

Farewells and language usage: Multilingual practices in Bolzano merchants' documents¹

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Abstract. Research on historical sociolinguistics has seen letter writing as a social practice which could present many instances of multilingualism. Merchants' language management is also of particular importance for the role of traders in language contact and change. In this work, merchants' correspondence from the town of Bolzano will be analysed across the 18th and 19th centuries, by considering letters written by the Georg Anton Menz textile company to its correspondents. These letters have been preserved (and partly digitized) in the archive of the Chamber of Commerce in Bolzano. This analysis will focus on language distribution, as well as on multilingual practices in closing formulas. It aims to show how the relative status of the languages involved changed over time, and how an Italian closing formula (*addio*, farewell) was also used to close German letters. This probably correlates with a specific writing style in use in the Habsburg Empire but uncommon for Italian commercial letters.

Key words: historical sociolinguistics; multilingualism; greetings; merchants; language contact.

[ita] Commiati e uso della lingua: pratiche multilinguistiche nei documenti dei commercianti di Bolzano

Resumen: La ricerca sulla sociolinguistica storica vede nella stesura di lettere una pratica sociale che potrebbe presentare molti casi di multilinguismo. Anche la gestione linguistica dei commercianti è di particolare importanza per il loro ruolo svolto nel contatto e nel cambiamento linguistico. In questo lavoro sarà considerata la corrispondenza dei mercanti della città di Bolzano tra il 18 ° e il 19 ° secolo, considerando le lettere scritte dall'azienda tessile Georg Anton Menz ai suoi corrispondenti. Queste lettere sono state conservate (e in parte digitalizzate) nell'archivio della Camera di Commercio di Bolzano. L'analisi si concentrerà sulla distribuzione linguistica, nonché sulle pratiche multilingue nelle formule di chiusura. Verrà mostrato come è cambiato nel tempo lo status relativo delle lingue coinvolte e come una formula di chiusura italiana (*addio*, *addio*) è stata utilizzata anche per chiudere le lettere tedesche. Questo probabilmente è correlato a uno specifico stile di scrittura in uso nell'impero asburgico, ma non comune per le lettere commerciali italiane.

Palabras clave: sociolinguistica storica; multilinguismo; commiati; mercanti; contatto linguistico.

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1. Introduction

This paper focuses on Bolzano merchants' linguistic practices as emerging from their correspondence as preserved in various city archives. By focusing on language distribution and on formulaic language in the closing greetings of the letters, the work will highlight how language mixing was a common practice in commercial writing in a town at the crossroad between the Romance and the Germanic worlds.

Across Europe, traders played a central role not only in developing the economic relationships among towns and countries, but also in spreading linguistic innovations and in favouring language contact (Bibikov 2004). Traders' language has been defined with different labels as 'argot', 'lingua franca' or peculiar «we-code» (Wagner *et al.* 2017). Recently, Wagner *et al.* (2017: 4) have pointed out that «merchant writings show a greater degree of language mixing and code-switching, along with, often, many more dialectal forms than are usually found in other text types». These multilingual practices were a fundamental part of merchants' activity and everyday life, especially within important trading centres. Furthermore, Del Lungo Camiciotti (2012: 107) has emphasized how merchants' letters until the Late Modern period were the key element for organizing long-distance trades, and also to forge and maintain cross-cultural networks.

In this respect, the town of Bolzano/Bozen represented an important meeting point for merchants from the Northern areas (Tyrol, Austria, Flanders, and so on) and Southern ones (mainly represented by Italian kingdoms and states, in particular Venice). A fixed presence of "foreigner" (i.e., non-Tyrolean) merchants has been documented since the 16th century, with traders having permanent shops and stables in Bolzano, while many others came in for the four annual fairs (Bonoldi & Denzel 2007). Furthermore, Bolzano traders acquired such a power to be allowed in 1635 by the Duchess of Tyrol to constitute their own association, which was given the Italian name of *Magistrato Mercantile* (henceforth, MM), a trade's chancellery born to write down merchants' contracts, solve disputes, but also impose tolls and discuss on these topics with the civil authorities. The MM was officially a bilingual institution: documents were provided in both German and Italian, and its leaders were selected each year in equal number among the German and the Italian merchants affiliated to the MM. In the following two centuries, the MM grew in importance: he could influence the politics as well as sponsor many artists and the Duch of Tyrol himself for his needs (see Denzel 2004). Many important merchants' families acquired power through the MM, like the Menz family, whose members were first head of the MM and then also mayors of Bolzano, like in the case of Peter Paul Menz at the beginning of 19th century. Therefore, commercial letters written to and from Bolzano could offer an important resource for understanding the multilingual practices of traders in historical Tyrol.

