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Words and images of multilingualism: A case study of two North Korean refugees

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Abstract: The article analyses the experience of multilingualism in the South Korean context, focusing on the experiences of North Korean refugees. The research participants (N = 2) are originally from North Korea, but now live in South Korea, where they face challenges in their adaptation to the new society, its linguistic landscape and its practices and positions with regard to language issues in society and in education. By combining verbal and visual means of data collection, we aim to analyse the multilingual trajectory of the research participants, their experiences of different languages and language learning and, further, the emotions that are attached to these. Our approach is socio-cognitive in that we seek to show how individual experiences intertwine with and refract the particular societal contexts and their ideologies.

Keywords: multilingualism, visual research methods, socio-cognitive approach, Korean

1 Introduction: The Korean context

North and South Korea have been divided since the Korean War (1950–1953), a fact that has not only made them two radically different societies in the political and cultural sense, but also has left its marks on language, so that the northern and southern varieties of Korean now differ considerably. Even though North and South Korea share the same writing system based on the Korean alphabet, Hanguel [한글], differences in their societal, economic and cultural circumstances have resulted in a number of differences in vocabulary, idioms, grammar, accent and intonation. One example is the higher number of lexical loans in South Korean.

Every year, somewhere between 1,000 and 3,000 North Koreans leave their homeland for South Korea for political, religious or economic reasons (Ministry

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of Unification 2016). Immediately after the ending of the North Korean economic crisis and famine, which lasted from 1994 to 1998, known as the Arduous March [고난의행군], most North Korean defectors came to South Korea to escape starvation. Now, many incomers arrive simply in the hope of improving their standard of living.

The routes of escape, often through third countries such as China or Thailand, are dangerous. Like many other undocumented asylum seekers elsewhere, North Korean refugees frequently resort to the assistance of brokers, and it is not uncommon that they fall victim to human trafficking. If caught when entering Chinese territory, the defectors may be deported back to North Korea,[1] and even if they manage to reach a refugee camp in Thailand, they may need to wait for a background check for a period of several months, possibly years, in crowded refugee camps, where the living conditions can be poor. Thus the escape itself often involves traumatic incidents.

Once in South Korea, the North Korean refugees are sent to a rehabilitation facility, Hanawon [하나원], where they stay for three months. Their life in South Korea is not without its challenges: living away from home, possibly separated from their family, and getting accustomed to a new culture with different values may be difficult. Also, societal attitudes toward North Koreans may be quite negative. An analysis of readers' comments on news articles shows that a total of 65.4 % of the comments about North Koreans were negative and that they were seen as, for example, a social problem. Although some of those who commented considered North Korean defectors to be their brothers and sisters, as they expressed it, as many as 31.2 % labelled them as criminals and spies (Choi and Kim 2013).

Faced with this situation, North Koreans not uncommonly try to hide their background. However, language use, speech style and accent are significant cues in person perception and evaluation (e. g., Scherer and Giles 1979). For this reason, North Koreans also often try to lose their accent: as Rakić et al. (2011: 879) observe, a regional accent can lead to "stereotype activation and possible discrimination against the speaker". If they fail to lose their accent, they may attempt to avoid the company of South Koreans, leading to a vicious circle in which experiences of exclusion and marginalization mix with feelings of loneliness. Identity crises and various psychological problems are not uncommon (Jeon et al. 2008; Park and Kim 2014).

1 Also individuals who have left for economic reasons are recognized as refugees by UNHCR if they are in danger of suffering persecution in their country of origin. However, China regards North Korean defectors as guilty of illegal entry.

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In this article, we will analyse the experience of multilingual selves in this particular context. The research participants (N = 2) are migrants from North Korea, now living in South Korea, who have encountered a number of languages, first of all, when living in the North, secondly, in the different territories they passed through on their way to the South, and thirdly, in their new life in South Korea. Their experiences have involved elements that are strongly emotional and potentially traumatizing. We analyse the multilingual trajectory of our research participants by drawing on verbal and visual data, and seek to understand the different dimensions of multilingual selves in this particular context. Drawing on a socio-cognitive approach (Dufva 2003), we will try to show how individual experiences refract the particular societal contexts and their ideologies, which might change in the new societal context, and how their individual emotions towards languages are intertwined with societal ways of speaking and discourses.

2 Theoretical framework

First, our analysis is rooted in the tradition of studying *first person experiences* (beliefs, conceptualizations) as a tool for investigating second/foreign language use, learning and development (Dufva and Lähteenmäki 1996; Kalaja and Barcelos 2003; Barcelos and Kalaja 2011). The field of second and foreign language studies has been characterized by a gap between traditional, cognitivist views on the one hand, and the new social orientations on the other. Here, starting out from the socio-cognitive, dialogical perspective on beliefs (Dufva 2003), we will examine experiences of multilingualism starting from the premise that the social-cognitive antinomy itself is essentially false (Cole and Engeström 1993). Hence, we approach multilingual experience as emergent in the ecology of living systems (see, e. g., Steffensen and Pedersen 2014). From this perspective, the social circumstances are not regarded as structures external to people's minds: the societal dimension is manifest in how individuals perceive, reflect upon and experience events and encounters, as part of their life world. However, the individual is not considered as *reducible* to societal practices or vice versa. Our point of departure is the reciprocity and mutuality between personal experience and the social world (Voloshinov 1973). In this, the socio-cognitive viewpoint allows us to examine how individual trajectories relate to particular societal contexts and how multilingual selves emerge in the interplay between the societal scene and the personal mindscape. Our concern is the Korean context, the particularities of which were described above.

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Secondly, we will build our arguments on research on multilingual selves, focusing particularly on the *emotions* attached to multilingualism. While emotions have been shown to be an important aspect of the multilingual experience (Pavlenko 2006a), and of language learning more generally (Dewaele 2012; Pavlenko 2013), they seem to be particularly relevant in cases of experiences related to migration, a minority position, discrimination and marginalization. Drawing upon the socio-cognitive view, we consider emotions to be relational, emergent in the interplay between the individual and the social environment.

