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Master thesis – Résumé

Regional and linguistic identity: is it possible to define them and how can we define them? The case of the multilingual region Trentino-Alto Adige in Italy

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1. Introduction

Due to the development of tourism, telecommunications, education foreign programs, processes of migration and exodus, mobility has been progressing at a large scale. Among this context, multilingualism has widely expanded, especially in the European Union, encouraging the learning of several languages and the protection of ethnic minorities currently endangered. In addition, regional identity has become a very important topic in the Geographic field. Trentino-Alto Adige / Südtirol formerly Austrian and annexed to Italy in 1918 is particularly concerned by this topic. The region is mostly German and Italian, but not only. Other communities, which are often unknown, are also living there. Trentino-Alto Adige is a very particular territory divided between the Alps and the Mediterranean life style, between towns and villages in which various communities live. In a very mobile world where everything evolves faster and faster, identity, often associated with the idea of boundaries and in opposition to the “other”, can be discussed.

1.1. Objectives

The point of this study is to figure out what kind of linguistic and regional identity can be developed in such context. However, before answering this question, it is relevant to know if it is possible to define these two terms. Here is my problematic: Regional and linguistic identity: is it possible to define them and how can we define them? The case of the multilingual region Trentino-Alto Adige in Italy.

To answer this question, I chose to draw my research on theoretical data based on scientific literature and empirical data collected through interviews. The résumé of the study will start with a theoretical overview of the topic which I will link with empirical data. I ran four interviews that I analyzed and interpreted relying on literature. Then, I compared the data in order to give my final conclusion. A discussion and some suggestions for further research have also been provided.

2. Theoretical overview

2.1. Definition of the key terms

2.1.1. Region

There are several definitions of a region and it depends on various points of view. A region can be symbolic, cultural, officially recognized by frontiers or not, depending on the role we want it to have and what it represents. Generally, the region is a territorial unit having one or several characteristics distinguishable from the outside. The region is usually related to a function or a specific aim (www.regionaldevelopment.cz). It can be associated to the climate, the landscape, the economic situation...(CNRTL, 2019). For Anssi Paasi (2003), it is an historical process taking politics, government, economy, and culture into account. The Italian regions were created in 1947 as a break with the central organization of the fascist movement. Step by step the power was transmitted to the regions and the towns responsible for heritage preservation, health...(Rivière, 2016).

2.1.2. Province

Italian regions are also divided in several provinces. They can be defined as a territory being part of the State and which has multiple cities, towns, villages...under a same government (<https://cnrtl.fr/definition/province>). The province is a political and administrative division like the region. In the case of Trentino-Alto Adige, the region is divided in two provinces: Trento, which the capital is also called Trento, and Alto Adige (or South Tyrol), which has Bolzano as a capital.

2.1.3. Culture

Culture is difficult to define. The CNRTL (<https://cnrtl.fr/definition/culture>) offers various definitions. Culture would be a way for individuals to distinguish themselves and to develop their personality, their identity through activities such as education, apprenticeship, learning, and others. Culture can be related to language, individuals' behavior, geographical spaces, taste, and history. In addition, depending on their own culture, individuals will behave differently and these interactions will contribute to their personal development (Haramboure, 2002). Therefore, Humans evolve through their own culture and the others' (Velazquez, n.d.).

2.1.4. Identity

As for culture, it is not possible to give one single definition of identity. It depends on each person to develop individually and collectively. Our administrative identity is defined through the ID card or the passport. We have a name, a last name, a number, and a photo (Drouin-Hans, 2006). We change, but stay the same and we are one and several persons at a time (Ferret, 2011). On one hand, I have my own personal identity and on the other hand, I have common characteristics with other people. Collective identity is called “cultural identity”, because it depends on the others. For Anne-Marie Drouin-Hans (2006), it is based on a group’s characteristics. It can be a nation or a city for example. Collective identity can lead to clichés, even if it is constituted by several individual cultures. This identity gathers people, but it can also increase differences between them, which can be dangerous. Besides, there is a will from international organizations to preserve cultural identities, but it can lead to conflicts and violence. Therefore, cultural identity can be defined as an intolerance to the “unknown”. It is important to say that identity is not fixed, but evolves through time (Drouin-Hans, 2006). According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identity is both a social and cultural approach. It develops and evolves along the conversations and interactions with other people. Moreover, linguistic and sociocultural fields are linked to each other and are characterized by language, culture, and society.

