

In Varietate Concordia: Does the European Union Live Up to its Motto?

An Analysis of EU Language Policy from 1957 to the Present

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Abstract

Jacqueline Kelley Morgan: *In Varietate Concordia* : Does the European Union Live Up to its Motto? An Analysis of EU Language Policy from 1957 to the Present

(Under the Direction of Donald Searing)

Since 1957, the European Union has experienced great changes in terms of language policy. From the use of five official languages to its current linguistic mixture of 23, identity has become more of a contentious issue, especially for linguistic minorities. This issue comes to light in the heated debate about the languages that should be used in EU affairs. The current policy is to translate every document or conference into all 23 of the EU languages, as everyone has a right to understand politics. The other side, the proponents of one or more pivotal languages, state that reducing the number of languages used would not only decrease spending in the EU budget on translation and interpretation, but it would also make communication more efficient. However, this would cause disenfranchisement for those whose languages are not represented. This thesis will also examine the effects of language policy initiatives on young people.

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Introduction

What does it mean to be truly connected? Throughout the course of history, humankind has progressed from isolation from those around them, to an interdependence that continues to grow in the 21st century. The French sociologist Jacques Lévy puts it best in terms of a continuum, encompassing five stages of human interconnectedness. The first stage is known as the “ensemble of worlds.” In this model, civilizations such as the Maya, the Chinese, or the Arabs, develop their own societies and invent concepts, such as timekeeping and mathematics that still exist to the present day. However, though there are different groups living on the same planet, each group is unaware of the existence of others beyond its borders. Time is seen as circular, solely dependent on the seasons, and communication is very limited. The second stage commenced during the Age of Exploration in Europe in the 1400s by adventurers such as Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Hernán Cortés and Ferdinand Magellan, who wanted to discover new lands and become wealthy. During this time, Europeans often sought to conquer the people of the places where they landed, imposing their Christian belief systems on the natives, who were often seen as barbarians. This second stage is the “field of forces” stage, in which governance depends on an entity that may or may not extend beyond the borders of a certain area. Power is enforced, sometimes forcibly, through a politics of coercion. Through this, Lévy notes the development of hierarchical networks in the third stage. Over the course of time, those who find themselves at the top of the hierarchy in

different nation-states have begun to cooperate even more as markets become more integrated. This concept of a “world society,” the final stage in Lévy’s model, shows that decisions made and conclusions reached at the supranational level affect not only those citizens living within the borders of member states, but also those on the other side of the world (J. Agnew 2010). These economic, political, and military coalitions have produced the modern international organizations operating today, such as the United Nations and the European Union. One element that determines how decisions are reached within the EU as a “world society” is how European citizens communicate with one another in government, in everyday interactions with their neighbors, and in higher education of young people. The effects of language policy in the European Union in these areas will be the focus of this thesis.

Let us go directly to the heart of the matter. It is 5:00 PM on a Monday evening in Brussels, Belgium. Within the European Parliament building, an older gentleman with snow-white hair steps up to the podium. He is Jerzy Buzek, a Polish liberal conservative politician and President of the European Parliament. As he gives his opening remarks, which range from the departure of former MEPs (Ministers of European Parliament) to condolences for those who suffered a natural disaster, a gaggle of languages is heard. From Spanish, French, and German to Danish, Swedish, Finnish, and everything in between, interpreters simultaneously convey the President’s message. Since the end of World War II in 1945, there has been a desire to promote conflict management through effective communication and unity. But even this has become a contentious issue as the EU is not one nation-state, but rather multiple nations with differing cultural perspectives, even within the same geographical borders. Though the desire for cohesion still remains

strong, some nationalist groups (particularly linguistic minorities) wish to maintain their own cultural identity in the face of a homogenizing supranational entity.

This thesis seeks to analyze the effects of language policy in the EU first from a parliamentary perspective. Then it will focus on case studies in individual nations, and examine how these cases contribute to the EU's overall linguistic initiatives and the development of identity within a supranational institution. It will also discuss the historical, economic, and social perspectives of the debate on multilingualism vs. pivotal languages. It will finally analyze the development of ERASMUS as well as other exchange programs for students and professionals, and the effects of linguistic diversity and cultural exchange on young people. The framework that draws all this together is captured in the following question: Does the European Union truly live up to its motto, *In varietate concordia* (unity in diversity)? Through these specific examples, I will demonstrate that, though moving to one or more *lingua francae* would seemingly make the process simpler (by saving money and expediting communications), it would actually result in a disenfranchisement, accompanied by political apathy among those whose languages were not represented.

