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9

Children's Perception of Their Multilingualism

Brigitta Busch

9.1 Introduction

Over the past decade there has been a growing body of research that promotes a shift from doing research *about* children towards doing research *with* children. Coming initially from education and sociology, this reorientation is increasingly reaching applied linguistics. It implies taking children seriously as research participants when it comes to exploring their perceptions, acts of positioning, desires, and concerns. Such approaches combine the traditional methodology of interviewing and observation with creative practices such as reflective drawings, map making, photography, or collages. They are understood as participatory (treating children as experts and agents in their own lives), reflexive (including children in reflecting on meanings and interpretations) and focused on children's lived experiences (looking at lives lived rather than at knowledge gained) (Clark & Moss 2011). The development of such multimodal methodologies coincides with what is often termed as visual turn in social and cultural studies (for an overview see Rose 2001; Pink 2012).

In multilingualism research, visual or art-based methods with children and adolescents were first developed in projects and networks in the *Francophonie* (e.g., Molinié 2009) and Canada (e.g., Moore 2010; Farmer & Prasad 2014), in Finland (e.g., Pietikäinen et al. 2008), the German-speaking space (e.g., Krumm 2003; Busch 2010), and South Africa (e.g., Bristowe et al. 2014). Such visual methods were employed to explore multilingualism in different sites, such as multilingual classrooms, families, or playgrounds, and in different constellations, such as indigenous and minority languages, displacement, migration, and mobility, or postcolonial and racialized language regimes. To elicit narrations about multilingual practices and self-representations, children are invited to produce reflexive drawings or visual narratives, for instance of themselves as

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speakers/learners of particular languages, of their language learning trajectory, of their linguistic resources, or of their social networks (for an overview see Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta 2018; Kalaja & Melo-Pfeifer 2019). Prasad (2018), one of the promoters of participatory art base research with children, accompanied children in different schools for several months to investigate how they make sense of linguistic diversity in their environments and of their own linguistic resources. Many works using visual methods with children employ the so-called language portrait which is at the core of this paper. Common to the mentioned approaches which can be summarized under the heading 'reflexive visualizations' is the assumption that meaning is created across the visual and the verbal mode. As Kramsch (2019: xix) observes, "[l]anguage is not replaced but enriched by these visual representations and other semiotic modalities. While visuals can provide the basis for a narration of [participants'] experience, language can offer a common metalanguage to reflect on this narrative."

In this chapter, I will first discuss theoretical and methodological implications in multilingualism research employing reflexive visualizations. The main part is based on language portrait workshops carried out in primary schools in Vienna with children between 6 and 11 years of age to show how children reflect upon and represent their multilingualism. In these workshops children visualized their linguistic repertoires, making use of the provided template of a body outline (Figure 9.1), commented on their drawings, and participated in group discussions.

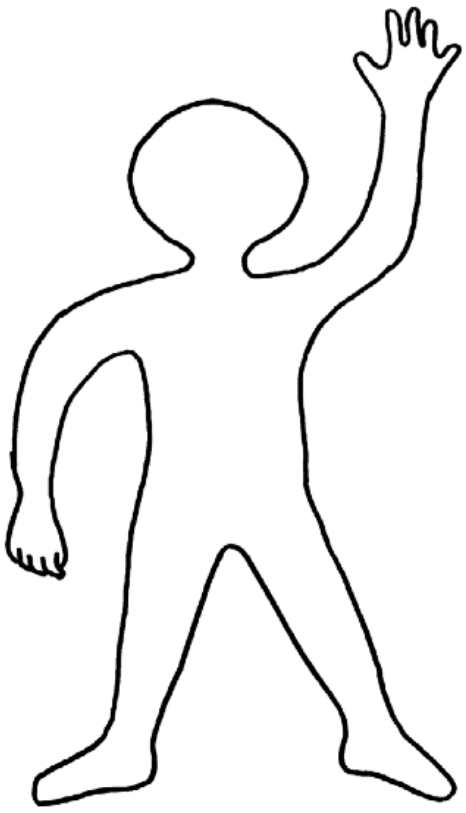

Figure 9.1 Template for language portraits with children. (http://heteroglossia.net/Sprachportraet.123.0.html)

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9.2 Reflexive Visualizations: Theoretical and Methodological Implications

9.2.1 Biographical, Multimodal, Collaborative

Using reflexive visualizations to explore children's perceptions of their multilingualism entails specific methodological implications that are related to the biographical, multimodal, and collaborative character of such approaches. They can be characterized as *biographical* insofar as they are interested in a subject or first-person perspective, in how children experience, construct, and interpret their own linguistic being in the world as well as the linguistic environments they are exposed to. When participants are invited to speak about their multilingualism the focus is on what Jakobson (1960) called the emotive function of language, i.e., on how we present ourselves or wish to be perceived. Instead of being ascribed to pre-given categories (as speaker of such-and-such language belonging to such-or-such social or racial category), participants can position themselves vis-à-vis others as well as vis-à-vis (sometimes competing or conflicting) Discourses about language and language use (Busch 2012). In this sense, the biographical subject should not be thought of as pre-given but as being brought into life by Discourses (or 'interpellations') that assign to an individual certain defined social position it can inhabit (Butler 1993). Equally, lived experience of language (Busch 2017) is lived and understood only through the prism of our ideological perceptions of the world (Vološinov 1929/1973).

