Enhancing teachers' multilingual language awareness through a course on language learning strategies and multilingual education

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ABSTRACT

EN | Several studies have explored the effects, on teacher cognition, of language teacher education regarding multilingual approaches. However, research on the impact of teacher training in multilingual education and language learning strategies in and across two or more third languages is limited. This study aims to understand the impact of a university course regarding the use of multilingual approaches to develop language learning strategies in both Italian and Spanish as third languages. It focuses on the development of multilingual language awareness in a group of pre- and in-service teachers, with particular attention to their collaboration. To achieve this, the article examines the changes in their beliefs and teaching practices during the course. Data were collected through teachers' diaries and the teaching materials they produced. Results confirm the efficacy of teacher training in using multilingual approaches to develop learning strategies in and across languages by stimulating teachers' reflections, engaging them in operative tasks, and promoting their collaboration.

Key words: MULTILINGUAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS, LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES, MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION, PRE- AND IN-SERVICE TEACHERS, IMPACT EVALUATION

ES | Varios estudios han explorado los efectos, en la cognición docente, de la formación del profesorado de idiomas sobre los enfoques multilingües. Sin embargo, la investigación sobre el impacto de la formación en la educación multilingüe y las estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas en y entre dos o más terceras lenguas es limitada. El objetivo de este estudio es entender el impacto de un curso universitario sobre el uso de enfoques multilingües para desarrollar estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas en italiano y español como terceras lenguas. El enfoque está en el desarrollo de la conciencia lingüística multilingüe en un grupo de profesores en formación y en servicio, con especial atención a su colaboración. Para ello, el artículo explora los cambios en sus creencias y prácticas didácticas durante el curso. Los datos se recogieron a través de los diarios de los profesores y los materiales didácticos que produjeron. Los resultados confirman la eficacia de la formación docente en el uso de la educación multilingüe para desarrollar estrategias de aprendizaje en y entre más idiomas al estimular la reflexión de los profesores, proponer tareas operativas y promover su colaboración.

Palabras clave: CONCIENCIA LINGÜÍSTICA MULTILINGÜE, ESTRATEGIAS DE APRENDIZAJE DE IDIOMAS, EDUCACIÓN MULTILINGÜE, DOCENTES EN FORMACIÓN Y EN SERVICIO, EVALUACIÓN DEL IMPACTO

IT | Diversi studi hanno esplorato gli effetti sulla cognizione docente della formazione relativa agli approcci plurilingui. Tuttavia, l'impatto della formazione inerente alla didattica plurilingue e alle strategie di apprendimento linguistico in e tra due o più lingue terze è stato scarsamente studiato. Questo studio mira a comprendere l'impatto di un corso universitario riguardante l'uso degli approcci plurilingui per sviluppare le strategie di apprendimento linguistico in italiano e spagnolo come lingue terze. Il focus è sullo sviluppo della consapevolezza linguistica plurilingue in un gruppo di docenti in formazione e in servizio, con particolare attenzione alla loro collaborazione. A tal fine, l'articolo esplora i cambiamenti nelle loro convinzioni e pratiche didattiche avvenuti durante il corso. I dati sono stati raccolti attraverso i diari tenuti dagli insegnanti e i materiali didattici da loro prodotti. I risultati confermano l'efficacia della formazione dei docenti sull'uso della didattica plurilingue per sviluppare le strategie di apprendimento in e tra più lingue attraverso lo stimolo alla riflessione, lo svolgimento di compiti operativi e la promozione della loro collaborazione.

Parole chiave: CONSAPEVOLEZZA LINGUISTICA PLURILINGUE, STRATEGIE DI APPRENDIMENTO LINGUISTICO, DIDATTICA PLURILINGUE, DOCENTI IN FORMAZIONE E IN SERVIZIO, VALUTAZIONE DELL'IMPATTO

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1. Introduction

In response to the increased linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of postmodern societies, the development of the younger generation's multilingual and intercultural competences has become a central issue in European Union policy initiatives (Byram, Fleming, & Sheils, 2023; Le Pichon-Vorstman, Siarova, & Szőny, 2020; Little, 2019). Teachers play a pivotal role in the *multilingual turn* in language education, since their beliefs and teaching practices influence students' learning outcomes and beliefs regarding both the value and the use of all linguistic resources in the classroom (Conteh & Meier, 2014; Duarte & Günther-van der Meij, 2018; Guarda, & Hofer, 2021; May, 2014).

The relationship between language teachers' beliefs and teaching practices, as well as the impact of language teacher education (LTE) on the same, have attracted considerable research interest (e.g. Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013; Barnard & Burns, 2012; Borg, 2003, 2006, 2012, 2018a, 2018b; Guskey, 2002a; Kubanyiova, 2012; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). In the course of the last decades, several investigations have focused on teachers' ideologies and actions in relation to multilingual education (e.g. Alisaari, Heikkola, Commins & Acquah, 2019; Arocena, Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; Burner & Carlsen, 2022, 2023; Calafato, 2020; De Angelis, 2011; Goltsev, Olfert & Putjata, 2022; Haukås, 2016; Lundberg, 2019; Michala, Manoli, Lavidas, & Koustourakis, 2024; Otwinowska, 2014, 2017; Sundqvist, Gyllstad, Källkvist & Sandlund, 2021). Overall, despite teachers' positive beliefs regarding multilingualism, findings revealed that the implementation of multilingual approaches remains challenging due to a persistent lack of guidance perceived by the teachers. Therefore, the topic of teacher professionalization in multilingual education, involving both pre- and in-service teachers' biographical experiences and reflections, requires urgent attention (García & Kleyn, 2013; Putjata, Brizić, Goltsev, & Olfert, 2022; Vetter, & Slavkov, 2022).

Recently, an increased number of studies have examined teachers' perceived impact of LTE regarding multilingual education (e.g. Barros, Domke, Symons, & Ponzio, 2021; Duarte, & Günther-van der Meij, 2018, 2022; Gorter, & Arocena, 2020; Hinger, Hirzinger-Unterrainer, & Schmiderer, 2020; Lorenz, Krulatz, & Torgersen, 2021; Pohlmann-Rother, Lange, Zapfe, & Then, 2023; Portolés & Martí, 2020; Schroedler & Fisher, 2020). Nevertheless, little is known about the effects of LTE in multilingual education and language learning strategies in and across two or more third languages (L3s), also related to teachers' collaboration (Haukås, 2016; Li, 2020).

On this basis, the present study aims to explore the impact of a course, taught at an Austrian university, regarding the use of multilingual approaches to develop language learning strategies in both Italian and Spanish as L3s. It focuses on the development of multilingual language awareness as perceived by a group of pre- and in-service teachers, with particular attention to their collaboration. To address this, the study investigates two main aspects:

1) the extent to which the course influenced teachers' beliefs about using multilingual approaches to enhance language learning strategies in and across languages;
2) how the course affected their teaching practices in applying these multilingual strategies.

The article will first present the theoretical underpinnings of the impact of professional development on teachers' beliefs and teaching practices, as well as teachers' multilingual language awareness. Second, it will describe the main features of the course and the study's research methodology. Third, it will present the analysis and discussion of the data, which was gathered through teachers' diaries and the teaching materials they produced. The reduced sample size, the single-course study, and the short period of data collection limit the generalizability of the conclusions, but the promising findings encourage further research on the topic.

2. The impact of professional development on language teacher cognition

Teacher cognition (TC) corresponds to "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). It deals with teachers' mental sphere (beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, emotions, identity etc.), and refers to all components of the teaching and learning process (teachers, students, subjects, materials, methods etc.) (Borg, 2012). TC exerts a profound impact on teachers' professional lives. On the one hand, it is influenced by teachers' prior experiences (schooling and professional coursework), other elements of their inner worlds (values, feelings, motivation etc.), and the specific features of their own teaching contexts (psychological, social, environmental etc.). On the other hand, TC shapes classroom practice and is transformed in turn by the experiences that teachers accumulate throughout their careers (Borg, 2006; Kubanyiova, & Feryok, 2015).

Research on language TC has considered both teachers' beliefs and their relationship with teaching practices (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Beliefs can be defined as "specific views about what is considered to be true" (Borg, 2018b, p. 202). Teachers' beliefs are dynamic and divided into clusters, of which the earlier ones are more resistant to change. They therefore provide a basis for action and are related to teachers' development throughout the process they undergo when learning how to teach (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013). The mutual relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices has been demonstrated by numerous studies (e.g. Borg, 2003; Buehl & Beck, 2014; Sercu & St. John, 2007; Tamimy, 2015). Nevertheless, discrepancies have been detected due to cognitive and contextual factors, such as teachers' prior knowledge and sociocultural settings (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013; Barnard & Burns, 2012; Borg, 2018a).

