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This work focuses on the way Italian informants of different ages (4, 7, and 10 year old children and adults) build discourse cohesion and thematic coherence with respect to two different narrative tasks. The data was collected using the video clip The Finite Story (Dimroth, 2006) and a sequence of 30 pictures composing a story (created by C. Dimroth as well). The characteristic of these two tasks is to involve a non prototypical flux of information since the episodes to retell force speakers to continually contrast entities, time spans and positive or negative polarities, besides of course maintaining or reintroducing the reference to some of the preceding referential domains. These tasks should force speakers to employ anaphoric means such as additive particles, temporal adverbs, polarity markings and prosodic strategies etc. This work will essentially explore three subjects: a. the cognitive processes guiding Italian children’s narrations at the different ages considered here, and consequently the different comprehension they have of the tasks proposed; b. the linguistic means children use to make the text cohesive; c. the influence of the typological specificities of Italian language on points (a) and (b). The results will be compared, as far as the available studies make it possible, to the ones relative to children of the same age learning German, Polish and French.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the way Italian children, aged from 4 to 10, build thematic coherence and discourse cohesion with respect to two different types of narrative tasks (cf. sections 1.1 and 1.2). In particular, we shall compare the different modalities by which children reproduce the proposed stimuli according to their different ages.

The peculiarity of the activities that the children accomplished is that of involving a non prototypical flow of information, namely varied referential restrictions: contrasts1 of entities and polarities, maintenance of the same predicate, temporal shifts etc.

1 We shall adopt the notion of contrast proposed by Umbach (2004), which is based on comparability presupposing both similarity and dissimilarity.
The two stimuli we used to elicit our data have already been used in other studies, but with respect either to adults or to children learning an L1 other than Italian (cf. Benazzo et al. 2004; Dimroth et al. 2010; Giuliano 2012a; 2012b).

With respect to the tasks in question, we shall consider just some of the possible information configurations, and with respect to these we shall evaluate the way children report their conceptual content and the linguistic means used to establish anaphoric linkage with what comes previously. Then, by comparing children’s narrative productions to those of adults, it will be possible to establish how close or how far are the very young subjects’ retellings from those of adults for the different ages considered here. The analysis of adults’ linguistic productions will allow us to say what is typical of the mature Italian “narrative perspective”, with respect to our two specific tasks, and whether/how children make their narrations conform to this perspective, which can be driven by specific typological and pragmatic patterns. As a matter of fact, our two tasks, when tested on adults speaking different languages (French, Italian, Dutch, German, English), brought to the identification of typologically and pragmatically driven perspectives (cf. Dimroth et al. 2010; Giuliano 2012a; 2012b; cf. also section 2 for a discussion of this point).

Several studies in the last twenty years have debated the role of the mother tongue in shaping human beings’ thought since very early childhood, both from a conceptual and linguistic point of view and from a textual and discourse perspective (cf., for instance, Bowermann 1996a/b; Hickmann / Hendriks 2009/2010; Giuliano / Di Maio 2007; Slobin 1987, 2003). Nevertheless, our data show that from four to ten children still have much to acquire in terms of “perspective”.

We shall reserve the last section to a crosslinguistic comparison between our narrative results for Italian and what emerges from the study by Benazzo et al. (2004) with respect to the acquisition of Polish, French and German as L1s.

1. The tasks

Data for this study was collected using two different tasks: a short film called *The Finite Story* (Dimroth 2006), never tested on children, and a
sequence of thirty pictures that we shall call the “picture story” (created by Christine Dimroth as well), tested just on Polish, German and French children.

1.1. The Finite Story

The video clip The Finite Story is about three men, Mr Blue, Mr Green and Mr Red, living in three different flats of the same building, which one night catches fire. It is subdivided into several segments – the content of which is illustrated in table 1 infra – and involves several referential restrictions: contrasts of entity and polarity, maintenance of the same predication, temporal shifts etc., which force the narrator to employ a great variety of anaphoric means.

We will focus on three information structures (IS: I, II and III), each of which is repeated two or three times during the story (they are shaded in table 1; for acronyms, cf. the Symbols and abbreviations section at the end of the work), that have already been explored on adults native speakers of Italian, French, German and Dutch (cf. section 2).

Table 1*. The Finite Story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>Film segment</th>
<th>IS wrt antecedent segment</th>
<th>Utterances with IS marking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>Introduction protagonists / flats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr Blue going to bed, sleeping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mr Green going to bed, sleeping</td>
<td>**I: Different TT, different TE, same POLARITY, same PREDICATE (wrt 03)</td>
<td>Anche il Sign. Verde va a letto ('Mr. Green also goes to bed')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mr Red going to bed, sleeping</td>
<td>I: Different TT, different TE, same POL, same PRED (wrt 03/04)</td>
<td>IL SIGN. ROSSO va a letto ('MR RED goes to bed')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fire on the roof</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mr Green sleeping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mr Red sleeping</td>
<td>I: different TT, different TE, same POL, same PRED (wrt 07)</td>
<td>Il Sign. Rosso fa la stessa cosa ('So does Mr. Red')</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Capital letters mark prosodical prominence.
As to the first information structure (cf. segments 4, 5 and 8 in table 1),
this is the prototypical configuration for setting up a contrast in the domain
of protagonists (Topic Entities or TE in our terminology, for which cf.
section 2), since it involves a shift in the domain of topicalized entities but
maintenance of the levels of polarity and predicate. So, considering the
types of means available in Italian, we expect informants to use additive
particles (It. anche, pure: Engl. also, too, as well;):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>Film segment</th>
<th>IS wrt antecedent segment</th>
<th>Utterances with IS marking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mr Blue not sleeping</td>
<td>II: Different TT, different TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 03/04)</td>
<td><em>Solo il Sign. Blu non dorme</em> ('Only Mr. Blue does not sleep')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mr Blue calling fire brigade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Fireman in bathroom, not answering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Fireman answering the phone</td>
<td>III: different TT, same TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 12)</td>
<td><em>Questa volta il pompiere RISPONDE al telefono</em> ('This time the fireman DOES ANSWER/ ANSWERS the phone')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Arrival of fire engine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Rescue net: Mr Green not jumping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Mr Red not jumping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Mr Blue jumping</td>
<td>II: different TT, different TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 24/25)</td>
<td><em>Il Signor Blu invece SALta</em> ('Mr Blue on the other hand DOES JUMP/JUMPS')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Mr Green jumping</td>
<td>III: different TT, same TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 24)</td>
<td><em>Il Signor Verde alla fine SALta</em> ('Mr. Green eventually DOES JUMP/JUMPS')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Mr Red not jumping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Mr Red jumping</td>
<td>III: different TT, same TE, opposite POL, same PRED (wrt 28)</td>
<td><em>Alla fine il Signor Rosso SALta</em> ('Finally Mr. Red DOES JUMP/JUMPS')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>The happy end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This table illustrates just the segments our analysis is concerned with; **TE = Topic Entity = one of the protagonists; TT = Topic Time = the time span to which a specific event is anchored*

As to the first information structure (cf. segments 4, 5 and 8 in table 1),
this is the prototypical configuration for setting up a contrast in the domain
of protagonists (Topic Entities or TE in our terminology, for which cf.
section 2), since it involves a shift in the domain of topicalized entities but
maintenance of the levels of polarity and predicate. So, considering the
types of means available in Italian, we expect informants to use additive
particles (It. anche, pure: Engl. also, too, as well;):
(1) It.a: Il Signor Blu va a letto
    The Mr Blue goes to bed
    ‘Mr Blu goes to bed’

      It.b: Anche il Signor Verde va a letto
    Also the Mr Green goes to bed
    ‘Mr Green also goes to bed’

or to exploit a prosodic prominence on the entity:

