

4. SOUND AND SIGN

4.1 Noises, voices, sounds

To learn how to read and write is like playing with a strange graphical and sound construction in once. The use of the basic signs offers a quiet approach to the graphical difficulties. Therefore, as there is nothing to be learnt mechanically but gradually by means of personal construction, already from the first days it is possible to engage the child also in the pairing of the signs with the alphabetical sounds.

For this aim it is first useful go through the "sound landscape". (*)

By listening to and producing noises and sounds, some of them can be isolated so that they become a shape and the child happily realizes his/her discriminant capacity. These are always sound events which are close to the everyday experience, but which often are overlooked.

The teacher will record sounds and noises to be listened, whose sources should be recognized, and among which the pupil can catch similarities and differences.

The children concerned will give different answers according to their own experience, with an amount of associations which will create richness, because everybody will eventually deal with one's own images and those offered by the schoolmates.

It is important to explore the auditory ability of the child, thereby availing of the contribution of some experts in musical education and, if necessary, of specialists of auditory and language disturbs.

The teacher makes the child listen the sound of a little bell her left hand, in front of him/her, behind him/her.

Three different bells ring.

Standing still we listen and listen.

If possible, the phone receiver is arosen and the signal is heard: free, occupied.....

At home, other noises: the dishwasher, the washing machine at the top, above his/her head, at the bottom, below the chair, at his/her right hand, at his/, the fridge, the electric polisher in function. We hear a door which is closed softly, someone else is, on the contrary, slamming it.

A box is rolled on the floor.

Below the hands a ball is bouncing, slowly, more, quickly, again slowly.

With the shoes on the floor we imitate the movements of a worm and accompany the move with the voice: slow, winding, crawling ...

We turn in circle slowly, always accompanying the move with the voice. Quicker, high up: it's the roudabout.

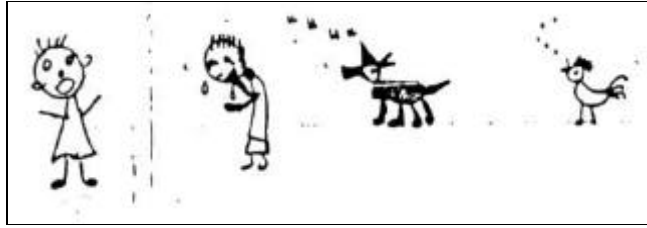
We imitate the wind blowing around, up down; a hurricane is forming, a thunder is heard ...

We make the rain with the help of fingers on the table: slow, quicker, soft, then a gutter, the rain on the roof, a hailstorm.

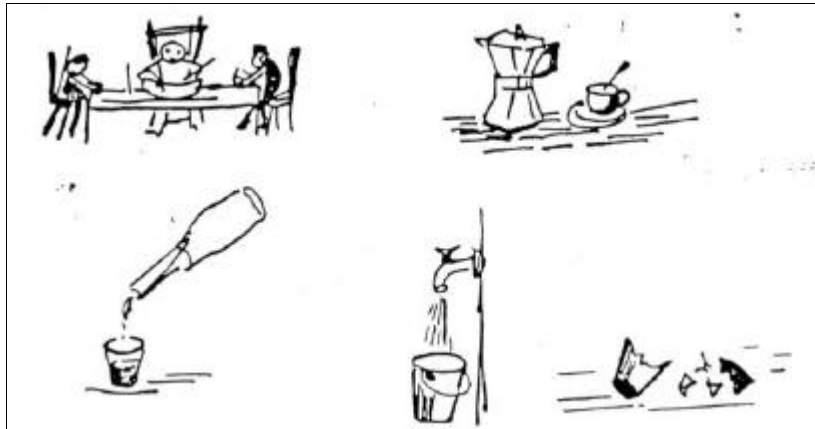


We try and sigh, cough, sneeze, laugh, shout, sing, speak with low voice, aloud, whisper, weep, kiss, stutter.

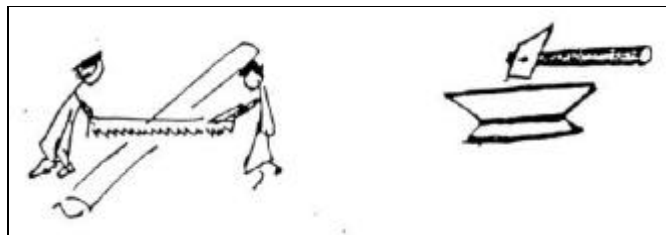
With the voice we imitate an animal: a cry, a call, a yelp, a howl.



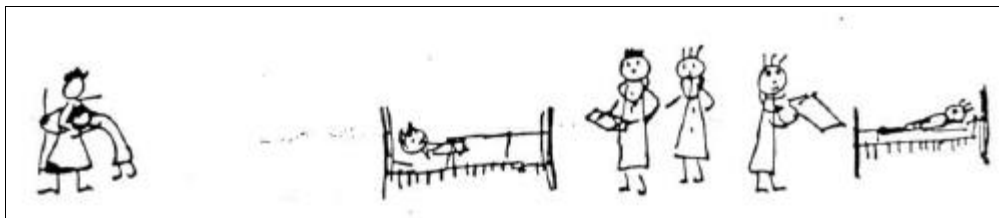
Someone eats with noise: here is the noise of the cutlery, the tinkling of a glass, a biscuit being crunched, the crispy bread, a fork falling. On the fire a steak is frying, the coffee boiling. A liquid is poured from a bottle, the water tap is open, a glass crashes.



The fire is crackling in the fireplace, a chestnut bursts in the burning charcoal. Dad is sitting in his armchair and skims through the newspaper. The TV transmits a cheerful, frightening or gloomy sound. We hear some bells, a piano, a trumpet, a drum, a guitar. On the road a car, a motorbike, a bus are passing. A cart is pulled by a horse: a wheel is creaking. In the sky a roaring airplane is flying. Someone is sawing a trunk. A hammer is hitting an anvil.



We listen to the heart beat and, if possible, we observe the track of an electro-cardiogram: the machine has written a record and the doctor is reading it.



