

# The Linguistic Repertoire Revisited

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This article argues for the relevance of poststructuralist approaches to the notion of a linguistic repertoire and introduces the notion of language portraits as a basis for empirical study of the way in which speakers conceive and represent their heteroglossic repertoires. The first part of the article revisits Gumperz's notion of a linguistic repertoire, and then considers the challenge to the concept represented by the conditions of super-diversity. It then argues that poststructuralist approaches, exemplified in the work of Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, add an exploration of previously neglected factors such as the power of categories or the significance of desire in language. In the second part, this article considers a novel methodological approach to studying linguistic repertoires: a multimodal, biographical approach using a language portrait, which involves a close reading of the visual and verbal representation of linguistic experience and linguistic resources. The final part of the article discusses how a poststructuralist approach can contribute to expanding the notion of 'repertoire'.

## REVISITING THE LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE

This article argues for the relevance of poststructuralist approaches to the notion of a linguistic repertoire and draws on empirical data to show how speakers conceive and represent their heteroglossic repertoires. In the first part of the article, I discuss how the notion of a linguistic repertoire was developed by John Gumperz from an interactional perspective, how the concept is challenged by the conditions of super-diversity, and how poststructuralist approaches, especially those of Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, can contribute to exploring undervalued factors such as the power of categories or the significance of desire in language. The second part presents empirical material on linguistic repertoires using a multimodal, biographical approach, and involves a close reading of a language portrait, a visual and verbal representation of linguistic experience, and linguistic resources. The third part discusses how a poststructuralist approach can contribute to expanding the notion of 'repertoire'.

### **The notion of linguistic repertoire in interactional sociolinguistics**

In view of the current debate on linguistic diversity, it is useful to go back to the origin of the notion of a linguistic repertoire. As a sociolinguistic concept,

this notion is associated with the work of John Gumperz in the early 1960s. He developed the notion of what he initially called the ‘verbal repertoire’ (Gumperz 1960) by drawing on empirical research in two agricultural villages, one in India north of Delhi, the other close to the Arctic Circle in Norway (Gumperz 1964). Gumperz takes as his ‘universe of analysis’ the speech community, which he does not conceive of in an essentialist manner but from the perspective of social interaction, and defines it as ‘any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction over a significant span of time and set off from other such aggregates by differences in the frequency of interaction’ (Gumperz 1964: 137). The notion of verbal repertoire is linked to a particular speech community and ‘contains all the accepted ways of formulating messages. It provides the weapons of everyday communication. Speakers choose among this arsenal in accordance with the meanings they wish to convey’ (Gumperz 1964: 138). Another central aspect from the point of view of the present discussion is that in Gumperz’s view multilingual repertoires form a whole: languages and dialects ‘form a behavioural whole, regardless of grammatical distinctness, and must be considered constituent varieties of the same verbal repertoire’ (Gumperz 1964: 140). Gumperz’s specific interest is in the question of how linguistic choices are tied to social constraints and categories:

Ultimately it is the individual who makes the decision, but his freedom to select is always subject both to grammatical and social restraints. (...) The power of selection is [therefore] limited by commonly agreed on conventions which serve to categorize speech forms as informal, technical, vulgar, literary, humorous, etc. (...) The social etiquette of language choice is learned along with grammatical rules and once internalized it becomes a part of our linguistic equipment. Conversely, stylistic choice becomes a problem when we are away from our accustomed social surroundings. (Gumperz 1964: 138)

In his discussion of verbal repertoires, Gumperz not only deals with the normative aspects of language choice and the social relationships constituent speech varieties normally symbolize, but also emphasizes that choices are not always predictable on the basis of such associations alone: ‘Just as individual words may be used in meanings which are different from their primary referents, so also speech styles need not always signal the exact social relationships with which they are associated’ (Gumperz 1964: 148). The realization that the connection between speech style and social relationships is not an absolute one takes on special importance in view of current debates such as those concerning phenomena of language crossing or translanguaging (discussed later). Basically, already contained in Gumperz’s concept of the repertoire is the realization that speech style not only refers indexically to social categories but that it can also be employed by speakers as a means of moving beyond normative and constraining categorizations.

## Linguistic repertoires under the condition of super-diversity

Vertovec (2007) has coined the term ‘super-diversity’ to describe the phenomena of globally expanding mobility, which entail new and increasingly complex social formations and networking practices beyond traditional affiliations. Although one could formerly assume the existence over a longer span of time of relatively stable communities of practice, these have become more temporary given the conditions of super-diversity and are now subject to rapid changes. As a result of varied networking practices—among other things in media spaces—speakers participate in varying and deterritorialized communities of practice. In this context, it seems necessary to re-examine the notion of a linguistic repertoire. This notion is in fact increasingly being referred to, particularly in the current debates around language crossing or translanguaging. As a result, even though translanguaging is not the central topic of this manuscript, we need to take a closer look at this debate.

Empirical studies in the past two decades have focused attention on linguistic practices—especially among young people in urban spaces—that have been designated by terms such as *language crossing* (Rampton 1995), *translanguaging* (e.g. Garcia 2009; Blackledge and Creese 2010; Le Wei 2011 *inter alia*), *polylingual languaging* (Jørgensen 2008), and *metrolingualism* (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010). The interest in translanguaging was initiated by Ben Rampton’s empirical work in which he studied communication among adolescents in a UK neighbourhood. Rampton (1995: 485) views language crossing as involving ‘code alternation by people who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language that they are using’, i.e. code switching into varieties that are not generally thought to belong to them. This kind of switching across social or ethnic boundaries raises issues of legitimacy which participants need to negotiate in the course of their encounter.

