

Learning language regimes: Children's representations of minority language education*

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Abstract

Minority language education initiatives often aim to resist dominant language regimes and to raise the social status of migrant or autochthonous minorities. We consider how participating children experience these alternative language regimes by analysing drawings made by children in two minority education settings—a Slovene-German bilingual school in Austria and an Isthmus Zapotec (Indigenous) language and art workshop in Mexico. We examine how children's drawings represent language regimes in the social spaces they inhabit. Considering these drawings in relation to ethnographic observations and interviews with educators, we illustrate differences between how the social spaces are planned by educators and how they are represented and experienced by learners. Generally speaking, the children in our studies depict flexible, multilingual experiences and spaces, in contrast to the educators' agendas of separating or emphasizing languages for pedagogical purposes. Mexican children's perception of themselves as participants in fluid language regimes, and Austrian children's increasing appropriation of multilingual space over time through both (school-like) routines and (fun) exceptions can inform the efforts of minority language educators.

Las iniciativas de enseñanza de lenguas minoritarias tienen múltiples objetivos; además de socializar a l@s futuros hablantes de una lengua, suelen promover resistencia hacia

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regímenes lingüísticos dominantes y elevan el estatus social de las minorías migrantes o autóctonas. En este artículo se aborda la interrogante sobre la forma en que l@s estudiantes en estas iniciativas experimentan estos regímenes lingüísticos alternativos. Se analiza dibujos realizados por niñ@s en dos entornos educativos minoritarios: una escuela bilingüe esloveno-alemana en Austria y un taller de lengua y arte enfocado en la lengua indígena zapoteca del istmo de Tehuantepec en México. Se examina cómo l@s estudiantes representan los regímenes lingüísticos en sus espacios sociales a través de sus dibujos. Analizando estas representaciones junto a observaciones etnográficas y entrevistas con educadores en ambos contextos permite notar las diferencias entre la planificación de l@s educadores y las representaciones y experiencias de l@s estudiantes. En términos generales, l@s niñ@s representan experiencias y espacios flexibles y multilingües, lo que contrasta con los planes de l@s educadores quienes a menudo buscan una separación o enfatización de idiomas con fines pedagógicos. La percepción de l@s niñ@s mexican@s de sí mismos como participantes en regímenes lingüísticos fluidos, y la creciente apropiación del espacio multilingüe por parte de l@s niñ@s austriac@s a través de rutinas (escolares) y excepciones (divertidas) pueden informar y aportar a los esfuerzos de educadores de idiomas minoritarios.

KEYWORDS

Austria, children's drawings, Mexico, minority language education, Slovene, Zapotec

1 | INTRODUCTION

The status of languages in society and in individuals' repertoires is often unequal and subject to change. *Language regimes* structure the status and socio-political landscape of communication in a specific place and time (Kroskrity, 2000). For example, the languages of Amerindian empires, such as Zapotec in Mexico,¹ have been devalued while European languages have become dominant in the language regimes of settler-colonial nation-states. Changes in language regimes can also occur when borders of nation-states are redrawn, turning former majorities into minoritized groups, as happened in the early 20th century to the Slovene speakers in southern Austria.² Additionally, migration plunges people into new language regimes on a regular basis around the world.

Language socialization involves learning not only communication practices (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984), but also the language regimes within which communication is understood in a given space and time. Minority language education initiatives often aim to resist dominant language regimes and to raise the social status of migrant or autochthonous minorities, while at the same time socializing learners into (typically multilingual) communication practices. Through socializing young learners into alternative language regimes, minority language education represents a significant space of potential social change. As educational researchers, we set out to examine how children represent their own experiences and express meaning-making in relation to minority language education as a *social space*—a complex ideological and material reality. In this way we hope to inform the work of planners and facilitators who aim to cultivate spaces for alternative language regimes, often by strengthening the languages of lesser status. As sociolinguists, we hope to contribute to improved understanding of how children experience the layered language regimes in which they participate. We consider these concerns in relation to two minority language education initiatives which aim to validate a way of speaking that has been socially marginalized and create alternative language regimes. These cases demonstrate how efforts to separate or emphasize languages for pedagogical purposes are perceived by children, who tend to represent their experiences as flexible and integrated.

The first case we explore is a workshop for primary-school-aged children in an Indigenous Isthmus Zapotec community in southern Mexico which focuses on the minority language; the second case is a bilingual primary school in Austria where teachers aim to maintain an autochthonous minority language through a dual or parallel immersion (Slovene-German) programme. By analysing visual representations produced by child learners in these settings we gain insight into how they perceive these learning spaces and the regimes that they are experiencing. We consider these representations in relation to ethnographic and interview data with project facilitators, illuminating some of the ways that the facilitators' plans and perceptions diverge from children's experiences. We draw on theories of language ecologies and regimes, social space, and multiliteracies to analyse the emic perspective of child learners, a lesser-examined area in sociolinguistic research (Laursen & Mogensen, 2016: 563), in particular the ways that youths' experiences and choices have been found to diverge from explicit language politics and plans. We begin with a conceptual framing of our study and research questions (section 2). We then provide an overview of our methodologies (section 3), before turning to the two case studies (section 4) and concluding discussion (section 5).

