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# Promoting Plurilingualism Through Linguistic Landscapes: A Multi-Method and Multisite Study in Germany and the Netherlands

Lisa Marie Brinkmann, Joana Duarte,  
& Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer

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*This article investigates how linguistic landscapes (LLs) can foster critical thinking about linguistic power relations and tensions in multilingual areas by acting as stimuli to reflect on the ethnolinguistic vitality of languages in a given region. We examine the pedagogical use of LLs as resources for the implementation of plurilingual pedagogies in mainstream secondary school classrooms in two distinct sites: Germany and the Netherlands. Data was collected through classroom observations, interviews with teachers, and students' assignments and questionnaires. Analysis included an examination of how students validate their linguistic and semiotic practices and those of the Other through different approaches to LL in the classroom. Results show that in the Netherlands, students and teachers co-constructed the research on LL by critically reflecting on visibility issues in their LL research; in Germany, students and teachers engaged in collaborative sequences of meaning-making based on preselected examples of the LL of their surroundings. In both sites, teachers' attitudes were central in fostering classroom interaction to enhance students' reflexivity and criticality. This study is significant as it confirms the added value of using LLs as resources for developing critical language awareness through challenging "banal monolingualism" in highly linguistic diverse classrooms and as a path towards empowerment.*

*Cet article examine la façon dont les paysages linguistiques peuvent favoriser la pensée critique quant aux relations de pouvoirs linguistiques et aux tensions dans les zones multilingues en servant de stimuli pour réfléchir à la vitalité ethnolinguistique des langues dans une région donnée. Nous examinons l'utilisation pédagogique des paysages linguistiques comme ressources pour la mise en place de pédagogies plurilingues dans les salles de classe traditionnelles de secondaire dans deux sites distincts : l'Allemagne et les Pays-Bas. Les données ont été recueillies par le biais d'observations en salle de classe, d'entrevues avec les enseignants et les tâches et des questionnaires remplis par des élèves. L'analyse incluait un examen de la façon dont les élèves valident leur pratique linguistique et sémiotique et celles de l'Autre par différentes approches du paysage linguistique dans la salle de classe. Les résultats ont montré qu'aux Pays-Bas, les élèves et les enseignants co-construisaient la recherche sur le paysage linguistique en réfléchissant aux problèmes de visibilité; en Allemagne, les élèves et les enseignants s'engageaient dans des séquences collaboratives de recherche*

*de signification fondées sur les exemples présélectionnés du paysage linguistique de leur contexte. Dans les deux sites, l'attitude des enseignants était essentielle pour favoriser l'interaction en salle de classe afin de mettre en valeur l'esprit critique et de réflexion des élèves. Cette étude est significative puisqu'elle confirme la valeur ajoutée de l'utilisation des paysages linguistiques comme ressources pour développer la conscience linguistique critique par la remise en question du « monolinguisme banal » dans des salles de classe très diverses linguistiquement et comme chemin vers la valorisation.*

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Keywords: linguistic landscape, multilingualism, critical language awareness, critical thinking

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Researching linguistic landscapes (LLs) in applied linguistics and education has recently been extended to the field of language learning and plurilingual education *in* and *beyond* the classroom (Badstübner-Kizik & Janíková, 2018; Malinowski et al., 2020; Niedt & Seals, 2020). Within this scope, research points towards an increasing interest in the analysis of LLs in urban spaces, especially in bi- and multilingual<sup>1</sup> settings (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009; Gorter, 2013), namely in the field of public pedagogy beyond the classroom (Marshall, 2021). Little research has focused on the role of LLs in the context of the development of plurilingual pedagogies (Kirsch & Duarte, 2020) and critical language awareness (Fairclough, 1992) and, specifically, on how teachers and students perceive the use of LLs when integrated into classroom activities. In this article, we report on the pedagogical use of LLs as resources for the implementation of plurilingual pedagogies in mainstream secondary school classrooms in two distinct sites: Netherlands and Germany. The study was guided by one overarching research question: To what extent can the use of LLs, as pedagogical resources in the language classroom, foster critical language awareness about underlying power relations and tensions between languages in multilingual areas?

To answer this research question, we present the pedagogical principles underlying the work with LLs in school settings by stressing the diversity of approaches and tasks that LLs can bring to the classroom. We argue that working with LLs is not a pedagogy on its own, but rather, a specific strategy to introduce plurilingual pedagogies in mainstream classrooms, favouring the development of critical language awareness of all students.

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<sup>1</sup> We use “multilingual” as a term to refer to the social coexistence of languages; “plurilingualism” will refer to individual linguistic repertoires (Piccardo & Galante, 2018).

# 1. Theoretical Background

## 1.1 *LLs and Plurilingualism*

LLs are often defined by referring to “the language on public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs and public signs on government buildings [that] combine to form the LL of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25). In general, language use on signage in public spaces influences the visibility of languages and can be both a marker of and a contributor to the ethnolinguistic vitality of a language (Kuipers-Zandberg & Kircher, 2020).

Public signs may be divided into two categories: governmental signs and nongovernmental or commercial signs (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), each fulfilling two functions. First, the languages used can separate one linguistic community from another and thus signal the presence of speakers of that language. In officially bilingual contexts, such as Canada, the LL may inform the language composition and the status of several languages relative to each other; the dominance of one language over another may indicate inequality of power between both languages, and even between the language communities by extension. The LL thus functions as a marker of ethnolinguistic vitality (informational function). Second, the LL may serve a symbolic function, which relies on the assumption that the presence or absence of a particular language in the public space in a multilingual setting can influence attitudes towards the languages and the language communities (Edelman, 2014). The presence of one’s language may contribute to the belief that the language is valuable, vital, and has status relative to other languages.

