

Keeping TRACK(s) of inclusive interactions in ECEC services: the affordances of video-analysis for professional development

Registrazione interazioni inclusive nei servizi per l'infanzia: video-analisi e formazione degli insegnanti

Lucia Balduzzi^a, Valentina Migliarini^b, Arianna Lazzari^c

^a *Università di Bologna*, lucia.balduzzi2@unibo.it

^b *Università di Bologna*, valentina.migliarin2@unibo.it

^c *Università di Bologna*, arianna.lazzari2@unibo.it

Abstract

Recent research shows the growing need of using video-analysis in qualitative educational research. Video-analysis offers possibilities for representing Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) professionals' practices, and for becoming a mediational and epistemological tool of their on-going knowledge construction about inclusion and equity. This paper presents initial findings from a case study conducted in Bologna, Italy, using video-analysis as a tool for ECEC practitioners' active learning and professional development. Results from the study show how video (recording and analysis) help practitioners (re)thinking their interactions with children and stimulate reflections on their conceptualization of inclusive practices. Drawing on a European trans-national project funded by the Erasmus Plus Program, this paper argues the relevance of video-elicited discussions and focus groups to help providing significant feedback to educators, as well as creating a digital repository of inclusive practices.

Keywords: video-analysis; early childhood; inclusion; professional development.

Sintesi

Ricerche recenti dimostrano l'importanza dell'uso della video-analisi nella ricerca educativa qualitativa. L'analisi dei video offre la possibilità di rappresentare le pratiche di educatori e professionisti che operano nei servizi per la prima infanzia. La video-analisi può diventare uno strumento epistemologico e di mediazione per l'acquisizione di conoscenze sull'inclusione e l'equità. Il contributo presenta i primi risultati di un caso studio condotto in Italia (Bologna) utilizzando l'analisi video come strumento per l'apprendimento attivo e lo sviluppo professionale degli educatori nei servizi per l'infanzia. I risultati dello studio mostrano come la registrazione e l'analisi dei video aiuta gli educatori a (ri)pensare le loro interazioni con i bambini, stimolando rinnovate riflessioni sulla loro concettualizzazione di pratiche inclusive. Basandosi su un progetto di ricerca Europeo finanziato dal programma Erasmus Plus, questo articolo sostiene la rilevanza dei focus group stimolati da video per fornire feedback agli educatori in formazione in servizio, nonché a creare un archivio digitale di pratiche inclusive.

Parole chiave: video-analisi; prima infanzia; inclusione; formazione degli insegnanti.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to interrogate the possibility of video-analysis as a collaborative cross-cultural method for research and professional development in ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care). Drawing on a transnational European project titled *TRACKs, Transition Children and Kindergarten*, this paper considers video-recording and video-analysis as innovative methodologies to facilitate ECEC educators' reflection and active learning on inclusion and inclusive practices (Tobin, 2004; Tobin, Mantovani, & Bove, 2010).

The ongoing *TRACKs* project is based on a partnership with different institutions and ECEC service providers of three countries: Poland, Italy and Belgium. The University institutions actively involved in the project are the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, in Poland, the University of Bologna, in Italy, and the University of Gent in Belgium. As the purpose of the project is to actively promote research based professional development, the training institutions and ECEC service providers taking part in such endeavor are: Arteveldehogeschool in Belgium, the Komensky Instytut in Poland, and the Cooperativa Assistenza Disabili Infermi Anziani Infanzia (CADIAI) in Italy. The main objective of *TRACKs* is to center the voices of practitioners, such as ECEC professionals currently working with children aged 0 to 6 years old, future ECEC professionals such as pre-school teachers and Kindergarten personnel still in teacher training. The project's foundation lays on the dynamic exchange of knowledge and practice between the target groups in the three countries involved in the project. This transnational exchange between professionals across the three European states aims at improving quality of learning, assuming that the international contexts can feed into each other, exchange solutions and practices, responding to shred ECEC challenges.

Further, the project intends to provide equitable learning opportunities and nurturing environments for all children, especially those coming from multiply marginalized backgrounds (living at the intersection of multiple forms of oppressions), and experiencing social inequalities, poverty and racism. Drawing on the methods of video-coaching and video-analysis the project invests in high-quality interaction of ECEC professionals. The research teams and professionals from the different countries observe collectively, or in on-to-one sessions, the video recordings and reflect on the interactions between professionals and children and among children. The video-recording material offers the possibility to take a more in-depth view of the interactions, and to put oneself in the position of the observer. In an appreciative dialogue, the ECEC educators and pre-school teachers can reflect on their competences by strengthening the existing skills and by becoming more aware of interaction opportunities.

