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STUDYING BILINGUAL AND MULTLINGUAL LANGUAGE IDENTITIES: NATURAL SETTINGS VERSUS FORMAL INSTRUCTION

Becoming more and more a multidisciplinary domain of study, the development of research in second language acquisition, and even more visibly in multilingualism, has moved away from its sole focus on cognitive aspects to social-affective dimensions. Consequently, research in these areas makes more extensive use of research methodology characteristic of social sciences. The focus on identity brings together issues of social context and the construction of one's identity through negotiation of who we are, how we relate to the outside world and how we position ourselves in relation to others (Pavlenko 2001). Language is the main tool in this construction/negotiation through the acquisition/learning and use of multiple languages. In relation to the development of one's multilingual identity, the major distinction has to be made between acquiring a language in its natural context (the case of one's mother tongue or immigration) and learning it in formal contexts. Block (2014) believes that the issue of identity can only be studied in a natural environment of language acquisition, and not in a formal instruction context. This article aims to confirm or reject the above belief, based on evidence from various studies of bi- and multiple language users and how they perceive their identities and their relation to the languages in their possession. It includes a pilot study of trilingual language learners and their understanding of how the individual languages they know (L1, L2, L3) build their identities and the way they enrich, impoverish or challenge who they see themselves to have been by birth (Gabryś-Barker 2018). The issues discussed relate to external (other people, situations, contexts) and internal identity-building factors (individual affectivity, personality features).

Keywords: *language identity*, *bilingualism*, *multilingualism*, *metaphoric perceptions*, *natural settings*, *formal instruction*, *immersion*

1. Introduction: various approaches to identity

Issues of identity are seen to be relevant not only to language learners, but also to language teachers, teacher educators, and researchers. There is an increasing interest in the ways in which advances in technology have impacted both language learner and teacher identity. But most of all it is globalization, people migrations and tourism that are considered to have an immense impact on identity construction.

What is identity? As Weinreich (1986) puts it, "A person's identity is defined as the totality of one's self-construal, in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future (…)". For Norton (2013: 45) identity is mostly seen from the perspective of "(…) how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future".

Across years different schools of thought took a different perspective on the concept of identity. Essentialist/existentialists such as Erikson, Mead and Turner perceived it as developmental throughout life stages and, importantly, interactional. For postmodernists (e.g. Wenger), one's identity was changeable and defined by context and self-determined (innate) but constructed through interaction with others, different communities and the individual roles taken up in different contexts. For Vygotsky and also Block, identity meant an ongoing process of negotiation and reshaping identity, depending on a present position in the "community of practice" or in other words, "discourse community" (Block 2014). Norton in her numerous publications on identity, on the other hand, emphasized the power angle in constructing one's identity, which she saw in varied institutions representing for example the legal and educational systems on a macrolevel and mundane, daily social inetraction and access to material resources on a microlevel.

2. Defining and constructing language identity

The concept of identity is a complex construct embracing various aspects of the self. In the context of communication and interaction, it is obviously language that becomes the basic variable and tool in identity construction. Language expresses identity as "a relationship between one's sense of self and different means of communication, understood in terms of language, a dialect or sociolect, as well as multimodality" (Block 2014: 50). Language is a social practice as it constructs and is constructed by a variety of relationships, thus it impacts identity. Because of the diverse positions from which language learners/users can participate in social life, identity is constructed as multiple, subject to change, and a site of struggle (ibid.). According to Block (ibid.)

learners/language users participate in diverse learning contexts where they position themselves and are positioned in different ways. This multidimensional postioning allows learners to construct and negotiate multiple identities through language, reframing relationships.

A learner may be a highly motivated language user, but may nevertheless have little investment in the language practices of a given classroom or community, which may represent different value systems than those of an individual. Motivation is a primary factor, but it is *individual investment*, understood as a meaningful connection between a learner's desire and commitment to learn a language, that contributes to construction of one's complex identity. Also, an extension of interest in identity and investment concerns the *imagined communities* that language learners may aspire to join when they learn a new language (Anderson 1991, Norton 2001).

3. Contextual differences

Irrespective of somewhat different perspectives taken on (language) identity, it is perceived as contextually-grounded. Thus, when talking about for example an immigrant's language identity and a school learner's identity, we will be faced with totally different contexts participating in identity construction, though both the idea of investments and of imagined communities constitute significant contributing factors. Generally, three major contexts and environments of language identity development can be distinguished. These are adult migration, the foreign language classroom, the second language classroom and immersion.

