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English and other languages in a plurilingual pedagogical approach: A case study from northern Italy

ABSTRACT. Language teaching constantly needs to be adapted to changing societal realities, such as the spread of English as an international language or the growing linguistic complexity in Europe. A key question is whether and how languages could be treated together in school programmes to cater to a multilingual milieu. This article analyses a plurilingual pedagogical approach that is adopted in a few primary schools in the Italian province of South Tyrol. The research is a qualitative case study and draws on various theoretical perspectives, including the method model developed by Richards and Rodgers (1982, 2001, 2014). The dataset comprises analogue and digital data gathered through participant observation, field notes, personal communications, audio recordings, and school documents. Results show how a multilingual turn has taken root in the context examined, while reinforcing English acquisition.

KEYWORDS: Language teaching approaches, English language learning as an L3, Ladin, multilingualism, plurilingualism, integrated linguistic education, crosslinguistic awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Significant advances have been made in understanding language teaching approaches and methods, which have undergone continuous changes due to better knowledge about the nature of language, language acquisition processes, and the kind of proficiency that learners need. Two primary sources of change have shaped recent language teaching, one of which is internal to the profession, and the other comes from outside. On the one hand, the English language teaching profession reflects a growing “understanding of its own essential knowledge base and associated instructional practices” (Richards & Rodgers 2014: 83). On the other hand, it reflects the status of English as an international language, whose knowledge is required in many sectors of contemporary life and industry. At the same time, citizens of minority-language areas and border regions often need to speak their local languages along with a number of larger languages

besides English. Furthermore, European communities and nations are becoming linguistically more and more diverse because of migration.

Therefore, language teaching scholars have started exploring instructional designs that best support and enhance *multilingualism* and *plurilingualism*. They distinguish between the coexistence of various languages in society and an individual's evolving communicative competence in two or more interacting languages (Council of Europe 2001; Taylor 2021). A point at issue is whether it is feasible and beneficial to integrate different languages in single lesson plans. The latter is advocated by proponents of *Integrated Linguistic Education* (henceforth abbreviated as ILE), which aims to create synergistic links across languages and is the focus of this article (Cathomas 2015; Irsara 2017; Le Pape Racine 2007)¹. The ILE approach to teaching languages can be embedded within the broad discussion on multilingualism in education, which includes debates on translanguaging (Baker 2011; Conteh 2018; García & Wei 2013; Lewis, Jones & Baker 2012). The term *translanguaging* defines "the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson" (Lewis et al. 2012: 3). It has been emphasised that "in a translanguaging classroom, learners and teachers draw on all their linguistic resources: all languages are valued and are regarded as making different but equal contributions to language learning and meaning making" (Copland & Ni 2018: 145). Similarly, the term *classroom code-switching* indicates "the alternating use of more than one linguistic code in the classroom by any of the classroom participants" (Lin 2017: 487). May (2013) and Conteh and Meier (2014) argue that language education witnesses a multilingual turn in different regions of the globe, where monolingual instructional strategies are being reconsidered in favour of multilingual approaches.

This article aims to contribute to language teaching research in multilingual contexts by examining the ILE approach in South Tyrol (Italy), adding to an understanding of the multilingual turn mentioned above. The plurilingual pedagogical approach ILE has been implemented in the South-Tyrolean Ladin schools for several decades, whereas it is more recent in the South-Tyrolean German school that is the focus of this article. Focusing on a particular case study, this article intends to provide more accurate insights into how English and other languages are combined in a specific school subject called *languages*, which remains largely unexplored. The article also seeks to determine whether the methods model proposed by Richards and Rodgers (1982, 2001, 2014) provides a valuable framework for the examination of teaching practices, more specifically for an analysis of the ILE approach.

¹ The ILE concept and framework presented in this article are not to be confused with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which combines subject and language learning.

Section 2 of this article describes the ILE concept and approach, also providing information on the plurilingual Ladin context, which offers the greatest source of inspiration for the German school under analysis. Section 3 presents the case study that was conducted, illustrating the geopolitical and learning context of the participants in Section 3.1. Section 3.2 subsequently outlines the model proposed by Richards and Rodgers (1982, 2001, 2014), which acts as a reference point in the analysis in Section 3.3.

2. INTEGRATED LINGUISTIC EDUCATION

Proponents of multilingual approaches to language teaching argue that time slots should be made available in school curricula to enable learners to approach language diversity systematically from an early age. Well-informed multilingual strategies are not intended to replace monolingual programmes but to complement them in a balanced way. This was highlighted by the ten-year developmental project *Steps towards multilingualism*, conducted in South-Tyrolean Ladin kindergartens and primary schools (Cathomas 2015).

