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Executive Summary

The MATEL (Metalinguistic Awareness Tests in European Languages) project draws on a strong concept, namely metalinguistic awareness (MLA, henceforth), i.e. the capability to reflect on the relations between forms and meanings of language, as an indispensable means for reaching in-depth comprehension of oral and written messages. **The target audience** of the project is therefore composed of L1, L2, additional languages teachers, translators and interpreters, clinical and educational psychologists, Educational stakeholders (from primary school to University level).

1) Objectives

1) Research objectives: Before the application there were three Italian validated tests measuring MLA, and Spanish and French *non validated* versions. Therefore, a first research objective (**1a**) was to **validate** these versions, to provide the scientific and educational community with tools applicable at national level. A second research objective (**1b**) was to **enlarge the range of linguistic versions**, by reaching another relevant European language, namely German. Two of the three MLA tests (Junior school, High school/university level) had to be translated from Italian into German, and piloted on German-speaking samples.

2) Educational objectives: The MATEL project aimed at creating educational resources at different levels: **2a)** by providing the *manuals and the protocols* of the tests in different languages for screening abilities and developing enhancement or remedial programmes; **2b)** by creating *videos* that show how the *interactive use* of these tests stimulates taking consciousness processes in spontaneous form. **2c)** by developing *metalinguistic exercises* as collective activities in the classroom applicable to diverse curriculum areas and in various languages.

3) Consortium, methodologies and approaches

The Consortium combined different types of competencies, from Applied Linguistics (Austria, Spain-2 and Canada), to Psychology (Italy-1), Psychometrics (Italy-2) and Education (Spain-1). This resulted in a combination of typically *quantitative research* for the validation and pilot studies, on the one hand, and *qualitative* methodology for the implementation of the videos on the interactive use of the MLA tests, for the translation of the tests and for the development of the metalinguistic exercises, on the other.

4) Major results and products: **4a) Three validated tests:** Spanish THAM-2 (9-14 years), Spanish THAM-3, and French THAM-3 (adolescence-adulthood) (3 books and 3 scientific articles on the validation process). **4b) Two tests translated** from Italian into German: Metalinguistischer Kompetenztest, Teil 2 & 3 (MKT-2 & 3). (2 books and 2 scientific articles. **4c) Five videos** on the interactive use of parts of the MLA tests: 3 on the THAM-3/TAM-3 (University level) + 2 on the THAM-2/TAM-2 (Junior school), in Italian, Spanish and French. **4d) A book on metalinguistic exercises** in Italian, Spanish, French and German. **4e)** In all, **29 publications and 21 presentations** of the project, in the period 2013-2015.

5) Plans for sustainability: **5a)** Translations of the tests into Portuguese and Persian.

5 b) Development of MLA-based teaching materials for French, German, Italian as L2.

5c) Scientific mobility between Europe and Canada (3rd Country). **5d)** Second Special issue on MLA.

6) Website: www.matelproject.com. Facebook pages, Twitter account.

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1. Project Objectives

The MATEL project had two major, interconnected objectives: 1) research and 2) educational.

1) Research level.

Prior to Application stage, the Partners knew each other since they had worked on the MLA tests named “MATs” (English acronym for Metalinguistic Ability Tests), in Spanish, French, English and Italian in different and complementary perspectives. In some cases (Un. of Granada – Spain), elaborating on L1, showing that the entire THAM-2 (Spanish acronym for MAT-2) is a predictor of text production and comprehension abilities at Junior school level; in other cases (Un of Vitoria, Basque country-Spain; Un of Innsbruck-Austria; Un. of Québec-à-Trois Rivières-Canada; Un of Rome “Sapienza”), the MATs were used in a bi/plurilingual perspective, showing, on the one hand, significant MLA superiority of bilinguals over monolinguals, and, on the other, the predictive power of MLA in L1 towards additional language learning.

But while the originary/original Italian tests were already validated, thanks to the expertise of another partner (S &P, Statistical Company), all the remaining linguistic versions were not yet validated. Therefore, the first research objective was to:

1a) Validate the Spanish THAM-2 (9-14 y.), the Spanish THAM-3 (adolescence-adulthood), and the French THAM-3 (French acronym for Test d’Habilités Métalinguistiques. n.3).

The validation of these tests can give any user, be him/her a teacher or a psychologist or a researcher, a tool with **reliable national references**, based on a **unitary conceptual basis**.

