Ruth Wodak

Michal Krzyzanowski

Bernhard Forchtner

Dynamics of Multilingualism in the EU institutions: Perceptions, Conceptions and Practices

Our research on multilingualism in European Union Institutions applies a multilevel perspective which allows exploring the diversity of the Union's institutional language regimes and regulations from the point of view of its perceptions, conceptions and practices. Focussing on the (external or 'outside') perceptions of multilingualism in the EU institutions we discovered public perceptions of multilingualism which are prevalent in EU member states' national public spheres. While analyzing those perceptions we establish a typology of language ideologies which are produced and disseminated by Europe's media with regard to language regimes and repertoires of the Union's key institutions. As we argue, those language ideologies eventually become the foundation of public-wide ideas about, and expectations of, multilingualism in the EU institutions among European citizens. Secondly, at the level of (internal or 'inside') conceptions, we primarily studied how the meaning of multilingualism produced in/by the institutions has evolved in recent years. Here, we observed the ways in which multilingualism has become a salient concept in the EU policy in which different political, institutional and academic discourses about multilingualism intersect. That allows for making multilingualism a tool in the European Union's larger strategic projects (e.g. the 2000-2010 Lisbon Strategy) rather than a policy field in itself.

Finally, our analysis of practices of multilingualism in the EU institutions detected how multilingualism is applied, governed and managed in the range of EU-institutional contexts. Here, we studied the diversity of linguistic regimes in the EU key institutions. Those regimes are primarily driven by institutionally-specific language ideologies which differ across institutional contexts and are negotiated in a dynamic and context-dependent way. While observing all those levels, we were able to juxtapose the EU-relevant language

ideologies (perceptions, conceptions) which create public and other expectations of EU-institutional linguistic repertoires with the ways in which multilingualism is de facto regulated and practiced. This allowed us to observe how, holistically, multilingualism in the EU institutions changes and how, inculcated in the process of the Union's ongoing widening and deepening, it quickly becomes one of the key facets of the transformation of Europe's supranational polity.

In line with the overall aims of DYLAN's Workpackage 2 devoted to EU institutions, a particular emphasis in our work is put on establishing relationships between internal and external modes of institutional communication in the EU, along with the motivations behind decisions made in these areas by individual and collective actors. While it is often assumed that the distinction between internal (supposedly monolingual) and external (supposedly multilingual) communication may be justified by the fact that these two modes of communication could function relatively independently of one another, we challenge this assumption and investigate processes of mutual influence between both prototypes and modes of communication more closely. Thus, our aim was to explore how the highly complex terrains of EU-institutions often forge intermediary, hybrid modes (of de-facto language practices and projected language ideologies/representations and strategies) which are located between two different extremes of 'pure' mono- or multilingualism.

In all areas of our exploration, our key findings point to the obvious lack of coherent multilingualism policies in the European Union. Taking into consideration the diverse perceptions, as well as practices, of multilingualism 'inside' and 'outside' EU institutions, such coherent policies should be created if multilingualism is to become a key element of (a) an inclusive construction of social EU-rope (and not only of the EU-based Knowledge-Based Economy directed at EU-internal or -external competition) and (b) democratising Europe – creating social and political links between the inside (EU institutions) and the outside (wider EU-rope).

Our analysis illustrates that, at the time when Europe discussed its Communication policy, and is set to bring it forward by means of the recent 'Citizens' Initiative', it clearly has still neglected the fact that multilingualism (and its perceptions) should also become an element of building an inclusive and democratic image of the EU institutions. Thus, while proposing policies on how to 'Communicate Europe' the EU should also remember that the image of its institutions as multilingual and thus inherently diverse should be promoted not only in EU-originating messages. That image should be fostered across the European Public Sphere by means of media and related guidelines on multilingualism which would support multilingualism in becoming one of the central tools in democratising the European Union and forging its civic openness and transparency.

Secondly, our findings on European Language and Multilingualism Policy (EULMP) point to obvious policy deficiencies and to the need for a more open and inclusive approach. The EULMP has not really become an EU policy field in its own right to date and the policies

it produced mainly became measures supporting the implementation of key provisions of other policy areas (e.g. Education – through the Lifelong Learning Programme and similar measures, Dion 2005). Because of its economic character, the EULMP is now a closed field which only intermittently includes non-economic arguments. Thus, the future development of EULMP must primarily aim at decoupling itself from the Union's strategic politico-economic projects (such as 2000-2010 Lisbon or the recent Europe 2020 strategy) and becoming a stand-alone policy field in its own right. Only such an approach would allow for a future development of proper EU-originating multilingualism policies to respond to not only economic but also social, political and other developments in the constantly changing European space.

Finally, at the level of 'inside' practice of multilingualism, our research points to the necessity of coordinating EU regulations on 'internal' multilingualism. Practically each of the key EU institutional bodies operates a somewhat different language repertoire and can be characterised by the often radically different degrees of multilingualism. We claim that a need exists for coordinating regulations and – accordingly – linguistic repertoires of the key EU institutions. Such a coordinated approach would allow for reforming the Union's internal language (translation and interpretation) services. The latter have recently been under immense pressure to increase their efficiency in the Union of 23 official languages while at the same time facing budget cuts and no significant improvement of language-related infrastructure.

In sum, our results imply that research should be continued in the future in all of our focal areas in order to lay foundations for new multilingualism policies in all of the studied fields. Thus, research on both 'outside' perceptions as well as 'inside' conceptions and practices of multilingualism in the transforming EU institutions is salient in order to make EU institutions into more open and diverse spaces of political and organisational practice. Only if resembling the linguistic diversity of the EU member states (including the major migrant and minority languages) would the EU institutions become the core of the democratisation of the European Union and of opening it up to all citizens and inhabitants of Europe.

dylan
Language dynamics
and management of diversity

CITIZENS AND GOVERNANCE IN A
KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY