

**3. BASIC SIGNS: manipulation and writing
CONVENTIONAL SIGNS**

In the learning of reading and writing, the pupils can be 4 or 5 years in age, be starting the primary school or be teenagers with problems.

Independently from the pupils' age, it is necessary to verify first that they can reach skill in the management of the graphical expression, at least as with Sara, Fiorenza and Stefano. Then, quietly, it will be possible to introduce them to reading and writing.

The approach with adults belonging to a group of alphabetization will be different. Often they are not or little familiar with the graphical tools and, at the same time, they are in a hurry to learn how to read and write. In these cases, therefore, it is preferable to start immediately with manipulation of and writing with the basic signs.

3.1 The sign and the humans *

It can be useful to wander about the world of the signs in order to make the child to understand the origin of what is called alphabet. By observing ancient panels, we can understand that when a group of human beings departs from the used signs without having the time of telling and transmitting to someone their relationships with those signs, an alphabet can die and be lost in the ocean of the shapes. And, nevertheless, in our mind the traced signs still recall human beings who were communicating to one another, but we cannot find the key anymore to that talking, which appears to be mysterious and incomprehensible to us and makes us excluded and deaf.

	•	•	•	•	Vocall facerte
Vocall	∩	V	↑	↗	
Nasall	∩		↑		
•	∩				
•	⊙	∩	∩	∩	
•/•	∩	∩	∩	∩	
•	∩	∩	∩	∩	
•	∩	∩		∩	
•	∩	∩	∩	∩	
•	∩	∩	∩	∩	
•	∩	∩	∩	∩	
•/•	∩	∩	∩	∩	
•/•	∩	∩	∩	∩	
•	∩	∩	∩	∩	

Sillaba di valore ignote

Fig. 88 - Il sillabario hittita arcaico

The Hittite syllabarium according to Gelb (...).

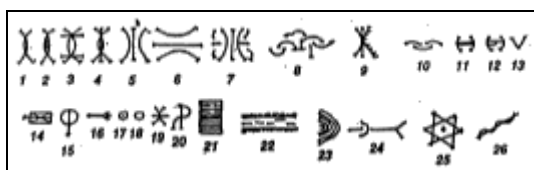
* D.Diringer, *L'alfabeto nella storia della civiltà*, Giunti Barbera, 1969.

SEGI	SEGI	SEGI
A A A P P A P P P A A	M M M M M M M M	C C C P P P O P
E E E	P P P P P P P P P P	P P P
A A A P P C	T T T T T T T T	R R R R R R
D D D A	Q Q Q Q Q Q	S S S S S S
E E E E E E E E E E	W W W W W W	T T T
F F F	X X X	Y Y Y Y
I I I	K K K K K K	Q Q Q Q Q Q
B H K K	L L L L L L	A A A T T T Y Y

Alphabets from Beotia

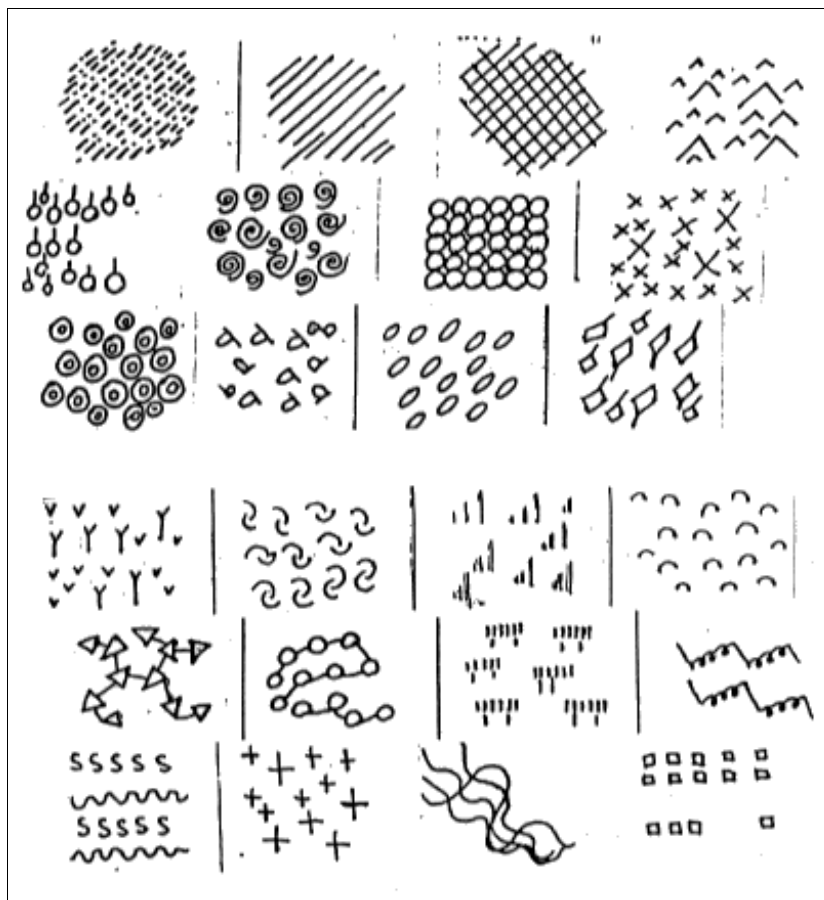


Pseudo-hieroglyphic inscription from Byblos and another aenigmatic inscription from Byblos.



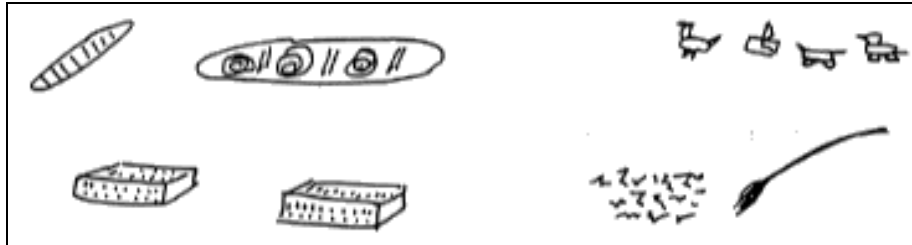
Some signs from the Nsibidi writing.

After having traced freely several signs, the teacher can ask the child "What do you see?", "The flying saucer". "Or else?". "The doughnuts". "Or else?". "The dishes". Etc..



May some of these signs be employed to invent an alphabet?

The teacher conveys short accounts on the relations between man and signs to the child:
 The dashes and the spirals on the pre-historic rocks or on the Australian churingas;
 The peoples who were writing by means of drawings;
 The peoples who were writing on pages made of bricks (what heavy exercise books!);
 The Chinese who write by a paint brush;
 The computer which analyzes the signs with its hardware.



The signs and the press

Here are some pages of a newspaper. Some titles will be read aloud by the teacher a bit emphatically and then:

"Dad, Mum, brothers and sisters, they all read the newspaper. Why can't the children do it as well? These are words written in Italian, not in Chinese!!! Halas, hurry up children, let's read!!!"



These strange exhortations to the class can create a bit of embarrassment and excitement. Someone would lose his/her temper with the teacher and would cry out "But, alas, when are you going to teach us how to read and write?".

IMMEDIATELY!!!!

3.2 The basic signs

Before working with the pupils, it is better to go through the basic signs together and plan an operating system.

The basic signs selected are no more than seven and are conformable to the characteristics previously mentioned and considered useful for our aim:

- they are already used in the child's graphical expression;
- they are introduced by ideographical matchings to impress the child with significance;
- they are amenable to consistent subdivisions, which can be explained by use;
- they build up the symbols of the language by assembling two or three parts, thereby with a very low degree of difficulty;
- while building up the word they allow order and proportion in height and width because this is prevailing in a common printed page, so it is possible to approach any text, from a book to a newspaper;
- they can be arranged as an independent material for the composition, writing and reading, and can require the active participation of the child.



3.3 Operating scheme

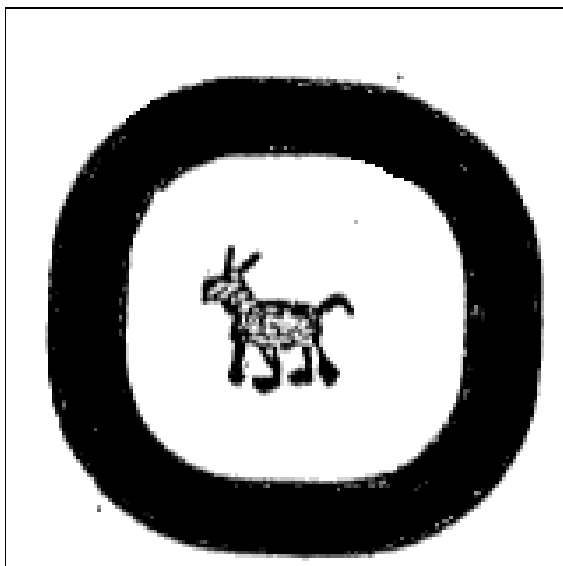
It is necessary to face the problems relative to the sign and then to the sign connected to the sound. The points to examine are shown in the following scheme:

<p><u>Sign</u></p> <p>(composition of the conventional sign by means of the basic signs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visualization and graphical representation - ideographic matching - movement and graphical representation - writing of the basic sign - composition of the conventional sign - difficulties and appropriate operations (interventions) <p>Writing of the conventional signs; shapes = exploration similar shapes = differentiation</p>
<p><u>Sign and sound</u></p> <p>(Composition of the word by vowels and consonants; translation)</p>	<p>Noises and sounds: listening, recording; production, imitation Sound and movement - sound and drawing- sequences, rhythms similar sounds = differentiation</p> <p>listening and production of the alphabetical sound word = vowels + consonants = word</p> <p>Translation from sound to sign Listening, composition and graphical reproduction (writing)</p> <p>Translation from sign to sound: visualization and synthetic verbal reproduction (reading)</p> <p>Difficulties</p> <p>Development of the graphical and verbal expression.</p>

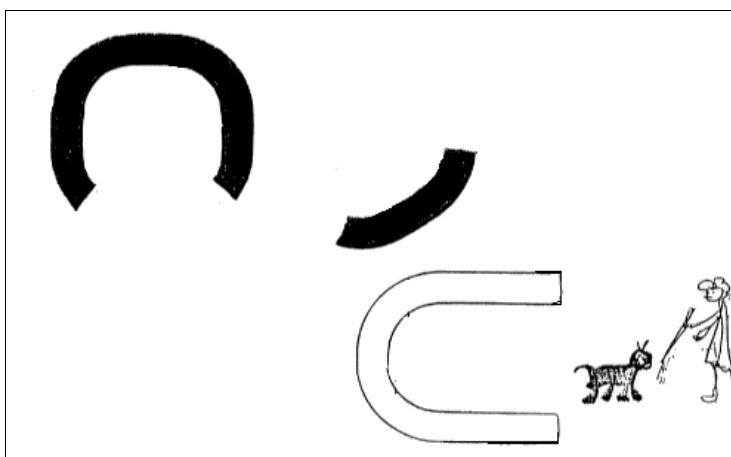
3.4 Basic signs: recognition

The teacher and the children build up an animal with clay or else the teacher gets hold of a small plastic animal which will be used for an ideographical matching.

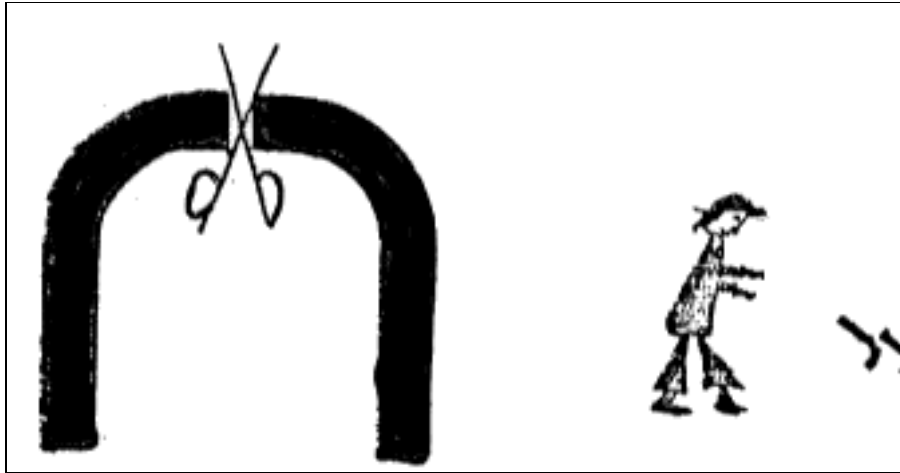
Now the children are given a "closed" as an enclosure with the small animal positioned in the centre.



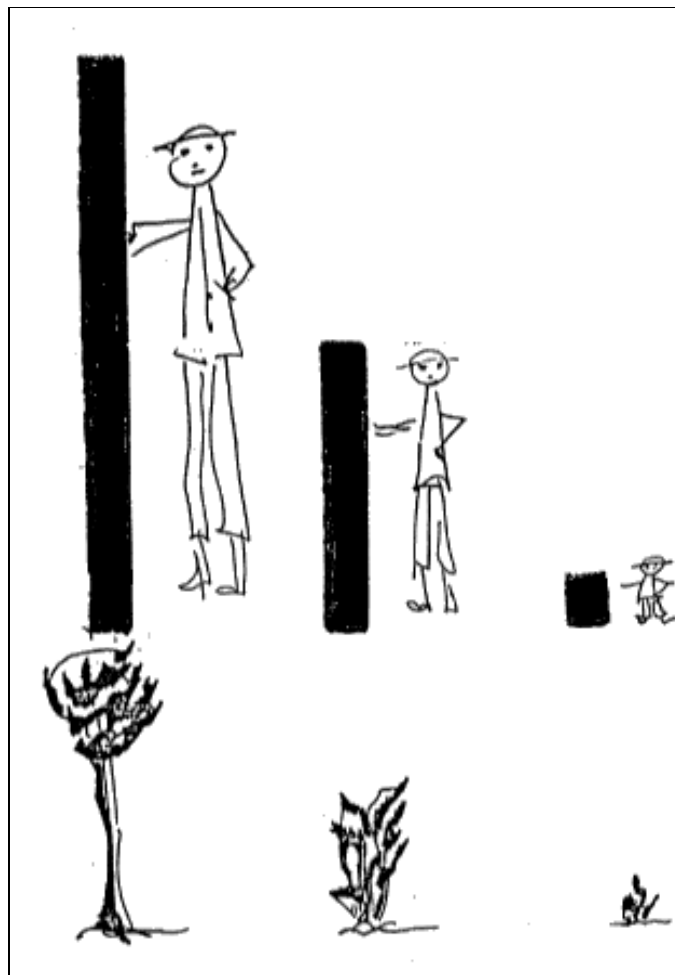
With the scissor an opening is made to open the enclosure. The operation must be done by the child, even if this may be difficult for his/her tiny hands.



The animal can go out and can be pushed gently by a small stick.










The enclosure is now useless, it can be cut into two pieces and set aside.



Also the sign used as a small stick to push the small animal out of the enclosure is now subdivided with scissors: three pieces are therefore obtained which can be related to the height of the children at the nursery school (tall, medium, small), or else to the trees (big, medium, small), to the grass (just sprouted, medium, tall), etc..

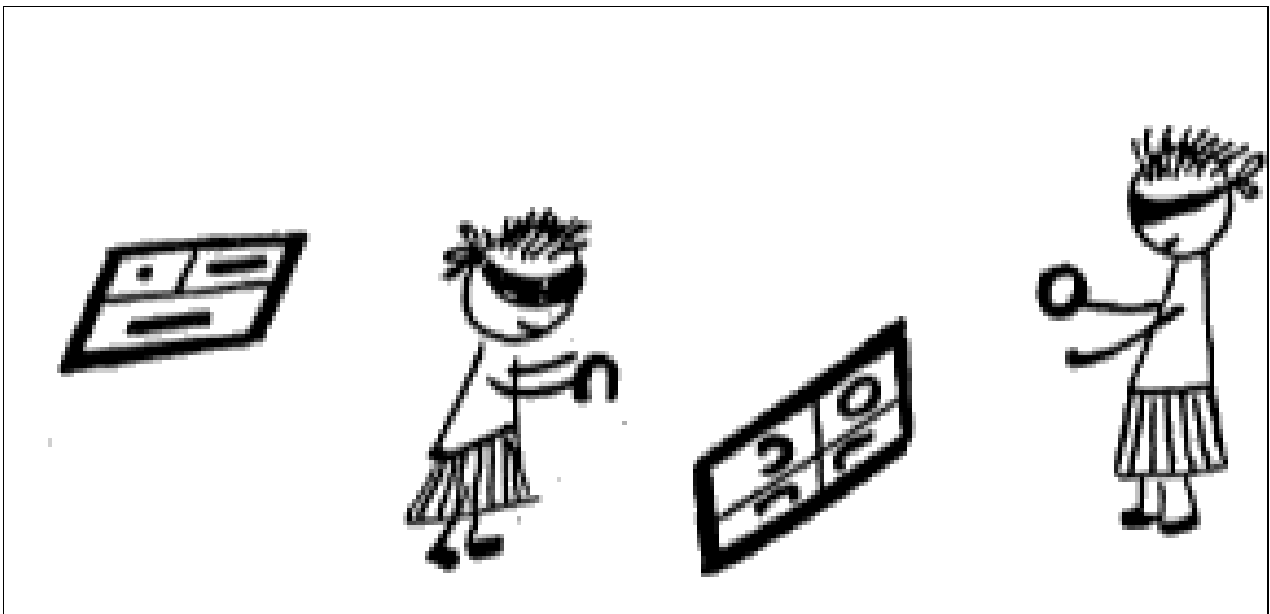
Therefore we have obtained 7 signs which will be put neatly in a pigeon-hole container or else in seven containers of any type.

Let's play to the recognition.

Some pieces are taken out of the boxes and the child will have to put them back properly. In a class the teacher gives seven signs to any pupil. The signs, positioned on the table, will be explored with closed eyes, or, kept in a pocket, they will be found and recognized by the touch and taken out at the teacher's command:

" From the pocket let's take a "closed", now an "open", a "broken", ... Let's grab a big, a medium, a small, ...



3.5 Shapes and movements *

What is obtained by the basic signs is also experienced by the movement.

The children and the teacher stand up and go to play.

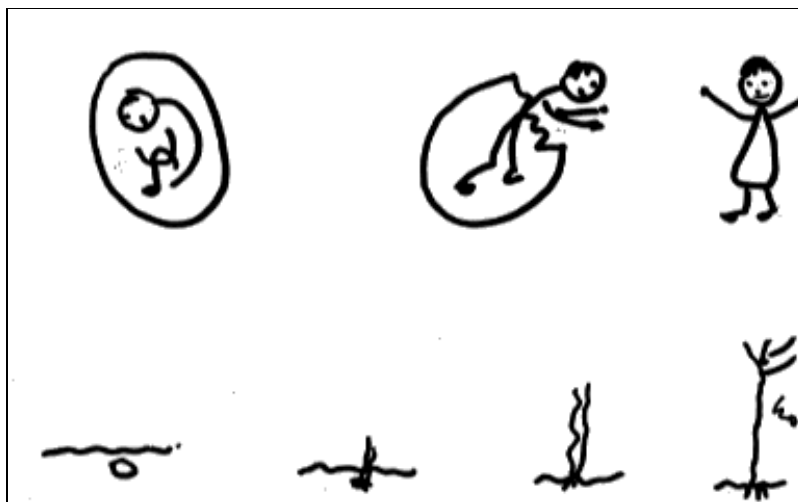
"Let's think about curled shapes. Let's try to pull back in ourselves, let's become smaller and smaller. With bended knees, let's bend to form something closed: the egg of a hen, of a canary, of an ostrich".

Little by little the teacher speaks about the possibilities of a growth, of the employment of the surrounding space.

"Let's try and break the shell. Let's put the hand, the head, the chest out. Let's stretch, let's stand up, we are free!"

These actions may be highlighted by means of sounds and words which come out spontaneously, like clapping the hands or beating a drum.

"Again crouched: we are a seed underground, then laboriously a small plant sprouts little by little, grows up and becomes a tree".



"The seed sprouting in a soil full of pebbles must force its way upwards or get around the heavy stones. Any inch upwards is a battle: force, tension, twisting, struggle against the pression.

A hero who is trapped in a terrifying mud swamp must conquer wearily his freedom from the quick sand.

An elf who is trapped under a fallen trunk must fight to get free.

The mist is raising above the lake.

A ghost raises from below a rock.

The dancer lightly stands on tiptoe".

