

4th EUNoM Symposium. "Multilingualism in the Knowledge Economy: Labour Markets Revisited, and Corporate Social Responsibility"
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Rapporteur's summary

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The fourth EUNoM Symposium "Multilingualism in the Knowledge Economy: Labour Markets Revisited, and Corporate Social Responsibility" has focused on the role of the universities in meeting the challenges of the knowledge economy, in the general curriculum development and in particular how the development of multilingualism is tackled. The target of the symposium has been to initiate and innovate about the relationship between the universities and multilingualism in working life. The symposium has offered many interesting examples of how the universities collaborate with business life and community. Moreover, the symposium has been an active forum for critical discussion of some of the key concepts of the symposium, such as communities of practice, knowledge economy, and linguistic diversity.

One of the core questions of the symposium has been how to develop the teaching of languages at the universities so that the challenges of labour market and knowledge economy are met. The discussion has given critical theoretical perspectives and several more pragmatic approaches to the current challenges. During the symposium we have discussed about the relationship between language, creation of knowledge, creativity and innovation. We have had several examples of the use of languages as lingua franca(s), global and local lingua franca(s) and local languages. We have sought to understand the relationship between language, culture and identity, e.g. identification with the local, cultural knowledge, language and knowledge, communication and intercultural communication.

The more theoretical perspectives in the symposium have presented viewpoints on diversity, knowledge economy, multilingualism and innovation.

Glyn Williams argues that knowledge economy is premised on the basis of team working and communication. Language has a central role in this production process. When the process involves working through the medium of more than one language, it contributes to innovation. Williams refers to Wittgenstein's notion of

language games as one of the central concepts in understanding the construction of meaning in interaction. Within this social construction of meaning the essential ambiguity of language links to the resolution of multiple meanings in a multilingual context. This relates directly to innovation.

Peeter Mürsepp presents the concept of the trilingual university as a model case for future in the context of knowledge economy. In order to make knowledge economy efficient on a broader scale, multilingualism enhances diversity. Mürsepp argues that concentrating on using just one language may seem cost-effective and probably really is so in the context of traditional economy. Knowledge economy, however, needs to be open and flexible. The latter can be achieved by preserving cultural and linguistic diversity.

Finbarr Bradley argues for language diversity as nurturing creativity and innovation. Bradley emphasises conversation, reflection, shared meaning and networks of human interaction as critical for the knowledge economy. We have entered the age of the hearth and thus also the age of language. As the significance of material resources diminish, emotions and feelings, the heart rather than rational mind, are becoming crucial. The key resource is imagination which is founded on meaning, experience and identity. Bradley argues that transformative learning and innovative practices have most potential to flourish in a multilingual environment.

David Johnston looks at the ways in which the theories and practices of translation may feed into public policy. Johnston argues for translation as an ethical practice potentially inviting to step outside from the local cultural context. It establishes the complex relationships between self and other, thus nourishing diversity and creativity, enabling mobility and cross-cultural competence. In societies and activities increasingly defined by multi-ethnicity, there is a growing need not just to develop sophisticated intercultural standards of working, but also to begin to recognize cosmopolitanism as a key value of citizenship.

François Grin introduces the concept of language economics as a way of making sense of globalisation and linguistic hegemony in the context of macro-level language dynamics. Language economics can be used to understand the nature and structure of language as a communication tool. Furthermore, the concept is useful in understanding the position of languages with respect to one another. According to Grin language economics has not gained the institutional recognition enjoyed by disciplines such as education economics or environmental economics. Grin argues that this gives an advantage for language economics in that there is a more pronounced willingness to engage with other disciplines when confronting a variety of issues, including new topics relevant to the understanding of the links between language and economics.

