



The
DYLAN Project
Booklet

dylan
Language dynamics
and management of diversity

*Dylan Project
Main Findings*

*2006 - 2011
19 Partners - 12 Countries
1 Booklet*

Ouvre ton
esprit, vis
plurilingue

Eröffne dir neue
Wege, werde
mehrsprachig!

Open
your mind, go
plurilingual

Deurete
strades nueves,
empara de plu
lingac!



For more information
about the DYLAN Project
and its findings, please
refer to our website
(www.dylan-project.org)
or the Dylan Book
(www.dylan-project.org/book
in preparation)



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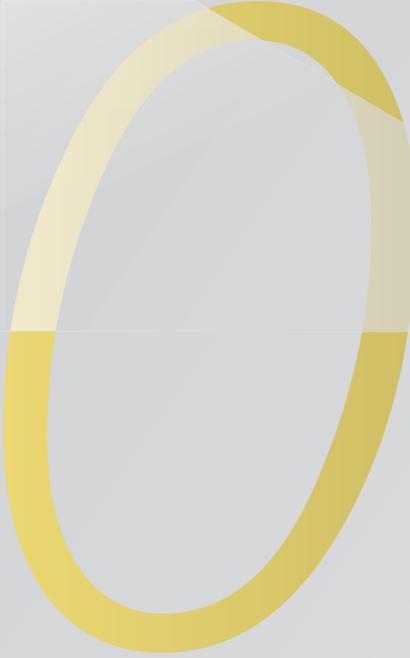
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Executive summary

The DYLAN
Project provides...

► ... a fresh look at multilingualism in a
variety of settings

... Multilingualism is approached in terms of interrelationships between actual language practices, people's representations about multilingualism, their declared choices, and the myriad contexts in which people are confronted with linguistic diversity.

... These links are examined in different practical situations: business meetings, procedures in official European bodies, and teaching in educational institutions. Depending on the setting, different ways of exploiting multilingualism emerge, in which larger and smaller languages can all play a part.

... a renewed understanding of the nature of multilingual interaction

Multilingual practices are **observed at close range**, shedding light on what actually happens in interaction between people with different language profiles. This interaction is shown to be a much more complex process than just choosing one common language, or a fixed combination of official languages, or even switching back and forth between them.

Besides the mere co-presence of several languages, actual multilingualism means drawing on one's language repertoire, made up of more or less extensive skills in a variety of languages. The ways in which language repertoires are exploited are numerous, suggesting a flexible, inclusive approach to the use of Europeans' language skills.

People's **choices of communication strategies make sense**: people take account of specific situations and adapt their linguistic resources in patterned ways – even the use of one dominant language is shown to display considerable flexibility.

Actual communication strategies are not simple, unequivocal phenomena. They are formulated in official **discourse** that hides, but sometimes also reveals the complexity of motivations behind professed choices. Communication strategies emerge from **multidimensional processes**. These are top-down and bottom-up, they may be observed in institutions' explicit policies, and pressure for language standardisation or, on the contrary, differentiation of language forms may be apparent, as shown by the investigation of multilingualism in European history.

... tools for comparing ways of handling multilingual situations, and criteria for making better choices

Communication strategies are not equal: some offer more advantages than others in terms of sharing and building knowledge in **university education**, getting members of a **working team** to contribute their expertise to a meeting, or ensuring that MEPs can participate equally well in political and policy developments in **EU institutions**.

Different strategies can be assessed in terms of standard policy **evaluation criteria** such as **efficiency** and **fairness**. Alternatives can be compared in order to choose more efficient and fairer strategies. DYLAN proposes a systematic approach for applying these concepts to communication in multilingual settings.

The approach also gives rise to a **system of linguistic indicators** with which individual situations can be characterised, options compared and trends monitored, in order to identify and encourage "best multilingual practice".

Project objectives and analytical framework

The DYLAN research project - *Language Dynamics and Management of Diversity* - is a five-year Integrated Project funded under the EU's 6th Framework Programme for Research and Technology development, carried out by researchers from eighteen universities in twelve European countries. The project addresses core issues of the Programme:

Objectives

Can a European knowledge-based society designed to ensure economic competitiveness and social cohesion be created within a European Union that is linguistically more diverse than ever, and, if so, how?

How do organisations and individuals actually cope with this diversity?

And in what way and under what conditions are "multilingual solutions" not just a response to a problem, but a genuine advantage for companies, European institutions and bodies, and higher education? These are three terrains which are particularly important with respect to multilingualism.

The project addresses issues for which multilingualism has economic, political, educational and scientific implications:

economic: strengthening economic performance through the implementation of linguistically diversified modes of control, problem management and problem solving in production, consumption and exchange;

political: ensuring fairness in the treatment of various languages and their speakers, and contributing to social justice by facilitating access of all citizens to multilingualism;

educational: contributing to the construction, transmission and use of knowledge;

scientific: contributing to the development of a scientific approach to the management of linguistic and cultural diversity.

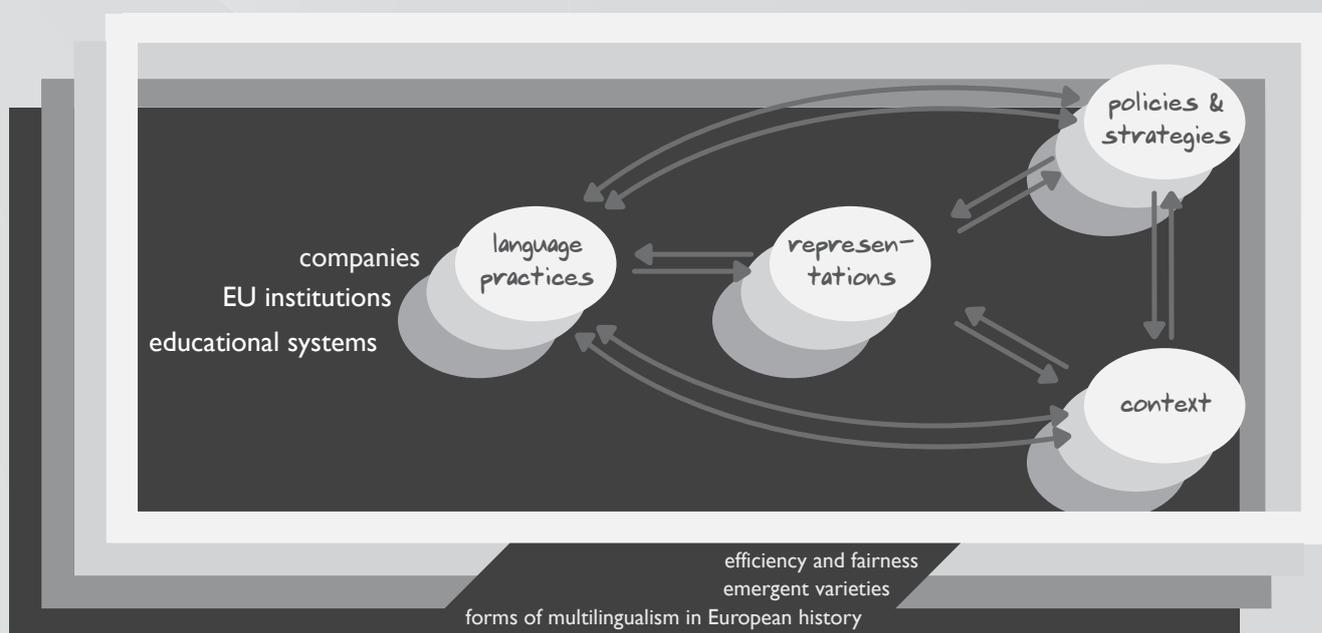
The Analytical Framework

The analytical framework of the project is designed to meet all these objectives. The development and use of multilingual repertoires in a number of situated contexts are approached in a way that is both relevant from the standpoint of scientific research and practical from the standpoint of actors who may use the framework later when selecting, designing, implementing and evaluating policies on linguistic diversity. At the same time, it remains flexible enough to accommodate new questions that emerge as a normal result of the internal dynamics of a practice-oriented research process. These requirements generate an analytical framework made up of four dimensions that constitute the project's conceptual cornerstones:

- » actual **language practices** (with a focus on oral and interactional practices);
- » **representations of multilingualism and linguistic diversity** (what organisations and individuals say about multilingualism and linguistic diversity);
- » the **language policies** of states or other public bodies (particularly local, regional or national authorities, as well as supra-national organisations) and the **language strategies** of private-sector companies;
- » and the **linguistic context** (or language environment) in which agents operate.

This figure shows the expanded analytical framework:

DYLAN Analytical Framework



With research teams from various parts of Europe, observations reflect a great variety of specific contexts: national, regional and local.

DYLAN does not chiefly analyse the four conceptual dimensions, but focuses on the relationships between them. Their influence on one another proves to be considerable.

The four dimensions and interrelationships are studied in different settings, which are described as terrains, namely **companies, EU institutions and bodies, and higher education**.

In addition, the development and use of multilingual repertoires should be seen in connection with three additional sets of issues: **efficiency and fairness; emergent varieties; and forms of multilingualism in European history**.