* Keyho D. W., *Aesthetics and movement - Journal of the Canadian Association for Health Physical Education and Recreation, Ottawa Ont. 1973-1975*

Again let's play.

Crouched, the head is kept over the knees, the arms around the legs. The teacher knocks at the child's back and asks: "*Who are you?*".

Everyone, in turn, must give a different reply and then will be able to stand up.

"I'm a little rabbit". "Welcome, little rabbit!"

"I'm a monkey." "Welcome, monkey!"

"I'm a little rabbit." "Sorry, the little rabbit already came!", etc..

Once free it is again possible to use the different parts of the body. Therefore let's play with arms, legs, hands and feet.

Hands are moved in a quick way to make people understand they are happy hands, or agitated, nervous, frightened hands; or else quietly, sweetly; little by little they become harsh, bad, tight, closed in a fist or around something. Everything goes by and the hands become again open and happy.

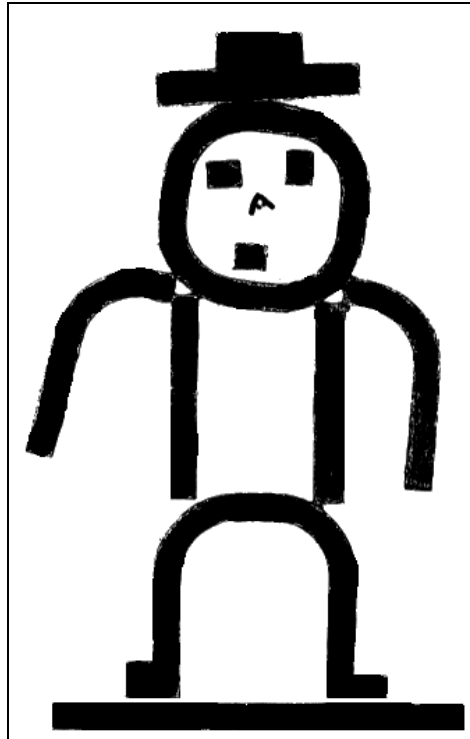
Let's play with the fingers, thereby making up bridges, tunnels, loops, crossings, obstacles.



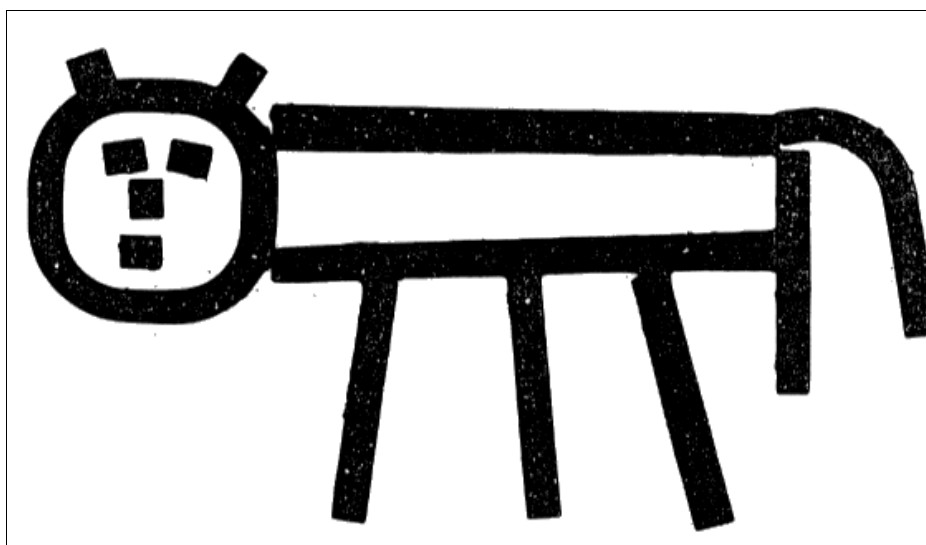
The whole body is elastic, soft, obedient and allows us to compose many shapes.

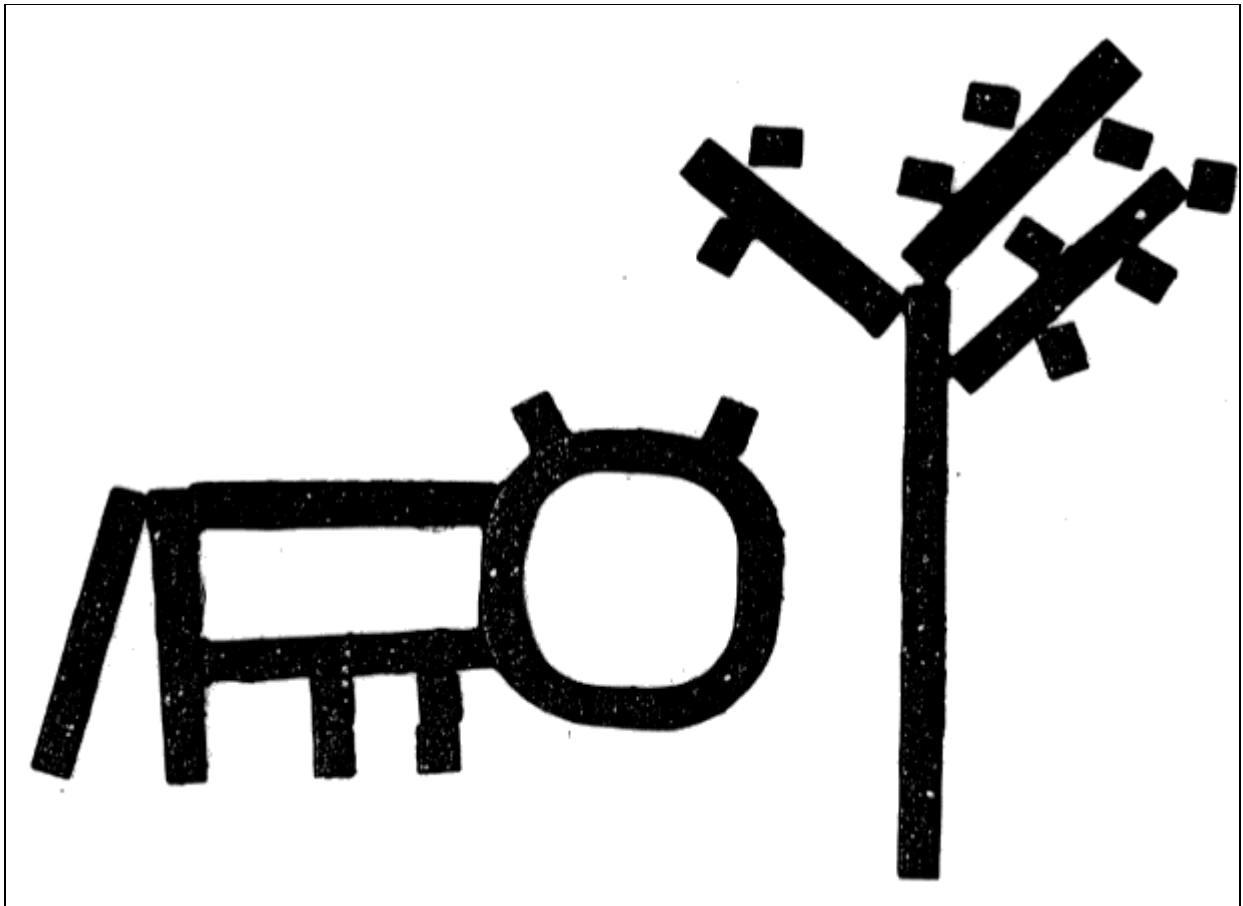


Anytime the children have the basic signs at disposition (if they are not invited to activities programmed by the teacher), they will spontaneously make drawings on the table, they associate and cooperate to have more pieces available. The children are let play quietly, then the teacher passes by, observes their compositions and invites each of them to go and see what the other schoolmates have done. With the same pieces, the others have built up scenes different from one another. At the end, everything is destroyed and the basic signs are put back in their containers.

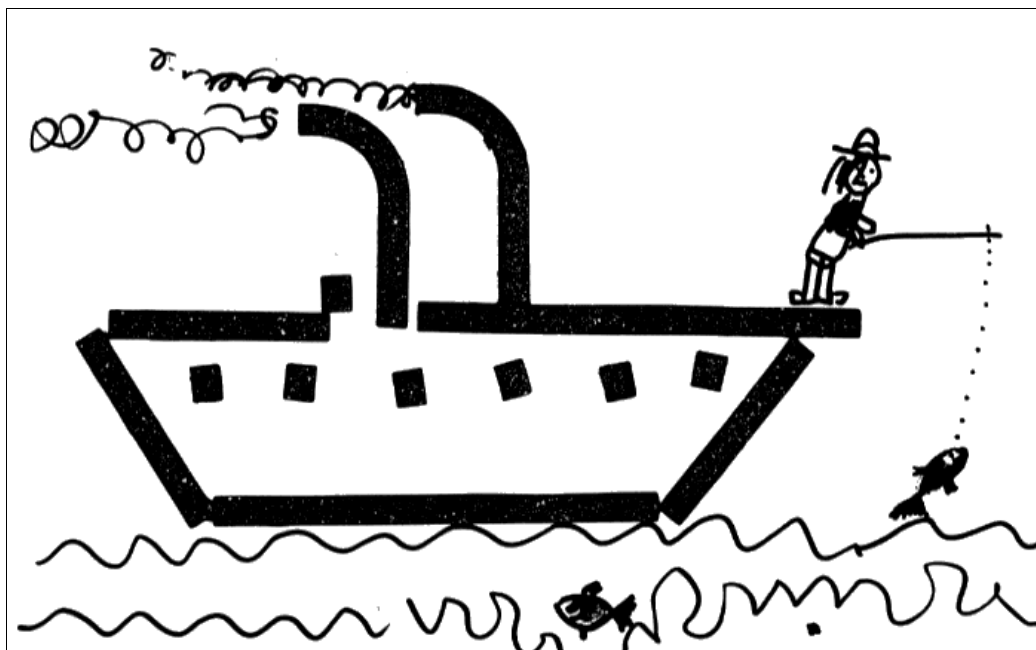


Composition and patchwork by means of basic signs





Composition and patchwork by means of basic signs



Patchwork completed by means of drawing

3.6 Conventional signs

The moment has come to introduce the child to a new use of the basic signs and, in particular, to some matchings useful to build up letters of the alphabet and then words.



a - f - g - t - j = three signs

b - d - e - h - i - m - n - p - q - r - s - u - y - k = two signs

v - z - x - w = repetition of the same sign

By observing the degree of difficulty that the combinations of the signs into alphabetical letters represent for the child, one notes that this difficulty is low, because the different parts to be matched are never more than three.

Therefore we choose the definition "easy combination" for the making of letters and "difficult combination" for the making of words.

3.7 Basic signs and combinations

Easy combination

To introduce the child to the alphabetic combinations, these must be built up in front of him/her on paper sheets or other surfaces. On the sheet the teacher will have to trace a central baseline for the horizontal composition and a small, coloured square on the top as a reference for the vertical direction.



How is the procedure?

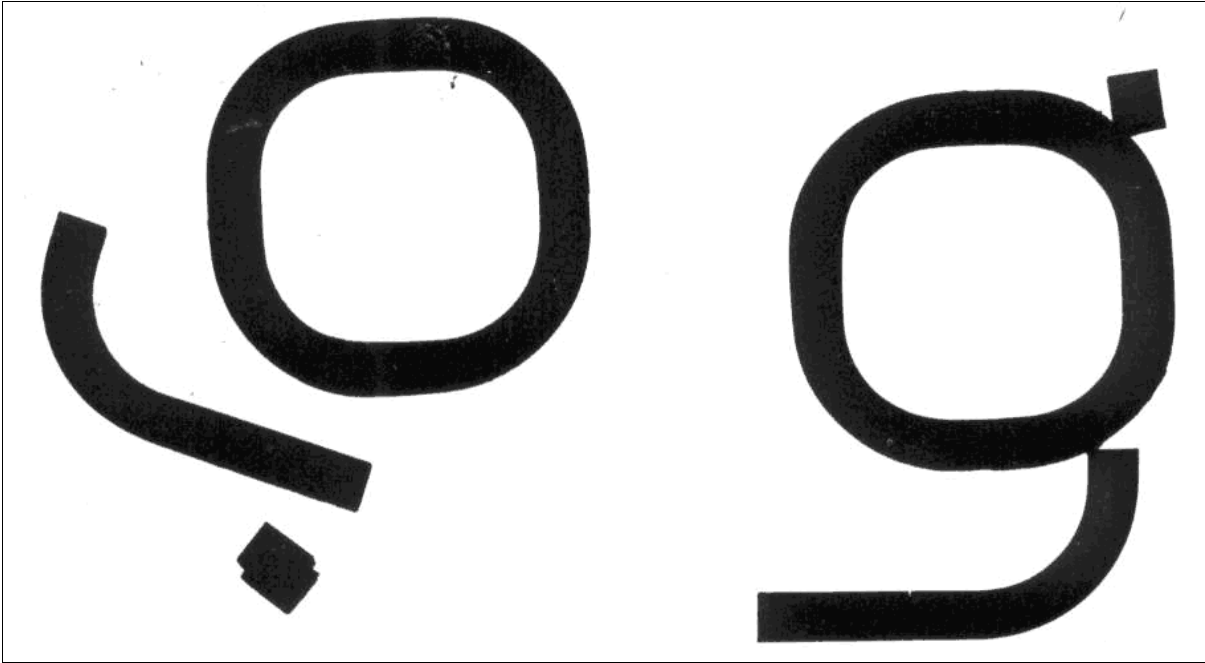
Attached is a number of basic signs made in resistant material. These basic signs can be used freely or else by application of bi-adhesive tape on the back in order to form fixed pairings which can also be explored by the touch.

The model given to the child for each alphabetic letter must have well visible joints between signs, with the parts slightly apart so that the different basic signs employed can be recognized.

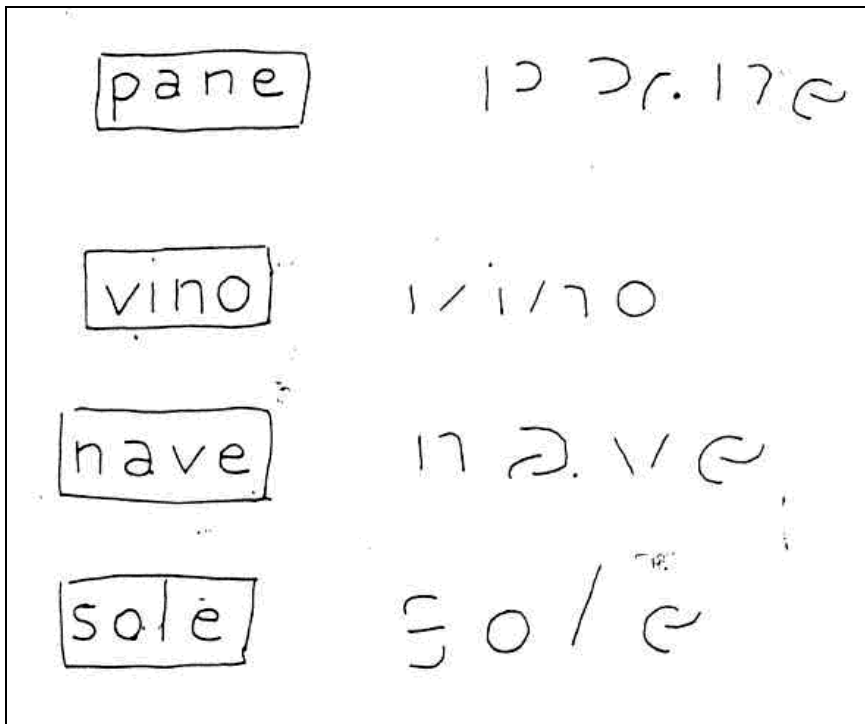
For the moment it is not necessary to speak about either letters or words, but only about shapes to be composed.

From time to time an easy combination is shown to the child, who is asked to recognize the parts and to try and produce the same combination by means of the signs at disposition in the container.

So to play, the letters obtained are "destroyed" and then the child will have to build them up again by heart.



The game can be experienced also with the "difficult combinations".



pane = bread
vino = wine
nave = ship
sole = sun

It is important to stress that the graphical configuration is investigated and learned without association of sounds. Therefore the teacher must not pronounce the name of the letters or of the words, but must only deal with more or less easy pairings or combinations.

The verbal comments of the children clearly show that the skill in the reproduction is allowed by the reference to the basic signs.

Example.

Teacher. *"Can you make this construction?"*



mano = hand

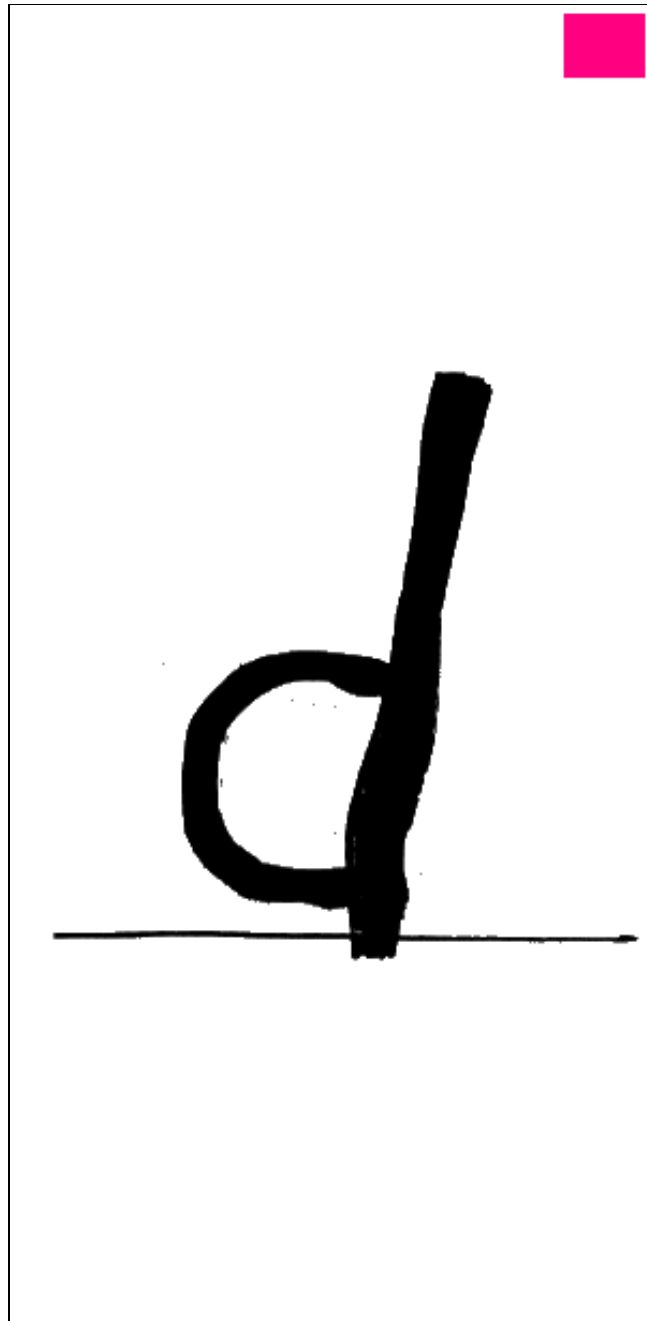
Pupil.

"Oh, this is not very difficult. A "medium", two "curves", an "open", a "curve", a "small", a "medium", a "curve", a "closed"."

3.8 Construction and drawing

At this point, attention!

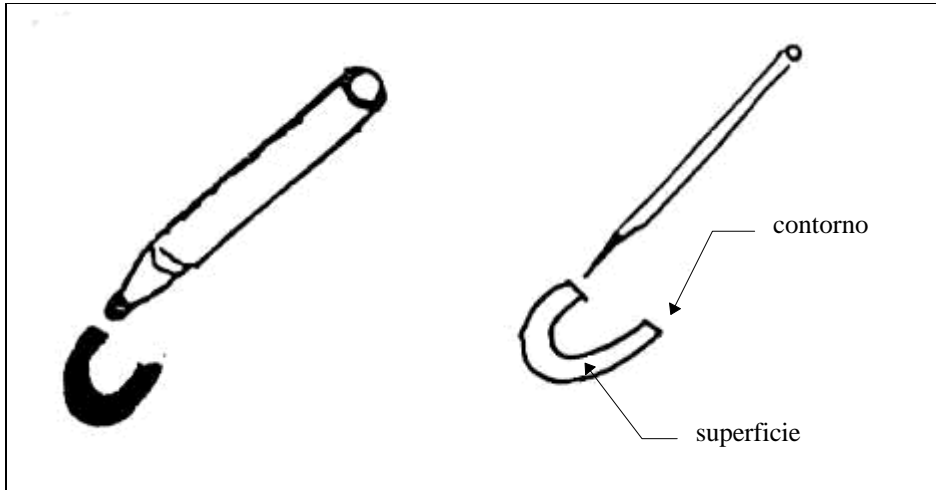
A big black felt pen and a certain number of reference cards are given to each pupil. The reference cards are simply sheets of paper on which a central baseline with a reference sign in the upper right corner are traced.