Researchers can use them more reliably for comparing levels of MLA in different languages in their own country, in national or international curricula schools, or across countries, in relation with differences in educational focus in each national curriculum.

On the educational side, the availability of validated MLA tests provides teachers with tools they can use in their classrooms, even for some subtests only, even for some items only, to detect strengths and weaknesses of their pupils/students at different moments of the school year. On such screenings they can build more or less structured programmes for reinforcing deficitary abilities. This is even more so in bi-plurilingual curricula, where MLA development can vary according to the different languages.

As there exists also a *clinical use of MLA assessment* and empowerment programmes for enhancing ML abilities, having validated MATs in different languages provides clinical operators (e.g. : speech therapists) with reliable age norms and cut-offs for normal development.

1b) Extend the range of the linguistic versions of the same tools, by translating these tools into one more relevant European language. Based on previous work of the **Austrian partner in research on MLA as related to multilingualism, the first candidate**

for further translation was German. It was therefore set out to **translate the MAT-2 and MAT-3 into German**, and to **pilot them on L1 German-speaking samples**.

The research part of the project had to be implemented during the first year, and disseminated by means of presentations in conferences, seminar or workshop sessions in each country, scholarly publications, and the website

2) Educational level

In the original plan, the practical application of the theoretical grounds of the MATs to education was thought in terms of videos showing the interactive use of items of these tests as a means for enhancing MLA. The principle was the following: while the test, by itself, essentially yields a static and individual assessment, face-to-face interaction naturally creates a zone of proximal development in Vygotskys' terms (Vygotsky, 1962), where originary differences in levels of MLA can evolve ~~by~~ from the very confrontation of points of views. The pattern for conducting these interactions in small focus groups was elaborated prior to the Application and it was set out to create **4 of such "didactic videos"**: 3 based on the interactive use of the French THAM-3, the Spanish THAM-3 and the Italian TAM-3 + 1 based on the interactive use of the Spanish THAM-2.

At progress report stage, the Consortium was advised by EACEA to enrich the educational side of the project with additional educational materials and resources. A new work plan set out to:

- a) **enrich the didactic videos**, both on quantitative and qualitative terms.

One more video was added, based on the interactive use of the Italian TAM-2, which twinned and reinforced the value of the Spanish video on the THAM-2.

For each video (5 in all, with this new addition), an **accompanying booklet** was elaborated, where the actual *interactions are punctually transcribed* and the *nature of the evolutions that take place in MLA's participants* are analyzed in qualitative terms.

- b) present the **materials of the tests in a user-friendly modality** for facilitating access and use for teachers and clinical operators. This would take the form of complete manuals of the tests, or of more reduced protocols, in case of copyright issues, but with practical indications wherever possible, accessible online and printable at will.

c) develop **practical activities** to make pupils/students **practice ML abilities in the classroom**, as related to precise **areas of the curriculum**: phonological competencies, text comprehension in mathematics, history, geography, social media.

The educational part of the project was planned for the second year, and had to be disseminated also by means of presentations in workshops, seminars, events in each country involved, publications and through the website.

2. Project Approach

The MATEL project combined different types of methodologies and approaches according to the diversity of its components.

A relevant part of the **research objectives** of the project (see above, **I.a**), had to be implemented with a **typically quantitative methodology**.

Tests validation naturally entails a carefully multi-step planned research design, as much uniformized as possible in each country participating in the research. The partners involved in the validation of the 3 ML tests had to: a) recruit participants on the basis of pre-established age, sociocultural and linguistic criteria, and after obtaining the requested formal permissions from individuals and/or institutions; b) check the latest versions of the protocols and of the coding criteria of the tests; c) administer the ML tests and a cognitive test used for studying convergent validity following a pre-established order and duration for each subtest; d) organizing the coding of the collected protocols; e) having the coding checked by the Coordinator; f) having a second rating done and sending the database to the Psychometrician; e) the Psychometrician had to deliver the analyses based on a pre-established order of psychometric operations, and to elaborate a first overall draft of the meanings of the results; f) the Consortium had to contribute to the drafting of a scientific article on the whole research process, with the Psychometrician as first author on the basis of a pre-established order of presentation.

It was planned that the pilot studies with the newly translated German tests (MKT-2 & MKT-3) followed a similar pattern, although on a smaller scale.

