

“A Region Divided/United: Language Policy Developments in the European Union”

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As Cooper writes “[T]o plan language is to plan society.” (1989: 182) And nowhere does this statement resonate as much as in Europe. From the emergence of the nation-state, to the decolonization that took place after the World Wars, language has played a pivotal role as an agent of change in this particular context. And oftentimes likened to the Tower of Babel, the EU is an institution *sui generis* when it comes to its historical commitment to institutional plurilingualism. However, trying to understand the multi-facetedness of the EU's language policies is neither simple nor unproblematic. Given the complexity of the language situation in both the EU and its Member States, this paper in no way attempts to suggest best practice situations, or language policy alternatives. This paper does aim to:

- (1) To develop an overview perspective on the EU's language policies; and
- (2) To develop a better understanding of how language policy (policies) are developed in the EU.

I will follow the distinction that Van Els (2005; 2006) makes between the EU's “institutional” and “non-institutional” language policies. Briefly, the distinction between institutional and non-institutional is that where the EU's institutional language policy is its policy applying to language use within the EU institutions, its “non-institutional language policy” refers to the policies extending to impact language use within Member States and between Member State citizens.

Overview: Key Terms and Definitions

The term “language policy” is used oftentimes interchangeably with “language planning”. As Cooper (1989) points out, there is disagreement within the field about what the field should be called and the scope of its activities, which further complicates things. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) posit that language planning and policy are in fact two different processes and that, in fact, the former is the implementation of the later. They define language planning as an “activity most visibly undertaken by government simply because it involves such massive changes in society, intended to promote systematic linguistic change in some community of speakers.” (1997: xi) Language policy then is a “body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules, and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in society, group, or system.” (1997: xi) Spolsky and Shohamy (2000) argue that this distinction does not seem significant. Instead, the categories they differentiate between are: explicit

language policy, language practices, and language ideology in an attempt to expand the discussion of language policies to the larger context by including its ideological orientation.

A small example, but these terminological differences are a reflection of the challenge to formulate or find normative terms and definitions in developing professional jargon for a field that is rooted in the particularities of each context and the milieu of disciplines from which it has emerged. As a field, the study of language policy emerged out of a variety of disciplines including linguistics (applied and sociolinguistics), sociology, anthropology, and more recently, political theory, to name a few.¹ And so, there does seem to be agreement that there is a fuzziness and confusion as a result of “terminological non-definitiveness” in the field and the need or desire for normative terms and/or theories. (Spolsky and Shohamy 2000; Kaplan and Baldauf 1997; Cooper 1989; Ricento 2000, 2006) For this paper, I will use the term “language policy” that Ricento uses, that it is

a

... super-ordinate term which subsumes ‘language planning.’ Language policy research is concerned not only with official and unofficial acts of governmental and other institutional entities, but also with the historical and cultural events and processes that have influenced, and continue to influence, societal attitudes and practices with regard to language use, acquisition and status. (2000: 209)

Additionally, language policies can be formulated and written in different ways. As Kaplan and Baldauf (1997: xi) point out, that some language policies may not seem more like an “informal statement of intent” and not like a language policy at all. They then qualify this, saying that language policy statements can be categorized as one of two types – symbolic or substantive “where the first articulates good feelings towards change (or perhaps ends up being so nebulous that it is difficult to understand what language specific concepts may be involved, and the latter articulates specific steps to be taken.”

Language policy and planning discussions are challenging because the empirical research is usually very context specific. Thus, because of the way the field has developed, it is difficult to have normative terms, because of the particularities of each context. For example, the word “minority language speakers.” For example, the word “minority” has a different connotation in the United States versus in Europe because of how majority/minority relations have been historically constructed (majority/minority relations in the U.S. are described defined primarily by race, whereas in many Western European states, majority/minorities are defined along ethnicity or more recently,

¹ See Ricento 2000; 2006 and Hornberger 2006 for historical overviews of the intellectual history of language policy as a field.

religion). Such particularities make it difficult to create or have normative terms that become evident when attempting to critically and comparatively analyze various language policies.

Moreover, there is a dearth of tools available for researchers doing language policy analysis. In part, this is because the evaluation component in language policies are often not very well built in (Grin 2002), but also because of the way the field has emerged, from a number of different fields. There are some tools, like Fishman's GIDS scale that have been used by policy analysts and researchers like Grin and Moring in the SMiLE Report (2002), and the policy formation and evaluation cycle that they also present.

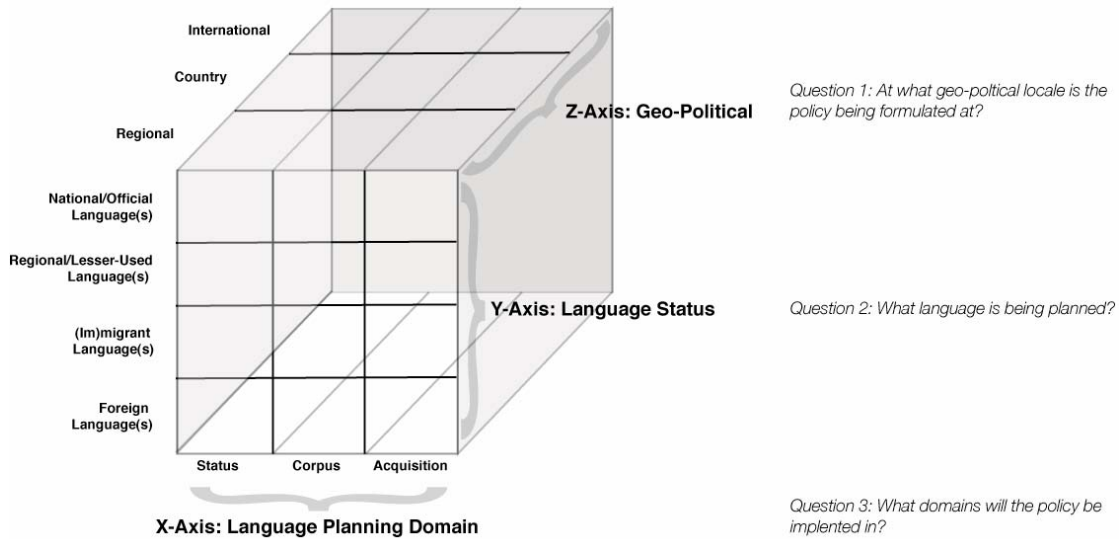
Kroon (2003; 2005) also presents a language policy cube as tool, atheoretical and apolitical² and useful for language policy analysis. I utilize the language policy cube³ to help navigate through the different perspectives and discussions represented in this paper. The language policy cube is useful in representing some of the key dimensions in clarifying language policy discussions under discussion (figure one).