The child is invited to draw the combinations which he was previously able to compose.

Why must the felt pen be big?

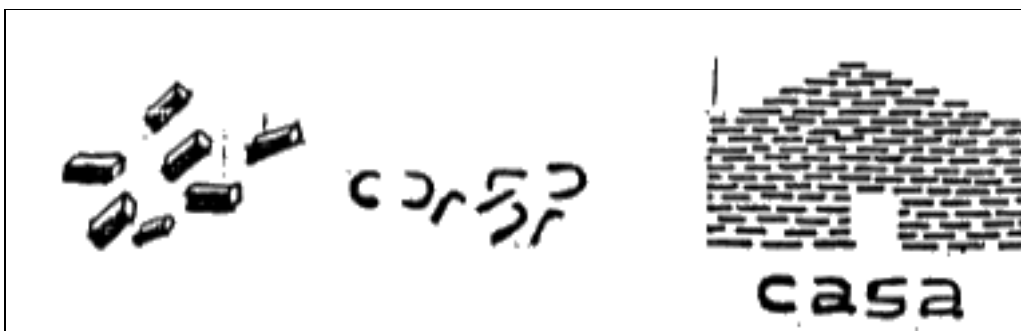
Because it should be similar to the thickness of the material in use and also should not create problems of surface and contouring for the child. As a matter of fact, if the felt pen does not leave a trace similar in thickness to the basic sign offered, the latter will be perceived as a shape to build up.



contorno = contour
superficie = surface

In a second time more common writing means (pen, pencil, thin felt pens, etc.) will be employed and the child will be asked to draw more quickly and with a smaller and smaller case. Any time, the material used for these exercises is thrown away.

It is not worrying if the child refuses the graphical transposition. As a matter of fact, at certain moments the child prefers the composition over a plan because it is like playing with plastic bricks to build up a toy house.



casa = house

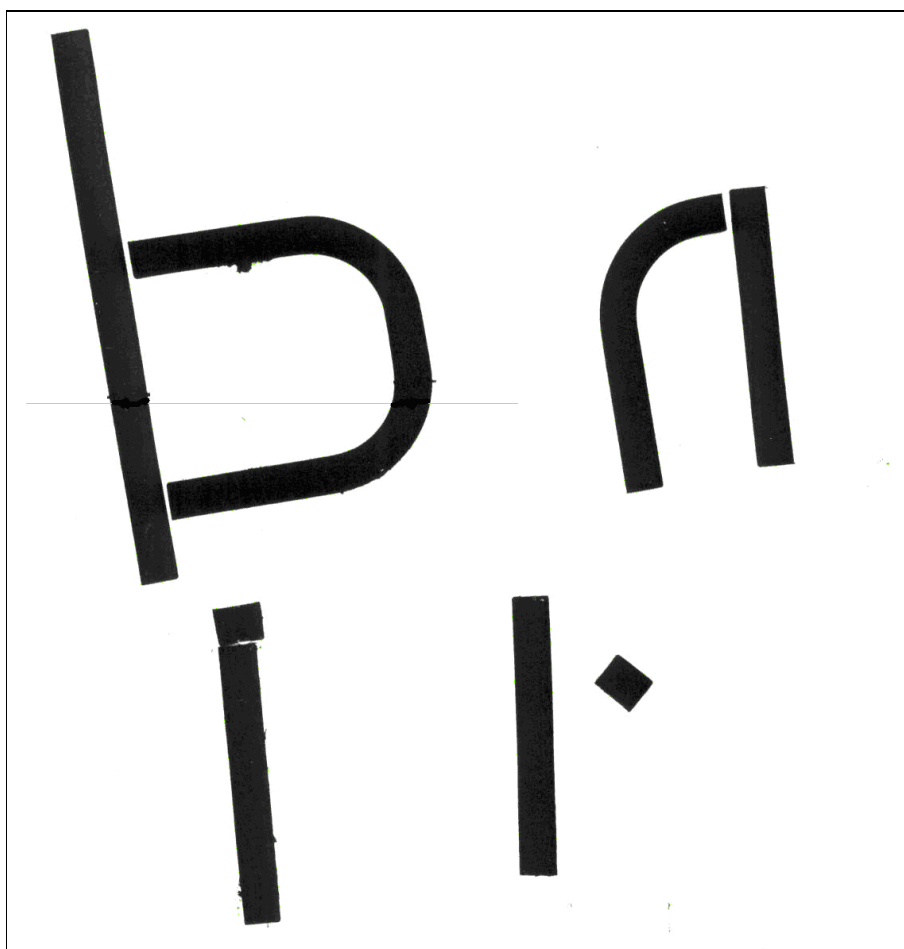
On purpose, the teacher must not offer the complete letter for quicker compositions because the aim is to transfer the skill acquired with the tactile and visual experience into the drawing hand.

Moreover, letters and words would shift immediately the learning on the verbal level, thereby skipping the moment relative to the perception of shapes, spaces, sounds and related problems.

3.9 Sign and space relationships

It is very important to observe the child while working and playing with the material because it is possible to understand whether he/she has any difficulties in the space relationships.

For example, he/she may not be able to position the signs neatly over or below the baseline, he/she may mistake the orientation of the curved sign to the right or to the left of a reference, or else he/she may pair objects which should stay apart, etc..



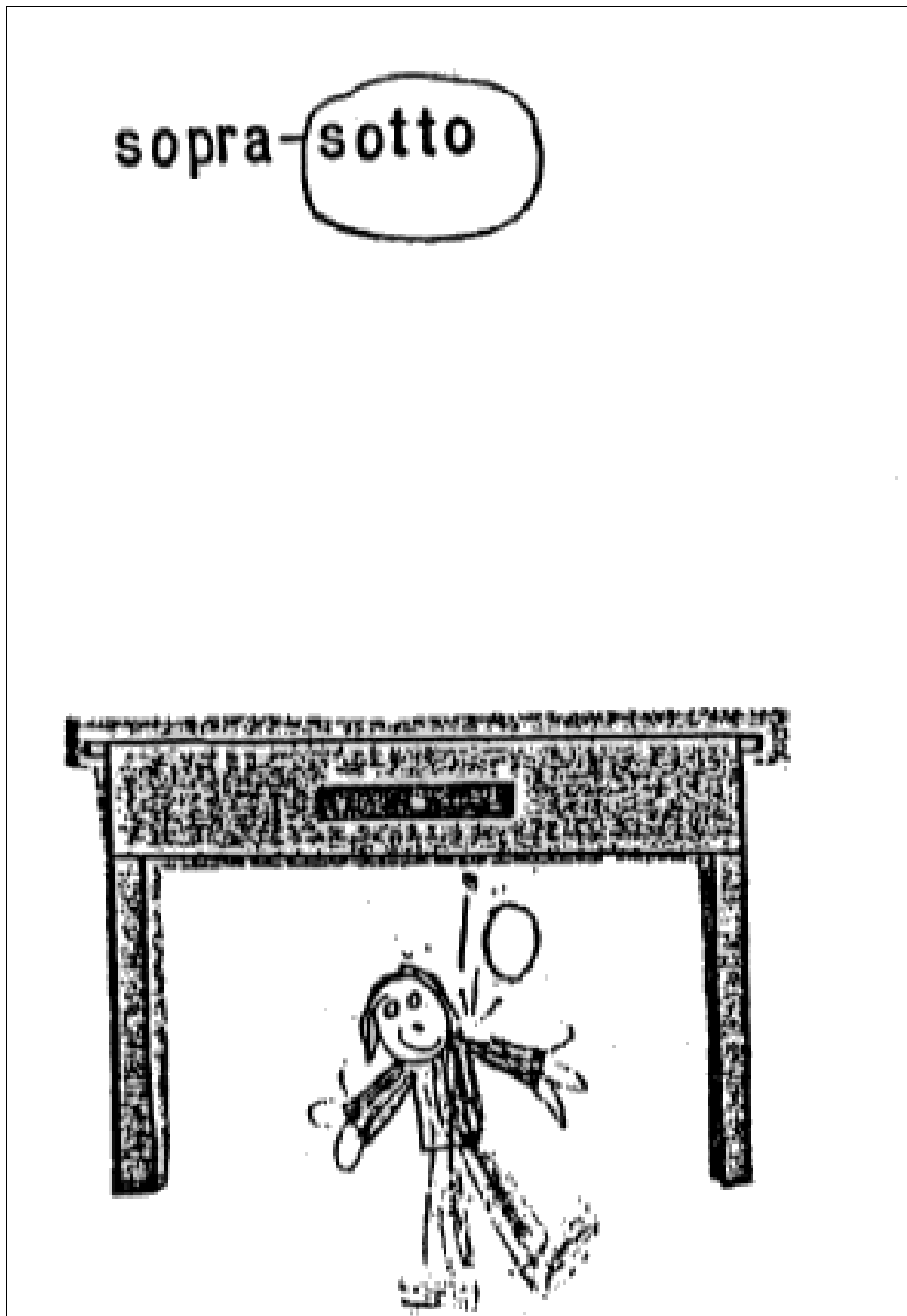
In this case one must stop and help the child by means of exercises, cards, or then, in a second time, to consult some specialists.

By making only basic signs available, thereby operating a restriction, all the pupils will alternate construction and drawing, and the latter will eventually be preferred as a quicker and less laborious method.

If in the group there is a left-handed child, for fun all the children are invited to reproduce the easy combinations with both hands. The problem is solved with the achievement of a higher skill.

Thereafter some examples of cards are shown which are relative to the space relationships recalled by the pairings of the basic signs for the writing.

But it is necessary to remember that the experience first and then the cards should be proposed to the pupils.



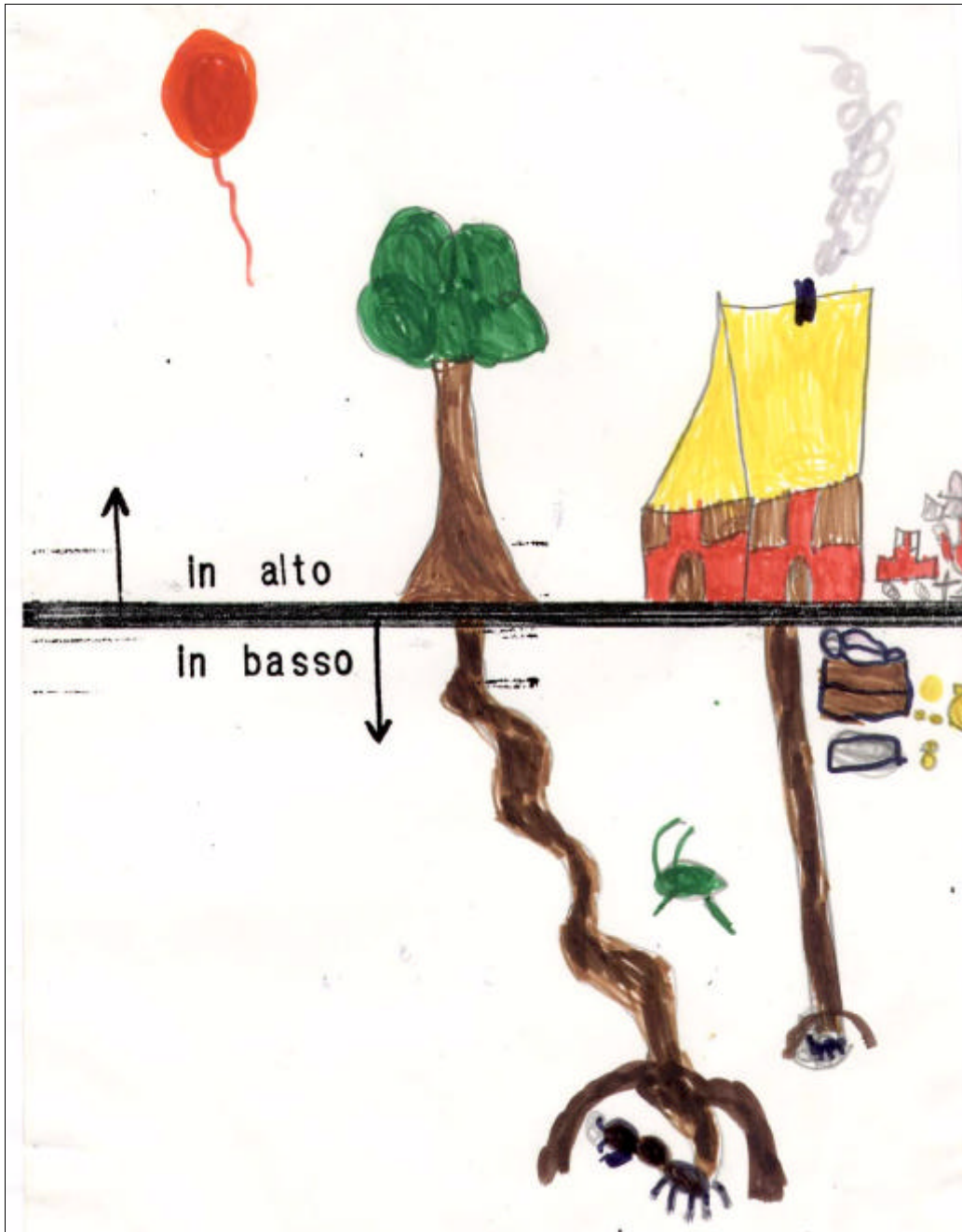
On the card a shape (in this case a table) is glued and to the top there are two words in capital letters which are read by the teacher. By circling one of the words, the teacher indicates his/her request and the child answers by drawing.



in alto = at the top

in basso = at the bottom

On the sheet a patchwork is prepared with a leafless tree, a basket on the ground and some words that the teacher reads aloud. The child finishes the sketch by drawing.



in alto = at the top
in basso = at the bottom

On the card the baseline is traced with the words and some arrows. The child replies by drawing.



in alto = at the top
cielo = sky

in basso = at the
bottom
terra = ground

On the card only the words "high up", "sky", downwards" and "ground" are shown. The child completes by drawing.

3.10 Activities and themes

Soon the children are able to draw easy and difficult combinations rather quickly. At this point the teacher can start to speak about the sounds and to show the poster with the alphabet (as explained in Chapter 5).

One can immediately deal with a specific theme/argument, illustrate it, compound a small sentence, transcribe it, and copy one's own name and surname.

It is important for the talk to have a guiding thread which leads the choice of the words and of short phrases.

The topic should be carefully prepared by the teacher and lead in a clear and multifold way, continuously modified by the intervention of the child in a continuous exchange and with reciprocal enrichment between pupils and teacher. The teacher will have to cope with the primary stiffness of the child and continuously beware of acquired stiffness as well.

Particular care should be given to the intervals in which to subdivide the lesson ("teaching unit"): these will have to be fit for the age of the children and of the average level of the class, but should tend to a higher level. As a matter of fact, activity and efficiency should not be mortified, but the rapidity and the skill acquired will be used to help each other in an atmosphere of cooperation in which also the hardest moments will be overcome by the group.

It is useful to print out the titles of the chosen arguments so that it will come out clearly which itinerary is going to be followed and how the sequence of the topics will be developed. Within a theme it is not advisable to choose in a rigid way whether to start from a sentence or from a word, but to use the most adequate strategy from time to time.

In the first argument offered as an example, one starts with the management of the basic signs for the small word "io" (I, myself), which will then be enriched in "sono io" (it's me), "sono io con la mamma" (it's me with Mom), "sono io con il papà" (it's me with Dad).

For the topic "house-school", the activity is introduced by means of a patchwork, exercises about space relationships and, at the same time, by sentences and words.

In other cases one can use mini-puzzles or some words, not for completion of any shape, but considered by themselves for the characteristics of the combination consonant-vowel.

However, when a story is told, letters, words or sentences are not certainly able to attract the attention immediately, but only the interplay of the events mentioned. Therefore it is good to start with the "reading of the images".

For a limerick the musicality of the verses is important, so it is more useful to start with the "reading of lines" and with "group reading" by choosing sentences or words at will.

Eventually it is important to add the following specification.

In every topic, no word is written by the teacher on the blackboard and then copied by the children, without being first built up, decomposed and re-built up by means of the basic signs.

After the fourth or fifth meeting, after the topic of the sounds has been faced and the wall alphabet has been shown, the teacher will choose some words to be composed and will work with the children on other words by using the suggestions of the children about the sounds-signs.

Example.

What is the day today?

Saturday.

Well. We must write this word. I will write it on my exercise-book-blackboard and you on your pages. Please, help me.

How does it start? Saturday ssssss.....

S like sun.

Right, but how do I write it?

Teacher, look to the pigeon-holes if you don't remember. A medium and two curves. It's very easy!!!

Let's hear again. Saaaa ... Which vowel is sounding?

A aaa a as "ape" (bee), and so on.

The aim of the material is not the one of starting a period of easy and quick copying, but to offer the child the possibility of managing each phase in the learning of the linguistic means.

The same consideration is valid for the drawings on the blackboard. It is better to go out and observe a real tree and then to try and reproduce it on the blackboard with all the children rather than leave them passively adoring the beautiful and perfect drawing by the teacher. For what cannot be directly observed, the teacher will make sketches on the blackboard (i.e., images in order to fix a topic), but then he/she will erase them and is careful not to impose the classroom his/her fluid or geometric, neat style. The teacher should rather intervene individually by means of observations and suggestions aimed to differentiate the graphical schemes.

As a matter of fact it is easy for the teacher to substitute him-/herself to the child by rude or soft ways for reasons which appear to be valid. But the teacher must leave the child use his/her own forces.

It is possible to help each other not by offering one's own work to the mate who requires it, but by showing the way to do it and then by staying aside while he/she tries to work alone. Maybe the day after he/she will be able to exchange the favour in a different, complex situation, like that of the use of the rulers or of the "logical blocks", or the construction of a stable, toy house with clay.

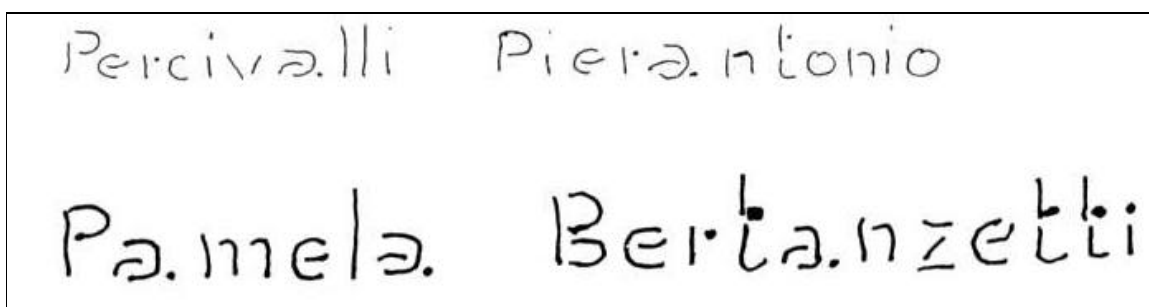
In the following pages two complete paths are represented as examples of the transfer of individual and guided verbal and graphical expressions on the exercise-book.

The start is by introducing oneself: the drawing, the word "io" (I) and the and surname.

Name and surname

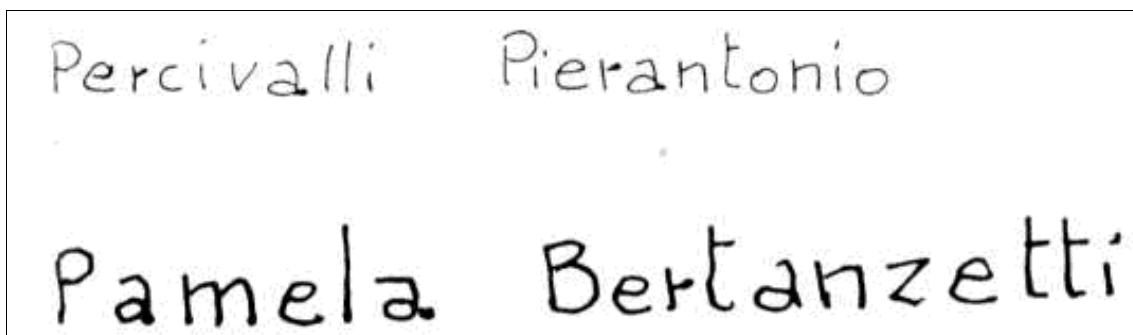
By the basic signs the child composes his/her own name and surname (as very difficult combinations) and then he copies it from a card which the teacher has prepared and attached in a corner of the table. The name and surname on the card must be written with the basic signs slightly detached from one another, not to make it too difficult to copy for some children.