3.1. The adult migration context

Here the speakers of the target language community are adult immigrants of the target language (TL) country. Their reasons for immigrating are varied: searching for work (generally economic reasons) or for better standards of education, for political reasons (seeking asylum in a safer country) or in a globalized world to be able to reunite with their families. Fresh immigrants find themselves in a new environment, surrounded by a new language, perhaps totally unknown, just partially learnt or acquired over time, with a desperate need for acculturaltion to integrate with the new community. They undergo bitter experiences of culture shock: the more distant L1 and L2 cultures are, the bigger the effect. They experience language shock and initially the inability to communicate in simple daily situations. The older they are, the more difficult it is for them to overcome their ego boundaries. However, in contrast, their continuous exposure to language and immersion in it, the need for survival and to improve their quality of life are strong motives for the (partial) reconstruction of identity to fit in better with the out-group. A certain degree of integration is

observable that in later stages may lead to assimilation. Often this degree will be the self-choice of an individual. Selected studies on immigrants' language identity are discussed by Block (2014) and a selection of them is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Adult migration context (selected studies, based on Block 2014)

Source	Focus of the study
Broeder et al. (1996)	A longitudinal sociolinguistic study of how migrants position themselves in a new socio-cultural-linguistic context, language use and communication breakdown, often marked by the feelings of inferiority and powerlessness.
Goldstein (1996)	A case study of 27 Portuguese immigrant women of low-educational and profession background in Toronto, decribing how they position themselves in a new work place, following the traditional model of male hegemony (known from their motherl – Portugal) and of focus on family life in a subordinate position. the role of present community is pointed out.
Norton (2000)	A case study of five immigrant women of various nationalities (Polish, Czech, Vietnamese, Peruvian) in Canada and their fairly turbulent life-stories of struggles with isolation or determination to belong, focusing on the social context of the subjects (mostly family and friends) and also the role of the past (educational background, social class and experience of being declassed as an immigrant).
Teutsch-Dwyer (2001)	A case study of a Polish immigrant in the US who first integrated well in his half-American family, but then moved to Polish ethnic surroundings. The study demonstrates how language development impacts one's positioning in immigrant life; a report solely based on the subject's perception of his experiences.
Block (2006)	A small-scale study of six in a Spanish-speaking community in London, their language development (or fossilization) due to extensive participation of one's ethno-communities, or, on the contrary, forming "an emergent community of educated Spanish speakers living and working in London" (Block 2014: 133).

On the basis of research into adult migrants' identity, it is (among others, Block 2014) observed that their critical experiences lead to changes in *positioning* themselves in society (and in life). Their continuous immersion most strongly impacts their sense of self and identity. Foreign knowledge becomes the strongest means of mediating one's position, where low levels of L2 competence may lead to a possible declassing of individuals due to their verbal inability to express themselves and consequent failure to be well-understood. As the data shows, for example in the case of women, a visible change of their position for the better is observed with the development of their language skills. The work place of

immigrants and the public sphere where they function also impacts their first language and culture maintenance, resulting in the emergence of a new perspective on their L1 and motherland. Various positions, and thus individual identities of subjects, can be observed: from denial of immigrant status to being cosmopolitan and integrating into the new community (Block 2014). Pavlenko (2006: 5) talks about competing identities when she expresses her own (language) identity experiences as a multilingual adult migrant to the United States from (still communist at that time) Ukraine: "(…) guilt over linguistic and ethnic disloyalties. (…) anxiety about the lack of wholesome oneness (…) sadness and confusion by being oneself as divided (…) a self in between (…) a self in need of translation".

