

Language Policy Round Table, Szeged 2009

The EU and languages: diversity in what unity?

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Handout + talk + dialogue

- **Variables** that influence language policy
- **Further reading**
- **Selection from handout points to promote our ‘unity’ in analysing an extremely diverse EU language scene, supranationally and nationally**
 - Language policy poorly understood
 - *laissez faire* = linguistic deficits, like the democratic and political deficits
 - folk linguistic beliefs, unquestioned nationalisms, hegemonic ordering widespread and unchallenged.

Language policy: multi-disciplinary theory and practice? Applications? Implementation? Empirical studies?

- **Language policy at the interface between scholarship and ongoing social policy and politics, national and international**
- **The EU is a new type of polity, with sovereignty and decision-making being shared between the member state and the supranational level**
- *De Gaulle's 'Europe des patries', intergovernmentalism, or Monnet's 'United States of Europe', federalism?*
- **'Europe' as project, as product, as process**

Uncertainty about what the EU is

Project: European integration: economic, political, cultural, legal, ...

- An elite project characterised by lack of vision, democratic deficit, inadequate 'justification' of what the EU is for, scepticism?

Process: EP, Commission's right of initiative, Council of Ministers, pressure groups, civil society, constitutionalisation (referenda), ...

Product: *acquis communautaire*, institutions, buildings, infrastructure, implementation of actions, joint research programmes, Bologna

2005 EU policies for 'Europe 2010: A partnership for European renewal'

a Europe of freedom

- **Knowledge economy**
- **European education and research area**
- **European public space**
- **European Justice Space**

Leonard Orban

Commissioner responsible for multilingualism

"Languages are a bridge for intercultural dialogue"

Speech, Brussels, 29 June 2007 to

The Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue

promoting the cultural dimension of languages to build inclusive societies and develop **intercultural dialogue**. I intend to promote the learning of all languages present in the European Union, including the languages of migrants.

work with business, to help them identify how to build up their language capacities to enter new markets, and to improve job-satisfaction

a **European space** for dialogue with the citizens, to make sure that everyone can communicate with the institutions in their language, that the Community legislation is available to everyone in their languages.

**Paradox 1: the rhetoric of diversity
is pitted against the unfree market**

*EU treaties and rhetoric proclaim support for
multilingualism,
and cultural and linguistic diversity*

BUT in practice

- **the Draft Constitution is weak on language rights**
- *laissez faire* in the linguistic market
- **political paralysis** in language policy analysis and formation at the supranational level
- **formal equality** between 23 official languages, but French was earlier *primus inter pares* and English is the current linguistic cuckoo, the **lingua cucula**.

Paradox 2: English, yes, but 'broken English'

Newsweek journalist, 31 May 2004:

**A unified Europe in which English, as it turns out,
is the universal language?**

Romano Prodi:

It will be broken English, but it will be English.

**No more emotional topic in
the EU than the language issue**

**Es gibt in der EU kein emotionaleres
Thema als Sprachen.**

**Wilhelm Schönfelder, Head of Mission
for Germany at the EU, cited in
Süddeutsche Zeitung, 1 April 2005**

**”Un sujet qui peut être qualifié
d’explosif en Europe”**

**A topic which can be considered
explosive in Europe.**

Pierre Lequiller, Président, réunion ouverte à l’ensemble des membres français du Parlement Européen, le 11 juin 2003, pour débattre le *Rapport sur la diversité linguistique au sein de l’Union européenne*, préparé par Michel Herbillon, auprès de la Délégation pour l’Union Européenne.

**The Frankenstein syndrome:
is Europe being united by 'bad' English?**

A Danish colleague, a freelance interpreter (Danish/German/English), has stopped work because she cannot understand the English spoken by non-natives, even the Dutch (the best users of English as L2).

A problem not of bad English but of bad policy.

(NB Frankenstein was the person, not the monster.)

Bad policy resolution of the conflict between Finland and Germany in 1999, which was resolved by brute force and not as a matter of principle.

See *Deutschland: Finnland 6:0 Saksu-Suomi 6-0*

Andreas F. Kellertat, Universität Tampere 2001

**European discourses:
rule of law or abuse of power?**

**The Union shall respect cultural,
religious and linguistic diversity.**

*Article 22, The Charter of
Fundamental Rights of the European Union*

... in the field of **linguistic rights**, like in other
fields of human rights, there is **no right but only**
... politics.

