



Paper 3

MultiLX



Strategies to strengthen European linguistic capital in a globalised world



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Linguistic capital in Europe: First thoughts

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Linguistic capital in Europe: First thoughts

In 2025 the Horizon Europe research project, ‘Strategies to Strengthen European Linguistic Capital in a Globalised World (*MultiLX*)’ launched. What follows are initial thoughts as field work began.

Heritage

Heritage tangible and intangible. Heritagizing tangible and intangible. The *Porta delle Culture* network in Turin develops a proposal to found an itinerant Museum of People on the Move. Heritage in the future for the future about the future and the past and the present. Linguaging as heritagizing. Revival of the traditional art of *requeifa* among young people in Galicia. Heritagizing for the people. For the local people. The older generation of performers bristles. This is their heritage. Heritage is not for the young ones. Heritage is for the young ones. Listen to them sing. Read the walls: *DEFENDE A TUA LINGUA ZUA*. A dusty schoolroom in Børselv. A traditional dwelling. This is how we used to live. Turf-cutters. Heavy woollen clothes. This is where we come from. Young people encouraged to sing the old Kven songs. To connect with their heritage. I don’t mind singing in the Kven language but not those dusty old songs. They are not my heritage. We will write songs in Kven for now and for the future. Our heritage is the future. Berlin. A Syrian Café on Hobrechtstraße in the Neukölln neighbourhood. Shakshuka. Fatteh. Cheese cubes, green and black olives, makdous, za’atar, hand-made jam, butter-fried eggs, shredded string cheese, labneh balls, makdous, shanklish, clotted cream with honey, musabbaha with olive oil, hummus, muhammara, date molasses. Food as heritage. Eating as heritagizing. Glasses of tea. Whose heritage. Whose heritagizing. Barcelona. Hundreds of children, mainly boys, engaged in practice drills: passing, shooting, tackling, running into space, diving to save. The players wear identical blue training strips, the coaches wear grey. Everything is highly structured and organised. Football is heritagizing. Football is belonging. Football is identity. We are football. A team of refugees. Football means something here. Playing is heritagizing. Not for everybody. Distributed heritage. Different heritage. Collective heritage. Individual heritage. Multilingual Switzerland. Official multilingualism. Legal multilingualism. Multilingualism as heritage. Multilingualism as heritagizing. Different multilingualisms. Old multilingualisms. New multilingualisms. New heritages. New heritagizing. Pedagogy as heritagizing. Teaching as heritagizing. Pass on the lessons of the past to the next generation. Learning as heritagizing. Out with the old, in with the new. Who decides what counts as heritage. Who decides what counts as heritagizing.

Activism / advocacy

Navigate the liminal space in which research is activism, and activism research. In which research is advocacy and advocacy research. Each member of the research team brings a different biography, a different history. Each entered the field of social linguistic research with different dreams and ambitions. Each brings different beliefs and values. Researchers are never neutral. Research is never neutral. The questions we ask are political questions. Advocacy questions. Activist questions. We are involved with the people who allow us to enter their lives and observe their social practice. Involvement is never neutral. We engage. Engagement is never neutral. We form relationships. Relationships are never neutral. We support the cause for which our research participants are

fighting. We do what we can to help them. We support the development of sport as a site for the maintenance of the minoritised Romansch language in the Grisons region of Switzerland. We stand four-square alongside the commitment of language activists in their mission to restore the Galician language through *regueifa* practice and performance in Santiago de Compostela and elsewhere in Galicia. We endorse the efforts of the Kven Institute in the north of Norway as they deploy creative, practical approaches to engage young people with Kven language and heritage, and are committed to learning from others in different parts of the world. We admire the work of the Yekmal organisation to help Kurdish-heritage families in Berlin with the education of their children. We stand beside *MOSAICO*, a social promotion association founded on the initiative of a group of refugees in Turin. We share their political commitment. We share their humanitarian drive. We share their desire to improve the lives of minoritised people. And yet we are first and foremost researchers. We have a responsibility to be reflexive. We have a responsibility to create spaces in which we are able to look carefully and listen carefully. We have a responsibility to look at ourselves. Our task is to navigate the *activism – research – advocacy* triad without compromise and without losing perspective. We are activists. We are advocates. We are researchers. Balancing these roles is not a straightforward task. We take up the challenge.