Because language policies are interventions at some level to change the linguistic behavior of some population, when using the language policy cube, the z-axis needs to be determined first. At what geo-political locale is the language policy being formulated? Then, what language is the policy geared towards (y-axis)? Finally, what language planning domains are involved (x-axis)?

² Because the language policy cube in fact, reflects certain socio-political realities, arguably, it is not apolitical or atheoretical. However, because the cube is a flexible model not theoretically dependent on the status quo existence of certain structures, it is useful in different contexts. In this sense, such an instrument, to some degree, can function normatively.

³ Much thanks to Prof. Sjaak Kroon (Babylon Centre for Studies of the Multicultural Society, Tilburg University, Tilburg, The Netherlands) for suggesting I look at this model and providing many different references and resources about European language policy perspectives.

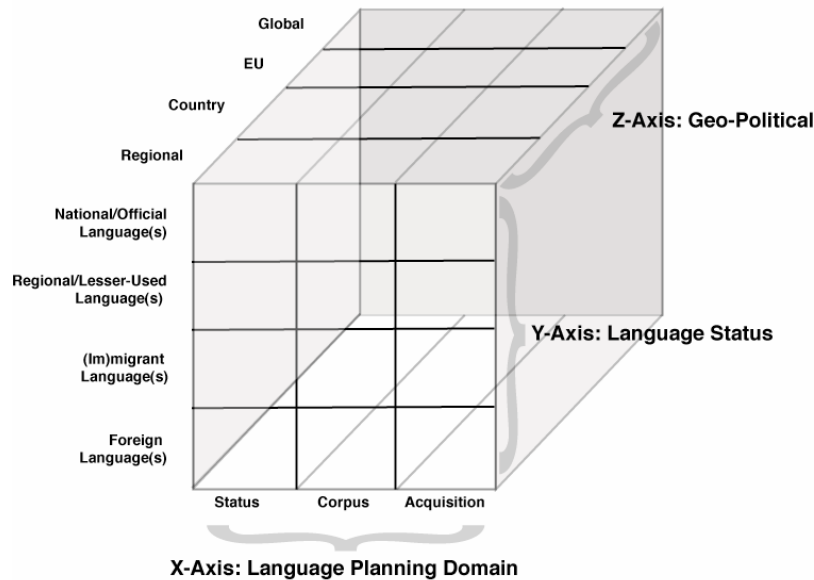
Figure 1. General language policy cube.



Adapted from Kroon (2003; 2005)

While utilizing the three axes, the language policy cube can be modified to reflect the different ways that languages may be categorized, or language status. On the same token, the different geo-political levels could be modified to include significant contributors or governance structures (e.g., in the case of Europe, I argue that the EU is, in fact, a significant actor in shaping a particular type of language policy discussion). For this paper, in order to discuss the language policy particularities in the EU context, the language policy cube seen in figure one will be modified, by adding the EU as another locale on the z-axis (geo-political), seen in figure two.

Figure 2. Language policy cube including the EU.



X-axis: Language planning domains

Cooper's book, *Language Planning and Social Change*, considered a seminal work in the field of language policy, systematically lays out the frameworks and definitions that most language planners and policy makers consider foundational to their discussions. Language status planning involves focusing on the importance or position of one language in relation to other languages. Status planning focuses on making languages "official" through a variety of channels, e.g., the nationalization or standardization of a language.

Corpus planning refers to the standardization of the language in relation to its structure and functionality, along with standardization of auxiliary code(s). (Cooper 1989; Kaplan and Baldauf 1997) This includes (but is not limited to) activities like corpus building through creating new words/terms and spelling and orthography reforms. This would include attempts to standardize language or spelling vis-à-vis the creation of a dictionary or a particular type of script (e.g., the switching from Arabic to Roman script during the Turkish language reform). Acquisition planning involves language and education issues (i.e., school, literary resources, media, employment, etc.).⁴

Although actual distinctions between these different planning domains are easier to make in theory than in practice, since implementation of language policies tend to incorporate all these different arenas, policies oftentimes do focus on different domains, which makes these distinctions helpful in clarify policy aims. Moreover, since this is a language policy cube, language planning is one aspect that is captured as part of more holistically learning at "what agent is planning for which language in what target domains."

Y-axis: Language status

Kroon (2005) defines the y-axis as the "language" or language status being discussed in the language policy. Essentially, using the nation-state categorizations, these languages are categorized by their political recognition within a nation-state context. It was, in fact, the emergence of nation-state, particularly in Europe, which essentially created majority and minority languages. (Shohamy 2006; May 2001; Kaplan and Baldauf 1997; Wright 2004) However, since the language policy cube is an

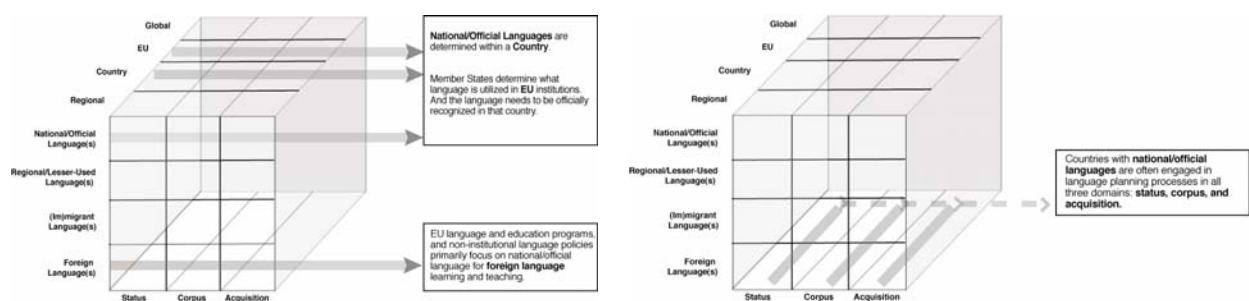
⁴ Haarman (1990) proposed adding a fourth domain into language planning, "prestige planning." Since "corpus and status planning are productive activities, prestige planning is a receptive or value function which influences how corpus and status planning activities are acted upon by actors and received by people." (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 50-51) However, as Kaplan and Baldauf point out, there are a multiplicity of variables and impacts in a language planning situation and so, it is hard to definitively attribute some outcome to prestige planning. For this paper, the language policy cube configurations do not include prestige planning; however, if it proved to be a significant consideration for analysis, the configuration could be adjusted and a fourth planning domain added without fundamentally changing it.

instrument/tool intended to elucidate language policy discussions by clarifying various referents, the following categories have been accepted. Language and language categories are however, fluid. And so, it may be that these categories may become obsolete – but presently, the breakdown of language status on the y-axis into the four categories still seems relevant. The following sections will elaborate on the language categories used here with illustrations given from the European context when necessary.

