

Summary

The number of people with a so-called migration background, or migration history, in Germany has increased significantly over the past years, up to 23.6 per cent of the population in 2019. There is a steadily increasing diversity in German schools with regard to the language repertoire of the students, consisting in a great variety of languages rather than large groups of speakers. This has given rise to two key issues: one is the significance of the official language/s and the students' first languages (L1) for personal identity and integration. The other is the way a political system deals with its citizens' plurality regarding language and culture.

As is now widely accepted, language plays an important role for identity. The role accorded to it by society and individuals has an impact on access to cultural heritage and identity construction. Language is therefore a crucial factor for the willingness of migrants to participate in a new linguistic and cultural community. Access to cultural heritage requires literacy competence, including the necessary cognitive abilities. The question of whether or not to support biliteracy in the education system is rooted in fundamental ideas about the principles of living together in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts.

Against this backdrop, the interdisciplinary study at hand pursues three main objectives:

First, the significance of biliteracy for the identity formation of adolescents whose first language (L1) is not at all or not exclusively German.

Second, the analysis and classification of the current institutional language policies of the German Federal States (*Bundesländer*) according to their support of first languages other than German.

And third, the formulation of a language policy framework that takes into account the needs of L1-speakers with respect to their first language other than German.

In Chapter 2 (*Theoretische Grundlagen*), main theoretical terms and concepts such as Literality and Orality, Biliteracy, Identity, Adolescence and Language Policy are presented in order to specify the research objectives. Biliteracy as a form of individual multilingualism involves various dimensions such as language acquisition, language competence and language use. In this study, a broad concept of biliteracy is adopted, defining it as any and all instances in which communication occurs in two or more languages in or around writing – independent of the degree of mastery and the mode of acquisition. Identity, then, is seen as a process of calibration between the inner and outer worlds, where different aspects of

identity (personal, social and cultural) become relevant, if an individual is confronted with external cultural factors. The climax of identity development takes place during adolescence, with language, among other factors, playing an important role in its development. The promotion of languages in an institutional setting is part of language policy and therefore concerns language rights. Rights, in themselves, have to be legitimized by the state, which – in the case of language rights – has led to multiple explanations, movements and theories surrounding various aspects, for example the definition of language, whom or what these rights address, in which socio-political context they are to be implemented and for what reason, to name just some. Besides this overview of the language-policy debate, the interdependence of theory and practice is crucial to this research field. Three approaches (Language Ecology, Linguistic Human Rights and Minority Language Rights) as well as further developments are therefore discussed.

Following this theoretical setting, the results of an analysis of the institutional promotion of so-called new minority languages in Germany are presented in Chapter 3 (*Die institutionellen Sprachförderpolitiken in Deutschland in Bezug auf die nichtdeutsche/n Erstsprache/n*). In order to understand the variety of heritage language classes in Germany, a historical overview is given. For the analysis, official open source documents of the Federal States have been evaluated. Currently, nine out of sixteen Federal States offer heritage language classes. The analysis reveals four different models of such classes and various ways of organizing them. One state was chosen to represent each model for the study: Baden-Württemberg (model of representation), the Free State of Bavaria (model of representation), North Rhine-Westphalia (mixed model) and the Free State of Saxony (school model).

In Chapter 4 (*Biliterate Individuen im Fokus: die Studie “Muttersprache/n”*), the “Mother Tongue/s” (“*Muttersprache/n*”) study undertaken from 2013 to 2015 is described in detail. The predominantly qualitative two-phase study focuses on 10th-graders at grammar schools (*Gymnasien*) in the four Federal States of Germany named above. In the first phase, all 10th-graders filled out a questionnaire with closed and open questions. In the second phase, individual participants were asked for an interview. In total, 505 paper-based questionnaires and 23 guided interviews were conducted.

The data analysis of the questionnaire is set out in Chapter 5 (*Datenauswertung der Studie “Muttersprache/n”*). The analysis follows the different aspects of the questionnaire, such as language competence and language use, the manifestation and importance of biliteracy and questions concerning heritage language classes. The participants were categorized into three different groups: L1 = Ger-

man (N=322), L1 = German and non-German (N=111) and L1 = non-German (N=72). In total, the students named 45 languages.

Chapter 6 (*Zusammenführende Auswertung der Daten*) links up the data analyzed with regard to the manifestation of individual multilingualism and biliteracy as well as to the importance of biliteracy for individual identity. The questions of this section consider, for example, general issues concerning the significance of reading and writing, meaningful reading and writing contexts and individual learning purposes. The codings of the answers of the open questions are subsumed under four aspects regarding the following facets of identity: personal, social, cultural and general aspects. Also, a conclusion is drawn concerning the current promotion of so-called new minority languages in the institutional school system.