(2) It.a: Il Signor Blu va a letto
    ‘Mr Blu goes to bed’

      It.b: Il Signor Verde va a letto
    ‘Mr Green goes to bed’

It is also possible to employ verbal periphrases (It. fare la stessa cosa:
Engl. to do the same thing):

(3) It.a: Il Signor Blu va a letto
    ‘Mr Blu goes to bed’

      It.b: Il Signor Verde fa lo stesso
    ‘Mr Green does the same’

For Configuration II (cf. segments 9 and 26 in table 1), speakers have to convey that a situation applying for the first two characters (Mr Green and Mr Red) does not apply for the third one (Mr Blue), since we have a change in the TE domain, an opposite polarity but the maintenance of the predicate. For this configuration speakers can either mark the contrast on the TE or highlight the change of polarity. If speakers opt for the TE contrast, they can apply means such as lexical modifiers (It. invece, in compenso, diversamente da Mr X etc.: Engl. on the other hand, instead, differently from Mr X) or restrictive particles (It. solo, solamente, soltanto: Engl. only, just):

(4) It.a: Il Signor Verde continua a dormire
    The Mr Green continues to sleep-INF
    ‘Mr Green keeps on sleeping’

      It.b: Anche il Signor Rosso continua a dormire
    Also the Mr Red continues to sleep-INF
    ‘Mr Red also keeps on sleeping’
Polarity can be seen as the strength of assertion, and in Italian it is supported by negation, auxiliaries and/or prosody. For the change from negative to positive assertion, it can be marked, theoretically, by the pitch accent on the lexical verb (cf. ex. It. 5c).

As the comparison between the Italian (c) utterance in 5 and its English translation shows, in Italian it is not possible to separate the finite component of a lexical verb (Mr Blue does jump). For the contrastive stress on the lexical verb, theoretically, the latter can be exploited to mark information structure both in Romance and Germanic languages, but intonational prominence plays a greater role in Germanic languages (cf. Féry 2001; Dimroth et al. 2010; Andorno / Interlandi 2010). Furthermore, for Romance languages this is not a common strategy and a contrastive accent on a light verb (auxiliary, copula, modal), seems even more uncommon. Still theoretically, in Italian the change of polarity could be relatively highlighted by appropriate lexical means, that is proprio, effettivamente (Engl. actually) as in the following ad hoc example:

\[
\text{It.c: Solo il Signor Blu non dorme / Il Signor Blu invece non dorme} \\
\text{Only the Mr Blue not sleeps / The Mr Blue instead not sleeps} \\
\text{‘Only Mr Blue does not sleep / Mr Blue instead does not sleep’}
\]

\[
\text{It.a: Il Signor Verde non vuole saltare} \\
\text{The Mr Green not wants jump.INF} \\
\text{‘Mr Green does not want to jump’}
\]

\[
\text{It.b: Neanche il Signor Rosso vuole saltare} \\
\text{Neither Mr Red wants to jump} \\
\text{‘Mr Red does not want to jump either’}
\]

\[
\text{It.c: Il Signor Blu SALta} \\
\text{The Mr Blue JUMps} \\
\text{‘Mr Blue DOES jump / JUMps’}
\]

\[
\text{6) Il Signor Rosso non si lancia //} \\
\text{The Mr Red not.. himself launches //}
\]

3 The Italian adverb invece normally has scope on entities.

4 Although it is known that Romance languages mark both narrow and contrastive focus with a pitch accent (cfr., for example, Avesani / Vaira 2003), there is no systematic study dealing with the prosodic marking on the assertion component of a finite verb in this type of language.
Nevertheless, these means are not to be considered as true assertion related markings, since they do not entail a real contrast of polarity but rather they signal the actual realisation of the event as opposed to a hypothetical event, and so have no real implication for the assertion.

Both for the first and second configurations, Italian has a specific syntactic strategy according to which the subject is placed after the verb in order to cotextually highlight its focus or contrastive status (for an overview of the parameters influencing Italian V-S structures, cf., for instance, Andorno 2012):

(7) a. Il Signor Rosso va a dormire
    The Mr Red goes to sleep.INF
    ‘Mr Red goes to sleep’
    Va a dormire anche il Signor Blu
    Goes to sleep.INF also the Mr Blue
    ‘Mr Blue also goes to sleep’

b. Il Signor Rosso non vuole saltare
    the Mr Red not wants jump-INF
    ‘Mr Red does not want to jump’
    salta invece il Signor Blu
    Jumps instead the Mr Blue
    ‘Mr Blue instead jumps’

If there is a switch from a positive to a negative polarity, the means commented above are of course combined with negation.

As to the third configuration, speakers can either mark the change of polarity or the shift in the time span an event is anchored to (Topic Time or TT in our terminology) or both.

(8) Il Signor Rosso non vuole saltare
    ‘Mr Red does not want to jump’
As a matter of fact, time shift linking markings (temporal adverbs such as It. finalmente, alla fine etc.: Engl. eventually / finally / at last) are crucial for the third information configuration since, ideally, they are the only alternative to the polarity change devices that speakers can use to mark the contrast.

1.2. The picture story

The picture story consists of a sequence of thirty pictures forming a story about two characters, Mr Blue and Mr Red, who perform several actions, some of which are aimed at the liberation of a princess from a castle she is imprisoned in (we shall call this task “picture task”). The same task was used by Benazzo et al. (2004) to analyze children’s narrative productions in French, German and Polish L1. The story is summarised in table 2, where cases correspond to the content of pictures; boldface letters and shades mark the contexts under focus. All the information configurations that we shall consider have an additive meaning.

Table 2. The picture story: content of the pictures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>IS wrt antecedent segment</th>
<th>Utterances with IS marking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 / 2 / 3 / 4</td>
<td>introduction “street”, “princess”, “Mr Red”, “Mr Blue”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R &amp; B are in front of the church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>B leaves; R stays in front of the church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>R leaves</td>
<td>I: Different TT, different TE, same POL, same PRED wrt 6</td>
<td>anche / pure il Sign. Rosso se ne va (‘Mr Red also leaves’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>R drinks an orange juice at the bar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>R drinks a 2nd orange juice at the bar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>R drinks a 3rd orange juice at the bar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>R leaves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of referential flow, the segments in question involve contrasts of entities (segments 7, 25, 26, 27, 28) or of time spans (segment 19) or also temporal continuation (segment 17).
Pictures 7 and 25-28 correspond to the first information configuration commented on for *The Finite Story* stimulus, so we shall not focus on them longer. Conversely, pictures 17 and 19 involve new information structures (we marked them by IV et V, respectively), since the same actions are continued or repeated by the same character, a sequence which should lead informants to mark an additive relationship in the temporal domain (the same action is continued in IV and reiterated in V). So for these new configurations contrasts are concerned with time spans.

(9) Configuration IV
a. Il Signor Rosso dorme sulla panchina
   the Mr Red sleeps on-the bench
   ‘Mr Red is sleeping on the bench’

b. Il signor Rosso dorme ancora/sempre sulla panchina
   the Mr Red sleeps still / always on-the bench
   ‘Mr Red is still sleeping on the bench’

(10) Configuration V
Il Signor Rosso dorme ancora / di nuovo / sempre
the Mr Red sleeps still / again / always
‘Mr Red is (still) sleeping (again)’

With respect to these two configurations, it is necessary to remark that the Italian adverb *ancora* can have several functions. Two of them – the ones in question here – have a temporal meaning (cf. Engl. *still*, in ex. 9, and *again*, in ex. 10); the third function is quantitative (corresponding to Engl. *another / some more*: *Ne voglio ancora* = I want some more). The iterative and continual meanings of *ancora* can be clearly separated if the speaker chooses to employ the iterative expression *di nuovo* in alternation to continuative *ancora* (ex. 10). As to the adverb *sempre* (always), it can also take on a continuative or iterative temporal meaning, as emerges from examples 9 and 10.