National/official languages – big, mid-sized, and small

National languages, as May (2001) points out are languages that are “so called because they have been legitimated by the state and institutionalized within civil society, usually to the exclusion of other languages.” Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) define national languages as languages that are officially recognized in a country’s constitution or other legally binding document. National languages are not necessarily spoken by everyone (and oftentimes are not) but it is the one granted “special political status within the state.” (1997: 16) Official languages refer to contexts where having one national language is not a feasible solution to multilingualism because of the diversity of the population, and so, a number of languages are given equal status for official and/or public purposes. (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 16)

Figure 3. Language policy cube: National/official languages.



As seen in figure three, discussions regarding national/official languages can take place in all three domains, status, corpus, and acquisition building.

Minority languages: old and new

Paulston (1997) points out that the term “linguistic minorities” is really a misnomer. She writes, “Minority’ implies quantitative differences only, and... the most salient difference is that of a super/subordinate relationship... it is more correct to speak about privileged or dominant and non-

privileged or non-dominant ethnic groups.”⁵ (Paulston 1998:1, May 2001:18) This is evident in the fact that a linguistic minority in one locale might be a linguistic majority in another place (e.g., ethnic Hungarians living in Romania vs. Hungarians in Hungary).⁶

The division of minorities between national and non-national minorities is an accepted convention in international law,⁷ with the thinking that national minorities are entitled to protection and privileges from the government because of their historical presence in a particular country/region.⁸ The underlying assumption is that national minorities although are minorities, are citizens of a country as opposed to (im)migrants. De Varennes (1996) discusses this how this assumption is problematic; nonetheless, this distinction is reflected here because of the differences in how the two broader groups of minorities are legally treated within nation-states, and supra-national organization like the EU.

“Old minorities”: Regional and lesser-used languages

In the European context, regional and lesser-used languages mainly resulted from the state formation period in the 19th century. (Extra and Gorter 2001) These languages are also referred to as regional and historical languages, heritage languages, and historical minority languages. In the negotiation of language and power in post-French Revolution in Western Europe, these were the languages that were basically “left behind,” e.g., Breton, Occitan, and Basque in France.

The typology most frequently used in distinguishing between regional and lesser-used languages in the EU context is laid out in the European Charter for Regional and Minority

⁵ See also Tollefson 1991, Nelde *et al* 1996. Cited in May 2001: 18, where he writes that while “the distinction between ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ languages... tends to draw attention to numerical size, its more important reference is to differences in power, rights, and privileges. A similar approach is found in Grillo, R. (1989). *Dominant Languages: Language and Hierarchy in Britain and France*. Cambridge: CUP. Given Paulston’s line of reasoning, arguably, a third group could be added within the “minorities” category, that is, speakers of small national/official languages. While on the one hand this is true, Melander (2001) points out that despite challenges that different types of language speakers are facing, it is “misleading to use concepts and theories developed for the study of threatened minority languages when investigating the current situation for the national languages of the European states, and especially when trying to predict their future.” The way that speakers of different languages are positioned in terms of power relations in a particular socio-historical context also affects their overall collective experience, and should be taken into consideration in research involving European language policy discussions.

⁶ Regardless of how one defines linguistic minority, one thing is evident. In the light of increasing population movement, free movement within the EU region, and the Eastward accessions, minorities are increasingly becoming a big concern for both the EU and national governments, especially given “the growing discontent with existing nation-state structures evident among minorities today.”

⁷ See De Varennes (1996) for an extensive discussion about minorities under international conventions.

⁸ De Varennes writes that national minorities are considered

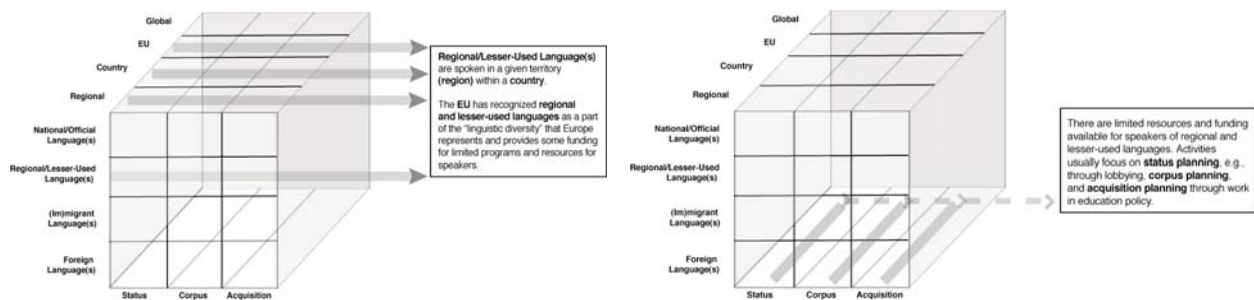
... citizens of a state which can be considered as ‘minorities plus’: their long-standing presence in a country make them a recognized constituent of the national culture and society, and they are deemed to be entitled to rights and privileges which other minorities may not be able to claim, such as the right to language promotion programmes using state resources, or even state schools using the minority language as language of instruction. (1996:173)

Languages (ECRML) developed by the Council of Europe (CoE). (ECRML1992) The ECRML defines regional (or lesser-used) languages as languages that are

...traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population; they are different from the official language(s) of that state, and they include neither dialects of the official language(s) of the state nor the languages of migrants.

A “given territory” is defined as the “geographical area in which the said language is the mode of expression of a number of people justifying the adoption of protection and promotional measures as provided for in the Charter.” However, in addition to territorial minorities, the ECRML also covers non-territorial languages, which are spoken by nationals of a particular state and differs from the language(s) used by the rest of the state's population, but which, “although traditionally used within the state's territory, cannot be identified with a particular area thereof.” This would include speakers of the various dialects of Romani and Sinti, as well as Yiddish.⁹

Figure 4. Language policy cube: Regional and lesser-used languages.



Policies and programs that do exist for regional and lesser-used language speakers mainly focus on status building (e.g., the lobby work that EBLUL does is aimed at raising the status of said languages), but also fund programs that focus on corpus and acquisition planning.