Understanding LL as contributing to the ethnolinguistic vitality of a language—defined as a group’s ability to maintain and protect its language in time as a collective entity with a distinctive identity (Ehala, 2015)—is especially important in minority language situations. When a language is scarcely used (if at all) in a public space, it may send a message that the language holds limited status and little economic or cultural value, as it is not vital (Shohamy, 2006). This in turn may affect speakers’ willingness to use the language. When a language is perceived as having limited value, parents may choose not to teach it to their children and may opt instead for the teaching of a majority language (Spolsky, 2012).

Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) stated that there should be more research on how and by whom the LL is being shaped. They introduced the notion of “LL-actors,” who concretely participate in the shaping of LL by borrowing from others or building by themselves LL elements according to preferential tendencies, deliberate choices, or policies. In the study reported here, we examine teachers and secondary school students as potential “LL-actors,” as individuals negotiating and performing their plurilingual identities through

the interaction with and reaction to multilingual texts in the LL (Dagenais et al., 2009).

## 1.2 LLs to Promote Plurilingual Education for All

LLs are suitable tools to answer the recent call for the visual (Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2018), multilingual (May, 2014), and spatial (Benson, 2021; Lozano et al., 2020) turns in language education. LLs show how multilingualism and semiotic resources are embedded in space, creating contextualized multimodal and multisensorial resources for both language learning and learning about language. Pedagogical work with LLs answers the visual turn, as it brings multimodality to the foreground of meaning-making and meaning co-construction, shifting our attention from linguistic towards multisemiotic (and even multisensorial) meaning containers. In the case of the multilingual turn, the work with LLs is particularly suitable to develop students' critical language awareness, namely the ability to reflect on languages and their relationships, as well as to challenge notions of language, linguistic boundaries and norms, and even multilingualism as permanencies. By doing so, LLs foster students' plurilingual competence (Piccardo et al., 2021). In terms of the spatial turn, working with LLs emphasizes "the importance of students' critical examination of texts and other semiotic resources within and across different spaces (e.g., classroom, home, school, communities, online) that are embodied, interactive, multimodal/multisensory, and that evolve over time" (Lozano et al., 2020, p. 19). We focus mainly on the "multilingual turn," highlighting the role LLs can have in educating self-aware plurilingual students *in* and *for* highly diverse multilingual and multisemiotic settings.

LLs are important in language education because they can provide information on and/or influence the language attitudes of both in- and out-group members, affecting language behaviour. In addition, LLs in education can support language learning in different ways. Cenoz and Gorter (2008) argued that LLs have an affective and symbolic value and are sources of additional linguistic input, providing opportunities to develop the pragmatic competence, literacy skills, and multicompetences. Identifying such affordances of LLs in language education largely depends on the lenses through which they are being used, in both nonformal and formal language learning contexts (Melo-Pfeifer & Silva, 2021). Among the support of language learning through LL, we distinguish three linguistic foci:

- *Multilingual focus*: teachers and students analyze the presence and distribution of languages in the (private or public) space, investigating the means by which they are represented or erased from those spaces, and the ideologies/attitudes attached to societal multilingualism.
- *Monolingual focus*: teachers and students examine the presence of a specific language in a time-space scale and learn both skills in the language

and about the language, as well as the stereotypes or representations attached to it in a given context. Teachers can thus focus on the specific affordances provided by the LL to learn the target language and focus on the ethnolinguistic vitality of a specific linguistic community.

- *Mixed-focus*: relates to the particular ecology of a given language in the multilingual and intercultural landscape, for example, which other languages are mostly combined with the language being considered (see Li & Marshall, 2020 for a mixed-focus on Chinese in Canada).

The development of plurilingual pedagogies through the use of LLs is, however, linked to other concepts related to plurilingualism. In the case of language awareness (James & Garrett, 1992), research shows the positive impact of the LLs on affective and cognitive dimensions. Working with LLs develops students' curiosity and openness towards languages (Dagenais et al., 2009) and enhances language learning through the development of language learning processes and awareness thereof, at the cognitive dimension (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Hernández-Martín & Skrandies, 2020; Roos & Nicholas, 2019; Sayer, 2020; Tjandra, 2021).

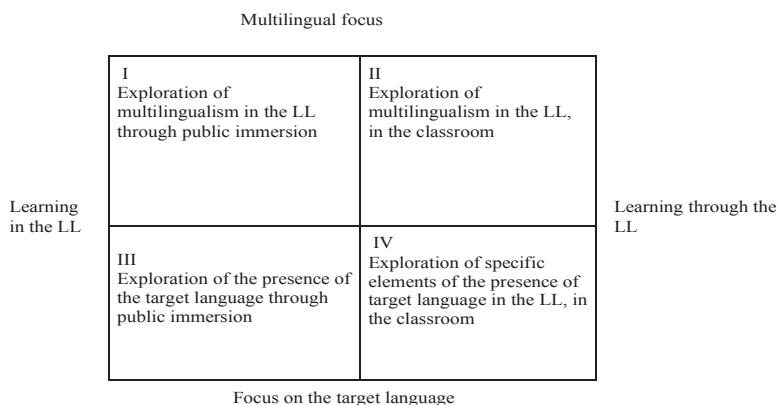
Research also shows that LLs enhance students' intercultural competence and critical thinking through the development of attitudes, knowledge, and action-related skills to the understanding and engagement in particular linguistic and cultural scenarios (Clemente et al., 2012). The choice of the linguistic focus (multilingual, monolingual or both) depends on the pedagogical aims, the teaching and learning context, and, in case of incorporation into the curriculum, the syllabus of the school subject. The work with LLs can be carried out in outdoor and indoor learning settings because opportunities of language learning are embedded in multimodal forms of (visual) communication, "both in and beyond classroom in local communities and online" (Lozano et al., 2020, p. 20). To structure choices regarding the pedagogical work with LLs, two approaches are possible, either developed separately or sequentially:

- Learning *in* the LL (Malinowski et al., 2020): this approach, which occurs outside the classroom, includes walking and observing the public spaces as ways of knowing. By bringing the language classroom to the street with an ethnographic focus, teachers and students can observe, document and analyze the presence of languages and the way they (also) produce space. Learning in the LL can occur both through incidental learning (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Tjandra, 2021) or/and through planned noticing strategies, planned beforehand by the language educator.
- Learning *through* the LL: this approach, which predominantly takes place inside the classroom, aims to draw students' attention towards previously chosen elements. Learning through the LL in the classroom

means bringing the street to the language classroom through multimodal transposition, that is, through the capture of the LL through technological devices, and its recontextualization as a classroom document. This approach is based on the creation of pedagogical materials derived from the documentation of LLs, both by teachers and students.

