Chats in nursery schools

By Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

Our study/talk/paper is about the research and analysis study in three different environments of interaction, co-construction, learning and knowledge. The main subjects of this study are children from 3 to 6 years old, and the "places" of action and participation, besides being represented by the classroom, are "bridge immaterial places": i.e. chat rooms. We will present, for each environment, both the description and some related documents (textual, graphics and videos) about their educational use in children's schools.

MSN Messenger: description prospectus

MSN Messenger Service is an instant messaging program (for Windows and Mac) that allows communication with everyone through synchronization audio/video in real time. To use this service it is necessary to create a profile or to have an e-mail address to login. Once the registration is done, it is possible to create a friend list.

http://www.msgplus.net/
http://join.msn.com/messenger/overview

MSN Messenger: description prospectus

- Messages can be sent instantly; individually or with more participants at the same time in the same window (chat group).
- If you have a microphone and headsets an audio conversation can be held, making calls directed by a person to another computer in any part of the world, with no cost (pulsating "Call")
- It is possible to share files with other consumers
- A simple and attractive interface
- It checks the number of new messages received on Hotmail
- Emoticons can be used simply and neatly
- Good support on the site
- Available also for Macintosh and Pocket PC

MSN Messenger at school

MSN Messenger, the chat that we used previously, has been proposed this year for two projects:

<div align="center">

"Il percorso Soave"

"Robot a Scuola"

</div>

In our opinion the two projects take the origin from paths started in the previous years, and involved more than just our school and institutional research centres.

During the chats the children downloaded animated gifs, inserted emoticons, invented "games" and give brief written answers.

School year 2002/03 "Il percorso dei folletti" http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0203/percorso_folletti.htm.
School year 2003/04 "Ispirati da Gessetto" http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0304/percorso_gessetto.htm
School year 2004/05 "Ponte con Soave" http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0405/percorso_soave.htm
Mattoncini ColorAnimati 2003/04 http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0304/percorsi_lego.htm
Mattoncini ColorAnimati 2004/05 http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0405/percorsi_lego.htm

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

5

Synchronous meeting example in 2002/2003
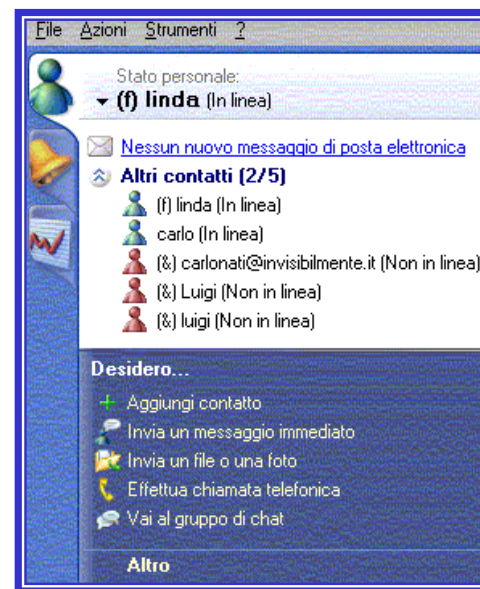
Synchronous meeting with Prof. Carlo Nati
**http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0203/edu_msn.htm**

Synchronous meeting example in 2005/2006

Synchronous meeting with teacher Patrizia
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0506/incontro-chat.htm

In both cases the children met online two teachers involved in the project.
We have noticed that often having adults "on the other side" the children are more coherent in the communication and the use of creative form of the chat increases. Returning to the project, the "Percorso Soave" has had the animals (real, fantastic, virtual) as background. On this matter there have been asynchronous exchanges with the families and the games online. In the class activities have been planned such as the reading of a story: "Che animale sei? Storia di una pennuta" by Mastrocola Paola
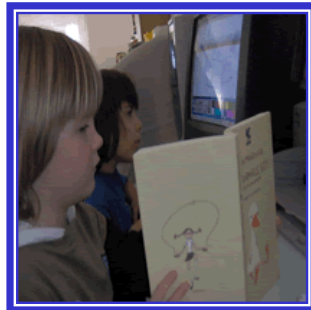
MSN has been a bridge also with the "Scuola di Robotica (Genova)" for the national project "Robot in the school". Next, we report some of the synchronous meeting log referring to the robot remote control, also present in the "Scatola delle Esperienze" (log chat in PDF)

