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Title: Researching Adolescents' Linguistic Repertoires in Multilingual Areas : Case Studies from South Tyrol and Finland

Year: 2023

Version: Published version

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Please cite the original version:

Zanasi, L., Mård-Miettinen, K., & Platzgummer, V. (2023). Researching Adolescents' Linguistic Repertoires in Multilingual Areas : Case Studies from South Tyrol and Finland. In S. Björklund, & M. Björklund (Eds.), Policy and Practice for Multilingual Educational Settings (pp. 173-197). Multilingual Matters. Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 138. https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.1231861.11

Multilingual Matters / Channel View Publications

Chapter Title: Researching Adolescents' Linguistic Repertoires in Multilingual Areas: Case Studies from South Tyrol and Finland
Chapter Author(s): Lorenzo Zanasi, Karita Mård-Miettinen and Verena Platzgummer

Book Title: Policy and Practice for Multilingual Educational Settings
Book Subtitle: Comparisons across Contexts
Book Editor(s): Siv Björklund, Mikaela Björklund
Published by: Multilingual Matters / Channel View Publications. (2023)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.1231861.11

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7 Researching Adolescents' Linguistic Repertoires in Multilingual Areas: Case Studies from South Tyrol and Finland

Lorenzo Zanasi, Karita Mård-Miettinen and Verena Platzgummer

In this chapter we present and compare two research experiences in the domain of linguistic repertoires (LRs) applied to the field of education. Our aim is to elucidate how we used different combinations of methods for data generation in the trilingual (German, Italian and Ladin) Italian province of South Tyrol and the bilingual (Finnish and Swedish) coastal regions of Finland in order to map the LRs of young multilingual participants aged 10 to 19. We investigated different aspects of their LRs (representations, use and trajectories) with multiple methods, ranging from more traditional sociolinguistic surveys such as questionnaires and interviews to multimodal and task-based methods such as language portraits, photographs and simulated contexts for multilingual interaction. We describe these methods and share some of the insights they enabled us to gain into the LRs of adolescents in two multilingual contexts in Europe.

Introduction

This contribution is related to sociolinguistic studies on linguistic repertoires (LRs) as flexible and dynamic resources that are not bound to specific languages (Blommaert & Backus, 2013). As Blommaert and Backus (2013) point out, individuals may develop their LR through formal learning in educational contexts but also through more informal encounters with languages when meeting people live or online, when travelling, via media and so on. This is true in particular for bi- or trilingual areas where young people experience language diversity and contact not only at

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school but also in everyday life. Blommaert and Backus (2013) further argue that the learning that takes place through short-term informal encounters is seldom perceived as language learning even though its outcomes form part of a person's LR. Alongside the adoption of a historical-biographical and developmental perspective on the LR, researchers such as Busch have sought to further expand the notion in order to foreground a subject perspective that 'encompasses the body dimension of perceiving, experiencing, feeling, and desiring' (Busch, 2012: 510).

In this chapter we aim to display different methodological ways to map different aspects of the LR, including participants' representations and use of their repertoires as well as a biographical perspective on their repertoires as trajectories. In doing so, we also aim to take emotional and bodily dimensions as well as the fluid nature of LRs into account. We approach the methodologies through two projects that researched adolescents learning multiple languages in Italian, German and Ladin schools in South Tyrol and in Swedish immersion schools in Finland. By adolescents we mean persons aged between 10 and 19 years (World Health Organization, 2022). The point of departure for both projects is the fact that, in both contexts, children study multiple languages in school from an early age. Additionally, the participating young students also have a unique possibility of learning and using many languages even outside of school since they live in multilingual environments consisting of two or three official languages (German, Italian and Ladin in South Tyrol and Finnish and Swedish in the southern and western coastal regions of Finland) as well as a large number of other languages spoken by inhabitants with an immigrant background. Hence, both projects focused especially on the use of LRs both in and outside school. Furthermore, since the schools are situated in multilingual areas, some of the students have a bi- or multilingual rather than a monolingual background when entering the school. Of course, the degree of multilingualism varies depending on whether pupils are placed in specific language immersion pathways (as in the Finnish project) or in a non-specific, mainstream education system in which second- or third-language learning is normally encouraged (as in the South Tyrol project).

The geographic areas addressed in this chapter, the Italian province of South Tyrol and the bilingual regions of Finland, represent an ideal research context as these territories are characterised by a very diverse linguistic landscape and they share a long history of approaches to multilingualism and multiple language learning. Due to their geographical locations and historical development, both South Tyrol and the southern and western coast of Finland have always been multilingual areas. This is evident today not only because of the deep-rooted presence of the official languages (Italian, German and Ladin in South Tyrol and Finnish and Swedish in Finland) but also because of the appearance of numerous languages of the new minorities. Moreover, both areas are influenced by neighbouring

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countries: the bilingual coastal regions of Finland are influenced by Sweden and South Tyrol is influenced by Austria and Germany. For instance, many young adults in Finland complete their university studies in Sweden and many in South Tyrol go on to study in Austria or Germany.

A special methodological challenge in the two projects was formed by the ages of the participants (10–19 years). Conducting research with adolescents has been found to be challenging when it comes to motivating participants to provide information, capturing their lives and overcoming the power imbalance between young participants and adult researchers (e.g. Waugh *et al*., 2014). By drawing on the experience of two projects carried out in different times and contexts, in this chapter we seek to illustrate a path to describing LRs that goes beyond enumerating linguistic resources.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the concept of the LR, after which we introduce the two projects and their contexts. In the following three sections, we present the methodological approaches for data generation used in the projects and the results gained with them in relation to the different dimensions of LRs they were addressing, before drawing more general conclusions.

The Linguistic Repertoire

The notion of the LR dates to Gumperz's work from 1964, who defined the verbal repertoire as 'the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the course of socially meaningful interaction' (Gumperz, 1964: 137), taking as the starting point for his analyses the speech community. Linguistic forms are thereby not investigated for their own sake, but as social action and with the aim of observing their social meanings for the groups of people who employ them.