The research teams see different *levels in high-quality interaction*, through which children must be stimulated in order to grow and develop:

1. stimulating (rich) language interactions (between children and between children and professional);
2. stimulating exploring/research/cognitive interactions;
3. stimulating warm relational interactions;
4. stimulating artistic-creative/expressive interactions.

All levels must be seen in a holistic perspective. The link between tackling social inequalities and these four levels is: every child must be stimulated on these four levels, but marginalized children might need extra and sometimes intensive stimulation.

This paper presents initial findings from the Italian case study based on analysis of videos, and observations carried out in two ECEC services in the city of Bologna, Emilia Romagna. The Italian case study intends to rethink initial and in-service training tools and pedagogical supervision, as the need to promote innovative educational practices within early childhood services in an inclusive perspective (promoting the active involvement of children and families from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds) is today a recognized both nationally (D.Lgs. n. 65/2017) and internationally (Recommendation 2019/C189/02). The need for rigorous research on the subject is made particularly urgent in Italy by the new legislation *Buona Scuola* (L. n. 107/2015, art. 1, par. 181), which emphasizes the continuity of education for the age range 0-6 years and is committed to defining guidelines for ECEC services.

The empirical case study focuses on ECEC services that are located in an urban setting, one of which is in an area densely populated by migrant families. Building on a corpus of literature that focuses on video-analysis as a tool for professional development (Bove, 2009; Tobin & Davidson, 1990), and on successful application of video-coaching methodology (Fukkink & Tavecchio, 2010; Fukkink, Trienekens, & Kramer, 2010), this article sheds light on the potential and challenges that practitioners encounter when using video as a mean to promote active learning and practices rooted in the inclusive paradigm. The two main questions guiding the Italian case study are:

- what are the affordances of video-analysis to ECEC professional development?
- how can video-analysis be used to document and reflect on inclusive practices?

The paper starts by exploring the state of the art of Professional Development (PD) in ECEC services in Italy, focusing particularly on workforce profiles and initial training as well as on continuing professional development. The review of the literature on video-analysis emphasizes the innovative aspects of such method, and how it can be considered a paradigm shift in teacher education. Instead of using videos to analyze teachers' practices individually, in line with the micro-teaching tradition (Allen & Clark, 1967), the studies considered in this paper promote the use of videos to collectively develop critical thinking with regards to teachers' daily practices performed in professional settings (Bove, 2007). This is followed by the methodology, data sources and research process, which gave rise to the data used in this paper. The findings section focuses on the themes emerged from two video-elicited discussions with practitioners. Initial findings point out that video-analysis in ECEC services can be a tool to (i) promote educators' collective reflection on children's intentionality, (ii) de-construct taken-for-granted assumptions through pedagogical guidance teams, (iii) improve enacted practices through action-research and experimentation.

2. The context: initial and in-service professional development of ECEC workforce in Italy

As consequence of the recent reform *Buona Scuola* (L. n. 107/2015; D.Lgs. n. 65/2017) the split system between early childhood socio-educational services (*nidi*) and preschool (*scuola dell'infanzia*) was overcome by creating an integrated system of ECEC under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Such reform introduced important changes especially in relation to the initial training of early childhood educators (*educatori di nido*) and pre-school teachers (*insegnanti di scuola dell'infanzia*) and has opened new fronts for reflection in relation to their continuing professional development.

University training is now mandatory at Bachelor level for early childhood educators and at Master level for pre-school teachers. Although the duration of degree courses for the initial training of educator and teachers differs, their structure follows the same guiding principles (Balduzzi & Pironi, 2017; Nigris, 2004):

- a multidisciplinary approach grounded in the field of educational sciences;
- an integrated curriculum combining theoretical and experiential learning (importance given to workshops and practicum);
- a strong partnership between training institutions and local ECEC services/pre-schools.

The reciprocal interplay between theoretical knowledge and experiential learning characterizing the curriculum content of both degrees courses is considered to be laying the foundations of ECEC professionals' reflective *habitus*, which is to be further enhanced during in-service professional development. Continuing professional development in fact has become mandatory for both educator and teacher profiles and its compliance is entrusted directly to the ECEC institutions within which such professionals are operating: municipalities and social cooperatives for early childhood educators; municipalities and state-maintained institutions (Istituti Comprensivi) for preschool teachers.