In reflexive drawings we are typically concerned with what Mitchell (1987), one of the pioneering figures in visual studies, characterized as 'image-text', that is to say, a form of *multimodal* representation in which image and language do not appear in their 'pure' form, but refer reciprocally to each other. Meaning is created in both modes: one mode is neither a translation nor a simple illustration of the other. The visual and the verbal can both be understood as embedded in social practices, referring (in their production and their reception) to other images and discourses that circulate in the public sphere (Rose 2001). And both can be understood as being situationally framed and co-produced in interaction with (present or imagined) others. But meaning is conferred in different ways: in the verbal mode, it is through *selection* and *combination* of given linguistic elements, in the visual mode, meaning is created by an *assemblage* composed of pictorial components such as lines, contrasts, colors, shapes, proportions. Whereas verbal narrations are structured in a linear and sequential way and tend to link single elements in chains of *temporality* and *causality*, the visual mode steers one's vision toward the whole (the *gestalt*) and toward the *relationality* and the *interplay* of the parts with regard to each other and the whole. Whereas the verbal tends to foreground diachronic continuity (or discontinuity), the visual emphasizes synchronic coherence (or fragmentation). As Langer (1948) developed in her seminal work, which is often referred to in visual studies, the difference is in essence not one between language and

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image but rather between two ways of projection: the *discursive projection* "requires us to string out our ideas even though their objects rest one within the other, as pieces of clothing that are actually worn one over the other have to be strung side by side on the clothesline" (Langer 1948: 65–66). In contrast, the *presentational projection* presents the components simultaneously: the meanings of particular elements that compose a larger, articulate symbol are understood only through the meaning of the whole, through their relations within the total structure. According to Langer (1948: 82–83), the presentational mode that operates by condensation lends itself in particular for the expression of what tends to defy a linear and logic projection, such as "the ambivalences and intricacies of inner experience, the interplay of feelings with thoughts and impressions, memories and echoes of memories, transient fantasy, or its mere runic traces, all turned into nameless, emotional stuff." The advantage of reflexive visualizations is that they allow the participants to switch back and forth between the two modes of meaning making: to reflect discursively about the image as well as to visually present discursive reflections. As we will see later in our examples, children make use of an ample repertoire of semiotic resources including written representations in all their possible forms, whether they are logographic, iconographic, alphabetic, pictographic, or ideographic.

When working with reflexive drawings the focus is less on the accomplished picture as an artifact than on the *collaborative* process of thinking in and with images involving the research participants. During creative activities, interactions among children are usually vivid, when commenting, discussing, and supporting each other's doings. We do not understand the language portrait or other reflexive visualizations as a representation of the individual language repertoire 'as it is', but as a situational and context-bound co-production framed by the inputs introducing and accompanying the language portrait activity (see Section 9.3.1) as well as by other factors (setting, available materials for visuals, etc.). The picture is seen as a moment in a process of reflection and imagination that is not simply a solitary act but implies an orientation towards an (imagined or physically present) other. It is produced to be looked at and can serve as a point of reference in a subsequent presentation of the picture. The meaning of what is shown is not imposed by an auctorial observer but collaboratively negotiated so that the power of interpretation ultimately remains with the author, who decides what s/he wants to show without being urged to impart more than s/he wants.

9.2.2 The Language Portrait

For more than 25 years so-called language portraits (Figure 9.1) – graphic visualizations of the linguistic repertoire using the outline of a body silhouette – have been employed in schools and other educational institutions, to

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initiate processes of language reflection. Furthermore, the language portrait has become a methodological tool in multilingualism research (Busch 2018). The idea of the language portrait can be traced back on the one hand to a group of pedagogues in Hamburg (Neumann 1991) and linguists in Vienna (Krumm 2003, and *Forschungsgruppe Spracherleben*, www.heteroglossia.net). On the other hand, it draws on experiences with whole-body-mapping (for an overview see de Jager et al. 2016), an art-based collaborative approach originally developed in critical feminist and post-colonial studies with the claim to strengthen self-empowerment. In providing the outline of a body silhouette as a frame, thus avoiding provoking the fear before the blank page, the language portrait can be considered as an easily accessible activity. It is left to the participants to use the body outline as a template for coloring in or as the basis for a schematized diagram, to complement and elaborate it artistically or even to turn the page and draw an own-body silhouette. With its reference to the body, the language portrait offers the possibility of reflecting on one's communicative repertoire both from the 'inner' perspective of the experiencing *subject-body* as well as from an 'external' perspective onto the *object-body* (Merleau-Ponty 1962). It makes it possible to shift between the 'internal' view informed by one's own emotionally imbued language experiences and linguistic dispositions (e.g., I love speaking English), and the external 'outside' view on languages and language practices as objects (e.g., English is a useful language). The possibility of switching between the two perspectives allows participants to regulate how much of themselves they want to reveal.