4.2 Space and sound landscape

After this panorama of sounds, we start to create groupings of the sounds around spatial configurations.

The teacher proposes to think about a landscape, roughly outlines its characteristics on the blackboard or else uses some pictures, then all together look for the sounds and imitate them.

In the forest

We hear the blows of an axe of a woodcutter, then everything is still. The rustling leaves, the singing birds. With small calling devices we try and recognize the voices of the robin, of the finch, of the sparrow, of the starling, of the nightingale, ...

In a farm

The cock and the hens, the barking of a dog, the horses and the carts, the voices of the people, the animals in the shed, the tractor, the threshing-machine ...

In the meadow

The whining of the sheep, the watch dog, the calls of the shepherds, the cow-bells, the singing birds, the cicadas, the crickets, a crawling snake, the wind in the leaves ...

At the seaside

The waves on the shore, the plop of a row, the wind and the storm, the breakers, a motorboat, the voices of the fishermen, of the bathers...

The village during the day, at night ...

A singing woman, the grand-father who is snoring, a motorbike, an ambulance, an airplane, the voices of people going to work, a drunken man ...

On these sound landscapes we can now recall scents, smells, flavours, tactile impressions.

Example.

In the farm

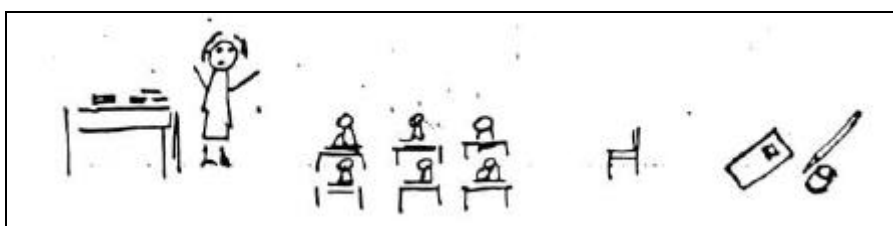
The scent of the hay, of the straw, of the grass, of the flowers, the smell of the hen-house, of the cow-shed, of the horse-stable; the smell of the bird-seed, of the seeds, of the milk, of the greens....

The flavour of the freshly squeezed milk, of the seasoning cheese, of the cottage cheese ...

The lettuce and the onion, garlic, sweet and sour fruits ...

We feel the grass wet with dew under our hands, the stinging straw, the gravel and the soil in the courtyard under our feet. It is nice to jump over the hay sheafs, to run on the grass, to feel the wind on the face, the fresh morning air, the sultriness in a summer afternoon ...

At school we listen to the words of the teacher, the shouts of the children in the nearby classroom, the voice of the schoolkeeper, a bell ringing, the chalk on the blackboard, the penknife with a pencil inside, a torn sheet, the steps and the chairs moved on the floor.



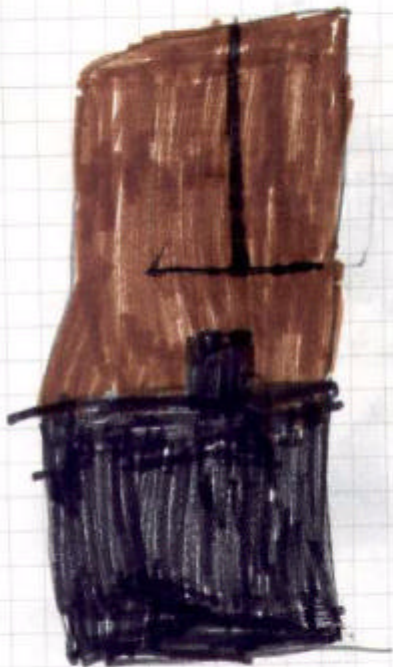
rumori-voci-suoni



ride



ru s s a

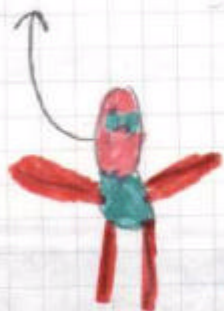


su o n i

scorre

ba t t e

pi a n g e

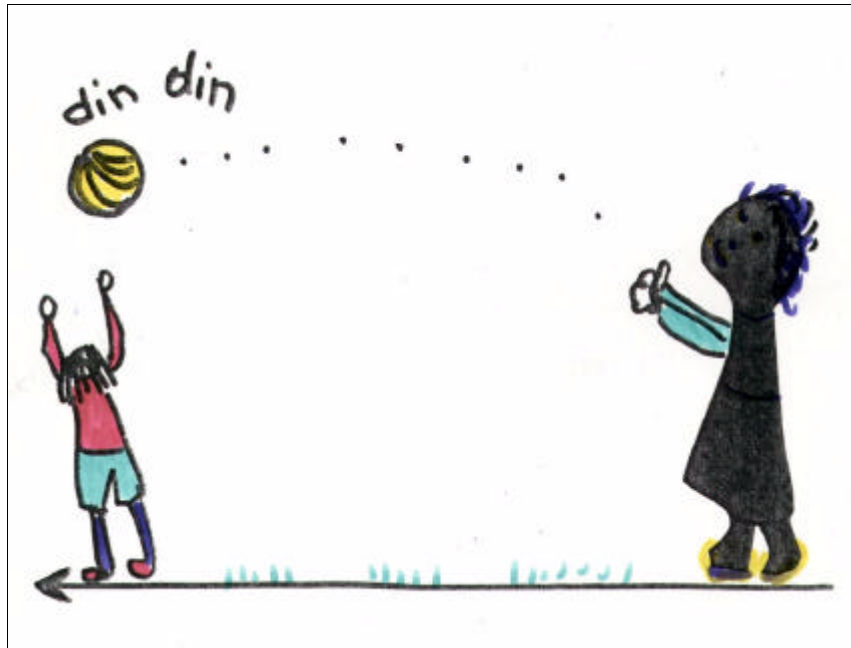


parlano

4.3 Sound and space relationships

Within a sound landscape the range of listening is more and more restricted. We look for sounds and noises related to space situations of high-low, right-left, above-below, inside-outside, in front-behind.