The following table sums up the functions of Italian additive (quantitative, iterative or continual) expressions; the numbers 1, 2, 3 will be useful to distinguish specific functions for the same item.
Table 3. Additive particles in Italian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Non-Restricted Addition</th>
<th>Restricted Addition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entities / places / processes</td>
<td>Entities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Iterative Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td><em>anche</em> (‘also, as well, too’)</td>
<td><em>ancora1</em> (‘more’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For some of the episodes in the story, informants may exploit chronological expressions instead of additives, since a clock marks the temporal progression (cf. pictures 15-19).

During the task, the interviewer commented on the first four pictures, which introduce the set, the characters and the objective of the narrative (to discover who released the princess from the castle where she was imprisoned). On the basis of this introduction, the interviewee built his story picture by picture.

2. **The framework of analysis**

Configurations I, II and III have been studied by Dimroth *et al.* (2010) and Giuliano (2012b) with respect to adult native speakers of four languages: Dutch, German, French and Italian. As to configurations IV and V, they are discussed in Benazzo *et al.* (2004), both for adults and children, in relation to French, German and Polish.

For the first two studies, the authors state that the stimulus The Finite Story leads them to the identification of two typological perspectives: an assertion-related perspective and an entity/time-related perspective. As a matter of fact, when a polarity contrast from negative to positive assertion is involved in an information structure, Dutch and German native speakers mark the contrast on the assertion level, either by a contrastive stress on the finite lexical verb or auxiliary or by what Dimroth *et al.* (2010) call “assertion related particles”, namely *doch/schon* (for German) and *toch/wel* (for Dutch)\(^5\) (whose translation is relatively possible into French, by Fr. *bien* but not into Italian and English). For the same information configurations,

\(^5\) The highlighting function of these particles is comparable to that of the auxiliary *do* in English: Germ. *er doch* steht auf! = Engl. he does stand up!
native speakers of Romance languages and English prefer to mark the contrast by anaphoric means acting on the topic component of the utterance, at the levels of time or entities (cf. Dimroth et al. 2010; Giuliano 2012b) (for examples, cf. section 1.1, configurations I, II and III).

As to the study by Benazzo et al. (2004), it suggests that children are expected to cognitively follow the sequence provided below, referred to addition of entities, temporal iteration and continuation:

Scheme 1

the function of also > the function of more, again > the function of still

The acquisitional and cognitive path that scheme 1 illustrates could however be specific to the acquisition of the languages the authors focus on.

The various considerations from studies above contribute to the debate about the specific “perspective-taking” to which a certain language “forces” its native speakers, both from the viewpoint of the semantic concepts and the formal means they select, whenever their thought is aimed at linguistic production. This is the theory of the thinking for speaking by Dan I. Slobin (cf., among his works, those of 1987 and 2003).

From the point of view of children learning their mother tongue, as is the case in our study, we shall evaluate both the hypothesis that younger children are still relatively far from the perspective that the language that they are acquiring “imposes”, and the hypothesis that since early childhood they already select content and linguistic means corresponding to the choices made by adult speakers of the same language (cf. Bowermann 1996a/b; Choi et al. 1999; Hickmann / Hendriks 2009, 2010).

All the studies quoted in this paragraph will be reference points during our research, along with the Quaestio model of textual analysis by Klein / von Stutterheim (1989, 1991). According to the Quaestio theory, a text is shaped and informationally organized with respect to an unconscious question individuals learn to formulate since early childhood. The prototypical question, or Quaestio, concerned with a narrative text is what happened to the protagonist in time X?, where the event is the information segment to specify, or focus, and the protagonist and the time span the segments in topic. But the Quaestio is influenced by the formal and conceptual patterns a certain language has available, which explains the possibility for individuals of different native languages to conceive, for the
same type of text, relatively different *Quaestiones* (for instance, *What happened to the protagonist and why?*, *What happened to the protagonist after time X?* etc.)\(^6\).

In Klein’ and von Stutterheim’s opinion, the *Quaestio* guides the speaker’s formal and content choices while building the information structure of a text (introduction, maintenance, shifting and reintroduction of referents)\(^7\), or *referential movement*. On the whole, this internal question dictates the discourse principles coherence and cohesion are based on.

We suggest that the *Quaestio* mentally internalized through the acquisition of the mother tongue during childhood is difficult, if not impossible, to restructure, as studies about adult second language acquisition prove.

3. The informants

The data we collected consists of 80 interviews for *The Finite Story* and 40 for the picture story. The informants are all native speakers of Italian. From a cultural and sociolinguistic viewpoint, the groups are quite homogenous, since all informants come from a middle class milieu, most of the adults have a university degree and the children’s parents have an educational level ranging from high school to a university degree.

Table 4. The informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Informants</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
<th>Geographic Origins</th>
<th>Category of Informants</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
<th>Geographic Origins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Naples; Rome 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Naples; Milan 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Naples; Milan 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults from 23 to 31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Adults from 22 to 35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Naples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^6\) Giuliano / Di Maio (2007) show that different pragmatic ways of conceiving interaction across cultures also influence the selection of linguistic and conceptual preferences.

\(^7\) The *Quaestio* shaping a whole text is said to be *global* by contrast to an incidental or *local Quaestio* a speaker can answer during his textual production, and that he can abandon immediately afterwards. So, with respect to our stimulus, a narrator could focus on a protagonist instead of the event, answering by that a *local Quaestio* such as *Who else jumps?*.  

19
4. Research questions

Our analysis aims at the exploration of the following points:

a. the cognitive processes guiding the Italian child, at different ages, in order to report the content he watched (The Finite Story) or observed (the picture story), and consequently the comprehension that he or she has of the communicative tasks that we proposed;

b. the conceptual domains that the child selects and the linguistic means that he uses to build textual cohesion with respect to the five information structures commented on in the previous sections, evaluating the child’s potentially increasing ability to master more and more specific means and contents as regards the typological features of the Italian language, an entity/time-oriented language;

c. the possible differences between Italian children’s narrative productions and the ones of children learning a different mother tongue (which is possible only with respect to the picture story).

As to point (b), Dimroth et al. (2010) and Giuliano (2012b) have shown the more or less marked peculiarities by which adult speakers of typologically different languages (Italian, French, German, English, Dutch) select semantic domains and linguistic means for textual cohesion in a narrative text. It is possible to hypothesize that these means have been only partially acquired by very young subjects, whose cognitive and linguistic development is still in progress.

5. The Finite Story data

The four-year-old subjects show problems with focusing on the proposed task and, even if at the beginning of the experiment they state that they have understood the instructions ("watch each short scene and tell me what happened"), they have not really grasped them. As a result, while watching the video clip, they often interrupt by anticipatory questions such as but what is he doing?, why is there fire here?, why do they wake up? why do not they want to wake up? etc. interruptions outside the task are also very frequent (has it finished?, do you have just this cartoon? etc.).
(11) Elena, 4

*SBJ*:

Adesso quale si sveglia?
Now which-one himself wakes up?
Che cos’è? Un fuoco! [during the scene]°
What is? A fire! //
Che vuole bruciare la casa?
that wants burn-INF the house?
‘Now which one wakes up? What’s that? A fire! //
that want to burn the house?’
*SBJ: [she nods]*

*INV:*

Vediamo
See-1st.PL
‘Let’s see’ […]

*SBJ:

Ha detto di no
Has said [PP] of no
‘He said no’
*SBJ:

Che cosa no?
‘What no?’
*SBJ:

Che non vuole saltare…
That not wants jump-INF
‘That he doesn’t want to jump […]’
*SBJ:

Perché non vogliono tutti saltare?
Why not want-3rd.PL all-PL jump-INF?
‘Why don’t all of them want to jump?’