Within the Ladin context, sustained efforts to integrate multilingualism as an important educational goal into preschool and school curricula gradually shaped the concept of *Integrated Linguistic Education*. This concept has been expressed over the last decades with different terminology. Practitioners in the German-speaking territories of South Tyrol have contemplated the possibility of partially eliminating the rigorous separation existing between languages at school, using the expressions *integrierte Sprachdidaktik* (Flügel & Sitta 1992), *integrale Sprachendidaktik* (Cathomas 2003), *integrative Sprachdidaktik* (Gelmi 2005), and *integrierende Mehrsprachendidaktik* (Cathomas 2015). Although there is still no complete terminological consensus on the above concept, the pre-modifying adjectives are etymologically related, tracing back to the Latin *integrare* “make whole”, from *intēger* “whole, complete”. Something is included, restored, supplemented, or renewed. Cathomas (2015) favours the participial adjective *integrierend* “integrating”, arguing that it emphasises an active and constructive process in which learners and teachers use prior linguistic knowledge to build new knowledge consciously and systematically. Moreover, there was a move from the singular form *Sprach-* “language” to the plural (*Mehr*)*sprachen-* “(more) languages” to emphasise the use of multiple languages. However, the German terms are generally used side by side and are not distinguishable. Considering the various German forms and their semantic nuances, different translation solutions were contemplated for English, before finally opting for *Integrated Linguistic Education* (Irsara 2017). An *integrated* approach to languages is advocated by the Council

of Europe (2007: 42), whereby “learners’ experience of one language – whether acquired in formal education or informally in the community – is consciously drawn upon in the acquisition of others”.

Based on the idea that effective language teaching has all the attributes of good teaching in general, the ILE framework applies pedagogical principles of general didactics, such as awakening and sustaining motivation in class, or moving from known to unknown, or taking a learning-centred perspective, whereby teachers have a longer view in sight and support learners to move towards increasingly challenging targets.

Specifically, ILE envisages a harmonious combination of multiple languages in certain phases of language teaching and learning, intending to make teaching and learning more efficient. The framework aims at a well-informed and systematic comparative multilingual teaching that enables learners’ development of language skills and learning strategies, including elements of intra- and intercultural pedagogy. ILE encompasses various teaching and learning approaches that focus on finding and exploiting commonalities between languages. In line with the widely accepted communicative language teaching approach, there is a strong focus on functional aspects of language, meaning, interaction, the authenticity of input, and learning by doing. However, ILE intends to develop both communication skills and metalinguistic and crosslinguistic awareness in learners, who are led to systematically reflect on similarities and differences between the languages in their repertoire.

A resolution adopted by the north-Italian Autonomous Province of Bozen-Bolzano (2009), South Tyrol, promotes the systematic implementation and documentation of multilingual classroom activities in the Ladin valleys in the province, namely *Val Badia* and *Val Gardena*². Ladin is a Rhaeto-Romance minority language that counts approximately 31,000 speakers in the Dolomites. Two thirds of the Ladin speakers (20,548) reside in South Tyrol, which recognises three official languages, namely German (majority of the population), Italian, and Ladin. South Tyrol was annexed to Italy after the First World War, before which it belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The province has secondary legislative competences in the primary education sector, which means that South-Tyrolean schools can develop their own profile within the national framework. In the Ladin schools of South Tyrol, pupils learn Ladin, Italian, German, and English. Plurilingual teaching strategies are implemented across the curriculum throughout pre-primary and primary school, as well as in the curricular subject *Educaziun Linguistica Integrada* ‘Integrated Linguistic Education’, which is underpinned by the ILE concept.

² “Aktivitäten integrierender Sprachendidaktik werden regelmäßig in allen Klassen durchgeführt und dokumentiert” ‘ILE activities are regularly conducted and documented in all classes’ (Autonomous Province of Bozen-Bolzano 2009: 59).

Training in multilingual teaching is offered to teachers in education at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, where most South-Tyrolean pre-primary and primary school teachers gain their teaching qualification. The continuous 5-year Master's Degree Course in Primary Education comprises a German, an Italian, and a Ladin section. Language plays a significant role in this course since students are prepared to teach English as a foreign language at the primary level and must master the local languages (German, Italian, and English in the German and Italian sections; Ladin, Italian, German, and English in the Ladin section). Ladin speakers attend modules in 4 languages, while students in the German and Italian sections take modules in 3 languages. Graduates have a C1 level in the local languages (including Ladin in the Ladin section) and a B2 or higher level in English. Therefore, South-Tyrolean primary teachers are plurilingual and can be viewed as positive role models of successful plurilingualism.

The project *Steps towards multilingualism* implemented and analysed ILE in the Ladin territory, concluding that it was a successful attempt to develop its theoretical foundations and to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Cathomas 2015). While the above-mentioned project started in 2004, in 2010, a further ILE initiative began to take shape in a South-Tyrolean German school, which is the focus of this study, presented in Section 3 (Brugger & Primucci 2017).

3. THE CASE STUDY

3.1. Context and participants

The case study was conducted in the north-Italian province of South Tyrol (see Section 2), a multilingual territory due to historical socio-political circumstances and recent migration to the area³. More precisely, the study was carried out in the municipality of Bruneck, which had 17,050 inhabitants at the end of 2020 (ASTAT 2021). The latest population census of 2011, which counted the speakers of German, Italian, and Ladin as a first language (L1), revealed the following percentages for the municipality of Bruneck: 82.47% (German), 15.24% (Italian), and 2.29% (Ladin) (ASTAT 2021)⁴. German is to be understood as an umbrella term encompassing various local variants of Southern Bavarian. At the end of 2019, 9.5% of the inhabitants were residents with a migration background (ASTAT 2020).