Example.



However, soon the children write the alphabetical combinations with skill and the cards with the names must be changed and replaced with others where the letters are close to one another and the words well apart.

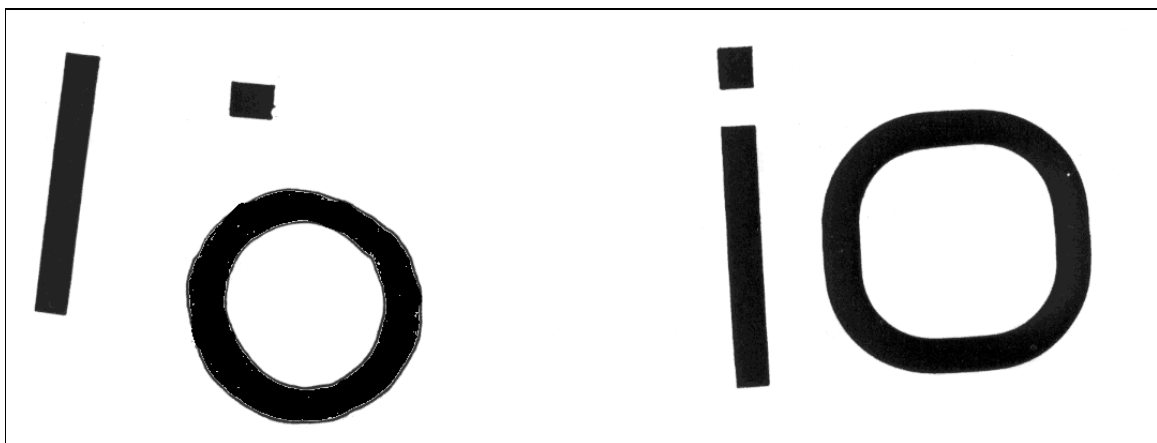
Example.



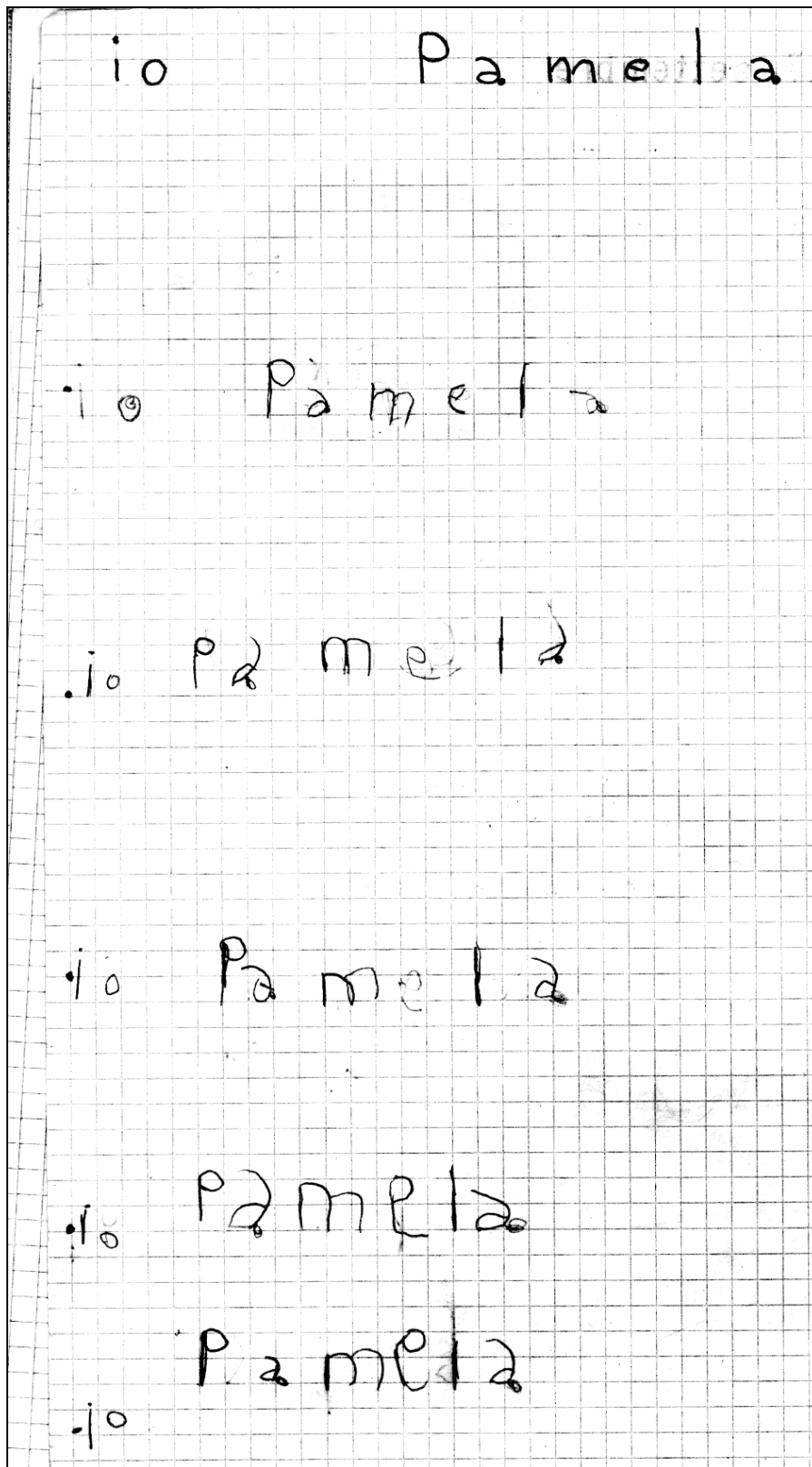
The name and the surname will be written every day.

Copying of the name and surname.

Drawing, composition and writing of the word "io" (I).



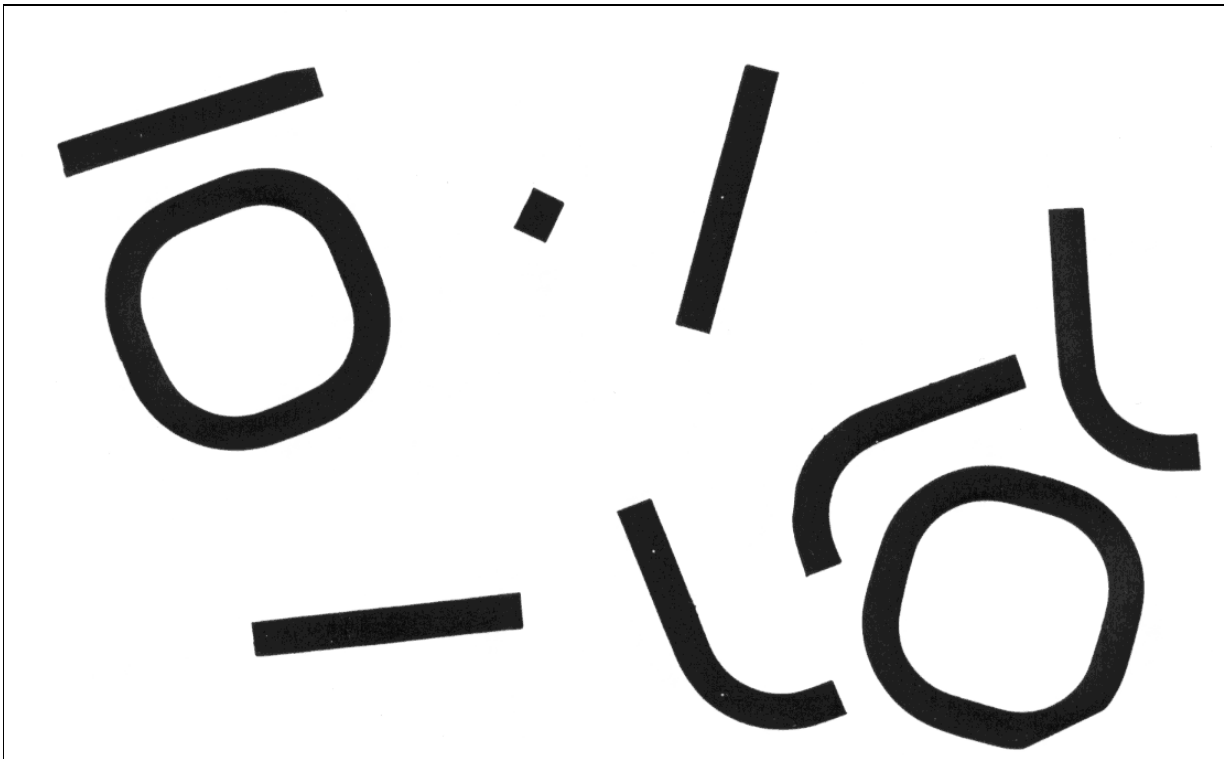
Writing exercise of the word "io" (I) and of one's own name. The teacher will indicate with a dot the lines on which the pupil will have to write.



io Pamela = I myself Pamela



Construction of the two combinations: "sono" "io" (I am, or, it's me).



Construction of the combination "papà" (dad) with the basic signs.



papa' = Dad

Patchwork and drawing

The teacher distributes a "closed" for dad's head and a pink round shape for the head of the child. All together write the sentence with the words learnt. The teacher will give the child the word "con" (with) as a present, which will be very useful.



Sono io
con il
Papà

sono io = it's me con il papà = with
Dad

Composition of a new word, "mamma" (mom).



Patchwork and drawing

Use of the basic sign for mom's head and of a pink round shape for the head of the child. Writing of the sentence "io sono con la mamma" (I am with Mom).



sono io
con la
mamma.

sono io = it's me con la mamma = with Mom

Identification, composition and decomposition: games with phrases and words

The topic is subdivided in four parts with increasing complexity, i.e. in four paper bands written in block letters. These bands are distributed to the child one by one and he/she is invited by the teacher to mark them with a different colour at the beginning.

We play together to the identification of the bands, then the child glues them on the exercise-book. Now we start reading.

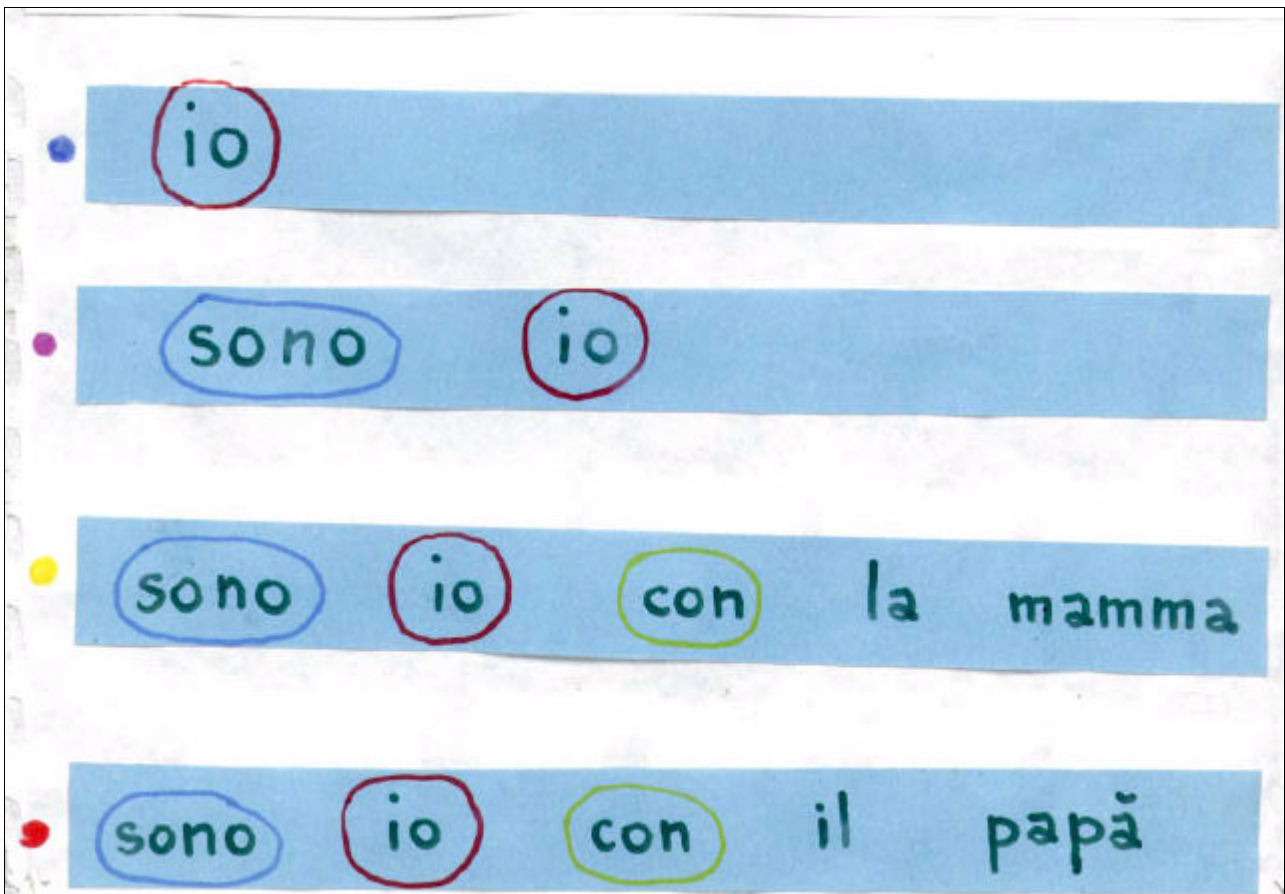
Example:

Let Paolo read the band marked with red

Let Anna read the band with blue ...

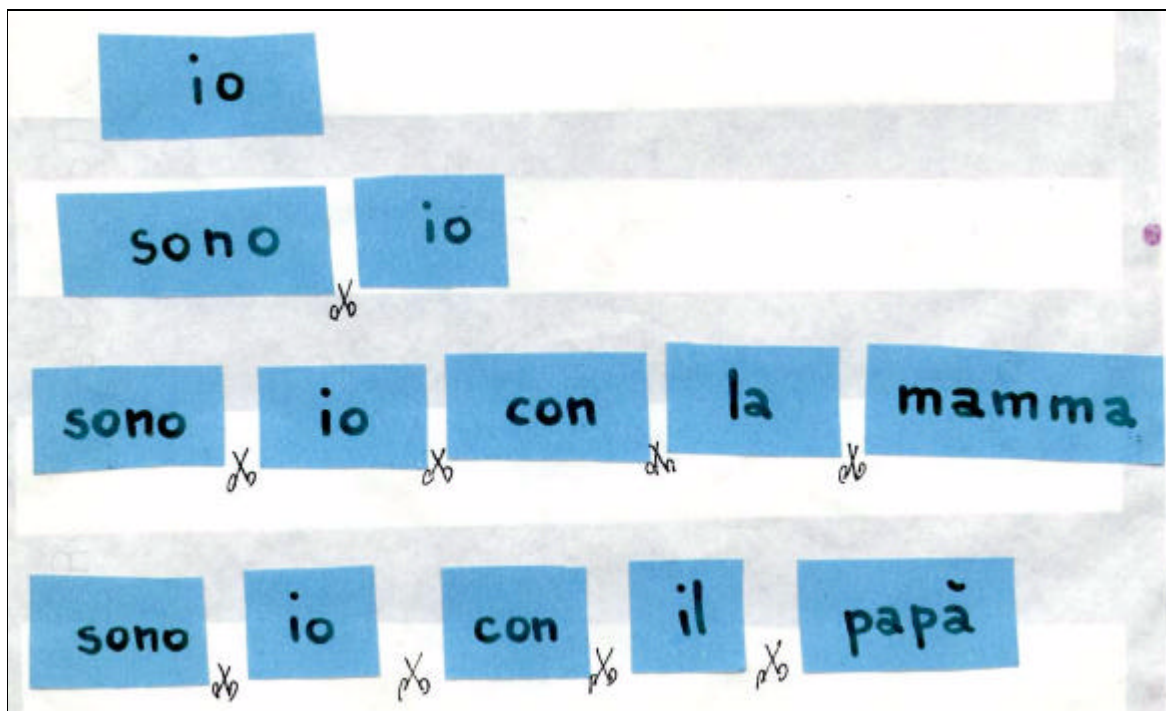
Who is willing to read all the bands?

All the similar words are circled with a felt pen.



io = I myself
sono io = it's me
sono io con la mamma = it's me with Mom
sono io col papà = it's me with Dad

For the games with the words, the teacher will distribute again the bands and this time he/she will subdivide the bands in words which the child will try to recognize and then will glue in order.

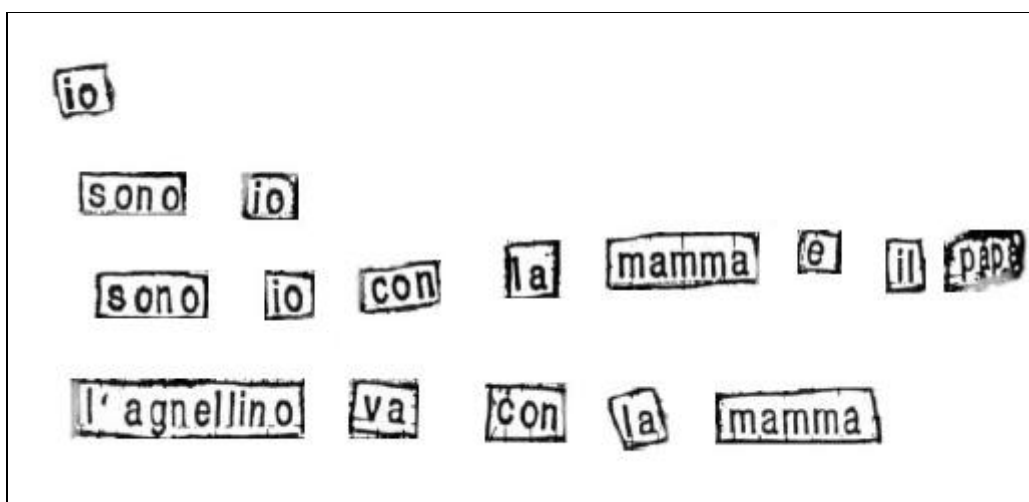


We shall end with a group reading.

For the chosen topic it is possible to use also short stories.

After the teacher has done a general reading, a reading of the images and of the bands, the dramatization and with it the analysis of the text by means of environments and characters and the actions developed in temporal sequences, the teacher chooses sentences and words.

