

A Multilingual Approach to Podcasting for Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages

The German-Italian Podcast *Überall Konfetti*

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Abstract The use of multilingual resources for foreign language learning has received increasing attention in recent years. This article presents a podcast project called *Überall Konfetti – Il podcast italo-tedesco che non ti aspetti*, which incorporates both Italian and German in order to develop receptive language skills, while simultaneously providing socially relevant content. We then explore the reception of the podcast by means of a qualitative small group study conducted with students with different first languages. We finally provide a summary of the findings, discuss their pedagogical implications, and identify potential directions for further research.

Keywords Language teaching. Plurilingualism. Mobile learning. Foreign language. Pedagogical translanguaging.

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Peer review

Submitted 2023-12-18
Accepted 2025-03-14
Published 2025-05-08

Open access

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Citation Triulzi, M.; Lammers, I.; Nissen, A. (2025). "A Multilingual Approach to Podcasting for Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages. The German-Italian Podcast *Überall Konfetti*". *EL.LE*, 14(1), 65-84.

DOI 10.30687/ELLE/2280-6792/2025/01/004

1 Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing interest towards integrating multilingual approaches in language teaching, including foreign language teaching. One prominent approach that has emerged is Pedagogical Translanguaging, which aims to harness and promote a learner's multilingual skills. This approach recognises the fluid and hybrid use of their entire linguistic repertoire, and seeks to leverage this in language learning (Cenoz, Gorter 2017). To demonstrate the practical application of this approach, this article presents a podcast project called *Überall Konfetti – Il podcast italo-tedesco che non ti aspetti*,¹ which incorporates both Italian and German in order to develop receptive language skills, while simultaneously providing socially relevant content.

In the first part of this article, we will discuss the increasing importance of multilingual approaches within foreign language teaching and learning, as well as their significance in research (section 2). We then explore the opportunities offered by mobile learning, particularly through podcasts, in the use of multilingual resources for language learning (section 3). Then we introduce the multilingual podcast *Überall Konfetti* as a product of theoretical considerations and empirical evidence on multilingual approaches for language learning (section 4). In section 5, we report our first findings from a qualitative small group study on the reception of the podcast by three students with different first languages (Italian, German and Russian). Finally, we provide a summary of the findings, discuss their pedagogical implications, and identify potential directions for further research.

2 Foreign Language Teaching and Learning After the Multilingual Turn

2.1 Individual Multilingualism and Foreign Language Learning

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001) and its *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe 2020) deal extensively with multilingualism. These documents position multilingualism as a set of dynamic skills that enable individuals to operate in multilingual contexts. They emphasise that these skills can be the result of different language acquisition and learning processes, and that individuals are generally considered multilingual,

¹ *Konfetti Everywhere – The German-Italian podcast you don't expect.*

when they are able to use more than one language to achieve communicative goals, regardless of whether these skills are productive (speaking, writing) and/or receptive (listening, reading), well-developed or rudimentary, acquired in family contexts or learned as a foreign language in school.² Moreover, multilingualism needs to be seen as a resource through which one may further develop language skills.

Multilingualism is a common condition within foreign language learners in both Italy and Germany. Many have experienced multilingual acquisition in their family, and all of them have acquired skills in English – the compulsory foreign language from the beginning of primary school. Over the past century, the understanding and importance of incorporating multilingualism into foreign language teaching has undergone, and still is undergoing, a long evolutionary process. For example, different language teaching methods that have emerged over time have continuously reshaped the way a learner's first language(s) are perceived in relation to the acquisition of new foreign languages; this leads to different perspectives on multilingualism as either a valuable asset or a hindrance (cf. Maahs, DeCapua, Triulzi 2023). Within the last decade, there has been a clear shift in foreign language teaching, known as the *multilingual turn*. This paradigm shift emphasises the importance of using multilingualism as a resource for learning and recognising linguistic diversity as an asset (Conteh, Meier 2014; May 2014). This multilingual turn advocates for the acknowledgement and use of a learner's multilingual skills, recognising their benefits for the acquisition of a new language. By embracing multilingualism, foreign language teaching takes a more inclusive and realistic approach, respects a learner's linguistic background and reality, and diversifies the learning process.