Investigating the design, implementation, and effects of professional development interventions (PDIs), involving both pre- and in-service teachers, contributes to enhancing the understanding of TC (Borg, 2006; Guskey, 2002b; Johnson, 2018; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Research into the impact of PDIs reveals the extent to which new inputs produce meaningful changes regarding teachers' perceptions of the training content and implementation of new teaching practices, with respect to both their specific educational contexts and students' needs (Borg, 2018a; Kubanyiova, 2012). However, PDIs can affect TC as long as teachers' beliefs are taken into appropriate consideration through explicit reflective practices (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013; Borg, 2003; Farrell, 2007). Moreover, changes in TC proved to be more effective when PDIs foster social interaction, including teachers' exchange of experiences and expertise (Barnard & Burns, 2012; Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). Teachers' collaboration can be promoted through various strategies, such as working in groups to analyze pre-existing teaching materials and design new ones. Despite its relevance in LTE, this socio-cultural feature of TC has been underexplored. As Li (2020) reported, "there is often a lack of detail on how teachers' knowledge, understandings and beliefs are evident in their interactional work. … there is a need to examine how cognition is displayed in social interaction as an object in and through talk" (p. 51).

Due to the complex nature of teacher change, the way in which PDIs impact on teachers' beliefs and teaching practices can vary according to external and internal factors (teachers' profiles, the content of PDIs, teacher educators' competences etc.), as well as to the direction of their reciprocal influence (teachers either first change their beliefs and then implement new teaching practices, or vice versa) (Guskey, 2002a). It is also essential to distinguish between the impact that teachers perceive PDIs would have on their teaching practices and a direct verification as to whether their actions have actually changed (Borg 2018b; Farrell, 2007). In any case, including an operative-based component in PDIs supports teachers' understanding of the innovation of content and methodological proposals (Borg, 2018a).

To date, studies regarding the impact of PDIs on language TC have especially involved pre-service teachers and scarcely focused on teachers' interaction (Borg, 2015; Kubanyiova, 2012). The present study intends to contribute to this research field by considering the teacher professionalization of both current and future teachers, as well as by exploring their collaboration during a PDI. The research focuses on both teachers' beliefs and their instructional skills, regarding the ability of designing new teaching materials, and includes reported changes in their teaching practices (Borg, 2018b).

3. Teachers' multilingual language awareness

To educate students in today's superdiverse classroom, LTE programs must foster the "multilingual turn" in teacher professionalization (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014; Putjata et al., 2022). Both pre- and in-service teachers must be trained to teach learners with heterogeneous home language practices, as well as to enhance the multilingual competences of all students (García & Kleyn, 2013; Vetter & Slavkov, 2022).

As reported by several authors (e.g. De Angelis, 2011; Haukås, 2016; Jessner, 2018; Otwinowska, 2014, 2017), to become competent in the field of multilingual education, language teachers must have the following traits:

- Be multilingual themselves.
- Have developed Metalinguistic Language Awareness (MLA) and Cross-linguistic Language Awareness (XLA).
- Be familiar with multilingual theories.
- Be able to implement multilingual approaches.
- Be sensitive to students' individual differences.
- Be interested in collaborating with other teachers to promote multilingual education.

Traditionally, teachers' language awareness included their own language proficiency, MLA, and ability to transmit linguistic and intercultural knowledge to students (Andrews, 2007; Andrews & Lin, 2018; Haukås, 2018; Hiver & Whitehead, 2018; Wright, 2002). In line with the growing heterogeneity of globalized societies, this umbrella term has recently been expanded (Hélot, Frijns, van Gorp, & Sierens, 2018; Svalberg, 2016). Today, teachers' multilingual language awareness includes teachers' XLA, knowledge of multilingualism, ability to implement multilingual approaches, and psycholinguistic knowledge of students' differences (Cenoz, Gorter, & May, 2017; García, 2008; Hufeisen & Neuner, 2004; Jessner, 2006; Otwinowska, 2014). Teachers must therefore not only be able to guide students to reflect on a single language by identifying its specific system, structures, and patterns, but also train learners to relate their previously known languages with the target language(s) by consciously using language learning strategies in and across languages (Otwinowska, 2017; Vetter & Jessner, 2019). Indeed, teachers' XLA is closely related to their own multilingualism and responsive to the awareness of similarities and differences between students' linguistic repertoires and the taught language(s) (Ellis, 2016).

To promote a successful implementation of multilingual education, teachers need to be trained by playing the dual role of students and teachers, in that order. As Otwinowska (2014) points out, "teachers' own plurilingual awareness *must be developed first* [emphasis added], so that they can help their students to take advantage of their previous learning experiences and the knowledge of languages they already possess" (p. 100). Since teachers' perceptions of multilingualism and multilingual education deal especially with their personal and professional experiences, they must be made aware of their monolingual mindsets and practices through both reflexive and operative tasks in order to deconstruct them (Putjata et al., 2022; Vetter & Slavkov, 2022). Only if teachers understand how to learn multilingually, will they be able to teach effectively in a multilingual context. As Jessner (2018) states, the development of multilingual awareness requires "teacher training that focuses on developing language and language learning awareness among the teachers, students, and *teachers as learners, since language learning is a life-time process* [emphasis added]" (p. 269).

Moreover, research has demonstrated the positive effects of teachers' collaboration across language subjects to support linguistic diversity, but it has also revealed its poor implementation due to institutional and interpersonal reasons that are related to school policies and teachers' beliefs (Creese, 2005; Jessner, 2018). As a result, new PDIs fostering language teachers' interaction are required, so that participants can become aware the benefits of such interaction and start applying it in their practice (e.g. Aalto & Tarnanen, 2017; Davison, 2006; Giles, 2022; Haukås, 2016; Yoon, 2023).

Considerable literature about teachers' beliefs and teaching practices regarding multilingual education has shown that teachers in fact tend to display a more positive attitude towards students' linguistic and cultural diversity compared to what they actually practice in their classroom, due to their restricted knowledge of multilingual approaches (Burner & Carlsen, 2023). Among the latest studies, Alisaari et al. (2019) examined 820 teachers' ideologies and actions in different school levels and subjects in Finland. Their beliefs about multilingualism were mainly positive, but most of them were implementing monolingual teaching practices without considering students' linguistic repertoires as learning resources. Similarly, Sundqvist et al. (2021) investigated 139 English teachers' beliefs and teaching practices at Swedish secondary schools. Although almost all had a positive opinion of multilingualism and half had often discussed the idea of teaching in a multilingual classroom, 22% considered multilingualism a problem within the school context, and only 15% had been trained in multilingual education. Equally, Burner and Carlsen (2022) explored 21 teachers' qualifications, perceptions, and teaching practices at a secondary school for newly arrived students in Norway. Despite having some basic knowledge of multilingual approaches, these teachers believed that language learning occurs stepwise and focused on Norwegian rather than valuing students' previously known languages.

At the same time, recent investigations have shown the benefits of PDIs regarding multilingual education in teachers' beliefs and teaching practices, whilst confirming the complexities of teacher change. For example, Gorter and Arocena (2020) showed the positive evolution of 124 in-service teachers' ideologies regarding separating languages, mixing languages, and languages supporting each other in the Basque Country, after attending a PDI on multilingual approaches that they intended to implement in the near future. Likewise, Schroedler and Fisher (2020) demonstrated the interdependence between positive beliefs and structured opportunities to engage with topics related to multilingualism and linguistic diversity provided to 296 pre-service teachers who participated in a teacher training course on multilingualism at the University of Hamburg. Conversely, Portolés and Martí (2020) investigated 121 pre-service teachers' beliefs about the teaching of English in the Valencian Community and found that, although they became more favorable towards multilingualism after being trained in multilingual education, monolingual bias still persisted in their

ideologies. Lorenz et al. (2021) researched the impact of a monthly PDI on multilingual education on 3 English teachers at a Norwegian primary school, and discovered that, despite developing positive beliefs about multilingualism, teachers still failed to employ multilingual education systematically. To sum up, teachers could have positive views on multilingualism, also thanks to PDIs, but seem to possess limited knowledge of how to implement multilingual approaches, which makes them reluctant to apply such approaches regularly. Therefore, it is essential to build teachers' multilingual language awareness by developing innovative PDIs and exploring their impact (García, 2008).