2.1.5. Regional identity

Anssi Paasi (2003) declares that identity is a social phenomena in which each individual has to deal with different social actors such as institutions, groups, public opinion, and media. More specifically, regional identity is a form of social and cultural practice, discourses, and actions which contribute to the institutionalization of a region, that is a political and social space. At an individual level, regional identity is a way to define our “person” and our “home” basing on each personal/familial and spatial history. In addition, there is a distinction between a region’s identity and a region’s consciousness. The former has two aspects: historic-cultural and politic-economic. The latter is related to a population and its practices, discourses, and symbols being institutionalized to become a “region”. Regional identity is often associated with a specific population, culture, and territory delimited by frontiers. However, this can be discussed, especially with the development of mobility.

2.1.6. Linguistic minorities

There is no universal definition of a linguistic minority. There is a link between minority language and linguistic minorities. If we follow the logic, a minority language is a language which is not spoken by the majority of a country's population (Cuneo-Orlanducci, 2016) such as autochthonous or local languages. In the case of Trentino-Alto Adige, Ladin and German are recognized as minority languages through the The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (<https://www.coe.int/fr>). However, Cimbrian and Mòcheno are only recognized by the Province and the Region (Spagnoli, 2015).

2.2. Brief presentation of the region

Italy is divided in 20 regions, five are autonomous and there are two independent States: Vatican and San Marino. Trentino-Alto Adige is an autonomous region in the Northeast. It has an area of 13 606 km² and two provinces: Trento and Bolzano. In September 2018, more than 1,07 million inhabitants were living in the region. Generally, Italians live in town (98% of them) and Tyroleans in the countryside (72%). Ladin people live in the valleys Val Gardena and Val Badia (87%). The region shares its frontiers with Switzerland and Austria. It is the most famous region in Italy, especially for its mountains. The unemployment rate is low (3%), which makes it one of the ten most richer regions of the EU (Bagini Scantamburlo, 2007). The region offers two life styles: the Alps and the Mediterranean's. The two major languages are Italian and German, which constitutes the biggest population in Trentino-Alto Adige (<https://www.suedtirol.info/fr>). In addition, other languages exist such as Ladin and more than 40 dialects used by Tyroleans.

The history of the region has been very turbulent and various populations followed one another along the centuries. The region, as we currently know it, was born in 1918 as its annexation to Italy. During the 19th and the 20th centuries, the territory met some tensions from the communities, which did not accept this situation. Italy fought for national unity, whereas Tyroleans claimed for independence. Also, after the fascist period and the Second World War, the country was in a difficult and tense situation. Then, the process toward autonomy and the protection of linguistic minorities began. Trentino-Alto Adige get lots of privileges as the protection of the German speaking community for example (Bagini Scantamburlo, 2007).

Today, there are approximately 69,1% Tyroleans, 26,5% Italians, and 4,4% Ladin. The current situation is based on a proportional linguistic classification system, concerning education, employment, justice, religion, army...Plus, people are now encouraged to learn several languages and exchanges between communities are more and more frequent. Yet, some people are not satisfied with this proportional system and would like to reform it. Therefore, despite the fact that the inhabitants live now pretty peacefully, some issues still remain (Bagini Scantamburlo, 2007).

