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Exploring Croatian Adolescents' Multilingual Identity

A Mixed Methods Study

1. Introduction

Multilingualism is, both from the synchronic and the diachronic perspective, a global phenomenon, which has been receiving much attention in diverse academic fields, including several linguistic disciplines. Whether looked into from the social or the individual perspective, the notion is challenging to define. The European Commission understands multilingualism as »the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives«. ¹ More precisely, one of the objectives of the EU language policy states that every EU citizen should, in addition to his/her mother tongue, master two other languages. ²

At the individual level, which is the perspective taken in the present article, Haukås et al. believe that multilingualism refers to »the dynamic and integrated knowledge and/or use of more

Multilingual identity can be understood as the learner's explicit self-identification as a multilingual, stemming from an awareness of their linguistic repertoire. This identity evolves over time, forming a bridge between the learner's past and present experiences, while also serving as a foundation for future multilingual identities. This paper presents the findings of a mixed methods study investigating the multilingual identity of Croatian high school pupils learning foreign languages, conceptualized as an emergent property shaped by their self-identification as multilinguals. The results indicate a generally positive outlook on multilingual identity among learners, though qualitative differences are also observed.

1 European Commission: *Final Report*, p. 6.

2 European Parliament: *Language Equality*.

than one language or language variety«.³ According to Aronin, multilingualism is a phenomenon related to the individual's ability to use three or more languages.⁴ Furthermore, Rutgers et al. underline that multilingualism includes not only proficient multilinguals, but also ›emergent‹ multilinguals who study a foreign language (FL) in school.⁵ As multilingualism is nowadays perceived as a positive resource for individuals, scholars suggest many benefits related to the notion: increased cognitive flexibility, better language learning skills and metalinguistic awareness, increased open-mindedness and creativity, increased academic performance and intercultural awareness, as well as economic advantages.⁶ Multilingualism necessarily takes into account the individual's reflection on the relation between the languages he/she masters – speaks or studies – and his or her identity. In general, according to Siebenhütter, language acquisition and use can be understood as identity creating elements, and language can be seen as a part of self-understanding and reflection.⁷ Multilingualism can be analysed from a psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, or socio-psychological perspective.⁸ As for our research, it is situated primarily within the framework of applied linguistics as related to FL learning and teaching.

2. Setting up the context of the research

The implications of this research are placed in the context of multilingual education in Croatia as a monolingual country. Croatia has a rich tradition of learning various FLs, however, in different periods, depending on social and historical circumstances, the status of an FL as a subject in the Croatian education system has changed, as have the number of FLs taught.⁹ According to Letica Krevelj, despite this rich tradition, over the years, English has become the ›lingua franca‹ and the most popular FL in Croatia, since it has

3 Haukås et al.: *The Ungspråk Project*, p. 2.

4 Aronin: *What Is Multilingualism?*

5 Rutgers et al.: *Multilingualism*, p. 2.

6 Letica Krevelj: *Strani jezik i višejezičnost*, p. 31; Vrhovac: *Poučavanje elemenata strane kulture*, p. 304; Haukås et al.: *School Students' Beliefs*, p. 1; Rutgers et al.: *Multilingualism*, p. 3; Siebenhütter: *The Multilingual Profile*, p. 2.

7 Siebenhütter: *The Multilingual Profile*, p. 5.

8 Haukås et al.: *School Students' Beliefs*; Rutgers et al.: *Multilingualism*; Fisher et al.: *Participative Multilingual Identity Construction*; Aronin/Ó Laoire: *Exploring multilingualism*; Kresić: *Sprache, Sprechen und Identität*; Dressler: *Exploring Linguistic Identity*; Gayton and Fisher: *Multilingual Identity Construction*; Siebenhütter: *The Multilingual Profile*.

9 Košuta et al.: *Plurilingualism*; Kapović: *Strani jezici*.

assumed the main role in international communication, and as such it is taught as the first FL in the countries of Europe and the world, as well as in Croatia.¹⁰ In terms of encouraging and promoting multilingualism, the Croatian educational context relies on the relevant documents of the Council of Europe and the European Union on language learning and teaching,¹¹ in order to give sufficient attention to FLs in national curricula. In this sense, Mihaljević Djigunović, Lujčić and Letica Krevelj give a certain number of recommendations for encouraging multilingualism, and for designing and applying appropriate methods in language teaching that would strengthen multilingualism.¹²

As for the status of FLs as a taught subject and the possibility of choosing a particular FL, from the 2003/04 school year, it is mandatory for pupils to choose an FL in year 1 of primary school,¹³ which thus becomes their first FL that they must continue to study until the end of their primary education, i.e. year 8. They can, but are not required to, choose a second FL in year 4 of primary school.¹⁴ The place of an FL in the curricula of Croatian secondary schools depends on the type of secondary school (grammar school, vocational school). However, all pupils are obliged to study at least one FL.¹⁵

In general, according to data collected by Kapović,¹⁶ FLs are studied significantly more in secondary school than in primary school, which is especially evident in the case of less represented languages, since English is ubiquitous at both levels. Thus, in secondary schools, in addition to English (95.92%), a significantly larger number of pupils study German (37.34%), and the share of Italian in secondary schools is almost twice as high (14.8%) as the share in primary schools (7.86%). As for French (4.42%) and Spanish (2.22%), they are also a lot more represented in secondary than in primary schools.

In such circumstances, it is evident that the Croatian educational context at primary and the secondary school level generally offers a relatively wide range of FLs that pupils can choose from. However, unresolved issues of language policy and pedagogic-organisational difficulties (the transi-

10 Letica Krevelj: *Strani jezik i višejezičnost*, p. 27.

11 Lujčić: *Dvojezično i višejezično obrazovanje*; Košuta et al.: *Plurilingualism*; Letica Krevelj: *Strani jezik i višejezičnost*, p. 28; Kapović: *Strani jezici*.

