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Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rmmm20

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To cite this article: Lissander Brasca, Marco Tamburelli, Ianto Gruffydd & Florian Breit (10 Nov 2024): A matter of strength: language policy, attitudes, and linguistic dominance in three bilingual communities, Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, DOI: 10.1080/01434632.2024.2408448

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2024.2408448

Published online: 10 Nov 2024.

JOURNAL OF MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2024.2408448

A matter of strength: language policy, attitudes, and linguistic dominance in three bilingual communities

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the relationship between language attitudes and different bilingual language policies in three European communities where a regional/minority language is spoken: (1) the Lombard – Italian community in Italy, where Lombard does not benefit from any active policy; (2) the Moselle-Franconian – German community of the Belgian Eifel, where Moselle-Franconian speakers are a recognised linguistic minority, albeit as German-speaking, with Moselle-Franconian indirectly supported as a closely related German variety; and (3) the Welsh – English community in Wales, where the Welsh language enjoys full sociopolitical recognition. In two studies that combine a direct and an indirect method, we collected attitudinal data from a total of $N = 235$ participants (aged 23–38 years) across three locations. Results suggest a link between language policy and speakers' attitudes, with Welsh scoring higher than both Moselle-Franconian and Lombard, and Moselle-Franconian scoring higher than Lombard. This trend is explained in view of a tripartite model that places horizontal bilingualism as the most positive societal situation for language maintenance, followed by diglossia, and with vertical bilingualism as the least desirable case.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 9 July 2024
Accepted 19 September 2024

KEYWORDS
Bilingualism; diglossia; language attitudes; language maintenance; regional and minority languages

Introduction

Speakers' attitudes are deemed a fundamental barometer for the vitality of a language. Among the nine major evaluative factors of language vitality listed in UNESCO (2003), two explicitly concern attitudes, namely 'Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies including Official Status and Use' and 'Community Members' Attitudes towards their Own Language'. These two factors seem to be cross-linked (Garrett 2010): on the one hand, official status has been argued to positively affect speakers' attitudes (e.g. Lee 2015), on the other, community members' positive language attitudes inspire and encourage social activism and political initiative in favour of the official recognition of the language and the establishment of safeguard policy.

Positive speakers' attitudes are critical to a successful language maintenance policy for several reasons. For instance, without positive speakers' attitudes, many policies are likely to be opposed, and thus doomed to fail (e.g. Bell 2013; Dołowy-Rybińska and Hornsby 2021). Similarly, Fishman (1991, 2012) warns about the risks of pursuing 'premature goals' (2012, 428), i.e. policies that do not

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line up with speakers' attitudes concerning domains of usage, as such a mismatch can lead to societal conflict and thus to policy failure.

These considerations suggest that efforts to maintain linguistic diversity should prioritise the measuring of speakers' language attitudes, as well as empirically investigating what kind of language policy most positively – or negatively – affects speakers' attitudes towards endangered languages.

For this purpose, we investigated the relationship between language attitudes and bilingual language policies in three European communities where a minority/endangered language co-exists with a sociolinguistically dominant language: Lombard – Italian in Italy, Moselle-Franconian – German in Belgium, and Welsh – English in Wales. These communities were selected because they are markedly different in terms of their language policies and the degrees of sociopolitical recognition of their minority/endangered language. In Wales, the Welsh language enjoys full sociopolitical recognition; in the Belgian Eifel, Moselle-Franconian speakers are a recognised linguistic minority, albeit as German-speaking, with Moselle-Franconian supported only somewhat indirectly as a closely related German variety; while Lombard is mostly a case of benign neglect, not benefitting from any active policy.

Literature review

Wales

An estimated 538,300 (17.8%) of the Welsh population aged three years or older can speak Welsh (Welsh Government 2022).

Since the passing of the Welsh Language Act 1993, Welsh has been afforded equal status to English in Wales. Nearly two decades later, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 secured official status for the Welsh language in Wales. Since 2003, Wales has implemented official language strategies leading to the current strategy that aims to reach one million Welsh speakers by 2050 (*Cymraeg 2050: Miliwn o siaradwyr* 'Welsh 2050: A Million speakers' – Welsh Government 2017).

Increased provision of Welsh-medium education is seen to be a significant part of the Welsh Government's arsenal in their effort to reach a million Welsh speakers, and although their overreliance on using education as a tool for creating new speakers comes with its own dangers (Edwards and Newcombe 2005), its success can be highlighted in the fact that young people represent the largest proportion of Welsh speakers (Welsh Government 2022).

Therefore, the sociolinguistic situation in Wales has the defining characteristics of 'horizontal bilingualism' (Tamburelli 2012; based on Pohl 1965): speakers and institutions welcome both languages for first socialisation, and for private/informal as well as public/formal use.

A significant body of research on explicit self-reported attitudes reports mainly favourable attitudes towards Welsh (Coupland et al. 2005; Lyon and Ellis 1991; Morris 2014). Some studies have employed focus groups (Musk 2006; Price and Tamburelli 2016) and interviews (Hodges 2009). Generally, informants report more mixed attitudes towards Welsh than through self-reported questionnaire data.

Robert (2009) employed a Verbal Guise Technique (Markel, Eisler, and Reese 1967) which indicated that Welsh speakers view social attractiveness and prestige as dependent on language competence, with speakers disfavouring guises with higher rates of transfer from English in their Welsh, regardless of speaker background. Price and Tamburelli's (2020) MGT study reports that adolescent L1 Welsh speakers evaluated English guises more favourably than Welsh ones, and that a gender gap exists whereby male respondents rated Welsh less favourably than female respondents. Overall, Welsh receives positive evaluations with some discrepancies across methods. From a language maintenance perspective, less favourable MGT evaluations from male adolescents call for research on young adults of child-bearing age, a central aim of the current study.

Belgian Eifel

The German-speaking community of Belgium, covering an area commonly referred to as East Belgium, reported a population of 79,383 in January 2023, of which approx. 40% live in the southern Eifel region of East Belgium (cf. Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft 2023). While precise linguistic statistics are not available, it is clear that the portion of the population in the Eifel Region who speak *Eifeler Platt*, the regional variety of Moselle-Franconian, is smaller than the number of German speakers in the region more generally (Darquennes 2013), presenting a clear *minority of the minority* situation.

While Moselle-Franconian does not enjoy direct recognition, its speakers are a recognised linguistic minority in Belgium, albeit as German speaking. Moselle-Franconian arguably receives some indirect support as a closely related variety of German, though there is no official policy toward the various linguistic varieties present in the German-speaking community beyond the recognition of German itself, which largely looks toward German Standard German for its linguistic standard.

The sociolinguistic situation in the Belgian Eifel aligns closely with 'classical diglossia' (Ferguson 1959; Hudson 2002): Moselle-Franconian is accepted as the language of first socialisation and private/informal communication ('low' domains), while for formal ('high') situations only Standard German is acceptable. Neither of the two is necessarily identified with a socio-economically dominant group.

Research on attitudes toward Moselle-Franconian in Belgium is very limited. Vari (2021) sought to establish the potentially differential effect of standardisation on attitudes when comparing the situations of Moselle-Franconian in the Belgian Eifel with that of (linguistically very closely related) Luxembourgish across the border in northern Luxembourg. Vari's (2021) results overall indicated that her Luxembourgish participants had a preference for their Moselle-Franconian vernacular (which in this case is very close to Standard Luxembourgish), whereas her Belgian participants showed a preference away from their Moselle-Franconian vernacular toward (more distant) Standard German, and her Belgian participants scored Moselle-Franconian significantly higher than Standard German on the AToL Value factor. Vari and Tamburelli (2021), based on the same data, suggest that this might be due to overcorrection based on solidarity towards the language or perhaps even reflect covert prestige of Moselle-Franconian in Belgium.