3.2. Formal instruction in a foreign language: classroom context

The second context in which language identity is created is school or any other environment which offers formal instruction in a foreign language – so we are dealing here with foreign language learners at school, language school or in one-to-one tutorials. The focus of foreign language (FL) learning is developing FL competences for instrumental and/or integrative reasons, a future job or perhaps living in some other country in order to join some imagined communities. However, for the most part, the immediate motivation is to get educational credits and degrees. What is characteristic here is that these learners have a (very) limited exposure to language input, mostly in the classroom, geared towards programme requirements and the number of hours assigned to a language course in the programme of studies in a given institution. A standard language model is provided, which is often semi-authentic, if not a classroom language model. The procedures of formal instruction lead to a conscious process of learning based on language rules, controlled practice and resulting in rigidly established assessment measures. Individual investment going beyond classroom practice is a desired factor in becoming a successful FL user. In relation to the construction of identity, positioning in a group in relation to a teacher or other peers in class dynamics leads to a negotiation of identity. It is both a learner and a teacher that are involved in this negotiation processs. L1 use and the perception of its role in a FL class is an important positioning factor as well as the desire to join first a class community of practice, then perhaps a FL community if seen as desired. One's individual assessment of one's position in a class and in relation to the teacher is a strong factor in identity construction. Table 2 offers a few examples of this identiy formation context selected from Block's (2014) overview.

Block (2014) assumes that foreign language (FL) i.e target language (TL) -mediated positions (identities) are not very visible in a formal instruction context in contrast to language competence development itself. Positioning (identity) evolution can, however, be observed in actual language use in the classroom and beyond, by forming communities of practice. Block strongly believes that:

The FL context (…) relatively unfertile ground for TL-mediated identity work, contrasts markedly with naturalistic adult migrant settings (…), where there is a potential for partial or full immersion in the TL multimodality. It also differs significantly from the study abroad context (…), where FL classroom instruction gives way to "being there", which increases the potential for immersion in TL-mediated environments and the emergence of new TL-mediated subject positions (Block 2014: 173).

Table 2. Formal instruction settings (selected studies, based on Block 2014)

Source	Focus of the study
Liddicoat and Crozet (2001)	A study of a FL classroom instruction on interlanguage pragmatics by means of awareness-raising tasks and their influence on learner's identity (a degree of adoption of TL norms or becoming more aware of one's own?)
Belz (2002)	A study of multilingual written production (playing with langue via translanguaging) as a way of re-conceptualizing the self as language user and creator (feeling different, a new subject position, a new discourse of self-expression).
Lantolf and Genung (2002)	A case study of an academic, learning a FL at the university, based on a learner diary. It demonstrates how FL learners position themselves against their Chinese teachers (irrelevant methods, humiliating attitudes in their understanding), which resulted in change of motive to learn (from communicative- affective to self-promoting – cognitive). The role of family background is emphasised, in this a military father developed the subject's obedience to orders, which in the end prevailed over the subjects's beliefs about good teaching.
Block (2000)	A case study of a FL learner in Spain and her evolving attitudes towards the teacher (positioning herself as a learner) and presenting onself as a problem student (positioning herself as a peer), developing her textual identity by participating in writing activities.

The study presented in this article is either to confirm or reject the above assumption that language identity is only emergent in the context which involves at least some form of immersion in the target community, either on immigration or during the study abroad period discussed below.

3.3. Formal instruction and immersion in the second language: a study abroad period

The modern world allows and promotes travel, not only for tourism, but also for contracted work and for study purposes, for example in the mobility programmes of the European Union so popular with students across Europe (e.g. the ERASMUS mobility programme among many). This context is an amalgam

of former contexts, where formal instruction is offered at the institution of work or study but the one that is also based on immersion in the language and culture of the target country. However, importantly for one's identity construction, this context usually offers higher social status and economic standards for the subjects compared with those of migrants group. In terms of communication opportunities they are afforded both in the classroom where the second language becomes a *lingua franca* for a multilingual group of students, but most importantly, beyond the classroom in daily encounters with the native community. So there is an unlimited exposure to SL beyond the classroom. Additionally, developing cross-cultural awareness and openness to other cultures, without necessarily having to integrate/assimilate is a shared characteristic of this group of people.

Research on simultaneous formal instruction and immersion in the second language focuses mostly on study abroad periods and has already gathered quite a substantial number of studies, published in regular journals, in thematic collections of research papers, but also in academic journals solely devoted to this context, as is the case of *Study Abroad Research in Second Language Acquisition and International Education, Frontiers. The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* or a pioneering collection of studies on SA edited by B. F. Freed (1995) under the title *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context.*

These studies relate mostly to linguistic development but also to growing awareness and intercultural sensitivity, openness to otherness and tolerance, thus dealing directly with issues of bi-/multilingual identity. Block (2014) overviews numerous studies which in one way or another reflect identity formation and focus on issues of national identity (e.g. in France, Spain, Russia), sexual harassment (e.g. in Russia, Spain and Costa Rica), gender positioning (e.g. in Russia, France) and teacher-student situations (e.g. in France, Russia) in various university institutions in the United States and Europe. However, he observes that there is still a gap in studies whose major concern is identity formation in study abroad (SA) periods. Also, the participants in these studies are usually recruited from the United States, Europe and only to some extent from Asia (mostly Japan), with a lack of studies involving African or South American students. Table 3 offers some examples of research on the study abroad context in terms of issues pertinent to the identity formation of their participants.