3. Methodology

3.1. Development of the research question

In order to develop my research question, I first relied on a scientific research I worked on during my higher education studies that had the same structure. So, I applied the same method as the one applied for my previous research. Of course, my question needed to be related to my thesis' topic which is regional and linguistic identity. In addition, in order to be able to answer the problematic, it had to be well formulated. First of all, I developed a general question that I modified and improved along the theoretical and the empirical process. Indeed, the information collected all along the research process allowed me to develop my question in a coherent and logical way.

3.2. Data collection

3.2.1. Theoretical part

As soon as the general question was developed, I had to collect the theoretical information necessary for my research being in accord with my topic. For a start, I wondered which information was useful for the development of my interviews' questionnaires. Also, the data collected through the interviews helped me to complete my theoretical part. Indeed, the theoretical data and the empirical one have to be coherent and to make me able to answer the research question as efficiently as possible. Moreover, when we do a scientific research, it is important to have a good knowledge of the topic. The collection of the theoretical data allowed me to gather as much information as possible on the region Trentino-Alto Adige as well as to define the key

terms being part of my topic. I relied most of all on scientific articles and official web-pages.

3.2.2. Interviews

My choice concerning the interviewees was made all along the research process. First of all, I naturally chose my friend Riccardo and his mother Daniela, because they have both a link with Trentino-Alto Adige, even if they do not live there. Daniela lived in the region until she was 24 years old in the town of Merano where Riccardo was actually born. They spent a few months in the region and then went to settle down in Rome. Then, after asking my tutor for some advice, I chose a third interviewee named Walter Wiedenhofer. He has the Italian citizenship, has Austrian origins, and currently lives in Trentino-Alto Adige. Even though he is a friend of Daniela and her husband, I did not know him before doing this research. My fourth and final interviewee is a woman named Petra Egger who works with Riccardo's uncle. She also has Austrian origins and lives in Trentino-Alto Adige. Such as the third interviewee, I had never met her before this research. The interviewees do not all live in the region, have different origins, and do not belong to the same generation, which allowed me to get different points of view and to expand my research.

Concerning the type of interview, I chose the in-depth interview, which I already worked with. This type of interview is semi-structured and frequently used in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The questions are classified in different categories, which allows the guiding of the interviewee related to the topics we want to tackle without influencing him/her since the questions are open. This process ensures the data to be relevant.

For the writing of my questionnaires, I relied on what I already knew about the interviewees, taking into account that I did not know all of them. I developed several categories with basic questions I could ask to all and I changed the questionnaires when it was necessary. In order to develop my questions, I also drew on the theoretical data previously collected and I asked myself which questions were the most relevant and will help him to give the problematic an answer. As I already mentioned it, the scientific research I worked on during my studies also helped me with the development of my interviews. Some probes were prepared, that is some closed questions allowing me to be

sure that everything were said by the interviewees, to clarify some points, or to obtain more details on some aspects or topics tackled during the interviews.

The two first interviews were done face to face, one in Rome and the other in Ljubljana. I decided to do the two last interviews by email for several reasons. As it was impossible for me to go to Trentino-Alto Adige and my third interviewee does not have any Skype account, we had commonly decided to do the interview by phone. After a first exchange of emails and a first conversation over the phone with the interviewee, the former did not actually have enough time to do the interview by phone. So, I offered him to do it by email; the same happened with my last interviewee. It is true that the email interview has a few disadvantages, but the person is generally more prone to reveal sensitive or private information as it is a written interview. In addition, the interviewee feel more comfortable filling the questionnaire at home and can take his/her time he/she needs to answer the questions.

Three interviews took place in German and one in English. The languages have been chosen related to the interviewees' mother tongue, the language they think the most easy to speak, and of course the one, which was the most relevant for my research, German in this case.