However a reference point is necessary. Further on opposite time conditions will be coupled with opposite space situations. For the exercises we can use the cascabel-ball and the cards.



Hereafter we show how to operate with children on very simple topics through fantasy, observation and listening of the real world.

Sound and space: high and low, right and left

Reference point: a tree

Characters: a dog and a cat

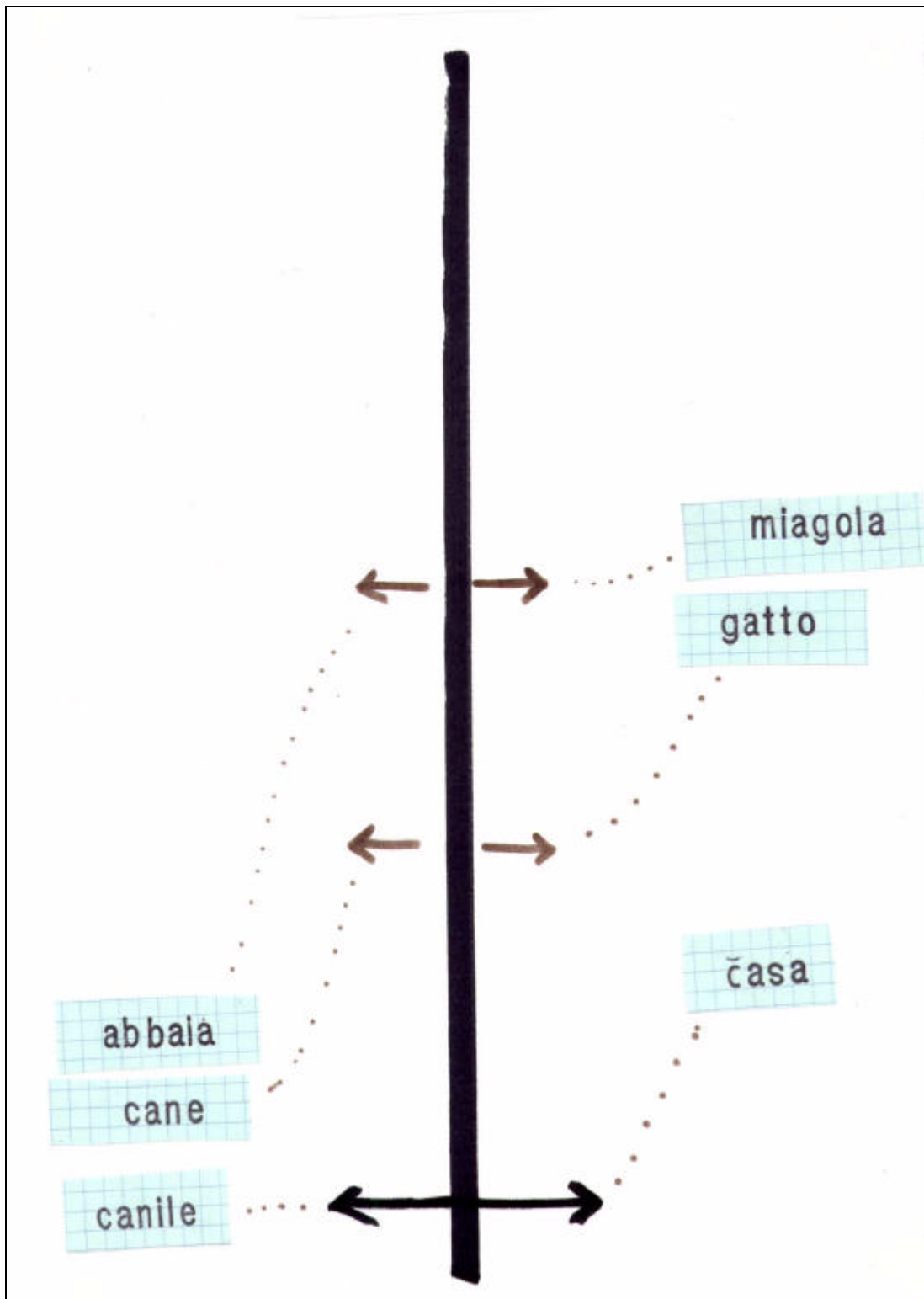
The central tree is made by patchwork with the basic signs in cardboard. On the foliage there is a "rhythm" of light green and dark green. The cat is on the roof; the dog is down in the kennel.