2 | LEARNING REGIMES OF LANGUAGE

Language practices in a given social space are shaped by historical, political, economic, and ideological factors, among others. The metaphor of language ecology is useful in understanding the interrelation of different contextual factors and framing language policy as a locally negotiated phenomenon (Canagarajah, 2005; Haugen, 1972). While language ecologies are always in flux over time, certain norms achieve a notable degree of influence and longevity, and contribute to language hierarchies which endure across multiple spaces and times, constituting language regimes or regimentation (Costa, 2019). Kroskrity (2000) discusses ideologies, identities, and politics as key elements in the context-specific constellation of factors which define a language regime. Language ideologies or beliefs about a language become taken-for-granted assumptions that can exert a hegemonic influence on the other two elements of "politics" (social structures) and "identities" (social actors). For example, regimes influenced by monolingual ideology can be found across social scales, from nation-state assimilation policies to ethnic preservation movements

(Cameron, 2007). Complex and sometimes contradictory arrays of ideologies are present in minoritized language communities (Messing, 2007), termed “language ideological assemblages” by Kroskrity (2018).

Language regimes exist both on an ideological level and on a material level; for example, Zapotec is both ideologically framed as less valuable than Spanish and anyone with the identity of “Zapotec speaker” has been subject to physical exclusion and even punishment in Mexican national education spaces. In considering the language regimes present in minority language education initiatives, we are therefore interested in both the ideological and the material conditions of these initiatives as well as in the experiences of different actors: activists and educators who tend to have more power over designing spaces of learning, and children who tend to have less power to shape their environment. While educators plan to change the dominant language regime through making a separate space for the minority language and/or combining it in a meaningful way with the majority language, this paper illustrates that children's experiences do not necessarily reflect these careful plans and separations.

Although they may exert significant influence, language regimes never control the totality of a time or place, and individuals may participate in different regimes across the spaces that they inhabit (Gal, 2017). Certain language varieties may be valued highly in a specific context or in an official policy even when they are low on the overall hierarchy or in daily interactions. Participants in a social space are also agents in the (re)production of language regimes. Recently, the importance of children's agency in family language policies has been explored (Al Zidjaly, 2009; Crump, 2017; Fogle & King, 2013), and is also relevant for research on social spaces (as discussed further below). In order to understand the language regime in a setting, and ways in which new regimes may come to be, it is necessary to go beyond official policies to explore how language varieties are perceived and produced by actors within that setting.

2.1 | Transforming language regimes through minority language education

Children are socialized into language regimes through their participation in diverse social spaces, including the home, school, and peer interactions. School-based regimes of language exert a strong influence on the ideologies and identities which children take up (Martin-Jones, 2012) and play a key role in marginalizing certain groups (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). In relation to literacy practices, for example, Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) note that although there are a broad range of practices which make up (bilingual) literacy, certain practices (monolingual, literary/formal, written, decontextualized literacy practices) consistently hold more social power and prestige in formal education. Schools which promote critical, multimodal literacy practices may subvert these hierarchies, however (Cazden et al., 1996; Rymes, 2014).

Language education has the potential to reinforce *and* the potential to contest social hierarchies within and beyond the classroom. Policies to strengthen specific (minority) languages may create new hierarchies, and have the potential to ignore elements of the diverse linguistic repertoires of speakers (Blackledge & Creese, 2010). Criteria to assign teachers, materials, and resources are in themselves problematic (Busch, 2017), as students might be forced to choose what to learn based on essentialist criteria (i.e. choosing one line of heritage over another, one dialect over another). Social and biological lineage might not align, and may marginalize children by denying them “proper” minority status. Additionally, minority language initiatives run the risk of reproducing and/or commodifying tokens of culture and language and making stereotypical use of linguistic resources (i.e. in traditional songs and dances), while potentially over-looking contemporary culture and multiple belonging (Heller & Duchêne, 2012). Minority language initiatives thus have the potential to reinforce dominant stereotypes and exclusions despite their aim to foster alternative, more egalitarian language regimes. As

such, there is a need to scrutinize how the language regimes within minority language education initiatives are negotiated.

2.2 | Making future social spaces

Like a large number of teachers and researchers, we ask ourselves—how do we know if (our) education initiatives have achieved the transformative goals we set out with? What unintended consequences might come from (our) language education practices? Outcomes in language teaching and learning are often measured through linguistic units, such as competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, or through enrolment and graduation numbers. However, the emergence and negotiation of new norms and the conflicting priorities and perspectives that may exist within a social space are also important factors in understanding minority language education initiatives. Harvey (1996: 326) provides an apt summary of the productive, yet conflicted quality of creating new social spaces:

Our future places are for us to make. But we cannot make them without inscribing our struggles in space, place and environment in multiple ways. That process is on-going and every single one of us has agency with respect to it.

In order to consider the potentially transformative nature of minority language initiatives, it is important to consider both the ideals and the plans of the educators who facilitate these spaces, as well as the experiences of the learners who participate in these emergent social spaces.

Social space has certain qualities in our understanding: It is inherently relational and dynamic, meaning that it develops within societal frames and changes over time. It encompasses multiple stories, produced through different actions that might align or contradict each other (Massey, 2005). And finally, it is constantly constructed and performed over time by social actors and societies, through very distinct and visible actions, as well as almost unnoticed practices. Lefebvre's (1991) concept of a triadic production of space is a useful heuristic which distinguishes *spatial practices*, the ever present yet mostly unconscious patterns of actions, from *spatial representations* that encompass the plans, rules, or norms in a social space. The third aspect is *representational spaces*, referring to how space is experienced and what it means for actors. In this sense, it is space as lived and perceived by the people who inhabit it. Shields emphasizes how the three elements overlap and interact, noting that “all these aspects can be latent, ideological or expressed in practice in a historical spatialisation, and may either reinforce or contradict each other in any given site or moment” (Shields, 1999: 161).