3.2.3. Transcription

To transcribe the two first interviews, I used the software called FOLKER, which I had already used before. It is a free German software downloadable online and which can be easily set up on the computer. Moreover, it is available in French, English, and German. The system applied to the transcription is called GAT 2. It is a German system that was developed to transcribe the oral language and offers three types of transcription from the most basic one to the most advanced one. Each of these type has several conventions, which means symbols compatible with linguistic and phonetic analysis of the spoken language. To transcribe my interviews, I chose to use the first level called minimal as it already offers a various choice of conventions, which appear regularly along the interviews and that I estimated being sufficient for my transcriptions. However, I also used a convention from the basic level that was necessary for my research. Below is the list of all the conventions I used:

[]	Overlap and simultaneous talk
°h / h°	In- / outbreath
(.) ; (-) ; (--) ; (---) ; (0.5)...	Pause (depending on duration)

Euh ; huh ; eh	Hesitation markers
((rires)) ; ((laugh)) ; ((lachen))	Description of laughter
hm	Monosyllabic token
hm hm	Bi-syllabic token
(...)	Unintelligible passage
SYLLable	Focus accent

As my research was about the Italian region Trentino-Alto Adige, I did not run the interviews in French, but in English and German. The language was adapted to the persons interviewed; the point was indeed to choose the language they feel the most comfortable with in order them to give me the information I needed. That is why I also adapted two conventions. Indeed, the hesitation mark changes from one person to another depending on the language she/he speaks, this one being the mother tongue or not. So, I used the French hesitation mark for myself, and the German and English ones for my interviewees. Plus, the convention related to laughing changes according to the language chosen for the interview; that is English and German for my research.

4. Results

4.1. Reminder

For the empirical part, I first analyzed the data collected through the four interviews and then interpreted them basing my different arguments on interviews' extracts and relying them on the literature. I dealt individually with each interview in order to compare them and give my final results.

First of all, I would like to remind that I interviewed four people, two living in Rome and having a link with Trentino-Alto Adige and two living in the region itself. The two people living in Rome were born Italians and come from an Italian family, whereas the other two have Austrian origins. Two of my interviewees are women and two are men. About the age, two interviewees belong to the same category (aged 55 to 59), one is aged between 45 and 49, and the last one belongs to a younger generation (aged 25 to 29). The fact they do not all live in Trentino-Alto Adige and that they do not have the same age allowed me to obtain variable and more relevant data concerning the points of view.

After reminding the characteristics of my interviewees, I compared the information get from their interview that I analyzed and interpreted. This comparison was divided in

five categories: the linguistic aspect, the geographical aspect, the relationship between the German- and the Italian speakers, and the role of dialects in regional identity.

4.2. The linguistic aspect

All the interviewees speak, among others, Italian and German at an advanced level. One is their mother tongue and the other has been learned at school or at the university. Knowing this, we can say that the linguistic integration in Trentino-Alto Adige is pretty good, even though the population from the valleys has less opportunities to learn Italian, due to a lack of material as Walter Wiedenhofer told it. The interviewees also speak other languages such as English or Spanish and they consider multilingualism as cultural wealth and a big advantage, especially when people look for a job.

In Trentino-Alto Adige, dialects are very important as it is spoken everyday by the majority of the region's population and almost every village has its own dialect. Besides, the German speakers are more used to talk with their dialect than with the standard German language ("Hochdeutsch"). This is the case of Petra Egger who has more difficulties to speak German than Italian. This point proves that German speakers like Italian language and are pretty tolerant regarding the situation.

For two interviewees, Daniela and Riccardo, linguistic identity is related to their mother tongue they use everyday with their family and friends. Italian is a beautiful language allowing them to transmit personal information and which allows other people to understand who they are. That is how they differ from the others through their hobbies and other activities. They feel particularly tied to this language and they would like to speak more Italian in Trentino-Alto Adige. Indeed, it is part of Italy for them.

According to Walter Wiedenhofer and Petra Egger, linguistic identity is very important. They are tied to all the languages they speak and would like to pass it down to their children. In any case, it is important to preserve it and to hand it down from generation to generation. Through this point comes out the idea of the family previously mentioned. Regarding Walter Wiedenhofer, language is a characteristic from a group and every language, whatever it is, creates a form of identity and a safety feeling. The language creates the individual and through it develops the place that we call "home". That is why mutual respect should not be neglected, especially in Trentino-Alto Adige where several communities live together in.