° The acronyms *SBJ and *INV stand for: interviewee and interviewer, respectively. The two slashes (//) mark the border between different scenes (cf. the Symbols and abbreviations section at the end of the work).

° Brackets enclose the comments of the analyst or implicit elements.
Four-year-old children do not interpret the task as a narrative task, so they often limit their observations about scenes to single words or to monotonous repetitions of the same utterance without any clear identification of the various characters, as the following extracts show:

(12) Anna, 4
*SBJ: terremoto… // cacca //
‘Earthquake [= the roof of the building catches fire] […] //
shit [= the fireman goes to the
bathroom //’
Telefono […] // Si è seduto // dice “no” // dice “no” //
Telephone // himself is sat-down [PP] // says no // says no //
‘Telephone [= the telephone rings…] he sat down //
he says “no” [referred to Mr Green] //
he says “no” [referred to Mr Red] //’
*INV:
e poi?
‘And then?’
*SBJ:
è sceso giù // Si è buttato giù //
has come down [PP] down // himself is launched [PP] down
‘He came down [referred to Mr Blue] //
he jumped down [referred to Mr Green] //’
Dice no // Si è buttato giù
Says no // himself is launched [PP] down
‘He says “no” [referred to Mr Red] // He jumped down’

(13) Roberta, 4
il camino ## con il fuoco // Si è svegliato //
the fireplace ## with the fire // himself is woken-up //
Si è svegliato […] //
himself is woken-up […] //
‘the fireplace ## with the fire // he woke up [referred to Mr Red] //
he woke up […] [referred to Mr Green] //’
sta saltando giù // sta saltando giù //
is jumping down // is jumpimg down //
‘he is jumping down [referred to Mr Blue] //
he is jumping down [referred to Mr Green] //’
non vuole saltare giù // sta saltando giù // ha saltato
not wants jump-INF down // is jumping down // has jumped
‘He doesn’t want to jump down [referred to Mr Red]’ //
he is jumping down // he jumped’

The absence of any explicit reference to the characters – very frequent in the passages above – can be justified, at least theoretically, by the fact that the interviewer watched the scenes along with the young informants. Nevertheless, these failures seem typical of four-year-old subjects independently from the stimulus used (for a similar result but a different elicitation methodology, cf. Hickmann 1995, 1996; Hendriks 2000). Paradoxically, the characters can be reintroduced to the listener as anonymous entities:

(14) Pasquale, 4
uno che dorme sul letto
one who sleeps on-the bed
‘someone who sleeps on the bed’
un altro che dorme sul letto
a other who sleeps on-the bed
‘another one who sleeps on the bed’

The examples show the scarce textual cohesion of four-year-old subjects’ narrations. Very crucial information such as the characters’ refusal to jump are left at an inferential state (cf. ex. 11: ha detto di no; ex. 12: dice no). The information produced are often completely unlinked with respect to what comes previously or after, since any explicit motivation about the protagonists’ actions is lacking. So the logical and causal links between the events are not grasped by the subjects in question, for example the link between Mr Blue’s call to the fire brigade and the fireman who does not answer because he’s in the bathroom (ex. 15), or the link between Mr Blue who calls the fire brigade again and the fireman who finally answers (ex. 16).

10 For the first configuration, for example, the characters are made explicit just in 6 contexts out of 60.
(15) Federica, 4

stanno sparando i fuochi d’artificio //
are.3rd.PL shooting the fireworks //
m: sta parlando vicino al telefono //
m: is speaking close at-the telephone //
‘they are shooting fireworks // m: he is speaking close to the phone //’
Sta chiamando una persona //
is calling a person //
‘he is calling a person//’
un pompiere che fa la pipì
a fireman who does the pipi
‘A fireman who is peeing’

(16) Cristina, 4

sta chiamando // sta chiamando anche lui
is calling // is calling also he11
‘he is calling [referred to Mr Blue] //
he is calling too [referred to the fireman]’

It is difficult to establish the reasons why four-year-old children do not make motivations explicit: do they take them for granted or conversely do they not perceive them at all? A question such as perché non vogliono tutti saltare? (‘why don’t all of them want to jump?’), in ex. 11, lets us suppose that in many ways children of this age have problem with making inferences. The same explanation can be furnished for sta chiamando anche lui (‘he too is calling’) in ex. 16, where the additive particle anche (‘too’) creates a fake cohesion with what comes before since neither the actors of calling nor the reasons why they do it are cleared up.

Table 5 illustrates the conceptual domains and the linguistic means four-year-old children exploit for configurations I, II and III.

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11 The Italian pronouns lui, lei etc. are theoretically object (direct or indirect) pronouns but in spoken Italian they are normally used with the subject function as well; the subject forms (egli, ella etc.) are used just in the written language. In our glosses we shall translate lui as he or him according to the syntactic status it has got in the context under analysis.
As to configuration I, some of the attempts to express the repetition of the same action by two different characters are given by the following passages:

(17) Désirée, Configuration I
Il bambino che stava a letto e ha spento la luce […]
The child that was at bed and has switched off the light
‘the child that was in bed and switched the light off’
[referred to Mr Red]’
È andato a letto e il bambino ha spento
Is gone at bed and the child has switched off
un’altra volta la luce //
a other time the light
‘He went to bed and switched the light off again’
[referred to Mr Green]’
tutti sono uguali // È andato a letto a spegnere
all-PL are equal // is gone to bed to switch off

12 The implicit meaning of the utterance is that Mr Green jumps down because “he’s not scared anymore”, which explains its insertion in the table.
la luce anche [...] //
the light also [...] //
‘all of them are equal // he went to bed to switch the light off too
[referred to Mr Red]’
ie: ha fatto un rumore //
e: has made a noise //
‘e: he made a noise [the scene where Mr Green keeps on sleeping] //
Ha fatto un rumore anche
Has done a noise also
‘He made a noise too [the scene where Mr Red keeps on sleeping]’

(18) Anna, 4, Configuration I
è andato a letto il Signore Verde
is gone to bed the Mr Green
‘Mr Green went to bed’
è andato a letto il Signor Rosso
is gone to bed the Mr Red
‘Mr Red went to bed’

Despite the clear attempts to mark anaphoric links, the last passages show strong failures both for the lexical selection of some items and for their position in the syntactic chain. The expression *un’altra volta* (‘another time = again’, ex. 17) prompts us to state that the young informant has not grasped the change in the entity domain; and yet, immediately afterwards, she adds, with respect to the three protagonists, that *tutti sono uguali* (‘all of them are equal’), which shows her being conscious as to the existence of three different characters. The source of the mistake could lie not in the lexical choice but rather in the fact that the subject confuses the intratextual relations with deictic relations: so *un’altra volta* would refer to the repetition of a scene similar to one she has already watched, and consequently to the stimulus rather than to the action of a specific protagonist. The same informant employs the additive particle *anche* in a syntactically ambiguous way in *è andato a letto a spegnere la luce anche* (‘[he = Mr Red] went to bed to switch the light off *too*’), since *anche* cannot normally be placed at the end of the sentence (except in very rare and pragmatically very marked contexts), and certainly not if it has scope over the subject – as it seems the case for this passage –, a type of scope which demands a structure such as ‘*anche Mr X* \text{VP}’; the subject is otherwise
implicit, which makes the interpretation of anche even more difficult. As to the passage ha fatto un rumore anche (‘[he] made a noise too’), still in ex. 17, here the scope of anche is clearer (= anche in questa scena si è sentito un rumore: ‘in this scene too you heard a noise’); nevertheless, the predicate ha fatto and the position of anche at the end of the utterance puzzle the listener.

