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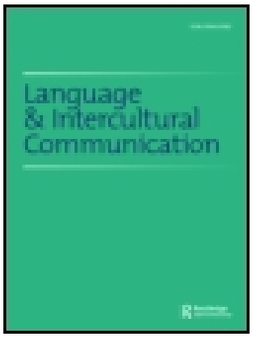

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Raising awareness of multilingualism as lived – in the context of teaching English as a foreign language

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews possibilities of raising learners' language and culture awareness or that of multilingualism as subjectively experienced, based on a review of two collections of studies that have made use of arts-based methodologies. This kind of data makes it possible to recollect past experiences, envision future events and reflect on aspects of becoming or being multilingual subjects, including identity (re)construction and beliefs about languages and their use. We argue that the tasks in the studies can be applied to different groups of learners in FL education, offering space for reflection and enhancing agency in specific contexts of multilingualism.

Tässä artikkelissa esitellään mahdollisuuksia herätellä kielen oppijoiden kieli- ja kulttuuritietoisuutta. Esitellyt mahdollisuudet pohjautuvat 24 empiirisen tutkimuksen kriittiseen arviointiin. Tutkimuksissa käytettiin kuvataiteisiin pohjautuvia visuaalisia menetelmiä. Tällaisten menetelmien avulla on mahdollista pohtia aikaisempia kokemuksia tai kuvitella tulevaisuutta ja näin reflektoida erilaisia monikielisyyden kokemuksia. Näitä voivat olla identiteetin rakentumiseen liittyvät kysymykset, käsitykset eri kielten käytöstä tai tulevaisuuden unelmat. Arviointimme perusteella esitämme, että niitä tehtäviä, joita käytettiin tutkimuksissa, voidaan soveltaa eri tavoin erilaisille vieraan kielen oppijaryhmille ja tarjota oppijoille reflektoinnin tila, joka voi edistää oppijoiden toimijuutta heidän omissa henkilökohtaisissa monikielisyyden konteksteissaan.

KEYWORDS
Multilingualism as lived; language and culture awareness; visual methodologies; images; foreign language education

The multilingual nature of people's everyday lives, including educational contexts, is today the norm rather than an exception. This is acknowledged to be the case in Europe, too, being already reflected – to an extent – in the aims (and curricula) in teaching English as a foreign language (FL). However, there is little evidence of these developments in current learning materials, and therefore teachers often lack means of tackling issues of multilingualism in their classrooms.

This article discusses the possibilities of raising learners' language and culture awareness by focusing on multilingualism as subjectively experienced or *as lived* by visual means. Our discussion is based on a review of two collections of empirical studies that make use of arts-based methodologies, or more specifically, of *visual arts*.

Based on the review, this article will illustrate how arts-based methodologies could also be used for raising learners' awareness of the complexity of multilingualism as lived, involving ups and downs, positive and negative experiences, and identities. We argue that being aware of one's multilingualism is a key to enhancing language and culture awareness, as subjective/lived experience is a

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central component of it (e.g. Kramsch, 2009). Recent (growing) interest in visual methods in studying language learning and multilingualism (or in Applied Language Studies) has shown that visual methods can be used as a tool to become more aware of one's own multilingual realities and thereby these are a way for teachers to raise language and culture awareness of their students.

In this article, we will first define concepts central to our discussion, that is, multilingualism and language and culture awareness as well as their relation to FL education. We will then proceed to the review of the two edited collections of studies that have employed visual methodologies. Based on this analysis we designed a set of tasks to be used with young people, or more specifically, with learners of English in grades 7–9 in the Finnish educational system as the target group to discuss the possibilities that visual methodologies offer – as a pedagogical tool – for teachers to raise the language and culture awareness of learners not only of English but also of other FLs – in their own specific educational contexts.

Multilingualism and FL education

Changing tenets of FL education

It is well established that multilingualism in societies is more common than monolingualism, but FL education has overwhelmingly been and still is characterised by a strong monolingual bias with the assumed homogeneous learner groups sharing the first language (L1). The demographic changes in societies have thus not reached classrooms, and as Kramsch (2012) aptly points out, despite multilingual speakers society and education are still largely organised for monolinguals. However, during the past decade, scholars have increasingly advocated for a *multilingual turn* in SLA (e.g. Conteh & Meier, 2014; Douglas Fir Group, 2016; May, 2014; Meier, 2017), and this discussion has had repercussions on FL education as well (see, e.g. Kramsch, 2014).

Lo Bianco (2014, p. 312) points out that 'Foreign language education is deeply affected by globalization, destabilizing some of the central ideas that have helped form national languages, and, by contrast, foreign languages.' FL is thus losing its old status as the language of the other and the traditional categories of first, second, and foreign language do not hold anymore. Kramsch (2014, p. 297) describes the now shaking tenets of FL education as follows:

> Modernity, a product of the 18th-century Enlightenment, is characterized by all the features that FL teachers take for granted: the existence of nation–states, each with their national language and their national culture; the existence of standardized languages with their stable grammars and dictionaries that ensure the good usage of the language by well-educated citizens that FL learners are expected to emulate; the superiority of national languages over regional dialects and patois; the clear boundaries between native and foreign languages and among foreign languages so that one can clearly know whether someone is speaking French, German, or Chinese, standard Spanish or regional Spanish; the codified norms of correct language usage and proper language use that language learners have to abide by for fear of not being understood or not being accepted by native speakers.

