



# Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht

## MehrSprachen Lernen und Lehren

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Jahrgang 25, Nummer 1 (April 2020), ISSN 1205-6545

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Themenschwerpunkt: Empirische Zugänge zu  
Mehrsprachigkeit und Sprachenlernen

### **Practical tools for a pluralistic approach: knowledge *of* and attitudes *towards* multilingualism in the classroom**

*Sabrina Colombo, Joanna Barrett, Dana Engel*

This contribution focuses on didactic resources developed with the aim to provide appropriate tools for dealing with the ‘new multilingualism’ in the schools of South Tyrol. These tools consist of a travelling exhibition and eight workshops developed and created within the project One School, Many Languages (SMS). Each workshop includes a number of activities and brings into focus a specific aspect of multilingualism (etymology, intercomprehension, etc.). This paper presents the perspective of students aged 11 to 14 (middle school) on the activities, thus offering an alternative insight into the implementation and practice of plurilingualism and intercultural awareness in education.

Dieser Beitrag konzentriert sich auf die didaktischen Ressourcen, die mit dem Ziel entwickelt wurden, geeignete Instrumente für den Umgang mit der ‚neuen Mehrsprachigkeit‘ in den Südtiroler Schulen bereitzustellen. Diese Tools bestehen aus einer Wanderausstellung und acht Workshops, die im Rahmen des Projekts One School, Many Languages (SMS) entwickelt und erstellt wurden. Jeder Workshop umfasst eine Reihe von Aktivitäten und fokussiert einen spezifischen Aspekt der Mehrsprachigkeit (Etymologie, Interkomprehension, etc.). Dieser Beitrag stellt die Perspektive der 11- bis 14-Jährigen (Mittelschule) auf die Aktivitäten dar und bietet so einen alternativen Einblick in die Umsetzung und Praxis der Mehrsprachigkeit und des interkulturellen Bewusstseins in der Bildung.

**Keywords:** didactic resources, language awareness, multilingualism, South Tyrol

Colombo, Sabrina; Barrett, Joanna & Engel, Dana (2020),  
Practical tools for a pluralistic approach:  
knowledge *of* and attitudes *towards* multilingualism in the classroom.  
Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht 25: 2, 1197–1212.  
<http://tujournals.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/index.php/zif>

## 1 Introduction

This contribution presents the results of a quantitative analysis of 1487 questionnaires by students aged 11 to 14 (middle school students according to the Italian school system), which were filled in immediately after having taken part in one of the eight workshops created and carried out within the project One School, Many Languages (*Sprachenvielfalt macht Schule, SMS*).<sup>1</sup> Since 2013, the eight ready-to-use workshops have been the most prominent and well-known tools for the promotion of language diversity and plurilingual competencies among students in South Tyrolean schools. From etymology to the theory of intercomprehension, worldwide writing systems, and lesser-used languages of Italy and of Europe, all of the workshops address different aspects of multilingualism by means of interactive activities, in doing so focusing on and including the linguistic repertoires of students in a playful way.

The activities were developed within the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA) (*Cadre de Référence pour les Approches Plurielles des Langues et des Cultures*), a tool created in 2012 by the language division of the Council of Europe (Candelier/Camilleri Grima/Castellotti/De Pietro/Lőrincz/Meissner/Molinié/Noguerol/Schröder-Sura 2012). The document presents an original and innovative contribution to dealing with language teaching methodology (here intended in its *pluralistic* approach as explained later) and is intended to complement other instruments such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001) and the Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe (Beacco/Byram 2007).

Through the quantitative analysis of the data gathered from the student questionnaires, the present contribution aims to analyse the perspective of the students on activities relating to the descriptors defined within the *Framework*, and their relative success.

Firstly, this paper briefly introduces the complex linguistic situation of the multilingual region of South Tyrol where, from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century/ beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century onwards, historical minority languages (see Gesetz vom 15.12.1999, Nr. 482, 15.12.1999) have started to cohabit with new language minor-

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<sup>1</sup> The authors thank Agnieszka Stawinoga (Eurac Research, Bolzano, Italy) for her support with the statistical analysis. We thank Florian Leimgruber (University of Vienna), Martina Nappi (University of Bonn and University of Florence), Christian Pichler (University of Graz) and Beatrice Tanduo (University of Udine) for their invaluable work on data insertion.

ities. The SMS project was launched in 2012 due to the resulting increasing linguistic diversity in South Tyrolean schools, and was awarded with the *European Language Label 2018* in December 2018.