Figure 1 shows the pedagogical possibilities of working with LLs.

Figure 1  
A Framework for the Pedagogical Implementation of LLs.



Quadrants I and II have a multilingual focus, meaning that work in these scenarios aims at analyzing societal multilingualism and linguistic ideologies in the public space and developing students' language awareness and intercultural competence. In the case of Quadrant I, the work around those issues is developed in the field, mostly in public immersion, as in the work carried out by Dagenais et al. (2009) in Canada, while in Quadrant II, those pedagogical aims are pursued in the classroom (Tjandra, 2021).

Quadrants III and IV have a focus on the target language, representing a research element; they explore language in public immersion, or in the classroom, respectively. As examples of Quadrant III, Aladjem and Jou (2016) worked on the potential that LLs offer for the learning of Spanish in Israel, focusing on students' documentation of the presence of Spanish in the LL. Elola and Prada (2020) mapped out how Spanish was present in outdoor environments, thus offering occasions for language learning. Melo-Pfeifer and Silva (2021), as an example in Quadrant IV, examined the presence of Portuguese in a particular neighbourhood in Hamburg, Germany, to analyze the intercultural and pragmatic potential of its use in the Portuguese language classroom. The work with LLs can integrate elements of the four quadrants or can move across them.

## 2. Design of the Empirical Study

In this section, we present the research design, first in the German site, and then in the Dutch site, followed by the data collection and analysis. This study is based on classroom activities aiming at developing language awareness, during which students explored the LLs of their regions through guided tasks. These activities served to empower plurilingual students by giving them a voice. The study is part of the Erasmus+-project LoCALL<sup>2</sup>, which aims to develop plurilingual pedagogies based on teachers and students' experiences with plurilingualism and to create a bridge between indoor and outdoor learning. We collected data in secondary school classrooms in Germany and the Netherlands. This multi-method study (Creswell, 2013) included a combination of data collection methodologies with different stakeholders in both sites: (i) interviews with teachers reporting on their experiences introducing LLs in the classroom; (ii) classroom observations and samples of students' work to examine student interaction while conducting, analyzing, and reflecting on LLs; and (iii) students' questionnaires and reflections on LLs.

### 2.1 Site 1: Hamburg and Surroundings (Germany)

#### *Setting*

Hamburg is a multicultural and multilingual city and region ("Bundesland"). In 2018, 16.4% of the inhabitants were immigrants and 35.5% (including the 16.4%) had a migrant background (Statistisches Amt für Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein, 2020). Data was collected in two secondary schools in Hamburg, where the proportion of the population with a migrant background was 18.7% in the first school (H1); in the surrounding area of the second school (H2), however, statistics were unavailable (Statistisches Amt für Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein, 2020). The activities were implemented in four French as a foreign language classrooms in H1 and H2. In total, two teachers and 44 students participated in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of the material used in the lessons. The activities and context of implementation in Hamburg closely resembled Quadrant II (learning *through* the LL; multilingual focus) presented in Figure 1. The activities, which extended for 90 minutes in H1 and 45 minutes in H2 (plus a reflexive homework), were based on a co-constructed worksheet that included selected LL from Hamburg (photos and descriptions) and aimed at developing students' awareness of diverse languages and language diversity in the classroom. More specifically, the students were given a presentation in

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<sup>2</sup> LoCALL stands for "Local Linguistic Landscapes for global language education in the school context" (<https://localproject.eu/>); it is an Erasmus Plus project, developed between 2019 and 2022. The authors are part of the German and the Dutch teams, and the paper is part of the experimentation of the materials produced in the scope of the project.



French about a character who explored the LL of her hometown, Hamburg. The presentation included short texts in French, photos taken in Hamburg, and vocabulary illustrations or explanations.

### *Data Collection Instruments*

To examine the extent to which LLs foster critical language awareness about power relations and tensions between languages in multilingual areas, we relied on four data collection instruments:

- Three structured classroom observation, conducted by one of the authors, were carried out in March 2021; the classroom observation guide included classroom events and discourse that could be classified as manifestations of James and Garrett's (2014) language awareness dimensions: cognitive, affective, power, performance, and social dimension;
- Anonymous student survey with two open and 19 closed questions to elicit their evaluation of the classroom content and materials (with questions such as "What did you learn?" or "How do you rate the quality of the materials?");
- Student written reflections produced as a homework in any language(s), in which they were asked to summarize the content of the class (prompt: "write to a friend in the Spanish class and tell him/her what you did in the French lesson"; see Figure 2 for an example);
- Semi-structured interviews with the teachers in H1 and H2, immediately after the lessons, in order to collect their perceptions of using LLs as resources in the classroom, of their student participation, perceived benefits and challenges, etc. The two teachers participating in the experimentation of the materials were interviewed in March 2021 by one of the authors.