All eighteen research teams were asked to position their research questions with respect to this set of conceptual clusters and relationships, and then referred to this framework when contributing their own specific answers to the project's central questions.

The “**Companies**” terrain concerns the study of relationships between language practices, policies, and representations in selected companies throughout Europe (in France, Denmark, Scotland and Switzerland). Workplaces are a setting where major changes in the extent of multilingualism are observable as companies acquire more and more international partners, an increasing number of partnerships within and between companies scattered over various countries, and an increasing number of staff from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds who are working in the same teams, both physically and virtually. In this context, it is essential to understand more clearly how social actors mobilise multilingual resources in their professional practice, how they conceive, represent and actively shape the multilingual and multicultural character of their work and projects, and how they regulate, prescribe, enforce or reduce the multilingual dimensions of these dynamics.

*A brief
description of the
terrains*

The “**European institutions**” terrain concerns the study of relationships between language practices, policies, and representations in selected contexts of the EU institutions (the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council, as well as MEPs from two member states (Germany and Slovenia). In these contexts, it is of particular interest to explore how EU institutions relate both multi-and/or monolingual as well internal and external communication to each other. The main focus is on studying what are the motivations for specific choice in different EU-institutional milieus, and which are the language representations (ideologies) shaping specific multilingual communication within/between, and outside EU institutions.

The “**Higher education**” (Educational system) terrain concerns the study of relationships between language practices, policies and representations in selected universities throughout Europe (in Belgium, Finland and the other Nordic countries, Italy, Romania, Spain and Switzerland). Its objectives are to determine how a rapidly changing context can modify language policies and strategies in specific institutions of educational systems, and how multilingualism is constructed in policies, strategies, representations and practices. It mainly explores new learning methods, such as multilingual education, in order to show how, and under what conditions, multilingualism can be an asset or an obstacle in the construction, transmission and use of knowledge. It further assesses how the frequently mentioned goal of acquiring two foreign languages in addition to one's first language has materialised in different educational settings.

Transversal issues

“**Transversal issues**” play a special role in the DYLAN project design and have particular importance for project integration. They address phenomena that appear in each of the three terrains which define the project’s other work packages.

“**Efficiency and fairness**” approaches multilingualism from the perspective of (public) policy evaluation. Its main thrust is the operationalisation of communication processes in multilingual settings in order to develop a set of indicators that can capture the “efficiency” and “fairness” of more or less multilingual ways of communicating.

“**Emergent varieties**” investigates whether new forms of communication “emerge” in communication between actors with different linguistic repertoires in linguistically diverse settings, and focuses on the interaction between English as a lingua franca and multilingualism in this context.

“**Forms of multilingualism in European history**” investigates changing representations of language, language use and multilingualism and the impact that these representations have on language selection in different terrains, with a focus on language education.

Integration of different methodological orientations

One of the original features of the DYLAN project is the adoption of a mixed-methods approach in order to cope with the wide range of questions it addresses. These methods are well established in the language sciences; on the basis of the hypothesis that the terrains analysed are regulated by different types of institutionalised language practices, they aim at understanding how forms of discourse are indicators of how the various institutions operate, as well as revealing the patterns of language use through a fine-grained analysis. They comprise discourse analysis, ethnography of communication, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, analysis of the linguistic landscape as well as the use of secondary quantitative data sources. The latter type of information, in particular, characterises key features of the linguistic environment described in the research design and provides the backdrop for social actors’ choices regarding their language practices, as well as defining the actual context that many public policies and corporate strategies seek to influence. This input can then be processed using concepts from other disciplines, particularly policy analysis, in order to assess the advantages and drawbacks of alternative communication and language acquisition strategies.

2

Main findings

Moi je pense que les multinationales ne réussiront leur implantation que si elles respectent la spécificité de l'endroit où elles s'implantent. Si elles veulent laminer les gens, ça ne va pas marcher à terme.



The following pages sum up the main findings of five years of research. These findings can be divided into two basic categories: some are qualitative, shedding light on fine-grained aspects of communication in a multilingual context; others are methodological, providing the necessary stepping stones for future work.

Given the overarching aims of the research project, we will organise the presentation of findings around the following central questions:

How do companies, European institutions and bodies and higher educational establishments draw on monolingual and/or multilingual resources, and which arguments do they use in doing so?

How do individuals communicating in these terrains exploit monolingual and/or multilingual resources, and which arguments do they use in doing so?

Under what conditions can multilingualism be seen as an asset or a drawback for companies, European institutions and bodies and higher educational establishments?

What does “multilingualism as a resource” mean? In order to answer this question, we must first acknowledge that there are competing views of what multilingualism is. We will first approach the question from the corporate and institutional perspective, then look at the interactional, individual perspective and finally return to the definition of multilingualism when discussing the conditions for making the best use of it.

Corporate and institutional language policy

Quand c'est moi qui dirige la réunion, j'essaie de parler la langue étrangère donc, en général c'est moi qui demande qu'on parle anglais. Je ne sais pas comment cela est reçu par mes collaborateurs et ça m'est complètement égal!



Saviez-vous que les entreprises ont des manières très différentes de gérer les langues ?

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postcard N° 4

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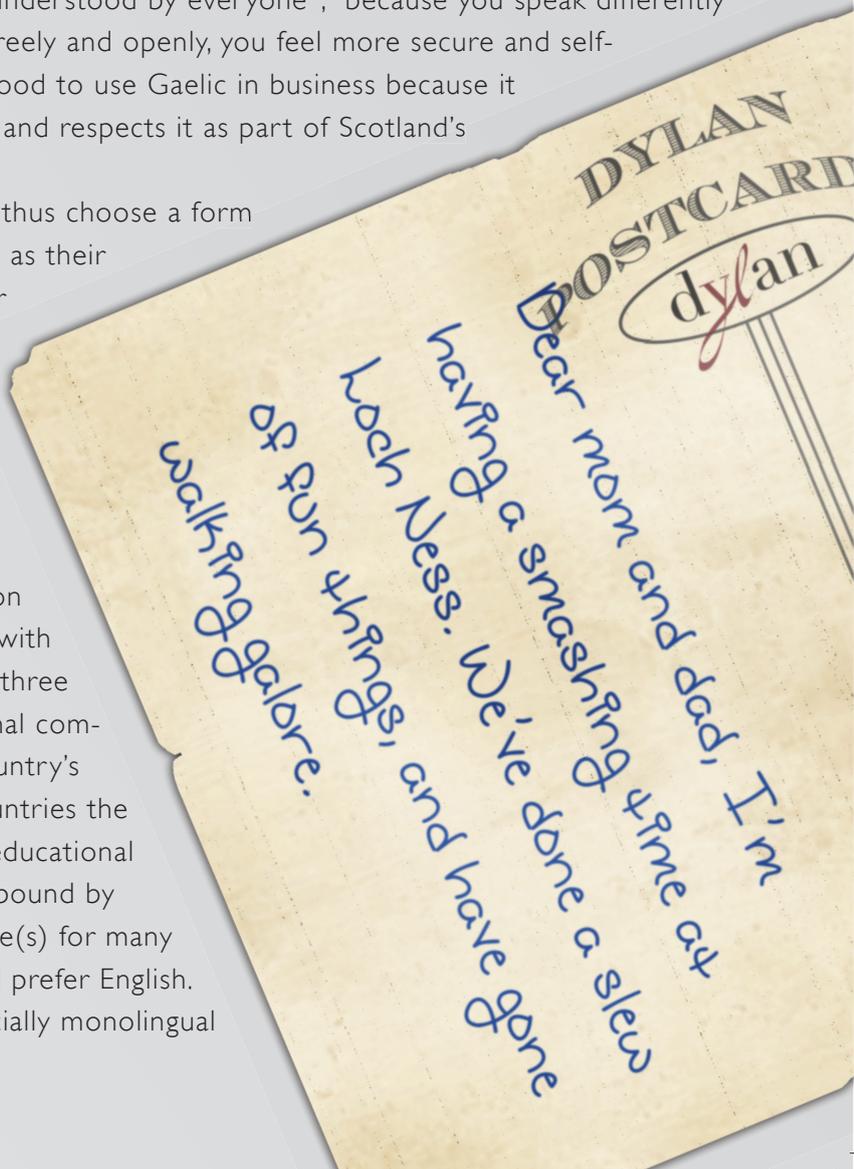
It's interesting to know that a lot of the words and phrases we use in English come from other languages. Smashing, loch, slew and galore are all words that have come into English from Gaelic.

Our first question was how organisations in our three terrains respond to the challenge of the linguistic diversity prevailing in Europe and beyond. What is their corporate policy on the management of multilingualism? The answers to these questions are manifold, and involve more than a simple dichotomy between “monolingualism” and “multilingualism”.

The easiest solution would seem to be a single corporate language, including for internal communication – the solution known as OLON (“one language only”). Until very recently, the single language was usually the local official or national language (for the sake of brevity, we generally refer to ‘official languages’); today it is often English.