## 2 Historical overview of South Tyrol

South Tyrol, Italy's northernmost province, has a population of 527 750 (Landesinstitut für Statistik der Autonomen Provinz Bozen – Südtirol [ASTAT] 2018). At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century/ beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, internal and external migrations started to affect this alpine territory and languages such as Chinese, Albanian, Urdu and Hindi appeared in South Tyrolean schools (cf. Medda-Windischer/Ferraro/Jiménez 2018: 13). However, mainly due to its geographical position, South Tyrol has never been culturally or linguistically homogeneous. On the one hand, being at the crossroads of one of the most important trading routes has stretched its territory since the Roman times (i.e. Via Claudia Augusta) has brought a certain level of multilingualism. On the other hand, the morphology of the territory has allowed for the survival of a language island such as the South Tyrolian valleys of Gardena and Badia where Ladin, a Rhetoromance language related with Romansh and Friulan, is spoken. But this picture is far from being complete: until 1919 the present territory of the Province of Bolzano was part of the Austrian Empire. With its collapse and the treaty of Saint Germain it was annexed to the former Kingdom of Italy. Turbulent decades followed until the promulgation of the first Statute of Autonomy (1949) when German was declared an official language, followed by Ladin in 1951 (Dell'Aquila & Iannàccaro 2006: 9). Since then Südtirol/ Alto Adige/ Südtirol is the name of the territory in its three official languages and it was granted the political status of autonomous region jointly with Trentino, along with four other Italian border regions all characterized by the presence of historical language minorities in their territories: Aosta Valley, Sicily, Sardinia and later Friuli Venetia Giulia (1963).

According to the last census (ASTAT 2012), 62.3 % of the population has German as L1, Italian is spoken as first language by 23.4 % of the inhabitants, while Ladin is the smallest language group with around 4 % of L1 speakers. The rest, 10.3 % of the population, has none of the three languages as L1 and goes by the definition of “others” without any further specification. Neither Italy nor South Tyrol provide any data based on languages spoken by its people but, according to the most recent census, 9.5 % of the South Tyrolean population do not possess Italian citizenship; instead, they come from 137 countries (ASTAT 2018). These numbers are lower if compared with those of other Italian regions (Santagati/Colussi 2019: 49), but have a considerable impact on the local language landscape. English is a compulsory

subject in schools and is studied as a first foreign language, along with French, Spanish, Russian and, to a lesser extent, Latin. Moreover, in daily communication, the vast majority of the German-speaking population speaks South Tyrolean dialect (a local variety belonging to the Austro-Bavarian dialectal family) while standard German is taught and learned at schools (*internal plurilingualism*).

### **3 Monolingual school system in a plurilingual region**

Although structured on the Italian school system, the special autonomy has granted the Province a secondary legislative right regarding primary and secondary education that made the creation of an educational system in which languages play a significant role. This role was later reaffirmed in 1972, when the Second Autonomy Statute came into force (see 2. Autonomiestatut Südtirols 1972). Art. 19 (1) states:

In der Provinz Bozen wird der Unterricht in den Kindergärten, Grund- und Sekundarschulen in der Muttersprache der Schüler, das heißt in italienischer oder deutscher Sprache, von Lehrkräften erteilt, für welche die betreffende Sprache ebenfalls Muttersprache ist.

[In the Province of Bolzano, teaching in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools is carried out in the mother tongue of the students, i.e. in Italian or German, by teachers for whom the language in question is also their mother tongue.]

The German and the Italian language groups opted for separate schools where either German or Italian is the language of instruction respectively. This is a monolingual model aimed at preserving the ethnic and linguistic identity especially of the German language group. In contrast, the Ladin educational authorities have opted for a plurilingual model (now called *paritätisches Modell*, paritetic model) in classes in Gardena and Badia valleys since the beginning. This model is based on the equality of German and Italian languages whereas Ladin is taught as a language subject (2 hours per week) and used as subject language (in religion and music) and as a possible supporting language in all subjects. Therefore, the distinction between L1 and L2 disappears here, as stated in the same article (Art.19 (2)):

Die ladinische Sprache wird in den Kindergärten verwendet und in den Grundschulen der ladinischen Ortschaften gelehrt. Dort dient diese Sprache auch als Unterrichtssprache in den Schulen jeder Art und jeden Grades. In diesen Schulen wird der Unterricht auf der Grundlage gleicher Stundenzahl und gleichen Enderfolges in Italienisch und in Deutsch erteilt.