Languages and European Identity: Past and Present

One original purpose for the European Community (the EU's predecessor) was to unite Europe after two devastating world wars, and to promote conflict management strategies. The conflict between the Allies (UK, France, and the Soviet Union) and the Axis (Germany and Italy) left a disastrous legacy and painful memories of wars throughout the first half of the 20th century. This background contributed substantially to growing support for international cooperation in a supranational European entity in the postwar era. This, in turn, prompted debate about the contrast between "European and national identities." The debate has become increasingly relevant in the decades since the European Parliament's inception in 1958, when only five languages (French, English, Dutch, German, and Italian) were used. In subsequent decades, as more countries joined, the number of working languages continued to expand. Since January 1, 2007, two new members have been added: Romania and Bulgaria. This brought the European Parliament to its current linguistic mixture. Now, the EP has 23 working languages. The languages include Spanish, German, English, Italian, Czech, Finnish, and now Romanian and Bulgarian as well as 15 others. This diversity has created debate about the practicality of the current language policy and its effect on identity in Europe.

Commentators project two views, one stating that the EU may be changing into a more cohesive state similar to the United States. Others see only a simple security coalition. Either way, the policies of Parliament continue to affect citizens in a way that

supersedes the reach of their own national governments, giving them a more global perspective rather than a local one – which raises the question of identity (Hermann, Brewer 2004). A person may be French, Caucasian, and Christian, but one is not necessarily equivalent with the other. For example, not all French are Christians, not all Christians are French. Not all Caucasians are German, nor are all Germans Caucasians. Identity is increasingly multifaceted, a case-by-case affair, in which the individual is increasingly the focus. Thus, in the EP, it is important to take into account different ways of identifying oneself, while still maintaining the goal of cohesion in EU affairs.

So how can an entity with so many different nation-states and cultures achieve and maintain legitimacy? This question is highly debated in the European Union, as allegiance is one of the most controversial issues facing the EU today. According to the treaty, “the Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States” (Fossum 319). These principles take quite a universalistic transnational approach, and have been met with fierce opposition. Ardent nationalists struggle to defend their own identities in the face of a supranational institution. Therefore, Fossum compares the two sides to Scylla and Charybdis, monsters that threatened Odysseus on both sides of a vast chasm. The tensions are evident in a documentary film entitled “Pelota Vasca,” meaning “Basque Ball” (Medem 2003). The following conversational exchange occurs between two children from the Basque country in Spain and their elementary school teacher:

“Ustedes son espanoles.” (You are Spanish)

“Vascos!” (Basque)

“Espanoles!” (Spanish)

“Vascos!” (Basque)

The teacher then proceeds to beat the children with a ruler until they are bullied into forced Spanish assimilation. The unfortunate children are caught in a tug-of-war between regional loyalties as Basques and Spanish societal pressure for predominance of identity and cultural superiority. Throughout this short dialogue, some of the issues within the EU are made manifest. The teacher represents the dominant nation (Spain) whereas the children represent the Basques, a linguistic minority in both Spain and France. The situation in Euskadi (Basque term for that region) is a microcosm for the linguistic diversity and potential problems facing the EU because, similar to Spanish dominance over its Basques, the EU exerts its influence over its national constituents. However, unlike the forced assimilation through coercion that is shown in the Spanish-Basque example, the European Union claims instead to respect all linguistic and cultural diversity.

Overview of EP Initiatives

In spite of difficulties within the individual member-states, the EU has sought to maintain unity under an umbrella of common principles of human rights and cultural diversity. In December 2000, the EU Charter was proclaimed to constitutionalize in the EU a set of principles that were already familiar to the public. Those who are part of the EU, the charter says, shall share a peace based on a common set of transnational norms. However, this concept of common rules could be problematic in that the EU itself is not a state, but rather, a collection of nation-states, all of whom claim equal rights in the EU Parliament. To address this challenge, the preamble also states its respect for cultural, national, and linguistic diversity. One objective is that every European citizen should learn two foreign languages in addition to his or her native language. The European Council (EC) signed a treaty that gives the European Union the responsibility of teaching various EU languages to its citizens to promote multilingualism, while still respecting cultural and linguistic heterogeneity. According to the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000), no one should face discrimination because of language. Linguistic awareness is an important component to openness to other cultures in the EU. Foreign language competence has therefore become a basic requirement for advancement in educational and employment opportunities, as well as in personal development and cultural exchange.