The fluid nature of social space is highlighted by research on globalized communication, such as Ma's (2002) study of translocal spatiality, which draws on Lefebvre's triadic conception of space to analyse how cultural practices follow global dynamics but also serve local networks and subcultural modes of expression. Heller (2007) has demonstrated how expected and unexpected (forms of) languages emerge when multilinguals interact in an imagined bilingual situation in Canada, and how those resources are used to build locally relevant social spaces in a globalized world. Contemporary social spaces might be even harder to grasp as speakers take part in online and offline communities with different language resources and people (Blommaert, 2018; Pennycook, 2010).

The minority language education initiatives which we consider in this paper are social spaces where the facilitators actively and explicitly seek to construct new language regimes, often trying to ensure prominent or separate spaces for the minoritized languages. In order to understand these spaces, we are interested in the lived experiences of participating children, or in Lefebvre's terms the *representational spaces* that they experience. We thus see the children as agents with the power to symbolically construct (language) realities (Kramsch, 2009: 124). We are also interested in how the

children's experience of the space relates to the plans of the educators who have created the space (in Lefebvre's terms, the planners' *spatial representations*). As such, we ask:

1. How are the language regimes in minority language education initiatives experienced by children?
2. How do children's lived spaces relate to the spaces planned by educators?

Through these two questions we aim to provide insight into the ways in which minority language education initiatives may create social spaces for more egalitarian language regimes.

3 | METHODOLOGY

In this paper, we draw on longitudinal ethnographic studies of minority education initiatives in Austria and in Mexico (see section 4 for further information). We analyse drawings by children participating in these educational spaces in relation to ethnographic observations and conversations with the educators.

3.1 | Children's drawings as data for analysis of social space

Ethnographic approaches carry the advantage of spending time in environments and learning about practices that are known or accessible, in this case to children. Initially, we started to work with drawings because we found them an interesting resource to interact with children. Drawing is a recognizable practice which most children feel confident participating in, and which is not too similar to school activities which might make children feel that they will be evaluated or should produce a standard answer.

Visual data have been used in social sciences in different traditions (for an overview, see Pink, 2012; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004). Knowles and Sweetman (2004: 7) speak about the visual's "capacity to reveal what is hidden in the inner mechanisms of the ordinary and the taken for granted," noting that "images are a point of access to the social world and an archive of it." In this sense, discovering the meanings of drawings is a process of shared interpretation and, while we as researchers might find it more straightforward to stick to language-based elicitation through interviews, Maranhão (1993) reminds us that a language-based scheme of understanding might be neither accessible nor appropriate for our interlocutors. Especially when working with children, our methods need to facilitate expression of their perceptions and experiences. Researchers have used drawings to achieve this goal (e.g. Kalaja, Dufva, & Alanen, 2013; Pietikäinen et al., 2008), including comparisons between different national settings (Pitkänen-Huhta & Rothoni, 2018), while remaining aware that drawings need to be seen as, at least partly, performative acts that always involve interpretation and discursive negotiation.

3.2 | What are we looking at concretely? Categories of analysis

For the purpose of the paper, we focus on drawings from children between the ages of 8 and 14 that were produced as a result of our request that they draw where they use their languages. The children also talked with the researchers during and after the drawing activity.

Analysing drawings, we most closely align with studies on semiotic landscapes (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010) and multimodal and multilingual literacies (Dagenais, Moore, Sabatier, Lamarre, &

Armand, 2010; Prasad, 2018). For the analysis of the drawings, we begin with descriptive categories which we then link to our theoretical approach to social space. Not all of these descriptive categories are present in each drawing; however, they allow us to identify patterns in the depictions.

Descriptive analysis:

- Language(s) used in the drawings
- Functions of text (i.e. labels, headings, speech bubbles)
- Persons represented (i.e. the child, others)
- Places represented (i.e. home, school, workshop, others)
- Perspective and organization (i.e. distance, distribution)
- Symbols of schooling (i.e. tables, blackboard, books)
- Traits of cultural products (i.e. flags, symbols identified with a certain culture)

In our interpretive analysis of drawings from a social space perspective, we look for Lefebvre's representational spaces (i.e. lived spaces, experienced language use) as a window into how the children are experiencing language regimes. Additionally, we consider how children's experiences relate to Lefebvre's spatial representations (i.e. planned language use) in these contexts. Spatial representations are present in the plans of the educators who run the programmes, and are expressed in their comments, learning materials, and other forms of planning such as signs and official linguistic landscapes. They are also present in the drawings through symbols of schooling and regulations.

For this paper, we have analysed 16 drawings from the Mexican workshop and 90 drawings from the Austrian school. The data presented in section 4 exemplify representational patterns we find in multiple drawings and interviews. Interpreting the drawings in relation to our ethnographic observations and interviews with educators allows us to situate the children's representations with regard to the plans of the educators and the wider social context.

4 | THE LIVED SPACES OF MINORITY LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The two case studies presented here offer insights into children's experiences of language regimes and the transformative potential of educational spaces. Both cases concern a minoritized language, Zapotec and Slovene, with a relatively substantial speaker base and official state recognition. They are in language ecologies with prestigious languages (Spanish and German, respectively), and have relatively low social prestige, leading to speakers being hesitant to use them with their children. Considering these cases together allows us to look at two spaces where educators are planning for children to appropriate a minoritized language; in the Austrian school, the programme follows a dual immersion or parallel monolingual model, while in the Mexican workshop the focus is solely on the minority language. The Zapotec children draw experiences that are more multilingual than imagined, representing Zapotec alongside Spanish as part of the language regime both in and outside of the workshop space. In the case of Slovene, the children's drawings represent the process of appropriating multilingual space over time. The fluid, multilingual experiences they represent point to less separation between languages and less ideological emphasis on the minority language than what is present in the facilitators' plans.