[The Ladin language is used in kindergartens and taught in primary schools in Ladin villages. There it is also used as a teaching language in schools of all kinds and degrees. In these schools the lessons are given in Italian and German on the basis of the same number of hours and the same final results.]

On the basis of this statement, it becomes easy to understand, where the special features of the South Tyrolean educational landscape lie: each language group has its own “school world” (Engel/Niederfriniger 2016: 280). For administrative purposes there are three school offices and/or education departments, each with the appropriate departments for pedagogy, didactics, and advanced training and consultation for teachers. Moreover, the educational landscape is characterized at all levels by a tripartite division resulting from the recognized status of each of the three autochthonous language groups (Engel/Niederfriniger 2016). In this already complex picture, the arrival of languages other than Italian, German and Ladin has posed new challenges for the South Tyrolean school worlds as far as language education is concerned. Since 2012 the research project SMS has tried to give teachers, students and, more generally, all stakeholders involved in the educational sector theory- and practice-based support, guidelines and tools to deal with this increased diversity.

## 4 Theoretical background

Due to the administrative and pedagogical tripartite division of schools, there are no unitary guidelines on a local level for dealing with multilingualism in classes (see Engel/Niederfriniger 2016). Despite the ever-increasing collaboration between the two main language groups in the form of school projects and exchanges, and despite the creation of cross-linguistic institutions such as the Competence Centre (*Kompetenzzentrum*), the approach to the so-called new multilingualism remains traditional (see Colombo/Stopfner 2018). Leaving out the Ladin model, the German and the Italian educational worlds are still strictly bound to their respective areas of reference in developing policies to manage languages: Italy for the Italian-speaking schools; Germany, Austria and Switzerland for the German-speaking schools.

In this context, and thanks to their innovative nature, the SMS activities carried out in schools promote the pluralistic idea that forms the basis of the new approach to language education and language teaching set up by the FREPA. The term pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures refers to “didactic approaches that use the teaching/learning activities involving several (i.e. more than one) varieties of languages and cultures” (Candelier et al. 2012: 6). This is in contrast to the approaches defined as “singular”, i.e. any didactic approach that takes into account “only one language or a particular culture and deals with it in isolation” (6). In this

sense, the FREPA defines and interprets plurilingual and pluricultural education as a sum of all the linguistic experiences of the speaker in what has been described a “global approach” (6). After the CEFR was published in 2001, the FREPA was published in 2012 and it can be considered as its natural successor insofar as it describes a series of descriptors for the promotion of the competencies described in the CEFR. In this sense, the FREPA questions the idea of seeing languages from a “compartmentalised view” (Beacco/Byram/Cavalli/Coste/Egli Cuenat/Goullier/Panthier 2016: 91) and takes a step further by detailing a list of didactic approaches for the development of the CEFR competencies in the process of language education.

There are four pluralistic approaches within the Framework: the intercultural approach, the awakening to languages (or *éveil aux langues*), the intercomprehension of related languages and the integrated didactic approaches to different languages. Of the four approaches, the first encompasses a variety of approaches which all have in common the fact of drawing on aspects of multiple cultures, while the other three approaches have, according to the authors, a more “pronounced linguistic orientation” (Candelier et al. 2012: 6).

The *integrated didactic approach* aims to establish connections among a limited number of languages, usually the language(s) of education and the languages taught within the school curriculum. As the FREPA defines it: “the goal here is to use the first language or the languages of education as a springboard to make it easier to acquire a first foreign language, then to use these two languages as the basis for learning a second foreign language” (6) in an approach known as “mutual support between languages” (6).

The approach defined as *intercomprehension of related languages* builds on the existing connections and relations among languages belonging to the same linguistic family, where one of which is the native tongue of the learners or a language learnt previously. In this approach the focus “is on receptive skills, as the development of comprehension is the most tangible way of using the knowledge of a related language to learn a new one” (7).

