Languages in European university alliances

Challenges and issues

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ed.

Milano 2024

Gli studi dell'OTPL

OTPL
Osservatorio di terminologie e politiche linguistiche

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The publication of this volume has been funded by Conseil Européen pour les Langues/European Language Council.

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Largo Gemelli 1, 20123 Milano – tel. 02.7234.22.35 – fax 02.80.53.215
e-mail: editoriale.dsu@educatt.it (produzione); librario.dsu@educatt.it (distribuzione)
web: www.educatt.it/libri
ISBN: 979-12-5535-253-2

copertina: immagine Unsplash; progetto grafico Studio Editoriale EDUCatt

Summary

Introduction

In an era marked by interconnectedness of the post-globalisation (and some de-globalisation movements) European Universities Alliances[1] (EUAs) stand at the forefront of this transformation. They are pioneering initiatives that foster deeper integration and cooperation among Europe universities. These Alliances involve not only the potential merging of educational programmes and research efforts but also standardisations that deny the abundance of perspectives (as some critics say) versus embracing and promoting the rich tapestry of culture and languages that define our geography.

Strategic partnerships across the EU between higher education institutions (HEIs) have encouraged the emergence of European Universities, "consisting in bottom-up networks of universities across the EU which will enable students to obtain a degree by combining studies in several EU countries and contribute to the international competitiveness of European universities"[2]. The European Universities Initiative is, therefore, one of the flagship programmes of the European Union, aimed at building a European Education Area, co-developed by HEIS, student organisations, Member States, the European Commission and a wide range of stakeholders. Alliances are intended to be more than just collaborative networks of HEIs across Europe. As European Universities they intend to be transnational alliances that will become the universities of the future, promoting European values and identity (including own diversities), and revolutionising the quality and competitiveness of European higher education.

1 https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative/map.

2 https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universitiesinitiative; cf. M.T. Zanola (2023), *Language Policy in Higher Education*, in F. Grin, L. Cardinal, M. Gazzola, K. Heugh (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Policy and Planning*, *Routledge*, London-New York, pp. 483-496.

European universities will be a key driver in improving the quality of Higher Education and strengthening links with the European research and innovation landscape, as well as with society and the economy. In the coming years, each alliance will define a common, long-term strategy for education, research, and innovation, involving a high level of integration and in cooperation among its members. This is aimed at achieving an unprecedented level of cooperation between HEIs at all organisational levels and in all fields of activity (education, research, innovation, transfer, governance, etc).

Most alliances have a transdisciplinary approach. These alliances may have or lack dominant theme and may focus on cross-cutting issues for joint work, such as education and citizenship, digital technology, environment, societal transformations, or health; other alliances focus on specialisations. Some represent emergent approaches form common contexts (mountains, sea, etc) to valorise territories and enhance the added value of local/regional resources.

In this overall scenario, embedding language diversity into the HEI activity is essential. The role of languages within higher education has become more critical than ever. Mobility programmes within these alliances are designed to encourage all partners and members to be mobile and students to study in different countries, thereby promoting proficiency in several languages (hopefully!). This multilingual exposure is seen as a valuable asset institutionally, academically, and professionally.

Several questions arise within the language area. What new language policies must be conceived and implemented? What will be the role of languages in University Alliances' strategies for interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches, while maintaining different contextual linguistic, rhetorical, and disciplinary traditions? Will multilingualism be enhanced, and with what perspectives? What new frameworks must be designed (and by whom) for science communication, knowledge transfer, and multilingual needs? This volume intends to bring together contributions, experiences, and reflections on the role of languages in HELP, on strategies for their valorisation, on inter-comprehension practices, on methodologies and actions to promote plurilingualism and continuous language development and intercultural competence among staff (teaching, technical, research) and students.

Multilingualism within EUAs enriches the cultural experience for students and staff, fostering a sense of European identity and enhancing employability by equipping students with language skills valued in the job market. It also equips staff with skills to manage diversities in the alliances' strategies. One of the significant challenges facing EUAs is balancing the ideal of multilingualism with the practical need for a common instructional language. Over-reliance on English can undermine the goal of promoting linguistic diversity. To address this, language centres and digital platforms of the alliances' partners offer courses in multiple languages and are supposed to develop strategies to support both English and other languages. This may include offering dual-degree programmes in different languages or at least designing courses in several languages and accommodating students from different linguistic backgrounds.