Our position as researchers is similar in both contexts as we have conducted ethnographic observations and interviews over several years, and have both engaged in formal and informal consultation with the teachers and facilitators. The use of visual data collection was part of the Austrian case from

the beginning, and is an area of special interest to the first author, Judith Purkarthofer. Haley De Korne was inspired by her work in this area and decided to collect comparable data in the Mexican context.

There are numerous socio-political differences between the two cases, with one straddling the border between European nation-states, and the other in a peripheral region of a colony-turned-nation-state in Latin America. The Austrian case considers a formal school run by trained teachers, with mandatory attendance five days a week, while the Mexican case considers a workshop run by community members with no formal pedagogical training, and attended voluntarily by students about six hours during one weekend per month. In sum, the Austrian case is an example of a reimagined school space, yet with very close ties to the community, whereas the Mexican case is an example of an informal educational space with closer ties (both in location and in timing) to community than to school. We consider each case in turn and then look at them together for joint discussion and conclusions (section 5).

4.1 | Case study 1: Isthmus Zapotec in Mexico

Isthmus Zapotec is spoken in a multilingual ecology in Oaxaca state, where multiple Indigenous language families come into contact in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Spanish has been present since the European invasion in the 16th century, with a significant increase in Spanish use following the establishment of public schooling in the 1920s and 1930s (Pardo Brüggman & Acevedo, 2013). While there are an estimated 100,000 speakers of Isthmus Zapotec (INALI, 2008), the increasing use of Spanish within families (Augsburger, 2004) and dominance of Spanish in high-status social spaces is evidence of the marginalization of Zapotec. Indigenous languages of Mexico have been officially recognized since 2003;³ however, this policy has not substantially changed the negative evaluations of Indigenous languages in society (De Korne, López Gopar, & Ríos Ríos, 2018; Hamel, 2008). In the multilingual ecology of the Isthmus, Spanish is necessary for social mobility in the formal economy and Zapotec is valued in relation to private and certain public social spaces, including music and poetry, but is widely viewed as less valuable than Spanish and other European languages (De Korne, 2017).

A programme of community-based workshops for children, entitled *Gudxite ne Biziidi' Diidxazá* (Play and Learn Zapotec), began in 2014 in the town of La Ventosa as a result of an ethnobotany and language documentation project lead by Gabriela Pérez Báez, which was funded by the Smithsonian Institute and run in collaboration with members of the local community and Mexican and international researchers (Pérez Báez, 2018). The primary facilitators of the workshops were residents of La Ventosa who had participated in the documentation project in some way. While none of them initially had pedagogical training, they brought skills in linguistics, visual art, dance, construction, gastronomy, plant and animal husbandry, music, and in-depth knowledge of local history and the participating children, among other capacities. Collaborating researchers and artists participated at various points, but were not present at all of the workshops.⁴ As a member of the project team, De Korne observed workshops from initial planning stages in 2014, and continued to participate and to discuss the project with facilitators periodically in subsequent years. Observation notes, photos, and interviews with participating facilitators were collected as part of a larger ethnographic study of Zapotec education initiatives across the region.

Zapotec is spoken daily among older generations in La Ventosa, but very little among young adults and children. Many children have passive abilities in Zapotec, which they hear their grandparents, and in some cases their parents, speak on a daily basis; however, they are typically dominant in Spanish, which is the language of mandatory public schooling and the language which adults typically speak to children. At the same time, adults often express regret that children today no longer speak Zapotec. In this context, a key aim of the workshops was to build on children's passive knowledge and to

counter the social prejudice against the language. The facilitators aimed to achieve learning in a ludic environment of art, singing, and games. During workshops, children were addressed in Zapotec with some translation to Spanish and were highly encouraged to speak Zapotec. When the drawings were collected in 2017, all regular participants were observed to use Zapotec greetings and simple questions or statements without being prompted, although Spanish remained the main language among child participants. Workshops were held in public community facilities and private patios and occurred on a semi-regular basis, typically conducted once a month on a weekend, for 2–3 hours each day, and 20–30 children between the ages of 5 and 12 attended each time. Participation was entirely voluntary; some children participated regularly, while others came less frequently.

While assisting with a workshop in April 2017, De Korne collected situational drawings with the permission of children and their parents. Children were asked to draw places where they use different languages in their daily lives, with the aim of evoking representations of the workshop as well as other social spaces that are significant for them.

4.1.1 | Children's perceptions of language use

In the drawings, a few children depicted language ecologies structured into monolingual spaces, with Spanish as the language of school and Zapotec as the language of home, or Spanish at home and Zapotec at grandparents' homes. The majority of children, however, depicted multiple bilingual spaces, at home and in some cases also at school. The workshop was most often depicted as a bilingual space as well. An example of this is shown in Figure 1, titled in Spanish “Where I speak Zapotec and where I speak Spanish,” showing home, school, and a community building (“Casa Ejidal,” where the workshop was held on that occasion) in equivalent perspectives. Home is labelled in Zapotec (“Yoo”), with the languages “Diidxazá” (Zapotec labelled in Isthmus Zapotec) and Spanish (labelled in Spanish); school appears with the language Spanish (both labelled in Spanish); and the community centre appears with the languages Zapotec and Spanish (all labelled in Spanish). To the left of the workshop building is a table with the word “drawing” in Spanish, which represents what happens in the workshops (see discussion in 4.1.2 below).

This drawing, and many of the others, indicates that the children experience their social spaces to be bilingual, with Zapotec and Spanish represented in equivalent size (and in this case with Zapotec



FIGURE 1 Where do you speak different languages? 1

listed first). This contrasts with the fact that children attend monolingual Spanish schools, where Spanish is officially dominant; it was therefore unexpected to see some children represent school as a bilingual space. In the workshops, the facilitators try to use Zapotec as the dominant language, so it was likewise unexpected to see the workshop represented as an equally bilingual space.