Although this context is similar to the adult migrant environment in its immersion aspect, at the same time, positioning will be different with the temporary nature of stay. These two contexts also differ in terms of subject profiles, as in study abroad (SA) both the students' backgrounds (usually a higher social status) and often younger age (university students of 19-24 years of age) are dissimilar from the migrants' personal characteristics. This is a significant adventage for SA students over migrants. However, there are also some factors for SA students that may impede their language imrpovemnt and identity formations, such as for example, formal instruction different in form and content from home experiences of foreign language learning. The novelty of teaching methods may become a real challenge. On the other hand, the development of intercultural awareness and intercultural

communicative competence (ICC) in the case of flexible ego boundaries, a strong need to belong by joining the local community (of students) will undoubtedly impact formation of a new identity. Alternatively, this period can turn into an experience of confrontation of L1 and L2 group identities, derving from rigid ego boundaries. In the latter case, an impeded language development and increased reticence towards the L2 community at hand will be observed. In a SA period, classrooom and beyond experiences of learning, using and functioning in L2, become a part of socializing with new (mostly international) peers and also local students and a new (university) community. However, again, as Pellegrino (2005) observes:

> Stripped of the comfortable mastery of their first language and culture and societal adrointness, learners in immersion environment, such as study abroad, often report feeling as if those around them may perceive them to be unintelligent, lacking personality or humor, or as having thr intellectual development of a small child.
>
> (Pellegrino 2005: 9)

Table 3. Formal instruction and immersion in the second language: the study abroad context (sample studies)

Source	Focus
S. Wilkinson (1998)	The study demonstrates that a SA period is the time of becoming more aware of one's national identity and its enhancement, expressing the feelings of either superiority or inferiority towards the target group.
D. Gabryś--Barker (2011)	A case study of an Erasmus student focusing on her development of language awareness, but first of all an intensive development of language identity and intercultural awareness and openness to other cultures during a three-months stay at an English university.
C. Kinginger, F. Whitworth (2005)	An examination of the perceptions of femininity in different national contexts (American versus French femininity) and becoming more aware of its cultural manifestations, initially expressed as rejection and difficulties with immersion in the French context and way of being, seeing their surrounding thorugh American lenses.
L. Polanyi (1995)	The study demostrates how lack of language skills makes the female subjects postion themselves as helpless receivers of sexual advances, not being able to express their feelings and thus, exposed to sexual harassment. The need to develop language strategies to defend themselves impeded the development of their academic language competence, while focusing on enhancement of their defensive verbal strategies in Russian.
V. Pellegrino (2005)	The case of a SA student positioning herself in the host family environment, taking up the role of a learner and the host family as a superior in the "teacher" position, which resulted in low self-esteem and self-respect and low coping potential.

Source	Focus
J. Jackson (2018)	Despite a generally positive attitude to study abroad and the efforts institutions make to encourage mobility programmes, the researcher questions the assumption that immersion will always lead to development of higher levels of language competenece or intercultural sensitivity, thus more openness and internationalization (developing flexible ego boundaries).

The results and observations made on the basis of study abroad periods in relation to both language development, intercultural sensitivity and also identity are quite diverse and determined by a a variety of not only contextual factors, but most of all, individual factors and differences in the affective and cognitve functioning of the subjects participating in the studies. Such a period is seen as a challenge for one's identity, thus, coping strategies, and an ability to either integrate or reject come from one's personal predisposition and openness, tolerance of ambiguity but also the intensity of life experience in international contacts.