The body silhouette also helps to scaffold the structuring of a metaphorical space for reflecting on one's linguistic repertoire. As Lakoff and Johnson (1999) formulate, metaphors are rooted 'in the flesh', i.e., in the bodily experience. The body serves as a point of reference for spatial metaphors that often structure language portraits: internal/external as metaphors for familiar and unfamiliar; above/below for current and more remote; large/small for important and less important, etc. The silhouette of course also suggests a structuring according to common body metaphors: for example, the head for reason, the belly for emotions, the heart for intimacy, the hand for social activity (for a metaphor analysis of language portraits see Coffey 2015). In the language portraits, iconic elements (such as arrow, lightning, heart, ears), symbols (national flags) or ornaments are frequently used. Colors, too, or different color shades, are employed partly in the sense of common connotations (e.g., red for the emotional, blue as a 'cool' color, light for what has a positive, dark for what has a negative connotation), but also because they are associated with personal preferences (favorite colors) or aversions. It should, however, be noted that there are no generally valid laws to account for the meaning of a particular color.

As visualizations emphasize the relation of the particular elements to each other and to the whole, they are particularly suited for initiating

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reflections on the multilingual repertoire which, following Gumperz (1964) forms a whole from which speakers chose situationally adequate ways of communicating. Jessner (2008: 18) develops: "Due to the dynamics of multilingualism, that is, the changes which usually take place in the course of time with regard to language proficiency and consequently language dominance in a multilingual repertoire, the use of the terms L1, L2 and L3 becomes even more problematic." Consequently, following Bakhtin (1981), I prefer to think of the repertoire as heteroglossic, as even speakers who consider themselves monolinguals can draw on a large range of linguistic resources including registers, dialects, sociolects, etc. The repertoire can be conceived as forming a hypothetical structure or disposition, a space of constraints and of potentialities that preforms a person's capacity of acting in and reacting to different types of communicative events. It can be understood as chronotopically layered in the sense that it reflects the synchronic coexistence of different social spaces in which we participate as speakers/signers, as well as that it points diachronically to different levels of time – not only backward to the past of our language biography, which has left its traces and scars, but also forward, anticipating and projecting future situations and events we are preparing to face. In this sense, the repertoire is inherently dialogic, socially oriented, and intersubjective (Busch 2012, 2017); it does not 'belong' to the individual but, in the same manner as Bakhtin (1981: 294) characterizes language, lies "on the borderline between oneself and the other." In order to find a common ground of communication with the other, there is a need to constantly adjust and expand the repertoire (Rymes 2014).

9.3 Representing Multilingual Repertoires

9.3.1 Using Language Portraits in Schools

The following part is based on empirical data gathered during workshops on linguistic diversity with children between 6 and 1 years of age in primary schools in Austria. The main aim of language portrait workshops is to encourage participants to reflect upon their linguistic life worlds, practices, and desires and to portray their communicative repertoire. In this chapter I refer to workshops held in primary schools in Vienna. One is a public primary school located in a neighborhood in which traditional labor migration and social housing for refugees coincide with beginning gentrification. The other workshops were held in private international schools that propose bi- or multilingual programs and primarily attract children from mobile international communities. The workshops were mainly held in German, and all translations into English are by myself. Although the schools differ greatly in terms of their population, they can all be considered as language-friendly environments providing a sort of safe space in which multilingualism is welcomed. This is the case also for the public primary school, which does not offer a bilingual curriculum but puts

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an emphasis on language awareness and offers a space for heritage languages (Busch 2014). This certainly influenced the way in which the children reflected upon their multilingualism. Language portrait workshops in less language-friendly school environments show that students sometimes adopt negative evaluations of heteroglossic repertoires and, for instance, disqualify nonstandard varieties of the medium of teaching and learning as "untidy" (*nicht ordentlich*) or "sloppy" (*schlampig*) (Purkarthofer 2012: 17).

To prepare the children for their role as co-researchers we had a short discussion about languages in the immediate and larger environment. Then the language portrait activity was introduced by asking them to think about their languages: how they speak with whom, which languages they use, and where, how they feel about them, which languages they hear around them, and which ones they know or would like to know in their future life. Then they were asked to choose colors that best represented their different ways of communicating and to place them with respect to the body silhouette. For a discussion on how different prompts frame language portraits, see Kusters and De Meulder (2019) or Busch (2018). The activity is usually well accepted by the children, most of whom interpret the drawing as a self-portrait and a screen for projection. An indicator for the appropriation of the image is the frequent occurrence of add-ons such as faces, hairstyles, or clothes that transform the silhouette into a self-portrait. Children also use the drawing to position themselves by expressing preferences for currently popular lifestyles or affinity to communities. In our workshops, children presented themselves, for instance, as computer game warrior, Hello Kitty girl, princess, or with a Sikh turban.