12 Mihaljević Djigunović: *Strani jezici u kurikulumu*; Lujčić: *Dvojezično i višejezično obrazovanje*; Letica Krevelj: *Strani jezik i višejezičnost*.

13 Buljan Culej: *Preliminarni hrvatski rezultati*.

14 Košuta et al.: *Plurilingualism*, p. 89.

15 Lujčić: *Dvojezično i višejezično obrazovanje*, p. 112.

16 Kapović: *Strani jezici*.

tion from primary school level to secondary school level, the neglect of continuity, the question of how to value an acquired linguistic repertoire, FL instruction which depends on various factors related to a particular school context) raise questions about the status of an FL as a subject, and thus the possibility of pupils systematically building their multilingual and multicultural competences. Bearing all this in mind, there is a need to investigate the way in which a learner as an individual reflects on his/her multilingualism, how he/she sees himself/herself as a multilingual person in the future, and thus outlines his/her multilingual profile. So far, a number of studies have explored different aspects of multilingualism and multilingual competence.¹⁷ As for the Croatian educational system, several studies have explored aspects of learner's multilingual competence, mainly among adult learners,¹⁸ or multilingualism from the teacher perspective.¹⁹

3. Literature overview

In this part, our aim is to present elements of a theoretical framework, especially in relation to the concepts of identity, linguistic identity and multilingual identity. As an interdisciplinary concept, identity can be viewed from several perspectives: for example psychological (which considers identity as being developed rather than constructed), sociocultural (which underlines the relational dimension of identity) and poststructuralist (considering identity as multiple phenomena presenting dynamic and shifting dimensions).²⁰ Identity can broadly be defined as »how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future«. ²¹ Since language is viewed as integral to identity,²² there are various definitions

17 Norton: *Identity and Language Learning*; Haukås et al.: *Developing and Validating*; Rutgers et al.: *Multilingualism*; Siebenhütter: *The Multilingual Profile*; Fisher et al.: *Participative Multilingual Identity Construction*.

18 Horvatić Čajko: *Knowledge*; Petravić/Šenjog Golub: *Višejezičnost i višekulturalnost*.

19 Trinki/Letica Krevelj: *Multilingualism*; Knežević: *Priprema li inicijalno obrazovanje*.

20 Erikson: *Exploring Linguistic Identity*; Vygotsky: *Interaction*; Norton: *Identity and Language Learning*; Haukås et al.: *School Students' Beliefs*; Rutgers et al.: *Multilingualism*; Fisher et al.: *Participative Multilingual Identity Construction*; Forbes et al.: *Developing a Multilingual Identity*; Kresić: *Sprache, Sprechen und Identität*; Dressler: *Exploring Linguistic Identity*; Siebenhütter: *The Multilingual Profile*.

21 Norton: *Identity and Language Learning*, p. 45, cited by Rutgers et al.: *Multilingualism*, p. 2.

22 Rutgers et al.: *Multilingualism*, p. 2.

of linguistic identity.²³ While addressing this issue, Kresić determines that linguistic identity is a flexible phenomenon, that it is created by participants in communicative processes, that these processes comprise different forms of communication (dialogic or narrative) and that the flexibility and the possible multiplicity of identity are based on the inner-linguistic and multilingual competencies of individuals.²⁴

As for multilingual identity, scholars mostly emphasize that it is related to the way in which an individual identifies himself or herself in relation to each of the languages in his/her linguistic repertoire or how he or she sees each language in that repertoire.²⁵ When it comes to the linguistic repertoire, it can be seen as »an integrated set of resources that are in constant mutual interaction and development and that have an inherent potential of boosting speakers' proficiency in the languages they already know or are currently learning«.²⁶

For the purpose of our research, we will rely on the definition of multilingual identity proposed by Haukås et al., who emphasize that it refers to »one's explicit self-identification as multilingual« precisely because the individual is aware of having a multilingual repertoire.²⁷ This notion reflects a theoretical perspective on identity and relates to a core identity, that is, »a temporary fixed sense of what one is«. ²⁸ As emphasised by Fisher et al., this identity connects one's past, present and future (possible) images of oneself and provides guidance for actions and the interpretation of experience.²⁹ Such self-identification, as underlined by some authors, can be empowering.³⁰ This definition stems from a holistic understanding of multilingual identity that affects some dimensions of identity such as beliefs, attitudes and personal life scenarios.³¹ Some scholars point out that the awareness of one's own multilingualism and self-identification as multilingual can greatly influence the status and structure of an individual's language repertoire in the future – whether he/she will continue to learn the languages

23 Janich: *Werbesprache*; Kresić: *Sprache, Sprechen und Identität*; Edwards: *Language and Identity*; Siebenhütter: *The Multilingual Profile*.

24 Kresić: *Sprache der Identität*, pp. 6, 20, cited by Siebenhütter: *The Multilingual Profile*, p. 3.

25 Storto et al.: *Visualising*; Fisher et al.: *Participative Multilingual Identity Construction*; Rutgers et al.: *Multilingualism*; Haukås et al.: *Developing and Validating*.