4. A sample study of multilingual identites in formal instruction settings

4.1. Methodology of the study

Was Block (2014) right in suggesting that there is very little (language) identity construction (or negotiation) occurring in a purely formal instruction context? This study intends to offer some discussion, observations and comments as to (possible) language identity formation occuring in a formal context of learning a FL in the students' L1 country. The main objective of the study was to make a comment on the perceptions multilingual language learners (and users) have of their own multlilingual identities. The data was collected from a sample of twenty-eight multlingual students of English at the university level, whose L1 was Polish, L2 – English (C1 level), L3 – German (A2/B1 level). All of them were pre-service teachers of Englsh as a foreign language (EFL) in their final M.A. semester. They all attended an introductory lecture in multlingualism and became familiar with the basic terminology as well as participated in numerous reflection sessions on what multingualism is and what it means to be multilingual. The data presented here comes from one of such sessions, where written responses from the students encouraged them to reflect upon the concept of language identity and their own mulilingual (or otherwise) identities.

The subjects were asked to reflect upon their language identities in five written tasks. The first task focused on their general perceptions of identity as a concept expressed by associations:

Task 1. *What do you associate language identity with*?

Next, the subjects were instructed to think of similes (explicit metaphors) that would best describe their identitites in the different languages they know (L1, L2, L3). It was assumed that metaphors give us a framework for thinking and reflect the way we experience, understand and interact with the world around us (Gabryś-Barker 2017):

Task 2. *My L1 identity is like ….*
Taks 3. *My L2 identity is like …..*
Taks 4. *My L3 identity is like ….*

The last task in the study consisted of reflections in a form of personal narratives of approximate 450 words, in which the subjects commented on the following:

Task 5. *How does using each of the languages you know (L1, L2, L3, Ln) affect your verbal and non-verbal behaviour?*

4.2. Language identity of FL learners (associations and metaphors)

In response to task 1 *What do you associate language identity with?*, the students expressed their views on *language identity* (LI) as a part of one's holistic identity, emphasizing the need to be fluent to talk about one's language identity in a given language. Language identity was very strongly associated with the affective functioning of a person and expression of emotions. Also, LI meant for the subjects a strong sense of belonging to a given group or community ("community of practice") but equally important were one's idiosyncratic qualities. LI expresses internalization of historic, cultural and symbolic values, facts and issues important for a given language community (nation). But not only this: exposure and international contacts were also delineated as significant factors in defining one's language identity.

In task 2 a whole variety of similes expressed different perceptions of mother tongue identification in *My L1 identity is like ...* statements (Table 4).

Table 4. L1 identity (sample similes, original student version)

Task 2	Simile
My L1 identity is like…	*A comfortable apartment, where I can move freely and at ease* *A plug that connects me, a social group through a dialect, culture, religion.* *A heart-beating, you don't think about it but you do it.* *A constant improvement* *A home to return to*

Task 2	Simile
	My home, a place in which I can be myself. *Air – I know that I breathe it but usually I don't pay attention to it, it is natural* *An unshaped universe. It is changing all the time.* *My whole life, it is something I was raised with* *A precious ring. I am proud and self-confident because I have it. That self-confidence makes me communicate. I also feel special because I have it.* *An opened door. I am free to express my feelings, opinions, views and beliefs.* *A life buoy, I feel safe using it.* *Understanding a person even without any words used in a conversation* *Breathing. You cannot get rid of it.* *My head. It is always with me.* *A bird which flies freely in the air.* *A constant possibility to develop language and express myself.*

The key descriptors that appeared in the metaphoric expressions show that L1 identity means:
- Something cosy and familiar: home, apartment
- Something safe: a life-buoy
- Something indispensable: breathing, air, heart-beating
- Something valuable: a precious ring
- Something free (freedom): a bird flying freely

In task 3 the subjects reflected upon their first foreign language (L2), English (Table 5).

Table 5. L2 identity (sample similes, original student version)

Task 3	Similes
My L2 identity is like…	*A tree. It is deeply and firmly rooted but it has also new branches to grow.* *My soul-mate. It is like an inseparable thing which is extremely similar to me. I would even call it unity.* *A toolbox, I can use different items from it to make things work better.* *Chameleon, it changes according to a given situation, I try to blend it in, to fit a given situation.* *An all-directions ticket. It gives me the feel that I can go anywhere I want and to make everything I want. It makes me feel good.* *A piano, the white (L1) help to interact with black ones (L2) and they can produce a great second.*