However, this seldom means that no other language is used. As an observer of the Danish context puts it, “most people think that the use of English as a corporate language means that no other languages are supposed to be used, even though they do actually use these languages.” On the one hand, organisations opting for the official language can no longer avoid at least some use of English. On the other hand, legislation (national, as in France, or regional, as in Catalonia), as well as demographic influence, pressure from the local workforce and the pursuit of efficiency and fairness, reinforce the role of local languages. These are maintained as the medium of instruction in higher education, as well as for internal communication with and among staff. The arguments presented concern both efficiency and fairness: “in order to make everyone feel at ease, to be understood by everyone”; “because you speak differently in your own language, more freely and openly, you feel more secure and self-confident”; in Glasgow “it is good to use Gaelic in business because it helps keep the language alive and respects it as part of Scotland's heritage.”

In contrast, organisations can thus choose a form of institutional multilingualism as their language policy or regime. For example, the universities in Barcelona and Bolzano use three languages as a medium of instruction (official language + co-official, regional or minority language + English); the European Union is supposed to communicate with member states in the twenty-three official languages; Swiss national companies are trilingual in the country's official languages; in some countries the government, companies and educational and research institutions are bound by law to use the official language(s) for many purposes, even if some would prefer English. Many organisations, even officially monolingual



Ved du at nogle mennesker tror, at man kun kan lære sprog, hvis man er særligt sprogbevaget?

English ones, choose to communicate with their employees in a range of languages which they themselves can select from. They do so to enhance the quality of work and to strengthen people's emotional involvement with the organisation.

What applies to internal communication applies even more to external communication, because of legislation in the case of European institutions, and because of the maxim "Sell in the customer's language" (and sometimes even "Negotiate purchases in the supplier's language") in the case of companies. It is true, however, that the necessary skills are often outsourced, particularly in the case of "exotic" languages – which in the Nordic countries can mean all foreign languages except English. Thus internal linguistic diversity may be much less than the total number of languages used, for instance on websites or in official documents. At another level, most higher educational establishments that were analysed argue in favour of using English as a medium of instruction in addition to official and/or minority languages, in order to create openings on the international academic market.

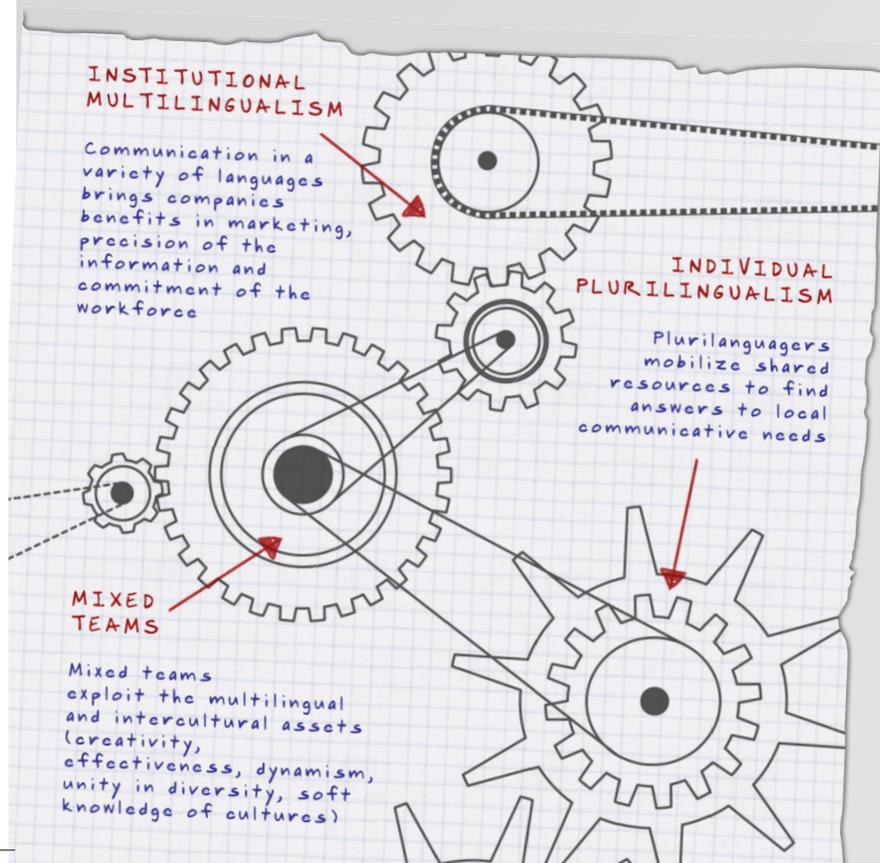
Most organisations analysed by the DYLAN teams espouse multilingualism either by declaring themselves officially multilingual or by acknowledging the linguistic diversity of their employees, members, students, etc. However, all these cases involve parallel communication with groups that speak different languages. This is usually done by translating and (on websites, for instance) by localising messages. This principle is known as OLAT ("one language at a time"). The view of multilingualism inherent in this principle seems "additive", as distinct from "integrative".

Several of our teams carried out fine-grained observation and analysis of workplace practices in companies, European institutions and higher educational establishments. The aim was to understand which communication strategies or "methods" are used in settings with several languages that are not all spoken equally well by all the individuals concerned.

As a first result, the common assumption that everyone speaks English was disproved. Participants adopt a wide range of strategies, and they do so in an extremely

variable, flexible and dynamic way, constantly reassessing and readapting the solutions chosen in the course of an activity. On the basis of relevant sets of audio and video recordings in various settings, several teams helped produce a classification of strategies located on two axes. One axis compares "monolingual" strategies ("one language only" or OLON and "one language at a time" or

Multilingual repertoires as a communicative, strategic and cognitive resource in interaction



OLAT) with “multilingual” ones – known as ALAST (“all the languages at some time”) or ALAAT (“all language at all times”) – and the other axis compares the “exolingual” pole (greatly asymmetrical repertoires) with the “endolingual” one (participants share the same repertoire).

Choosing a **lingua franca** such as English – but also, for example, Spanish used by speakers of Portuguese and Italian, or even North Sami in the polar region – is just one of many solutions; in addition, the form of the lingua franca depends heavily on the speakers’ levels of competence as well as on the “habitus” they assume, ranging from a monolingual-endolingual mode (among speakers who strongly adhere to language standards) to a monolingual-exolingual one (where language standards are disregarded to a high extent), or from a multilingual-endolingual mode (found in highly multilingual communities), to a multilingual-exolingual one (where the speakers draw on a mixture of linguistic resources). Another solution is the lingua receptiva mode, in which everybody speaks his/her own language and is expected to understand the ones used by the other speakers.

There is obviously a great difference between speaking English (Italian, Arabic, etc.) at near-native level or

with approximate skills. Thus English used as a lingua franca is not a variety of English like Indian or Singaporean English, but can be viewed as a field of “mixed” form of speaking that uses the whole range of the speakers’ repertoires. Hence, a lingua franca is by definition a kind of hybrid, “rough-and-ready” version of the language. In addition to their linguistic resources, participants make coordinated, systematic use of a whole range of multimodal resources.

The choice of language(s) and of a mono-/multilingual mode at work meetings largely depends on the participants’ profiles and competence, as well as on the participation regime, for example the ways in which participants at a meeting (and their repertoire) are included in or excluded from the activity. In settings where participants are aware that their competence is asymmetrical, solutions that enable the multilingual situation to be managed are developed in the course of the activity, in a way that is suited to the details of the activity concerned. Such solutions are not pre-existing models that are simply adopted as they stand, but emerge in situ and change constantly. Invented by the participants and negotiated throughout their interaction, these rough-and-ready solutions allow maximum flexibility and adaptability to the context.

As in companies and universities, the very complex situations found in European institutions and bodies encourage the emergence of intermediate, hybrid modes between monolingual and multilingual modes of communication, at the level of practices and social representation. These modes are very different from classic bilingual interactions in traditionally bilingual communities such as Puerto Ricans in New York, or Alsatians. In the three terrains studied (whether in work situations in companies, at meetings in European institutions, at official university events or in administrative exchanges), the analyses show that use of multilingual repertoires affects the way in which par-



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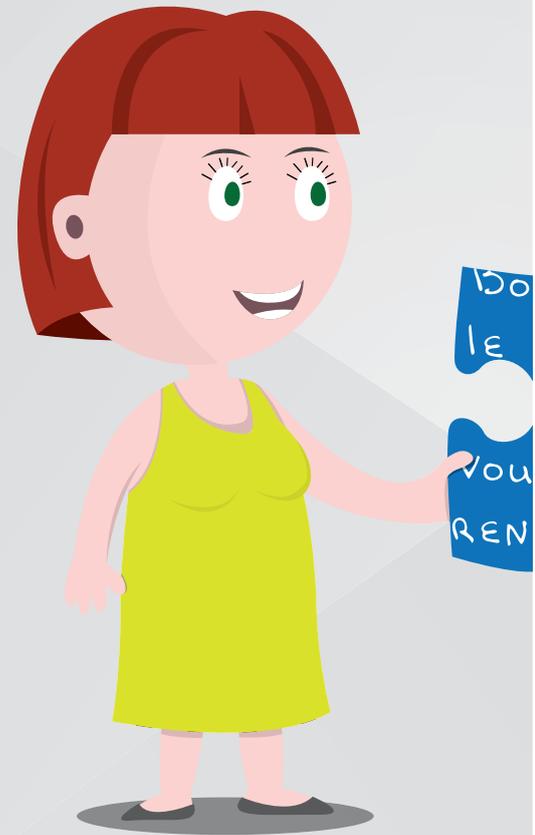
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Wussten Sie, dass viele Unternehmen konsequent auf den Mehrwert der Mehrsprachigkeit setzen?

