

Dagmar Abendroth-Timmer / Eva-Maria Hennig
(eds.)

Plurilingualism and Multiliteracies

International Research on Identity
Construction in Language Education



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Plurilingualism and Multiliteracies: Identity Construction in Language Education

Dagmar Abendroth-Timmer / Eva-Maria Hennig (Siegen)

Touché par le phénomène de la globalisation, l'enseignement des langues doit faire face à un défi particulier. Le développement des technologies de communication, la mobilité transnationale croissante et l'ampleur de l'anglais en tant que *lingua franca* (tout comme d'autres langues enseignées comme p. ex. l'espagnol) agit énormément sur le processus de formation d'identité des enseignants et des apprenants, et au-delà sur le procédé d'apprentissage. Finalement, ces développements influencent aussi les exigences de formation des enseignants. L'article suivant offre un aperçu théorique sur tous ces aspects qui dans les articles suivants seront approfondis, remis en question et complétés de façon théorique et empirique.

Fremdsprachenbildung steht in Zeiten der Globalisierung vor besonderen Herausforderungen. Die weltweite Entwicklung von Kommunikationstechnologien, die steigende transnationale Mobilität und die zunehmende Bedeutung von Englisch als *Lingua franca* (oder auch weiterer Schulfremdsprachen wie z. B. Spanisch) beeinflussen maßgeblich Prozesse der Identitätskonstruktion von Fremdsprachenlernenden und Fremdsprachenlehrenden sowie darüber hinaus unterrichtliche Lehr- und Lernprozesse. Schließlich wirken sich diese Veränderungen auch auf Erfordernisse der Lehrerbildung aus. Der folgende Artikel liefert einen Überblick über diese Aspekte, die in den weiteren Artikeln theoretisch und empirisch vertieft, hinterfragt und ergänzt werden.

1 Plurilingualism¹ and multiculturalism in European educational systems and beyond

In times of globalization and of cultural and linguistic hybridization, communication processes change. At all institutional levels, learners and teachers come into contact with numerous different languages, language varieties, cultures, communication tools and text genres (cf. Pauwels in this volume). They have various social backgrounds and are exposed to diverse or even contradicting views of the world which highly impact their learning processes (cf. Vygotskij 1978) or notions of 'good' teaching. In everyday life, learners as well as teachers have to cope with heterogeneous communicative situations and cannot always rely on competences or skills they have acquired through earlier experiences (cf. The New London Group 1996). Consequently,

¹ The term 'multilingualism' refers to the coexistence of several languages within one society, whereas the term 'plurilingualism' rather refers to the individual and his or her identity concept (cf. Cuq 2003).

both, teachers and learners can be defined as “plural actors”, as the French sociologist Lahire explains (2011: XI):

The scientific programme I offer here in *The Plural Actor* is that of a sociology that is indissociably both dispositional and contextual. It consists in taking into account the embodied past, the earlier socialising experience of the actors studied (experiences that are crystallized in the form of more or less strong and constant dispositions – dispositions to believe, think and act in a certain fashion), while not claiming that we are at every moment [...], in every one of our acts – in a kind of synthesis of everything that we have previously experienced [...].

Against the background of these assumptions, we define individuals as social practitioners who are able to reflect meaning and to adapt their behavior to contextual or situational demands (cf. Lahire 2001: 132). Individuals internalize meaning on the basis of their individual dispositions, i. e. attitudes, emotions, motivations, interests, self-confidence and estimations concerning one's own self-efficacy etc. (cf. Berger/Luckmann 2007; Krüger 2011; Lahire 2011). They reflect and judge social meaning and position themselves (Harré/van Langenhove 1999; Lahire 2001).

In a globalized multilingual world, not all learners have equal access to linguistic, economic and cultural resources (cf. Bourdieu 1979). Consequently, not all of them have the chance to be heard and to express their attitudes, learning needs or feelings. Educational institutions favor and support certain languages, whereas other languages are excluded from everyday practice (cf. Abendroth-Timmer/Fäcke 2011). This is often due to the prestige which is attributed to languages (cf. Gogolin 2007) because of economic and political reasons. Learners often know (consciously or unconsciously) which languages they are supposed to speak and which ones they should rather avoid in educational contexts (cf. Gogolin 2007: 63). This is why, according to Hu (2003), multilingual speakers are sometimes less self-confident and therefore in turn less successful in language learning. Language education should counteract these tendencies by promoting linguistic and cultural identity formation processes in a favorable way and by supporting the esteem of diversity and alterity (cf. Council of Europe 2001). The aim is to support the personal development of all learners by integrating their linguistic and cultural resources (languages of origin, foreign languages, regional and minority languages, dialects). Linguistic and cultural diversity should be regarded as a source of enrichment which needs to be protected against tendencies of discrimination and prejudice (cf. Council of Europe 2001).

