

Between participatory art and media education: pedagogical perspectives in the TAG project - Territory, Art, Youth

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Abstract: School dropout does not manifest solely as the physical abandonment of educational pathways, but rather as a loss of meaning and a disconnection from the educational experience. From this perspective, the research project, through the design of the experimental pedagogical device TAG: Territory, Art, Youth, aims to investigate the potential of artistic processes and the role of digital media within educational pathways, exploring their transformative value in contexts marked by educational poverty (Salvato, 2020).

The qualitative pilot study is grounded in the paradigms of Embodied Cognition (Maturana & Varela, 1991) and the Phenomenology of Perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1945), which recognize the body and plural, non-linear languages (Carlomagno, 2023) as fundamental mediators in the construction of knowledge (Damiano, 2013). The project, carried out in the Campania region, specifically in the neighborhoods of Ponticelli and San Giovanni a Teduccio, involved twenty-five adolescents aged between 15 and 18 in multidisciplinary workshops led by educators and art teachers. The outputs created by the participants were reworked through digital media into poetic podcasts and interactive posters, which were disseminated both in urban and digital spaces, thus becoming, with the aid of technological tools, spaces of community sharing. The qualitative analysis of the pilot study highlighted how the integration of participatory art and Media Education can represent an effective strategy to counteract school dropout and educational poverty (Salvato, 2020) in contexts characterized by high social vulnerability.

Keywords: Multidisciplinary Design; Art; Participatory Learning; Digital Media; Educational Poverty / School Dropout



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1. Introduction

In contemporary society, the phenomenon of school dropout and educational deprivation (Salvato, 2020) represents a critical issue for the Italian and European education systems. According to ISTAT data (Italian National Institute of Statistics ISTAT, 2024), in 2024 the national rate of early school leaving was 9.8%, with particularly high incidence in Southern Italy; specifically, the rate in Campania reached 13.3%. Dropout cannot be reduced to mere school leaving but constitutes a complex phenomenon that includes truancy, abandonment, irregular attendance, and academic failure. This complexity may be linked to transmissive teaching models, in which students are placed in a passive position, subordinated to the role of the teacher, and relegated to the mere reception of content without the possibility of acting as active and co-responsible agents in their own learning process.

According to this transmissive view of knowledge, the educational relationship tends to take the form of a unidirectional process, characterized by the centrality of the adult-centric vision of the teacher and the marginalization of the experiential and emotional dimension of the student, generating disinterest, demotivation, and alienation from the school context. In this context, the adoption of teaching approaches oriented toward participation, personalized learning (Carlomagno, 2024), active and experiential engagement (Dewey, 1938), and the use of expressive and non-linear creative languages (Carlomagno, 2023) can foster high levels of student motivation, promote meaningful learning (Ausubel, 2004), and contribute to the prevention of educational exclusion and marginalization (Taddeo, 2021), with the aim of promoting and enhancing students' academic success. The pilot study aims to investigate whether the pedagogical-educational device focused on Territory, Art, and Youth (TAG) can serve as an effective model of active participation and whether it can act as a deterrent against demotivation and school dropout. In particular, the research examines the ability of the TAG device to integrate effectively into the educational offer and whether it can be implemented as a tool to encourage active participation in school contexts characterized by high dropout rates. Implementing the TAG device also means promoting an inclusive design of teaching practices, centered on the hybridization of performing arts and Media Education, which can help build learning environments capable of countering school dropout, fostering motivation, a sense of belonging, and active student participation.

From this perspective, inclusion is understood not merely as physical presence in an educational context, but as meaningful participation, a sense of belonging, and the opportunity for every adolescent to have a voice (Demetriou, 2022). In contexts characterized by educational deprivation and discontinuous schooling, inclusive practices must reduce barriers to expression and engagement, offering multiple ways for young people to access learning activities and be recognized. From this viewpoint, the TAG device can be seen as an inclusive proposal, as it combines collective creation, flexible roles, and multimodal forms of expression that can support participation even when traditional school languages are inaccessible or unmotivating.

2. Theoretical Framework

In contemporary society, educational institutions require a profound reflection on pedagogical practices capable of fostering active student participation, taking into account individual differences, personal needs, and intrinsic motivations that guide each learner's educational process (D'Alonzo & Giaconi, 2024). From this perspective, every educational process must be conceived as a dialogical act (Freire, 1996), in which the teacher does not merely transmit content but rather promotes the development of agency and critical awareness in students, encouraging their ability to assign meaning to their own experiences (Dewey, 1938) and to reflect on their learning process. Within this framework, the body assumes a central role as a mediator of knowledge, since learning is not configured exclusively as an abstract mental process but emerges from the dynamic interaction between body, environment, and culture (Maturana & Varela, 1991; Frauenfelder, 2018).

Didactic, motor, and emotional experience intertwine with cognitive functions, making learning a situated, embodied, and relational process, in which knowledge is not transferred or transmitted, but rather transposed through experiential processes that place the student at the center of their own learning (Chevallard, 1985).

Cognition, therefore, develops through the co-construction between organism and environment and cannot be considered a disembodied phenomenon (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 2017). According to the enactive paradigm, perception and action are closely interconnected, as individuals know and learn through continuous self-regulatory processes with their context, emphasizing bodily and sensory aspects in the construction of knowledge (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 2017; Gallese & Morelli, 2024). The application of enactive principles in educational contexts implies the design of learning experiences in which the learner actively participates in the construction of knowledge, integrating cognitive, emotional, and bodily dimensions in order to promote authentic and meaningful learning (Ausubel, 2004). The teacher, therefore, is called to design flexible and inclusive learning environments (D'Alonzo & Giaconi, 2024), capable of adapting to different cognitive styles and educational needs, and to co-construct an educational space where error and experimentation are valued as opportunities for dialogue, personal and professional growth.

From this perspective, learning is conceived as an active and socially mediated process, developing through peer interaction, mutual support, and the intentional guidance of the educator (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978), fostering progressive levels of autonomy, awareness, and self-confidence. Collaborative and participatory practices, central to the TAG device, thus allow students to learn within meaningful relational contexts, where skills emerge and are consolidated through processes of sharing, negotiation of meanings, and educational mediation (Damiano, 2013).

Within this scenario, teaching practices should enhance individual cognitive styles, encourage divergent thinking, and promote the use of multiple and non-linear expressive and narrative languages (Sibilio, 2012; Carlomagno, 2023; Bruner, 1990).