Whereas there is a substantial body of literature affirming that the educational quality of ECEC services is closely connected to the professional competence of the workforce – and that the enhancement of professional competence takes place along a continuous process – research also shows that the provision of initial and in-service training per se is a necessary but not sufficient condition (OECD, 2012). Evidence from the CoRe study point out that – in order to improve and sustain the quality of ECEC provision – not only a competent practitioner is required but also a competent system that feeds into the ongoing professionalization of staff in relation to changing societal needs (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Van Laere, Lazzari, & Peeters, 2012). In these regards, research gaps have been identified especially in relation to the content and delivery of professional development opportunities as well as in relation to their effective contribution in addressing the current challenges faced by ECEC services (Eurofound, 2015). In the Italian context, this directly calls into question the function of pedagogical coordinators and their role in facilitating a participatory design of professional development initiatives by connecting the perceived needs of educators' and teachers' teams with ongoing research and experimentation for the improvement of educational practices enacted within ECEC services (Lazzari, Picchio, & Musatti, 2013). The study presented in this article intends to address this research gap by shedding light on how the latter could be achieved in the context of a collaborative partnership between ECEC providers and university institutions.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1. Video-Analysis to Foster Reflection, Empowerment and Consciousness

The use of videos, and particularly video-recording and video-analysis, in early childhood services can be considered as a “reactive tool” (Bove, 2009, p. 71) facilitating practitioners' collective reflections and discussions that ultimately let emerge their voices, and those of other educational community members. Through such method of data collection, images are contextualized, rendered as concrete and subjected to inquiry. Video-analysis poised to become an innovative method for professional development in ECEC settings, as it solicits

and center participants' voices, increases their consciousness and empower them (Bove, 2009).

This method of inquiry derives from Tobin and Davidson (1990) pioneering work on video-cued ethnography to study ECEC settings and educators' practices through a critical polyvocal discourse between scholars and practitioners. The authors videotaped narratives of *typical days* in preschools as starting points for discussion. Such research strategy is designed to empower teachers to speak directly and *talk back* to the researchers' interpretation of phenomena (Tobin & Davidson, 1990). In so doing, the authors create a forum where hegemonic interpretative authority of scholars can be contested and enriched with the practitioners' perspective.

This method has been subsequently adopted in cross-cultural studies exploring ECEC services in different countries: *Preschool in Three Cultures. China, Japan and United States*, published by Tobin, Wu, and Davidson in 1989, the revised version published in a peer reviewed journal by Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa (2004) and later as a book (2009), and the recent study investigating intercultural education in ECEC services in five countries (France, UK, Italy, Germany and the United States) (Tobin, 2016). In the Italian context, the study of Cescato, Bove, and Braga (2015) titled *Video, Formazione e Consapevolezza. Intrecci metodologici* (Video, Training and Awareness. Methodological Plots) highlights the possibilities of video-analysis and video research in supporting educators' professional development in ECEC services. The study advances the thesis that video-analysis for sustaining professionals can be more effective by using different research/training tools, for example visual and textual tools. Findings from this research highlight that video recording in ECEC services is a powerful tool to analyze the service's routines, interactions, and educators and children's positionality. Attention to how such aspects intersect within the service is crucial to foster practitioners' professionalism, in terms of observation and description, and critical thinking about practices (intentions, theoretical perspective, emotional and personal aspects). In their study, Cescato et al. (2015) have used individual and collective discussions as a reaction to the projection of videos.

3.2. Video-Analysis to Address Issues of Diversity and Inclusion

Research shows that video-analysis and video recordings can be used as research methods to tackle issues of diversity and inclusion within ECEC settings (Mantovani, 2007; Pea, Barron, & Derry, 2009; Tobin, Arzubiaga, & Adair, 2013). The cross-cultural research coordinated by Joseph Tobin titled *Children Crossing Borders*, whose findings are published in international journal and books (Tobin, 2004; 2016; Tobin, Arzubiaga, & Adair, 2013), and within Italian journals (Bove, 2007; Mantovani, 2007), shows how ECEC services in five cities namely Milan, Paris, Berlin, Birmingham and Phoenix respond to the presence of children of recent im/migrants. The scope of the research is to understand what im/migrant, non-im/migrant parents and practitioners think about ECEC services within the five countries considered. Video recording and analysis is specifically used to center the voice of multiply marginalized children in the ECEC services of the host countries. Subsequently videos are watched and discussed by mixed group of parents, im/migrant and non-im/migrant, and practitioners (Bove, 2007; Mantovani, 2007; Tobin, 2004; Tobin et al., 2013; Tobin, Mantovani, & Bove, 2010). The opportunity of observing, and mutually understanding different models of education contributes to expand practitioners' pedagogical philosophies. In fact, they can interpret differently children's transitions and settlement within the services, free and structured activities and conflict resolutions.