The positive influence of multilingual-oriented approaches on (foreign) language learning has been documented in the empirical research over the last few years. One significant advantage is the impact on learner motivation. Learners who are encouraged to make full use of their multilingual repertoires are not only more engaged and motivated to learn the target language, but they are more likely to actively participate in class (Bär 2010; Meißner 2010; Bredthauer 2016).

Moreover, the incorporation of multilingualism in foreign language teaching supports comprehension and positive transfer. Learners are encouraged to compare and contrast linguistic structures, identify cognates, and apply transfer strategies from their other languages for communicative purposes. When teachers incorporate first languages into the foreign language classroom, learners have the opportunity to transfer their existing grammar, vocabulary, and

² Li 2008; Gogolin, Lüdi 2015; Council of Europe 2001; Bredthauer, Kaleta, Triulzi 2021.

communication strategies to the target language. This transfer can facilitate comprehension, aid in the acquisition of new vocabulary, and promote a deeper understanding of grammatical structures. As a result, a learner's performance will improve, and they will find it easier to learn a language, because they are building on their prior experiences and knowledge (Marx 2005; Bredthauer 2016). Furthermore, the implementation of a more multilingual oriented approach leads to an increase in language awareness and language learning competences.³ Promoting knowledge about languages and the learning processes supports the development of learner autonomy, and of further language learning in general. In recent times, different approaches have emerged in schools and universities within the field of foreign language teaching, which recognise and promote a learner's multilingual skills. The Reference Framework for Plural Approaches to Languages and Cultures (REPA; Council of Europe 2012) categorises different multilingual approaches under the term *plural approaches*. Their commonalities are that they move away from a view that strictly separates individual languages when considering the whole range of a learner's language skills (Council of Europe 2012). Multilingual approaches are resource-oriented and build new knowledge and skills, based on what is already known and acquired. One of the most discussed multilingual approaches of recent years is Pedagogical Translanguaging.

2.2 Pedagogical Translanguaging and Foreign Language Learning

Translanguaging, as defined by Otheguy, García and Reid (2015), refers to the deployment of a speaker's entire linguistic repertoire, without strict adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages. This means that individuals make fluid use of all the resources of their linguistic repertoire – disregarding the constraints of social or institutional monolingualism – in order to achieve communicative and action-oriented goals (García 2020).

Within the context of language use and acquisition, translanguaging can be categorised into different types. One such type is *basic interpersonal translanguaging*, which involves multilingual interactions for everyday language purposes, as e.g. casual conversations and social interactions, informal (written) communication, or reading or listening to sources in everyday language that make use of different languages. This allows for a more natural way of communicating

³ Marx 2005; Bär 2009; Bredthauer 2016; Wildemann, Bien-Miller 2022; Carbonara, Scibetta, Torregrossa 2023.

in multilingual environments, and ensures efficient informal communication, by allowing individuals to use the languages they are most comfortable in and readily available to them (Jones 2017). Another type of translanguageing is *cognitive academic translanguageing*: this refers to the exchange of cognitively demanding content using multiple language resources. In educational settings, students may engage in discussions, debates, and presentations on complex topics; they may draw on their entire linguistic repertoire to effectively express their thoughts and ideas; they may even acquire information through listening and reading (Jones 2017).

Building on this conceptualisation of the use of multilingual repertoires, *pedagogical translanguageing* (Cenoz, Gorter 2021) is a pedagogical approach that emphasises the use, and promotion of, complex and dynamic language practices of plurilingual individuals, while also enhancing language proficiency. It recognises the value of multilingualism in the classroom and aims to activate and engage a learner's entire linguistic repertoires for language and content learning. It does not prioritise adherence to the target language, but instead supports the use of all available language resources to facilitate learning. Pedagogical translanguageing acknowledges that learners may use different languages to acquire knowledge, gather information, demonstrate what they have learned and express themselves. By embracing pedagogical translanguageing, teachers can create inclusive and empowering learning environments that value the first language(s) of their learners. This may coincide with the majority language adopted as the main language of instruction and/or include other languages acquired through parents and relatives or learned at school. Current research focusing specifically on pedagogical translanguageing for (foreign) language learning produced promising results. Sun and Lan (2021) conducted a comprehensive review of 42 empirical studies that used pedagogical translanguageing to teach English as an Additional Language, with a particular focus on writing skills. The review suggests that the overall findings of these specific studies indicate that the integration of pedagogical translanguageing led to improvements in various components of the writing activity. Yasar Yuzlu and Dikilitas (2022) recently conducted a study in Northern Turkey, which showed a sample of 60 pre-intermediate and 60 upper-intermediate English foreign language high school students. The results showed that the implementation of translanguageing pedagogy had a positive impact on reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills in the foreign language. In addition, this pedagogical approach also increased students' motivation and comfort during the learning process. These studies highlight the potential benefits of pedagogical translanguageing for foreign language learning. An issue arises in multilingual pedagogical approaches, however, when one is faced with translating this into