The adoption of participatory, experiential, and creativity-based educational approaches increases student motivation and active engagement, representing an effective tool for preventing educational exclusion and school dropout (Freire, 1996; Mezirow, 2003; Sibilio, 2012). In this direction, performing arts can serve as powerful educational mediators, capable of integrating bodily, emotional, and cognitive dimensions within learning processes (Damasio, 1999; Rivoltella, 2013; Gallese & Morelli, 2024), through dialogical and transformative educational approaches (Freire,

1996; Dewey, 1938; Mezirow, 2003), which foster agency and awareness in students, particularly within marginalized contexts (Boal, 1992).

2.1 The Importance of Art in Educational Contexts

In educational contexts, art represents a privileged pedagogical tool, capable of fostering motivation (Moè, 2020), inclusion (D'Alonzo & Giacconi, 2024), and active student participation, by integrating cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions into a single learning experience.

Unlike traditional teaching practices, which are primarily based on verbal and logical-deductive languages, art enables the development of lateral thinking (de Bono, 1985) through the use of alternative and plural expressive languages (Carlomagno, 2023), allowing each individual to explore and identify diverse, original, and authentic pathways to problem-solving. This feature is particularly significant from an inclusive perspective, as it enhances the uniqueness of every student and reduces the communicative and relational barriers that often hinder teaching and learning processes.

Artistic practices, and particularly performative ones, can act as powerful tools of didactic mediation (Damiano, 2013). These practices simultaneously engage the cognitive, emotional and relational (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 2017; Gallese & Morelli, 2024), and bodily dimensions (Sibilio, 2011; Carlomagno, 2022), activating meaningful (Ausubel, 2004) and lasting learning processes rooted in lived experience (Dewey, 1938). From this perspective, art becomes a space for critical reflection and symbolic elaboration, enabling individuals to develop self-awareness (Brockmeier, J., & Carbaugh, 2001), agency, and metareflective competences (Schön, 1983).

From a pedagogical standpoint, art does not play a merely decorative or accessory role; it assumes a transformative function (Mezirow, 2003). The aesthetic experience becomes the core of the educational process, as it allows for a deep and embodied understanding of reality (Dewey, 1938). Through theater, music, dance, and visual arts, enhanced by digital technologies, students are given the opportunity to explore, represent, and transform reality, to reinterpret complex experiences, and to assign new meaning to their lives, constructing both personal and collective narratives (Bruner, 1990; Boal, 1992; Mezirow, 2003). In this direction, art does not simply represent the world, it becomes a generative space where individuals can re-signify themselves and their relationships with others (Boal, 1992).

Engaging in artistic practices allows individuals to express emotions, experiences, and inner dimensions that are not easily accessible through rational or verbal language, since art has the capacity to bring to light what is latent within the subject.

In this sense, art perfectly embodies the very etymology of the term “educate” - from the Latin e-ducere, “to draw out”, enabling individuals to externalize what is implicit, hidden, or unexpressed, thereby fostering personal growth and identity transformation. The aesthetic experience thus becomes a moment of revelation and awareness, where individuals confront their emotions within a social and dialogical dimension. Through the sharing of symbolic and creative languages, art becomes a vehicle of communication and encounter, promoting inclusion, relationships, and community participation. Art represents an important educational resource, offering alternative and universal communicative channels that integrate body, emotion, and mind within a complex learning process. It facilitates access to learning for students

living in contexts of educational poverty (Salvato, 2020), marginality, or social disadvantage (Boal, 1992; Eisner, 2002; Tadeo, 2021). In this sense, the aesthetic experience becomes both a mediating tool and a relational bridge, allowing individuals to express themselves freely through artistic creation and to engage in dialogue with the community, thereby strengthening their sense of belonging and civic participation. Neuroscientific studies have also shown that emotions play a fundamental role in cognitive processes, influencing memory and learning (Damasio, 1999).

From this perspective, artistic practices emerge as privileged pedagogical tools, as they simultaneously stimulate the cognitive, bodily, and emotional dimensions of learning. Art thus constitutes a powerful instrument of cultural mediation, capable of fostering the development of higher mental functions through symbolic creation (Vygotskij, 1972), affirming its educational value as a vehicle of non-verbal thought and as an experience that broadens the ways of knowing and interpreting the world (Eisner, 2002). From this perspective, art becomes an essential pedagogical device within educational practices, activating and nurturing individuals' latent potential, guiding them toward processes of active social participation. Within this framework, art becomes a powerful tool for educational inclusion (Dewey, 1938; Boal, 1992; Montessori, 2008), a means of self-expression and self-re-signification, and a privileged resource for sustaining motivation, promoting inclusion, and fostering student participation, by integrating creative, emotional, and social dimensions into educational pathways (D'Alonzo & Giaconi, 2024).

2.2 Participatory Art and Media Education

The digital era has profoundly transformed the way art is produced, shared, and experienced by individuals, introducing new dynamics of participation and social connection. Art in the digital environment is no longer confined to physical spaces but extends across online platforms and mobile devices, enabling simultaneous and distributed engagement on a global scale. This new scenario fosters the creation of artistic and cultural communities, in which participants not only observe but also interact actively with the artwork and with each other, generating an immersive and shared experience characterized by a sense of co-presence and community, where individuals are fully engaged in the creative process, sharing perceptions and emotions simultaneously (Ateca-Amestoy, V., & Castiglione, 2023).

Participatory art, understood as a practice that actively involves the public in artistic creation, represents a privileged field for Media Education, particularly in the digital era. It provides spaces for expression and collective reflection, promoting community building and active, aware citizenship. The integration of participatory artistic practices into educational pathways supports the development of new forms of agency, where students do not merely consume content but become critical and conscious producers (Cappello & Siino, 2022). The simultaneity of experience, seeing, listening, manipulating, or co-creating a work at the same time, strengthens the perception of the here and now, making the creative act and artistic engagement tools for co-presence and co-learning. Participatory culture therefore represents a central element for the development of essential social and cultural competencies in contemporary life (Jenkins, 2009). Moreover, the digitalization of artworks overcomes the spatial and temporal limits of traditional exhibitions, allowing for broader dissemination. Works are no longer bound to a physical location but can reach a global au-

dience and be experienced autonomously at any time, promoting democratized access to culture (Jenkins, 2009). This phenomenon fosters autonomous and reflective engagement, enabling audiences to modulate their own experiential paths, revisit content, and actively participate in artistic narratives (Jenkins, 2009). Digital art, therefore, not only expands the reach of artworks but also enhances their educational and civic functions, stimulating creativity, critical thinking, and social participation. The integration of art and digital technologies also introduces new forms of media literacy, in which the ability to understand, analyze, and produce artistic content becomes an integral part of citizen education.

