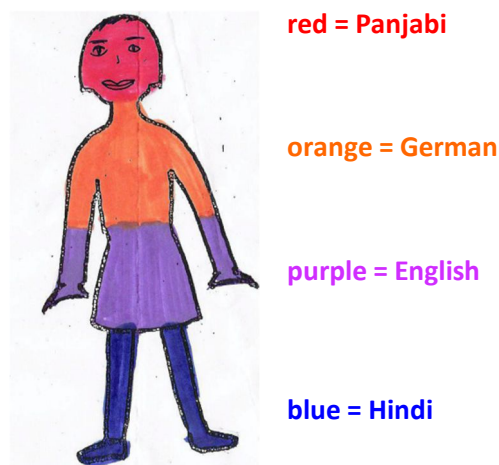


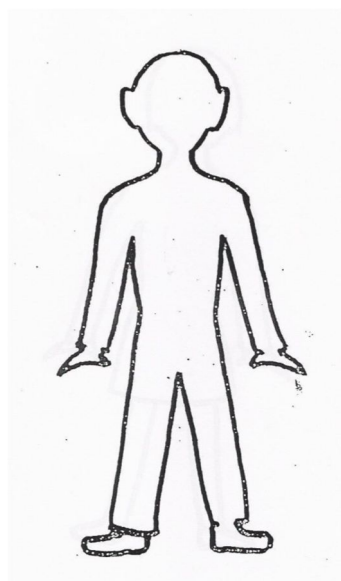
38 - Plurilingual portrait: a reflective task for refugees

Aim: To help refugees to reflect on the languages they know, how they use them, and what they mean to them

The concept “[language repertoire](#)” refers to the fact that all individuals are potentially or actually plurilingual, capable of communicating in more than one language. A language portrait is one way of making a person’s language repertoire visible. The woman who created the example below has used the colours red, orange, purple and blue to show the languages she is able to use.



This activity has often been used with refugees. It has proved to be a good way of helping them to become aware of the “linguistic capital” they already possess, which enhances their self-esteem, especially in circumstances where they seem to be defined by the languages they don’t know rather than the languages they know.



Awareness-raising task for refugees

Show your learners the example on the previous page and get them to draw a blank figure and create their own language portrait.

- Explain to them that this is a spontaneous, intuitive activity; the time for reflection is after they have created their language portrait.
- Encourage them to include all linguistic varieties: dialects are as important as standard languages.
- Explain that competence levels are not important. If they know just one word in a language it is worth making it visible.
- If they prefer, allow them to write the names of their languages on the figure instead of colouring it in.

When they have completed their language portrait, get them to form pairs and discuss the following questions with their partner:

- In which contexts do they use their different languages (in the family, with friends, at work, etc.)?
- Which of their languages are broadly respected in their community?
- Do they speak a language or dialect which doesn't receive the same kind of respect?
- Are there situations where they mix languages when they communicate with other people?

See also Tool 16 *Plurilingual portrait: a reflective task for volunteers*.

Source of the plurilingual portrait: H.-J. Krumm (Hgg. H.-J. Krumm/E.M. Jenkins): *Kinder und ihre Sprachen – lebendige Mehrsprachigkeit*. Vienna 2001