During the legislative term of 2004-2009, Jan Figél from Slovakia was appointed as a commissioner (Mutke & Itzel 2007). The Commission presented its New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism in November 2005, which announced three

primary goals: encouragement of language learning for cultural exchange, enhancement of a multilingual economy, and allowing citizens to gain access to EU information in their respective languages. These goals have also been cited in Clare Mar-Molinero and Patrick Stevenson's article "Language Policy in a Changing Europe, Introduction" (2006). There have also been programs to promote the study of regional or minority languages. Thus, citizens have a right to present issues to the EP, advisory councils, and other affiliates in their own languages, and should therefore be entitled to a response in that language. All legislation must also be made available to everyone in his or her own language. This commitment to multilingualism is unique in today's world. Interestingly, complete multilingualism is more of an issue in the EU than in the UN, which represents every country on earth. Why? In the UN, there are only six working languages (English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Russian) (Languages of UN Documents 2006, Date of access December 16, 2010). This illustrates the concept of partial multilingualism, using languages that are the most prevalent in the world at large. Therefore, in contrast to the EU, partial multilingualism has proven a more feasible option for the UN. It would be too impractical to have languages from 192 nations (over 6,000 languages) represented at every conference or debate. But since the EU is not quite so extensive, it has sought to manage with complete multilingualism.

It is important to consider two concepts here: constitutional patriotism and deep diversity (Fossum 321-323). The concept of constitutional patriotism, primarily associated with German international relations theorist Jürgen Habermas, is the idea of bonding and achieving legitimacy through constitutional symbols and common law, rather than through shared cultural background. Two examples of this type of civic

bonding are Switzerland (with four official languages) and the United States, where citizens come from all over the world. Deep diversity refers to multiple goals from different sectors of the entity. Some simply see this as a way to differentiate between people, therefore preserving national identity in general. Others have a more specific focus, such as national, ethnic, or linguistic minorities, as in Euskera in the Basque country. Constitutional patriotism, by contrast, refers to contextualizing similar beliefs that bond people, while still preserving the flexibility to adapt to differences of opinion.

Against this background, there have emerged four alternatives for bridging language gaps.

Barrier vs. Bridge: Four General solutions to Overcoming Language Gaps

The first idea is to use languages that have already achieved intellectual prestige throughout history, such as Latin, French, or English. A classic example of a universally accepted standard system is that which is used in science. All species have Latin scientific names for example, so that scientific discourse can be linguistically neutral, for Latin is not widely spoken anywhere today. This eliminates language bias altogether. But the problem with using a language like Latin is that, while it is widely used within the scientific community, it is not used in everyday life and is not likely to be. The second idea turns to restrictive forms of languages. This usually involves the use of Pidgin or Creole, or other ways of speaking that are specific to certain groups (for example, the Creoles in Louisiana in the United States). But, again, this is not practical, since such restrictive forms of languages are not common to even an entire nation-state.

The third alternative is to make up a universal language. At first glance, this would make it easier and less culturally irritating to communicate among all peoples. This is the idea behind Esperanto. But the linguistic issue is not so easily solved as this proposal makes it sound. Characteristics of one language (or one family of languages) are bound to be dominant. There is an idea of “universal grammar” that all languages possess. This includes lexical categories, syntax, and semantics. Lexical categories refer to parts of speech (noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, interjection) that state the function of the word in the utterance. Syntax is word choice, which directly correlates with semantics, or the meaning the speaker wants to convey.

These have an interconnected relationship, as word choice conveys meaning. (One could also say that meaning is determined by word choice.) Though these three concepts fit under the umbrella of “universal grammar,” they are not always applied in the same way (Dodsworth, 2008). For example, let’s take the following English sentence: “We have reached a conclusion.” The pattern is subject (We), verb phrase (have reached), determinate (a), direct object (conclusion). Now take the same sentence translated into German. Wir sind zu einer Entscheidung gekommen. Here the word order is slightly different, with the pattern subject (Wir), auxiliary (sind), prepositional phrase (zu einer Entscheidung), main verb (gekommen). Though the structure differs from English, the semantic meaning (we have accomplished something) is still expressed. Despite the presence of universal grammar, there is no way to create a “universal language” completely devoid of linguistic bias.