However, too few studies have investigated the effects of PDIs regarding multilingual education that engage teachers as both learners and practitioners, while fostering collaboration among them (Haukås, 2016; Jessner, 2018; Otwinowska, 2014). Little is known about teachers' multilingual language awareness, and to what extent they implement multilingual approaches to support the cross-linguistic transfer of language learning strategies (Haukås, 2018; Hiver & Whitehead, 2018). Moreover, research regarding teacher training in multilingual education and language learning strategies in and across two or more L3s is scarce (Hinger et al., 2020). To the best of my knowledge, no investigation has explored the impact of a PDI regarding the use of multilingual approaches to develop language learning strategies in Italian and Spanish as L3s. This study aims to fill this gap.

4. The research context

The study was carried out during a course regarding the use of multilingual approaches to foster the simultaneous acquisition of two L3s (Italian and Spanish), as well as the cross-linguistic transfer of language learning strategies. The course was held by the researcher at an Austrian university in A. Y. 2021-22.

Austria aligns with European language policies that encourage learning multiple languages at school. The Austrian education system supports language learning from an early age, starting with the study of the first foreign language (typically English) in primary education. In secondary education, students introduce a second foreign language among a wide range of options (typically French, Italian, and Spanish). Both Italian and Spanish are usually offered as optional subjects in the Gymnasium (the grammar school branch), where a second modern foreign language or Latin becomes compulsory from the third grade onwards (Council of Europe, 2008a, 2008b)[1]. Recent statistics show that, although French is still the second most commonly learned foreign language, the percentage of students studying it has slightly fallen over the past decade. In contrast, Spanish has gained increasing popularity and is now learned by more than 20% of students. Italian is primarily taught in regions with historical ties and geographical proximity to Italy, such as Tyrol and Carinthia, and is studied by 15% of students (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023).

The course was developed throughout nine lessons, which took place over eight weeks, for a total of 27 hours. Preliminary knowledge of both Italian and Spanish was required (an A2 level at least). Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies was adopted due to its widespread employment in third language acquisition (TLA) (Jessner, 2018). Although all multilingual approaches were introduced in accordance with the purposes of the course, Integrated Didactic Approach (IDA) to the studied languages and Pedagogical Translanguaging (PT) were mainly implemented (Candelier & Manno, 2023; Cenoz & Gorter, 2021).

During the course, teachers both experimented and created multilingual activities while collaborating. After a short theoretical introduction (lessons 1-2), they focused on four teaching units (TUs) created by the researcher in both L3s (lessons 3-6). Each TU developed different language skills and language learning strategies through IDA and PT, adhered to the goals of quality education, gender equality, and reduced inequalities of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations, 2015), dealt with multilingual and intercultural topics (the connection between language, culture, and identity, the relationship between standard language and language varieties, inclusive language etc.), and included authentic materials (excerpts of literary texts, TED Talks, articles etc.) and social mediation methods (peer education, cooperative learning). Then, working in groups, teachers created and presented new TUs, aimed at developing language learning

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[1] For further information on the Austrian education system, see
https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/en/Topics/school/school_syst.html, https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/austria/teaching-and-learning-general-lower-secondary-education,
https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/austria/teaching-and-learning-general-upper-secondary-education.

strategies in the same L3s and through the multilingual approaches, content, and resources they had experimented (lessons 7-8). Finally, teachers wrote individual reflection papers on the course (lesson 9).

5. The study

The study explored the impact of course participation on the development of teachers' multilingual language awareness. It investigated changes in language TC related to the enhancement of language learning strategies in both Italian and Spanish as L3s through the implementation of multilingual education. Two research questions (RQs) were formulated:

- RQ1: To what extent did the course impact on teachers' beliefs regarding the use of multilingual approaches to develop language learning strategies in and across languages?
- RQ2: To what extent did the course impact on teachers' teaching practices regarding the use of multilingual approaches to develop language learning strategies in and across languages?

By examining teaching practices, teachers' perceptions regarding their collaboration were also investigated.

6. Method

The research adopted a qualitative approach, followed a constructivist paradigm, and consisted of a single, instrumental, and longitudinal case study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2018). Research into the impact of LTE on TC has traditionally followed qualitative approaches by focusing on individual or small groups and examining their cognitive, affective, and behavioral development throughout a prolonged period (Borg, 2012, 2015; Kubanyiova, 2012). Prospective impact evaluations should be preferred to retrospective ones, since they ensure the wide distribution of more reliable information during PDIs through multi-stage data collection (Borg, 2018b). Moreover, qualitative approaches are recommended for researching multilingual education within multilingual contexts, since they foster participants' reflection on teaching and learning languages against the backdrop of discrepancy between the linguistic diversity of today's societies and the persistence of monolingual norms (Dooly & Moore, 2017).

In this study, primarily textual data were collected to investigate how teachers interacted with multilingual approaches to develop language learning strategies in a natural setting and throughout the entire course. The objective was to provide a detailed description of the training process, as well as to investigate the change in teachers' beliefs and teaching practices by examining their subjective multiple interpretations and co-constructed understandings of the course content (Borg, 2018b; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017; Creswell, 2014).

6.1. Participants

The study involved a multilingual group of six teachers (n=5 female, n=1 male), aged 20-50+ (n=2 aged 20-30, n=1 aged 31-40, n=2 aged 41-50, n=1 aged 50+), of Austrian (n=5) and Spanish (n=1) nationality. Half had Spanish-speaking backgrounds (Venezuelan, Peruvian, and Cuban). Their mother tongues were Spanish (n=4) and German (n=3) (one teacher indicated both, having been born in Austria and spent their teenage years in Spain). They spoke between four and eleven further languages and language varieties (German/Spanish, English, Italian, French, Slovenian, Portuguese, Latin, Catalan, Galician, Basque, and Leonese). Their self-assessed language level in Spanish (n=1 level A2-B1, n=5 level C2) was higher than in Italian (n=2 level B1-B2, n=4 level B2-C1). Half were already working as teachers (n=1 of Italian, n=1 of Spanish, n=1 of both English and Italian), whereas the other half were still training. More than half (n=4) were already familiar with language learning strategies, whereas the others had no prior knowledge of them. All teachers were enrolled in the university and attended the course on a voluntary basis.

This background information was collected at the beginning of the course through a preliminary questionnaire. On that occasion, the objectives and procedures of the study were introduced, and informed consent was obtained. Data confidentiality and anonymity were promised and secured by pseudonyms (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017; Dörnyei, 2007).

6.2. Procedure

Changes in TC as a result of PDIs can be detected by introspective and ethnographic instruments that allow teachers' beliefs to emerge through their own words, show the interplay between teachers' thinking and actions, and refer to contextual factors (Borg, 2019). In this study, data were gathered from teachers' diaries and the analysis of the teaching materials they had produced.

6.2.1. Teachers' diaries

Teachers were asked to keep two types of diaries (see Appendix). All questions aimed at investigating teachers' beliefs and teaching practices indirectly, an approach that was more likely to produce a clear and sincere response than directly asking for opinions on a specific topic (Borg, 2018b). The questions were written in both Italian and Spanish. Teachers could choose to answer in either language to give full rein to their in-depth reflections. One teacher chose Italian, while the others preferred Spanish. The diaries followed an interval-contingent design (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003) since teachers were expected to provide their impressions on a lesson-by-lesson basis. The aim was to stimulate retrospective, well thought-out, and accurate reflections to increase teachers' awareness of their TC, as well as their multilingual language awareness, throughout the training process (Dörnyei, 2007; Moon, 2006).

Diary 1 was administered in lessons 3-8. It included three reflective questions, presented separately, exploring teachers' training in language learning strategies (lessons 3-6), working in groups (lesson 7), and sharing ideas among colleagues (lesson 8). Teachers were required to share their perceptions of the TUs by answer these questions in public forum posts on the platform of the course within a week (after the end of a lesson and before the beginning of the next one). Diary 2 was administered in lesson 9. It consisted of three reflective questions, submitted together, examining teachers' overall perceptions of the course (questions 2-3 were inspired by Davies & Dart, 2005; Borg, 2018b). To encourage the elaboration of personal and detailed ideas, teachers were asked to answer by writing individual reflections at the end of the lesson.

All teachers succeeded in keeping regular records of the investigated aspects. The teachers' diaries included a total of 8,791 words, with an average of 1,465 words per teacher.

6.2.2. Teaching materials

The teaching materials, gathered in lesson 8, consisted of two TUs produced by two groups of three teachers. Data collection was based on three criteria that were connected with the competences that the teachers were expected to develop by means of the course:

– The enhancement of language competences and MLA: whether the activities fostered the improvement of reading, listening, writing, or speaking skills, as well as the ability to reflect on languages.
– The development of XLA: whether the activities promoted the training of a variety of language learning strategies to foster the cross-linguistic transfer.
– The use of multilingual approaches: whether the activities supported the development of multilingual competences through IDA and PT.