It will be argued in this article that emotions emerge and develop in events of face-to-face social interaction and in encounters with societal-level institutions or discourses (see also Pavlenko 2007). Thus, emotions are not seen as exclusively individual states of mind, but as relational or extended (Slaby 2014). Emotions are *about* something; they relate to a particular context, either societal or interactional. Here, for example, emotions connected with languages and multilingualism relate to the societal discourses and practices in the North as opposed to the South, and to actual events and interactions the migrants meet with during their migration or in the education that they participate in. However, emotions are also individual because they are embodied, experienced and felt by real people and their *lived body* (Merleau-Ponty 1964), and genuinely felt, possibly as a physical response of anxiety or pain, or pleasure and joy (Suni 2010). Therefore emotions are also closely connected with agency: how individuals feel about themselves and see their rights and responsibilities as language learners, as members of the community, and as citizens. Again, however, it is also very appropriate to take into consideration how they are seen by others (see, e. g., Dufva and Aro 2014; Kalaja et al. 2016) and how they are positioned in the society.

Thus there are dimensions of emotions that are unique, but also dimensions that may be recognized and shared by others: in this case, the research participants are refugees from North Korea and share experiences with each other and, potentially, with many refugees elsewhere. Still, they are also unique in their trajectories, responses and reactions. Drawing upon these premises, we approach multilingual language users as socio-cognitive and embodied agents (Dufva 2012) – individuals whose beliefs and emotions are deeply intertwined with their social and material circumstances.

Thirdly, we will draw upon the extensive body of research using *visual methods* in the study of multilingual experience, such as photographs (Nikula and Pitkänen-Huhta 2008), multimedia (Menezes 2008), learner portraits (Kalaja et al. 2008, 2013), self-made picture books (Pitkänen-Huhta and Pietikäinen 2014) and human figure drawings (Busch 2006; Coffey 2015). As suggested by Kress et al. (2001) and Dufva et al. (2011), we acknowledge the different meaning

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potential embedded in the use of verbal as opposed to visual means (see also Busch 2012). This means that the articulations of one's experiences are, to an extent, modality dependent: verbal language provides different means of expression from visual means.

Visual and verbal tools and means also relate to different cultural-historical traditions (Dufva et al. 2011). Oral interviews elicit certain types of narratives as people tell their story under the affordances and constraints of the language they use, the conversational genre they engage in, and the social situation in which they are participants. In comparison, to produce a picture, or indeed any artwork, is an activity that echoes a different tradition and uses different means for its articulations, such as colours, visual symbols or the whole perspective and architecture of the image.

Here, we have used both verbal and visual means to enable an in-depth analysis of the participants' experiences of multilingualism. The visual tools were chosen particularly with the research participants' ease of articulation in mind. Visual methods have long been used for therapeutic purposes: for example, the systematic use of visually based art therapy – drawing, painting, collage, crafting or sculpting – is common in the treatment of various psychosocial problems and mental disorders (Schouten et al. 2015).

3 Methods: Data collection and analysis

3.1 Research participants

This study is part of a more extensive project on multilingual selves. For the present study, female university students originally from North Korea were recruited through a South Korean NGO, *Tiatnuri*. In this paper, we have chosen to focus on the data of two research participants in order to 1) produce an in-depth analysis on the basis of verbal and visual material and 2) show the individual-social interplay that is reflected in the similarities and differences between the two verbal-visual narratives. The participants are here called by pseudonyms, Bona and Dora, and they are now living in South Korea. *Bona*, who is 28 years old and arrived in South Korea five years ago, comes from a city near the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, and had her primary and secondary education in North Korea. *Dora*, who is 20 years old, comes from a village in a rural area and at the time of data collection had been living in the South for little less than 4 years. She attended primary and secondary school in the North and then went to a high school in the South.

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Both research participants had been diagnosed with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD),[2] which was one of the reasons for choosing not only verbal but also visual means of data collection. As reported in several studies (see, e. g., Gantt and Tinnin 2007; Johnson et al. 2009), participating in art therapy can be associated with a general clinical improvement and the alleviation of the primary symptoms of PTSD. Particularly relevant for the present study, art therapy has been shown to decrease the internal stress of North Korean defectors' children diagnosed with PTSD (Kim 2013; for a discussion on the use of visual means in the analysis of trauma and resilience connected with multilingualism, see Busch and Reddeman 2013).

Both research participants have given their consent to the use of their interviews and artworks for research and educational purposes. We use pseudonyms and have removed any information that might lead to their identification.

3.2 Data collection

The data, which consist of both verbal *in-depth interviews* and two *visual means*, were collected between June and August 2015 as part of a more extensive study on multilingualism in the Korean context (for first results, see Park 2015). The data were collected by the first author. During one-on-one, face-to-face interviews, the research participants were asked to talk about their escape from North Korea and their present life after they had first worked on two types of visual presentation (for general comments on the use of autobiographic data, see Pavlenko 2007). The interviews were carried out in Korean. The interview extracts below were translated into English by the first author.

The research participants were first asked to draw their *language portrait*: a drawing of the silhouette of a human body (adapted from Busch 2006; see also Busch 2012; Melo-Pfeifer 2015; Martin 2012; Coffey 2015) on which they were instructed to mark, using different colours, or symbols if they liked, the different languages they knew (e. g., North Korean/South Korean, Chinese, English, Japanese and French).

2 Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), one of the anxiety disorders, is characterized by severe symptoms of re-experiencing, avoidance, and hyper-arousal as a consequence of one or more traumatizing experiences. PTSD is diagnosed when the duration of the symptoms is more than 1 month and the disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (Kazdin 2000).

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Then a *language timeline* (see also Park 2015) was used to map the participants' multilingual trajectory. The participants were given an A4 sized sheet of paper with two black horizontal lines on it. At the centre of the upper line, the escape from North Korea was marked as a significant milestone. The participants were asked to identify other significant events and turns (e. g., the time in a refugee camp; settling in South Korea) and to indicate all the languages they had been exposed to, using the same colour they had used for each language in their language portrait. To help them report their emotional responses, they were given three sets of 68 conventional emoticon stickers, including happy, sad, angry and other facial expressions. (For the set of stickers, see Appendix 1).