Notions of translanguaging are less interested in what distinct codes people fall back on and what affiliations these codes refer to than in how different communicative resources are employed to create meaning and what such a heteroglossic language practice means to speakers (Rampton 2011). Le Wei (2011) too, with his concept of creativity and criticality, places greater focus on the speaker. By criticality he understands the ability of the speaker ‘to question and problematize received wisdom, and to express views adequately through reasoned responses to situations’. He sees creativity as the ability ‘to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of the use of language’.

In work on practices of translanguaging the reference to a linguistic repertoire results from the fact that linguistic practices are not merely seen as arbitrary, as playful language use devoid of social context, but are instead described in relation to grounded local practices. Some authors explicitly use the concept repertoire, whereas others instead refer to it implicitly. Li Wei (2011: 1222) develops a repertoire-like concept, which he calls ‘translanguaging space, a space for the act of translanguaging as well as a space created through translanguaging’. With reference to Bhabha (1994), he defines this space as one in

which different identities, values, and practices do not simply co-exist, but generate new identities, values, and practices. Translanguaging, according to Li Wei (2011: 1223), creates a social space for the multilingual language user ‘by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity’.

Otsuij and Pennycook (2010: 248) in their comments on metrolingualism refers explicitly to the concept of repertoire, which they place on a par with language ideologies, practices, and resources. They see communicative repertoires as ‘conventionalized constellations of semiotic resources for taking action—that are shaped by the particular practices in which individuals engage’. Blommaert (2010) also refers explicitly to the concept of repertoire and argues that in considering repertoire and competence the focus should be placed not on immobile languages but rather on mobile resources. Speaking of what he calls the ‘polyglot repertoire’, Blommaert (2008: 16) explains that it is ‘not tied to any form of national space, and neither to a national, stable regime of language’, but, being ‘tied to an individual’s life’, it follows ‘the peculiar biographical trajectory of the speaker’. Similarly, Blackledge and Creese (2010: 224) in their analysis of multilingual classroom interaction underline the complexity of linguistic repertoires that reflect narrations and ideological constructs of ‘home’ and nation and thus ‘bear the traces of past times and present times, lives lived locally and globally’.

These approaches mark a shift away from structure, system, and regularity toward approaches that acknowledge fluidity and creativity in linguistic practices. There is consent among the authors who deal with translanguaging that the focus of interest is shifting from languages to speech and repertoire and that individual languages should not be seen unquestioningly as set categories. In this context, some authors (e.g. Garcia 2009) make reference to the critical examination of the notion of *a* language perceived as a bounded entity such as has been done in the context of linguistic ecology. Blommaert (2006: 512) invokes the scholarly examination of language ideology to show that ‘the very existence of “(a) language” is the result of ideological construction and therefore involves power, authority, and control.’ From the perspective of critical sociolinguistics, Makoni and Pennycook (2007) also stress the social, political, and historical constructedness of languages. In addressing the issue of languages as distinct and constructed categories, reference is also made to Bakhtin’s critique of unitary language, which ‘is not something given (*dan*) but is always in essence posited (*zadan*)—and at every moment of its life [it] is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia’ (Bakhtin 1981: 270). Other concepts that are based on the categorization of linguistic practices are also subjected to critical inspection, such as concepts that perceive bilingualism as the addition of two monolingualisms or dichotomizations such as those between native speakers and non-native speakers or between a language of origin and a target language.

But even if linguistic categories are recognized as historically conditioned, ideological constructs, this does not mean that for this reason alone they have already lost their impact. Translanguaging as a linguistic practice playfully combines elements that represent references to different linguistic and social categorizations or national stereotypes. By overstepping categories of a normative character, it does not eliminate these but reinvoles them, as it were. Moreover, opposed to the practices of translanguaging are institutional practices that aim at monolingualization and homogenization and determine inclusions and exclusions. In this context, the concept of a linguistic repertoire is gaining in relevance as it allows a move away from imagining languages as clear cut entities. As Gumperz's original concept leaves a number of aspects unaddressed, authors—as has been shown—feel the need to enrich the concept by taking up historical, ideological, and biographical dimensions in particular.

### **Construction and deconstruction of language categories from a poststructuralist perspective**

The study of the discursive construction of categories in general (which will include the kinds of categories of which we have been speaking) and of the power that emanates from them is a central theme of poststructuralist thought. The core assumptions in this connection are, first, the temporally and spatially, that is historically and culturally, conditioned impact of discursively generated categories, and, secondly, the interdependence between symbolic, discursively produced power and subjectivity. Subjects are seen as shaped and constituted in their thinking, speaking, feeling, and desire and even in their corporality by the power of discursively produced categories. In the following, we concentrate on Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction and on Judith Butler's notion of normativity and agency, because these concepts can contribute to developing an understanding of linguistic repertoire which takes into account the new conditions linked to super-diversity and which also includes the aspects of subjectivity and power relations.