What is more, in the plateau of multilingualism, including students' rich repertoires of first, heritage, minority, and signed languages, FL education is still largely focused on a fairly limited selection of languages. In the European context, this means mainly European languages. This kind of multilingualism can be described as *elite multilingualism*. Ortega (2019, p. 27) describes elite multilingualism as follows: 'Conditions of elite L2 learning ensue when people learn new languages by choice, without any material or symbolic threat to their home languages – and often aided by ample support and in the midst of great praise.' This is often the case in FL education, which is organised, regulated and supported by governments and moreover, English is most often one party in this kind of elite multilingualism (Kramsch, 2014; May, 2019).

Thus, the conditions of FL learning and teaching have changed radically. Learners in our FL classrooms are not monolingual anymore and the status of the language taught in the classroom is not the same for all learners. Furthermore, not all learners have the same starting points when beginning to learn a new language. Teachers have to take all this into account, but they also need to be given tools to tackle the multilingual realities of their classrooms.

Defining multilingualism

Defining *multilingualism* is not an easy task, neither is separating it from related concepts, such as bilingualism or plurilingualism. We will bring up here only a few different ways of defining multilingualism, relevant to our purposes in this article (for a detailed account of different definitions, see, e.g. Cenoz, 2013).

One way of characterising multilingualism is to see it either as *a societal phenomenon* or as *an individual characteristic or practice* (e.g. Cenoz, 2013; Wei, 2008). When examined as a societal phenomenon, the interest may lie in, for example, official or unofficial multilingualism, the status of or attitudes towards different languages. From an individual's point of view, the focus could be on acquiring several languages from birth or on multilingual practices in different contexts. The Council of Europe (2007), however, distinguishes between the concepts of multilingualism and *plurilingualism* on the basis of a societal or an individual phenomenon, connecting the former to multilingualism and latter to plurilingualism. The frequently quoted definitions are:

> 'Multilingualism' refers to the presence in a geographical area, large or small, of more than one 'variety of language' i.e. the mode of speaking of a social group whether it is formally recognised as a language or not; in such an area individuals may be monolingual, speaking only their own variety.

> 'Plurilingualism' refers to the repertoire of varieties of language which many individuals use, and is therefore the opposite of monolingualism; it includes the language variety referred to as 'mother tongue' or 'first language' and any number of other languages or varieties. Thus in some multilingual areas some individuals are monolingual and some are plurilingual.

Bilingualism and multilingualism are often used interchangeably in research. Cenoz (2013) notes that sometimes bilingualism is used as a generic term but these days multilingualism appears to be more often used as the generic term when referring to two or more languages. She further points out that for some researchers bilingualism refers to two languages and multilingualism to three or more languages, especially when examining third language acquisition.

Another contrast between the concepts is that of multilingualism as *parallel monolingualism* or *holistic (or dynamic) multilingualism*. The former characterisation has been prevalent when looking at multilingualism from a monolingual perspective. Multilingualism has been understood as serial or parallel monolingualism in two or more languages, i.e. an individual's competence in several separate languages (Heller, 1999, 2007). It is thus assumed that to be a multilingual, a person has an equal level of competence in two or more languages. This view has been heavily criticised (Blackledge & Creese, 2010) and an alternative approach, i.e. holistic multilingualism (concerning education, in particular) has been proposed (e.g. Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; García & Sylvan, 2011). This approach is related to the view of language as multimodal resource and the focus is on individuals' repertoires rather than competences.

Becoming and being multilingual

When looking at multilingualism from the point of language users, we can compare multilinguals with monolinguals. Traditionally, *monolinguals* were thought to be speakers of an L1 or native speakers, and they were assumed, firstly, to have acquired the L1 from birth, and secondly, to have full competence in the language (Ortega, 2014). In contrast, *multilinguals* were not only speakers of an L1 but also users of one or more additional languages (labelled as 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 considered to be deficit: their competence in any additional language would always be lacking in one or another respect. It was typical of multilinguals to resort to code-switching and -mixing, neither of which was, however, viewed in very positive terms, and so something to be

avoided. It is only gradually being acknowledged that it is, in fact, multilinguals that form the majority of people in the world, not monolinguals.

Thus, some of the traditional assumptions have been challenged (e.g. Ortega, 2014), including *the monolingual bias* – with its two assumptions discussed above. Besides, 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 are now viewed to be individuals that do *translanguaging* (Otheguy et al., 2015). They have a repertoire 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 launched 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 of theirs.

In addition, becoming or being multilingual can be looked at from two perspectives (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. In contrast, from the perspective of *insiders*, 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.