After each visual task, the research participants were *interviewed* in an unstructured interview in which they were asked to describe their artwork in their own words (for interviews of sensitive topics, see, e. g., Corbin and Morse 2003). The visual and verbal means are regarded as mutually complementary means of data collection (Busch 2012): bringing them together helps us to understand the complex and dynamic nature of each individual's multilingualism. While the timeline displays aspects of their past trajectory and the portrait highlights issues of their current understanding, the verbal articulations bring in dimensions that cannot be visually represented.

3.3 Data analysis

The data analysis was informed both by narrative analysis (Pavlenko 2007), particularly the analysis of visual narratives (Kalaja et al. 2008) and also, by research on visual representations (see, e. g., Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; Breckner 2007; Busch 2006). Considering the different meaning potential present in verbal and visual modalities (see, e. g., Kress et al. 2001), the verbal interview is not merely a verbal explanation of the visual image, nor is the image a mere illustration of what the participant is able to express verbally (Busch 2006). Rather, the verbal and the visual data have to be seen working together as an individual 'case file' (Worth 2011) that helps us to identify the significations and meanings given to languages and multilingualism in the context of our study. In our analysis, we paid attention, first, to the body image, by analysing the colours and symbols used for each language (see, e. g., Kress and van Leeuwen 2002), and to how they were positioned on the body parts in the image (e. g., Busch 2006; Pietikäinen and Pitkänen-Huhta 2014; Coffey 2015). Secondly, we analysed the timeline for its significant events and encounters, examining how and in what connection different languages were mentioned and how they were represented (see also Dufva 2006). Thirdly, we connected our

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own observations of their visual artwork to the ways the participants themselves talked in the interview (for the combination of verbal and visual data, see also, e. g., Dressler 2014; Pietikäinen et al. 2008; Kalaja et al. 2008).

4 Results

In what follows, we will first discuss the two case studies in detail, using the chronology of the interview situation to show how the research participants proceeded with their task. Doing this, we rely both on what was said, and what was represented in the human body portrait and in the timeline drawing.

4.1 Bona's multilingual self: "Confusing, right?"

First, we focus on Bona, the older interviewee from a city near Pyongyang: her language portrait (Figure 1), language timeline (Figure 2), and her comments during the interview.

As we can see from the design of Bona's language portrait, she has chosen a metaphorical image for each language she mentions, using both colours and symbols. The use of colours and symbols may carry different significations – ranging from interpretations that are widely shared across cultures to meanings that are culture specific or individual (Kress and van Leeuwen 2002). Here, the heart shape that she uses, for example, is quite common in many cultures, signifying something close and dear. In contrast, some of the features may be more personal, like the black marks on the leg that she uses to express her response to North Korean (see also Example 2 below).

Further, as pictorial representations of the body often reflect embodied experiences (see also Gibbs 2003), we see it here in, for example, the way languages are placed in different parts of the body. Bona started working with the head, where she placed the English language and coloured it blue. Here, the head represents knowing, thinking, memorizing or intelligence – as it has been shown to do in many other studies across the world (Kress 1997; see also, e. g., Dressler 2014 for an analysis of children's drawings). As Example 1 below shows, the exclamation marks are there to designate both the importance of the language and the stress she feels about her studies.

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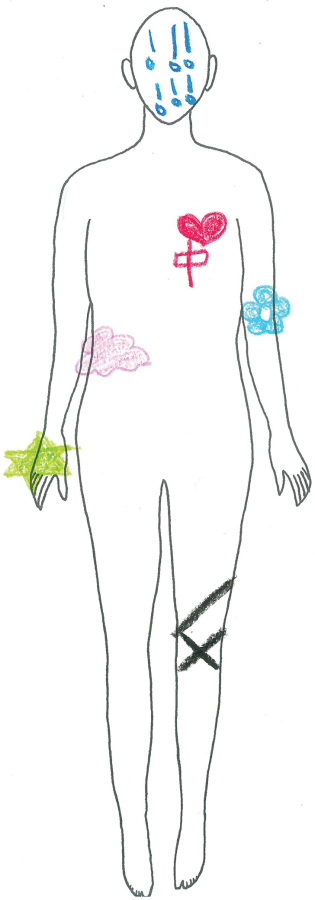

Figure 1: Bona's language portrait.
Note: Colours: blue = English; red = Chinese; sky blue = South Korean Daegu dialect; pink = French; yellowish green = Seoul dialect; black = North Korean dialect. Symbols: exclamation marks = English; heart = Chinese; flower = Daegu dialect; cloud = French; star = Seoul dialect; a bandage round the leg = North Korean dialect.

(1) I am under stress because of English! It is very important for getting a job. Um … English sounds cold like blue to me.

When Bona drew a red heart and wrote next to it the Chinese character (中), which means both 'China' and 'centre', she put her "favourite language" at the core, where people often place their mother tongue (Coffey 2015) and used red in the sense of its being "the colour for love", as she said, to express her emotion.