Different nations and societies have reacted differently to the societal developments mentioned so far at political and institutional levels. Education policy determines, e. g., which languages are to be taught, the time quotas available for teaching, the competences which should be acquired and how learning outcomes are to be achieved. In the European context, The *Common*

European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001) has been of considerable importance. The Council of Europe (2001) demands of all its members to protect languages of origin, regional languages and dialects. All Europeans are encouraged to develop plurilingual identities (mother tongues plus two foreign languages). Minority languages and languages of migrants, e. g., should not be artificially suppressed in educational contexts, but they should be connected to the target language conveyed in the classroom in a more favorable way. It is obvious that these aims are far from being achieved (cf. Fäcke 2008; cf. Fäcke in this volume) and that more research is needed in this field.

Some nations are multilingual not only because of migration processes but also on a political level, and they therefore foster several official languages. Within these countries, as e. g. in Luxembourg (cf. Ehrhart in this volume) or in Belgium, language learners continuously act as plurilingual social practitioners in multilingual institutional contexts. Forms and organizational structures of educational institutions are closely linked to linguistic policy. Researchers should explore the ways in which linguistic diversity is conceptualized and treated in multilingual school or university systems from a pedagogical and political perspective, as well as the way linguistic diversity is experienced by children, their teachers and parents. Institutional structures, procedures and tools should be adapted to the professionalization of multilingualism in order to ensure full participation within multilingual societies. The didactics of multilingualism (cf. Bär 2009) as well as the concept of multiliteracies (cf. The New London Group 1996) are of special interest within this context.

Multilingual communication processes also affect research on foreign language education itself. English has emerged as a *lingua franca* (cf. Gnutzmann et al. in this volume). As a consequence, writing and publishing in English has become the norm in almost all scientific disciplines. Since journal publications in English have become the essential indicator for research performance and assessment internationally, it seems obvious that non-native English researchers have to cope with an additional problem – a fact which very often puts them at a communicative disadvantage. Consequently, research in this field of interest should first explore the difficulties researchers face in this context in order to develop strategies to cope with this new demand.

Before detailing the demands all of this has on foreign language education, some definitions and models of identity need to be described. They will be evaluated with regard to their usefulness in researching and modeling linguistic, cultural and professional processes of education – i. e. identity construction processes – in heterogeneous contexts.

2 Models of identity

There are numerous definitions and models of identity. Therefore, it is not possible to summarize the entire scientific discourse in this introduction. Instead, we are going to present some approaches which are of special interest with regard to the fields of research explored by LANGSCAPE members. (Empirical) studies dealing with the topic of identity always have to define what is actually implied by this term. Norton/Toohey (2011: 413) state an explosion of research activities dealing with the topic of identity in the last fifteen years. This seems to be connected to discourses on multilingual learning and on the construction of plurilingual (cf. Hu 2003) or transcultural identities (cf. Schumann 2008).

The discourse on identity mainly emerged in the period of modernism (cf. Klika 2000: 294) when people began traveling and exploring other countries. In the period of enlightenment, people in German-speaking parts of Europe also began to define the notion of ‘culture’ (cf. Altmayer 1997: 2). In a parallel development, the term ‘civilization’ was used (cf. *ibid.*) in French, English or other European languages. Science, education and the detachment from clerical and aristocratic authorities not only changed people’s lives but also their ways of thinking. Philosophers tried to define the notion of ‘subjectivity’ which had not been present before. According to Descartes the ‘I’ is the subject of cognition, for Fichte it is the subject of action who never reaches the collective *Geist*, Kant connects identity to the ideal of morality, Marx relates the ‘I’ to a person’s behavior in the social world which is structured according to social conditions (cf. Kon 1983 according to Krewer/Eckensberger 1998: 574). These and various other philosophical discourses on identity have been picked up by sociological and educational disciplines. As a result, three different movements emerged in these contexts: a biological, a psychological and a socio-dialogical concept of identity (cf. *ibid.*).

From a psychological perspective, adolescence is the sensitive period for the development of the ‘I’. In this period, developments in the frontal part of the brain, which regulates emotions, cognitions and socially adequate behavior, enable the individual to be more self-reflective (cf. Oerter/Dreher 2008: 304). In sociological approaches, self-reflection is also crucial for defining identity. Mead (2005) differentiates the psychological ‘I’ from the social ‘me’. The ‘I’ contains the subconscious needs of the individual, whereas the social ‘me’ reflects the impact of society on the individual. Consequently, identity emerges from a dialogical process of communication and reflection. The ‘me’ limits the personal freedom of development. While playing ‘father, mother, child’, for instance, children take over the perspectives of different social roles. In this process, they test various ‘mes’ and thus learn to preview how another person might act and think (cf. Mead 2005: 192). This enables them to adapt their behavior to social norms. Erikson (2011) proposes a similar dialogical model of

identity. He also differentiates between ‘I’ and ‘me’, but in contrast to Mead’s theory, his ideas are closely linked to Freud’s psychosexual theory. According to Erikson (2011), the ‘I’ is the feeling of a coherent unity as regards the multiple experiences of the ‘I’. The problem connected with this theory is that it is linked to ideas which arose in post-war times and are not up to date in our post-modernist era.

In contrast to Erikson’s modernist theory of identity, poststructuralist and postmodernist theories rather highlight the disconnectedness of several parts of a person’s identity. In times of multiculturalism and plurilingualism, the notion of identity is becoming fuzzier. Compound structures such as “patchwork identities” or “fluid identities” try to illustrate how identity is structured (cf. Elkind 1990): it is regarded as a set of fragments which is in a continuous process of shift and reorganization. According to socio-constructivist theories, these identities are created through communicative processes in various social contexts (cf. Altmayer 2002; Berger/Luckmann 2007; Klika 2000: 295; Mead 2005). Migration as well as educational and professional mobility contribute to the multiplication of possible social experiences. Languages and cultures merge and this in turn leads to the development of plurilingual (cf. Kramsch 2009) and transcultural identities (cf. Welsch 1999).

In addition, linguistic, cultural and economic resources are unevenly distributed within modern societies. Therefore, the social space is not only linguistically and culturally fragmented but also in a socioeconomic way. All in all, referring to socio-constructivist theories, this is not meant to say that the individual is forced to cling to social meaning. Social meaning can only become relevant for the individual if it is internalized. The concept of ‘habits’ (cf. Bourdieu 1979) describes these internalization processes (cf. Krüger 2011). In a further development, Lahire (2001: 131) reflects and expands on Bourdieu’s theory of habits. He is predominantly interested in the question of how social meaning is internalized. Despite of social connections, the individual develops individual dispositions (attitudes, interests, motivations, emotions etc.) in social contexts. These dispositions form the repertoire of competences and skills from which the ‘I’ can choose in different situations. As different situations demand contradicting dispositions, the individual can also develop contradicting attitudes. Consequently, in a postmodern society, identity should no longer be defined as a stable product but as a situational and contextual construct which is influenced by the individual’s dispositions developed in social interaction.

Defining identity according to Krewer/Eckensberger (1991) as a construct consisting of the individual’s self-concept, his or her self-esteem and his or her self-confidence, linguistic, cultural and social identity can be described on the basis of the following categories:

- Self-concept: What languages does the individual speak in which contexts and in which situations? How does the individual define him- or herself as a linguistic and cultural person? How does the individual describe and define his or her (plurilingual) communication practices? In which social contexts does the individual live? What is his/her (socioeconomic/linguistic etc.) status in society?
- Self-esteem: What value and prestige does the individual assign to his or her languages and the respective (socio-)cultural contexts and in what way is this estimation influenced by migration contexts or intercultural contact experiences? How is the individual viewed by people having more/less access to power in society?
- Self-confidence: How does the individual perceive and evaluate his or her competences with regard to his or her different languages? In how far can the individual contribute to changes in society?

Languages are crucial for constructing identity because they do not only convey meaning in a literal sense but they also convey norms, attitudes, beliefs about what is normal, esthetic or ethnic beliefs and cultural memories (cf. Hu 2007: 2). Depending on what languages individuals speak, they might define themselves in completely different ways (cf. Kramsch 2009). This fact also impacts foreign language learners and teachers who not only learn or convey a language system but who gradually become members of different discourse communities (cf. Chic; Pennington/Sachdev/Lau; Weyreter/Viebrock, all in this volume).