The fourth proposal for bridging language gaps involves staying with the status quo: translation and interpretation. Yet this too has its drawbacks. We might think of the two acts as equivalent, but in fact they are not. While they both involve conveying information, translation deals with written materials, while interpretation focuses on spoken language. Also, both require practice and constant revision, as languages evolve considerably over time. It is, moreover, important when translating or interpreting to ascertain the entire context of what is being said or written, rather than taking the “word-for-word” approach. There is not always a one-to-one correspondence, even between structurally similar languages. A rather humorous case of mistranslation proves, for example, that machine translations cannot yet match human intelligence: The English expression “out of sight, out of mind” was electronically translated into German as

“invisible idiot” (Ginsburgh, Weber 2005). This is why it is important to pay attention to the context of the whole conversation or the entire context of a paragraph. Therefore, the first three options (using a formerly prestigious language, using restrictive language forms, and using completely artificial languages) involve the use of *lingua franca(e)* while translation and interpretation require continuing and considerable language competence.

The Language Policy Debate in the EU: Complete or Partial Multilingualism?

In recent years, people have debated two opposing views of language policy in the EU. One supports the idea of multilingualism (linguistic diversity), while the other focuses on the concept of a *lingua franca*. The latter refers to English, or another prevalent language such as French or German, dominating over all other languages in EU affairs. The first perspective stems from the very essence of the European Union, as it focuses on promoting linguistic diversity so that every citizen has the right to address Parliament, to have government documents translated, or meetings interpreted, into his or her native language. This is very important, because, as observed above, Bulgaria and Romania have recently entered the EU, thereby increasing the number of member states to 27 and the number of official languages to 23. This is a dramatic increase from when the EC (European Community) was formed with only six members and five official languages (http://ec.europa.eu/languages/education/languages-of-europe/doc135_en.htm, Date of Access January 8, 2011). According to this treaty, all 23 languages have equal rights within EU affairs. Still, though this linguistic equality may be present in theory, it does not always carry over into practice. Patcharamon Trakultivakorn (2004) states that in most cases, business within one department of the EU, as well as between departments, is conducted in English, French or German, as well as the other languages pertinent to the specific issue, rather than all 23. The use of one or more pivotal languages decreases the amount of spending on translation and interpretation within the EU budget.

However, it is quite clear that the EU values multilingualism as one of the key aspects of the organization itself. More than 80 languages are spoken in Europe. Multilingualism can be interpreted in two different ways, both of them valid. One refers to an environment in which multiple languages are used, while the other focuses on an individual's ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages. Due to new technology and openness in Europe, it is easier to travel across borders, allowing EU citizens to expand their horizons by immersing themselves in the cultures of their neighbors. While linguistic differences may be seen as barriers, multilingualism seeks to bridge these gaps to facilitate effective communication. The EU creates its policies based on the Latin motto *in varietate concordia* (unity in diversity). This led to the year 2001 being declared the European Year of Languages, in which the "mother tongue +2" policy (learn two languages in addition to one's native) was established. The European Council (EC) signed a treaty that gives the EU the responsibility of teaching various EU languages to its citizens to promote multilingualism, while still respecting cultural and linguistic diversity. According to the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000), no one should face discrimination due to language. Linguistic diversity is as important as openness to other cultures. Foreign language competence is a basic requirement for advancement in educational and employment opportunities within the EU, as well as personal development and cultural exchange. Some programs have been created to promote cultural awareness of linguistic minorities within the European Union and its neighbors. This brings to light another concept, with regard to linguistic minorities within dominant cultures: "Diglossia." This idea refers to the use of multiple varieties of the same language. One key example here, though it is not in the EU, is German-speaking

Switzerland. Standard German, the high variety of the language, is used in official meetings and formal situations, whereas Schwyzerdütsch (Swiss German) is used in everyday conversation and informal settings.

So how does this linguistic diversity apply to Parliamentary procedures themselves? According to the key principle applied today, the use of all EU languages legitimates the idea of a supranational body. Hence, citizens have a right to present issues to the EP, advisory councils, and other affiliates in their own languages, and are entitled to a response in that language. All legislation is also made available to everyone in his/her own language. This commitment to multilingualism is unique in today's world, a commitment that contrasts with the idea of English becoming an increasingly primary tool for communication in the international arena. English is often the language of choice between non-native speakers [of English] who share no other cultural or linguistic background. So it is possible for English to be used as a simple communicative tool without loss of identity of nonnative speakers.

The Economics of Language Policy

Another way of looking at language policy is through an economic perspective, as the EU promotes multilingualism in order to support a multilingual economy. As with any other good or service, language can also be analyzed as a commodity. How, then, can human communication be measured just like any other material goods? This brings us to the concept of Q-value, or communicative value. Languages that have a higher communicative value are more likely to be learned than those that do not. For example, someone may be more likely to learn French than Lithuanian because it is spoken by more people, not only in Europe, but also in the world at large. Multilingualism can create equilibrium between those languages with a higher Q-value and those with a lower value, enabling speakers of mutually unintelligible languages to understand one another. From this perspective, we can understand the world in a language system.