The main form of visibility for this part of the research had to be a Special issue of a scholarly journal reporting on the results of all the empirical studies conducted within the MATEL project. The articles that compose this special issues would also be summarized in a shorter and more divulgative form for non specialists, and made available on the website.

The research part of the project also included **translation**, which calls into question completely **different processes for ensuring quality and adequacy**.

As the source and the target languages of the tests (Italian and German, respectively), belonged to two different linguistic families, and as previous translations of the source language already existed in the same two linguistic families (French and Spanish, as representatives of the Romance family, and English, as representative of the Saxon family), a first criterion was to have a translator highly competent in both the source and the target language, and sufficiently competent in the languages of the other existing linguistic versions. A second criterion was to consult the author of the tests in the source language extensively, for weighing alternative solutions in the choice of terminology as a function of the conceptual context of the translation. A third criterion was to consult experts in German linguistics, *in primis* the German supervisor of the translation, Partner of the project, and other colleagues expert of specific usages in German Psycholinguistics and Applied linguistics. A fourth, more indirect criterion, was the spontaneity through which the German-speaking addressees of the tests would understand the translated items into German. This criterion had to be verified on empirical grounds by means of the pilot studies.

On the educational side (**Objective 2.**), the methodology for developing the **videos (Objective 2.a)** is entirely based on **qualitative criteria**, namely interaction analysis in focus groups. The interaction pattern for provoking the most effective MLA co-construction within a focus group had been experimented prior to Application. In order to analyse both the linguistic and the psychological aspects of the interaction in the focus group, a methodology was previously elaborated, presented in a Conference (ACLA/CAAL, 2014) and explained to the partners with a same pattern in each language.

This methodology had to be clearly outlined in the discursive parts of the videos, visualizable/visible on the videos themselves in specific slides, and in separate accompanying booklets that could be analyzed *before, during and after watching the video*, so as to get the most of some salient moments of the interactions.

To facilitate access to the materials of the tests (**Objective 2.b**), it was planned to follow a **standard methodology** for describing the nature and the composition of these instruments, the coding and scoring criteria and the main psychometric properties, specifying age norms. Special attention had to be devoted to the ***linguistic register to be used***, accessible to an average competence level of educational operators (teachers and educational consultants), richness of examples for assigning scores, explanations of the practical meanings of basic concepts, range of educational potentialities of the tests.

Lastly, the teaching materials for developing ML abilities were planned in such a way as to apply the **basic principle of the MLA tests**, that of breaking automatisms in the spontaneous use of form-meaning associations and to *justify the reasons* for linguistic choices in phrasing questions and answers.

As this principle applies transversally to potentially all the areas of the curriculum, it was planned to elaborate materials in one or more areas of the curriculum where the teacher elicits **reflection on the phrasing of the concepts as key to the concept itself**. Prior to the Application, some of the partners had already developed partial materials, previously piloted in their contexts, and therefore checked the **ecological validity** of these educational proposals.

Overall, the project faced its objectives using diverse methodologies and approaches, according to the specificities of each product. Although diversified, these methodologies were conceived as *interconnected* from the start. Two cases in point: the translation of the tests and the pilot studies, on the one hand, and the recruitment of the participants for the videos and their evolution during the interactions, on the other.

We saw that adequate translations require a series of fundamentally qualitative processes. At the same time, to check the impact of the products of these translations on real subjects entails, sooner or later, to implement empirical studies using standard quantitative methodology. In turn, the *interpretation* of the quantitative results calls into question qualitative explanations, since percentages of answers must be handled within the conceptual framework of these particular tests.

As for the videos, the participants were first recruited on the basis of the administration of the whole test, be it the MAT-2 or the MAT-3, therefore with a standard test methodology. On these grounds, they were selected as representative of a prevalingly poor level, of a prevalingly intermediate or of a prevalingly high level. At the very beginning of the interaction, the quality of the arguments these participants brought to the discussion

faithfully reflected the level shown by means of the test previously administered. But in the course of the discussion, it was often the poorest level participant who evolved the most, and each participant benefitted from the discussion in his/her particular way. Therefore, the test approach and the interaction approach were complementary and comforted both the expectations of the researcher and the objectives of the educationalist.

For evaluating the quality of the MATEL project, a **Quality plan** was elaborated, tightly connected to the Dissemination and Exploitation plans. An **external evaluator** was appointed by the partner responsible for the Quality Working package, whose task was to monitor the impact of the ongoing activities through several channels: the website life, the publications produced during the project lifespan, quantitative and qualitative attendance to presentations, the extent of spontaneous initiatives and requests from attendees, etc.