The paper is organized as follows: section 2 will offer some theoretical remarks on multilingualism and formulaic language in historical sociolinguistics, while sec-

tion 3 presents the data and the research questions to be addressed in this work; section 4 presents the analysis of multilingual practices as found in our corpus so far, and section 5 discusses these results from the point of view of historical multilingualism, before moving to conclusions and further perspectives in section 6.

2. Multilingualism and formulaic language in a historical perspective

Research in historical sociolinguistics has repeatedly stressed how multilingualism has to be considered as a «default starting point» (Pahta *et al.* 2017: 4) for societies in the past. Recent works have considered different historical settings by emphasizing the importance of the analysis of multilingualism in historical contexts, and the way this multilingualism was represented in writings (e.g., Vandebussche 2004, Rutten / van der Wal 2014, Nevalainen / Raumolin-Brunberg 2005, Adams 2004, Molinelli 2017, etc.). From a historical perspective, however, two main approaches could be considered: the first one is the so-called elite bilingualism (Adams 2003), which considers mixed-language instances as the product of the high-level, educated and multilingual part of the population. Conversely, a different approach to language history «from below» focuses more on private letters and diaries written especially by semi-literate writers in order to offer «a different starting point for the description of language history and the explanation of language change» (Elspaß: 2012: 160).

For both approaches, however, the attention is on how multilingualism was part of the societies in the past. In this respect, Pahta *et al.* (2017) also proposed a change of perspective, by considering multilingualism as the norm rather than an exception for societies in the past. Furthermore, Schendl (2012: 522) points out how a multilingual situation always presumes a specific context and a relative status of the languages involved. This status could also change through time: for instance, Schendl (2002) demonstrated how language choice in a corpus of 60 letters on Welsh rebellion could be used ascertain the status of English and French in early 15th century England. Furthermore, Pahta & Nurmi (2009) have stressed the importance of the relationship between the writer and the addressee in determining instances of language alternation in correspondence.

Language choice is only one of the variable to be addressed in studying multilingualism in the past. Indeed, in language contact situations, a central role is played by code-switching, which could generally be defined as the use of more than one language in a specific communicative event (see also Matras 2009, Gardner-Chloros 2010, Muysken 2000). Code-switching could appear in different textual typologies (e.g., the Swiss administrative texts studied by Lüdi 1989), and it could cover different functions. Schendl (2012: 527) distinguishes between micro-level and macro-level functions, the former being the indication of the date, and the latter being more linked to the attribution of prestige value towards one language in a particular time and place. Since code-switching has mainly used to indicate within-text variation, Phata *et al.* (2018) proposed the label «multilingual practices» as a sort of umbrella term for all those instances of language alternations, which could not simply be labelled as code-switching in the strict sense of the term. Multilingual practices, thus, will account not only for language alternation within the text (e.g., between a French article and an English noun as in Schendl 2011, but see also Wright 1995), but also for language selections in different parts of the text or for different interlocutors.

These multilingual practices could be expressed in the use of formulae, in particular in the closing remarks of letters. As it has been observed by Palermo's (1994: 24), the use of formulaic language is of particular importance in the letters of less educated people, since it shows the textual competencies from both a formal and a functional perspective. Indeed, letter writing was highly codified and conventional, especially when dealing with official and commercial letters, due to the existence of conversation manuals which also dealt with text writing (Franceschini 2002). The distinction between formulaic and creative writing (Kuntz 1997: 182, Wray 2002: 4) has usually been addressed by studies on language acquisition (see Siyanova-Chanturia / Pellicer-Sánchez 2018 for a recent work and review). In historical pragmatics, formulaic language in letter writing has been focused in particular on speech-act analysis and on closing remarks or greetings (see Rutten / van der Wal 2012: 174 for a review). In particular, research on German opening and closing remarks in writing practices across the centuries has been the key topic of a huge trend of pragmatic research (e.g., Spillner 2014).