The design and findings of the studies explored so far highlight how video-analysis has been applied to let the positive tensions emerging from the research-informed professional development. The following section highlights the methodology and the research process developed for the Italian case study.

4. Methodology

The methodological approach adopted by the research team for conducting the Italian case-study is *Ricerca-Form-Azione* (Balduzzi & Lazzari, 2018), whereby the elements of video-analysis recalled in the section above were used along with pedagogical guidance. The combination of video-analysis and pedagogical guidance sustains practitioners' critical reflection on enacted practice and, ultimately, generates change toward more inclusive practice within the ECEC settings (Peeters & Sharmahd, 2014).

The *Ricerca-Form-Azione* approach – developed over the last decade by a group of Italian educational scholars (Asquini, 2018) – strives to connect research (*ricerca*) and professional development (*formazione in servizio*), by engaging practitioners and teachers in the experimentation of innovative educational practices (*azione*). Its main feature is precisely the involvement of ECEC teachers and practitioners as co-researchers, working side by side with academics. They are engaged in collective reflection processes aimed at generating transformative change within educational institutions starting from situational analysis, data collection and interpretation. This leads to joint planning, documentation and evaluation of experimental projects. Given the participatory nature of the research process, a particular emphasis was placed on ethical issues for ensuring that the actions undertaken within the projects would be respectful of the intentionality of participants – namely practitioners and children – and contribute to enhance their agency (Mortari & Mazzoni, 2010).

4.1. Research Design

The project develops in three subsequent stages. In the first phase of the project, narrative observations of children in interactions with practitioners and peers were carried out by the researchers in order to familiarize with children's and adults' everyday life experiences within each setting (Kalkman & Clark, 2017). Fieldnotes were transcribed and analysed thematically by the research team in advance of the meetings with practitioners where video-recording were to be discussed. Parallel to this process, video-recording of relevant educational activities were carried out by practitioners' teams in each setting: in some cases, educators and teachers were filming their colleagues during co-presence, in others, the pedagogical coordinator of the centre was involved in filming as well. After a certain number of video-fragments were collected, two collective meetings were held within each setting in order to select the most relevant ones to be showed and discussed with the researchers.

In the second phase of the project, the selected video-fragments were watched and collectively discussed within each team together with the researchers (four meetings in total). The role of researchers during these meetings – involving practitioners as well as pedagogical coordinators – was to facilitate the process of problematization of observed situations, the elicitation of implicit assumptions underlying enacted practices and the co-construction of new meanings guiding pedagogical transformation (Bove & Cescato, 2013).

In the third phase of the project – which is currently ongoing – action-research plans are to be elaborated by each team under the joint guidance of researchers and pedagogical coordinators in order to increase the inclusiveness of ECEC practice within the settings involved.

4.2. Participants

The participants for the Italian case study, conducted as part of the *TRACKs* project, are educators and teachers (total number: 16) and pedagogical coordinators (total number: 2), selected from two ECEC services located in the city of Bologna. The educators and teachers have been working in the two services for a period varying between two and ten years, and the pedagogical coordinators have been working for ten or more years. The two services are located in two different areas of the city of Bologna: the first service (service 1) is in a middle and upper middle class urban area, while the second is located in a working class inner city area, densely populated by families at the intersections of race, migratory status, citizenship, lower socio-economic status and disability.

The services are managed by CADIAI. We have decided to carry out the study partnering with CADIAI, an educational social cooperative, which is already applying the integrated system, because it has a long-standing collaboration with the University of Bologna and the research team for in-service training provision for educators. In addition, educators, teachers and pedagogical coordinators were willing to undertake the experimentation of video-recording and video-analysis. Pedagogical coordinators within CADIAI services have a leading role, and they are responsible to carry out team supervision, professional development, and craft the pedagogical aims and activities for the services. Also, CADIAI had a specific interest on the issue of inclusion, since its services are located in urban settings, characterized by a high number of children from migrant and lower social class background. Within the case study conducted, ECEC professional from CADIAI assumed the role of co-researchers, as they themselves gathered the data and recorded the videos in their own settings.

5. Findings (I): Research Team Observations in ECEC Settings

As outlined in the methodology section, observations have been used during the research process to facilitate the emergence of teachers' actions, children's initiatives, and to give the researchers the possibility to familiarize with the settings. For the Italian case study, observations within the CADIAI services have been used to triangulate data gathered through practitioners' video-recording (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). For the purpose of this paper, we consider only the themes emerged from the observations carried out in the two ECEC settings targeted, for the age group 1-2 years old and 3-6 years old. Such themes have also been discussed during the second phase of the research process, constituted by video-elicited discussions, or focus groups with educators.