Lombardy

According to the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), about 3.5 million people living in the Lombardy region could speak "dialect" in 2006, i.e. 35.7% of the regional population (but we do not know how many of those could speak a *Lombard* variety). Nevertheless, and despite a regional law on 'cultural matters' (Regional Law 2016, n. 25) mentioning a supposed protection and promotion of the 'Lombard Language', Lombard is not officially recognised by the Italian state. Hence, it does not benefit from any active overt policy (Coluzzi 2007; Coluzzi et al. 2018). This makes Lombard one of the 'contested languages' of Italy (Brasca 2021; Tamburelli 2021). Excluding sporadic cases, Italian linguists disregard or contest the idea that Lombard could be considered a 'language distinct from Italian' and negate its right to institutional recognition and support, insisting on referring to Lombard varieties as 'Italian dialects' (Brasca 2021; Coluzzi 2007, 2009; Coluzzi, Brasca, and Scuri 2021; Tamburelli 2021). The sociolinguistic situation of Lombardy is therefore one of 'vertical bilingualism' (Tamburelli 2012), benefitting neither from legal protection nor from the relative safety of diglossia, as the diglossic equilibrium has been broken at least since the 1960s, when Italian started being used as the only language of first socialisation among the urban middle and upper classes. Since then, Lombard became increasingly associated with lower social and socio-intellectual groups and the elderly, and intergenerational transmission has suffered greatly as a result.

Comparative, dialectometric and intelligibility studies (see Brasca 2020, 2021, 2023; Goebl 2008; Hull 2017; Tamburelli and Brasca 2018) group Lombard – both genealogically and synchronologically[1] – with the Gallo-Italic branch of Gallo-Romance, thus placing it as relatively distant from Italian and the languages of central and southern Italy, which are part of Italo-Romance.

In terms of attitudinal studies, direct attitude data on Milanese (a Lombard variety) were discussed in view of data on Asturian collected through a questionnaire (Coluzzi 2007) where speaker attitudes were approximately equally positive across both languages, but the diminishing vitality of Lombard was also brought to light.

Other studies have collected quantitative attitudinal data via questionnaires by non-Lombard participants. Evaluations collected by Tamburelli (2014) from Tuscan participants were 'in the middle range' as were those collected by Brasca (2023) from Piedmontese and Emilian speakers. Overall, however, research on attitudes towards Lombard remains very scant.

Research questions

As presented above, research on attitudes towards Lombard and Moselle-Franconian is scarce, especially if compared to Welsh.[2] In this paper we report results on quantitative attitudinal data from Lombard speakers for the first time, as well as build on previous quantitative studies on Moselle-Franconian and Welsh. Specifically, our study is the first to employ the MGT for Moselle-Franconian and to provide a comparison between AToL and MGT for Welsh.

Further, running methodologically identical experiments in three European areas with substantially different kinds of language policy – from full institutional recognition and strong administrative support for Welsh, to total institutional disregard for Lombard – will allow us to address the following research questions:

RQ1: Which language policy corresponds to the most positive speakers' attitudes towards their regional/minority language?

RQ2: Do language preferences indicated by direct and indirect methods differ?

RQ3: Do these possible differences correspond to differences in language policies?

Methodology

We conducted two distinct experiments per location; the AToL-C (Breit et al. 2023), an adaptation of the Attitudes Towards Languages questionnaire of Schoel et al. (2013); and the Matched Guise Technique (MGT – Lambert et al. 1960).

The AToL is a questionnaire eliciting quantitative attitudinal data by asking participants evaluations on various aspects of the languages of interest. Like other questionnaires, the AToL provides *explicit* measures, since participants are explicitly asked for evaluations, which also makes the AToL a *direct* measure (Kircher and Zipp 2022; McKenzie and McNeill 2023) meaning that participants are required to provide evaluations on the actual attitudinal object of interest.

By contrast, the MGT is an *indirect* method. Participants are led to believe that the guises they are hearing are of different speakers, when in fact the same speaker performs two guises, one in each language. Participants are required to rate the guises on a series of personality and social traits (Mobärg 1989, see details below). The assumption here is that possible differences between evaluations of what participants believe to be different speakers mirror different evaluations of the languages used by the speaker in the two guises.

The reasoning behind including two typologically different methods is based on the fact that language attitude measures can differ greatly depending on the method used (e.g. Maegaard 2005; McKenzie and Gilmore 2017). A discrepancy between attitudes collected via a direct method (e.g. questionnaires) and an indirect method such as the MGT has emerged in various regional/minority language contexts such as Welsh (Price and Tamburelli 2016, 2020), Irish (Ó Duibhir

2009), Catalan (Pieras-Guasp 2002), Frisian (Jonkman 1991), and Quechua (McGowan and Babel 2020), indicating that a comprehensive study of attitudes should include more than one type of method, since different methods may reveal different aspects of language attitudes. The AToL and MGT were specifically chosen for the following reasons: the AToL was purposely devised for the study of attitudes towards *language* (see Schoel et al. 2013), while the MGT, despite eliciting indirect evaluations on language to some extent, nevertheless asks for evaluation of the *speaker* (see also Pharao and Kristiansen 2019), hence providing not only two types of methods but also two potentially different types of evaluations.

Study 1: the attitudes towards languages questionnaire (AToL)

Participants

We recruited a total of 111 participants (Males = 45, Females = 66), aged between 23 and 37 years old (Mean = 28.76), representative of the current parent generation, with the average age in England and Wales being 30.9 for mothers and 33.7 for fathers (UK Government 2023).

Full breakdown of participants is given in Table 1.

All participants received monetary compensation between £10 and £15, depending on location.

Materials

The L'ART Research Assistant app (Breit et al. 2023) was employed to collect data with the Language and Social Background Questionnaire (LSBQe – adapted from Anderson et al. 2018), the AToL-C, a digital implementation and continuous-measure version of the AToL (Schoel et al. 2013) (see Breit, Tamburelli, and Gruffydd 2023 for an overview of all adaptations from AToL to AToL-C), and to obtain informed consent from participants.

Attitudes towards languages questionnaire

The AToL-C uses 15 equipollent adjective pairs to measure explicit attitudes along three factor dimensions: *Sound*, *Structure,* and the superordinate factor *Value*. Figure 1 shows the adjective pairs from our implementation of the AToL-C in all three locations pertinent to this study.

Procedure

Participants completed the LSBQe before completing the AToL-C. Both the L'ART Research Assistant app and the researchers' verbal instructions were presented in the majority language for reasons concerning consistency and continuity between research locations as well as sociolinguistic restrictions: English (in Wales), Italian (in Italy), and German (in Belgium).

A screenshot of the task is shown in Figure 2.

After evaluating the majority language by the slider for each of the 15 adjective pairs, the same task was required for the corresponding regional/minority language.

After completing the task, participants were debriefed, and the aims of the study were fully disclosed. Participants were then asked whether they still wished for their data to be included in the study and were reminded that they had the right to withdraw at any time and that withdrawal would not affect receipt of any compensation they were promised.

Table 1. Participant information.

