

## **Rapporteur’s Summary**

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The symposium focused on the management of multilingual societies and institutions. The papers were divided into three sessions:

Session 1: Multilingual policies in contact areas: gaps and issues of national and international language policies at the local levels; demands in global scale and responses, local dimension of the language use;

Session 2: Managing language diversity at work: global economy and local dimension of language use; and

Session 3: New spaces for language and identity. Multiple identities within global vision of political, social and cultural cooperation. Migration and cooperation.

### **Session 1: Multilingual policies in contact areas: gaps and issues of national and international language policies at the local levels; demands in global scale and responses, local dimension of the language use**

Prof. Paolo E. Balboni of the Ca’ Foscari University in Venice addressed the issue of the quality of multilingual policy in contact areas. In his opinion, it was necessary to have a clearly defined vision of ‘multilingual society, followed by the consequent *mission*. A balance would then need to be struck between actual *demand* and possible *supply* as far as multilingual services were concerned. A precise *timetable and action plan* would need to be worked out in order to decide whether or not objectives had been achieved. This would require a definition of *factors and terms of flexibility* in the timetable and action plan so that failures, if any, might be analysed and a re-definition of the timetable and action plan prepared. A *governance model* would also be needed as well as the factors and terms of flexibility in its implementation in different contexts. Such a model could be applied to various multilingual areas.

Paola Fogar considered language use and plurilingual education on Friuli Venezia Giulia. She observed that Multilingual policies play an important role in encouraging communication, mutual recognition, shared goals and the development of ‘plurilingual identities’ in contact areas with rich language repertoires. The multilingual area encompassing Friuli–Venezia Giulia, one of the most heterogeneous regions in Italy and the neighbouring countries of Austria and Slovenia, represents a unique scenario for a thorough exploration of multilingualism and the implementation of educational projects. This is all the more the case when we consider today’s rapidly changing society which presents us with the challenge of meeting the needs of newly created, dynamic language constellations, made up of a variety of majority, minority, regional, community and immigrant languages. An ongoing research project being carried out at the International Centre on Plurilingualism (University of Udine) makes it possible to examine and discuss various options of language learning provision in

secondary schools by means of multilingual, cross-curricular and cross-cultural approaches to plurilingual education in a multilingual context.

Kristin Tytgat from the Erasmushogeschool in Brussels is a specialist in the study of language and communication. Brussels is a bilingual (French/Dutch) city with a large multicultural community. Dutch and French, being the two official languages are also the languages of instruction. She considered the role of English as an important international language in university education and the law concerning the language(s) of instruction in Flemish universities against the sensitive background of the struggle for Dutch especially in bilingual Brussels.

Peeter Mürsepp from Tallinn University argued the case for the trilingual university being the model for the future. Every country is understandably anxious to retain its national language as a medium of instruction at university level. In many parts of the world there is also pressure to use a neighbouring 'international' language. However, English has effectively become the *lingua academia* for the entire world. A trilingual model would seem to be the best and maybe the only way forward.

Helen Kesonen of Tartu University raised the issue of the Võru language, the biggest of the South Estonian languages/varieties. It has suffered marginalisation during the Soviet period because of the policy of Russification and even in independent Estonia because of the policy of revitalising standard Estonian. The Võru people strongly identify with their historic tongue and the most important feature of being *võrokena* is to speak the language. The issue of accommodating regional varieties, alongside a standardised official form, would seem to have relevance far wider than Estonia.

## **Session 2: Managing language diversity at work: the global economy and the local dimension of language use**

Lid King, National Director of Languages in the UK, raised questions about the practicality and acceptability of multilingualism and multiculturalism. He questioned the 'unity in diversity' concept and said that are some difficult decisions to be made about language choices, and educational priorities, about the relationship between the school and society and perhaps about the places in which multilingualism will flourish. Although remaining optimistic he said that we must reflect on educational and social policies in the coming decade.

