'It's Precisely the Friulian Identity That Allows Me to Identify This European Identity': Interaction Between Language Selves in Elders and Young Adults: An Intergenerational Comparison on Language Learning Motivation in Multilingual Friuli Venezia Giulia

Ada Bier

Societât Filologjiche Furlane / Società Filologica Friulana

Palazzo Mantica, Via Manin 18, 33100 Udine, Italy

E-mail: ada.bier@icloud.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-2794-9019

Abstract

The research project framing the present contribution intends to be a first empirical attempt to understand whether elders and young adults living in a specific context – i.e., the Friulian-speaking area of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy – could be involved in language learning and teaching within an intergenerational perspective. The first phase of the research consisted in a survey aimed at defining elders' and young adults' profiles. Building on those results and within the theoretical frame outlined by seminal work on bilingual selves and language learning motivation, this contribution reports on findings from subsequent qualitative interviews. Interviews aimed at exploring subjects' language selves and their complex interrelationship and allowed to gain insight into the tight link between language learning motivation, self and identity. The main commonalities and differences between elders and young adults are presented, with a view to highlighting future directions for research and implications for practice.

Keywords: Language learning motivation, Intergenerational learning, Friulian minority language, LOTE, Global English

1. Introduction

While interest in multilingualism is growing and the multilingual turn has brought about a fundamental epistemic re-orientation (Douglas Fir Group, 2016), language motivation research "has a longstanding monolingual bias" (Henry & Thorsen, 2018, p. 1) as few studies have focussed on learners' motivation to learn languages other than English (LOTE), and even fewer addressed heritage and minority languages. Similarly, little research explored motivation among specific learner groups, such as older adults.

Research shows that language learning in old age produces important benefits, of social, cognitive and affective nature (Cardona & Luise, 2019; Ramírez Gómez, 2016). The lack of studies on older learners' motivation is striking given the growing number of seniors engaging in lifelong learning, encouraged by European policy initiatives (EC, 2000, 2019).

Within lifelong learning, intergenerational learning, that is "learning taking place between different generations" (Boström, 2014, p. 193) is especially relevant. Research highlights its potential to foster dialogue and counter the declining contact between generations in contemporary societies (Lohman et al., 2003). With a view to pursuing intergenerational learning while at the same time targeting multilingual competence – which is included in the eight European key competences for lifelong learning (EC, 2019), language learning represents a promising yet underexplored avenue.

To our knowledge, no study so far has inquired into elders' and young adults' motivation for language learning 1) adopting a comparative perspective, 2) including English as well as LOTE, minority languages included, and 3) exploring the potential for intergenerational approaches to language learning and teaching. The present study aims to address this gap.

In an initial phase, a survey was conducted among elders and young adults to examine their language attitudes and habits of language use in everyday life. The aim was to profile the two groups and highlight similarities and differences, particularly regarding the local minority language (Friulian) and the global international language (English). Results revealed contrasting habits and attitudes toward these languages (Bier, 2021). Building on those findings, this contribution presents a qualitative investigation of how elders' and young adults' language-related selves interact and shape their motivation, offering insights to guide intergenerational initiatives that respond to learners' needs and foster meaningful exchange.

The following sections review the key literature informing this study; the remainder of the paper presents the qualitative analysis and findings.

1.1 Research on the Identity Experiences of Multilinguals: Studies on Feelings of Difference Linked to Switching Languages

Research shows that bilingual and bicultural individuals often describe themselves differently and report different values and self-descriptions when using different languages (Fabbro et al., 2019). One of the most influential studies on this phenomenon was conducted by Pavlenko (2006), who adopted the Bilingualism and Emotion Questionnaire (BEQ; Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2001-2003) to explore feelings of difference when switching languages. Over half

of the responses (65%) reported feeling like a different person (Pavlenko, 2006).

Drawing on Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and language as dialogic (1981, 1984, 1986, cited in Pavlenko, 2006), Pavlenko identified multiple discourses shaping perceptions of self: the "one language-one personality" discourse, stemming from linguistic and cultural differences; the "language socialisation" discourse, tied to learning contexts; and the "psychoanalytic discourse", which frames bilingualism as a form of linguistic schizophrenia, based on different perceived proficiency and emotionality across languages. Interestingly, the psychoanalytic discourse of the 'true' self also appeared in participants who felt the same across languages. Pavlenko concluded that perceiving different selves is integral to the multilingual experience and that similar behaviours may be interpreted differently depending on which discourse a speaker draws upon (Pavlenko, 2006).

Dewaele (2016) later analysed the same corpus statistically, finding no significant relationships between feelings of difference, age of acquisition and oral proficiency. Instead, age, education and foreign language anxiety in the L2 and L3 were positively linked with these feelings. He noted that many bilinguals and multilinguals cannot always explain why they feel different, or the same, when switching languages, highlighting the fuzzy nature of these experiences. Following Grosjean (1982), who famously stated that a bilingual is not two monolinguals in one body, Pavlenko (2006) argued that a bilingual or multilingual is not like a monolingual either; as each of them perceives and interprets the world differently, their perspectives, ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour may dynamically change when they switch languages.

1.2 Research on Language Motivation: Studies Adopting the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS)

Drawing on Markus and Nurius's (1986) work on possible selves and Higgins's (1987) self-discrepancy theory, Dörnyei's L2MSS (2005, 2009) frames L2 motivation as focussed behaviour stemming from the individual's wish to become a speaker/user of the target language. The L2MSS foregrounds two self-guides: the *ideal L2 self,* representing one's aspirations and promoting language learning, and the *ought-to L2 self,* reflecting obligations or responsibilities and associated with a prevention focus (Dörnyei, 2005). The third component, the *L2 learning experience*, refers to the "perceived quality of the learner's engagement with various aspects of the language learning process" (Dörnyei, 2019, p. 25), and links concrete experiences to future aspirations (i.e., the future selves), thus improving coherence among the three components of the L2MSS.

