

Multilingual Policy for Sustainable Educational Growth

Context:

Universities are under increasing pressure from seemingly conflicting policy agendas. On the one hand, the pressure to produce “highly skilled and competent knowledge workers” (UNESCO, [WHEC2022](#)) for a global economy, points towards adopting English as the language of international communication. On the other hand, universities have often been perceived as key national flagships, assets of the nation. Two seemingly opposing trends can be observed: the globalizing or internationalist versus the cultural or regionalist. Language becomes the arena for this tension, with languages positioned in a conflictual binary; with a clash between so called global languages (English) and national/local languages, in what has been referred also as the mobility vs inclusion trade-off. This is a narrow and binary view which is ideological and political but not linguistic; languages are not and do not need to be mutually exclusive; to the contrary, they coexist in the linguistic ecosystem that makes our world. That, however, does not make them equal, languages are linguistically equal but socially unequal and this is the reality we aim to tackle. We therefore promote a policy that takes a holistic multilingual ecosystem approach, and we provide 3 recommendations for challenging what we argue is a persistent multilingualism paradox: while multilingualism is associated with mobility, productivity and knowledge creation, our society and our institutions continue to operate on a monolingual ideal.

With the exception of discipline-specific debates, multilingual education is still not widely discussed, and language use is associated with proficiency, which is only a part of how speakers decide which variety is appropriate for what purpose. This also applies to multilingual pedagogies, which are rare and generally not part of teacher training in most European countries – despite the significance of language for participation and inclusion to education, and the diversity and change in the demographics that make the European classrooms. We invite EUTOPIA to invest in thought leadership in the area and take a sector-leading position by implementing multilingual pedagogies.

Position:

Revisiting language policies in Higher Education entails reconceptualising the concept of multilingualism itself, beyond the sum of English to the detriment of national language/s. Such an approach will lead to a language policy that enables and empowers language users and supports the development and application of multilingual pedagogies. We propose that EUTOPIA should:

- Introduce a language policy in line with the values and experience of the Alliance. We propose a dynamic, nuanced and politically informed definition of multilingualism according to which *multilingualism denotes a diverse linguistic ecosystem in which the speakers are empowered to use their repertoire*.
- This policy needs to specifically connect with educational developments. The EUTOPIA *Connected Learning Communities model* (EUTOPIA CLC) which builds on connected pedagogies and seeks to create spaces where multiple languages are used and coexist, allowing their speakers choice in using their resources for interacting with their peers, has successfully produced results and should be supported to move from a pilot to the mainstream.

The following stances emerged from the pilot of EUTOPIA and draw on cutting edge research in the field; the recommendations are associated with specific actions EUTOPIA has piloted and which are producing promising results for a new model of global education.

Stances and Recommendations:

1. The language policy of EUTOPIA should reflect the needs of the speakers globally and locally, as well as the actual language practices that teachers and students are engaging in, the language capital of the speakers and the potentially different and conflicting communicative and academic aims they might be pursuing. This means abandoning a static view of languages as bounded entities (English, Swedish, Dutch, etc.), which has been the way language management has been traditionally tackled in all education levels, and embracing instead a more dynamic perspective that focuses on *linguistic repertoires*, i.e., the idea that individuals communicate with a set of linguistic resources pertaining to different varieties, registers, dialects, accents and styles for which they have different competences at different levels of mastery. It also involves acknowledging that some varieties carry the 'societal label' of standard which comes with hierarchies that distinguish between varieties. The challenge is to create learning spaces where speakers will be incentivised and will have reasons to cross linguistic boundaries.

Pedagogic implementation: The EUTOPIA CLCs have achieved increased language contact and act as incentives for the use of multiple varieties through pedagogic designs such as global teamwork. Curating banks of resources that bridge local/global languages also shows practical commitment to the capital of all speakers, varieties in the classroom and co-curricular activities. Students have successfully crossed linguistic borders in assignments and used global and local languages to disseminate work. Academic colleagues are also experimenting the balance of research reporting in English with creating multilingual domains for disseminating research and increasing access and usability.

***Recommendation:** The EUTOPIA Connected Learning Communities model should be widely disseminated and incentivised.*

2. The lack of language competences is one of the main barriers to multilingual participation in European education, training, and mobility in the EU. We can easily infer that the ability to use one's linguistic repertoire **and** to develop one's multilingual competence further constitute added value for students, researchers, and staff. The ability to use the various linguistic repertoires of students, researchers and staff makes the linguistic environment in HE open to embracing linguistic diversity, leaving no one behind and ensuring equal participation. Simultaneously, developing competence in multiple languages is in line with the ethos and practice of global education.

Pedagogic implementation: Using Connected Learning Communities to increase language contact and incentivise the use of multiple varieties through pedagogic designs such as global teamwork. Allowing access to language learning and intercultural training can be cross-subsidised by members of EUTOPIA, as well as connecting learning and practices of language use in situ and for specific curricular/co-curricular benefit.

***Recommendation:** The EUTOPIA Connected Learning Communities model should be supported with resources for language/intercultural communication training.*

3. We argue that approaching and developing pedagogies for HE as a **linguistic ecosystem** can provide opportunities for speakers of different varieties to use their own linguistic resources in the process of their learning. This can then flatten hierarchies between varieties, and 'legitimise' and empower students and staff in using the totality of their linguistic resources.

***Recommendation:** Learning Communities should be embedded in our permanent offering to provide an innovative and cost-effective design for multilingual pedagogies to infiltrate curricula.*

Professor Jo Angouri (University of Warwick)

Associate Professor Vicent Climent-Ferrando (Universitat Pompeu Fabra)

Professor Tommaso M. Milani (Göteborgs Universitet)

on behalf of the 'Multilingualism and Diversity' Learning Community.