In example 18 we find the Verb-Subject order, a strategy which can be used to highlight the focus status of the protagonists, but when used by four-year olds it seems to be more by chance than on purpose. As a matter of fact, several authors have remarked that children begin discovering the importance of adult syntactic strategies between 5 and 7 (cf., for instance, Tomasello 2000; Guasti 2002).

Here are some more attempts to mark textual cohesion with respect to configuration I, this time by the use of anaphoric (explicit or implied) predicates (ex. 19) and the particle anche (ex.s 20 and 21):

(19) Camilla M., 4, Configuration I

Lo stesso di quello Blu ha fatto il Verde //
The same of that Blue has done the Green //
Il Rosso lo stesso [...] //
The Red the same [...] //
‘The Green man did the same thing as the Blue man //
the Red man the same //’
Poi il Verde si è buttato giù come il Blu
Then the Green himself is launched down like the Blue
‘then the Green man jumped down like the Blue man’

(20) Pasquale, 4, Configuration I

Devono far cadere uno sopra [...] //
Must-3rd.PL make fall one on [...] //
è caduto [...] &peccché il fuoco stava dentro [...] //
is fallen [...] because the fire was inside [...] //
‘they have to make someone fall on [the fire escape net …]
[referred to Mr Blue] // he fell […] because the fire was inside […] //’
anche a lui
also to him
‘him too [= Mr Green must jump too]’

13 The underlining marks the element the particle has scope over.
In the last extract, the use of anche distorts the content of the scene in question (cf. segment 18 in table 1, section 1.1).

For configuration II, it is never marked by the four-year-old group of informants, whereas configuration III is marked rarely: by anche (1 occ. for the topic entity), due volte (‘twice’, 1 occ. for the topic time, cf. ex. 22 below) and non si mette più paura (‘he’s not afraid any more [so he comes down]’, 1 occ. still for the topic time). In the following extract Camilla refers to two different characters who jump, in contrast with what the expression so’ caduti due volte (‘[they] fell twice’) lets us suppose.

(22) Camilla, 4, Configuration III
So’ caduti due volte
Are fallen two times
‘they fell twice [referred to segments 27 e 29 of table 1]’

In conclusion, our results show that configurations II and III are the most complex to mark, cognitively and/or linguistically.

It is also necessary to remark that four-year-old children’s narrations are full of fanciful interpretations, such as the one in the following passage:

(23) Elena, 4
s’ è fatto la barba // pure lui s’ è fatto la barba
himself is done the beard // also him himself is done the beard
‘he shaved himself [referred to scene where Mr Green looks scared because of the fire] // he too shaved himself [referred to Mr Red who is scared as well]

The fanciful interpretations sometimes seem to arise from the young speakers’ incapacity to infer crucial elements from the scenes in order to create links with what came previously or will follow, which could partly result from their scarce encyclopedic knowledge about life (for instance, the typical actions in case of fire).
Table 6 below illustrates the results for the first, second and third configurations in The Finite Story retellings of seven-year-old children.

Table 6. Configurations I, II and III: 7-year-old children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IS I</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>IS II</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>IS III</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Advs</td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Add Part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Un’altra volta</em> 2 (‘another time’)</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Poi</em> 1 (‘then’)</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Anche</em> 11, <em>pure</em> 5 (‘also’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ancora</em> 3 (‘still / also’); <em>sempre</em> 1 (‘also’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>V-(anche)-S</em> 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Sress NP</td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Restr</td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Adverbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Il Signor</em> ROsso 1 (‘Mr RED’)</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Solo</em> 1 (‘only’)</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Adesso</em> 2, <em>ora</em> 1, <em>mo</em> 14 2 (‘now’); <em>poi</em> 2 (‘then’); <em>a un certo punto</em> 2 (‘at a certain point’); <em>alla fine</em> 1 (‘in the end’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Anche</em> 7, <em>pure</em> 4 (‘also’); <em>manco</em> 1; <em>nemmeno</em> 1 (‘neither’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Advs</td>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Invece</em> 2 (‘instead’)</td>
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<td><em>Invece</em> 7 (‘instead’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V-S</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same PRED</td>
<td>Anaphor VP</td>
<td>POL</td>
<td>Part POL</td>
<td>Sì 1</td>
<td>(<em>yes</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>è lo stesso</em> 1 (‘it’s the same’); *V <em>sempre</em> 1 (‘V also’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>stessa cosa</em> 3 (‘same thing’); <em>lo stesso</em> 1 (‘the same’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generic Means</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Però</em> 1 (‘but’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 The Neapolitan adverb *mo*, frequent in Neapolitan speakers’ colloquial Italian, stands for It. *ora, adesso.*
The interviews to seven-year-old subjects show relevant differences with respect to the younger group from several points of view: on the whole their narrations are much better organised; they definitively pay more attention to the first configuration and greater concentration on the third one; the second information structure, never marked by four-year-old subjects, emerges, as in the following extracts:

(24) Francesca, 7, Configuration II
E invece questo Blu ha visto il fuoco [...] //
And instead this Blue has seen the fire [...] //
Manco l’omo Rosso voleva saltare //
neither the man-DIM Red wanted.3rd.PAST.IMPF jump.INF //
Lui SÌ voleva saltare
he YES wanted.3rd.PAST.IMPF jump.INF
‘And instead the Blue man saw the fire… //
The Red little man didn’t want to jump either // he did want to jump’

(25) Camilla, 7, Configuration II
solo quello Blu si è svegliato
only that Blue himself is woken.up
‘only the Blue one woke up’

Example 24 contains both a marking scoping on the entity, invece (‘instead’), and a polarity marking, sì (‘yes’). The latter phenomenon is completely lacking in Italian adults’ retellings (cf. section 7). Example 25 shows the use of the restrictive particle solo.

The third configuration is generally marked by additive particles and/or the temporal adverbs adesso and poi\(^\text{15}\), but we also found some more sophisticated expressions such as a un certo punto (‘at a certain point’) and alla fine (‘in the end’). Furthermore, it can happen that the subjects use more than one marking simultaneously.

(26) Carla, 7, Configuration III
E lui si è buttato // E: pure è sceso //
And he himself is launched // And: also is come.down //

\(^{15}\) Temporal adverbs such as poi, adesso, ora were considered as markings of contrast just if the informants expressly used them to contrast a scene to a previous one, in other words they were never calculated if the speakers insistently used them to simply mark the passage from one scene to the other one.
‘and he jumped down [referred to Mr Blue] // and: he jumped down as well [referred to Mr Green]
E lui non vuole scendere // Poi è sceso
And he not wants come.down // then is come.down
‘and he doesn’t want to jump down [referred to Mr Red] //
them he jumped down

(27) Sebastiano, 7, Configuration III
Che ora il pompiere si accorge del telefono
That now the fireman himself realizes of-the telephone
‘now the fireman realizes [that] the phone [is ringing]’

Outside the configurations that we analysed, we also found the structure è l’unico che... ([he] is the only one who…’), which together with the restrictive particle solo (‘only’) actualize the uniqueness strategy, appearing in Italian adults’ retellings (cf. section 7). As to the use of prosodic means, it is exceptional, and as a matter of fact we identified just one occurrence, for the first configuration, replacing a lexical marking such as anche:

(28) Giacomo, 7, Configuration I
poi il Signor ROSso e: va a letto spegne
then the Mr RED e: goes to bed switches.off
la luce si mette le coperte e va a dormire
the light himself puts the covers and goes to sleep-INF
‘then Mr RED e: goes to bed he turns the light off he covers himself and goes to sleep’