Through experiences of co-creation and participatory engagement, students develop cognitive, emotional, and social skills, learning to navigate complex and interconnected contexts and to recognize the cultural, ethical, and social implications of digital artistic production (Cappello & Siino, 2022). From this perspective, art in the digital era is not merely a technological transposition of traditional artistic languages; it becomes an educational and social paradigm, capable of promoting participation, inclusion, critical awareness, and the formation of creative, active, and interconnected communities. The integration of participatory art and Media Education, supported by digital technologies, thus provides a fertile ground for the development of critical, creative, and civic competencies, promoting experiential, reflective, and collaborative learning that goes beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge, shaping active and conscious individuals who can participate meaningfully in cultural and social life while also enhancing each person's creative and relational potential.

2.3 Between Art and Education: The Birth of the TAG Project

«Why art and education? Both share the same mission, which is the transformation of the human being. So, we merged the two fields, removed the hyphen, and wrote arteducation as a single word» (De Florio La Rocca, 2021).

The term ArtEducation originated in Brazil, in Salvador de Bahia, within the context of educational work with *meninos de rua* (street children), through the Axé Project, founded by Cesare de Florio La Rocca, a former diplomat and prominent figure in socio-educational animation (De Florio La Rocca, 2021). A disciple and friend of Paulo Freire, De Florio La Rocca maintained a constant dialogue with the Brazilian educator in defining the project's methodologies, which aimed to rescue children and adolescents from the favelas from conditions of marginalization and deviance. Operating within the theoretical framework of liberation pedagogy (Freire, 2002), the proposed pilot study seeks to analyze the TAG Project: Territory, Art, Youth, investigating which tools can rekindle in street youth the spark of desire and the ability to imagine an alternative future. Direct observation and listening to the young people, in line with Freire's dialogical principle (Freire, 2002), showed that art, in the forms of music, dance, play, and bodily expression, was an integral part of their daily lives. Adolescents, often surviving through resourcefulness that could include illegal means, were not drawn to purely material assistance but rather to opportunities for creative expression and joyful sharing.

From this awareness, De Florio La Rocca and Freire hypothesized that access to beauty, understood as an aesthetic and transformative experience, could represent a privileged way to engage youth and promote processes of emancipation. When ac-

accompanied by educators capable of building authentic relationships, art can become a means of self-discovery and realization of personal potential (De Florio La Rocca, 2021). Over time, these educational practices evolved into an action-research experience, guided by the trainer and analyst Marcos Candido Carvalho, who developed the notion of the pedagogy of desire (de Araujo & Geglio, 2024).

In this perspective, desire is not understood solely as a need, but as a vocation, dream, or life project that young people begin to develop through artistic experience and educational care. The pedagogy of desire is based on the belief that every youth can discover their own path if supported by educators who engage with them regarding life's challenges, fostering awareness and autonomy. The theoretical foundations of this perspective are rooted in Freire's pedagogy of thought, which emphasizes the inseparable political dimension of education, and in Piaget's theories (Piaget, 1967), recognizing the child as an active and conscious subject, a builder of knowledge. Additionally, the psychoanalysis of Freud (Freud, 1920) and Lacan (Lacan, 2002) has significantly influenced the concept of desire as a driving force of action and subject formation. Within this vision, art is not a mere ornament but an educational experience par excellence, capable of evoking desire and guiding individuals in the search for their vocation. Education becomes an experience in which the child is both creator and receiver of beauty, regaining confidence in their potential to construct their own identity. It becomes a transposed space where one can share intimate feelings and deepest desires through the metaphor of art, learning to articulate and communicate strong emotions rather than act them out, supported by educators who build trusting relationships and guide youth toward autonomous thought and feeling. It is within this shared vision of art, as an experience fostering self-discovery and the exploration of one's desires, that the practices and methodologies of the TAG Project: Territory, Art, Youth are situated.

They advance the mission of the Maestri di Strada association, which serves, in the Neapolitan peripheries, as a methodological reference for teachers and educators working to combat school dropout and educational poverty (Salvato, 2020).

Within the TAG Project, ArtEducation can operate as a pedagogical device that integrates the principles of the pedagogy of desire (de Araujo & Geglio, 2024) with Media Education (Rivoltella, 2013), placing aesthetic experience at the center of the educational process as a form of knowledge, relationship, and transformation, encouraging "a return to sharing and collectivity, generated only by the ritual of experiential learning, since true experience is possible through an 'intentional act of meaning-making of lived experience'" (Demetrio, 1996), not reducible to mere physical presence, but to the subsequent possibility of making "the lived experience an object of thought (Mortari, 2003)" (Carlomagno, 2023).

The TAG Project views art not merely as an expressive tool but as an authentic pedagogical space, where young people can reactivate the desire to learn, reconstruct meaningful connections, and rediscover themselves as agents of speech, action, and change. Within the TAG Project, ArtEducation assumes an emancipatory and community-oriented role, aimed at building spaces of belonging, participation, and active citizenship (Freire, 1996; Salvato, 2020). Through artistic language, young people develop awareness of their bodies, voices, and potential, transforming laboratory experiences into acts of self-representation and collective voice (Boal, 1992).

In this perspective, the TAG Project validates experiential pedagogy (Dewey, 1938; Massa, 1987; 2001), highlighting aesthetic experience as a form of embodied

learning (Maturana & Varela, 1991; Gallese & Morelli, 2024), in which body, emotion, and cognition intertwine in a dynamic process of reflection and personal growth.

The laboratory pathway, structured around artistic, narrative, and digital practices, aims to foster the emergence of identity and relational awareness (Bruner, 1990; Malaguzzi, 1995), where art serves as the preferred language for self-narration.

Within TAG, ArtEducation functions as a transformative practice, operating simultaneously on the individual and collective levels: on the individual level, it promotes identity exploration and meaning-making through the symbolic language of art, while on the collective level, it generates educational communities based on listening, cooperation, and mutual recognition (Dewy, 1938; Bourriaud, 2010). In this dimension, art and education converge in their shared transformative function (Mezirow, 2003), as both guide the individual toward meaning-making, relationship-building, and the potential to change the surrounding context (De Florio La Rocca, 202; Freire, 1996).

In particular, within the art-educational work of Maestri di Strada, the narrative dimension of art (Bruner, 1990) plays a key role, stimulating dialogue and the sharing of young people's experiences.

By recognizing themselves in others, they create community, a space for encounter, reflection, and identity construction.