According to Wray's (2002) division, formulaic language in letters could cover three different functions, with greetings as well as address formulae classified as having a text-constructive function. In Elspaß's (2012: 69) terms, it means that «text-constructing formulae foreground the text in itself, that is, they draw attention to the fact that the text is a letter». Another but not less important function of formulas is the reduction of writing effort (Wray 2002), making formulaic language more likely to be linked with literacy, in the sense that unexperienced writers will rely more on formulas in order to solve communicative problems (see Elspaß 2005: 192).

3. Data

Although the documents of the MM constitute a huge archive including many different written typologies (e.g., letters, tolls, contracts and sentences) dating from 1463 to 1851, the lack of digitalization and even a detailed catalogue of these materials makes the analysis quite challenging. A second source of data is represented by the letters and books of one specific trading company of Bolzano, the Georg Anton Menz's company, whose archive was now preserved at the Chamber of Commerce. These data include 52 bundles of received letters, and 110 ledgers of copied letters (i.e., copies of letters sent by the Menz company). So far, 47 bundles and 71 ledger books have been digitalised by the *Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio* and the Chamber of Commerce. The Georg Anton Menz (henceforth, GAM) archive has also the advantage, if compared with the data from the MM archive, to be focused on one specific writing typology, that is commercial letters.

Georg Anton Menz was part of one of the wealthiest merchant family in Bolzano: originally from Bavaria, the Menzes settled in the Tyrolean town at the end of the 17th century since the forefather Josef Franz died in Bolzano in 1705. Georg Anton was Josef Franz's grandnephew, and he was born in Bolzano in 1722 (the date of death is unknown). He owned a textile company named after him, which continued the activity long after his death, since we have documentation from 1781 to 1832 constituting the GAM archive. It should be noted that it was not unusual for a company to continue to exist with the name of his founder after his departure, mainly because the sons and grandsons continued the business.

Due to the amount of data at disposal, a decision has been made to start the analysis from two target years, that is 1794 and 1824/25, since a 40-year gap may show an evolution of language practices in a multilingual town between the 18th and 19th centuries. The reasons for selecting these two years are socio-historical ones: in 1794 Tyrol was part of the Habsburg Empire, and all official documents were written in German (cf. Obermair 2008), while at the beginning of 19th century the Napoleonic domination imposed firstly French and then Italian as official languages. Furthermore, in 1794 the MM was officially recognized for its importance and socio-economic power in Tyrol, and the Menzes were both members of the MM and high-level politicians within Bolzano administration. As far as it is known, the end of 18th century also corresponds to the period of maximum expansion of Bolzano as a marketplace, with traders coming from the Flanders, England, other than France and Italy; the correspondence shows also that trading or at least contacts have been established with Russia and with South America. In 1824, after the restoration of the Habsburg Empire after Napoleon defeat, German was re-established as the official language in South Tyrol.

Therefore, by selecting 1794 and 1824/25 as two target years it will be possible to consider whether linguistic practices «from below» (Elspaß 2012) contrasts with official language policies, and how multilingualism was managed. For these reasons the attention was focused only on letters, which present an interesting variation for what it concerns both the writers and the way they are preserved: indeed, for these documents is difficult to trace back the ‘authors’ of the texts, since many letters show different inks and handwritings between the main text and the signature, and many of them are preserved through copies made by the secretaries at the company. Therefore, it will be better to use Dossena’s (2012: 20) label «encoders», that indicates «the person (or group of people) whose meanings are expressed in the text, regardless of whether they wrote it themselves, or prompted it to other people, whose only task was to put it in writing». Indeed ‘encoder’ is a more precise term than writer, especially because in case of commercial letters it is quite often the case that «the person who actually writes the letter is not necessarily the person whose meanings are conveyed» (Dossena 2012: 20).

The label ‘encoders’ fits the situation of the GAM documents: a part from a corpus of received letters (at disposal only for year 1784), the letter sent from Bolzano to the company’s correspondents or partners were all preserved in huge ledger books of copied letters. In particular, each year had one book of copied letter *per l’Italia*, ‘to Italy’, and one *per la Germania*, ‘to Germany’, thus written in Italian. Although not such entities as Germany and Italy existed in 1794, the labels *Italia* and *Germania* appeared in the copybooks used by GAM secretaries. This may testify a conceptualization of the world as divided between a Germanic and a Romance one (but see the next section for language distribution). ‘Italy’ indicated everything south of Tyrol, encompassing a large variety of independent kingdoms (e.g., the duchy of Milan and the Republic of Venice), whereas the label ‘Germany’ included everything north of Tyrol (e.g., Austria) and/or belonging to far away countries (including Spain, Sweden and even Argentina). Details of the letters were also copied into the ledger books, in which each letter was separated by a line and preceded by the addressee and the date. The left margin was for the place of destination and some further notes concerning that particular letter (e.g., emblems of the merchants involved, indication of edited parts). The questions are, however, when these letters were copied in the books and

by whom: since the original letters have not been found yet, it is impossible for now to determine if the secretary who wrote the original letter was the same who copied them in the ledger book (although, it seems quite a possibility). Furthermore, it is not completely certain that the letters were copied from an original one into the book: although the name of the books seems to suggest so, it is still possible that the books were used as a first draft for the letters to be sent to the commercial partners.