³ Migration increases the linguistic and cultural diversity of South Tyrolean society. In 2019, people from 138 different countries lived in South Tyrol (ASTAT 2020).

⁴ Respondents in 2011 were invited to select one group of speakers, whereas multiple language declarations were not possible.

The system of compulsory schools in South Tyrol comprises three distinct, parallel school systems with different linguistic foci. German-speaking schools focus on German and teach Italian as a second language (L2), while Italian-speaking schools focus on Italian and teach German as an L2. In contrast, schools in the Ladin valleys have a dual focus on Italian and German and adopt a balanced language approach. In these three school systems, English is taught as a third (L3) or fourth language (L4), starting from grade four (at 9–10 years old) in the Ladin and most German schools.

This article presents an analysis undertaken in a German school that has implemented an ILE project for over a decade. In this school, English is taught as a subject from grade four, as in the other German schools (see Table 1), but the language also finds a place within the ILE subject, which is offered from grade one in the classes with a specific language focus (see *languages* in Table 2). While ILE strongly emphasises German, Italian, and Ladin in the Ladin schools, it balances German, Italian, and English in the German school under analysis. Tables 1 and 2 show the number of language instruction hours per week in most South-Tyrolean German schools (Table 1) and in the German school with a language focus in Bruneck (Table 2). One school hour lasts 55 minutes, and a school year comprises at least 34 weeks (Autonomous Province of Bozen-Bolzano 2021).

Table 1. Number of language instruction hours in South-Tyrolean German schools

Subject	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
German	8	7	7	5	5
Italian	2	4	4	5	5
English	–	–	–	2	2

Source: Autonomous Province of Bozen-Bolzano (2021).

Table 2. Number of language instruction hours in the South-Tyrolean German school under analysis

Subject	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
German	8	7	7	6	6
Italian	2	4	4	5	5
English	–	–	–	2	2
Languages	4	4	4	4	4

Source: Primary School District Bruneck (2022).

More specifically, the study presented in Section 3.3 is focused on the subject *languages* (see Table 2 above), which adopts the ILE approach illustrated in Section 2. The research was conducted during several months of spring 2022,

informally observing several lessons. For reasons of clarity, this article focuses on the detailed analysis of one lesson given to 7–8-year-olds approaching the end of grade 2. In the lesson observed, there were 18 children (14 girls and 4 boys), who spoke various languages at home (L1s), as Table 3 illustrates. While the level of German and Italian varied considerably among the children, none of them spoke English at home, and they learnt it mainly as a foreign language.

Table 3. Languages that are spoken at home by the study participants

Number of children	Languages spoken at home
6	German dialect
2	Albanian
2	Urdu
1	Spanish
1	Italian
1	German dialect, Italian
1	Standard German, Italian
1	German dialect, standard German, Ladin
1	German dialect, Ladin
1	Polish, Slovak, German dialect
1	Polish, German dialect, Italian

Source: current study.

The lesson under analysis in this article was co-taught by three plurilingual language teachers, who shared responsibility for the overall lesson planning and outcomes, but who were mostly in charge of one language: German, Italian, or English. While the German and Italian teachers were L1 speakers of the languages, the English teacher was a local speaker of German.

3.2. Methodology and data

The case study research was selected as the most appropriate way to approach the area of investigation, considering, in particular, the close attention this methodology pays to context. As explained by van Lier (2005: 195), “a case study zeroes in on a particular case (an individual, a group, or a situation) in great detail, within its natural context of situation, and tries to probe into its characteristics, dynamics, and purposes”. Van Lier (2005: 196) further specifies that a case can be “a group of individuals with a common context, set of goals, or some kind of institutional boundedness”. The case study reported in this

article concentrates on a group of pupils learning languages through a specific multilingual programme at a primary school. The study is qualitative, interpretive, and takes a non-intervention approach. Therefore, it falls into the upper right quadrant of van Lier's (2005) coordinate system in Figure 1.

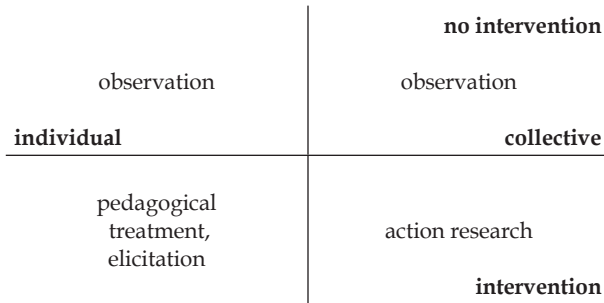


Figure 1. Approaches to case study research

Source: van Lier 2005: 197.