Finally, it is claimed that there are two approaches to multilingualism (e.g. Kramsch, 2009). The *objective* approach focuses on figuring out the mechanisms inside a multilingual's mind and tracing developments in his or her knowledge of any language (and possible stages in the acquisition process) in terms of mastery of a language as a system (e.g. grammar and lexicon), or in terms of an ability to communicate or interact with others in the language. The *subjective* approach, in contrast, attempts to find out how a multilingual him- or herself feels about becoming or being multilingual, or what the different languages and their use mean to him or her personally. It is precisely this subjective approach that our article is concerned with.

Raising language and culture awareness[1] in FL education

Language awareness is yet another term that needs defining for the purposes of this article. Quite a broad definition of the term is provided on the website of the Association of Language Awareness as 'explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use' (n.d.). In addition, it is argued that increased awareness of these issues would provide a number of advantages: firstly, it can make us better learners, teachers and users of languages; secondly, it can enhance our relations with other people and/or cultures; and thirdly, it can make us sensitive to language that might be (mis)used for manipulation or discrimination. As Garrett and Cots (2018) argue, language awareness can focus on aspects related to language teaching and teachers, language learning and learners (including multilingualism and plurilingualism), as well as issues reaching beyond language pedagogy, including intercultural competence.

Regarding the raising of awareness of multilingualism (and multiculturalism), and/or fostering intercultural competence, more critical stances have been put forward as early as in the late 2000s. Consider, for example:

> … concepts like 'communication', 'language', and 'culture' cannot be taken at face value but must be problematized. She [Hu] sees as the goal of intercultural learning reflexion, critical awareness, acceptance of paradox and contradiction, open discussion of power relations and identity conflicts, and willingness to cross over into other disciplines (e.g. sociology, philosophy, literary and cultural studies). An intercultural pedagogy, she argues, takes into account the students' culturally diverse representations, interpretations, expectations, memories, and identifications, that are, in turn, thematized, brought into the open through personal narratives and multilingual writings, and discussed openly in class. (Hu, 1999, 2000; cited by Kramsch, 2005, p. 552)

European policy makers have joined in this criticism only more recently after the developments in Europe since 2015. It is assumed:

> … that cultures are internally heterogeneous, contested, dynamic and constantly changing, and that individuals have complex affiliations to various cultures. The Framework also assumes that intercultural situations arise due to the perception that there are cultural differences between people. For this reason, the Framework competence model makes frequent reference to "people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself" (rather than, for example, to "people from other cultures"). Intercultural dialogue is construed as an open exchange of views between individuals or groups who perceive themselves as having different cultural affiliations from each other. (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. 32–33)

In short, these critical stances suggest questioning traditional terminology that has been taken for granted until recently and making a distinction between awareness of language and that of culture. In addition, ways of enhancing awareness are outlined: students could share their experiences (as stories) and opinions in FL classes, or in writing or speaking. To this array of verbal means, we would like to add means in another mode, that is, *visual methodologies* of various kinds. The possibilities of these will be discussed in greater detail later on to foster multilingualism and multiculturalism in Finland (and possibly elsewhere in Europe).

FL education policies (illustrated by one European country): fostering multilingualism and multiculturalism

Finland is officially a bilingual country with two national languages: Finnish (87.3%, Statistics Finland, 2019) and Swedish (5.2%). The linguistic and cultural rights of the linguistic minorities of Sámi, Roma, and Sign Language users are guaranteed in the constitution. Of the population, 7.5% speak other languages, e.g. Russian, Estonian, Arabic and Somali. The educational system in Finland is highly decentralised, which means that universities, municipalities, schools and individual teachers have considerable freedom to decide on the selection of languages to be offered as well as on the teaching materials and methods. Still, FL education is regulated by a number of guidelines, some of which are European, others national or local.

Comparing *documents launched by the Council of Europe* over the past few decades, each compiled by a different group of experts in FL education (e.g. Council of Europe, 2001, 2007, 2018) we can see developments in what *plurilingual education*, on the one hand, and *cultural education* (earlier referred to as intercultural learning/education, the idea was to compare an L2 with a learner's L1), on the other hand, are claimed to involve. Some earlier assumptions, as advocated in the first document from the early 2000s, have been challenged and more critical stances towards both and regarding the traditional terminology in the field, such as native speaker, first language, foreign language, culture, Other(ness), and aims in teaching languages can be traced. Importantly, for the purposes of this article, the second document provides some suggestions how to challenge some popular beliefs or myths about aspects of learning languages (e.g. 'Language X is difficult/easy to learn') and to raise learners' awareness of their own plurilingualism and repertoire of languages that they already speak and learn to appreciate these, which may not have been the case before, e.g. because of the monolingual bias mentioned above. The third document is important in broadening language awareness into intercultural awareness (and acknowledging its complexity these days) and providing a general framework. It consists of values, attitudes, skills and knowledge, and critical understanding, and provides teachers with descriptors to plan teaching and assess learning outcomes in these respects. The descriptors are comparable to the CEFR language proficiency scale (described in the 2001 document), ranging from A1 to C2. Overall, the aim of the third document is to empower 'all learners to become autonomous and respectful democratic citizens by equipping them with the competences needed for democracy and intercultural dialogue' (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 25). These developments in FL education are reflections of what has been taking place in Europe in the past few years: politically, socially, economically, including globalisation and migration, and thus being faced with the increased number of and diversity in the languages spoken and their users on the continent.