different foreign language teaching practices. One possible area of implementation of such an approach is mobile learning, in particular through the instrument of podcasts.

3 Mobile Learning and Podcasting in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

3.1 Potentials of Mobile Learning for Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

The concept of self-directed learning has been discussed for more than 30 years (Breuer 2001; Dohmen 1999). Friedrich (2002) points out, particularly in the light of the explosion of knowledge in many professional fields, due to social, scientific and technical changes and the associated rapid obsolescence of relevant knowledge, that it is an important task for schools and universities to provide learners with the skills and abilities necessary for self-directed learning, thus preparing them adequately for lifelong learning, independent of educational institutions. Stadelhofer and Marquard (1999) indicate that new technologies offer great opportunities for self-directed learning. In particular, they emphasise the possibility of worldwide communication with learning partners and learning advisors independent from time and space, the easy and fast access to information, the interactive handling of learning materials and the possibility of controlling the learning process through the “self-determined approach to the learning material” (13).⁴ One such way of implementing self-directed learning is through mobile learning.

Mobile learning, also known as m-learning, is a concept that refers to all teaching and learning processes that take place using portable and networked devices that are available at any time, both inside and outside traditional educational settings. This can exercise the use of e-learning components and/or other digitally supported materials (Adamczak-Krysztofowicz, Stork, Trojan 2015). Thanks to the proliferation of smartphones and tablets, mobile learning has the potential to be implemented ubiquitously and with a wide range of learners. Specific features of mobile learning make it highly relevant for foreign language teaching and learning (17-18):

- Mobile learning is oriented towards learner-centered, self-determined, and constructivist learning models. This means that mobile learning enables learners to take ownership of their

⁴ Translated from the original: “selbstbestimmtes Vorgehen mit dem Lernstoff” (Stadelhofer, Marquard 1999, 13).

Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Authors.

learning process, to set their own learning goals, and to take responsibility for their progress.

- Mobile learning facilitates authentic, context-embedded, and situated learning opportunities. Mobile devices can provide learners with access to real-life language use, such as videos, podcasts, and authentic texts, that are relevant to their interests and needs, also allowing learners to engage with language in context.
- Mobile learning facilitates an environment that is both self-directed, and individualised, as well as cooperative and collaborative learning. Mobile devices provide learners with access to a variety of learning materials, tools, and applications that suit their individual learning styles and preferences.
- Mobile learning provides learners with flexible, location-independent learning experiences. Learners can access learning materials and activities from anywhere, at any time, and at their own pace.
- Mobile learning overcomes the boundaries of formal classroom-based instruction. Learners may continue their language learning process outside the classroom, and can integrate language learning into their daily lives. This approach can enhance a learner's motivation, autonomy, and independence.

3.2 Making Use of Podcasts in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

Podcasts are a form of digital audio content that can be easily accessed through the internet and downloaded to personal devices. They are a rich source of authentic, timely and socially relevant resources that can be used in foreign language teaching and learning (Lazzari 2009; Walls et al. 2010; Thomas, Toland 2015), can expose learners to real-world language use and help them to understand societal differences and perspectives, and can be used to increase a learner's language awareness (Ashton-Hay, Brookes 2011; Kavaliauskienė 2008). Podcasts have also been shown to have a positive impact on a learner's listening skills (Trojan 2015; Adamczak-Krysztofowicz, Stork, Trojan 2015).