The case study is intrinsic, and “the case itself is the focus of attention” (van Lier 2005: 205). As Stake (1995: 77) emphasised, “with intrinsic case studies, our primary task is to come to understand the case”.

Linguistic education can be defined as teaching aimed at developing learners' first and further languages. It is a branch of education in which “the purpose (language) and the teaching instrument (language) coincide” (Balboni 2010: 9). Language teaching research is a science that studies linguistic education, one aim of which is to understand teaching mechanisms and processes. Various logical constructions and propositions have been put forward to provide a reference for scholars working in this field. However, language teaching research is hardly compatible with formula definitions that can be verified by formal or mathematical logic and privileges verbal definitions (Balboni 2010).

In describing language teaching methods, “the difference between a philosophy of language teaching at the level of theory and principles and a set of derived procedures for teaching a language is central” (Richards & Rodgers 2014: 21). Anthony (1963) attempted to account for this with a tripartite scheme that recognised three levels of organisation, which he called *approach*, *method*, and *technique*. Anthony (1963: 63) saw a hierarchical arrangement between these three levels, arguing that “*techniques* carry out a *method* which is consistent with an *approach*”. This proposal was appreciated for linking theoretical bases and practices simply and comprehensively. However, the model should have paid more attention to the inherent characteristics of a method, according to Richards and Rodgers

(1982), who wished to develop a framework that would help describe and compare language teaching methods systematically. With this in mind, Richards and Rodgers (1982) adopted Anthony's (1963) terminology and modified it. Figure 2 shows that they turned the expression *method* into an umbrella term encompassing *approach*, *design*, and *procedure*, which were considered interdependent.

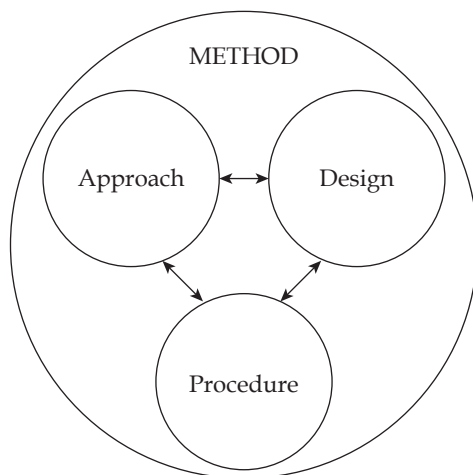


Figure 2. Approach, design, procedure

Source: Richards & Rodgers 1982: 155.

Richards and Rodgers (2014: 22) specify that “a method is theoretically related to an approach, is organisationally determined by a design, and is practically realised in procedure”. More precisely, the conceptualisation and organisation levels termed *approach*, *design*, and *procedure* refer to the elements listed in Table 4, which constitute a method, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001, 2014).

Table 4. Elements and sub-elements that form a method

Method		
Approach(es)	Design	Procedure
A theory of the nature of: - language - language learning	- The objectives of the method - A syllabus model - Types of learning and teaching activities - Learner roles - Teacher roles - The role of instructional materials	Classroom techniques, practices, and behaviours

Source: Richards & Rodgers 2001: 33.

The analysis conducted in Section 3.3 is based on the model that is outlined in Table 4, confirming that also ILE, like other language teaching methods, can be examined in terms of the issues identified by Richards and Rodgers (1982, 2001, 2014) in the levels of approach, design, and procedure.

The analysis draws on different types of data that were collected in the first half of 2022. The data contains field notes taken during observation, audio recordings, personal communications by children and teachers, pupils' notebooks, school documents, and previously published reports and research in related areas. Although various lessons were observed, one in particular is the focus in the article. The study brings an emic (insider's) and etic (outsider's) perspective to the data since the author-analyst collected the data herself and participated in various projects at the same school.

3.3. Findings and discussion

3.3.1. Approach(es)

Richards and Rodgers (2014: 22) emphasise that the "*approach* refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching". Various language models and theoretical views on the nature of language inform ILE. These are cognitive, structural, functional, interactional, sociocultural, and lexical models. Similarly, ILE assumes various theories of language learning.

ILE interprets language as the reflection of a mind that does not compartmentalise languages but integrates them into an overall system. This consideration is cautiously suggested by proponents of the dynamic model of multilingualism (De Bot & Jaensch 2012). The latter see multilingual proficiency as "composed of the individual language systems, the crosslinguistic interaction between the language systems, and other components such as an enhanced multilingual monitor" (Jessner & Cenoz 2019: 160). Metalinguistic and crosslinguistic awareness help develop multilingual proficiency. Metacognitive language learning skills also develop such proficiency that ILE supports.

ILE exploits and values learners' prior linguistic knowledge, 'picking them up from where they are', as expressed metaphorically by Cathomas (2015). In relation to Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis, acquisition occurs if the input is slightly beyond the learner's current level of competence ($i + 1$), whereby i "represents the level of language already acquired, and the '+1' is a metaphor for language (words, grammatical forms, aspects of pronunciation) that is just a step beyond that level" (Lightbown & Spada 2006: 37). Krashen's i could be

taken to encompass other languages and dialects that learners speak, that is their entire linguistic repertoire and plurilingual competence.