*Yves Marek, counsellor to
Jacques Toubon, Minister of Culture and
Francophonie, and later of Justice, France, 1996*

Paradox 3: 23 'equal' language versions

All key documents are **equally valid legally** (French: 'font foi') in 23 languages

In theory there is **no language 'original'** or source text which is translated into the other languages

BUT

Over centuries, member states have evolved **unique national legal systems** (Roman law, Napoleonic, common law, ...) through periods of empire, fascism, communism, neoliberalism, and 'democracy'

The **rule of law** is therefore no single gold standard

Vocabulary, **concepts have different meanings** in each language

Conceptual confusion

Basic concepts like *language, dialect, nation* mean different things in each language and state. So do terms like *multiculturalism, integration, fair trial*.

Example: Eurolaw in 23 languages and 27 states

Discussion of *EU language policy* is often muddled: different institutions, speech/writing, law, interaction with member states, etc

Example 1: 'working language'

Example 2: 'interpreting' is whose task?

Influences on national law: concepts and procedure

- Adoption of *acquis communautaire* requires importation of new discursal and semantic characteristics, e.g. Finland's accession: from English to French
- Preamble to **Draft Constitution** understood DK/F
- Some **concepts** have no national equivalent
- **Differences between 23** equally authentic language versions, with no original, force national courts to select, without guidance on conflicting versions
- **EU case law, decisions of ECJ (Copenhagen 2009)**
 - Determining or making law?
 - Legal reasoning is influenced by national/cultural traditions, not multilingual input.

Language of initial drafting of EU texts

	French	German	Other	English
1970	60%	40%	0%	0%
1996	38%	5%	12%	46%
2004	26%	3%	9%	62%
2006	14%	3%	11%	72%

Art II-22 CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

**The Union shall respect cultural,
religious and linguistic diversity.**

**Unionen respekterer den kulturelle,
religiøse og sproglige mangfoldighed.**

Draft Constitutional Treaty

Title III EQUALITY

Art II-21 NON-DISCRIMINATION

Any **discrimination** based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, **language**, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation **shall be prohibited**.

Cf Danish: **Enhver forskelsbehandling pga. [...] seksuel orientering eller ethvert andet forhold er forbudt.**

Hierarchy of EU languages

- ‘... **le français** tend à devenir une langue de traduction et non plus de conception’ (Annual Report, *Délégation nationale à la langue française et aux langues de France*, 2006)
- Entire **accession process** (negotiations and documents) exclusively in English
- Commission **website**
 - legal acts and some policy texts in 27 languages
 - everything in English
 - many texts in French
 - little in other languages

Ombudsman

- **Complaint** by Germany about Presidency websites being not being in German: 1487/2005/GG
- **Draft recommendation by European Ombudsman to Council, 2008**
- **EP Resolution 20 November 2008**, in 22 languages
 - endorses five conclusions of Ombudsman:
‘information on Presidency websites should be available in good time in all official languages ...
 - makes eight additional points
- **Swedish presidency 2009 website**: English, French, Swedish

EU, European integration: a Franco-German agenda, or ...?

- Pascaline Winand, 1993. *Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- **'The process of European integration might never have come about had it not been imposed on Europe by the Americans.'**

Erik Holm, 2001. *The European anarchy.
Europe's hard road into high politics.*

Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press

- 2007 EU-US summit endorsed the **Transatlantic Economic Integration Plan**, and the coordination of **foreign policy** globally
- European Round Table of Industrialists, Transatlantic Business Dialogue, Transatlantic Economic Partnership, NATO, OECD, World Bank etc

Project for the New American Century

The Cheney-Wolfowitz-Rumsfeld doctrine

The plan is for the United States to rule the world. The overt theme is unilateralism, but it is ultimately a story of domination. It calls for the United States to maintain its overwhelming military superiority and prevent new rivals from rising up to challenge it on the world stage. It calls for dominion over friends and enemies alike. It says not that the United States must be more powerful, or most powerful, but that it must be absolutely powerful.

D. Armstrong in Harper's Magazine 305, 2002.

Fluidity in language policy in Europe

- unresolved tensions between **linguistic nationalism** (monolingualism), **EU institutional multilingualism**, and **English becoming dominant in the EU**
- increasing **grassroots and elite bi- and multilingualism**, except among the older generation in demographically large EU countries,
- largely uncritical adoption of **englishisation**, *lingua economica/americana*
- rhetoric of **language rights**, some national and supranational implementation, and advocacy of linguistic diversity.

Additional influences

Globalisation of commerce, the media, advertising, research, military activities etc favours English.

Internationalisation of many domains, formal (Bologna process) favours English and informal (internet) favours English and other languages.