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

Card and patchwork

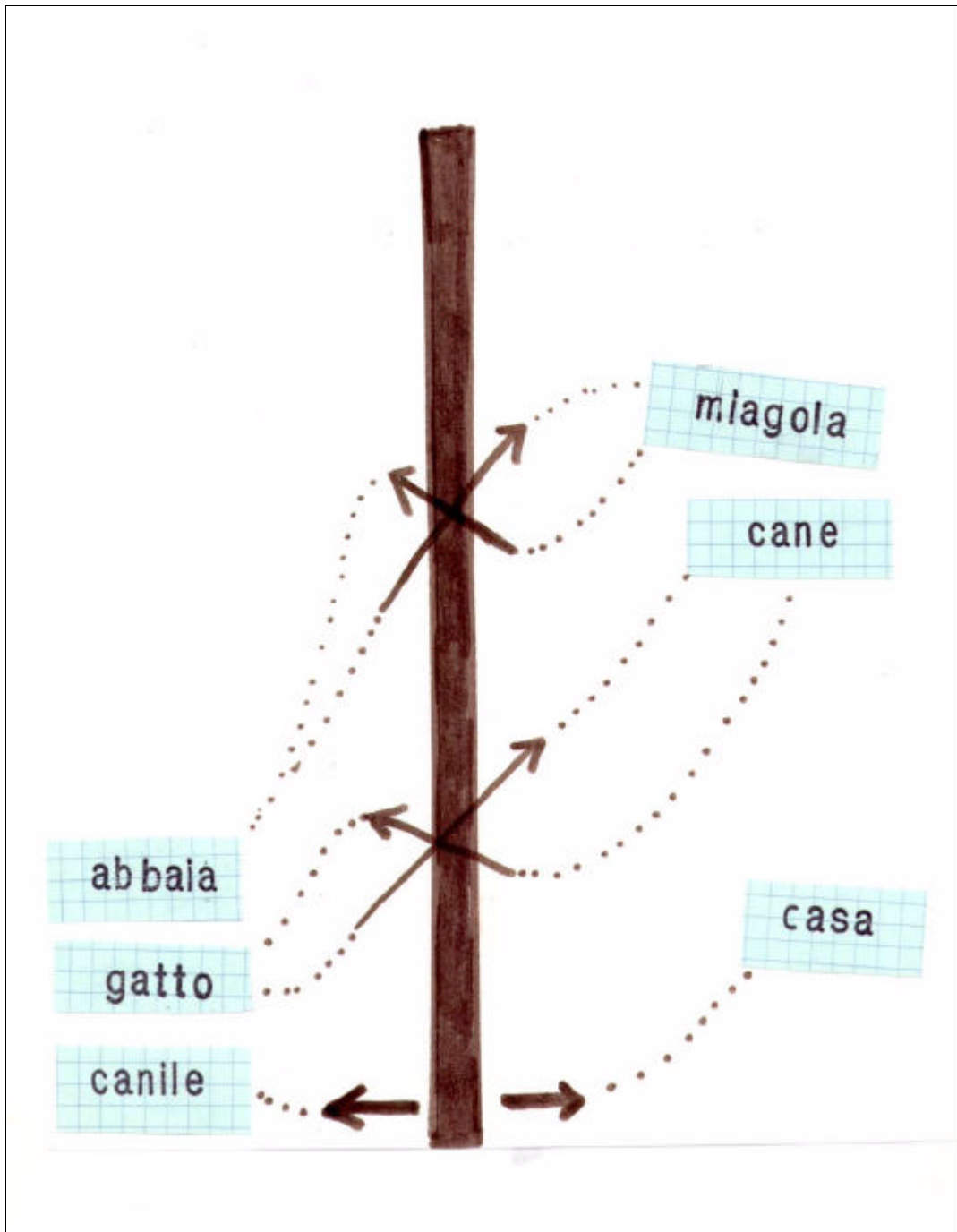
The pupil receives the card and the paper bands carrying the words. He/she makes an effort to recognize them and tries to put them in the proper sector: to the right or to the left, high up or below.



abbala = it barks
cane = dog
canile = dog-house

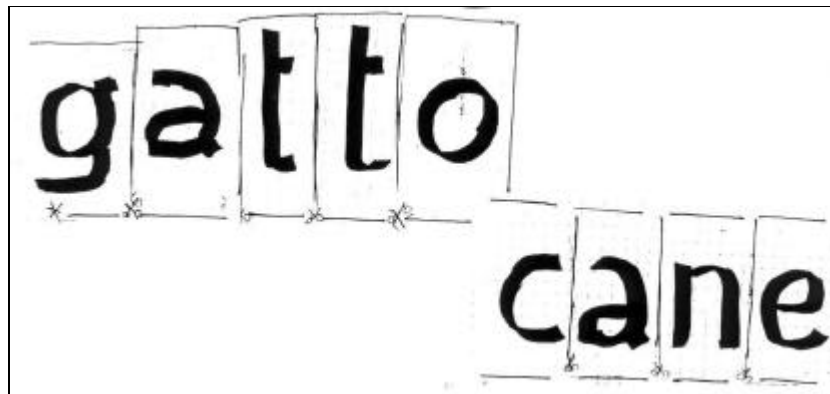
miagola = it meows
gatto = cat
casa = house

Card and patchwork



abbaia = it barks	miagola = it meows
gatto = cat	cane = dog
canile = dog-house	casa = house

The dog and the cat have been to a party in a faraway village and maybe exaggerated in drinking: on the way back the dog goes to the right on the roof and starts meowing, whereas the cat goes downwards in the kennel and barks.



Drawing, clipping, composition and decomposition of the words "gatto" (cat) and "cane" (dog)

Sounds, time and space

Inside and outside; day and night.
Reference point: the house.

Again patchwork and drawing

The child is given a small clipped house in different colours for the day and for the night. The door and windows have clipped wings which can be opened. The child completes the scene by drawing: the fireplace, the sun, the meadow, etc., and then inside and outside the house, the sources of the sounds: the little bird, someone singing at the window, Mom with the polishing machine, the coffeepot, a motorbike, ...

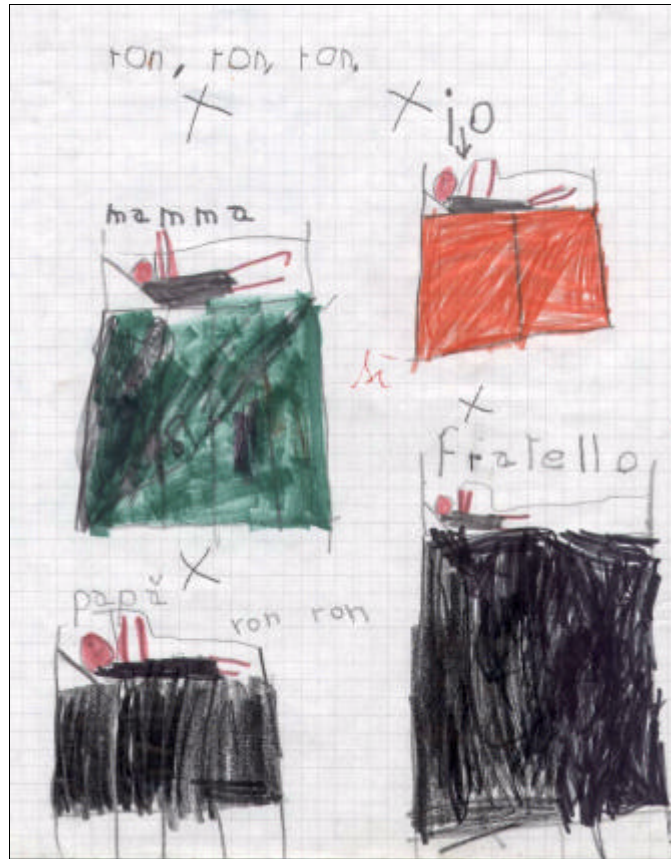


giorno = daytime
di giorno sento cantare la la la = in the daytime I hear someone singing

In the night the smoke is missing from the fireplace, the cat is meowing on the roof, in the bedroom someone is snoring, a car with lights on and an airplane with three lights are passing by. At the end of the drawing, some child decides to close doors and windows.