On the whole, seven-year-old children’s retellings show many cohesive elements, several of which never appear in the younger group: neanche / nemmeno / manco (‘neither / nor’), già (‘already’), ancora (‘still / also / more’), di nuovo (‘again’), sempre (‘always, still, *also’16) and the iterative verb prefix ri-. These elements can show up outside the configurations we considered. Here are some passages:

16 The use of sempre as also is not grammatical, neither it appears in adult retellings.
(29) Simone, 7
si è fatto più grave l’incendio // Ha visto pure quello Verde //
 itself is done more grave the fire // has seen also that Green //
‘the fire became bigger // the Green man also saw [it]’
Ha visto pure il Rosso //
Has seen also the Red //
‘the Red man also saw [it]’
Ha detto non va bene // neanche là va bene
Has said not goes right // neither there goes right
‘he said “it is not ok there // it is not ok there either”’

(30) Rossella, 7
Il signor Verde si è steso *sempre sopra al letto
The Mr Green himself is lied.down *always on at-the bed
‘Mr Green also lied down on the bed’

(31) Roberto, 7
Chiama i pompieri // Sta GIA’ chiamando … //
Calls the firemen // is ALREADY calling … //
Ritornava di nuovo alla porta
returned again at-the door
‘he calls the fire brigade // he is ALREADY calling […] he went back to
the door again’

The seven-year-olds’ narrations can still show failures as regards the
referential movement of the protagonists and ambiguities in relation to
the use of some anaphoric items:

(32) Simone, 7
si hanno messo un’altra volta a letto … //
 themselves have-3rd.PLU put [PP] a other time at bed … //
Si è messo un’altra volta a letto
Himself is put [PP] a other time at bed
‘they went to bed once again … [referred to Mr Red] // he went to bed
once again [referred to Mr Green]

(33) Benedetta, 7
nella casetta verde sta facendo una musica che lo
in-the house-DIM green is doing a music that him
sta facendo spaventare //
is making scare-INF //
‘in the little green house there’s music which is scaring him //’
Nella casetta rossa sta facendo un’altra musica uguale a quell’altra
In-the house-DIM red is doing a other music equal to that other
‘in the little red house there’s music equal to the other one’
che lo sta facendo ancora spaventare
that him is making still scare-INF
‘which is still scaring him’

In 32 the informant uses the expression un’altra volta similarly to four-year-old speakers (cf. ex. 17 above), so he has not grasped the functional and discourse peculiarities that this expression involves, namely the fact that it necessarily refers to two different actions of the same character. For the same reasons, the employment of ancora, in 33, is also ambiguous.

By the age of ten, as emerges from table 7 below, we observed a continued progression, which is nevertheless concerned with the quantity of the means ten-year-old children use rather than their typology. Inappropriate means such as un’altra volta et ancora with reference to actions of different characters have completely disappeared.

Table 7. Configurations I, II and III: 10-year-old children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IS I</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>IS II</th>
<th>IS III</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Advs</td>
<td>Ancora 2 ('still, also')</td>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Advs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Add/Excl Part</td>
<td>Anche 31, pure: 7 ('also') nemmeno: 1 ('neither')</td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Rest Part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advs</td>
<td>Invece: 1 ('instead')</td>
<td>Advs</td>
<td>Invece 10 ('instead')</td>
<td>TT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From a global viewpoint, the retellings of this group are very cohesive, which is demonstrated by the explicit reference to characters (for the first configuration, for example, 17 speakers out of 20 always mention the various protagonists) and the very frequent resort to additive and temporal strategies, which the informants resort to outside the analysed information structures as well. As to additive devices (*anche, pure, ancora, neanche, nemmeno, manco*\(^{17}\) ‘neither / nor’, *(fare) la stessa cosa* ‘(do) the same thing’), they employ them 156 times (103 occ.s for seven-year-old children and 18 occ.s for the four-year-olds). With respect to temporal strategies (*sempre* ‘always / still, /also’, *già* ‘already’, *mai* ‘never’, *non*… *più* ‘not… any longer’, *ancora, di nuovo / nuovamente* ‘again’, *un’altra volta* ‘once again’, *un altro po’ ‘a bit more’, *continuare a* ‘to continue’, *ri-Verb* ‘iterative prefix-Verb’), the relevant difference is between four-year-old children, who resort to them 16 times, and seven or ten-year-old ones, who employ them, respectively, in 51 and 65 contexts.

It is necessary to point out some more points of contrast as regards the type of items the different groups use. Once again, the crucial difference lies between the four-year-olds and the seven-year-olds, since the former never employ *ancora* but they use iterative *un’altra volta* when marking an iterative function; they do not use additive negative items except one occurrence of *nemmeno*. Between 7 and 10 continuative *ancora* and additive negative items appear; *ancora* with quantitative function, *anche*

\(^{17}\) The expression *manco* is typical of colloquial Italian.
with scalar meaning\textsuperscript{18} and contrasting means such as invece, solo, è l’unico che... show up as well. The real difference between these two groups lies in: the very frequent use, at ten, of anche/pure, the higher frequency of the negators neanche/nemmeno/manco; the non standard employment, at seven, of sempre with an additive function (cf. ex. 30 above).

To sum up, the narrations of four-year-old children show these informants’ incapability to organize the content of the film using a holistic perspective, even though the information to narrate are furnished in a slow and progressive way as is the case for The Finite Story stimulus. So from a cognitive viewpoint, their conceptualization of the task proposed is rather atomistic and deictic, with no clear inferences about characters’ actions and no or very few logical links between episodes. The absence of markings for the second configuration – concerned with contrasting actions of two different characters – and the very scarce attention for the third one – implying temporal contrasts – clearly demonstrate that children of this age have problems with focusing on this type of contents. As a matter of fact, the third configuration is conceptualized as “two similar actions” of different or equal entities (cf. ex. 17), which distorts the content of the film, showing the four year old concentration on the entity dimension rather than the temporal one. At seven, children’s retellings are more cohesive and coherent, with richer and more pertinent observations for each scene, which shows a better understanding of the narrative task proposed. They make more explicit inferences and are certainly more sensitive to the creation of contrasts, including temporal contrasts and opposed actions of different protagonists. At ten, finally, children clearly highlight the conceptual domains of both entities and time when building anaphoric linkage.

6. \textit{The picture story data}

The elicitation of data by the picture stimulus was more difficult than with The Finite Story, in particular with four-year-old subjects, who often needed to be supported by the listener intervention. The pictures could have been perceived by very young children as less stimulating than the video clips composing \textit{The Finite Story} or probably they found the instructions relative to the picture story more complex to put into practice (cf. section 1.2).

\textsuperscript{18} Scalar expressions involve scales in their interpretation. The scalar meaning of ancora, for instance, correspond to that of Engl. even.
In the following we furnish some passages for configurations I, IV and V (cf. *ibid.*):

(34) Andrea, 4, Configuration I
E poi sta correndo // e poi sta correndo pure l’ uomo Blu
And then is running // and then is running also the man Blue
‘and then he is running // and then the Blue man is also running’

(35) Claudio, 4, Configurations IV + V
E qua sta anche dormendo […] // e anche dormendo
And here is also sleeping […] // and also sleeping
‘and here he is also sleeping […] // and also sleeping’

The following table shows the conceptual domains and linguistic means the four-year-old subjects exploit for configurations I, IV and V\(^\text{19}\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IS I</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>IS IV</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>IS V</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Add Parts</td>
<td>Picture</td>
<td>Parts</td>
<td>Iter TT</td>
<td>Adv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-anche / pure-S</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>altro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ri-Verb</td>
<td>1 (ritornare)(^\text{20})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont TT</td>
<td>Advs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Same PRED | Lo stesso 1 (‘the same’)
| Total | 13         | 7         | 5         |

\(^{19}\) The expression *picture*, in the tables, refers to the fact that some additive particles have scope over the stimulus itself (cf. ex. 35). As to the acronyms *Cont TT* and *Iter TT*, the former stands for *Continual Topic Time*, namely a continual temporal relationship, whereas the latter stands for *Iterative Topic Time*, that is to say an iterative temporal relationship.