Languages

Try telling a speaker of Kven in the village of Børselv that their language does not intrinsically exist, but is a convenient collection of resources which, alongside other semiotic means, enables people to communicate with each other. Try saying the same to a speaker of Galician in Santiago de Compostela. To a speaker of Catalan in Barcelona, a speaker of Italian in the Ticino region of southern Switzerland, or a speaker of Kurmancî in Berlin. Try telling any of the 130,000 migrants in Turin that the language of their family and their homeland is arbitrary and in itself of no consequence. Languages mean something to people. Minoritised languages in particular are often either under attack or threatened with erasure. If people do not fight for them their languages will be at risk. Languages matter to people. And yet, and yet. We know from research over time that in their communicative practice people do not maintain strict borders between languages. Instead they translanguage. Translanguaging incorporates the attitudes and practices with which people make connections. Such attitudes and practices enable communication by making difference a resource for successful interaction, and by creating semiotic strategies which are not restricted by boundaries or borders. Rather than focusing on languages as objects translanguaging focuses on the language user. A translanguaging perspective looks beyond languages to focus on communicative practices in specific contexts. Translanguaging is more concerned with the ideological than with the linguistic. It is a means of making sense of the world that extends beyond the naming and co-existence of languages. Translanguaging is about breaking through boundaries. Is it sustainable, even plausible, to hold both positions in balance – that languages are essential to a sense of belonging, heritage and history, and that languages are an expedient assemblage of communicative means which have little tangible existence in themselves? In a butcher's shop in Turin, a café in Berlin and a market hall in Barcelona, the multilingual environment accommodates experiments with languaging and languages, and allows neologism and creativity. Borders between languages are not insisted upon but are liberal and permissive. But the significance of languages as ideological objects is also with us. Language as

identity, language as belonging, language as heritage, language as narrative, language as history, language as a right which must be protected. Can both positions co-exist? It can seem to be a delicate balance. But our conclusion so far is yes.

Creative practice

We work on topics of memory | witness and border | symbolic and physical | we built a work which is really a walk | in one of the paths of a migrant group | using a sound installation made with recordings of the landscape | not only the mountain landscape | but also recordings of the Mediterranean Sea | We work with poetry | we believe that art is a kind of bridge that can connect things | art means things like poetry | the language we use through art | can be sound | or it can be visual | People coming from Lampedusa | I mean they arrive from Lampedusa | they are like from Ethiopia | Eritrea | Sudan | everywhere | they want to go to Turkey | they are walking through Trieste | and then they are in Italy | there is this like Babylonia

The words of BANDITE, an activist collective founded by Valentina Bosio and Simona Sala. The activists' creativity intersects at the crossroads of art and activism. BANDITE's work moves through theatre, dance, visual and plastic arts, video and technology. Their practice transcends languages, blending diverse expressive codes to reclaim theatre as a collective space and a lens through which to engage with contemporary realities. BANDITE is collaborating with young people and researchers in creative workshops in Turin. What's this. Why art. Why creative practice. Why is artistic work relevant to the study of language policy. Aren't we better served by analysing top-down legislation which erases and discriminates against the languages of the powerless. Isn't it more important to examine the ways in which local language policy and practice prevents people from gaining access to basic rights and resources including education, welfare and security. Poetry is all very nice - but will it improve the lives of the disenfranchised. Theatre, dance, music, visual arts, crafts, digital art, film, video, social media, story, installation, curation and on and on. Exploration. Expression. Articulation. Connection. Disconnection. Pushing at the edges of the known. Pushing at the edges of the unknown. This is not knowledge. Art permits non-knowing. It is a kind of bridge. A kind of opening. Telling Kurdish stories in Kurmanci to children in Berlin. Young people learning to write poetry for 'strengthening strengths' in Lucerne. Rap music, contemporary dance and film in Barcelona. Film-making in northern Norway. Improvisational *regueifa* singing in Santiago de Compostela. Art: a kind of bridge that can connect things