5.1. Dealing with children's verbal and non-verbal interactions

Devoting attention to verbal and non-verbal interactions of children both during free play or structured activities has been one of the most recurring themes from the observations. The research team witnessed that during daily interactions the educators were verbally interacting more and offering more detailed instructions to children whose home language

is Italian. An example of such critical instances is described below, as reported in researcher's observation journal:

“Y. and B., both from migrant background, are sitting at the table together with other three children and the educator, leading a playdough activity. Y. is sitting beside the educator whereas B. is sitting in front of her. All children are deeply involved in the activity and use a variety of tools to manipulate the playdough (shapes, rolling pins, knives). The educator leads the activity: she verbally describes to the children how the playdough can be manipulated and seeks to stimulate children to tell her what shapes they are creating. Her attention is particularly focused on T., the youngest toddler in the group, whose language (Italian as mother tongue) is emerging: ‘What did you make, a ball? Tell me with your voice!’ She waits for his reply a few second until the child repeats the word. Y. and B., whose mother tongue is not Italian, are less present in verbal exchanges with the educator although they are deeply engaged in the activity and observe intensively the actions of the educators and peers (in contrast with other children whose attention is mostly focused on the educator). B. call the attention of the educator by making a sound and the educator asks her: ‘What do you want to tell me B.?’ B. is about to utter a word when educator's attention is caught by G. who call her loudly: ‘Look I made a snake!’” (Observation 2, 2019, January 29).

The lack of awareness of language and body interactions educator-toddler and of children's intentionality can have negative consequences on the way in which children develop their language, their capacity to ask questions and seek for help. Through the verbal and non-verbal interactions depicted in the excerpt above, practitioners unintentionally display a bias towards emerging bilingual children by providing them with less opportunities for interactions compared to other Italian children whose language is also emerging. The manifestation of educators and teachers' explicit and implicit biases towards verbal and non-verbal interactions with children from migrant background reflects processes of marginalization depicted by the raciolinguistic framework (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Raciolinguistic focuses on the intersections of race and language to call attention to the ways in which linguistic and communication practices are de/valued based on the white listening subject's racialization of the marginalized speaker (Alim, Rickford, & Ball, 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017). In recent years, language has become one of the most charged and polarizing cultural practices embodied by (im)migrants. As such, it has become a tool for educators and teachers to establish inclusion and, more often than not, social and educational exclusion. Children of speakers of minoritized languages may be targeted not only for the language they speak at home but also for the (im)migrant statuses that are superimposed upon them.

5.2. Involvement and non-involvement of children in the activities

During the observation process, the research team concentrated also on focus and proximity when engaging children who might lose attention structured during activities. In fact, parallel to structured group activities, free play also takes place starting from children's initiatives. It has been noted, however, that the latter is seen mostly as a peripheral activity which tend to be devalued in its potential for children's socialization, learning and linguistic development. The excerpt below offers an interesting example for such argumentation:

“three children play in the kitchen corner and try to interact with me [researcher2], offering me something to eat and pretending to prepare coffee. A. [from migrant background] makes various attempts to participate in their play through non-verbal communication (observing, getting close to the table), but several times the children playing in the kitchen corner tell

him not to touch the toy cutleries on the table. When A. takes the coffee maker with which M. was playing in order to catch her attention, a conflict starts. The educator asks to A. and M. “What is happening here?”, without waiting for an answer, and she immediately proceeds asking: “I didn’t see, who had the coffee maker first?”. Looking at the educator, A. leaves the coffee maker on the table and then he moves away with two little cups in his hands. Then the educator tells him repeatedly (from the distance) that the cups need to stay in the kitchen, they are not to be carried around. A. continues to wonder around the classroom with the cups, like if he was looking for someone to play with, but all the three other children in the room are busy in individual play [...]. At this point A. starts playing on his own with soft construction, leaving the cups beside him, on the ground. Then the educator picks up the cups from the floor and, without interacting with A., brings them back to the kitchen” (Observation 1, 2019, January 22).

The episode reported above reveal the need for a more intentional educational mediation of child-initiated play, for the purpose of *giving voice* to children’s non-verbal communication initiatives and scaffolding peer relationship within the group through guided participation (Picchio & Mayer, 2019). This is the case specifically true for children from migrant background who tend to be often left at the margins, when a group of children is involved in adult-directed learning activities.

All of these themes emerged from the observations have been then discussed collectively during the focus groups and video projections with educators and pedagogical coordinators of the two services considered. The following section demonstrates the affordances of video-analysis to specifically provide in-service educators and teachers with feedback in relation to these and other themes captured in the videos that they recorded.