Although “regional and lesser used language” speakers are minorities within their respective home countries, they are generally still considered nationals. So, it seems the main criteria that distinguish regional and lesser-used language speakers and new (im)migrant language speakers is time and perceived notions of citizenship, which will be further discussed in the next section.

⁹ Note that “rights” only appears in preamble of the ECRML. The ECRML is, in fact, not about rights but about a range of practical measures for the protection and promotion of RMLs in education (Article 8), judicial authorities (Article 9), administrative authorities and public services (Article 10), media (Article 11), cultural activities and facilities (Article 12), economic and social life (Article 13), and trans-frontier exchanges (14). Signatories are expected to choose 35/68 of the practical measures explicated.

New minorities: (Im)migrant languages

Discourse regarding (im)migrant¹⁰ language groups use descriptors like *Auslander*, *Gastarbeiter*, *allochtonen*, non-nationals, in need of integration, and non-European language speakers. (Extra and Gorter 2001) The first major migration came post World War II in order to economically rebuild Europe. Generally minority language speakers fall into one of four categories,¹¹

- Mediterranean countries that are now EU Member States;
- Non-Mediterranean countries that are now EU Member States;
- Former colonial countries as a result of decolonization; and
- Political refugees who are asylum seekers, etc. (Extra and Gorter 2001)

Data and census information for this group, is generally the most difficult to attain. Since many European countries do not include language as an identifier on national censuses, accuracy of language data vary from country to country.¹²

At the European level, there is virtually no language provision made for people who fall into this category, speakers of non-European, (im)migrant languages, other than the 1977 “Directive of the Council of the EC on the Schooling of Migrant Children.” To date, this is the only language and education provision or directive explicitly focusing on the language of (im)migrant children at any geo-political level.¹³ And so, the language policy cube in figure five reflects more of a hypothetical, “if there were language policies for (im)migrants” scenario.

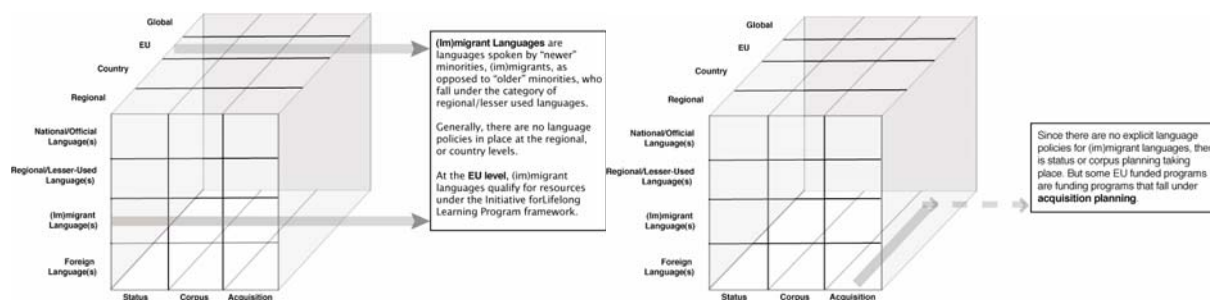
Figure 5. Language policy cube: (Im)migrant languages.

¹⁰ As far as I have read, from a language policy point of view, to date there is no distinction made between immigrants and migrants, although historically this refers to different groups of people. While these are two different groups of people, moving for different socio-political and economic reasons, since they have not been treated differently in policy formation, I will use the notation (im)migrant to reflect the distinctiveness of the groups, yet lack of distinction in language policies.

¹¹ There has been and is concern that a combined result of the EU’s eastward expansion and free movement within the European Union will be an additional mass migration of people from Eastern/Central to Western Europe. This might be considered a potential fifth category for future research.

¹² This is also true for speakers of regional and minority languages as well.

¹³ This however, could be changing. In the document “Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006” produced by the European Commission in 2003, there were a number of references to including the languages of migrants into the discourse of the Community’s “linguistic diversity”. This has not led to any policy changes or programs funded for the languages of (im)migrants; however, with the emphasis on language on the Commission’s 2007-2013 lifelong learning program framework, it remains to be seen whether the Commission will in fact fund language programs that focus on (im)migrant language learning.



Assimilation/integration pressures are most evident in discourse regarding (im)migrant language speakers and are increasingly tied with immigration issues that many European countries are dealing with. This discussion often takes place in the status domain, since many of the struggles revolve around issues of acknowledgement/legitimation and identity. These issues then relate to the acquisition domain, since language and education are closely related, and issues of bilingual or mother tongue education for (im)migrants. However, corpus building does not seem to be a major focus of this discussion, since the major/larger of these languages have a “home” country, where it is assumed there is a body of literature about language training and a context that corpus building is taking place.

Foreign Languages

The commonly accepted definition for “foreign language(s)” is that they are languages not normally spoken within the polity. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) point out that when it comes to large polities, this definition may in fact be regional if there are large language communities in a particular region versus elsewhere within the same country.¹⁴

Z-axis: Geo-political categorization

The z-axis is a little more self-explanatory than the other two axes. This axis is intended to reflect the geo-political level that is under focus. In figure one, there were three levels (regional or local, country, and international). In the model for the EU, I argue that adding the EU as another layer on the z-axis is justifiable because of its role as a significant actor in developing a European level language policy discussion. And so, given having given an overview of terms and the language policy cube, this provides the framework in order to elucidate the EU's language policy (policies) in greater detail in the next section.

¹⁴ No figures are included because essentially the whole cube could be filled in.

The European Union

Before discussing the EU's language policies, just a brief note on subsidiarity. Philosophically foundational to understanding the dynamics of EU legislation and policy making is this idea of subsidiarity, which also reflect the tension of an “ever-increasing” and harmonizing EU and the sovereignty of its Member States. Subsidiarity is the idea that within a multi-level and multi-actor organization, things should be handled by the lowest competent authority and closest to the citizen. In the context of the EU, the principle of subsidiarity was established from the onset of the ECSC in Article 5 of the Treaty of Rome, and means that¹⁵

[I]n areas other than those in which the Community has exclusive competence, the principle of subsidiarity seeks to uphold the capacity to take decisions and action at Community level when the scale and effects of the proposed action mean that the objectives would be better achieved at Community level. It also upholds the capacity of the Member States to take action in those areas that cannot be dealt with more effectively by Community action. The purpose of including it in the European Treaties was also to bring decision-making as close to the citizen as possible.¹⁶

To rephrase, since subsidiarity basically means that decisions and actions should be done at the lowest competent authority, which, in the EU context, this means that actions are taken at the Community level when it is something that Member States by themselves cannot best decide or act independently of the rest of the Community. The principle of subsidiarity allows Member States to exercise their sovereignty and act (if necessary) and limits the Community to carrying out tasks that could be undertaken only “more effectively in common than by individual States acting separately.”¹⁷

The EU's language policies

Currently, there is no single agency or organization within the EU that is solely responsible for language policy and related issues.¹⁸ Thus language issues are dealt within cross sectors, including the EP (Intergroup), Commission (DG-Education and Culture, Translation, Interpretation, and most recently, DG-Multilingualism), as well as in the number of lobby groups present in Brussels, to name some of the actors. At present, language policy research focuses within the EU's first pillar, the European Community, although this may not always be the case.