Children in nursery school sending audio, written and picture (emoticons) information to the robot in Genova
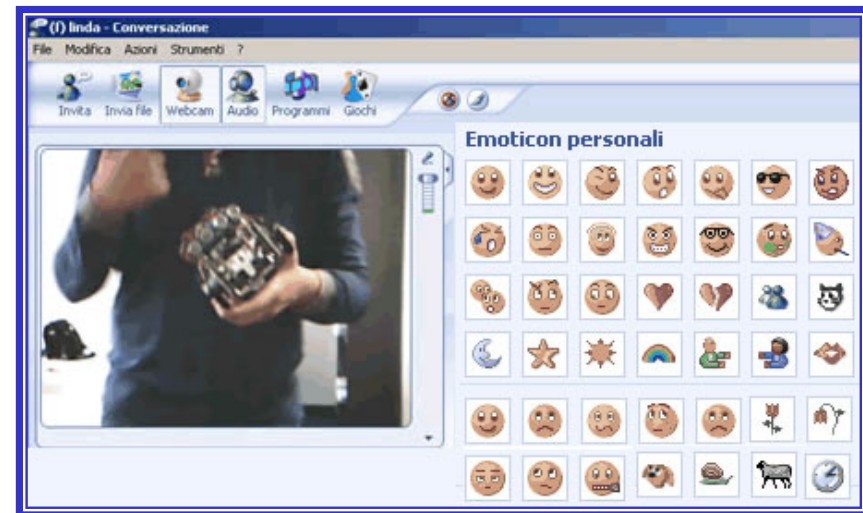
Skype: description prospectus

We received the beta Skype release in 2004 February; the 6.15 Mb software was kindly sent to us by our good friend Mario Nervi from DIE (in Italian for Electric Engineering Department) at Genova University, but the first approach with this tool, though interesting, was not as good. We did prefer the written chat, which leaves a "footprint" about itself and other interactions in order to follow the lines of thought, which are well shown, can be shared and co-created, broken up and re built again.

Skype: description prospectus

Beside this we were curious to see the effect Skype should have had between children in the 3-5 years old age range. Skype was (and still is) simple and free software that can be run by many computers (Mac OS X, Windows, Linux and PocketPC operating system), permitting phoning all around the world. This means that the voice is running between 2 subjects. The voice ... so something that is hard to keep: "verba volant!" Skype was created by the KaZaA (a software able to share music and files) authors, and uses an innovative technology P2P (Peer to Peer) connecting more Skype users.

http://www.skype.com/
http://web.skype.com/home.it.html

Skype at school

In the 2004 November, during TED in Genova, Jeff Earp and we did think to give Skype a try to connect nursery school children at Latina with him. Following are some chats that can be seen (through video too) on the "La Scatola delle Esperienze".

Children 3-.4-5 years old meet Jeff Earp through Skype
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0405/chat_jeff02.htm

In the beginning children thought to link with software or an online game and not with a person. This idea about the "partner", in the beginning, did not change even when text was written in a chat. Almost all the children thought that Jeff was living inside the computer and, like a virtual man, he had a virtual life with a family and children... of course, all inside the narrow and fantastic space inside the computer machine. This profile was better understood through the children's drawings and the following descriptions.

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati   13
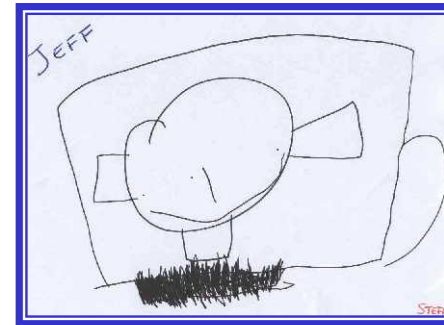
Mirko (5 years)

Jeff is in to the computer talking with me and Aron. I am glad and like to talk with him because his voice is fine. I think Jeff is one of the computer in the nursery school. Ours. I do not know if he is a real person because I have not seen him.

Francesca P. (5 years)

I have drawn the computer and Jeff inside it and then many children playing with it. I was also playing with Aron. I play with the computer at castle and I have even done the Christmas draw. I think Jeff is living inside the computer. He is a computer because lives inside the computer to talk with children. He has two sons, they live in the computer and play together.