Henry (2011) integrated the L2MSS with the working self-concept (Markus & Nurius, 1986) to account for situational fluctuations in self-conceptions, bridging Dörnyei's framework with Ushioda's (2009) "person-in-context relational view" of motivation. In his studies on the motivation to learn LOTE in Sweden, Henry showed that some learners can maintain motivation for additional languages despite the dominance of L2 English by drawing on self-knowledge to reaffirm their L3 self-concept (Henry, 2011). Similarly, Siridetkoon and Dewaele (2018) found that university students acknowledged the importance of global English yet valued LOTE as well, with overlap observed between ideal and ought-to selves,

which were found to be shaping each other. Ought-to selves, when influenced by significant others (e.g. family), may undergo internalisation and culminate by being integrated into one's ideal self, mitigating negative influence from English.

With a view to understanding Japanese learners' motivation for learning LOTE and mindful of Herdina and Jessner's point that for multilingual individuals "languages are no longer functionally equivalent and interchangeable but fulfil a complementary role in the daily communicative requirements" (2002, p. 105), Nakamura (2019) emphasised the importance of domain-specificity. He argued that different life domains – i.e., interpersonal, career, leisure, education – shape learners' ideal L2 selves. He maintained that it may be the functional differentiation, or domain specificity referred to in Grosjean's complementarity principle (2008, 2010), what underlies the stabilisation of multilinguals' various language systems.

Research studies have also applied the L2MSS to heritage language learners. MacIntyre et al. (2017), investigating Gaelic language learning in Cape Breton Island, identified a heritage language-specific component of the L2MSS, namely the *rooted L2 self*. This self guide was defined as a heritage-oriented link to a language and its community, encompassing affective and cognitive processes that deeply connect personal experience with historical, ancestral, and cultural knowledge, as well as hopes for the language's future.

Research adopting Dörnyei's L2MSS has further expanded to older learners. Neigert (2019) conducted a mixed-methods study on foreign language learners aged 60-80, analysing their L2 self-concepts across past, present, and future ideal selves. The study pointed out that older learners' priorities appeared to undergo a shift with old age and retirement, emphasising the increased perceived value of the social aspects linked with formal language learning and using foreign languages to counter ageing effects and engage in lifelong learning. Cardona and Luise (2019) used an autobiographical approach to explore motivation in older learners. They found that the ought-to L2 self is particularly strong for English, often studied for instrumental reasons or past familiarity, while the ideal L2 self is primarily linked to LOTE, sustained by passion and affective engagement. The authors state that older learners tend to focus on languages in which they already have some competence, reflecting processes of *Selection*, *Optimisation*, and *Compensation* (Baltes & Baltes, 1990) that enable efficient learning despite reduced or poor learning potential.

Building on findings from previous studies (Henry, 2010, 2011), Henry (2017) conceptualised the *ideal multilingual self*, which can be developed when multiple additional languages are learned simultaneously. Henry and Thorsen (2018) validated this self-guide, highlighting its higher-level, abstract, emergent nature, which transcends individual languages while influencing motivation for specific ones. The ideal multilingual self creates a richer context of meaning within which the ideal L2 self is nurtured. Such context of meaning provides an additional degree of purpose for learning LOTE while offering protection of the ideal L2 self from competing L2 selves and social discourses questioning the value of learning LOTE. It can also help neutralise threats and reduce the chances of downward language-related self-revisions (Henry & Thorsen, 2018).

Notwithstanding these significant contributions, to our knowledge research has yet to jointly investigate elders' and young adults' motivation for learning English and LOTE, or to examine how such motivation could inform intergenerational language-learning activities. This study represents a preliminary development in this area.

1.3 Research Questions

Building on the literature and a prior quantitative study (Bier, 2021), the present qualitative inquiry examines the interplay of elders' and young adults' language-related selves to understand their motivation for learning English and LOTE. The following research questions (RQ) were addressed:

RQ1. *How do interviewees perceive themselves as speakers of different languages? Are there differences between elders' and young adults' perceptions?*

RQ2. *How do interviewees' various language-related selves interact with each other? Can a predominant language self be identified in elders? And in young adults? If a predominant language self can be identified, what effect does it produce on interviewees' other language selves?*

2. Method

2.1 Context

The research was carried out in the Friulian-speaking area of Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG), in the north-eastern part of Italy. FVG is one of the five Autonomous Regions in Italy and one of the most important reasons for its Special Statute is its linguistic diversity. In this Region, "one of the most convincing examples of a plurilingual community" (Fusco, 2019, p. 167), Italian, the official State language, historically coexists with German – spoken in the area close to the border with Austria, with Slovene – along the border with Slovenia, and with Friulian, which is a "unique minority language", that is it does not have a majority status anywhere (van Dongera et al., 2017, p. 10). According to the latest published sociolinguistic survey, Friulian is primarily a spoken language, and the average age of its speakers is 53 years old (ARLeF, 2015). On the basis of both State and regional laws, Friulian is nowadays offered in schools as an optional subject, based on the choice of pupils' families, who can decide whether they wish to make use of the opportunity to have Friulian taught to their children or not (Bier et al., 2024). To complete the picture, English as a global language (Graddol, 2006) should also be mentioned. Not only is it omnipresent in many specialist domains (e.g. business, technology, academic communication, etc.), but also it is the most frequently studied language in compulsory education: according to Eurostat, in 2020 99.8% of upper secondary students in Italy were learning the language.

2.2 Participants

Participants in this phase of the research were chosen among those who participated in a previous survey (Bier, 2021) and expressed their willingness to take part in a follow-up interview. Table 1 presents the interviewees together with relevant survey information, which guided the selection of the 13 participants. They were purposefully selected in contrasting

pairs or triads to maximise variation and capture a range of learner profiles, thereby highlighting both intra- and inter-generational similarities and differences.

Table 1. Young (Y) and Elderly (E) interviewees, with data from preliminary survey (Bier, 2021).