3. Research Design

Art and its practices can represent an effective didactic mediation tool (Damiano, 2013) in all educational contexts, implementing teaching approaches capable of developing agency in marginalized individuals (Boal, 1992). The proposed pilot study aims to verify whether a didactic-pedagogical device, focused on Territory, Art, Youth (TAG), can function as an effective model of active participation, able to act as a deterrent against demotivation and school dropout, while also assessing its capacity to integrate effectively into the educational offer and to be tested in schools with high dropout rates. From this perspective, it is necessary to identify and enhance each student's cognitive style through appropriate teaching practices, promoting divergent thinking and the use of multiple non-linear languages (Sibilio, 2012), particularly expressive and narrative languages (Carlomagno, 2023; Bruner, 1990), recognizing art as a special resource to foster motivation and educational inclusion (D'Alonzo & Giacomini, 2024).

The TAG Project proposes a didactic-pedagogical device that brings art and education into dialogue, enhancing the expressive and communicative potential of Media Education to raise awareness and disseminate results as immaterial environments.

The pilot study involved 25 adolescents from the territorial association "Maestri di Strada", including 13 males and 12 females, aged 15 to 18, all sharing conditions of interrupted school attendance. The project, lasting 75 hours, was conducted between May and December 2024 in Municipality VI of Naples, specifically in the neighborhoods of Ponticelli and San Giovanni a Teduccio, contexts characterized by high socio-educational vulnerability. It was structured in eight laboratory phases, with weekly 3-hour sessions:

1. Identification of four thematic work areas and creation of four creative collages;
2. Collective creation of the four creative collages;
3. Narration and collective sharing of the collages;

4. Selection and creation;
5. Creative writing section;
6. Podcast production;
7. Social promotion campaign – onsite and on social media;
8. Creation of the TAG A MOSTR creative exhibition to share the completed works.

To promote inclusive participation during the workshops, the device was implemented through flexible roles and multiple modes of contribution.

Participants were able to engage through visual composition (via the collective creation of collages and artistic posters), oral storytelling and performance, writing and dramaturgy, audio recording, editing, and the planning of dissemination activities. Small-group work and peer education were used to reduce anxiety, strengthen participation, and encourage mutual support, while educators and artists provided guidance when needed and gradually fostered autonomy.

This multimodal and collaborative structure aimed to lower barriers related to self-confidence, language, and prior school experiences, enabling each participant to contribute according to their own interests and strengths.

4. Methodology

The pilot study aims to investigate to what extent artistic and digital experiences in educational contexts can foster motivation to learn, increase students' active participation, and help counteract school dropout, disengagement, and social exclusion.

To address this objective, a study was conducted adopting a qualitative approach, integrating innovative artistic, narrative, and participatory methodologies.

The pilot study aims to investigate the extent to which artistic and digital experiences in educational contexts can foster motivation to learn, increase students' active participation, and help counteract phenomena of school dropout, educational disengagement, and social exclusion, with the ultimate goal of promoting students' academic success.

To address this objective, a study was conducted using a qualitative approach, integrating innovative artistic, narrative, and participatory methodologies. Data were collected by the researchers at the end of the field experience through direct observation and the analysis of materials and artifacts produced by the participants during the workshop activities.

The methodological framework is based on Art-Based Research (Leavy, 2020), a research approach that values artistic practices as tools for investigation, reflection, and transformation. This perspective recognizes art not only as a means of expression but also as an epistemological device, capable of producing situated and shared knowledge. Within this framework, narrative practices (Striano, 2005) also play a significant role, supporting reflective processes and the construction of individual and collective meaning, allowing students to rework their experiences in a symbolic and communicable form.

The methodological approach also aligns with the Service Learning model (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995), where learning and civic engagement are integrated,

making educational pathways opportunities for personal growth and, at the same time, social responsibility.

In this sense, the proposed artistic-digital experience was conceived as an educational and community device, aimed at strengthening the connection between educational contexts, territory, and active citizenship.

In the pilot study, specific teaching and methodological techniques were also adopted:

-*Brainstorming technique*: used in the initial phases of the workshops to stimulate ideas among participants. This technique promoted divergent thinking and activated student participation without evaluative constraints, creating an inclusive and creative environment (Osborn, 1953);

-*Peer education methodology*: implemented to encourage peer-to-peer learning dynamics, allowing students to take an active role, promoting student protagonism and the sharing of knowledge and skills (Topping, 2005). These data were collected through direct field observation by the researchers;

-*Storytelling methodology*: employed as a narrative device, enabling the collection and reworking of individual and collective experiences in the form of stories, facilitating critical reflection, identity construction, and community sharing. Storytelling proved particularly effective for integrating artistic and digital languages, transforming personal experiences into shared narratives that strengthen engagement and motivation (Alterio & McDrury, 2003).

Given the involvement of minors, the pilot study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of educational research. Privacy was therefore ensured, and the use of images, audio, or video produced during the activities was carried out exclusively for research and scientific documentation purposes, with specific prior authorization and in compliance with current regulations on personal data protection.

5. Results

The pilot study analyzed the outcomes of the eight phases of the TAG Project: Territory, Art, Youth, a didactic-pedagogical device that integrates participatory art and Media Education. The process began (first phase) with a peer dialogue space led by educators, where young people shared reflections and experiences using the brainstorming technique. Subsequently, the participants, divided into four groups, selected words that were meaningful for their personal growth and, with the support of a creative atelier equipped with various materials, including photographs, images, drawings, and newspaper clippings, created a collage based on the chosen words (Figure 1).

From this work, four thematic nuclei emerged, one per group, freedom, love, change, dream, which became the focus of the laboratory pathway and of the data analysis conducted for this study.

The pilot study also involved students in the creation of four musical pieces on the themes of love, freedom, dream, and transformation, which were subsequently transformed into narrative podcasts and shared via social media. (See Appendix A).

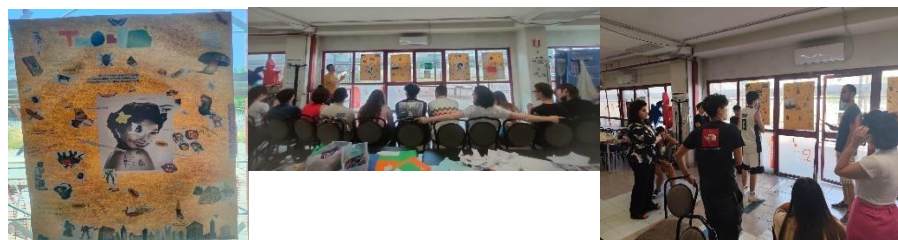
 <i>LOVE – Reflections</i>	 <i>FREE YOURSELF – Poem: TheHole</i>
 <i>DREAM - Monologue</i>	 <i>TRANSFORM - Thoughts of Romeo</i>

Figure 1.