In his essay 'Monolingualism of the Other', Derrida (1998)<sup>1</sup> reads and (re)writes his personal language trajectory in the form of a text—thus, exposing it to the practice of deconstruction.<sup>2</sup> In connection with deconstruction, Derrida does not speak of a method but rather of a practice or a strategy, first because it itself questions the foundations of methodology, and secondly because it cannot be generalized as a method but is instead guided by the object under examination. Building on his own 'case' as an example, Derrida exposes how in the specific (and at the same time paradigmatic) context of the colonial history of Algeria the French language exerted a 'monoculturalist homo-hegemony' (1998: 71). Related to this, he presents himself as a subject that can be identified by the paradoxical statement: 'I only have one language; it is not mine.' (1998: 1) He characterizes his monolingualism as 'the source of my sufferings, the place of my passions, my desires, my prayers, the vocation of my hopes' (Derrida 1998: 2). The deconstruction that he carries out in this text

is conceived as a 'double gesture' (Derrida 1972: 35) comprising two steps. First, from varying perspectives, he considers how French, by excluding other ways of speaking, has been institutionalized as a 'homo-hegemonic' category and how not only he but in a broader sense every speaking subject is constituted by precisely such exclusions and misappropriation, because every language that is spoken is always the language of the other (Derrida 1998: 63). The second step consists of an attempt to inscribe traces of the excluded other into the dominant language, to re-appropriate the language of the other by transforming it.

Derrida develops his account against his personal background as a person born into a Judeo-Maghrebian family and against the political-historical background of the French colonial regime, which in its language policy as in everything else was oriented towards metropolitan France. He specifically addresses the issue of the Vichy regime, which by an act of state collectively denied Algerian Jews the French citizenship that had previously been conferred upon them collectively, resulting in Derrida's expulsion from the French lycée. The inclusion resulting from the conferring of citizenship and the exclusion resulting from the withdrawal of citizenship are interpreted both as an act of recognition and as an act of misrecognition. Recognition and misrecognition take place at one and the same time, since the subject is only constituted insofar as he is assigned to a specific category (for example as a French-Maghrebian Jew). But every assignment to a category is also inevitably a misrecognition, because it is based on the establishing of a boundary which excludes or marginalizes something else. Derrida represents himself as having been exposed to a multiplicity of language proscriptions: the lack of any idiom of his own due to the history of assimilation of the Jewish community in Algeria; the de facto ban on accessing the main languages of the environment, Arabic and Berber, imposed by the colonial educational system; and finally being forbidden from regarding French as 'his' language and himself as a legitimate speaker of French:

The monolingual of whom I speak speaks a language of which he is deprived. The French language is not his. Because he is therefore deprived of all language, and no longer has any other recourse neither Arabic, nor Berber, nor Hebrew, nor any languages his ancestors would have spoken—because this monolingual is in a way aphasic (perhaps he writes because he is an aphasic), he is thrown into absolute translation, a translation without a pole of reference, without an originary language, and without a source language [langue de départ]. (Derrida 1998: 60 f.)

In this passage, the transition from the first step of deconstruction, which involved reading one's own language history as one marked by categorizations and imposed from the outside, to the second step becomes visible. The second step involves rewriting this history through a practice of transference and translation, inscribing in it traces of the excluded other. The excluded other

is in the case of Derrida the memory of something that never existed, the memory of a language of protectedness, which exists solely as desire, the memory of a first language or rather of a prior-to-the-first language that has to be invented:

Since the prior-to-the-first time of pre-originary language does not exist, it must be invented. Injunctions, the summons [*mise en demeure*] of another writing. But, above all, it must be written *within* languages, so to speak. One must summon up writing inside the given language. From the cradle to the grave, that language, for me, will have been French (p. 64).

In relation to our question concerning the linguistic repertoire, Derrida's deconstruction of his own language history points to the fact that a linguistic repertoire may not only include what one has but also what one does not have, what one was refused but is still present as desire. Derrida also makes it clear that the power of categorizations cannot simply be nullified by ignoring them. Rather, deconstruction is a lengthy process that involves recognizing the formation of categories based on binary logic and tracing the excluded Other, the ambiguities in the margins.

Like Derrida, Judith Butler also views the subject as formed and constituted in language. At the same time, she stresses the significance of the normative aspect of language. In her theoretical work, she addresses the issue of the relationship between language, subject, body, and power (Butler 1997). She attributes the discursive, performative power of language to its normativity. The normativity of language lays down what—assuming the presence of 'normality'—is sayable and what is not. It exercises, as Butler states with reference to Foucault, 'productive' censorship, which is 'not merely restrictive and privative but also formative of subjects and the legitimate boundaries of speech' (Butler 1997: 132). Butler (1997: 135) distinguishes between the operation of censorship that tacitly forms the subject of speech and another action of censorship subsequently imposed on that subject. The primary censorship, the entering of the subject into the normativity of language 'is reinvoked in political life when the question of being able to speak is once again a condition of the subject's survival' (Butler 1997: 135). Applied to the question of the relationship between linguistic repertoire and languages conceived as bounded categories, this means that the restrictive power of categorizations is particularly felt when language is not self-evidently available, that is, for example, when people are not recognized or do not recognize themselves as legitimate speakers of a specific language. Although the subject is not sovereign but rather formed by the power of categories, Butler (1997: 16) grants the subject a certain (limited) agency: 'The one who acts (who is not the same as the sovereign subject) acts precisely to the extent that he or she is constituted as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints from the outset.' Applied to the notion of linguistic repertoire this means that repertoire can be seen as a space both of restrictions and of potentialities.

Gumperz in his interactional approach takes an outside perspective on speakers and their observable linguistic behaviour and develops the notion of linguistic repertoire focusing on rules and conventions of communicative interaction that are learnt, followed and occasionally flouted. Derrida's and Butler's thoughts can contribute to an elaboration of the notion of repertoire that foregrounds a subject perspective which—drawing on phenomenological approaches—encompasses the body dimension of perceiving, experiencing, feeling, and desiring. Such an expanded notion of repertoire also would have to take into account a historical and biographical time dimension, as in a poststructuralist view the subject is considered as constituted in and through language and discourse already established before. While Gumperz's notion of verbal repertoire focuses on the synchronic space of social interactions, the reading of Derrida and Butler suggests re-thinking it more in terms of a diachronic time space of cultural re-enactment.