With these exercises of composition and decomposition, reading and writing are done.



io = I sono io = it's me sono io con la mamma e il papà = it's me with Mom and Dad
 l'agnellino va con la mamma = the little lamb goes with Mom sheep

A nursery rhyme

We prepare thick bands (8 cm thick) on which the nursery rhyme is written:

*the little ball flies to the sky
in the den stays the little mouse
in the sky flies the butterfly
in the den the cricket dances.*

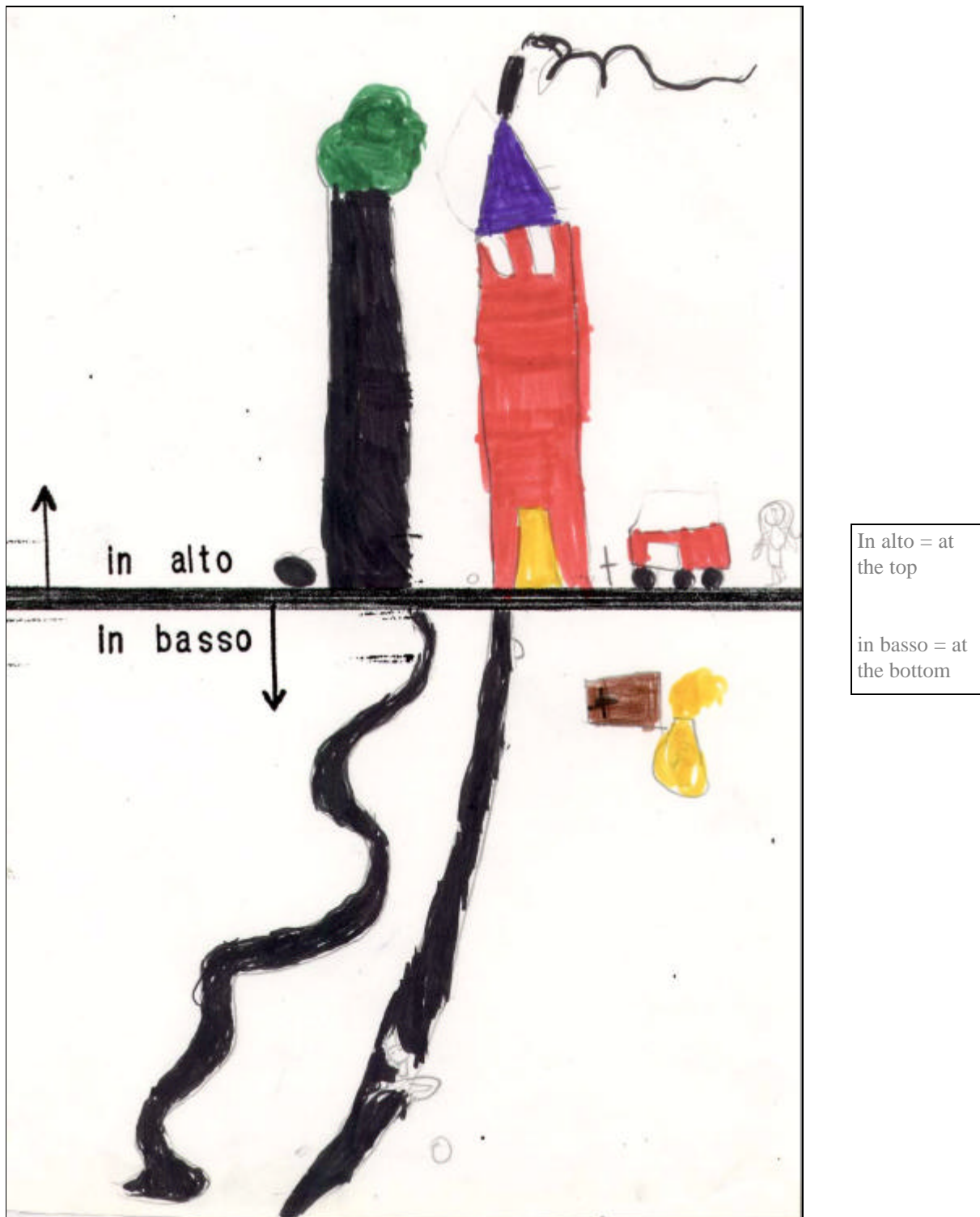
There will be some difficult compositions on some words "flies", "sky", "little ball", "den", "little mouse", "butterfly", "cricket", "dances". The children make compositions and decompositions by means of the basic signs.

The teacher always pronounces the name after the manipulation.



A "big" green glued in the centre represents the ground line. Around this reference the child draws the content of the nursery rhyme on his/her exercise-book.

This topic is used by the teacher also to face the matter of the space relationships "over"-“below". Therefore games in the gym and work on leading cards are done.



Drawing of the nursery rhyme on a card in relation to the directions "higher", "lower" starting from the central baseline.



farfalla =
butterfly

Games of composition and decomposition on the table

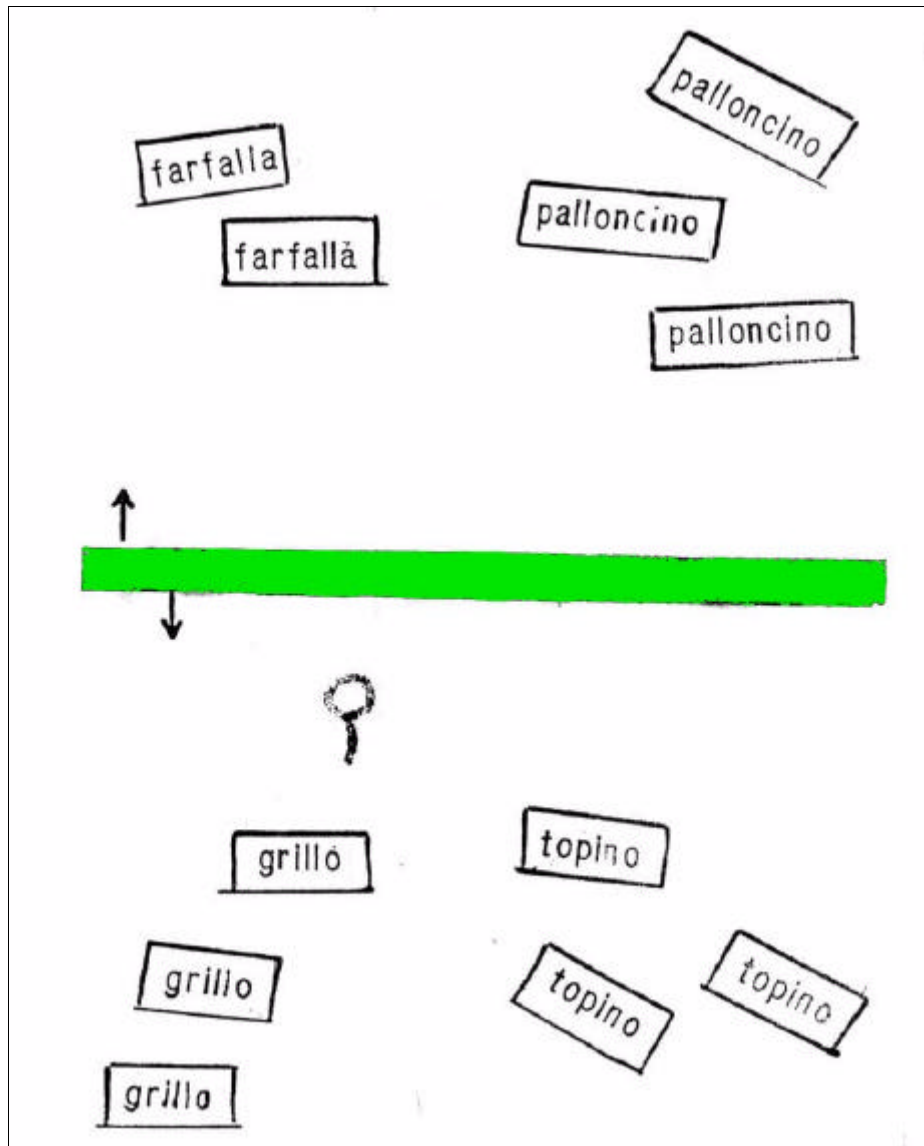


vola =
it flies

Patchwork and drawing

The teacher offers each child a basic sign (the "big") made in green heavy paper, which will be glued halfway in the page and which represents the meadow. Then the four names previously learnt with the basic signs are distributed: "little ball" and "little mouse", "butterfly" and "cricket". The child will glue them at the top and at the bottom.

farfalla = butterfly palloncino = little ball



grillo = cricket topino = little mouse

Now we shift to the transcription of the sentence on the exercise-book.

As previously noted, the teacher should never say "Now, children, I am going to write the words on the blackboard and you will copy them", but should lead the activity in this way:

"We want to write - "Vola in cielo il palloncino" (the little ball flies to the sky)- Well!

Let's count the words all together, by beating the hands. Vola ... in ... cielo ... il ... palloncino (5 words)

Let's start from "vola" (verb to fly) (on the wall the alphabet is shown). Children, please help me. Vvvvvv like?

Like "vela" (sail).

I write on my exercise-book-blackboard and you on your pages. When the word is finished I shall come and see how good you have been.

Come on: voooo, ooo like?

Orologio (watch).

Vol, ll like?

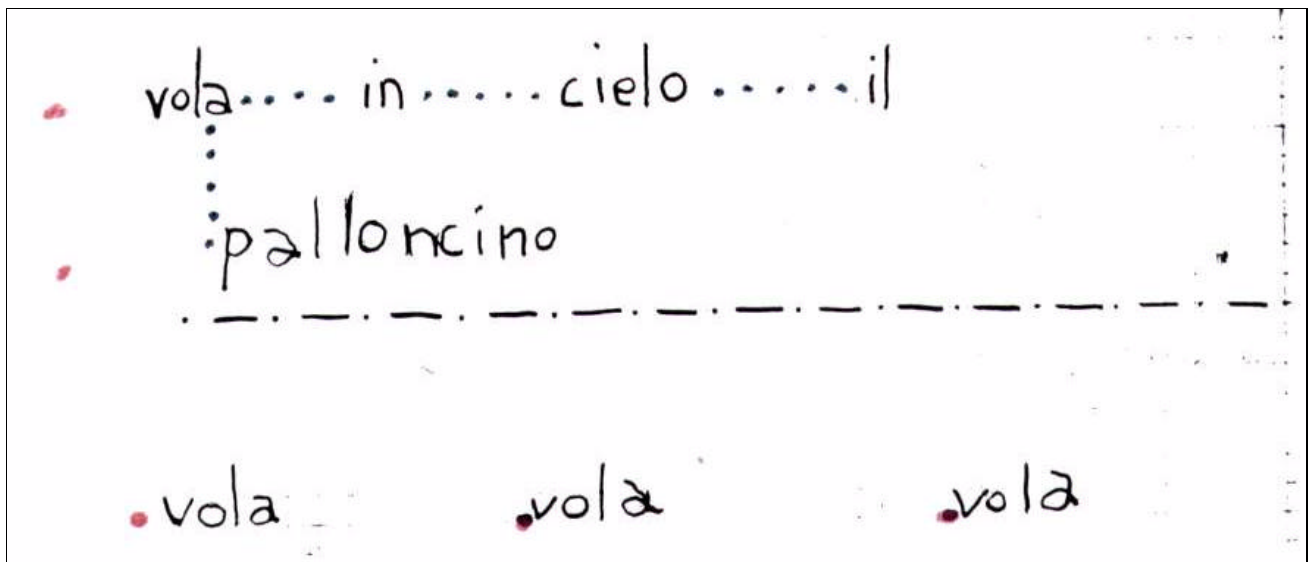
Luna (moon).

Volaaa, aaa like?

Ape (bee)."

The teacher goes and quickly checks each exercise-book.

It is very important to make the children indicate immediately the pause with four dots and, by beginning a new paragraph, keep the rule of marking also the vertical distance between paragraphs by the four dots.



vola ... in ... cielo ... il ... palloncino = the little ball flies to the sky

• nella tana
sta il

topino

• topino • topino • topino

vola in cielo

la farfalla

farfalle

nella tana il grillo balla

il grillo balla

il grillo balla

nella ... tana ... sta ... il ... topino = the little mouse stays in the den
topino = little mouse

vola ... in ... cielo ... la ... farfalla = the butterfly flies in the sky
farfalla = butterfly

nella ... tana ... il ... grillo ... balla = the cricket dances in the den
il grillo balla = the cricket dances

Reading

Each child receives the whole nursery rhyme for the reading exercise. As usual, each line of words is marked by a color.

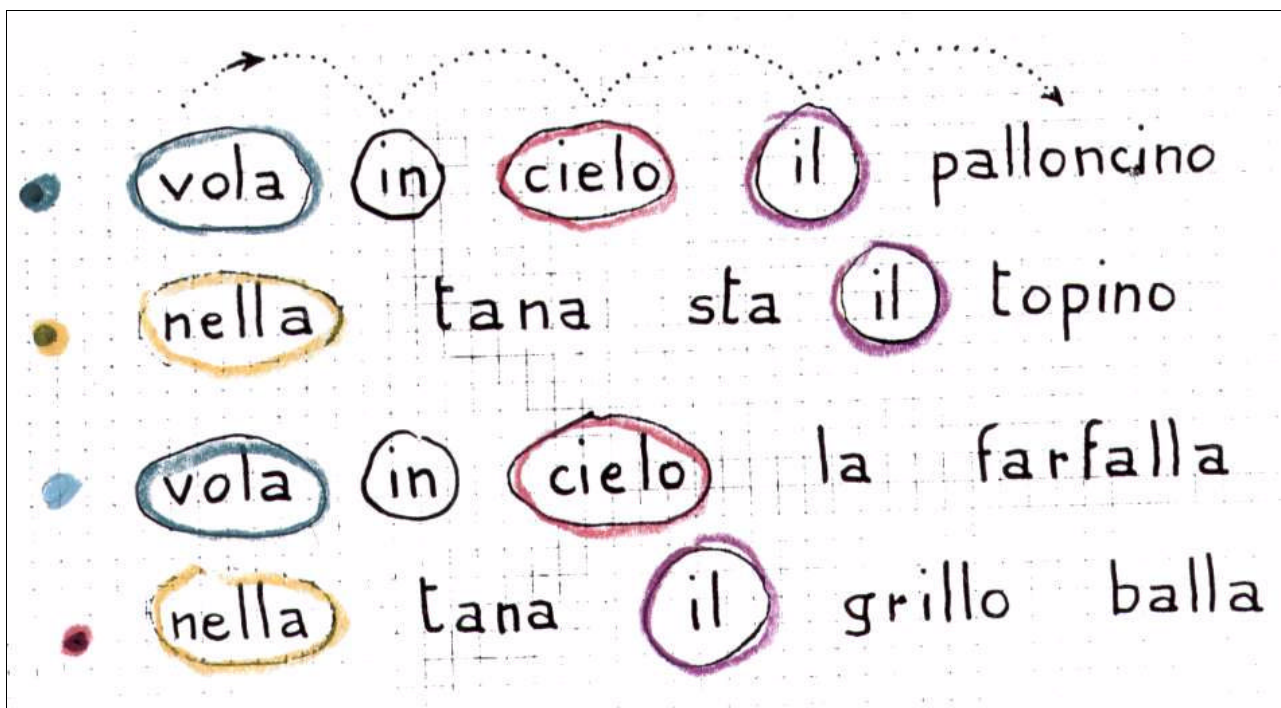
The procedure of reading from right to left and from top to bottom is not a spontaneous one and, without a reference, the child is often uncertain about which part to start from.

The similar words are circled and read together.

The children are invited to touch the pronounced word with a finger.

The sheet with the words of the rhyme is inserted between the first pages of the reading book or glued on the exercise-book. The words will be read together for three-four days until a new topic will offer a new occasion for reading.

Also word stripes on the board will be read.



vola in cielo il palloncino = the little ball flies up in the sky

nella tana sta il topino = the little mouse stays in the den

vola in cielo la farfalla = the butterfly flies in the sky

nella tana il grillo balla = the cricket dances in the den

Patchwork and drawings

The children prepare a baseline by drawing some grass, then they are given the "big" basic sign, which will be a tree trunk, and two "curved" signs for the branches. The tree is completed with some leaves and fruits. This is the reference. On one side a dog-house and on the other side a cat on the roof are put.

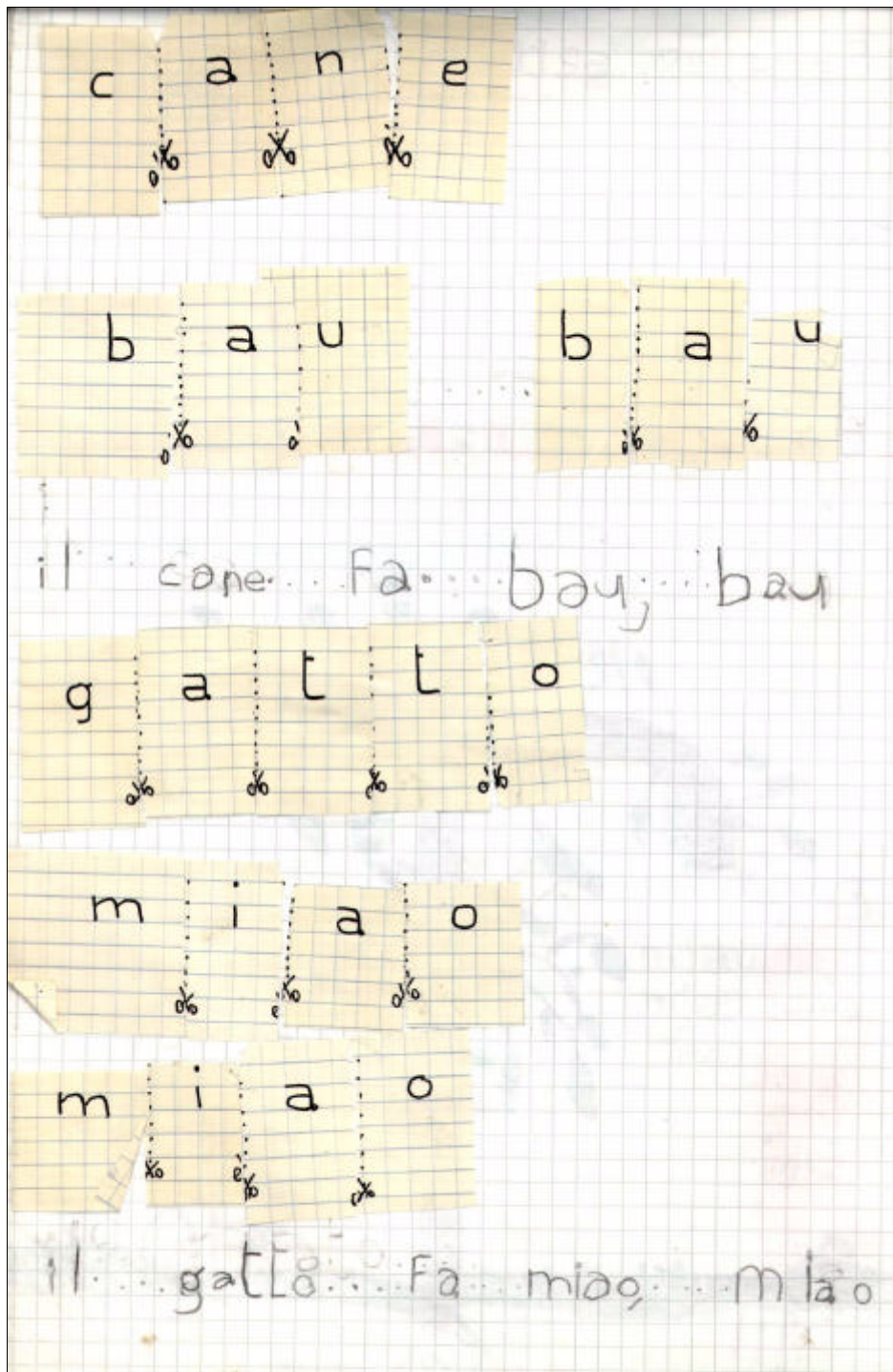
The teacher does not speak about right and left (difficult concepts also for the editors of dictionaries), but relies on the characteristics of the classroom (i.e., the dog there, close to the window, ...).

With basic signs on the table words are composed and decomposed which correspond to the voices of the two animals: "miao" and "bau", and then they are written on the exercise-book in the proper space. This argument is paired with the short story of the cat Fufi and the dog Bobi.

sabato = Saturday



The child is given paper stripes with the words to be considered and the letters well detached. He/she cut them with scissors. All together we play on the table and compose and decompose the words, then we glue them and write them on the exercise-book.

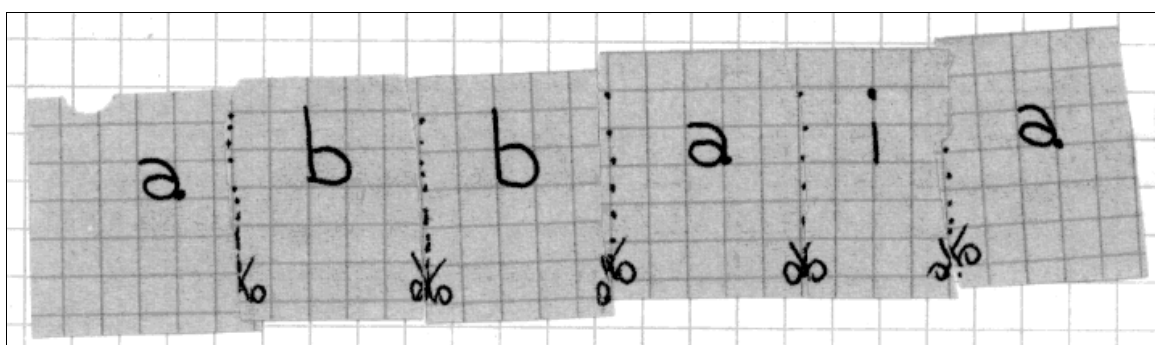


cane = dog bau bau = barking
il cane fa bau bau = the dog is barking
gatto = cat
miao miao = mewing
il gatto fa miao miao = the cat is mewing

The argument is shifted to reality. Each child knows or owns a dog or a cat. The teacher passes and writes the name of these animals which, in the meantime, are drawn on the exercise-book. The children write down the name of their own animal.