There are new approaches of English as a *Lingua Franca*, interacting with a wide range of other languages. However, there is a risk that the so-called *Lingua Franca* might undermine efforts to promote others languages. Language barriers will affect participation in academic and social activities within the expected new multicampus university. EUAs will need to mitigate these barriers through extensive language support services, including reparatory language courses, ongoing language training, and intercultural training programmes to help students and staff navigate linguistic and cultural differences, enhancing integration and mutual understanding.

Alliances must adopt comprehensive language policies that create broad multilingual and multicultural learning spaces to ensure inclusive communication and accessibility as a universal value. Emphasising language diversity supports cross-cultural research collaboration and the exchange of ideas, contributing to academic innovation and excellence. Linguistic diversity in the European Universities Alliances has a relevant impact on research collaboration and science communication. It fosters a rich environment for academic exchange and innovation by enhancing effective communication, facilitating the exchange of ideas and knowledge, and promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity to better understand different perspectives and methodologies. It will also allow to access to broader range of literature and resources that may not be

available in one's native language, creating networks to interact with peers in multiple languages and expanding the reach and influence.

Languages are fundamental to the success of European Universities Alliances, playing a crucial role in fostering cooperation, enhancing educational quality, and promoting a sense of European identity. They are a cornerstone of academic excellence, cultural enrichment, and European unity. While balancing multilingualism with practical communication needs presents challenges, the opportunities for cultural enrichment, personal development, and academic excellence are substantial. As EUAs continue to evolve, their commitment to language diversity will remain a pivotal factor in their ability to provide a rich and inclusive educational experience and in their success. The significance of language within these alliances cannot be overstated – it is the linchpin that holds together the diverse and dynamic collaborations spanning the European educational landscape.

This book, containing texts form selected presentations delivered at the conference organised by Conseil Européen pour les Langues/European Language Council at the University of Sevilla in 2022, aims to provide perspectives of how languages shape and enhance the European higher education landscape, offering insights into the challenges and triumphs of fostering multilingualism in collaborative academic environments. It presents cases from some EUAs, showcasing their approaches to integrating languages into their academic frameworks and delving into how multilingualism is cultivated, managed, and leveraged to enhance educational quality, research innovation, and cultural exchange.

Multilingualism and language policies within the EUAs are *sine qua non* conditions for a real internationalisation that respects the local/regional and national cultures and are also very good evidences of the EU motto, "united in diversity".

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Initiatives of a European University in Creating Plurilingual Ethos: challenges and solutions

Abstract

The experience and challenges of a European University in promoting European values and identity and ensuring the quality and competitiveness of a European higher education institution in today's complex life will be discussed with the focus on plurilingual ethos creation at an institutional level. The study aims at answering two research questions: How can local initiatives contribute to language policy development at an institutional level? How can institutions benefit from international cooperation and networking in developing their plurilingual ethos? The language learning ecosystem created at VMU, based on the values of personal and academic freedom, democracy, openness, sustainability, responsibility, and community development, will be presented, including opportunities for plurilingual competence development for all university students (linguistic and non-linguistic study programs) and staff. The development of the plurilingual ethos system will highlight the importance of a participatory approach – initiatives of teachers and students – which can lead to the institutionalization of the suggested practices and ambitions. Another part of the study will proceed from local to global: challenges and opportunities provided by international cooperation networks and participation in the European university alliance Transform4Europe will be discussed, basing the claims of benefits on concrete examples, and identifying their impact upon plurilingual ethos development at a HE institution.

