

Irina M. Cavaion

Research Profile

Dr Irina M. Cavaion is a Research Associate at the Institute for Linguistic Studies, Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS Koper), and the founder and Head of the Laboratory for Linguistic and Social Innovations (LangLAB). Her research focuses on the development of multilingual and intercultural education in multilingual border regions, with particular emphasis on the teaching and learning of neighbouring languages, cross-border cooperation, and the design of innovative pedagogical models. She is the author of the CoBLaLT (Contact-Based Language Learning and Teaching) model, which is based on direct and virtual cross-border contact as a means of supporting language learning and the development of intercultural competences.

Her research also encompasses contact-based language pedagogy, the teaching and learning of minority and neighbouring languages in multilingual border regions, language policy development, teacher education, multilingual literacy, linguistic diversity, and the integration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence into language education. Particular attention is devoted to investigating the role of direct interpersonal and cross-border contact in language learning and to developing sustainable models of multilingual education. She regularly publishes the outcomes of her research in peer-reviewed journals, monographs and edited volumes, and presents her work at national and international scientific conferences.

Research Interests

Multilingual and intercultural education; contact-based language pedagogy; language education; teaching and learning of neighbouring languages; teaching and learning of minority languages in multilingual border regions; cross-border cooperation in education; language policy; teacher education; border spaces and multilingualism; innovative pedagogical models; digitally supported language learning.

Keywords

Multilingualism; interculturality; contact-based language pedagogy; neighbouring languages; minority languages; border regions; CoBLaLT; cross-border contact; language education; teacher education; language policy; language contact.

Selected Publications

Books

Cavaion, I.M. (2020). *Najstniki, stiki in sosedski jeziki: uvodna študija k didaktiki jezikov v stiku*. Koper: Science and Research Centre Koper, Annales ZRS.

Cavaion, I.M. (2016). *Let's Contact!: An Introductory Study to CoBLaLT*. Koper: Annales University Press.

Book Chapters

Cavaion, I.M. (2026). *Fostering inclusivity and cultural connection through students as trainers in their own language, culture, and identity: An introductory study*. In V. Mikolič, D. Košir & M. Rolih (Eds.), *Jeziki sožitja, jeziki konflikta*. Online edition. Koper: Science and Research Centre Koper, Annales ZRS.

Cavaion, I.M. (2025). Reciprocity in language learning: From tandem language and culture learning to Contact-Based Language Learning and Teaching (CoBLaLT). In S. Karpava (Ed.), *Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Language Education* (pp. 127–157). Cham: Springer. *Multilingual Education*.

Cavaion, I.M. (2020). Teaching and learning neighbouring languages in multilingual border areas: Meanings, critical issues, strategies, and perspectives. In V. Mikolič (Ed.), *Language and Culture in the Intercultural World* (pp. 256–269). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Cavaion, I.M. (2020). Contiguous or border languages and their teaching in Europe. In S. Bratož, A. Pirih & A. Kocbek (Eds.), *Pathways to Plurilingual Education* (pp. 47–58). Koper: University of Primorska Press. *Knjižnica Ludus*, 24.

Articles

Čok, L., & Cavaion, I.M. (2023). Languages and cultures beyond borders. In F. Fusco, C. Marcato & R. Oniga (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Third International Colloquium on Plurilingualism* (pp. 183–202). Udine: Forum.

Cavaion, I.M. (2022). Slovene as a minority and foreign language in Italian mainstream schools in the Province of Trieste. *Razprave in gradivo: Revija za narodnostna vprašanja*, 88, 27–47.

Cavaion, I.M. (2022). Teaching and learning the language of the neighbouring country: Tools for mainstream primary education in the Slovenian–Italian border area. *Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht*, 27(1), 81–103.

Cavaion, I.M. (2020). Italian in the mainstream schools of the bilingual border area of the Slovenian coast: Language policy, teachers' perspectives and a vision for the future. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 14(2), 130–145.

Cavaion, I.M. (2020). *L'insegnamento dell'italiano e la didattica del contatto nell'area multilingue di confine italo-slovena: Una proposta metodologica*. *Italiano LinguaDue*, 12(2), 268–281.

Cavaion, I.M. (2017). Promoting minority language learning within mainstream primary schools: A five-step constructivist and IT-enhanced model. In J. Filipović & J. Vučo (Eds.), *Manjinski jezici u obrazovanju i učenje jezika: Izazovi i nove perspektive* (pp. 105–122). Belgrade: Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade.

Selected Projects

Research Programme

- **P5-0409** – *Dimensions of Slovenhood between the Local and the Global at the Beginning of the Third Millennium* (since 2019), member of the research programme.

Research Projects

- **J6-3132** – *Strengthening the (Social) Constructivist Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Neighbouring Languages in Slovenian Border Primary Schools through the Co-Creation, Expansion and Evaluation of the CoBLaLT Model* (2021–2025), Principal Investigator.
- **Z6-8257** – *Teaching and Learning (Neighbouring) Languages through Direct Contact* (2017–2019), Postdoctoral Research Project, Principal Investigator.
- **CrossTerm** – *Crossborder Standardization of Institutional Terminology* (Interreg VI-A Italy–Slovenia 2021–2027; 2024–2026), Researcher.
- **SCORE** – *Smart Control of the Climate Resilience in European Coastal Cities* (Horizon 2020, 2021–2025), Researcher.
- **EDUKA2** – *Cross-Border Governance of Education* (Interreg V-A Italy–Slovenia, 2017–2019), Researcher.

Biography

Dr Irina M. Cavaion is a Research Associate at the Institute for Linguistic Studies, Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS Koper). She graduated in Violin from the Benedetto Marcello Conservatoire in Venice (1994). She graduated with distinction in Educational Studies (Language Education) from the University of Trieste in 2003 with a dissertation entitled *Presupposti storici, metodologici, istituzionali dell'insegnamento delle lingue straniere nella scuola elementare italiana ed inglese/ Historical, Methodological and Institutional Foundations of Foreign Language Teaching in Italian and English Primary Schools*. She also spent an academic year at the University of Cambridge. In 2016, she was awarded a PhD by the University of Primorska in the field of multilingual and intercultural education with a doctoral dissertation entitled *Teaching and Learning Primary Neighbouring Language through Cross-Border Contact*. Since 2017, she has been employed at ZRS Koper, where she served as Acting Head of the Institute for Linguistic Studies from 2017 to 2019. Since 2025, she has been Head of the Laboratory for Linguistic and Social Innovations (LangLAB). Her research focuses on multilingualism, the teaching and learning of neighbouring languages, cross-border cooperation, and the development of innovative pedagogical approaches.

Leadership Positions

- Founder and Head of the Laboratory for Linguistic and Social Innovations (LangLAB), ZRS Koper (since 2025).
- Member of the Scientific Committee of the Centre for Plurilingualism, University of Udine (CIP UNIUD) (since 2026).
- Principal Investigator of the ARIS research project J6-3132 (2021–2025).
- Principal Investigator of the postdoctoral research project Z6-8257 (2017–2019).
- Acting Head of the Institute for Linguistic Studies, ZRS Koper (2017–2019).
- National Coordinator and Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Coordinator of ANILS for minority language education (2019–2021).

Awards and Recognition

- **2021** – *Glasnik znanosti* Award of ZRS Koper for outstanding scientific achievements by promising researchers.
- **2017** – SLORI Award for the doctoral dissertation *Teaching and Learning Primary Neighbouring Language through Cross-Border Contact / Poučevanje in učenje sosedskih jezikov v osnovni šoli ob čezmejnem povezovanju*, recognised for its significant contribution to knowledge of the Slovene community in Italy.