26 Storto et al.: *Visualising*, p. 2039.

27 Haukås et al.: *Developing and Validating*, p. 406.

28 Block: *Issues*, p. 18.

29 Fisher et al.: *Participative Multilingual Identity Construction*, p. 3.

30 Ibid.; Pavlenko: *Bilingual Selves*.

31 Aronin: *Multi-Competence*.

he/she is already learning and whether he/she will decide to start learning other languages.³²

Researchers have attempted to operationalize multilingual identity in various ways. For Haukås et al.,³³ the concept encompasses various aspects: (a) language use habits in the sense of the context and the purposes of learning as well as speaker's attitudes towards a particular language; (b) pupils' beliefs about multilingualism; (c) the future multilingual self in the sense of the »learners' future-oriented self-conception as speakers or users of multiple languages«³⁴ which is related to the learner motivation to learn languages; (d) open-mindedness in the context of learners' intercultural competence which is usually associated with »learners' open, unprejudiced and positive attitudes towards diversity«;³⁵ and (e) other significant variables related to self-identification as multilingual, such as attitudes towards the languages pupils know, gender, academic achievement, out of school experience such as travel experience, living abroad, friends' language repertoires, and parents'/carers' education. Forbes et al.³⁶ consider that it is shaped by: (a) learners' experiences of languages and language learning in the sense of learners' contact and interaction with languages in various life contexts; (b) an evaluation of languages and themselves as language learners in the sense of their beliefs, attitudes, values, self-efficacy, self-esteem and goals; and (c) emotions related to identity formation and their role in the language learning process.

As far as previous research is concerned, the studies mostly focus on adult learners and it is quite recently that adolescent, i.e. secondary school, learners have come into research focus. Haukås et al. carried out research in the Norwegian context about pupils' beliefs about the benefits of multilingualism and about individual factors which were significantly correlated to students' positive beliefs about multilingualism.³⁷ They found out that pupils held various beliefs related to the benefits of multilingualism: they were more positive about the benefits related to the language learning process and less positive about the general cognitive advantages. In addition, no statistical differences were found in pupils' beliefs about multilingualism between learners who do self-identify as being multilingual and those who

32 Fisher et al.: *Participative Multilingual Identity Construction*; Henry: *L2 Motivation*; Henry/Thorsen: *The Ideal Multilingual Self*.

33 Haukås et al.: *Developing and Validating*, pp. 407–408.

34 Ibid., p. 5.

35 Ibid.

36 Forbes et al.: *Developing a Multilingual Identity*, p. 435.

37 Haukås et al.: *School Students' Beliefs*, p. 2.

do not or those who study only one FL and those who study two FLs. In their study conducted with secondary school pupils in England, Bailey et al.³⁸ also found out that students had rather neutral views about the benefits of multilingualism, and mostly did not identify as multilingual even though they studied an FL at school. However, a correlation was found between their self-identification as multilingual and their beliefs about multilingualism. Participants also did not have high scores on the future multilingual self-scale and they did not see themselves in the future as speaking many languages very well. The authors also underlined the great potential schools have as environments where learners are exposed to various languages and their role in developing learners' multilingual identity. In their research with secondary school pupils in England, Forbes et al. concluded that appropriate pedagogical interventions may have a positive impact on the development of learners' multilingual identity in the sense of their identification as multilingual, their language beliefs and self-beliefs and their emotions relating to language.³⁹ In the Croatian context, the multilingual identity of adolescent FL learners is an under-researched area and our study attempts to fill this research gap.

4. Research design

In our study, particular attention will be given to individuals' linguistic repertoires and to their multilingual identity. It is understood as learners' explicit self-identification as multilingual based on the awareness of their linguistic repertoire and the way in which this self-identification is related to their FL use, to what they think about multilingualism, and to how they see themselves using their FLs in the future.

4.1. Aim and research questions

The aim of this study was to explore some aspects of the multilingual identity of Croatian adolescent FL learners. Three research questions were formulated: 1. Do the participants identify themselves as multilingual persons and why? 2. What are their FL use habits, beliefs about multilingualism and their future multilingual self? 3. How is their self-identification related to their FL use habits, beliefs about multilingualism and their future multilingual self?

38 Bailey et al.: *Having a Decent Understanding*.

39 Forbes et al.: *Developing a Multilingual Identity*.

4.2. Participants

The participants were 120 adolescents at three Croatian secondary (grammar) schools in the largest urban area of the country and the convenient sampling method was used. They were aged 14–18 ($M = 16.53$; $SD = 1.20$) and attended grades 1 (8%), 2 (46%) and 4 (46%). The highest number of pupils attended a general grammar school (53%), 32% attended a science-oriented grammar school, and 15% of them a language-oriented one. As for their gender, 68% were female and 32% were male. All pupils learned two FLs at school. Their first FL was English (99%) or German (1%) and their second FL was English (1%), German (71%), French (15%), Spanish (12%) or Italian (1%). The third FL is also learned in grammar school by 20% of participants and is mostly French (46%), followed by Spanish (25%), Italian (8%), German (4%) and other FLs (17%).

4.3. Instruments

A mixed methods research design was used in the study. Quantitative and qualitative data on learners' multilingual identity were gathered by a questionnaire in the Croatian language consisting of close-ended and open-ended questions adapted from Haukås et al.⁴⁰ In the demographic section, questions elicited information on the participant's gender, age, type of school, grade and languages learned at school.

The language use habits scale consisted of eight statements related to the frequency of use of the given FL learned at school in various communication situations and used a 5-point Likert scale (1 – never and 5 – always). The same scale was offered for each FL self-reported by the participants as being learned as a school subject. Cronbach's alpha for the scales was as follows: 0.84 for the first FL use habits, 0.79 for the second FL, and 0.69 for the third FL.

The beliefs about multilingualism (BAM) scale also consisted of eight statements related to the cognitive, affective, economic and academic benefits of being multilingual, as well as to participants' language awareness. Each statement was accompanied by a 5-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree and 5 – strongly agree) and Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.85.