Table 5 – continued

Task 3	Similes
	An adventure, the process of learning never stops. *A physical training, it is about staying in shape and taking care of my condition.* *A hobby, I love to develop my knowledge all the time.* *My favourite dress, make up.* *A constant broadening of horizons by a systematic use of it.* *A mobile phone, I always have it by my side and use it each time it is necessary.* *A cupcake, it makes the language attractive, it makes me want to eat it (know all about the culture and society)* *A garden. You have to take care of it so it develops.* *A chest full of treasures that I find one by one each day.* *A traveller who travels around the world and sometimes finds himself in trouble.* *A mountaineer who walks through quite easy hills but sometimes meets very difficult and high obstacles.*

The key descriptors that can be inferred from the above similes express the dynamic character of the subjects' L2 identities:
- Something developmental/challenging: growing tree branches, a hobby, a physical training, an adventure, a garden, being a traveller
- Something changeable: a chameleon
- Something complementary: a soul-mate, a piano (white and black keys)
- Something useful/indispensable/nice: a toolbox, an all-directions ticket, a mobile phone, a cupcake
- Something to hide behind: a dress/a make up
- Something precious: a chest of treasures

In the last task based on metaphors (task 4), the subjects reflected upon their perceptions of L3 identity (Table 6).

Table 6. L3 identity (sample similes, original student version)

Task 4	Similes
My L3 identity is like…	*A difficult long journey.* *A hedgehog, it is nice and cute but I am afraid and discouraged by its needles.* *An adventure. It is not crucial in my life but I like to experience it from time to time.* *Going beyond the borders that cannot be crossed.* *A mirror.*

Task 4	Similes
	An incessant challenge that I have to face every day. *A shed, where there is always something to clean.* *A diamond in the rough, it exists but in fact, there are a lot of things to do before it really becomes my language identity.* *A parachute. It makes me feel safe in all cases. If my two languages are not enough to communicate, there is still the third one to rescue me. It helps me to understand myself better.* *A never ending story. It still has some gaps to fill in.* *A ghost, it does not exist.* *A stage presence. I enter into this equation only in some cases, but still, can I do it? am I a good actress?* *A snowdrop. It is still growing and developing and it disappears after some time.* *Being an animal which can communicate with people but is not able to say everything in its language.* *Climbing a tree which is unusually high.* *An obstacle which is difficult to overcome.*

As was in the case of L2 similes, also here in its key descriptors of L3 identity, its dynamic character is emhasised but this time with an element of challenge and difficulty as L3 identity is seen as:

• Something difficult happening (occasionally): a long journey, an adventure, climbing a tree
• Something challenging: a hedgehog, unusually high tree
• Something to work on: a diamond in the rough, an obstacle on the way
• Something to cope with: cleaning a shed, daily challenges
• Something offering security: a parachute
• Something illusory/unstable: a ghost, a never ending story, a (melting) snowdrop
• Something of a play/inauthenticity (being an actor): a stage presence

Comparing the perceptions of L1, L2 and L3 identities, it can be observed that there are many more descriptors in the case of L2 and especially L3, the metaphors present more unique patterns, there is less predictability and more diversity and as a consequence, less stability and more fluctuation in these reflections. On the other hand, there are almost clearly designated qualities characteristic of each language identity, where:

• L1 identity is expressed as an inherent quality of each person/persona, affective in nature,
• L2 identity is developmental, indispensable and allowing to grow as a person, satisfying one's needs, but (mostly) cognitive ones,
• L3 identity is challenging, scary and illusory, not fully surfaced, and still "under construction".

4.3. Verbal and non-verbal behaviours in multiple languages (narratives)

In the last task of the study, the subjects were asked to write a short reflective text of 450 words on the following topic: *Comment on how using each of the languages you know (L1, L2, L3, Ln) affects your behaviour (verbal and non-verbal).* In other words the object of the examination of the students'narratives were their behavioural patterns as expressions of the subjects' different perspectives on their multiple language identities. The general belief expressed was that language learning means learning new culture and behaviours (subject 3) as each language has different patterns of behaviour, body language and views (s. 25) and, as such, it is "a powerful and full of surprises process" (s. 19). At the same time, two other distinctive perspectives on the influence of individual languages on behaviour of the subjects were revealed.