A bilingual language regime appears even more distinctly in Figure 2, with three places represented twice in two columns. Labels in Spanish that appear seemingly as the speech bubbles of the author (although no person is depicted) indicate the place and the kind of language use there.

In the first column, the author writes “I speak Zapotec in my grandparents’ houses,” “I also speak Zapotec in school,” and “I also speak Zapotec in my house.” In the second column, the author writes “I speak Spanish in my house,” “And I also speak it in school,” “and also in my grandparents’ house.” There is a different order in relation to each language, with the grandparents’ house first in relation to Zapotec, and the author’s house first in relation to Spanish. In many of the drawings, the school is indexed visually by the national flag, as in Figure 2.

Both representations diverge from how parents and educators in interviews typically present children’s participation in the regional language regime. As noted by the director of the school that many of the children attend, “unfortunately, here the majority of the children don’t speak in Zapotec now.”⁵ A mother commented that “My children [...] don’t speak Zapotec. Now for about 10 years the children who are being born, since 10 years ago, now they’re not speaking, now they’re not learning Zapotec.”⁶ While parents commonly state that children are no longer learning, children represent themselves as participating in Zapotec and Spanish spaces, and as speaking Zapotec in these spaces. Adults do typically recognize that children understand some Zapotec, but emphasize their lack of speaking as a sign that the language is being lost among this generation. What it means for children to “speak” or to “know” a language in this context may differ from what it means for educators and parents (see section 5 for further discussion).

4.1.2 | Children’s perceptions of the workshop space

Several of the children who drew the workshop as one of the spaces in response to the original prompt were asked to elaborate on what happens in the workshops. As mentioned, the workshops were intended to focus on games and art and to facilitate enjoyable Zapotec use as indicated in the title the facilitators chose: Play and Learn Zapotec. Activities included a walk along the river to collect, label, and eventually

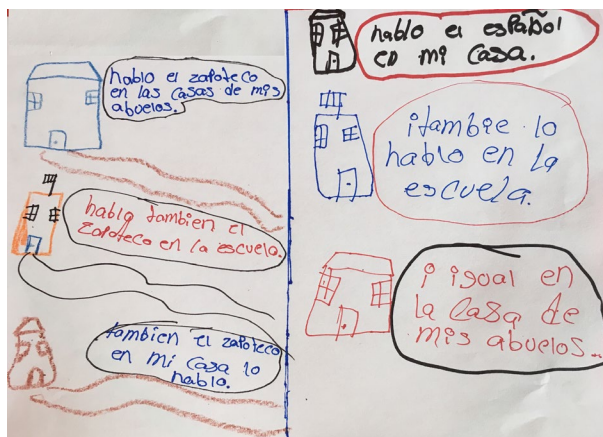


FIGURE 2 Where do you speak different languages? 2

paint plants; creating posters which were displayed on public walls; painting murals on several walls; role plays (in particular, market practices); researching and drawing a family tree; singing; and traditional parades (*calendas*) through the town, among many other activities. The drawings depict a variety of activities, but most commonly show a space similar to formal schooling, with children seated in rows or working at tables. Figure 3 is a close-up of a drawing: The students and a teacher are in the patio of the building where the workshop is held, with students in rows and the teacher indicating something on the whiteboard. The text in Spanish reads “In the workshop I am learning Zapotec.”

Another drawing (Figure 4) depicting activities in the workshop shows two girls and a ball with the label “Play ball” (in Spanish); a table with a drawing of a flower and the label “Draw (flower) flower” (the word “flower” in parentheses is in Isthmus Zapotec, while the framing words are in Spanish); and two children on a bench with the label “We sit” (in Spanish). Here a variety of activities appear, but sitting in a row is still one of them.

While the workshops did include explanations by facilitators using a whiteboard in front of the group, it was notable that this facilitator-fronted experience appeared at least as frequently in the drawings as other more interactive activities which were the planned focus of the workshops, such as games and art projects. Although the workshops were far less structured and less regular than school, the children seemed to experience them as something not-so-different from school. Considering the high prestige that formal school has in this context, being associated with school is not necessarily a negative outcome. If the workshop facilitators aim to make a space more closely linked to participants’ home lives than to school, the nature of the interactions within the workshops needs to be considered, however.

The use of text in the drawings also provides insight into the emergent language regime of the workshops. The predominant use of Spanish in the text reflects children’s linguistic repertoires. In Figure 4, the label of the drawing which includes a noun in Zapotec (*Guie*, flower) is reminiscent of labelling exercises, a regular activity in the workshops. Although facilitators aim to engage children in meaningful communicative contexts, noun vocabulary is a frequent focus and mirrors the information memorization practices common in Mexican schools. Several drawings include common noun labels in Zapotec, similar to Figures 1 (House) and 4 (Flower). Considering that children do not receive instruction in writing Zapotec anywhere outside of the workshop, and live in a context where many people still believe that Zapotec is inherently inferior to Spanish, the spontaneous, integrated writing of even a few common Zapotec nouns is an indication of some transformation of the language regime and can be seen as a positive sign of emergent Zapotec literacy. This glass-half-full perspective was expressed by the facilitators many times. In an interview, a facilitator commented:



FIGURE 3 Zapotec workshop 1

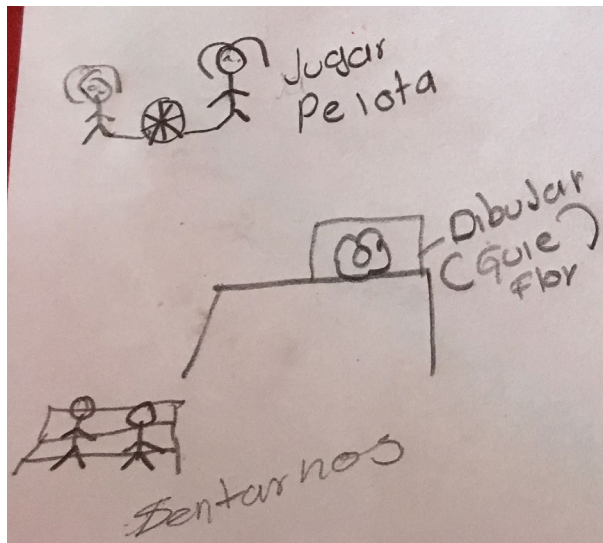


FIGURE 4 Zapotec workshop 2

The best part was to see the result. [...] That they were saying that “pink” is said this way, “blue” is said this way... And that already they could put names on their drawings in Zapotec. So that yes they learned, yes they really got what we had taught them.⁷

Analysis of the drawings collected during one workshop gives a glimpse of children's lived language experiences, what aspects of the workshop have been salient for them, and how this contrasts with perceptions of children's language use in the local context. In order to gain further insight into the potential impact of workshop participation over time, however, it is necessary to collect drawings longitudinally, as illustrated in the Austrian case study below.

4.2 | Case study 2: Slovene in a bilingual school in Austria

Slovene has been recognized as a minority language in parts of Austria's southernmost provinces since 1955. In a language ecology with dominant German, Slovene has been associated with rural areas, while social mobility was attributed to the majority language (Busch, 2013). Forced language shift was common in the first half of the 20th century in many families but following years of struggle for recognition, Slovene has gained value recently as multilingualism in general is perceived more positively. However, schools are still hesitant to use Slovene and hardly any majority language speakers acquire relevant knowledge of it (Purkathofer & Mossakowski, 2012). The bilingual dual-medium primary school examined in this case study is one of the few schools that are outspoken about minority language teaching and their transformative agenda. Approximately 100 pupils, aged 6–10, are educated through the medium of German and Slovene, with the language of instruction alternating on a daily basis. All teachers are bilingual and instruction for one class is done by the same teacher in both languages. While the school traditionally catered to Slovene-speaking families, over the last years a larger part of the school population has had German as a stronger language and the school attracts a more varied student body, with other home languages becoming more common. The data for the Austrian case study were collected through participant observation, different interview settings and group discussions, drawings and photo elicitation tasks, linguistic landscapes, and workshops

around the linguistic repertoires of students over a period of 18 months in 2010 and 2011. Further meetings were arranged after data collection to discuss findings and future developments (see “School Language Profile,” Purkarthofer, 2017). The data set that is presented here was drawn by one child, with the first drawings (Figure 5) at age 8 and the second (Figure 6) about a year later.

4.2.1 | Symbols of schooling

As a prompt, children were asked to draw situations where they were using either of their languages. Figure 5 shows a drawing to the left that is labelled “School” (*šola* in Slovene) and “Slovene” (in German) and a second drawing to the right, representing home and labelled “German” (in German). A rather distant perspective has been chosen for both drawings (underlined by the framing of the classroom to the left and the sloped earth, with the house and lake on top). The empty classroom contains typical symbols of schooling (desks and chairs as well as a blackboard), and only the home contains some people. German is used as the labelling language in brown except for the token label “*šola*.”

Language-wise, we are presented with a rather binary distribution, using Slovene (primarily) in school and German in the home. In the majority of drawings from other students, Slovene is also more present in the school context and home is more closely associated with German. This was confirmed in interviews with parents who talked about the loss of Slovene in their own family where “the grandparents spoke it sometimes, they used it when they were children, but even only the dialect [...] other than that, [for the generation of parents and children] it is just in school.”⁸ Still, the labelling of the situations in Figure 5 points to the presence of both languages in the school space, albeit in a tokenistic way. One of the teachers gives another example of ritualized language use that transcends the clear-cut languages: “[when you gather to leave the courtyard], every child says ‘*gremo*’ [let’s go in Slovene] and ‘Is it time for *gremo* already,’ that’s just cool.” In this case, the teacher highlights the presence of Slovene as a desired and successful practice, and considers it a step towards more extended language use when the children use “*gremo*” even in the middle of an otherwise German sentence.⁹

4.2.2 | Appropriating the lived space

In Figure 6, we see drawings of the same child one year later, and the perspective has changed: To the left are two exercise books in Slovene under the bilingual heading “In School.” Text from the books is partly copied and speech bubbles append comments like “That is easy,” “This is hard.” The repetition of question marks as well as the genre of the speech bubble links some of the represented utterances to an oral genre whereas others, like work assignments “*v zvezek*” [*in the book* in Slovene] are part of a more formal register. To the right, we see the situation labelled in German, showing a blackboard with a chair in front of it. Both drawings represent the perspective of a student sitting at his/her desk—looking towards the blackboard or looking at the books in front of him/her—and thus

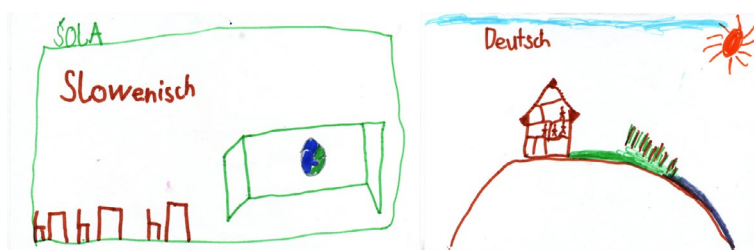


FIGURE 5 School (Slovene, left), Home (German, right)



FIGURE 6 Mathematics books (Slovene, left), In the class (German, right)

no longer represent the view of the omniscient spectator. While the languages still seem to be rather separated, an increased diversity of language modalities in the drawings is notable and both languages are sharing the school space.