Regarding learners' prior linguistic knowledge, ILE draws in particular on Cummins' (1981) underlying proficiency model, which recognises that "the languages of bi- and multilinguals interact in complex ways that can enhance aspects of overall language and literacy development" (Cummins 2007: 234). Cummins (1981: 25) uses the visual metaphor of a dual iceberg to provide a general sense of the interdependence between languages in an individual. He argues that "common cross-lingual proficiencies underlie the obviously different surface manifestations of each language". Cummins' (1981, 2005) dual-iceberg representation is shown in Figure 3.

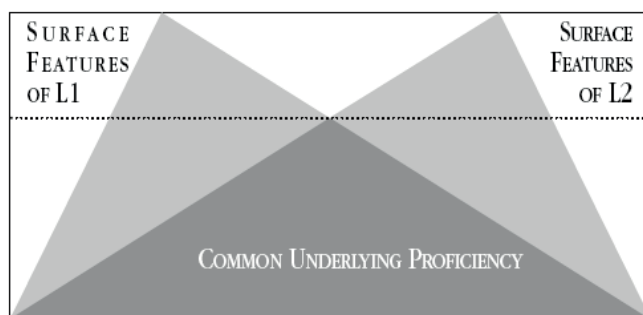


Figure 3. The dual-iceberg representation of bilingual proficiency

Source: Cummins 2005.

While ILE practitioners also adopt structural, interactional, sociocultural, and lexical views of language, they prioritise the functional dimension, that is, "the view that language is a vehicle for the expression of functional meanings and for performing real-world activities" (Richards & Rodgers 2014: 23). In particular, ILE emphasises the importance of appropriate and effective use of different languages in different domains, which is termed *functional multilingualism*, as discussed in Section 3.3.2 below.

3.3.2. Design

A general objective of ILE is functional multilingualism, as stated above. At the same time, native-speaker-like competence in every language is considered a myth that can lead to an obsession with perfection and inhibit learning. The ideal of faultless competence creates an unattainable goal, which is doomed to

failure and has a demotivating effect on learners and teachers. It might be argued in line with Byram (2021: 17) that learners of several languages in ILE should develop the following:

the ability to see and manage the relationship between themselves and their own beliefs, values, behaviours and meanings, as expressed in a foreign language, and those of their interlocutors, expressed in the same language – or even a combination of languages – which may be the interlocutors’ native language, or not.

The more specific objectives of the ILE-based subject *languages* in the school under analysis are provided in Table 5. The objectives encompass performance, knowledge, and metacognition. The programme includes developing children’s abilities to switch between languages (performance). It also includes engaging children in crosslinguistic and metalinguistic reflections (knowledge and metacognition). ‘Learning to think’ and ‘learning to learn’ are integral parts of the programme. Table 5 also serves as an assessment form, in which children are graded on a band scale ranging from ‘fully achieved’ to ‘not achieved’. Assessment is largely informal and formative. Data about pupils’ performance is mainly obtained through observation under normal classroom conditions, and assessment “feeds back into learning and gives the learner information on his/her progress (...) thus helping him/her to be a more efficient learner” (Harris & McCann 1994: 90).

Table 5. Objectives in the subject *languages*

Area	Objectives
Knowledge of multilingualism	Recognise and exploit commonalities and differences between languages and cultures
Dealing with multilingualism	Be able to switch from one language to another
Language learning	Consciously use one’s language skills when learning other languages
Language reflection and transfer	Establish links between language systems through observation and analysis

Source: current study.

Although functional multilingualism is a stated aim of the ILE framework, no explicit syllabus type is specified. However, various syllabus assumptions can be inferred from the data collected in the current study, which points to a blend of types with a focus on child-relevant communication and child-friendly reflection. The ILE programme examined follows what Pinter (2006) calls a multi-layered syllabus, which includes various language components, themes or topics, and

learning-to-learn skills. In particular, the study data shows that syllabuses of the ILE-based subject *languages* are planned using picture books in English, German, and Italian. For example, the storybook in the lesson under analysis in this article was *You're a Hero, Daley B* (Blake & Scheffler 1992), around which various work hours were planned. Regarding the framework for a story-based methodology by Ellis and Brewster (2014), illustrated in Figure 4, the lesson described in this article was at stage 3 of the model. The story had already been read in English, German, and Italian in previous classes and acted now as a springboard to further reflection and post-storytelling activities.

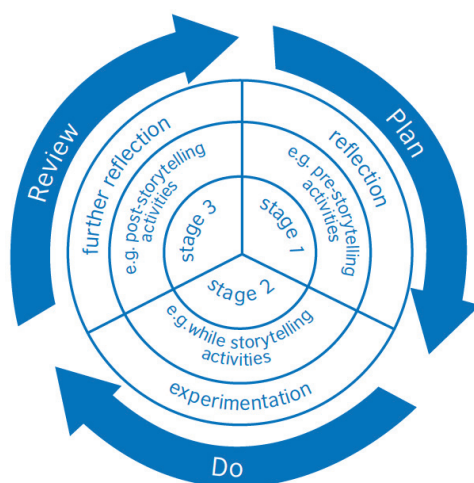


Figure 4. A story-based methodology

Source: Ellis & Brewster 2014: 24.