	N. participants	Males	Females	Age range	Mean age
Wales	42	21	21	24–37	28.07
Belgian Eifel	30	8	22	24–36	29.70
Lombardy	39	16	23	23–35	28.77

German	English	Italian
logisch – unlogisch	logical – illogical	logico – illogico
stillos – stilvoll	inelegant – elegant	non elegante – elegante
stockend – fließend	choppy – fluent	frammentato – scorrevole
eindeutig – missverständlich	unambiguous – ambiguous	chiaro – ambiguo
anziehend – abstoßend	appealing – abhorrent	attraente – ripugnante
stukturlos – sturkturiert	unstructured – structured	non strutturato – strutturato
genau – ungenau	precise – vague	preciso – vago
hart – weich	harsh – soft	duro – morbido
flüssig – abgehackt	flowing – abrupt	fluido – brusco
schön – hässlich	beautiful – ugly	bello – brutto
systematisch – unsystematisch	systematic – unsystematic	sistematico – non sistematico
angenehm – unangenehm	pleasant – unpleasant	piacevole – spiacevole
geschmeidig – rau	smooth – raspy	liscio – ruvido
plump – anmutig	clumsy – graceful	goffo – aggraziato
eckig – rund	angular – round	spigoloso – arrotondato

Figure 1. Equipollent adjective pairs for the AToL in German, English and Italian.

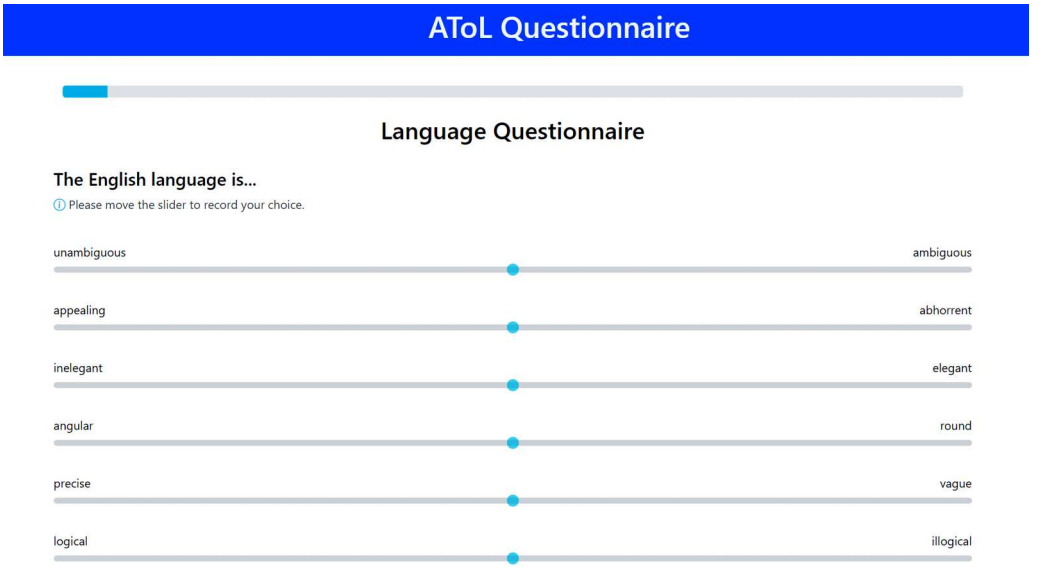

Figure 2. Digital implementation of AToL on the L'ART Research Assistant App (Breit, Tamburelli, and Gruffydd 2023).

Results

To explore AToL ratings across the three communities, we ran a 2 (language: majority vs. regional/minority) x 3 (AToL dimension: Value vs. Sound vs. Structure) repeated measures ANOVA with community as a 3-level (Wales, Lombardy, Belgium) between-subject factor. The analysis revealed significant main effects for language ($F(1, 108) = 35.319$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .246$) and AToL factor ($F(2, 107) = 28.930$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .459$). Significant interactions were also found between language and community ($F(2, 108) = 66.281$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .551$), language and AToL factor ($F(2, 107) = 10.205$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .160$), and AToL factor and community ($F(4, 216) = 3.963$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .069$), indicating that the mean language score was different across communities, as was the score for each AToL factor. A three-way interaction also emerged between language, AToL factor and community ($F(4, 214) = 16.796$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .239$).

Within-subject tests showed that the difference across AToL factors was significant for both the majority languages ($F(2, 108) = 40.071$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .426$), and the regional/minority languages ($F(2, 108) = 16.212$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .231$).

Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustment revealed that scores for the majority language were significantly higher in Lombardy when compared to either Wales (mean difference: 120.0481, 95% CI [86.416, 153.680], $p < .001$) or Belgium (mean difference: 91.345, 95% CI [54.617, 128.073], $p < .001$), while scores for the regional/minority language were significantly higher in Wales than either in Belgium (mean difference: 42.934, 95% CI [5.388, 80.479], $p = .019$) or Lombardy (mean difference: 81.696, 95% CI [46.769, 116.623], $p < .001$).

AToL factors

For AToL factors, the results of pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustment are reported in Table 2.

Figure 3 shows the AToL *Value* factor scores for the regional/minority languages (RML) and majority languages (Maj) for all three communities. As outlined in Table 2, Value factor scores were significantly higher for Welsh (RML) when compared to English (Maj). Conversely, Value factor scores were significantly lower for Lombard (RML) when compared to Italian (Maj). No significant difference was found between Value factor scores for Moselle-Franconian (RML) and German (Maj).

Figure 4 shows the AToL Sound factor scores for the regional/minority languages (RML) and majority languages (Maj) for all three communities. Sound factor scores were significantly lower for Lombard (RML) when compared to Italian (Maj) and significantly higher for Moselle-Franconian (RML) when compared to German (Maj). No significant difference was found between Sound factor scores for Welsh (RML) and English (Maj) (see MD values in Table 2).

Figure 5 shows the AToL *Structure* factor scores for the regional/minority languages (RML) and majority languages (Maj) for all three communities. No significant difference was found between Structure factor scores for Welsh (RML) and English (Maj). Structure factor scores where

Table 2. Comparison of scores for AToL factors by community and language.

Community	RML	Maj Lang	AToL factor	MD	[95% CI]	SE	*p*
Wales	Welsh	English	Value	100.811***	[64.950, 136.671]	18.092	<.001
			Sound	18.855	[−18.073, 55.784]	18.630	.314
			Structure	17.818	[−12.607, 48.244]	15.350	.248
Lombardy	Lombard	Italian	Value	−151.044***	[−188.259, −113.830]	18.775	<.001
			Sound	−207.446***	[−245.769, −169.124]	19.333	<.001
			Structure	−109.256***	[−140.831, −77.682]	15.929	<.001
Belgium	M-Franc	German	Value	4.713	[−37.718, 47.144]	21.406	.826
			Sound	47.921*	[4.227, 91.615]	22.044	.032
			Structure	−130.059***	[−166.060, −94.059]	18.162	<.001

Note: * $p \leq .05$; *** $p \leq .001$.