At this time Jeff started to send us photos of himself, his daughter and him and his family so that he would become real to the children, with a real life and work. Later there were even presents online, such as a small though fine address book where you can reach games: Topolina MIA and UpToTen Kids It is important to underline how Jeff's game proposals have been, beyond Italian, in English too. With no particular language and interpretation problems, children did have a good time with Jeff (also with a pleasant chat meeting) as well as playing online. Lucia Ferlino did enjoy our group shortly afterwards (she works in the didactis software as well as Jeff http://www.itd.cnr.it/SoDiLinux/)

Children 3-5 years old meeting Lucia through Skype
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0405/chat_lucia01.htm

From the beginning, Lucia was understood as a real living person; we realised that the first time *Jeff* had sounded a little bit strange and was not familiar as a name, as was his Australian way of talking. It was probably of some help to have shown Lucia's photo as she was coming online. Very interesting games were invented by the children with Lucia just in the chat time. These games were images exchange, guessing written words, and understanding numbers during download as well as the upload.

Download file from Lucia Ferlino [by Skype]

http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0405/chat_lucia02.htm

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

16

With Lucia, children co-created simple words using "Someone keeps stealing my letters" or drawn using an online shared blackboard

SnapShot 1 Name composition with: Someone keeps stealing my letters.

SnapShot 2 - Draw created using an online blackboard.
We have been using this blackboard since 2001
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0102/lavagna.htm

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

17

Unfortunately we don't have documentation of all the meeting chat between Genova and Latina, because we did not have a web-cam all the time. However, some of the meeting is available on our site.

In the meanwhile (the school year 2005-06), as we wrote, we have connected through Skype to the Bari children that are playing AwEdu with us in the 3D world iCity 📄 and we have built a new bridge with Genova thanks to the Robot Project@School.

Skype video 1

Skype video 2

Skype video 3

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

You can find more about "La Scatola delle Esperienze":

* Poster: " who is on line?"
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0506/ponte-lt-ge.pdf

* Meeting Skype 15-02-2006
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0506/06-02-15-LT-GE-SKYPE.pdf

* Meeting Skype 16-02-2006
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0506/06-02-16-LT-GE-SKYPE.pdf

* Meeting Skype 17-02-2006
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0506/06-02-17-LT-GE-SKYPE.pdf

* Meeting Skype del 03-03-2006
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0506/06-03-03-LT-GE-SKYPE.pdf

* Meeting Skype del 27-03-2006
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0506/06-03-27-LT-GE-SKYPE.pdf

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

19
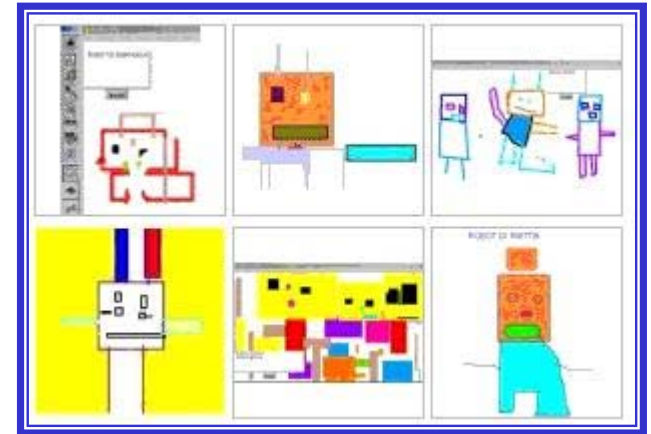
Active Worlds: description prospectus

Home of the 3D Chat, Virtual Reality Building Platform; AW, the web's most powerful Virtual Reality experience, lets you visit and chat in incredible 3D worlds that are built by other users. Think you have what it takes to build your own world or Virtual Reality game? Active Worlds is the place for you, where in minutes you can create fascinating 3D worlds that others can visit and chat in. The AW Universe is a community of hundreds of thousands of users that chat and build 3D virtual reality environments in millions of square kilometres of virtual territory. Take a quick look at some of our satellite maps and see how our community has grown over the years. Launch the free software and come check us out for yourself. You'll be amazed at how vast our Virtual Reality universe is.