The future multilingual self (FMS) scale included seven statements on the participant's self-image as a multilingual in the future and his/her attitude towards the future knowledge of multiple languages. Each statement

40 Haukås et al.: *Developing and Validating*.

was accompanied by a 5-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree and 5 – strongly agree) and Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.78.

Learner's self-perception as a multilingual was elicited by the question ›Are you multilingual?‹ with the alternatives offered Yes/No/I am not sure. Each participant was then asked to explain his/her choice.

4.4. Data collection and analysis

The study was conducted in autumn 2023. The participants filled in the questionnaire in an online format during regular FL classes, in about 15 minutes. The informed permission of school headmasters, as well as parental/learner consent, were obtained from all participants. The quantitative data were statistically analysed by means of SPSS 24. The qualitative data gathered by the open-ended question ›Could you explain why you consider / do not consider yourself to be multilingual or you are not sure?‹ were coded, categorised and analysed. A coding system was developed based on the themes emerging from the data. The themes were then organised into categories representing reasons why learners did or did not consider themselves multilingual or why they were not sure about it. Both authors coded the answers independently, the achieved inter-coder reliability was high (90%) and differences between researchers were resolved through discussion.

5. Results

In this section we present the analyses based on the quantitative and qualitative data on the researched aspects of Croatian adolescents' multilingual identity. Our study addressed the issues of their self-identification as multilingual, their language use habits, and beliefs about multilingualism, as well as their future multilingual self.

5.1. Participants' self-identification as multilingual

Our first research question was aimed at determining whether Croatian adolescents consider themselves as multilingual persons and how they explain their self-identification. The majority of learners (63%) considered themselves multilingual, 23% of them were not sure whether they were multilingual, while 13% of learners did not think that they were multilingual. Qualitative data provided more insight into participants' views. They

comprised the answers learners gave to the open-ended question ›Could you explain why you consider / do not consider yourself to be multilingual or you are not sure?‹ Participants who considered themselves multilingual (N = 77) stated the following reasons presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Qualitative data on the reasons supporting learners' self-perception as multilingual

Reason	Yes
Learning several FLs	14
Having the knowledge of several FLs	30
Using several FLs	28

The data suggested that participants who considered themselves multilingual did so because they study (›I have been learning several languages for the majority of my life, I can get by with the languages that are not my mother tongue‹), have knowledge of (›I know how to speak in two languages, Croatian and English‹) or use (›I speak fluently and understand English and I am very good at speaking and understanding German‹) several languages. As far as the number of languages is concerned (if included in the answer), the majority of participants mentioned knowledge of more than one language in general (26), followed by those who mentioned Croatian and two FLs (24) and those who reported knowing three or more FLs (11). Participants who did not consider themselves multilingual (N = 16) or were not sure about it (N = 27) stated the reasons presented in Table 2 together with the frequencies of their answers.

Table 2: Qualitative data on the reasons supporting learners' self-perception as not multilingual or not being sure about it

Reason	No	Not sure
Knowledge of Croatian and English only	6	3
Knowledge of only 2 FLs	0	1
Insufficient level of second or the third FL knowledge or use	7	26

The majority of learners who were not sure whether they were multilingual or not (26 answers) did not consider that the level of their knowledge or use of a second or the third FL was sufficient (›I speak English fluently but not German‹). For others (7 answers) this was the reason they did not

consider themselves multilingual (›I speak fluently only English; I study two more foreign languages but I cannot say that I know how to speak them‹). In addition, several learners considered that the knowledge of two languages, i.e. their mother tongue and English, either did not qualify them as multilingual (6 answers) (›I do not speak fluently languages that are not Croatian or English‹) or they were not sure about it (3 answers) (›I know how to speak English, but everybody knows English‹). One learner was not sure whether studying two FLs qualified him/her as multilingual (›I study only English and German‹).

5.2. Learners' FL use habits, beliefs about multilingualism and their future multilingual self

Our second research question examined the role of FL use habits, beliefs about multilingualism and future multilingual self in shaping the learners' multilingual identity. Table 3 shows data on the comparison of learners' first and second FL use habits using the dependent samples t-test. The comparison of learners' third FL use habits to the first and the second FL use habits, also performed by the dependent samples t-test, was done only for the smaller sample of 24 learners who studied three FLs and the data are shown in Table 4.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and the dependent samples t-test for comparison of learners' first and second FL use habits (N = 120)

Item	Language	M	SD	t-test
I use this FL with my family.	First FL	2.18	0.953	t(119) = 8.04, p<0.001
	Second FL	1.49	0.778	
I use this FL to speak with my friends.	First FL	2.76	0.944	t(119) = 14.43, p<0.001
	Second FL	1.43	0.683	
I use this FL when I go on holidays.	First FL	3.44	1.044	t(119) = 14.79, p<0.001
	Second FL	1.97	0.961	
I use this FL when I am on the internet.	First FL	4.26	0.783	t(119) = 24.33, p<0.001
	Second FL	1.80	0.866	
I watch TV in this FL.	First FL	4.08	0.949	t(119) = 22.72, p<0.001
	Second FL	1.58	0.886	
I listen to music in this FL.	First FL	4.05	0.878	t(119) = 20.19, p<0.001
	Second FL	1.75	1.015	

It is important for me to use this FL.	First FL	4.28	0.822	t(119) = 15.06, p<0.001
	Second FL	2.65	1.200	
I avoid using this FL.	First FL	1.46	0.721	t(119) = -8.02, p<0.001
	Second FL	2.53	1.384	
Learners' first FL use habits scale result		3.70	0.612	t(119) = 23.4, p<0.01
Learners' second FL use habits scale result		2.02	0.640	