Group	Pseudonym[a] gender, age	'Felt'[a] citizenship	Province where they live	Mother tongue (perceived competence)[b]	a. LESSONS ATTENDED b. Other languages known (perceived competence)	Wish to attend a language course in the near future	Perceived importance of...[c]			Attitudes towards...[d]		
							FUR	ITA	ENG	FUR	ITA	ENG
Y	**Mauro** M, 18	Italian	UD	Ita (4)	a. ITA (4), ENG (3), GER (2) b. Arab (na), Fre (na), Spa (na)	yes (Eng)	L	H	H	U	F	F
	Michele M, 18	Friulian	UD	Fur (3)	a. ITA (4), ENG (3), FRE (2) b. Rus (1)	yes (Old Norse)	H	L	L	F	U	U
	Sara F, 19	Italian	PN	Ita (4)	a. ITA (4), ENG (2), GER (2) b. Fur (3)	yes (Eng)	L	H	H	N	F	N
	Lorenzo M, 19	Friulian	UD	Fur (4)	a. ITA (4), ENG (4), GER (2), ARAB (1)	yes (Ger)	M	H	H	N	N	F
	Mara F, 20	FVG	UD	Ita (4) / Fur (3)	a. ITA (4), ENG (3), GER (2)	yes (Rus)	M	H	H	N	F	F
	Silvia F, 22	European	PN	Ita (4)	a. ITA (4), ENG (4), GER (3), SPA (3), POR (4), SWE (3)	yes (Fre)	M	H	H	N	F	F
	Anna F, 22	European	UD	Ita (4)	a. ITA (4), ENG (3), GER (3), FRE (3) b. Fur (4)	yes (Rus)	H	H	H	F	F	F
E	**Fulvio** M, 63	European	PN	Fur (3) / Ita (3)	a. ITA (3), FUR (3), ENG (2), GER (2), FRE (na)	yes (Slo)	M	H	M	F	F	F
	Aurelia F, 63	European	UD	Fur (4)	a. ITA (4), FUR (4), ENG (3), GER (1), FRE (2), SPA (2), SER-CRO (2)	yes (Ser-Cro)	M	M	M	F	F	F
	Guido M, 64	European	UD	Ita (4)	a. ITA (4), ENG (4), FUR (2)	yes (Fur)	M	H	H	N	F	F
	Carlo M, 66	Friulian	PN	Fur (3)	a. ITA (4), FUR (3), ENG (1), FRE (na)	yes (Eng)	H	H	H	F	F	F
	Isabella F, 70	Friulian	UD	Fur (4) / Ita (4)	a. ITA (4), FUR (4), ENG (1), FRE (na)	yes (Eng)	M	H	H	F	F	N
	Armida F, 73	Friulian	UD	Fur (3)	a. ITA (3), FUR (3), SLO (1), GER (2), FRE (na)	no	H	H	M	F	F	F

[a] In compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2016/679) requirements, all interviewees' personal names have been substituted with pseudonyms, invented by the Author.
[b] Legend for perceived competence in languages (in parentheses): 4-very good; 3-good; 2-a little; 1-none. "na" stands for "not available".
[c] Legend for perceived importance of the three languages: L-Low; M-Medium; H-High.
[d] Legend for attitudes towards the three languages: U-Unfavourable; N-Neutral/mild; F-Favourable.

2.3 Research Methods

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview outline, provided in Appendix A, was developed based on the literature summarised above.

Interviews were carried out remotely, via zoom or telephone. Ten interviews were conducted in Italian and three in Friulian (with Carlo, Isabella, Armida). They lasted from a minimum of 15 minutes (Mauro) to a maximum of 58 minutes (Anna), with an average duration of 35 minutes. The researcher herself led all the interviews as a neutral interviewer, audio-recorded and then transcribed them verbatim.

During transcription – which prompted an initial, preliminary analysis – some doubts emerged that required closer examination. Participants were therefore contacted via email: they received their interview transcripts to verify accuracy (member-checking validation: Creswell, 2007) and were invited to respond to additional written questions. These follow-up questions are provided in Appendix B. Almost all participants replied, only two either did not respond (Sara) or responded partially (Armida). The additional written data were incorporated into the transcripts and subjected to qualitative analysis.

2.4 Analysis

To analyse the interview corpus, a Grounded Theory, bottom-up approach was adopted, with the support of NVivo 12 Pro. The method consisted of two main phases (Charmaz, 2006): a first phase in which raw data were coded line-by-line (i.e., initial coding), and a second phase in which, starting from the most salient nodes, larger amounts of data were organised, integrated and synthesised (i.e., focussed coding). During initial coding 94 nodes were identified, whereas during focussed coding the number of nodes was reduced to 42. These were then grouped into 7 broad themes: self-perception; Self System; domains of life as a basis for language functional differentiation; language teaching and learning (ideas, opinions, beliefs); membership in a community; references to specific languages; other language-related issues.

3. Findings and Discussion

In response to RQ1 – *How do interviewees perceive themselves as speakers of different languages? Are there differences between elders' and young adults' perceptions?* – a concise summary of main findings is presented in Table 2.

Most participants – i.e., two young adults (Mauro, Lorenzo) and five elders (Fulvio, Aurelia, Carlo, Isabella, Armida) – reported feeling substantially the same when speaking their languages, especially among elders. Overall, young adults tended to report feeling different more often; two (Michele, Anna) declared they perceived themselves as a different person without second thoughts, while three (Sara, Mara, Silvia) initially stated that they felt the same but, after reflection, indicated feeling different. The same change of mind was registered in one elder (Guido) too.

Table 2. Summary of findings in response to RQ1.

Group	Pseudonym	Education (and job)	Same/Different self
Y	Mauro	currently attending vocational school in the hospitality and catering sector	same
	Michele	currently attending technical high-secondary school specialising in chemistry	different
	Sara	completed vocational school studies in the hospitality and catering sector (currently working as a waitress in a bar)	(same →) different
	Lorenzo	currently attending a BA programme in European Studies at university	same
	Mara	currently attending an MA programme in Primary Teacher Education–Friulian curriculum at university	(same →) different
	Silvia	currently attending an MA programme in Language Sciences at university	(same →) different
	Anna	currently attending a BA programme in Communication Interfaces and Technologies at university (and part-time worker in a fast-food restaurant)	different
E	Fulvio	university studies in his background (prior to retirement: manager in hospital's pharmaceutical service)	same
	Aurelia	university studies in her background (prior to retirement: lower secondary school teacher)	same
	Guido	university studies in his background (prior to retirement: upper-secondary school teacher)	(same →) different
	Carlo	no university studies in his background (prior to retirement: technical clerk in town's municipality)	same
	Isabella	no university studies in her background (prior to retirement: head nurse in hospital)	same
	Armida	no university studies in her background (prior to retirement: hairdresser)	same

When comparing these results with previous studies, some contrasts emerge. Unlike Pavlenko (2006), who found that many multilinguals perceive themselves as different across languages, only a minority of our participants did so. A possible explanation is given by Pavlenko herself, who states that "[i]ndividuals who live in multilingual contexts and code-mix and code-switch on a daily basis may have a less acute perception of linguistic and cultural boundaries" (2006, p. 18). Similarly, our results do not align with Dewaele (2016), who reported positive correlations between feelings of difference, age, and education. In our study, older participants felt less different, and education did not appear to influence responses either: among university-educated participants, three (Lorenzo, Fulvio, Aurelia) felt the same, one (Anna) felt different, and three (Mara, Silvia, Guido) shifted from feeling the same to feeling different.