6. Findings (II): Video-elicited discussions

Following the period of observation of the research team, focus groups and video-elicited discussions with practitioners were held at the two services considered. The discussions, two per each service for a total of four focus groups, were organized through a partnership between researchers and pedagogical coordinators, once practitioners were satisfied with the collected video-recorded materials. It is important to note that the research team did not interfere in the decision-making process of what videos to share. The practitioners and pedagogical coordinators chose the videos that were more significant for them, in line with the general objectives of the project. This has given practitioners the power to be purposeful in their reflection on the most relevant practices implemented in daily life within the ECEC services where they are working (Tobin & Davidson, 1990).

This section will focus on two of the emerging themes from the discussions with practitioners, following the collective analysis of two videos. The first theme focuses on making ECEC practices inclusive by focusing on children’s unspoken intentionality. The second theme focuses on how children’s multiple identities and belongings can be legitimized and fostered through adult mediation, guiding the process of co-creation of collective meanings within children’s groups. These themes are inextricably linked to some of the ones emerged from the observations, that is why they were all discussed during the focus groups, with the research team mentioning what they have witnessed while in the setting. The following sections reports some of the quotes from practitioners during three different moments of the analysis of the videos: after the first screening, after the second screening and after a third screening. Gathering practitioners’ impressions after watching

videos several time and discussing it collectively with their colleagues and research team, helps understanding the shift in their attitudes towards children and their implicit biases (Tobin et al., 2010).

6.1. From the margin to the center: making visible children's un-spoken intentionality

The first video considered for the analysis presented in this paper has been recorded by a practitioner in one of the services considered, during a sensory activity planned for children aged 1-2 years old. The video considered captures one of the educators for this age group moving to the space destined for the nature workshop with four children. She holds on one hand a child from migrant background and on the other the youngest toddler of the group, who is not walking steadily yet. The video records the interactions of the children with natural unstructured materials within the sensory room, as well as the interactions between children and educator. According to the practitioners, the sensory room is designed for smaller children who are not yet ready for symbolic play. Practitioners shared with the research team this particular video because – given the small age of the children – they felt the necessity to structure activities in the sensory room in order to avoid children being left to wonder around. Thus, the overarching objective of the activity filmed in the video that was collectively discussed was that of attempting to organize a structured activity for children to experience a sensory footpath within the room. The video-elicited discussion touched important themes, such as the conceptualization of children's interactions with objects and their peers, how free the children are to express themselves in the sensory room, and what it means for a toddler to participate in an activity. Following the multiple projections of the video, the discussion concentrated on how practitioners' attention tend to be more focused on the structuring of the activity itself, rather than on scaffolding children's intentionality in the use of the space and materials. This might contribute to reinforce practitioners' bias around who is participating and who is not and linking certain individual characteristics (being from migrant background, being at an earlier stage of development) to the lack of participation in a structured activity. Video-elicited discussion has then been beneficial in addressing practitioners' attitudes and beliefs about certain children and helping them modifying their approach towards children's intentionality.

The following excerpts offer examples of video-elicited discussion with the practitioners. The research team prompted the reflection by asking the practitioners why they chose to show this specific video. The educator (from now on Educator 2), who was recording the video, argues:

“sensory workshop and any other manipulative activities are usually used with children at that small age. Very often we live the children exploring the materials on their own, after taking out all the materials. So, we recorded this video, in this particular workshop, because we wanted to show what happens when the activities and play time is a bit more structured, especially for children who are very young. So, the objective was really to give children more structured guidance on how to approach the materials, especially considering that they are small, and their attention span is not prolonged. Ehm there is F., who is very small and that needs always to be followed through the activity and he cannot do things by himself, and he doesn't interact much with other children” (Educator 2, service 1).

The video has been recorded to show how more structured activities with diverse children aged 1-2 can look like, instead of always leaving the toddlers to play freely in the workshop space. It seems particularly interesting how Educator 2 talk about the limited attention span for children in this group, but immediately singles out the migrant child and the youngest

child of the group, describing their lack of attention, need of support and independent attitudes almost as problematic. Such view seemed to be shared, at least initially by the rest of the practitioners in the focus group, and Educator 2 continues her discussion focusing on the age difference of the children in the interaction that has been video-recorded and how their cultural differences impact the way they interact. Particularly she affirms:

“there are a couple of children who are older and two are younger. The first two they participate [following the sensory footpath], and they interact, the other two M. and F. *they don't seem... like if they are in their own world, they do not want to engage in activities*. F. is *always* doing something different. He doesn't interact” (Educator 2, service 1, emphasis added).