Since Gumperz, the focus on the notion of LR has gradually shifted from the speech community to individual speakers, supported in recent years by theoretical elaborations by Blommaert and Backus (2013) and Busch (2012, 2015). These researchers agree on the need to question two central concepts – that of speech communities and that of delimited and separable languages. In the context of globalisation and new communication technologies, speech communities can no longer be considered homogeneous, and real-life language practices are fluid and do not correspond to the socially constructed boundaries between languages. This idea also underlies approaches such as translanguaging (e.g. Canagarajah, 2011; Otheguy *et al*., 2015) or polylanguaging (Jørgensen *et al*., 2011), and has also been more widely discussed in sociolinguistics in general (Heller, 2007; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007).

Busch's notion of the LR represents a 'move away from the idea that the repertoire is a set of competences, a kind of toolbox, from which we select the "right" language, the "right code" for each context or situation' (Busch, 2015: 17), and in this, her notion differs from other reconceptualisations

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such as that of Blommaert and Backus (2013). Busch's concept of the LR in particular can be mobilised as a theoretical notion to address how people experience, and potentially also subvert, categorisations along axes such as legitimacy, authenticity, inclusion or exclusion in connection with linguistic variation (Busch, 2015, 2020).

For Busch, the point of departure of the LR is the speaking subject that moves through different social spaces and assumes different positions within these spaces. She understands the LR 'not as something the individual possesses but as formed and deployed in intersubjective processes located on the border between self and the other' (Busch, 2015: 7). Accordingly, the LR is constituted in interaction just like the subject itself. Busch additionally merged these insights with a phenomenological perspective on the subject by introducing the concept of the lived experience of language. This notion brings to the fore the bodily and emotional dimension of experiencing language in intersubjective interaction, aspects that remained under-researched (see e.g. Kramsch, 2009).

In this context, Busch (2012, 2015) underlines that a LR is not only determined by the linguistic resources we use, but also by the ones we do not use. These may be resources that we do not yet use, and are relevant as objects of desire, or they may be experienced in bodily-emotional terms as threats in encounters with high stakes (e.g. asylum procedures). They may also be resources we no longer use but are inextricably linked to past experiences. Consequently, the LR does not only point backwards along a biographical trajectory, but also forwards to possible futures that speakers are imagining.

This complexity of the notion of LR has obvious repercussions in empirical research. In other words, if we aim to investigate adolescents' LRs, it is appropriate to investigate their different dimensions. We will thus discuss methods by which we investigated how students represent their own LRs, how they use them in interaction in typical adolescent domains (family, school, free time) both online and offline, and how their repertoires developed along their biographical trajectories. Before we do so, however, we present the two projects and contexts providing the basis for this chapter.

Two Projects, Two Contexts

This section begins with an introduction to the two sociolinguistic contexts and the two projects or case studies addressed in this chapter and ends with a discussion of the main common and distinctive features between them in connection with the research reported on in this chapter.

Case study 1: RepertoirePluS in South Tyrol

South Tyrol is an autonomous province in northern Italy. It is an officially trilingual territory with Italian, German and Ladin as official

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languages. According to data from the last census in 2011, about 69% of the population declares itself to be a member of the German language group, 27% of the Italian language group and 4.5% of the Ladin language group (Astat, 2012) – which, of course, does not necessarily provide any insight into the population's LRs. As far as geographical distribution is concerned, declared members of the German language group are in the majority throughout most of the province, apart from the capital of the province, Bolzano, where the Italian language group prevails (74%). The latter is also well represented in the second and third largest cities Merano (49%) and Bressanone (26%). Ladin-speaking communities are historically located in the valleys of Val Gardena and Val Badia. In the province, German has been put on equal footing with Italian and bilingualism is therefore present in public administration, in toponymy and in dealings with judicial offices. It should be noted that the German-speaking population widely uses local dialects belonging to the Southern Bavarian group in both public and private contexts.

The South Tyrolean education system exhibits a tripartite structure with three school boards (Italian, German and Ladin), which guarantees the right to education in the 'mother tongue' for Italian and German (see Platzgummer, 2021, for a critical discussion), as well as the right and obligation to learn the respective second language of the territory (German for Italian schools, Italian for German schools). Education in the Ladin valleys, on the other hand, includes all three languages, with German and Italian serving as languages of instruction to the same degree. In South Tyrol, this system has resulted, on the one hand, in the possibility for each language group to have its own school and, on the other, in the separation of the school population, starting from kindergarten. In order to overcome this distance, since the 1980s and 1990s (Gelmi & Saxalber, 1992), German and Italian schools have promoted mutual encounters. In addition, they enhanced the offer of L2 lessons with the use of content and language integrated teaching (CLIL) for German, Italian and English.

As far as new minorities are concerned, the three systems of schooling in South Tyrol have been affected by the wave of migration that began in Italy in the 1990s and has been progressively increasing ever since. Tools such as the multilingual curriculum implemented at some schools (Schwienbacher *et al.*, 2016) and the creation of a competence area called Intercultural and Citizenship Education are currently used in the schools' curricular planning and in the design of teacher training. The most significant result of the synergy between the three school systems is the establishment of so-called Language Centres in 2007, aimed at all schools in the province at all levels, with the function of promoting the integration of pupils with a migrant background.

In this context, within the Institute of Applied Linguistics of Eurac Research, the project RepertoirePluS matured. The aim of the project was to study the LRs of a group of students aged 12–16 years, enrolled in lower

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and upper secondary schools in South Tyrol. The project, which included schools with Italian or German as the language of instruction as well as schools in the Ladin valleys, focused on the operationalisation and evaluation of individual LRs and observed their use during multilingual interaction. RepertoirePluS was structured around three research questions aimed at investigating qualitative and quantitative aspects of local students' LRs.

(1) How diverse are the LRs of students in South Tyrol?
(2) What kind of multilingual skills do the students have?
(3) How do the students use their multilingualism in interactive learning scenarios and how do they perceive this experience?

The first question was answered by means of a questionnaire, while the other two questions were addressed with a 'language village' – a specifically adapted research method – and with focus groups. The research was an opportunity to test, empirically, the appropriateness of methodological tools for collecting and analysing self-declarations, representations and feelings associated with multilingualism and examples of multilingual communication.