Figure 9.2 shows one of the language portraits drawn during a workshop in the public school by a 9-year-old girl. I have chosen this portrait not because it is particularly colorful or richly decorated, or because it contains an unusually large number of languages, but because the author presents in it much of what also appears in many other portraits by children of the same age group.

Avin (all names were changed) structured her portrait (Figure 9.2) top to bottom: the red in the head stands for Kurdish, which she speaks with her parents and grandparents; the scarlet stripes in the throat and shoulders are for Arabic, which she uses with her aunt; German, yellow in the right arm, is, as she says, important for her not only because it is the main language at school but also because she speaks it, alongside Kurdish, with her brothers and sisters. The orange in the right hand is for Turkish, which she wants to learn because one of her best friends speaks it. She hears Turkish, like Arabic, on TV too. Pink, a color she particularly likes, in the raised left hand is for Spanish. While drawing she insists several times how much she wants to learn Spanish "because of my student." The school runs a buddy program in which to-be-teachers support learners who have recently arrived in Austria. Avin also maps "baby language," explaining: "I have got a little brother, I can understand him." Her portrait displays a

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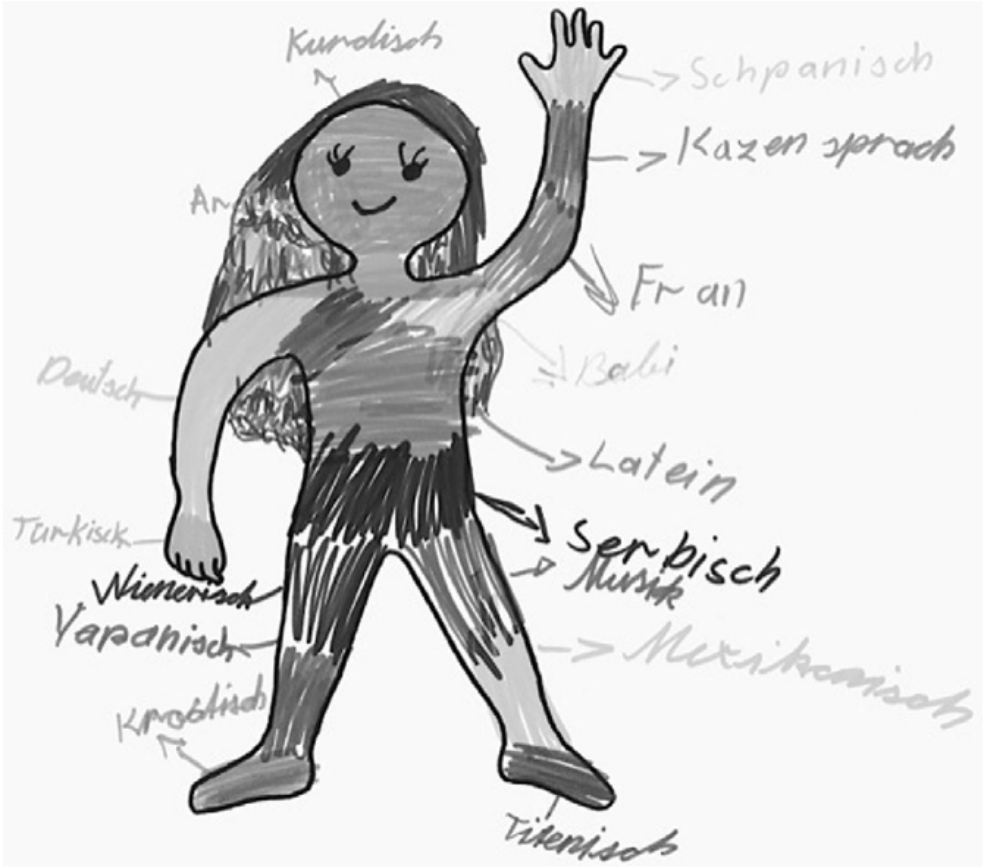

Figure 9.2 Avin's language portrait

number of further languages in the body and the legs: English, which she learns at school; Viennese, Serbian, Croatian, and French, which she hears from children in the neighborhood. Japanese, "Mexican," and Latin appear in her portrait, as in many others in the same workshop: Japanese, because recently an opera singer from Tokyo came to the school and taught the students songs in Japanese; "Mexican," because one of the classmates enthusiastically informed about his holidays in Mexico; Latin, because the children learned some Latin plant names at school. Avin also inscribes "cat language" and "animalish" (*tierisch*) into her portrait. While drawing she asks, "May I also write music?" She has discovered what she calls the "language of music" since she has started to play the violin and performed on stage. Finally, she adds eyes, mouth, and hair, expressing, so to speak, that she has made the language portrait her own, and concludes the presentation of the many languages in her portrait by saying, "And I want to learn exactly all of them."