The use of podcasts in foreign language teaching and learning can also increase motivation and confidence (Bollinger et al. 2010), as learners may perceive the use of authentic, real-world materials as more relevant and engaging, leading to higher levels of motivation and self-confidence. Several studies (Walls et al. 2010; Fehennig 2017) have also shown a positive impact on a learner's competence and knowledge acquisition, as well as their learning performance,

additionally providing an opportunity for the simultaneous delivery of both language and subject content (Rosell-Aguilar 2013).

Adamczak-Krysztofowicz, Stork and Trojan (2015) examine the following conditions for the successful integration of podcasts in foreign language teaching: The resources must be easily accessible, possibly for free. The podcasts must be carefully selected, and address relevant and interesting topics that are relevant to the target audience. The content should be selected according to the language level of the learners, ensuring that it is challenging yet not too difficult. The authenticity of the materials is a crucial element. The selected podcasts must be authentic and relevant to the learner's language goals and general interests. Teachers should guide learners in the choice of (individually) suitable podcasts.

Modern, action-oriented language-teaching is based on the assumption that it is not only the content itself that promotes language acquisition, but, above all, the engagement (goal-setting, interaction, action) with the content that leads to rapid and sustainable language acquisition. For this reason, digital tools are increasingly being used to teach and process complex content. Compared to traditional methods and media, there are a number of advantages and possibilities:

- bridging of distances (the 'foreign' culture comes to the learner);
- portability through transportable learning programmes;
- diversification of learning through the realisation of different learning paths;
- consideration of different types of learners;
- facilitating and differentiating communication through interactive, fast and reliable media (Roche 2008, 15-18).

4 The German-Italian Podcast *Überall Konfetti*

4.1 Background and Development

The German Embassy in Rome has declared 2022 the Year of the German Language in Italy. In line with this initiative, the podcast *Überall Konfetti* was developed in collaboration with the German-Italian Youth Exchange Office VIAVAI⁵ and the German Embassy, Johanna Gremme, Vanessa Verena Wahlig and the DAAD lecturers of the University of Bologna and the University of Rome La Sapienza, with the aim of promoting mutual understanding and communication between learners of Italian and German as foreign languages and improving their skills in the languages studied.

⁵ <https://ufficio-viavai.eu/>.

The podcast's orientation is bi-directional, with a balanced representation of both languages and content relating to Italy and Germany. With this clear use of multilingual and transsocietal relevant content, the intention was to fill a gap in the podcast offerings available to date, as podcasts are usually divided into offerings specifically for language learning, rarely following a bilingual or translingual approach, on the one hand, and content-oriented but monolingual offerings on the other.

The target groups are young Germans and Italians between the ages of 18 and 30 who want to learn more about German and Italian society and improve their knowledge of the relevant language. The podcast was developed with the involvement of this target group and, as far as the choice of topics is concerned, was also based on surveys carried out beforehand among students and other learners of German and Italian via social media. The project was fully funded by the German Embassy in Italy. It is freely available on all major platforms.

4.2 Structure and Objectives

The current format of *Überall Konfetti – Il podcast italo-tedesco che non ti aspetti* is one season of ten episodes, with a second season currently being planned. The episodes have been released between October 2022 and March 2023, with a new episode every two weeks. Each episode of the podcast runs between 20 and 30 minutes and makes use of both German and Italian. This not only gives learners the opportunity to experience both languages, but also serves as an example of how communication is not strictly divided by monolingual constraints, aiming to break down the walls of institutional monolingualism and to showing students the benefits of embracing and actively using language mixing to enhance understanding and expression.

Each episode begins with an introductory segment by the hosts, Vanessa Verena Wahlig and Johanna Gremme, who set the scene for the topic to be discussed. This introduction creates a lexical and thematic context for learners to understand the discussions to come. In the introduction, the hosts deploy their first language (German) as well as Italian, which they have learnt as a foreign language.⁶

After the introduction, the podcast features 1-2 interviews with experts, usually one German-speaking and one Italian-speaking, who

⁶ Importantly, it is not a repetition of the same content in both languages, but a fluent usage of one utterance in one language and a seamless transition in the other, switching between the language less frequently as in the *Lessikonfetti* but still using both languages within one speech segment.

are chosen to represent different perspectives on the episode's common topic in the field related to the topic. These interviews provide learners with in-depth insights and multiple perspectives on the topic.