Educator 2 quote reveals a certain bias both towards children from other culture, whose parents speak different languages at home, and that therefore might be confused in following instructions in Italian, as well as children who are developmentally beyond others. She seems to problematize the fact that the two children in question are independent and they do not always want to engage in a certain kind of interaction, which fits the norm in Educator 2 view. Thus, the intentionality of children that in the video-fragment manifested a shared interest for exploring and balancing a curve wooden block left on the floor, goes unnoticed as practitioners have predetermined expectations about what inclusive interactions are supposed to look like (Elder & Migliarini, 2019).

By watching the same video, a second and a third time, and following the collective discussions of all the practitioners, pedagogical coordinators and researchers, it seemed as if the educators' bias towards the intentional participation of F. and M. to the activity started to be gradually deconstructed. After the second projection, Educator 3 affirms:

“I think F. *is always present in the activity, but I feel he is in his own dimension*” (Educator 3, service 1, emphasis added).

Once again, this view of children as independent and manifesting their own intentionality seems to be perceived as problematic and their intentions devalued in the context of the group. Educator 2 continues to agree:

“yeah I don't see the interaction between children, *I see the interest in the same object*” (Educator 2, service 1, emphasis added).

The only practitioners who disagrees is Educator 5 who affirms:

“I disagree. I think children interact, and they feel safe and comfortable in these spaces. I think that they DO interact” (Educator 5, service 1, emphasis added).

After the third screening of the video, Educator 5 reinforces her disagreement and her view about a positive and comfortable interactions of all children, respecting their differences:

“sometimes you don't see the positive things or actions when you are busy in carrying out an activity...When you look at the videos, *F. is actually doing some positive stuff, trying out the materials and such*” (Educator 5, service 1, emphasis added).

These tensions in the discussion generated by some specific fragments of the video highlight how video-analysis can be a powerful tool to promote ECEC practitioners' awareness of children's different approaches in interactions, and to reflect collectively on children's intentionality in order to understand more deeply children's actions and initiatives. Additionally, video-recording and video-analysis is extremely helpful in providing grounded feedback to in-service educators, who often are not aware of the effects of consolidated practices.

6.2. Reading as an inclusive practice: promoting diversity and legitimating identities

Educators in the two services considered for the case study have shown a significant interest in using videos to record reading activities, especially with children from older age groups. During the video-elicited discussions, practitioners shared that reading is an activity that forms a central part of the daily routine, and one which is done even multiple times during the same day. Reading is particularly used in the service and the classroom with a high number of children from migrant background to help them achieve Italian language proficiency. For the purpose of this paper, we have chosen to report the analysis of a video filming a reading activity with children aged 3-6, whose objective was not only promote language but also diversity and inclusion via children's identification with the characters of the book in question, titled *Children of the World*.

The video starts with Educator 1 sitting at the center of a seemingly well-formed circle of six children. She started by illustrating the book cover and reading the title out loud to the children. At times she interrupts the description of the book cover to remind the children the rules of reading time, and she makes sure that everybody listens and sits down, so that all children can see. The children, on the other hand seem very excited about this book, and the reading activity. They started pointing at the book cover with enthusiasm recognizing that the characters look like them. Such identification makes them extremely engaged throughout the whole length of the story. During the discussion, after the video projection, the researcher prompted Educator 1 as to why they decided to record that specific activity. She argues:

“this is an activity that we do every day with children, so seeing and analyzing how children respond and how it is carried out it's something that ehm it is interesting for us, if you compared to other activities we do here daily. This is an activity that we do even more than once per day. Then I think that when we read, we don't have a deep perspective about children, because we are busy reading or making sure that there is a good level of attention and listening. So, we miss a lot of things that can be captured through video. This for me helps reflecting about how a practice can be inclusive, and ehm the objective of the activity was reflecting on diversity, maintaining a dialogue with the book and with the children” (Educator 1, service 1).

Educator 1 puts an emphasis on how video-recording and video-analysis can be a useful mean to provide feedback on a consolidated practice, such as reading, that can be used to create an inclusive environment, promote language development, but also address important issues such as diversity. From the outset of the discussion, Educator 1 shows a deep understanding of the importance of video for her development as a professional in ECEC setting, recognizing that the video has the potential to grasp what practitioners cannot capture while they are directly involved in the interaction with children. It can provide insights on interactions that may go unnoticed, and which may lead to children changing their behavior and attitude, as they feel that they are not given sufficient attention (Tobin et al., 2010).