The fourth approach, the *awakening to languages* (or *éveil aux langues*), has been defined as the “most extreme” and is used to “describe approaches in which some of the learning activities are concerned with languages which the school generally does not intend to teach” (7). In contrast to the other approaches described above, this approach comprises many languages and thus not only the native tongues, the languages of education or the foreign languages studied at school, but it could theoretically include an unlimited number of idioms. Indeed, promoting language

awareness does not necessarily mean that the learners should start learning the foreign languages but, on the contrary, it involves all the languages of the class. Distant languages in particular are fundamental because they can cause a certain detachment and put students in a position where it is not possible to find a foothold in their existing linguistic repertoires (see Sordella/Andorno 2017). In this way, by enhancing cross-linguistic confrontation, there are more opportunities to implement meta-cognitive and metalinguistic skills (Sordella/Andorno 2017).

## 5 The SMS project: didactic resources

The data in the present article were gathered within the project SMS. The project was carried out by the Institute of Applied Linguistics at Eurac Research in Bolzano/Bozen in collaboration with the three school boards of the three official language groups. SMS aims to promote linguistic diversity as an enrichment by increasing language awareness among all relevant stakeholders involved in the educational sector.<sup>2</sup> The idea for the project came from the increasing need felt by school staff to manage a new and a more complex multilingualism (Colombo/Stopfner 2018): no longer just considering the 3 territorial languages in South Tyrol, but including many other languages e.g. Albanian, Chinese and Serbian. The final objective of the project is to identify whether schools in South Tyrol, by virtue of their experience managing linguistic heterogeneity, already possess methods and concepts specific to multilingual teaching and whether these allow for the evaluation of all languages present in the classroom and the promotion of school languages, as well as linguistic awareness through the current standard model in Italy of inclusive education. In order to achieve this, SMS has had a strong focus since the beginning on developing and evaluating practical tools such as workshops, didactic materials, teacher training sessions, class projects and a travelling exhibition. The aim of these tools is to support a more modern, positive, and conscious view of the current linguistic landscape in order to increase multilingual awareness.

Eight workshop packages have been developed based on the contents of the travelling exhibition. They expand on the exhibition with further questions, examples, materials and activities using an action and production orientated approach, i.e. practical activities and discussion. In addition, there is space for reflection on the meaning of multilingualism and its importance. At the same time, curiosity for getting to know and trying out languages and having fun should be encouraged.

The starting point when devising each workshop was the multilingual reality in South Tyrolean school classes and the conviction that it is necessary to give students

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<sup>2</sup> For more information, see <http://sms-project.eurac.edu/>.

a space that allows them to ask their own research questions, discuss with one another, question realities, but also discover and show what competences they already have. The workshops are intended to promote learning *about* multilingualism, as well as learning *in* several languages. Whereas the topics were established by the project team, the workshops are not intended as finished products, but as flexible tools that can be individually adapted and expanded according to the needs of the individual schools or classes in consultation with the responsible teachers. Due to this flexibility, both the workshops and the travelling exhibition have been used with students aged 7 to 19.

After deciding on the themes of the workshops, the number of activities in each workshop and the way in which they should be carried out, the FREPA came into play. The research group framed the individual activities using the descriptors in the Framework. In this case, the process that took place was the reverse of how the descriptors are intended to be used: the indicators are intended to be used as the basis for the construction of the multilingual curriculum for developing plurilingual competencies, and in the SMS project the starting point was the activities that were later framed in the grid of descriptors. This was a deliberate change of course. SMS, like many other projects, intends multilingual education as a particular way of understanding language education, which is expressed mainly by bringing out the linguistic heritage of the students. Moreover, proposing such tools to teaching staff avoids the fears often expressed by teachers, such as lack of time to dedicate a part of the lesson to linguistic promotion and to value all the languages present in the classroom rather than only German or Italian, and uncertainty in how to do so.

## 6 Data collection

The data in this paper were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire with twelve questions which can be divided into 4 sub-sections, namely: the linguistic profile of the student (i.e. language/s spoken, gender), the evaluation of each activity within the workshop, an overall evaluation of the workshop, and final remarks and comments. While the first, third and fourth sections are the same for all eight workshops, the second section varies insofar as the participants gave an evaluation on singular activities. Each activity was listed in a table and the participants had to put a cross next to the activity they liked the most. The same was asked in relation to the activity they liked the least. In both cases, multiple answers were possible but less than 10 % of the middle school students opted for more than one answer. Initially, the aim of this second section was to verify whether the activities were appealing for the attendees, and if so, which ones. Because of continually increasing



demand from schools for workshops, this question soon became an instrument capable of providing information on students' views towards the contents and the topic of the activities.