### *Procedures*

Two teachers taught the four classes and each of them implemented the activities with two classes: Teacher 1 taught the two classes in H1 and Teacher 2 taught the two classes in H2. In H1, activities were completed during the lesson, while in H2 they were completed both as homework and during the lesson. In order to compare the outcomes of the introduction of LL as pedagogical resources in the target language classroom in H1 and H2, students were introduced to fill out a worksheet with questions like: "How would you define LL?" (cognitive dimension), "What languages do you like and why?" (affective dimension), "Why are there so many languages in Hamburg?" (social and power dimension), and "In which districts can the images in the presentation be found?" (social dimension). Students were

encouraged to use the target language, French, but were allowed to use German for discussion with a partner during classroom interaction. At the end of the lesson, students filled out the questionnaire and as a homework, they wrote the reflection (no instructions regarding the use of languages were given).

## *2.2 Site 2: Leeuwarden, Friesland (The Netherlands)*

### *Setting*

In the province of Friesland, Netherlands, Dutch and Frisian are official languages. As a mother tongue, Frisian, is spoken by approximately 55% of the province's population, 30% has Dutch as mother tongue and 15% speaks other languages (Provinsje Fryslân, 2020). Despite most of the population having Frisian as their mother tongue, Frisian speakers are also proficient in Dutch. In general, attitudes towards the Frisian language are negative, in particular regarding its role in compulsory education (Makarova et al., 2021). Friesland can be considered a region in the process of consolidating the position of Frisian in education, meaning that there are several measures being implemented to guarantee a secure place for the language in the curriculum of the region, to raise its status among school staff and students, and to develop teaching materials (Duarte & Günther-van der Meij, 2018). Additionally, the increasing presence of immigrant languages in educational institutions has led to the emergence of new challenges, meaning that schools are now looking for new strategies and methods to deal with the increasing linguistic diversity (Mercator, 2017). In previous research in Frisian secondary education, Makarova et al. (2021) found that secondary school students have more negative attitudes towards learning Frisian than towards learning other languages. Such results reinforce the need to focus on attitudinal aspects when investigating issues of minority language education. To address this issue, we investigated how LLs might influence the motivation and engagement with Frisian, a minority language in the context of emerging forms of superdiversity.

### *Data Collection*

Data was collected in one Frisian class (F1) during a series of five lessons of 45 minutes during which we combined 16 students from three different schools, with three different teachers, attending extra Frisian classes. Students were aged between 15 and 16. The lessons started with a presentation by the regional government about their policy on the visibility of Frisian in the region. The students were asked to act as policy advisors to the regional government. After jointly analyzing LLs from across the globe—identifying languages of signs and discussing, what the functions of the different signs were, and what the status of the languages presented was— students were

given a research assignment to be completed in pairs. They chose a given area (e.g., the city centre, the station, the market) or a topic (commercial signs, COVID-19 signs) and took photographs of all signs containing language(s). Afterwards, they analyzed the languages and functions of the signs. Finally, they discussed in groups what kind of policy advice they would give the regional government based on their findings. At the classes, interviews were conducted with the three teachers.

Three data collection instruments were used in this context (F1):

- Anonymous student survey to map their language backgrounds and attitudes. The questionnaire consisted of 42 items, divided into eight subsections: Frisian in secondary school, general language attitudes, attitudes towards languages in the LL; students' attitudes towards different regions, language background, use and proficiency, and socioeconomic background.
- Samples of students' LLs in which they were asked to produce a report in any language(s) and to summarize their analyses of the LLs they had collected in groups, as well as to formulate a policy advice based on their findings. In this article, we use two of the students' reports made in pairs, for which the largest amount of coding in relation to the four analyzed dimensions was attributed.
- Semi-structured interviews with three teachers (FT1, FT2 and FT3) a few days after the lessons, in order to collect information on their language and professional background, language attitudes, description of the language background and the language attitudes of their students, influence of language attitudes on students' motivation and performance, experiences with integrating LL methods in education. The teachers participating in the experimentation of the materials were interviewed in January 2021 by one of the authors.

### *Procedures*

In F1, the questionnaire was conducted in class before the start of the first lesson. The analyses of LLs were done during the first class. Students were encouraged to use the target language, Frisian, but were allowed to use Dutch or other languages in discussion with group partners. The assignment was conducted by the different groups outside of the class and the data was analyzed in classes two and three. The last classes were dedicated to the presentations and the reports containing the policy advice. Interviews with the teachers were conducted after implementation of the lessons.

### 3. Analysis

A qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2008) was conducted on merged data from both sites to investigate how working with LLs can foster critical thinking about linguistic power relations and tensions in multilingual areas. Deductive coding (Mayring, 2008) was used to identify categories. To code, the three authors examined the data iteratively focusing on the three predetermined categories of language awareness: social, power, and performance (James & Garrett, 2014). To highlight student empowerment through the work with LLs, we analyzed the signs of development of three dimensions of language awareness, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
Categories for Data Analysis Deduced from James & Garrett (1992).

<b>Dimensions of Language Awareness</b>	<b>Definition in the scope of the work with LL</b>	<b>Example from the data set</b>
<b>Social</b>	LL contributes to building cohesive and tolerant societies, respectful of linguistic and cultural diversity, through raising awareness of one's own and foreign languages.	<i>Student:</i> "refugees. They just come from another country and then when they come here and had to leave their home, they keep their culture here so they feel more at home." (H2)
<b>Power</b>	Working with LLs provides students with critical and analytical tools to observe and deconstruct manipulative phenomena, hegemony, and oppression anchored in language issues.	<i>Teacher:</i> "they [the students] suddenly realize that they have something of which they were not aware of." (H1)
<b>Performance</b>	Working with LLs in the classroom can contribute to increasing the languages and semiotic resources available to the language learner and language user, as well as to the language teacher.	<i>Teacher:</i> "I do think that it [LL] has a big influence on the attitudes and performance of the students; whether they see the language more. So, using it indirectly by improving the attitude." (F1)

These three dimensions of language awareness are particularly important in the process of empowering plurilingual students—for students with and without a migrant background. As stated by Hélot et al., (2018, pp. 9–10), "a process of empowerment happens when students see their languages becoming legitimate at school, when they are free to use them to acquire school knowledge and when they can showcase their plurilingual competence" or, as we will see, as they are able to recognize, discuss, and challenge coercive relations based on linguistic power and hierarchies.

## 4. Results

In this section, we first present signs of development of students' language awareness, based on data from classroom observations and students' assignments. We then present teachers' perspectives on the development of students' language awareness. The results are described and analyzed per site.

### 4.1 Site 1: Hamburg and Surroundings (Germany)

#### *Students' discovering reasons for urban multilingualism and valuing their own plurilingualism*

In the Hamburg classroom, a great deal of attention was put on why people have different relationships with different languages in general, and more specifically with minority languages (in this case the Low-Saxon language "Plattdeutsch"). The presence of many different languages in the LLs and what is possible to learn from them were also addressed.

In the multimodal presentation triggering the discussion in the classroom, Plattdeutsch was shown as an integral part of Hamburg's LL, and a character explained the affection he had towards that language. While discussing why people like or dislike some languages and understanding how "good" it feels to see the language(s) one likes in the LL, one student spontaneously made connections with Shona, a language in Zimbabwe, showcasing her competence in that language. The student felt confident to explain that languages are connected to places and people, and that those connections nurture the positive feelings towards languages, as illustrated in the excerpt below:

Student (S) 8: Shona. Both my parents are from Zimbabwe. I was born in Germany, but I can understand the language.

Teacher (T): What is the name of the language again?

S8: Shona.

T: And with what feelings do you hear the language?

S8: Well home, well homeland feelings. (H1)

In another classroom setting, when discussing their linguistic likes or dislikes (answering to the same part of the presentation as the excerpt above) first in pairs, and then as a whole class, one student shared her competence in Polish with the whole class. The student continued to discuss this topic, whispering to the peer sitting next to her. This indicates that the question about her languages is important to her and she seems to be proud of sharing the insights into her linguistic repertoire with the peer.

S10: Polish. [...] I grew up speaking it.

T: Ah, because your parents speak it and you speak it with them too, because it's familiar to you.

S10: My mother speaks Polish (getting quieter and speaking more towards the person sitting next to her) and my father only... (H2)

When the whole class was asked about why Plattdeutsch is positively appraised by the character present in the classroom activities, students referred to emotional, sociolinguistic, and economic issues related to language shift and/or maintenance. Plattdeutsch appeared in the presentation as one of many languages in the LL and yet, as a minority language; it tended to be associated with intergenerational dynamics in the family and with modest and rural ways of living, as shown below.

(Several pupils speak up [why does he love Plattdeutsch?]).

S7: Because he speaks it.

S2: Maybe also because he understands it and is happy about it.

S8: Because he grew up with it?

T: What does that mean for his relationship to Plattdeutsch?

S8: That he knows and likes it from his childhood and that's his home.

T: Exactly, that reminds him because he perhaps associates it with his grandparents, his home, or holidays. (H1)

When S2 said "he understands it and is happy about it," she referred to the fact that understanding languages in the LL is something to feel good about. By using the verb "remind," the teacher showed the role LL plays for the connection of language and feelings, and therefore bridges the experiences S8 mentioned about Shona.

Such discussions were not anodyne and could (re)produce ideas of competences and modernity. When asked where the minority language Plattdeutsch was spoken, students engaged in discussions that might entail some prejudices:

S3: In the countryside, older languages like Plattdeutsch tend to be spoken.

T: Why in the countryside?

S3: Because in the countryside the farmers have always spoken Plattdeutsch.

S1: Plattdeutsch is only spoken in the north and there aren't so many big cities there.

S10: When they moved to Hamburg, they couldn't do any more farming.

S8: In the countryside they are not as modernised as in the city. (H1)

Importantly, the teacher engaged in a sort of Socratic dialogue, not directly criticizing students for their perspectives, but rather letting them express their ideas and asking further questions that might lead students to reposition themselves. It is important to notice that discussions around LLs could foster students' reflexivity about power differences between rural and urban areas, connecting them with issues related to maintenance of languages perceived as having a lower status and "not as modernized." The excerpts above show that students associated mobility with language loss and abandonment of economic activity.

Regarding the social dimension of language awareness, students noticed that linguistic diversity is related to people and to personal histories of migration and mobility. They recognized that languages are not just abstract entities or tools to communicate but are also emotionally bound to the family and linguistic communities. They understood that languages have different histories in the territories where they are spoken, and these territories do not have to be perceived as having fixed borders. Instead, people can make languages transcend boundaries: one might grow up with a language and then carry that language from one point to another, without needing to forget it ("S3: Because there are many people who are not from here and bring their languages with them" [H2]).

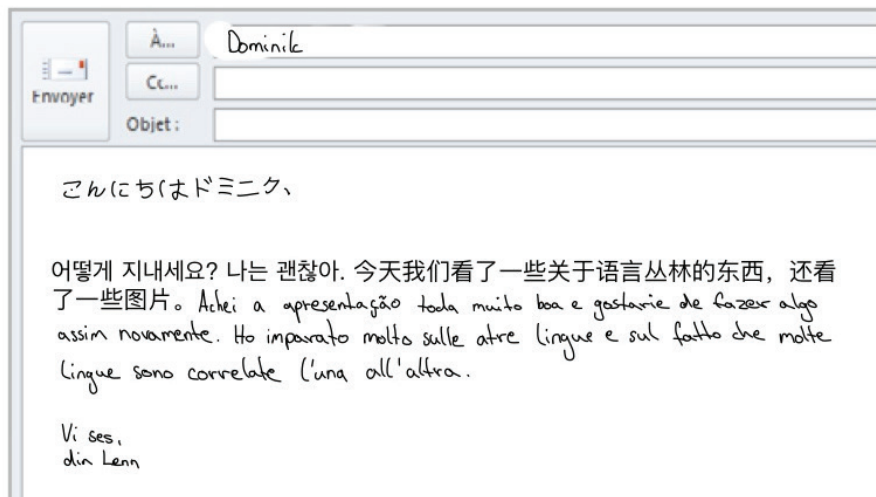
In terms of discussion around the composition of the LLs, students explained why they are so diversified in urban areas. Answering the questions why there are different languages in Hamburg's LL and in which places to find them, collaboratively with the teacher, students explained the diversification of LLs due to:

- Migration and refugee presence: "S13: Because some people come to Hamburg from abroad" (H2) and "S8: Like refugees. They just come from another country and then [...] they keep their culture here so they feel more at home" (H2);
- Concentration of people in the city centre— this was perceived as more diverse than the periphery, namely because of the influx of tourists: "S2: Because there are so many tourists. T: Okay and do the tourists bring their languages with them or are there offers for the tourists? S2: They bring their languages too" (H1);
- Adaptation of the city to the influx of tourists, influencing the economics of language presence, referring to languages as a commodity (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006): "T: That's right, when you come here, you go where the business has a good chance that many people will come" (H1); "S10: where language schools are situated" (H1).
- Language learning possibilities in the city.

These results show that students gained awareness of the linguistic dynamics in urban areas: not only migrant and refugee influx, but also the use of languages as commodities that sell as the languages are associated with internationalization and connected to appropriate opportunities to place products in the market (Heller, 2010).

Survey results show that most students learned about languages in the city and the diversity of the languages, as in “I learned that there are many languages in one place and why. And how you can deduce it from other languages” and “I learned that there are many languages in the city centre, there were more different languages than I thought.” Interestingly, when asked to write an email to the other class explaining what they had learned, students felt empowered to break up with the monolingual stance in the foreign language classroom after having seen and analyzed diverse languages (in interaction) in Hamburg’s LL. Following the contact with multilingualism in the city, they engaged in pedagogical translanguaging practices, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2  
Evaluation Task by a Student (H2).<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Translation: Hello Dominik, How are you doing? I am okay. Today we saw something about the language jungle and also some pictures. I think, the presentation was very nice and I would like to do something like that again. I learned a lot about other languages and the fact many languages are linked to others.



Here, the student used what could be attached to different named languages (as Portuguese or Italian, which were part of the LL analyzed, but also Korean and Chinese). It is unknown if the student knows all these languages. What can be observed is that the student felt free to express him/herself resorting to a variety of languages, engaging in multilingual practices. Even though the instruction for the task referred to the possibility of choosing the language(s) of production, the fact that the student accepted the call to transgress the monolingual communicative stance is a sign that they felt they could perform more adequately when speaking about multilingualism.

### *Teachers' Perceptions of the Added-Value of Working with LLs in the Classroom*

From the teachers' perspectives, in addition to the affective dimension of language awareness, the power dimension (and the empowerment that seeing diverse languages in the LL and talking about languages brings with it) was also present. Teachers referred to how students (1) valued their linguistic biographies, acknowledging the uniqueness of their repertoires, and potentially, in a mirror effect, those of the Other: "the students' self-esteem [was raised], because they suddenly realized that they have something of which they were not aware" (H1); (2) shared their linguistic identity, even in cases where students seemed to be shy, as the work with LL has a positive impact on students' performance and self-presentation: "with the student from Zimbabwe she was particularly awake and pleased to talk about it, and otherwise she is always very, very quiet and seems rather a bit, I don't want to say depressed, but in any case not as open" (H1); and (3) referred to a sense of "plurilingual identity," which was made up of languages learned at home and at school across times and spaces:

when you ask the pupils what each of their languages means to them or which languages they like or speak themselves, you suddenly touch a point where the pupils notice, like an aha effect, that they suddenly see: Oh, I have another language that also has a great value and that means something completely different to me than, for example, a school language like French or English (H1).

Interview results show that teachers reflected on elements that were also salient to the students during class. In terms of language awareness, they referred to the complexification of students' perspectives on language diversification and linguistic dynamics in LL, which are not just dependent on notions of nation and region, but also on the notion that languages are to be conceived beyond those borders:

I think they have learned that ... even if a city or a region is assigned to a certain country and thus also to a certain language, that does not mean that ... this language is the ... only relevant one (H2).

Even though the discourse of the teacher tended to associate "language" with "country," the use of "thus," served to deconstruct the link between

languages and a nation. The teacher referred to the language diversity in the LL and problematized it in the classroom setting.

Teachers also acknowledged that working with LLs in the foreign language classroom helped students recognize that languages are not only curricular objects present in a classroom with a given language name, but they are realities that trespass the school context, which make most sense beyond learning setting:

I think they have also learned, or at least I hope they had, that language is a much, much broader field than just learning foreign languages or German lessons at school. That there is a great diversity, that this diversity does not only take place in the classroom, but in the city (H1).

Besides fostering students' consciousness of the extracurricular significance of languages, another added value of LLs is the nurturing of the social dimension of language awareness through reflection on the affective role and identity of minority languages, as seen above.