How does this language system work? Peripheral languages, the least focused, represent regional languages and dialects, and are confined to specific nation-states or parts of these nation-states. A key example here is Euskera (spoken in the Basque country), as it only relates to a particular area in northern Spain and southern France. The next category is the central languages, which tie together (if necessary) different regions of a nation-state in order to facilitate official communication. Spanish in Spain is a key example. It connects the autonomous communities of Cataluña, Galicia, and the Spanish Basques with the general Spanish population, as these three languages are not mutually

intelligible. Thirdly, supercentral languages such as French are used in international communication in organizations such as the EU. The final category is the most focused toward a global system. Languages in this category (for example, English), are those which hold the system together and allow it to function across varying cultural backgrounds. Some languages in the last two categories can be used to connect those who have no common cultural background. For example, I studied in Lille, France, in the summer of 2007. I met two Bulgarians who were completing medical internships there and we realized there would be difficulty in communication. The Bulgarians did not speak English, and I spoke no Bulgarian. However, there was a common language for communication: French. This is an example of a supercentral language used strictly for communication purposes, without reflecting the identity of either of the speakers. In this case, English and Bulgarian would be the languages of identity that are culture-specific and therefore define each individual speaker. Languages could also be used to express belonging in a specific area. Examples within the EU include Danish, Estonian, and Lithuanian, all of which are only official languages to their country of origin. Therefore, preservation of language within EU policy may be more of an issue for these people, even if they are fluent in English or another pivotal language within the EU.

Here, the idea of national identity arises, in which some nationalists find to their disappointment that supranational entities limit the use of specific languages. To give the nationalists their due, this could lead to disenfranchisement or, worst-case scenario, decline of a nation. But what exactly would this disenfranchisement amount to, and why could this be a hindrance within the EU? An article by Victor Ginsburgh and Shlomo Weber, published in 2005, introduces the idea of disenfranchisement within the European

Union and its effect on EU policy. This occurs when the number of working languages is decreased, thereby denying representation of some nations. Though English is one of the more widely spoken foreign languages in the EU, it is still necessary to have French and German (also spoken by larger numbers of EU citizens) as “pivotal languages.” In May 2004, a Constitutional Treaty was published in 20 official and working languages. This says that, in theory, all member-states should have a right to have official documents presented in their respective languages. This issue of language policy became more difficult with the addition of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Cyprus, Malta, and most recently Romania and Bulgaria. Many more interpreters will be needed if “full multilingualism” is to be maintained. According to some, failure to use the languages of all peoples may cause the groups whose languages are left out, to feel misrepresented, underrepresented, or ignored, and less inclined to support EU institutions and policies. For example, a farmer in Portugal, who only speaks Portuguese, may be less likely to engage with EU symbols and politics if information is not provided in Portuguese. On the other hand, a Danish member of the EP is more likely to speak English, French or German, therefore less likely to distance him/herself from EU politics, from a similar linguistic position. The attempt to avoid alienating EU citizens has become more important because language is so much a part of an individual’s identity that it has become a very consistently debated issue in the EU. The populations and disenfranchisement rates can be seen in the following table, taken from Ginsburgh and Weber’s findings (2005). The authors took the six most widely spoken languages in the European Union and calculated the percentages of citizens who would be excluded from engagement in political activity because of their inability to

communicate in a certain language. For example, according to the data set, out of the 57.6 million people in Italy, 61% of the population would be disenfranchised if English were the primary tool of communication. By contrast, out of the 5.3 million living in Denmark, only 25% would be left out.

Nation	Population in Millions	Single Language Disenfranchisement Rates (%)					
		English	French	German	Italian	Spanish	Dutch
Austria	8.1	54	89	1	93	99	100
Belgium	10.2	60	25	90	95	99	31
Denmark	5.3	25	95	63	100	98	100
Finland	5.1	39	99	93	100	99	100
France	60.4	58	0	92	95	85	100
Germany	82.0	46	84	3	99	98	99
Greece	10.5	53	88	88	92	95	95
Italy	57.6	61	71	96	1	97	100
Ireland	3.7	5	77	94	99	98	100
Luxembourg	0.4	81	9	26	89	97	96
Netherlands	15.8	30	81	41	98	99	1
Portugal	10.8	65	72	98	99	96	100
Spain	39.4	64	81	98	98	1	100
Sweden	8.9	21	93	69	100	96	99
UK	58.6	1	78	91	98	95	100
Total	376.8	45	66	69	83	85	94

Therefore, Ginsburgh and Weber conclude that the most likely language to be used as a pivotal language is English, followed by French and German. Though using one or more of these languages would decrease the amount of disenfranchised citizens in the EU as a whole, the disenfranchisement rates would be highest for English in Luxembourg, for French in Finland, and for German in Spain and Portugal. If these populations are not taken into account, then this could deter them from political activity.