The many languages and ways of communicating referred to in language portraits are not an arbitrary choice but refer to a complex communicative repertoire that reflects emotionally lived experiences of language and relates to the biographical trajectory (with its dislocations), to different significant

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partners of interaction, and to different social spaces. It points not only to the past and the present but also, by voicing desires, to the future.

9.3.2 Presenting Oneself

Avin does not declare herself as a 'so-and-so speaker' but presents herself as multilingual – in contrast to the school register, which classifies her as a Kurdish speaker. In Austria as in many other countries, at the moment of school enrollment, parents are asked to declare the child's 'mother tongue'. Even if multiple answers with regard to the family language (e.g., Kurdish, Turkish, and German) are possible, the child is assigned by the school authorities to a single language category. Only for this language (if not German) is the student entitled to attend so-called mother tongue education as far as provided. Thus, through a process of narrowing a multifaceted repertoire, a reduction of complexity takes place that corresponds to a one-person-one-language ideology with its language in education policy implications. This process of 'monolingualization' finally results in creating a binary opposition – as reflected by the official statistics – between a marked category 'pupils with first languages other than German' on the one hand, and an unmarked category of those who are assumed to be native speakers of the hegemonic language on the other. This latter category is tacitly assumed to be the norm, although less than half of the total school population in Vienna are reported to be first language speakers of German (Statistik Austria 2019: 164).

The students in our workshops presented themselves as competent actors in linguistically diverse environments. As Krumm (2003) already pointed out when using language portraits for language awareness exercises, cases in which pupils present themselves as monolingual are rare. This is certainly also due to the fact that the approach favors the colorful over the monochrome, the multilingual over the monolingual. Andreas, the only one who claimed to speak only one language, first regretted that his portrait was unicolored (for German) but later discovered that he could add English and Japanese. Most of the portraits display a large range of colors and a great variety of semiotic resources. However, this does not mean that language-ideological judgments and linguistic power relations do not appear in the language portraits.

The fact that national flags, colors, emblems, and symbols are used in some of the portraits to represent particular languages can, with good reason, be interpreted as a manifestation of Discourses that link languages to nations or nation states. But to assume that this is necessarily the case would be wrong, as the representation of languages by national flags is a current practice, for instance, in computer applications. The equation of language and nation is virtually deconstructed when children invent flags for their fantasy languages or, as Judith did when she designed flags for the

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languages in which she communicates with animals, a flag with a bone for "dogish," a fish bone for "catish," or a piece of cheese for "mousish."

In the workshops in both schools, the ideologically loaded term 'mother tongue', which signals affiliation to a particular (national or ethnical) language group, was used only very rarely. In one of the group discussions, Kenan, a student whose family recently arrived from Syria, concluded the presentation of his portrait in which he had already named a number of languages relevant to him with an affirming undertone: "Yes, and Kurdish is my mother tongue." In the same group, a discussion evolved around another boy's linguistic affiliation:

Ali:	Kevin speaks KURDISH!
Interviewer:	So, what about Kurdish?
Kevin:	Yes, I do
Interviewer:	And Turkish?
Ali:	Is his mother tongue!
Kevin:	No.
Kenan:	KURDISH is his mother tongue!
Interviewer:	Ah. You rather speak Kurdish at home?
Kevin:	No. Turkish.

Whereas Ali and Kenan categorically construct Kevin as a mother tongue speaker either of Turkish or of Kurdish, Kevin refuses to commit himself and prefers to remain in the ambiguous. In his portrait, he drew Turkish in the left arm, Kurdish in the right one, both occupying an approximately equal surface. The precarious position of Kurdish as a repressed minority language in Turkey with its sometimes violent repercussions in the diaspora in several cases left noticeable traces in how children with Turkish-Kurdish backgrounds conceived their repertoire. In contrast, students with Syrian-Kurdish backgrounds who had recently arrived as refugees tended to emphasize their identification with Kurdish. In the same way, hierarchies imposed by colonial language policies manifest themselves in language portraits, among others, through processes of erasure (Irvine and Gal 2000) that make indigenous African languages invisible. In his language portrait, Léopold colored the main part of the body in brown, explaining in the legend that this stood for 'African'. Only when asked did he specify that he spoke Mòoré and Fula as his family was from Burkina Faso, but he did not want to show them in his portrait because "nobody knows about them." In contrast, the former colonial languages French, English, and Portuguese, and the neocolonial Chinese figure prominently in the limbs of the body silhouette.

From autobiographical narratives of adults, we know that linguistic injuries experienced during childhood related to minoritized languages, colonial language hierarchies, or migration often leave lasting wounds (Burck 2005). In contrast, it seems that when children represent their

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multilingual lives, such negative experiences are rarely addressed openly, but rather appear in the form of hints or omissions.