Participants organise their interaction and the specific way in which linguistic resources are mobilised and processed in multilingual situations. In particular, it can be seen how turn-taking and actions are managed so as to maximise or minimise their participation, how linguistic resources are chosen (but also created in a rough-and-ready manner) according to which individuals are to be included (or excluded), and how leadership is constructed. Multilingual repertoires help agreement and disagreement to be managed. In a continuum of possible ways of speaking and behaving, they provide new ideas and views, especially on the development of professional creation.

According to our observations, these specific participatory configurations have an impact on the objects and activities involved, and above all on the transmission of information, the construction of knowledge and expertise, ways of negotiating, supervision of interactions, decision-making and problem-solving.

Our observations show that actors use all these strategies in a very systematically patterned way, based on emerging social knowledge. They have to find a trade-off between two competing principles, both of which are necessary components of efficient communication: speakers have to make rapid progress and to accept a degree of opacity (the “progressivity principle”), but at the same time they must ensure that they understand each other by means of time-consuming reverse movements (repair sequences) and translation (the “intersubjectivity principle”). The former principle is forward-looking and tends to minimise the resources used, whereas the latter is backward-looking and tends to expand them. At work meetings the former principle is reflected in participants’ focus on the shared activity, allowing them to take approximations in stride (“let it pass”). The latter principle is reflected in repairs and use of translation, entailing a return to what has just been said, and hence a degree of redundancy.



These various techniques involve “shared resources”. This can be seen as a kind of “do-it-yourself toolbox”. The idea is to use whatever comes to hand – an assortment of tools and materials resulting not from a particular project but from all the occasions on which stocks have been renewed, enriched or maintained using the remains of earlier construction or destruction. This allows participants to conduct a verbal activity in specific contexts in a creative, playful manner.

Such practices help the activity to be managed (taking turns, focusing on appropriate topics, etc.), allow the formulation of appropriate utterances for completing the task and to overcome communicative obstacles to communication.

Multilingualism as a cognitive resource

The analysis confirms earlier findings suggesting that the use of multilingual repertoires allows various kinds of access to knowledge, and deepens our understanding of the role of interaction in these processes. This was especially observed in the construction and transmission of knowledge through multilingual education in higher educational establishments. Terrain observations indicate that the use of different languages changes our perception of processes and objects, resulting in deepening and “fine-tuning” of conceptual

understanding, enriches conceptual construction, reveals hidden or implicit meanings, and “unfamiliarises” supposedly familiar meanings. This sheds a new light on concepts approached from multiple angles as if they were viewed through a prism or a kaleidoscope. Multilingual practices provide multiple keys to concepts and original ways of handling them. They allow a closer look at words and deeper reflection on the linguistic substance of concepts in the languages used, as well as explicit processing

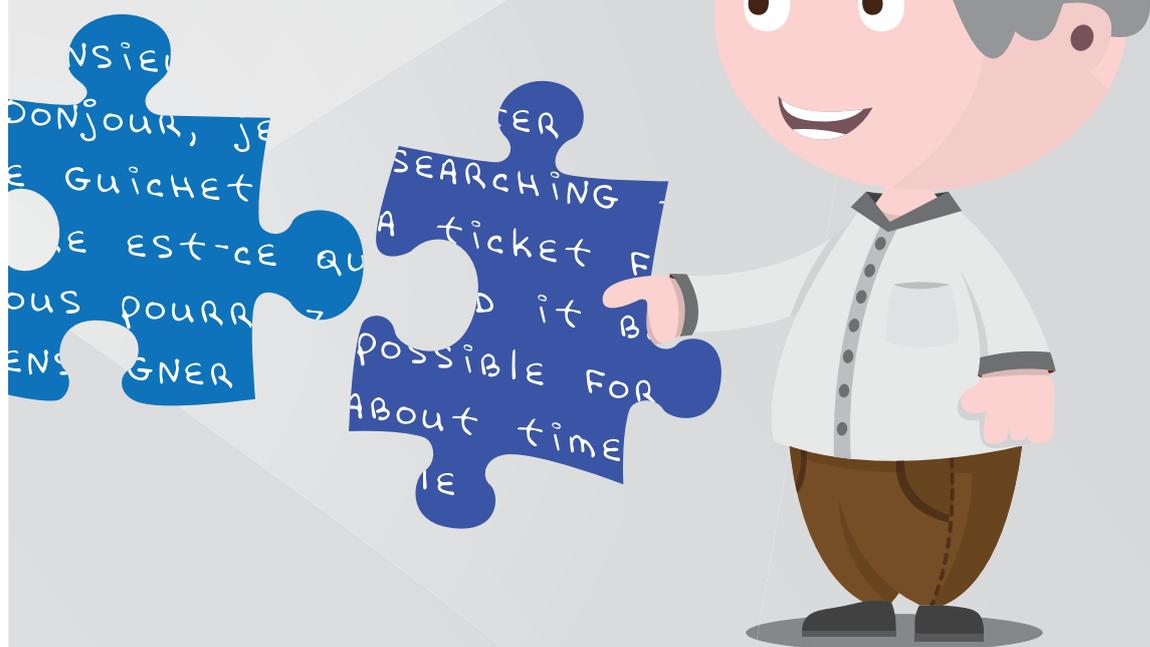
of the relationship between linguistic form and conceptual content, emphasising its symbolic nature.

For example, attention to a language problem reflexively leads to the reappraisal of conceptual knowledge; likewise, in order to understand content, students are forced to pay attention to details of the second language. Hence, multilingual practices can be used as resources for accomplishing situated cognitive activities. They help enhance students’

participation and joint

construction of knowledge. Effective, balanced use of the multilingual repertoire is linked to differentiated and complex social relationships. Participating in educational events provides such an opportunity: interactions such as those described for seminars, in particular, show that alternation between languages is used to enhance comprehension, foster creativity and the development of original knowledge products with the resolution of terminological conflicts leading to reinterpretation of established concepts.

Multilingual practices somehow help challenge the myth of linguistic transparency by revealing the full substance of language and its mediating role, especially as they encourage actors to stand back and see the objects and their representations in retrospect, calling words into question and generating linguistic opacity. Moreover, since they make it possible to work on meaning and form in continuous alternation, multilingual practices highlight certain notions as central to conceptual construction. They help increase output in terms of both quantity (emergence of many different notions) and quality (diversified and differentiated processing). They can also generate processes that span an entire sub-field of a discipline, helping to create broad conceptual networks and new relationships between concepts. For example, learners become aware of wider, interconnected semantic fields, possibly leading to a new kind



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Créons ensemble avec nos langues: le plurilinguisme permet le passage d'une communauté de pratique à une autre et contribue ainsi au drainage de la diversité de ressources vers l'accomplissement collaboratif de l'activité professionnelle.

of conceptual dynamism. Thus the use of terminology from several languages in higher education improves the development, processing and stabilisation of knowledge.

This, however, requires sharp language awareness and good bridge-building capacities between languages. Several examples show how monolingual English-medium instruction fails to transmit knowledge accurately, for lack of teacher or student skills. The right to use a national, official, co-official, regional or minority language is in practice sometimes questioned, since it raises the issue of communication with teachers who have not learned the language.

Our analysis shows that the use of multilingual repertoires serves as a resource for the construction, transmission and use of knowledge, providing various kinds of access to information processing and helping actors retain and classify new information.

Multilingualism and creativity

In general, multilingualism can be seen as an instrument for creativity, in linguistic and cognitive as well

as interactional and strategic terms: linguistic creativity, by giving rise to hybrid phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic varieties; cognitive creativity, by broadening access to information, providing alternative ways of organising thought and perceiving the world, and, more generally, developing potential for creative thinking; interactional creativity, by providing new ways of adapting to new communicational contexts and new ways of intervening (whether by changing the subject or reorganising the participatory framework); and strategic creativity, by providing new ways of negotiating, reaching decisions, solving problems or supervising action.

Assuming that multilingual, multicultural speakers enjoy the advantage of greater cognitive flexibility, this asset will be multiplied in mixed teams, which are the ideal place for using multilingual resources in an interactive, rough-and-ready manner. These resources are much more than just the sum total of the resources associated with each of the languages involved. And this will help enrich descriptions, improve understanding of scientific objects and increase creativity in seeking solutions to new challenges and problems.

Referring to literature in business studies, but also, in particular, their own experience, the managers interviewed argue that mixed teams have greater resources, knowledge and experience, which makes them more efficient, more dynamic and more innovative and creative.