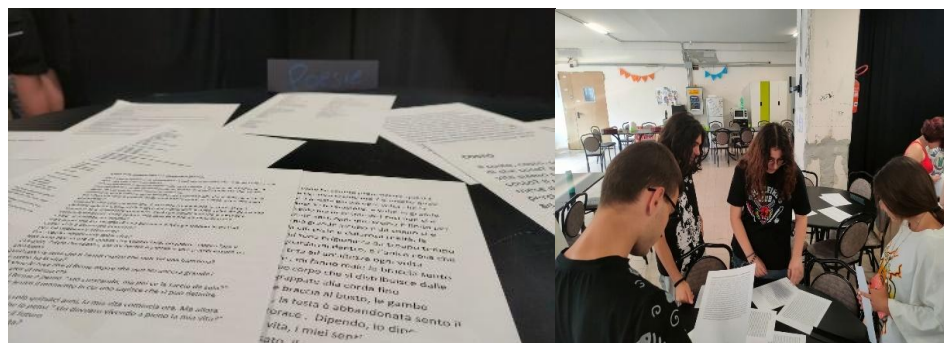
The second phase involved the creation of the collective work, the group collage and represented the pre-operational stage of the experience. The formation of focus groups promoted moments of peer-to-peer discussion, in line with the peer education methodology. In the third phase, the groups presented and narrated their collages, fostering sharing and collective reflection among the participants (Figure 2).

Figure 2.



In the fourth phase, the educators provided the participants with song lyrics, poems, and theatrical monologues related to the four themes, assigning them the task of selecting the ones with which they most identified. The materials offered came from an authentic repertoire of the art-education laboratory, produced over previous years (Figure 3).

Figure 3.



The fifth phase consisted of a workshop section dedicated to creative writing, in which the educators invited the students to develop four dramaturgies based on the identified themes (Figure 4).

Figure 4.



In the sixth phase, digital tools were integrated, allowing the artistic product to reach a wider audience within the community, with the aim of especially engaging adolescents at risk of school dropout. The educators asked the students to record their texts vocally, transforming them into four original podcasts. This activity enhanced the participants' expressive and narrative skills and promoted the acquisition of technical abilities related to multimedia production, integrating the creative dimension with practical learning (Figure 5).

Figure 5.



The penultimate phase was dedicated to promoting the works produced through digital artifacts. The students created a Spotify playlist containing their products (Figure 6) and recorded videos related to their podcasts for dissemination of the project on the Instagram page (Figure 7). Each product created using the storytelling methodology, posters, audio stories, podcasts, and musical pieces, was linked to a QR code (Figure 8) and displayed at various locations throughout Municipality VI of Naples for broader and more accessible dissemination.

Figure 6.

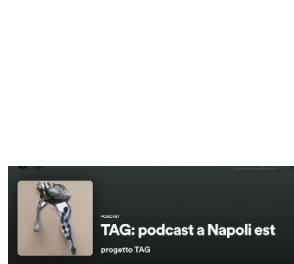


Figure 7.

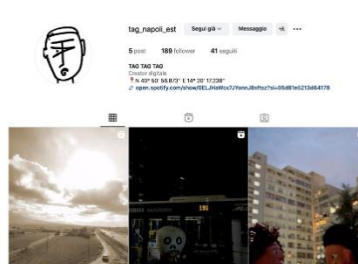
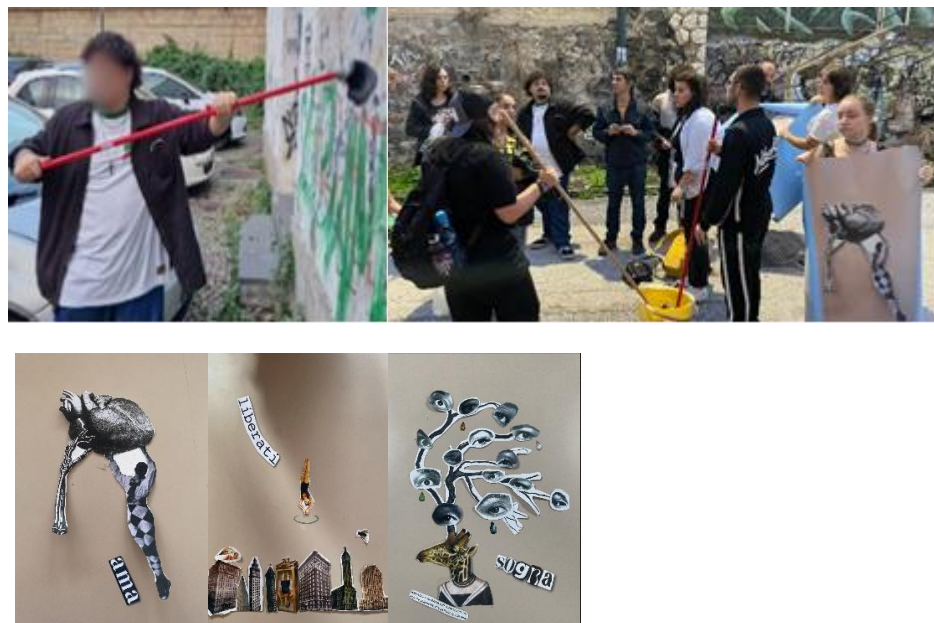


Figure 8.



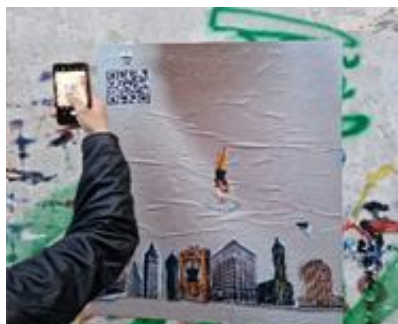
The project concluded with the exhibition titled TAG A MOSTR, designed to share the students' work with the local community. The initiative included the display of posters (Figure 9) and the listening of podcasts through technological devices, allowing visitors to experience an immersive and participatory collective experience. The technologies used enabled the simultaneous enjoyment of images and sounds, creating a sense of sharing and community, and demonstrating the educational and social significance of the Project.

Figure 9.