\(^{20}\) Just in one context there appears a verb with the iterative suffix *ri-,* namely *ritornare* (‘return, come back’), for which the identification of the prefix could not be noticed by children since the root *tornare* is iterative by itself.
The first configuration is the most marked one (13 occ.s, ex. 34), confirming the hypothesis that the entity contrasts are cognitively and linguistically simpler for very young speakers to perceive and express (cf. previous paragraphs). Still in agreement with what has been observed for The Finite Story retellings, four-year-olds have problems with temporal relations of any kind (iterative or continual time spans), so instead of focusing on the temporal link between the scenes, they deictically mark the analogies between them: ex. 35, for instance, refers to the fact that Mr Blue goes on sleeping but the informants underline the analogy between the two pictures in question rather than the continual action of the protagonist, which explains the use of anche (= ‘in this picture too’) instead of ancora / sempre / di nuovo. In other words, the subject seems concentrated on extra-textual and deictic relationships rather than on intra-textual cohesion. This switch of focus could be partly justified by the nature of the task – a sequence of pictures that the child can point at with a gesture –, nevertheless, as we saw in the previous section, very young children tend to focus on deictic, extra-textual relations when watching The Finite Story as well, which demonstrates the childish character of this type of logical correlation. It also happens that a temporal link (Mr Blue is still sleeping) is conceptualized as an entity contrast, as in the following:

(36) Clara, 4, Configuration IV

E qui l’ uomo che dorme //
‘and here the man who sleeps [referred to Mr Red] //
e un altro uomo che dorme
and another man who sleeps [still referred to Mr Red]’

The use of items such as sempre and ancora to mark continuation is not completely lacking in the retellings of these informants, but ancora, in particular, is used just once and along with di più (‘more’), a quantitative expression which cannot mark temporal relations:

(37) Riccardo, 4, Configuration IV

Poi sta dormendo ancora // poi sta dormendo ancora *di più
‘then he is still sleeping // then he is sleeping even more’
The following table is concerned with seven-year-olds’ retellings:

Table 9. Configurations I, IV and V: 7-year-old children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IS I</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>IS IV</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>IS V</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Add Parts</td>
<td>Picture</td>
<td>Parts</td>
<td>Iter TT</td>
<td>Advs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-anche-S</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont TT</td>
<td>Adv</td>
<td>Sempre, ancora 4 (‘still’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same PRED</td>
<td>Anaphor V</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to the configurations in question (I, IV e V), there is no big difference between this group and the four-year-old one, but if we look at the whole texts, they show a better mastering of anaphoric linkage: the seven-year-olds mark the distinction between continuation and iteration more frequently, using *sempre / ancora* for the former and *di nuovo* for the latter; still for iteration, the verbal prefix *ri-* is more frequent (*riandare: ‘to go again’, riaddormentarsi: ‘to fall asleep again’, ritornare: ‘to go back’, rincontrarsi: ‘to meet each other again’). Here are some passages:

(38) Cristina, 7, Configurations IV + V

E dorme ancora… // e si addormenta di nuovo
And sleeps still // and himself fall asleep-3rd.SING again
‘and he still sleeps… // and he falls asleep again’

(39) Miriam, 7, Configuration IV

Sta sempre coricato
Is always lied.down
‘he is still on the bed’

In some contexts, *anche* can deictically refer to a link between two pictures but in a less ambiguous way:
As far as ten-year-old informants are concerned, their texts are more cohesive – as is shown by the higher frequency of additive items within the whole texts –, including the emergence of the verb periphrasis continuare a + Verb (‘to continue…’). Furthermore, the deictic use of additive items is very rare.

As a matter of fact, with the progression of age some pictures are connected to each other in a chronologically more complex way and enriched with causal explanations. The following passages are concerned with the last segments of the retellings of a four-year-old and of a ten-year-old respectively:

(41) Laura, 4

il Signor Blu va a liberare la principessa
the Mr Blue goes to set.free-INF the princess
‘Mr Blue goes to set the princess free’

Il Signor Blu va a liberare la principessa
The Mr Blue goes to set.free-INF the princess
‘Mr Blue goes to set the princess free [referred to a different scene where Mr Blue keeps on going up the hill]’

Il Signor Rosso va a raccogliere le mele
The Mr Red goes to pick-INF the apples
‘Mr Red goes to pick the apples’

(42) Francesco, 10

E si dirige anche lui verso il castello
And himself addresses also he to the castle
‘and [Mr Blue] also goes to the castle’

E ora Signor Blu e Signor Rosso si incontrano
And now Mr Blue and Mr Red themselves meet-3rd.PL
‘and now Mr Blue and Mr Red meet’
Signor Rosso… mette la scala vicino a un albero di mele
Mr Red… puts the ladder close to a tree of apples
‘Mr Red… puts the ladder against an apple tree’
e quindi si capisce vuole raccogliere delle mele
and so IMPS.PRO understands wants pick-INF some apples
‘and so you understand that he wants to pick some apples’
Mentre Signor Rosso raccoglie le mele Signor Blu
While Mr Red pick-3rd.SING the apples Mr Blue
si dirige verso il castello
himself addresses to the castle
‘while Mr Red is picking some apples Mr Blue goes to the castle’

The following table is concerned with ten-year-old children’s retellings:

Table 10. Configurations I, IV and V: 10-year-old children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IS I</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>IS IV</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>IS V</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Add Parts</td>
<td>anche, pure 20 (‘also’)</td>
<td>Picture</td>
<td>Parts</td>
<td>Anche 1 (‘also’)</td>
<td>Iter TT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-anche /pure-S</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Cont TT</td>
<td>Advs</td>
<td>Sempre, ancora 2 (‘still’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cont a+V</td>
<td>1 (‘continue to V’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Anaphor V</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Anaphor V</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the whole, the comparison between the different age groups shows a remarkable progression with respect to cohesion and the mastering of specific additive and temporal means. By the age of ten these means are well integrated into a holistic perspective of the narrative text. Although these results are in agreement with the ones we ascertained for The Finite
Story task, a slight difference emerges probably due to the diverse features of the two stimuli: temporal means are lacking in the four-year-olds’ retellings of The Finite Story but not completely in their picture story narrations, which could be – at least partly – a reflex of a greater memory effort and dispersion of attention that the sequence of video clips may involve for very young children with respect to a sequence of pictures they can stare at.

7. Adults and children: a comparison

The following table is concerned with adult native speakers’ retellings and illustrates the results for the configurations we analysed for The Finite Story task.

Table 11. Configurations I, II and III, The Finite Story: adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IS I</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>IS II</th>
<th>IS III</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>Infine 1 ('finally')</td>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Adverbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Add Part</td>
<td>Anche, pure 34 ('also')</td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Restr Part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excl Part</td>
<td>Nemmeno, neanche 4 ('neither')</td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Part</td>
<td>È l’unico/il primo che 4 (it’s the only one/the first who)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-(anche)-S</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Add Part</td>
<td>Anche, pure 22 ('also')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same PRED</td>
<td>Anaphoric V</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Primacy / Uniqueness strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>(cosi) come 3 ('like')</td>
<td></td>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Il primo.. è 1 ('the first one.. is')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparison with ten-year-old children’s retellings of The Finite Story demonstrates a great analogy between the means the latter employ and those exploited by adults. Otherwise, the ten-year-old group shows a
relative sensibility for the uniqueness and primacy strategies (è l’unico/il primo che…: ‘[he] is the only/first one who…’; solo il Signor X: ‘only Mr X’), which makes them similar to adults, and by which the action of a specific protagonist is chronologically highlighted. The only relevant difference lies in the lesser attention that children pay to the third configuration, since they mark it much less frequently (56 markings by adults vs 25 by ten-year-olds).