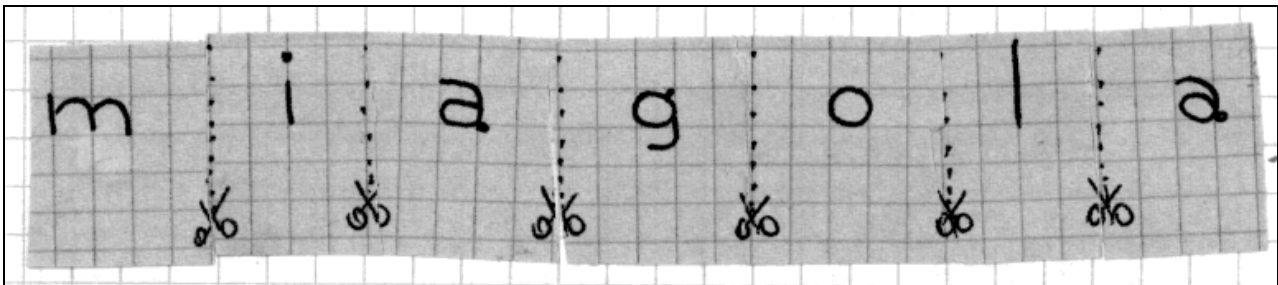
The sentence written the day before is modified, and the verb "fa" (makes) is replaced by "abbaia" (barks) and "miagola" (mews). The two new words are made up with the basic signs. Then the stripes with the words are cut into single letters, re-composed and decomposed and eventually glued on the exercise-book.



it is barking



Bobi il gatto miagola miao miao = Bobi the cat is mewling miao miao



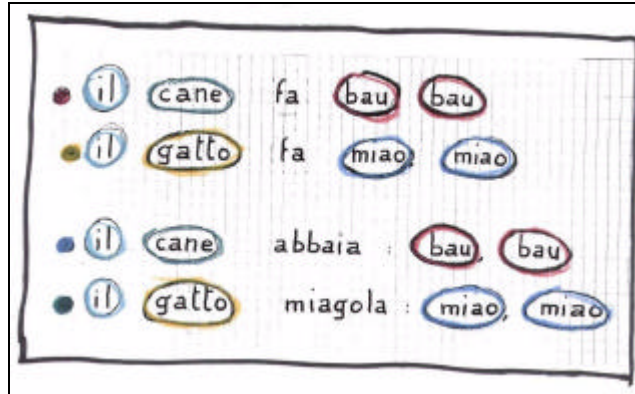
it is mewling

Reading

Each child gathers all the sentences considered in a single sheet.

Each line is marked by a colour, the similar words are looked for and then the communal reading is done.

The children will read also at home. "How many times must we read, teacher?". "One hundred thousands!".



il cane fa bau bau = the dog is shouting bau bau
il gatto fa miao miao = the cat is shouting miao miao
il cane abbaia bau bau = the dog is barking bau bau
il gatto miagola miao miao = the cat is mewling miao miao

Exercise of reading - Example of reference card

The child is urged to complete the card with the letters repeated in the four types of characters: upper and lower case, printed and italics.



When for most of the children the vowels are less difficult, the consonants are considered: if possible, four consonants for each small topic.

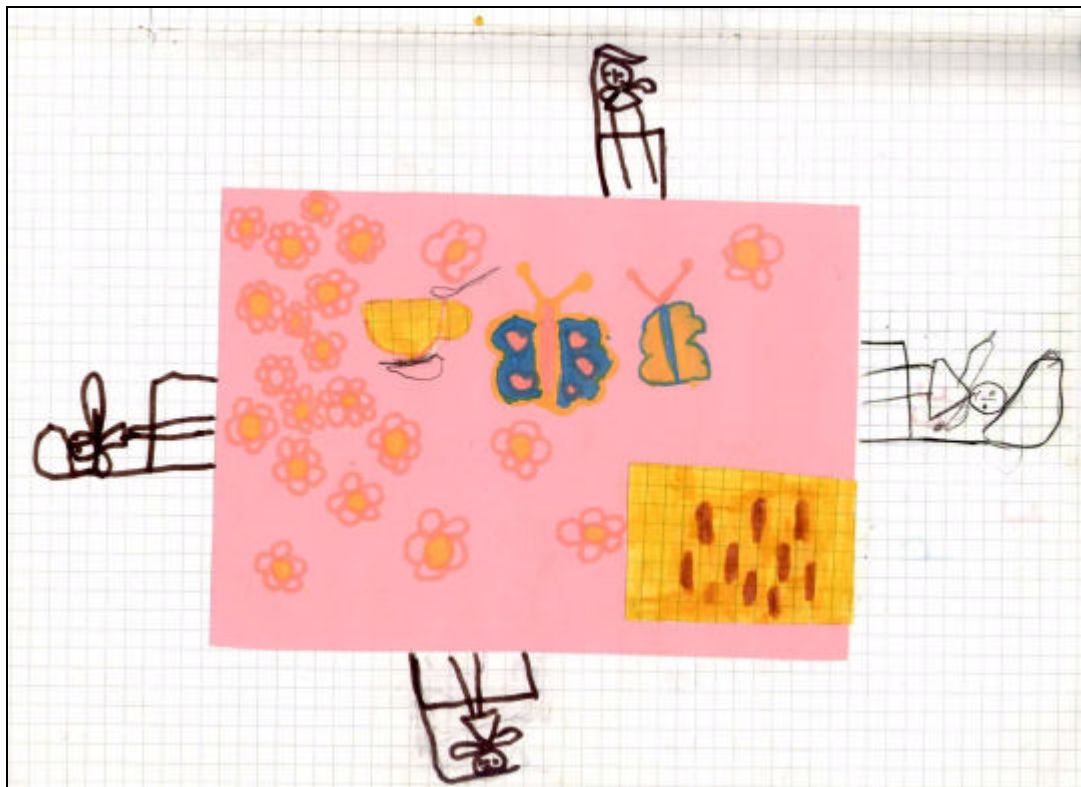
In the following examples, the teacher has chosen the breakfast, the lunch and the dinner as points of interest. A piece of pink paper is a small table cloth, which is distributed around and glued on the exercise-book, decorated at will and enriched with crockery, food and guests.

In the meantime the teacher prepares the paper board.



Buongiorno =
good morning

bambina =
little girl



With the basic signs the difficult combinations are made: vuoi (want), tè (tea), con (with), biscotti (biscuits), grazie (thanks).



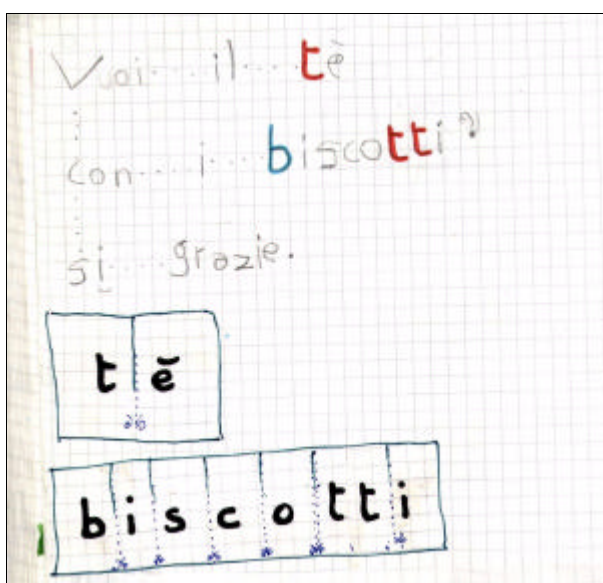
Composition of the word "grazie" (thanks)

In order to write all together the sentence "Vuoi il tè con i biscotti?" "Sì, grazie" or "No, grazie) (do you want any tea with biscuits? Yes please, or No thanks), the words are counted by clapping the hands, then the children dictate the basic signs.

Without emphasis the upper case at the beginning of the sentence, the accent, the question mark and the comma are introduced.

The letters t and b are outlined in red. Words in stripes to be cut, composed and decomposed are distributed.

Eventually the exercise in reading is done.



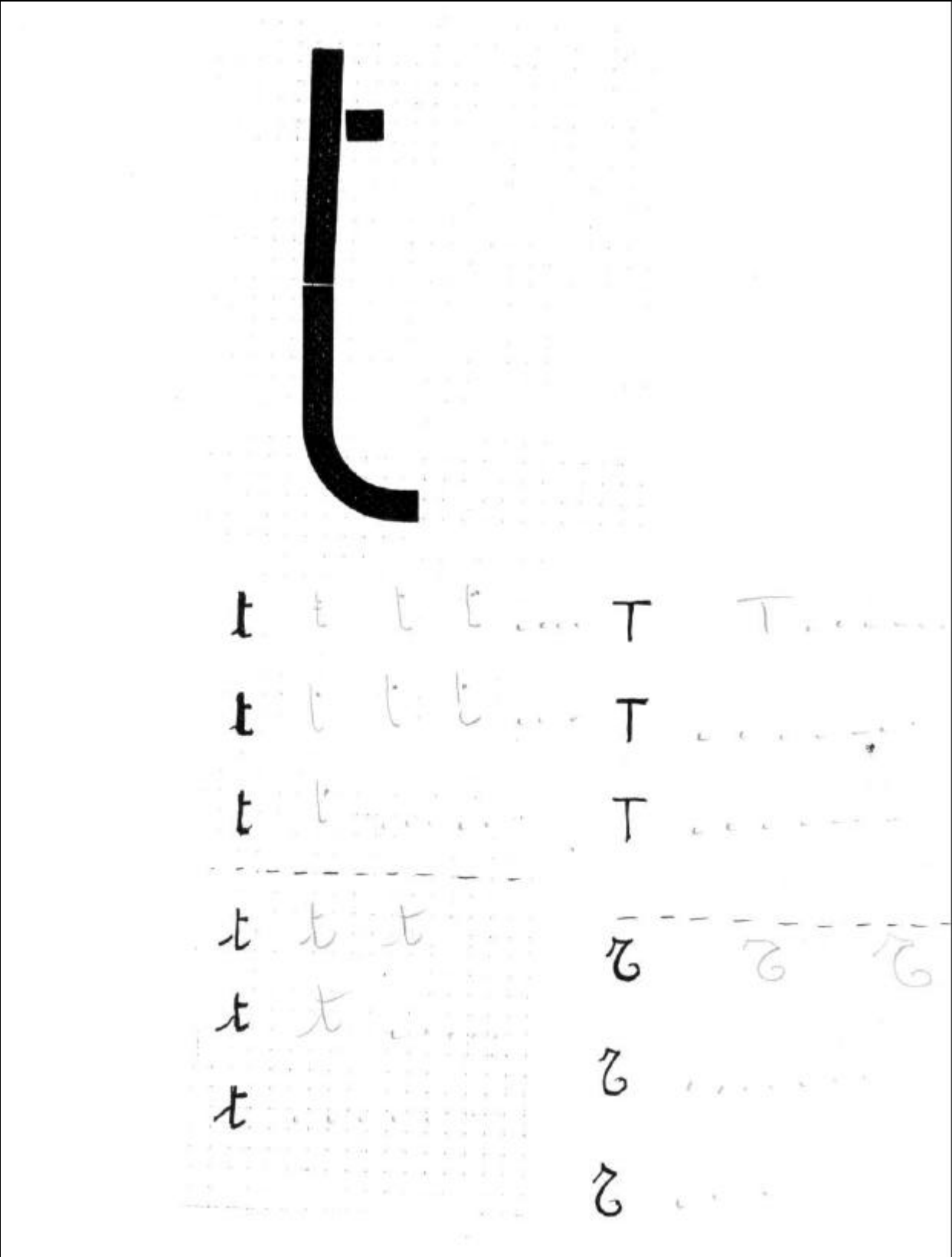
Vuoi ... il tè ... con ... i
 ... biscotti? =
 Would you like tea and
 biscuits?

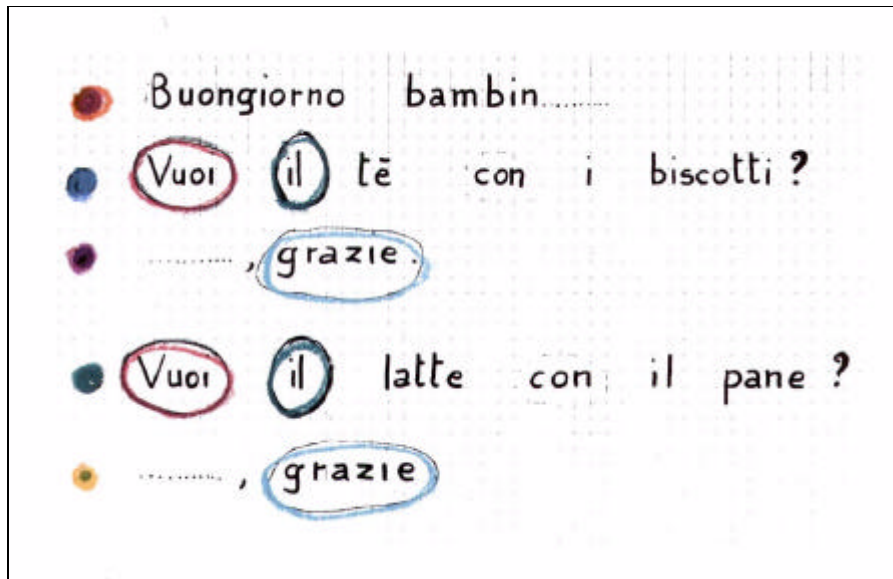
Sì, grazie = yes, please

tè = tea

biscotti = biscuits

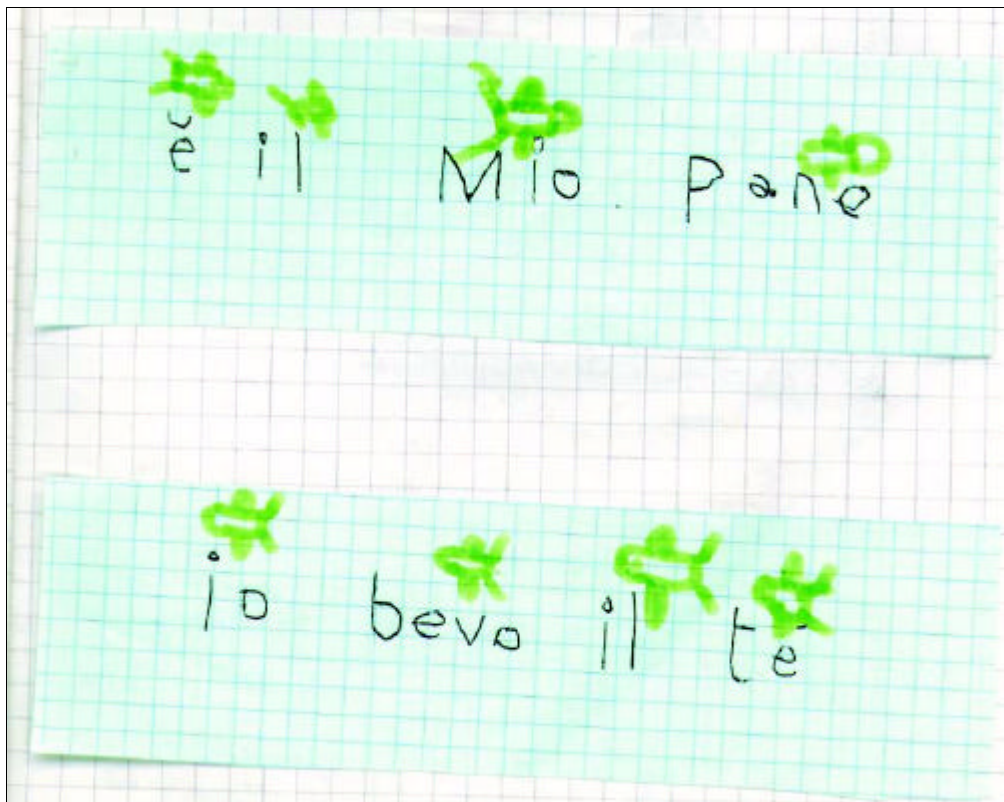
Exercise of reading - example of reference card





Buongiorno bambin... = Good morning little girl/boy Vuoi il tè con i biscotti? Would you like tea and biscuits?, grazie =, please
 Vuoi il latte con il pane? Would you like milk and bread?, grazie =, please

The topic is finished and the child receives the sentences grouped on a sheet. The operations of outlining and circling with colours are done rapidly by now. This time, however, each pupil will have to end the word "bambin..." (child) with an "a" or an "o", as well as to reply with a "yes" or a "no" in the following lines. Reading is made for some days, also on sentences already known. On the paper boards new sentences are composed with the known words.



è il mio pane = it is my bread io bevo il tè = I drink tea

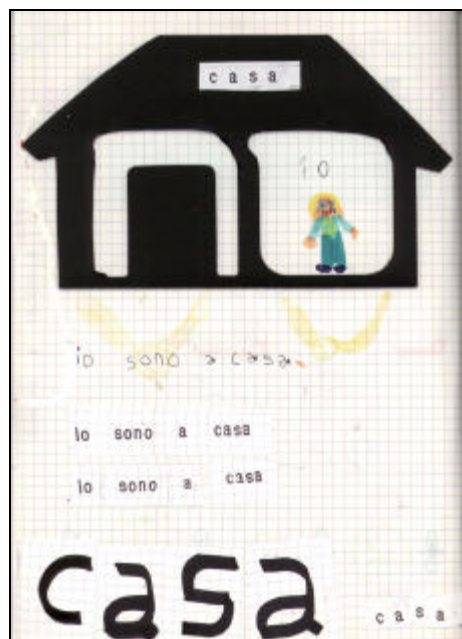
Another example of reading

Drawing and writing of the words "io" (I) and "sono" (am) earlier composed with the basic signs on the base of the table.

Sono io = it's me

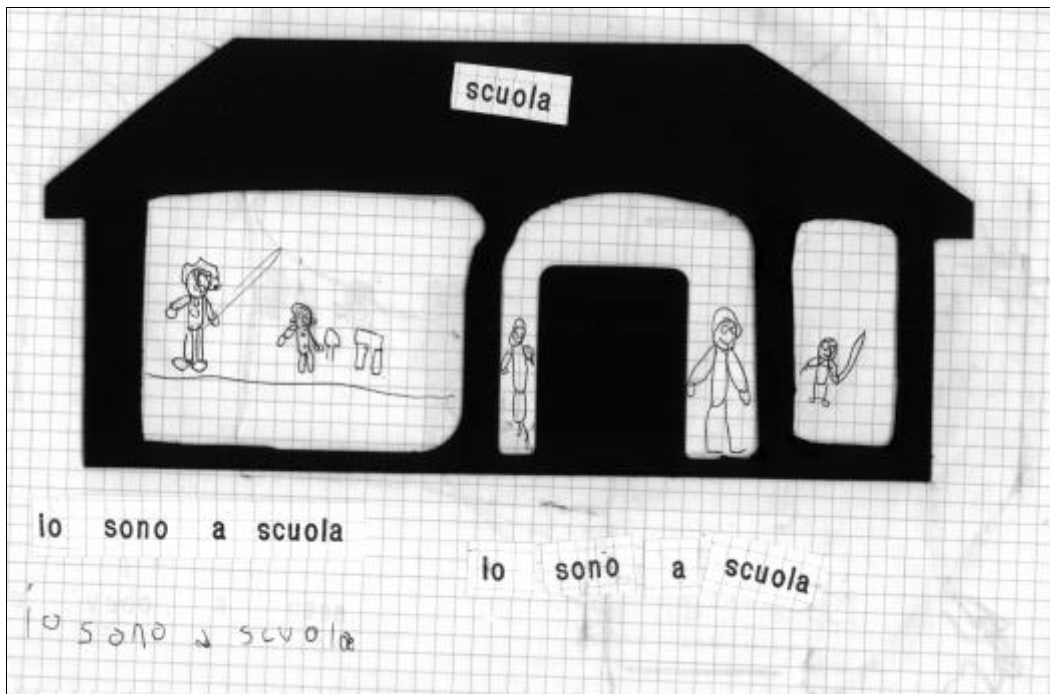
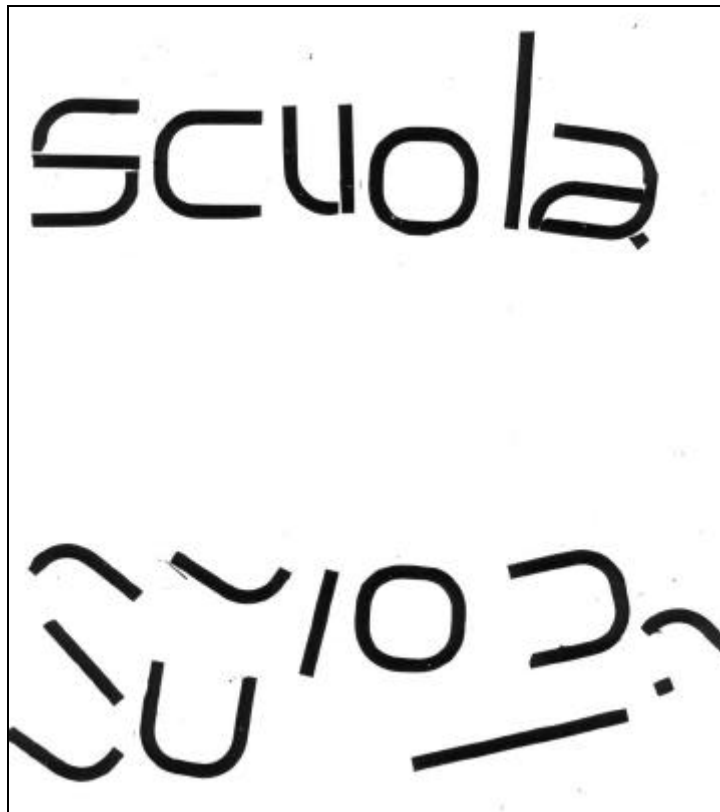


Patchwork, drawing and writing of the words "io sono a casa" (I am at home). Composition and decomposition.