6.3. Analysis

An interpretive content analysis procedure was adopted for a detailed and contextualized understanding of TC (Borg, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007). Data from teachers' diaries were transcribed in Word documents, and transferred to *NVivo 12* together with the teaching materials. All were read thoroughly, divided into separate codes (initial coding), clustered, and compressed into broader and significant categories (second-level coding) (Creswell, 2014). The codes were both predetermined and emerging: predetermined codes were identified deductively from the reference literature (e.g. "developing multilingual and intercultural competences" referred to an effective L3 course) and from the three above-mentioned criteria; emerging codes materialized inductively from data analysis (e.g. "demanding" referred to collaboration among colleagues). The iterative process of data analysis made it possible to verify preliminary interpretations and include new themes. To support claims, extensive references to teachers' primary data were provided through relevant quotes and a detailed description of the teaching materials.

7. Results

Results are presented according to the RQs, concerning teachers' beliefs (RQ1) and teaching practices (RQ2).

7.1. Teachers' beliefs

To answer RQ1, data from diary 1 (question 1: "Which multilingual language learning strategies are useful to you, as a teacher?") and diary 2 (question 2: "In your opinion, which characteristics should an effective L3 course have today?") were considered.

7.1.1. Diary 1

Each TU focused on a specific language skill (reading, listening, writing, or speaking), and aimed to develop all language learning strategies (metacognitive, affective, social, compensation, memory, and cognitive) through both IDA and PT. This connection is shown in Table 1, which presents a list of all TUs (first column), as well as the lists of all strategies and approaches (second and third columns) used in each TU. To reflect on each TU, teachers considered all the developed language learning strategies through the two multilingual approaches.

Table 1
Teaching units, language learning strategies, and multilingual approaches

Teaching Units	Language learning strategies	Multilingual approaches
TU1: Reading skills and strategies TU2: Listening skills and strategies TU3: Writing skills and strategies TU4: Speaking skills and strategies	Metacognitive strategies Affective strategies Social strategies Compensation strategies Memory strategies Cognitive strategies	Integrated Didactic Approaches Pedagogical Translanguaging

As far as reading strategies are concerned (TU1), teachers observed that metacognitive strategies can be fostered by dividing the lesson into *before*, *during*, and *after* reading activities, as well as by including final self-assessment exercises. Although affective strategies concern students' individual characteristics, teachers recognized that they can be used to encourage students to express their opinions, fight their fears of being penalized because of mistakes, and express their satisfaction with their language progress. Teachers noted that social strategies allow students to gain confidence in sharing their ideas and in verifying the comprehension of a text through pair and group work, which stimulates the exchange of questions and reflections. They also considered that compensation strategies are essential to gain a global understanding of a text through activities to be carried out both before reading and while examining the text from different points of view. Finally, teachers noted that involving students' entire linguistic repertoires contributed to training memory and cognitive strategies. This can be seen in Excerpt 1 and Excerpt 2:

Excerpt 1.

> "Teachers should create links between the languages known by students and the target language to facilitate memorizing the content they have just learned. One way to create such links is to tell anecdotes. I personally will not forget that "Ma chi ti è?" [a dialect expression from an Italian text in TU1] is not used by all Italians, or even by the professor. Cognitive strategies are relevant too, since comparing languages makes similarities and differences visible. This is also possible by reflecting on translations and revisions in order to understand whether the original essence of the text has been preserved or lost." (Ana)

Excerpt 2.

> "I would love to implement cognitive strategies in my language class, dealing especially with interlingual comparison, but it is very difficult, as they are an unknown concepts for many of the students. I am interested in understanding how to apply them and I hope to find new ideas during the course." (Lilli)

Ana's reflection (Excerpt 1) highlights giving value to students' prior linguistic knowledge to enhance their understanding and retention of new content. The anecdote she provided underscores the effectiveness of such connections in clarifying linguistic and cultural nuances. Lilli's comment (Excerpt 2) emphasizes the challenges teachers face when introducing cognitive strategies to students who are unfamiliar with them. Her interest in finding practical ways to implement these strategies shows the need for teacher training to bridge this gap.

As concerns listening strategies (TU2), teachers recognized the relevance of metacognitive strategies to plan, organize, and self-assess the acquisition of oral competences. By referring to the K-L-W Chart, teachers observed the utility of metacognitive strategies throughout the TU. At the beginning, it activates students' previous knowledge, interests, and motivation. During the TU, it allows the teacher to adapt activities according to students' preferences and needs. At the end, it stimulates students' reflections on their own progress and difficulties, which teachers should take into account when planning the following lessons. Teachers noted that the promotion of social strategies through peer education and cooperative learning stimulates interaction both before and after the listening activities. These procedures also contribute to training affective strategies in order to reduce the anxiety that students may experience while listening to the foreign language. Teachers considered that compensation strategies, which are promoted through images, synonyms, and periphrases, are fundamental to both introduce and accompany listening activities. They also observed that memory strategies can be enhanced by including multilingual and intercultural activities, such as matching untranslatable words and expressions to the corresponding languages and identifying the most interesting concept in a listening practice and later discussing them in groups. Teachers realized that cognitive strategies can be trained through a variety of activities aimed at practicing communicative content with different purposes, such as revising listening comprehension through debates, summaries, and comparisons between languages. As regards translation, teachers claimed that comparing Anglicisms and English loan words in Italian, Spanish, and other languages to explore word origins can serve as a valuable tool for promoting reflection on language functioning and providing practical applications in multilingual classrooms. This can be observed in Excerpt 3 and Excerpt 4:

Excerpt 3.
	"I thought translation was not always an adequate technique to promote cognitive strategies, since the target language should be used as much as possible. Instead, I realized that it is useful to reflect on the functioning of languages." (Jan)

Excerpt 4.
	"The activities focused on comparing both Anglicisms and English loan words in Italian, Spanish, and other languages showed me how to apply cognitive strategies within the multilingual classroom. The training of cognitive strategies gave me new ideas for future activities, so that students can become more and more autonomous in using them." (Lilli)

Jan's observation (Excerpt 3) illustrates the initial hesitation some teachers may feel about using translation to promote cognitive strategies. However, its usefulness in fostering a deeper understanding of language functioning demonstrates that translation is a powerful tool in the multilingual classroom, as it balances target language use with the comparison of structures across languages. Lilli's reflection (Excerpt 4) reveals the practical advantages of integrating cognitive strategies into multilingual teaching. Her positive experience with linguistic comparisons inspired innovative activities and demonstrated the potential of cognitive strategies to empower learners to take ownership of their language development.

During TU2, teachers' reflections moved from considering one single strategy to analyzing multiple strategies within the same multilingual exercise. This can be noticed in Excerpt 5:

Excerpt 5.
	"Listening to a language and then discussing the same topic in another language involves a simultaneous use of social, compensation, memory, and cognitive strategies, and thus supports multiple language acquisition at many levels. It is like a strategy bombardment!" (Ana)

Ana's comment (Excerpt 5) emphasizes the dynamic and multifaceted nature of multilingual activities, which support a holistic approach to language learning by integrating multiple strategies. Her description of this process as a "strategy bombardment" highlights the required intense engagement.

As for writing strategies (TU3), teachers observed that metacognitive strategies can be effectively taught by dividing the written process into several steps, such as building a semantic map to organize ideas, employing labels in bilingual word walls, and encouraging peer correction. Despite reaffirming the subjective components of affective strategies, teachers acknowledged the importance of choosing a motivating topic to promote students' writing. Furthermore, teachers realized how different strategies can be combined within the same multilingual exercise, and are therefore "difficult to circumscribe" (Vega). Teachers stated that pre-writing activities play a crucial role in engaging students, fostering their motivation, and preparing them for written production by actively involving multiple strategies. This can be seen in Excerpt 6 and Excerpt 7:

Excerpt 6.

"Brainstorming, applied at both individual and group levels and including more than one language, is an infallible strategy to motivate students to speak freely. At the same time, students train affective, social, and compensation strategies while being introduced to the topic of the lesson." (Inés)

Excerpt 7.

