

Jochen Rehbein (2010)

Multilingualism through community languages – challenge or opportunity of Higher Education?

[Summary]

(1) To start with a quasi-definition, a series of pros for individual and social multilingualism will be given, viewed from different scientific fields.

(2) Two cases of multilingual societies will shortly be discussed: The EU and Turkey. The EU has about 60 regional or minority languages. Concerning the „European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages“, it should not only be signed by all countries of the EU, but extended to what one calls „immigrant languages“ (as Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish, Russian, Turkish, Urdu, several Indian languages, Assyrian, languages from Africa and many others; s. Ethnologue 2009; of course, each of them has its specific socio-historical context and status of origin). Within the EU frame, all these languages converge in being non-national languages; they may be subsumed as „community languages“ (Clyne 1991). It seems to be an essential quality of globalization, esp. urbanization, that community languages are no longer traditionally organized in protectable territorial/areal places but exist in scattered plurilingual spaces, mixed and intertwined to a great extent and forming language contact zones (Rehbein 2010a). But plurilingualism is not multilingualism.

(3) Turkey, as a single country, disposes, as the EU in toto, of about 60 regional or minority languages (Yağmur 2001, Rehbein 2010b) vis-à-vis an exclusively affirmed „language of the state“ (§ 3 of the constitution), notwithstanding the growing number of immigrant languages, some of which, themselves, are immigrant languages in the EU (as Kurdish, Zazaki (Kirmanjki), Laz, Arabic, Romani and others, and Turkish itself). Sociolinguistically speaking, Turkey is in the process of transition from an areal to an urban organization. Also, the aphorism fits: plurilingualism is not multilingualism. In Turkey as well as in the EU, economic development and modern media play a decisive role in dismantling territorial plurilingualism.

(4) How to develop multilingualism in these language constellations? A closer look at the „Charter ...“ shows that it protects the language included in the Charter on a EU-legal level. But, in my understanding, it does not basically aim at multilingualism on a social level, it does not aim to transform the plurilingual (inimical or amical) juxtaposition of diverse languages into a multilingual communication and, thus, a deployment of the language potential of the societies (House & Rehbein 2004). Here, Higher Education activities come in.

(5) At first, Higher Education can try to lower the *ideological barriers* between the overall functional and normative view of a national language and the community languages, especially on the part of the monolingual majority as well as among the community language groups. This works by scientific reflection and research in the sense of the introductory arguments for multilingualism. The idea of a multilingually based intercultural communication among the diverse social groups might be a fruitful backdrop.

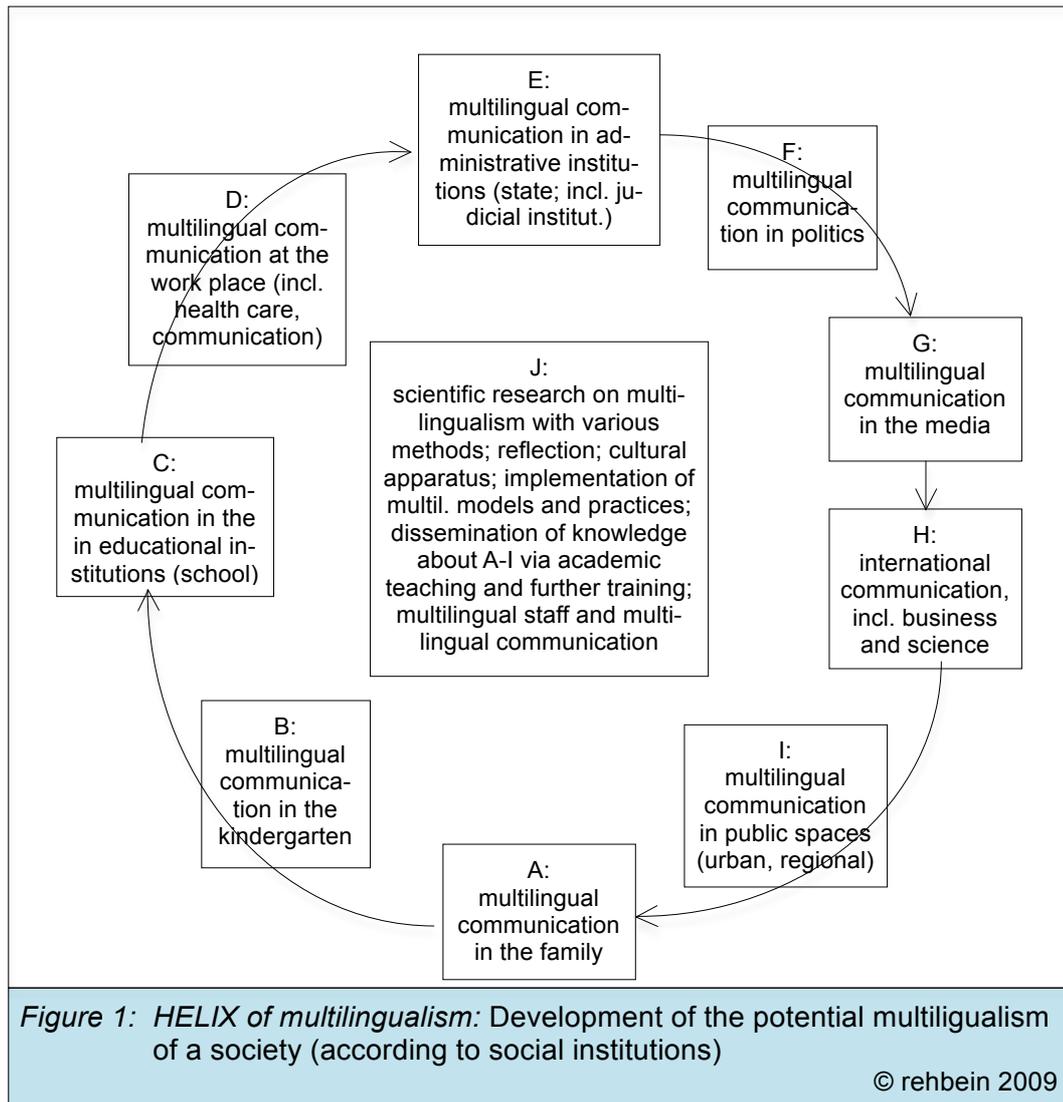
(6) In a general perspective, Higher Education itself is to be seen as a complex social institution with sub-institutions: Staff (agents) and its organization in faculties and departments, according to disciplines; and students (clients) of different levels; communication among agents in administrative (committees etc.) and research domains (projects), and among agents and clients in courses (teaching) according to a curriculum/syllabus, with audiovisual, digital media, and in a scientific discourse with vari-