Language and Influence: Communicative Value

Effective communication is one of the key aspects of policymaking in multilingual institutions. That is why some commentators say that errors in translation and interpretation, as well as delays, may inhibit productive discussions and, ultimately, good judgment and decision-making. Hence, there has been a motion to shift from “complete” multilingualism to “controlled complete” multilingualism, as in, only using a few pivotal languages for official meetings. On the plus side, ideas would be communicated more efficiently, and the EU could decrease the translation and interpretation portion of the overall budget. But among the minuses, some representatives may be forced to communicate in a language that is not their own, and that could lead to language bias.

So what exactly does “effective communication” mean? Participants in a survey by Ginsburgh and Weber (2005) were asked to identify their “mother tongue” and “other languages they knew.” With regard to the other languages, proficiency questions were then asked (basic, good, or very good). According to the statistics, it takes 12,000 hours of study for individuals to know a language. Interestingly, some individuals tend to exaggerate, claiming “good” or “very good” proficiency when their knowledge is only basic. For others, it is the opposite. Those who are shy may refuse to speak a language (perhaps out of fear) even though they may be fairly proficient at it.

Ginsburgh and Weber’s article then presents a quantitative analysis based on the

six most commonly spoken languages in the European Union (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch). The number of citizens who speak each language (they may speak more than one) is compared with the population of native speakers. This ratio is known as the “language multiplier,” and it gives a relative proficiency score for the language overall, which can then be compared to the scores for the other five. After several data tables comparing the entire population, as well as the population under 40, the researchers conclude that English, French, and German would be the most likely languages to use as “pivotal” languages for the most effective communication, as previously stated.

Against these ideas is the fact that members of many of the linguistic groups fear weakening their national identity due to linguistic atrophy. Therefore, language associations have been established in some nations in order to preserve their own language and, in some cases, limit influences from other languages. The Académie Française in France and the Duden in Germany are examples of these organizations, but their approaches are different. While the Académie seeks to preserve the French language (i.e. limiting use of Anglicisms such as *le week-end* rather than the French term *fin de semaine*), the Duden focuses on how the language actually evolves, even adapting some terminology into the German grammatical system. A key example here is in the field of information technology. Many of the terms originate from English. For example, “download” is adapted to the pseudo-German infinitive “downloaden” and the past participle is completely changed to form “gedownloadet” rather than using the actual German word ‘herunterladen’ (past, ‘heruntergeladen’). Both of these examples show a combination of English and another European language, which some believe is

detrimental to the language as a communicative tool.

This practice has even spilled over into entertainment and pop-culture, as in the song “Denglisch,” by the German a cappella group Wise Guys. Through sarcasm, their song highlights resistance to the integration of the two languages not only in technical fields, but also in everyday situations. It starts out completely in German (“Oh Herr bitte gib mir meine Sprache zurück”) which progresses to the eventual “Oh Lord please gib mir meine Language back”(Wise Guys, Denglisch, 2006). This song could be interpreted by opponents of language integration as a desire to have a pure language without being influenced by others, even to the point of translating terms that were in foreign languages from the beginning. This is made manifest again in the aforementioned a cappella song, with “Und gib dass Microsoft bald wieder Kleinweich heißt” (Wise Guys, Denglisch 2006). Microsoft has never been translated in the first place. But one might say that this mixture of languages is not detrimental to society as a whole in many different contexts, particularly in the education systems of different nations within the EU.