1. Introduction

European higher education institutions (HEIs), facing the challenges of complexity and multidimensionality of contemporary life in the third decade of the 21st century, are increasingly becoming multilingual and multicultural. These new challenges call for different approaches and forms of internationalization processes occurring at HEIs. Providing courses in English as a medium of instruction (EMI) that was a challenge for many HEIs a decade ago is no longer the only solution in answering the needs of the growing outward and inward student, teacher, and staff mobility, free and/or forced migration, increasing cross-border cooperation of HEIs, and the creation of HEI networks and alliances. The changing cultural and linguistic landscape of HEIs provides much more: it creates new broad opportunities that need to be exploited, i.e., the rich plurilingual and pluricultural milieu of the new HEI population.

The study focuses on the challenges and solutions in developing language policy at a HEI with the aim to answer the following **research questions**: How can local initiatives contribute to language policy development at an institutional level? How can institutions benefit from international cooperation and networking in developing their plurilingual ethos?

1.1 *Methods*

The study used a small-scale quantitative research of the data accumulated in the Institute of Foreign Languages during 2002-2022 and qualitative desk research based on content analysis of *VMU Statute*, *VMU Study Regulations*, *VMU Language Policy Guidelines* and *VMU Annual Reports*.

1.2 *Definitions*

Language policy is a broad concept and can have different meanings in various contexts. Here the definition of a *language policy* provided by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) will serve as our conceptualized definition, where language policy means "a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the societies, group or system" (p. xi). Our operationalized definition will be narrowed

to "a body of regulations and practices designed for university community to achieve plurilingual competences." The achievement of plurilingual competences or plurilingual repertoires by the students will lead to the creation of the plurilingual ethos in the class, and consequently, in the institution, whose students hold different "competences of various languages (including home languages, dialects, learned languages, etc.) acquired to a different extent" and where students are encouraged to develop their plurilingual repertoires and conditions are created at the HEIs to acquire them.

2. Creation of the language learning ecosystem: individual initiatives

The language learning ecosystem, based on the values of personal and academic freedom, democracy, openness, sustainability, responsibility, and community development, started to be created after the re-establishment of Vytautas Magnus University in 1989, at the dawn of the restoration of Independence of Lithuania in 1990. The leadership of the university guided by the Lithuanian diaspora academicians (professors and alumni of the former VMU that flourished in 1922-1950) set the task to teach English as a foreign language to all university non-linguistic and linguistic program students (at that time English language was studied at secondary education institutions as a foreign language but the curricular and teaching methods did not allow to achieve the English language communicative competence). They understood that for the new country, in addition to the first language competence, Russian as a foreign language proficiency will be insufficient. In a few years, German, French and Spanish started to be taught and when the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) was opened in 2002, students could choose from 12 foreign languages on offer.

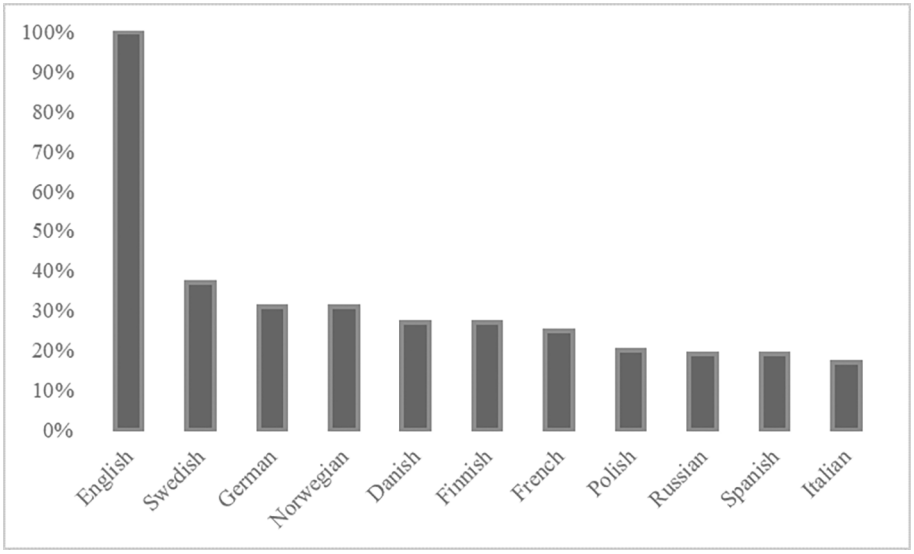
The rapid expansion of the offer was enabled by 3 types of initiators: students, teachers, and market demands. First, the students' expectations to acquire communicative competences in several languages and their initiatives expressed during language and culture events (e.g., annual European Day celebrations since 2002), informal round-table discussions between IFL leadership and student representatives from all language groups, and various surveys conducted to find out students' needs and preferences concerning the language offer and choice allowed to expand

