

Social Aspects of Cognitive Linguistics: Studying Language Attitudes and Identity

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Abstract

The analysis of language attitudes seeks to elucidate various dimensions of linguistic functioning, particularly where the social dimensions of discourse are manifest, such as lexical encoding, interaction positioning, and discursive strategies. It also considers elements aligned with cognitive models that shape language use in specific contexts, cultivated through socialization and the formation of social identity. Linguistic identity, a multifaceted construct, encompasses both linguistic and cultural knowledge and plays a key role in shaping personality. This study examines the linguistic identity of plurilingual students from various Ukrainian higher education institutions, assessing how plurilingualism impacts their identity. Using qualitative analysis of survey data from 31 students collected in autumn 2023, the study explores themes such as the influence of linguistic environments on plurilingualism, language attitudes, and self-identification. The findings indicate that all languages spoken by an individual contribute to shaping their linguistic identity, with self-identification as bilingual or plurilingual influenced by personal language proficiency and relevant language environments. The results support the idea that linguistic identity evolves over time, highlighting the dynamic nature of language and identity in response to varying social contexts.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, language perception, cultural differences, linguistic anthropology, language interaction, sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

In 1963, linguist Roman Jakobson revealed six key functions of language. Among them, he identified the function of referring to the world (referential), the function of influencing actions (conative), the function of maintaining social connection (phatic), and the aesthetic or poetic function. In his classification, he also considered the meta-language function, which refers to language as a system (from the point of view of anthropological linguistics), and the expressive function (from the point of view of psycholinguistics), which expresses external manifestations of feelings and emotions (Jakobson, 2014).

Linguistic attitudes are seen as the use of the expressive function of language to serve a meta-language function. In the semantic analysis of meta-language tools, one can see the cultural differences of an individual. Such attitudes can be manifested in conversations or texts that focus on the aesthetic aspects of language, on comparing language variants in terms of their ease of learning or beauty, on determining the correctness or incorrectness of certain language forms, and on evaluating the acoustic pleasantness of different accents (Gennadiievich et al., 2022). Such statements can provide a specific interpretation of linguistic phenomena or consider language as an artistic medium of expression.

Thus, linguistic attitudes reflect a wide range of socio-cultural relationships related to language, language communities and their speakers. These attitudes can be the subject of various forms of expression, such as opinions, judgements, attacks, defence, prejudice, condemnation or stereotypes, which can have both justified and unjustified grounds at different sociolinguistic levels (Zinchenko et al., 2021). The perception and reflection of language, its speakers and groups in mental space can be reflected through various expressions of emotions, perceptions and reactions, which often reflect the interaction between language, culture and identity.

What manifests as linguistic expressions seems to be objective and only related to language but is less obviously related to our emotions and subjective experiences. At the same time, almost everyone has an opinion about what is considered right or wrong in language, what should be expressed, and what, despite any instructions, is said (Beibei, 2023). This linguistic consciousness, both conscious and unconscious, is important to observe because it affects all speakers: from those for whom language is a tool, to those for whom it is a profession, to those for whom it is a creation.

As an object of study, the multidisciplinary nature of the study of linguistic attitudes is revealed through its origin in social psychology, which analyses social behaviour (Čok, 2023). This research has a significant impact on sociolinguistics in general, as it addresses such aspects as language contact and language planning. In addition, this field of research is important for those who wish to investigate the processes of teaching languages, whether native or foreign, and to contribute to research in the field of education.

In the end, perhaps most importantly, when sociolinguistics turns to the analysis of linguistic attitudes, it acquires a crucial social component, and understanding these attitudes becomes impossible without a sociological approach to language. Identity, whose components are diverse, including linguistic identity, plays a significant role in the formation of personality. Linguistic identity, according to some researchers, is not limited to the mother tongue, but includes all linguistic and cultural knowledge.

The present study analyses the opinion of plurilingual students of different higher education institutions of Ukraine, namely: Zaporizhzhia State Medical and Pharmaceutical University, Faculty of Humanities of Zaporizhzhia Polytechnic National University, Department of International Relations and Social and Humanitarian Disciplines, Educational and Research Institute of Law and Innovative Technologies of Dnipro State University of Internal Affairs, Department of Journalism of the Faculty of Humanities of the Ukrainian Institute of Art and Science. A survey was conducted among the students of the departments represented and only 31 answers were selected, which, in the authors' opinion, provide the most comprehensive answer to the research questions. The linguistic identity of students at this stage of their lives was analysed. The study aims to determine the impact of plurilingualism on the linguistic identity of these students.

The following research questions were formulated for the study:

Q1: How do plurilingual students identify themselves in relation to all the languages and cultures they know?

Q2: How do students describe their linguistic identity from birth to the present?

The theoretical part of the work focused on the areas of plurilingualism and linguistic identity.

The research paper analyses two key language-related concepts: plurilingualism and bilingualism as interrelated. Plurilingualism can be defined as the ability of a person to use several language variants, the level and competence of a person can vary from one variant to another, while bilingualism (or multilingualism) indicates that there are several language variants in a certain territory (Li et al., 2022; Starinskyi & Zavalna 2021). In this context, identity is defined as a personal and individual concept that can be defined as the way a person builds his or her personal relationship with the environment (Maraieva, 2022). Thus, identity is constantly changing depending on circumstances and is formed in interaction with others. Language is not only a means of communication, but also an attribute of identity, it can be seen as a fundamental component of identity, which emphasises the importance of the term linguistic identity.

1.2 Explore Importance of the Problem

The issue of social aspects in the context of cognitive linguistics, especially the study of language attitudes and their relationship to identity, is key for several reasons. Firstly, language attitudes and identity are closely intertwined. Attitudes towards language determine the perception, use and evaluation of language, while identity reflects who we think we are through language and how we identify with different language communities. Second, this problem has a social aspect to it. The study of language attitudes and identity helps to understand how social factors, such as cultural, historical and economic factors, influence the perception and use of language. Third, it has practical implications. Understanding language attitudes and identities can have important implications for language policy, education and intercultural communication.

Therefore, the study of the social aspects of cognitive linguistics, in particular language attitudes and identity, plays an important role in understanding linguistic behaviour and social interactions. This paper discusses the concepts of plurilingualism, bilingualism (rarely multilingualism), and the phenomenon of linguistic attitudes. Starting with the definitions of plurilingualism and bilingualism, the paper goes on to explore other concepts and phenomena related to them, such as language switching. The concepts of first language (L1), second language (L2) and third language (L3) are also covered.

1.3 Describe Relevant Scholarship

Linguistic attitudes are shaped by the influence of parents, educators, and other social factors that ensure the stability of these attitudes. Friends, classmates, and the media, including the Internet, also intervene in this process (Gennadievich et al., 2022). Experience and information about an object are needed to identify one's attitudes towards it, and personal experience is the most important factor in the

formation of attitudes.

According to Aydinbek (2022), the analysis of traumatic childhood experiences, political fanaticism and religious beliefs shows the importance of certain significant experiences in the formation of specific attitudes. This emphasises the sensitivity of the process of emergence and change of attitudes, which can be modified by various influential agents, including institutions. This shows that the development of individuals takes place in a social structure where attitudes are constantly being shared.

In the field of education, there are four main factors that significantly influence the formation and transformation of attitudes: parents, teachers, peers, and school (Vytvytska et al., 2023). It is important to note that the influence of parents on the formation of attitudes in children is extremely significant, as they influence the learning process through the mechanism of classical conditioning, or association-based learning. Even if parents are not actively involved in school life or do not interact with the educational system indirectly, their influence and attitudes still play a key role. In this context, J. Littlemore (2023) emphasised the importance of parental influence in his social psychological theory, considering them as the main mediators between the cultural environment and the student. Modern research confirms that parental influence is directly related to students' attitudes towards learning and their level of engagement (Watrin et al., 2022a).

The role of teachers as authority figures is already important and complex in shaping students' attitudes (Uslu, 2020). However, to date, most studies have focused on identifying the features that contribute to the effectiveness of teachers in shaping linguistic attitudes (Zhang, 2023). The results of these studies are not unambiguous due to the influence of many factors (personality, professional qualifications, motivation and pedagogical practice), which, when combined, can lead to different results (Zinchenko et al., 2021). However, all these factors point to the importance of the teacher's role in socialisation and their influence on the formation or change of attitudes. Moreover, according to a study by Zimny (2023), students and teachers agree that relationships are the main variable that has the greatest impact on attitudes.

It is also important to consider the influence of peers as a group and their social interactions (Watrin et al., 2022b). In some cases, students may show indifference to a particular subject to avoid stigma or feeling rejected by their peers, which can lead to average academic results. The same student may have different attitudes depending on the group to which he or she belongs: his or her attitude may be positive if the group is conducive to learning or negative if the group shows interests other than academic achievement.

Among the four standard factors often mentioned in the literature as key to the formation and development of attitudes, it is worth including a fifth one that is becoming increasingly important in our daily lives: the Internet, which has become an important cultural mediator in societies and serves as a source of knowledge of both desired and undesired realities (Duong et al., 2024). In addition, it has a significant impact on the formation of stereotypes and attitudes.

In relation to attitude change, it is important to emphasise that despite the large number of theories that attempt to explain why and how people change their attitudes, none of them can fully cover or adequately interpret the wide range of attitude-related phenomena we may encounter (Okanda, 2024). Sometimes an individual shows significant resistance to changing their attitudes, while at other times such change can be surprising in its speed. Various theories claim to establish the conditions under which change occurs and the way in which it occurs, but despite the progress made to date, explanations remain incomplete (Aliyeva, 2023).

In conclusion, linguistic attitudes never remain the same but rather are subject to change depending on the individuals, their experiences and context. Attitudes towards language can change due to the presence of different incentives, for example, in a school environment, encouragement from the teacher or increased interaction with the teacher can promote positive attitudes. In the case of minority languages, rewards may also include greater social prominence and higher status. Conversely, punishment can also influence attitudinal change. Attitudes, like all affective variables and the process of learning multiple languages (Mabebe, 2024), are characterised by their dynamism, unlike other individual variables that are more static, such as intelligence or linguistic ability.

2. Method

Thus, the corpus of the work consisted of 31 transcribed responses of students from different higher education institutions of Ukraine within the subject "Foreign Language". The students were selected randomly. The survey essentially consisted of students' retelling of their autobiographies and language interference in their lives. A biography is a written construction about the life of a person, authored by someone other than the person being written about. In turn, in an autobiography, the author makes a construction about his or her own life (Jalilbayli, 2022; Boone et al., 2023).

The corpus was gathered in autumn 2023 among undergraduate and graduate students, where the topic of plurilingualism and various related aspects were discussed. The selected students had different levels of foreign language proficiency: the first group consisted of 9 third-level bachelor's students, and the second group consisted of 22 master's students who studied different foreign languages at the following institutions: Zaporizhzhia State Medical and Pharmaceutical University, Faculty of Humanities of Zaporizhzhia Polytechnic National University, Department of International Relations and Social and Humanitarian Disciplines, Educational and Research Institute of Law and Innovative Technologies of Dnipro State University of Internal Affairs, Department of Journalism of the Faculty of Humanities of the Ukrainian Institute of Art and Science.

This paper uses an individual and random code for each student (C1-C31) to distinguish between them. Codes from C1 to C9 indicate bachelor's degree students, and codes from C10 to C31 indicate master's degree students.

2.1 Identify Subsections

To make it easier to understand, we add the levels and course descriptions of the selected students (Table 1):

Table 1. Course descriptions

Course level	Course objective	Course description
Undergraduate students	Acquiring a level of foreign language proficiency (L2)	The aim of this course is to introduce operational theoretical concepts and their application to the analysis of second language acquisition data. Students will examine texts and analyse interaction data arising from different socialisation contexts (classroom, out-of-classroom, immigration or expatriate interactions).
Master's students	Learning a third language (L3)	This course offers a look at issues related to third language (L3) acquisition, especially those related to learning and using vocabulary in specific contexts. A multilingual speaker has several mental representations at the same time, which makes it difficult to express thoughts in the L3.

Source: authors' own development

2.2 Participant (Subject) Characteristics

At the end of the course, the teachers asked the students to describe their linguistic attitudes and explain how they identify themselves. The condition of the task was as follows:

"On the basis of everything that has been covered in the L2/L3 course, you need to describe an autobiography. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the features/phenomena presented, preferably with examples."

This was the only instruction the students received. Therefore, they built their narratives from different starting points; most students started by describing their own story. The narratives differed in terms of text length and the number of characters with spaces. Each student received a random code to facilitate data processing (Table 2):

Table 2. Student codes and text length

Code	Text length in words	Code	Text length in words
C1	249	C17	739
C2	231	C18	259
C3	318	C19	176
C4	573	C20	72
C5	397	C21	510
C6	596	C22	411
C7	485	C23	268
C8	194	C24	471
C9	292	C25	133
C10	403	C26	265
C11	551	C27	282
C12	252	C28	319
C13	257	C29	372
C14	593	C30	676
C15	321	C31	306
C16	226	General	7862

Source: authors' own development.

2.3 Sampling Procedures

The number of words in the narratives presented in the table is an important element of the cognitive-psychological interpretation of information. In this work, as well as in general autobiographical research, the subject of study is the person's own knowledge and subjective experience of reality (Durmishi & Durmishi, 2022). It should be noted that the corpus consists of autobiographical narratives that describe a particular moment in the lives of these students. This moment is constantly transformed, and attitudes change (Durmishi & Durmishi, 2022).

2.4 Participant (Subject) Characteristics

The present study was conducted using a qualitative method. In qualitative research, according to Bobur (2023), the starting point is a description of real life, which includes the idea of the diversity of reality. It should be noted that reality cannot be arbitrarily dissected. Events interact with each other simultaneously, so it is possible to find multidirectional relationships. In qualitative research, the subject is studied as a whole. To conduct the analysis, students were offered various topics that were discussed in the autobiographical narratives. The categorisation of the topics of the answers emerged during the analysis of the corpus. This categorisation attempts to answer the research questions.

2.5 Sampling Procedures

The analysis of the student responses is based on the languages that the students have learnt or learned, and then additional themes that were found during the transcription of the survey are explored. The first theme examined was the influence of the language environment

on plurilingualism, followed by an analysis of how the languages that were learnt or learned influence each other and the emotions associated with it. It also examined whether students identify themselves as bilinguals or plurilinguals.

2.5.1 Measures and Covariates

In addition, the paper examines students' self-identification, which corresponds to the first research question, and traces of identification can also be seen in other sections of the analysis.

2.5.2 Research Design

The paper uses examples of narratives written by 31 students. The age group was from 19 to 23 years old. Ten students were men and 21 were women. The data was collected through interviews with the study participants, during which they shared their autobiographical narratives. The interviews were conducted in the form of free narration, which was recorded for further analysis

2.5.3 Experimental Manipulations or Interventions

To analyse the data, thematic analysis was used to identify key themes that emerged in the students' autobiographical narratives. These themes were then categorised and analysed to answer the research questions.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study complied with all ethical standards, including data confidentiality and participants' consent to participate in the study. The participants were informed about the objectives of the study and agreed to the data processing.

3. Results

During the analysis of students' responses on linguistic attitudes and identification, attention was given to the languages they had acquired. Initially, the number of languages mentioned in narrative responses was counted (N=31). The number of languages cited in the responses ranged from two to seven (Fig. 1).

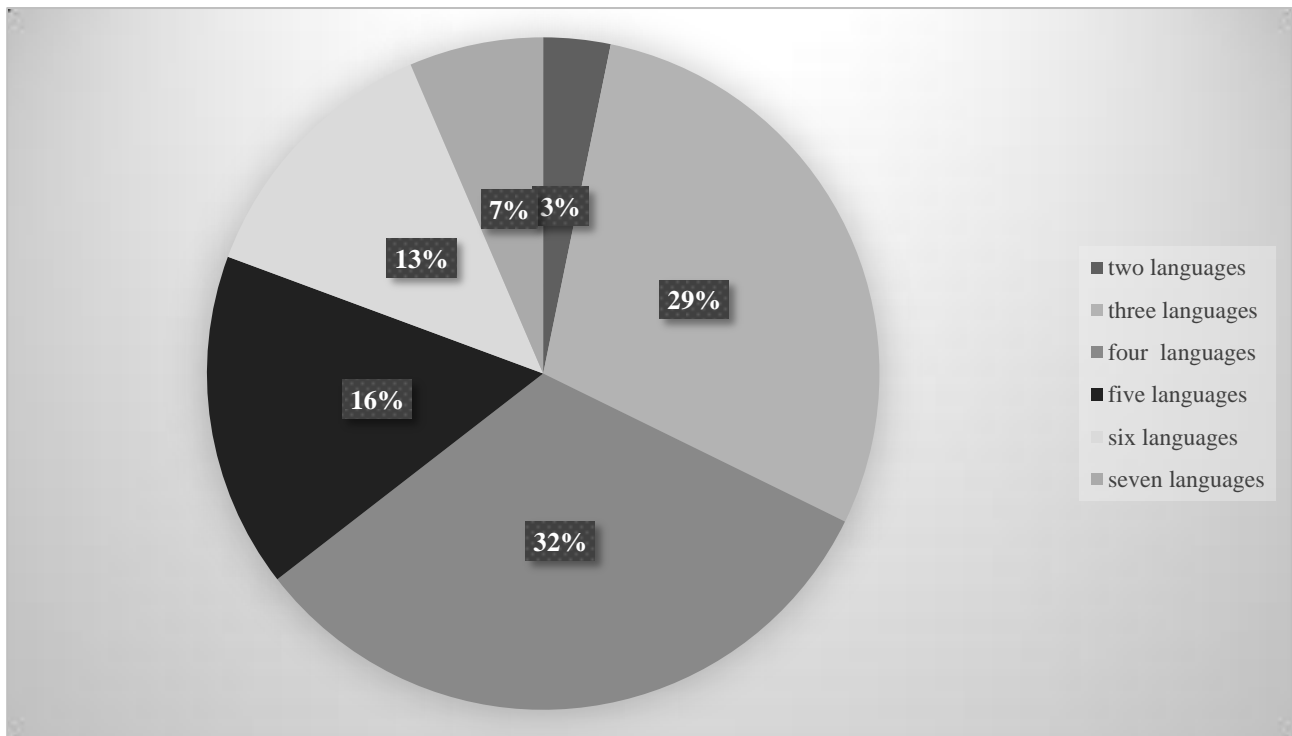


Figure 1. Number of languages mentioned in the responses

Source: authors' own development.

Almost two-thirds of students (10) mentioned four languages:

- two languages - (1) C27
- three languages (9) C4, C5, C14, C15, C16, C17, C18, C19, C20
- four languages (10) C1, C3, C6, C7, C8, C9, C10, C11, C12, C21
- five languages (5) C22, C23, C24, C25, C28
- six languages (4) C2, C13, C27, C26

- seven languages (2) C30, C3

3.1 Recruitment

It should be considered that students did not necessarily mention all the languages they knew. For example, one student (C27) mentioned only two languages, but neither of them was Ukrainian. The most frequently mentioned languages were English (30 times), French (28), German (15), Italian (9), and Spanish (7). All the languages mentioned are shown in (Fig. 2).

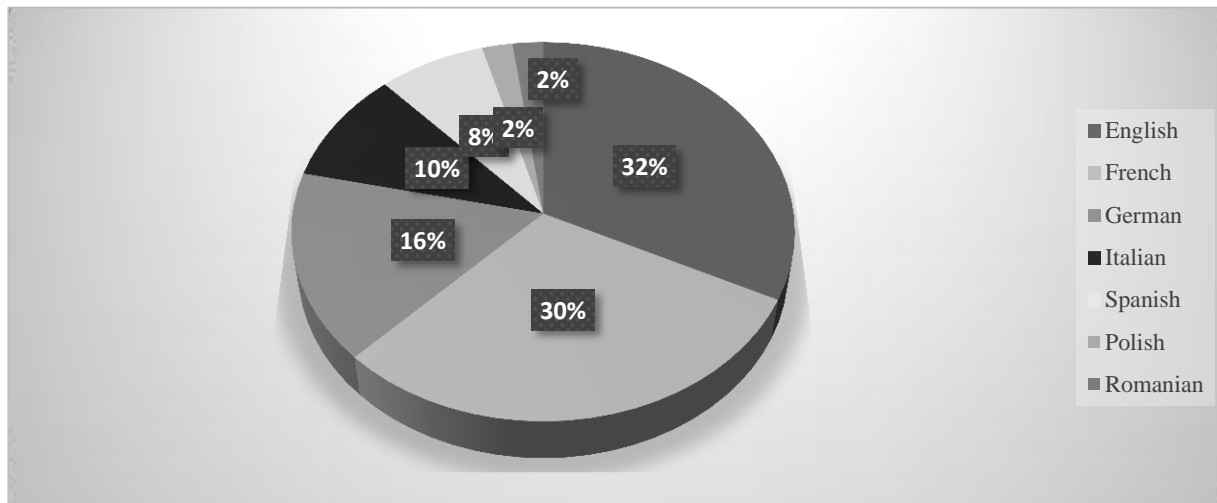


Figure 2. Languages mentioned in the responses

Source: authors' own development.

The descriptions of languages in the answers are varied, but most students (26; C1-C3, C5-C8, C10, C11-C19, E21-E30) mention their languages in the chronological order of the first meeting (Example 1).

(1) *“My mother tongue is Ukrainian, but I have been learning English since I was 6 years old, French since I was 12, and German since I was 19. I took a few Italian lessons to help with my opera singing and Spanish lessons to travel.” (C22)*

3.2 Statistics and Data Analysis

The other students used different methods, for example, one student (example 2) mentions his languages in the order of his proficiency.

(2) *“I speak the following languages at a more or less advanced level: English, French, German. I just listed them in the order of proficiency; but, for example, I started learning German before English, but that doesn't mean I speak it.” (C1)*

Thus, the students could be divided into two groups:

A. Those who recall only two languages (spoken since childhood and consider them native).

B. Those who know several languages and consider them foreign.

(3) *“I was born in Poland and went to primary school there. Therefore, Polish is my mother tongue and a foreign language at the same time.” (C30)*

3.3 Ancillary Analyses

Consequently, some students used the terms “first language”, “second language”, “third language” (L1, L2, L3), etc. when referring to their acquired or learnt languages. It should be stated that Ukrainian students began to learn different foreign languages due to immigration to other countries because of the war. The way in which students classify their L1, L2, L3 varies. All (except for one student) who use the concepts of L1, L2, L3 refer to their first language (L1) as their mother tongue (C11, C17, C26, C29, C30). On the other hand, student C3 classifies his mother tongue as L3.

(4) *“I would classify all languages that I have learnt but not mastered as L3. In my opinion, a second language (L2) can be a second language learned in the environment in which a person lives, a language of study or a foreign language.”*

3.4 Identify Subsections

In this context, it is essential to examine the impact of the language environment on plurilingualism. The term “language environment” refers to the linguistic circumstances present at the time the autobiography was written. Various scenarios were explored to understand how the language environment affected the students' language situations and their plurilingual abilities. Upon analyzing the responses, it became apparent that many students drew upon their family dynamics and university experiences. A significant number of students (28) began their responses with a statement detailing their language, ethnicity, nationality, or the places of birth of either themselves or their

parents (as illustrated in examples 5, 6, 7, and 8).

(5) *"I was born in Odesa from parents who were born in Romania."* (C3)

(6) *"Having been born in Poland, I am now plurilingual."* (C30)

(7) *"I am Ukrainian, my mother tongue is Ukrainian"* (C27)

(8) *"I was born into a family where only French was spoken since childhood, as my parents are teachers of this language."* (C13)

3.5 Sampling Procedures

Eight students mention in their answers, or we can infer from their answers, that the reason for their plurilingualism is related to their nationality.

(9) *"I live near the border with Romania, so the school taught in Ukrainian and Romanian."* (C3).

(10) *"I have individual plurilingualism, which is a reflection of national plurilingualism, because at home we use the three languages I mentioned above, and they coexist in different ways."* (C13)

The analysis of the answers shows that the language situation in the family or other family circumstances also have a great influence on plurilingualism.

(11) *"I am Ukrainian by origin and was born in Italy, as my parents were working there, I have been studying since I was three years old in an Italian educational institution"* (C17).

In examining the students' languages of instruction, we find that 25 students provide this information, as shown in Figure 3. About half of these students (20) report that their language of instruction aligns with their second language (L2). Meanwhile, one third (5) mention that their mother tongue or first language is the same as their language of instruction. Among these students, 13 have also noted that they have studied at university or spent an extended period in a language environment different from their native one. Such experiences can greatly influence language proficiency and individual plurilingualism, as demonstrated in the following example 12:

(12) *"After I got my diploma, I moved to England to study. At that point, English became my strongest language. I started learning German when I was 18, on a course, so it was very explicit, but the following year I moved to Germany where I was immersed in the language. Later, I came back and started studying in Ukraine"* (C29).

Students who had three or more languages in their language environment indicated that there are differences in language proficiency levels and that they use different languages for different functions, i.e. a person may use one language for study and another language in family situations.

3.6 Participant Flow

Students may also use one language in emotional situations and another in leadership functions. Here is an example 13:

(13) *"If I'm in an emotional state, my mother tongue comes out (anger, happiness, etc.), if I'm in a leadership position, I think and speak French, if I speak English, it's more often when I'm having fun or at university"* (C13).

Changes in the language environment affect plurilingualism and language skills. The responses provide examples of positive or negative cases. Changes with a positive effect can be the result of, for example, a new partner, as in example 14, or a move to a new language environment, as in example 15.

(14) *"As for English, I am living with my English boyfriend at the moment, my level of English has improved a lot in the last two years"* (C12).

(13) *"I first learned French with my parents and then English when I moved to England during the first year of the war"* (C13).

Also, students who do not regularly use multiple languages in their daily lives emphasise the fact that even short exposures to natural language environments have a positive impact on language skills and can be important or even necessary for language learning or retention. These can include travel, student exchanges and language courses. Examples 16 and 17 illustrate this point:

(16) *"Thus, my trips abroad contributed to the rapid improvement of my level, restoration of lost knowledge due to interruptions in education due to the pandemic and war."* (C7)

(17) *"Despite the late learning of my second language, I was able to master it thanks to several trips to German-speaking environments during which I had language practice"* (C29).

3.7 Intervention or Manipulation of Fidelity

On the other hand, a change of environment can lead to a weakening of language skills. In two responses, students mention that their language skills in a particular language have weakened or even disappeared when that language is no longer part of their language environment, for example, due to a move. This is also confirmed by the following examples 18 and 19:

(18) *"For about 10 years I was fully bilingual. Then I moved to another city and gradually lost my language skills."* (C1)

(19) *"I lost my Italian. I started learning it from the time I was born and spoke it until I was 18. But then my parents returned to Ukraine,*

so I forgot a lot” (C19).

So, the language environment has a significant impact on language skills, and it can act both positively and negatively.

3.8 Baseline Data

By analysing students' perceptions of the effects of their learned languages, we can gain insights into how they articulate the relationship between their languages and instances where they noticed language interventions. When students discuss the impact of their acquired languages on one another, we observe both positive and negative effects. The majority of students (26) highlight positive aspects of plurilingualism in their responses. However, one student (C26) notes that, in his experience, his languages do not influence each other and that he does not perceive any disadvantages.

(20) *“They [languages] do not benefit each other, but they also do not hinder me in my life” (C26).*

3.8.1 Statistics and Data Analysis

Several students observed the phenomenon of language switching occurring in various contexts. They highlighted that a shift in cognitive processes can take place when switching between languages, influenced by specific situations or individuals. For instance, there are instances where conversation participants speak different languages at varying proficiency levels or use distinct languages as their primary means of communication.

3.8.2 Adverse Events

The students noted that the languages they learn or know are interconnected and can influence one another when they interact, which may lead to language mixing, particularly in spoken communication. The examples provided by the students were diverse. They employ various strategies to enhance their speech when they struggle to find the right expressions. One approach highlighted was pronouncing a familiar word from another language with a different accent to achieve a more authentic sound. Nevertheless, when the first language (L1) and second language (L2) have substantial differences, particularly in their phoneme systems, this task may become more difficult.

The responses included a considerable number of observations regarding how previously learned languages affect the acquisition of a new language. These influences can be both beneficial and detrimental, although students tended to report more positive outcomes.

In addition, emotions were felt in the answers. We include emotions about bilingualism and plurilingualism. In general, bilingualism and plurilingualism are seen as positive. It is considered an advantage to speak several languages and to have a good command of one or more foreign languages. A plurilingual person may have a certain language among their languages that appears in an emotional state and which they use to describe their feelings, and at the same time another language may serve a different function. Plurilingualism can evoke feelings related to nationality or ethnicity. When you speak a certain language, you can feel part of a certain group, national or ethnic. Thus, an emotional connection is formed with a foreign language and culture while learning that language or while living in that language environment.

4. Discussion

The analysis allows us to address the research questions. Overall, responses reflect a positive view of bilingualism and plurilingualism. Students consider speaking multiple languages and having strong proficiency in one or more as advantageous. Many students report experiencing language switching, which can yield both positive and negative outcomes. When languages intermingle, especially in pronunciation, this mixing is natural.

Similar research indicates that bilinguals and plurilinguals often demonstrate varying proficiency levels in their languages, as they use them for different purposes, contexts, and audiences (Storonyanska et al., 2023). Our analysis confirms that students report considerable variability in their proficiency levels. Additionally, a stronger language can serve as a tool for better understanding and utilising a weaker language.

In addition, learners can use different strategies to communicate better when they do not know the exact expressions. One possible strategy is to use a familiar word from another language and consciously pronounce it with a different accent, for example, a word in English with a French accent, so that it sounds more acceptable in a particular communication situation. Another strategy is to look for synonyms or paraphrase when the exact word is not available. The responses indicate that previously acquired or learned languages can exert both positive and negative influences on the acquisition of a new language. In this regard, Jamalli (2023) posits that plurilingualism is a multifaceted construct that can be delineated into three dimensions: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic.

The linguistic dimension pertains to the interactions and contact phenomena between languages. The sociolinguistic dimension encompasses the dynamics of language switching and its implications for communication. Finally, the psycholinguistic dimension addresses the motivations underlying speakers' language choices, as well as the emotional and affective factors that influence these decisions. This framework underscores the complexity of plurilingualism and its varied impact on language learning processes.