9.3.3 Exploring Semiotic Resources

Some children structured the legend for the drawing introducing categories such as "languages I know well," "languages I know a little bit," and "languages I want to learn." The third category opens a space to express desires and projections linked to language. It happens that children forget to represent the language(s) they use most frequently. "Speaking normal" is a term that was used more than once, referring to the most current language practices. At the same time, the unknown or less known often fascinates. What it means to know a language "a little bit" was sometimes expressed in a quantifiable way (counting up to 10, knowing three, four, or five words, the days of the week, greetings, songs, etc.), sometimes as not speaking but hearing it on a daily basis (e.g., from peers in school). The question of knowing was not only negotiated in terms of (quantifiable) vocabulary and seemingly objective criteria but also in terms of subjective experience. Explaining his portrait, Marcello said, "German in the head because I always need to think. French or Italian come quicker." In the group discussions, participants frequently comment on each other's claims of knowing (or not knowing) a language, sometimes questioning such claims, sometimes, in an inclusive move, encouraging others to affirm themselves as knowledgeable. Yara invited her friend to learn Kurdish, "then you can speak with us." Kaya pointed out to Jovan that there were a number of common words in Turkish and Serbian, and this meant already knowing the other's language a little bit. It seems that knowing a language "a little" is primarily about what one can do with it (counting, greeting, signaling alinement or responsiveness); it embodies, in Merleau-Ponty's (1962: 171) words, less Descartes' 'I think' than an 'I can'.

It is striking how many language portraits point to means of communications beyond set categories and norms, as secret languages, language games, communication with animals or plants, fantasy languages, or fantasy writing systems. Answering the question of a schoolmate, Hannah defines secret language as "a language that nobody other than you knows and that you speak for instance with your best friend. So that nobody else understands what you say now." In her conception, a secret language creates a space of intimacy among the initiated, thereby excluding others. In the portraits such languages are often named or represented by emblems. All kinds of techniques are used: vowels are replaced, syllables added, fragments from different languages are combined, and for secret writing, encoding systems based on numbers are imitated. Does not 'Pantro es dante', the fantasy name of one of these languages, sound derived from Latin, which at the time of the workshop

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enjoyed high prestige because of the presence of Latin plant names during lessons? Similarly, parody and comedy are displayed, often borrowed from popular media characters like 'Donald Duck speech', articulated in the cheek.

The following playful negotiation about language creativity and language norm developed between Sera, a 6-year-old in her first year, and Kenan, 10 years old, in his fourth year of schooling. It was video-recorded by Kenan during a school excursion shortly after our workshop. While walking in the forest, Sera engages in the rhythmical and rhymed recital of the English sounding fantasy words: "*peezes, feezes, freezes*." Kenan interrupts her self-contained play, and a dialogue unfolds as to whether these words were English or a secret language. Kenan positions himself in the role of the elder and knowledgeable and challenges Sera, asserting that English cannot be a secret language because everybody knows it. Sera opposes that, asserting that even English can function as a secret language, for instance, in presence of her cousin in Turkey who does not understand it. Then, Kenan accuses Sera of just mixing any languages together. She replies by again aligning nonsense syllables:

Sera: Blablabla, blabla, blabla [in an affirmative tone]
Kenan: Bla, bla, bla, bla, bla, I can do that too, do that too.

[. . .]
Sera: No, this is a, is a secret language, called, uhm, called a dino language.
Kenan: DINO language? Dino language sounds like this: gsh, gsh, gsh [with a hissing sound]
Sera: No, dino language goes hrss, hrss, hrss, hrss, hrss eah, hrss eah, hrss eah, hrss eah, hrss eah, hrss, hrss [rhythmically while walking]

The scene illustrates the importance of a space in which children can, in a playful way, explore and negotiate the liminal zone between linguistic/semiotic creativity and language as socially and culturally normed and norming. In the scene described above, the elder positions himself as defender of the normative, while the younger empowers herself through creativity. The fascination with secret languages and language play, in other words with the material quality of language as taking shape for instance in rhythmical intonations, consonances, specific written signs, or gestures, points to what Jakobson (1960) called the poetic function of language. Following Langer (1948: 82), poetic language in its material quality foregrounds the presentational dimension, i.e., "the interplay of feelings with thoughts and impressions." Children's keen interest in this dimension reminds us that the communicative repertoire is much more than a toolbox consisting of testable competences, and first of all

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constitutes a space of potentialities and affordances that needs to be explored and tried out intra- and intersubjectively.

The child psychiatrist Winnicott (1971/1991) underlines the importance in a child's development of an intermediate area of experience between inner and outer world, between "the subjective and that which is objectively perceived" (1971/1991: 4). He introduces the term 'transitional object' to designate the intermediate that is not fully recognized as belonging to external reality. As transitional phenomena he explicitly mentions, besides the famous teddy bear, babbling and, later in child development, a repertory of songs and tunes recited in particular moments, for instance when preparing for sleep or when fighting anxiety. Transitional objects emerge by appropriation and transformation of found material into self-created material. Social and cultural experience is thus acquired in play. This is the case also for language experience (Leszcynska-Koenen 2016). The child treats pre-existing symbol systems imparted by relevant others as his own; in the process of language acquisition it 'recreates' the language and imbues it with own meanings, which, like other 'self-created' things in the found reality, gives it a quality of uniqueness.