New solutions for the virtual (and real world) community for children
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/nir99.html
Kids and virtual worlds
http://www.xplora.org/ww/en/pub/xplora/practice/examples/kids_and_virtual_worlds.htm

**Resources and materials needed by teachers to carry out activity**

- Software ActiveWorlsd **http://www.activeworlds.com**
- Camera to take photographs
- Digital camcorder
- Computer (in classroom)
- Internet (connection adsl in classroom)

http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0203/edu_chat.htm

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

In Active Worlds you can (Info from:http://www.activeworlds.com)

• Build your own 3D virtual reality home on the Internet;

• Shop online in our own 3D virtual reality mall and chat with store clerks;

• Explore over 1000 unique virtual worlds;

• Make new friends and chat with people from all over the globe

• Play interactive 2D and 3D games;

• Choose from a vast range of avatar identities and chat with other avatars.

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

22
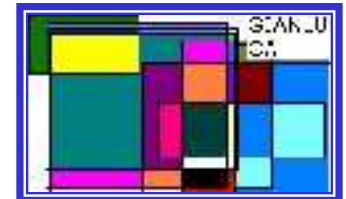
Active Worlds at school

If during the simultaneous meeting we can even play in a three-dimensional space as the one we actually have, for instance in AW, then the experience may be more creative and stimulating. New solutions for virtual (and real) communities - Internet for the child

"What is real, what is virtual and what do we mean as an image of something which is real?"

Philosophers and scientists have long debated it, and we do not pretend to answer this question: we would only like, with the opportunity we have, to tell you how school-children aged three, four and five are working on these questions, and how they are interacting with a tri-dimensional chat: AW

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

On line documents

http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/aw_en/index.htm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/virtual_en/aw.htm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/99_00_virtual.htm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/tutto99_00.htm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0203/narnia_aw.htm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0304/percorso_mondi.htm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0405/percorso_mondi.htm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0506/percorso_mondi.htm

On line videos

http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/mondi.rm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/albert.rm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0203/video/pc_finto01.rm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0203/video/pc_finto02.rm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0203/video/edu01.rm
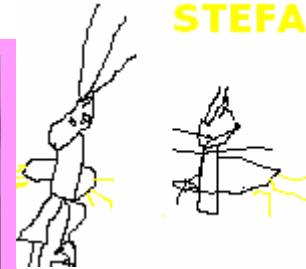http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0203/video/edu02.rm
http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0405/percorso_mondi.htm
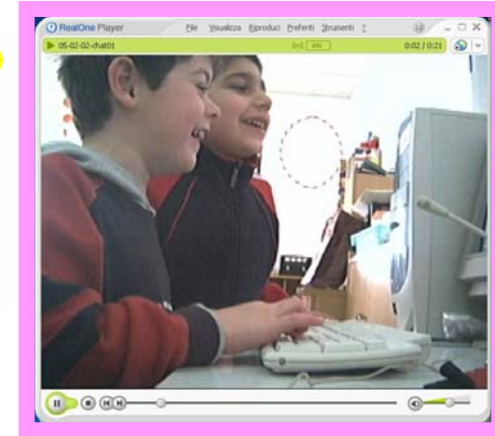http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0506/percorso_mondi.htm

