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*Visualising Multilingual Lives: More Than
Words*

Edited by

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Chapter 1

Introduction

PAULA KALAJA and SÍLVIA MELO-PFEIFER

In this chapter, the reader will be introduced to the rationale of the book, becoming familiar with the turns currently characterising Applied Language Studies. Special attention will be given to the multilingual turn, to the visual turn and to the way subjectivity becomes a necessary approach in the study of multilingualism as lived and as experienced by individuals. The reader will then be acquainted with the tripartite structure of the book (The multilingual self, The multilingual learner and Multilingual teacher education) and with a detailed description of each chapter.

What is this volume about – in a nutshell?

The current volume entitled *Visualising Multilingual Lives: More Than Words* is an indeed timely response to the recent call in Applied Language Studies to approach multilingualism as *lived* or as subjectively experienced (e.g. Kramsch, 2009; May, 2014). The volume will be focusing on *multilingual individuals*, including learners, teachers and users of more than one language, and/or on their lives or worlds that they currently find themselves in. These will be addressed by making use of *visual methodologies* of various kinds. In these two respects, the volume will be providing a fresh take on the issues addressed so far in Psychology of Language Learning and Teaching (PLLT). It is one thing for an individual to learn a second language (L2) as a system (e.g. its grammar and vocabulary) or be able to communicate in it. It is, however, quite another thing for him or her to make sense of becoming or being multilingual as subjectively experienced, *involving positive and negative emotions, attitudes, beliefs, visions and identities*. It is issues like this that the volume will be addressing.

Multilingualism as lived? From monolingualism to translanguaging

The *multilingual turn* is one of the most recent turns that Applied Language Studies (earlier Applied Linguistics) has been undergoing in the past few decades. Traditionally, *monolinguals* were thought to be speakers of a first language (L1) or native speakers, and they were assumed, firstly, to have

acquired the L1 from birth, and secondly, to have full competence in the L1 (Ortega, 2014). In contrast, *bi- or multilinguals* were not only speakers of an L1 but also users of one or more additional languages (L2, L3, etc.), having learnt these at a later stage in their lives, and they were not expected to attain full competence in any of these. In addition, as non-native speakers, they were considered to be ‘less than’ native or L1 speakers, and as learners deficit, their competence in any additional language always lacking in one or more respects. It was typical of them to resort to code-switching and -mixing, neither viewed in very positive terms, and so something to be avoided.

However, in recent years, some of the traditional assumptions have been challenged (Ortega, 2014), including what has been called the *monolingual bias* with its two assumptions mentioned above. Besides, bi- or multilinguals are viewed to be ‘rather more than less’ compared with monolinguals or native speakers. In fact, it is argued that they should not be compared with these at all, but with other multilinguals to ensure fairer comparisons. Multilinguals (including bilinguals and emergent bilinguals) are now viewed to be individuals that do *translanguaging* (Otheguy, Garcia & Reid, 2015). They have a repertoire (or idiolect) of linguistic (and other semiotic) resources, and so they can draw on their knowledge in any language they happen to know, depending on the situation. Their aim is in fact to attain *multicompetence*, originally used by Cook (1992), or knowledge in more than one language but to different degrees, and to learn to appreciate this constantly evolving and unique competence. In other words, multilinguals are quite different from monolinguals as users of languages. And it is gradually acknowledged that multilinguals form *the majority* of people in the world, not monolinguals, who have been used as the norm not only by lay people but by scholars in their studies.

Over the years, our views on multilingualismⁱ (including bilingualism) have evolved, too. It is claimed that there are two perspectives on the matter (Otheguy *et al.*, 2015). From the perspective of *outsiders*, the languages of a multilingual are viewed as separate and fixed entities and associated with nation states (e.g. Swedish is thought to be spoken only in Sweden – and not say by a minority of L1 speakers of the language in Finland). From the perspective of *insiders*, in contrast, the languages of a multilingual are assumed to form one single entity in his or her mind, aspects of which he or she can draw on selectively from one situation to another. Research in Applied Language Studies has for the most part been conducted from the perspective of outsiders and only recently has it begun to be done from the perspective of insiders.

Furthermore, as pointed out by Kramsch (2009: 1–25), there are two approaches to multilingualism or individuals’ use of more than one language. The *objective approach* focuses on tracing the development in their knowledge of any language (and possible stages in the process) in terms of a linguistic system, including mastery of grammar and lexicon, or in terms of an ability to communicate

or interact with others in the language. In contrast, the *subjective approach* attempts to figure out how multilinguals themselves feel about becoming or being multilinguals, or what the different languages and their use might mean to them personally. Kramsch (2009: 1–25) talks of languages as symbolic systems, and the subjective approach can be illustrated by a pioneering study of hers (2003). In it she asked a group of university students of various L2s to complete a sentence ‘Learning Language X is (like) ...’ with a metaphor to describe how they had subjectively experienced the learning of the L2s. The metaphors fell into a total of 13 classes, including Engaging in an artistic process, Learning as a cognitive or physical skill, Being at home, Returning to a childhood state, Travelling to new places, Becoming another person, Incurring physical danger, and Ingesting food (listed in order of frequency). In other words, the learning of L2s has quite different additional meanings from one student to another. Other pioneering studies include those by Busch (2013), Krumm and Jenkins (2001) and Moore (2006). Instead of metaphors, these studies made use of linguistic biographies or linguistic portraits.

Since then with the globalization of the world for a number of reasons, including political, religious, social, economic, and technological ones, there have been further calls to pursue more research on multilingualism using the subjective approach as outlined above (see also e.g. May, 2014). It remains to be seen how these recent developments in Applied Language Studies will be reflected in the years to come – e.g. in practices in classrooms, teaching materials, assessing students’ skills in additional languages, or in language teacher education.

Why this book and who is it for?

Visualising Multilingual Lives: More Than Words is our contribution to the field of multilingualism as lived, and more specifically to PLLT (for recent state-of-the-art reviews on L2 learner and teacher psychology, see Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015 and Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018, respectively). The volume reports research on the multilingual subject him- or herself with an attempt at innovation in the research methodologies used. It contains a total of 13 empirical studies. Importantly, the participants in the studies could share their experiences of becoming or being multilingual by translanguaging not only verbally in a variety of languages but also *visually*, by producing drawings by a number of means or taking photographs. The book provides not only an innovative methodological approach to researching the self but also a fresh perspective on the psychology of the individual.

Visual methodologies have already been used in Applied Language Studies (or in Sociolinguistics) to address multilingualism as encountered by people in their immediate surroundings, e.g. in studies on linguistic landscapes conducted in major cities in different parts of the world (e.g. Backhaus, 2006;

Laitinen & Zabrodskaia, 2015; Schmitt, 2018; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). However, the focus of this volume is different: it focuses on the multilingual subject him- or herself. Very recently, a new methodological turn has been suggested (by Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2018) in doing research on multilingualism as lived: a *visual turn* (for some earlier experimentation, see e.g. Kalaja, Alanen & Dufva, 2013; Krumm & Jenkins, 2001; Melo-Pfeifer & Simões, 2017; Molinié, 2009). It is now acknowledged that each mode of expression has its possibilities but also its limitations: what it might be possible to express verbally, may not be possible visually, and the reverse can be the case, too. Furthermore, the modes might at times complement each other. When addressing aspects of multilingualism as subjectively experienced, which as a rule involves emotionally charged events, visual methodologies can be beneficial, especially in cases where the participants have limited literacy skills (e.g. small children or illiterate adults), *linguistic* problems (i.e. participants not sharing any language with the researcher) and/or *psychological* problems (participants suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, e.g. a migrant with a difficult journey behind him or her). On occasions like these, it might be easier for participants to use visual methodologies than share experiences verbally or in writing and/or speaking. It is also true that some individuals simply prefer sharing ideas, opinions, experiences, etc. verbally, while others would rather do so visually.

Even though there are already some books, special issues of journals, book chapters and articles which make use of drawings and other visual material (e.g. Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2018; Melo-Pfeifer & Simões, 2017; Molinié, 2009) in addressing aspects of multilingualism as lived, this edited collection of articles could serve as a reference in the fields of language education and teacher education. It stands out from the previous literature in its scope, contexts, languages covered, and visual methodologies used.

Visualising Multilingual Lives: More Than Words is aimed primarily at advanced university students (e.g. MA students), pre-service and in-service teachers, teacher educators, and senior or junior researchers who wish to deepen their knowledge of the multilingual subject and to improve their use of visual methodologies in language education, teacher education or research. Depending on the target group, the book can be used either for *raising awareness* of those involved in the complex processes under scrutiny and/or for *pursuing further research* to gain deeper insights into the issues addressed by trying out novel ways of collecting and analyzing data.

What is this book about and how is it organized?

The current *multilingual turn* in Applied Language Studies, or more narrowly, in language learning and teaching and in language teacher education, has been acknowledged as the ‘topic du jour’ (May, 2014: 1), and the turn recognizes the ‘dynamic, hybrid, and transnational linguistic repertoires of

multilingual (often migrant) speakers in rapidly diversifying urban conurbations worldwide'. This is precisely the focus of this edited volume: to recognize the diversity of paths and resources of the 'multilingual subject' (Kramersch, 2009) and the ways of tapping into the linguistic diversity in order to improve language education and teacher education (Yiakoumetti, 2012). The different contributions acknowledge the social and individual values attached to linguistic diversity in very different formal and informal contexts to enhance linguistic identity and self-esteem, linguistic rights, linguistic well-being and social justice (as advocated e.g. by Mercer & Williams, 2012, and Piller, 2016).

As an innovative venture, *Visualising Multilingual Lives: More Than Words* aims to:

- acknowledge the added value of using visual narratives and other visual materials to grasp the identity of multilingual subjects in different sociolinguistic and/or learning and teaching contexts;
- share recent trends in the use of visual methodologies in the analysis of multilingual and intercultural repertoires and lives;
- discuss how visual narratives can be combined with other visual methods and with more traditional methodologies in the study of the multilingual subject.

Apart from the Introduction and Conclusion, or Chapters 1 and 15, *Visualising Multilingual Lives: More Than Words* focuses on multilingual subjects in specific contexts and includes a total of 13 chapters on aspects of being multilingual, accessed by visual means, which include

- drawings (often referred to as visual narratives),
- photographs, and
- computer-generated artefacts.

The book is divided into three main parts. The studies in each part share both their focus and the ways the identities of the multilingual subjects are discursively and/or visually constructed across different lifespans and contexts in which they might find themselves – informal or formal contexts of learning and/or using their language repertoires, or in professional training:

- Part one (four chapters): The multilingual self
- Part two (five chapters): The multilingual learner
- Part three (four chapters): Multilingual teacher education.

Overall, what the studies in this volume have in common is, firstly, that they focus on multilingual subjects, most of whom have at least English as a linguistic resource (in addition to their L1); secondly, they make use of visual data, possibly complemented with other types of data; and, therefore, thirdly, most of the studies are attempts at multimodal analysis. However, the pools of data

have been analyzed within a variety of methodological frameworks and/or from different theoretical starting points. There is further variation, firstly, in the contexts where the studies have been conducted, ranging from European countries (including Finland, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden) to Australia, Brazil, Japan and South Korea; secondly, in the aspects of being multilingual that are addressed, such as identities, literacies, social integration, social mobility, beliefs about the languages in the repertoire of a multilingual subject, experiences of using, and learning and/or teaching the languages; and, thirdly, in the type of participants involved in the projects reported – children, young people, adults (some with refugee backgrounds) and student teachers of foreign languages.

What are the chapters about?

Each of Chapters 2 to 14 will report an empirical study that is original work, and each chapter is divided into the following sections:

- Introduction
- Background to the study (or Theoretical starting points)
- Aims of the study
- Data collection and analysis procedures
- Findings
- Discussion and concluding remarks.

Part one: The multilingual self

Part one focuses on multilingual subjects who use their repertoires of different languages in both informal and formal contexts, and across different timespans, looking either backward or forward in time. So, even if the subjects may be learning a language, the studies do not focus on the learning process or how it is subjectively perceived by the learners, but instead focus on the multilingual users and their languages.

Chapter 2, by Alice Chik, traces the becoming and being multilingual in Sydney, Australia, of a group of migrants (N = 12, aged 12–72 years) from different backgrounds. For this study, the participants produced self-portraits and timelines of their experiences of learning different languages in the course of their lives. These pools of visual data were complemented with excerpts from written life stories and interviews.

Chapter 3, by Nayr Ibrahim, focuses on the identity construction and exercise of agency of trilingual children (N = 13, aged 5–17 years) living in the capital of France. They were learning to read and write (or becoming literate) in three languages (French, English and a Heritage Language) in different

educational contexts, both formal and informal. In addition to providing verbal data of various kinds, the children were asked to produce drawings and bring with them to interviews objects that represented the languages they spoke.

Chapter 4, by Silvia Melo-Pfeifer and Alexandra Schmidt, explores the social integration of recent underage refugees in Hamburg, Germany, (N = 12, aged 17–18 years). When about to graduate from a vocational school, the young people were asked to produce two drawings, ‘My life now’ and ‘My life in a year’s time’. The task allowed them to envision their future and consider the role of German (and other languages) in the process.

Chapter 5, by Muriel Molinié, introduces a way for a group of international students studying in universities in France to reflect on their lives and envision their future in terms of social mobility. To empower the group, they were instructed to produce a drawing describing their background and visualizing their mobility in the years to come in Europe or beyond.

Part two: The multilingual learner

Part two focuses on students who are studying a foreign language (either English or Japanese) in a variety of educational contexts – school, university or study abroad – with consequences for the construction of their identities. The first chapter is an important methodological contribution to the volume (with quite a small pool of data), whereas the rest are full-length reports of empirical studies.

Chapter 6, by Kristiina Skinnari, presents a reinterpretation of a sub-set of data collected for a major project (PhD thesis). Among others, a group of children/adolescents (N = 95, aged 9–12 years) who were attending Grade 5 or 6 in the Finnish educational system were asked to produce self-portraits of themselves as learners of English. Some of these drawings (n = 7) were reinterpreted and earlier misinterpretations were corrected when they were viewed from a different starting point than before.