Teachers were also asked to fill in the questionnaire at the end of the ninety-minute workshop, but despite the fact that the second section had the same questions, the teacher questionnaire had a different structure and thus was not comparable to those of the students. Both questionnaires were anonymous, although those from the teachers are, for obvious reasons, less anonymous. For these reasons, data taken from teachers will not form part of the analysis in the present paper. In addition, similar questionnaires were submitted to students and to teachers at the end of the guided tour of the exhibition, but because the way of working with the seven posters underwent a slight change during the years, the data are less reliable and more difficult to compare and will therefore also not be included.

For a total of 2463 students, middle school students were the biggest sample group, making up 60 % of all questionnaire respondents. This number includes students attending both the German and the Italian schools, although the data will be analyzed in the present paper without any distinction based on language of instruction.

There were no instances of a single student taking part in two workshops because the classes and students were always different. For the sake of convenience, this paper only focuses on two of the eight workshops offered, namely those that had the highest number of students participating over the six years. The two workshops are *Alphabets of the world* attended by 309 students (21 %) and *The languages game* completed by 324 students (22 %)<sup>3</sup>.

## 7 The results of the analysis

In the presentation of the questionnaire analysis, the answers from middle school pupils are compared with the FREPA descriptors. The aim is to identify whether these descriptors are rooted in school life, albeit limited in the present analysis to the time periods spent by the SMS researchers in schools when running the workshops.

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<sup>3</sup> The titles of the other workshops,<sup>3</sup> which will not be discussed in the present paper, are as follows: My languages, your languages, our languages; 1001 ways to communicate; Etymology for experts; Limitless language learning; Little languages made big; News – haberler – nouvelles – новости – الأخبار .

## 7.1 Alphabets of the world

The *Alphabets of the world* workshop is made up of five activities and introduces participants to the most well-known and popular alphabets and writing systems, exploring their evolution, curiosities and myths. The activities aim to stimulate the creativity and reflective skills of the participants, giving them some basic knowledge of the differences and similarities of scripts around the world. One or several researchers accompany the workshop and provide theoretical information at the end of each activity during the correction phase. 309 middle school students took part in the workshop and the great majority gave positive feedback by rating it as *good* (48.9 %) or *very good* (32.4 %).

The workshop consists of five activities:

1. **How many alphabets do you know?** In plenum, pupils are asked to list and to give some information about scripts they can write or read but also, more generally, on those they know or recognize. In this first activity either the researcher or the students themselves write the scripts they mention on the blackboard in two separate columns: on one side the alphabets written with Latin letters, on the other those that do not use Latin characters (e.g. Chinese or Georgian). This trick initiates the reflective process, insofar as it leads participants to learn what goes under the definition of ‘Latin characters’.
2. **The alphabets in the travelling exhibition.** This second activity is a continuation of the first, because participants have the possibility to put into practice the information acquired during the first activity. They receive a sheet with a table divided into five columns. By observing the seven panels of the exhibition, they try to fill the first column of the table *examples of scripts* by finding and copying words or signs written in alphabets that do not involve the use of Latin characters. So, for example, Spanish is excluded, but Armenian could be on the sheet. If they have further knowledge of the language or they can get some information from the panels about that word or sign, they can try to fill in the other columns of the table: *pronunciation, meaning, alphabet/writing system, further information*.
3. **The history of alphabets** allows an in-depth and creative analysis of the origin of the Latin alphabet. In groups students receive four cards each depicting the same letter but across different historical periods: Proto-Semitic (or Proto-Sinaitic), Phoenician, Greek and Roman. Without telling them the correct historical evolution, they are asked to make up possible connections and explanations and compose histories in text or picture form. Each group will then later present to the rest of the class. Thus, they reflect on the history and evolution of the Latin alphabet and they are confronted with the embedment of cultural history in context.

4. **Giving writing systems a try.** The following two activities are carried out in parallel and aim to consolidate the topics of the exploring alphabets workshop. In groups, students practice writing eight words (apple, bread, computer, friendship, love, sun, tiger, water) in several languages and in different scripts, whereby they are asked to observe similarities and differences as well as the structure of the individual script.
5. **Alphabets domino.** Through a game of dominoes, participants try to guess how many alphabets they know already and discover which ones they are able to recognize and name correctly by matching the cards.