4.3.1. Different perspective- different profiles of multlinguals

Perspective one: was taken by an overwhelming majority of the students (80%), who believe that languages change our personalities (s. 1) and expose us to confusing behavioural situations (s. 7) and therefore being multilingual means "a complex way of being", different temperaments and behaviour (s. 4). It is emphasized that "Language is our personality and its use determines and describes us". Thus, we are "a different person in each language, discovering oneself in each" (s. 12) to form "a coherent whole" (s. 13). To illustrate the above, here are examples of texts by subjects reflecting on the above (original, unedited versions):

(…) my identity consists of four languages. I am open and more direct when I speak Silesian. I am more elegant and serious when I speak Polish. I am more comfortable when I speak English. And finally, I am easy-going when I speak German. I have different memories and experiences connected with these languages which helped me become who I am now. I learn a lot combining these languages and cannot imagine who I would be without them. I am more organised, determined and stronger because I know that I can achieve what I plan or have somewhere in my mind (s. 4).

(…) A stable and deeply rooted native language identity somehow made a ground to form my other identities (….). Developing language identity prompted me not only to improve myself as a language learner but mainly as an active participant of my school community. From an extreme introvert and a shy person, I was gradually transforming into a more open-minded and self-conscious girl (s. 1).

The last but not least important component of my multilingual language identity is being a teacher. This is the place where all my three languages meet(…) (each language: Polish, English, German) influence the way I function and perceive the world. They also have a tremendous impact on the way I teach. (s. 8)

I know three languages and in each of them I am a different person. Furthermore, I am proud that I can learn something about my personality (s. 6).

Behaviour comes not so much from proficiency as a character of different languages" (s. 27)

These multilinguals see themsleves as possessing complex identities, which impacts the changes in their personality and results in becoming more open-minded, tolerant and expressing more positive feelings – as being a multilingual is like "taking a journey, open doors to new paths, and new thinking, views, developmental, motivator" (s.1). It also results in developing confidence, confidence given by others, e.g. in authentic communication versus insecurity in formal instructional settings (s. 10). These changes make one "more aware of oneself and becoming more complete" (s. 25). Different languages and the learning processes involved and functioning in these languages in different contexts make a multilingual take different positions.

This perspective was very well expressed by Pavlenko (2006: 5) in the words: "Speaking a different language means being a different person, belonging to a different community, character type, emotional type (…). I feel like I have a different personality in French (…). When I speak Dutch I feel like a more precise person (…)",

Perspective two, expressed by 20% of the students, sees languages is "enriching us, but not changing our personality" (s. 3), thus functioning in L2 is like "being an actress" playing a role on the stage (s. 16), whereas in not very well-developed L3 we may feel "like a child not an adult" (s. 16). The above approach to mulitngual identiy is expressed in the following words of the subjects (original, unedited versions of the text):

By being a multilingual person I have the ability to understand other people and I am more tolerant and open. Maybe I do not see myself as a truly multilingual person because I am very attached to Polish language (s. 15)

For me, my multilingual identity means something very personal and intimate (…). In my opinion, identity means not only the way we communicate by using a language but also the culture, traditions and history which are intrinsic part of a language identity. All these elements make me a hundred percentage Polish (s. 15).

Although I know four languages, there is only one that I can fully identify with, and it is my native language, Polish (…). The process of language identity development is dynamic and it can change any time (…) so maybe at some point in future I will identify with some foreign language that would, for some reason, become extremely important for me (s. 18)

It is believed by the subjects in this group that all languages "influence thinking: but not behaviour" (s. 24) and "L1 shows who I am, creates me as a person. L2 is just a tool" (s. 26).

4.3.2. Verbal and non-verbal behaviour in different languages

The subjects' comments in the narrative demonstate different patterns of both verbal and non-verbal behaviour when functioning in different languages. As was expected, L1 **verbal behaviour** is described as automatic, spontaneous, adjusted to a situation but also fast, chaotic, incoherent, resulting from the safety of expression/being understood. At the same time, L2 verbal expression is often either abundant and upbeat – it can be assumed, this it is the case of more confident and extrovertic multilinguals, when compared with inhibited, fully controlled students who see using L2 like in a stage performance. At the same time, it does not preclude identifying with and belonging to a larger community (so-called *imagined community*, *community of practice*). Interestingly, the subjects seem to experience more security outside class and in communication with NSs than in a controlled classroom situation, where they postion themselves as learners, subjected to the teacher's authority and power, traditionally understood. In the case of L3, verbal behaviour seems overwhelmingly to focus on form and not content. It is fully monitored and also (extremely) stressful due to lack of language ability/competence. As was the case of L2, L3 use seems more natural outside the classroom, as they consider this use to be less stressful (taking the postion of a communicator and not being assessed).