¹⁵ Also known as the Treaty establishing the European Community.

¹⁶ See Batta, D. (2005) European Parliament Fact Sheets. 1.2.2. The principle of subsidiarity. (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/facts/1_2_2_en.htm)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ In 2004-05, a needs assessment evaluation was carried out to gauge the need for a separate agency for linguistic diversity and language learning. However, it appears that no follow up work has been implemented. See “A Feasibility Study Concerning the Creation of a European Agency for Linguistic Diversity and Language Learning.” Final Report. 18 May 2005. (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/linguistic_diversity_study_en.pdf)

Creech (2004:15) makes an insightful clarification, arguing, that “despite the common usage of the term, neither the EU nor the EC, as such, has any ‘official’ languages... (because these Articles apply)... to the more limited set of ‘institutions’ of the Community...” Given this, Van Els’ distinction between “institutional” and “non-institutional” language policies is useful in order to elucidate what is being discussed, the grounds for implementing or legitimating the policy, and its scope. To reiterate, Van Els’ distinction between the two is based on context. Its “institutional language policy” refers to the language policy dictating or determining the use of language(s) “within and between the EU institutions themselves and in communications with the Member States and their citizens, and outside the EU.” “Non-institutional language policy” then refers to the use of language(s) “used within the Member States and between their citizens mutually, without EU institutions being party to this.”(2005: 268; 2006: 209)

The EU's institutional language policy

The constitutional body (or, in lieu of a Constitution, the various treaties) that provides the legal basis for the EU's language policy was established in the beginning in the Treaty of Rome, Article 248¹⁹, which then stated

[T]he treaty, drawn up in a single original in the Dutch, French, German, and Italian languages, all four texts being equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the Italian Republic, which shall transmit a certified copy to each of the governments of the other signatory States.

Subsequent addendums have maintained this article with new Member States, which now adds up to 23 official languages as of January 2007. And Member States determine which language will be used for them (representing them) in the EU (as seen in figure 12). Article 248 (now 314) has been interpreted to mean that all official documents are translated into all 23 of the EU's official languages, along with the usage of each respective language in EP debates and meetings with the European Council and Council of the European Union. This includes meeting notes, meetings agendas, along with, policies and program proposals that are being deliberated.

Additionally, Article 217 (now Article 290) also determined that the Council (requiring unanimous vote) would determine the rules governing the languages (with the exception of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and also more recently, the European Central Bank) of Community institutions. And Article 21 determines that any European citizen can write the EP,

¹⁹ As noted by Creech (2004:13), the renumeration that takes place between various treaties, and then again with the now-rejected 2004 version of the Constitution is very confusing. So, Article 248 in the Treaty of Rome later became Article 314 in the Treaty of Amsterdam, and then Article IV-448 in the 2004 version of the Constitution.

Commission, Council, ECJ, Court of Auditors, or the EU Ombudsman in any of the official languages as laid out in Article 248 (now 314).

However, language use realities are different from potentialities. Meaning, that although official and working languages can be used in the aforementioned contexts, all official and/or working languages are not used in day-to-day meetings, memos, etc. EP debates do take place in the official languages with both simultaneous and relay translation and interpretation. However, for the other institutions and sub-council/committee meetings, the meeting language(s) are determined by the meeting facilitator(s). Gazzola (2006: 397) compiled an example of language usage within EU institutions, seen in table one.²⁰

Table 1. Official and working languages in the EU institutions, advisory boards, and ECB (as of 2006).^{21, 22}

Institution or body	Official languages	Working languages
European Parliament	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
Council of the European Union (Ministers' meetings)	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
European Commission	All 20 languages	English, French, German,
European Court of Justice (ECJ)	All 20 languages + Irish	French
Court of Auditors	All 20 languages	English, French, German
Economic and Social Committee	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
Committee of the Regions	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
European Central Bank	All 20 languages	English

Source: Gazzola, M. (2006: 397)

It goes without saying, that the EU's translation and interpretation among the biggest in the world, especially after the most recent accessions in 2004 and 2007. And a growing number of studies are focusing on the way that the EU's institutional language policy is developing.^{23, 24} Additionally, another interesting area of research could also look at the effect of changing over to the use of “procedural languages,” namely English, French, and German within the European Commission on institutional multilingualism.

²⁰ See also Van Els 2006.

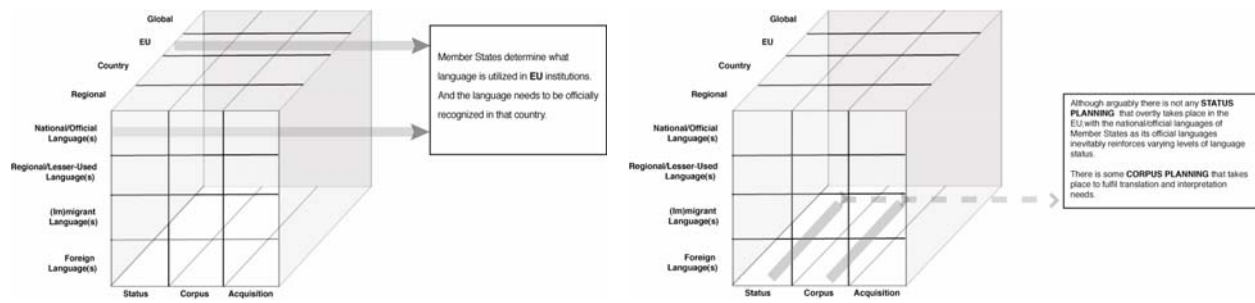
²¹ It is doubtful that the intention of the architects of the ECSC had any idea that the it would become what it has today, additionally it is doubtful that they intended Article 214 to be interpreted the way it has – with the EU claiming 23 official languages.