Log in PDF chat building chairs

Results to be uploaded to our portal
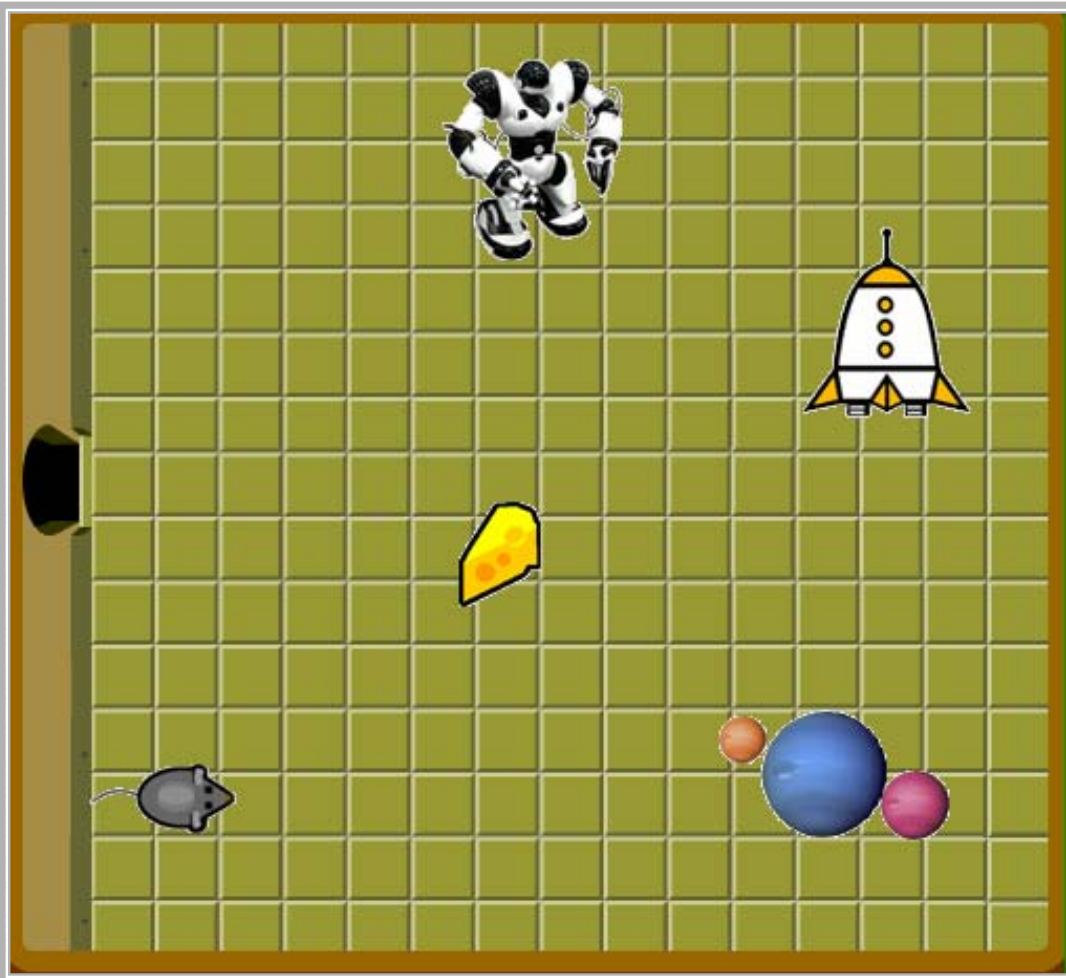
- Photographs
- Videos
- Reports

RoboTopo

Alla lavagna viene riproposta graficamente l'ambientazione del racconto RoboTopo

On the blackboard the teacher and the children draw the history and the environment of the little mouse robot. Antonio is moving the mouse toward the cheese

RoboTopo

Blune PHPFreeChat

<pb> gggg
* TIZY & FRANCY disconnected (timeout)
* pb disconnected (timeout)
* pb is connected
* pb disconnected (timeout)
* ema disconnected (timeout)
* Carlo is connected
<Carlo>
<Carlo>
<Carlo>
<Carlo>
<Carlo>
* Carlo disconnected (timeout)
* carlo is connected
* linda is connected

linda

B I U S @ C

La chat di Robot @ Scuola

tastierino2

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

28

RoboTopo

Children are chatting with the robotic school of Genova (Italy)