Roxana-Maria Gâz gave an overview of 'Foreign languages for Economic development especially in the Romanian labour market'. She underscored the point that languages not only help us communicate with one another but also contribute to our self-development, the development of our economies and the business environment. She outlined the strong connection between bilingualism/multilingualism and the employment market and pointed out that 'languages in the new service economy are viewed as a commodity'. The

importance of people in the labour market being offered language courses by schools, universities and other institutions was underscored.

Prof. Peter Weber from Munich spoke on economic decisions for language diversity at work. He argued that the value or non-value of a language cannot simply be linked to the prestige of its standard version but depends on a complex and at the same time situational bundle of factors. The individual but also societal usage of language is generally oriented towards the two modes of action - the purposeful action and the action directed to communication. His presentation sought to illuminate the underlying motivation for economic decisions for language diversity at work – which is linked to different types of added values of multilingualism. Examples of majority and minority languages and of marketing activities of international companies were selected from an interdisciplinary point of view.

Sonja Novak-Lucanovič of the Institute of Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana and the University of Ljubljana presented a paper on a research project which she and Prof. Lucija Čok of the University of Primorska undertook on 'The Value of mastering languages in the economy'. She pointed out that in today's multicultural and global society, more so than in the past, the interaction between economy and language is a reality. People are more aware that it is due to processes of globalisation that the lines of force influencing geographic, cultural and social diversity and links deviate from or lose their original meaning. This is particularly evident in economy where capital plays the leading role. The research project showed that empirical results identified the dimension of language value that was exposed by a single individual from the selected sample. Differences in the hierarchy of classifying individual value dimensions arose from the status of language (dominant group language, minority language and foreign language), the environment, and the individual's characteristics. Research data showed whether or not a language on the labour market contributed to the elimination of psychological boundaries, easier approach to other/foreign market, success on labour market (employment), mobility – flexibility on labour/manpower market.

### **Session 3: New spaces for language and identity. Multiple identities within global vision of political, social and cultural cooperation. Migration and cooperation**

Prof. Colin Williams of the University of Cardiff spoke on 'New Spaces, Old Truths and Problematic Applications'. He spoke on how three fundamental trends in society are coalescing to change the relationship between selected minority language communities, the state and the international system and globalisation. The three trends are 1) the increased regulation of minority languages; 2) the withdrawal of public sector finance and support and its partial replacement by non-state agencies and organisations; and 3) the increasingly plural nature of media, IT and communication systems which render innovations within the target minority languages more difficult to sustain, at least from a financial and resource perspective. Such a configuration makes it more imperative that selected minority language

agencies and organisations exchange best practice and develop sophisticated arguments for mainstreaming their agendas. EUNoM was a useful space for this kind of necessary activity.

Tomasz Wicherkiewicz spoke on new languages, new identities and the development of language policy in Central Europe. He argued that the old opposition between *language(s)* and *dialect(s)*, relations between the ‘pigeonholed’ linguistic varieties, as well as the problem of the “inventory of languages” are recently getting new dimensions: socio-, and ethno-political as well as eco-linguistic. One of the spin-offs of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was that hitherto neglected language varieties, gained a chance to officially enter both the family of recognized languages and to launch programmes (or at least undertake individual activities) aiming at reversing languages shift, language revitalization and/or maintenance. The recent developments in the domain of corpus planning, language policy and status planning have significantly changed the sociolinguistic situation of these ‘regiolects’ during the recent decade, having also influenced their legal situation and official status.

Prof. Juliane House from Hamburg University spoke on ‘English as a global lingua franca: A Threat to Multilingualism?’ Starting with a brief outline of the role of English as a lingua franca today, she went on to discuss English as a lingua franca from four different perspectives: 1, a socio-political and socio-cultural perspective; 2, a linguistic perspective, where results of two relevant research projects were outlined; 3, a psycholinguistic perspective; and 4, a pedagogic perspective where a few suggestions for quality assurance in English medium instruction.

The final item on the agenda was a roundtable panel discussion on *New spaces for identity* in which five young people, mostly students, from the Slovenian border area answered questions and expressed opinions on the use of their own and other languages in domains such as *Facebook*, *LinkedIn* and *Twitter*. The general impression was one of young people, confident in their own identity, and open to other influences.