As to the *language policy documents in Finland*, there are national and local curricula drawn for pre-primary education, basic education (grades 1–9) and general upper secondary education. These

are more specific than the European policies and more influential in practice. The national curricula 'set out the key objectives, content and policies of education' (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016). In addition, the education providers, i.e. municipalities and schools, have their more detailed local curricula, which have to be based on the national curricula. Thus, the national curricula are binding, and the aim is to ensure the basic rights for education, equity, consistency and quality of education.

The most recent *National Core Curriculum for Grades 1–9* (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014) became effective as of 2016. The curriculum is structured so that it first outlines general issues such as the mission, goal, operating culture, support, student welfare, the general principles of assessment, and the status of minority languages and the different forms of bilingual education. Secondly, the curriculum covers the goals for different subjects for grades 1–2, for grades 3–6, and for grades 7–9. What is important in terms of cultural competence and language awareness are the transversal competences, first described generally and then specified for each of the three groups of grade levels. There are altogether seven transversal competences, and these concern all subjects taught in basic education (with slightly differing emphasis in different subjects). These include, for example, *thinking and learning to learn*, *ICT competence,* and *multiliteracy*. What is of significance for our purposes is *cultural competence, interaction and self-expression*. In the sections setting the aims for different subjects, FLs are described as being 'a part of language education and introduction to language awareness' (Section 13.4.3 Foreign languages). It seems thus that many of the recent developments in research, including multilingualism and multimodality, have been filtered into the curriculum.

When comparing the most recent National Core Curriculum for Grades 1–9 or for Basic Education (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014, e.g. pp. 218–233, 348–373) with the previous one (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2004, pp. 138–143), it is evident that the three main aims in FL education in Finland have been reversed in their order of importance, and their emphasis and scope revised (Table 1).

These days the first aim in FL education is to increase learners' language awareness in general, and their appreciation of multilingualism and multiculturalism, in particular. The second aim is to provide learners with practice in learning-to-learn skills, including learning strategies. The third aim is to develop their proficiency in FLs in three abilities, i.e. in the ability to interact, interpret, and/or produce texts in different modes. Also, for the first time, it is acknowledged that the status of English is different from that of other FLs in the country: English is considered a lingua franca or a global language. As a result, compared with learners of other FLs, learners of English are expected to reach higher levels in any ability, as measured on the standard CEFR scale of A1–C2 (Council of Europe, 2001). In addition, teaching content through the medium of English or Content-and-Language-Integrated-Learning (CLIL) is encouraged, as is searching information in English, e.g. on the Internet.

Overall, the current National Core Curriculum for Grades 1–9 seems to have adopted some key ideas from the earlier European guidelines reviewed above (but clearly not from the more recent ones), being thus reflected in the aims of FL education these days in the country, highlighting the importance of fostering language and (inter)cultural/culture awareness, or rather of multilingualism

Table 1. Aims of Finnish National Core Curricula regarding FL education summarised.

National Core Curriculum for Grades 1–9 (2004)	National Core Curriculum for Grades 1–9 (2014)
• *Language proficiency*: four skills (Reading Comprehension, Listening Comprehension, Writing, and Speaking); status of English: a foreign language among others; summative assessment (outcomes)	• *Awareness of languages* in general and appreciation of multilingualism and multiculturalism
• *Cultural skills* (L1 vs. L2 culture), respect for Other	• *Learning-to-learn skills* (including learning strategies)
• *Learning strategies*	• *Language proficiency*: three abilities (ability to interact, interpret and produce oral, written and multimodal texts); status of English: lingua franca; formative or dynamic assessment (process, feedback)

and multiculturalism, as it is put in the document. However, these remain in the document pretty much at the level of buzzwords and lack any concrete applications that teachers could introduce to their FL classes (for an earlier attempt at this, see, however, Kalaja & Dufva, 2005). So little is known to what extent FL teachers address these issues in their classes at the moment (to meet the first aim in teaching FLs, see Table 1) or how producers of series of FL textbooks have taken or will take these developments into account in revising/updating teaching materials after the revisions. It is for these reasons that we will be making some suggestions later on how learners' awareness (and appreciation) of multilingualism and multiculturalism could be increased within the Finnish educational system (or beyond) by resorting to visual methodologies, based a critical review of two sets of empirical studies and their findings.

Review of research on multilingualism as lived using visual methodologies

Rationale for the use of visual methodologies

('Fine') arts are claimed to be a powerful means of communication, especially if the issues at hand are difficult/tough or highly emotional in nature, and can be divided into different types: literary, performance, auditory and visual arts (The Old Jail Art Center, n.d.; Study.co; Thoughtco.com, n.d.; Visual art, n.d.). Of these, the *visual arts* (or their products) appeal to/stimulate the visual sense but can engage other senses, too. The visual arts include, among others, drawing, photography, painting, film and sculpting, each having its specific elements and characteristics. The visual arts are primarily created for aesthetic purposes and judged for their beauty. However, they can also be used to express emotions, opinions, or taste.