In connection with RepertoirePluS, Platzgummer (2021) also conducted a PhD project aiming to investigate adolescents' self-positionings in relation to their LRs. For this purpose, she carried out language-biographical interviews with 24 participants, taking the RepertoirePluS questionnaire as a point of departure.

Case study 2: Multi-IM in Finland

The other context in this chapter, Finland, is a bilingual country by constitution with Finnish and Swedish as official languages (Ministry of Justice, 1999). At the end of 2020, 86.9% of the population was registered as Finnish speakers, 5.2% as Swedish speakers and 7.8% as speakers of other languages (Statistics Finland, 2021). The latter percentage has steadily grown in Finland during the 2000s, from 1.9% in 2000 to 7.8% in 2020, and includes the immigrant population as well as speakers of the three indigenous Sami languages spoken in Finland and speakers of Roma and sign language, which are also mentioned in the language legislation in Finland. In the regions where this research was conducted, this average is similar to or higher than the national average (Statistics Finland, 2021). Geographically, the two national languages are not evenly distributed in Finland. There are bilingual Swedish–Finnish municipalities in the southern and western coastal regions of Finland whereas other regions in mainland Finland are monolingual Finnish-speaking and the municipalities on the Åland Islands are monolingual Swedish-speaking.

In the bilingual municipalities, signs, important documents and public services need to be in both languages. Moreover, the Language Act

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(423/2003) guarantees speakers of Finnish and Swedish the right to use their language in public services, even in the monolingual municipalities. However, the realisation of linguistic rights is continuously debated in Finland (see e.g. Prime Minister's Office, 2018). Furthermore, Finland has separate national and local newspapers in the two national languages and the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) is required to provide media services in both languages. Both national and local theatres and other cultural institutions and societies as well as sport clubs are run either monolingually in one of the two languages or bilingually. Both Finnish and Swedish are also used in many workplaces in the bilingual regions, even though companies within the private sector do not have any language-related obligations in Finland (Malkamäki & Herberts, 2014).

With regard to education, Finland has a system of parallel monolingual education, meaning that schools and early childhood education institutions are administratively either Finnish-medium or Swedish-medium but follow the same national curriculum guidelines. The 'other' national language (i.e. Swedish in Finnish-medium schools and Finnish in Swedish-medium schools) is an obligatory school subject in all schools in Finland and has to be studied at the latest from the age of 12 onwards. There is, however, ongoing debate in Finland on the obligatory status of Swedish as a subject in Finnish-medium schools due to low learning motivation and low learning results (e.g. Hult & Pietikäinen, 2014). For newcomers to Finland, the tendency is to enrol them in Finnish-medium schools even in the bilingual municipalities. Multilingual students are supported in various ways in Finnish schools; for example, they are offered preparatory education and teaching of their mother tongue. Furthermore, the newest national curriculum guidelines oblige schools to support the multilingual and multicultural development of all students (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016).

In order to provide students with better learning results in Swedish in the bilingual coastal regions, Finnish-medium schools started to provide early total Swedish immersion education in 1987 (e.g. Bergroth, 2015; Björklund & Mård-Miettinen, 2011a). Swedish immersion addresses mainly majority language (Finnish) children who do not have Swedish as their home language. Despite the growing number of immigrant-background students in Finland, the Swedish immersion population is still Finnish-dominated due to the enrolment criteria used (Mård-Miettinen *et al.*, 2020). Swedish immersion is an optional programme that starts in early childhood education (ages 3–5 years) and continues throughout preschool and basic education (Grades 1–9, ages 6–16 years). In early childhood education, teaching is 100% in Swedish, gradually diminishing to 50% by Grades 5–6 (Bergroth, 2015; Björklund & Mård-Miettinen, 2011a). The main goal of Swedish immersion is to provide students with functional language proficiency and literacy in the immersion language (Swedish) and L1 level proficiency and literacy in Finnish as well as

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age-level proficiency and literacy in one to three foreign languages that are introduced in different grades of basic education.

Internationally, one of the core features of immersion is language separation by teacher (one teacher–one language) and subject (one subject–one language each school year) (e.g. Johnson & Swain, 1997). Hence, some researchers (e.g. Heller, 1999) label immersion as an educational programme that fosters individual multilingualism through parallel monolingualism. Students in immersion are, however, allowed to use all their languages for communication and learning, but they are often explicitly asked to only use the immersion language during certain lessons to support its development to a strong language for content learning as it is a minority language and a new language to the students (e.g. Ballinger *et al*., 2017).

The project Multilingualism in Swedish immersion (or Multi-IM) was set up at the University of Vaasa by Professor Siv Björklund and PhD Karita Mård-Miettinen in 2011 with the aim of studying the use of multiple languages among 10–16-year-olds attending primary and secondary school Swedish immersion education in the bilingual regions of Finland. Prior to this, immersion research in Finland had mainly focused separately on the development and use of the immersion language (Swedish) and Finnish (as first language) as well as on learning results in foreign languages in order to investigate whether immersion education fulfils its objectives. Research on immersion students' whole LRs was expected to give an interesting point of departure to the study of the use of multiple languages, as immersion students belong to the language majority but live in bilingual municipalities with an increasing number of multilingual speakers. For a majority speaker, the use of multilingual repertoires is not in the same way obvious and a prerequisite as it is for students who belong to a linguistic minority. Immersion students' LRs were approached from different angles and hence the Multi-IM project consists of several data sets and different cohorts of Swedish immersion students living in different parts of the bilingual coastal parts of Finland. The initial quantitatively oriented mapping of Swedish immersion students' LRs was carried out with a written questionnaire followed by individual and focus group interviews. This was followed by case studies where data were generated with two types of visual methods and self-recordings to examine the students' use of LRs outside the school context. The latest data generation was completed within the scope of a larger research project financed by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland that aimed to investigate the relation between language practices, linguistic identity and language ideology within the context of Swedish immersion (Björklund *et al*., 2022).