ous structures of speech actions as argumentation, explanation, rhetorics and style, professional talk etc. Examples of multilingual Higher Educational institutions are: 3 Hoogeschools in Leeuwarden (Gorter, van der Meer & Riemersma 2008), Autonomá (in Barcelona), and, in certain domains, Boğazici (Istanbul) and METU (Ankara) and the (planned) departments of Kurdology in Turkey. One of the main features of multilingualism in Higher Education is the employment of at least three languages in scientific communication (a community language, a national, a foreign language; s. Sağın Şimşek 2006, de Angelis 2007). Purpose of Higher Education is to cultivate higher linguistic functions of acquiring knowledge, recognition and reflection and to expand these functions through multilingualism into social practice. - How to incorporate linguistic diversity into Higher Education? Some suggestions:

- recruitment of multilingual staff
- multilingual talk among staff members
- students with diverse community languages work upon discourse and grammar of their own languages in field studies of linguistic departments and courses
- courses in community languages (as many as possible) for staff and students, including academic skills of reading and writing via
- initiation of multilingual communication among the students by
 - tandem-courses
 - multilingual working groups
 - exchange programmes with other countries
 - multilingual phatic communication among students („homileic discourse“)
 - encouragement to use Receptive Multilingualism across closely related languages and dialects
- to engage in a (internationally based) buildup of multilingual corpora of community languages (with audiovisual recordings and transcriptions) and further measures.

(7) In the past, much energy has been expended to elaborate models of bilingual education on various school levels. This work is absolutely essential and should be expanded towards multilingual, longitudinal and transferable models. But all levels of growing up should be moulded and shaped, from multilingual communication in the family, in the kindergarten, to school education and advanced training programmes at and for the communication at the work place (s. Clyne 2004). Beside the educational institutions, other social institutions should be taken into account under the auspices of multilingual communication: health care, administration and judicial institutions, politics, media, international communication in business, science and diplomacy and institutions and institutes in the public space like restaurants, entertainments etc. - With respect to communication in these various institutions (A to H; s. fig. 1), Higher Education should provide training courses in community languages to the agents of the institutions mentioned in order to make multilingual communication between them and their clients (through a community language) more professional. This includes enhancement of community interpreting practices. - Moreover, Higher Education can devise models of multilingualism which can be realized under concrete everyday conditions. [-> conflict management between national and community language groups]

(8) In my opinion, Higher Education, thus, can play a leading role in the transformation of the plurilingual *potential* of a society into the *reality of multilingual communication* in society. This works by Higher Education doing research in order to shape multilingual communication within the various social institutions (as outlined in (7)). In this sense, it *contributes* to multilingualism in the society which develops in form of a spiral, or better, as a HELIX of multilingualism as follows (s. figure 1).



In this outline, the HELIX of multilingualism develops along the concepts of *institution* (language of the clients) - *movement* (dynamic multilingual links between the institutions) – (multilingual and anti-ideological) *knowledge* – (multiplicity of) *languages* – *growing spaces* (incl. *virtual spaces*) of multilingual communication (in all subdomains A to J)(cf. also Clyne 2004, 2005 in an educational perspective).

[take also into consideration: the role of the media in dissemination of multilingualism (example: Turkey and Australia); - transfer of research results; - training of professionals in multilingualism; - internet and facebook communication and new media of communication; - online usage of dictionaries; - audio-visual courses of minority languages for self-learning; -discursive interculture and the application of the cultural apparatus in interlingual/multilingual communication]

An important function of multilingual Higher Education is to establish and to strengthen international networks (e.g. EuNom) of centres and university departments which are engaged in multilingualism. Such centres support each other in attenuating the pressure towards monolingualism exercised by administrations and in multiplying the *lingue franchise* in international scientific and business communication and to disseminate knowledge of multilingual research across the societies.

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