A *caveat* should be made about the generalisability of these results. The findings of this qualitative study involving 13 participants are not statistically representative of the wider populations of elder and young adult learners. However, participants were purposefully chosen to maximise variation and to represent different learner profiles, thus capturing a range of experiences that may reflect broader tendencies. In this respect, our findings allow for what Rihoux and Ragin (2008, p. 12) describe as "modest generalisations": statements that can be cautiously extended to other comparable cases sharing similar characteristics.

To respond to RQ2 – *How do interviewees' various language-related selves interact with each other? Can a predominant language self be identified in elders? And in young adults? If a predominant language self can be identified, what effect does it produce on interviewees' other language selves?* – a summary of findings is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of findings in response to RQ2.

Group	Pseudonym	Ideal L2 self *		Ought-to L2 self	Rooted L2 self	Ideal Multilingual Self
Y	Mauro	**English**		German	//	✗
	Michele	**Friulian, Russian** German[a]		Italian, French[a]	Friulian	✗
	Sara	English German[a]	←	English	//	✗
	Lorenzo	**German** (English, Friulian, others)		//	Friulian (= *key* for the European)	✓
	Mara	**Friulian, English**		German[a]	Friulian	✗
	Silvia	**Portuguese** (Spanish, German, Swedish)		//	//	✓
	Anna	**English, Friulian, French, Russian, German**	←	German[a]	Friulian (*within* the European)	✓
E	Fulvio	**English, Friulian** German[b], French[b]	← ←	Standard Friulian German[a], French[a]	Friulian (*within* the European)	✓
	Aurelia	**English**		//	//	✓
	Guido	**Italian, English, Friulian**		//	Friulian (*within* the European)	✓
	Carlo	**Friulian** **English**	← ←	Standard Friulian English (French[a])	Friulian (past → future)	✗
	Isabella	**Friulian, English**	←	English (French[a])	Friulian (past → future)	✗
	Armida	**Italian** French[a], German[a b]		Standard Friulian	Friulian (past)	✗

* Ideal selves **in bold** correspond to language/s indicated in Written Question 2   [a] past ideal/ought-to self
← ought-to self has been internalised   [b] too much discrepancy perceived between actual and ideal selves

The analysis of the interviews allowed to identify two distinct groups: interviewees with discrete language selves, among which a predominant self can be detected (par. 3.1), and interviewees displaying Henry's ideal multilingual self (2017), as emerging from the dynamics of multiple language-specific selves (par. 3.2).

3.1 Interviewees With Discrete Language Selves

Both in young adults and in elders, we find subjects with discrete language selves, among which a predominant self can be detected.

Among the young adults, those belonging in this group are Mauro and Sara (par. 3.1.1), and Michele and Mara (par. 3.1.2), who identify opposite pairs; as can be seen in Table 1, they show very different attitudes towards the three languages in contact, and such differences are confirmed in the interviews. The elders with discrete selves are Carlo, Isabella and Armida.

While a number of similarities are found in the views expressed by Michele, Mara, Carlo and Isabella (par. 3.1.2), Armida's case is in its own right (par. 3.1.3).

3.1.1 Mauro and Sara: Dominant English Selves

In the questionnaire, both Mauro and Sara described themselves simply as Italian rather than Friulian, European, or from FVG. This answer – which reflects their actual citizenship – may also be linked with their pragmatic orientation, consistent with their education and work backgrounds in catering and hospitality. Sara's explanation highlights this view:

> [Sara] After all I was born and did everything in Italy, my residency is in Italy and therefore I feel I am an Italian citizen.[1]

Among the young interviewees, Mauro expressed the strongest ideal English self, prevailing over both his ought-to German self – German being compulsory at school – and his Italian self. In his working self-concept (Markus & Nurius, 1986), English is more active than Italian, as he uses it frequently and imagines his future self speaking it. By contrast, he attributed little value to his family language, Arabic. He dismissed it as "more a dialect than Arabic", clarified that he never studied it formally, and considered it a language that "does not count" in his repertoire. His brief comments suggested some unease in addressing it.

While Mauro made no reference to Friulian, Sara declared using it more often than what was understood from her survey responses. In the questionnaire it appeared that the only little Friulian she uses – in association with Italian, predominant – is in exchanges with her father, whereas Italian dominates all other domains. She even seemed to perceive Friulian and Italian as one, raising doubts about her actual language awareness and competence:

> [Sara] I'm more competent, well, in Italian and Friulian, my competencies are higher *in this language*, I know *it* better. (emphasis added)

Sara studied English at school as compulsory L2 and chose German as her L3. While she still acknowledged a weak ideal German self, linked mainly to employment opportunities, it was consistently overshadowed by her stronger English self, to which she apparently attached the function of normative referent (Henry, 2010) with respect to all other foreign languages. She openly admitted she had "lost" her German and relied on English whenever needed, for instance when interacting with tourists at work.

3.1.2 Michele and Mara, Carlo and Isabella: Dominant Friulian Selves

In the questionnaire, Michele, Carlo, and Isabella identified as Friulian, while Mara described herself as a citizen of the FVG region. For all four, Friulian occupies a pivotal place in their self-concept.

Michele and Carlo listed Friulian as their mother tongue, though both admitted only "good" competence in it, compared to "very good" competence in Italian (see Table 1). This is consistent with their interviews. Michele, in particular, lamented his limited proficiency, especially in literacy, since he had never studied Friulian formally: he even called this lack "a personal handicap". Despite this, Michele expressed the strongest ideal Friulian self among the young adults, one resonating with MacIntyre et al.'s rooted self (2017), grounded in community belonging and respect for tradition. Friulian clearly dominated his other language selves, including English, towards which he showed unfavourable attitudes (see Table 1).