It is certain that linguistic identity is a matter of huge importance for the interviewees and that their identity is developed through the language. In addition, in spite of the fact that they speak several languages and that they are pretty open to other people, they have a particular link with their mother tongue they use daily with their relatives. Of course, Italian is a matter of heart for Riccardo and Daniela and the Tyrolean dialect is a part of Walter Wiedenhofer and Petra Egger's life. So, we can say that everything starts with language and that each community (Italian and German) has its own identity, while coexisting peacefully.

4.3. The geographical aspect

The aim of my interviews was to know what meaning do the inhabitants give to "regional identity". Each interviewee gave a different answer, because none of them have the same experience of Trentino-Alto Adige and each of them has different demographic characteristics.

According to Riccardo, this aspect is related to his feeling of belonging to his country and his city (where he lives). He feels really Italian and declares belonging to the Italian speakers' community in Trentino-Alto Adige. Even though he has a familial bond with this region and speaks German, it is not his mother tongue. Consequently, it is understandable for him to feel like a "stranger". Therefore, through his interview we can distinguish a collective identity related to the idea of a nation and its people. His identity takes a national and local dimension into account which is not the usual criteria of regional identity.

Daniela developed a regional identity since she spent her whole childhood and teenage years in Trentino-Alto Adige. She goes there regularly to visit her family and friends. She grew up in an Italian family, but also in a multilingual region where she learned other languages such as German. Moreover, she is really fond of German culture such as the language, the literature or the music. However, like Riccardo, she also has a local identity transmitted by Rome, the city where she lives with her husband and her children. She has two homes, meaning one in Trentino-Alto Adige related to her childhood and adolescence, and one in Rome related to her life as an adult.

Concerning my interview with Walter Wiedenhofer, the tolerance emerges from it. Indeed, to him, regional identity means first of all mutual respect between the communities. Each identity has a value, whatever the community we belong to, making

besides the particularity of the region Trentino-Alto Adige. Since he was a child, the interviewee has always had good relationships with the Italian community. He is in favor of diversity and thinks that traditions and renewing can coexist at a regional and European level. Besides, he declares being an Italian citizen and having the German language as mother tongue. So, he is proud and satisfied to be Italian and to live with the Italian community. We can say he developed a regional identity related to the ideal encouraged by the majority of the region's politicians, that is a peaceful cohabitation.

Petra Egger, the last interviewee, feels also very well in Trentino-Alto Adige. She is very tolerant toward the other communities and thinks that each community can learn from another. She likes Italian that she speaks more easily than standard German, which is really surprising. Her vision of the region is very positive and she does not want the region to lose her Special statute. Indeed, even if a lot of people dream about independence and would like to go back to Austria, the majority of inhabitants are satisfied with their life in Trentino-Alto Adige. Therefore, the interviewee is really tied to her region, not only to her culture, but also to her traditions. She describes herself like 100% Tyrolean, based on her personal and familial experience since her parents are also Tyrolean. Like Walter Wiedenhofer, Petra Egger has a pro-European attitude and thinks about the changes brought soon by immigration among others. This transforms identity and puts the notion beyond simple regional limits.

To conclude, three forms of "regional" identity developed by the interviewees can be distinguished: first, Riccardo's who has a national and local vision (he observes and judges from the outside), Daniela's which ties both to the region and the city (local level) since she lived in Trentino-Alto Adige, and the last interviewees' having their own original regional identity divided between the German and the Italian community, but also a wider vision at a European level. Each of them developed his own version of regional identity evolving according to their demographic data and their personal experiences.

4.4. The relationship between the German and the Italian speakers community

All the interviewees have a pretty positive vision of the situation in Trentino-Alto Adige. Of course, the one given by Riccardo and Daniela is different from the one given by the other two interviewees as everybody does not actually live in the region.