Table 1 shows the total amount of letters sent from Bolzano in 1784 and in 1824/25, for a total amount of 3293 letters. For year 1784 we also have 1758 received letters sent to the Georg Anton Menz Company from various cities in Europe. The second time-point covers the last six months of 1824 and the last six months of 1825, since the ledger books of the first months of 1824 have gone missing (together with the received letters for that year).

	1784	1824-25	Total
Copied to Italy	1532	367	1899
Copied to Germany	611	783	1394
Total	2143	1150	3293

Tab. 1. Quantity of sent letters from the GAM Archive (Chamber of Commerce, ref. nr. 56_1784-1786; 66_1824-1832; 13_1784-1786; 23_1822-1825).

All letters, even those not digitalized, have been catalogued in a matrix on Excel, that included the metadata for the identification of the single letter (i.e., archive, reference number), epigraphic notes (e.g., writing material), addressees, date, place of destination, language of the main text, eventual words in a language different from the main one, marginalia, greetings formulae, (eventual) signatures. Following this first classification, it was possible to identify different textual typologies according to the relation between the sender and the addressee: for the GAM archive, however, almost all letters in the corpus represent a case of one-to-one communications. However, it was often the case that the company wrote to one of its partners in another town as a mediator with other merchants or companies. Only 200 letters were copied without an addressee, thus making it difficult to ascertain because of the lack of a part of the book or lack of information, all the other letters represent a case of one-to-one communication.

3.1 Research questions

Due to the importance of merchants' writings in the analysis of multilingualism in historical perspective, the main aim of the analysis is to answer to the famous Fishman's (1965) interrogative «which language are spoken to whom and when». In particular, two research questions will guide the analysis of multilingual practices in the GAM archive:

1. Is there a predominant language used in the commercial correspondence of the Georg Anton Menz company?
2. Are there instances of multilingual practices at a micro-functional level, and what these practices tell us about the repertoire of Bolzano merchants between 18th and 19th century?

3. How different are both language choice and multilingual practices at a 40-years distance (i.e., from 1784 to 1824/25)?

4. Analysis

Once the documents have been catalogued, a first investigation has been carried out concerning the primary languages used in the letters. This means that we firstly considered which languages appeared in the main text of the letters, and then we considered the envelopes, the glosses or notes within the text (almost certainly made by a different person, as visible by the ink differences). In the GAM Archive, the situation in the two target time-points is reported in Tab. 2.

		German	Italian	French	Total
'To Italy'	1784	0.52% (8)	99.48% (1,524)	0% (0)	100% (1532)
	1824	0.54%	99.46%	0%	100%
	-1825	(2)	(366)	(0)	(368)
'To Germany'	1784	68.74% (420)	6.38% (39)	24.88% (152)	100% (611)
	1824	81.33%	18.67%	0%	100%
	-1825	(636)	(146)	(0)	(782)
Total		32.4% (1,066)	63% (2,071)	4.6% (152)	100% (3,293)

Tab. 2. Language distribution in the GAM archive in the two ledger books of copied letters of 1784 and 1824-25. Percentages are calculated by rows (i.e., according to the language variable)

It should be noted that there is an overall predominance of Italian (about 63.1%), followed by German (32.3%) and then French (4.6%). However, letters written in French have been found only for the year 1784, in the ledger book of letters copied 'to Germany'. As expected, the main languages are predominantly Italian for the book of copy letters to Italy, and German for the copy letters to Germany. However, data also show letters written in French in the ledger book of letters copied 'to Germany'. These letters were sent not only to France or to Switzerland, but also to the United Kingdom. In this respect, letters sent to Anglophone areas were written either in French or Italian, rarely in German. There are no instances of English letters preserved in the corpus, confirming how English was not a vehicular language, at least in this part of Europe (Hsy 2013).