Common Features in the Two Contexts

The two research projects on LRs addressed in this chapter were set up in contexts with a number of shared features regarding multilingualism on

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societal and individual levels (cf. Herberts & Laurén, 1998). Both research contexts are historically bi- or trilingual border areas and issues around bi- or trilingualism are legally regulated in both areas: in Finland both on a national and local level and in South Tyrol on a provincial level within the framework of the Italian Constitution. Language policies in both areas are built on ideas of language separation, which results in rather complex provisions regulating language on a societal level. For instance, there are separate newspapers and theatres, and public documents are translated between the languages. Regarding education, the two or three language groups mainly have separate schools up to university level and it is compulsory for all to study the respective second language of the region/country in both contexts.

Another common feature is that both contexts have recently seen an increase in their resident immigrant populations and, consequently, in the immigrant student population. This has also resulted in changes in the multilingual situation in education, as students' LRs became more diverse. Hence, more recently established policies were added to the long-term policies and established practices with bi- and multilingualism in educational contexts in these regions in order to adjust to the changing situation.

Moreover, both national contexts are not uniform as far as their sociolinguistic situation is concerned and neither are the smaller regions we are interested in. Italy is officially monolingual, with provisions for linguistic minorities, and Finland is officially bilingual, with provisions for other linguistic minorities. Along the coastal regions of Finland, there are monolingual Finnish-speaking and Finnish–Swedish bilingual regions. These regions, in turn, are also not uniform. The southern and south-western coastal regions are Finnish-dominated whereas (particularly) the north-western coastal region is Swedish-dominated. Furthermore, Finland has an autonomous Swedish-speaking region, the Åland Islands, with its own language legislation as well as a region called the Sami Homeland in the northernmost Finland, which is autonomous on issues relating to Sami language and culture. In South Tyrol, too, the sociolinguistic profile changes in connection with locality, with a large portion of the countryside being German-dominant (apart from an Italian–German bilingual South and the Ladin valleys), the capital city being Italian-dominant and other larger cities being Italian–German bilingual to differing degrees.

Due to the long history of societal and individual bi- and multilingualism in the two contexts, there is also a considerable tradition of research studies, especially of bi- and multilingual practices in education and administration. The multilingualism experienced on a daily basis and the coexistence of very different communities in delimited territories have prompted all those in society who deal with languages and education (schoolteachers, administrators, researchers, policymakers) to develop a sensitivity towards tools, methodologies and theoretical approaches that are grounded in the lives of speakers. For this reason, both South Tyrolean

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and Finnish research experiences converge towards multimodal and versatile methods for research in the field of applied linguistics. As to the two projects focused on in this chapter, there is a common interest in researching children's and adolescents' LRs, particularly to identify combinations of methods that are adequate for use in a complex multilingual context and with the challenging age group of young multilinguals.

Researching Representations of Linguistic Repertoires

In the two projects, several methods were used to generate and analyse verbal or visual representations of LRs, i.e., the participants were asked to describe and portray their repertoires.

Exploring repertoires with questionnaires

The questionnaire is a classic tool for sociolinguistic research and continues to be a formidable means of data collection, including for the investigation of individual LRs. Using a questionnaire to explore the representations that participants have of multilingualism means being able to relate their daily world to the diversity of languages and thus direct their attention to a reality in which multilingualism is often hidden, taken for granted or undervalued. To bring out the personal linguistic experience, as suggested by the research approach of the LR (Busch, 2015), presupposes that the items on the questionnaire cover different periods of the informants' lives, various contexts of use, an attention to the emotions linked to languages and that they offer the respondents considerable degrees of freedom to develop their representations. Analysis of the questionnaires makes it possible to interpret the data on two levels. The first is that of the entire student sample considered as a homogeneous group in order to get an overview of the LRs at group level. The second focuses on the representations of the multilingualism of each individual and constitutes an important resource in the triangulation with other sources of data.

RepertoirePluS (South Tyrol)

Based on these assumptions, in the course of the RepertoirePluS project, researchers at Eurac Research developed a questionnaire that was completed by 240 secondary school students. It consisted of 47 items, including creative elements (e.g. a language portrait), closed, semi-open and open questions, and was divided into five sections. The first two sections covered aspects of the participants' language biography (past, present and future) and self-assessments of language skills, accompanied by information about frequency of use, favourite or non-preferred languages and varieties, and language learning experiences. The third section focused on language use in everyday life and specifically on representations of receptive and

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productive language use at home, at school, in their personal surroundings and in the digital world. The fourth section asked students to reflect on the meaning and benefits of being multilingual and then to imagine how they would react in plausible multilingual situations. The questionnaire ended with a section about the students' metadata.

Analysis of the sociolinguistic questionnaires revealed that the group of participating students was multilingual in its entirety (all 240 participants), all together mentioning knowledge of 29 different languages. Taking only named standard languages into account, the most frequent combination was Italian, German and English (30%), followed by combinations of these three languages with Ladin (16%), Latin (14%) and Spanish (8%). Participants also mentioned a total of 32 non-standard language varieties in the questionnaires. Most of these were related to the German standard languages (e.g. Bavarian, Swiss German, Viennese, one of the South Tyrolean dialects) or to the Italian standard language (e.g. regional varieties such as Calabrese, Roman, Trentino, Sicilian). When asked about language use at school, however, pupils tended to mention only the languages taught in their respective schools, with the exception of local varieties of German and Italian. Language use at home, in turn, was described as multilingual by the majority of students (81%), with 49% using two languages (often a combination of Italian and German standard language and/or varieties) and the remaining 32% using three or more languages. Regarding their free time, an even higher percentage of students (94%) stated that they use more than one language.

In conclusion, the questionnaire analysis showed that the observed sample used multilingualism proactively and confidently. Students associated positive experiences with learning and using languages and were convinced that their multilingual skills would continue to be important and useful in the future and in many personal, social and professional situations (for further details on the findings see Engel *et al.*, 2020).