Riccardo and Daniela declare that the relationship between the German- and the Italian speakers community are very good. These two get very well on and there is no integration problematic among the population. Moreover, it is true that Italy brought a lot to the region which is now wealth and well managed. They both tell about a political issue, because the politicians do not know how to run the region. They give the example of the toponymy still nowadays actively discussed.

Concerning Walter Wiedenhofer and Petra Egger, they do not mention any political problems in their interview. The relationships between the different communities are pretty good and better in town than in the countryside where the inhabitants have few opportunities to learn Italian for example. In any case, it is certain that the situation improved since the annexation of the region to Italy. Obviously, as I already said, there are still some people having radical points of view, not only among the Italians, but also the Tyroleans.

4.5. Correlation between linguistic and regional identity

Once having analyzed, interpreted, and compared the interviews, it is possible to establish a correlation between linguistic and regional identity. For my research, I obviously distinguished one notion from the other. The point was first of all to understand what regional and linguistic identity mean before establishing an eventual correlation between these two terms. From now on, we can maintain it is obvious that the interviewees are dependent on the languages they speak and they are certainly tied to their mother tongue. Each of the languages they speak are a part of their identity and influence it through the social interactions they have with other people. The social experiences they live day after day, moment by moment, are inseparable from language and contribute to the development and evolution of their identity.

In addition, when the interviewees tell about regional identity, they often speak about their culture and traditions. As I previously said, language is a part of culture and collective identity related to a group or an entity is called “cultural identity”. This proves that language is also linked to the idea of regional identity.

4.6. The role of dialects in regional identity

As it was several times mentioned in my thesis, every language contribute to the individuals' identity. Of course, we should not forget dialects which play a role as

important as other languages officially recognized by the State. Concerning the region Trentino-Alto Adige, there are for example the Cimbrian and the Mòcheno language constituting, with Ladin, linguistic minorities. Only Ladin and German are recognized by the Italian State in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. However, dialects are still very present in this region where the German speakers use them everyday. It is part of their daily life. Besides, one interviewee declares having more ease to speak standard German than the dialect, even if she uses these two languages everyday. She adds that her linguistic identity, her culture and traditions are very important for her and she would like to hand it down to her children like Walter Wiedenhofer would. This demonstrates that the several dialects existing in Trentino-Alto Adige still play a major role among the German speaking population, concerning both linguistic and regional identity.

5. Proposals

5.1. Trentino-Alto Adige, modal of linguistic integration?

After having done this research, this question is certainly legitimate. Trentino-Alto Adige is a multilingual region where Italian is the official language recognized by the State, whereas German and Ladin are registered at a European level as regional or minority languages. Also, there are other minority or ethnic languages like Mòcheno and Cimbrian which change from a valley to another. These two dialects are only recognized by the Province and the Region. This is what makes Trentino-Alto Adige so particular and complex. Admittedly, the situation between the communities, especially Italian- and German speakers ones, improved a lot since the end of the 1980s and the life conditions in town are pretty pleasant. However, this is different for the valleys made up of small villages often difficult to access and where the opportunities are limited, for example concerning education. Plus, the number of those dialects' speakers decreased considerably, creating a big challenge regarding the linguistic integration of the region (Spagnoli, 2015).

5.2. Linguistic minorities: the “home” challenged

I will talk again about linguistic minorities. It would indeed be interesting to respond to this problematic. In Trentino-Alto Adige, German and Italian language are the major

languages spoken by the population, German being more used than Italian. However, the number of Italian speakers has incredibly increased since 1919. This phenomena also happened in the valleys. Touristic development, emigration, and rural exodus have had a bad repercussion on the cultural heritage of these valleys and their inhabitants who are currently endangered. In addition, life in the towns is very different from the one in the villages. The latter is most of all based on agriculture and rural traditions, and the valleys, complicated to access, have few contact with the outside (Spagnoli, 2015). Regarding to these two aspects and these two worlds appearing, we can thus ask ourselves what kind of identity can be developed, if it exist a regional consciousness among these valleys, and what will happen to these populations and their heritage, if nothing is done to preserve it.