The data suggested the overall rather frequent use of the participants' first FL (mostly English) ($M = 3.70$; $SD = 0.612$) and a rather rare use of their second FL (mostly German) ($M = 2.02$; $SD = 0.640$). A statistical difference was found between the use of the two languages in favour of the first FL both at the level of the overall scale ($p < 0.01$) and with regard to all proposed scale items ($p < 0.001$). The first FL is thus more frequently used on the internet, for watching TV and listening to music, as well as on holidays. In addition, the learners attributed a much greater importance to their first than to their second FL. Learners also, to a certain extent ($M = 2.53$; $SD = 1.384$), avoid using their second FL.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics and the dependent samples t-test for comparison of learners' third FL use habits to first and second FL use habits ($N = 24$)

Item	Language	M	SD	t-test
I use this FL with my family.	First FL	2.38	1.056	2>3 t(23) = 2.07, p=0.05 1>3 t(23) = 6.78, p<0.001
	Second FL	1.67	0.816	
	Third FL	1.38	0.711	
I use this FL when I speak with my friends.	First FL	2.83	1.007	2>3 t(23) = 3.49, p<0.01 1>3 t(23) = 7.40, p<0.001
	Second FL	1.92	0.881	
	Third FL	1.29	0.464	
I use this FL when I go on holidays.	First FL	3.33	1.239	2>3 t(23) = 2.42, p<0.05 1>3 t(23) = 8.23, p<0.001
	Second FL	2.04	0.042	
	Third FL	1.46	0.833	
I use this FL when I am on the internet.	First FL	4.21	0.721	2>3 t(23) = 3.80, p<0.01 1>3 t(23) = 17.67, p<0.001
	Second FL	2.29	1.160	
	Third FL	1.50	0.590	

I watch TV in this FL.	First FL	3.88	1.076	$2 > 3$ $t(23) = 2.56, p < 0.05$ $1 > 3$ $t(23) = 10.06, p < 0.001$
	Second FL	2.08	1.139	
	Third FL	1.75	0.897	
I listen to music in this FL.	First FL	3.96	0.806	$1 > 3$ $t(23) = 6.99, p < 0.05$
	Second FL	2.46	1.179	
	Third FL	2.25	1.032	
It is important for me to use this FL.	First FL	4.21	0.833	$2 > 3$ $t(23) = 3.19, p < 0.01$ $1 > 3$ $t(23) = 8.37, p < 0.001$
	Second FL	3.25	1.032	
	Third FL	2.50	1.103	
I avoid using this FL.	First FL	1.50	0.722	$1 < 3$ $t(23) = -2.717, p < 0.05$
	Second FL	1.79	0.977	
	Third FL	2.13	1.262	
Learners' first FL use habits scale result		3.66	0.682	$2 > 3$ $t(23) = 3.63, p < 0.01$ $1 > 3$ $t(23) = 12.53, p < 0.001$
Learners' second FL use habits scale result		2.48	0.693	
Learners' third FL use habits scale result		2.00	0.504	

The data suggested the overall rather infrequent use of the participants' third FL (mostly French and Spanish) ($M = 2.00$; $SD = 0.504$) with a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) compared to their first and second FL use. A statistical difference was found between the third FL use and the first and the second FL use with regard to all proposed scale items ($p < 0.01$) except for listening to music. In addition, learners attributed a lesser importance to their third FL, as compared to their first and their second. No statistically significant difference was found between the second and the third FL with regard to avoidance of their use. Table 5 shows the data on learners' beliefs about multilingualism.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for learners' beliefs about multilingualism scale

Item	M	SD
The more languages you know, the easier it is to learn a new language.	3.99	0.983
Learning new languages helps you better understand the languages you already know.	3.94	1.048
People who know many languages usually make more money than others.	3.29	0.956

People who know many languages are usually smarter than others.	3.20	0.949
Knowing many languages makes you better at other school subjects.	3.11	1.091
Knowing many languages helps you see things in different ways.	3.09	1.237
People who know many languages are usually more creative than others.	3.00	1.115
Knowing many languages helps you understand other people's feelings better.	2.65	1.234
Learners' beliefs about multilingualism scale result	3.28	0.756

The data suggested an overall positive attitude of Croatian adolescents towards multilingualism ($M = 3.28$; $SD = 0.756$). They exhibited a rather high level of language awareness as they considered that being multilingual facilitated further language learning ($M = 3.99$; $SD = 0.983$) and enabled building cross-linguistic skills ($M = 3.94$; $SD = 1.048$). In addition, the participants were aware of the cognitive benefits of knowing FLs, i.e. intelligence ($M = 3.20$; $SD = 0.949$) and flexibility ($M = 3.09$; $SD = 1.237$) as well as of economic ($M = 3.29$; $SD = 0.956$) and academic benefits ($M = 3.11$; $SD = 1.091$). The affective component of multilingualism being related to empathy was the least prominent for the participants ($M = 2.65$; $SD = 1.234$). The data on learners' future perceptions regarding their FL knowledge are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics for learners' future multilingual self-scale

Item	M	SD
The person I would like to be in the future speaks English very well.	4.69	0.591
I can imagine myself in the future as someone who knows several foreign languages.	4.18	0.979
The person I would like to be in the future speaks several languages very well.	4.18	1.012
It is important for me to know another foreign language apart from English.	4.04	1.080
I hope that I can use foreign languages in my future job.	3.84	1.037
In my future job, I think that knowledge of Croatian will be enough.	2.11	1.129
Learning another language is pointless because everybody knows English.	1.93	1.116
Learners' future multilingual self-scale result	4.13	0.663

The data suggested that the participants had an overall very positive future multilingual self-image ($M = 4.13$; $SD = 0.663$). They attributed great importance to English, and in the future, they would like very much to master it very well ($M = 4.69$; $SD = 0.591$). However, in the future they would also like very much to speak several FLs ($M = 4.18$; $SD = 1.012$) and can imagine themselves doing so ($M = 4.18$; $SD = 0.979$). They also acknowledged that in addition to mastering their mother tongue and English, the knowledge of another FL was important for both professional ($M = 3.84$; $SD = 1.037$) and general purposes ($M = 1.93$; $SD = 1.116$).