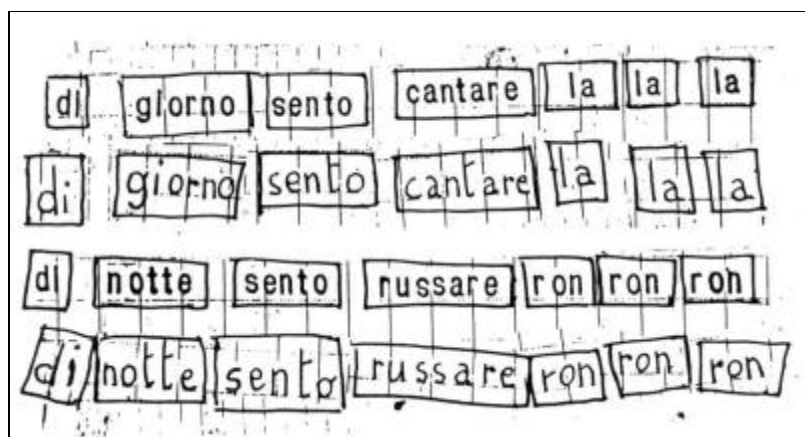
dentro-fuori = inside-outside
notte = nighttime
di notte sento russare ron ron ron = in the
nighttime I hear someone snoring ron ron ron



mamma = Mom io = I myself
 papà = Dad fratello = brother

Tiding up the sentences

In the final exercise of clipping, composition and decomposition, two contrasting sentences are given on four paper bands. Two bands are complete because they will be useful for reference and comparison. The other two are given in pieces and mixed to the children, thereby simulating the confusion of the dog and of the cat after the party. With the help of the teacher the child observes, makes distinctions and rebuilds the two sentences.



di giorno sento cantare la la la = in the daytime I hear someone singing
 di notte sento russare ron ron ron = in the nighttime I hear someone snoring ron ron ron

4.4 Gesture, sound and sign

Production, listening and understanding (*)

We must not forget that a pupil who is listening to us carefully and in silence, is not always understanding us. Listening is actually often overestimated and cannot be equalized to understanding. In the class we can be understood by children who are listening with little effort, if there is little necessity of learning and the context and explanation are simple. On the contrary, there can be pupils who are concentrated but who cannot understand when they are entertained on things advertised as important to be learnt, to be listened carefully, but explained in a too complex way, without a good link to the child's basic knowledges.

Clearly, in order to get a good attention to which understanding and learning may correspond, we must also introduce a material able to create interest and leading to a new and gradual learning, in the sense that the new thing would include something familiar.

The explanation should be neither too simple nor too difficult, but adequate, and we must manage to make t child work, search, discover, find out in his/her own way.

By using a metaphor, we may say that we must put the stones close to one another across the stream, but then we must allow the child to cross the stream by himself/herself, first with his/her unsteady forces and then, little by little with more and more skill and confidence.

To this aim the activities in which difficult things are to be learnt, should be alternated with others which represent a "varied repetition", or else which require little effort for the understanding in spite of the fact they are new.

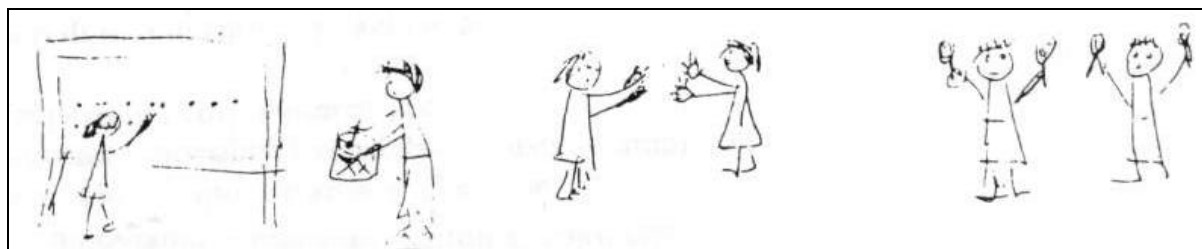
Also when sounds and noises are introduced to the child, he/she often appears to be attentive, but this role can also be passive. By offering him/her only this opportunity, we shall soon see a decrease of the participation to the activity. Moreover, the listening as well may become detached from what is offered towards other sources of sound.

It is therefore important that the children try, individually or in groups, and produce rhythms with some musical instruments or with any object.

It is useful to listen to the teacher managing the sounds, listen to the tape recorder, but it is also necessary that the child may act. It is necessary to invent very simple sequences with him/her, to try them, to learn them.

In addition we shall realize with pleasure that the sequences obtained, with a segmented time and strong to soft accents in repetition, will concentrate and protect the pupils' attention from the diversion caused by the sounds external to the working environment.

In this way an ideal background is created where the differences between the alphabetic signs proposed may be better perceived.



4.5 Sound and movement *

It is interesting to listen to the sounds of the classroom and to try and manage them by working on movements and sounds produced by one's own body in relation to schoolmates and objects from the furniture of the classroom.