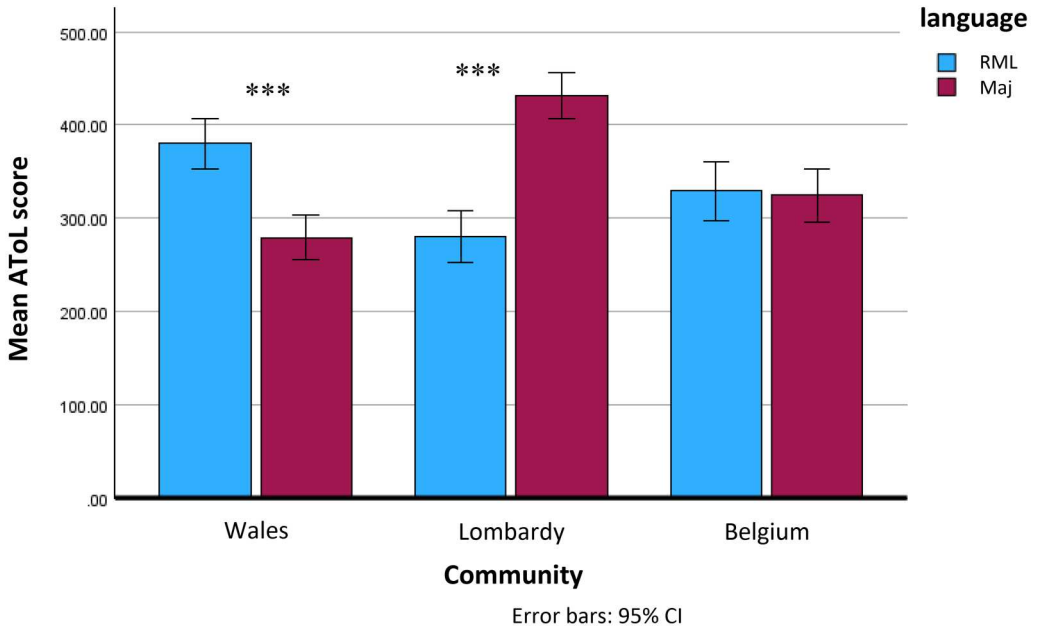

Figure 3. AToL Value factor scores for the regional/minority languages (RML) and majority languages (Maj) for all three communities under investigation.

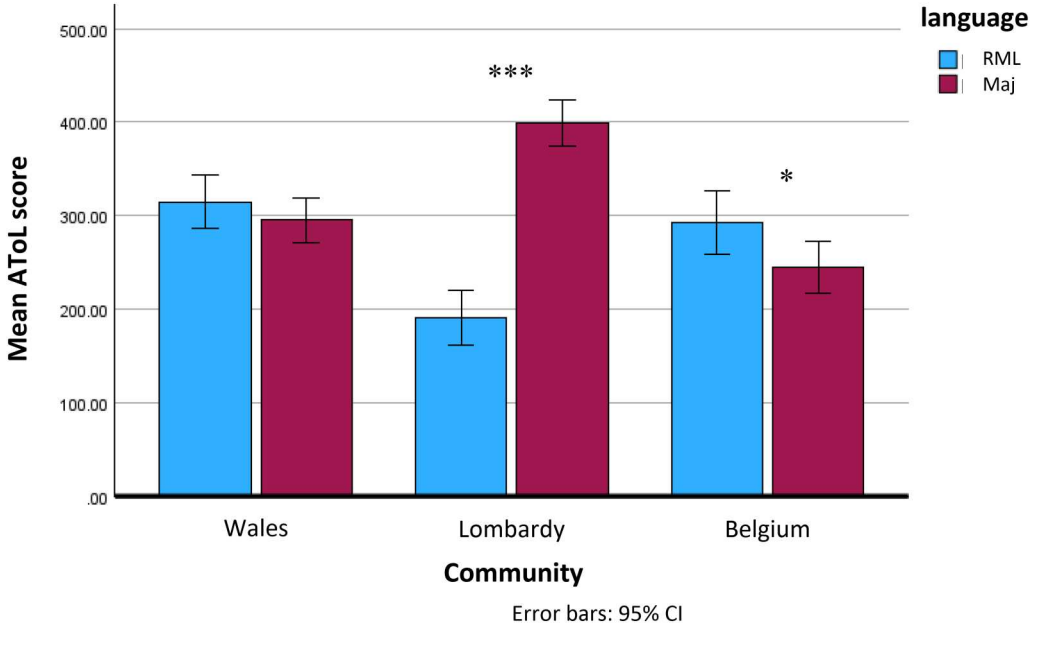

Figure 4. AToL Sound factor scores for the regional/minority languages (RML) and majority languages (Maj) for all three communities under investigation.

significantly lower for Lombard (RML) when compared to Italian (Maj). Structure factor scores where significantly lower for Moselle-Franconian (RML) when compared to German (Maj) (see MD values in Table 2).

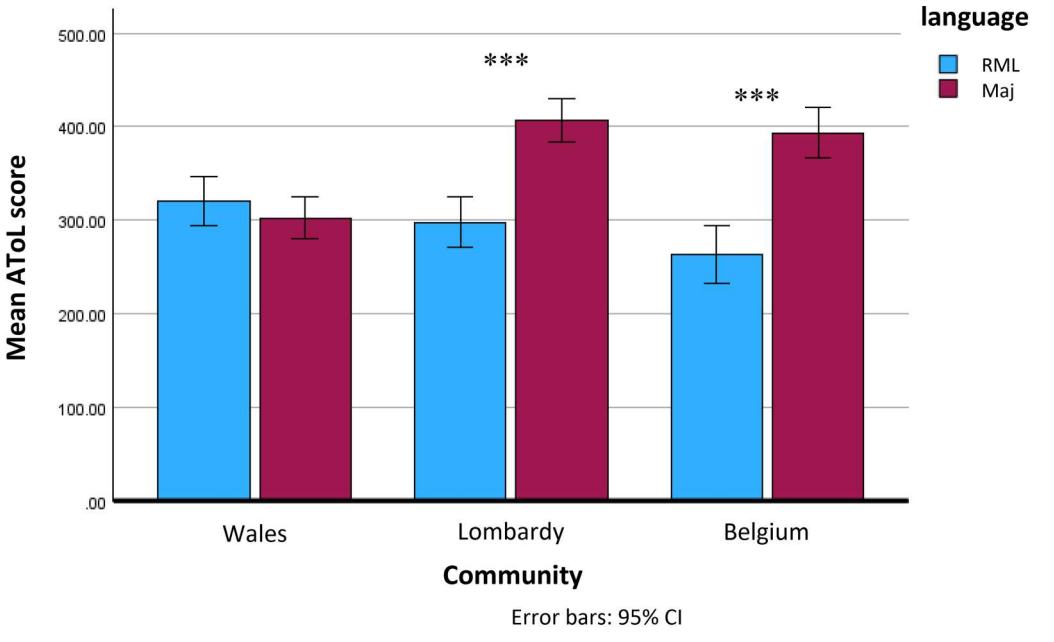

Figure 5. AToL Structure factor scores for the regional/minority languages (RML) and majority languages (Maj) for all three communities under investigation.

Study 2: the matched guise technique

Participants

We recruited a total of 124 participants (Males = 53, Females = 71) between 24 and 38 years old (Mean = 29.33), following the same reasoning and recruitment methods as described in Study 1. Full breakdown of participants is given in Table 3.

Design

Participants were presented with 12 recorded audio guises (6 in the majority language and 6 in the regional/minority language) produced by 6 speakers. Participants were asked to rate each guise on 18 traits combining personality and social traits (Mobärg 1989). The independent variable was language of guise (majority or regional/minority), and the dependent variable was the evaluation score.

To minimise acquiescence effect and social desirability bias (Jackson and Messick 1965; Oppenheim 2000), the attitudinal object of interest for the study was not revealed to participants until after they had taken part. Instead, participants were initially told that they were required to evaluate voices for podcasts and radio broadcasts.

Materials

Stimuli

Preselection of Guises. To produce the guises, six fluent female bilinguals, speakers of the same local variety of each regional/minority language, were asked to talk

Table 3. Participant information.

	N. participants	Males	Females	Age range	Mean age
Wales	44	25	19	25–35	28.23
Belgian Eifel	40	11	29	24–36	29.68
Lombardy	40	17	23	24–38	30.20

informally about several topics in both the regional/minority and majority language (details below).

In Wales, speakers were between 24 and 31 years old; in Belgian Eifel they were 31–46 years old, and in Lombardy between 53 and 63 years old. The decision to select older Lombard speakers was made to comply with sociolinguistic expectations: fluent speakers of Lombard are unlikely to be younger than middle aged (ISTAT 2007), a consequence of Lombard's 'definitely endangered' status as reported in the UNESCO Atlas (Moseley 2010).

The topics discussed were introduced to the speaker beforehand. They included hobbies and holidays, chosen due to their informal nature and to comply with sociolinguistic expectations in Lombardy and the Belgian Eifel (see Loureiro-Rodríguez and Acar 2022). For each location, one of the recorded topics was chosen as the source of the guises. Guises were kept similar across languages and speakers in terms of socio-intellectual characteristics. For instance, in Lombardy, the guises were about holiday trips to places of popular cultural interest.

To keep guises as consistent as possible for speed (see Stewart and Ryan 1982) and input level, speakers were invited to speak in a friendly and calm tone, and were recorded in individual sessions in a quiet room. A Rode Wireless Go II with a Rode Lavalier Go was used for recording in Belgium, a Rode NT1A for recordings in Wales, and a ZOOM H2 portable digital recorder in Lombardy.

Guise Selection. Excerpts of approximately 60–80 s long were extracted from the recordings to be used as guises, with this length deemed sufficient for participants to work through the 18 traits.

The guises produced by four of the speakers were used as stimuli, while those produced by the other two speakers were used as fillers. One further guise was produced in the majority language and presented to the participants as practice item before the actual test started.

In Lombardy and Wales, the topic of the practice item was the speaker's opinion about the use of podcasts and radio respectively. This choice of topic was meant to help reinforce the participant's belief about the purported aim of the research. In the Belgian Eifel, a practice guise about a travel story was chosen as local informants rated this as clearer and more neutral than the other options that had been recorded for the practice guise.

All guises were made as consistent as possible for acoustic ambience by reducing background noise and were normalised to −1.0 dB in version 2.4.2 of Audacity (Audacity Team 2014).

Traits. MGT traits were constructed by the research team, which featured at least one member with linguistic expertise in each of the languages under consideration. Eighteen traits were selected based on the list from the original MGT (Lambert et al. 1960) in conjunction with more recent developments from attitudinal studies that focused on minority language contexts (Echeverria 2005; Loureiro-Rodríguez, Boggess, and Goldsmith 2013; Price and Tamburelli 2020). We filtered out any item that did not transfer well across linguistic communities, as our final list had to cater for rather different sociolinguistic situations (see Breit, Tamburelli, and Gruffydd 2023 for more detail). The final list of 18 traits is reported in Table 4.

Procedure

Participants completed the LSBQe before completing the MGT. The MGT procedure was presented as in Breit, Tamburelli, and Gruffydd (2023), and proceeded as follows. First, the researcher

Table 4. Final list of 18 traits for MGT.

amusing	trustworthy	ambitious	intelligent	educated	competent
open-minded	ignorant	international	influential	friendly	natural
attractive	polite	cool	likable	honest	pretentious

Speaker	Language Variety	Example
F1	Either	Filler: English
S1	Var1	Speaker 1, Welsh
S2	Var2	Speaker 2, English
F2	Either	Filler: Welsh
S3	Var2	Speaker 3, English
S4	Var1	Speaker 4, Welsh
F3	Either	Filler: Welsh
S1	Var2	Speaker 1, English
S2	Var1	Speaker 2, Welsh
F4	Either	Filler: English
S3	Var1	Speaker 3, Welsh
S4	Var2	Speaker 4, English

Figure 6. Example of a pseudo-random order using Welsh and English as working languages.

instructed the participant on the nature and sequence of the MGT: the participant would hear a sequence of people speaking and would see a series of sliders on the screen to be used to evaluate each speaker; the evaluation had to be given exclusively on the basis of the speaker's voice; by the slider, s/he was required to indicate how much s/he agreed that the voice corresponded to each of the traits listed, from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'; participants would hear each voice only once. Upon beginning the MGT, a practice guise allowed participants to familiarise themselves with the task and possibly adjust the headphones and volume.

The participant then proceeded to evaluate 12 guises for each trait listed on screen. Guises appeared in a pseudo-randomised order which spaced recordings from the same speaker maximally apart. The order of fillers (regardless of language), and which language variety was presented first (keeping alternation constant) was also randomised. Below is one example of a pseudo-random order generated by the L'ART Research Assistant (Figure 6).

After completing the task, debriefing and compensation proceeded as in study 1.

Table 5. Obliquely rotated component loadings for 18 MGT items, with loadings => .40.

	Component			
Adjective	1	2	3	4
Likeable	.795			
Friendly	.815			
Honest	.840			
Trustworthy	.832			
Natural	.846			
Polite	.666	.456		
Pretentious	.665		−.493	
Ignorant	.555			
Open-minded		.636		
Educated		.842		
Ambitious		.698		
Competent		.820		
Intelligent		.782		
Cool		.728		.431
Attractive		.692		
International			.785	
Influential		.440	.597	
Amusing	−.412			−.769

Results

Component analysis

A Principal Axis Factor (PAF) with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation of the 18 MGT adjectives was conducted on data from all 124 participants for a total of 248 average ratings (124 participants x 2), with averages calculated from a total of 912 ratings (124 participants x 2 languages x 4 guises per language = 672 individual ratings, plus 40 participants x 2 languages x 3 guises per language = 240 individual ratings). An examination of the Kaiser–Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy suggested that the sample was factorable (KMO = .878).

The results are shown in Table 5. When loadings less than 0.40 were excluded, the analysis yielded a four-factor solution.

However, factor 4 contains a single item ('amusing'), which also shows a mild negative correlation with factor 1, suggesting that perhaps participants interpreted 'amusing' in the sense of 'humorous/light-hearted', rather than in the intended sense of being laughable. This departs from the interpretation we had in mind, i.e. the speaker being 'laughable', which we thought might be elicited by use of the regional/minority language in a high register situation (i.e. a recording in an experimental setting) in the two communities where the regional/minority language is sociolinguistically overtly subordinate to the majority language. Further, 'international' is the only item that does not pattern with any other adjective in components 1 and 2. Re-running the analysis after removing 'amusing' and 'international', a two-factor solution emerged, closely aligned with the traditional distinction between Solidarity (factor 1) and Status (factor 2), both of which also revealed very strong coefficients, with a Cronbach's alpha of .911 (factor 1) and .870 (factor 2) (Table 6).

Analysis of variance

A 2 (MGT factor: Solidarity or Status) x 2 (Language: majority or regional/minority) repeated measures ANOVA with community as a 3-level (Wales, Lombardy, Belgium) between-subject factor revealed a main effect for language ($F(1, 121) = 19.074$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .136$) and MGT factor ($F(1, 121) = 367.723$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .752$). Interactions were also found between Language and MGT factor ($F(1, 121) = 85.931$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .415$), Language and Community ($F(1, 121) = 21.575$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .263$), and MGT factor and Community ($F(1, 121) = 16.485$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .214$). A three-way interaction was also found between language, MGT factor and Community ($F(1, 121) = 18.226$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .232$).

Table 6. Obliquely rotated component loadings after removal of 'amusing' and 'international'.

	Component	
Adjective	1	2
open minded		.608
attractive		.665
trustworthy	.824	
ignorant	.634	
polite	.649	.430
ambitious		.764
cool		.702
intelligent		.784
influential		.590
likeable	.841	
educated		.829
friendly	.857	
honest	.821	
competent		.794
natural	.825	
pretentious	.779	

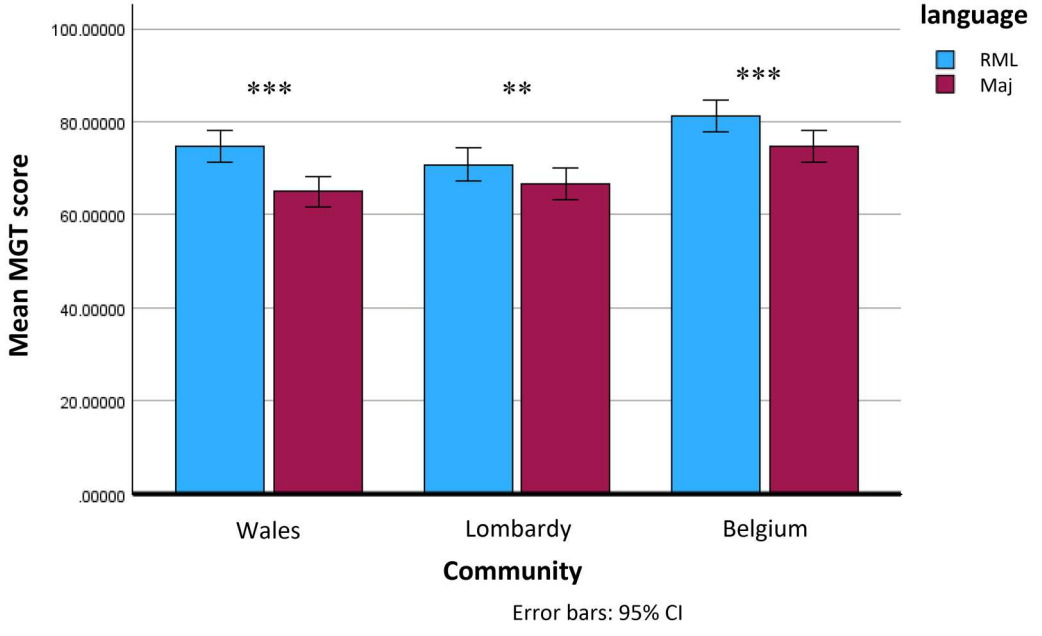

Figure 7. Mean Solidarity scores for the regional/minority language (RML) and the majority language (Maj) for the three communities under investigation.

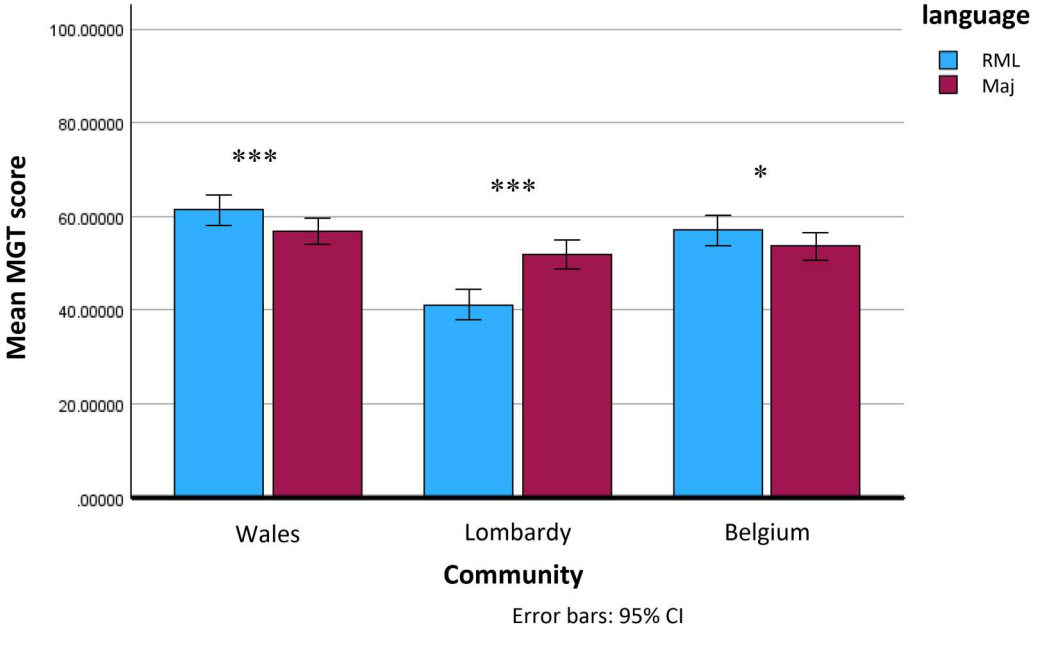

Figure 8. Mean Status scores for the regional/minority language (RML) and the majority language (Maj) for the three communities under investigation.

Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustment revealed that Solidarity scores for the regional/minority language were significantly higher in Belgium when compared to both Lombardy (mean difference: 10.478, 95% CI [4.516, 16.441], $p < .001$) and Wales (mean difference: 6.609, 95%

Table 7. Comparison of scores for MGT factors by community and language.

Community	RML	Maj Lang	MGT factor	MD	[95% CI]	SE	*p*
Wales	Welsh	English	Solidarity	9.653***	[7.068, 12.237]	1.305	<.001
			Status	4.577***	[1.870, 7.283]	1.367	.001
Lombardy	Lombard	Italian	Solidarity	4.202**	[1.491, 6.913]	1.369	.003
			Status	−10.672***	[−13.510, −7.833]	1.434	<.001
Belgium	M-Franc	German	Solidarity	6.651***	[3.941, 9.362]	1.369	<.001
			Status	3.379*	[.540, 6.217]	1.434	.020

Note: * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

CI [−.784, 12.435], $p = .020$), while no difference was found between Welsh and Lombard ($p = .328$). For Status, Lombard was scored significantly lower than both Welsh (mean difference: 20.128, 95% CI [−25.751, −14.506], $p < .001$) and Moselle-Franconian (mean difference: 15.826, 95% CI [−21.581, −10.071], $p < .001$), with no difference between Belgium and Wales ($p = .197$).

For the majority language, Solidarity scores were significantly higher in Belgium when compared to both Lombardy (mean difference: 8.029, 95% CI [2.036, 14.023], $p = .004$) and Wales (mean difference: 9.611, 95% CI [3.755, 15.467], $p < .001$), while no difference was found for Status scores ($p = > .062$). Figure 7 shows the results of comparisons by community for Solidarity, while Figure 8 shows comparisons for the Status scores.

Table 7 shows results for MGT scores by community and language.

Discussion

We aimed to address three research questions: (1) Which kind of language policy corresponds to the most positive speakers' attitudes towards their regional/minority language? (2) Do language preferences indicated by direct and indirect methods differ? (3) Do these possible differences correspond to differences in language policies?

Concerning RQ1, AToL results indicate that the situation of horizontal bilingualism found in Wales corresponds to the most positive overall attitudes towards the regional/minority language, i.e. Welsh. Conversely, the vertical bilingualism of Lombardy corresponds to the least positive attitudes, while the diglossic situation of the Belgian Eifel corresponds to an intermediate attitudinal situation.

This overall ranking is visible in the Value factor, where Welsh is preferred to English, Moselle-Franconian does not differ from German, and Italian is overwhelmingly preferred to Lombard. This is particularly relevant to an overall comparison, as previous research showed that while 'Sound and Structure are rather independent factors, … Value is interrelated with both of them … [and] may be conceived a superordinate factor' (Schoel et al. 2013, 8).