It was in the course of some of these presentations, particularly those focused on emblematic publications, as the French book on MLA, co-authored by the Coordinator and the Canadian partner, that some relevant initiatives were borne. Among these, we will cite the proposal to elaborate teaching materials inspired from the MATs in French, German and Italian as L2, which was soon transformed in an application for a grant, already obtained at the end of the MATEL project.

The other relevant case was the initiative from Portuguese colleagues to translate the MATs into Portuguese, piloting them with Portuguese-speaking subjects and develop videos on the basis of the MATEL's pattern. This initiative was formulated on the basis of simply knowing the existence of the MATEL project through the website and other publications of the partners. More recently, some Iranian professors teaching in Québec who knew the project, the publications of the French book on MLA and its previous translation into English, proposed to translate the MAT-3 (university level) into Farsi (Persian) and piloting it with Iranian-speaking subjects in Canada, Iran and Italy. Attending to presentations of the MAT-3 in French, Italian and Spanish in the course of Conferences in Canada created interest for these instruments and their potentialities for both research and education.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The MATEL project achieved all the outcomes planned at Application stage, and even beyond these plans. Advices provided by EACEA at Progress report stage stimulated a supplementary effort by the Consortium for expressing the best potentialities of the central concept of the project, namely MLA.

1) On the research side:

- The **3 tests that had to be validated** (Spanish THAM-2 and THAM-3, and French THAM-3) were successfully validated and are now usable at national level in every Spanish- and French-speaking context as L1 and L2, or L3 in other contexts, in and outside Europe.

The Canadian partner gave a special contribution to the vast French-speaking world (la “Francophonie dans le monde”) and stands as a distinguished researcher in French MLA tests also for other age levels than the THAM-3, as the French book on MLA offers the whole range of these instruments, from preschool to adult age.

The validated Spanish texts are also likely to have a wide diffusion in the Latin-American world, thanks also to educational commitments of the partners with some countries in South America.

- The **2 tests that had to be translated into German** (the MKT-2 and MKT-3) have been translated, published and diffused not only in their originary contexts, Austria and South Tyrol in Italy, but also in the very center of Rome, at the Swiss school where the vehicular language is German, and among Germanists of the University of Sapienza, as a basis for developing teaching materials for German as L2.

The existence of these instruments will significantly enrich the possibilities for teachers of German as L1 and L2 to assess levels of MLA in pupils/students of schools having German as the primary vehicular language or as the second language of the context, as is the case in many border areas in Europe.

The diffusion was implemented essentially by publications: a paper special issue of a scholarly journal, the RIVISTA DI PSICOLINGUISTICA APPLICATA / JOURNAL OF APPLIED PSYCHOLINGUISTICS, the paper French book on MLA describing the 3 THAMs, the 2 paper books on the translated German tests. Nevertheless, there are also online versions of these publications, but in shorter version, for copyright reasons.

An exception to these copyright constraints are the 2 manuals of the Spanish THAM-2 and THAM-3, available in full version and printable at will for any user. Moreover, the Spanish THAM-3 is also available as an e-book.

2) On the educational side

The planned videos on the interactive use of items of the MATs have been implemented in more extended modality than foreseen. First, one more video was added to the planned quantity, based on the interactive use of the Italian TAM-2, which twins the video based on

the interactive use of the Spanish THAM-2 and provides insights into the processes that a teacher can activate on single items of these test in the classroom.

It also offers inspiration to teachers for proposing activities on similar sentences in the classroom or find equivalent exercises in the ordinary textbooks to which ML abilities can apply.

Secondly, each of the videos were complemented by downloadable booklets that report the interactions that took place between the participants, and, more importantly, the qualitative analyses of these interactions. These accompanying booklets are training materials on their own, consultable at will. Teachers can study them before or after watching the video, for detecting significant moments of the taking consciousness process, and draw ideas as to how optimize differences in the cognitive styles of their students.

- The conceptual accessibility of the tests to facilitate their customization in educational contexts was ensured by detailed explanations about the administration and scoring procedures, with a wide range of examples and an overall linguistic register accessible to the average teacher (See the 2 manuals of the Spanish THAM-2 and THAM-3, full version, available online, and the short version of the articles, also online).
- The plan to elaborate **ML activities applied to curricular areas** at different age levels culminated in different initiatives implemented by the partners. Some, in Spanish and French, separately, were proposals to develop ML abilities at primary and junior level (Spanish, phonological awareness, reading-writing abilities, reading comprehension applied to history and geography texts), while some others apply to adults. They are accessible on the website as pdfs or videos.