Visual methodologies have been used in other disciplines, including anthropology, sociology and psychology, to document research sites, to give visual prompts or to evoke reflection (for brief reviews, see Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2018a; Pitkänen-Huhta & Pietikäinen, 2017) and even in Applied Language Studies to describe multilingual environments, including studies on linguistic landscapes in major cities and schoolscapes.

For the two of us working as researchers in Applied Language Studies and as FL teacher educators, visual arts or methods have been only of instrumental value (as opposed to being used for aesthetic purposes or judged for their beauty) in addressing aspects of becoming or being multilingual as subjectively experienced and being our response to the recent call to broaden the methodologies used in Applied Language Studies to visual ones. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, *visual methodologies* can give participants in studies (i.e. learners, teachers, and users of more than one language) an alternative way of expressing themselves, in contrast to verbal means, whether written or spoken. This might be the case especially with issues that are complex or controversial in nature. Some might find it easier to tackle issues like this visually than verbally (But the reverse can also be the case). Secondly, people are used to the increasing use of visual means of communication in their everyday lives (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Tiktok, Facebook). Thirdly, students attending school or university in Finland have become more and more multilingual and multicultural. In the capital area close to 140 languages are spoken these days (in addition to the two national languages) and in some suburbs of Helsinki over 55% of the students in FL classes speak other languages than Finnish or Swedish as their L1 (Laakso, 2017). So communication or sharing experiences verbally can be a challenge in pursuing research. There are also power issues involved, if Finnish were insisted to be used in interviews with participants with a limited knowledge of the language, for example. Furthermore, it would be impossible to ask small children or illiterate adults (which is often the case with immigrants to the country), for example, to write a language learning history or fill in items in a questionnaire in Finnish or in any language. Finally, some occasions of learning, teaching and/or using more than one language may have been negative or even traumatic experiences (possibly requiring psychological treatment or therapy) and these might be easier to handle/share by visualising than by putting into words.

Different types of visual images and methods of analysis

Over the past few decades we, together with some *local colleagues* of ours, have been exploring the possibilities of visual methodologies in doing research on FL education in Finland (see, e.g. Kalaja, 2019; Kalaja et al., 2013; Nikula & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2008; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Pitkänen-Huhta, in press; Visual art, n.d.). In pursuing research along these lines our mission has as a rule been two-fold: firstly, to carry out research on topics that we have found of importance, and secondly, to have the participants in our studies, being mostly students of ours, share their experiences in class, reflect on specific topics and eventually raise their awareness of the issues at hand, issues that can be complex in nature, and research findings often inconclusive or controversial.

In addition, we have recently been collaborating with *international colleagues*, sharing our interest in exploring the possibilities of visual methodologies in doing research on multilingualism as lived and working with learners, teachers or users of more than one language in different parts of the world. This cooperation has resulted in the publication of two international volumes:

(1) P. Kalaja & A. Pitkänen-Huhta (Eds.) (2018b). Double special issue 'Visual methods in Applied Language Studies, *Applied Linguistics Review*, 9(2–3), pp. 157–473: with 11 articles, all empirical studies
(2) P. Kalaja & S. Melo-Pfeifer (Eds.) (2019). *Visualising multilingual lives: More than words*, published by Multilingual Matters: with 13 chapters, all empirical studies.

Overall, the two publications with a total of 24 empirical studies address topics related to the learning and teaching of additional languages, or being or becoming a multilingual person as subjectively experienced or as lived, and make use of visual material/methodologies of one kind or another. Importantly, they are evidence of the recent *visual turn* in Applied Linguistic Studies.

Next, we will review the articles or chapters in the two publications. Our point is to illustrate the variety of visual data used in the studies and ways of analysing aspects of multilingualism as lived. Later on we will consider the possibilities of the studies in raising language and/or culture awareness of multilinguals (of any status) in FL education in Finland (and even beyond).

Critical review of the two recent publications on multilingualism as lived

The review of the articles and chapters in the two publications is based on *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* by Rose (2016), and on three of the four *sites* (or foci) of analysis suggested by her: (1) production of the image, (2) the image itself, and (3) audiencing (the fourth site, namely, circulation, will not be considered here) (for a more detailed analysis of the articles of the Special Issue, see Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2018a). More specifically, in the following the studies will be compared for how their pools of visual data or images have been produced, what they are composed of, and who serve as their audience – entitled to their own interpretations of the images (Table 2). More detailed observations regarding the three sites (or foci) and some other related points follow the table (all based on Rose, 2016).

In the total of 24 empirical studies reviewed, the visual data have been produced by a variety of means, including (and listed below from the most frequent to the least frequent):

- drawing pictures, either in a controlled way, with a template provided, to produce, e.g. a portrait, or in a less controlled way, without a template,
- accessing a computer to produce pictures (e.g. image banks or software to produce images),
- taking photographs,
- making use of clippings of pictures and/or text from printed materials such as magazines, e.g. to compile a collage

- composing multimodal language learning histories, text complemented with pictures, sounds, etc.,
- compiling identity kits, made of cardboard boxes and containing small objects or human figures, photographs, drawings, slogans, etc.