Activities in the subject *languages* include various age-appropriate activities that target the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but also activities that are designed to activate language acquisition processes in multilingual settings, such as comparing and noticing exercises. At the beginning of each ILE session, activities are teacher-led and carried out in the whole group. At this stage, pupils sit in a circle with all the three language teachers, who lead the discussion in German, Italian, and English. Subsequently, pupils move into subgroups with one of the three teachers, working in three different rooms in this second stage. After some time in one room, pupils rotate to the next one, switching to another language. After working with the three teachers separately, the entire group is reassembled in the main multilingual room. As illustrated in Table 2 above, the subject *languages* is taught four hours per week, corresponding

to two 55-minute sessions. The length of the whole-group and sub-group stages within the 55-minute sessions is not strictly regulated but flexible to meet needs at different phases in the learning programme.

Besides objectives, syllabus models, and activity types, the level of design finally includes the role of learners, teachers, and instructional materials, as shown in Table 4 above. In the ILE-based subject examined, learners are viewed as members of a group that learn from three teachers and one another. Co-operative learning, peer-tutoring, and peer-monitoring are encouraged in all three languages in the plurilingual subject *languages*, where pupils are seen as active agents. All learners observed learnt English as a foreign language, but their levels varied, partly because of different literary experiences within their families. However, pupils' proficiency varied particularly in German and Italian, spoken by various pupils as their L1(s), as Table 3 above shows. Hence, children in multilingual classrooms can be linguistic resources and assume both expert and novice roles, alternating between the two in various lesson phases.

Similarly, children can regard plurilingual teachers as models. It is widely acknowledged that primary teachers are an influential source of motivation for children (Pinter 2006). Teachers of the observed subject *languages* can be described as facilitators of learning and involvement. They facilitate crosslinguistic comparisons and involve the pupils actively, putting "a great deal of effort into finding appropriate and interesting activities that will do this, while still retaining clear control over the classroom and what happens in it" (Scrivener 2011: 18).

Due to a need for more specific commercial resources for ILE, teachers need to adapt to the method and create their own materials. While no specific coursebook is used in the subject *languages* under analysis, picture books play a crucial role, as mentioned above. Teachers in ILE "mediate the read-aloud", whereby mediation is defined as "the support or assistance, often referred to as 'scaffolding', given by the teacher when sharing a picturebook with a group of children" (Ellis & Mourão 2021: 23). Teachers do not translate stories and activities word by word but adopt various mediating strategies, among which is multilingual classroom talk.

3.3.3. Procedure

Following *approach(es)* and *design*, the *procedure* is the third and last level of conceptualisation and organisation in the method model delineated by Richards and Rodgers (1982, 2001, 2014). It "encompasses the actual moment-to-moment techniques, practices, and behaviors that operate in teaching a language according to a particular approach or method" (Richards & Rodgers 2014: 35). The main

procedures and techniques observed during the ILE-based subject *languages* in the South-Tyrolean second grade under analysis are discussed in this section.

The lesson starts at 7.40 and is the first of the day. Children are in their seats while the German teacher (GT) ensures they have their materials and homework ready, praising some of them for their diligence. In the meantime, the English teacher (ET) invites the present author and lesson observer to choose a place that suits her. She suggests that she could sit near the teacher's desk off-centre, remarking that teachers hardly ever sit there but walk around among the children's single desks, which are spread out in the classroom.

ET and GT then address the whole class to capture each child's (C) attention. As extract (1) shows, this is done in two languages, in line with ILE principles.

- (1) ET: *Okay, let's see who is ready. Who is ready?* (Eng)
 C: *P.!*
 ET: *P. is ready. That's great!* (Eng)
 (ET calls on various children, who keep talking in German and Italian).
 GT: *Mal schauen, wer am schnellsten ist.* (Ger)
 'Let's see who is the fastest.'
 ET: *Let's wait another minute.* (Eng)
 GT: *C. ist beim Arzt.* (Ger)
 'C. is at the doctor's.'

When the children are ready, ET introduces the lesson observer, at which stage a cognate is identified, to which pupils' attention is drawn by GT. Cognate awareness is promoted, as suggested by ILE proponents, who emphasise the value of highlighting similarities between languages. Extract (2) illustrates how GT notices and responds to an opportunity to engage children in a crosslinguistic reflection. The term that GT uses is the German *Sprachenalarm* 'language alarm', a signal teachers in the multilingual programme regularly give in order to bring attention to interlinguistic similarities. The Italian teacher (IT) also participates in the interaction in (2).