The most systematic achievement is a book, available online and printable at will, on **“Metalinguistic exercises as classroom activities”**, based, as the MLA tests, on a unitary conceptual basis. The basic objectives of these exercises are: a) to sensitize pupils/students to the power of language as the main vehicle of concepts and communication intentions in their school materials and in social life; b) to increase control over such a powerful instrument by developing “meta” activities, namely metalinguistic abilities on these same school materials. These principles have a transversal character and apply to the comprehension of mathematics problems texts, as well as to history and geography texts at primary and junior school level, and to social media messages, among other possibilities. The proposed activities are presented as exercises that a teacher can develop together with his/her classroom as a mental training to which everyone can contribute. Exercises consist on questions that target *the phrasing* of essential concepts, stimulate the search for synonyms, paraphrases and interconnections between parts of the texts. Each curricular area is preceded by an introduction to the specific issues posed by terminology and concepts, and to the modality of presenting the exercises themselves. The four languages of the Consortium are represented: Italian, Spanish, French and German.

To ensure ecological validity, the choice of the materials was made on the basis of existing textbooks for primary and junior school, suggested by teachers of these levels, and re-elaborated with a metalinguistic-metacognitive focus. In addition, some of these

exercises were piloted in classrooms thanks to volunteer teachers and students in psychology.

As far as some indicators of **dissemination** can be considered as outcomes, we can say that the **website itself** ([www. matelproject.com](http://www.matelproject.com)) has represented the main channel for dissemination, with **212 “I like”** on the two **facebook pages** created by the University of Granada and the University of Rome “SAPIENZA”, **47 posts devoted to the project, and more than 3000 covered posts**, other facebook pages, twitter account and forums, as described in the final Dissemination report.

Another relevant indicator of dissemination is the **number of presentations** of the MATEL project, in the form of workshops, seminars, events, in each country, in each language, and more than once by each partner, for a total of **21 times** during the two years of the project. To this, **29 scholarly publications** must be added, as books, chapters or articles, also in the 4 languages of the Consortium.

4. Partnerships

The Consortium gathered 5 partners from European countries (Austria (1), Spain (2), Italy (2)) and one partner from a Third party country, namely Canada. Each partner brought to the Consortium not only a different language but a different type of background. The Austrian partner (Ulrike Jessner, University of Innsbruck-UIBK), one of the Spanish partners (David Lasagabaster, University of the Basque Country-UPV/EHU) and the Canadian partner (Sonia El Euch, Trois-Rivières-UQTR) came from the field of Applied Linguistics, the other Spanish partner (Pilar Núñez Delgado, University of Granada-UGR) represented the field of Education Sciences, the Coordinator (Maria Antonietta Pinto, University of Rome SAPIENZA), the field of Psychology, and another Italian partner (Statistics & Psychometrics, S & P, in the persons of Paolo Iliceto and Gabriella Candilera) represented the field of psychometrics.

Working together on ambitious targets posed some challenges in communication during the first year of the project. A turning point in collaboration was the partnership Meeting during a Monitoring visit from EACEA at the beginning of the second year. When the Consortium had to reorganize working plans and increase the number of educational resources, the communication flow increased concomitantly, and this represented a powerful stimulus for each partner to express his/her best energies. The confrontation between different languages and theoretical backgrounds, in addition to geographical displacement, highlighted the *commonalities* between the partners rather than the differences. The official presentation of the French book on MLA in Italy and in Canada gave a precise sense of the added value that the Third party Country brought to the Consortium.

This added value is undeniable, not only on the level of research and deliverable products, but more importantly on the level of exploitation and sustainability. The Canadian partner was a bridge between the European members of the team and other Canadian researchers, firstly through an invitation to be part of a research laboratory (LERTIE-Laboratoire d'Études et Recherches Transdisciplinaires et Interculturelles en Éducation) at the UQTR, and secondly through an effort of dissemination and exploitation of the MATEL project in other universities in Canada, namely Université Laval and Université du Québec à Montréal. Two researchers from these universities agreed to translate the THAM-3 into Farsi (Persian). This positive impact of the Canadian partner is not limited to North America. It has reached South America as the MATEL project and its European team were presented in Cuba, where teachers showed interest in using the MATs in their different linguistic versions. This significant and already far-reaching added value of the Canadian partner to the European team paves the way for future collaborations between Europe and North and South America.