## EXPLORING THE LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE: THE EXAMPLE OF A LANGUAGE PORTRAIT

### A multimodal approach

Given this new orientation, how can we study linguistic repertoires? As Hymes (1977: 31) observed, how the linguistic repertoire of a group or an individual can be grasped is an empirical problem that cannot be solved solely by observing interactions within the group. Rather, 'the communities' own theory of linguistic repertoire and speech' must be taken into account, in other words, the language ideologies and metalinguistic interpretations of speakers. Similar methodological suggestions are also made in the current debate on translinguaging practices, among others by Li Wei (2011), who suggests combining the observation of multilingual practices with metalinguistic commentaries by participants gained through interviews and group discussions. There is also a growing body of language biographical research which approaches the notion of repertoire from a subject perspective (for an overview see Kramersch 2009; Busch 2010).

The Research Group *Spracherleben* [Experiencing Language] at the Institute of Linguistics at the University of Vienna<sup>3</sup> began a few years ago to use a multimodal biographic method in research on linguistic diversity (Busch 2006). Work with what are known as 'language portraits' goes back to research on language awareness in primary school education (Neumann 1991; Krumm and Jenkins 2001). The school children received a body silhouette with the instruction to paint all their languages on it and to use a different colour for each. The instruction to the teachers was to use this exercise as an opportunity for the learners to talk about the country they came from or to compare the German language with their native language (Krumm and Jenkins 2001: 5–6). In a sense, a national multiculturalist orientation was given from the start, but



the exercise also gave rise to the expression of emotions and feelings tied to language and language use.

The empirical research this article draws on also uses language portraits but is based on methodological assumptions which do not refer to languages as national categories or bounded entities. Participants are asked to think about their linguistic repertoire, the codes, languages, the means of expression and communication that play a role in their lives and to map them with multicoloured felt pens in the body-shape drawing (Figure 1). It is up to the participants to define categories, to decide what is considered as a 'language' or a 'code' and how different linguistic resources are related. This often gives rise to representations that include terms such as 'sister language', 'body language', 'secret language', 'language of repression', and 'language of joy'. The picture first serves as a means of eliciting explanations regarding language practices, resources, and attitudes and acts at the same time as a point of reference. For instance, body or colour metaphors frequently structure the ensuing narrative. The picture is also considered as a mode of meaning making in its own right, which follows another logic than the verbal mode and therefore needs another specific analytical approach (see the discussion of the language portrait below).

In recent years, the research group at the University of Vienna has collected and evaluated several hundred of these multimodal language portraits in the context of various projects. It is of course true that the metalinguistic commentaries of speakers and the visual and verbal representations of their repertoires, which emerge during the research process are representations produced in a specific interactional situation. We do not consider them an image of the linguistic repertoire 'the way it really is', nor as an 'objective' reconstruction of the history of language acquisition. Selection, interpretation, and evaluation take place in the visual mode as much as in the verbal mode, and representation and reconstruction do not occur independently of social discourses. With this acknowledgement, in the following section, I single out one of these portraits and submit it to a close reading to show what this approach has to offer in terms of exploring linguistic repertoires.



*Figure 1: Template for the drawing of language portraits*

## French and German: experiencing the power of categories and of language ideologies

For the purpose of this article, I have chosen one of the many language portraits in which the power of languages as (national) categories as well as the desire to overcome or deconstruct such categorizations become particularly apparent. In this portrait, the traces left by the history of post-World War II Europe underline the impact of national ideologies linked to languages in a number of possible senses: that of Derrida's (1998: 71) understanding of 'monoculturalist homo-hegemony'; of linguistic identity constructs that attempt to create 'intra-national sameness and/or differences with other nations' (Wodak *et al.* 1999: 188); or of 'banal nationalism', the term by which Billig (1995: 6) conceives the endemic condition and 'the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced'.

In the context of a workshop conducted with teachers from the German-French border area of Saarland and Lorraine, Pascal, aged approximately 50, draws his language portrait (Figure 2). In the blank body silhouette provided, he sketches in his languages, completely fills in the outline, adds ears and at the bottom edge of the picture a hand, and then explains his portrait. In the visual and narrative description of his language experience, two major themes emerge which in fact frequently recur in the biographical representations of multilingual speakers, particularly in participants from border areas and the associated political conflicts which distinguish them. The themes are first, the feeling of being subjected to competing discourses involving mutually exclusive national identities, and, second, the development of strategies for achieving agency and for coping with contradictions. The particularly striking thing about Pascal's body image is the pronounced division into a red and a blue half. Pascal explains:

Was ich bei dieser Zeichnung zeichnen wollte: Blau ist halt die Farbe für Frankreich, Französisch, ich bin halt Franzose. Aber nicht soo gern, obwohl ich dort lebe, wie ich/wie meine andere Hälfte, also Saarländisch-Deutsch.

What I wanted to show with this drawing: blue is simply the colour for France, French, I am simply French. But I am not really as fond of this, despite living there, as I/as my other half, that is, Saarland-German.