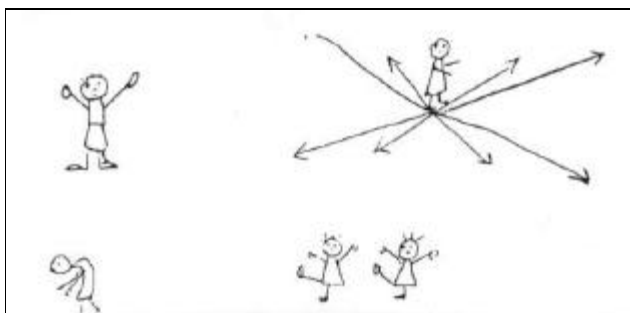
As not all the children can perceive a sound, a word, a movement in the same way, we become aware that some are disturbed at certain levels, whereas some other, less sensitive to sounds, need a higher volume. Also for the movements, there is someone who prefers to stick to his/her own body and someone who prefers to expand in the surrounding space.

We can try and smooth the differences and use the sound to bring out the movement and viceversa.

Therefore the sounds will be used to manage the movement, then from the gesture we shall go back to the sounds and to the talk. We shall perceive times, flowing, hues, shadows, inflections and colouring.

Thoughts of movements in relation to:

- what we are moving: parts of the body involved
- place where we are: space opportunities, narrow or wide space
- the way we are moving: types, features, style
- the person we are moving: relation, tune, contrast
- to where we are moving: direction, orientation



Production of sounds of movements accompanied by gestures:

slow: dlon ... dlon ... dlon ... dlon ...

quick: sguisc sguisc ...

soft: secc secc .. secc

strong: sbang! sbang!

straight: zac! zac!

supple: vlimvlam vlim vlam

Continuous: zzzzzzzzz
interrupetd: toc toc

upwards: vummm ... vummm ...

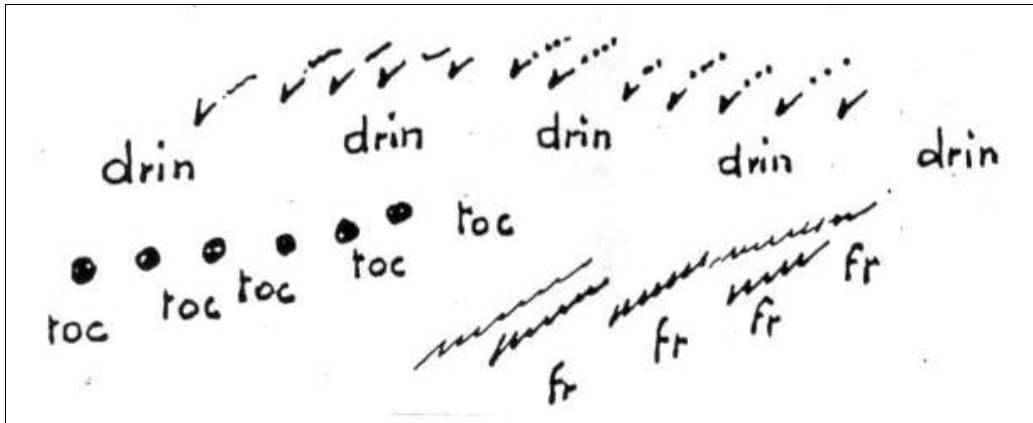
downwards: splash ... splash ...

* D.W.Keyho - op. cit.

Production of a word for ideas of movements:

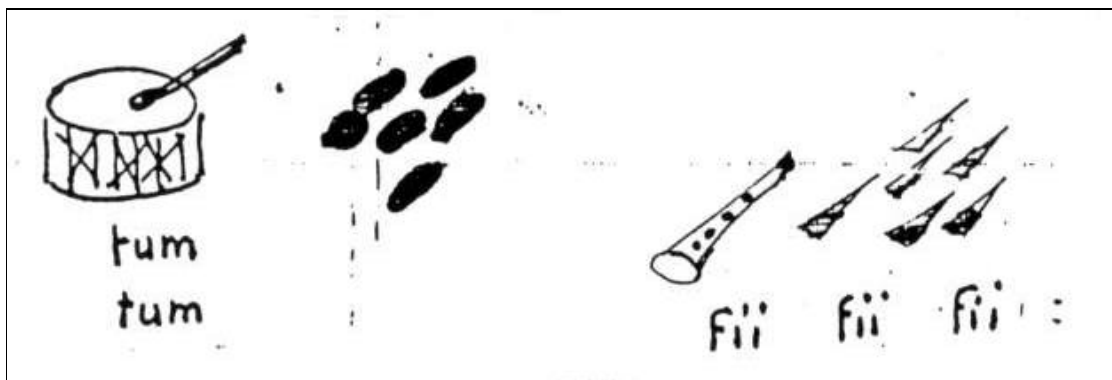
quick: mouse	slow: turtle
strong: fist	soft: caress
straight: arrow	supple: snake
continuous: running car	interrupted: braking
upwards: rocket	downwards: dive

For the sounds and movement we draw a sign and a word.



We can pair columns and shapes with the sounds produced by instruments.

E.i., a drum, a whistle, a dim sound, a clear sound, etc..




We make movements in couples and by accompanying them with the voice, simultaneously or in succession, on activities of the same type or contrasting.

E.i., We are on a boat ... oooo oooo
 The bells are ringing don ... don ...
 A hammer tum ... tum ... tum ...
 A clicking: tic tic tic

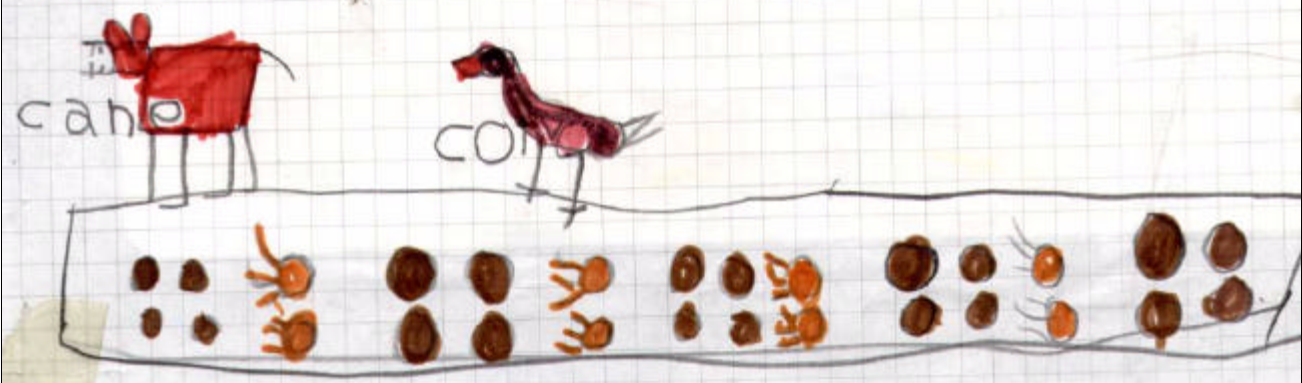


We play with the animal spoors by establishing a simple program for sounds: two sounds for a cat and one for the bird, two for the cat and one for the bird.