5.3. Migration and identity

The particular and turbulent history of Trentino-Alto Adige gave birth to a multilingual territory in which the communities live pretty peacefully together. In this thesis, I especially did research on the case of German and Italian speakers, and I focused myself on regional and linguistic identity, only including a small overview of the role of migration in the identity construction's process. I already had the occasion to do a scientific research on the development of multilingualism, but with only one interviewee. Also, it would be relevant to do a more detailed study on this topic.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to do a scientific research on regional and linguistic identity, and more specifically to answer to the following problematic: Regional and linguistic identity: is it possible to define them, and how can we define them? The case of the multilingual region Trentino-Alto Adige in Italy. My research question was very open and was about the particular situation of Trentino-Alto Adige, which allowed me to clarify my research all along the process. In order to answer this problematic, I relied on theoretical and empirical data collected through in-depth interviews. Once I was finished with my interviews, I analyzed the data and I interpreted them basing myself on the theoretical information. Then, I established a comparison of every interviews that I organized in five parts, these being relevant to answer my research question. The five

parts were about: the linguistic aspect, the geographical aspect, the relationship between the German and the Italian speaking communities, the correlation between linguistic and regional identity, and the role of dialects in regional identity. The point to remember in this research is that it is very difficult to give a definition of regional and linguistic identity. Indeed, it already exists multiple ways to define identity, and it is even more complicated to do it with regional and linguistic identity. According to this research, however, I can say that interviewees, both Tyroleans and Italians, are very tied to their linguistic identity, especially to their mother tongue. It is something they want to pass the future generations on. Language is what allows them to distinguish themselves and to evolve among their own environment. It is certainly the most important aspect concerning identity. So, each of them has his/her own personal identity, which is more or less influenced by one or several languages they have different relationships with, the latter based on their experiences and interactions with other people. Moreover, linguistic identity cannot be itself dissociated from regional identity, which the interviewees relate most of the time to their culture or traditions. Since they each develop a different linguistic identity, it is the same for regional identity, because language and traditions are linked to language, which also influences their identity. Plus, it is sure that regional identity is not only defined according to a region's boundaries. Once again, it changes from one individual to another depending on his/her personal and familial experience.

On one hand, I am very satisfied having done this research, because I am passionate about languages and I was very curious to know what I was going to find out along my interviews. This allowed me to learn more about multilingualism and the region Trentino-Alto Adige that I did not know very well. Working on this thesis also allowed me to speak English and German, which is very useful for my professional career. The interviews I ran went pretty well and I did not have any particular issue along my research. Yet, I was disappointed not being able to run all my interviews orally in order to record them. I was afraid not getting enough information from the interviewees, but it was not the case after all. Admittedly, there already are several theories on linguistic and regional identity, but lots of factors play a role in this process and each person has his/her own experience and vision of the world he/she lives in. Concerning Trentino-Alto Adige, it is obviously impossible to give a definition of these two terms which everyone would agree on. The interviews I led only give a brief overview of the topic and it should be relevant to do a research at a bigger scale in order to get more detailed results.

In any case, the inhabitants of the region have good relationships to each other, even if a few people still have reticence about the annexation of South Tyrol to Italy. Despite the fact that the situation significantly improved, there are still some issues and conflicts, both among the politicians and the population. Some people would like to see the situation change. For example, lot of people demonstrated and still do in order to reform the linguistic classification. The Professor Sergio Fabbrini speaks about a “South Tyrolean apartheid” (Bagini Scantamburlo, 2007, paragr. 47). Besides, the preservation of dialects is challenged in Trentino-Alto Adige since the valleys are more and more abandoned and that the number of Italian speakers is constantly increasing. All of this challenges the survival of linguistic minorities face to the European Union and the immigration flows, which will bring some important demographic, linguistic, and cultural change in the coming years.