From the analysis of the data, the fourth activity resulted to be the activity that participants liked the most. Out of a total of 304 students, 112 liked this activity. 104 of them had then a preference for *The history of alphabets*, while in third place is the second activity with 80 votes. These three activities are included in the *knowledge – K domain (savoirs)* of the FREPA descriptors insofar as they give students the possibility to acquire new knowledge skills or deepen those that they already possess.

As specified by the authors of the FREPA, the knowledge list is composed of two thematic subgroups: language and culture. Despite the close link existing between the two subgroups, the dichotomy is here particularly important because of its pedagogical objective “to make it easier to analyse and assess what happens in the classroom, where activities are certainly global, with language and culture intermingled in the actual practice of teaching” (Candelier et al. 2012: 62). Connections between languages and culture are a constant feature throughout the five activities of the *alphabets of the world* workshop. More specifically, the K descriptors were identified on the basis of what the FREPA identifies as “predicates” (14). Although “there is relatively little variety in the predicates” (63), the three most successful activities fall under two of them. The first predicate *Know that*, i.e. to know that a phenomenon exists, is present in the aim of the *Giving writing systems a try* activity: “knows that there are different kinds of scripts” – K 5.3. The second predicate, *know examples*, helps in identifying to which category a certain piece of knowledge belongs e.g. “has knowledge about historical facts which have influenced/ influence the appearance or development of certain languages” – K 2.6, which features in the activity *The history of alphabets*. The third predicate *know how*, i.e. to know how a phenomenon works, is not addressed here, however this was not done with intention of diminishing its importance.

Undoubtedly, students assign importance to creativity and the way activities are implemented in class. This is reflected in their preferences, however the opinions that the students expressed are particularly significant from a pedagogical point of view. Scripts are fundamental in the process of understanding languages, as well as

learning them. *Giving writing systems a try*, *History of alphabets* and *The alphabets in the travelling exhibition* all deal with topics which are fundamental, but that are not usually taken into consideration while learning a language. The existing connections, common origins, differences, and above all the similarities among scripts are all essential in putting into practice all four approaches of the Framework: the intercultural approach; awakening to languages; intercomprehension of related languages; integrated didactic approaches to different languages.

## 7.2 The languages game

It is no surprise that *The languages game* resulted as the most frequently chosen of all the workshops. Out of 1487 middle school students overall, 324 had played the game in total. The workshop aims to combine learning with play and integrates and summarises all the other workshops.

*The languages game* is structured differently than the other workshops and is characterized by a high level of interactivity, as playing with and learning about languages come together. The workshop is in the form of a board game, where the floor of the classroom becomes the board, made up of twenty to twenty-five landing squares and there are additional playing pieces, dice and five types of question and activity cards. In four teams, participants have to answer questions from one of the following five topics: etymology, non-verbal communication, curiosities about languages of the world, learning languages (e.g. How do I say good morning in Armenian?) and language biographies of famous polyglots. The topics are based on those of the seven posters of the travelling exhibition. Indeed, *The languages game* was originally conceived as a workshop on the exhibition, but it can also be used as a stand-alone tool. All the questions are translated into three languages, namely German, Italian and English, and the language in which each question is read is decided every time by rolling the 'language dice'.

Due to the unique structure of this workshop, it was almost impossible to define separate activities within the workshop on the questionnaire as was done for the previous workshop. Entering the five categories in which questions are grouped was considered quite risky for analytical purposes as there was a high possibility that, at the time of filling in the questionnaire, pupils would not clearly remember the categories of questions. Moreover, by leaving the choice of questions to chance, there was the risk that a group might not get to answer questions belonging to a particular category, as indeed happened. Therefore, in the case of this workshop, question five of the questionnaire does not ask the pupils to give an assessment of the individual activity, but rather of the essential components of the game: *answering the questions, questions in different languages, earning points or other*. Surprisingly the analysis of these answers showed that the pupils gave importance to the

contents and how they are transmitted, insofar as the option *answering questions* resulted to be the most liked activity with 186 preferences. *Questions in different languages* comes immediately after with 110 preferences, while only 21 students checked the *earning points* option. Only six pupils chose *other* and specified what they liked most.