Educator 1 preoccupation about how to carry out the reading activity while being cognizant of children's interaction and intentionality has been discussed for a fair amount of time, during the focus group. With the prompts of the researchers, the educators understood that video-analysis can help paying attention to children's intentionality, but also reflect on the activity's objective: like in the case reported above reading a book on differences, increases a dialogue on difference. Video-analysis also help practitioners in this case in understanding how to balance children's engagement and intervention with the actual reading of the story. During the focus group attention was given as to how the video

solicited the reflection about how to give everyone the floor and try actively listen to the children.

Lastly, a further important issue that has been discussed by the practitioners relates to how videotaping reading activities has helped educators understanding what they could do better to further develop children's linguistic capacities, while enacting inclusive practices. The pedagogical coordinator of service 1 speaks very clearly to this matter:

“our main objective when we started recording videos was to concentrate on actions that would make our practices related to language learning better. In one of our classrooms we have 99% children from migrant background that need to learn Italian to be able to succeed in primary school. So, video-recording and video-analysis helped us understanding what we can do better in our practice for teaching Italian but also [...] focusing not only on our attitudes but also on the children's intentionality and interaction” (Pedagogical Coordinator 1, service 1).

This account shows the potential of using video-analysis as a tool to provide pedagogical guidance to practitioners and assist them in their in-service professional development. Along these lines, it shows how it generates fruitful discussions among the educators and other professionals, assisting them in (re)thinking their consolidated practices. As Tobin and Davidson (1990) argue, what really counts in the video-cued polyvocal ethnography, it is not the video in itself, but the discourse that is generated around it.

7. Implications and conclusion

Drawing from a transnational project funded by the Erasmus Plus program, this paper has presented initial findings from the Italian case study based on the analysis of videos and observations carried out in two ECEC services in Bologna, Emilia Romagna. Through a synergy between ECEC services and academic institution, the study intends to re-think initial and in-service training tools and pedagogical supervision for educators and pre-school teachers, in line with the most recent Italian legislative shifts. Particularly the article shed light on the possibilities and challenges that practitioners encounter when using video as a mean to promote active learning and practices rooted in the inclusive paradigm. The article started by exploring the state of the art of PD in ECEC services in Italy, then moved on by analyzing the literature on video-analysis and the most innovative aspects of this method. The findings section focused on two themes emerged from the observations (1. Dealing with children's verbal and non-verbal interactions; 2. Involvement and non-involvement of children in the activities), and from the video-elicited discussions (1. From the margin to the center: making ECEC practices inclusive through children's unspoken intentionality; 2. Reading as an inclusive practice: promoting diversity and legitimating identities).

The paper has attempted to show the benefits of video-elicited discussions and focus groups can be used as powerful tools to sustain the professional growth of in-service educators and pre-school teachers through collective reflection and pedagogical guidance. Video-elicited discussion help professionals reframing professionals' educational objectives, as well as finding possibilities to center children's needs and intentionality, and align them to theirs. In addition, video-elicited discussions help identifying specific moments in which the intentionality of the educators supersedes that of children.

Despite the research design and theoretical framework chosen to carry out such educational research, video recording and video-analysis presents opportunities but also challenges and issues. The first problem that the method of video-analysis, as conceptualized by Tobin and Davidson (1990), is constituted by what should be considered as *typical*. That is the level of representativeness of the school or service chosen as the context in which to make the video (Bove, 2009). To what extent shall one consider a school as *typical* or not *typical* for video-recording purposes? It is hard to imagine that a school can represent all the schools in a country, nor it is possible to imagine that a school is sufficiently typical (ibidem). By showing recordings of a school, it is possible to measure its level of representativeness through the reactions of the audience and of the research participants (Tobin & Davidson, 1990). As such, it is the audience and the participant who ensure the researchers about how *typical* an institution is.

A further limitation of video-analysis is represented by the editing of the videos, to be able to consider them as reactive tools for collective group discussion (Mantovani, 2007). Editing a video for a collective discussion requires the collaboration of experts in film editing, who understand sequences as discourses that can start other discourses (Pennacini, 2005). For this purpose, the experts should also have poetic competences to recur to narrative strategies that make the final product effective.

This study is limited in the number of services, educators and children targeted. Also, it represents an intervention carried out in a specific location and rather short time, thus we are not in the position of generalizing the research findings. However, we can argue that video-analysis and video-elicited discussions have the potential to shift the paradigm of teacher education, and it promises to become a universal tool for documenting educators' practices in relation to issues of behavior, diversity, management, interaction and inclusion. It also poises to become a powerful archival tool for ECEC, and all educational services.

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