The visual data or images have been produced either by the participants involved in a study or as part of a bigger project, by the participants in cooperation with the researcher/teacher or fellow students, or by the researcher (see Table 2). The participants in the studies have ranged in age from small children to retired/elderly immigrants. However, the majority has been university students, including future teachers of English or other FLs. The data have been produced either at one point or more than one point in time. Studies of the second type are longitudinal in their design and typically case studies with quite a small number of participants.

The visual material[2] comes either black and white or in full colour. They are either *two-dimensional*, including drawings, pictures/images (often referred to as visual narratives), photographs, collages, billboards, timelines, and sets of PowerPoint slides; or *three-dimensional* (identity kits, of the size of shoe boxes and comparable to dioramas). As is evident (from Table 2), most of the data have been two-dimensional.

The visual material, of one or more types, is as a rule complemented with other types of data. The pools of data to be processed are thus, in fact *multimodal*, and contain also verbal data such as interviews, surveys, language learning histories (or autobiographies), oral or written commentaries (referred to as narratives or meta-narratives from one study to another), postings to an online discussion forum, or poems and vignettes. In addition, in one study visual material is complemented with concrete objects that the participants have found of significance regarding a specific topic addressed (e.g. a toy Lada car turns out to represent Grandfather and his Russian in the country-of-origin of a trilingual child, residing now in France).

Audiencing shifts the focus from the production (and producers) of images to their analysis (and interpreters). The interpretations (see Table 2) can be by those involved in a study, i.e. the participants, by others involved in a study or a project, e.g. fellow students and teachers sharing their interpretations, or by the researcher.

In addition, of the total of eight *ways of analysing* visual data suggested by Rose (2016), the pools of visual (or multimodal) data in the studies reported in the two publications have been subjected to only one or two methods of analysis: (1) *compositional interpretation* and/or (2) (narrative or discursive) *content analysis*. The first method is used to analyse aspects related to the composition of the images, or how something relevant is depicted (e.g. the size or placement of specific items or the use of colours in portraits of learners or teachers); the second to analyse images for their content, that is, making sense of what they portray and/or how they might relate to the discourses in the context or in society at large. The focus of analysis varies thus from the form to the content of the images, followed by interpretation. Possible developments over time are noted in a few studies that are longitudinal in their research design (see Table 2).

Overall, the 24 studies have addressed a range of *themes*, including

- experiences of learning additional languages, e.g. by tracing trajectories, or of being or becoming multilingual
- beliefs about aspects of learning and/or teaching languages or about oneself as a learner (possibly noting developments over time)
- making sense of one's practices, identities (construction and possible developments over time), sensitive and traumatic issues, or values and attitudes
- envisioning one's future: as a learner/multilingual, or identities or profession as teachers.

In sum, the studies have focused either on the past, present or future aspects of learning or teaching FLs, or being or becoming multilingual subjects as subjectively experienced and visually (or multimodally) expressed.

Table 2. The studies ($N = 24$) summarised regarding the pools of visual data: three sites or foci of analysis (Rose, 2016).

Study (Year) Context: Participants	Production of the image(s) by participants (unless stated otherwise)	The image itself: two- or three-dimensional (2D or 3D)	Audiencing: interpretation(s) by participants (unless stated otherwise)
Inözü (2018) Turkey: children	Drawing self-portraits of L2 learners	2D	
Purkarthofer (2018) Austria: young multilinguals	Drawing two spaces: home and school	2D	
Ahn and West (2018) South Korea: young L2 learners (up to grade 6)	Producing drawings/ images of a good L2 teacher	2D	
de Laurentiis Brandão (2018) Brazil: an L2 student teacher	Drawing self-portraits of an L2 teacher x 2 (over time)	2D	
Ribas and Perine (2018) Brazil: L2 student teachers	Producing self-portraits of L2 teachers (on an online discussion forum) x 2 (over time)	2D	
Chik (2018) Australia: young L2 learners	Drawing self-portraits of L2 learners	2D	
Pitkänen-Huhta and Rothoni (2018) Finland and Greece: L2 learners (14–16 years of age)	Compiling collages of the importance of the L1 and L2 for the students	2D	
Becker-Zayas et al. (2018) Uganda: young children	Compiling billboards in an L2 in response to official information about a sensitive topic (= AIDS/ HIV)	2D	
Frimberger et al. (2018) Britain: young refugees	Compiling identity kits of multilinguals	3D	Interpretations by the researchers in the form of vingnettes/poems
Salo and Dufva (2018) South Korea: refugees	Drawing self-portraits of multilinguals (a template provided) and timelines of L2 learning	2D	
Tasker (2018) New Zealand: L2 university students	Producing timelines of L2 learning by the researcher	2D	
Chik (2019) Australia: immigrants	Drawing self-portraits of multilinguals	2D	
Ibrahim (2019) France: children using three languages	Drawing self-portraits of trilinguals	2D	
Melo-Pfeifer and Schmidt (2019) Germany: young refugees	Drawing self-portraits of L2 learners x 2: now and in the future	2D	
Molinié (2019) France: university exchange students	Drawing visions of mobility in the future	2D	Interpretations by participants jointly with fellow students and teachers
Skinnari (2019) Finland: L2 learners (grades 5–6)	Drawing self-portraits of L2 learners	2D	Re-interpretation of a set of self-portraits with fellow researchers
Sylvén (2019) Sweden: L2 learners (grade 12)	Taking photographs of uses of the L1 and L2	2D	
Ahn (2019) South Korea: L2 university students	Drawing self-portraits of L2 learners x 2: now and in the future	2D	
Paiva and Gomes Junior (2019) Brazil: L2 university students	Producing multimodal L2 learning histories	2D	
Umino and Benson (2019) Japan: L2 university students (study abroad)	Taking photographs of L2 events participated in over years of study abroad	2D	
de Laurentiis Brandão (2019) Brazil: L2 student teachers	Drawing self-portraits of future L2 teachers	2D	
Pinho (2019) Portugal: an L2 student teacher	Drawing self-portraits of a future L2 teacher x 2 (over time)	2D	
Pérez-Peitx et al. (2019) Spain: L2 student teachers	Drawing/producing images of *plurilingual competence* x 2 (over time)	2D	
Mäntylä and Kalaja (2019) Finland: L2 student teachers	Drawing/producing visions of an ideal L2 class	2D	