This division in the drawing, which is depicted as one of conflict, is disrupted by a blue eye in the red half of the picture and by a red one in the blue half. Pascal explains it this way:

Und es überkommt doch einem oft, man ist doch nie wirklich - das eine oder das andere. Und selbst, wenn ich jetzt Franzose bin, in Frankreich, so hab ich doch immer ein deutsches AUGE. Und seh nicht nur auf die anderen sondern auf mich selbst auch. Wenn ich

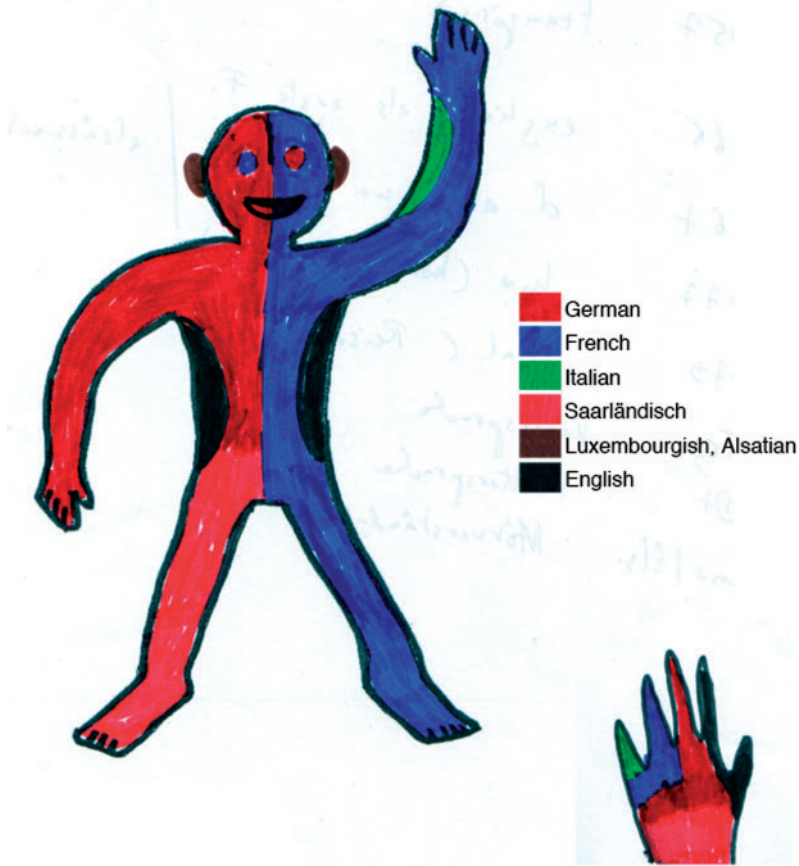


Figure 2: Pascal's representation of his linguistic repertoire

jetzt in Deutschland bin, so wie heute, so überkommt es mich doch auch, überfällt es mich, das ist wie ein Reflex, der Franzose in mir wehrt sich doch auch. (...) Wenn ich in der einen Sprache bin, habe ich immer die andere auch im Blick. (...) Auch die anderen haben einen immer im Blick.

And I am often overcome [by the feeling] that one is never really only—the one or the other. And even if I am now French, in France, I still always have a German EYE. And I not only look at others but also at myself. When I am in Germany now, as today, the feeling comes over me, it is like a reflex, the Frenchman inside me also defends himself somehow. (...) When I am in one language, I always also have my eye on the other. (...) Also the others always have their eyes on me.

Pascal sees himself as bilingual. Here, he considers his two languages as national languages which assign him two different identities. He struggles with a language ideology that considers bilingualism as the addition of two (mutually exclusive) monolingualisms. Nonetheless, in his perception the other language in each case, the language of the Other, is always co-present, that is, both in his own perspective and as seen from an outside perspective: both in self-observation, and in being observed. In his representation, he sees himself as belonging to two language worlds, but never entirely. Something always remains foreign and, as such, suspect.

Pascal's story is a history of a border in which German–French relations and the varied history of the Saarland are reflected, a region whose belonging to Germany or France following two world wars was contested for many years. Pascal's mother comes from Saarland. At the time of Pascal's birth, his father was stationed in Germany as a French soldier before being transferred shortly afterwards to Algeria. When his father returned from the war in Algeria after 3 years, his son failed to recognize him and did not understand his language. Pascal's French–German family repeatedly moved between the two countries, each change of residence accompanied by a change in the language environment. In Germany, his mother was blamed for her relationship with a foreign soldier, in France his father was blamed for his relations with a *boche*.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the family moved to France. Pascal grew up bilingual. His mother, he reports, enjoyed speaking German with him even later in France. He was often teased by his schoolmates: 'J'étais toujours le fils de la boche,'<sup>5</sup> he says in conversation, switching to French in this sentence. At age 18, Pascal confronted the question, one related to compulsory military service and his desire to become a teacher, as to which citizenship he should opt for. For him this meant, at the same time, a declaration of belonging. National service compelled him to define himself as a subject in the sense of subjecting himself to outside demands. Pascal's attempt to achieve dual citizenship, by which means he hoped to reconcile his life worlds and language worlds, was thwarted by the nation-state claim to exclusiveness; his desire for both-and was thwarted by either-or.

Und da hätte ich fast binational werden können, das war mein großer Traum, da wollte ich Deutsch-Franzose werden. (...) Aber bei den Franzosen hat's geheißen 'non, vous devez choisir'. Das war, das ist bis jetzt meine größte Frustration geblieben.

And I could almost have become a bi-national, that was my big dream, I wanted to become a German-French. (...) But for the French it was 'non, vous devez choisir'.<sup>6</sup> That was my biggest frustration up to now.