the range of languages offered as mandatory or optional subjects to non-linguistic and linguistic program students twice in ten years (from 12 in 2010 to 26 in 2012, and 30 in 2022).

Second, the teacher initiatives played a huge role in new course development and language offer. Czech, Serbian, Turkish, Italian, Chinese, and Estonian language teachers offered their services by applying to the IFL administration on their own initiative and created conditions to promote their course descriptions, thus attracting student enrollment in their courses. Due to full-time or part-time teacher as well as institute leadership initiatives a computerized SANAKO 300 Lab was opened with 30 workplaces for student independent and in-class work in a digital lab in 2004. At that time, it was the first offer of a digitalized experience of language learning that was efficiently exploited by all language learners. The teachers of the IFL were among the first in the university to create their courses in the MOODLE virtual learning environment to ensure intensive daily language learning in situ and online.

Market demands served as the third driver for expanding the offer of languages at VMU IFL. The increased language needs in the workplace were primarily determined by the growing number of international business companies that opened all over Lithuania in the last two decades, especially in Vilnius and Kaunas. According to 2019 report of "Invest Lithuania", the Lithuanian Investment Promotion Agency, in the rapidly developing Global Business Service sector the demand for English has grown to 100 % (LBSR, 2019, p. 23), while, as shown in Figure 1, the need of Swedish, German, Norwegian, Danish, Finnish, French, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Italian is also high ranging from 17 to 37 percent of usage.

Figure 1 – *Demand for languages in Global Business Service sector in 2019*



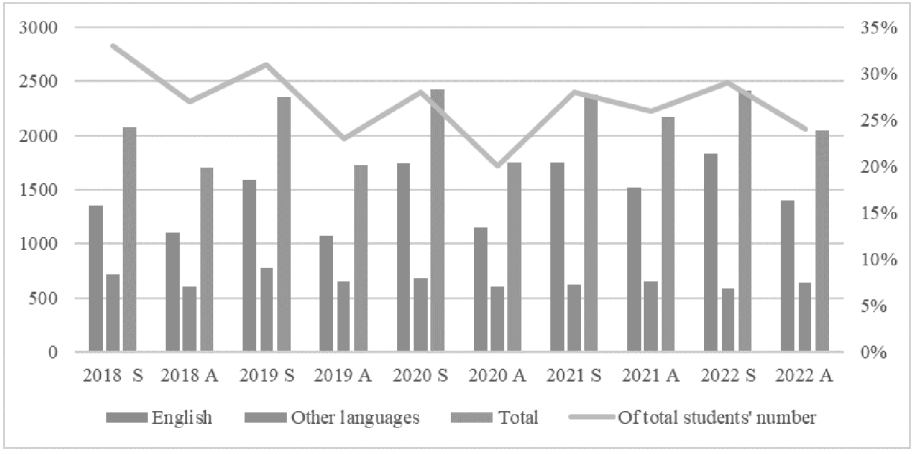
Moreover, as was indicated by the director of "Kaunas in", the Investment Promotion Agency of Kaunas, in a presentation he delivered at VMU in 2018 during the European Day of Languages, good competences of a particular language can empower an employee to receive a higher salary. Namely, good competences of Spanish, Italian, French and German can make one eligible for a 10-15% higher pay in comparison to his or her counterpart in the same position but without the require language skills. Meanwhile, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Finish can benefit one by a15-20% of a higher pay.