Multi-IM (Finland)

A questionnaire was also developed in the Multi-IM project in order to map multilingual patterns among Swedish immersion students in three municipalities along bilingual coastal Finland. The questionnaire consisted of 26 closed and open-ended questions addressing the participants' language learning history and experiences, past and present language use in different contexts and their conceptions of language learning. They were also asked to self-assess their language skills and to indicate if they considered themselves multilingual. The questionnaire was completed by 182 Grade 4–6 students (ages 10–13) in 2011 and by 203 Grade 7–9 students (ages 13–16) in 2014. In each municipality, this was accompanied by structured interviews with volunteering students to gain more insight into the themes brought up in the questionnaire, resulting in a total of 11

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interviews with Grade 5 students (ages 11–12) and 22 interviews with Grade 8 students (ages 14–15).

In the Multi-IM project, the sociolinguistic questionnaire data showed the knowledge of 12 different languages by the participating immersion students as a group. Furthermore, all the students felt they knew the two languages used for content teaching in the immersion programme (Finnish and Swedish), as well as English, which is a compulsory foreign language for them. Most of those students who studied other foreign languages in school (German, French, Italian, Spanish or Russian) reported that they knew those languages. This goes against the national trend that not even several years of language studies in school (up to six years) gives Finns the confidence to say they know these languages (except English) or that they are multilingual (e.g. European Commission, 2012).

Secondly, the questionnaire and interview data allowed the project researchers to study in more detail to what extent immersion students head towards multilingualism by studying elective languages offered within the programme. The results showed that 55% of the responding students studied at least one elective language besides the three compulsory languages. This indicates that students in the immersion programme are, nationally, an important group of multilingually oriented individuals compared with students in mainstream education, with national statistics showing that the study of elective languages has dramatically declined in schools in Finland since its peak in the 1990s (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017).

As to reported use of the LR, even in the youngest cohort (Grades 4–6 students, $n = 97$), more than half (57%) reported using at least two languages in their repertoire for activities such as reading books, watching TV or using the internet; many (43%) also indicated they dreamt in several languages. Furthermore, in the oldest cohort (Grades 7–9 students, $n = 114$) with the longest experience of language learning, 75% of the students felt that they were multilingual, meaning that participation in immersion education had made them multilingual language users. Cross-linguistic influence was also brought up by 93% of the immersion students, who found that the knowledge of the immersion language (Swedish) helped them learn subsequent languages (for further details on the results see Björklund & Mård-Miettinen, 2011a, 2011b; and Björklund *et al.*, 2015).

Representing repertoires through visual methods

Another way of eliciting data on multilingual repertoires is visual methods. These are typically based on photographs, commercials or videos and films that are either produced by the researcher or the subject of the study or are naturally occurring visual products (Heath *et al.*, 2009). Visual methods have been employed in the field of language research for only a

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relatively short time, but they have a long tradition in social sciences in researching social worlds of everyday life (Pitkänen-Huhta & Pietikäinen, 2017; Rose, 2016). In recent years, visual methods have also been used more frequently in ethnographic research concerning language learning and language use (for some examples see Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2018). Pitkänen-Huhta and Pietikäinen (2017) emphasise that visual data can make language experiences and practices visible without the need to use restricting classifications of languages or language skills.

RepertoirePluS: Language portraits

One method of eliciting visual data is a language portrait. This was originally conceived as a didactic method aimed at language awareness but has been adapted and widely used as a research method over the last decade. While the uses differ in modes of elicitation and methods of analysis, they share a common interest in investigating speakers' perspectives on their LRs and lived experience of language (see e.g. Kusters & De Meulder, 2019; Prasad, 2014).

The language portrait method consists of participants colouring a body silhouette to represent their linguistic resources and language practices and the meanings they attach to them. Kusters and De Meulder (2019: 2) highlight the participant-centred nature of the method and state that it 'allows and aids researchers to see languages as embodied, experienced and historically lived'. More so than other interviewing methods, the language portrait gives participants time for reflection as they create a visualisation of their LRs. The visual representation and its concurrent or subsequent verbal explanations exist in tandem and the research interest does not lie in the portrait itself, but rather in the interaction during which it serves as a prompt and point of reference. In fact, Busch (2018: 7) conceives the language portrait 'as a situational and context-bound production that is created in interaction between the participants, framed by the specifications […] and the setting'.

In the RepertoirePluS project, language portraits were used as an icebreaker activity at the beginning of the questionnaire described previously in order to prepare the ground for participants to reflect on their repertoires. They were then reintroduced to the students in focus group interviews during the second phase of data generation as well as in the 24 individual language, biographical interviews conducted by Platzgummer (2021). As the focus of the latter interviews was a perspective on LRs as trajectories, we will present the results of this investigation only before the conclusions.

Multi-IM: Language trees

Another possible method for eliciting visual data on LRs is the language tree, developed by Østern (2004). The method is inspired by family trees and was originally used by Østern as coursework on a university

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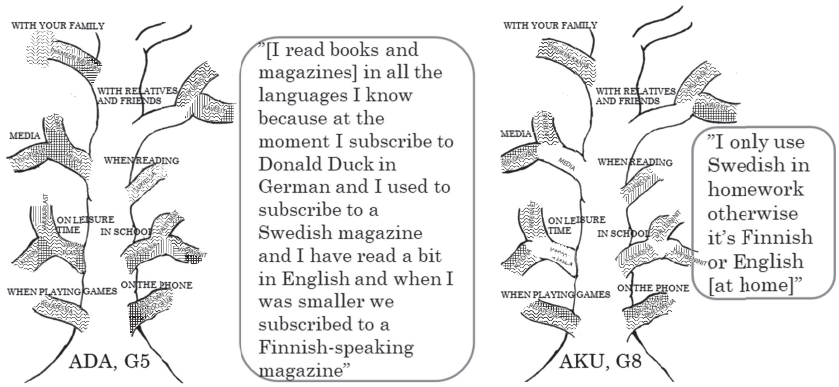

Figure 7.1 Language trees of Ada (Grade 5) and Aku (Grade 8). Waves stand for Finnish, vertical stripes for Swedish, checkered for English and horizontal stripes for German.

course on child language and bilingualism in order to develop student teachers' awareness of language and culture to prepare them to better understand their future pupils. In the original language tree method, the participants were asked to think about their language background, language competence and current LRs, represent their reflections in a language tree and comment on their drawing in writing.

