but you do not want to be audio-recorded please specify this in the *Consent Form* attached. Furthermore, during the interview you have the right to refrain from answering all the questions and/or to terminate your participation without providing any justification. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. A pseudonym will be used throughout the whole study to keep your identity anonymous.

Should you have any queries or require any further clarifications contact the researcher on [redacted] by sending an e-mail to the following address: [redacted] and/or the supervisor by sending an email to the following address: [redacted]

I thank you for your time and patience.

Yours faithfully,

Graziella Rose Zammit.

Researcher's signature:



Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:



Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

INFORMATION LETTER FOR HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Mr/Ms (name),

My name is Graziella Rose Zammit. I am an MTL student (2017-2019) within the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. In part fulfilment of the latter course, I am conducting a research study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*. This study, which is being supervised by Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli, lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement.

You are cordially being invited to take part in this research study. If you decide to accept this invitation, after reading this information letter carefully, please sign the attached *Consent Form* and return it through the self-addressed envelope provided.

As part of this study, you will be required to take part in a semi-structured interview that will explore your perception on the Foreign Language Awareness Programme; its perceived benefits; challenges and areas for improvement within the school; as well as the perceived relevance seen behind the implementation of the programme in the community of learning. The interview shall not take longer than 45 minutes and will be audio-recorded in order to facilitate reporting. The recording will be stored on a password protected hard drive and destroyed once the study has been submitted and evaluated. If you wish to participate in the study but you do not want to be audio-recorded please specify this in the *Consent Form* attached. Furthermore, during the interview you have the right to refrain from answering all the questions and/or to terminate your participation without providing any justification. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. A pseudonym will be used throughout the whole study to keep your identity anonymous.

Should you have any queries or require any further clarifications contact the researcher on [redacted] by sending an e-mail to the following address: [redacted] and/or the supervisor by sending an email to the following address: [redacted]

I thank you for your time and patience.

Yours faithfully,

Graziella Rose Zammit.

Researcher's signature:



Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:



Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

INFORMATION LETTER FOR TEACHERS

Dear Mr/Ms (name),

My name is Graziella Rose Zammit. I am an MTL student (2017-2019) within the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. In part fulfilment of the latter course, I am conducting a research study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*. This study, which is being supervised by Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli, lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement.

You are cordially being invited to take part in this research study. If you decide to accept this invitation, after reading this information letter carefully, please sign the attached *Consent Form* and return it through the self-addressed envelope provided.

As part of this study, you will be required to take part in a semi-structured interview that will explore your perception on the Foreign Language Awareness Programme; its perceived benefits; challenges and areas for improvement. This interview shall not take longer than 45 minutes and will be audio-recorded in order to facilitate reporting. The recording will be stored on a password protected hard drive and destroyed once the study has been submitted and evaluated. If you wish to participate in the study but you do not want to be audio-recorded please specify this in the *Consent Form* attached. Furthermore, during the interview you have the right to refrain from answering all the questions and/or to terminate your participation without providing any justification. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. A pseudonym will be used throughout the whole study to keep your identity anonymous.

Should you have any queries or require any further clarifications contact the researcher on [redacted] by sending an e-mail to the following address: [redacted] and/or the supervisor by sending an email to the following address: [redacted]

I thank you for your time and patience.

Yours faithfully,
Graziella Rose Zammit.

Researcher's signature:



Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:



Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

Appendix 4: Consent Forms

CONSENT FORM FOR THE PROGRAMME COORDINATOR

By participating in this study:

- I have read and understood the information provided about the study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*.
- I understand that the data collected from the interview will be analysed as part of the study.
- I understand that anonymity will not be ensured in the write-up and that hence, data is attributable to me.
- I understand that only the researcher will have access to the raw data gathered.
- I understand that the interview recordings will be stored on a password protected hard drive until the study is submitted and evaluated, after which these will be destroyed.
- I confirm that I am participating voluntarily.
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the study at any time. Consequently any data collected beforehand will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.
-

By participating in this study: <i>(tick where appropriate)</i>	Yes	No
I accept to be audio-recorded during the interview.		

Subject's statement:

I, _____, give my consent to participate in the study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*, by taking part in the interview.

Subject's signature:

Date: _____

Researcher's signature:

G. Zammit

 Graziella Rose Zammit
 MTL Student
 University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:

Alessia Portelli

 Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
 Lecturer
 Faculty of Education
 University of Malta

CONSENT FORM FOR THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

By participating in this study:

- I have read and understood the information provided about the study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*.
- I understand that the data collected from the interview will be analysed as part of the study.
- I understand that anonymity will not be ensured in the write-up and that hence, data is attributable to me.
- I understand that only the researcher will have access to the raw data gathered.
- I understand that the interview recordings will be stored on a password protected hard drive until the study is submitted and evaluated, after which these will be destroyed.
- I confirm that I am participating voluntarily.
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the study at any time. Consequently any data collected beforehand will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.