Many governments promote a national language internationally but are generally powerless vis-a-vis US-UK linguistic imperialism (hegemonic practices, native speaker insensitivity, corporate universities, testing businesses, journal 'peer' reviewing' etc etc: see *British Council Corporate Plan 2006-2008*).

obstacles to supranational, Europe-wide language policy formation (1)

1. *states differ constitutionally* (unitary, federal), in their cultures and *educational philosophy* (Bildung, skills, ...) and in their support for *minority languages*,
2. the *EU translation and interpretation services* are impressive in many respects, but subject to an economic rationale, and see themselves as a service function rather than policy-making; they are also detached from international research, national work on terminology, and national language policy,
3. staff in the *national civil service* (Ministry of ??) and in the *Commission* are *underqualified*, except possibly in Finland, (France?), Catalonia, perhaps Sweden,
4. a weak infrastructure in *research*,

obstacles to supranational, Europe-wide language policy formation (2)

5. the *rhetoric of EU multilingualism and linguistic equality* is seen as a charade by some, irrelevant or unrealistic by others. The EU only partially lives up to its own ideals of multilingualism and linguistic equity, in its communications with member states, its dealings with the public (e.g. its website) and its everyday functioning.
6. *language policy is politically untouchable* at inter-governmental level, and *has a low priority*. It remained untouched by the Convention on the Future of Europe and in the draft Constitutional Treaty, despite the efforts of a number of NGOs from several countries.
7. International coordination among *national language bodies* is in its infancy, marginal, and proceeds at the pace of one meeting p.a.

A feasibility study concerning the creation of a European agency for linguistic diversity and language learning

- **Requested by European Parliament**
- **Commissioned by DG Education and Culture**
- **Yellow Window Consultants reported 18 May 2005**
- **Not concerned with the internal workings of EU institutions**
- **Ignores migrant languages**
- **Makes a strong case for either an agency or a network of Language Diversity Centres to strengthen policy formation, particularly for regional minority languages.**

Political will?

- **Detailed (118 pp) study articulates an analysis of needs, conditions, and modalities.**
- **Confirms that there is a wealth of professional knowledge that the political will needs to relate to.**
- **Feasibility study reveals a widespread perception of the need for policy advice and information for national and EU decision-makers, but these, except in new member states, consider such functions 'not useful'.**
- **Same pattern as regards research needs.**
- **Near unanimity in responses in rejecting English as a sole *lingua franca*.**
- **"A no-action scenario would seriously undermine the credibility of the EU in this field."**

Willful political ignorance?

Politicians want free hands rather than expert advice.

But it is imperative to influence

- **National governments (politicians and administrators)**
- **Members of the European Parliament**
- **University policy makers**
- **Academics, experts who travel to Brussels, lawyers concerned with Eurolaw or its interpretation in national and supranational courts**
- **The corporate world**

45 recommendations

- **national and supranational language policy infrastructure**
- **EU institutions**
- **language teaching and learning**
- **research**

Robert Phillipson

English-only Europe? Challenging language policy

Routledge, 2003



No action?

The **Commission** maintains a monopoly of policy initiation, in interaction with member states. (A)

Changes of official/working language policy in the EU system are the result of **Member State policies** and pressure (e.g. Ireland, Spain). (B)

Decisions on which languages are to be used in interpretation in each part of the EU system are made by **COREPER (Heads of mission)**. (C)

Linguistic hierarchy has always been an EU reality:

Equality has only applied to all EU languages for certain **restricted written or spoken purposes**. (D)

Danish interpreters and translators sense since 2003 that their language is *de facto* being downgraded. (E)

Some **new member states** feel their languages are treated as second class. (F)

Who decides?

A majority in the **European Parliament (plenary) refused to approve of more energetic language policies, despite strong recommendations from the EP's Culture and Education Committee (23.10.2006), which wished to strengthen the 2005 *Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*.**

Slovak plea for more active language policy analysis, with conclusions of a conference in Bratislava

Dušan Čaplovič, Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic to all Ministers for Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of EU Member and Candidate States, and EU Commissioners, March 26, 2007

- **Refers to many ongoing EU initiatives**
- **Refers to the Grin report**
- **Reports on the EU system not serving speakers of all languages equally well**
- **Explains why the Višegrad countries see the need for inter-governmental discussion on EU language policy, initially at expert level.**

Responses to the Slovak plea

MFA (or deputy, or European affairs):

Austria, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain; Croatia

No response from 19 countries.

No response from the Commission.

Among the issues raised are

- **equality + pragmatism + cost**
- **national responsibility**
- **Language Competence Indicator not in 'small' languages**
- **approval of initiative.**

The economics of language: transfers to the UK & Ireland

The current dominance of English results in quantifiable

- **privileged market effects**
- **communication savings effects**
- **language learning savings effects**
- **alternative human capital investment effects**
- **legitimacy and rhetorical effects**

Continental countries are transferring to the UK & Ireland at least € 10bn per year, more probably about € 16 to 17 bn a year (cf budget rebate of € 5bn annually)

Grin, François, 2005: L'enseignement des langues étrangères comme politique publique. Rapport au Haut Conseil de l'évaluation de l'école, Paris, n° 19,