Previous research (part of it mandated by the European Commission) emphasised the cognitive and social advantages enjoyed by multilingual individuals. The experience reported by the managers that were interviewed for the DYLAN project transfers this finding to mixed teams. But this depends on two conditions: (a) mixed teams must take advantage of the intercultural assets linked to linguistic diversity, and make optimum use of the “intermediate space” it creates between different languages and cultures, and (b) “exolingual communication” (communication between people with asymmetrical competence) must be efficiently managed, as shown above.

Scientific theories always work with words, images, metaphors borrowed from ordinary language. Because each language opens up new vistas on reality and offers

*Have you thought
that by studying
at a multicultural
university
I. your
communicative
and cultural
competence will be
enhanced?
II. your creativity
will improve?
III. you'll be more
open-minded?*

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different forms of argumentation, using several languages is profitable for knowledge. Decision-makers at the universities investigated insist on the benefits of multilingualism as a tool for integration, cohesion and mutual understanding, as well as for students' employability, but in particular because it makes them more resourceful researchers.

Assuming that multilingual and multicultural speakers enjoy the advantage of greater cognitive flexibility, this can be multiplied in mixed teams where multilingual resources are used in an interactive, rough-and-ready manner.



Under what conditions are “multilingual solutions” not just a response to a problem, but a genuine advantage?

We have already mentioned several reasons for institutions and individuals to take advantage of individual and social forms of multilingualism. Indeed, many of our observations suggest that institutional and individual multilingualism brings major advantages to the political institutions, companies, universities and individuals that adopt it. However, these various assets of multilingualism will not be effective unless a number of conditions and factors are taken into account.

Conditions and factors must be defined in terms of the kinds of interrelationships between language practices, representations, language policies and linguistic context. The influence of these conceptual dimensions on one another proves to be considerable. But the influence of language policy on practices largely depends on the kind of measures taken at various levels. These include measures to assess and improve staff language skills in order to make the institution more competitive. A particularly important instrument here is the creation and

Optimum coherence between conceptual dimensions

preferential treatment of mixed teams (see above). As already mentioned, top-down measures not only alter practices, but also affect actors' social representations, which will in turn have a political impact in that they help construct the social order. We also observed clashes between conceptual dimensions: practices, policies and representations do not match. Yet these "conflicts" should not be seen as problems, but as areas of fragility in which policy interventions may be possible.

A systematic analysis of the impact of language policy in Scotland on language management in companies, and of the latter on bilingual practices, shows that multilingualism will be an asset provided that efficient policies help individuals and organisations develop their ability and wish to operate bilingually, and help create opportunities for the use of several languages.

Striking a balance between the use of a lingua franca and multilingualism

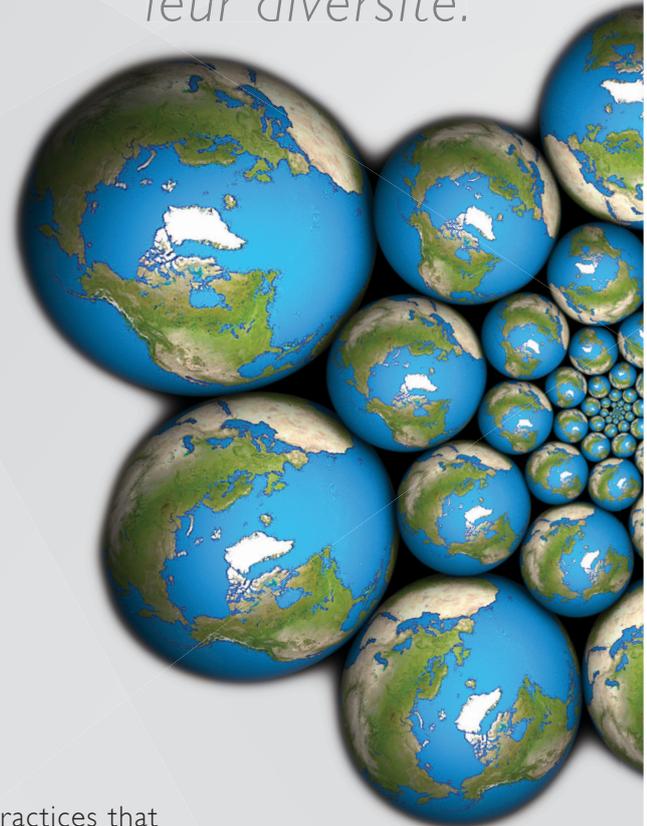
There are two other conditions: taking account

of a particular kind of relationship between a lingua franca and multilingualism, and a coherent conception of the notion of multilingualism, which has gradually developed in the course of the research process.

Where language management measures exist in higher educational establishments, they aim to promote national and international languages (mostly English). With the partial exception of Bolzano/Bozen, they insist upon using one language of instruction at a time, although many cases of simultaneous use of several languages in a teaching event were recorded.

Let us take a closer look at this last point. Today, teaching/learning practices that create favourable conditions for the construction of knowledge are not necessarily the result of an institutional project that explicitly implements a bilingual or multilingual curriculum. The reason is that institutions promoting multilingualism see it as an asset for internationalisation rather than construction of knowledge. The second language is seen as a transparent means of communication rather than as a tool that can be used for scientific questioning. Teachers often see second language learning and learning of subject matter as separate processes, whereas the learning of a language (whether English or any other language), and especially the academic variety of it, is an integral part of the lessons in which it is used. When universities draw up multilingual policies, these are most often based on the "monolingual" view of multilingualism (seen as the addition and division of several languages) rather than the integration of several repertoires (as in the "multilingual" view of multilingualism). Incidentally, the costs and benefits of such measures are not usually assessed. However, our studies show that the most efficient multilingual practices in terms of construction of knowledge implement a wide range of solutions using several languages at the same time. Complex knowledge is affected by the way in which it is formulated, and so multilingualism is a "decoder" of complexity. It should therefore be seen as a "hard" rather than a "soft" skill.

Les mondes de la connaissance sont multiples. On peut surfer entre ces mondes et les interroger dans leur diversité.



Saviez-vous que globalisation et mondialisation désignent deux phénomènes différents ? La première vise l'uniformité et la seconde l'universalité, la première valorise UN monolinguisme et la seconde LES plurilinguismes.

postcard N° 26 ▲

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Two opposing conceptions within academia have resulted in the implementation of two strategies in a knowledge-based society: (a) surfing on the worlds of knowledge seen as a globality, and (b) questioning the worlds of knowledge seen as an irreducible plurality. These two strategies may be complementary. But how can the twofold requirement – surfing on these worlds and questioning them – be reconciled? The multilingual language mode could be the answer to the paradox that universities face today: their wish to internationalise currently demands the use of English, yet their public mission legitimately demands the use of local languages, and multilingual strategies enhance construction of knowledge. Here again, clashes and contradictions create areas of fragility in which action becomes possible.

One way to resolve these conflicts between policies, representations and practices not only within universities,

but also in companies and European institutions and bodies, is to create a “multilingual climate” in which internal communication is an extension

of external communication rather than separate from it, giving the various organisations a multilingual identity by moving from symbolic to functional multilingualism, with multilingual practices inspiring policy, since language policy that is more in line with actual practice is likely to be more efficient.

Indeed, there are two more important, interrelated conditions for a “multilingual asset”: types of language management (the “language regime”), and the participatory framework (the “participation regime”) in which the interaction takes place.

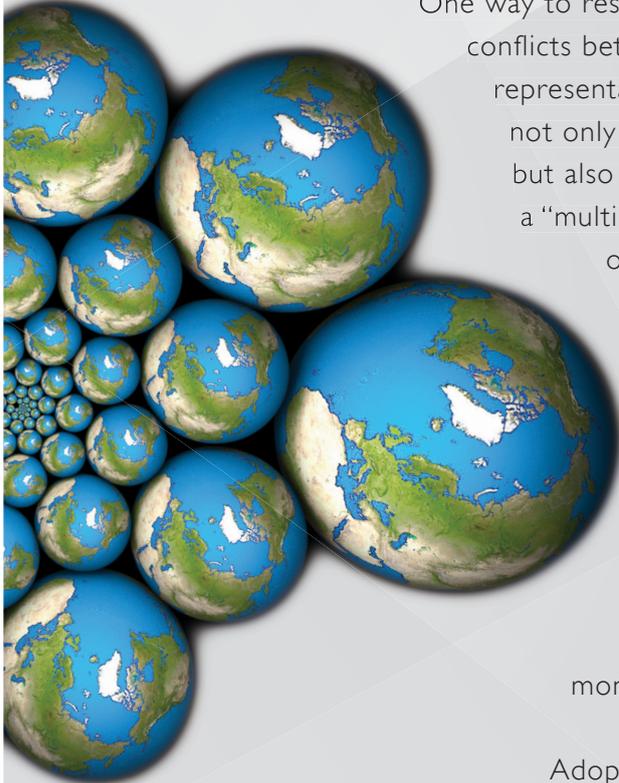
Organisations can adopt either of two types of language policy: monolingual or multilingual.