According to Karyolemou (2022), a plurilingual person possesses a specific form of linguistic competence, which consists in managing a language repertoire depending on numerous situational and cultural factors.

The differences between monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism are qualitative rather than quantitative. A monolingual person also makes decisions and choices that are similar to those of a bilingual or multilingual person, but because the monolingual person does

so in a language, they are considered stylistic, dialectal, or register (Kharitonenko, 2022). Plurilinguals use multiple languages for numerous social, cultural and economic reasons. They may live in a multilingual community or in communities where bilingualism overlaps, or they may be in contact with several monolingual communities (Kohnert et al., 1999). Most researchers in the educational and psycholinguistic traditions agree with the definition of plurilingualism as the ability to use three or more languages to some degree. However, plurilingualism is a complex and flexible concept, and it is therefore difficult to provide a precise definition for every context.

Another investigation addresses the intricacies of language switching (Kormos, 2023). According to Kormos, language switching is an inherent phenomenon that arises in contexts where two or more languages coalesce. Morgan-Short and Ullman (2022) define language switching as the concurrent use of multiple language variants by a single speaker within a singular spoken utterance. Moreover, language switching can manifest in interactions between individuals speaking different languages (Shah et al., 2023). Crucially, the findings of the current study indicate that language switching is also prevalent in plurilingual contexts, highlighting the adaptive linguistic strategies employed by individuals navigating multiple languages.

Regarding the concept of linguistic identity, it should be added that it is widely researched and there are many ways to define identity (Suzuki et al., 2023). According to Tan (2023), there is some agreement in the humanities that identity is not seen as a static state but due to a process. The author sees identity as having two parts: individual and collective, with individual identity being personal and constructed in relation to the environment, while collective identity is an identity shared by a group of people, such as cultural, ethnic and national identities.

In terms of individual identity, it can be noted that everyone has their own individual identity, which is different from others. Van Geert (2017) defines individual identity as “the way in which a person constructs his or her personal connection to the environment”. Identity is a relationship that does not exist without contact with others. Identity begins when a person realises that he or she is not alone in the world and needs others. Identity is rather constructed, as it is not given in full at once. This means that it changes depending on the circumstances. Identity construction is ongoing and reflects the history of the individual. There are various elements that influence and shape attitudes, such as education and interactions with others, some of which are more permanent than others (Wyer Jr, 2022). Attitudes are also the relationship that an individual builds with their environment. In this case, the environment is viewed in a broad sense that is not limited to the natural environment (Zhou et al., 2023). In this context, language can be seen as one of the most important fundamental elements of institutions and identity, which justifies the use of the expression “linguistic identity”. The idea that language is an integral part of identity is a persistent and pervasive one (Watrin et al., 2023).

Wu (2023) posits that linguistic identity is predominantly a social construct, manifesting through an individual's recognition of belonging to a specific language group or community. For speakers, language serves as a unifying element that not only represents the collective identity of a linguistic group but also delineates this group from others. The influence of plurilingualism on identity formation is often underappreciated. Languages function as instruments of socialization, enabling individuals to articulate their identity in relation to their sociocultural environment. This perspective underscores the significance of language as both a facilitator of group cohesion and a mechanism for individuals to navigate and negotiate their multifaceted identities.

5. Conclusions

This research paper analyses linguistic attitudes and identity associated with different languages and cultures. It employs a qualitative approach focused on content analysis to understand personal experiences and attitudes toward linguistic identity. The theoretical section introduces plurilingualism and bilingualism, emphasizing linguistic identity as a key aspect of personal identity. The practical part describes the data corpus and analysis methods, detailing the languages spoken or studied by students and themes in their responses. The study investigates the impact of the language environment on plurilingualism, emotional aspects, and self-identification. It concludes that identification is subjective and not necessarily linked to the number of languages learned. Many students know multiple languages yet do not identify as bilingual or plurilingual. The paper views identity as a dynamic process comprised of various components, influenced by social, psychological, and linguistic factors. The linguistic environment, including family language situations and experiences abroad, significantly impacts identity. It is suggested that all languages in a person's repertoire shape their identity, with identification relating more to subjective feelings about language skills than to the number of languages learned. The study is limited to analysing language attitudes and identities among students and does not account for broader demographic influences. It was conducted in a university context, limiting its generalizability. Future research should include diverse populations for more comprehensive results.

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