



**OFFICE FOR BILINGUALISM AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES
BOLZANO MULTILINGUAL CENTRE
MERANO MULTIMEDIA LANGUAGE CENTRE:**

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1. Mission

South Tyrol is a border area inhabited by three different linguistic groups (German, Italian and Ladin), which possesses an interesting history and rather recent progress towards inter-ethnic peaceful coexistence. The language policies that led to the birth of programmes and institutions designed to maintain the mother tongue and knowledge of the second language in the Seventies are now confronting other languages and cultures that have arrived in South Tyrol due to the recent flow of immigration. Undoubtedly, the degree of sensitiveness of the local population towards themes such as language, culture and identity is high. Nevertheless, the inclusion of new ethnic and cultural groups along with the three historical ones has contributed to placing what had sometimes been seen or exploited as a “hardship” in a different perspective. The population of South Tyrol is now richer than ever before, with different sounds and colours and with the University, established in 1997, which is introducing new challenges and potential today.

The Office for Bilingualism and Foreign Languages of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano has been promoting German as a second language for years now, as well as other languages and cultures from around the world. In order to offer the population of the Province direct and immediate access to languages, the Office has established two territorial centres designed to support language teaching and favour self-learning: The Bolzano Multilingual Centre and the Merano Multimedia Language Centre.

The Multilingual Centre, which was founded at the beginning of the Eighties as a “Bilingualism Research Centre”, with a view to promoting, in particular, the teaching of German as a second language, has gradually adapted to the social and cultural changes underway in the Province of Bolzano and in Europe, becoming a multi-media centre with a specialist library, with the objective of divulging languages and culture.

The Multimedia Language Centre was established in Merano in 2002, exclusively as a centre of self-learning employing multi-media resources. Its characteristic, in fact, is the lack of traditional hard copy texts, in favour of multi-media supports of various types, developed especially for language learning (language courses on CD-ROM and DVD-ROM), or which are interesting for learning through informal channels (films on DVD supports, music cd's, etc.).

The Multilingual Centre and the Multimedia Language Centre are innovative public cultural institutions dedicated to the learning and teaching of languages and the awareness of other cultures and are the only ones of their kind on the national level. These two linguistic resource centres¹ have a patrimony of over 20,000 hard copy and multi-media resources for all ages and all levels of linguistic knowledge; the presence of multi-media work stations for self-learning make these centres modern points of reference for a vast and heterogeneous public, made up of language teachers and self-taught students alike. Their vocation as multi-cultural centres is evident in the success they enjoy among the foreign communities in the city, which find two stimulating meeting places, where they can get information to maintain the languages they have learned and also learn the official languages of the Province.

The contours of centres of self-learning that distinguish the Multilingual Centre and Multimedia Centre perfectly respond to the individual objectives of recent communitarian language policies (*lifelong learning*) and stress the goal of proposing themselves as a place of learning and belonging, where people can discover and study new languages and come into contact with peoples and cultures. Initiatives are organised with great attention to quality and the needs of users, proposing a multi-media and multi-ethnic vision of society within the structure.

¹ A language resource centre is characterised by services and resources, environments and equipment made available to the users, with the declared and specific purpose of promoting language teaching and learning, applied linguistics or research in these areas (“Manuel des centres de ressources de langues”, LRC 2003.

<http://www.lrcnet.org/html/fr/handbook.html>)



1.1 Objectives

The Multilingual Centre and Multimedia Language Centre both pursue the following cultural and scientific objectives, through different and complementary resources and itineraries:

- Widespread learning of German as a second language and other languages, according to the principles of lifelong learning² and through the offer of exhaustive and up to date didactic and cultural resources, which are also suitable for non-formal and informal learning³ (literature, films, periodicals, music, games, etc.) and additional language-related services.
- Support of language teaching through the continuous and systematic acquisition of up to date resources;
- Realisation of cultural events to create awareness and bring the population closer to other cultures and language, in order to valorise them;
- Being a point of reference for “minority” communities of immigrants, with different ethnic and cultural values and the need to learn the official languages of the Province, as well as to maintain their own mother tongue and have contact with their culture⁴;
- Creating awareness of the wealth of multi-cultural society;
- Identifying, experimenting and spreading innovative and non-formal itineraries of language learning (use of pod casts, audio books, video games)⁵
- Collecting scientific works (degree and doctorate theses) concerning plurilingualism in South Tyrol, through a contest, and the cataloguing of publications on the subject;
- Support of studies, research and projects within the ambit of language didactics and learning, through the diffusion of specific information and resources, the realisation and publication of texts and materials relative to bilingualism and plurilingualism;
- Collaboration with other cultural institutions and associations in the territory;
- Inclusion in an international network of language centres of self-learning.

1.2 Reference target

The reference segments identified refer to the local population and immigrants alike, who come from various countries and reside in South Tyrol and, in particular:

- Persons interested in languages on the personal level and for professional requirements;
- Self-taught persons;
- Teachers and linguistic divulgators (educators, teachers and parents);
- Scholars and students;
- Pre-school age children;
- Plurilingual families;
- Other libraries, institutions and associations in the territory.

² Lifelong Learning Programme (EACEA)

³ Planned learning itineraries created by an educator, trainer or animator, which also offer support throughout the process of learning, are considered “non-formal”, while the term “informal” is understood as spontaneous learning, as may take place in everyday life.

⁴ Every member state of the European Union should guarantee greater and better opportunities to non-native speakers (both adults and children) to learn the national language(s) of the country they reside in and to maintain and improve their own native language (“Brussels Declaration on Language Learning in Europe”, 2006).

⁵ Most social disadvantaged people learn through non-formal or informal processes. (“Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning”, 2005).



Thanks to inter-library loans, the basin of users covers the entire territory of the Province. Many requests for loans are received regularly, even from outside the region. In this sense, the two centres are presented as qualified and specialised second-level library structures.

1.3 Patrimony

The patrimony of the Multilingual Centre and Multimedia centre, which is the only one of its kind and is characterised by a specific identity (language learning and teaching), is made up of over 20,000 hard copy and multi-media titles, in various languages and for various levels of linguistic knowledge and age groups. In addition to the resources present in the two centres, incentives are provided for the use of resources available on the Internet, which have been selected and organised in preference lists by specialised personnel.

Both centres have:

- Courses and language exercise programmes (for children, adolescents and adults)
- Grammar books
- Facilitated reading texts
- Literary works in the original language
- Resources for specialised sector language
- Resources for the preparation of language certification examinations
- Dictionaries and vocabularies
- Films and animated cartoons
- Resources for children
- Linguistic magazines and periodicals
- Selection of useful sites for language learning, linguistic podcasts, daily newspapers and on-line periodicals.

Each of the two centres has distinguished itself for several particular sectors:

Bolzano Multilingual Centre	Merano Multimedia Language Centre
Comic books	Music
Table games	Video games
Specialist literature and collections of degree and doctorate theses	

The choice of establishing only a multi-media centre in Merano was made with the intention of responding to the challenge of proposing a truly modern and informal way of learning, through the new technologies. Instead of the traditional hard copy instruments, interactive virtual environments are proposed, which favour self-learning (thanks to listening to pronunciation, self-correction exercises, etc.), linguistic acquisition (for example through games) and a high level of interaction (including vocal interaction, thanks to vocal recognition technologies). The use of the new technologies is also an effective method to get a rather young public involved.

Through inter-library loaning of the patrimony, all of the resources can be borrowed at both of the centres.



1.4 Services

The Multilingual and Multimedia Centres provide the following services free of charge for registered users:

- Loaning and use of resources;
- On-site use of resources through self-learning stations (PC, television with DVD reader, VHS and satellite channels, audio stations);
- Individual consultancy structured on various levels:
 - Initial orientation for the choice of materials and use of services is guaranteed by the library referent, a person with perfect linguistic competence in several languages and updated knowledge of the patrimony. The referent is available every afternoon.
 - More in-depth and specific individual language consultancy, on appointment, by a mother-language tutor, useful to identify the student's level of knowledge of the language and to plan an itinerary of self-learning. Linguistic consultancy is currently performed in German, English, Italian, French, Spanish, Russian and Portuguese.
 - Specific individual consultancy, free of charge, exclusively for the German language, is also offered to candidates for the bi- and tri-lingual examinations, and provides specific indications on the examination process and on the resources and techniques to prepare for them.
 - A specific consultancy service is reserved to familiarise users with the new technologies.
- Guided tours are available for school classes for every order and level of school and for groups of university students and adults. Usually, visits are performed in the second language (German for Italian schools and Italian for German schools) or in English.
- Access to Internet, in respect of regulations, through workstations that require identification of the user through the fiscal code. Independent access is not permitted for minors. Several PC stations are dedicated to the consultation of digital newspapers and magazines, as well as to research and use of linguistic pod casts.
- Loan of iPods, with a selection of linguistic pod casts.
- Inter-library loan towards national and international libraries.

1.5 Access and utilisation

Both the Multilingual Centre and the Multimedia Centre are near the historical centres of Bolzano and Merano, respectively.

The library, media centre and all the initiatives designed to favour the knowledge of languages and cultures are accessible free of charge by the population in general, during hours in which they are open to the public, following registration, in accordance with the regulations, with no distinctions relative to age, sex, race, mother tongue or religion. Elevators guarantee access for the disabled and wheel chairs.

Resources are available on the open shelf and can be borrowed or consulted on site. The global catalogue can be consulted on line at the website <http://alephopac.provincz.bz.it/F>.

The procedure to gain access to the borrowing and library services are indicated on a special form.



2. Areas and resources

2.1 Linguistic islands

The resources for self-learning (hard copy and multi-media at the Multilingual Centre and only multi-media at the Multimedia Centre) are divided by language and placed on the shelves, which make up various “linguistic islands” marked with name of the language:

- *Deutsch*
- *English*
- *Español*
- *Français*
- *Italiano*
- *Ladin*
- *Português*
- *Russian*
- *Arabian*
- *Chinese*
- *World (this section has works in Danish, Dutch, Norwegian, Polish, Swedish, etc., and multilingual works)*

Within the linguistic islands, the resources are divided by content and marked with symbols in the original language and with a common icon for all of the languages, to facilitate understanding (courses for children, adolescents and adults, grammar books, exercise books for language abilities, linguistic certifications, professional language, literature and music).

Most of the resources are divided according to the Common European Reference System (Levels A1-C2).

Films and periodicals, on the other hand, occupy separate sections (*home video and news*).

At the Multilingual Centre, a special section is also dedicated to resources for children (kids), comics & cartoons and specialist literature.

2.2 Films (home videos)

Original language films are an important contribution to language learning, because they offer authentic images and sounds of other cultures and are an informal method of learning. DVD's in various languages and subtitles are located in the “home video” section.

2.3 Daily newspapers and periodicals (news)

The area dedicated to reading, daily newspapers and magazines is furnished with armchairs and includes the following types of periodicals:

- Daily newspapers
- Weekly magazines in the original language and periodicals for foreigners who live in Italy
- Original language magazines
- Magazines with didactic preparation for language learning
- Specialist magazines for language teachers



At the Multilingual Centre, a PC is also available, which is dedicated to the consultation of daily newspapers and periodicals on-line (on-line newsstand), through preference lists regularly actualised for all languages. These lists are also available on the home page of the Office for Bilingualism and Foreign Languages www.provincia.bz.it/centromultlingue

2.4 Kids' corner (*kids* ☺)

A special area is dedicated to children between 0 and 10 years of age:

- At the Merano Multimedia Language Centre there is a room with appropriate furnishings and multi-media instruments made to measure for children, where introductory courses are organised for languages and the use of multi-media instruments. The resources that can be loaned to children, on the other hand, are located on the lower shelves of the respective linguistic islands;
- At the Bolzano Multilingual Centre, the kids corner is located inside the library, is well marked and appropriately furnished and has resources designed for a public of younger readers, divided by language.
- The resources available for children up to 10 years of age cover the languages for which a linguistic island has been set up (German, English, Italian, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabian, Portuguese and Ladin) and include:
 - Illustrated books, storybooks, audio books and collections of songs: they are marked with coloured stickers on the basis of the subject matter (pink and white) or degree of difficulty (yellow, orange, red or green). A great deal of attention was dedicated to inter-culture and key themes such as friendship, love, social alienation, cultural prejudice, racism and peaceful coexistence among the peoples, which permit the children to approach other cultures, different systems of values and representation of what is perceived as “other”.
 - Language courses on CD-ROM and didactic video games
 - Hocus & Lotus animated cartoons