The urban promotion campaign, designed by the participants themselves, involved the posting of posters and flyers containing QR codes linking to the digital content, thus transforming the city into a space of connection and participation. Systematic observations and the narrative and visual feedback produced throughout the project highlighted a significant change in the participants' behaviors and attitudes. There was an increase in attendance and participation in activities, a greater willingness for peer interaction, and a progressive openness to expressive and creative languages, perceived as tools for communication, self-representation, and mutual recognition (Figure 10).

Figure 10.



6. Discussion

The pilot study included systematic observations, narrative and visual feedback, which were produced and shared on social media. It highlighted significant changes among the participants, including increased attendance and engagement in educational activities, greater willingness for peer interaction, and a progressive openness to diverse expressive and creative languages, understood as tools for mediation and communication. These results confirm the validity of Art-Based Research (Leavy, 2020) as an approach capable of integrating creative processes with pedagogical reflection, promoting learning grounded in aesthetic experience and symbolic elaboration. Narrative practices (Striano, 2005) acted as cognitive and emotional mediators, enabling participants to rework their experiences and consolidate a developing sense of identity. The project, developed according to a bottom-up logic, enhanced the active participation of young people in shaping the educational pathway, allowing the emergence of individual and collective skills and resources.

In this sense, the experience aligns with the Service Learning model (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995), in which experiential learning intersects with civic engagement and social responsibility, generating a form of participatory and aware citizenship. The integration of art, technology, and educational processes highlighted the potential of digital art as a transformative device. The digital era has profoundly changed how art is produced, experienced, and shared, extending its reach beyond physical boundaries and creating new modes of participation and social connection (Ateca-Amestoy & Castiglione, 2023). In the digital environment, art becomes a distributed and simul-

taneous experience, accessible through platforms and mobile devices, enabling the creation of artistic and cultural communities where participants do not merely observe, but interact and co-produce meaning. From this perspective, participatory art represents a privileged domain for Media Education, as it fosters spaces for collective expression and critical reflection, promoting the development of active and aware citizens (Cappello & Siino, 2022). The simultaneity of the experience, seeing, listening, manipulating, and co-creating at the same time, generated a condition of co-presence and shared immersion, where artistic creation becomes a space for experiential and collaborative learning. In this context, the TAG Project demonstrated how digital art can act as a catalyst for building educational communities and social bonds in high-vulnerability contexts. The integration of relational art (Bourriaud, 2010) with narrative and technological devices, such as podcasts, interactive posters, and social media, enabled the sharing of experiences and the consolidation of participatory-experiential learning processes, awareness, and human growth in socially vulnerable contexts. The digitalization of the works and their public dissemination also expanded the project's communicative and democratic reach, allowing for autonomous, reflective, and participatory engagement, where participants are not merely recipients but co-authors of cultural processes (Jenkins, 2009).

From this perspective, a sociocultural approach (Vygotsky, 1978) can also help interpret the learning processes activated by the TAG Project. Many activities are based on collaboration and shared production, in which participants develop skills through dialogue, guided participation, and support from peers and educators. This dynamic aligns with the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, where students can achieve more with support than independently, and where competence gradually grows toward autonomy (Chaiklin, 2003). From the perspective of inclusive education, the public dissemination of results (podcasts, posters, QR codes, exhibitions) can also be seen as a form of social inclusion, positioning adolescents not as passive recipients, but as visible authors and active participants in the cultural life of their community. Within this framework, it can be stated that the TAG Project can be interpreted as a complex pedagogical device, capable of generating processes of individual and collective transformation, promoting intrinsic motivation, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking, while developing social, emotional, and communicative skills that translate into experiential and reflective learning.

From this perspective, the TAG Project can be defined as an intentional and structured set of practices, languages, spaces, relationships, and tools that guide the educational experience without rigidly predetermining its outcomes. Its effectiveness as a pedagogical device lies in the co-presence of essential elements, such as the centrality of the learner, the integration of participatory artistic practices and digital media, the connection with the local context, and the communal dimension of learning, as well as the presence of flexible elements that can be adapted to different educational contexts, including specific artistic techniques, digital media used, and organizational modalities of the workshops. This configuration allows the device to maintain a recognizable and coherent structure while simultaneously fostering processes of co-construction, agency and situated transformation.

In this framework, the TAG Project can be seen as a complex pedagogical device, capable of generating individual and collective transformation processes, promoting intrinsic motivation, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking and developing social, emotional, and communicative skills that translate into experiential and re-

flective learning. The integration of participatory art and digital technologies, supported by an inclusive pedagogical perspective, enables the formation of active and aware individuals capable of navigating digital ecosystems critically and contributing to the construction of creative and supportive communities.

In the context of Municipality VI of Naples, characterized by high social vulnerability, the results confirm a significant incidence of absenteeism and irregular attendance. Thus, art is affirmed not only as an aesthetic space but also as a vehicle for emancipation and social regeneration (Freire, 1996; Dewey, 1938), capable of restoring meaning and educational value to the shared experience.

7. Conclusion

This pilot study highlighted how the integration of artistic and digital practices in educational contexts represents a powerful tool for promoting learning motivation, active participation, and social inclusion. The approach adopted, based on Art-Based Research (Leavy, 2020) and the Service Learning model (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995), allowed for the combination of aesthetic experience, civic engagement, and critical reflection, giving the educational experience a transformative and community-oriented value. Art, understood as a symbolic and relational experience (Bourriaud, 2010), fostered in participants self-awareness, cooperation, and openness to the world, while the integration of digital media enabled broad and participatory dissemination of artistic productions. This participatory dimension strengthened a sense of belonging, sharing, and the construction of common meanings, in line with the principles of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009) and Media Education (Cappello & Siino, 2022). Observational results and narrative and visual feedback showed significant changes in the participants, manifested in higher attendance in educational activities, increased motivation, and a more open attitude toward collaboration and creative experimentation. In this sense, the artistic-digital experience functioned as a pedagogical device capable of generating experiential, reflective, and cooperative learning processes, impacting not only behaviors but also the emotional and relational experiences of the young participants. The future prospects of this pilot study include experimenting with this model in schools with high dropout rates, assessing whether it can effectively integrate into the educational offering, achieve practical educational usability, and act as a countermeasure to demotivation and dropout. The experience conducted and tested aims to demonstrate how art and digital media, when integrated into a participatory educational approach, can become privileged tools for building educational communities and combating school dropout and educational poverty (Salvato, 2020).

8. Limitations and Future Perspectives

Despite the positive analysis of the results, the study presents some limitations. First, the pilot nature of the research and the small sample size do not allow the results to be generalized to broader contexts. The intervention was conducted in a specific territorial context, characterized by particular socio-cultural conditions and educational vulnerability, which may have influenced the observed outcomes.