3 Identity construction in foreign language education

3.1 The perspective of the learner

As mentioned above, it is crucial to understand the structure of language learner identities and the processes that lead to the construction of plurilingual identities. Research in this field should focus on how learning environments, methods and tasks impact the formation of plurilingual and pluricultural identity constructs in formal and informal foreign language learning contexts. There is a need for a fundamental theory in foreign language education which is sensitive to issues of language learner identities (cf. Breidbach/Küster in this volume). Nevertheless, identity discourses in educational sciences do not only describe what identity is, but also what it should be and how it could be developed. It thus has a normative character (cf. Klika 2000: 296). In the last decades, several didactic approaches have been proposed which focus on how to foster the development of different identity concepts in foreign language classrooms.

The communicative approach of intercultural learning (cf. Byram 1997) proposes the model of the “intercultural speaker” as identity concept (cf. *ibid.*).

The intercultural speaker should be open and curious with regard to cultural and linguistic otherness and willing to reflect his/her own cultural perspectives (*savoir être*). Besides, he/she should be able to interpret different perspectives in their cultural contexts (*savoir comprendre*) and to gain knowledge about different cultures and interactional processes on an individual and a societal level (*savoir*). As language is a crucial part of cultural identity and the means to negotiate and to transmit culture, the intercultural speaker should also dispose crosslinguistic knowledge. Furthermore, he/she has to be able to detect ideological and stereotypical ways of thinking (*savoir s'engager*) and should be able to learn autonomously by developing efficient strategies which help to cope with intercultural communication processes (*savoir apprendre/faire*). He/she develops a critical cultural and political awareness which allows him or her to protect diversity and otherness him- or herself.

Bennett (1986) rather focuses on the affective-cognitive pillar of intercultural learning and describes the stages learners pass through while developing an “intercultural sensitivity”, i. e. the capacity to integrate different cultural perspectives and to switch between perspectives and the respective language system in a spontaneous and flexible way. Thereby, learners are enabled to cope with a world characterized by hybridization and to live together peacefully. This identity concept is mainly referred to in hermeneutic approaches of intercultural learning similar to the *Didaktik des Fremdverstehens* developed by the graduate research group of the same name (cf. Bredella 2010). When working with texts in the foreign language classroom, students are encouraged to reflect on their own linguistic and cultural identities before temporarily taking over the perspectives of literary characters they are confronted with (e. g. by doing creative tasks through which they have to speak or write from the perspective of a figurative character; cf. Caspari 2000). In a dialogue between the student's own perspective and the perspective of the literary character, the learner is expected to overcome stereotypes and ethnocentric viewpoints (cf. Bredella 2010). In a meta-reflective process, the learner should negotiate these perspectives and integrate or reconstruct different viewpoints. Ideally, this learning process will lead to the development of empathy and openness towards different perspectives and to the development of transcultural identities (cf. Schumann 2008), in which different perspectives merge and mingle.

In the context of the didactics of multilingualism (cf. Reissner 2011), identity is usually defined on the basis of the concept of “linguistic awareness” (cf. Eichler/Nold 2007). This concept includes different domains of competence: affective competences (attitudes and emotions towards language), cognitive competences (views of the world, analysis of linguistic units), metacognitive competences (sociolinguistic awareness, the ability to detect ideologies) and communicative competences (performance) (cf. Gnutzmann 1997: 232ff.). The EuroCom-Project which adds a practical dimension to this theoretical concept

(cf. Klein/Stegmann 2000) focuses on cross-linguistic structures existing in language families (parallel syntactic structures, morpheme-grapheme relations etc.). Crosslinguistic learning strategies (cf. Bär 2009), for instance, can facilitate the decoding of a yet unknown language. Learners become more autonomous by making use of all their linguistic resources, including their languages of origin.

The steady growth of cultural and linguistic diversity is accompanied by an increased use of different communication channels and thus forces educators to rethink literacy learning and teaching. The pedagogy of multiliteracies (cf. The New London Group 1996) “overcomes the limitations of traditional approaches by emphasizing how negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of the working, civic, and private lives of students“ (ibid.: 1). It includes the immersion in experience, the interpretation of knowledge, critical analyses of learning processes in connection to the respective context as well as the transfer of knowledge and the capacity to apply this to new or different contexts (ibid.: 21f.). Plurilingual literacy plays a crucial role in ensuring participation in social contexts. As societies change with regard to their linguistic and cultural heritage, the pedagogy of literacy has to change as well in order to meet the new demands of the individual. Multilingual talking books, which are books that are made on the computer and used on screen, may be the key to a first practical realization of this so far rather theoretical concept (cf. Elsner in this volume).