- (2) ET: *Okay, [...], today we have a guest in our class. A guest.* (Eng)
 GT: *Sprachenalarm!* (Ger)
 'Language alarm'
 C1: *Der Gast!* (Ger)
 'the guest'
 IT: *In italiano, C.?* (It)
 C2: *Un ospite.* (It)
 IT: *Esatto.* (It)
 'Exactly'
 ET: *Welcome!* (Eng)

After the observer briefly introduces herself, three children stand in front of the class and say what day and season it is. Extract (3) shows that they quickly do so in German and Italian but need support for the English version. ET elicits the name of the month by providing the initial sound. At the same time, GT successfully reminds the pupil of an interlinguistic similarity, using the term *Sprachenalarm* 'language alarm', as in extract (2). When the pupil has difficulties remembering the season in English, ET provides a gestural cue, which is initially misinterpreted but then understood by the pupil.

- (3) C1: *Heute ist Donnerstag, der 12. Mai 2022, Frühling.* (Ger)
 'Today is Thursday the 12th of May 2022, spring.'
 C2: *Oggi è giovedì, il 12 maggio 2022, è primavera.* (It)
 'Today is Thursday the 12th of May 2022, it is spring.'
 ET: *English?*
 C3: *Today is Thursday 12...* (Eng)
 ET: *12 M...*
 GT: *Sprachenalarm!* (Ger)
 'Language alarm'
 C3: *May 2022.* (Eng)
 ET: *And it is... 'Frühling'?*
 (ET makes a quick sudden jump forwards, i.e. a spring)
 C3: *Jump!* (Teachers laugh quietly)... *Spring!* (Eng)
 ET: *Yes, it is spring!* (Eng)

Well-acquainted with classroom routines, a child goes to the blackboard and outlines the timetable for the day, indicating flashcards lined up on the board, which provide visual cues and remind children of the sequence of subjects and breaks throughout the day.

Eventually, children sit in their seats, with their heads on their arms, while ET taps one pupil after the other on their shoulders. On being given this signal, children quietly push their chairs into a circle at the back of the room. When all children are in the circle, they sing a greeting song in various languages and greet their teachers in chorus in English, German, and Italian.

ET subsequently asks children to give their reasons for attending the language-focused programme and requires them to explain why learning languages is essential. Children eagerly raise their hands to take the floor and are allowed to speak once they are passed a short stick they call a 'magic wand', which moves around, allocating speaking turns. ET asks the questions in English, while the children reply in German and Italian. They speak about their plurilingual experiences, their families, their interest in languages, the advantages of being plurilingual, and activities they knew they would enjoy in class, such as creating

multilingual lapbooks. Finally, making mistakes as a natural part of language learning is also mentioned, in line with ILE's emphasis on metacognitive language learning skills and dispositions. Selected extracts are provided in (4).

- (4) C1: *Mi interessano l'inglese, l'italiano, Deutsch, e sapevo che facevano molti lapbooks.* (It)
 'I'm interested in English, Italian, German, and I knew they made many lapbooks.'
 [...]
- C2: *Italienisch habe ich schon im Kindergarten gelernt.* (Ger)
 'I already learnt Italian in kindergarten.'
- C3: *Anche io!* (Various children say they did as well.) (It)
 'Me too!'
- C4: *Weil ich die Unterstützung meiner Schwester kriege.* (Ger)
 'Because I get my sister's support.'
 [...]
- C5: *Ich wollte in die Sprachenklasse, dann kommt auch mein Bruder und dann kann er auch Sprachen lernen.* (Ger)
 'I wanted to come to the language class, then also my brother comes, and he can learn languages as well.'
- IT: *Quanti anni ha?* (It)
 'How old is he?'
- C5: *Uno.* (It)
 'One.'
- IT: *Ah, è piccolino!* (It)
- ET: *A baby brother!* (Eng)
 [...]
- GT: *Die Gäste... Woher kommen die Gäste?* (Ger)
 'Tourists... Where do tourists come from?'
- C6: *Österreich, Deutschland. Gestern war eine Ukrainerin in der Bibliothek. Sie hat ein bisschen Deutsch geredet, aber mit Englisch kann man in der ganzen Welt...* (Ger)
 'Austria, Germany. Yesterday there was a Ukrainian woman in the library. She spoke a bit of German, but with English you can get around the world.'
 [...]
- C7: *Ich kann in viele Länder gehen, reisen, andere Sachen erforschen. Mein Vater muss Deutsch können, obwohl er Italiener ist. Er arbeitet in einem Geschäft, das seinem Bruder gehört. Ein Gast war Franzose [...] Französisch [...] und das kann er. Mein Opa ist Franzose. Meine Mama hat Italienisch geredet und viele Fehler gemacht (children laugh), aber dann hat sie gelernt.* (Ger)
 'I can go to many countries, travel, explore other things. My father must know how to speak German, although he is Italian. He works in a shop that belongs to his brother. One guest was French [...] French [...] and

my father can speak that. My grandpa is French. My mum spoke Italian and made a lot of mistakes (children laugh), but then she learned.'