In the Multi-IM project, the language tree method was used with certain modifications to generate more detailed data on the use of LRs among immersion students and to allow for method triangulation. In 2015, a group of ten primary and secondary school immersion students were given a drawing of a tree silhouette and asked to complete it to make their own language tree. The tree silhouette was accompanied with a short, written instruction that encouraged the students to think about the languages they use in certain places, with certain people and in certain activities in order to inspire them to think more broadly on the issue. Some examples of places, people and activities mentioned in the European language portfolio in Finland (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014) were written on the branches in the tree silhouette and the students were encouraged to draw more branches and to add more situations of language use (see next section). Furthermore, the students were given coloured pencils and asked to use different colours for different languages in their language tree. They were also asked to write a short explanation about their language tree. Prior to drawing the language tree, they also answered three questions on their LR. To gain deeper knowledge about the language trees, the students were engaged in a 15-minute structured individual elicitation interview one week after drawing the language tree.

The results generated through the visual language tree method were in accordance with the quantitative findings in the questionnaires: most of the participating students reported using three languages in their

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repertoire (Finnish, Swedish and English), both in school and in their leisure time. The data also revealed that, for some, the immersion language (Swedish) was mainly a language used in school and the only other language widely used outside the school besides their first language (Finnish) was English (see Figure 7.1). No languages other than those studied at school appeared in the drawings or in the elicitation interviews.

Discussing repertoires through focus group interviews

In addition to individual interviews, focus group interviews were also conducted to investigate the participants' reflections on issues related to use of their LRs.

RepertoirePluS

In the RepertoirePluS project, focus groups were designed to serve a dual purpose. First, participants were asked to reflect on their LRs generally and also on their use of their LRs in the language village activity (described later in this chapter). Second, the focus groups served as a method of triangulation. For this reason, the focus group interviews were conducted after the conclusion of the mentioned activity. Students were invited to discuss a set of questions in small groups with the assistance of an interviewer taking the role of moderator. Participants were free to use any language or dialect from their repertoire and it was specified that they could also alternate between and mix languages. The focus groups were designed to last for up to 45 minutes and were audio and video recorded.

Multi-IM

In the Multi-IM project, focus groups were used for method triangulation to enable the ten primary and secondary school immersion students who had drawn a language tree and had been individually interviewed about it in Autumn 2015 to collaboratively reflect on the use of their LRs as well as to demonstrate the use of their repertoires in Spring 2016. Focus groups of five primary and five secondary school students were set up and they were given a set of five topics that they discussed independently. The discussions were audio recorded and they lasted for approximately 15 minutes. The topics concerned languages they felt they would need in the future, imagined language use in a number of given situations in and outside school, reflections on who can be considered a multilingual person and actual language use when figuring out the language and content of a Dutch text. The topics were written down on separate sheets and a moderator gave the groups one sheet at a time but did not interfere with the discussion. For this reason, each student was instructed to act as chairperson for one topic.

The students' reflections on their individual multilingualism in the focus group discussions yielded similar results to the questionnaire and interview data and the language tree data: the participating Grade 9

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students considered themselves to be multilingual as they knew Finnish, Swedish and English well; the Grade 5 students had some doubts about their own multilingualism as they felt they only knew two languages well (Finnish and Swedish) and, according to them, a multilingual person would need to know at least three languages well and have some basic knowledge of a fourth language. It seemed important for both groups that a multilingual person knows their languages well and can use them with other speakers of these languages. These relatively high standards may be linked to the fact that the participating students attend multilingual schooling and live in a multilingual area where several languages are used in their environment.

Researching Linguistic Repertoires in Use

Employing methods designed to observe the use of LRs aims to fill the gap between what young people say about their languages (the ones they claim to speak and know) and the real, everyday use they make of them.

Documenting LRs through photographs

In the Multi-IM project, another way of using visual methods for researching LRs was the use of photographs taken by the participants. This method was implemented in an attempt to model the students' use of their multilingual repertoires. Data generation focused on informal school spaces (breaks) and out-of-school spaces (e.g. home, hobbies, with friends etc.) – in other words, contexts that are challenging to map with other forms of data generation (questionnaires, interviews, drawings). According to Heath *et al.* (2009), using visual data produced by participants makes the participants active agents, opens access to more private spaces than other methods and also gives access to information that is hard to illustrate with words.

In 2016, ten Grade 5 (11–12 years) and ten Grade 8 (14–15 years) students were first asked to fill in a short questionnaire to indicate which languages they used at school and in their spare time. They were then engaged in data production with the instruction to use their mobile phones to take photographs of typical situations when they used their different languages over the course of a week. They were asked to send two or three photographs each day to the researchers by email or WhatsApp, with a short comment to describe each photograph. This medium of data generation was selected as, in 2015, over 90% of Finnish school children were reported to have a mobile phone and to use WhatsApp daily (DNA, 2015). The total number of photographs sent by each student varied between two and 11, and the research data comprised a total of 71 photographs. To gain a deeper understanding of the photographs and to support the analysis, the students were engaged in individual 15-minute structured photo elicitation interviews two weeks after taking the photographs.

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When documenting the use of their LRs in their leisure time with photographs and through photo elicitation interviews, the students reported diverse contexts for language use that were also connected to languages other than those studied at school (Mård-Miettinen & Björklund, 2019). Finnish, Swedish and English were a part of many of the immersion students' everyday lives, even outside school. The other foreign languages studied at school (German and Spanish) also appeared regularly in the immersion students' lives, but mainly in connection with doing homework or holidays. Interestingly, Swedish had also brought another Nordic language (Norwegian) into the everyday lives of many students as they reported reading in Norwegian and communicating with Norwegians using Swedish in these situations and, when necessary, using English as support. Additionally, some students reported using French, Estonian or Chinese, which they did not study at school. Some students also described situations where they had noticed the presence of certain languages in their environment that they did not know themselves (e.g. Japanese).