The words on the blackboard in the drawing are those that were present in the classroom where the drawing was done. The words are in different colours (corresponding to different word classes) and are meant to be copied onto cards. The student thus situated the drawing in the present or immediate past. When asked about it, he described a situation earlier when one of the children had finished his writing and gotten up to put the cards onto the chair. He stumbled and knocked the cards to the floor. In the drawing, it is this instance that is remembered: A singular event makes this situation meaningful instead of others that went by as planned. The child's representation shows personal participation and meaning-making in the school space.

Another finding concerns the semiotic landscapes; in the Austrian drawings, the linguistic landscape of the school is not very present, although it was commented on by teachers as a part of their overall planning for ensuring the status of Slovene as a prominent language in the school's ecology. One teacher stated “for me, the visible has big/is very important, the real lived bilingualism, that we are not hiding.”¹⁰ However, even when contents of the blackboard were copied, they were representative of practices (e.g. the copying onto cards) and thus activities. Language use is in this way seen as situated and linked to practices, aligning with earlier findings about children's choices being motivated by the activities they take part in and less by the signs they see (Dagenais et al., 2010: 264).

This “zoom” into different modalities and specific language practices, in comparison to the drawings of the first year, and also to the drawings from the Zapotec workshop, is visible in all of the drawings that were done in the second year (see also Purkarthofer, 2017). This can be read as an indicator of growing familiarity with the languages, the class, and with drawing, which in turn can be read as a growing familiarity with language regimes. The students demonstrate not only stronger command of the languages but also a more diversified realm of use.

5 | DISCUSSION

Through children's drawings, we have gained new understanding of their experiences in alternative education spaces (question 1), including the children's appropriation of educational space and multiple

languages over time. By considering these drawings together with ethnographic data, we have insight into some of the ways that children relate to the plans of education facilitators (question 2), including an unexpectedly bilingual, school-like regime in the Mexican workshops and increasing participation in a bilingual space supported by the Austrian school's planning. Examining social space and language regimes through drawings has given us insights we did not previously have from our observations as researchers and educators in these spaces. Additionally, this study illustrates the benefit of combining visual methods with ethnographic research, and using visual methods longitudinally where possible.

The ideological orientation of these education initiatives, both of which seek to represent minoritized languages on a par with the national languages Spanish and German, is reflected in the children's representations in some ways. In contrast to the widespread discourse that Zapotec is not valuable, children participating in the workshop appear to represent Zapotec on a par with Spanish. This might indicate that workshop participants have a heightened awareness or positive attitude towards the use of Zapotec, and more readily identify as using it. The same is true for the Austrian case where students represent themselves as users of Slovene, even with only a limited inventory of words available to them. In order to further examine whether the Zapotec workshops or the bilingual school have influenced this attitude, soliciting drawings from children who have not participated in the workshops and/or from workshop participants over time would be necessary.

While learners may be aligning with the ideological position of the programmes to some degree, the use of languages as expressed in the drawings versus adults' perspectives of child language use highlights how language "use" and "competence" are understood and experienced differently among programme participants. Ways of performing competence in a language vary widely (Hymes, 1972; in relation to endangered language settings, see Moore, 2012; Weinberg & De Korne, 2016). Laursen and Mogensen (2016: 578) discuss the *travelling ways of knowing language* among multilingual children in Danish classrooms, and we find unique ways of knowing spaces and languages also among the children in our studies. Contrary to some reports from adults, such as those quoted in 4.1.1 and 4.2.1, the children did perceive themselves as participants in minority language speech communities and as active users of minoritized languages. In the Mexican case, a majority of children represented several of their spaces as bilingual. In the Austrian case, the minority language was limited to school in some cases (as in the example shown), but other children also represented Slovene use in parts of their lives which the teachers and parents were not aware of. Independent of the children's drawing skills, patterns in their representations become meaningful when the drawings are embedded in ethnographic research. These representations indicate that the children experience themselves as participants in multilingual social spaces, and are positive signs for the educators in both contexts who aim to create more egalitarian regimes.

While drawings at one point in time can give insights, continued use over time may capture changes in socialization and in language regimes. The value of looking at children's experiences longitudinally is visible in the Austrian case: in the first year drawings, symbolic language use (labels or ritualized phrases) was visible and the child speaker was rarely present. In the second year, a wider set of language functions was represented (e.g. speech bubbles, interaction) and more individualized use was reported. These representations of participation and interaction are significant in that they imply increased appropriation of the language and of a school space lived through both Slovene and German. In this way, they get closer to what the teachers comment that they would like to achieve.

Symbols of schooling were prominent in drawings in both contexts. This is not surprising in the Austrian case, as the school is one of the main environments where the language is used in verbal and written form and is the site of the study. The representation of symbols and routines of schooling in the Zapotec workshop was less expected considering that workshops took place primarily

in outdoor patios and were facilitated by community members who were neighbours and in some cases family members of the children. The facilitators did not aim to reproduce a school setting, rather to highlight fun and community activities. However, at the same time, they do place great value on writing, and often include activities which involve naming objects such as body parts or animals, echoing common schooling practices. The prevalence of school symbols such as sitting and blackboards could be interpreted as a failure to create a space linked to children's homes and communities; however, it could also be interpreted as success in creating a space with a certain degree of social status.