From the perspective of monolingual state ideologies, which Derrida (1998: 71) as we have seen calls 'homo-hegemonic', what is ambiguous is always suspect. Pascal's double identification as a *fils de la boche* and as a French citizen is at one and the same time an acknowledgement and a misjudgement. The

entanglement of language and the nation-state takes place not only through official language policy but also through language ideologies, through discourses on language, language use, and the legitimacy of speakers. The ideology of monolingualism equates national affiliation and language. It creates a dichotomy between interior and exterior, between one's 'own' language and a foreign language. An important aspect of this is the way in which constructs of national identity are internalized in the course of socialization, the way the master narratives enter the minor ones. Uncertainty about whether because of his ambiguous life trajectory he is recognized as a legitimate speaker is reflected in Pascal's picture with the mirror-inverted eyes and in his story with its motif of being observed and self-observation.

The theme described by [Derrida \(1998\)](#) of experiencing one's own language as that of the Other, of perceiving oneself as the Other, emerges repeatedly in Pascal's account. Pascal does not consider himself to be incomplete or deficient in one or the other language. Nor does he depict his two languages simply additively as separate entities. Rather, he describes himself as a subject constituted in the field of tension between his two languages and their constant co-presence when he says: 'When I am in one language, I always have an eye on the other. It is never so clearly separated.' The division of his portrait into a French and a German half therefore points primarily to the competing national language ideologies, which exert their power over the speaking subject through categorizations, monopolizing, and exclusions. In the following section, I will deal with strategies speakers can develop to position themselves against such monopolizing and exclusions and to break out of the categorizations that are founded on dichotomies or on binary opposites. Several such strategies become apparent from Pascal's portrait and his narrative. They are also part of his linguistic repertoire.

### **Desire, irony, and silence: transgressing language categories**

In his drawing, Pascal ascribes the role of acting and reacting mainly to the mouth, which along with the eyes he tries to colour in a mirror-inverted way. This means, he says,

dass ich dementsprechend auch reagieren kann, aktiv werden kann. Das heißt, ich kann auch mich selbst zum Beispiel bespötteln. Ich habe manchmal selbst auch Reaktionen in der einen oder anderen Kultur. Und dann versuch ich halt, das mit Distanz zu nehmen, denk dann, ja du hast jetzt reagiert, du hast überreagiert und die andere Hälfte von dir, die hätte das vielleicht anders gesehen. (...) Dann ist es oft sinnvoller halt, man hält halt den Mund.

that I can also react accordingly, can become active. That means that I can also make fun of myself, for example. Sometimes I also have reactions in the one or the other culture. And then I simply try to take it with some distance, then I think, yes, now you have reacted, you have overreacted, and your other half would perhaps

have seen that differently. (...) Then it is often better to keep one's mouth shut.

Here, Pascal describes two forms of reacting and acting: ironically distancing oneself and self-imposed silence. Irony and self-irony in Pascal's case involve carrying the categories of being German or being French to the extreme, caricaturing oneself in the role of the one or the other while distancing oneself. This can be seen as a strategy of varidirectional double-voicing, a term which Rampton (1995: 505–6) borrows from Bakhtin to describe language crossing practices which consist in inserting a new, clearly demarcated and opposed semantic intention into a discourse which has already an intention of its own. The self-imposed silence is thus not one that arises from a language deficit. Rather, it is one that originates in the awareness that the change in perspective calls into question every simple categorization, and reveals the constructedness of categories.

The brown ears inscribed in Pascal's language portrait stand for Luxembourgish and Alsatian, which according to his own account he understands but does not speak. The choice of colour is revealing, since as a mixed colour it contains the primary colours red and blue. In Pascal's perception, Luxembourgish and Alsatian defy the polarity between French and German. They belong to the border region, the space between, which he yearns for. Pascal's desire to escape the logic of the binary opposition between German and French and to identify with the in-between has influenced his life trajectory. After finishing school, he studied several years in Alsace, chose a life companion whose family came from Luxembourg, and took up the profession of German teacher. He settled down in France in the immediate vicinity of the border with Saarland and is endeavouring to pass on the German language to his children growing up in France. He himself has not quite succeeded in adapting to life in this region in-between. Referring to his friends in Alsace, he reports the following:

Wenn ich deutsch antwortete, da waren die immer ein bisschen frustriert, das gefiel ihnen nicht so, weil ich war halt der Deutsche. Also wieder der Feind, ne. Und wenn ich französisch antwortete, da war es auch wieder, du gehörst nicht zu uns.

When I answered in German, they were always a bit frustrated. They didn't like it that much, because I was then simply the German. Once again the enemy, you know. And when I answered in French, there it was again. You don't belong to us.

Pascal also mentions Italian and English as resources that are part of his linguistic repertoire. He learned English in school as a 'foreign language'. He describes it as a constricting black corset. For him, it is a language that he uses 'like a tool'. Quite in contrast with this is Italian, which he colours in green, a colour he likes, in his depiction of the arm raised in greeting. He associates Italian not only with his first big vacation trip as a youth but also with later

trips, on which he was able to communicate successfully ‘with his hands and feet’. Italian, to which a lengthy sequence is devoted in Pascal’s story, opens up for him a larger space in which to escape polarization.

In Pascal’s language portrait, the left half of the body representing German appears as a red area. Only when one looks closer does it become clear that the leg remains a lighter red colour, which he calls cherry red. This colour stands, as Pascal explains, for the language of Saarland. It was, he relates, the language that his mother liked to speak with him, his repertoire of intimacy that evokes early childhood: ‘My happiest period. I was surrounded by aunts and I spoke the language of Saarland.’ In school, the use of the regional dialect was banned. There ‘I was no longer allowed to speak it and consequently learned German,’ which he describes at another point as a ‘foreign language’ which you learned in school. The language of Saarland represents for Pascal not only the repertoire of childhood security but it also has for him, like Luxembourgish and Alsatian, the connotation of a language ‘in between’. The fact that the Rhine–Franconian dialect, in contrast with the standard languages of German and French, fulfils a border-crossing role may also be argued from a sociolinguistic standpoint, as Raasch (2008) shows. What Pascal expresses on the basis of the Saarland dialect—an idealizing desire for linguistic intimacy—is demonstrated by many language-biographical accounts. Such pre-Babel fantasies (Busch 2010), produced out of a lack, that is, *ex negativo*, may be interpreted as a longing for a language of universal understanding, for something intact that precedes hurt, monopolizing, and expulsion. Derrida’s notion of the prior-to-the-first language (1998), discussed earlier, points to something similar.