Both in the questionnaire and in the interview, he mentioned Russian, a language he had begun to study on his own and that he wished to learn in the near future. There were, therefore, hints of an ideal Russian self, especially linked with job opportunities.

Mara likewise displayed a strong rooted Friulian self, tied to identity and heritage. Her choice of the Friulian curriculum at university – where she was studying primary teacher education – confirmed this orientation:

> [Mara] I chose the Friulian curriculum to gain greater awareness of this language, right? […] in short, to get to know the traditions of specific parts of Friuli. […] Then, in short, to understand that ehm… that the history that, let's say, ehm… that the history of my region is part of me as well.

English too played an important role for Mara. She frequently referred to it, often positioning it as a normative referent (Henry, 2010) for her other foreign languages. Yet, when reflecting on her English self, she described it as inauthentic, feeling like "doing theatre", putting on a mask (Pavlenko, 2006). In her follow-up written answers, she envisioned herself as a primary teacher of both Friulian and English, thus cultivating strong ideal selves in each.

Carlo, too, perceived his Friulian self as the most authentic – "not cosmetic," in his words (Pavlenko, 2006) – and dominant over Italian, French, and English. Two features of his interview underline this attachment: first, he was the first participant to request using Friulian in the interview; second, he declared speaking a local variety, slightly different from the standard, thus exhibiting a degree of language awareness that is not normally found in many speakers of the language (e.g. in Michele and Isabella). He described his engagement as a "personal battle" for Friulian, recalling how he insisted his wedding be celebrated in the language. Reflecting on his school years, he referred twice to a "deformation" caused by Italian being the sole medium of instruction:

> [Carlo] Although I believe it [learning Friulian at school and using it as a medium of instruction] could be a solution, the fact of having experienced all my years of schooling through Italian […] so due to this let's call it *deformation*, one is used to the fact that all that has to be learned should be mediated by the Italian language, right? (emphasis added)

Carlo contrasted this with current approaches, advocating the teaching of subjects in Friulian – implicitly alluding to Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) – as a path for language promotion. His outlook highlighted both his critical stance on past experiences and his forward-looking vision for Friulian.

For Isabella, too, Friulian is central to her identity. She described her sense of being Friulian directly in relation to language, framing it as the "software of the mind" (Hofstede, 1991). She declared feeling a strong sense of belonging to the Friulian community – resonating with MacIntyre et al.'s rooted self (2017) – as an entity that comes from the past but is projected towards the future. She explicitly mentions this in the follow-up written questions:

> [Isabella] The issue of the future of the Friulian community sparks strong

emotions in me, which push me against the tide with respect to politically-correctness: I strongly wish that the blood shed by our ancestors not be in vain for times to come. […] For the future of my loved ones, I hope that all this may continue to be the unifying force for future Friulians.

Isabella claimed a fundamental unity across her language selves, arguing that multilingualism made her feel "more complete" and able "to expand and bestow in multiple dimensions" (a similar view, although within a different perspective, was expressed by Lorenzo, see par. 3.2). Nevertheless, she still placed Friulian above all other languages, citing both its role as her mother tongue and its affective power. Citing research carried out by Prof. Franco Fabbro, internationally known Friulian scholar in neurolinguistics, she explained that affective activation in childhood made her Friulian self predominant. By contrast, she dismissed languages learned later in life, such as English, as "fake," "postiche" (Pavlenko, 2006).

3.1.3 Armida: Dominant Friulian (Backward-Looking) Self

Armida also declared feeling a Friulian citizen. Her interview revealed a strong rooted Friulian self, grounded in belonging to the community. However, unlike Carlo and Isabella, who displayed a positive future-oriented outlook on Friulian and its community, Armida's view appeared backward-looking, tied to an idealised Friulian community of the past that, in her view, no longer existed.

Her reasoning about bilingual Friulian-Italian signs illustrated this stance. She described such signs as "forced," arguing that Friulian had historically been a spoken language of largely illiterate common people, while literacy in Friulian was reserved for an intellectual élite. Today, she explained, people are accustomed to reading and writing in Italian, and thus "knowing Friulian well" (i.e., mastering literacy) was relevant only for a small group of professionals such as "teachers of Friulian" or "journalists of the RAI radio-TV public service". For Armida, Friulian represented more of a leisure or retirement pursuit than a language with contemporary social vitality. Unlike Carlo, she did not envisage any role for Friulian in schools.

Her rather negative orientation extended beyond language. Among all interviewees, she was the only one who stated in the questionnaire that she would not like to attend any language course in the future. Both her interview and follow-up answers suggested a limited, even pessimistic view of the future, shaped by discourses of ageism (De Bot & Makoni, 2005; Andrew, 2012; Ramírez Gómez, 2016). Notably, instead of completing the written follow-up questions, she crossed them out and added a comment in red beginning with: "these questions do not seem to be appropriate for a 74-year-old person".

3.2 Interviewees Displaying the Ideal Multilingual Self

Both among young adults and elders, six participants displayed what Henry (2017) defines as the *ideal multilingual self*: Lorenzo, Silvia, and Anna (young adults); Fulvio, Aurelia, and Guido (elders).

Several commonalities emerged across profiles. All six had university studies in their

background (see Table 2) and, except Lorenzo, declared feeling European citizens in the questionnaire (see Table 1). Lorenzo, however, clarified in the interview that his European identity was rooted in his Friulian identity:

> [Lorenzo] I was undecided between Friulian and European [while filling out the survey questionnaire] but I chose Friulian ehm because… *it's precisely the Friulian identity that allows me to identify this European identity*. […] Meaning that, ehm, I think that the Friulian identity is the outcome of many influences after all… the Mediterranean influence, the Mitteleuropean influence, the Slavic influence. Ehm and in a way the Friulian identity combines all these identities... Ehm and in the same fashion the European identity itself is a combination of many diverse identities and therefore I chose Friulian, let's say, because *the Friulian identity is somehow the key to the European identity*. (emphasis added)

Thus, for Lorenzo, the rooted Friulian self served as the foundation of his European outlook. Similar views were expressed, albeit with emphasis reversed (i.e., European first, Friulian afterwards), by Anna, Fulvio ("I'm a Friulian European"), and Guido, who, adopting a wider (political) perspective, associated the Friulian identity to the broader project of European integration. Specifically, he framed minority language promotion as a step towards a Europe without borders and nationalisms. Lorenzo and Anna were also among the few who explicitly used the concept of "identity" in their interviews: Lorenzo used the term 17 times, Anna repeated it twice, highlighting its importance to their self-perception as European and Friulian citizens.