5.3. Correlation between learners' self-identification as multilingual persons and their FL use habits, beliefs about multilingualism and their future multilingual self

Our third research question was aimed at exploring whether learners' self-identification as multilingual persons was related to their FL use habits, beliefs about multilingualism and their future multilingual self. A one-way ANOVA was performed to determine if there was a difference among the students who identified themselves as multilingual, those who did not identify themselves as multilingual and those who were not sure, and to compare the effect of their perception on their FL use habits, beliefs about multilingualism and their future multilingual self. The Bonferroni post-hoc test for multiple comparisons was performed to compare the results between the three groups of learners based on self-determination as multilingual. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results for three groups of learners based on their self-identification as multilingual

Dependent variables	Groups of learners based on their self-identification as multilingual									One-way ANOVA			
	No (1)			Not sure (2)			Yes (3)			F	df	p	Bonferroni
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD				
First FL use habits	16	3.50	0.57	27	3.61	0.51	74	3.77	0.64	1.620	2, 114	>.05	/
Second FL use habits	16	1.57	0.40	27	1.99	0.59	74	2.13	0.66	5.516	2, 114	<.01	1<3
Third FL use habits	1	2.12		2	1.81	0.44	20	2.03	0.53	0.177	2, 20	>.05	/
Beliefs about multilingualism	16	3.10	0.74	27	3.12	0.62	74	3.37	0.79	1.577	2, 114	>.05	/
Future multilingual self	16	3.49	0.61	27	3.98	0.58	74	4.29	0.61	12.366	2, 114	<.001	1<2 3>1

The data revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores in relation to learners' second FL use ($F(2, 114) = 5.516$, $p < 0.01$) between the participants who did not ($M = 1.57$; $SD = 0.40$) and did ($M = 2.13$; $SD = 0.66$) consider themselves as multilingual persons. In addition, a statistically significant difference was found in mean scores in relation to learners' future multilingual self ($F(2, 114) = 12.366$, $p < 0.001$) between the participants who did not consider themselves as multilingual persons and those who were not sure, as well as between those who did and did not consider themselves as multilingual persons. Those who did not consider themselves as multilingual persons had a lower score on that scale ($M = 3.49$; $SD = 0.61$) than those who were not sure ($M = 3.98$; $SD = 0.58$), and those who considered themselves multilingual ($M = 4.29$; $SD = 0.61$) had a higher score than those who did not self-identify as multilingual persons.

5.4. Discussion

The aim of our research was to explore some aspects of the multilingual identity of Croatian adolescent FL learners, such as their self-identification as multilingual, their language use habits and beliefs related to languages in their linguistic repertoire and their future multilingual self. A mixed methods research design was used to answer the research questions put forward.

Our first research question inquired about the participants' self-identification as multilingual persons. About two thirds of learners consider themselves multilingual. Among the rest, the majority is not sure and a relatively small number of learners do not consider themselves multilingual. These results are overall comparable to the ones obtained in the study carried out by Haukås et al.,⁴¹ but are more positive than those in the study conducted by Bailey et al.,⁴² as the participants of the present study self-identify more frequently as multilingual persons. Such results are not quite surprising, since Bailey et al. conducted their research with students in England whose L1 is English and are less motivated to learn foreign languages due to the significance of English in the globalised world. The qualitative data suggest that the learners apply two intuitive criteria in their self-identification: the number of languages they study, have knowledge of or use, and the perceived level of competence in these languages. Knowledge of more than one language, preferably the mother tongue and two FLs, is taken by the majority as a defining element of a multilingual person for the learners

41 Haukås et al.: *School Students' Beliefs*, p. 2.

42 Bailey et al.: *Having a Decent Understanding*.

who self-identify as multilingual. Those who are not sure mostly state that knowledge of Croatian and English is not sufficient for an individual to be deemed multilingual. This particular observation by participants is in line with the objective of the EU language policy which states that every EU citizen should, in addition to L1, master two other languages.⁴³ This is also in line with the views of those Croatian adolescents who are not sure about being multilingual because they underline the insufficient knowledge or use of their second or third FL (the first FL being English for the vast majority) as preventing them from self-identifying as multilingual.

The number of learners self-identifying as multilingual seems to be encouraging for the Croatian context. As for participants who are not sure or those who do not identify themselves as multilingual, it is important to raise awareness of their multilingual potential as, according to contemporary views,⁴⁴ multilinguals can have varied levels of proficiency and knowledge in their languages. It is also important to create pedagogies that foster cross-linguistic reflections. Such strategies might rely on a comparative approach to linguistic systems,⁴⁵ which could include making cross-linguistic links to other languages (i.e. comparing words and structures) or using metalinguistic comments in languages learners already speak. Following the principle of language similarity, teaching strategies might take into account languages belonging to the same family, i.e. the principle of intercomprehension,⁴⁶ and refer to other languages from that family for better learning of new language(s), as well as refer to close languages, for example, making links between English and French, since English throughout history, especially at the level of lexicon, was strongly influenced by French. As for the role of English as most commonly the first FL in the Croatian context, English teachers in particular might refer more frequently to other languages and thus turn an English lesson into a multilingual environment. As advocated by Trinkin and Letica Krevelj,⁴⁷ more attention should be paid to linguistic and metalinguistic awareness as a clear outcome of an FL course, and the boundaries between languages as school subjects should be less rigid.