One segment of the podcast is the *Tagebuch* (Diary), which features personal accounts and experiences of young people from Germany and Italy related to the theme. This segment provides learners with a more personal and relatable perspective, allowing them to connect emotionally with the content and further enhance their understanding.

Finally, the podcast includes a segment called *Lessikonfetti*. The aim of this segment is to explore the etymological evolution of certain Italian and German terms and concepts by switching between the two languages.⁷

For the first season, ten episodes were produced on various topics ranging from minority languages, to agriculture, to gender and identity.

The overall aim of the podcast is to be applicable in multilingual educational contexts, with a particular focus on conveying socially relevant content from different perspectives. The reception and pedagogical integration of *Überall Konfetti* has been scientifically monitored within the project *PluriPodS – Plurilingualism in Podcasting for Language Teaching*.⁸

In parallel to the trials conducted at different Italian universities (cf. Triulzi et al. 2024), a qualitative small-group study was initiated to assess the reception of the podcast by students. The study and its findings are presented in the following section.

5 Reception of *Überall Konfetti*: An Exploratory Small Group Study

5.1 Data Collection and Analysis

For this exploratory small group study, conducted in May 2023, the main research question was to investigate the extent to which listening to the multilingual podcast *Überall Konfetti* contributes to competence gains in mobile foreign language learning. We also wanted to

⁷ To give an impression of the language switching, we reproduce an excerpt of the first episode's *Lessikonfetti* (the regular parts are in German, the Italian in italics): "Aber apropos Zahlen, also, du meinst, der Strudel hat seit dem 16. Jahrhundert seine aktuelle Form. Das bedeutet, den Strudel gibt's also schon seit sehr langem, aber in einer anderen Form. *Eh si infatti questo dolce si è originato sul territorio dell'impero asburgico - che comprendeva l'attuale Austria, l'Ungheria, e gli stati slavi dei Balcani, und wurde dann auf der ganzen Welt berühmt. In Italia lo si conosce soprattutto grazie all'associazione con i dessert offerti in Südtirol*".

⁸ PluriPodS is a collaborative project between the University of Duisburg-Essen, LMU Munich, and the University of Milan (<https://www.uni-due.de/daz-daf/pluripods.php>).

investigate the similarities and differences between learners of Italian as a foreign language with German as their first language, learners of German as a foreign language with Italian as their first language, and learners for whom both German and Italian are foreign languages.

Three interviews were conducted via Zoom with three students, aged between 20 and 24, who listened to all or most of the episodes of the first season of *Überall Konfetti*. They are Aurora,⁹ a M.A. student of Language and Communication in Italy with Italian as her first language; Dominik, a B.A. student of European Studies learning the Italian language in Germany with German as his first language; and Darja, a M.A. student of Language and Communication in Italy with Russian as her first language. The average length of the interviews was 28 minutes and 24 seconds.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, with interviews in Italian with Aurora, in German with Dominik, and in English with Darja. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed using a simple transcription method (Dresing, Pehl 2018). A structuring content analysis was then carried out using a deductive-inductive approach to systematically define and identify recurring themes, identifying major categories and two levels of subcategories (Kuckartz 2018). The major categories identified included *language acquisition*, *language use*, *knowledge about society*, *general familiarity with podcasts*, *content reception of “Überall Konfetti”*, *linguistic reception of “Überall Konfetti”*, *personal suggestions for “Überall Konfetti”*.

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 Language Acquisition

The three interviewees have been learning German or Italian as a foreign language for different lengths of time. Aurora has been learning German since *scuola media*,¹⁰ Dominik started learning Italian in the 11th grade of secondary school (*Gymnasium*),¹¹ and Darja started learning German during her bachelor's degree, while she only

⁹ We assigned pseudonyms to the three interviewees to protect their confidentiality.

¹⁰ *Scuola media* in Italy refers to a compulsory level of education for students aged between 11 and 14. It follows primary school (*scuola primaria*) and prepares students for the next stage of their education (*scuola secondaria superiore*).