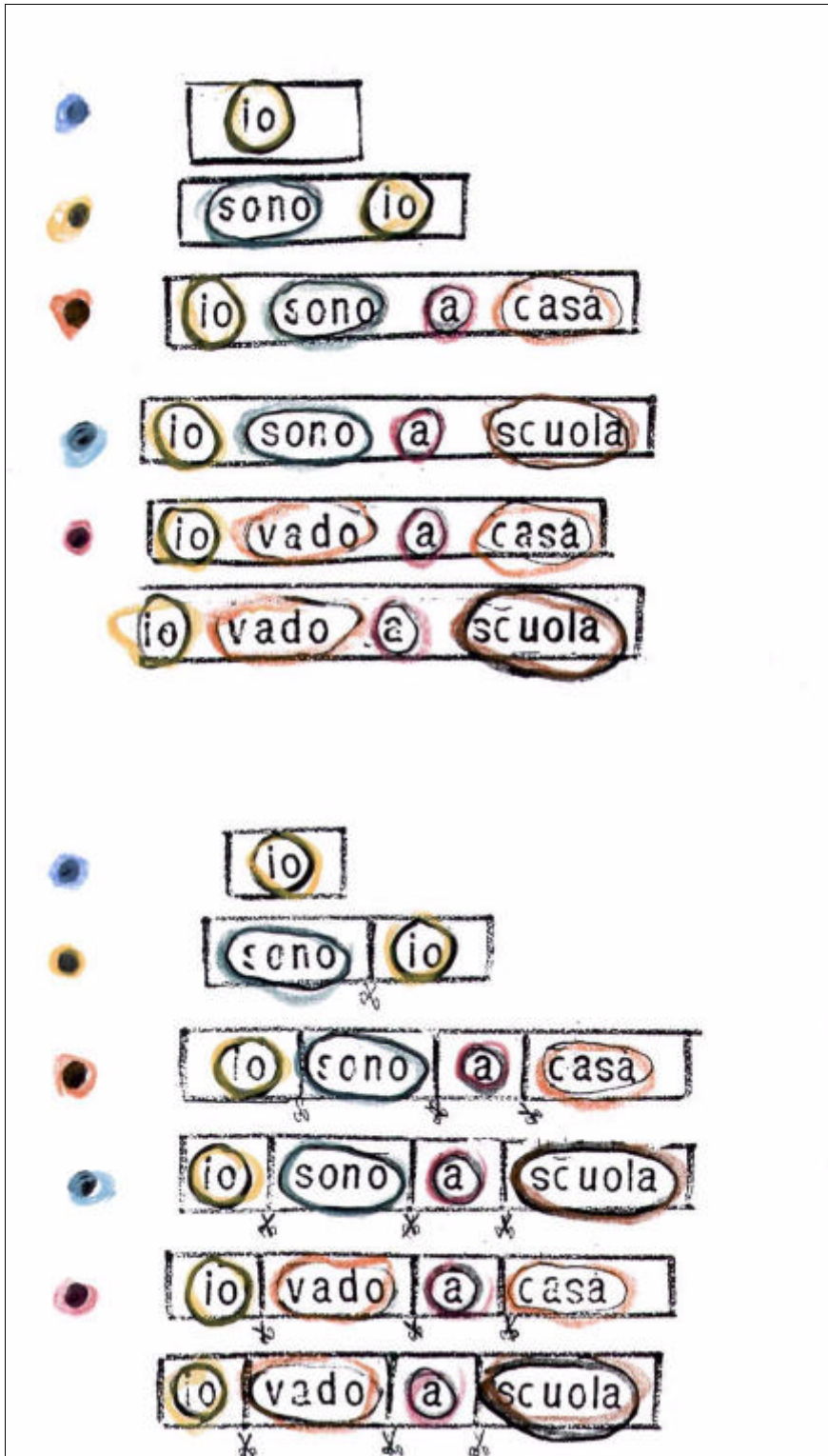
io sono a casa = I am at home
casa = home

Patchwork (drawing and writing)
Composition of the word “scuola” (school).



io sono a scuola = I am at school

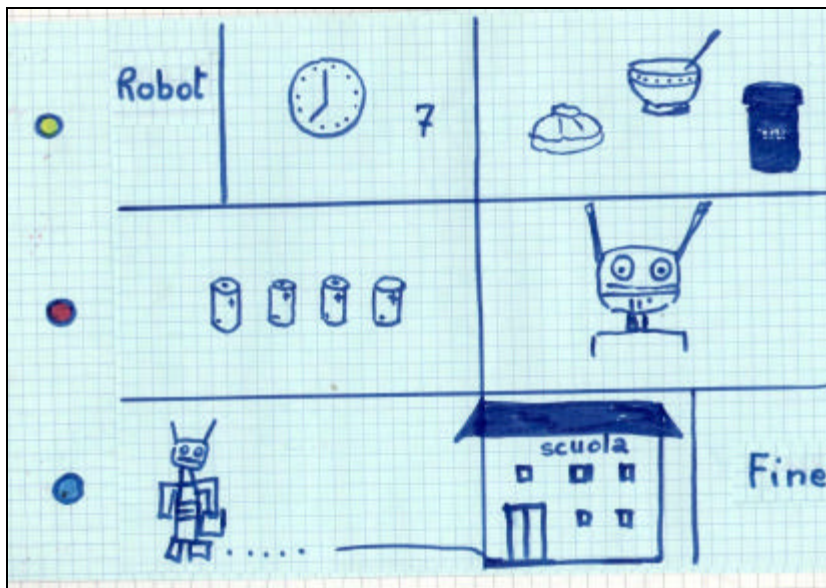
Patchwork, drawing and writing



io = I sono io = it's me
 io sono a casa = I am at home io sono a scuola = I am at school
 io vado a casa = I go home io vado a scuola = I go to school

Reading of stripes
 Composition and decomposition.

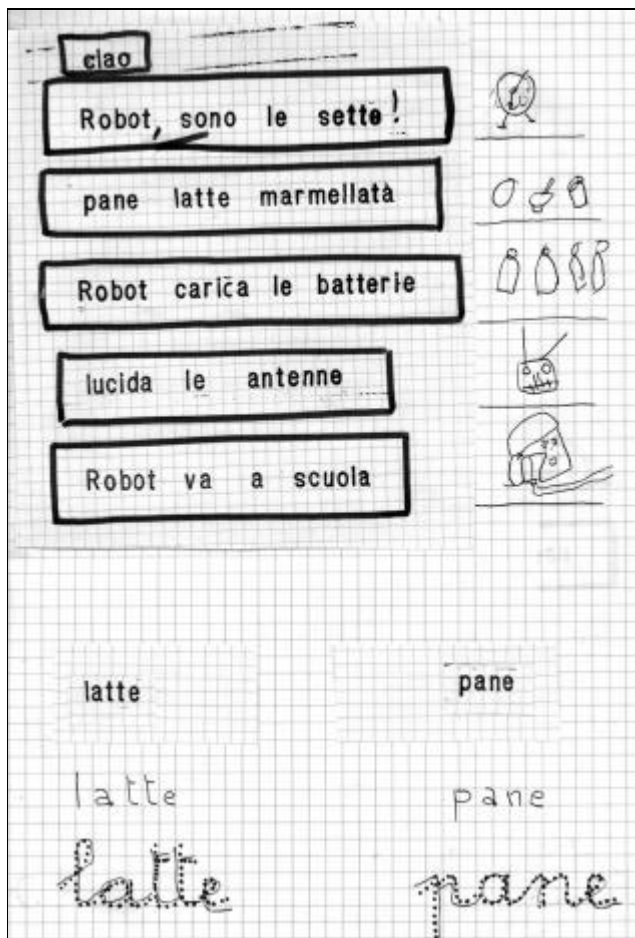
For the topic- a short story is employed and the reading of the images is done. The teacher has prepared a drawing and gives it to the child. The reading order is indicated by the coloured sign at the beginning of each line.



scuola =
school

fine =
the end

Now the teacher distributes the stripes with the short phrases. These are put in order on the table are read comunally and then they are glued on the exercise-book and illustrated.



ciao = hi!

Robot, sono le sette! =
Robot, it's seven o'clock!

Pane latte marmellata =
bread milk jam

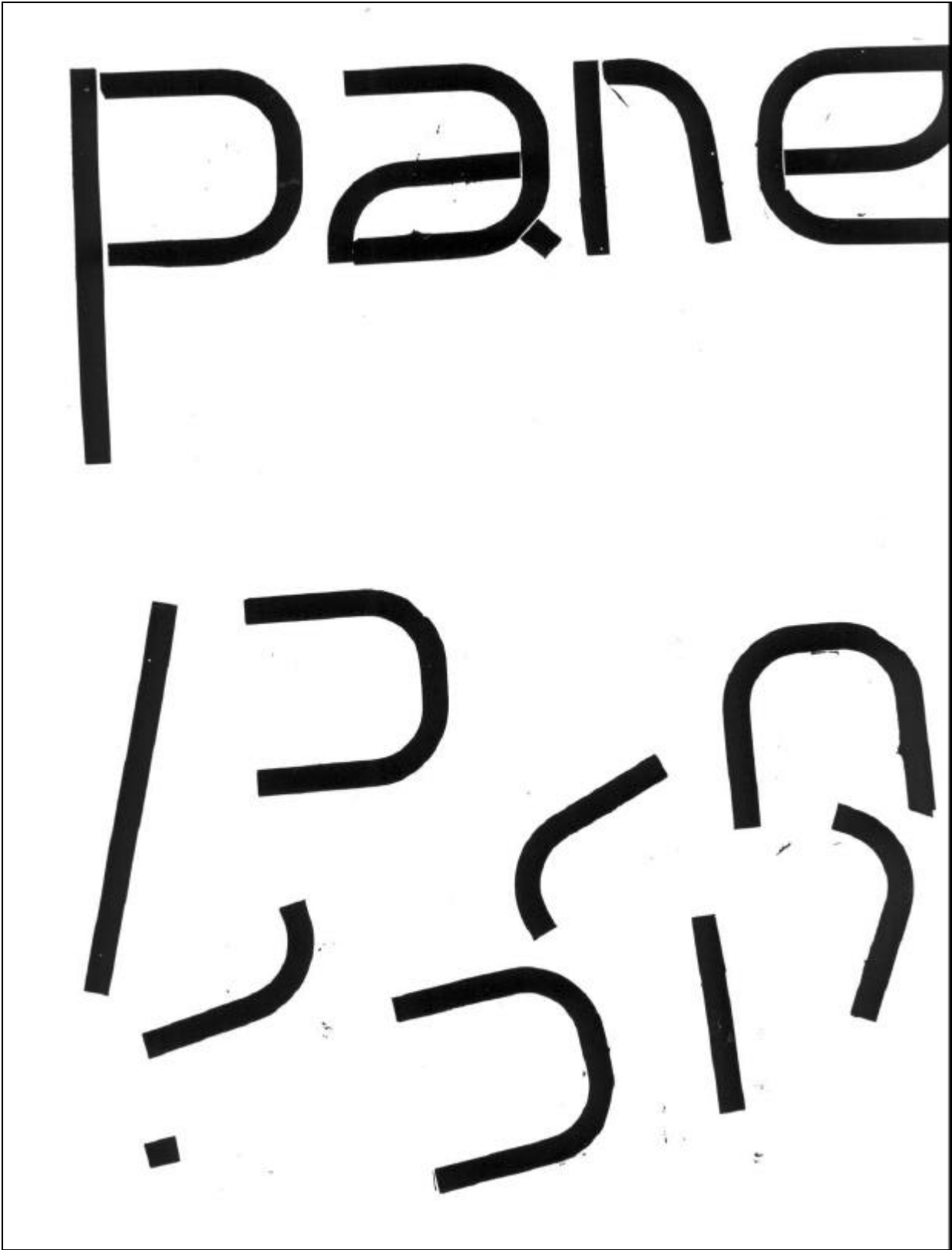
Robot carica le batterie =
Robot charges its
batteries

lucida le antenne = he
polishes its antennas

Robot va a scuola =
Robot goes to school

latte = milk
pane = bread

Composition of the word "pane" (bread)

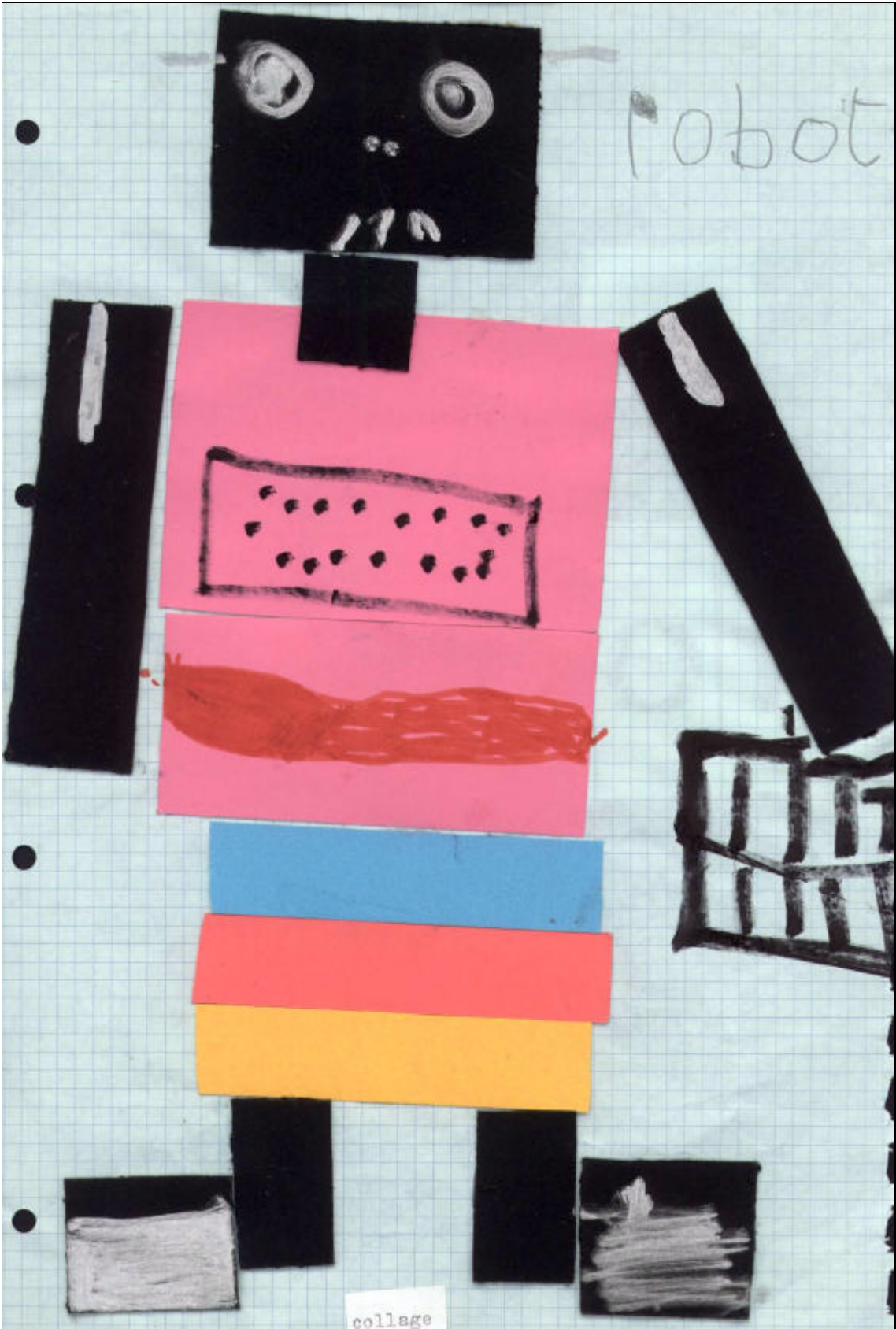


A four-piece mini-puzzle for the image "pane" (bread) is made as the word itself which is made of four letters. The puzzle is cut, composed and glued on the exercise-book.



The image "latte" (milk) is divided in five pieces, like the number of letters in "latte". It is cut, composed and glued.

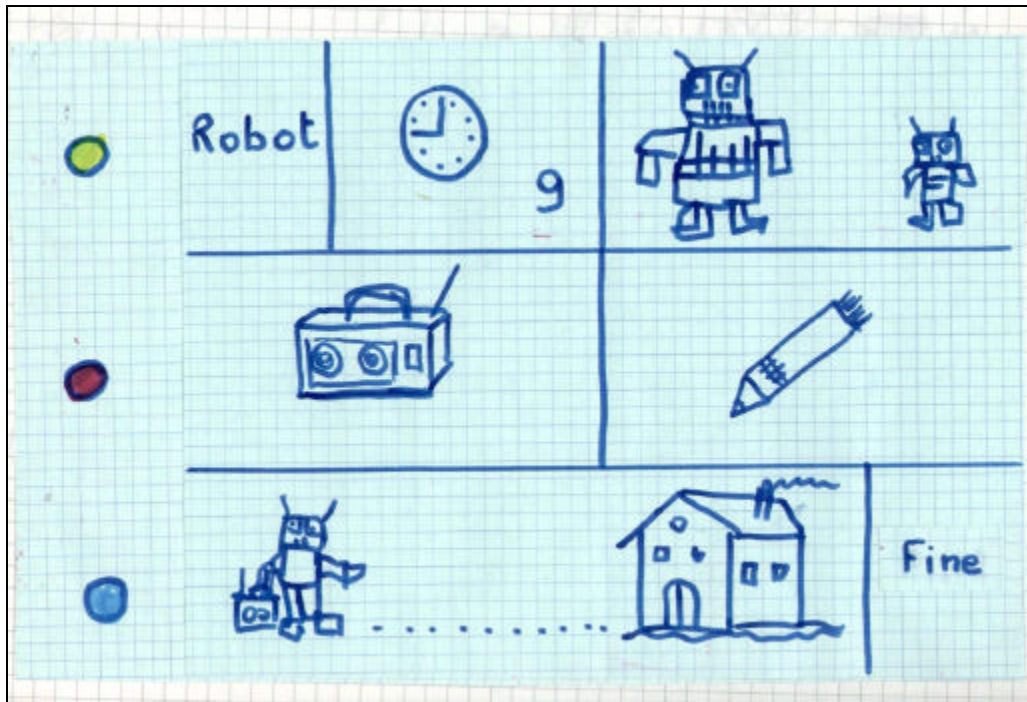
Patchwork for the robot, playing with clippings and composition



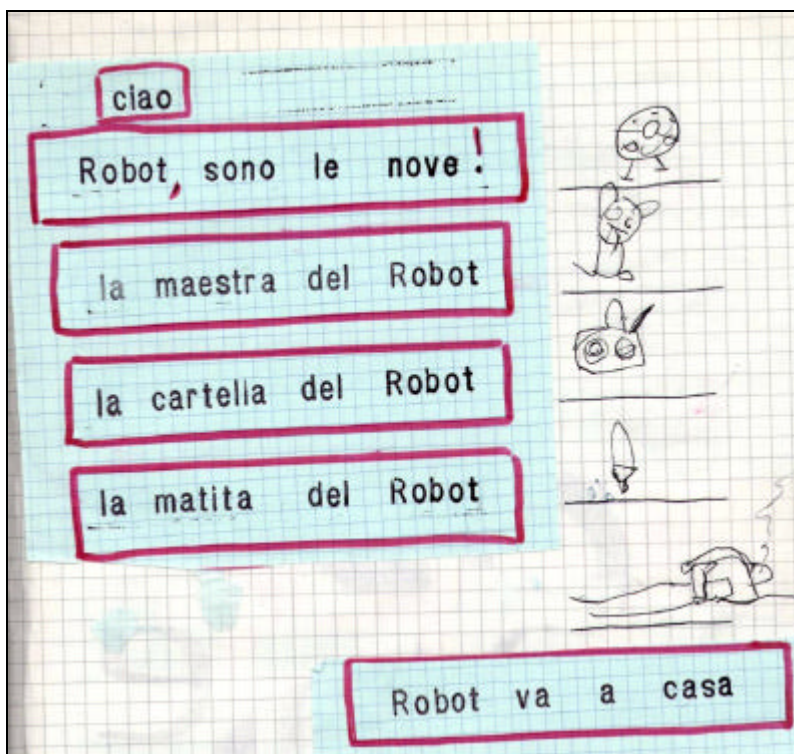
Composition and scomposition of the word "matita" (pencil).