As for teacher training, it might focus especially on teachers who have also completed the study of another language (double major FL study programmes). By building teachers' awareness of the potential of multi-

43 European Parliament: *Language Equality*.

44 Haukäs et al.: *School Students' Beliefs*, p. 2.

45 Hélot: *Awareness Raising*, cited by Trinkin/Letica Krevelj: *Multilingualism*, p. 58.

46 Doyé: *Intercomprehension*.

47 Trinkin/Letica Krevelj: *Multilingualism*.

lingual competence and with some additional training (pre-service and in-service) on developing learners' multilingual awareness, teachers could integrate multilingual activities more frequently in their classrooms. In that way, teachers could encourage learners to make connections between the languages they speak, and thus raise awareness of their multilingualism. Teachers might also encourage learners' more frequent out-of-school exposure to languages they already speak or study. Finally, learners need to be encouraged to work on their competencies, especially on their fluency in languages other than English (since they mostly consider that being multilingual facilitates further language learning).

Our second research question dealt with the participants' FL use habits, beliefs about multilingualism and their future multilingual self. In general, learners have relatively developed FL use habits: they tend to use their first FL (mostly English) relatively often, but their second (mostly German) and third (mostly French and Spanish) FL use is much less frequent. In addition, some learners tend to avoid using their second FL. Their FL use is similar to the importance they attribute to individual FLs: while English is very important to them, the second and the third FL are somewhat less so. Predominant areas of use are in line with their age, interests and the digital environment they are constantly exposed to: the internet, television and music. They have positive beliefs about multilingualism for which, on the one hand, they consider has a role in the development of one's language awareness and cross-linguistic skills, and, on the other, has positive cognitive, economic and academic benefits.

These results only partially confirm the results of previous studies⁴⁸ as the participants of the present study have more positive beliefs about multilingualism in almost all its aspects. As in the previous studies, the most appreciated benefit of multilingualism is the impact it has on the language learning process, but unlike in the previous studies, our participants do not see multilingualism as helping them to shift perspectives more easily. The learners also have an overall positive future multilingual self-image, unlike in Bailey et al.'s study (as explained above),⁴⁹ recognizing the global importance of the English language but seeing themselves in the future as speakers of other (multiple) languages as well. Haukås et al. suggest that it is important to have a mapping of the languages known and used by learners and to know the purposes and the contexts in which a language is used, and Storto et al. underline the role of the languages in the digital

48 Haukås et al.: *School Students' Beliefs*; Bailey et al.: *Having a Decent Understanding*.

49 Bailey et al.: *Having a Decent Understanding*.

networks of communication.⁵⁰ In addition, such data can be useful for FL teachers who, in their classrooms, should offer learners motivating input and provide them with opportunities to produce output according to their communication needs. As for the importance of English, the findings of our study seem to be in line with those of other authors (Fisher et al., Trinki and Letica Krevelj)⁵¹ as they underline the dominant status of the English language. However, these authors also suggest the powerful effect of languages other than English on students' motivation. In that sense, the overall positive future multilingual self-image of participants in our study indicates a significant role played by other (multiple) languages in learners' linguistic repertoire.

In order to encourage learners' awareness of their future multilingualism, teaching strategies might focus on encouraging learners' reflection on how they see themselves in the future and how they see the role of other languages in the future (e.g. what they want to do with languages, in which situations they see themselves speaking the language). Depending on the input collected from learners, teachers then may propose particular multilingual activities. More attention should also be paid to encouraging students to rely on authentic sources and materials in other languages they speak and to use them more for creative purposes (e.g. reading poetry in the source language, watching movies and listening to music in other languages).

In our third research question we looked into a possible relationship between the participants' self-identification as multilingual persons and their FL use habits, beliefs about multilingualism and their future multilingual self. There seems to be a relationship only with regard to the second FL use habits and future multilingual self but not with the beliefs about multilingualism. Learners who identify themselves as multilingual are both currently more frequent users of their second FL and also have a clear view, in a metacognitive sense, of the goals they set for themselves regarding their future knowledge and use of multiple FLs. In that future picture, the role of English as a global language is undeniable, but other languages play a significant part as well. This is in line with the results obtained by Haukås et al.,⁵² who did not find any statistically significant difference in beliefs about multilingualism between participants who did and did not identify themselves as multilingual persons.