Chapter 7, by Liss Kerstin Sylvén, compares and contrasts the beliefs about two languages, Swedish as an L1 and English as an L2, held by two content-and-language-integrated-learning (CLIL) students (aged 17–18 years) with those of two other students. They were all attending Grade 12 in the Swedish educational system. The students were asked to take photographs of occasions that were significant to them when they used the two languages and provide interpretations in follow-up discussions.

Chapter 8, by So-Yeon Ahn, focuses on the beliefs held by a fairly large group of university undergraduates (N = 159) in South Korea, majoring in subjects related to English (e.g. linguistics, literature), and the possible transformation(s) in their identities once they had learnt the language. For this purpose, the students produced two self-portraits (on one and the same occasion), one showing what they were like before beginning to study English and the other what they were like after having studied it, both complemented with written commentaries.

Chapter 9, by Vera Lúcia Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva and Ronaldo Correa Gomes Junior, explores the possibilities of using digitally produced multimodal language learning histories (or oral data complemented with images and possibly sounds) to learn about the experiences of learning English of a group of university humanities undergraduates in Brazil (N = 43). The metaphors and metonymies used in describing the learning process were identified in the pool of multimodal data and classified systematically within a specific framework.

Chapter 10, by Tae Umino and Phil Benson, reports on two longitudinal case studies of exchange students studying Japanese as an L2 in universities in Japan. The students took photographs of any events in which they had participated. The photos taken in large quantities were coded for the people depicted and related to the events in the students' lives (in subsequent sets of interviews) to consider which communities of practice they had been allowed access to and the consequences of these for the development of their identities as speakers of Japanese during their study abroad.

Part three: Multilingual teacher education

Part three is about a specific context of professional training, that is, language majors being qualified as teachers of an L2 or a foreign language. In all of the studies reported, the language happens to be English with consequences for the identity construction of the student teachers as multilinguals.

Chapter 11, by Ana Carolina de Laurentiis Brandão, is a case study of two language majors in Brazil (aged 18 and 25 years) who had just begun teacher education. Still hesitant about the profession, they were asked to imagine themselves as EFL teachers in the future by drawing their self-portraits a few times during their training. The drawings were complemented with other types of data (including autobiographies, journals and interviews) to gain further insights into the process of eventually taking on the identity of an EFL teacher, shaped by their previous experiences in different roles and contexts.

Chapter 12, by Ana Sofia Pinho, reports on a case study of a student teacher of English in Portugal, and traces the development of her teacher identity and possible changes in her professional thinking over one term. Together with her classmates (N = 5), the student teacher was attending a course that addressed such key issues as citizenship and plurilingualism (a term used for multilingualism in the European Union). She was asked to come up with a metaphor that illustrated her idea of an English teacher in primary school and turn it into a drawing, complemented with verbal comments. The task was done twice during the course.

Chapter 13, by Mireia Pérez-Peïtx, Isabel Civera and Juli Palou, is a longitudinal study that sought to find out how two courses on teaching methodology being given in Barcelona, a bilingual city in Spain, affected the awareness of and beliefs about plurilingual competence held by a group of student teachers (N = 50), who would eventually graduate as English teachers in primary school. The courses

were given over two years, and the students produced drawings ‘Me and my languages’, twice, each time complemented with verbal comments. They did their first drawing at the beginning of the first course and the second one at the end of the second course.

Finally, Chapter 14, by Katja Mäntylä and Paula Kalaja, set out to find out (as part of a bigger project on the motivation of future EFL teachers) what a group of student teachers (N = 67) in Finland thought teaching English would involve once they had graduated from an MA programme and entered the profession a few years later. They were asked to envision ‘An English class of my dreams’ as the final home assignment on one of their first professionally oriented courses. The envisioning was done visually, so the students produced pictures (by a variety of means) and provided further details about the class in writing on the reverse side of the task sheet.

Chapter 15, by the co-editors, closes the volume with a critical evaluation of the studies reported and a discussion of the lessons learnt when using visual methodologies to address aspects of multilingualism as lived. They also discuss issues related to reflexivity in the research process and present a research agenda with the aim of developing this research area.

To sum up, the studies illustrate cutting-edge research on multilingual subjects, with innovation in the ways of collecting and analyzing visual material of various kinds. All the studies acknowledge the added value of using visual data, possibly complemented with other types of data, to overcome “lingualism” (Block, 2014) in research on multilingual subjects and to make sense of aspects of their lives in a variety of sociolinguistic and/or learning and teaching contexts in different parts of the world.

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ⁱ In Europe, yet another term, *plurilingualism*, has been advocated by the Council of Europe (2001). This is an issue addressed in Chapters 12 and 13 of this book, for example.