Adopting a foreign language as a corporate language or as a language for teaching fundamentally means staying in a monolingual (often exolingual-monolingual) mode, with limited adjustment of some problematic means of communication. This approach is intrinsically subtractive, in the sense that it deliberately steers clear of the mother tongue. It therefore overlooks the cognitive potential inherent in the multilingual mode.

Practices are more multilingual in companies that have developed an explicit language management plan; and language management measures allowing the use of several languages are more successfully internalised by employees than ones aiming at monolingualism, as demonstrated by a comparison between several international companies in Alsace.

As for the participation regime, this refers to the more or less shared organisation of a lesson or a meeting. Activities are conducted either by one participant (the chairperson or teacher) or jointly by all the participants. The analyses show that multilingualism is encouraged by a more participatory framework. Strategies favouring intersubjectivity or progressivity respectively (see above) depend on the type of corporate language policy, as observations in the Lyon region revealed.

Favourable participatory frameworks and kinds of language management



Le plurilinguisme manifeste la richesse de ces mondes et décode leur complexité.

The emergence of a multilingual mode at meetings and in classrooms tends to be linked to less rigid structures, for example small groups, pre-meeting and post-meeting sequences, less public parts of a meeting, etc. It is linked to situated cognition in multilingual communication settings where individuals use their multilingual repertoire to tackle communication tasks locally.

In classrooms, meetings and interaction at the workplace in companies and in European institutions and bodies, a multilingual mode, encouraged by a policy of multilingualism and linked to an appropriate participatory framework, seems to be one of the conditions for taking full advantage of multilingualism as an asset. Top-down measures can assist multilingual practices, but at the same time they affect actors' social representations, which will in turn have a political impact in that they help construct the social order. Hence, clashes between conceptual dimensions should not be seen as problems, but as areas of fragility in which policy interventions may be possible.

Complementary conceptions of multilingualism

two (partly complementary and partly competing) ways of theorising and representing multilingualism as such.

The first is rather conventional, and is shared by most of the actors in our terrains (and most probably by the general public). It is an “additive” view of multilingualism, based on the knowledge of official languages (such as French, German, Slovene, or Catalan) that have to be mastered as fully as possible. This “additive” or “monolingual” view on multilingualism, however, has only become conventional with changing representations of language, as shown by the investigation of multilingualism in European history. With the language standardisation processes across Europe, standard languages came to be seen as the only “real” languages. Speaking several languages in this first view of multilingualism is a professional soft skill. It is based on a conception of languages as idealised, timeless and decontextualised “objects”, each neatly separated from the other, with language (langue; competence) preceding language use (parole; performance). This can lead to apparently contradictory political positions, for instance measures to protect the dominant position of an official language within its territory versus measures to foster a single working language for the European Union. Obviously, it is on this basis that policies of institutional multilingualism are built.

The second is more implicit, more novel and generally less well-known. It corresponds to the “rough-and-ready” notion of languages and multilingualism that has emerged from the preceding sections.

In our terrains, we did not just observe a dichotomy between individual and institutional multilingualism. Clearly there are also

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*Have you ever
thought about
language as a
flexible activity
rather than a fixed
unit?*

Language
a verb.

Did you know that mixing languages enhances your creativity and innovative thinking?

postcard N° 2

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In this case, language use (“*linguaging*”) precedes language, particularly in the form of “*multilinguaging*”. Firmly anchored in numerous practices observed in all three of DYLAN’s terrains, it also appears explicitly in the actors’ social representations. For example, a manager who had to chair (for the first time) a meeting attended by ten totally new people told us “so you bring them together, and you find a language, and it is a mixture between German and English, in a way we found our own Esperanto (...) and it was then that creative processes started”. Moreover, it is a view on being/becoming multilingual that was very common before the primacy of standard languages, as the analysis of language learning textbooks from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shows.

This second view draws upon a functional conception of multilingualism, defined as the ability to interact, even imperfectly, in several languages in everyday settings, as

Be Creative. Be Hybrid. *Switch Languages!*

formulated in the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework. A set of skills in different languages, from perfect to very partial, is seen as an integrated whole which is more than the sum total of its parts. Incidentally, the term multilingual “*competence*” has been replaced by “*repertoire*”, defined as a set of “*resources*” — both verbal (various registers, dialects and languages, mastered at different levels) and non-verbal (e.g. mime and gestural expression) — that are jointly mobilised by the actors in order to find local solutions to practical problems. It is like a do-it-yourself toolbox; the speakers display creativity, and the boundaries between the languages vanish.

The focus is on practices and repertoires, on pushing resources to their limits and beyond. However, there is evidence that these multilingual practices are not unshaped, but are the locus of “*emergent multilingual grammars*” comprising “*methods*” of interaction such as code-switching, spontaneous translations by peers or ways of using *lingua francas* – or, to use the plural of what is originally an Italian term, *lingue franche*.

In the follow-up to these analyses, some teams attempted to question the notions of “*language*” and, in particular, “*language boundaries*”. On the one hand, they showed that “*hybrid words*” (words that can no longer be assigned to one language only) emerge as production strategies at language boundaries (and how they do so); on the other hand, they emphasised that views of “*language*” that are based on the ideology

i s

of “standard languages” as it was developed in Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries cannot account for these forms. We will come back to this.

Many observations support the assumption that such “multilanguaging skills” are a precondition for success in all three terrains; but, of course, multilanguaging does not cover all the situations in which people do not share the same language, among other things because it entails the risk of misunderstandings. It therefore cannot replace professional interpretation and the crucial work of translators as mediators between people and institutions speaking different languages.

A multilanguaging philosophy

The contrast between these two conceptions helps to explain some of the conflicts observed at different levels (practices versus

stated policies, divergent practices at the individual and institutional level, etc.). What some people condemn as “lack of mastery in any language” is praised by others as a down-to-earth solution in practical situations. However, if one admits that part of the “multilingual asset” is linked to the “multilanguaging” philosophy, then the analysis (and in some cases deconstruction) of representations evident in decision-makers’ discourses may be a key condition for the promotion of multilingualism.

In fact, the public perception of multilingualism varies enormously throughout our terrains. It materialises as a classification of beliefs about language prevailing throughout the various countries and institutions with respect to language policies and multilingualism, as it appears in media discourse. Furthermore, different voices can be heard in the shared social representations in the terrains analysed.

This also (and perhaps even mainly) concerns one of the key questions in European language policies: the role of English. Some believe that maintaining full linguistic diversity in Europe paradoxically endangers the policy of institutional multilingualism. Should we really reduce the number of working languages, in the extreme case to one only (at the moment, English)? One could, on the contrary, put forward the hypothesis that the real problem is the transfer to Europe of the monolingual nation-state ideology. It will be recalled that the latter hardly allowed regional languages to survive under pressure from official languages. Should other European languages be permitted to suffer the same fate?

In all three terrains, actors and observers insist on the importance of English. English is perceived as essential not only by international companies, but also by regional companies operating in cross-border markets, by universities and by European institutions.

At the same time, daily reality is perceived as very multilingual, as confirmed by the observer of the Danish context quoted above and by many hours of audio- and videotaped communicative events throughout the three terrains. From the perspective of the “multilingual asset”, a possible response to this paradox could be a new “partnership” between the use of a lingua franca and multilingual interaction.

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*Wussten Sie,
dass die Grenzen
zwischen Sprachen
bei deren Gebrauch
im Alltag oft
verwischt werden?*

Obviously, numerous voices in the EU institutions are calling for a more interconnected view of Europe's linguistic diversity, at the same time drawing on institutional multilingualism and the corresponding practice of translation and interpretation, as well as on situated and practical day-to-day bottom-up experiences which are well described by modern sociolinguistic theory.



3

Policy relevance of findings

As shown in the preceding sections, the DYLAN project has delivered detailed knowledge of actual communication in a variety of multilingual settings, highlighting the complex interplay between observed practices, actors' representations regarding language, and contextual elements, which all contribute to our understanding of real-world communication processes.

Let us recall, however, that one of the aims of the DYLAN project is to provide stakeholders (the European Commission, businesses, educational authorities, and, of course, the general public) with guidance on how to deal with multilingualism, not as individuals, but as decision-makers steering private or public sector organisations towards collective goals. This means that the preceding results must be linked up with an analytical perspective on how choices are made, and how they can be improved by using the knowledge acquired.

The goals pursued are of course very diverse: in the case of European institutions, they are spelled out in fundamental policy documents; businesses usually seek to create market value for shareholders; universities may be public or private, but they usually aim to ensure high-quality teaching and research, along with a positive social impact. No matter what the goals are, however, the way in which diversity is handled will affect the results that these very diverse actors actually achieve. Hence,



Diminuer les dépenses de traduction et d'interprétation dans une institution multilingue n'est pas forcément une économie. Cela revient en fait à un transfert de charges qui peut mettre les citoyens dans une situation inégale.

▶ **postcard N° 33**

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providing guidance presupposes that we have criteria for comparing possible courses of action, for assessing their respective advantages and drawbacks, and, on this basis, helping stakeholders make better choices and take full advantage of multilingualism in order to perform better. The term “perform” should be understood in the broadest sense, in line with the objectives of the “Europe 2020” strategy, which refers to smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth.