Mauro Sala



miao cip miao cip miao cip



cane corvo

bau cra bau cra bau cra

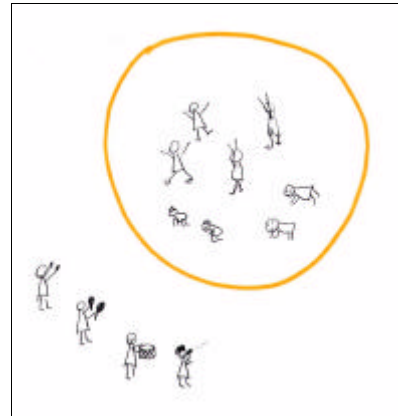
cane = dog corvo = crow

4.6 Sound and movement: exercises and transcription.

At the gym or in an almost empty room with few tables and chairs the teacher traces a wide circle on the floor with yellow chalk. The children-elves will enter the circle to dance.

Outside other children will lead the movement and with the teacher they will tell a short poem and clap their hands, play maracas, a drum, a whistle.

The elfs
in the moon circle
dance
from twelve till one o'clock
they are hands
they are dogs
they are bulls
they are mice
they are elfs
magical people.





Back to the classroom, each child will draw and clip a paper elf which will be glued on a cardboard. There the teacher will have traced a big yellow circle and written two or three sentences below.


The elfs make a dance
They are hands
They are bulls
they are dogs
they are mice





Identification and reading of paper stripes. The children glue them on their notebook, draw and write.


I folletti 


nel cerchio di luna 


fanno i balli 


dalle dodici all'una 


sono mani 

sono cani 

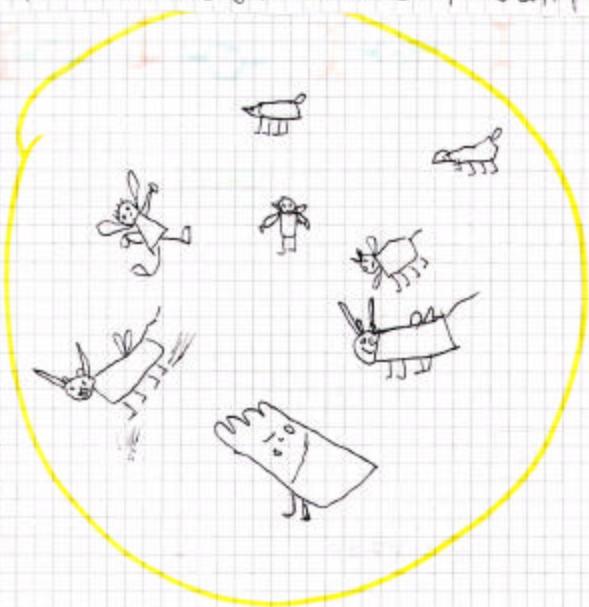
sono tori 

sono topi 

sono i folletti 



magici ometti 



i folletti fanno i balli



sono mani sono cani
sono tori sono topi



sono mani



sono mani  sono mani 

sono cani  sono cani 

sono cani

sono tori

sono tori  sono tori 

sono topi  sono topi 

sono topi

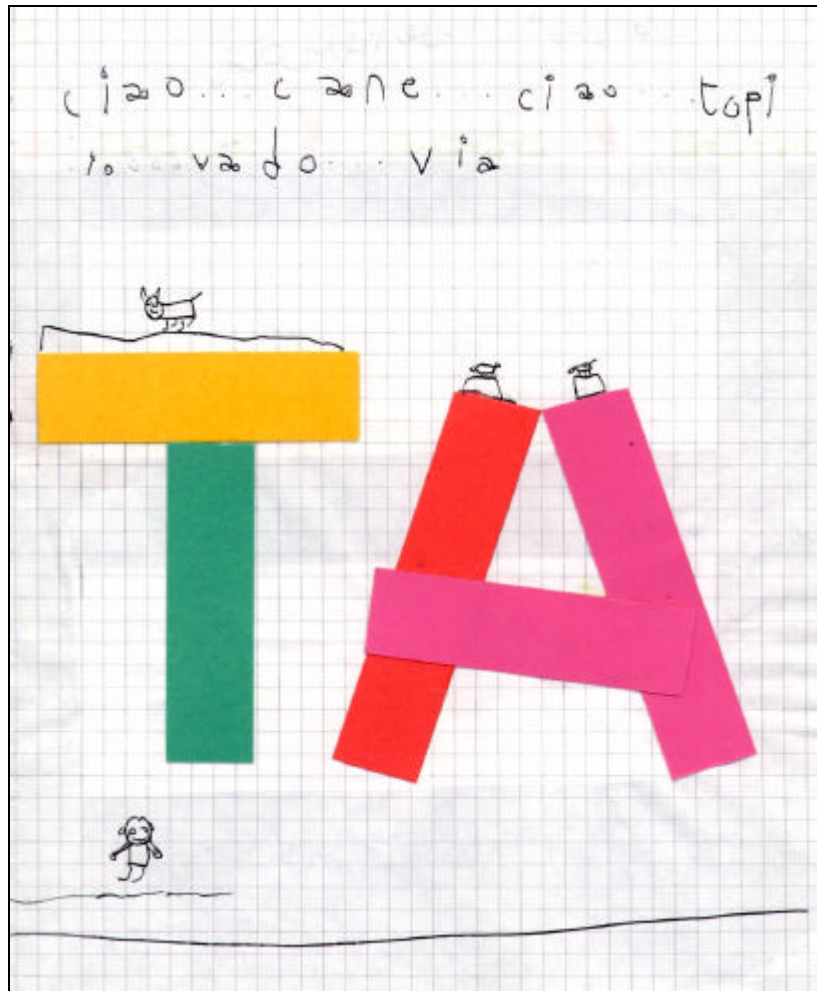
Identification and reading of paper stripes glued and illustrated. Guided writing in italics.