Working with LLs also allowed students to pay attention to the relationship between different meaning-makers present in the landscape that are not usually valued. In this sense, the development of language awareness seems to be perceived as "multimodal awareness" of the LL:

They ... actually came to the conclusion on their own that, for example, these graffiti also belong to the linguistic landscape and also the doorbell panels that were attached to them, for example. ... They listed them and we marked them on the photo and then found a lot of things on such a small picture where basically only two shops or something could be seen. (H2)

Results show that the work with LLs in the classroom allowed students to develop a sense that LLs are not just "linguistic," but they make sense only when analyzed in terms of a combination of semiotic resources. Teachers seemed to acknowledge that students understood how meaning-making works in public spaces. Working with LLs in the classroom thus allowed students to become aware of "multimodal translanguaging" and, as seen in Figure 2, of the possibilities of combining their semiotic resources. Melo-Pfeifer and Araújo e Sá (2019) referred to this learning on how to use and combine semiotic resources in the communication and through communication as "learning to translanguaging" (p. 876). As such, working with LLs allows students to be plurilingual social actors (Dagenais et al., 2009; Piccardo & Galante, 2018) rather than foreign language learners.

## 4.2 Site 2: Leeuwarden (Netherlands)

### *LLs to Question Existing Language Hierarchies*

In the two reports presented here, the students were asked to reflect on the results of their LL analyses and provide their own alternative advice on the LL of the region. The excerpts below illustrate the conclusions in their policy advice:

Actually, we find it a pity that there are so few signs in Frisian, as we are actually in Friesland! This is especially true for the signs saying “Leeuwarden”, because, why not write “Ljouwert” [Leeuwarden in Frisian]? There should also be more signs in English, as this would attract more visitors.

Students chose to write in Frisian, which was not a requirement of the task. This pair concluded that the visibility of Frisian should be increased in the region, next to increasing the visibility of English. Students perceived Frisian as a marker of regional identity (the social dimension), and the use of English in LL as related the economic power associated with the English language. Engaging with LLs contributed to students’ critical awareness of the uneven distribution in the visibility of languages in the region as well as the desire to act upon it. They suggested a change in the city’s LL, involving not only a bigger role for Frisian, due to its social function in the region (for example, in terms of contributing to local identities), but also for the English language, due to the economic power attributed to this language (manifested in the way it attracts visitors to the region).

The second pair was more explicit in their explanation of the role of the Frisian language in the LL of Friesland:

We find that in general there should be more Frisian in the city, because Leeuwarden is definitely the capital of Friesland and therefore also attracts a lot of tourists. That is why it is important to show that we are proud of our language and want Frisian to continue to exist, something that is in danger as so many parents do not pass on Frisian to their children and it is hardly offered at school .... So: as our conclusion, we find that the visibility of Frisian in the city should be increased.

These students also concluded that the presence of Frisian in the city should be raised. They used arguments related to both the social and the power dimension of LLs. Apart from tourism, the pair addressed emotional issues of language identification (“proud of our language”), the lack of intergenerational transmission in families, the reduced language education in Frisian, and the fact that Frisian is only used symbolically in the current LL (in works of art or tourist attractions). Thus, through the analyses of their own LL data, these students became aware of and critically reflected upon

the existing language hierarchies in the region and the power differences between languages in the LL, evident in their uneven distribution and on the vitality of the Frisian language.

### *Teachers' Positive Attitudes Towards and Experiences with LLs*

Interview results show that teachers perceived the LL in Leeuwarden as currently not what they thought it should be. Teachers FT1 and FT3 stated that they would like to see more Frisian in the LL of the region. As illustrated in the following quote, teachers believed that institutions and public signs should be available in Frisian:

I would like to see that there would be more Frisian. When you go into villages, in some villages you see it a lot. I am even part of a Facebook group, "Frysk op'e Dyk", which ... has pictures of signs, and things, that are also Frisian and Dutch. And I think that should be more. Information signs, at institutions, and things like that there could very well be some Frisian. (FT3)

This quote highlights another issue related to the power dimension of LL: the LLs differ greatly between the rural and the urban areas of the region, which confers the language a different status as compared to Dutch. Both FT1 and FT3 argued that the low visibility of Frisian in general, and in urban areas in particular, is problematic, as Frisian is perceived by students as being less important:

If they [students] don't come across it, then it also isn't important and when you come across it here or there then unconsciously students, and people in general, notice that. And that it matters after all, and that it is there. (FT1)

FT1 emphasized that more attention should be paid to spelling and grammar in Frisian public texts. She argued that the existence of language mistakes on public signage may lead students to believe that the language norm does not matter in Frisian, while this norm makes it possible to teach and protect Frisian. In contrast, FT2 stated that policy towards the LL should be more nuanced; while she would like to support Frisian and its presence, she argued that there were many more languages in Leeuwarden that should also be represented in the LL, such as immigrant languages or local varieties. She directly referred to the social dimension of LLs, in terms of the importance of making the LL of the region more inclusive: "Well it [the LL] should be more a reflection of the people who live there" (FT2).

The attitudinal aspect of the social dimension, the ideas of how attitudes are directly connected to the visibility of languages in the LL, was of central importance to the three teachers. They believed that the LL influences the students' attitudes, as the visibility of Frisian is connected to its importance. In addition, they associated the social dimension of LLs with the performance dimension:

I do think that it [LL] has a big influence on the attitudes and performance of the students; whether they see the language more. So using it indirectly by improving the attitude. (F3)

They also believed that students may become more aware of and familiar with the language. All teachers agreed that LLs should be incorporated into the Frisian education curricula as a means to reflect on the power relations in the LL of Leeuwarden, in particular, and of Friesland in general.