These results are in line with the model presented in Tamburelli (2012), which highlights how positive attitudes towards the L language are promoted in cases of horizontal bilingualism and – although indirectly and in a more limited manner – in diglossic situations, but are actively discouraged in cases of vertical bilingualism. This follows from the fact that, in diglossia, the L is perceived as valuable because its knowledge and use are essential in informal situations (Ferguson 1959) and thus necessary for speakers to be functional members of the society. In horizontal bilingualism, language diversity is overtly valorised by the institutions, hence perceived as socio-economically advantageous by speakers (Baker 2001). In vertical bilingualism, on the other hand, there is no situation where knowledge and use of L are necessary, nor is the language associated with any socio-economic advantages, thus leading to a steady decay in attitudes. As Tamburelli (2012) points out, these properties are fundamental to issues of intergenerational transmission, and thus language maintenance. The advantages associated with knowledge and use of L in diglossia and with the minority language in horizontal bilingualism encourage intergenerational transmission. Conversely, vertical bilingualism does not associate any communicative needs or socio-economic advantages with the L, making intergenerational transmission redundant and ultimately halting it (see

Tamburelli 2012). This makes diglossia and horizontal bilingualism the only two situations able to foster a degree of stability in multilingual settings (Tamburelli 2012; see also Fishman 1991 and Romaine 2002 for similar points).

Concerning the Structure dimension, Italian and German were preferred to their respective regional/minority languages, while Welsh was preferred to English. These results align with Schoel et al. (2013), who found lower evaluations on Structure for the regional/minority language than for the majority language in socio-politically unbalanced bilingualism.

Importantly, the fact that higher social classes tend to dictate linguistic standards has been argued to account for the relationship observed between AToL Structure and MGT Status and with the Competence dimension identified in socio-psychological research (Schoel et al. 2013). On this basis, the Structure scores we reported for Lombard and Moselle-Franconian are likely a sign of endangerment, since, as Edwards (2011) points out 'overall, when compared to [solidarity], speaker-status evaluations generally carry more weight and are thus a stronger determinant of an individual's level of [social and economic] success and advancement' (reported in McKenzie and McNeill 2023, 37). Here, dominance of the H variety in the fragile equilibrium afforded by classical diglossia in the Belgian Eifel reveals itself: in times of easy access to education, extending the use of German from the formal situations to the loci of first socialisation is a short step, which could lead to Moselle-Franconian's shift towards vertical bilingualism in a trajectory similar to that experienced by Lombard in the 1960s. For the same reasons, the opposite trend in Structure results for Wales suggests that decade-long use of both languages in education, a defining characteristic of horizontal bilingualism (Tamburelli 2012), has led Welsh speakers to move beyond the H vs L dichotomy. Preference for Welsh over English on Structure seems to echo, at a more overt level, Price and Tamburelli's (2020) MGT results, where adolescents associated school and officialdom more with Welsh than with English.

No preference was found on Sound between the two co-official languages in Wales, despite this being a domain where regional/minority languages tend to be perceived more positively than majority languages (Schoel et al. 2013). Here, the possible effect of the overtly egalitarian school and media narrative on the cultural and functional value of languages, typical of horizontal bilingualism, can be seen: where bilingualism is taught and promoted in schools, speakers *know* that a presumption of 'better' or 'worse' language sounds has no objective linguistic grounding.

In line with previous research on non-standardized regional/minority languages (Schoel et al. 2013), Moselle-Franconian is preferred to German on Sound. Previous research has identified a potential relationship between the AToL Sound dimension, the MGT Solidarity factor, and Warmth in the wider socio-psychological literature (Fiske et al. 2002; McKenzie and McNeill 2023; Schoel et al. 2013; Vari and Tamburelli 2021). This indicates that Sound scores for Moselle-Franconian typify the profile of diglossic communities, where the L is still passed on to children and its informal day-to-day use is accepted and vital across generations, including outside the home, as a trans-generational mark of belonging to the regional community. On this basis, Sound results in Belgium indicate at least an ongoing in-group identity link between young adults and Moselle-Franconian.

The situation of vertical bilingualism in which Lombard finds itself is more severe, with lower evaluations than Italian for both Sound and Value. Moreover, Sound-ratings were lower than on Structure, and indeed the lowest in the entire study. This profile corresponds to a particularly advanced level of 'linguistic insecurity' and negative self-image (Labov 1972). This raises concerns of overt estrangement from Lombard among young adults, even in an in-group identity sense.

The MGT results, on which Lombard received the least favourable evaluation overall, confirm this further. While Lombard was preferred to Italian on Solidarity, it was disfavoured on Status, a trend that is an indicator of endangerment (Edwards 2011). This trend was not found in the other communities, where more favourable sociopolitical conditions for the regional/minority languages correspond to higher evaluations in comparison to the majority languages on both dimensions.

In relation to RQ2 and RQ3, our results indicate that language preferences differ at least partially across methods in a way that corresponds to differences in language policies. Following up on the potential relationships AToL Sound – MGT Solidarity and AToL Structure – MGT Status (Schoel et al. 2013), divergences, in the form of different rankings of regional/minority and majority language, emerge across some AToL and MGT related dimensions.

Convergence between related dimensions across methods is found in two comparisons out of six. Firstly, preference for Italian over Lombard on Structure and Status, which indicates stability of an ideology-driven vertical bilingualism, which associates the majority language alone with socio-economic-intellectual success (see Edwards 2011), endangering the regional language, in this case Lombard. Secondly, preference for Moselle-Franconian on Sound and Solidarity indicates stability of the in-group identity link between speakers and the regional/minority language, which characterises diglossia. For majority languages, however, Solidarity scores were higher for German than Italian and English. This could reflect a sociolinguistic peculiarity of the Belgian side of this study. Since the use and recognition of German in Belgium is limited to the participants' regional community, it is plausible that Moselle-Franconian speakers might form their primary in-group identity as the German-speaking minority – which includes the Belgian Eifel. This contrasts them to French as the dominant majority language in surrounding Wallonia. This would leave them to associate with German, though possibly less so than with Moselle-Franconian. This differs markedly from English and Italian, which represent a standard language of the entire state, and are therefore not uniquely associated with Welsh and Lombard speakers respectively.

Conversely, four divergences emerge between related dimensions across methods. To account for them, a key-difference between AToL and MGT needs to be highlighted. Previous literature indicates that responses to direct methods like the AToL are prone to social desirability bias (Garrett, Coupland, and Williams 2003), and thus to pressure from dominant linguistic ideologies. In this respect, due to its indirect nature, the MGT elicits more covert responses, which are less likely to be sensitive to social desirability bias (Garrett, Coupland, and Williams 2003; see Loureiro-Rodríguez and Acar 2022). With this in mind, a slight divergence can be seen in Wales between preference for Welsh on Solidarity on the one hand, and no preference on Sound on the other. This could be seen as a covert in-group response associated with the regional/minority language coexisting with the possible overt effect – seen above – of horizontal bilingualism and the egalitarian school and media narrative that characterises it.

A slight divergence can be seen in Wales again, between no preference found on Structure and a preference for Welsh on Status. As for Sound above, similar evaluations for Structure may result from the overt egalitarian stance in schools and the media. Status results, on the other hand, seem to echo the results of Price and Tamburelli (2020): governmental efforts to support Welsh in media and school may be pushing young Welsh speakers to associate Welsh more than English with school and officialdom. However, while Price and Tamburelli (2020) expressed concern about the fact that *adolescents'* association between Welsh and school corresponded to increased use of English, the interpretation of the current results regarding *adults* can be more optimistic. As we have seen, Status evaluations generally carry a particular weight in language maintenance due to their link to social and economic success (Edwards 2011). Importantly, it is not adolescents but adults who decide what language(s) to pass on to (their) children, a decision which is at least partly based on their association to potential social and economic success (e.g. Baker 2001).