When children engage with language portraits, they enjoy discovering semiotic resources beyond the spoken or written language. Sign language, as well as fingerspelling and mimetic gestures and the desire to learn signing, are in the drawings, not surprisingly, mostly located in the hands or upper arms. As in the portrait of Avin, who mentioned "music language," the fascination for possibilities of meaning making beyond the verbal is often expressed in syntagmatic compounds or lexical creations such as "language of painting," "drawingish" (*zeichnerisch*), or "eyish" (*augisch*, for eye-contact communication).

In a study employing language portraits with signers, Kusters and De Meulder (2019) rightly argue that this takes the method to a new level as signers emphasize ways of using language across different modalities (such as signing, writing, speaking, mouthing, gesturing, pointing) as well as by establishing a more immediate connection between language and the body. In their study, Kusters and De Meulder show how several participants literally mapped their body when signing and gesturing in their narratives, thus performing and *becoming* their language portrait. A certain awareness of the multimodal and embodied character of language can also be found in portraits made by children in our workshops: Mona, for instance, showed that French, which she associated with her ballet lessons and drew in the upper leg, is so to speak in her flesh by demonstrating two ways of doing the *pas de bourrée*; Yara explained that the turquoise in her hand was for German which – in contrast to her family language – she uses for writing; Kenan added to the body silhouette an ear for Turkish that he only knows from listening to his peers; Arthur drew an eyebrow for Kurdish because *brû* (eyebrow) is the only word he knows in this language; Aharon colored the head in red for "head speech, speaking in the head" (*Kopfreden, im Kopf*

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reden), explaining, "sometimes I have a language in the head that I just can't say," for instance just before falling asleep. Others mentioned in this context languages they use with their plush animals and dolls.

9.3.4 Relating to the Other

As developed earlier, children treasure personalized secret languages also because they allow them to affirm privileged relations. Especially when referring to ways of communicating in the close family, children often do not mention named languages (German, English, etc.) but evoke the idea of a particular type of idiolect. It is possibly the visual mode that favors the representation of less regimented and more emotionally colored conceptualizations of language. Cornelius, for instance, uses the French term *langage familier* (familiar, colloquial language), not *langue familiale* (family language), to designate the communicative practices within his close family, where they use both French and German. Marcello choses a specific color to designate his "language with brothers and sisters." Jovan names *sestra* (Serbian for sister) a way of communicating that he characterizes as a "language mix" that he practices exclusively with his elder sister. Ways of communicating with baby sisters or brothers are mentioned with emotional commitment: Lotte drew a golden heart for her "language of love (with my sweet baby sister)." She explained that the 2-month-old sister responds when she talks to her, but that talking in this case is not so much with words as with cuddling, thus pointing to the bodily-emotional and multisemiotic dimension of communicative interaction.

Children's representations of their multilingual repertoires also reflect the linguistic diversity and the transidiomatic practices (Jacquemet 2005) that emerge – beyond the dichotomy between the languages of the country of origin and those of the country of residence – from processes of dislocation and mobility in transnational families. Krishan, who speaks Punjabi and Viennese German at home, uses "German from Germany" with his cousin. Tanja drew attention to the importance of two words she knew in Ukrainian for addressing, as a symbolic gesture, her new sister-in-law, with whom she otherwise communicates in English. It is not surprising that local dialects (e.g., Tyrolean, Syrian) and heritage languages (e.g., Kurdish) figure frequently in connection with grandparents.

The revival of a lost heritage language can emerge as a desire. Milan took special care in choosing the right color for the Czech that his mother had recently started to learn with the aim of reviving a lost family language. Sophie began her portrait with the "Latin of my grandmother; she is dead already, but it was so beautiful to listen to her speaking Latin," The desire to learn a new language (Kramsch 2009) figures prominently in the portraits and is often associated with particular persons: elder brothers and sisters who learn these languages at school, peers presented as language brokers

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who transmit chunks of language knowledge, or adults with whom children identify. In the local public school it was primarily, and particularly among girls, the assistant teacher, a female Kurdish speaker, who served as a role model.

9.3.5 Opening up Spaces

In their language portraits and in the discussions the children frequently linked languages to spaces or places with their respective language regimes. Whether real or virtual, connected to a biographical past, to present life worlds, or projected onto the future, such spaces are constituted by particular spatial (including communicative) practices and perceived as particular soundscapes that resonate with lived experiences. Besides home, school figures as a significant space. Edi differentiates the more informal Viennese (*Wienarisch*) that he locates in the arms and legs of the body silhouette from what he calls school German (*Schule Doitsch*) located in a bubble outside the body. Similarly, many other children contrast an informal register at home from the normative aspect of standardized language with which they are confronted through the school when socialized into literacy practices. This demonstrates that already young children have an impressive metalinguistic awareness of language variation. As Ioannidou (2017) shows, they are not only able to choose registers in a pragmatically appropriate way but also to perform them in spontaneous play when enacting different characters. When enumerating languages associated with school, the participants in our workshops attached almost less importance to the formal school languages (as the medium of instruction or foreign language learning) than to practices that underline the role of school as a safe space in which communication can be explored and rehearsed, not only in the form of language play and language brokering among peers but also as organized curricular activities. In our workshops, children referred to recent language-related experiences brought into school through projects with enthusiasm: encountering Japanese or Yiddish through songs, or Chinese through calligraphy. Whereas the significance attributed to these languages within the students' repertoire is of course situation-related, the readiness to engage in the hitherto unknown can be developed into a resource that can be accessed regardless of the situation.