FT1 and FT3 stated that LL assignments can improve students' awareness of languages and change their general language attitudes through critical thinking. They referred to aspects related to the power dimension of LLs. FT1 also stressed that analyzing LLs in the context of commercial organizations of the region may be valuable as it contributes to the students' analytical skills as well as their perception of the relevance of Frisian and the LL:

Imagine they are doing an LL assignment, and they have to find a company ... First they have to get into contact with them, they have to introduce themselves, explain the assignment ... These are all also skills that you are learning. And then you can look at how Frisian is now being used, or isn't being used, so they have to research how it is now, give advice, present. So that knife is sharp on a lot of sides, and that is very nice. Those are nice assignments because it is for real. (F1)

In order to improve students' language awareness, the attitudinal dimension remained central in teachers' willingness to engage with LLs in education. If teachers perceive that LLs will change students' attitudes towards language and enhance their critical thinking skills, they are positive towards including assignments in their teaching.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Drawing on results of the LoCALL project in two sites, we found that the pedagogical introduction of LLs in the (language) classroom enabled students' plurilingual repertoires to be activated, legitimized, shared, and (re)constructed by means of engagement in plurilingual practices. The analysis of data from the implementation of LL in secondary schools in Germany and the Netherlands shows students' development of critical language awareness and critical thinking skills. Data gathered from teachers and students shows their perceptions of LL and its affordances for (language) education, and more specifically, for linguistic empowerment.

Results reveal that working with LLs contributed to raising student awareness of how power and control can be asserted through language, and how language and culture relate in students' daily lives. Critical language awareness issues were related to students' empowerment through validation of their own semiotic resources and those of others, and the recognition that

languages are not all valued equally, but rather subject to different “market values,” in Bourdieu’s terms (2001). Results from the Frisian site show that young adolescents were noticeably capable of collecting and analyzing LL data, and they critically reflected on what their LL research might mean in terms of possible changes in the visibility of languages in the region.

The potential affordances of using LLs in the language classroom in a minority language setting were also clearly recognized by the teachers. In the German site, students were able to identify language hierarchies, explain the diversification of LLs, reflect on rural and urban LLs, and expand the use of their linguistic repertoires. Teachers acknowledged the added value of using LLs as a resource to reflect on multilingualism and plurilingualism, and to connect outdoor and indoor learning potential: languages were seen as emotional and identity resources and not just as curricular objects. In the Frisian site, both students and teachers saw the LL as a marker of ethnolinguistic vitality (Edelman, 2014) of the Frisian language, or rather, the lack thereof. Similar findings were reported on Plattdeutsch, even though this language was not the focus of the activities. As recognized by Shohamy (2006), such processes are especially important in minority language situations, where minority languages are scarcely used in public spaces.

The LL assignments contributed to raising awareness of the status of the Frisian and Plattdeutsch languages, their emotional, economic and cultural values, and their fragile vitality. Teachers reinforced the importance of engaging with LLs in their classrooms to increase students’ willingness to use different languages (Fishman, 1991). While students mostly referred to the social and power dimensions attached to LLs, teachers also acknowledged the value of LLs in the classroom for performance, specifically in relation to improving students’ language attitudes and willingness to use other languages (which was observed in the reflection task in the French classroom in Germany). While in Germany the focus of the activities was multilingual, despite the target-language context (Quadrant II, in Figure 1), the participants in the Frisian site adopted a mixture of Quadrant I (Exploration of multilingualism in the LL through immersion, in Figure 1) and Quadrant IV (Exploration of specific elements of the presence of target language in the LL, in the classroom, in Figure 1), meaning that even if the object of analysis was multilingual, all the final productions were meant to be in Frisian.

Interestingly, in both sites a great deal of students’ efforts was put on examining the presence of specific minority languages—Plattdeutsch and Frisian—in the region, in terms of vitality, presence, and use. In both sites, teachers’ reflections and students’ analyses adopted a mixed-focus, reflecting on the complex language ecology of Friesland and north Germany and how the dominant languages in both national contexts affect the visibility of minority (or minoritized) languages and on the role of English for tourism and internationalization. This represents a deconstruction of the language hierarchies.

Students in both sites were able to reflect on the linguistic stratification in multilingual societies and the unequal distribution of power among speakers and regional settings. By engaging in dialogic activities that challenge the pervasive monolingual status quo, students and teachers challenge the “banal monolingualism” that is reproduced in public spaces and discourses. By “banal monolingualism,” we understand the “banally mundane way” monolingualism is flagged as the normal and endemic condition, kept unnamed, and therefore being routinized and going unnoticed (Billig, 1995 on “banal nationalism”). Working with LLs helped students engage in reflexive inquiry and problematize “banal monolingual” ideologies and practices, and find new ways to look at how languages are constitutive of human life in contemporary societies. Working with LLs in the classroom, in both sites, helped participants deconstruct the connection between language and nation, and “draw attention to the powers of an ideology which is so familiar that it hardly seems noticeable” (Billig, 1995, p. 12). Discussing LLs, therefore, challenged “invented permanencies” (Billig, 1995, p. 29), such as monolingualism, named languages, and borders, thus enhancing critical language awareness. Through those discussions, students recognized that “language conventions and practices are invested with power relations and ideological processes” (Hélot et al., 2018, p. 4).

Results show that the power dimension gained saliency while working with LLs. Indeed, students became aware of language ideologies that favour dominant, majority and standardized languages at the expense of minority and migrant languages. This was particularly salient in the case of Friesland. Results which show students’ enhanced critical language awareness in both sites, officially bilingual (Leeuwarden) and officially monolingual (Hamburg), can help inform research and pedagogy in Canada and other contexts. Even in classes where students can be perceived as having homogeneous linguistic and cultural backgrounds (e.g., the great majority having no migrant background, the same L1), as in the analysed case of the German classrooms, the tasks had a positive impact. Students recognized “banal monolingualism,” the plurilingualism of the Other, and the challenges plurilingual individuals can face in their daily lives. Such a standpoint contributes to both empowering students as plurilingual speakers and validating their linguistic and semiotic practices. This means that the study of LLs is a suited resource for plurilingual pedagogies for all contexts and not just those acknowledged by their hyperdiversity.

As suggestions for further research with LLs as pedagogical tools in the school context, we envision bringing sign creators to the classroom, encouraging dialogue with students and parents on their linguistic and semiotic choices. Finally, as the study reported was mainly researcher led, more student co-researcher approaches could be more engaging for the students, making them the real social actors we want them to be.

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