From the viewpoint of the means exploited, the data of the seven-year-olds does not show any significant difference with respect to adults but rather quantitative discrepancies, since the three configurations in question are marked more rarely. As to the type of markings, the peculiarity of this age group is the fact that they exploit sì (‘yes’) as polarity marking (1 occ.), the expression il Signor ROsso (‘Mr RED’) with a prosodic emphasis (1 occ.), and quantitative sempre, means lacking both in adult’s retellings and the other age groups’, and that we interpret as typical of children’s narrations rather than of adult standard Italian.

The retellings of four-year-old subjects are obviously the most distant from adults’ ones both for the scarce frequency of cohesion markings and the many mistakes with respect to concepts of iteration and continuity.

As far as the picture story is concerned, we furnish below the table concerning adults’ retellings.

Table 12. Configurations I, IV and V, the picture story: adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IS I Meanings</th>
<th>IS IV Meanings</th>
<th>IS V Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TE</strong></td>
<td><strong>Add Parts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Picture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-anche -S</td>
<td>Ancora pure 31 (‘also’)</td>
<td>Anche, pure 31 (‘also’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont TT</td>
<td>Parts Ancora 1 (‘still’)</td>
<td>Iter TT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont a+V 5 (‘continue to + V’)</td>
<td>Adv</td>
<td>Cont a+V 5 (‘continue to + V’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 44</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the picture story also, what seems to distinguish adults’ retellings from the ten-year-olds’ is the slight greater frequency of cohesive items, scalar *anche* and the more sophisticated vocabulary. The presence even in adults’ retellings of one deictic use of *ancora* — that for *The Finite Story* retellings completely disappear from the age of seven on — demonstrates that it is induced by the type of stimulus, namely tangible pictures that the speaker can constantly see, touch and point at.

On the whole, with respect to adults’ narrations, Italian children’s sketch an acquisitional path for referential contrasts as the following, which is confirmed — with some little variations — by both the elicitation methodologies we used:

Scheme 2. Contrasts: conceptual level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>addition of entity contrasts</th>
<th>contrasts of actions / temporal contrasts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(with continuity more frequent than iteration)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entity contrasts focusing on addition (cf. configuration I) show up in a precocious way, whereas the ones opposing *different actions by different characters* appear by the age of seven (cf. configuration II), together with temporal contrasts (cf. configurations III, IV and V).

From the viewpoint of the linguistic means children exploit, quantitative addition is precociously marked by *anche*/*pure*; nevertheless, the seven-year-olds also exploit *sempre* with this function, which corresponds to a non grammatical employment of this (temporal) item. Negative additive items begin to emerge just at seven. As to temporal addition, continuity and iteration means show up according to the different task but children have troubles with iterative *ancora*.

The *Quaestio* theory that we have adopted lets us interpret the results obtained for the two tasks in the following way: in terms of textual organisation, four-year-old children are not capable of planning a global narrative perspective such as the one intervening when the *Quaestio* principle has definitively been elaborated by the cognitive system. This perspective is just “sketched”, so to speak, and it matches the concept of *script* proposed by Fayol (1985), by which he refers to a banal sequence of actions with no hierarchical organization and purpose, which explains the incomplete character of utterances but also the incompleteness of the retellings altogether. As a consequence, very young children cannot build
a solid holistic perspective of the narrative text in question. This result could partly be due to their inability to select the conceptual domains pertinent for the Quaestio a certain task requires, which demonstrates four-year-old children’s dispersion of attention and their focus on details of little or no importance for the dynamics of the story. Furthermore, in “local” terms, the comparison with the other age groups shows that four-year-olds’ retellings are very weak with respect to the way new or focused information is matched to linguistic markings, in other words subjects of this age take crucial information for granted differently from seven and ten-year-old informants, despite the fact we used the same data elicitation methodologies.

Between the ages of 7 and 10, our results show the increasing ability of Italian children with the conceptual and linguistic specificities the task in question demands in their mother tongue, namely their aptitude to contrast entities, actions and temporal spans in agreement with the increasing holistic planning of the narrative text. (cf. the concepts of plan and schema by Fayol 1985). For the contrast of assertion, it appears just once at seven (cf. ex. 24) and plays no role for all the other age groups, as in agreement with the entity/time perspective “imposed” by the Italian language.

8. Typological and crosslinguistic considerations

With respect to the two tasks we proposed, adults’ narrations show that Italian speakers are definitively oriented to entities and temporal contrasts, differently from what happens for languages such as German and Dutch (cf. Dimroth et al. 2010), whose native speakers also highlight polarity contrasts very strongly. The absence in Italian of any highly grammaticized means to express the strength of positive assertion (or polarity) could justify these results, although the highlighting of positive polarity is not impossible in the language in question (cf. the section 1.1).

Concerning Italian children, the linguistic means that four-year-old subjects select already show a high specificity with respect to the language they are acquiring (cf. the employ of anche and pure), at least in the conceptual domain to which the Italian child appears to be sensitive, namely the contrast of entities. From a cognitive viewpoint, the precocious
emergence of entity contrasts has also been ascertained for French, Polish and German children (cf. Benazzo et al. 2004). It is otherwise in agreement with what Givón (1995: 380) maintains with respect to nominal referents: they are perceptually and cognitively more salient, they are acquired early in ontogeny and evolve early in phylogeny, they are culturally central entities, in particular those that are subject-agent (human, active, conscious, wilful) or object-patient (concrete, compact, manipulable, usable). For all of these reasons we hypothesize that young children could, at the same time, combine linguistic specificities of their mother tongue with age cognitive restrictions independent from their L1. Future studies about children learning assertion-oriented languages could, nevertheless, narrow or enlarge the validity of this cognitive path.

From the age of seven on our children are more and more oriented to temporal contrasts besides the contrasts of entities and by the age of ten the “perspective” imposed by the language they are acquiring – a perspective markedly oriented to temporal and entity contrasts – has been consolidated.

From a crosslinguistic viewpoint the comparisons with children learning French, Polish and German (with respect to the picture story) show that, for the Italian child, the relationship between iteration and continuity implies some peculiar difficulties, since in Italian these conceptual distinctions are complicated by the semantic and functional complexity of the particles ancora and sempre, which can charge themselves with quantitative (just ancora), iterative and continual functions and consequently sound ambiguous to very young speakers – as otherwise also happens with L2 adult learners of Italian (cf. Giuliano 2012a). Furthermore, the implicational acquisitional pattern continuation > iteration suggested by Benazzo et al. (2004) is not confirmed by our data.

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Symbols and abbreviations

IS  information structure
TE  topic entity
TT  topic time
POL polarity
PRED predicate
*SBJ interviewee
*INV interviewer

// mark the passage to a different scene
… mark the elimination of a passage
[   ] enclose the comments of the transcriber
#, ## short pause, long pause
: vowel lengthening
B  Mr Blue in the picture story table
R  Mr Red in the picture story table
Adv/s adverb/s
Part/s Particle/s
Add additive
Excl exclusive
Restr restrictive
Cont continual
Iter iterative
DIM diminutive
INF infinitive
IMP imperative
IMPF imperfective
IMPS impersonal
PRO pronoun
PL plural
PP past participle
SING singular
It. Italian
Ger. German
Engl. English
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