50 Haukås et al.: *Developing and Validating*, p. 4; Storto et al.: *Visualising the Language Practices*, p. 21.

51 Fisher et al.: *Participative Multilingual Identity Construction*; Trinki/Letica Krevelj: *Multilingualism*.

52 Haukåset al.: *School Students' Beliefs*.

In line with the previously presented overall FL learning picture in the Croatian education system, it seems that in the selected secondary schools various FLs are generally well represented, and the linguistic landscape is quite rich despite some policy and practical challenges, e.g. a lack of good planning in the field of FL learning, issues of continuity and of valorisation of the acquired language repertoire. The dominant role of English is widely recognised by Croatian adolescents who are well aware of its importance and its benefits. At the same time, it seems that learning languages other than English greatly contributes to their self-identification as multilingual persons and shapes the overall positive features of their multilingual identity. Since our research focused on adolescents who are currently going through the process of identity formation, a challenge for future research could be gaining insight into the further development of their multilingual identity and possible changes in the post-secondary school period.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore some aspects of the multilingual identity of Croatian adolescent FL learners in the framework of theoretical assumptions⁵³ based on learner's explicit self-identification as multilingual and includes, among other things, their FL use habits, beliefs about multilingualism and their future multilingual self. The results suggest a positive learner multilingual identity outlook but some qualitative differences emerge as well. The obtained results posit that the learners have a rather positive multilingual profile in the sense that the majority of them self-identify as multilingual, they have developed some FL use habits (especially in their first FL) and have a rather positive belief about multilingualism. English is regarded as a necessity in today's globalised world but it seems that true multilingualism, according to Croatian adolescent FL learners, resides in the knowledge of at least one FL in addition to English. The multilingual future of participants in the study appears to be quite promising, as they overall exhibit a very positive future multilingual self-image, especially those who already consider themselves as multilingual persons. For those who do not or are unsure, there is a need to raise their awareness of their multilingual potential. The results are generally in line with previous studies, such as the study carried out by Haukåset al.,⁵⁴ but in some aspects they show a more

53 Haukåset al.: *Developing and Validating*.

54 Haukåset al.: *School Students' Beliefs*, p. 2.

positive multilingual identity outlook in respect of Croatian adolescent learners compared to those from other contexts, such as Bailey et al.⁵⁵

The school context and the pedagogic interventions learners participate in may play an important part in developing their multilingual identity, so data on the contexts of FL use, especially in relation to the second and the third FL, could help to implement specific teaching and learning multilingual activities, which would encourage more frequent language use in wider contexts adapted to learners' needs and interests. In addition, it is important to work on raising awareness of these FL learning and use experiences and on valorising the acquired knowledge in each individual language within the learner's repertoire.⁵⁶ Positive and realistic views on learning experiences and acquired competence, even partial, can encourage and motivate learners to persist in FL learning or even to discover new FLs.

Our study included a limited number of participants in the Croatian school context, with favourable conditions for learning multiple FLs in the largest urban area of the country, and the results were considered from a rather general perspective. Future research should explore a larger number of students across the country, in other regions (coastal and continental areas, smaller cities, suburbs, rural areas) and other school environments (e.g. vocational schools) as well as examine the differences between students from a closer perspective, e.g. learners studying only one FL, learners of particular FLs studied as a second FL, or learners studying three FLs in the school context.

Investigating multilingualism can have clear implications for various education stakeholders. As far as schools and teachers are concerned, more attention should be paid to introducing multilingual activities in the classroom, such as the cross-linguistic approach,⁵⁷ intercomprehension,⁵⁸ using metalinguistic comments in languages learners already speak,⁵⁹ that would raise learners' awareness of their multilingual identity. As for education policy, the objectives of multiple language learning should be clearly articulated and FL teachers need to be informed of the potential of multilingual competence through pre- and in-service training. In addition, a better insight into the language resources learners have can be a powerful tool for improving their learning outcomes. Furthermore, investigating

55 Bailey et al.: *Having a Decent Understanding*.

56 Haukäs et al.: *School Students' Beliefs*, p. 2.; Trinki/Letica Krevelj: *Multilingualism*.

57 Hélot: *Awareness Raising*, cited by Trinki/Letica Krevelj: *Multilingualism*, p. 58.

58 Doyé: *Intercomprehension*.

59 Trinki/Letica Krevelj: *Multilingualism*.

learners' multilingualism can boost their motivation for further language learning, whether they decide to continue learning languages they already master or to invest in learning new ones. The overall objective at the policy level should be maintaining linguistic diversity in Croatian schools.

Appendix: Multilingual identity questionnaire

Dear Students,

This questionnaire is about the multilingual identity of Croatian secondary school learners.

Please read all items and answer honestly to all questions. The questionnaire is anonymous and there are no right or wrong answers. You can withdraw from the questionnaire at any time. The data collected will be used only for research purposes. Thank you in advance for your time!

Section 1: Demographic data

Gender: F M Age: _____

Please indicate the type of school you are attending:

- General grammar school
- Language-oriented grammar school
- Science-oriented grammar school

Grade: 1 2 3 4

Section 2: Languages

Pupils are asked to indicate the first, the second and the third foreign language they learn at school and answer questions regarding each one of the indicated languages. The list of questions is standard and repeats for each language.

What is the first/second/third language you learn at school?

- English German Italian French Spanish Other

To what extent do you use the first/second/third foreign language you learn at school?

	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Always
I use this language with my family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I use this language to speak to my friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I use this language when I go on holidays.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I use this language when I am on the internet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I watch TV in this language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I listen to music in this language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important for me to use this language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I avoid using this language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3: Beliefs about multilingualism

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Kind of agree	Not sure	Kind of disagree	Strongly agree
The more languages you know, the easier it is to learn a new language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People who know many languages are usually smarter than others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People who know many languages are usually more creative than others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People who know many languages, usually make more money than others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning new languages helps you to better understand the languages you already know.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowing many languages makes you better at other school subjects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowing many languages helps you understand other people's feelings better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowing many languages helps you to see things in different ways.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4: Future multilingual self

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Mostly agree	Strongly agree
I can imagine myself in the future as someone who knows several foreign languages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I hope that I can use foreign languages in my future job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In my future job, I think that knowledge of Croatian will be enough.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The person I would like to be in the future speaks English very well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The person I would like to be in the future speaks several languages very well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important for me to know another foreign language apart from English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning another language is pointless because everybody knows English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 5: Multilingualism

Are YOU multilingual? Yes No I am not sure

Please explain why do you think so.

Thank you and good luck in your foreign language learning!

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