3. Challenges in student language learning preferences

Since 2002 VMU Institute of Foreign Languages has been increasing the offer of languages to implement the provision of the *Study Regulations* and to satisfy the needs of the first-cycle students to have a choice for their plurilingual competence development. In the same vein, the offer has been available for all the University community. Out of the general proposal of 30 languages, the actual number of languages taught every semester revolves around 20-25, as it depends on the students' enrolments

in particular language and level groups. Built on the data collected by the Institute of Foreign languages for the University annual reports, the enrolment numbers of students in language courses over the period of 2018-2022 are displayed in Figure 2. The figure shows the total number of students who attended languages courses in spring (S) and autumn (A) semesters and their division into two categories: students who attended all the English levels as well as EAP and ESP courses in one category and students who chose all the levels of other languages into another. The figure also demonstrates the percentage of students enrolled in language classes in comparison to the total number of students studying at VMU in that particular year. On the one hand, the data generally supports the positive sustainable outcome of VMU language policy: namely, over 25% of all VMU students are engaged in language learning each semester. With some consistent fluctuation between autumn and spring semesters, the autumn semester of the year 2020 shows the sharpest drop, especially in the English language. This might have resulted from the uncertainty caused by the covid infection closedown when some students might have postponed their language learning for later semesters instead of choosing a distant learning mode. Nevertheless, the figure also shows an overall unfavourable tendency for the development of the plurilingual ethos: the numbers in the other language courses are not only considerably lower than those in the English language courses, but they are also gradually becoming smaller.

Figure 2 – *Enrollment in language courses*



Individual initiatives of students, teachers and attempts to respond to the market demands by preparing graduates with unique and diverse plurilingual language profiles have received the support from the university leadership and several initiatives and suggestions were institutionalized in various university documents. The created language learning ethos was reflected in the development of the language policy guidelines, the first draft of which was created by groups of teachers of the IFL during the period of 2007-2008 and later extended to embrace all the solutions to language related challenges met by the whole university. The language policy guidelines existed as a practice-based document until it was accepted by the Senate and acquired the role of the most comprehensive and all-embracing document including all language related decision-making issues.

4. Sustainability of language policy through institutional documents

Sustainability and resilience to outside influences are among the key factors for an institutional language policy to be successful and enduring, which can be largely achieved through its codification in the main institutional documents. The foundation for VMU language policy and the subsequent development of a plurilingual and pluricultural ethos is laid primarily in *VMU Statute* – the document of the highest hierarchical order stipulating among other things the university's synergies between different structural parts and their functions. Clause 14 of Section 4 of *VMU Statute* stipulates that the Lithuanian language is the main language of instruction and indicates that other languages could be used for studies in specific conditions such as the expected outcomes being related to the knowledge of a foreign language, or the study process being focused on international students and/or including academic staff, and in the case of the delivery of joint study programmes and/or other study programmes aimed at international students.

The main document, however, which sets a strong prerequisite for students' plurilingual competence development is *VMU Study Regulations*. Clause 35 of Part 3 of *VMU Study Regulations* stipulates that each first-cycle student "shall choose language courses the volume of which is not less than 12 credits and not more than 24 credits" (p. 9).

These credits must primarily be spent to achieve the mandatory C1 level of English (or B2 if started at A1) and then could be used to learn other languages from the offer of 30 at the Institute of Foreign Languages. Thus, *VMU Study Regulations* not only enshrines students' right to broad flexibility in choosing their preferred languages and subsequently developing their plurilingual competences, but also allows for the application of plurilingual approaches in language teaching and the subsequent enhancement of plurilingual ethos. Moreover, *VMU Study Regulations* places some emphasis on the Lithuanian languages, namely all first-cycle students also have to take a course of occupational Lithuanian language. Nevertheless, even though there is a growing number of international students each year in taking the courses of Lithuanian, from an introductory survival course to advanced levels, there are no requirements or recommendations for international students to learn the Lithuanian language in *VMU Study Regulations*.

Finally, *VMU Language Policy Guidelines*, first approved by the Senate in 2014 and then reviewed in 2018, expands the promotion of language learning, assessment and recognition to all university community and the public. It stipulates the right of all members of VMU academic and non-academic community to join any of the language classes with VMU students or to develop their plurilingual competences in separate groups designed for the staff. It also outlines the role of different languages in creating VMU multilingual ecosystem ranging from Latin as ceremonial language to English and other languages of instruction and to students' home languages which become an important asset for language awakening activities in different non-formal language learning events. Above all, *VMU Language Policy Guidelines* aim at creating an environment of linguistic inclusion and community emotional well-being.