"We spent a lot of time on preparatory activities, in which all strategies were somehow involved. In my opinion, this aimed at enhancing multilingual skills, considering students' individual differences, and involving them actively in written production, which is more difficult than passive reception." (Ana)

Inés's observation (Excerpt 6) demonstrates the effectiveness of brainstorming as a pre-writing activity in multilingual contexts. By engaging students in more than one language, it fosters the simultaneous use of multiple strategies, setting the stage for more structured writing tasks. Ana's reflection (Excerpt 7) highlights the importance of dedicating time to preparatory activities that integrate various strategies and languages, thus creating an inclusive learning environment and facilitating successful written production.

By reflecting on writing exercises, teachers emphasized the effectiveness of collaboratively constructing a bilingual text, reading each other's writing, and discussing revisions in multiple languages. These activities helped integrate various strategies, support peer interaction, and encourage the development of multilingual skills. This can be noticed in Excerpt 8:

Excerpt 8.

"These activities are very complete because they combine all the strategies we have studied. The cooperative activity fosters peer interaction in both Italian and Spanish, as well as peer learning of new strategies. As regards the compensation, memory, and cognitive strategies, by writing an argumentative text, students seek favorable and contrary theses, revise their previous knowledge of the topic, consider what they have just read and discussed with their peers, elaborate their ideas, and practice both Italian and Spanish. By doing multilingual activities, students are also encouraged to compare further languages by translating, using synonyms etc." (Vega)

Vega's comment (Excerpt 8) reveals the comprehensive nature of multilingual writing activities. Her detailed account illustrates how cooperative activities can foster peer interaction in multiple languages by promoting mutual learning and the simultaneous use of several strategies. These activities help students develop critical thinking skills and deepen their understanding across languages.

As regards speaking strategies (TU4), teachers realized the importance of training all strategies through cooperative exercises like Jot Thoughts, the observation of posters and leaflets, the reading of articles in both Italian and Spanish, and the revision of either grammar or vocabulary content in the two L3s. They understood that social and affective strategies can be promoted through pair and group discussions, which activate students' previous knowledge, support the exchange of opinions and, by doing so, reduce their anxiety about discussing complex and challenging topics. Teachers noted that compensation, memory, and cognitive strategies can be fostered by using multilingual sources, as well as bilingual word walls regarding the most

relevant content and vocabulary connected to the topic of the lesson. Teachers concluded that the whole set of strategies should be developed, especially through cooperative activities such as the debate, where students subsequently support opposing theses using the two L3s. This can be observed in Excerpt 9 and Excerpt 10:

Excerpt 9.

> "During speaking activities, students should regulate their own emotions and focus on the content, since they must argue both for and against a thesis. In this way, they use various strategies: besides affective and cognitive strategies, they collect information to support their ideas (metacognitive strategies), share the opinions of their group and interact with those who defend an opposite position (social strategies), speak fluently in both Italian and Spanish although they do not know all the terms that they would otherwise use in their mother tongue (compensation strategies), use key words and concepts dealing with the topic of discussion (memory strategies)." (Jan)

Excerpt 10.

> "The speaking activities involve all strategies. Looking for vocabulary and arguments to support an idea you disagree with and in various languages is a double challenge, which requires the use of compensation, memory, and cognitive strategies. Students train all the aspects of social strategies, too: cooperation, interaction, empathy." (Inés)

Jan's reflection (Excerpt 9) demonstrates the multifaceted demands of speaking activities, which require students to use several strategies to manage emotions, articulate ideas in multiple languages, and collaborate effectively. Inés's observation (Excerpt 10) reinforces the complexity of such activities and emphasizes their role in strengthening meaningful communication and building confidence in a multilingual setting.

Teachers also agreed on the importance of carefully choosing the topic of discussion, which should be appropriate and challenging in terms of students' age, language skills, and interests in order to foster their participation and contribute to developing affective and social strategies. Teachers recognized that oral production can be facilitated by introducing similar topics and grammar and/or vocabulary content in previous lessons, as experienced in TU3, dealing with inclusive language focused on Italian and Spanish connectives, and TU4, regarding family systems in Italy and Spain, with the revision of Italian and Spanish connectives. This can be observed in Excerpt 11:

Excerpt 11.

> "Choosing a topic that is closely linked to the previous written activities is of the utmost importance. In this way, students already have a general knowledge of the vocabulary related to the theme and of how to support their ideas in multiple languages. This is useful not just to train affective and social strategies, since speaking about a completely new topic would be more difficult and counter-productive, but also to enhance metacognitive, compensation, memory, and cognitive strategies. The oral activities probed the issue more deeply and fostered information retrieval, repetition, and integration." (Ana)

Ana's comment (Excerpt 11) underscores the value of continuity in topic selection by emphasizing how linking oral activities to prior written exercises can create a smoother transition for students. It not only reduces anxiety by building on familiar vocabulary and content across languages, but also engages various strategies, promotes meaningful participation in discussions, and improves multilingual competences.

7.1.2. Diary 2
According to teachers, today an effective L3 course should aim to:

- Train mediation skills.
- Develop multilingual and intercultural competences.
- Teach all language learning strategies through multilingual approaches.

As regards the training of communicative competence by paying attention to mediation skills, teachers referred to the Austrian school system, which has changed in recent decades due to globalization. They also mentioned the classes where they were either teaching or doing university internships, which included many foreign students and Austrian learners with migrant backgrounds. Teachers highlighted the close relationship between language and culture, and stressed the importance of teaching students not just to express their own ideas but also to consider their interlocutors' needs, opinions, and emotions. They considered that students should be trained to become more empathetic and flexible, while facilitating and managing interaction in and across languages, to recognize and overcome risks of misunderstanding. This can be noticed in Excerpt 12:

Excerpt 12.

"An effective L3 course should include a balanced mix of all language learning strategies considering the context of a globalized world in which many languages and cultures interact. Students should learn to develop their emotional intelligence, which does not mean losing their roots or the denial/replacement of their own culture and convictions. They should learn effective communication skills, be aware if these are not working, adapt their language and communicative style, listen actively, and try to solve possible conflicts." (Inés)

Inés's reflection (Excerpt 12) highlights the importance of teaching students to cultivate adaptability and manage communication flexibly in a multilingual and multicultural world. Her emphasis on balancing language learning strategies with the development of empathy and active listening underscores the need for students to mediate across languages and cultures while maintaining their own cultural identity.

Concerning the development of multilingual and intercultural competences, teachers stressed the importance of acknowledging and giving value to students' linguistic and cultural diversity. Students should be guided to consciously employ their previously known languages and past language learning experiences in order to connect them with the target language(s). To this end, they agreed on the essential contribution of multilingual approaches, especially IDA and PT. This can be seen in Excerpt 13, Excerpt 14, and Excerpt 15:

Excerpt 13.

"Today an effective L3 course should be communication-oriented and open to individual differences, as we perceive them in our classes. Students' pre-existing knowledge must be considered when planning the lessons. Teachers must finally move away from 'medieval' methods based only on grammar and vocabulary learning. Instead, they should exploit the characteristics of the school context and reinforce students' learning strategies." (Lilli)

Excerpt 14.

"Teachers should promote students' participation in the L3 classroom by focusing on the comprehension and transmission of ideas, collaborating with peers, and exploiting entire linguistic repertoires, instead of considering only grammatical and lexical correctness, and error correction. This would give value to students' individual differences and reduce anxiety about speaking a foreign language." (Layla)

Excerpt 15.

"The course should draw on all students' previous linguistic and cultural knowledge to foster the interaction between languages. No matter how good students' level of proficiency is, if they ignore the sociocultural, geographical, and historical framework related to the target language, they will never understand its pragmatic dimension and will encounter misunderstandings. According to the types of course, teachers can employ a variety of multilingual approaches. The integrated didactic approach and pedagogical translanguaging are particularly suitable for transferring language learning strategies across languages." (Vega)

Lilli's reflection (Excerpt 13) underscores the need for modern L3 courses to prioritize meaningful communication. Her comment advocates for more dynamic and inclusive teaching methods that develop

language learning strategies while valuing students' entire linguistic repertoires. Layla's observation (Excerpt 14) reinforces the need to move beyond traditional teaching methods to embrace the uniqueness of each student, promote diversity, and support a multilingual learning environment. Vega's comment (Excerpt 15) highlights the role of multilingual and intercultural approaches, such as IDA and PT, in drawing on students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and fostering deeper language understanding and exchange. As regards teaching all language learning strategies, teachers considered the benefits of using multilingual education to facilitate transfer across L3s. For example, Ana explained that she had already started to successfully implement multilingual approaches with a Mexican student. This can be noted in Excerpt 16:

Excerpt 16.