¹¹ *Gymnasium* in Germany refers to a type of secondary school offering a high-level academic curriculum. It is characterized by a focus on theoretical learning, preparing students for higher education and university entrance. Students attend *Gymnasium* from grades 5-12 or 5-13, depending on the state.

learned Italian after she moved to Italy to study two years before the time the interview took place.

Aurora and Dominik state that they are learning the respective foreign language out of both personal passion, and to better communicate with personal contacts. In Aurora's case, her father works closely with Germany and speaks German himself, while Dominik has family connections to people in Italy and has been to Italy himself. Darja, on the other hand, mentions that she learns German out of passion, but that she also is learning Italian for pragmatic reasons, as she lives in Italy. Aurora and Dominik also took part in longer exchange programmes in Germany and Italy during their school or university years.

Aurora and Dominik both indicate a level of C1 in the foreign language, while Darja claims a level between B1 and B2 in German and B1 in Italian. Aurora reports that she excels in receptive skills, especially in listening comprehension, while Darja states that she has a lower level of proficiency in listening compared to other language skills. Dominik considers his listening comprehension skills as very good, except when dialects are spoken.

5.2.2 Language Use

In contrast to Aurora and Dominik, Darja does not use her first language, Russian, in everyday life. Instead, she mainly uses English as the lingua franca for private life, leisure activities, and work. Darja uses very little Italian, mostly with fellow students, and does not use German in everyday communication. She occasionally reads books and enjoys listening to music in German.

Aurora uses German both to communicate with German-speaking friends and to read the news. Dominik also uses Italian to communicate with his peers, mostly exchange students from Italy. In his free time, he consumes media mainly in English, although Italian is also present, for example when reading books or watching YouTube videos. All three participants listen to podcasts in foreign languages.

5.2.3 Knowledge About Society

Aurora and Dominik indicate that they have a good knowledge of the society of the country in which they grew up and still live. Aurora reports having a good knowledge of German society, thanks to her family contacts from Germany. This is particularly evident in her interactions with fellow students in Italy, who didn't have the same exchange possibilities. However, she also admits that her knowledge of the German education and health system is still fragmentary. Dominik is

aware that he particularly lacks comprehensive knowledge regarding political participation in Italy. Darja is familiar with the social structure in Germany through her exchange with Russian friends living there, although she felt, confronting the two countries, that she knew Italy better since she moved there one year ago.

5.2.4 General Familiarity with Podcasts

All three interviewees report a high consumption of podcasts. In particular, all three listen to news podcasts. They also like to listen to other podcast genres, such as cooking or business-related podcasts. However, specific language learning podcasts are not very popular among the participants. Only Dominik follows a Russian language learning podcast, but he listens to it infrequently. Darja mostly listens to podcasts in English. Dominik and Aurora consume podcasts in different languages. All three listen to podcasts while engaging in other activities, especially while commuting, whether on foot or by train.

5.2.5 Content Reception of *Überall Konfetti*

The interviewees in this study express that, due to their level of language proficiency, they approached the podcast *Überall Konfetti* primarily for its content value rather than with the aim of improving their listening skills in the foreign language, in order to gain more knowledge about German and Italian society in general.

All three interviewees evaluate the recurring structure of the podcast positively. They particularly appreciated the variety in the episodes, with a combination of more linguistically and intellectually challenging interviews with experts in the relative field, more informal sections such as the *Tagebuch*, and the entertaining segments like *Lessikonfetti*.

Dominik A very good mix, I would say. So yes, I think I found the interviews and diaries the most interesting in terms of content / they are also the two main things in terms of content [laughs] / so in terms of content. But also the Lessikonfetti with, I say, the language background, yes, quite good. (00:17:51)¹²

12 Original: “Ein ganz guter Mix würde ich sagen. Also ja, ich glaub ich fand die Interviews und Tagebücher vom Inhalt her / es sind auch die beiden inhaltlichen Hauptsachen (lacht) / also vom Inhalt am interessantesten. Aber auch das Lessikonfetti so mit, ich sag mal zum Sprachenhintergrund, ja, ganz gut”.

This diverse structure prevents each episode from becoming monotonous and ensures that listeners feel both informed and entertained.