Applying visual methodologies to raise language and culture awareness of FL learners

However, when considering the 24 articles and chapters, the general purpose of all the studies seems to extend beyond the mere gaining of research findings. They appear to strive towards helping the participants to express themselves by visual means and thereby to unravel issues otherwise remaining hidden for researchers and for the participants. This then leads to awareness raising, empowering the participants, and helping them to tackle complex personal issues.

In our opinion, the studies have even *greater* potential in this respect: the studies and different visual methodologies could be adapted and used for *raising language and culture awareness* (or multilingualism and multiculturalism, as it is put in the Finnish curriculum, see above) in any FL classroom in the Finnish educational system (and even beyond). To illustrate the potential, we adapted the original tasks with one specific target group in mind, namely, *students in grades 7–9* (in Basic Education), ranging in age from 13 to 15 years and who had studied English as their first FL. However, at this point in their studies, they have already experience of learning more than one FL.

In designing the tasks, our idea was to provide the students with an opportunity to reflect on their *own* learning of FLs (or additional languages) over their school careers: (1) to recollect past experiences, (2) to consider their current situation, and/or (3) to look forward in time. Accordingly, we reorganised the original tasks thematically into three groups (Tables 3–5) and revised the instructions to suit the new target group, taking into consideration their specific context of study and the main aims of FL education (see FL education policies above). All tasks make use of visual methodologies of one type or another, including both two- and three-dimensional ones (or multimodal methodologies, see critical review above). Overall, the tasks focus on the learning of additional languages as *subjectively experienced* by the students: in their roles as learners of additional languages over their school careers so far and as envisioned in the years to come, and/or as users of more than one language. While interacting with others in specific places or spaces, including home and school, the languages can take on different roles and/or significance. These are all important issues to address in raising awareness of multilingualism and multiculturalism (or language and culture awareness).

Table 3 contains the revised sets of tasks based on the articles and chapters in the two publications. The tasks give the students a chance to recollect their *past experiences* of learning additional languages and/or to trace their learning trajectories over time. Reflecting back in time on their multilingual lives provides students with means to understand their present situation and see their continuous and contextual linguistic development.

Table 4 contains further suggestions for tasks to consider the present time. These provide the students with an opportunity to consider their *current beliefs* about various contextual and social aspects related to the learning and use of additional languages in their lives and the possible *(re)construction of their identities*. Both are important issues related to the learning of additional languages or becoming multilingual.

Table 3. Looking back in time: recollecting the learning of additional languages in the past.

- *Drawing a timeline* (possibly based on oral sharing or written life stories) of your career as a learner of an additional language (or more than one) to note positive and negative events, or ups and downs; or types of activities engaged in to learn the language(s) (i.e. formal, informal, non-formal or none at all) (Salo & Dufva, 2018; Tasker, 2018)
- *Producing a multimodal history of your learning of an additional language* (or more than one), text complemented with pictures/drawings and sound- and/or video-clips to note how they represent you and the others involved, the language(s) being learned, and the process of learning it (these) (Paiva & Gomes Junior, 2019)
- *Taking photographs of groups of people, or communities of practice*, that you have interacted with in an additional language (or more than one) over time, noting also who made it possible for you to access the groups, and considering consequences for your identity development (Umino & Benson, 2019)
- *Taking photographs of your use of an additional language* (or more than one, being different in status) and in different contexts, considering their significance/role/function in your life and for the development of your identity (as a user vs. as a learner) (Sylvén, 2019)

Table 4. Considering the present time: holding beliefs and (re)constructing identities.