Taken together, the six participants' accounts reflected three main characteristics of the ideal multilingual self.

Valorisation of multiple languages. Each interviewee assigned dignity and value to all languages in their repertoire, using them flexibly across different domains (Nakamura, 2019). Anna, for instance, described feeling like a different person depending on the language spoken, not because of proficiency, but because of the contexts in which the languages could be used. Lorenzo, by contrast, emphasised a fundamental unity of self, but similarly valued functional differentiation, seeing his languages as tools for adapting "to specific contexts in the best possible way".

Aurelia expressed unity even more strongly, supported by her pronounced willingness to communicate (WTC, MacIntyre, 2020; Yashima, 2002). She reported that whether using Friulian, English, Spanish, or Serbo-Croatian, she "was always herself" (Pavlenko, 2006), simply selecting the most effective medium for communication in a given context. Guido, meanwhile, envisioned himself as a competent trilingual in Italian, English and Friulian. Although he admitted lower production proficiency in Friulian, his determination to reach fluency sustained an ideal Friulian self alongside his Italian and English selves.

Refusal of one dominant language self. A second commonality was refusal to allow a single language self to prevail. Unlike Sara or Mara (par 3.1), these six interviewees maintained balance among their language-related selves.

Silvia's case was especially illustrative. Passionate about Romance languages, she had studied Spanish for five years in upper-secondary school and was majoring in Portuguese in the MA programme she was enrolled in at university. Despite acknowledging greater confidence in Spanish, she nevertheless cultivated an equally strong ideal Portuguese self, envisioning a future in a Portuguese-speaking country. She also declared meaningful connections to Germanic languages (English, German, Swedish), and all of them had their own space in her repertoire, no language dominating over the others. She described her main challenge not as prioritisation but as managing interference between Spanish and Portuguese – two Romance languages close to each other and to her mother tongue, Italian – both regularly active in her working self-concept (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Fulvio's interview further confirmed this pattern. Responding to a fictional prompt (i.e., the fictional situation in Q7, Appendix A), he interpreted the interviewer as suggesting that studying English would be more valuable than Friulian. His reaction was telling:

> [Fulvio] I don't believe it [the choice of attending a course of Friulian] is something *superfluous or useless*, you know […]. The thing about English, well, ok, I'll do something, I'm not ruling out the possibility of doing… but not as a mutually exclusive alternative, you know. […] *You've caught me right on what I lack!* The thing about English, isn't it? By telling you my experience you noticed that *this is actually something I lack*, isn't it? […] but I don't see them as mutually exclusive alternatives, by any means […] if anything, I'll do both. (emphasis added)

In defending his wish to attend a course of Friulian, Fulvio revealed two dynamics: first, an awareness of English as a normative referent (Henry, 2010); second, a refusal to accept exclusivity, instead choosing to strengthen both his rooted Friulian and ideal English selves. His awareness of speaking a non-standard variety of Friulian also fuelled an ought-to dimension, as he felt the need to "systematise" and regularise his written usage, a sort of positive anxiety that ultimately reinforced his ideal Friulian self.

Dynamicity, openness and curiosity. All six interviews revealed dynamicity, openness and curiosity, all traits that describe Henry's (2017) ideal multilingual self.

Anna, in her follow-up written responses, offered an especially interesting example. She identified as a European multilingual citizen and distinguished between Europe and the "great abroad", by which she meant countries outside Europe (e.g. the Americas). For her, Europe was not "abroad" but an ideal community of people that is not internally divided by nation-State borders and where different peoples peacefully coexist (paraphrasing her own words). This perspective was consistent with Fulvio's numerous references to "feeling at home" in all the European countries he had visited, and Aurelia's frequent travels for family and tourism. Aurelia also connected her aptitude for languages to her field of expertise – i.e., music – characterising herself as having an "ear for languages". This, combined with her WTC, enabled her to effectively employ even her most basic German or Serbo-Croatian skills during her travels.

Lorenzo also showed openness and dynamicity. In his written responses, he claimed that learning a language was "a goal in its own right", rather than a means to other ends. His comments suggested an emergent view of goals, shaped by increasing competence and consistent with a Complex Dynamic Systems perspective (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008).

Guido provided a revealing illustration of open-mindedness towards the local minority language, which he introduced as "a jump in his appreciation of Friulian". He recounted witnessing two students – before retirement, he was a teacher in a technical upper-secondary school in Udine – coining a Friulian neologism for a mathematical concept:

> [Guido] They used this neologism, *pont di ingrumament* [trans. pile-up point]. And it's perfect! Because the concept is exactly the *ingrumament*, it's not the accumulation, it's like in processions […] exactly like in processions, right? A procession piles up and the *pont di ingrumament* as a mathematical neologism is much better than the Italian term. And I thought 'You see, Friulian can be a scientific language as well!' So, that was an enlightening moment.

This anecdote marked a turning point in his appreciation of Friulian as a vehicle for academic discourse, reinforcing his ideal multilingual self.

The main difference that was detected between the three young adults, on the one hand, and the three elders, on the other, is the *reach* of their ideal multilingual self. For the former, it appeared potentially limitless, supported by an openness to future learning and the incorporation of new languages. Conversely, it was more bounded for the elders, anchored in already familiar languages. This difference likely reflected life trajectory: the young adults were at the beginning of their careers, while the elders were at later stages. In line with Cardona and Luise (2019), this may reflect processes of Selection, Optimisation, and Compensation that are common in older age (Baltes & Baltes, 1990), whereby learners deliberately choose and optimise efforts to continue learning efficiently.

4. Conclusions

This study, despite its small scale and qualitative nature, permits modest generalisations (Rihoux & Ragin, 2008) within the Friulian-speaking area of FVG (Italy), as interviewees were deliberately chosen to maximise variance and reflect wider trends. Nonetheless, the specificity of its setting limits the generalisation of findings to the wider populations of reference, i.e., elderly and young adult learners. Building on recent work in language motivation research, the study provides a preliminary response to the question of whether elders and young adults can effectively participate in language learning within an intergenerational framework.