In an article by Margit Krause-Ono (2008), the author focuses on the education system in Germany, as German is spoken by the largest group of people in the EU. The education system starts at the *Grundschule* (elementary school) at age 6 and lasts 4 or 6 years, depending on the state. Then, the students and their parents choose where to go next: the less academic *Hauptschule*, which leads to vocational training, the *Realschule* (leads to business or technical school) or the academically focused *Gymnasium*, with an *Abitur* as the exit exam, which permits students to go to university. Students start learning foreign languages in fifth grade, often with English. In seventh grade, they choose a second language, often either French or Latin. In ninth grade, they then can

choose either French or Latin, the one that was not started in seventh grade. So most students in Germany have studied English for nine years, French for seven years, and Latin for three to five years. Students can only enter university after the *Abitur* is complete, and for this, at least two foreign languages are required. However, in recent years, the choices of languages one can study have expanded. Now that the first foreign language is taught starting in elementary school, students will have already studied one language for four years by age 10. In fifth or sixth grade, these students start learning English, French, Latin or Russian. If they chose to go on to the *Gymnasium*, in eighth grade, they can choose a third language such as Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Greek, French, Russian or Latin. Those with high language competency can even start a fourth language, which, in addition to those languages already mentioned, can include Chinese, Hebrew, Japanese, and Turkish. In some bilingual or multilingual *Gymnasiums*, content classes like chemistry or math are also taught in a foreign language.

So why are languages taught so early? This is part of the EU initiative known as “mother tongue plus two foreign languages,” which goes together with the EU motto: *In varietate concordia* (Unity in Diversity). Viviane Reding, a Luxembourgish Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth, Media, and Sports, states that “multilingualism is an opportunity we cannot pass up... Companies clearly need people capable of communicating in their clients’ languages and this means that multilingualism has become an undeniable strength- if not a vital qualification- in the job market” (Krause-Ono 2). Ms. Reding also points out that if only one *lingua franca* is used (usually English), the cultural exchange is lacking. True mutual understanding arises from dialogue in the local language. Also, English may not be the most important

language for everyone. Therefore, there is not just one single solution to the language policy issue.

Toward the beginning of 1999, another article was published in Germany by Reinhold Freudenstein (1999), discussing the decline of bilingual education in the US. It quoted Theodore Roosevelt who said, at the beginning of the 20th century, “we have room for but one language here, and that is the English language. We must have but one flag. We must also have but one language” (Freudenstein 1). This reflected the idea that English-only education would serve people better economically than bilingual education. The article was published in Germany at a time when the EU was becoming more of a concrete reality rather than a farfetched, abstract concept. Theodore Roosevelt’s approach was thus treated as a bad example of language policy. Nonetheless, today 51% of the EU citizens still cannot speak any EU language other than their native language.

So how are such citizens going to function in a multinational, multilingual society? In Germany, learning multiple languages is required, but in other countries it is not at all mandatory. And although language learning materials appear in a variety of forms nowadays, most language teaching (40-60%) focuses on a formal, and arguably less practical, prescriptivist approach rather than a descriptivist one. Prescriptivism refers to rules one learns in a grammar book, what one should or should not say in the “standard” form of a language. For example, a prescriptivist French-language professor in Germany would insist on keeping the “ne” in the French expression “Je ne sais pas,” as one learns in primary school. However, this fails to take into account what native speakers actually say. Some natives actually omit the “ne” in colloquial speech, as in “Je sais pas,” or even “J’sais pas.” Incorporating expressions that are used in everyday life

involves more of a descriptivist approach. Descriptivism refers to how the language actually works. Frustration with prescriptivism's impracticalities led another prominent language professor in Germany to argue that language teaching might as well be abolished, not because it is unimportant, but rather because of the lack of competence of language teachers to teach descriptively for purposes of everyday communication.

Educational Initiatives within the EU: Development of ERASMUS and other language and culture programs

Beyond the question of effects upon parliamentary proceedings, how do these initiatives come into play with regard to young people, with regard to higher education? In this area, the most successful program that the European Union has implemented is ERASMUS (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students). ERASMUS is a program that enables European citizens to study for a year in another member state. To lessen the financial burden, grants are provided to pay for tuition and housing during the exchange year. This program, which began in 1987, would seem contrary to the practice of leaving education to the jurisdiction of the individual Member States. However, despite setbacks created by the economic issues such as the oil crisis in the 1970s, ERASMUS has persevered. Why? According to lawmakers and government officials, such a program is an integral part of “creating the new European citizens of the future,” and it has also been dubbed, “the most successful single component of EU policy” (Lillie 77). In addition to Erasmus, the EU launched the Lingua program in 1989 with the intent of promoting foreign language learning in order to foster economic solidarity within a more integrated Europe. According to Elisabeth Lillie, this initiative serves not only to achieve “greater understanding and a sense of solidarity between its peoples” but also to promote “the establishment of the internal market and overcoming obstacles which impede the free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital”

