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LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN BOLZANO: USE OF THE MATCHED GUISE TECHNIQUE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Province of Bolzano which makes part of the Italian region Trentino-Alto Adige-Südtirol is located in the North of the country with a border to Austria. It belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1919. Due to the victory of Italy in the First World War, this region was annexed to its territory. Since that moment, many political and social changes have taken place in this traditional German region. At that moment, the most prominent language of the region was German with almost 93% of the entire population while Italian was spoken by just around 3% of the population (Blanco, 2006). After the annexation, the Italian Government set several policies in order to “*Italianize*” the territory, like the imposition of Italian as an official language and the prohibition of many spaces where German could be spoken such as schools and public offices. These measures remained until 1972, when thanks to the Second Autonomy Statute, Italian and German were recognized as official languages of the Province. One of the consequences of the Second Statute was the creation of a separate school system based on the language: Only-German-instruction Schools and only-Italian-instruction Schools with a second language learning option. Nowadays, this separation still exists and it is one of the main reasons that prevents the integration between both communities, as there is little to no contact between these linguistic groups. Moreover, considering the percentage of speakers of each language, the Pro-

vince holds a system that allows the access to state jobs and political positions, among others.

Historical background and sociolinguistic division are proof of the importance of languages in the Province and how they determine the main aspects of the territory. A study based solely on linguistic analysis would fall short in our quest to understand the relevance and special interaction of languages in the inhabitants lives and their society. Hence, broadening the scope to the study of language attitudes could be useful to fathom why both language communities coexist but are not completely integrated and could also pose a significant step to provide guidelines for more suitable linguistic policies on the matter.

The study of language attitudes is one of the most complex approaches within sociolinguistics, inasmuch as it allows us to understand a linguistic phenomenon taking into account the society where languages are spoken, as well as the historical and geographical elements of the region, the psychological factor, and some political reasons behind the language policies. The purpose of this study was to analyze the language attitudes in South Tyrol towards German, Italian, and South Tyrolean Dialect.

Use of the languages Italian

As a province within Italy, it is necessary that the inhabitants of the province of Bolzano know, but not necessarily speak, Italian language. Due to the historical events described previously, the use of Italian was initially imposed upon the local population. Nevertheless, the majority of the province's inhabitants today speak, or at least understand, Italian, and it represents the most widely spoken variety in the city of Bolzano. It serves as the language of commerce and public institutions, as well as the lingua franca between the German-speaking group and Italian-speaking group.

Hochdeutsch

Before examining Hochdeutsch, it is necessary to note that a case of diglossia (Ferguson, 1959) exists between Hochdeutsch and Südtirolerisch, in which the first variety is employed in formal contexts and the second one in informal, daily conversations. Although Hochdeutsch is not the most common spoken variety in daily life, it is heavily used in the media, including newspapers and the majority of radio and TV broadcasts. Consequently, it can often be described as a receptive variety rather than a productive one. It is primarily used in official institutions or documents, and when communicating with German-speaking foreigners

Südtirolerisch

One of the most interesting aspects of the use of Südtirolerisch is that its development runs contrary to what Fishman called “permeable diglossia” (1967). In a standard permeable diglossic situation, one of the varieties loses the structural spaces where it was previously spoken; Typically, the standard variety assumes the roles for-

merly designated to the dialect. In the case of Bolzano, however, Südtirolerisch is actually assuming a most prominent role across different spheres of society. Even though Südtirolerisch is a non-standard variety, there are ongoing institutional efforts to extend its use - for instance, in schools or public administration.

On the other hand, Südtirolerisch represents both a tool for daily communication and a core pillar of identity for the inhabitants of the region. It works as a boundary-marking mechanism, signaling that dialect speakers are distinct from typical Italians, while simultaneously emphasizing that they do not belong to Germany.

2. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Language attitudes are defined as the beliefs and perceptions of a speaker concerning a specific language and the speakers of it (citation). In order to understand language attitudes as they concern my study, I analyzed them from a social psychology and a sociolinguistic point of view. From a psychological perspective, attitudes are global and relative stable evaluations towards an object. This object could be also considered an idea, a person, or an abstract system. Attitudes are normally stable in time, which allows us to formulate generalizations about them and they can determine what we do and the way we think. There are three components of attitudes: a) cognitive: classifying the pluses and minuses of a situation, b) affective: validating the personal basic values system; and c) behavioral. observing our own behavior towards an object. Linguistically speaking, language attitudes help to understand the motivation towards learning a new language (Lambert and Gardner, 1972). Specifically, in sociolinguistic studies there are four types: Attitudes towards: a) the language, b) the speakers of that language, c) the functions of the language, and d) the institutions that represent the community where the language is spoken (Baker, 1992). These attitudes could be positive towards one of these aspects but negative towards the others (Sharp, 1973).

Considering the importance of language attitudes from a psychological and sociolinguistic point, their role in the process of learning a second language should encompass a common and captivating field of study specifically in South Tyrol. Challenges such as the lack of bilingual schools creating a constant separation between the linguistic groups pose an interrogation about the real speakers' attitudes behind the situation (Vettori et al., 2021). For instance, some studies have shown that positive attitudes towards both languages (German and Italian) and their speakers create better intergroup contact and consequently more opportunities to use the language in real scenarios other than school (Kolipsi and Kolipsi II., 2012, 2017). Even though these studies have given light into the role of language attitudes in the region, they do not comprise the depth of the impact of attitudes both geographically and linguistically.

3. SOCIAL BILINGUALISM

Social bilingualism is defined by Appel and Muysken (1992) as two tendential monolingual speech communities that coexist in the same territory where both languages are recognized as official. In the case of South Tyrol, German and Italian speakers coexist but have scarce contact between them. Inhabitants rarely make

part of the social life of the other language group due to the demographic differences as in the urban area there are mainly Italian speakers and in the rural, mainly German speakers; including the differences in the language of instruction in the schools (Abel & Stuflesser, 2006, Vettori & Abel, 2017). Furthermore, there is a situation of diglossia (Ferguson, 1973) between the standard variety of German and the south tyrolean dialects (Cuadros Hernández, 2020). In which the first variety is spoken in the formal context and the second one in informal daily conversations. In this situation, language attitudes might help us learn why the separation between these language groups persist and the answers could lead us to provide guidelines for future and more inclusive language policies in the Province of Bolzano.

The main objective of the research was to explore the language attitudes of the inhabitants of the Province of Bolzano towards German, Italian, South Tyrolean Dialect, and a foreign language, in the development of social bilingualism in the province.

4. PARTICIPANTS

A total of 66 participants took part in this stage of the research, categorized by age and linguistic profile. By age group, the sample included 24 individuals between 16 and 34 years old, 26 between 35 and 59, and 18 who were 60 or older. Regarding their linguistic characteristics, 25 participants were classified as bilingual, 20 as monolinguals or Italian-dominant bilinguals, and 21 as monolinguals or German-dominant bilinguals (see table 1). To be considered fully bilingual, participants were required to hold a C1 level according to the CEFR, as mandated by the Province of Bolzano.

	Group 1 (16-34 years old)		Group 2 (35-59 years old)		Group 3 (>60 years old)		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Monolinguals and Italian-dominant bilinguals	1	6	7	2	2	2	10	10
Monolinguals and German-dominant bilinguals	3	4	3	4	2	5	8	23
Bilinguals	2	7	3	6	5	2	10	15
	23		25		18		66	

5. MATCHED GUISE TECHNIQUE

The “Matched Guise Technique” (MGT) is the most common methodological instrument used to analyze language attitudes. . It was originally developed by Lambert et al (1960) to investigate the language attitudes of French and English speakers in the province of Quebec, Canada. The technique evaluates participant’s judgments of spoken language through a series of audio stimuli. Participants were asked to rate speakers in a Likert scale across several pre-established categories revealing their attitudes toward specific linguistic variations or different languages and their speakers. In this case, the study focuses on the region of South Tyrol, and the speakers of Standard German (Hochdeutsch), Italian, South Tyrolean Dialects (Südtirolerisch).