²² These numbers were written up before the January 2007 accession and inclusion of Irish as one of the EU's official languages. All numbers are presumably changed to 23 languages, with the working languages of the Commission, ECJ, Court of Auditors, and ECB staying the same.

²³ Van Els suggests that despite the work/research that has been done looking at language usage in the institutions of the EU, he does suggest areas that might be interesting to examine, especially with the continued Eastward expansion. And that is one area of research, looking at the EU's own linguistic development, as it negotiates its institutional culture and policies and the broader implications of those choices.

²⁴ For a more detailed updates on the state of the EU's translation and interpretation capacities and goals post-2004/07 accessions, see Memo/07/77 (February 23, 2007) at <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation> and Memo/7/76 (February 23, 2007) at <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/scic/index.htm> (Brussels, Belgium)

Figure 6. Language policy cube: EU's institutional language policy.



The EU's non-institutional language policy

As aforementioned, “non-institutional language policy” then refers to language policies that regard language use with and between Member States and between their citizens. The signing of the Charter for Fundamental Rights and Articles 21 and 22 of the Charter for Fundamental Rights provided the broader linguistic orientation of the EU, stating that “Any discrimination based on any ground such as... language, religion or belief... shall be prohibited” (Article 21 (1)) and that “[T]he Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.”²⁵ These statements (though sometimes referred to as the EU's language policy) are more broad, symbolic policy statements, as differentiated in section 1.1. It is arguable whether such statements carry much weight beyond being symbolic.

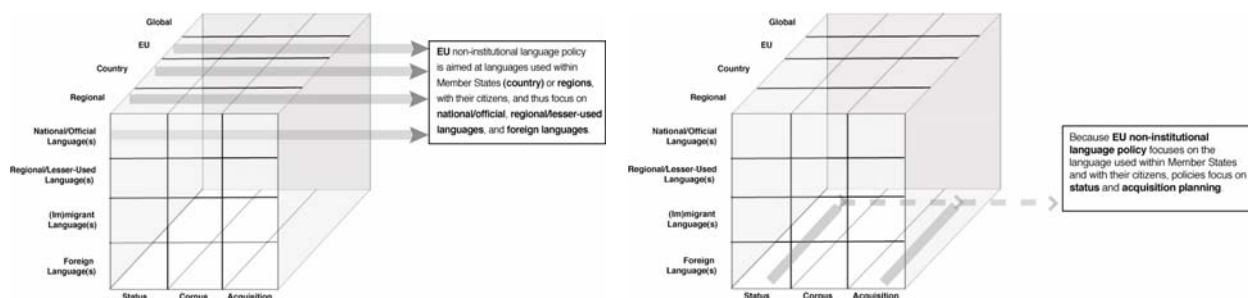
²⁵ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. OJC C364/01.

And while the treaty basis for the EU's institutional language policy is found in Article 248 in the Treaty of Rome, its “non-institutional language policy” treaty basis is found in Article 149, which states that

The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Community’s action was then to basically focus on facilitating foreign language learning and teaching among its Member States.²⁶ And if the Council’s linguistic mandate as laid out in the Treaty of Rome is to determine the languages used in its institutions, the Parliament is the “face” of the Europe’s multilingual “citizenry” with the use of all official languages, the Commission’s mandate is to propose and facilitate the implementation of language and education program frameworks, specifically focusing on foreign language education.

Figure 7. Language policy cube: EU's non-institutional language policy.



It is the EU's non-institutional language policies and program frameworks that have provided spaces for non-national and official languages to “compete” for funds. Thus, many of the programs and organizations representing regional and lesser-used language speakers have received grant funds from the European Commission on the basis of serving broader European interests and language and education needs of different groups of citizens.²⁷ Interestingly, from 2004 documents on, there is an increasing reference also to “migrant languages” or “languages of migrants” mentioned as being part of the linguistic diversity existing in Europe today. In light of the goals of the Lisbon Strategy (an economic strategy for the Community),²⁸ it makes sense that the EU would

²⁶ See Official Journal of the European Union C 321 E/113.

²⁷ See Grin, F. and Moring, T. (2002). “Support for Minority Languages in Europe”. Final Report. European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages; European Centre for Minority Issues.

²⁸ “The Lisbon European Council of 23 and 24 March 2000 set a strategic goal for the EU to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more

aim to fill a foreign language learning “hole” that currently exists in most Member States – that is funds and teachers for languages spoken in areas of “security concerns” and/or economic growth, since these are the programs that are rapidly being cut in Member States. However, it remains to be seen whether the Commission will fund language programs of non-historically European languages, e.g., Mandarin Chinese, different varieties of Arabic, Turkish, etc.

Expanding the Discussion: Ripple effects of EU policy making

Tamir (1993) argues that it is the larger cultural context that defines the scope of long-term effects as well as parameters for broadly speaking, social, and particularly, linguistic changes. From this liberal culturalist view, culture is a “context of choice” because it provides the “familiar, understandable and predictable environment” needed for rational decision-making and for the development of personal autonomy (1993: 84). Individuals have the capacity (and the right) to critically reflect on inherited lifestyles and traditional practices, but their capacity to do so is dependent on the presence of a cultural context that makes sense of these choices. The “right to culture” in this view, is not a right to protect and enforce traditional practices, but rather is the right to sustain a meaningful context of choice for group members. From this perspective, human agency exercised within the realms of possibility and choice. Along with Dhillon (1990), I argue that these “contexts of choice” are in fact, shaped by institutions.

If this is the case will or have the institutional and non-institutional language policy of the EU have impact on Member States language policies? Van Els (2005) argues that it has not had much effect on Member State language policy. Because the official language for Member States is their national language, even with the different struggles that are taking place within the institutions in terms of shrinking numbers of actual working languages, because of the official status of those languages within their Member States, there is no chance (at least presently) that will somehow be changed as a result. Furthermore, even though the Commission does fund an impressive array of language learning programs, it seems to be conflating language learning with language competence and multilingualism, which may not be the case at all.²⁹

and better jobs and greater social cohesion...” Taken from Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the EP and of the Council on 15 November 2006 establishing an action program in the field of lifelong learning. OJ European Union L 327/45.

²⁹ The Commission seems to have realized this also – in 2007, it published its report on the Framework for the European survey on language competences, in which it outlines a plan to test language learners initially in English, French, Spanish, German and Italian, as an attempt to evaluate how programs are facilitating the learning of two foreign languages in addition to the mother tongue, per the Presidential Summary in Barcelona 2002. See http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/com184_en.pdf for a draft of the paper.