(Lille, 2008: 78). So ERASMUS universities partnered with small and medium-sized enterprises in order to provide language training for use in business. Promoters of the program focused on young people's desires to travel, a sort of 20th-century democratization of the adventurous spirit of Columbus, da Gama, and Magellan. But unlike their Age of Exploration counterparts, instead of attempting to impose their ways of thinking on others in the host countries, the goal of today's ERASMUS young people in Europe is to understand and appreciate the cultures and ways of life they encounter. This not only promotes an acceptance of those who are different, but it also allows students to learn how to negotiate such differences, to sympathize with the goals of conflict resolution through diplomacy. And, through the work of ICPs (Inter-University Cooperation Programs), ERASMUS organizers seek not only to expand the horizons of students, but also the horizons of those who are teaching them. These ICPs must win the approval of all universities involved, with the program coordinator at the host institution having the final say. However, "despite such controls, this system was one which empowered enterprising academics who wished to develop student exchange and other aspects of the teaching and learning experience and who might otherwise have been held back by lethargy or the bureaucratic weight of tradition on the part of institutions or member states" (Lillie 79).

Though the success rate of ERASMUS is usually assessed with quantitative measures of academic performance, it is also necessary to consider the effects on identity brought about by this program. A research study was conducted at the University of Sussex about European identity among its students. Those who studied abroad through ERASMUS were more likely to have a sense of belonging to a larger community than

their country of origin, compared to those students who did not share the same experience. ERASMUS has also been shown to promote the desire for European professionals to gain international exposure within their careers. In sum, the ERASMUS program, and the creation of liaisons between universities in different member states, has fostered continuous cosmopolitan learning not only for students, but also for teachers and businesspeople in a more integrated Europe.

Students are not the only ones to benefit from EU sponsored international experiences. In 1995, the SOCRATES program was developed. It was modeled on the ERASMUS principles, but it reached out to many more European citizens. For example, under the SOCRATES umbrella, the COMENIUS program, named after the famous Czech educator, promotes international experiences for teachers in schools. According to the EU homepage for this program, “The overall objectives of COMENIUS are to enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of school education, in particular by encouraging transnational cooperation between schools, contributing to the improved professional development of staff directly involved in the school education sector, and promoting the learning of languages and intercultural awareness”

(http://www.comenius-tof.eu/comenius_program.htm, Date of access February 11,2011).

The first objective of creating a more “European” education for citizens is accomplished through effective transnational management of schools, use of new information technology, and integration of students with disabilities into all areas of the education system. The goal is to decrease the number of students who fail out of school. The second objective, like its sister programs under SOCRATES, is to encourage language learning in all aspects. It seeks to improve the quality of language teaching by

incorporating new pedagogical styles, thus allowing students to learn more languages and become more proficient at communicating. The diversity of languages taught, including minority and less-taught languages, is increased. This fits very well with the “mother language +2” initiative that has been promoted in the EU since 2001. Therefore, at the level of higher education and professional development, the European Union has excelled at promoting cultural understanding between host institutions of different member states, which creates a more global perspective that is ready to adapt to a supranational economic entity.

Conclusions

The European Commission in Brussels has proclaimed that all young people should learn at least two foreign languages in addition to their own, with the slogan, “We can all learn to speak three languages” (Freudenstein 2). This is the way to improve mobility between nations for educational or employment purposes, since effective communication is the key to success in a multinational, multiethnic, and multilingual society. Therefore, some have suggested implementing an EU-sponsored language-teaching program in primary school in order to make it more likely that European children will retain the languages later in life. A promising alternative solution to this issue is bilingual or multilingual education. This would democratize language learning so that it not only is available for highly gifted/talented people, rather for everyone, because cultures are more readily embraced when people can effectively communicate with one another. However, disagreements persist. Some commentators still insist on trying to avoid borrowed expressions (*le weekend* or *gedownloadet*), despite the fact that the continuous mobility of EU citizens across borders (as migrants or visitors), as well as the presence of other foreign visitors, will make language borrowing and blending inevitable. Supercentral languages (such as French and German) and hypercentral languages (such as English) may have a higher Q-value (more people are likely to learn them). But, I believe that the “mother tongue +2” policy is instead the most valuable way of bridging potential language gaps. The more nations that become part of the EU, the more difficult

the present complete multilingualism policy will become. The best method of avoiding future conflicts, then, is to learn effective communication skills across mutually unintelligible languages. While using one or more pivotal languages to communicate, whether supercentral or hypercentral, would decrease spending on translation and interpretation, it would also undermine identities and decrease the amount of participation in European Union governance, which defeats the fundamental purpose of this supranational entity. Therefore, though there is always room for improvement, and despite the persistence of purists, the European Union still manages to live up to its motto, *In varietate concordia*.

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