Reading of images is done. The teacher distributes a simple sequence of drawings. The outer dots are the references for the reading.

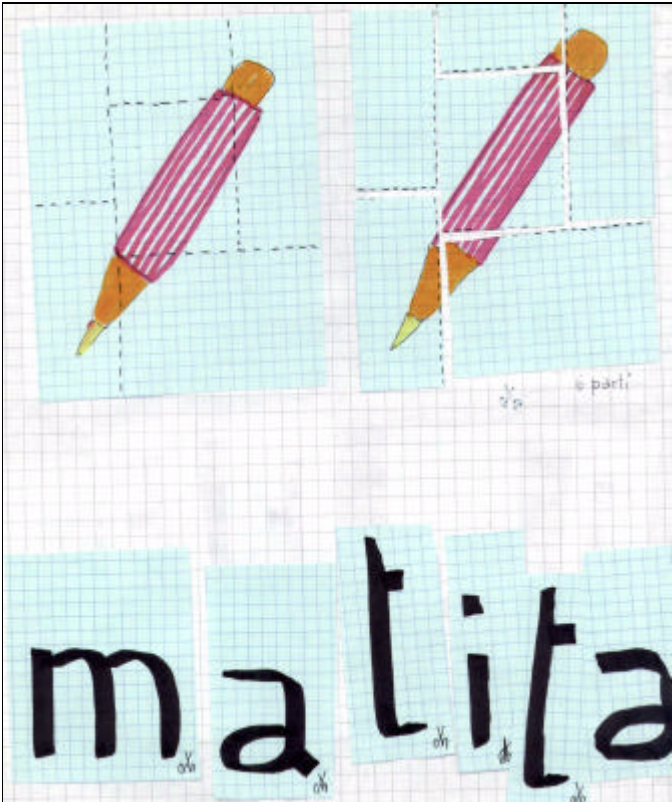


The reading of the stripes is done. The teacher distributes six stripes which are ordered on the table, then read together and eventually glued on the exercise-book and simply illustrated.



ciao = Hi!
 Robot, sono le nove!
 = Robot it's nine o'clock!
 La maestra del Robot
 = Robot's teacher
 la cartella del Robot =
 Robot's schoolbag
 la matita del Robot =
 Robot's pencil
 Robot va a casa =
 Robot goes home

Minipuzzle for the images and the words "matita" (pencil) and "cartella" (schoolbag).



Now we consider the stripes with phrases exposed on the wall of the classroom and related to the topics considered, enriched with patchworks, drawings and shapes in clay and plastiline. These are observed with attention, the known words are read and with them new sentences are done by adding, if necessary, other words previously known but not exposed. If desired, one can also write and illustrate.

Example.

From the sentences:

that's me with Mom and Dad
the lamb goes with its Mom
the dog barks
I go home
Robot goes to school
Cheers, Robot

We shall have:

Anna goes with Dad
the lamb goes with the dog
I am with the cat
mom says ciao ciaooo
the lamb goes to school,
Robot goes with the cat,
I go with the Robot

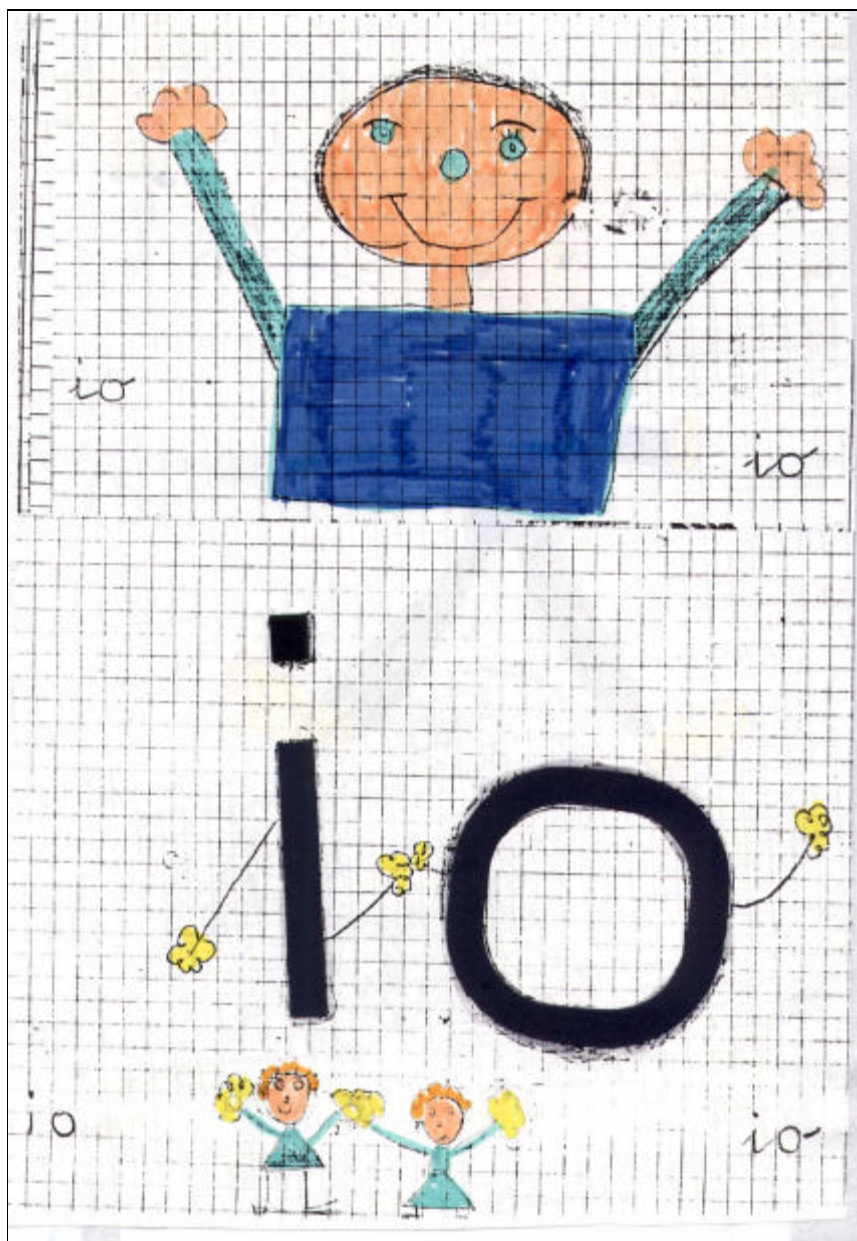


l'agnellino esce con il cane = the little lamb goes out with
the dog
sono io con il gatto = it's me with the cat

3.11 The Italics typing character

Already from the early days the italic character is introduced every now and then by showing to the children how it can be obtained from the capital letters by means of small signs of connection.

In this way the pencil can slide on the sheet without stopping and the writing becomes more rapid. The child soon realizes that he must just add the "little hands" and the "little tails" to some letters, and for other letters additional curves, loops and locks are needed.



io = I myself

It is not possible to employ the simplicity of the basic signs, so the word in italics appears as a long, complicated drawing to learn. In order to acquire skill in the italics it will be necessary to practice in controlling the sinuous line.

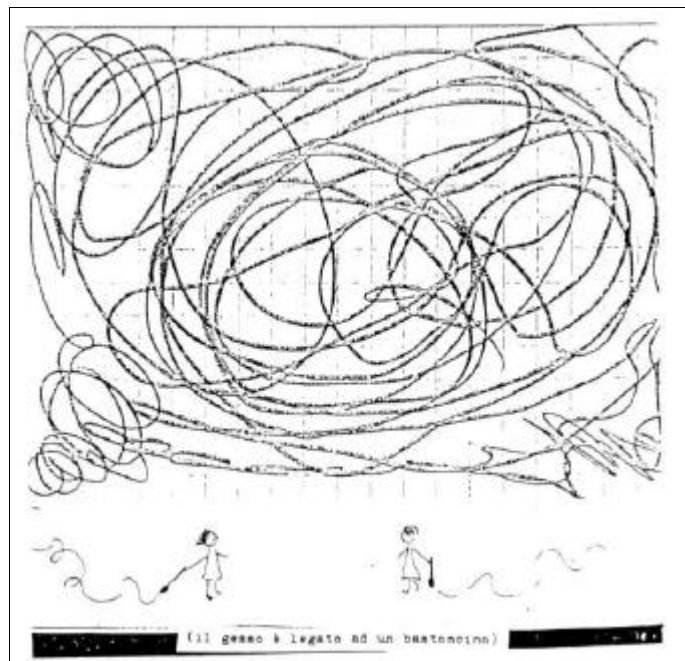
At the gym

The children are positioned at the corners of the room and, at the teacher's command, they will have to advance by forming curves, like a soft dance, while trying to reach certain points in the room.

Towards the centre some objects are located: blocks, chairs, tools, etc., acting as obstacles to be avoided.

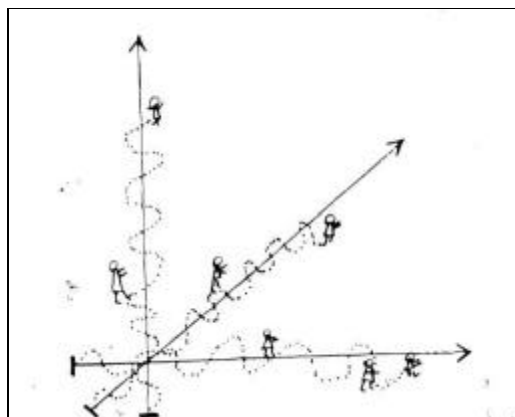
The whole thing is repeated by leaving a chalk trace on the floor, then the graphical construction obtained is observed. Eventually with a pencil, pen or felt pen, the curved path just done is transferred on a white sheet.

Instead of chalk an alternative is to use woollen thread balls in different colours fixed at the corners of the room. At the end the thread balls are rewinded by the children who, during this operation, must manage skilfully the movement of the right hand.

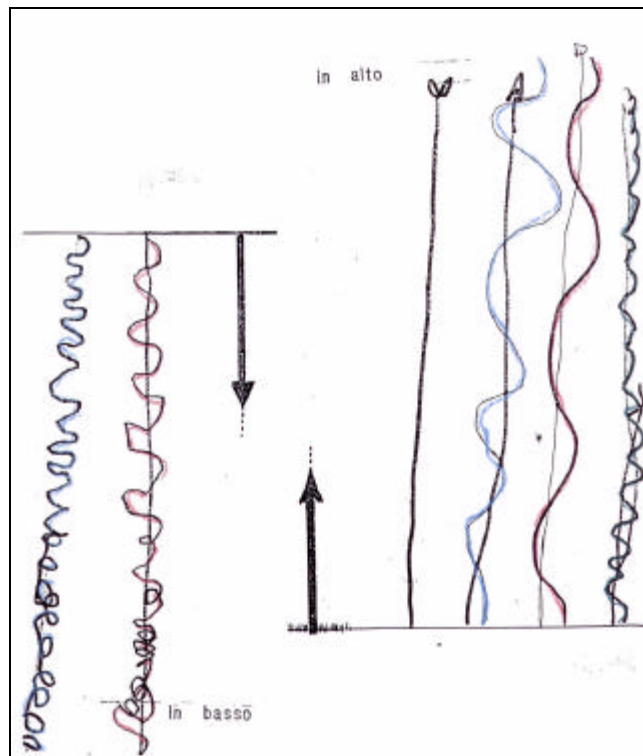


il gesso è legato ad un bastoncino = the chalk is tied to a stick

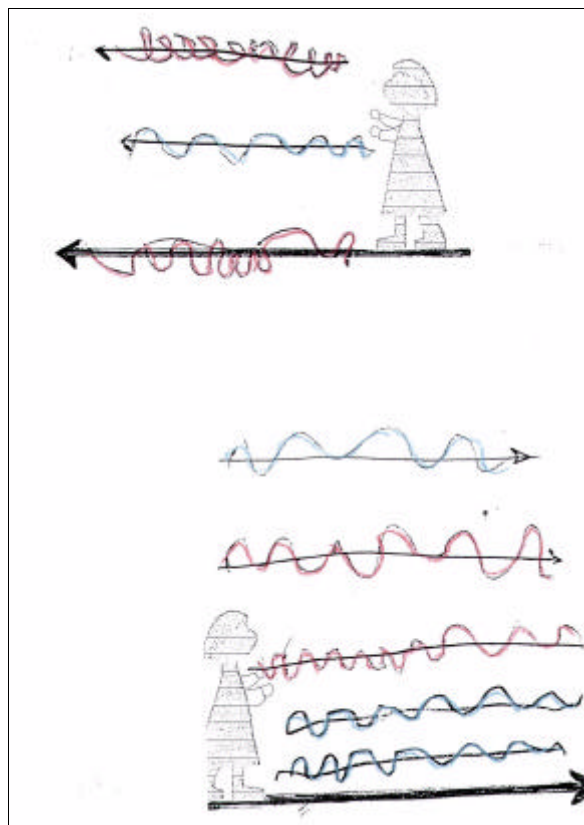
On the floor the teacher traces three arrows with chalk (in horizontal, vertical and oblique) and invites the children to walk along them with a snake-like trend.

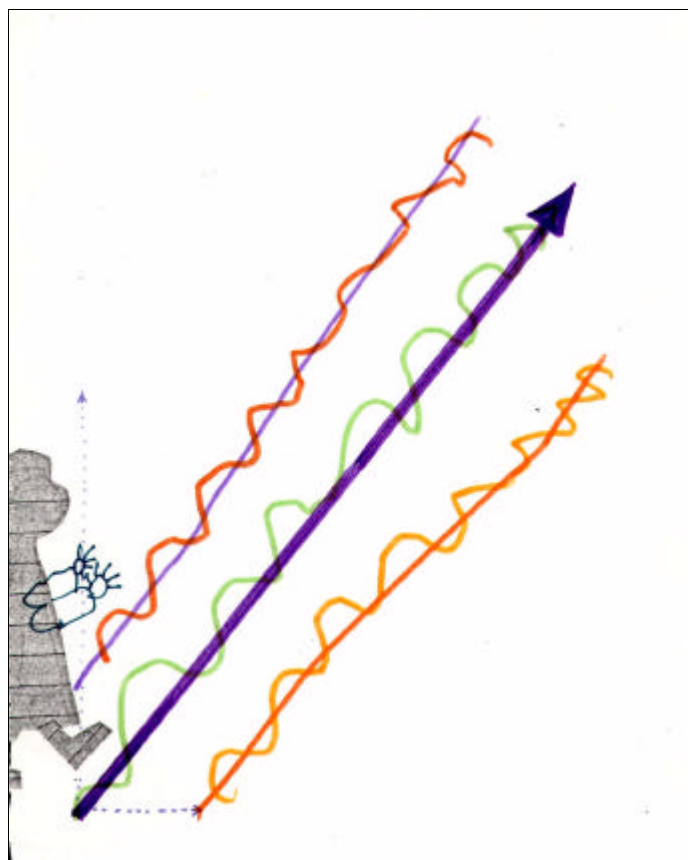
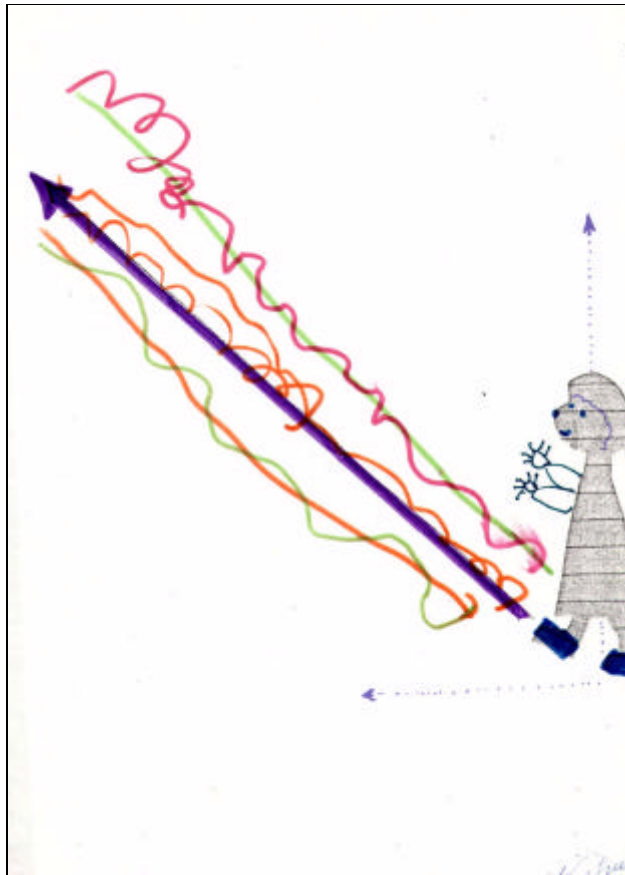


In the classroom the teacher refreshes the cards about directions to the top, to the bottom, to the right, to the left, in oblique, and these are completed by following the arrows with intentionally curved trend, by deviating and crosscutting freely the straight trace.



in alto = at the top in basso = at the bottom

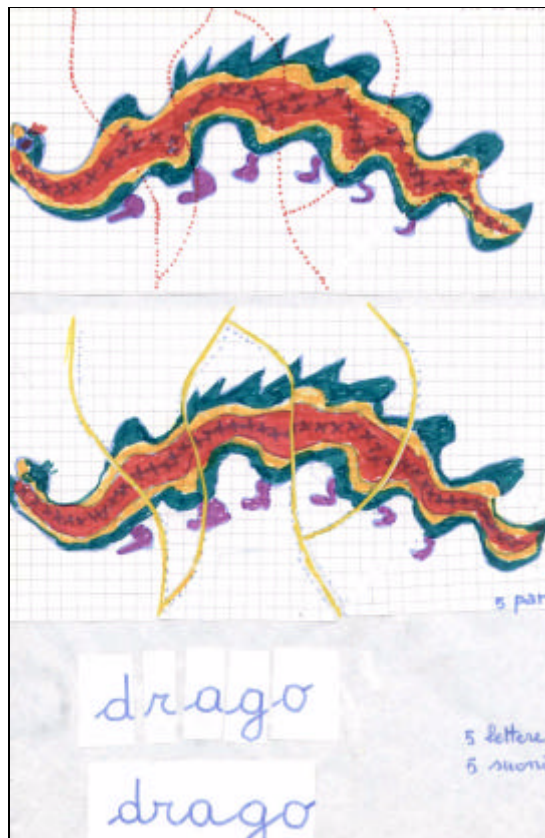




While the pencil runs on the sheet, some images are evoked:

- smoke raising from a house, from an outdoor fireplace ...
- the steam over a cup of tea, on the soup pot ...
- the genius coming out of Aladdin's lamp ...
- a crawling plant ...
- the wavy hairs of a child ...
- the dead leaves falling from a branch ...
- the agitated wind ...
- a winding road ...
- the flush of a river ...
- the water around some boulders ...
- the waves in the sea ...
- a snake ...
- a fast car on a racing-track

Little by little locks and curves become less dramatic also in the writing.
Contemporaneously the child gets better hold of the correspondence, in the alphabetical signs, between characters in capital letters and in italics. So, the printed pages become as reference and the lines of conjunction become little mobile and personalized.



drago = dragon	5 parti = 5 parts
5 lettere = 5 letters	5 suoni = 5 sounds

Mini-puzzle for the word "drago" (dragon) in italics.