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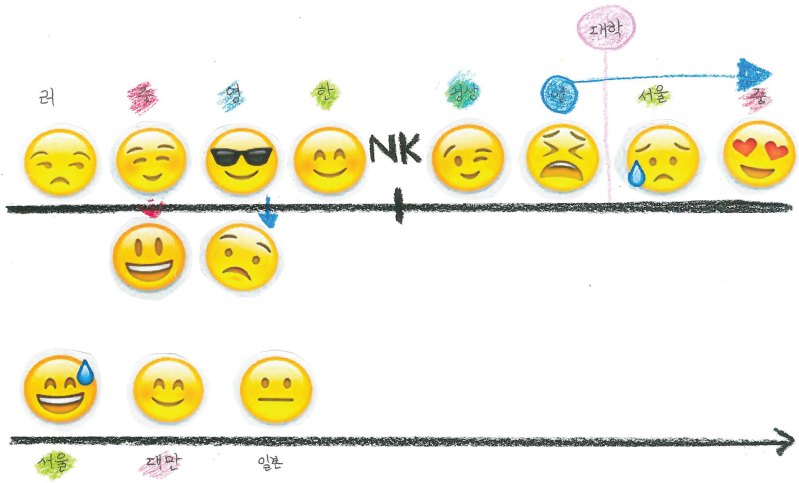

Figure 2: Bona's language timeline.
Note: Colours: blue = English; red = Chinese; sky blue = South Korean Daegu dialect; yellowish green = Seoul dialect; light red = Taiwanese. Russian & Japanese = no colour.

The yellowish green star on the right was used for the dialect of the South Korean capital, Seoul: Bona said the dialect sounded very soft to her – and that it was like the "yellowish green in the colour for newly growing buds on trees in early spring". Also the positioning of the star in that particular part of the body is important: the Seoul dialect was located in her right hand because it was now her "main language".

The sky-blue colour was chosen for the flower Bona drew on her left arm to designate the dialect used in the south of South Korea. When she had first arrived in South Korea with her father and her sister, they had settled down in a southern town, Daegu, where she had learned the regional dialect that she liked but no longer used, so that now it was just something that she felt nostalgic about.

After this, Bona stopped working with the image for a few minutes. After a long pause, she picked up the black and marked a cross on one leg. In body images, limbs are often farther away from the core, which is placed on the heart or in the head (see also Coffey 2015) and this is also what Bona said about North Korean. She put on many layers of the black and then drew an additional, sloping line over the leg in the same colour (Example 2):

(2) Bona: The leg is the north. It is far. It is the dialect of my hometown … I want to keep it as further as I can. I want to cut it out!
Interviewer: Do you use the hometown dialect with your father and sister?

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[Bona answered before the question was finished.]
Bona: No! I do not use it. My father is too old to change his dialect but we [Bona and her sister] don't use it.

Bona ended her work on the body picture by drawing a pink cloud on one side of the body, saying that she wanted to learn French in the future in order to travel to Paris, the "romantic" city. Clearly, there may also be a gender effect in this colour choice since pink is widely understood as a girl's colour, already preferred as such by young children (LoBue and DeLoache 2011).

With its use of symbols, colours and positionings, the portrait suggests how Bona felt about the different languages at the time of the drawing. Chinese is the language of her heart, while English is placed in the head as the choice of reason: while English is important for working life, it is cold, a blue language. The Seoul dialect, placed in the right hand, is important for everyday communication, but a more emotional stance is perhaps present in the colour that is associated by Bona with the early spring, a choice that might also signal a new beginning. Also while the Northern dialect is marked by black as hateful and something in the past, to be forgotten, French is placed in the future, in the clouds, to be anticipated with excitement. As argued by, e. g., Barsalou (1999), conceptualization is connected with perception and with the way people selectively attend to sensory information in their world. Hence, the use of different symbols, shapes and colours may be seen as rooted in the embodiment (see also Gibbs 2003).

To continue, Bona's language timeline (see Figure 2) gives more detailed information, accompanied by her interview remarks, about the temporal dimension: the chronology of her language trajectory and how her position towards each of the languages has changed over time.

One of the first observations is that some of the languages on Bona's timeline are different from those on her body portrait. This seems to argue for the use of a variety of means and methods of data collection in order to elicit more varied information. First, Bona mentions Russian and Chinese, both of which she had first heard in the North Korean media. Perceptions of different languages often involve auditory impressions (Dufva et al. 1989), and as Example 3 below shows, Russian sounded "strong". She also associated the sound of the language with her perception of Russian people (for further discussion on the indexical nature of language, see, e. g., Silverstein 2003).

(3) When I heard Russian for the first time on TV, I thought the people were angry. Whenever I went to Pyongyang I saw many (Russian) tourists. Uh, families mostly! Usually the father was very big. Big man with big belly. But kids were cute. And the wife looked pretty though they also seemed

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very strong and somewhat upset. I guess it is because of the sound of their language.

By contrast, Bona says that Chinese first sounded like bird song. The positive impression of Chinese – as signalled by a smiley above the timeline – is connected to her life history. Her parents had originally planned to settle in China after leaving North Korea and so Bona and her sister were given private Chinese language lessons by their neighbour, a Chinese immigrant. Bona says she very much enjoyed learning Chinese, her first foreign language, as is also shown by the emoticon she used, with a big smile and wide open eyes. The first positive impression of the language is connected with the exciting facial expression with a downward arrow. She also had an opportunity to use the language herself: first, when living in China for a while and second, when visiting her mother, who had to stay there because of her poor health. Bona kept on using Chinese also in South Korea: she studied it at university as one of her majors, "falling in love" with it once again, she said – again, as shown by the emoticon. Bona's university [대학] entrance is marked here with a pink vertical line. In sum, Bona's views on Chinese remain essentially the same, irrespective of the changes in her environment and circumstances, which shows her personal affection and interest in the language.

The position of English, on the other hand, has altered. As Bona's timeline indicates, she had studied English in a North Korean secondary school. However, she then saw English as an "American enemy language which sounds as arrogant as the American people": this is why also the emoticon with sunglasses and a "sneaky" smile was chosen. Her fading interest in English is also shown by the facial expression underneath the "sneaky" emoticon. Moreover, Bona's comments show how much she needed to adjust her views in her new context, in South Korea. No more an "enemy language", in South Korea English was considered all-important in guaranteeing a university education and was therefore studied intensively (for the position of English in South Korean education, see Lee 2014). Bona describes her attempts to keep up with the level of her peers by attending private institutes, practising her skills with English-speaking friends and watching American TV shows; the main emotions, as displayed in the expression of the emoticon, however, are worry, anxiety and frustration (Example 4).

(4) North and South Korean general level of English education is different. My South Korean peers are a lot better than me! I am way behind … .I am really worried about job competition. So I am even considering going internship abroad to improve [my English]. Maybe very soon I will go. (Sigh) English is really killing me … .

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As her timeline shows, Bona had also occasionally heard southern varieties of South Korean through South Korean broadcasts when she was still in the North. She mentions the sound of the language – South Korean sounded to her a lot softer than North Korean (cf. Dufva et al. 1989). Through broadcasts she had also learned about how South Koreans positioned North Korean migrants, as following Example 5 shows:

(5) The radio programme host spoke softly. I liked the way it sounded. Um, one day, she introduced a story of a South Korean guy seeking advice about the relationship between his mother and his girlfriend, who came from the North. He had written they loved each other ... er but his mother opposed their relationship because she is North Korean. The mother believed her son should be with a South Korean girl. [- - -] I knew there is discrimination and prejudice against North Koreans in South Korea before I came.

After arriving in South Korea, Bona lived first in Daegu, then in Seoul. She describes how she therefore needed to gain confidence in two southern varieties – their vocabulary and their local accents. In Example 6 below, she expresses her anxiety about her own language use and its North Korean usages and accent (cf. Rakić et al. 2011).

(6) There were too many words I had never heard of. Later I learned that they are originated from foreign languages. [...] I had thick North Korean accent at first. Even though it might be difficult to guess based on my look when people listen to me they could easily know I am not South Korean. Once a local hairdresser asked me where my hometown is. I told her I am from the North. You know what did she ask next? [- - -] She asked if I ever had an apple in North Korea! She thought all [North Korean] people are so poor not even having a chance to taste an apple! I felt ashamed ... (Sigh) Ever since I have lied about my hometown.

[...] I was scared people would laugh at me. Even if I could not understand others I just pretended I understood. Sometimes, I pretended a deaf person. [...]Yeah, it was so hard. I avoided meeting people because being with others made me very tired keep monitoring every word I say.

A person's speech is an important aspect of how a person is perceived and in how they are judged at the societal scene (e. g., Scherer and Giles 1979). Bona talks about her hard work trying to hide her accent because it would reveal her origin: she attended a speech clinic, did shadowing exercises while watching

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South Korean TV programmes and observed other people's speech style very carefully in order to learn the Seoul dialect, i. e., standard South Korean. Even now, although she felt more confident, she was "not 100 % (a Seoul person) yet". The ambiguity of her feelings is shown by the emoticon that displayed laughing and sweating at the same time (Example 7).

(7) Interviewer: So, do you feel more comfortable using Seoul dialect now? Or or do you think you need more time?
Bona: I guess so, but it [North Korean accent] wouldn't become not noticeable (.) No. I used North Korean for more than 20 years. It is part of me. It has rooted so deep. There is no space for Seoul dialect, actually. It cannot root. It always just hovers.
Interviewer: How about the Daegu dialect?
Bona: I don't use it any more. But I intend to make myself sound like a southerner to cover that accent [North Korean accent]. People could think I am from south [southern provinces of South Korea]
[...] I feel like I am originally from Seoul because I use Seoul dialect. But I don't feel like I am talking like a Seoul person. [...] I still have the ugly [North Korean] accent which I have to delete. (Sigh) My Korean is not Seoul dialect, Daegu dialect or also not North Korean dialect ... All mixed up. Confusing, right?

The last emoticon on Bona's timeline indicates her feelings about the Japanese language. She said it is a neutral facial expression with "no specific feelings" and it has no specific colour, either. However, her verbal comments add a dimension rooted in the societal context and the past history of the two countries, Japanese colonial rule 1910–1945 (Example 8).

(8) I heard Japanese in real life for the first time when I travelled there. Because I heard so many bad things about the history I cannot avoid being biased. You know, I was always told that we should hate Japan.

The excerpts from the interview that accompanies the timeline suggest that Bona is dissatisfied with her own speech, because her accent has elements from the North and from Daegu. While becoming 100 % a Seoul person seems to be her goal, she considers her attempts at becoming a Southerner a failure and says it's "all mixed up" and "confusing". Thus the timeline data seem to suggest that the hybridity of her identity is uncomfortable to her – a situation which was not so explicit in the body portrait (for a variety of positions taken to multilingualism, see, e. g., Pavlenko 2006b; Park and Kim 2014).

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4.2 Dora's multilingual self: North and South Korean – "They are the same to me"

Dora is the younger of the two interviewees, who came from a small village in rural North Korea. Let us now look at her language portrait (Figure 3), her language timeline (Figure 4), and her comments during the interview.

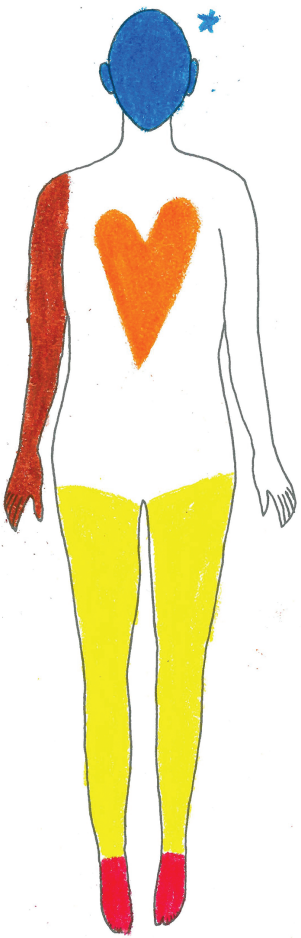

Figure 3: Dora's language portrait.
Note: Colours: blue = English; orange = Korean; brown = Chinese; yellow = Japanese; red = French. Symbols: star = English; heart = Korean.