The success of the workshop is a result of its format combining learning *in* and *about* different languages through play, and also thanks to its capacity to stimulate the curiosity of the participants in the form of questions that they have to answer. Because of its structure, the choice of descriptors differs slightly from that made for the other workshops in which the individual activities were framed within the FREPA descriptors. In fact, during this process, the researchers decided to frame *The languages game* not in the context of the knowledge dimension, but rather in the attitude dimension – A. Byram, in his theory based definition of intercultural communication competence writes: “Attitudes which are the pre-condition for successful intercultural interaction (...) need to be attitudes of curiosity and openness” (Byram 1997: 34). The aim of the game here was to make pupils ‘fit’ for developing of language awareness by means of curiosity. The descriptor A 3 “Curiosity about or interest in foreign languages, cultures, persons or curiosity about or pluricultural contexts (...)” (Candelier et al. 2012: 39) best describes the objective of the workshop, insofar as it promotes a positive curiosity towards languages and cultures but without necessarily implying an attitude of openness, as the FREPA also points out. In order to include this attitude the descriptor A5 was also included: “openness to diversity of languages and or people, cultures of the world. To diversity as such (...)” (41). The SMS researchers were well aware of the fact that these two descriptors are formulated very generally. However, because they are focused on the individual rather than on society, they were seen as fundamental in making the pupil ‘fit’ for language awareness.

## 8 Conclusions

From 2013 to 2018, the researchers in the SMS project team at Eurac research worked with more than 250 school classes and conducted more than 200 workshops. The questionnaires collected relating to the workshops totaled 2463. With 60 % of responses, middle schools proved to have requested by far the highest number of workshops. High schools (*Scuole Superiori/ Oberschulen*) follow with a considerably lower percentage of 23 %, while only 399 primary school (*Scuole elementari/ Grundschulen*) pupils (16 %) took part in workshops. Within the South Tyrolean research landscape, SMS has been an innovative project, both in terms of objectives and contents: On the one hand, a three-year longitudinal study on the

development of language competencies, and on the other hand, a wide range of concrete educational instruments aimed at promoting language awareness, multilingualism and linguistic diversity as a potential.

The success achieved over the years by the eight workshops is indicative of the need for such tools and, more generally, the need for new approaches appropriate for dealing with and managing new multilingualism, even in a historically plurilingual region. From the analysis of the questionnaires it is also possible to find a certain openness of pupils in the form of curiosity towards ‘new’ languages, despite the term ‘new’ no longer being up-to-date because languages such as Albanian, Arabic and Chinese, to all intents and purposes, have by now become part of the South Tyrolean linguistic landscape. Just like the teaching resources made available on the FREPA online platform, the SMS workshops have also been converted into activity boxes and made available online<sup>4</sup>. Sordella and Andorno (2017: 224) point out that this could lead to what they defined as didactic recipes, i.e. didactic packages that can be easily used in classes and that, in the long run, could lead to a distortion of the educational and didactic principles identified by FREPA. Of course, the development and, above all, the implementation of a pluralistic didactic approach to languages and cultures takes time, but the purpose of the workshops proposed within SMS was first of all to test the waters and see if the South Tyrolean educational worlds (students, but above all teachers) were ready to deal with the new multilingualism even within a monolingual system, which is, however, characterized by a totality of plurilingual people. Undoubtedly, the way in which the individual activities were implemented in classes played (and will always play) a primary role in the evaluation of the activities by the pupils, but the results of the analysis have given a positive picture of the attitudes of pupils towards all the languages and varieties that are now part of the everyday school life and that can no longer be limited to German or Italian or English. The analysis of feedback on those activities presented above shows that children’s preferences lie mainly with awareness-raising activities dealing with fundamental aspects of languages which, for various reasons, are not yet included in the curriculum.

The first phase of SMS ended in December 2018, but further funding has been obtained for a second phase of SMS so that the project will continue until December 2022. One of the challenges for the coming years will be to support teaching staff in schools to make these activities part of the regular curriculum. The possibility of starting a continuous monitoring process is being considered for this purpose, in addition to the continuing work to support the further development of schools with regards to multilingualism.

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<sup>4</sup> Please see <http://sms-project.eurac.edu/for-schools/lesson-materials/>.

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