The presentation of the pilot studies with the German tests in a border area such as South Tyrol in Italy, and in parallel in the very capital of Italy, as well as in Austria, is a tangible sign of the potentialities the project opened to areas of a different linguistic family. Lastly, the important affinities in results, revealed by the studies on validations and on the newly translated tests, highlighted core aspects of MLA. The potential conflicts associated to diversity converted into a successful enterprise that proved beneficial for each component of the MATEL team.

5 Plans for the Future

Further to the numerous presentations of the project, various initiatives were taken for giving the project significant continuity beyond its natural end. Since the first year of life, during 2014, the Coordinator welcomed a Portuguese Erasmus professor from the University of Coimbra, who showed interest in the MATEL project, and spontaneously proposed to translate the MATs into Portuguese. This first initiative converted into a more systematic proposal on September 2015, with two more Portuguese professors from the University of Madeira, willing to pilot the tests on samples of Junior school pupils and university students, and develop teaching materials inspired from those of the MATEL project. These proposals were ratified by a formal agreement signed by the Coordinator and the three Portuguese professors by the end of September (See website, EXPLOITATION-WP-11, private access), and a first, complete draft of the tests is already available on the MATEL website, although provisional.

This initiative is a significant indicator of the interest that the tests have stimulated in other European researchers involved in education and language. This contribution is not a simple addition to an existing set of languages, but a qualitative extension of the Romance linguistic family which raises to 4 the range of the Romance languages in which the MLA tests exist (Currently, there exist Italian, French and Spanish versions of the three tests). This is bound to have consequences on the network of instruments for creating inter-comprehension systems between these four European languages.

Another consequence stemming from dissemination activities is a project for developing manuals of exercises inspired from a subtest of the MAT-3, namely Acceptability, for L2 French, German and Italian students. The idea came from a colleague of French Linguistics, teaching at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, Prof. Oreste Floquet, who invited the Coordinator to give a seminar for future teachers of French as L2, in April, 2015. In May, 2015, Prof Floquet, together with the Coordinator and other colleagues of German and Italian linguistics, applied for a grant at Sapienza University, whose objective is to develop such teaching materials in French, German and Italian. The grant was obtained and part of these exercises are already implemented and are being piloted by students. This is a clear *educational* application of the theoretical grounds of the MATs that exploits two major outcomes of the MATEL project: the validation of the French THAM-3 and the publication of the newly translated German MKT-3.

Attending annual conferences of the ACLA/CAAL (Association Canadienne de Linguistique Appliquée / Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics) in Canada and keeping tight scientific collaboration with the Canadian partner, who has been working for years on MLA with different linguistic versions of the MATs, opened new opportunities that reverberated positively on the European partners. Two Iranian professors, teaching in universities in Québec, who came to know the French THAM-3 and the English MAT-3 through the studies by the Canadian partner, showed willingness to translate this test into Farsi (Persian), and piloting it with Iranian-speaking students in Iran, Canada and Italy. A formal agreement between the Coordinator and these two professors has been signed in November, 2015. Although Persian is not a European language, there are numerous Iranian students in European universities whose bilingualism can be supported thanks to

full MLA in their first language. A MLA test in their first language is precisely a tool that can help these students in that direction.

Being aware of the numerous potentialities that the Canadian context can offer to European researchers for studying bi/plurilingual situations, the Canadian partner mediated an invitation from LERTIE (Laboratoire d'Études et Recherches Transdisciplinaires et Interdisciplinaires en Éducation) University of Québec-à-Trois Rivières, addressing the MATEL European partners. This invitation is an incentive to mutual exchanges between Europe and Canada now that the project has ended.

In the short run, another initiative attests to the vitality of the MATEL project beyond its chronological limit, namely a special issue of a scholarly journal that combines MLA issues with sign language/vocal languages bilingualism, a topic that characterized another European LLP called SignMET. A call for papers has been launched from the two Coordinators of these projects in July, 2015 for a special issue on MLA and sign language/vocal languages bilingualism, to appear by the end of 2016. The issue is on its way.