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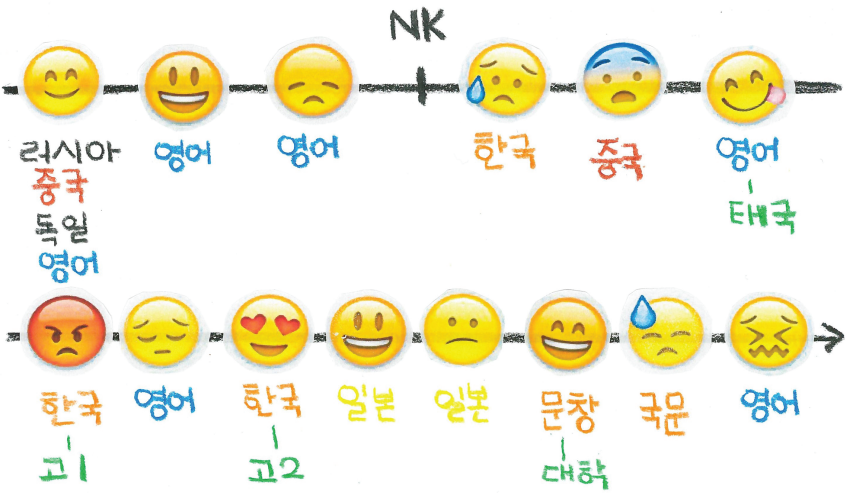

Figure 4: Dora's language timeline.
Note: Colours: blue = English; orange = Korean; brown = Chinese; yellow = Japanese; Russian & German = no colour.

Dora began her body portrait by placing her "mother language" at the heart. Here, she used a warm soft orange, which bears a personal signification to her, and her verbal comments help us to understand her choice of colour and her fondness for both North and South varieties, which she described as being the same (Example 9).

(9) Dora: This is the colour of beautiful sunrise I used to see every day in my hometown, a small coastal village. This is the colour I miss the most and the most familiar at the same time. And and uh it is my favourite colour.
Interviewer: What language is it?
Dora: Both North and South Korean. They are the same to me! I love my mother language the most. They are at the centre of me. Honestly, I miss my grandmother, father and brother a lot ... North Korean dialects remind me of home. But it is fading away because I am not using it here. I am very familiar with South Korean now. They [North and South Korean] are the same level and really the same to me.

Dora's view on Chinese, which she moved on to represent next, is expressed by the brown, "hideous" colour she chose, placing it on one arm. In the accompanying interview, Dora says that her mother had left North Korea years before

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her and stayed in China. When they finally met again, in a Chinese border town, the Chinese police raided their hotel and her mother had to bribe the police officers to avoid being sent back. Dora recalls that night in strongly emotional language (Example 10).

(10) I still dream of the terrifying river crossing night and the following Chinese police raid. I vividly remember the feeling of drowning and the door banging sound. [...] Learning Chinese might be useful because China is a big powerful country. It is an important country. Do you know that Chinese people like red? [...] I like red, too. But I want to put this hideous dark reddish brown here for China. I don't like the country, the people and everything. I will never even travel to China.

When Dora moved to work with the head, she coloured it with blue and drew a tiny star next to it. Like Bona, she used blue for English and, similarly, Dora also mentions the idea of thinking being associated with the head (Example 11) (see also Kress 1997).

(11) English is the global language. It is the most important language because we are living in the global era. So here's a star (emphasizing the importance). Um ... for me, English has the image of endless blue ocean. Endless, endless learning ... Many countries crossing over oceans use English including the most powerful America. I was taught that they are the worst enemy and I had negative perception of them though now I have become a lot familiar with English. And um ... um English is in the head because I have to think a lot to speak it. And study a lot.

Next, Dora chose yellow for the legs, to denote Japanese, thus also denoting her emotional distance by positioning it farther from the head and chest. However, Dora had in fact studied Japanese at her southern high school as an additional foreign language. Then she had chosen the language because Japanese cartoons, manga, were popular among her high school friends. Her comments show, however, that, contrary to her expectations, Japanese was not easy and her grades were only mediocre (Example 12).

(12) Dora: In reality, Japanese was not fun like cartoons. It is not even that important language. English is enough (.) and I will not try to learn Japanese again.
Interviewer: Why is it in the legs? And why yellow?
Dora: Ah, I don't feel it is close to me. So it's "far" in legs and yellow is the colour of poisonous flower.

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Interviewer: Poisonous flower?
Dora: Yeah! Maybe, maybe it is also here in South Korea. In my hometown there were a lot of them [the flowers]. - - - Anyway, I don't like the colour or Japan but but not the people. There must be good people as well. I just learned Japan is bad.

Example 12 also shows that, according to Dora, her views on Japan and the Japanese language are based on what she had learned, that is, on common societal discourses, which inclined towards the negative. However, Dora expresses her position towards Japanese also more personally, in words that display an ambiguous mixture of interest and dislike, and in her associating the colour yellow with both Japanese and poisonous flowers.

Finally, Dora coloured both feet in red, to stand for French. She explained that "red is a passionate colour" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2002) and also referred to her auditory impression: when she first heard French, it had sounded very foreign, but attractive. However, she says she located it "far" in the feet because she thought of the language as more distant because she had not yet begun to study it.

An examination of Dora's timeline (see Figure 4) shows that already in North Korea she had been exposed to Russian, Chinese, German, and English. Dora explains that she could not necessarily distinguish between the foreign languages she heard on the radio or TV: they sounded equally "unfamiliar, but interesting" at the same time. She goes on to describe how she had started to learn English at school in North Korea, at first excited, but soon seeing the instruction, which emphasized learning vocabulary by heart, as boring. She said that she did not learn the pronunciation properly, and tried to use English herself for the first time only when she arrived in a refugee camp in Thailand (Example 13)

(13) One day I saw some people eating apples. I wanted to have one as well. I was waiting a Thai person passing by. When I saw a lady coming I said "apple apple" to her. Maybe my pronunciation was not correct. Or, she did not know English. She couldn't understand me. But I felt proud of myself trying to speak a foreign language to a foreigner. [...] But but I was shy at the same time. It is the shy and happy face.

In South Korea English is one of the most important subjects for a high school student who plans to enter university. Dora comments about how different the instruction was in the two Koreas and about her own frustration as a South Korean high school student (see also Lee 2014; Shin 2007) (Example 14).