René Jorna discusses the contradictory relationship between the idea of a global economy and the objective of realizing multilingualism. Jorna emphasises the importance of discussing the basic assumptions of the dominant economic model when institutionalising multilingualism. Jorna argues that favouring multilingualism implies accepting different views of the world. Because a language is at least partly related to our conceptualisations of empirical reality (the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis), this means that we have to accept different views on the world, including different views on governing societies, on institutionalisation, on organisational forms and on language policy. What are then the implications of multilingualism for the dominant economic model? Within knowledge economy Jorna argues that sustainability of knowledge has consequences for how we view the various expressions of knowledge and the co-existence of languages.

The more pragmatic papers of the symposium have looked at the implementations of multilingualism in working life and in university education. Central themes have been the use of local and global languages and lingua franca languages in different context.

Thomas Vogel focuses on the new role that universities will have to play in further education and training. Institutions of higher education in Europe are no longer only academic research and training institutions for students but they also have to play an active supporting role in change management in society. The global economy calls for citizens, who can communicate beyond the borders of their native language and culture, individualisation of language education.

Claudia Böttger looks at the challenges of lingua franca communication in multilingual business contexts and the increasingly complex communicative interactions in multilingual work groups. This brings about new targets for the teaching of languages. One of the most important targets is the teaching of a language as lingua franca. Böttger emphasises the importance of defining a lingua franca. She argues that the standardisation or the dynamics of lingua franca need to be discussed and critically analysed.

Karl Gudauner presents the effects of language skills on the job market and on firms in South Tyrol. Gudauner discusses individual bi- and trilingualism as increasingly valued in working life, both in the recruitment phase and during the career. Gudauner emphasises the importance of proficiency in global lingua franca and local languages.

Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl presents an example of a successful interdisciplinary academic School and research unit in Dublin City University. The language medium of the School is the local language Irish. The School can be seen as strongly enhancing multilingualism and linguistic diversity. In addition the academic

programmes in the local language create a strong link to national identity. The core idea of the academic education in the local language is to build a strong local identity as a bridge to challenges in global economy; the importance of knowing where you come from so that you know where you are going.

Josep Maria Canyelles discusses the management of linguistic diversity within a Corporate Social Responsibility approach. Canyelles introduces the concept as a way of understanding how to manage multilingualism. He emphasises the importance of including language(s) directly in Corporate Social Responsibility, thus allowing new approaches and solutions to multilingualism in knowledge economy.

David Gibson suggests new thinking in academic education for languages students. He presents an education system that embeds entrepreneurship in degree programmes and in the curriculum, "ELVIS". Gibson argues that the system is well suited for language students, thus introducing skills and abilities for future academics in linguistics needed in knowledge economy and working life.

Miquel Strubell presents the results of ELAN.CAT, a survey on multilingualism as manifested in a local economy, in this case in Catalan firms. The local Catalan economy has been increasingly globalised and this has introduced new multilingual requirements in the economy. The traditional local multilingualism in French, Catalan and Spanish has broadened to include English as the lingua franca.

Teresa Tinsley presents the results of a survey on the languages in the job market in the EU, 'Languages for Jobs'. The results include recommendations on how to better harness the potential of languages for employability, mobility and economic growth in Europe. The report provides evidence of the need for a strong place for languages within education and training systems and within new European programmes.

Sonja Novak presents the results of a survey on individual plurilingualism and multilingualism in business life and companies. Novak looks at a developing situation where local economy is adapting to the needs of global economy and local competition currents. The results show that for an individual person the command of languages is an advantage, securing employment, satisfactory workplace and better income. In company management the choice of language is related to the business success of a company.

In conclusion one of the EUNOM project's central questions can be revisited, how the teaching of languages in higher education can be and ought to be developed. Do we face a need for a more substantial academic discussion about language and communication studies? Furthermore, should the presently persisting academic distinction between language studies and other studies be

discussed and questioned? We can say that the symposium has clearly manifested a need for new thinking of teaching and studying of languages in higher education. We need to cross borders to culture studies, to sociology, and economy and business studies to carefully analyse and understand the role of languages in the big picture. We need to be brave enough to lobby for it and defend it.