Aurora And I found it to be the right middle ground between entertainment, curiosity and indeed information, but also learning. (00:15:33)¹³

Overall, the interviewees state that the podcast has addressed their personal goals, although not completely fulfilling them. In particular, they found it valuable to engage with general issues of contemporary societies from a comparative perspective of different systems, and appreciate that the podcast provides a platform for experts and ordinary people involved in these issues to share their insights.

Aurora specifically mentions an increase in her knowledge about the education system through the episode dedicated to this topic. Darja and Dominik indicate that listening to the podcast has improved their general knowledge about agriculture in contemporary European societies.

5.2.6 Linguistic Reception of *Überall Konfetti*

The linguistic conception of *Überall Konfetti*, specifically regarding the language switching and mixing in the podcast, is evaluated as highly positive by Aurora and Dominik. They report that the switch to their first language during a long episode represents a cognitive relaxation, especially since the content of the podcast is intellectually and linguistically demanding.

Aurora It clearly gives you a break when you are not a native speaker of that language. Because you have to keep your attention on certain topics for a prolonged period anyway. [...] At a time when you want to relax, because that is the prerequisite. (00:13:27)¹⁴

Despite their advanced language skills in the respective foreign languages and their knowledge of relevant societal issues, long scientific and academic discussions in a foreign language still pose a cognitive challenge. The incorporation of their first language allows for a higher level of concentration as it provides moments of cognitive relief.

¹³ Original: “E ho trovato che fosse la giusta via di mezzo tra intrattenimento, curiosità e appunto informazione, ma anche apprendimento”.

¹⁴ Original: “Chiaramente ti dà un attimo di tregua nel momento in cui non sei madrelingua in quella lingua lì. Perché comunque mantenere l'attenzione così alta su determinati temi per un periodo prolungato. [...] In un momento in cui ti vuoi rilassare, perché quello è il presupposto”.

Aurora expresses her surprise to find that following a multilingual podcast is not as cognitively demanding as anticipated. On the contrary, she feels that crossing strict language boundaries actually facilitates comprehension and boosts self-confidence. It is worth noting that neither Aurora nor Dominik find the mixing of Italian and German within a section of the podcast, or even within a single utterance as alienating, but rather as natural.

Dominik Nice, I'd say, because I like this switching. I haven't noticed any breaks or anything, but it's just in the other language, but I don't notice it so actively, I say, that the language changes. (00:18:34)¹⁵

The interviewees report that they have acquired new vocabulary as a result of the podcast's multilingual approach. While direct translations of the content are mostly not provided, the semantic field surrounding the topic is extensively explored in both languages. For example, Aurora explains that she was able to infer the meaning of some unfamiliar words in German by drawing on the vocabulary used in the contribution in Italian and reconstructing the missing part in German. This aspect suggests that multilingual podcasts may also lead to a general improvement in specific language strategies.

Darja did not experience the same cognitive relaxation as Dominik and Aurora. She mentions needing more time and concentration to be able to switch between languages, as neither is her first language. While longer contributions are easier to process, the rapid language mixing in *Lessikonfetti* represents a cognitive challenge that Darja finds difficult to respond to. Nevertheless, she sees the multilingual approach of the podcast as a valuable exercise in improving her translanguaging skills.

Darja But on the other hand, it might be a good exercise for just to be able to switch from one language to another. (00:17:22)

She also reports that her knowledge in the two foreign languages has improved thanks to the podcast, particularly in terms of vocabulary and listening comprehension in German.

In addition to expanding her vocabulary, Aurora says she has noticed an improvement in her translation skills. This is particularly important for her, since a compulsory module on translation is

¹⁵ Original: "Nett, sag ich mal, weil ich diesen Wechsel gerne hab so. Also ich habe ohne irgendwie / ich habe jetzt keine Brüche wahrgenommen oder so, sondern es ist halt dann auf der anderen Sprache, aber ich kriege das auch nicht so aktiv mit, sage ich mal, dass die Sprache wechselt, also".

included in her course plan. She claims that it has helped her to better understand how German-specific structures or instances (such as e.g. *Berufsschule*) can be transported into Italian for an audience that may not know what the specific institution is, as it does not exist in Italian society and a simple word-for-word translation would not explain its peculiarities.