Two main learner profiles emerged across both generational groups. The first included individuals with discrete language selves, among which a dominant self could be identified: a strong ideal English self (found only among young adults) or a rooted Friulian self (found both in elders and young adults). The second group displayed Henry's (2017) ideal multilingual self, in which multiple language-specific selves coexisted dynamically. While

present in both young adults and elders, its reach differed: potentially limitless among the young, more bounded among the elderly. Perceived citizenship and education level appeared to be reliable predictors for these patterns.

These findings refine earlier research suggesting that elders and young adults might complement each other in tandem teaching (Bier, 2021). Looking at it from a qualitative perspective, the picture becomes more nuanced. For instance, whereas older participants might welcome the idea of intergenerational learning, the same may not hold for young adults (Schmidt-Hertha, 2014). Although attitudes toward such experiences were not directly explored, the results obtained suggest that learners with an ideal multilingual self may be the most open and receptive: young adults may be willing to learn standard Friulian, while elders could value opportunities to improve their English. On the other hand, young adults with a predominant English self showed little interest in Friulian, and elders with a strong rooted Friulian self were less likely to study English.

Another challenge regards the language to be used. While both elders and young adults may be able to speak a local variety of Friulian, far fewer are comfortable with its standard written form, a finding consistent with previous studies (Bier, 2021; Bier & Lasagabaster, 2024). Only those who attended Friulian courses could realistically teach the basics of the standard language.

In light of the results obtained and looking ahead, intervention studies at the intersection of language motivation and intergenerational learning are needed. Project-based initiatives that also investigate participants' attitudes toward intergenerational learning could shed light on how the two age groups engage with learning together, deepen our understanding of "learning taking place between different generations" (Boström, 2014, p. 193), while strengthening cross-linguistic awareness and promoting the development of multilingual selves.

References

Agjenzie Regjonâl pe Lenghe Furlane (ARLeF). (2015). *Ricerca sociolinguistica sulla lingua friulana*. Retrieved from https://arlef.it/app/uploads/materiali/1-ricerca-sociolinguistica-sulla-lingua-friulana-2015.pdf

Andrew, P. (2012). *The social construction of age: Adult foreign language learners*. Multilingual Matters.

Baltes, P. B., & Baltes, M. M. (1990). Psychological perspectives on successful aging: The model of selective optimization with compensation. In P. B. Baltes, & M. M. Baltes (Eds.), *Successful aging: Perspectives from the behavioral sciences* (pp. 1-34). Cambridge University Press.

Bier, A. (2021). Elders' and young adults' perceptions and attitudes towards languages in contact in multilingual Friuli-Venezia Giulia: A comparison to inform language teaching within an intergenerational perspective. *Studi di Glottodidattica, 1,* 1-21. https://doi.org/10.15162/1970-1861/1247

Bier, A., & Lasagabaster, D. (2024). Language use and attitudes of prospective teachers: A comparison of the Basque and Friulian multilingual contexts. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 45*(10), 4348-4363. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2159967

Bier, A., Zanello, G., & Ottogalli, A. (2024). *The Friulian language in education in Italy* (2nd ed.). Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning. Retrieved from https://www.mercator-research.eu/regional-dossiers/friulian-italy/

Boo, Z., Dörnyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). L2 motivation research 2005-2014: Understanding a publication surge and a changing landscape. *System*, *55*, 145-157. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2015.10.006

Boström A.-K. (2014). Intergenerational Learning and Social Capital. In B. Schmidt-Hertha, S. J. Krašovec, & M. Formosa (Eds.), *Learning across generations in Europe: Contemporary issues in older adult education* (pp. 191-201). Sense Publishers.

Cardona, M., & Luise, M. C. (2019). *Language Learning in Old Age. Motivation, Emotions, Experiences*. Soleil-Becarelli.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. SAGE.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

De Bot, K., & Makoni, S. (2005). *Language and aging in multilingual contexts*. Multilingual Matters.

Dewaele, J.-M. (2016). Why do so many bi- and multilinguals feel different when switching languages?. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *13*(1), 92-105.

https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2015.1040406

Dewaele, J.-M., & Pavlenko, A. (2001-2003). *Web questionnaire 'Bilingualism and Emotions'*. University of London.

Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner*. Lawrence Erlbaum.

Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 Motivational Self System. In Z. Dörnyei, & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 9-42). Multilingual Matters.

Dörnyei, Z. (2019). Towards a better understanding of the L2 Learning Experience, the Cinderella of the L2 Motivational Self System. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching, 9*(1), 19-30. https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2019.9.1.2

Dörnyei, Z., Henry, A., & MacIntyre, P. D. (Eds.) (2015). *Motivational dynamics in language learning*. Multilingual Matters.

Douglas Fir Group. (2016). A transdisciplinary framework for SLA in a multilingual world. *The Modern Language Journal, 100*(Supplement 2016), 19-47. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12301

European Commission (EC). (2000). A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. *Commission Staff Working Paper*. Retrieved from https://arhiv.acs.si/dokumenti/Memorandum_on_Lifelong_Learning.pdf

European Commission (EC). (2019). *Key competences for lifelong learning*. Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. Publications Office of the European Union. https://doi.org/10.2766/569540

Fabbro, A., Crescentini, C., Pascoli, E., Screm, S., Cantone, D., & Fabbro, F. (2019). Differences in personality traits in children and adult bilinguals: A pilot study in a bilingual Friulian–Italian context. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition, 23*(3), 631-638. https://doi.org/10.1017/S136672891900052X

Fusco, F. (2019). Plurilingualism and language contact in Friuli Venezia Giulia: The state of the research. *Quaderni d'italianistica, 40*(1), 165-199.

Graddol, D. (2006). *English Next. Why global English may mean the end of 'English as a Foreign Language'*. British Council.

Grosjean, F. (1982). *Life with two languages: An introduction to bilingualism*. Harvard University Press.

Grosjean, F. (2008). *Studying bilinguals*. Oxford University Press.

Grosjean, F. (2010). *Bilingual: Life and reality*. Harvard University Press.