However, these limitations open up future research perspectives, aimed at the replicability and expansion of the TAG Project, understood as a pedagogical device, in other school and territorial contexts, as well as the integration of mixed-methods and

longitudinal approaches, useful for evaluating over time the impact of artistic-digital processes on motivation, participation, and the prevention of school dropout.

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Appendix A

LOVE	 Reflections
E: Ahh, love, love! Hey, but how did this happen? Did someone scan this QR code? Listen to this song, it's beautiful, even with the background music. Listen, I wanted to ask you a question: what drives you to love? I mean, have you ever truly felt it? Wait, sorry, maybe that's a bit too direct... maybe even too much! Eh, but I can't help it! I love listening to love stories, I love making people reflect. What is it? It has no color, it has no smell, it has no taste... But... does it warm your heart? L: It's love! It gives warmth, but also pain. But love... what really is it? E: So, what really is love? Is it intoxication? Yes!	L: What do you feel? How do you feel it? What do you become when you love? Let it all out, don't hide. Love is beautiful, don't be ashamed, don't be afraid. Are you theatrical or shy? Do you gain weight or lose it? Do you turn pale or burst with joy? Do you worry or stop thinking about anything? Can you try new things? Do you look inside yourself to understand what you like? What do you do when you love? Do you wait for a sign or jump in without thinking? Are you a hamster or a tiger? Or somewhere in between? Or... are you nothing? L: You see, there are those who manage to hurt themselves even with love, and they're not few... But for me, love is a wonderful feeling. F: Every wave in the sea has a different light... Every person has a unique beauty.

It's an intoxication with no cure, no medicine, otherwise all the pharmacies in the world would make millions and mil- lions thanks to love. No, it's impossible! No one can cure it, and then there are even those who say they don't even want to heal. <i>(scan the QR code in the right column)</i> 	You can recognize it only through love. Loving each other can even be simply spending time sharing your stories. Loving each other means staying awake even at night, because reality is often more beautiful than dreams. C.: Love is the only feeling that never goes bad. It doesn't mold, it doesn't turn sour. When you love, you only love yourself a little more. And you... what do you think? Is it possible?
FREE YOURSELF F.: There are many things we cannot do without: eating, drinking, slee- ping... but I would add one more: freedom. S.: And what does that have to do with it? If you don't eat, you die. And even if you don't drink or sleep. F.: It's true, eating, drinking, and sleeping keep us alive, and in a way, they make us enjoy life. But freedom means truly living, seeing life not from the dark side, but from the illuminated side. Eating, drinking, and sleeping help us survive and make us partially happy. But being free means being able to look at life with the light of hope, instead of in the darkness of resignation. S.: And how do you turn on this light? F.: To be free, you have to seek creativity, joy, relief, and calm. I find them in music. And now... listen to this song. <i>(scan the QR code in the right column)</i> S.: Being free is not a given. Many of us are free without realizing it, while many others are not truly free... F.: Without freedom, we don't literally die, but we die inside. S.: The thing is, we live in neighborhoods where it seems impossible to imagine being free. A poem came to mind... my friend A. wrote it, thinking about our neighborhoods. <i>(read the poem in the right column)</i> S.: And you, do you feel free?	Poem – The Hole The hole, where thousands of trembling bodies have fallen. The hole, where today it is the souls that tremble. The hole, into which people have fallen by nature's hand and by the fault of the gun, remain. For where there is nothing but violence, one cannot live without it. Those who live in the hole cannot see the roses, even if the soil is fertile, because one cannot recognize beauty when surrounded by thorns. And so, to become important, one is forced to do horrifying things. Climbing the walls is hard, almost impossible, because it's easier to keep digging than to climb back up. But despite everything, someone tries, for when you lift your head, you find the light. And then, with your nails, you cling to the gray walls of reinforced concrete, trying to climb up, despite the asbestos. And people are lost. And things are lost. And you ask yourself: "Is it worth it?" To escape from the tormented souls.

How much do you push to free yourself? Our words, our thoughts imprison us. Have you ever taken off these chains? Do you know what's under a snail's shell? Have you ever felt the wind in your hair? Your legs trembling? Even if you feel free... are you really? Going beyond what terrifies us gives us the pure freedom of ourselves. F.: One day it will happen that, even in difficult moments, the moment will come when the weight falls off your body. As I say: "I lighten myself, I take off this weight... and let myself be carried by the wind."	
DREAM F.: If you've stopped, it means you're someone who dreams. But are you sure you give yourself enough time to do it? Listen: I don't want to waste your time telling you that every dream you have will come true. I just want to say that, every now and then, giving space to your dreams does you good. And that's already a good reason to dream... at least for people like us. <i>(scan the QR code in the right column)</i> S.: And you? How do you live in the real world? Every day you curse your alarm, get up, have breakfast, if you have time, and go out to meet the expectations of others. And then? Do you find time for yourself? Or... are you even willing to find it? <i>(read the monologue and the "Peter and Wendy" dialogue in the right column)</i> F.: "Those who dream by day know many things that escape those who dream only by night," said Edgar Allan Poe. Very often we think that to dream, we have to rush to conquer, challenge	Monologue C.: Why? Why do I have to keep spending my life running, never stopping for even a moment, chasing something that others want, but that <i>I</i> don't? Why did I convince myself that, to be at peace with others, I have to be what <i>they</i> want, and not who I really am? Because, in the end, who I am matters to few... and only a few appreciate it. I could be content with those few, but the truth is, maybe that's not enough for me. I feel such a huge emptiness that not even they can fill it. And so I run, I run, I run. I'm always running too much, skipping over moments, tripping over life every fifteen minutes. Like when I try to light a lighter with my cigarette, or drink my sandwich and bite into a bottle. Like when I fall and hit every single part of my body on every surface of the earth. Like when I speak and mix up my words. They're all funny things... but then there are those who forget to kiss their child, to hug a friend, to recognize the power of giving and receiving affection. Because we're all running. And the moment when our bodies meet is so brief that it doesn't even allow us to <i>truly</i> meet. It's not about being careless—the point is, we run, we run, we run...

the impossible, grasp the stars.

And in doing so, we don't realize that our Neverland could be right in front of us, waiting.

Sometimes, to have a dream,
 all it takes is learning how to dream,
 and maybe being in the right place,
 with the right person.

And when we slow down, we get hurt.