Setting

The task: to discover the language ideologies and communicative practices of young people in Europe. Impossible. How many young people are there in Europe. Where should we look. Where listen. Where open a window onto the market square. Where be present again and again and again. Where to find languaging and languages at the heart of things. Everywhere. Everywhere. Some places more than others. Some people more than others. Languaging is everyone. Everywhere. Take Galicia. Take the Kven region of the north. Take Catalunya. Here people claim their language and

reclaim their language. Take Switzerland: Romansch. Swiss German. Italian. Take Kurdish people in Berlin. Take languaging in Turin. Take translanguaging. But where. Smart phones. Social media. Instagram. But what. Sport. Athletics. Tennis. Padel. Volleyball. Education. A bilingual kindergarten in Berlin. Multilingual classrooms in Switzerland. Music. A feminist primary school in Galicia. Creative practice in Turin. Football training in Barcelona. Artistic work in digital arenas in Norway. Everywhere. We need to be everywhere. *Tessuti Orientali*. The same signage in Arabic. *Pescheria*. The same in Chinese characters. Livers. Stomachs. Kidneys. Hearts. You can't be everything everywhere all at once. You make decisions. You make choices.

Research

Academic researchers know a thing or two. Academic researchers know nothing. We aspire to the condition of non-knowing. But we are unable to divest ourselves of history. We are unable to free ourselves from biography. We carry with us heavy baggage. Our lives are with us. Our values and beliefs. Our opinions. Our politics. All this we bring into contact with collaborators, participants and partners. We set out our credentials. We stand remote from the condition of non-knowing. We know. We know you. We understand you. We live your life. We breathe your air. We eat your food. We share your heritage. We share your history. We share your language. We share your language. We know nothing. All that remains for us is to explain you to the world. All that remains for us is to explain you to yourself. We close our eyes and recall a state of non-knowing. We dream of non-knowing. Childhood. Childhood when. What age. After we were born. Newborn. The world incomprehensible. Before we were born. Before. Before anything. A state of pre-being. We aspire to the condition of pre-being. We are nothing. We know nothing. We are non-being. Now we start to see. Now we start to look. Now we start to listen. Now we listen to listening. Now we begin.

Digitalisation

Automation. Human agency. AI. Artificial imagination. Intelligence. Intelligence. Artificial intelligence. Conscious and ethical use. Transparent communication. Privacy. Security. Surveillance. Complex assemblage. The decentred human. Posthuman. Flexible, context-sensitive. Ongoing reflection. Digital translation. Quality. Accuracy. Culturally appropriate. Fidelity. Cultural fidelity. Ethical, inclusive, reflective. Reflexive. Digital multilingualism. Multilingual digitalism. Digital tools to save endangered languages. Minoritised languages. Languages potentially limitless. Digitise relevant languages. Relevant languages. Give people back the power to speak. Take back the power to speak. I am not made for the digital age. I am not made in the digital age. I am not digital. I am paper and wax crayons. I am not the computer. I am Meccano sets and wooden blocks. I am not smart phones. I am sticks and stones and knuckle bones. I am black jacks and dominoes. I am the muddy sports field. I am Web 0.0. I am Luddite. I am technophobe. Pssschhhh!! Catch yourself on. The young people are all online. All on screen time. Get yourself out of the 1960s and join the real world. Enter your password. Authenticate yourself. Enter your code. Your password or username is incorrect. Please try again. Change your password. Enter your code. Download the app. Your password or username is incorrect. Please try again. You have been timed out. Please login again. Young people communicate with smart phones and laptops. Almost everyone communicates with

smart phones and laptops. Almost everyone. Facebook. Instagram. X. Any number of platforms. Don't be the one left behind. Don't get left behind. Two-stage authentication. Enter your username and password. Enter your username and password. This is the future.