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

29

RoboTopo

When the children - in Latina - move something inside the graphic space on the screen , in Genova Paolo and Emanuele move the puppets on the model
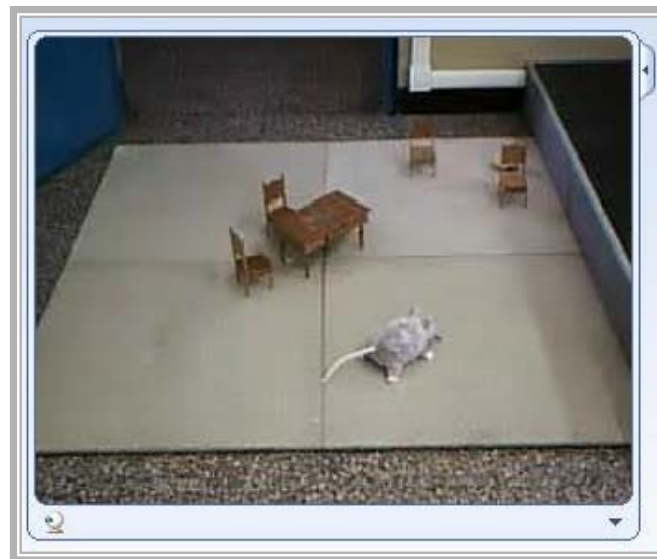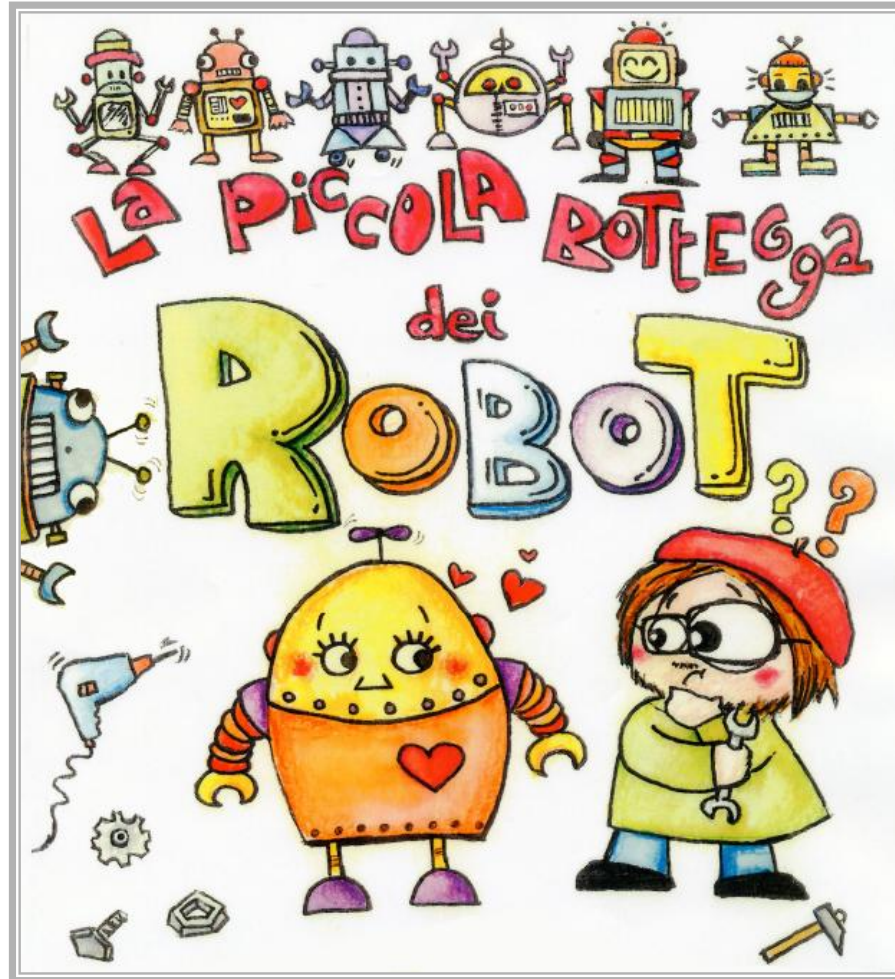

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

RoboTopo

Next step: two kind of robots are moving under a sw code .
The children have to think about simple algorithms they are using.

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati

31

RoboTopo

La piccola bottega dei Robot

Image by
Vera Bocciardo

Conclusions

The job is original in its kind because of the children's involvement in chat with adults and other children. This is research because, especially for adults that verify the ICT structure impact on the children, they take note of behaviour, hypotheses, graphic realisations and the memory of the experience. A mixed community is created in this way involving teachers, parents, researchers, children and also people not directly close to the school world. The interaction is active through e-mail, telephone, and other communication ways. These virtual community solutions usable from the children (3-5 years) have an important social-educational and pedagogic impact. It is well suited for reflections on experience and on analysis of the behaviour resulting from it.

Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati   33

Chats in nursery schools

By Linda Giannini and Carlo Nati