Aside from the formal agreements described above, to which only some of the MATEL partners adhered, other informal ideas were discussed between the partners as forms of exploitation of the outcomes of the project. Among these, the possibility of translating also the MAT-1 (4-6 years) into German, or of validating it in the existing translated versions, such as French or Spanish. This instrument, applicable since preschool level, could be used as a predictor of future achievement in linguistic competencies and metacognitive abilities. Studies on early bilingualism using the French and the Italian THAM-1/MAT-1 showed significant superiority of bilinguals over both French and Italian monolinguals. These outcomes could influence the educational methods in monolingual curricula.

Another line of development of the MATEL project that could be widely exploited concerns the educational products, particularly the videos on the interactive use of tests and the metalinguistic exercises in the classroom. The Portuguese colleagues from Coimbra and Madeira have clearly mentioned that they would use these videos as training instruments for teachers.

In sum, the partners are aware that the research and the educational potentialities of the project just ended are very rich. Some of these potentialities have been converted into precise plans and agreements that can last many years, starting from 2016, and can plausibly generate further plans and products.

6 Contribution to EU policies

The project contributes to encourage multilingualism in education at several levels. The key role of multilingualism in Europe has been expressed in several occasions and it is part of the cohesion policy of the Lisbon Strategy of EU 2007-2013.

This emerged, for instance, in the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 18 September 2008 – Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment (COM 2008 566), according to which multilingualism is an asset and a commitment, a value for intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and prosperity.

The priorities expressed in the mentioned communication are addressed by the project:

- helping EU countries develop new educational tools to ensure that school-leavers have better language skills;
- gathering data to monitor progress in language teaching and learning - to encourage mastery of more than one language as a way of improving job prospects and enabling people to move around within the EU;
- rewarding innovation in language teaching and learning.

By promoting the concept of metalinguistic awareness (MLA) as a way to assess and improve language learning, this project is in line with the European policies about multilingualism.

The MATEL project addresses two of the **Lifelong Programme Objectives**:

- **To promote language learning and linguistic diversity:** The project intends to promote MLA viewed as a means to access linguistic meanings in depth. According to this perspective, MLA is to be considered both as an outcome of bi/multilingualism, where ambiguities and conflicts between meanings are always latent, and as a significant predictor of additional languages learning, especially in complex multilingual settings.
- **To encourage the best use of results, innovative products and processes and to exchange good practice in the fields covered by the Lifelong Learning Programme, in order to improve the quality of education and training:**

As far as the project targets a common, scientifically-based battery for assessing MLA in different European languages, it will stimulate scientific dialogue between researchers concerned with the study of MLA in these languages and in others. On the other hand, the creation of innovative educational materials in different European languages will provide tools for promoting multilingual education.

The MATEL project addresses the following **Specific Objectives of the Key Action 2 (Languages)**:

- **To promote European co-operation in fields covering two or more sub-programmes:** As the project aims at increasing MLA as a transversal key ability in language learning, covering a wide age range (from childhood to adulthood), including School education, Higher education and Adult education, it addresses three subprogrammes in the framework of LLP (namely, Comenius, Erasmus and

Grundtvig), thus encouraging European co-operation in different educational fields throughout all the educational system.

- **To promote the quality and transparency of Member States' education and training systems:** Having tests in different European languages based on common conceptual and psychometric grounds will permit to compare abilities and assessment parameters from one educational system to another. Assessing MLA in various European languages will permit to target common standards for students, beyond linguistic diversity.

The MATEL project addresses the following **Operational Objective of the Key Action 2 (Languages)**:

- **To promote language learning and support linguistic diversity in Member States:** MLA, encouraged by this project, provides instruments for metacognition and reflection about different languages in the learning process, it triggers contrastive comparisons not only between different linguistic structures but also between the different cultural systems that underlie these languages, and contributes to develop awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity.

The MATEL project addresses the following Priority:

- **Support for partially or fully bilingual education:** MLA tests in different European languages offer an assessment tool for a relevant predictor of achievement in language abilities in L1, L2, Ln. As such, these tests will be particularly helpful in institutions offering partial or fully bilingual education and in any academic context where the languages targeted by the project officially coexist.

The MATEL project addresses the following Lifelong Learning Programme Horizontal Policy:

- **Promoting awareness of the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity within Europe, as well as of the need to combat racism, prejudice and xenophobia:** The MATEL project aims at fostering awareness not only of linguistic systems as such but also of their cultural and historical roots as a means for fighting racism and xenophobia.