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(14) English was a lot harder here compared to North Korea. There was neither listening comprehension test nor speaking practice. I was struggling with English ... And unfortunately it is even worse now! I am frustrated like this emoticon. [...] There are mandatory English conversation courses at my university! (Sigh) I have been avoiding them. But English is so important to get a job later. Should I participate in an overseas language school? Or a working holiday programme?

As far as Korean languages are concerned, living in rural North Korea, Dora had never heard South Korean dialects. She watched a South Korean TV programme for the first time when staying in a Chinese border town (Example 15).

(15) It was really shocking! South Korean sounded very soft and gentle. But it was an absolutely a foreign language to me! I could not understand it at all. Oh ... I was so worried how I could live in South Korea.

Dora goes on to describe how her worry turned out to be fully justified during her first week at the high school. In Example 16 below, she says she could not understand lessons at all and occasionally found it difficult to interact with her classmates.

(16) There were so many borrowed foreign words I had never heard of in the North. [...] There were other problems as well. When I could not understand a friend because she said something so softly I told her *speak high*! No one in the group of friends understood me. Later I found that I supposed to say *speak loudly*. In North Korea *speak high* means *speak loudly*. It is not the only example ... I talked whatever I wanted to say in the beginning. But my friends kept telling me that they could not understand what I said. I felt small. I started to feel ashamed ...

[...] At first, everyone was interested in me and helping me. I was the first ever North Korean student in my school. I was a bit like a celebrity I guess. But soon, after a month, many of them lost their interest in me and there were still communication problems because of different expressions and intonation. I felt like everything was wrong with me ... Whenever my friends were talking about South Korean pop culture I could not understand. I felt isolated, lonely ... and so stupid. I hated that I came from the North and that I did not speak Standard South Korean. I was mad at myself like this face ... I was always just listening to others while being silent.

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Dora went on to say that she was determined to become friends with her school mates and diligently "studied" information about South Korean celebrities and other popular topics in order to belong and to become counted as a member of her new community (see also Norton Peirce 1995). After two years' hard work, she felt much more confident in South Korean, and eventually "fell in love" with it. She even chose Korean literature as her major subject at university in her studies to become a journalist and says she is happy with her studies, though studying Korean grammar is still demanding (Example 17).

(17) Dora: In a way, I thought I could not blend with others very well in my high school because I had revealed my hometown. I avoid telling my true background to my university friends. I pretend I came from a rural village in the South. Besides, I almost removed my North Korean accent now.
Interviewer: [...] Do you still use the dialect at home with your mother?
Dora: No, we do not use it at all. Um ... North Korean is disappearing in me. I feel happy and sad at the same time. I want to talk with my family members in the North with the dialect.

Dora's language portrait and her timeline tell another story of migration, with some highly dramatic incidents in it. Along her trajectory, she has encountered different languages and the positions she takes to these languages bear traces of the incidents involved in those encounters, her relationship with Chinese being one example. Her views on the different varieties of Korean are particularly interesting: while she feels that her North Korean variety is fading and she is becoming more confident in her southern ways of speaking, she still displays one Korean as the language of her heart: they are one and the same to her.

5 Discussion

The main purpose of the paper was to analyse the research participants' views on their encounters with different languages and their learning and use of them. The languages they mentioned were Korean varieties (North, Seoul and Daegu), Russian, Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, English, and French. Their language repertoires consisted of a range of languages they had made acquaintance with at different times: in North Korea, on their journeys towards the South, and finally, in South Korea.

The way in which the social and individual aspects intertwine can be seen interestingly in the positions Dora and Bona took towards different languages.

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They had very similar responses to English: the language was valued and spoken of very differently in the two Koreas, and the appreciation of English as a global lingua franca and the tremendous efforts put to studying it in South Korea were new to both girls (for teaching English as a lingua franca, see, e. g., Seidlhofer 2004; for teaching English in Korea, see, e. g., Shin 2007). Although they both spoke about Japanese in words echoing the societal discourses typical of their context, their perspectives were slightly different. Dora's position towards Japanese was more ambiguous, a mixture of interest and dislike, and her associations were perhaps more individually tuned. Thus the societal scene with its educational practices and media discourses has an effect on how languages are talked about.

In contrast, as a reflection of their individual experiences, their relationships with Chinese were different. To Bona it was the "favourite language", represented in the heart; she had already been studying it when she was in North Korea, and she was still using it. To Dora, Chinese was associated mostly with the dramatic incidents that had happened to her en route to the South. Similarly, although they shared similar experiences about the prestige of the South Korean variety and about the pressure to hide their North Korean origin, their attitudes towards North Korean were different. While Bona wanted to cut it out completely, Dora considered the two varieties to be the same, and placed the varieties of Korean together, as one, at her heart.

In telling their story, the participants drew on the different semiotic resources that were offered to them in the design of the study: in addition to words spoken in the interview, we searched for significations in their use of, for example, colours, symbols and metaphors and in the positioning of different languages on the body parts. In analysing the use of these elements, we found both semi-universal, cultural, societal and individual connotations.

Some symbols, for example, seem to be spread across different contexts: an example of these in our data might include the heart, the flower and the cloud. Similarly, the use of colours may also have carried some universally recognized associations with the emotions: while light and bright colours may be associated with affection, dark colours may indicate dislike (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). Further, cross-contextual similarities may also be found in the ways subjects position different languages within the body. For example, the head is associated with thinking and studying while the most significant language is placed "in the heart". There is some indication that a position further from the head or heart – for example in the legs or feet – could be read as a sign of experienced distance (Busch 2006; Busch and Reddeman 2013; Pietikäinen and Pitkänen-Huhta 2014).

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The combination of cultural, even semi-universal elements and an individual take on the task is seen in the ways the colours and symbols, which sometimes go hand in hand, were used. The way in which Bona and Dora chose symbols was partly similar: they both used a highly conventional symbol, the heart, and placed it at the core of the body to signify affection and closeness (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). The participants' use of colours, however, articulated both cultural and individual significations (see, e. g., Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 59): while the heart for Bona was the conventional red, for Dora it was, through an individual association, orange.