Moreover, Aurora reports that she has acquired new skills not only in the foreign language, but also in her first language. Thanks to the section *Lessikonfetti* she was able to expand her etymological knowledge of words in Italian. This better understanding of meanings in her first language leads to better translation and general communication of meanings in the foreign language. This aspect is also emphasised in Dominik's interview.

5.2.7 Personal suggestions for the *Überall Konfetti*

The suggestions made in the interviews for improving the podcast *Überall Konfetti* are almost exclusively content-related. The interviewees expressed their desire for more in-depth episodes on current relevant topics such as the environment, identity and gender, cultural trends, equity in the education system, and the perception of Germany within and outside the country. The comparative perspective should always be the preferred way of approaching such topics.

These suggestions indicate that although the three interviewees claim to have a well-developed knowledge of the German and Italian society, there is still an evident need for further exploration. Most likely, there is also a perceived need to expand the technical vocabulary around the specific topics.

The interviewees did not express any suggestion to reduce the commitment to multilingual content in favour of a more monolingual approach. On the contrary, Dominik wishes for a stronger implementation of multilingualism in the podcast, inviting its creators to make more use of the linguistic repertoire of the interviewees. Although the hosts occasionally switch from German to Italian, the experts and the interviewees of the *Tagebuch* mostly use their first language in their contributions, whereas Dominik would like them to alternate between their first language and their foreign language.

6 Pedagogical Implications, Conclusions, and Outlook

The results of the study highlight the importance of podcasts as an important tool for mobile and autonomous language learning in the context of multilingualism. Learners responded positively to the authenticity and multilingualism of the podcast. In addition, the concept of translanguaging, which has recently been widely discussed as a pedagogical approach, especially in school, and specifically of *cognitive academic translanguaging*, seems to be found valuable in academic foreign language learning. The participants perceive translanguaging as a natural phenomenon, particularly when their first language is involved (cf. Jiang, Zhang, Mohamed 2022). This is probably due to the fact that mixing and switching languages is part of their daily reality. However, when their first language is not involved, translanguaging may not be immediately seen as beneficial for foreign language learning, possibly due to a lack of familiarity with this approach. It is therefore important to provide learners with opportunities to engage with alternative learning methods that go beyond monolingual ideologies, such as the use of podcasts like *Überall Konfetti*. Further research is needed to explore the impact of using multilingual materials on a learner's perceptions of the level of difficulty of language learning, taking into account their learning backgrounds and learning habits. It is also critical to consider a learner's first language and its presence as a language used in the podcast. Conducting further interviews with individuals who have different first languages will help to determine if the findings from the small group study are applicable to a wider group, and if any inter-individual variations can be identified.

The interviews showed that listening to the podcast helped the participants to increase their knowledge about society. The learners responded positively to the comparative perspective offered by a binational bilingual podcast. They also found the podcast useful for learning vocabulary. As mentioned by Aurora, *Überall Konfetti* is a suitable exercise for translation and language mediation. Mediation has received increased attention since the publication of the Companion Volume to the CEFR in 2020, where it is recognised as one of the four modes of organising communication. Mediation combines reception, production and interaction to facilitate understanding and communication. Mediation skills are paramount for effective communication in multilingual settings as they involve the transfer of meaning from one language to another and require language learners to navigate between two languages while maintaining the integrity of the original message (Council of Europe 2020, 25). As pointed out, *Überall Konfetti* has the potential to be incorporated into the language classroom to enhance language mediation skills. For example, one possible application scenario would be to implement a flipped

classroom approach. In the flipped classroom model, learners engage with course material before attending class and use face-to-face class time for more active learning activities, such as discussion and application. In the context of language teaching, this can be achieved by selecting relevant topics from *Überall Konfetti* and allowing learners to prepare the relevant content knowledge at home by listening to the relevant episodes. Such preparation will also ensure that a learner's multilingual repertoires are activated. In class, learners can engage in interactive activities that allow them to practise and apply their mediation skills. These activities may include group discussions or debates, role plays or other communicative games. Such activities can also be incorporated into a Tandem or e-Tandem project. In the context of language mediation, learners can take it in turns to mediate content from one language to the other, e.g. from German to Italian or vice versa. This activity allows learners to practise their mediation skills in a controlled and collaborative environment, promoting language development and mutual understanding.

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