Non-verbal behviour in L1 functioning is abundant and uncontrollable in the case of a gesture person (and totally devoid of gestures in the case of a non-gesture person). Thus it seems that the use of gestures maybe an innate idiosyncratic personality trait and as such it should not transfer to the other languages known to an individual. At the same time, it has to be pointed out that gestures or non-verbal communication in general become a conscious communication strategy in foreign language contexts. The subjects believe that in L2, their gestures are frequent and more expressive, but mostly controlled and used to gain confidence and as such function as a compensatory strategy. In the teaching context (all the subjects are trainee students), it becomes a didactic tool used successfully in a FL classroom to communicate meaning or to give feedback (to correct). In the case of L3 use, the subjects clearly declare their unawareness of their gestures or conscious avoidance of gestures because of unfamiliarity with nonverbal signs in L3/Ln. Here, somehow, gesture use is not perceived as a legitimate communication strategy. The only situation that was pointed out was the use of gestures in stressful situations and to express negative emotions. Some of the students report on L2/L3/Ln transfer of gestures characteristic of the target language (e.g. Italian or French).

It seems that nonverbal behaviour expressed by gestures across languages is perceived as performing well-defined functions in the context of teaching/learning/using a given language:

- **in L1** – gestures are an expression of one's personality (gesture versus non-gesture person)
- **in L2** – gestures constitute a compensatory communication strategy, demonstrating an affinity with L2

- **in L3/Ln** – gestures are an expression of (negative) affectivity (stress management) or a occasionally a deliberate communication strategy

It is interesting (but also disappointing) that the subjects who are mulitnguals with an extensive experience of learning and using foreign languages in varied contexts from formal (academic) to informal (traveling, socializing online, friends) perceive non-verbal behaviour as being comprised solely of gestures, neglecting other important non-verbal dimensions, such as for example proximics, eye-contact or tactile aspects of communication.

5. Final comments: Constructing (multiple) language identity(-ties)

In response to Block's (2014) reluctance to acknowledge that foreign language learners/users in formal instruction contexts form unique identities, this study clearly demonstrates certain tendencies in how these learners see their mulilingual identity. The multlingual identity of a FL learner/user as diagnosed in this study shows that being multingual means a complex way of being (a complex language identity), in which the use of a particular language from one's repertoire is (fairly) well-defined. L1 identity is inherent and affective, L2 identity is developmental and fulfils mostly cognitive needs, whereas L3 identity is still "under consruction" and presents a multilingual with a (sometimes threatening) challenge.

In conclusion, these perceptions, and also the differences between multilinguals' complex identities, derive from the (individual's) present, past and desires for the future. They emerge in the social practice of each language in varied contexts and through unique relationships with other people, each time choosing different positions. It has all to do with relations of power (being marginalized versus highly valued), as was expressed in confidence of language use beyond the classroom versus inhibition in the teacher-controlled context of a foreign language classroom. The complextiy of multilingual identity construction originates from diverse learning contexts, where the natural context (immersion) versus formal instruction impacts roles and how one positions onself, not to mention motivation and investment (desire and commitment) in language practices. Not without significant impact is also the starting age of learning a given foreign language, as adult learners will definitely have already formed their L1 identity and thus, be a little more limited in integrating different attitudes, values and beliefs pertinent to forming one's identity (e.g. national identity). At the same time, a strong desire to join an imagined L2/L3 community may help overcome the above barriers.

One of the tools in this study was an explicit metaphor (a simile), which is conducive to developing reflective attitudes, here of young multlinguals, future teachers of a FL (English and German), to become aware of themselves as individuals with complex identities resulting from their functioning in

multiple languages. Constructing identities through metaphors is a good example of awareness raising. Metaphoric perceptions expand understanding of the underlying cognitive and affective aspects of multilingual identities. They demonstrate integration of various factors and areas of life to form an understanding of what being a multilingual is, as a process of becoming both a unique person and a social being (Gabryś-Barker 2017, 2018, 2018a). As one of the subjects says, being a multilingual means being unique:

> Something that links my three languages is the fact that they make me multilingual and special. I am special because I have a gift of languages, but also because I work hard to improve my proficiency. Being multilingual is equal to being self-reliant and fulfilled. It is also being independent and autonomous in different situations (…). I am a happy multilingual who knows herself and knows that my languages are one of the sources of that happiness (s. 8).

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