More broadly, making the distinction between the direct impact of the language policies and the discourse of language policy, does the way the EU's language policies have any bearing on national language policies, the way language is used by its citizenry, and language policy discussions in general? The emergence of organizations like EBLUL show that the EU already has had an impact on how language policy and language issues could be discussed. One side effect of economic integration was the growing realization that other groups could attempt to advocate and work at a European level. In some sense, it was a “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” type of mentality. Thus, though previous to the creation of organizations like EBLUL, and the MERCATOR networks, particularly for minority language groups focused on working and advocating within their national boundaries, these organizations then provided a European space to advocate and collaborate across.³⁰

Case study: European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (EBLUL)

EBLUL was established in 1982 as a result of the 1982 Arfé Resolution passed through the initiative of the European Parliament. Located first in Dublin (then later also in Brussels and briefly in Luxembourg), EBLUL is an officially recognized NGO and has observer status at the levels of the OSCE, Council of Europe, EU,³¹ United Nations, UNESCO, and UN Economic and Social Council. It is one of the organizational representatives for European linguistic minorities, namely speakers of Europe’s lesser-used languages.³² (Brezigar 1999) Its organizational aim is “... to conserve and promote the lesser used autochthonous languages of the European Union, together with their associated cultures. It concerns itself only with its general aim and in matters relating to party politics, religion, race or ideology, it remains independent.” (Ó Riagáin 2001)

³⁰ Ó Riagáin (2002) notes EU support was instrumental in showing advocates for lesser-used languages that they could “speak and act together at the European level and thus achieve results which individually they could not have” was key to the continued work for organizations representing lesser-used language speakers.

³¹ This includes the Council of the European Union, European Commission, European Parliament, and the Assembly of Regions.

³² See Nic Craith 2006: 75-76.

The 46 millions language speakers included in the description of “lesser-used languages” for EBLUL include:

- (1) Those that speak the official and working languages of the EU as defined in the Regulation 1 of the Council of Ministers of 15 April 1958 (and subsequent amendments with each accession), but are in minority position in the Member States in which they are citizens;
- (2) Those who speak Irish, which, as of January 2007, will become a working language;
- (3) Those who speak Letzebuergesch, one of the languages covered by the Lingua Action of the SOCRATES program, but are not covered by the above;
- (4) Those who speak languages, which are to some official degree recognized by the Member States in which they are spoken (i.e., Catalan, Galician, and Basque in Spain, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Irish, Scots, and Ulster-Scots in the UK, and Frisian in the Netherlands); and
- (5) Languages which do not have any official recognition in the Member State in which they are spoken, e.g., Aroumain, Arvanite, Pomak in Greece. (Ó Riagáin 2002)

EBLUL thus advocates for speakers of different languages in EU institutions because for “EU-based speakers of regional and minority languages, the notion of European citizenship has an important additional dimension... when the EU respects its lesser used languages as an important part - and an added value to - the European heritage and culture.” (Nic Craith 2006:79; Warasin 2002) However, EBLUL explicitly does not represent “new” (im)migrant, non-historically European languages (e.g., Turkish in Germany, different varieties of Arabic in the Netherlands and France, etc.).³³

In the semi-structured, topic-oriented interviews carried out for this case study,³⁴ one recurrent theme was having the “right people in the right place at the right time.” During the 1970s, there was an increased focus on different types of integration. As one of the founders shared, the idea for starting an organization that worked at a European level for regional and minority language speakers came from looking at similar work that was taking place at the time with credit unions. The idea of working and collaborating with other groups at a European level in a number of more “on the ground” arenas was a novel one and one that appealed to minority groups because it “gave them a larger forum where minority language speakers could appeal.”³⁵

The year 1979 was a pivotal one in terms of getting the EP involved. Up until that point, Ministers of the EP (MEPs) were selected by Member State governments. But in 1979, elections

³³ In some cases, this could be explained by the lack of official statistics vis-à-vis census data. However, Nic Craith’s interviews with EBLUL staff reveal another possible explanation for this. The interviews reflected a strong leaning towards the “homeland argument” that such speakers could look to their ancestral homelands for such recognition and legitimation. Some other EBLUL members have suggested that such non-European language speakers should form their own forum, but as Nic Craith points out (2006:174) this is nothing less than a “form of linguistic apartheid and denies them their place in European affairs - both historically and in contemporary times.”

³⁴ A more elaborate case study was carried out on the history of EBLUL, particularly focusing on the dynamic between EBLUL and the institutions of the EU; however, for the sake of space, only one of the themes from the interviews was given here to illustrate the dynamic between the different policy actors.

³⁵ March 6, 2007 interview with an editor-in-chief of EuroLang, EBLUL’s Internet news agency.

were changed to open elections. This meant that MEPs were then directly elected by citizens of the Member States, making the EP the only representative body in the EU's institutional triangle. The significance of this for EBLUL was the election of the honorable John Hume MEP and Gaetano Arfé, who were pivotal in pushing resolutions through the Parliament to the Commission, who then initiated them for passing. John Hume MEP was a Social Democrat in the Labour Party and was committed to a non-violent approach to bringing peace and fighting for civil rights in Northern Ireland, along with also advocating for Irish as a recognized language. Gaetano Arfé was from Northern Italy, and also a lesser-used language speaker. Gaetano Arfé went on from 1982 to 1984 to also hold the chair for the then Intergroup on Regional and Minority Languages. And as one of the founders commented, EBLUL's relationship with civil servants has always played a role in its political dynamics.³⁶

This example from the larger case study was intended to illustrate the EU's policy landscape of actors and the interactivity that took place in developing some of the resolutions and budget lines for regional and lesser-used language speakers vis-à-vis the development of organizations like EBLUL.