By participating in this study: <i>(tick where appropriate)</i>	Yes	No
I accept to be audio-recorded during the interview.		

Subject's statement:

I, _____, give my consent to participate in the study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*, by taking part in the interview.

Subject's signature:

Date: _____

Researcher's signature:

G. Zammit

Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:

Alessia Portelli

Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

CONSENT FORM FOR THE COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

By participating in this study:

- I have read and understood the information provided about the study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*.
- I understand that the data collected from the interview will be analysed as part of the study.
- I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.
- I understand that only the researcher will have access to the raw data gathered.
- I understand that the interview recordings will be stored on a password protected hard drive until the study is submitted and evaluated, after which these will be destroyed.
- I confirm that I am participating voluntarily.
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the study at any time. Consequently any data collected beforehand will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.

By participating in this study: <i>(tick where appropriate)</i>	Yes	No
I accept to be audio-recorded during the interview.		

Subject's statement:

I, _____, give my consent to participate in the study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*, by taking part in the interview.

Subject's signature:

Date: _____

Researcher's signature:

G. Zammit

Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:

Alessia Portelli

Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

CONSENT FORM FOR HEAD OF SCHOOL

By participating in this study:

- I have read and understood the information provided about the study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*.
- I understand that the data collected from the interview will be analysed as part of the study.
- I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.
- I understand that only the researcher will have access to the raw data gathered.
- I understand that the interview recordings will be stored on a password protected hard drive until the study is submitted and evaluated, after which these will be destroyed.
- I confirm that I am participating voluntarily.
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the study at any time. Consequently any data collected beforehand will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.

By participating in this study: <i>(tick where appropriate)</i>	Yes	No
I accept to be audio-recorded during the interview.		

Subject's statement:

I, _____, give my consent to participate in the study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*, by taking part in the interview.

Subject's signature:

Date: _____

Researcher's signature:

G. Zammit

Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:

Alessia Cilia Portelli

Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

By participating in this study:

- I have read and understood the information provided about the study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*.
- I understand that the data collected from the interview will be analysed as part of the study.
- I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.
- I understand that only the researcher will have access to the raw data gathered.
- I understand that the interview recordings will be stored on a password protected hard drive until the study is submitted and evaluated, after which these will be destroyed.
- I confirm that I am participating voluntarily.
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the study at any time. Consequently any data collected beforehand will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.

By participating in this study: (tick where appropriate)	Yes	No
I accept to be audio-recorded during the interview.		

Subject's statement:

I, _____, give my consent to participate in the study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*, by taking part in the interview.

Subject's signature:

Date: _____

Researcher's signature:



Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:



Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

Appendix 5: Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview with the Programme Coordinator

- We are here to discuss the FLAP for Year 3 and 4 students. Can you please explain succinctly what this programme is all about and highlight the perceived reasons that led to its introduction?
- Are all Maltese schools involved in the implementation of the programme? Why?
- Our understanding is that the programme for now is only being implemented in state schools. Is there a possibility to extend it to church and independent schools?
- How is the programme being implemented?
- Have there been any changes since the programme was introduced? Why?
- What have been the perceived outcomes of the programme so far?
- Have there been any perceived challenges in the programme so far? Are there any perceived areas for improvement?
- Are there any future plans for the programme?

Interview with the Assistant Director

- We are here to discuss the FLAP for Year 3 and 4 students. Can you please explain succinctly what this programme is all about?
- Are all Maltese schools involved in the implementation of the programme? Why?
- Our understanding is that the programme for now is only being implemented in state schools. Is there a possibility to extend it to church and independent schools?
- How is the programme being implemented?
- Have there been any changes since the programme was introduced? Why?
- What have been the perceived outcomes of the programme so far?
- Have there been any perceived challenges in the programme so far? Are there any perceived areas for improvement?
- Are there any future plans for the programme?

Interview with a College Principal

- You decided to implement the Foreign Language Awareness Programme within your College. What led you to invest in the programme?
- Which were the perceived benefits of participation?
- How is the programme being implemented within your College?
- Have there been any changes since the programme was introduced?
- Have there been any significant outcomes that you are aware of in relation to the programme?
- Has the feedback you have been receiving been encouraging? In what ways?
- What are the perceived challenges of the programme and how do you think the latter can be overcome?

Interview with a Head of School

- The Foreign Language Awareness Programme is being implemented within your school. What led you to invest in the programme?
- Which were the perceived benefits of participation?
- How is the programme being implemented in the school?
- Have there been any changes since the programme was introduced?
- Were there any significant episodes and/or activities in relation to the programme that you would like to share with me?
- Have there been any significant outcomes that you are aware of in relation to the programme?
- Has the feedback you have been receiving been encouraging? In what ways?
- What are the perceived challenges of the programme and how do you think the latter can be overcome?