Lefebvre (1991: 53) discussed the importance of lived social space in projects of new “social existence,” stating:

Any “social existence” aspiring or claiming to be “real,” but failing to produce its own space, would be a strange entity, a very peculiar kind of abstraction unable to escape from the ideological or even the “cultural” realm. It would fall to the level of folklore and sooner or later disappear altogether.

Becoming trapped in the “ideological,” “cultural,” and “folkloric” realm is a common critique of cultural and linguistic heritage initiatives (as discussed in section 3.2), and thus a challenge for the promoters of minority language initiatives to address. When children represent and discuss personal stories in response to a prompt about language use, we take this as an indication that they do not associate the minority language (only) with folklore or an ideologically imposed language regime, but rather with a lived social space and a regime in which they are active participants.

We see the struggle to create an alternative social space, also mentioned by Harvey, present in our case studies and many other transformation-driven initiatives. Activists and educators pursue the ideal to pass on what they perceive as important linguistic, cultural, and related knowledge to the next generation. On the other hand, the children rarely represented future aims and folkloric symbols, and were more interested in present meaning-making. We are reminded of the importance of turning long-term, ideologically motivated efforts into momentary experiences of contextual relevance for learners. While well-established culturally relevant education approaches can form the base of such efforts (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), additional attention is needed to the lived dynamics and regimes of the social spaces of learning. The results of our studies inform educators about the level of representation that children are capable of when asked about their own experiences. Considering learners' lived language experiences (Busch, 2017) can thus help educators to gain insight into learners' repertoires, experiences, and the activities which have captured their interest. This insight can inform educators' plans and strategies over time and improve how minoritized languages are integrated into meaningful language practices for multilingual children. Separating languages for pedagogical purposes might still be called for at times, but it is unlikely that children will adopt this view in their multilingual lives, nor do they need to do so in order for minoritized languages to have a meaningful place in their experiences.

In our case studies, ethnography and interviews gave insights into the motivations of activists and teachers, while considering the school and workshops through the analytical lenses of social space and language regimes allows us to probe the outcomes of these alternative education initiatives in new ways. Both initiatives are dedicated to contest the language hierarchies of wider society and they aim to establish a more egalitarian language regime. At the same time, they are managing group settings in which they must act as authorities and as enforcers of regulations. There is an inherent degree of imposition and control in the creation of new regimes, regardless of egalitarian aims, and this may

be a source of on-going tension in such initiatives. In talks with the Austrian teachers, they voiced a desire to open spaces for multilingual language use and identity, which on first sight would contradict the planned language organization at school. The facilitators of the Mexican workshop aimed to foster spoken communication, but were pleased that children performed high-prestige practices such as writing and school-like labelling, as noted in 4.1.2. As these social spaces continue to evolve, it is valuable for facilitators to consider children's agency within and appropriation of emerging language regimes.

We conclude that both (school-like) routines and (fun) exceptions constitute elements of “real” social spaces for our types of minority language education. Over time, both regularities and exceptions can turn into new patterns of language behaviour which may come to have personal relevance for participants. Although the goal of broader social transformation cannot be reached through education initiatives alone, minority language educators can aim to influence participants' perspectives of minoritized languages and the ways they understand and participate in language regimes. We argue that a close scrutiny of the social spaces of minority language initiatives gives grounds for optimism that these are indeed potential spaces of social change, despite elements of superficial symbolism and re-hierarchization which complicate this idealistic endeavour.

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ENDNOTES

¹This study focuses on Isthmus Zapotec, also referred to in this paper as *Diidxazá*, and *Zapoteco/Zapotec*. It is part of the Zapotec branch of the Oto-manguean language family which contains extensive dialect diversity (Pérez Báez & Kaufman, 2017).

²Slovene is a South Slavic language. The variants spoken in Slovenia and in adjacent Austria and Hungary differ in dialectal features but use the same standard (Greenberg, 2006).

³Ley general de derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas, 2003. <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/257.pdf>

⁴The workshop team consisted of Reyna López López, José López de la Cruz, Diana Lenia Toledo Rasgado, Fernando Sánchez López, Rosaura López Cartas, and Velma Orozco Trujillo, with additional support from De Korne, Pérez Báez, Gibrán Morales Carranza, Kate Riestenberg, and Kenia Velasco Gutiérrez.

⁵“desafortunadamente, aquí ya la mayoría de los niños ya no hablan en zapotecó.”

⁶“Mis hijos [...] no hablan el zapotecó. Ya hace como 10 años que los niños que vienen naciendo, a partir de diez años atrás, ya no están hablando, ya no están aprendiendo el zapotecó.”

⁷“Lo más bonito fue ver el resultado. [...] que venían diciendo que ‘rosa’ se decía así, ‘azul’ se dice así... Y que ya le podían poner nombre a sus dibujos y en zapotecó. O sea que sí aprendieron, sí se les quedó realmente lo que les habíamos enseñado.”

⁸[die Großeltern] reden ab und zu, also es is ned so, sie habns noch in ihrer kindheit glernt, deswegen. aber es is ned, ah, hochslowenisch, wie ma sogt, sondern es is der dialekt. des windische, eigentlich. [...] aber sonst eigentlich nur in der schul.”

⁹“dass jedes kind sagt ned gemma wieder eini sondern das klassische is, gremo’ und dann kumman a fragen so ,ah, is schon gremo’. des is einfach nur cool.”

¹⁰“und dann jetzt große/hat a große bedeutung für mi, eben wirklich die gelebte zweisprachigkeit, *mhm* dass wir uns nicht verstecken.”

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