Like that time I was running to work and saw a little girl give her ice cream to a homeless man:

blinded by that tiny moment of beauty, I ended up slamming my head into a pole.

So why?

Why miss the small, beautiful moments of life?

Why run and lose sight of every little detail?

Why run after something we might not even want?

Why not stop to watch a sunset, or talk to someone without wearing a mask?

Why?

I'll tell you why... because... oh, damn, I'm late!

Dialogue – Peter and Wendy

P.: The sky that evening was particularly cloudy: the stars were invisible, and they couldn't go back home.

They had to stay there, in that place that was so frightening.

W.: So they decided to wander a bit.

They gathered all the courage they had and began to fly over the sky of Naples.

They were amazed by all the lights:

Naples, from above, looked like a toy, one of those that drive children crazy.

Lights on, lights off.

Lights on, lights off.

Lights on, lights off.

P.: They watched those lights until they noticed a place that seemed like where Captain Hook docked his ship.

They rushed to check that the pirate hadn't followed them to cause damage even in this world.

W.: Once they arrived, they realized there was no ship: the dawn was lighting up the sky.

They were tired, and the sand was so soft, so smooth.

They walked to the shore, where the sand was firmer, wet.

They tried to build a castle, but the waves kept destroying it.

Yet Peter and Tinker Bell were happy, despite everything.

They began to fly over the water, playing, pushing each other like acrobats, like jugglers.

	They were invincible, because they were happy to have found a place: a place that wasn't their home, a place they had found on their own, a place reached despite their fears. P.: When the day came, Peter and Tinker Bell returned home with a new awareness: that there is a bit of Neverland even in the real world.
TRANSFORM Welcome! If you've activated this QR code, it means you're out on the street — curious, eager to discover new things. I get it: I feel the same way. But it hasn't always been like this. There was a time in my life when I spent most of my days locked inside, staring at the ceiling, lying on my bed... But can a man really live doing nothing? Shut inside a room, eyes wide open, lying on the bed. Bed, bed, messy bed, dirty bed, a bed that pulls me down, that sinks me, that drags me deep. Sleep, sleep, sleep... I'm not even sleepy. Get up, get up, come on! Move! But if I get up, if I leave this room, I return to a world that makes me sleepy again. Sleep... sleep... you know, I never wake up happy. Have you ever felt trapped by your anxieties, by your fears? Paralyzed in every decision, action, or emotion? Have you ever heard the noise of other people's thoughts and judgments in your head, so loud that it drowns out your own voice, your own thoughts? We made a piece of theatre about that... listen to it. <i>(scan the QR code in the right column)</i> Sometimes we remain paralyzed simply out of fear	 Thoughts of Romeo E.: What are you doing locked in here, don't you miss the air? A.: We have to have 3-4 children, spectacular, spectacular!! L.: What mark will you leave on this earth? Our passage is just a shadow! F.: You have to find the woman of your life... you have to find her, you have to find her! C.: No one will remember you! You're already disappearing! D.: You're a handsome guy! But do you always want to be alone? A.: Where are you at? You're at zero! S.: If you don't find her now, when will you? This is the moment! Now is the moment! R.: You'll never accomplish anything... life without a goal is just wandering! C.: Love is wonderful! Love is like a spring day, can't you smell it? A.: Will you ever do something great? You're still small! F.: I want a woman! I want a woman! A.: Only dust will remain of you... dust you are, and to dust you shall return! <i>The thoughts continue their ticking</i> R.: Enough! Who are you all!? Chorus: Your thoughts... <i>The thoughts resume their ticking</i> R.: Stop! Stop! Stop! Are you really my thoughts? Chorus: Eh! R.: Stop! Who made you think this? Chorus: You! You're thinking of us. E.: We don't want to think about you.

of doing the wrong thing,
or of not knowing which is the right one.
And what if the right idea never comes?
Maybe it's up to us to take the first step to go find it.
After all, even the climb to the highest peak begins with a single step.
So I told myself... *Stand Up*

Chorus: Eh! We don't want to think about you.

D.: You're the one thinking of us!

D.: You're not thinking, you're doing, doing, doing...

Chorus: You're not thinking, you're doing!

The thoughts start chasing Romeo one by one, dancing chaotically.

E.: What are you doing locked in here, isn't that right?

A.: We have to have 5 spectacular children, we're full of women, we have to take them all! We have to fill an entire nursery!

L.: Poorly live those who believe they are always victorious.

F.: You have to find one! One and you have to marry her, you have to marry her!

C.: No one will remember you! You're already disappearing! Is there anyone in here?!

D.: But do you always want to be alone? You're handsome! Too fresh!

A.: Where are you at? You're at zero! Instead of moving forward, you move back!

S.: If you don't find her now, when will you? This is the moment! Try now!

R.: You'll never accomplish anything... life without a goal is wandering! Life is a journey... toward death!

C.: Love is wonderful! Love is like a spring day, love is a flower blooming under a blue sky!

S.: Will you ever do something great? You're still small! Worthless!

F.: I want a woman! I want a woman! I want a woman!

A.: Only dust will remain of you... dust you are and dust you shall return! Amen!

Romeo jumps on a chair to be heard

R.: Stop, stop, stop! Enough thinking, now let's play a nice song to relax, okay?

Chorus: Yes, yes, we like the song!

R.: What should we play?

A.: A fugitive.

D.: Freed.

G.: Scalea...

F. V.: Without a woman!

S.: Poor seagull...

They make a mess

R.: Hey, calm down! Calm down! Let's all take a deep breath! Calm ourselves.

Now, ask politely...

	A.: A fugitive, please! D.: Freed, thanks. G.: I'd like Scalea... F. V.: Without a mother! S.: Poor seagull... R.: No, no, no! I'll decide, got it, let me think... <i>While Romeo thinks, L. approaches and starts singing Carmina Burana</i> L.: O Fortuna! Chorus: Zan, zan, zaan! L.: Like the moon! Chorus: Zan, zan, zaan! L.: Variable state! Chorus: Zan, zan, zan! R.: Stop! Enough!!! By the way, were you the one speaking in Latin? Thought: Yes... Remember that time you read that book of Seneca's aphorisms? R.: Eh. Chorus: Oïlloc R.: (reflecting) Mmm... come here... Ignorant is he who doesn't know which port he wants to reach, no wind is favorable to him. (Starts to leave...) Chorus: And what does that mean? R.: Ask him! <i>Points to L., all thoughts chase, but L. releases them!</i> L.: There is no favorable wind for the sailor who doesn't know which port he wants to reach. Lucius Annaeus Seneca.
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