People constantly make decisions about language. They choose between different ways of using their linguistic repertoires, which can be seen as a resource. But the weighing-up of advantages and drawbacks which actors perform, usually informally, when deciding what languages to use (taking account of the specifics of every given interaction), has to be re-examined when it is analysed at the aggregate level of language policies and language strategies adopted by businesses, European institutions and higher educational establishments. For convenience we will refer to all these as “language policy”.

Language policy evaluation can use the tools of policy analysis, an approach routinely adopted when drawing up decisions on environmental, health or transportation policy, for example. However, its application to language choices is more recent. In the DYLAN project these well-established policy concepts have been thoroughly re-examined with regard to language-related choices, and confronted with relevant observations gathered in various terrains, as well as with discourse regarding such choices, in order to bridge the gap between formal policy frameworks and the practical conditions for their implementation.

Language choices can also be approached using the tools of policy analysis. This is useful in the selection and design of language policies by different types of actors.

Criteria for making choices

Sound policy choices can only be made by comparing possible courses of action, identifying their respective advantages and drawbacks, and opting for the course of action that seems best on the basis of such a comparison. Policy analysis can be arranged according to two basic criteria, namely efficiency and fairness. Course of action ‘A’ is more efficient than ‘B’ if it makes better use of scarce resources, whether material, financial or symbolic. Course of action ‘C’ is fairer than ‘D’ if the resulting distribution of resources (whether material, financial or symbolic) is more in line with socially and politically acceptable principles of justice.

One of the products of the DYLAN project is the transposition of these meta-level concepts to the practice of multilingual communication – at a sufficiently general level for the instrument to be valid across situations, yet with sufficient flexibility to be able to accommodate the richness and complexity of communicational processes observed in real-world settings: we now have a set of tools with which we can gauge different communication strategies and compare them in terms of efficiency and fairness. This provides a logically rigorous and practice-informed basis for language policy choices, consistent with recognised principles of policy analysis. Taking account, in such comparisons, of the intricacies of multilingual communication, as well as the distance between organisations’ professed goals and actual behaviour, challenges widespread but clichéd views regarding the relative virtues of multilingualism and monolingualism.

For example, the apparent savings generated by the attempt to use one language only may be cancelled out by the concomitant costs of language learning by actors, defective communication, linguistic insecurity among some speakers, etc. What looks like a saving may turn out to be nothing but a shifting of costs to other groups. Deciding which option is best is an empirical question to be examined in each specific setting; but the DYLAN project provides a general method for addressing it through the systematic comparison of alternatives.

“Efficiency” and “fairness” are well-established, general criteria for comparing options. The challenge is to clarify what they mean in the context of communication. The DYLAN project proposes ways of operationalising communication in multilingual settings so as to make rigorous and consistent comparisons possible.

“Comparing options” and then “choosing the best one” may seem like a pretty obvious guide for action. However, reality often proves untidier, sometimes to the point of preventing social actors from choosing the best – or in any case better – option available. The difficulty of making sound decisions is reflected in the interplay of representations, overt and covert policies, and the infinite variety of actual practices influenced not just by policies and representations, but also, of course, by the range of settings with which individual actors and institutions are dealing. Time and again, the examination of actors’ choices in the various terrains by the various teams in the DYLAN project (usually involving qualitative approaches) has shown that they were confronted with three recurring problems: lack of clarity, lack of guidance and lack of support.

The project helps increase clarity and transparency, for instance by offering a richer, deeper definition of the notion of multilingualism. Among other things, this makes it possible to identify the risks of confusion between internationalisation and multilingualism, which is related to the varied nature of the representations that underpin references to multilingualism, particularly in European institutions. These representations, which change over time and refer to different arguments, form part of the basis for public ideas and expectations about multilingualism; but they may also be institutionally specific, differing from one institution to the next. Although it is often assumed that such institutional specificity is not a problem (giving rise, for example, to differences between “internal” and “external” language regimes), there is in fact a high degree of mutual influence, which further complicates the situation for civil servants and citizens who have to navigate the waters of linguistic diversity. Divergence between professed policy and actual practice may blur even supposedly clear notions such as “working language”.

The tools developed in the project will help to identify and process these problems in a variety of settings. Such tools can contribute to more consistent and more inclusive approaches to policy development, in order to reconcile the notions used to address European-level and national-level language policy issues.

*Policies and
practice, policies
in practice*

Providing flexible policy development tools

The DYLAN project has made it possible to review existing language policy frameworks, sharpen them by taking account of the fine-grained observations collected in the various terrains, and use such broadened frameworks to draw up a set of proposals for the development of a full-fledged system of linguistic indicators for Europe.

POLYPHONY is a funny, creative and innovative game that brings you consistent benefits in your everyday life

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Indicators may adapt to changes of context and the variability and dynamics of communicational situations. They need to make sense with respect to not only observed language practices but also the goals pursued, and they also need to be connected with actual modes of policy intervention.

For example, many important language issues can be addressed using the “policy-to-outcome path”, a policy analysis tool which has been reviewed by the DYLAN project and adapted in order to highlight the role of policy deliberation and implementation. The adapted policy-to-outcome path can embody more open notions of communication, as well as essentially multilingual views of multilingualism (departing from the received view of multilingualism as the mere juxtaposition of sharply separated language skills), thereby taking account of the issues addressed in the “Main findings” chapter. At the same time, it provides a benchmark for assessing action plans. What are the overt and covert components of a given plan? Are these compatible, and do they generate unambiguous policies? Do the latter genuinely contribute to the three conditions that must be met in order to ensure that multilingualism is indeed an asset? More specifically, do they help build up actors’ linguistic repertoires? Do they give them opportunities to use them? Are actors’ attitudes adequately taken into account when designing a policy plan?

DYLAN provides stakeholders with well-designed policy development tools which take due account of actual language practices should encourage them to clearly identify where they are, where they intend to go, and why.



In order to assess the relative advantages and drawbacks of multilingualism (also distinguishing between different forms of multilingualism) and monolingualism, the project provides the conceptual and methodological basis for the future gathering of quantitative data capturing the magnitude of these advantages and drawbacks; the latter may also be referred to as “benefits” and “costs”, if one bears in mind that both of these include the non-material, symbolic dimensions of more or less multilingual ways of communicating. The distribution of those benefits and costs between groups of stakeholders also needs to be taken into account, since not all policy choices result in equally fair distribution.

By combining theoretical perspectives on language policy analysis and detailed terrain observations, the DYLAN project provides an approach to the design of linguistic indicator systems, as well as a set of over 200 indicators that may be fitted into a system matching the specific questions and needs of different types of actors, such as companies, European bodies or educational institutions. In order to create an effective indicator system, the data collected must be processed so that the resulting indicators display a number of desirable features: validity, reliability, sensitivity, stability, adequacy, feasibility, representativeness, intelligibility, timeliness, comparability and power.

Managing multilingualism is a complex endeavour, and one that requires the backing of the authorities. The Commission and Member States are now in a position to (i) select priority indicators, (ii) “populate” the indicators selected through large-scale data gathering, (iii) use them to gauge and monitor multilingualism in Europe, and (iv) adopt policies that encourage efficient and fair communication.

Earlier language indicator systems, as developed in specific minority language contexts, tend to be mostly contextual or to focus on traditional information about language skills and language use in different domains. Our indicators, by contrast, take account of findings on the richly patterned complexity of actors’ actual language use, as observed in the various terrains. In addition, they go beyond recent or current endeavours at the European level focusing on actors’ foreign language skills.

The DYLAN language indicator system provides a theory-backed connection between various language practices and their efficiency and fairness. It is thus a tool that identifies possible ways of managing linguistic diversity in a democratic knowledge-based society.

Examples of Indicators:

Potentially hundreds of different indicators may be proposed. Some basic indicators are little more than direct observations – provided the latter are systematic, meet a precise definition and are presented according to some explicit rules. For example, the number of different languages in which members of a team have a clearly defined degree of self-declared competence could serve as a simple indicator of the linguistic capital of the team. Other indicators are much more elaborate, and require combining or processing raw data.

Selecting an appropriate indicator depends on the questions asked. Suppose we are interested in who gets to speak at a meeting. This can be observed through conversation analysis, and indicators offer a synthetic way to summarise the observations made.

Consider for example two different meetings (A and B) in the same firm, each bringing together participants with different linguistic repertoires and, in particular, different mother tongues. Suppose that in meeting A the use of a wide range of languages is encouraged, while in meeting B the group leader insists on the use of a single language. Is speaking time more equally shared between speakers in meeting A or in meeting B? Or do we observe that, on average, native speakers of the privileged language(s) of the meeting tend to monopolise speaking time? To answer this question, both meetings can be taped, and the speaking times of participants recorded in seconds. The total duration of the meeting can therefore be analysed in terms of the share of speaking time t_j used by each participant j ($j=1, \dots, N$); we can use this information to compute a compact indicator of “evenness of speaking time” (let’s call it “EST”) given by:

$$EST = 1 - \sum_{j=1}^N t_j^2$$

Comparisons between different meetings, in terms of how speaking time is shared among participants with different repertoires, will now be very easy, because this information is captured by a single figure. The value of EST will be closer to 0 if one speaker takes up most of the speaking time, and closer to 1 if the speakers share speaking time more equally; it is an indicator of the fairness of distribution of speaking time among persons participating.

Participants at these meetings may also be asked to assess their usefulness (for example in terms of the actual amount of information they consider to have acquired and understood) on a scale from 0 to 1; let us call the resulting average value “IUM” (for “informational usefulness of the meeting”). IUM provides a metric for comparing the effectiveness of different meetings (which is a stepping-stone towards the evaluation of efficiency).

Now, recorded data also make it possible to assess the relative degree of multilingualism (“RDM”) of the two meetings. A wide range of observations can be used to quantify RDM. We could, for example, compute the number of repair sequences involving code switching per period of time; alternatively, we could cut up interaction time in small units and assign different units to different languages, where the total for each language could then be treated in the same way as respective speaking times in indicator EST above. The choice of a metric for RDM will very much depend on what actors themselves perceive as “more” or “less” multilingual.

We can then not only compare many meetings (not just A and B, but a large number of meetings) in terms of their respective degree of multilingualism, effectiveness and fairness, but also study possible correlations between these indicators, to see how various manifestations of multilingualism are, in general, related to efficiency and fairness. Let us observe that effective and fair meetings are not automatically more (or less) multilingual; working with indicators, however, is a tool for establishing in a systematic fashion trends emerging from a large number of meetings.

4

Conclusions

The project produces **three different outcomes**:

- » Answers to three questions
- » Instruments for answering these and new questions
- » Tools for implementation and assessment

1. How are organisations, especially companies, European institutions and higher education, as well as individuals responding to the challenge of growing linguistic diversity in Europe?
2. In what way are “multilingual solutions” not just a response to a problem but also a genuine advantage for organisations and individuals?
3. Under what conditions can multilingual responses actually be an advantage?

The three questions

Instruments for answering the three DYLAN questions - and emerging questions

New forms of partnership

The project brings together researchers from different theoretical and epistemological traditions, in a new kind of partnership with society (in the sense of an “enacted science”) opening avenues for the involvement of partners in the actual research process, generating a pilot project for the human and social sciences.

An integrative and flexible framework for analysis

This framework operates from the standpoint of scientific research and the practical standpoint of economic, political and educational actors in selecting, formulating, implementing and evaluating language policies. It provides a conceptual, methodological basis for addressing future issues.

Relationship between qualitative and quantitative tools

Fine-grained observations of actors’ language practices, and how these practices mesh with representations, deliberate plans, and contextual elements, have also been related to well-established criteria of efficiency and fairness. This fine-grained analysis opens the way for better-targeted further research, including quantitative approaches.

Selection of relevant strategies

Language strategies can now be selected and designed in order to take account of the complexity of actual practices in the workplace, in political institutions and in educational systems, as well as the requirements of both organisations and individuals. Language policies can be informed by effective language practices.

Tools for assessment

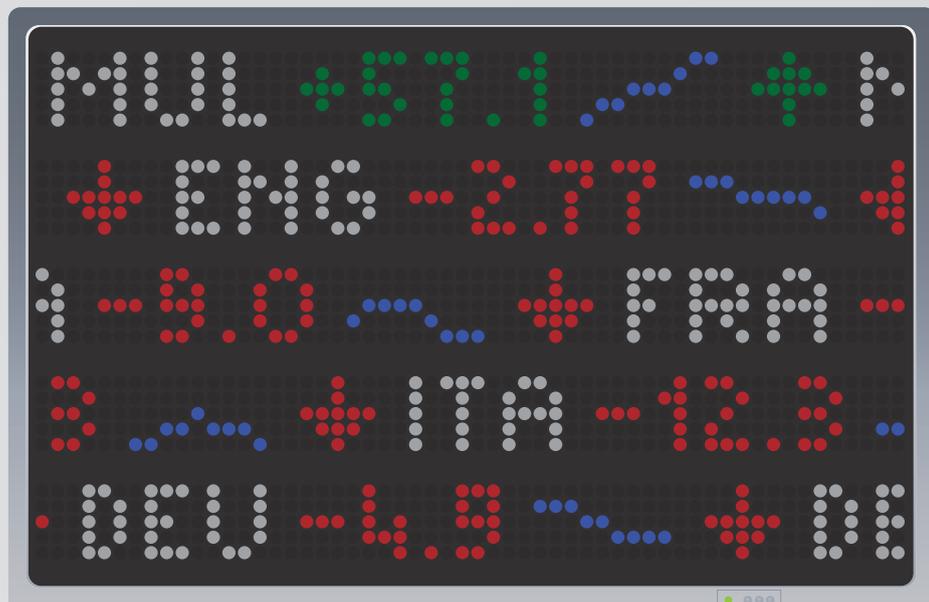
The project provides indicators for assessment, comparison, and monitoring, as well as a methodology for deriving additional indicators. It also offers a toolkit for the efficient and fair management of multilingualism in a number of different settings. Furthermore, it generates a tangible basis for developing a strong and coherent field of scientific research on multilingualism that can help formulate new questions and create the conditions for answering them.

Tools for implementation and assessment

Vous êtes-vous déjà demandé si communiquer d'une façon multilingue peut être plus efficace que communiquer dans une seule langue?

► *postcard N° 34*

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Answers to the three questions

How are organisations, especially companies, European institutions and higher education, as well as individuals responding to the challenge of growing linguistic diversity in Europe?

1. Manifold responses by organisations

This variability can be observed for both private sector companies and public sector institutions; well beyond a simple dichotomy between mono- and multilingualism, they range from:

- » one language only (an “OLON” strategy);
- » one language at a time (“OLAT”);
- » many or potentially all languages at the same time (“ALAST”).

Responses by individuals

Actors use multilingual repertoires as a communicative resource in interaction and use multiple multilingual strategies in a systematically patterned way.

They face a trade-off between two competing principles:

- » the “progressivity principle”;
- » the “intersubjectivity principle”.

Both are necessary components of efficient communication.

In what way are “multilingual solutions” not just a response to a problem but also a genuine advantage for individuals and organisations?

2. Cognitive asset

The use of multilingual repertoires is a resource for the construction, transmission and use of knowledge:

- » by providing various kinds of access to information processing and helping actors retain and classify new information;
- » by changing our perception of processes and objects;
- » by deepening and “fine-tuning” conceptual understanding;
- » by revealing hidden or implicit meanings, and “unfamiliarising” supposedly familiar meanings;
- » by shedding new light on concepts approached from multiple angles;
- » by allowing for a closer look at words and a deeper reflection on the linguistic substance of concepts residing in the languages used.

Creativity of mixed teams

Many of our interviewees concur that: "Dealing with a team that displays cognitive diversity and truly different ways of encoding and sensing has a direct correlation with the effectiveness of that team. This is the most concrete driver of creativity and innovation."

Strategic asset

The use of multilingual repertoires:

- » affects the way in which participants organize their interaction;
- » influences the extent of their participation;
- » has an impact on the construction of leadership.

The use of multilingual repertoires also has an impact on:

- » ways of negotiating, agreement and disagreement, the construction of expertise, problem-solving and decision-making.

Under what conditions can multilingual responses actually be an advantage?

3.

Ensuring coherence between conceptual dimensions

The influence of language policy on practices largely depends on the kind of measures taken at various levels.

If clashes arise between policies and practices, however, such tensions (or perhaps even conflicts) should not be seen as problems, but as areas in which policy interventions may be possible.

Favourable participatory frameworks and kinds of language management are required.

In classrooms and at work (in both private-sector companies and European institutions), a multilingual mode seems to be one of the pre-conditions for taking full advantage of multilingualism. But it must be encouraged by a policy of multilingualism and linked to an appropriate participatory framework.

Striking a balance between different ways of handling multilingual communication

This implies a new partnership between different strategies, among them the use of a lingua franca and the use of multilingual repertoires, in order to resolve complex and paradoxical situations.

A functional conception of multilingualism

Multilingualism can be defined as the ability to interact, even imperfectly, in several languages in everyday settings.

A multilingual repertoire can be used as a set of "resources" — both verbal and non-verbal — that are jointly mobilized by the actors in order to find local solutions to practical problems.

Multilingualism can be approached as a "do-it-yourself" toolbox.

A "multilanguaging" philosophy

If one admits that part of the "multilingual asset" is linked to the "multilanguaging" philosophy, then the analysis (and in some cases the questioning) of "common-sense theories" emerging from widely held opinions may be a key condition for the promotion of multilingualism.

5

Epilogue

Language dynamics are caught between two contradictory forces: on the one hand, progressivity and efficiency, related to immediacy, economy and simplicity and, on the other hand, inter-subjectivity and fairness, related to participation, collaboration and the decoding of complexity. Both of them are necessary components of efficient communication. DYLAN proposes to handle them in a perspective of complementarity and synergy, as a kind of key for a new partnership between lingua francas and multilingualism, in order to achieve a new management of unity in diversity.

The DYLAN Project

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DYLAN receives funding from the European Commission as an Integrated Project under Framework Programme 6.

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