As to the consequences of immersion being a programme that fosters individual multilingualism through parallel monolingualism, the students' descriptions in the elicitation interviews included discourses of both language separation and dynamic language use. Concerning language separation, the students talked about using one language at a time, so that a specific language was used with a specific person or in a specific situation or activity. The same activity was often reported to be done (separately) in several languages. The students also gave examples of parallel use of two languages, so that they simultaneously spoke in one language and wrote in another language. Dynamic use of different languages was mainly reported when talking with their friends. In these situations, English and/or Swedish words appeared in their Finnish speech. The students also reported using Finnish as support when doing their homework in Swedish.

Observing repertoires in interaction

In order to observe how LRs are used in interaction, communicative tasks can serve to simulate multilingual social interactions close to real-life situations. The 'language village' is a task-based method originally developed in the Netherlands as a method for foreign language learning and assessment at school (Adrighem *et al.*, 2006). It was adapted in the course of the RepertoirePluS project in order to investigate participants' use of their LRs and their multilingual competences. A language village generally consists of small groups of participants entering a physical environment (a classroom or a lecture hall) in which they are set communicative tasks at different stations. The time spent at each of these stations is predetermined; when it expires, the groups change stations. While the tasks are set by researchers, the participants are left free to express

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themselves according to their linguistic abilities and resources in order to meet the task demands.

In a revised format of the language village, carried out with 131 participants in 32 groups in the spring of 2018, each station was centred around a precise communicative task designed in accordance with the principles of multilingual assessment discussed by Lenz and Berthele (2010). Three of the four 'areas' identified as crucial for the assessment of multilingual competences were taken into account for the language village:

(1) mediation, which involves mediating between people and/or texts in different languages;
(2) polyglot dialogue, which concerns interactions with the simultaneous use of several languages;
(3) intercomprehension, which involves drawing on one's linguistic resources in one language to understand a related other language.

We now describe one of the five stations (called Lost and Found) used within the RepertoirePluS project in order to illustrate how we investigated strategies for using the entire LR in complex communicative situations (for further information on the language village, see Engel *et al.*, 2021). The setting for the Lost and Found station is the lost and found office of Disneyland Paris. The participants' task is to explain to the French-speaking clerk that they have lost a member of their group, who in turn is looking for his/her lost wallet. When this interaction nears completion, a very agitated lady who speaks only Albanian enters the office asking for help in finding her lost daughter in the park. The group has to fill in two forms for the two missing persons, and the clerk asks the group for help in recording a message to be transmitted through loudspeakers in the park. The task therefore requires activation of the areas of mediation (between the participants), polyglot dialogue and intercomprehension when filling out the form. The fact that both the clerk and the supposed worried mother played their roles in a realistic manner allowed some participants to also identify with the situation on an emotional level.

Regarding the students' use of their LRs during the language village task and their narration of their interactive performance during the focus group (for more details see Lopopolo & Zanasi, 2019; Lopopolo *et al.*, forthcoming), the analysis showed the following:

(1) A strong recourse of students to transversal plurilingual skills (i.e. the ability to combine their own languages and varieties), both in production and reception, in order to cope with an unexpected situation.
(2) The emergence of mediation strategies determined by participants' roles within the group.
(3) The use of non-verbal semiotic strategies (gestural language, physical proximity or distance, eye contact).

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Looking more specifically at the Lost and Found station, Engel *et al.* (2020) noted that, among themselves, the lower secondary school students communicated mainly in Italian, German dialect or German. In their interaction with the clerk, they frequently used English, quite often French and, in two groups, Albanian. The upper secondary school students mainly used English and Italian to communicate with the clerk and, to a lesser extent, French and German. Italian often served as a bridge language to French, and many students tried to include French terms and phrases in conversation. Communication was balanced between oral and written modes, and the station received generally positive feedback.

During the focus group, students were able to recall specific moments of the language village activity, to reflect on their communicative strategies and on the outcome of certain situations. This allowed the identification of different factors that affect the activation of the students' LRs. In addition to the languages and varieties present in the various stations, other factors that guided the speakers' choices were the context of each station, the students' perceptions of each task and of those who animated the stations and, of course, the type of behaviour of each student (extroverted or introverted, involved or detached) within the group dynamics.

The focus groups also allowed the students to clarify information previously stated in the language portraits and thus to update and recalibrate the data collected through qualitative commentary by the students themselves. Finally, the discussion that arose in the focus groups revealed additional details about what students think about language. First-person accounts of life experiences brought out opinions on language policy as perceived by students in their social relationships and on the future of languages. The focus groups were therefore very useful for collating different elements and reflections on the students' own LRs in order to draw up individual profiles of the relationships, attitudes and uses of languages.

Researching Linguistic Repertoires as Trajectories

As underlined earlier in this chapter, LRs develop as subjects move through different social spaces along their biographical trajectory. Consequently, language biographical interviews are a means of capturing this aspect of LRs along life trajectories (Busch, 2017). Language biographies have been referred to as 'life histories that focus on the languages of the speaker and discuss how and why these languages were acquired, used, or abandoned' (Pavlenko, 2007: 165) and language-biographical interviews have been a popular research method since the 1990s (Franceschini, 2004). A key principle in this context is that this kind of research is not primarily interested in the singularity of biographical experience, but in what individuals' language biographies 'reveal about specific dimensions of language practices and ideologies that are neglected when

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taking an assumed "average" speaker as representative of a certain group' (Busch, 2017: 55).

Language biographical interviews were conducted in the course of Platzgummer's (2021) PhD project. The aim thereby was to investigate the LRs of adolescents in South Tyrol, as well as how these adolescents position themselves with respect to their linguistic resources. For this purpose, 24 adolescents were interviewed, using the creation of a new language portrait as well as the language portraits previously created for the RepertoirePluS questionnaire by the respective adolescents as interview prompts (see Figure 7.2). The latter introduced a quasi-longitudinal element to the study, as contemplation of the earlier portraits offered an entry to reflections on changes and continuities in the participants' LRs.

An interactional analysis of these language biographical interviews provided additional insights into the participating adolescents' LRs, shedding light on the ways in which they perceived their language practices to have changed or remained the same over time. For instance, they mostly described their language practices at school in static terms (i.e. invariable over time), even though potentially multilingual. The few instances in which participants did describe school language practices as changing revolved around transitional moments of moving from one school to the other, which has already been demonstrated as a common pattern in language biographical research (Busch, 2015). Family language practices, on the other hand, were more likely to be constructed as changing over time. For instance, one participant recounted how her mother seemingly decided at some point that her father should stop speaking Italian in the family in order to prepare her for going to an elementary school of the

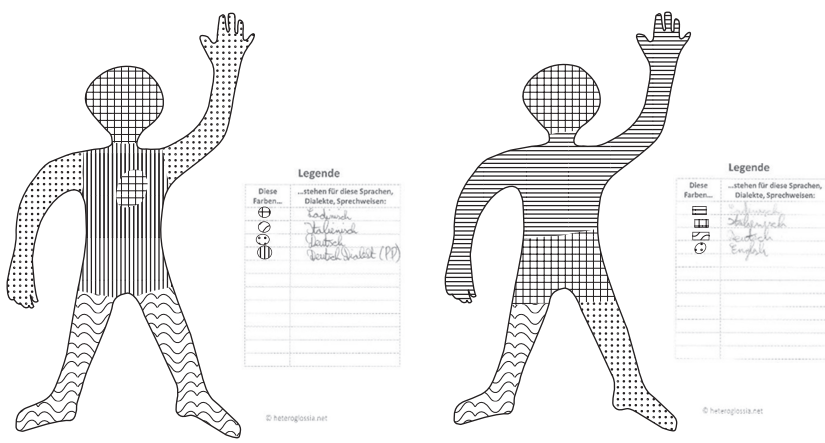

Figure 7.2 The 2017 questionnaire language portrait (left) and 2018 interview portrait (right) created by Lukas. Both portraits include Ladin, Italian and German, whereas a local German variety is only included on the left and English only on the right.

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German track. Another participant narrated how she only ever wanted to speak Italian when she was little, even when her mother and grandmother spoke German to her, while now she not only spoke German in the family but was also attached to the language in emotional terms.

The narration of such changes in language practices finally points to key moments along a biographical trajectory during which a subject's LR is – often rapidly – reconstituted. Analysis of such narrations allows the identification of salient factors that bring about such reconstitutions, such as transitioning from one school to another, parents' choices with respect to family language policy, or migration and displacement. Other ways in which the LR becomes reconstituted were narrated as more gradual in the interviews, with an example being narrations of language learning processes.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have given examples of methods for data generation that were used to capture the LRs of young multilinguals attending multilingual schooling in two different geographical contexts with a long history as multilingual societies. The contexts are the trilingual (German, Italian, Ladin) Italian province of South Tyrol and the bilingual (Finnish, Swedish) coastal regions of Finland. The two cases discussed in the chapter especially focused on language learning and the use of LRs in school and outside school when living in a multilingual environment. The aim of both projects was to capture the multidimensional nature of LRs in terms of extension, quality and use in space and time (i.e. to describe LRs in a way that goes beyond enumerating linguistic resources).

Regarding the RepertoirePluS project in South Tyrol, the combination of looking at LRs in representations (sociolinguistic questionnaires and focus group interviews) and in use (the language village task) yielded a number of interesting results for the participating multilingual adolescents. Their LRs included, at the very least, the three languages provided for in all South Tyrolean school curricula (i.e. Italian, German and English) and, in many cases, additional languages and local or non-local varieties. Moreover, a complex picture emerged when considering which functions these languages and varieties served for the individual participants, ranging from everyday communication to education to language use in the digital world. In relation to the language village, it is interesting to underline the students' reactivity towards unexpected situations: new languages and new words or phrases were added to the repertoire when the opportunity or the need for them arose in this specific context (e.g. students with no previous skills in French picked up French terms and used them). By comparing the students' answers in the questionnaires with their behaviour in the language village, we also found that the ways in which they stated that they would solve a hypothetical problem in the

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questionnaire often did not coincide with the strategies they applied in the language village scenarios. Additionally, the language biographical interviews conducted by Platzgummer (2021) opened a third perspective on LRs as trajectories, showing how the participants' LRs had already been reconstituted at different moments in their biographical trajectories.

In the Multi-IM project, Swedish immersion students in Finland reported a total of 12 languages as languages they know in the sociolinguistic questionnaire. Most of them also reported to use at least Swedish and English (and many of them also other languages) outside of school, alongside Finnish. This indicates that participation in immersion education provided them with a broad LR to use in their multilingual environment. Nevertheless, mainly the languages studied at school were mentioned when reporting on language use in school and in leisure time in both the questionnaires and the connected interviews. The same result was also gained when generating data using language trees and focus group discussions as well as in the questionnaire part of the photo elicitation study. However, the use of photographs accompanied with an elicitation interview when collecting data led to a better balance between the participants and the researcher (cf. Waugh *et al.*, 2014) and this turned out to be a successful way of engaging students to give more versatile information on their LRs. The adolescent students were highly motivated to take photographs and to describe their language use even outside the situations in the photos. The results from the photographic data showed that many students in fact regularly used languages other than those they studied in various contexts outside school.

In the two projects, multiple methods for data generation were used and triangulated. The methods ranged from more traditional sociolinguistic surveys such as questionnaires and interviews to the application of multimodal and task-based approaches such as photographs and recreated multilingual interaction environments. This allowed for an investigation of the different aspects of LRs among the participants and thus the acquisition of more reliable and valid insights. In addition to showing the value of method triangulation, the results of these projects highlight the importance of using methods that make participants active agents in order to allow for more participant-centred perspectives. Such methodological approaches can motivate teenage participants to elaborate more deeply on their LRs and thus help gain a situated understanding of their individual multilingualism.

The research experiences described in this chapter show that, while the two European research contexts are geographically distant and different in many respects, they share a history of societal bi- and trilingualism that impacts on individuals' LRs. In both contexts, there are education policies that strive to foster the learning and use of multiple languages, with a focus on the official languages of the respective context as well as other prestigious languages, in particular English. However, our research

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has also shown that students' LRs go beyond these languages. This points to a need for education policies that adopt a more inclusive approach to multilingualism and respect and promote the resources in everyone's LR, which is of central importance for individual wellbeing and social equity.

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