> "An effective L3 course should take advantage of students' multilingual repertoires. Communicating does not simply mean translating a sentence from one language to another or using prefabricated expressions. Students must learn to exploit all their linguistic resources and manipulate information in different languages by interacting in multilingual contexts. During my current university internship, I have been flanking a Mexican student and have realized the usefulness of implementing language learning strategies through multilingual approaches to support his acquisition and keep him engaged. This student has worked in collaboration with an Austrian classmate to develop the same task using both Spanish and German. As a result, they have exchanged their knowledge and learned from each other. Mediation strategies as well as multilingual and intercultural competences are useful for the whole class, since they foster students' participation and give value to individual differences." (Ana)

Ana's comment (Excerpt 16) highlights the many advantages of using multilingual approaches. Her experience with a Mexican student and an Austrian classmate exemplifies how mediation strategies not only support individual learners but also create a more collaborative environment, fostering peer learning and helping all students develop multilingual and intercultural competences.

7.2. Teachers' teaching practices

RQ2 was answered using data gathered from diary 1 (question 2: "How was creating multilingual activities by working in group?", question 3: "How was observing your colleagues' multilingual activities and receiving feedback about yours?"), diary 2 (question 1: "Consider your initial expectations: did the course meet them? Why?", question 3: "Which is the most significant change that the course will bring to your teaching practices?"), and the teaching materials.

7.2.1. Diary 1

Teachers viewed collaboration with their colleagues as an enriching experience at the cognitive, emotional, and social level. They believed that the creation of new TUs by working in groups was:

- Motivating: Teachers discovered new opinions and different perspectives regarding the development of the same task, felt stimulated to provide ideas, and learned from their colleagues' teaching experiences.
- Collaborative: Teachers realized that working in groups allowed them to plan lessons faster, strengthen their proposals, learn to reach compromises and agreements, as well as respect and value everyone's skills. Lilli claimed as follows: "Each of us has unique capacities. One is fastest at writing, the other is good at finding vocabulary… We divided the activity so that each participant could do what she/he does best".
- Demanding: Teachers found it complicated to consider many different elements, such as choosing the topic, defining students' language proficiency level, planning preparatory activities. Jan wrote: "Adapting the resources for a B1 level was difficult. However, having been given many concrete examples beforehand, and having learned both the strategies and the use of multilingual approaches, it was easier than it would have been without this preparation during the course".

- Engaging: Teachers enjoyed producing new materials, exchanging ideas, and listening to their colleagues' viewpoints. Inés sustained the following: "I always like working in groups. Collecting different ideas and not just focusing on oneself is much more fun for me".
- Affective: teachers helped each other to overcome difficulties, got to know their colleagues better, established emotional ties.

Teachers also appreciated the mutual presentation of TUs and the ensuing debate. Each teacher described a part of the group's activities, highlighting the multilingual approaches on which they were based and the language learning strategies they intended to develop. The other group asked questions, made observations and comments, as did the researcher, who moderated the discussion. Teachers considered such tasks:

- Stimulating: Teachers improved their critical skills by analysing their colleagues' activities and discovered alternative exercises aimed at developing the same skills through IDA and PT. Layla stated as follows: "It was fascinating to me that my focus in observing presentations regarded these questions: Does the other group have activities in common with us? What ideas justify their choices?".
- Constructive: Teachers reinforced their knowledge and competences in both language learning strategies and multilingual approaches by explaining their application in the TUs, as well as by listening to the other group doing the same. This enabled them to expand their repertoire of activities and receive constructive feedback. Vega wrote: "I have collected new ideas and exercises that I can add to what my group has already produced. It will all be useful in my future classes".
- Varied: Teachers appreciated the diversity of the tasks, the opportunity to get actively involved, and the chance to apply what they had learned during the course.
- Supporting: Thanks to the exchange with their colleagues, teachers felt more confident with their own ideas, better understood the strengths and the weaknesses of their activities, and found confirmation of the competences they had developed during the course. They claimed as follows: "Through the debate I felt more convinced of both the exercises and my ideas on language learning strategies and multilingual approaches" (Ana); "Thanks to the other group's feedback it is easier to evaluate effective proposals, as well as the aspects that should be improved or included" (Vega); "The inclusion of multilingualism in all our activities and at different levels (cognitive, social, metacognitive etc.) demonstrates that at the end of the course we all agree on the fact that students' linguistic background must be considered in every language lesson" (Lilli).

7.2.2. Diary 2

With respect to their initial expectations about the course, teachers:

- Learned new language learning strategies.
- Enhanced their multilingual competences.
- Innovated their teaching practices.

All teachers learned new language learning strategies to simultaneously teach two L3s through multilingual approaches by both reflecting on the language learning strategies used in the four TUs, and designing their own activities. Teachers recognized that discussing the topics of the course was beneficial at both learning and teaching levels, since they learned how to transfer the use of multilingual approaches from students' to teachers' perspectives. This can be seen in Excerpt 17 and Excerpt 18:

Excerpt 17.

"We reflected on language learning strategies and multilingual approaches by playing both the students' and the teachers' roles. By doing so, I understood how these strategies and approaches can help me while learning, and how I could implement them while teaching." (Ana)

Excerpt 18.

"Reflecting on my own learning preferences, learning styles, and types of intelligences allowed me to better understand students, as well as to be more aware of these factors

when planning a lesson. Observing and creating activities permitted me to recognize the variety of strategies and the reasons for their use, in order to design well-balanced activities that could be appropriate for every student." (Jan)

Ana's observation (Excerpt 17) illustrates how teachers can benefit from adopting the dual perspective of both students and teachers. By reflecting on her own experience, Ana felt she had enhanced her overall approach to multilingual education. Jan's comment (Excerpt 18) underscores the importance of self-awareness in teaching, which enabled him to design more effective activities tailored to the diverse needs of his students. The pre-service teachers felt that designing their own TU enhanced their multilingual competences. This can be observed in Excerpt 19:

Excerpt 19.

"While creating the activities in groups, we were required to use Italian and Spanish and it is also in this way that you learn, isn't it?". (Layla)

Layla's comment (Excerpt 19) emphasizes how the process of creating activities in multiple languages directly contributed to fostering her multilingualism. By engaging in group work and using several languages, she gained hands-on experience that reinforced her multilingual competences in a practical context.

For in-service teachers, both the reflections on and the design of activities modernized their teaching practices. This can be noticed in Excerpt 20:

Excerpt 20.

"I learned new approaches and rediscovered strategies. After more than twenty years at school, one might end up doing similar activities and preparing them without considering the theories on which they are based. Now I feel that my toolbox has been renovated. It is also clearer to me why I am using certain activities, so I can design a lesson with greater awareness." (Lilli)

Lilli's observation (Excerpt 20) underscores the transformative impact of the PDI in making her lesson design more intentional and informed. After years of teaching, Lilli felt she had reconnected with the theoretical foundations of her practices and refreshed her teaching toolbox.

The most significant change that the course brought to teachers' teaching practices was a greater awareness of:

- The need for a balanced use of all language learning strategies.
- The benefits of using multilingual education to foster the cross-linguistic transfer of language learning strategies.

Teachers realized the importance of mastering and applying all the language learning strategies they intend to use in their future lessons in a balanced way. By carrying out the four TUs and reflecting from students' perspectives, they experienced the benefits of developing not just direct, but also indirect, strategies, something that had been neglected by both their former language teachers and themselves (the in-service ones) due to lack of knowledge. As a result, teachers understood the importance of valuing students' individual differences, exploiting their previous knowledge, fostering peer education and cooperative learning, and stimulating self-assessment. This is necessary to implement more inclusive teaching practices and promote autonomy in language learning, as can be seen in Excerpt 21, Excerpt 22, and Excerpt 23:

Excerpt 21.

"The course started an awareness-raising process regarding the reasons why I use certain strategies and how I design a lesson. I have learned that affective strategies are extremely varied, and I should therefore pay more attention to students' individual differences, which is not always easy when classes are numerous." (Lilli)

Excerpt 22.

> "This course had a profound impact on the planning of my lessons. I am currently teaching Italian to a small but heterogeneous group of adult learners. Therefore, strategies play a key role. The aspect that I want to put more into practice is self-assessment, since I have noticed its usefulness in supporting autonomous learning. I also intend to employ more social strategies, which I have not done so much due to my own learning preferences – now I am aware of that!" (Jan)

Excerpt 23.