Other significant spaces in the everyday life of children besides playgrounds in the immediate neighborhood with their linguascapes (as mentioned by Avin) are spaces and time slots reserved for leisure time activities, such as the ballet lesson Mona associates with French or the karate course Madleine associates with Japanese. Languages that grant access to virtual spaces are also mentioned, e.g., the Spanish of the telenovelas, Arabic or English from news programs and popular songs, "computerish" or "gamesisch" (game language) from computer-related activities.

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Rather unexpectedly, another type of space emerged in some of the portraits: places of longing and desire, simultaneously real and ideal, are constructed as counter-sites to the regulated everyday life in the urban context. These sites 'speak'; they have their own language. Lotte starts her portrait by drawing a heart that she divides between the golden baby language that she shares with her little sister and the green *Murauerisch*, a local dialect that she declares to be her favorite language. Her family had only recently acquired a weekend house there, but, as Lotte says, it is the place where she feels completely at home. Similarly, Kian is eager to convey the importance of a place outside Vienna with garden, greenhouse, outdoor grill, and chicken house. This place where his grandparents live and the larger family gathers on weekends has become for him "a real home" (*eine richtige Heimat*). While conversations among the family members take place in Turkish, Kurdish, and German, for Kian the space is associated with a particular language of intimacy that he calls "chickenish" (*Hühnerisch*) and represents in the drawing by rhythmically placing dots that imitate the staccato of a picking hen. For Kenan it is "animalish" (*Tierisch*) that best captures the memory of what it was like on the big farm the family had back in Syria. Almost in every portrait language figures in connection with such spaces of desire, places where one spent holidays, would like to travel to, or imagines oneself living in the future. Similarly, Prasad (2018), working with photo-collages, observes that children often link plurilingualism with what she calls aspirational dreamscapes.

9.4 Summary and Outlook

The enthusiasm and perseverance that the children devoted to the language portrait activity can be read as an indicator for how much language and communication are invested with affect. If one understands affect with Merleau-Ponty (1962) as a bodily gesture or stance towards the world, one can distinguish between affective gestures intended to open oneself up to the world and those intended to shut oneself off (Busch 2017). Working with language portraits clearly demonstrated that the children perceived linguistic and communicative diversity as a means to open themselves up to the world, to other persons and other spaces, but also illustrated their basic curiosity in exploring poetic and playful potentialities inherent to language in its broadest sense. The keen interest children attributed to the new and unknown, to the experimental and creative proves the importance of safe 'transitional spaces' (Winnicott 1971/1991) in which language can be explored and appropriated and metalinguistic reflection can take place. In contrast, gestures of shutting oneself off from the world are much less manifest in the portraits. Negative and painful experiences related to

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linguistic hierarchies and dominances become apparent mainly in allusions or omissions. In our workshops, which took place in primary schools welcoming linguistic heterogeneity, the participating children used the visualizations to present themselves as competent language users and learners, to position themselves with their personal special interests and their identifications with lifestyles and family habits, and to voice their desires and ambitions for the future.

The multimodal approach with its focus on the communicative repertoire helps to gain such insights into how children conceive their multilingualism. Equally, the language portrait activity can be integrated into curricular activities of language learning, as it encourages pupils (as well as their teachers) to think about their own communicative resources and about language practices in their social environments. Thinking in and with images offers a low-threshold access, especially for children who are in the process of acquiring literacy skills, as it allows reflection on language and communicative practices and project imaginations without having to phrase one's thoughts immediately for an audience or to execute academically driven proficiencies, skills, and abilities. Thinking in visuals has the potential to challenge the discursively established dichotomies, such as between language of origin and target language, as well as the idea of languages as separate entities, and stimulate reflection upon intra-language variation and trans-language differentiation, "to regard one language (and the verbal world corresponding to it) through the eyes of another language" (Bakhtin 1981: 296). The language portrait suggests conceiving the repertoire as a whole. Many of the portraits in our workshops revealed a fascination for different semiotic modes (signing, gesturing, drawing, dancing, etc.) that challenges the predominance of logocentrism. The visuals and the narratives showed that children perceive their multilingual repertoires less in terms of competences that they 'have' than in terms of 'doing' things with language, on being able to relate with others and position themselves with regard to established, sometimes competing language ideologies present in their immediate environment.

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