For the application of the test, nine recordings were used: three in Standard German (Hochdeutsch), three in Standard Italian, and three in South Tyrolean Dialects (Südtirolerisch). These records belonged to seven different speakers (see Table 1). One of those speakers was a native German speaker who mastered the other two varieties. For the development of the MGT, the participants had to listen to each stimulus and, afterwards, complete the survey. For each participant, the exercise was repeated with each of the nine stimuli. A semantic differential scale was used to evaluate the groups of attributes, in which the participants indicated their level of agreement for each of the twelve pairs of words of the test.

Results

A mixed ANOVA of 3x2 was realized, where the linguistic variation i.e. (1) Hochdeutsch, (2) Italian and (3) Südtirolerisch represented the repeated measure, whereas the mother tongue of the participants represented the independent measure between subjects. The test met the assumptions of normality, sphericity (Mauchly $W = 0,968$, $p = 0,453$), and homogeneity of covariances (Box $M = 17,245$, $F(6, 2,680) = p = 0,013$). The results of the test show significant differences in the within-subjects factor, or stimulus language: $F_{0.05}(2, 100) = 10.106$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .168$, indicating that the language of the stimulus influenced the participants' responses. Similarly, significant differences are observed in the between-subjects independent variable corresponding to the participants' native language (German and Italian): $F_{0.05}(1, 50) = 5,008$, $p = 0,030$, $\eta^2 = 0,091$, indicating that differences in the results emerged based on the participants' native language.

The variety that received the highest score was German ($M = 4.747$; $SD = 0.064$), suggesting that this variety carries greater social prestige within both groups. In second place was Italian ($M = 4.524$; $SD = 0.71$) for participants from both linguistic groups. In both cases, the scores approach the highest value of the scale used, represented on the right side of the graph—that is, toward the adjectives categorized as positive. Regarding the relationship between German and Italian, there is no statistically significant difference, although a slight preference for German can be observed in the graph. However, when examining the relationship of these two languages with the South Tyrolean dialect, it is notable that the latter has a lower comparative mean ($M = 4.243$; $SD = 0.71$) and differs significantly from both German and Italian. This suggests that the South Tyrolean dialect, unlike Standard German (*Hochdeutsch*), carries less social prestige within both groups.

Hochdeutsch was the variation with the most positive evaluation, suggesting a direct relationship with the representation of status and power linked to the German-speaking group across different social levels. Italian was also rated positively, as it serves as the language of communication between both linguistic groups and is necessary for German speakers, particularly in the city of Bolzano. This positive rating is further driven by the benefits that its knowledge provides to German speakers, as outlined in the introduction. Lastly, Südtirolerisch represents identity and German culture in the province of Bolzano. Furthermore, it is considered the native language of the German-speaking group, which explains why German speakers gave it a higher valuation rate on the test than Italian speakers did.

6. CONCLUSION

Using the MGT it was concluded that Hochdeutsch received the highest scores from both linguistic groups (German- and Italian-speaking participants), despite being the less commonly spoken variety in the region. For the Italian-speaking group, Hochdeutsch represents identity, and they believe it should be used instead of dialect - a view reinforced by the fact that it is the variety they learn in school. Regarding the Italian language, attitudes are positive across both linguistic groups, as it is the most widely used language for intergroup interactions and serves as the national language. However, both Italian as Hochdeutsch are rarely used in rural context. Lastly, while Südtirolerisch received the lowest overall scores on the MGT; it remains the most frequently used variety in the daily life of German speakers, who view the dialect as a marker of identity and a source of pride that must be preserved.

Generally speaking, language attitudes influence second language acquisition within the province of Bolzano (either Italian or *Hochdeutsch*) and, above all, shape the relationship and contact between members of both linguistic groups. While this contact is primarily determined by language policies, it develops through individual interactions to the point of generating exclusive spaces for each of the languages spoken in the region. Similarly, the integration of these linguistic groups is defined by their mutual contact, which is frequently established by language policies rather than by the individuals themselves. Furthermore, it is necessary to note that the Matched Guise Technique (MGT) cannot be utilized as the sole instrument to measure the language attitudes of the population of Bolzano. Its results do not account for factors such as language use, the personal importance of these languages to individuals, or the daily interactions carried out by speakers of each variety—all of which are fundamental to fully understanding speaker attitudes. Consequently, the application of additional methodological instruments is required to account for the aforementioned factors.

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