> "Compared to the foreign languages courses that I attended at school, this course showed me the importance of investigating students' previous knowledge and experience, including many preparatory and retrospective exercises, such as the K-W-L Chart, and providing students with the best conditions in which to carry out activities, also using multiple languages." (Layla)

Lilli's observation (Excerpt 21) highlights her growing awareness of the importance of affective strategies in language learning, despite the challenge of accommodating diverse individual needs, particularly in large classes. Jan's comment (Excerpt 22) reveals how the PDI increased his self-awareness, which in turn positively influenced his lesson planning, especially in incorporating self-assessment and social strategies. Layla's reflection (Excerpt 23) underscores the significance of building on students' prior knowledge in multiple languages to create better conditions for carrying out language activities. Teachers also agreed on the potential of using multilingual approaches to promote the cross-linguistic transfer of language learning strategies, considering the multilingual context in which they were living, training (pre-service teachers), and working (in-service teachers). This can be observed in Excerpt 24, Excerpt 25, Excerpt 26, and Excerpt 27:

Excerpt 24.

> "This course really changed the way I learn, and I intend to teach. The most significant change was realizing that multilingual education has many benefits, whereas monolingual education has become obsolete. We live in a complex multicultural society, where students' multilingual backgrounds should be leveraged instead of overlooked. Students' resources have the potential to enhance language learning, besides representing personal and interpersonal enrichment. Multilingual education gives value to students' diversity and can be adapted according to their motivations, types of intelligence, cognitive styles etc." (Ana)

Excerpt 25.

> "Within the European context, with many languages in regular contact, multilingual education is essential. The course showed me that students' previous linguistic and cultural knowledge should be used as a 'bridge' to teach a new language, strengthen memory, promote creativity, and enhance cognitive flexibility." (Inés)

Excerpt 26.

> "I have learned how to include all students' languages, which I have not always done. We did discuss their experiences with other cultures, but I have never implemented exercises using, for example, the strategy of interlinguistic comparison. I would very much like to implement it in my classes and now I have some ideas about how it will work." (Lilli)

Excerpt 27.

"I will include more activities based on the multilingual approaches I experienced during the course. I have seen that there is no danger for students in mixing languages. On the contrary, these approaches facilitate their delimitation and differentiation, although the languages are very similar. Moreover, using various languages at the same time enhances students' linguistic repertoires." (Vega)

Ana's observation (Excerpt 24) highlights the transformative impact of multilingual education by emphasizing its advantages over monolingual approaches. Her comment reflects her intention to implement multilingual approaches to promote students' multilingualism while addressing their communicative needs in a globalized society. Inés's reflection (Excerpt 25) reinforces the pivotal role of multilingual education in contexts where several languages and cultures are in regular contact. Lilli's comment (Excerpt 26) reveals her growing understanding of how to integrate students' linguistic and cultural experiences into language teaching, as well as her eagerness to apply these insights in her future lessons. Vega's observation (Excerpt 27) demonstrates a change in her approach towards multilingual education, particularly her newfound confidence in mixing languages in the classroom.

7.2.3. Teaching materials

The two TUs that were produced by the teachers presented both common and different features concerning the enhancement of students' language competences and MLA, the development of their XLA, and the use of multilingual approaches.

All activities were designed for Austrian secondary schools with German as a first/second language. Target students attended L3 Italian classes at a B1 level. Both TUs focused on the training of spoken interaction and production, and included writing activities. Only one contained reading exercises, and none comprised listening tasks. The first group's TU concerned poverty eradication. It aimed at raising awareness as to the great extent of poverty across continents, stimulating reflections on individual contributions to change the situation, expanding vocabulary in the semantic field of poverty, debating the causes and possible solutions of poverty, and using connectors to justify personal opinions. The second group's TU dealt with independence movements in Scotland, the Veneto region, and Carinthia. It aimed at increasing students' historical, political, social, and cultural knowledge of European movements for autonomy, expanding vocabulary in the semantic field of independence, debating the advantages and disadvantages of autonomy, and comparing the three case studies.

Both TUs included activities fostering reflection on languages, as well as the cross-linguistic transfer of language learning strategies:

- Metacognitive strategies were developed throughout the TUs, such as in preparatory speaking activities, the planning of the task, and final self-assessment exercises. For example, in the second group's TU, teachers included the K-L-W Chart to activate students' previous knowledge, interests, and motivation at the beginning of the TU, adapt the activities to students' preferences and needs during the TU, and stimulate students' reflections on their own progress and difficulties at the end of the TU.
- Affective strategies were enhanced by alternating different types of activities to meet individual variables. Teachers introduced exercises to be carried out individually, in pairs and in groups; in addition to speaking skills, these aimed at developing writing and reading competences. For example, in the first group's TU, teachers combined the plenary discussion of the causes and possible solutions of poverty with the writing of the main ideas in pairs.
- Social strategies were implemented through peer education and cooperative learning activities such as Jot Thoughts and Debate. For example, in the second group's TU, teachers designed a group work asking students to observe the images of Scottish and Venetian geography and flags, individually write their ideas about the regions using sheets of two different colors, discuss their answers, and choose the three most representative pieces of information for each region to share with the whole class.
- Compensation strategies were fostered by stimulating students to determine the meaning of words in context, paraphrase and use synonyms, drawing on their mother tongue. For example, in the first group's TU, teachers introduced a brainstorming activity regarding the definition of poverty connected to the observation of a graph on poverty rates in Europe, Germany, and Austria, written in German.
- Memory strategies were promoted by drawing on students' previous knowledge of the topic of the lesson through initial brainstorming exercises. For example, in the first group's TU, teachers

introduced a second brainstorming exercise concerning the main characteristics of poverty in four continents, asking students to work in four main groups and discuss their previous knowledge on the assigned continent.

- Cognitive strategies were supported by encouraging interlinguistic comparisons of vocabulary. For example, in the second group's TU, teachers highlighted the same key words in two different articles, written in English and Italian, regarding Scottish and Venetian independence movements respectively. Students were asked to decorate a multilingual word wall with such key words, including a full column in German and two empty columns to be completed in English and Italian.

Both TUs also aimed at developing students' multilingual competences through IDA and PT. All teachers adapted the activities they had experienced, such as the multilingual cooperative brainstorming (Jot Thoughts), multilingual primary sources (graphs in German, articles in Italian and English, Quino's comics in Spanish etc.), multilingual word wall, multilingual cooperative speaking groups (Debate), and self-assessment activities of the skills and strategies that were being trained to the new teaching context.

The main differences between the two TUs regarded the materials that were used, and the involved languages. The first group's TU included photos of people living in poverty, graphs in German regarding percentage data on poverty in Europe, and Quino's comics written in Spanish. Teachers introduced activities in Italian, German, and the other languages known to the students. For example, students were asked to carry out a brainstorming activity in German regarding the main characteristics of poverty in four continents, write the main ideas developed throughout the discussion in Italian, and decorate in a multilingual word wall with the key words of the debate, including a full column in Italian and two empty columns to be completed in German and other languages. The second group's TU included photos of political demonstrations, images of pro-independence slogans, timelines, and articles written both in Italian and English. Teachers added activities in Italian, German, and English. For example, students were asked to work in groups and identify the political message conveyed in a set of images of pro-independence slogans, write their opinions in German, Italian, and English, and present their main ideas to the entire class by speaking in Italian about the Veneto region and in English about Scotland.

8. Discussion

The data collected from this study provided a clear picture of the impact of a course regarding multilingual approaches and language learning strategies in both Italian and Spanish as L3s on the development of teachers' multilingual language awareness. Despite the small number of participants, the data analysis has highlighted some interesting aspects concerning changes on language TC that deserve further discussion.

Regarding the effects of course participation on teachers' beliefs (RQ1), by implementing the four TUs all teachers acknowledged the potential of using a variety of language learning strategies to train different language skills, particularly in a multilingual learning environment. However, there were significant differences in their initial understanding of the strategies. Some teachers readily identified their interplay within the same multilingual activity. Conversely, other teachers initially linked each strategy to specific activities and struggled to understand how strategies could be transferred across L3s given their previous learning and teaching experiences. Over time, all teachers realized the impossibility of isolating strategies and became aware of their powerful combination through multilingual education. These findings prove the influence of both internal and external factors on language TC, including teachers' biographical experiences, personal beliefs, and teaching contexts (Borg, 2006; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015).