GT: *Aber Fehler kann man ja machen, oder?* (Ger)
 'But mistakes can be made, right?'
 (Many children nod and shout out *yes!*)

The next lesson stage places a focus on lexical forms and syntactic structures. Learners are not presented with grammar rules but with language data from the picture book *You're a hero, Daley B* (Blake & Scheffler 1992). Sitting around the coloured circles shown in Figure 5, children play the language analyst role. They read and assemble the cards with pictures, nouns, and affirmative sentences. The cards are in English, German, and Italian and need to be placed on the colours that officially represent the three languages in ILE: blue for English, red for German, and yellow for Italian (while Ladin would be green)⁵. The colour system helps recognise and visualise the various languages and is a methodological tool that has been used consistently in ILE since kindergarten. In the lesson under analysis, children place cognates on the rim of the overlapping circles, as should be noted in Figure 5. The activity involves reading and noticing but also speaking since children utter a question while picking up and putting down the nouns. The questions are formulated as a follow-up to the picture book they read, e.g. *Am I a monkey?*

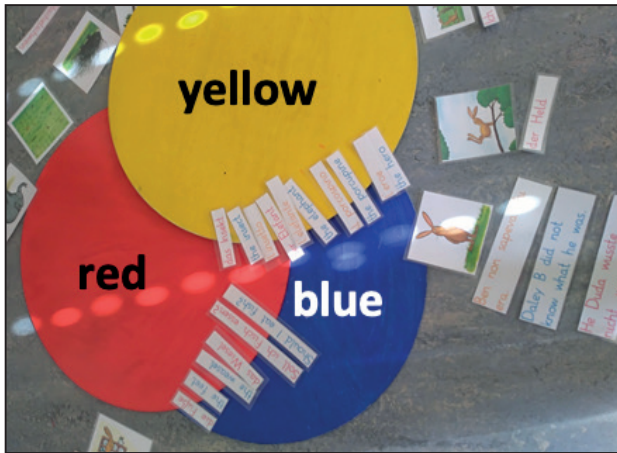


Figure 5. The coloured language circles

Source: current study.

⁵ Hence, a green circle would also be found in a Ladin school (teaching not only three but four languages).

The language reflection and production activity is followed by a multilingual *Total Physical Response* (TPR) sequence, which includes commands that recycle and extend language from the picture book *You're a hero, Daley B* (Blake & Schefler 1992) and its German and Italian translations. After this physical movement activity, pupils are given a short break to eat a small snack, during which teachers and children talk informally in the three school languages. Finally, ET explains and illustrates (bilingually) a pen-and-paper exercise that pupils will do later. At this point, work in three subgroups begins: one group remains in the main room with GT, while the other two move to the Italian and German rooms with their respective teachers. After some time, children switch rooms, before finally gathering in the main room for mathematics.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Language teaching approaches and methods have constantly been questioned and reconsidered in light of recent linguistic findings, significant advances in language acquisition, more excellent pedagogic knowledge, and changing societal realities. Considering that English is being taught in increasingly multilingual classrooms, incorporating more than one language in single lessons could be viable and legitimate at specific points in the curriculum, in which multilingual practices complement monolingual strategies in a well-informed and balanced way, as is observed in the present study.

This article provides a theoretical and empirical description of a multilingual approach to teaching languages that is called *Integrated Linguistic Education*, which treats languages in functional interrelationship with one another, supporting the thesis that multiple languages can efficiently coexist in single lessons. The analysis demonstrates that a multilingual turn has taken root in the South-Tyrolean German school under discussion, as in the Ladin schools of South Tyrol, which adopt multilingual and translanguaging pedagogies. In particular, the German primary school examined in this article adopts the multilingual pedagogical approach ILE in the curricular subject called *languages*. The subject is co-taught by three language teachers, who follow various multilingual procedures to increase pupils' crosslinguistic awareness, activate metacognitive language learning strategies, and facilitate language switching. The emphasis is not on identifying contrastive linguistic features that might cause problems for learners but on finding crosslinguistic similarities based on a critical principle of the ILE concept.

The model for describing methods proposed by Richards and Rodgers (1982, 2001, 2014) has allowed for a more systematic study of ILE. The model provides

a valuable framework for systematically analysing specific teaching approaches, designs, and procedures. Based on these three levels of conceptualisation and organisation, the qualitative study in this article shows that ILE is eclectic and has various characteristic features that are difficult to pin down to a set of specific components. However, the data analysis reveals that ILE is mainly story-based in the school examined, and that lessons follow clear procedures with which learners are familiar, such as the use of the language-representing colours, the search for cognates, and the processes of crosslinguistic and metalinguistic reflection.

Although the context-bounded nature of the investigation suggests that the identified practices may not be generalised, particularisation is arguably as important as a generalisation. The insights gained “can inform, be adapted to, and provide comparative information to a wide variety of other cases, so long as one is careful to take contextual differences into account” (van Lier 2005: 198). Overall, implementing a comprehensive approach to teaching languages mirrors children’s milieu and contributes to the development of a multilingual mindset from an early age. In the context examined in this article, English plays a major role in that it builds a bridge between various other languages.

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