A further divergence between related dimensions across methods concerns the Belgian Eifel: while German is preferred to Moselle-Franconian on Structure, Moselle-Franconian is preferred on Status. These Status results, against established tendencies for non-standardized languages (Schoel et al. 2013), could reveal one of the positive covert effects of diglossia in educated communities when compared to vertical bilingualism. In the diglossic situation found in the Eifel, Moselle-Franconian is probably no less associable with higher socio-economic-intellectual status than German, since high competence (native or otherwise) in the H language is widespread across all socio-

economic groups, as is usage of the L in informal settings. This is radically different from the situation found in Lombardy in the 1960s, where – after the diglossic equilibrium had been broken – use of H was restricted to highly educated speakers, with the result that Lombard became increasingly associated with lower socio-economic status. This means that the preference for Moselle-Franconian in our Belgian results may represent an encouraging positive covert evaluation for the socio-intellectual-economic potential of the local community.

A stronger divergence between related dimensions across methods concerns Lombard, which was slightly preferred over Italian on Solidarity, while Italian was overwhelmingly preferred on Sound. While the Solidarity evaluations align with previous studies on non-standardized languages (Schoel et al. 2013), such negative self-image revealed by Sound results could express participants' overt adherence to particularly effective dominant monolingualist ideologies characteristic of vertical bilingualism and typically spread through schools and mass-media (see Kircher and Zipp 2022). A cursory look at how Italian and Lombard are presented in school supports this interpretation.

First, Italian students are initiated into reflection on their languages through the study of literature[3] and media popularisations (e.g. Screti 2024), which, differently from linguistics (e.g. Grillo 1989), encourage evaluations – hence hierarchizations – of *linguistic* forms. Italian language models are cited as the 'golden and silver Florentine', the 'three crowns', the 'illustrious vulgar tongue (of Italy)',[4] with speakers pressured into eliminating linguistic regionalisms, including those originating from Lombard. The success of Italian as the language of opera leads even influential cultural and artistic institutions[5] to popularise the conviction of an 'alleged superiority of Italian as a language of music', due partly to its 'scarcity in consonant sequences' (Rossi 2022, 3) when compared to Germanic and Gallo-Romance literary languages.

Second, most Italian linguists present Lombard as an Italo-Romance variety, and often as an 'Italian dialect', both of which have been shown to be inaccurate (see Brasca 2021, 2023; Tamburelli 2014; Tamburelli and Brasca 2018). However, notwithstanding its Gallo-Romance nature and low intelligibility to monolingual Italian speakers, there are obvious similarities between Lombard and Italian due to their shared Romance roots. Such similarities contribute to making Lombard more vulnerable to being 'attacked' as a non-language (Trudgill 1992, 167), as is typical for contested languages (Tamburelli and Tosco 2021), and differently from what is the case in Wales, where the distinction between a Celtic language (Welsh) and a Germanic language (English) is more evident.

Based on these practices, it does not seem surprising that Lombard speakers conceptualise Lombard as an 'Italian dialect' that deviates considerably from the only possible model, hence from the perceived high quality of its sounds.

These practices and negligence fuel a perception that Lombard is 'inferior to' Italian and 'less than' a language, a set of attitudes which are part and parcel of linguistic contestation. Speakers might be less keen to devalue Lombard if it were presented as a different *language* from Italian in a case of horizontal bilingualism as the more egalitarian Welsh evaluations suggest.

Overall, this paper supports findings from previous literature (e.g. McGowan and Babel 2020; Pieras-Guasp 2002; Price and Tamburelli 2016, 2020), by providing further examples of divergence between attitudes collected via a direct and an indirect method. Moreover, our results suggest that the sociopolitical status of a regional/minority language can impact speakers' attitudes in a way that can at least in part explain attitude divergence, particularly as it pertains to related dimensions across direct and indirect methods, such as AToL Structure vs MGT Status or AToL Sound vs MGT Solidarity. Specifically, moving from a historically common situation of diglossia to horizontal bilingualism encourages attitudinal change in the direction of more equitable overt attitudes towards the two languages. Shifting to vertical bilingualism, on the other hand, sharpens overt disfavour for the regional/minority language. This is particularly relevant from a language maintenance perspective, since overt attitudes tend to become covert over time (McKenzie and McNeill 2023), rendering the attitudinal situation steadier.

Conclusion

Overall, results indicate that levels of sociopolitical status mirror language attitudes in a way that aligns with the tripartite model that places horizontal bilingualism as the most positive societal situation, followed by diglossia, and with vertical bilingualism as the least desirable case. Specifically, we saw that Welsh is in the most favoured attitudinal position, while Lombard is the most severe case and Moselle-Franconian, which is in the intermediate situation of classical diglossia, is in an intermediate attitudinal position. However, some divergences were also found between some AToL Sound and MGT Solidarity results, and between some AToL Structure and MGT Status results, that previous research indicates may be related. These divergences revealed a relative independence of the attitudes studied by the two methods, as has been previously suggested (Jonkman 1991; McGowan and Babel 2020; Ó Duibhir 2009; Pieras-Guasp 2002; Price and Tamburelli 2016, 2020). All these divergences find plausible interpretations in the different sociopolitical statuses of the languages under investigation.

Notes

1. That is, based on current linguistic similarity. See Brasca (2023).
2. This difference in terms of academic interest might itself be an effect of the different levels of official recognition.
3. For the relevance – to language ideology and policy in Italy – of the fact that Italian linguists came and come across language science/linguistics for the first time (almost?) exclusively during university courses in (classical, modern or foreign) *literature*, see Brasca (2024), presentation at CLOW 4, Warsaw.
4. Whatever vulgar tongue of Italy Dante Alighieri referred to by it, this expression presumes an evaluative hierarchy between the 'vulgar tongues' of Italy.
5. For example, https://www.ivirtuosidelloperadiroma.com/en/why-italian-is-the-language-of-music-and-opera/.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Centro Studi Valle Imagna, the Municipal Library of Albino, the Municipality of San Pellegrino Terme, the C.A.I. Clusone, the Pfarrheim St. Vith and the Pfarrheim Büllingen for making available their spaces for our research. We thank all the local community members who helped with facilitating our research on the ground and in preparing research materials, including but not limited to Ileana Bani, Terry Ghezzi, Marialuisa Mazzoleni, Daniela Moioli, Maria Luisa Nembrini, Francesca Poliani, Antonella Rota, Lois Elenid Jones, Sioned Prys Griffith, Jago Williams, Mari Elen Jones, Gwenfair Vaughan Jones, Moli Williams, Gerlinde Schröder, Jana Scholtes, Malia Heck, Tanja Heck, Veronique Hoffmann, Marco Schröder and Klaus-Dieter Klauser. We gratefully acknowledge the support of Gian Paolo Belloli, Luca Ranza, Abigail Price, Bethany Granton, Peter Kohnen, Elisa Keller and Ike Heidelberg during data collection. We thank the anonymous reviewer for useful comments and suggestions. Finally, we want to express our warmest thanks to the many people who kindly took part in our studies.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This project was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC; grant number ES/V016377/1).

Ethics statement

Ethics approval was obtained from the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee at Bangor University (reference: MT1-2022 & MT1-202223).

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available via the Open Science Framework at https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/CP6RE.

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