The identity concept which can be attributed to this didactic approach is that of a European identity as described by Küster (2007: 40). What is crucial for defining European identity is a consciousness for heterogeneity with regard to linguistic, ethnic and cultural entities and especially with regard to multi- and plurilingualism (cf. ibid.). This is what, in addition to common historical memories, unites all Europeans. All in all, Küster (ibid.) defines European identity as a continuum including individual and collective levels. The latter might range from local to global identities forming overlapping networks. Modern media of communication and digital social networks contribute to the worldwide interconnection of speakers (cf. ibid.: 41) and thus enhance the merging of different languages and cultures.

3.2 The teacher perspective

Professional identity can be described on the basis of individual attitudes, knowledge and teaching practices (cf. Miller 2009: 175). The teaching practices of both, student teachers and in-service teachers, do not necessarily correspond with their professional self-concept. When student teachers find themselves under pressure to act immediately, mental representations emerge (Blömeke

2005). Furthermore, their practical realization of didactic principles and methodological guidelines might form a distinct contrast to their professional ideals.

The ongoing development of professional teacher identities therefore hinges on reflecting on what seems personally, institutionally, and socially doable in classrooms, how change is effected, and how knowledge, pedagogy, and identity intersect. (Miller 2009: 178)

Undoubtedly, it is essential that teachers become aware of these subjective limitations if they wish or need to adapt their teaching practices to their professional self-concept. Such an awareness can only be achieved through diverse reflection processes which relate scientific or theoretical knowledge to real teaching situations (cf. Frevel in this volume). In times of globalization and of corresponding learners' pluriculturalism, these processes need also refer to the question of how to deal with individual plurilingualism and multiculturalism in the language classroom.

In her study on the professional self-concept of foreign language teachers, Caspari (2003: 282) claims that there are not sufficient empirical research projects that try to explore the impact of subjective theories on the act of teaching. In this context, it is crucial to focus on teachers' (language) learning experiences, on the one hand, and their views on teachers' role in language pedagogy and educational functions, on the other (cf. Abendroth-Timmer 2011). Existing studies point to the relation between teachers' institutional learning experiences and their development of self-efficacy. It seems clear that it is on the basis of their experience that student teachers develop expectations regarding their self-efficacy. This fact must not be ignored, because these expectations tend to be rather immutable. It stands to reason that student teachers have developed assumptions about learning and teaching (of languages) which influence their willingness to deal with new learning theories and to adopt new teaching concepts. Therefore, it seems to be crucial that those assumptions can be made accessible through approaches of reflective teacher education.

A question that still remains unanswered is that of how exactly theoretical knowledge can be transferred into practical knowledge. It is assumed that such a transfer is a highly complex process in which theory and practice have to be interrelated (Herzig et al. 2005: 51f.). The reflection of individual premises thus needs to be established in teacher education at university level (cf. De Mesmaeker/Lochtman; Etuř/Schultze, all in this volume). Moreover, future foreign language teachers have to (re-)reflect on their professional identity and their teaching practices with the focus on multilingual and multicultural classrooms and with the objective to avoid a monolingual and monocultural habitus. In order to address the multicultural makeup of their future classrooms in an appropriate way, it is necessary that student teachers of foreign languages be

exposed to intercultural and multilingual learning situations themselves. If reflected upon, these situations can potentially raise an awareness that supposedly influences the way teachers deal with the diversity of languages and cultures of their students in a positive way. Online seminars offer new options for participants with different languages and cultures to work together via learning platforms and to experience multilingual and intercultural communication processes (cf. Bechtel/Ciekanski in this volume). Experiences which are systematically reflected on the basis of theoretical knowledge might help to convert action-oriented knowledge into action-oriented competences.

Research needs to find an answer to the multifarious question of how reflection based on both theory and classroom reality can be initiated and guided in order to enable teachers (at every stage in their career) to overcome individual/subjective patterns of thinking and acting, and thus to tackle in a flexible manner the complexity of teaching situations in a pluralistic society (cf. Wildemann et al. in this volume).