It is also worth noting that within the book of copied letters to Italy 8 were written in German (around 0.5%). These limited examples were to specific addressees in Trieste (one such being Joachim Hurscel). Trieste is situated at the border between modern-day Italy and Slovenia and was at the time the most important port of the Hapsburg Empire on the Mediterranean Sea. The fact that the choice of language is related to the addressee and not to the geographical destination of the addressee is confirmed in this case by the fact that other letters sent to Trieste were written in Ital-

ian (e.g., to a Giacomo Broilli or the Simonetti brothers). Conversely, in the ledger to ‘Germany’, many letters appeared to be written not only in German, which unsurprisingly covered the majority of cases, but also in French and Italian. Indeed, 152 out of 611 letters (24.4%) were written in French and sent principally to France and the United Kingdom. It is worth noting that many cities of correspondence are today part of Belgium (e.g., Verviers and Hodimont, now also merged into one town), and lie on the border with German-speaking areas. Among the principal addressees was also a woman, the widow Bessiard de la Touche in Nogent-le-Rotrou (France), who probably wrote back through an attorney, since her signature wasn’t found in the folder of received letters. About 6.4% of the copied letters ‘to Germany’ were written in Italian: the main place of destination was Exon, the contemporary town of Exeter, in the United Kingdom, where two of the Menz’s partners were based, namely the company Lucke & Vallin, with diverse spellings in the different letters, and that of Samuel Coade (or Coave & son). Interestingly, three Italian letters were sent to Vienna to a certain Antonio Malanotte, another three to Filippo Giacomo Trank (or Trank) in Argentina, and three to Leyden to the company called Vrede & Van Marle (or Verdaux & Van Marle).

In 1824-25, there are no instances of copied letters ‘to Germany’ in French, probably due to the apparent end of commerce towards France and Switzerland. In the corpus, only one letter dated 9th April 1784 was sent to Zurich, to the company of Heinrich Daniel Murich & son, which was written in German. However, 146 of the 782 letters in this ledger (18.7%) were written not in German but in Italian. 133 of these were sent to the merchant Giacomo Bettini in Vienna, and 9 to various correspondents in Triest. Again, there are also instances of letters to Vienna and Triest written in German.

4.1. Multilingual practices

During the classification of the material, it became evident that alternate in two main different ways: (1) between the text of the letter and the glosses (or the envelope); (2) between the main text of the letter and the greetings.

The first observable alternation is between the main text of the letter and the glosses, including the dates (e.g., the names of the months) and the addressee’s honorifics. For instance, in the copied letters ‘to Germany’, there is one letter in Italian to Vienna, but the name of the town is indicated with the German equivalent ‘Wien’. The same could be said for the Italian town of Triest (‘Trieste’, in Italian), often spelled in the German way as ‘Triest’ in both German and Italian letters. Similarly, addressees’ names were sometimes indicated with a more Germanised or Italianised form: for instance, letters to Thomas Smith from Rochdale (United Kingdom) are always in French, but the addressee also appears spelled as ‘Schmith’. It is worth noting that the switch in the language always comes with a switch of orthography.

A similar phenomenon occurred also in case of the received letters (i.e., letters written to Georg Anton Menz) not considered in the present paper because they are only limited to year 1784. In these cases, a multilingual practice is visible as a different code-selection between the language of the letter and the language of the envelope, although this phenomenon is quantitatively limited (see Tab. 3). Out of the 1,758 received letters with their envelopes, only 16 show the use of more than one language between the letter and the envelope: in 9 cases a German letter has an

Italian envelope (e.g., addressed to ‘Bolzano/Bolgiano’ and not to ‘Bozen’), and in 4 cases German letters present a French envelope (e.g., to ‘Monsieur de Menz’). As for Italian letters, only in 3 cases they show a French envelope and never a German one. Finally, French letters always came in with a French envelope.

	Language	Letters (total)	Letters with the Addio - formula
Copied letters ‘to Italy’	Italian	1,524	954 (62.6%)
	German	8	3 (37.5%)
Copied letters ‘to Germany’	Italian	39	14 (35.8%)
	German	420	289 (68.8%)

Tab. 3. The distribution of the closing salutations in the GAM Archive for 1784, also divided by language.