Policy

Language policy. Local conditions. Local beliefs, local values. Local ideologies, Local legislation. Language is identity. Language is heritage. Language is belonging. Language is culture. Language is history. Language is self. Read the walls. *GALÍZA NOM É ESPANHA*. Paint it red. *GALÍZA NOM É ESPANHA*. We will not wait for your policy document. *GALÍZA NOM É ESPANHA*. We will not wait for your political debate. Paint the walls red. Language is birthright. Language is custom. Language is legacy. Language is inheritance. Language is us. Listen to our song. Listen to us sing. Never again will our language be erased. Never again will a government deny our language. Never again will we be silenced. We will not wait for change. We will take back our rights. Language is family. Language is us. We will not wait for politicians to debate our future. We teach our language. Our language. *DEFENDE A TUA LINGUA ZUA*. We give to our children the right to speak. We give to our children the right to sing. We give to our children the right to dance. We give to our children the right to choose.

Linguistic ethnography

Be there. Be present. Listen. Look. Record. Again and again and again. Listen to the same thing over and over again. Never the same thing. Nothing is ever the same. The same is always different. Notice difference. Mark difference. Out of difference comes creativity. Mark difference. Out of difference comes originality. Look at yourself. Notice yourself. See yourself. Navigate ways in. Be fair. Be kind. Be warm. Be cold. Be alert. Look after yourself. Look after the other. Ask questions. Talk. Listen. Listen. Look. Keep eyes in the back of your head. Write. Draw. Use the new technologies. Use the old technologies. Navigate ways out. Look. Listen. Again and again. Weeks. Months. Years. Notice change. Look at yourself. Mark difference. Aspire to a state of non-knowing. Impossible. Aspire. Know nothing. Know nothing. Keep your eyes and ears open. Show this to us, we want to know. Why do you want to know. What exactly do you want from us. You will take our words. You will take our actions. You will take our faces. You will take our bodies. You will take our languages. You will take our food. You will take our music. You will take our songs. Where will you take them. What will you do with them. We will analyse we will analyse them and. We will analyse everything and make make make arguments. Make arguments that more support should be given to. Yes we welcome that yes tell the powerful tell the decision-makers what we need. But we can tell you the argument. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. We have told you the argument. We don't have to tell you the argument. You know the argument. Tell them. Tell them. Tell them. But evidence we need evidence they need evidence you can't assume. It is not making assumptions we have been here for years for decades we know we know we know. You have to trust us. They have to trust us. It is not that simple. They do not trust us. Evidence. Evidence. Evidence. They want evidence. They will do nothing without evidence.

Languaging

Body. Head. Eye. Mouth. Hand. Finger. Thumb. Scowl. Shrug of the shoulders, point with the eyes, wide open smiles, raised eyebrows, torsos leaning in, a grimace, a wink, laughter, a nod of the head. Goosebumps. The hairs on the back of your neck. Movement of the bowels. Sleeping and waking. Happy face. Hungry face. Angry face. Astonished face. Frightened face. Embarrassed face. Rhythm. Ritual. Eyelids. The articulate body. The body as history. The body bears the traces of generations. The body learns to be through generations. The gait. The way you sit. The tilt of the chin. How you hold a glass of tea. The body changes. History changes. The body different over time. The body different in different spaces. The dancing body. The body standing at the bus stop. The body as memory. The body as way of being. A way of making. A way of languaging. A way of meaning. Rhythm. Reverberation. Mornings bring days. Work, break, drink, work, break, walk the dog, eat, work, break, drink, walk the dog, eat, watch TV, sleep, wake, walk the dog, work, break, drink, work, break, walk the dog, eat, work. Rhythm, rhythm, rhythm. The rhythm of the body. The rhythm of life. The same again, the same again, the same again. But not precisely. Not precisely. There is difference. There is ebb and flow, out and back, peak and trough, advance and pause. There must be rest. Languaging is movement. Movement is languaging. Music is languaging. Languaging is music. Improvisation. Orchestration. Practice, practice, practice. The same thing over and over again. Never the same. Always different. Always difference.