I folletti = the elves nel cerchio della luna = in the circle of the moon fanno i balli = make dances
dalle dodici all'una = from twelve to one o'clock sono mani = they are hands sono cani = they are
dogs sono tori = they are bulls sono topi = they are mice sono i folletti = they are the elves

New sentences

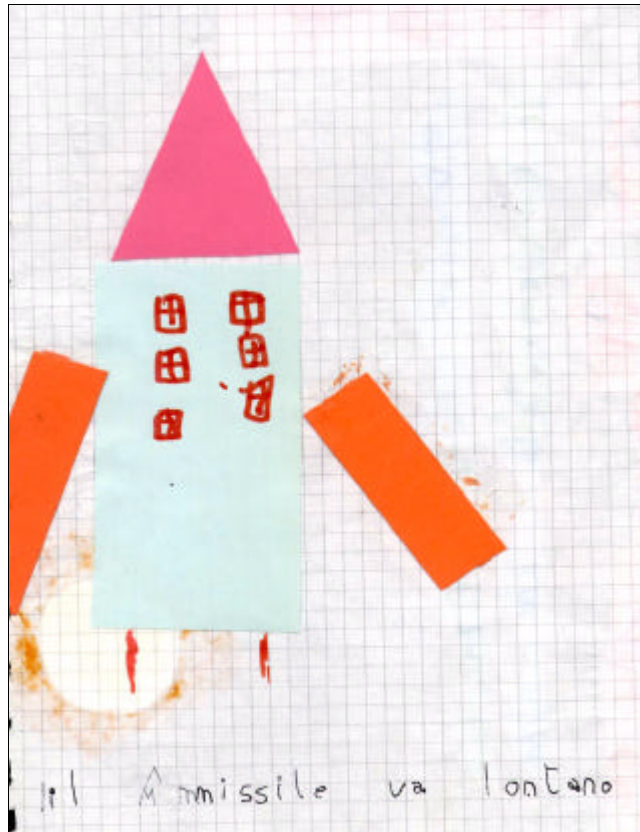
At the end on the walls there are many new words. Different and rich groupings can be made. All the children are involved. The most fantastic sentences come out with the help of small words, such as of, in, over, to, ... which are "given as presents" by the teacher. This is a very important stage which can stimulate also the most rigid children.

I go in the milk
The mice stay with Mom
cheers bulls
I am in the tea
the robot goes on the house
Dad goes with a mouse
I am a dog
...

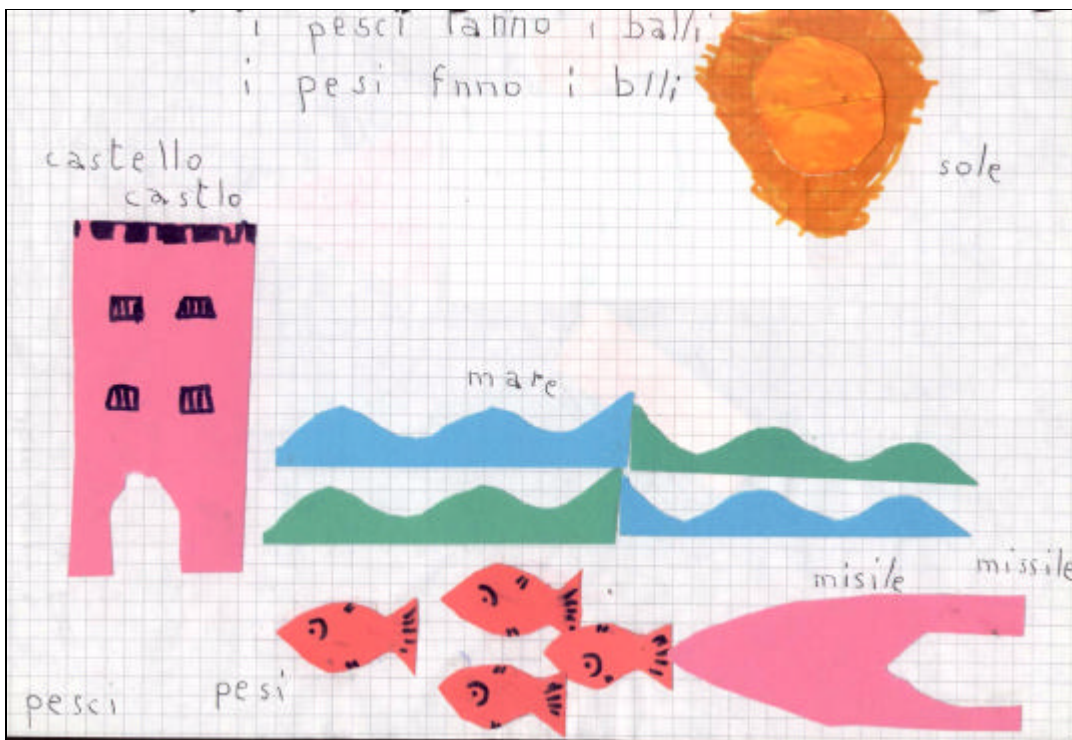


ciao cane = cheers dog ciao topi = cheers mice
io vado via = I am going away

Patchwork, drawing and free writing



il missile va lontano = the rocket flies far away



i pesci fanno i balli = the fishes dance	sole = sun
castello = castle	pesci = fishes
mare = sea	
missile = rocket	