A second instance of language alternation has been found within the text in the GAM archive. Indeed, it has come to attention that German letters might present a closing salutation formula with the Italian *addio* “farewell” written after a German letter. Sometimes, this formula could be shortened as a simple *ad*. With the same meaning. A brief survey on the distribution of this form has revealed its presence only in the 1784 ledger books, and not in 1824/25; as shown in Tab. 3, the Italian farewell has been found in both the Italian and German letters. Again, letters in French do not present any language alternation in the greetings formula as they did for the marginalia. Even allowing for copying by different hands (there are at least two), this form appears to be repeatedly used. Interestingly, the percentage of use of the *addio* closing formula are similar in the two ledger books but opposite for what it concerns the language: in the copied letters ‘to Italy’ the formula occurs in the 62.6% of the cases with Italian letters, but only in 35.8% of Italian letters contained in the book of copied letters ‘to Germany’. Conversely, in this latter book, 68.8% of the German letters present the Italian *addio* as a closing formula.

Moreover, the presence of this form seems to be typical of the letters sent from Bolzano. In the 1758 received letters checked for year 1784, this farewell formula occurred only once in an Italian letter from Trento. In Italian letters the most frequent greeting formula is *Vi baciamo le mani* ‘We kiss your hands’, which could also appear with the acronym *V.B.L.M.* or as mix between the acronym and the full text (e.g., *V.B. le mani*). This greeting appears in about the 25% of the received letters.

5. Discussion

The analysis of language distribution and use in the GAM corpus in two specific points in time support the claim that certainly three languages (i.e., German, Italian and French) were effectively used by Bolzano merchants, and in particular by Menz’s family, at least for commercial purposes. However, between 1784 and 1824/25 three main differences emerge: first, the letters ‘to Germany’ increased in the 19th centu-

ry, whereas letters sent ‘to Italy’ reduced; second, French letters are present only in 1784; third, multilingual practices concerning glosses and greetings were again found only in 1784.

At the level of language selection, it appears that an accommodation towards the addressee was preferred, with different languages used for different interlocutors. The language selection was based on the addressee rather than on the place of destination (either country or town): for instance, Italian merchants living in Vienna were addressed in Italian. Merchants’ correspondence was indeed bi- or multilingual, whereas the official policy and management of Bolzano was more strictly monolingual, as emerges from previous studies on the town chancellery documents (see Obermair 2005, 2008, and its online updates). In fact, by looking only at those official documents, one might have the impression that Bolzano was inhabited by monolingual speakers. However, the merchants’ letters let the multilingual competencies and networks emerge ‘from below’. However, this bilingualism should be considered more as a strategic means than a marker of identity, as it became in the subsequent centuries, that is to say after WWI. Knowledge of Italian and French was useful for commerce, and learning those languages was an instrumental acquisition rather than a matter of cultural affiliation (see also Franceschini 2002 for further references). As other similar commercial towns (e.g., Dossena / Fitzmaurice 2006, Hsy 2013), multilingualism in Bolzano during the 18th century was structured along utilitarian lines ordered from private to collective habits.

As for multilingual practices, it should be noted that glossing practices in a language different from the one of the main text were quantitatively rare. However, glosses could be written in all the three languages, although alternation was rarer in case of French letters (both coming in and out Bolzano). More interestingly are the multilingual practices associated to the greeting formula *addio* found in the vast majority of German letters in the 1784 book. The same formula has also been found in the copy-letter ‘to Italy’ written in Italian, but not in the received letters, in which the most common formula was the expression *Vi baciamo le mani*, ‘We kiss your hands’. It should be noted that this formula has been found in Sicilian merchants’ letters in the 17th century, and it was claimed that it was modeled on Spanish usage (cf. Sardo 2008: 2013). Its absence in letters written in Tyrol could implicate that Bolzano merchants followed different models for writing letters (see also Franceschini 2002 on conversation manuals), by preferring an Italian word as a closing formula independently from the language of the letter. It should also be noted that *addio* as a closing formula is found also in Romanian correspondence in the 19th century, with its first appearance in a letter dated 1821 (Costantinescu 2018). Given that in the 18th century part of the actual Romanian area as passed under the Habsburg Empire, it may be assumed that the use of *addio* (or, in case of Romania, the French equivalent *adieu*) was typical of German-speaking secretaries. This could possibly imply that German was the first (or predominant) language of Menz’s secretaries, at least the ones using the *addio* formula.