In describing his linguistic repertoire, Pascal not only presents himself as someone who is caught in the net of discursively constructed language categories and suffers as a result but also as someone who is striving for empowerment. He brings different strategies linked to language practices into play, strategies through which he attempts to soften and disrupt the power of categorizations: distancing irony and self-irony, self-imposed silence, the desire for a language between the dichotomy French–German (Alsatian, Luxembourgish), for a language beyond this (Italian) and for a language prior to it (the repertoire of early childhood).

## Representations of Lived and Embodied Experience

Pascal has supplemented his language portrait with an extended hand at the lower edge of the picture, one which takes on all colours of his linguistic repertoire. In the multicoloured hand the different competing languages are reconciled and function as resources in possible interactions. The hand symbolizes, as he explains, the partner in the interaction:

Man wird ja nur zum Menschen, wenn man in einem Umfeld mit anderen Menschen lebt, sonst ist man/sonst könnte man ja keine Sprache gebrauchen für die Kommunikation. (. . .) Damit wollte ich

zeigen, dass ich mich in den verschiedenen Sprachen mehr oder weniger gut äußern kann, je nachdem, wie er oder sie mich anspricht.

One only becomes a human being when one lives in an environment with other human beings. Otherwise one is/otherwise no language would be needed for communication. (...) By this I wanted to show that I can express myself more or less satisfactorily in different languages, depending on how he or she addresses me.

By this, Pascal indicates that he is aware that a linguistic repertoire is not something static but rather is achieved situationally in communicative interaction with others.

As a multimodal method, the language portrait provides two sets of data that permit inferences to be drawn concerning how speakers interpret their linguistic repertoire: a visual one and a narrative one. Meaning is created through both modes; one is neither the translation nor simply the illustration of the other. The visual mode is a mode in its own right and thus requires its own interpretive tool, as provided, for example, by Breckner (2007) with her segment analysis. In the visual mode, meaning is constituted by pictorial elements such as lines, contrasts, colours, areas, surfaces. Although narrations are structured in a linear and sequential way, the visual mode steers one's vision toward the whole (the *Gestalt*) and toward the relationality of the parts. Although the verbal mode favours diachronic continuity and synchronic coherence, in the visual mode contradiction, fractures, overlappings, and ambiguities can also remain unresolved (Breckner 2007). In Pascal's language portrait, the conspicuous red–blue, German–French division is disrupted by the colour-inverted eyes and mouth, and in this way it is made clear that the two dominant languages are not experienced independently of each other. Relationality is also produced by means of the colour scheme. In Pascal's portrait, brown ears stand for regiolects, which he considers as being in between the two national languages. The visual mode also allows for ambiguities and perspective shifts. In Pascal's drawing, the colour red forms on the one hand a contrast with blue; on the other hand the red area on closer examination is shown to be differentiated: the lighter red stands for the childhood repertoire of intimacy, the darker red for the standard German language. Through the body silhouette and the white paper, a framing is laid down for the language portrait, one that is usually taken up, exhausted or supplemented. Pascal instead makes use of the body silhouette provided by inscribing eyes, which point to self-observation and being observed, and extends it by adding ears and an extended hand. The picture repeatedly serves as a point of reference, and these references to the picture structure the interpreting and reconstructing narrative in a different way than questions concerning the individual's language biography would do. Through the narrative elicited by the image, the current experience of language comes into focus, that is, the primary concern is what meaning speakers attach to their



linguistic resources, their language practices, and their language attitudes in particular, and what significant lived experiences underpin these constructs of meaning.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the language portrait discussed here as an example of how speakers depict their linguistic repertoire, a two-fold move of deconstruction is involved. On the one hand, what is thought in terms of binary opposites and hierarchical categories as such is looked at and a provisional attempt is made to invert them. On the other, one moves beyond the field on which the opposition is based, in which case the concern is not about neutralizing or synthesizing it within a third element, but rather about a shift in the binary logic itself. The previously cited strategies of self-imposed silence, making fun of oneself and caricaturing oneself, irony, and playing with contradictions are opportunities for shifting and transgressing, in which opposites ultimately are allowed to retain their contradictoriness. Irony as a form of stylization makes it possible to remove oneself from the constraint of unequivocal identification as becomes clear from the studies on translanguaging mentioned in the first part of this article. Irony and parody constitute a special form of double-voicing, by which Bakhtin (1981: 324) understands the co-presence of 'two voices, two meanings, and two expressions' which are 'dialogically interrelated (...) as if they actually hold a conversation with each other'. Such strategies of subverting unequivocal (national or other) categories become clear from language portraits in which translocal repertoires are represented, not only in the case of speakers who, such as in the example discussed, are moving around within border areas, but even more so and in less predictable combinations in the case of speakers who, under the conditions of global mobility and super-diversity, have to deal with a multitude of different spaces of communication.