Henry, A. (2010). Contexts of possibility in simultaneous language learning: Using the L2 Motivational Self System to assess the impact of global English. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *31*(2), 149-162. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434630903471439

Henry, A. (2011). Examining the impact of L2 English on L3 selves: A case study. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *8*(3), 235-255. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2011.554983

Henry, A. (2017). L2 motivation and multilingual identities. *The Modern Language Journal*, *101*(3), 548-565. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/44981005

Henry, A., & Thorsen, C. (2018). The ideal multilingual self: validity, influences on motivation, and role in a multilingual education. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *15*(4), 349-364. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2017.1411916

Henry, A., Thorsen, C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2021). Willingness to communicate in a multilingual context: part one, a time-serial study of developmental dynamics. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *45*(4), 937-956. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1931248

Herdina, P., & Jessner, U. (2002). *A dynamic model of multilingualism: perspectives of change in psycholinguistics*. Multilingual Matters.

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, *94*(3), 319-340.

Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. McGraw Hill.

Larsen-Freeman, D., & Cameron, L. (2008). *Complex systems and applied linguistics.* Oxford University Press.

Lohman, H., Griffiths, Y., Coppard, B. M., & Cota, L. (2003). The Power of book discussion groups in intergenerational learning. *Educational Gerontology, 29*(2), 103-115. https://doi.org/10.1080/713844284

MacIntyre, P. (2020). Expanding the theoretical base for the dynamics of willingness to communicate. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *10*(1), 111-131. https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2020.10.1.6

MacIntyre, P. D., Baker, S. C., & Sparling, H. (2017). Heritage passions, heritage convictions, and the rooted L2 self: Music and Gaelic language learning in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. *The Modern Language Journal*, *101*(3), 501-516. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12417

Markus, H. R., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, *41*, 954-969.

Nakamura, T. (2019). Understanding motivation for learning languages other than English: Life domains of L2 self. *System*, *82*, 111-121. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.03.006

Neigert, M. (2019). *New Perspectives on Older Language Learners: A Mixed Methods Study on the Temporal Self of Young-Old EFL-Learners in Germany*. Narr Francke Attempto.

Pavlenko, A. (2006). Bilingual selves. In A. Pavlenko (Ed.), *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression and representation* (pp. 1-33). Multilingual Matters.

Ramírez Gómez, D. (2016). *Language teaching and the older adult: The significance of*

experience. Multilingual Matters.

Rihoux, B., & Ragin, C. C. (2008). *Configurational Comparative Methods. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Techniques*. SAGE.

Schmidt-Hertha, B. (2014). Different Concepts of Generation and Their Impact on Intergenerational Learning. In B. Schmidt-Hertha, S. J. Krašovec, & M. Formosa (Eds.), *Learning across generations in Europe: Contemporary issues in older adult education* (pp. 145-153). Sense Publishers.

Siridetkoon, P., & Dewaele, J. M. (2018). Ideal self and ought-to self of simultaneous learners of multiple foreign languages. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *15*(4), 313-328. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2017.1293063

Ushioda, E. (2009). A person-in-context relational view of emergent motivation, self and identity. In Z. Dörnyei, & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 215-228). Multilingual Matters.

van Dongera, R., van der Meer, C., & Sterk, R. (2017). *Research for CULT Committee – Minority languages and education: best practices and pitfalls*. European Parliament: Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies. Retrieved from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU(2017)585915

Yashima, T. (2002). Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context. *The Modern Language Journal,* *86*(1), 54-66. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4781.00136

Appendix A. Semi-Structured Interview Outline

Q1) Let me first of all recap the information you gave about yourself while filling out the online questionnaire. [Brief recap follows.] Could you confirm that everything is correct?

Q2) In what occasions do you use your languages?

Q3) In the Questionnaire, you stated that you feel as a European/Friulian/FVG/Italian citizen. What does that mean to you?

Q4) Do you feel like a different person sometimes when you use your languages? (Question from Pavlenko, 2006, p. 6)

Q5) With reference to all your languages, could you tell me something more about your language learning experience, in school or out of it?

Q6) Why have you chosen to study [language]?

Q7) Here is a fictional situation:

> *There is a student in your class, her/his name is Laura/Luca. And just like you she/he is learning [language]. You are sitting close to each other in a [language] lesson and you are working with a text that you have been asked to read. Suddenly she/he sits up, sighs and thinking out loud says, 'Gosh, this would have been so much better if it had been in English [Friulian].[2] This stuff that we are doing now would have been so much easier if it had been in English [Friulian]. No, it is much more fun reading something in English [Friulian]'.*

Do you recognise this situation? Has anything like this ever happened to you? (Question adapted from Henry, 2011, p. 243)

Q8) Is there anything you wish to add about the topics covered in the interview?

Appendix B. Post-Interview Follow-up Written Questions

First of all, I wish to ask you to concentrate and try and visualise in your mind the person you will be in 5 [for young] / 3 [for elderly interviewees] years' time.

Take a few seconds to form a clear mental image of the future yourself and the goals you wish to reach in 5/3 years. Then, answer the following questions: bear in mind that what is important is your own point of view, there are no right or wrong answers.

WQ1) In the life you imagine you will be living in 5/3 years, is/are any language/s involved? [Yes/No]

WQ2) If you answered Yes, what language/s is/are it/they?

WQ3) Do you think that this/these language/s will help you achieve the goals you wish to reach in 5/3 years? [Yes/No]

WQ4) If you answered Yes, how do you think that this/these language/s will help you achieve the goals you wish to reach in 5/3 years? (Question adapted from Siridetkoon & Dewaele, 2018, p. 328)

WQ5) If you answered Yes in question 3, do you think you can improve your mastery in the language/s you have indicated? How?

Notes

Note 1. All the quotes displayed have been translated into English by the Author.

Note 2. In Carlo's, Isabella's and Armida's interviews, Friulian was used as a referent, instead of English (like it happened in all other interviews). The reasons behind this choice are threefold: 1) they declared good or very good competence in Friulian and none in English; 2) all three had no formal learning experience of English in compulsory school, as they studied French; 3) all three had formal learning experience of Friulian, as they attended courses organised by the *Societât Filologjiche Furlane* (Friulian Philological Society).

Copyrights