Finally, it should be discussed if this formulaic language could be interpreted as a simple loanword or as real case of code-switching (or, as Patha *et al.* 2018 will say, multilingual practices). According to Poplack (1980: 65), in some cases a clear-cut distinction is almost impossible and even meaningless: a loanword is different from code-switching if its use is widespread and follows the morpho-phonological rules of the other language; whereas a code-switching could fill lexical gaps, having

a discursive function (Auer 1988) or a meaning-marking effect. Moreover, in his three-way distinction of bilingual switching, Muysken (2000: 97) highlights how, in stable bilingual community with a tradition of language separation, code-switching phenomena may be realized as alternations between structures of each language. The sociolinguistic correlates of this language alternation account for the prestige of the different languages in a given context. In our case, Italian in Tyrol during the 18th century had no official recognition from central government as the language of the administration (cf. Obermair 2005, 2006), but it was a prestige language with a strong correlation to the commercial activities of the whole South Tyrolean area. This is attested by its official use in the documents of the *Magistrato Mercantile* (cf. Meluzzi, submitted). Adding a final salutation in Italian rather than German may be considered as an example of emblematic language alternation for pragmatic purposes (Muysken 2000), and as a marker of the status of the writer. Moreover, from a more philological perspective, the alternation between the main text of the letter and the final salutation could be a sign that the letter was written by one person (e.g., a secretary or an attorney), and signed by another, following a practice attested since the late Latin Empire (cf. Cotugno / Marotta 2017).

All this considered, it appears that a change in the multilingual practices of merchants in Bolzano has happened between 1784 and 1824/25. Due to the historical context of the Tyrolean main town at the beginning of 19th century, in particular because of the Napoleonic domination, it will be possible that even commercial letters reflect the new language policy of the Tyrol. The alternative hypothesis that there wasn't a secretary able to write in French is not plausible, since the Napoleonic domination has just ended, and French was still considered a prestigious language for highly educated class. Conversely, the reduction of Italian letters in 1824/25 could speak in favor of a more German-oriented commercial network. The lack of French letters could be interpreted in the same way but concerning French it is also important to notice that even when it was used in 1784 letters, it didn't show instances of multilingual practices: therefore, it could be the case that French was only used for commercial purposes in a very standardized way, and later abandoned for commercial purposes.

6. Conclusion and further perspectives

In this paper we have considered the commercial letters from the company created by Georg Anton Menz, a member of one the wealthiest merchant family in Bolzano. We have considered as two target years 1784 and 1824, in order to see if there was a difference in language management and multilingual practices before and after the French domination in South Tyrol. The analysis conducted so far could allow to give a preliminary answer to our research questions, but obviously further research is needed on this topic.

From the distribution of languages in the copied letters in 1784 and 1824, it is possible to say that Italian was one of the languages of commerce from Bolzano merchants between 18th and 19th century. However, its importance decreased in 1824, where it was possible to detect a larger use of German in commercial correspondence, maybe because of the historical consequences of the Restoration. French letters also disappeared in 1824/25, again possibly because of a new German-oriented

language policy.

In the letters it was possible to find instances of multilingual practices in the glosses, but in particular for what it concerns the closing formulas: the Italian form *addio* was used in both Italian and German letters written in Bolzano, whereas in the received letters this form was found only once in contrast on the predominant greeting *Vi baciamo le mani*, ‘We kiss your hands’. Furthermore, instances of multilingual practices have been seldom found in French letters. This could imply that French was not a common language for commercial use, with a strict writing style secretaries adhered to. For German and Italian letters, the use of a similar salutation formula contrasting with the typical Italian one could indicate that there were different writing styles used in Tyrol with respect to the rest Italian peninsula: the hypothesis is that the models for commercial letters in Tyrol were shared within Habsburg areas and different from the Italian ones. A clue to this claim may be found also in Costantinescu’s (2018) analysis of Romanian merchants’ letters, which show the presence of the same *addio* formula.

A desirable perspective for future works on these data will be a transcription of a selection of documents in both Italian and German in order to check for other possible multilingual practices, for instance in orthography (see Cotugno in press, for a recent application of orthographic variables in historical sociolinguistics). Moreover, it will be interesting to check the use of closing formula in the German (and Bavarian) literature between 17th and 18th century, and manuals for writing letters in Italy and in the Habsburg Empire. Finally, a systematic comparison should be carried on between Bolzano merchants’ closing formulae in the letters and the evidence collected in already existing corpora, such as the corpus CEOD of the University for foreigners of Siena (Antonelli *et al.* 2004, 2009).

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