The three main objectives of this research project are revisited in Chapter 7 (*Die drei Ziele revisited: weiterführende Erkenntnisse*). Concerning the importance of biliteracy for the development of individual identity, it can be concluded that more than one third of the participants of the study has an extended language repertoire. The wide spectrum of languages represented highlights the tendency towards an increasing variety of languages spoken by individual speakers only, rather than large speaker groups, which is important for further research. The self-perception of language competence decreases from receptive to productive and from oral to writing skills. For most students who acquire reading skills in their non-German language, reading and writing usually starts before entering elementary school, similar to their monolingual German classmates. However, some students acquire these competences at different ages because there are no consistent or compulsory heritage language classes. This factor complicates the organization of heritage language education, as it increases the heterogeneity within classes. 91% of the languages in this study are written in an alphabet-based script. Interestingly, in this study, the script or writing system of the non-German language did not turn out to have an impact on the acquisition of literacy skills. Instead, other factors such as support by the family or institutions other than the school, as well as individual needs play a more important role. Particularly, formal language competences seem to be difficult to acquire in daily life, which underlines the importance of institutional provisions. For students with German as a second language, German is also essential as a central medium of communication in daily life, with friends and at school. The importance of biliteracy for the identity of multilingual adolescents, therefore, turns out to be complex and wide-ranged, best illustrated in a multidimensional field. Several thematic aspects make up the first dimension: language acquisition, self-perception of literacy competences and language use. The second aspect seems to be particularly

dynamic, because it is influenced by parents, relatives and other people with the same non-German language. The second dimension comprises the importance of biliteracy, meaningful reading and writing contexts and individual language learning goals. In addition, there are further factors that came up in the interviews, such as personal biographical experiences in connection with language. Although this study does not consider the degree of mastery and the mode of acquisition to be relevant for identifying individuals as biliterate due to the broad concept of biliteracy adopted here, students themselves do in fact regard the degree of mastery as important for rating their own biliteracy. This is why they feel set back in the case of negative feedback by others. One conclusion is to support the development of realistic language awareness in order to help them become more self-confident with their non-German first language.

In regard to the second objective, the analysis and classification of the current institutional language policies of the German Federal States according to the support of first languages other than German, it is now widely accepted that mother tongue instruction plays an important role for the identity of children and adolescents. However, the range of institutional programs on offer is neither transparent nor comparable due to the fact that each Federal State organizes and communicates its own programs differently. Nevertheless, a trend is discernible: The aims of heritage or mother tongue language classes have changed over time, from a phase considering them from a viewpoint of intended remigration to the country of origin to a phase of regarding multilingualism as a resource in an increasingly diverse society. This latter view may be identified in the tendency to turn away from classes run by consulates or embassies, as well as in the fact that heritage language didactics are becoming a more intensely investigated field of research.

Considering the political framework of institutional support of first languages at the national level, there is still no legal adaptation of the *Council Directive on the Education of the Children of Migrant Workers* (Council of the European Union) to the needs of “new minority language” speakers, although in practice it has been extended to cover non-official languages not spoken in former recruitment states, for example Russian or Vietnamese. Efforts at the EU level to broaden the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (Council of Europe) or the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (Council of Europe) have also failed, while at the international level the UNESCO claims “new minority language” rights in the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*. Nevertheless, two key elements may be drawn on to legitimize the support of non-German first languages: First, the language-identity link highlighted in this study with regard to reading and writing. And second, the

acceptance and appreciation of multilingualism in private language use, which may also include literacy skills and therefore requires institutional support as well. The question of legal implementation can be viewed from two perspectives: top-down and bottom-up. Top-down means that debate is required on the recognition and implementation of linguistic rights as cultural human rights in regard to all speakers or minority languages with the aim of creating public awareness and, in the long term, of shaping the political environment. With regard to the federal system of Germany, the study shows that there are Federal States that attempt to react creatively to the specific needs of non-German first language speakers. Some education authorities and schools are already aiming to establish educational programs depending on their organizational and financial capacities – thereby representing bottom-up initiatives. The current study can be regarded as contributing empirical data to such initiatives.

In future, heterogeneity in German classrooms will increase even further. Therefore, the development of adequate concepts to support biliteracy and language awareness for all adolescents within the institutional education system in Germany is urgently required.

This study addresses researchers in multilingualism as well as teachers and decision makers in the domain of language policy, in particular education policy, while also providing valuable data for an interested public.

Keywords

new minority languages, individual multilingualism, biliteracy, language and identity, language policy and language rights, heritage language classes, multilingual adolescents, Federal States of Germany, qualitative study mother tongue, multilingualism at school

neue Minderheitensprachen, individuelle Mehrsprachigkeit, Biliteralität, Sprache und Identität, Sprachenförderpolitik und Sprachenrechte, Herkunftssprachenunterricht, mehrsprachige Jugendliche, Vergleich der Bundesländer in Deutschland, qualitative Studie Muttersprache, Mehrsprachigkeit und Schule