One of our conclusions is therefore that visual data embed a variety of associative, metaphorical and symbolic elements, the analysis of which offers insights into the emotional, embodied experiences of multilingualism. Thus, it significantly adds to the analysis of verbal data and gives a thick description of multilingual selves.

In this paper, we have examined two stories of migration in order to show how social/cultural and individual aspects intertwine in the experience of multilingualism. As our analysis has shown, there were similarities between the two research participants, arguably related to the social and cultural context(s). As Bona's and Dora's narratives and visual presentations show, there are experiences that may be shared by many North Korean migrants – such as their often dramatic journeys towards the South and, after arriving there, their struggle with their accent to avoid discrimination and marginalization. However, there were also individual tones and differences between the two research participants, apparent in Bona's strongly dismissive articulation against North Korean and Dora's regard of Southern and Northern varieties as her twin mother tongues, to give just two examples.

The data also show how the research participants' multilingual identities have been subjected to change and fluidity. There are significant events and turning points in their multilingual trajectory, related, for example, to personal losses and changes in the societal and educational contexts. Although both research participants had moved from one social and cultural milieu to another in dramatic circumstances, and although they were both going through a period of adaptation to their new environment, they each had their own individual views and stances. In their multilingual experience, the societal ideologies mix with the individual responses and emotions.

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6 Conclusion

The study used both visual means and an accompanying interview to map the experiences of multilingualism on the personal trajectory of our two research participants. By discussing Bona's and Dora's individual narratives and relating them to their social and cultural milieu(s), we hoped to show the interconnectivity between individual positions and societal ideologies. As de Fina (2003: 1) puts it, "migration is a social phenomenon and a personal experience". Further, as Lanza (2012: 285) argues, with narratives of personal experience one can explore how linguistic resources are used by the speakers "to negotiate agency and power in their presentation and positioning of self in social experiences".

The methodological point we wanted to forefront was that combining verbal and visual data helps to gain a thicker description of multilingual selves. The two visual means utilized in the study – the language portrait and language timeline – are partly different instruments for investigating multilingualism. While a language portrait presents a snapshot of how different languages are symbolized by different colours and shapes in the interviewee's current self-image, the timeline helps the participants to track changes across time, giving information about the changes along the trajectory in chronological order and thus, also, about the impact of the societal and cultural context. However, it is evident that the timeline is neither a linear representation nor a factual autobiography. Like the body portrait, it is a representation of the many possible dimensions and interpretations of the past, as viewed from the current viewpoint. In our analysis, we sought to bring in the voice of the research participants by choosing examples that tell us not only about their experiences but also why they have chosen particular colours and symbols, for example, for their visual artwork. Only they can provide detailed explanations of the meanings (Busch 2006: 123). At the same time, we add our own perspective as researchers.

Our research participants were both diagnosed with PTSD. Their journeys to South Korea had involved a separation from their home country and, possibly, from their family. There were many traumatic incidents and hence, memories associated with feelings of fear or terror. In the South, they had become accustomed to making an effort to hide their origin, struggling with their feelings of shame, and they both reported feeling the need to change their language use for fear of discrimination and marginalization (for North Korean migrants' experiences, see also Jeon et al. 2008). Their multilingual identity could not have been expected to be unproblematic. Hence, another methodological point was our decision to search for methods particularly appropriate for discussing painful or traumatic experiences. That is why we decided to use, in addition to the

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interview, art-based methods that included drawing the human body, and the timeline. To the timeline task we added a set of emoticon stickers that we assumed would help the participants to display the emotions concerned.

The task design was thus planned also bearing in mind that giving a person an opportunity to look back may be helpful in the therapeutic sense (see also Busch and Reddeman 2013; Johnson et al. 2009). We feel that the methodological solutions not only added to our understanding of the socio-cognitive nature of the multilingual experience, but that they might have been helpful for the research participants as well. This is how Dora describes her feelings on being interviewed (Example 18):

(18) I have never shared my story in this detail because I was afraid of being judged by telling my past and and some parts are simply too sad to say out loud … Since you know already I am North Korean I did not need to make things up or hide (laughs). […] We mainly talked about my languages but um … I think I looked back more. It made me feel better.

Studying how Bona and Dora, two multilingual learners in the Korean context, narrate their life with words and images has helped us to understand how they relate to different languages, how they now see themselves as multilingual speakers, and how particular linguistic resources either help them to gain a position in their new milieu, or prevent them from doing so. With the goal of connecting the societal dimension to the individual experiential dimension, and the verbal data with the visual, we hoped to add to the understanding of multilingual speakers and their varied multilingual mindscapes. Although both Bona and Dora tell a story that is unique and individual, it also involves elements that may be helpful in analysing multilingual mindscapes elsewhere.

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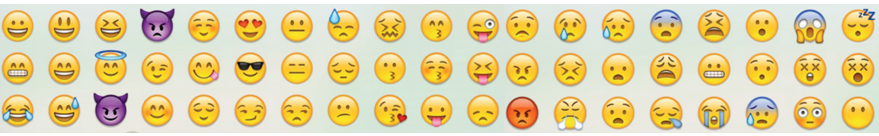
Appendix 1: Emoticons.



Bionotes

Noelle Nayoun Park Salo

Noelle Nayoun Park Salo is a PhD candidate at the Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. In her doctoral research project she explores multilingual self construction throughout life trajectories of young multilingual research participants. In this, she uses a combination of verbal in-depth interviews with visual artworks such as language learning timeline, self-portraits and human figure drawings.

Hannele Dufva

Hannele Dufva is a Professor of Language Learning and Education at the Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. In her research, she draws particularly on dialogism and the work of the Bakhtin Circle. She has published widely on issues of applied linguistics, particularly language learning and teaching, and has collaborated in several studies using visual research methods.

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