Although there was general agreement on the need to teach all language learning strategies, teachers' perceptions of their importance evolved differently. For some, the focus was on fostering social and affective strategies to build students' confidence, reduce anxiety, and motivate language learning. Others were more concerned with applying cognitive strategies effectively in multilingual classrooms. Nevertheless, through discussions with colleagues during in-person lessons and on the course's platform, teachers developed a broader awareness of students' diversity, especially in multilingual settings. As a result, they recognized the importance of distributing all language learning strategies carefully to engage the entire classroom while taking into consideration students' individual differences. These findings confirm the potential of exploring the impact of PDIs to broaden the understanding of language TC (Borg, 2006; Guskey, 2002b; Johnson, 2018; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). They also demonstrate the relevance of stimulating teachers' reflections during LTE to encourage their beliefs to emerge and possibly change (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013; Borg, 2003; Farrell, 2007). In

addition, they show the contribution of teachers' interactions in stimulating changes in language TC, starting with the analysis of pre-existing teaching materials through group work (Barnard & Burns, 2012; Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017).

Teachers agreed on the positive impact of multilingual education on the improvement of their multilingual skills, MLA, and XLA across multiple L3s by carrying out the four TUs from students' perspectives. Some teachers reported feeling empowered by the process. Their reflections from teachers' perspectives allowed them to increase their knowledge of multilingual theories, become more aware of their own individual differences, and empathize with students' linguistic and cultural diversity. Some teachers mentioned that they changed their minds about the potential of using specific techniques to train language learning strategies and, overall, about multilingual education. Therefore, teachers considered that today an effective L3 course should aim to develop mediation skills, multilingual and intercultural competences, and language learning strategies in and across languages through multilingual approaches. To justify their ideas, they referred not only to their professional backgrounds and the multilingual Austrian education system, but also to their personal reactions to the four TUs. These findings are consistent with the existing literature on the benefits of making teachers play the role of students during LTE to develop their multilingual language awareness (Jessner, 2018; Otwinowska, 2014; Putjata et al., 2022; Vetter & Slavkov, 2022).

As far as the impact of course participation on teachers' teaching practices (RQ2) is concerned, by designing their own TUs, teachers learned how to promote the training of all language learning strategies through IDA and PT within the L3 classroom. Besides enhancing their multilingual competences, teachers recognized that this task contributed to expanding their knowledge of language learning strategies and innovating their teaching practices. Teachers felt that they became more aware of both the importance of balanced inclusion of all language learning strategies, and the advantages of implementing multilingual approaches to foster their cross-linguistic transfer. Pre-service teachers felt that the course significantly broadened their pedagogical toolkit, and expressed excitement about using the new teaching approaches they had learned in their future classes. In-service teachers realized that they had been only partially implementing multilingual education to train students' language learning strategies due to their previous language learning experiences, teaching preferences, and lack of knowledge. They also deconstructed and overcame their prejudices about the negative effects of involving multiple languages in the L3 classroom. Therefore, they found it easier to envision integrating multilingual approaches into their current teaching practices. These findings are consistent with the discrepancies between teachers' positive beliefs about multilingualism and their monolingual teaching practices (Alisaari et al., 2019; Burner & Carlsen, 2022, 2023; Sundqvist et al., 2021). Results also demonstrate the positive effects of PDIs on multilingual education on teachers' beliefs and teaching practices, especially when interaction is promoted (Barnard & Burns, 2012; Borg, 2003, 2018a; Buehl & Beck, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Gorter & Arocena, 2020; Guskey, 2002b; Johnson, 2018; Kubanyiova, 2012; Schroedler & Fisher, 2020; Sercu & St. John, 2007).

As concerns teachers' collaboration, they experienced the benefits of both working in groups to design their own TUs, and critically discussing their activities in plenary sessions to support multilingual education. Teachers approached the task of creating multilingual activities differently. Some embraced the challenge as an opportunity for creativity and collaboration, enjoying the process of tailoring activities to their students' multilingual contexts. Others initially found it difficult due to the need to balance diverse students' needs and language proficiencies. However, while working together, all teachers found the task instructive, enjoyable, and emotional, thanks to the heterogeneous composition of the groups. Although their TUs presented both common and different features, all adapted the course content and approaches to the multilingual Austrian education system. All teachers were satisfied with the debate that followed the presentation of their TUs and found it inspiring, enriching, interesting, and encouraging. They felt that these discussions enhanced their ability to examine their colleagues' TUs, revise their own activities, and explain their instructional choices regarding the use of IDA and PT to train language learning strategies in and across languages. As a result, teachers strengthened their knowledge of multilingual theories, improved their abilities in applying multilingual approaches, and experienced the advantages of collaborating with colleagues. In accordance with the reference literature, results show the efficacy of developing teachers' multilingual language awareness through PDIs that focus on recognizing and overcoming monolingual teaching practices by engaging teachers in multilingual and collaborative tasks, such as creating new teaching materials through group work (Creese, 2005; Haukås, 2016; Jessner, 2018; Li, 2020; Putjata et al., 2022; Vetter & Slavkov, 2022; Yoon, 2023).

The course promoted significant changes in language TC, but the extent and nature of these changes will depend on each teacher's unique school context and readiness to integrate new teaching approaches into

their classroom practices. In fact, despite the encouraging results, some significant limitations in the data collection process can be identified. First, the sample size was modest in scale, although it was diverse in terms of linguistic repertoires, prior knowledge, and work experiences. Second, the study was highly context-specific, as it was confined to teachers attending an Austrian university and focusing on two L3s within the same family of Romance languages. Third, the research focused on teachers' change over a period of two and a half months, which was relatively short, despite being consistent with the longitudinal study design (Borg, 2012). Data regarding teaching practices were based either on teachers' future intentions or their self-reported implementation of the course content in their current practices (university internship and school lessons). The long-term effects of the course on teachers' beliefs and teaching practices were not investigated (Guskey, 2002b).

9. Conclusion

Due to the rapidly changing linguistic and cultural education systems, it is essential to investigate changes in language TC in relation to LTE programs (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014; Putjata et al., 2022), and more specifically those regarding multilingual education and language learning strategies in and across two or more L3s. This study examined the impact of a course regarding the use of IDA and PT to develop language learning strategies in Italian and Spanish as L3s on the development of teachers' multilingual language awareness. It focused on the changes in the beliefs and teaching practices of a group of both pre- and in-service teachers, with special attention to their dual role of students and teachers, as well as their collaboration.

Although findings are limited in terms of their broader applicability, they show that teachers' multilingual language awareness was strengthened on many levels. By playing the dual role of students and teachers, reflecting explicitly on their beliefs and teaching practices, and working together, participants acquired the qualities that a competent language teacher in multilingual education should possess (De Angelis, 2011; Haukås, 2016; Jessner, 2018; Otwinowska, 2014, 2017). By implementing the four TUs, they enhanced their multilingual skills, MLA, and XLA, discovered IDA and PT, and became more sensitive towards students' individual differences. By designing their own TUs, they applied their knowledge of multilingual theories, integrated multilingual approaches in their lesson planning, and experienced the benefits of collaboration. Consequently, teachers felt more prepared to both value students' linguistic repertoires and develop the multilingual competences of the entire classroom (García & Kleyn, 2013; Vetter & Jessner, 2019; Vetter & Slavkov, 2022). Therefore, they expressed their intention to foster inclusive and autonomous TLA by developing students' language learning strategies in and across languages using IDA and PT.

Based on these results, future PDIs on multilingual education should include more extensive opportunities for teachers to adopt students' perspectives, engage in reflective practice, and collaborate. Incorporating a variety of multilingual approaches and providing ongoing support for reflecting on and implementing language learning strategies in and across languages could further help teachers adapt to dynamic multilingual school contexts.

To extend the impact of this study, future research should involve a larger sample of both pre- and in-service teachers to enhance the generalizability of findings. Including additional data collection instruments, such as classroom observations and follow-up interviews after the PDIs, would provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of teachers' professional development on language TC (Burner & Carlsen, 2023; Guskey, 2002b). The continued use of qualitative instruments like teachers' diaries could offer richer data on the nuanced changes in teachers' beliefs and teaching practices over time. Comparative studies across different languages and educational contexts, both in Austria and internationally, would also provide a broader understanding of the impact of PDIs on multilingual education and language learning strategies in and across languages, thus highlighting differences and similarities in teachers' experiences. Addressing these suggestions could enhance the understanding of how to effectively support language teachers in leveraging multilingual educational environments, while promoting the development of their multilingual language awareness.

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Appendix

Teachers' diary 1
1) Which multilingual language learning strategies are useful to you, as a teacher? (Lessons 3-6)
2) How was creating multilingual activities by working in group? (Lesson 7)
3) How was observing your colleagues' multilingual activities and receiving feedback about yours? (Lesson 8)

Teachers' diary 2
1) Consider your initial expectations: did the course meet them? Why? (Lesson 9)
2) In your opinion, which characteristics should an effective L3 course have today? (Lesson 9)
3) Which is the most significant change that the course will bring to your teaching practices? (Lesson 9)

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