- *Producing a drawing or self-portrait of yourself as a learner of an additional language* (or of more than one), to consider the contexts and mediational means involved (including media and other people) and the construction of your identity (Inözü, 2018)
- *Adding to a human figure (a standard template provided) all the languages that you speak/know*, colouring them and giving reasons for their inclusion and placement (Salo & Dufva, 2018)
- *Producing a picture of all the languages that you speak/know*, to figure out your understanding of *plurilingual competence*, possibly done twice, to note developments in your beliefs over time (Pérez-Peitx et al., 2019)
- *Producing a picture of an ideal learner of an additional language* (or more than one) to consider what is required of a person to master the language(s) (Ahn & West, 2018)
- *Compiling a set of posters* (e.g. making use of clippings from magazines) with titles 'Language X and I', 'Language Y and I', etc., to consider the significance/role of the languages in your life (Pitkänen-Huhta & Rothoni, 2018)
- *Compiling a three-dimensional identity kit* (made of a cardboard box and containing small objects/toys, photos, slogans, etc.) to share your experiences as a learner of an additional language (or more than one) and to consider your identity construction (Frimberger et al., 2018)
- *Producing pictures of two spaces* (i.e. home/family vs. school), noting language practices in both, and possible developments over time, if the task were administered twice (Purkarthofer, 2018)
- *Designing educational posters/billboards* with images and slogans to promote diversity and multilingualism, e.g. posted along school corridors (to celebrate the European Day of Languages, for example) (Becker-Zayas et al., 2018)

Table 5 contains a few more tasks to consider the learning of additional languages in the future. The tasks make it possible for the students *to envision* their learning of additional languages and/or to consider the process of becoming multilinguals in the years to come. Envisioning is an important aspect of learner identity construction and investment in language learning (e.g. Norton, 2000).

Table 5. Looking forward in time: envisioning the learning of additional languages or becoming multilingual.

- *Producing a picture of yourself as a learner of an additional language* (or more than one) 'now' and envisioning yourself at a later stage in your studies/lives ('in a year's time' or over a longer period time), noting the significance/role of each of the languages and possible developments in your identity (Melo-Pfeifer & Schmidt, 2019)
- *Producing a self-portrait of yourself at the beginning of your studies of an additional language* (or more than one) *and later on* (e.g. before graduation), noting developments in your identity along a number of dimensions (including psychological, physical, relational and experiential ones) (Ahn, 2019)
- *Producing a picture of an ideal class* of learning an additional language (or more than one), and explaining what would, in your opinion, be important to learn about it (or them) (Mäntylä & Kalaja, 2019)

All the tasks are based on the reports in the two publications reviewed above. Importantly, once a task has been completed in a FL classroom (or as home assignments), the observations made by students can be compared with the findings in the original studies, stimulating further discussion of the issues.

We designed the sets of tasks with a specific group of learners in mind, but, in our opinion, the target group could easily be extended to smaller children (early language learners), 10–12 graders or various groups of adults (working life, pensioners, migrants)[3] and the tasks adapted accordingly. Furthermore, visual methods are flexible and especially children and young people are used to drawing, and therefore their use can range from small tasks within single lessons to extensive thematic weeks, workshops, courses or art exhibitions compiled together as community efforts. Even though our focus in this article has been on English as a FL, learners' multilingual development and culture awareness could also benefit from teachers and learners of different FLs (or additional languages) working together and so making use of the principles of *translanguaging pedagogy* (e.g. Hornberger & Link, 2012). To conclude, visual methods can be used widely – not only in research – but also as a *pedagogical tool* to raise learners' language and culture awareness.

Conclusion

This article set out to explore the possibilities that visual methodologies offer for teachers to raise the language and culture awareness of their learners in FL classrooms. Our discussion was based on the

critical review of two recent compilations of a total of 24 original studies making varied use of visual research methods. All studies also had aims beyond gaining research findings, i.e. they aimed at empowering their participants in reflecting on their own experiences, trajectories and future aspirations by opening up spaces of self-reflection and identity construction by visual means.

The review pointed towards a wide repertoire of technical approaches used in the studies and towards a range of topics relevant to learners, teachers and multilingual language users that could easily be adapted to use in the FL classroom. Various examples of applications were suggested to the readers and directions were given for extending the target groups and learning contexts.

On the other hand, it became evident from the review that the vast majority of the reports made use of two-dimensional images (of various kinds though, including drawings, collages, photographs and graphs) and only one of three-dimensional images. Furthermore, all the studies made use of *still* images, so the range of visual images could be broadened to *moving images*, including videos, vlogs, and other means to produce real-life documentaries, considering that these are phenomena that the young especially are surrounded by in their everyday lives. Despite the limitations in the variety of image types, the 24 studies and our pedagogical adaptations targeted at a specific group of FL learners could function as a rich source of inspiration for teachers to develop multilingual and multicultural awareness in their FL classrooms. The three sets of tasks provide teachers with ideas to raise their *own* students' understanding, tolerance and appreciation of diversity and the use of multilingual resources in their specific contexts by reflecting on past and present experiences and future visions of their multilingual lives.

Notes

1. The current Finnish national core curriculum for Basic Education (to be reviewed later as one context of teaching English as a FL) prefers to talk about raising awareness (or appreciation) of *multilingualism and multiculturalism*. This is the reason why the terminology will vary from one section to another in this article.
2. For copyright reasons we are unable to reproduce any of the original figures.
3. If the target group consisted of student teachers of FLs, some other articles or chapters in the two publications could be adapted for their purposes: in these the focus was on teaching FLs (rather than learning them).

Disclosure statement

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