2.5. Animated cartoons and comic books

The section of cartoons and comics at the Multilingual Centre is dedicated to animated cartoons, films for children, which are not divided by language and comic books, placed in drawers showing the cover, according to the following languages: German, English, French, Spanish and Italian.

2.6 Specialist literature

The specialist library of the Multilingual Centre has a large collection of specialist literature texts and degree and doctorate theses concerning the practical and theoretical aspects of plurilingualism and of languages in general, language teaching and language learning⁶.

The resources include reference texts for language teachers and consultants from the centres of self-learning and for the public in general: in fact, basic essay texts are also present.

⁶ Teaching and learning of the mother tongue go beyond the competence of the Office for Bilingualism and Foreign Languages, inasmuch as it falls within the sphere of action of pedagogical institutions.



2.7 On-line resources

The Multilingual Centre and Multimedia Centre are characterised by the use of non formal learning and knowledge itineraries and, in particular, the itinerary of free on-line resources, which can be used by any PC with an Internet connection. Among the resources, which are proposed in reasoned and accessible lists on the home page (www.provincia.bz.it/centromultilingue), the following are available:

- Language learning sites
- Pod casts for language learning
- Links to daily newspapers and periodicals on-line
- Subscriptions to on-line language courses (access through password protected by the centre). In addition to proposing on-line resources, the two centres also guarantee consultancy in research and independent use of the resources by interested users and institutions.

2.8 Self-learning stations

Both of the language centres are equipped with many self-learning stations, which may be used free of charge by users, but only for the resources of the centre: The following are available:

- PC stations with Internet access
- PC stations dedicated to the consultation of multimedia resources (Internet sites and pod casts for language learning, daily newspapers and periodicals on-line and on-line language courses).
- Audio support listening stations
- TV with video tape recorder and DVD reader
- Satellite TV



3. New acquisitions

3.1. Criteria of choice

The proposals for new acquisitions are made, taking into consideration:

- The mission of the two language centres and the indications of the Office
- The existing patrimony and any material needed in the various sections
- The needs of current and potential users, including users in the extra-European linguistic communities present in the Province.
- New orientations in the library and multi-media market

Proposals for new acquisitions are made by:

- Language consultants
- Office personnel
- Front office personnel and users

Sources for the selection of resources are:

- Catalogues and Internet sites of publishing houses
- Visits to sector trade fairs
- Bibliographies and reports or notices in the media
- Specialist literature
- Visits to similar structures

Format of materials

Every type of support is acquired, also giving priority to multi-media resources for the Multilingual Centre (for example, hard copy resources with audio or video supports).

Language of materials

The resources are acquired exclusively in the original language or in bilingual editions – original Italian or German language (in the case of Arabian and Chinese, bilingual versions are also accepted, for example Arabian/French and Chinese/English).

Levels of coverage

The Multilingual Centre and Multimedia Centre have set levels of coverage to apply to the various sections, by way of orientation, in order to indicate the level of depth it is desired to offer for the various languages. The levels of coverage are dealt with in the collections card.



3.2 Weeding

The Multilingual and Multimedia Centre resources are subject to periodical revision, in order to maintain an up-to-date patrimony, which is useful and coherent with the mission and purposes established.

The resources are therefore evaluated from the point of view of use, quality, usability, coherence and date. Theoretical manuals, superseded and unattractive resources (especially if multi-media) are removed.

Resources that are weeded out or lost are repurchased only if their value for the patrimony, level of circulation and popularity among users are high.

Discarded materials that are still in good condition may be given to other libraries or institutions.

The library keeps periodicals of particular linguistic and scientific interest in its collections, especially if they are not present in the patrimony of other institutions.