If one considers the linguistic repertoire from the perspective of poststructuralist thought, it becomes clear that discursively constructed categories, because of the fact that they can always be reinvoked, display their own dynamics. Even if one recognizes them as such and plays with them such as in translanguaging they still retain their power. This can be experienced especially when language is not self-evident, for example in the case of prohibitions, exclusions, pressure to assimilate, withdrawal of legitimacy, insistence on professions of loyalty, in other words, whenever languages are experienced as ideological categories external to the subject, whenever the normativity of language in Butler's sense is reinvoked. To simply wish away categories is not sufficient. Derrida (1972: 36) cautions us against succumbing to a 'beyond' or a 'neither/nor'. That would entail forgetting that dealing with categories is always a matter of hierarchies, opposites, and conflicts:

To deconstruct the opposition is first, at a given moment, to overthrow hierarchy. To neglect this phase of inversion is to forget the

conflictual and subordinating structure of the opposition. It is then to move too quickly, without keeping a hold on the previous opposition, to a *neutralization* which, *in practice*, would leave the previous sphere intact, would entail giving up all needs of actually *intervening* there.

If the power of linguistic categorization is understood to be constitutive for the subject and if one becomes aware of the opportunity that a practice of deconstruction offers, this can contribute to expanding the concept of an interactional repertoire in several respects.

First, languages and codes are not understood as a ‘Ding an sich’ (Kant) but rather in relation to one another, in distinction from one another, or as differentiated in themselves. Various elements that can be invoked in interactions but which also can only be pointed to in the form of quotations mutually condition one another and form a heteroglossic whole, which in Bakhtin’s sense (Todorov 1984:56) encompasses the co-presence of different discourses, codes, and voices.

Secondly, the meanings that speakers attribute to languages, codes, and linguistic practices are linked with personal experience and life trajectories, especially with the way in which linguistic resources are experienced in the context of discursive constructions of national, ethnic, and social affiliation/non-affiliation. These meanings are subject to changes which involve both biographical discontinuities (through migration, for example) and sociopolitical reconfigurations (e.g. the establishing of boundaries).

Thirdly, under the conditions of super-diversity, speakers participate in varying spaces of communication which may be arranged sequentially, in parallel, juxtapositionally, or in overlapping form. Each of these spaces has its own language regime—its own set of rules, orders of discourse, and language ideologies—in which linguistic resources are assessed differently. If speakers participate in a space of communication, they position themselves in relation to the rules that apply therein, either by submitting to them willingly or reluctantly or by transgressing them. In each instance, they bring with them experiences and evaluations from other spaces which they inscribe into the practices involved.

Fourthly, the linguistic repertoire points both backwards and forwards. Backwards, since languages insofar as they constitute the subject are embodied by him. This physical dimension is the subject both of Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the linguistic *habitus* (1992) and even earlier on of Merleau-Ponty’s (2009 [1945]) phenomenologically marked approach. Merleau-Ponty not only views language as cognitively and intentionally determined but also stresses the important role of the body in relation to language and memory (2009 [1945]: 221). He views speech in relation to daily practice, which is recursive, embodied, and intuitive. The linguistic repertoire, one could deduce from this, also carries traces of its inscription in the body, traces which—triggered by current perceptions—can be invoked in the form of pleasurable or angst-ridden memories. The linguistic repertoire also points forwards, because

ideas, desires, and imaginations that are also linked to language come to the surface, as Kramersch (2009) has elaborated in connection with language learning. In doing so, she bases herself on Kristeva (1980), who understands the desire for identification with the (idealized) other as a form of desire in language.

Gumperz's notion of linguistic repertoire still proves to be productive, especially as the repertoire is seen as a whole, encompassing all the accepted ways of formulating messages, thus enabling a move away from thinking languages and codes as bounded entities. A poststructuralist extension of the notion sees linguistic choices not only determined by the situational character of interaction and by grammatical and social rules and conventions, but sees language practices also as subjected to the time-space dimensions of history and biography. The repertoire can thus be seen as a hypothetical structure, which evolves by experiencing language in interaction on a cognitive and on an emotional level and is inscribed into corporal memory and embodied as linguistic habitus and which includes traces of hegemonic discourses. These discourses are expressed in categorizations that are backed up by inclusive and exclusive language ideologies. Drawing on a broad range of earlier voices, discourses, and codes, the linguistic repertoire forms a heteroglossic and contingent space of potentialities which includes imagination and desire, and to which speakers revert in specific situations.

In this article, I have examined the issue of how poststructuralist approaches may contribute to expanding the concept of repertoire originally developed from an interactional perspective, and in doing so I have drawn on Derrida's practice of deconstruction in particular, which he applies to his own language history in 'Monolingualism of the Other', as well as on Judith Butler's notions of the normative power of language and of the constitution of the subject. An empirical method was presented here that may be seen as a supplement to the observation and analysis of interactions. It allows one to submit discursively constructed categories which dominate the language experience of speakers to a 'deconstructive' examination. What distinguishes this creative, multimodal method, which is based on visual and narrative descriptions, is that the change in mode to one of thinking in pictures contributes to foregrounding the emotional experience of language, power relations, and desire. This article is offered as an attempt to initiate a debate on the directions in which the repertoire concept might be further developed to also include language practices, which are characteristic of the conditions of super-diversity.

## NOTES

- 1 For a broader sociolinguistic reading of Derrida's philosophical text, see McNamara (2010).
- 2 Derrida's concept of deconstruction was the subject of considerable controversy

and reinterpreted by him again and again in different writings and interviews. We base ourselves here mainly on an interview that was conducted with him in 1971 (Derrida 1972).

3 <http://heteroglossia.net>.

4 Pejorative French term for Germans.

5 'I was always the son of the boche.'

6 'No, you have to choose.'

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

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