Interview with a teacher

- You have taught or currently teaching the Foreign Language Awareness Programme. For how long have you been teaching this programme?
- Can you explain briefly what this programme is all about?
- Which were the perceived benefits of the programme? Do you believe they are relevant?
- Is the programme being successful in its intent?
- Have there been any changes since the programme was introduced?
- What methodology have you adopted to implement the programme's objectives?
- What type of lessons and activities do you plan and implement in the FLAP classroom? Can you describe some examples?
- Have there been any significant outcomes that you are aware of in relation to the programme?
- Has the feedback you have been receiving encouraging? In what ways?
- What are the perceived challenges of the programme and how do you think the latter can be overcome?
- Do you think the programme will suffer changes in the future? In what ways and why do you think that?

Researcher's signature:



Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:



Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

Appendix 6: DCRILL's Approval



Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

Tel: 25982265

researchandinnovation@ilearn.edu.mt

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 19th November 2018

Ref: RI2018 / 196

To: Head of School

From: Assistant Director (Research and Innovation)

Title of Research Study: *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability would like to inform that approval is granted to **Graziella Rose Zammit** to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit www.research.gov.mt.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

Claire Mamo

MA Ed (Open)
Research Support Teacher
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

f/ Grazio Grixti

Assistant Director (Research and Innovation)
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability
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Facebook: [@researchinnovation](https://www.facebook.com/researchinnovation) | Twitter: [@RI_MEDE](https://twitter.com/RI_MEDE)



MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Appendix 7: Permission Letters

PERMISSION LETTER TO COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

Dear Mr/Ms (name),

My name is Graziella Rose Zammit. I am an MTL student (2017-2019) within the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. In part fulfilment of the latter course, I am conducting a research study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*. This study, which is being supervised by Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli, lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement.

With this letter I am asking your kind permission to conduct a semi-structured interview with the Head of School in one of the primary schools in your College. The interview will be audio-recorded and field notes will also be kept to facilitate reporting. Data will be stored on a password protected hard drive. The audio-recording will be destroyed once the study has been submitted and evaluated.

The participant's participation is entirely voluntary and he/she may choose to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without suffering any consequences. Both the school's and the participant's identity will be kept anonymous at all times.

Should you have any queries or require any further clarifications contact the researcher on [redacted] or by sending an e-mail to the following address: [redacted] and/or the supervisor by sending an email to the following address: [redacted]

I thank you for your time and patience.

Yours faithfully,
Graziella Rose Zammit.

Researcher's signature:



Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:



Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

PERMISSION LETTER TO HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Mr/Ms (name),

My name is Graziella Rose Zammit. I am an MTL student (2017-2019) within the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. In part fulfilment of the latter course, I am conducting a research study entitled *Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*. This study, which is being supervised by Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli, lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, will help to identify the perceived strengths and benefits of the programme; to record its impact as perceived by the different participants; and outline its areas for improvement.

With this letter I am asking your kind permission to conduct a semi-structured interview with the FLAP teacher in your school. The interview will be audio-recorded and field notes will also be kept to facilitate reporting. Data will be stored on a password protected hard drive. The audio-recording will be destroyed once the study has been submitted and evaluated.

The educator's participation is entirely voluntary and he/she may choose to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without suffering any consequences. Both the school's and the teacher's identity will be kept anonymous at all times.

Should you have any queries or require any further clarifications contact the researcher on [redacted] or by sending an e-mail to the following address: [redacted] and/or the supervisor by sending an email to the following address: [redacted]

I thank you for your time and patience.

Yours faithfully,
Graziella Rose Zammit.

Researcher's signature:



Graziella Rose Zammit
MTL Student
University of Malta

Supervisor's signature:



Ms Alessia Cilia Portelli
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

Appendix 8: FREC's Approval

Research Ethics Proposal FRECEDU_1718_082 - Graziella Rose Zammit



Isabelle Warrington <isabelle.warrington@um.edu.mt>

17 Dec 2018, 12:15



to me, Alessia

Dear Ms Zammit,

I am pleased to inform you that your Research Ethics Proposal FRECEDU_1718_082 '*Perceptions of Different Stakeholders on the Year 3 and 4 Foreign Language Awareness Programme*', has been **accepted** by FREC.

Please be aware that in line with new procedures adopted by the University Research Ethics Committee on 1st December 2017 (www.um.edu.mt/urec), your Research Ethics Proposal does not need to be sent to UREC for final approval. Acceptance by FREC will suffice.

You are reminded that it is your responsibility - under the guidance of your supervisor - to distribute Information Letters and Consent/Assent Forms that are written in correct English and Maltese and which are signed by both you and your supervisor.

You may now collect your data.

I will let you know when your file becomes available for you to come and collect the original documents from my office (temporary office Room 311 Faculty of MaKS) in due course.

May I take this opportunity to remind you if you are conducting your research in State Schools, to send a copy of your dissertation, once it has been successfully examined, to the Directorate for Curriculum, Research, Innovation & Lifelong Learning as you agreed to do when applying for permission to conduct your research in State Schools.

Thanks and regards

Isabelle Warrington
Secretary
Faculty Research Ethics Committee
f/Dr Marie Therese Farrugia