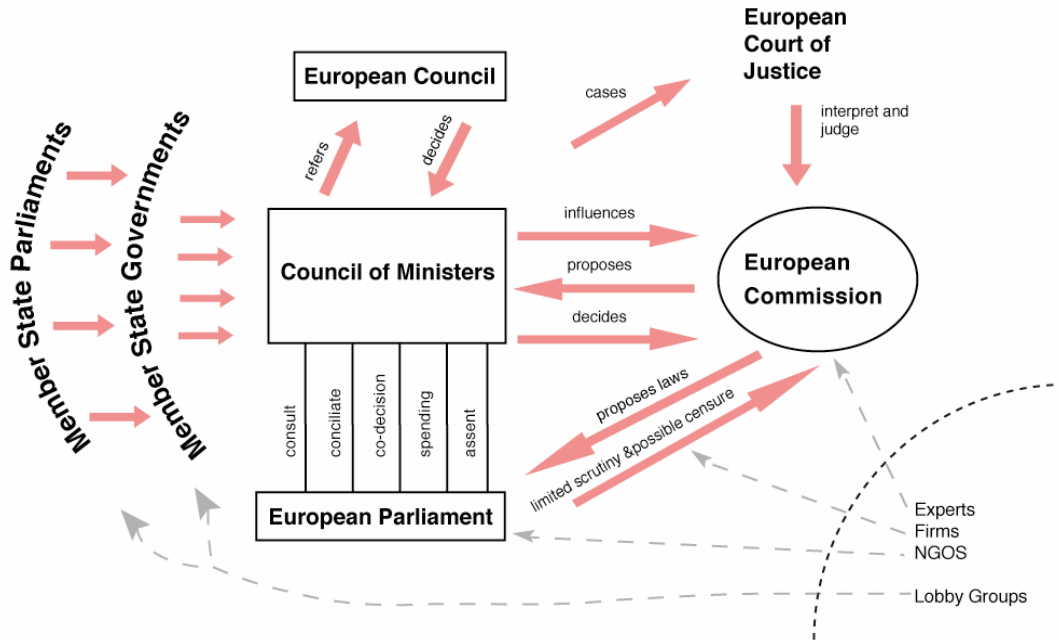
Concluding thoughts

Document analysis is inherently “top-focused” research because it is really difficult to develop a more nuanced analysis of the actors involved in the policy development process. But even a brief glimpse at the broader themes that emerged through the interviews, funding, politics and people's roles in pushing through different resolutions, the institutional “climate”, and the significance of leadership and vision show that there is a more dialectical relationship between individuals, organizations, and institutions than revealed by strict document analysis.

One thing that becomes more evident through the combination of document analysis and interviews is the role that the EU's institutions played in the formation of its language policies and subsequent, broader language policy discourse. The institutions are neither the sum of all the different actors and/or organizations that it is made up of, nor are organizations' actions and interests dictated from the top down in a deterministic fashion.

³⁶ March 12, 2007 interview with one of the founders of EBLUL and later director of one of the MERCATOR network centers.

Figure 8. Actors and Interactions on the EU policy-making landscape.



Adopted from Wallace and Wallace 2000: 46.

The EU is a dynamic institution, whose actors change over the course of time. These changes are reflected in the way that negotiations take place, the relationships that are built between individuals and within the institutions and organizations, and the overall institutional climate.

Figure 9. Representation of the dialectical relationship between different policy actors.

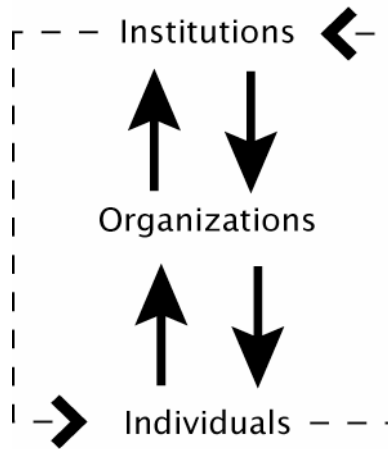


Figure nine attempts to show the more dynamic relationship between all three types of actors. And this is well illustrated particularly by the beginning period of EBLUL and the unintended emergence of a language policy discourse for speakers of regional and minority languages. The fact that the “right people were in the right place at the right time” and advocating for the “right cause” came together to produce institutional and organizational change. At that

point, regional and lesser-used languages were incorporated into the EU's language policy discourse and EBLUL was instituted as an organization working for the broader European interest.

A counter example of this would be a feasibility report on the formation of an agency for linguistic diversity and language learning that was commissioned in 2004 by the EC, then completed in 2005. One of the findings and concluding recommendations of this needs assessment report was that either an agency be formed (best case), a network approach utilizing existing organizations like EBLUL and the MERCATOR networks, or a null response (not feasible). As far as some of the interviewees knew (who had also acted as expert consultants on the project), the Commission had not followed up and the findings of the report disregarded. Given the direction of the 2007-2013 program cycle on lifelong learning, and emphasis on network formation rather than agency development, in this case, the right people were not in the right place and the findings of the result comes at a point when the Commission is changing its funding priorities. The result is uncertain.

Since then, the Commission has instituted the High Council on Multilingualism, and a new DG-Multilingualism also has been established. These changes seem unrelated to the findings of the evaluation report, as they have been linked to the Lisbon Strategy and increasing the language capacity of European citizens for the sake of becoming more economically competitive. It seems however, change results when organizations and individuals participate in a series of negotiations when the institutional climate (or policy pendulum) is on “their side.” When this is not the case, it seems that the result is apparent inactivity or general disregard.

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the European project is often likened to being a “Tower of Babel” because of the plurality of languages utilized within its institutions. However, it is worth mentioning that Babel’s multilingualism (in the Genesis passage) resulted in the disbanding of the building work and the subsequent linguistic splintering of society. It goes to reason then, that using the Tower of Babel as a reference in the construction of the EU does not have such a positive light.

However, it does seem like the EU is attempting to institutionalize a particular type of multilingualism through its non-institutional language policies, which could potentially lead to a narrowing or lessening of diversity. In this case, it might be appropriate to say that the EU is, in some sense, reversing Babel. That is, it is reducing the number of languages as the European project continues. It may in fact be, that we are seeing the EU shift away from linguistic diversity and towards multilingualism for the sake of increasing economic competitiveness, via a multilingual work force. Instead of an increased focus on supporting the linguistic diversity of the regions, there seems

to be a shift towards a greater emphasis on foreign language learning of the “big” languages (namely, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish). Whether this reduction of its diversity is problematic, is a separate argument. But in this process, the ones that experience the negative ramifications of this are potentially the speakers of regional and lesser-used languages, along with languages spoken by (im)migrants.

Francis Braudel wrote that “Political economy, which appeared to concern only material goods, has turned out to embrace the social system as a whole; (it) is related to everything in society.” (Dhillon 1990: 47) Whether the institutionalized language context that the EU is creating linked to economic development is the way its Member States and citizens will go, remains to be seen. But language is fundamental to the discussion of both an imagined Europe (past) and the imagining of Europe (future) (Anderson 1990). And so, it is all the more important to think critically about the linguistic processes that are taking place vis-à-vis the new institutions that are developing so that increased multilingualism does not necessarily result in decreased linguistic diversity. Or written another way, “so that ‘more languages’ does not ultimately translate into ‘less multilingualism’”. (Blanco 2007: 13).

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