4 Perspectives for academic and practical contexts

4.1 Consequences for foreign language education research

In the area of language policy, research will have to focus on governance (Bologna, *European Common Framework of Reference*) and educational standards. Research focusing on the foreign language learner should especially be directed towards the investigation of attitudes towards multiculturalism and plurilingualism as well as towards the investigation of learning processes. In this context, researchers should differentiate between cognitive, affective, meta-reflective, communicative and methodological domains (of competence). In language policy research and in the didactics of multilingualism (cf. Bär 2009), a lot of work has already been invested in this research area (cf. Baur/Hufeisen 2011) by studying the impact of the mother tongue on second language acquisition processes and by developing and investigating strategies of cross-linguistic language learning. Furthermore, research should focus on how certain learning tasks or settings impact the quality of these processes. Currently, there is still a lack of praxis-oriented work that would be able to illustrate how a pedagogy of multiliteracies would function in the (foreign language) classroom. Tasks have to be developed and tested which can foster the development of plurilingual identities and/or the development of a European identity. On a meta-reflective level, we can investigate how learners evaluate their learning processes on the background of certain settings (virtual, face-to-face, more or less formalized or institutionalized). As identity constructs define the preconditions for learning processes, researchers should always be sensitive to

the learners' individual dispositions (attitudes, emotions, motivations and interests towards/on languages and cultures) and the learners' identities.

Moreover, the attitudes of teachers towards pluri- and multilingualism and towards multiculturalism have to be investigated. Pedagogical approaches which claim to change habits or individual dispositions will have to be put to the test. It is crucial that teachers become aware of multilingual didactic approaches and of the respective media that can stimulate and foster cultural and plurilingual learning. In this research area, the development of teaching methodologies and theories still remains a necessity for research in order to find out how bi- and multilingualism can be integrated into both language classrooms and teacher education. The question of the role of new media for triggering (inter)cultural and multilingual learning processes and the additional question of how they may affect plurilingual identities have to be addressed as well.

4.2 Consequences for classroom practices

International projects (cf. e. g. Comenius projects) foster institutional or online exchanges of learners and teachers. They ensure the cooperative work of subjects with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and thereby initiate discussions on different living conditions, attitudes and beliefs or perspectives (cf. Abendroth-Timmer/Aguilar Río; Bechtel/Ciekanski; Chik; Narcy-Combes/Narcy-Combes; Weyreter/Viebrock, all in this volume). Through these exchanges, learners and teachers are enabled to act in multilingual and multicultural learning communities with which they are supposed to identify in their role as learner or teacher. On the basis of these interactions, they are encouraged to describe, open and reflect on their cultural and linguistic identities. The results of the evaluation of these projects can then be taken back to the respective institutions (universities, schools, school administration etc.) and thus directly influence learning processes.

Plurilingualism and transcultural identities can also be developed through *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL) approaches. By focusing on the subject matter, the content is in the center of interest, whereas the language functions as a medium of communication and not as an object of analysis. Working with texts written in different languages can provide learners with a wide range of different perspectives. From the teacher perspective, national teaching traditions are questioned (cf. Breidbach 2004: 160 f.) and discussed. By contrasting different concepts and perspectives learners are supported to process information more deeply (cf. Bonnet 2004).

Content-orientation can also be established on the basis of task-based approaches (cf. Ellis 2003). Learners are supposed to manage semi-authentic communicative situations within complex contexts. The latter should include

topics which seem to be relevant for learners on a personal level. In this way, language learning materials, cultural topics and diverse media become central means to elicit language learning processes which do not only depart from the learners' experiences but which are also co-determined by learners. With regard to tasks, it might be interesting to investigate how they can support not only linguistic but also cultural and multilingual learning processes. They might also be a suitable means in order to implement the theoretical program of The New London Group (1996) in the foreign language classroom. Tasks based on literature, films and music can be used in order to make students reflect upon their cultural and linguistic identity, as long as they address learners not only cognitively but also emotionally.

5 Summary and outlook

This introduction article can only provide a rough overview of theories, research approaches and possibilities of eliciting and investigating processes of identity construction in multilingual and multicultural language learning and teaching contexts. Nevertheless, it should be obvious that the notion of identity is not a new fashion term or fashion concept. Instead, it is able to bring together central concepts which are crucial in language education research in a fruitful way; foremost among these being multilingualism, multiculturalism, intercultural and multimedia communication, multiliteracies, and the development of competences.

The articles presented in this volume are intended to depict and to elaborate on several of the aspects mentioned here. In chapter I, contexts of mobility and the ecology of multilingualism in European or national contexts will be examined. The second chapter focuses on identity construction processes in foreign language learning and teaching contexts. Finally, the third chapter focuses on professional identity constructs of novices and highly experienced teachers.

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