5. International cooperation and networking in developing the plurilingual ethos

Data presented in Figure 2 show an urgent need to find plausible motivational means to encourage young people, especially students of Higher Education, not to be satisfied with English as the only additional language to their L1 or L1s, which seems to be a developing tendency.

This need has also been closely echoed by the initiative of the European Commission to form tight European University networks which was introduced in 2017 and in 2022 resulted in 44 University Alliances engaging 340 universities (EUF, 2022). Among the ambitious goals set for the alliance there is a sound focus on developing students' plurilingual and pluricultural competences, namely, "to enable a new generation of Europeans to cooperate across languages, borders and disciplines, developing a strong European identity" (EUF, 2022). Such reasoning is closely interrelated with a vision of developing an overall plurilingual ethos at a university.

In 2020 VMU with 6 partners[1] created a University Alliance "Transform4Europe" that was further enlarged in 2023[2]. Diversity and inclusions with placing special emphasis on offering language learning options through summer schools, shared bachelor tracks and informal language learning initiatives are among priorities of the partnership. Language learning is included as a horizontal direction within the partnership's main thematic focus areas: Digital transformation and smart regions, Environmental transformation and sustainability, and Societal transformation and inclusion. With the aim of inclusion and community-building in mind, in 2021 VMU Institute of Foreign Languages offered the partnership to organise a common event on the occasion of the European Day of Languages, as it has been annually celebrated at VMU since its inception (cf. Mačianskienė & Bijeikiene, 2013). It was an online event with the inclusion of all partners with the aim of promoting all the official/national languages they represent. Through the networks of stakeholders, all universities of the Alliance managed to engage around 400 participants from general schools, businesses, NGOs, etc. Thus, it was the first event of the alliance that succeeded in uniting many people through their interest in languages and cultures. The agenda of the event was built on a pluralistic approach of awakening to languages (cf. Candelier, Michel, et.al., 2012) encompassing three sections. The first

[1] The Coordinator: Saarland University (Germany), University of Alicante (Spain), Estonian Academy of Arts, Silesian University in Katowice (Poland), Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski (Bulgaria), University of Trieste (Italy).

[2] Catholic University of Portugal, the University of Primorska in Slovenia, University of Saint-Etienne-Jean Monnet in France and associated partner Mariupol State University from Ukraine.

section called "WorkTalk" featured presentations of the representatives of various international business and culture organizations on the needs of language competences in the current job market across the alliance countries. The second section called "Language Tasters" acquainted participants with the main official/national languages of the alliance, while the final section included interactive tools to engage participants in drilling what they learnt during this event. Through the contributions of the words of different languages that they learnt during the sessions; participants created the Transform4Europe 2021 European Day of Languages word cloud (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – *Transform4Europe 2021 European Day of Languages word cloud*

Participants were also asked to reflect on the value of languages in their current and future life and what they took from the event. Among their reflections there were such generalized highlights: languages open hearts of your interlocutors and doors to your future career, even knowing just the basic could be helpful, languages expand your world, to be European is to be multilingual or multilingualism is a richness for society. It cannot be claimed that awareness raising events would be enough to motivate modern students to invest their time in learning languages, but it could be a useful complement to other means. In the same vein, university networking, especially as close one as is created through the European University Alliances, could be a fruitful tool in

letting students not only learn languages, but also appreciate their use through mobility activities.

6. Conclusions

The study showed that individual initiatives of students and teachers attempting to respond to the market demands and prepare graduates holding a broad range of plurilingual competences of a different extent can result in institutionalising these initiatives by various university level documents, including language policy guidelines, to ensure the sustainability of these initiatives and can contribute to the development of plurilingual ethos of the HE. The development of a university plurilingual ethos can also benefit from international cooperation, especially the European initiative of alliances. The present study demonstrated how collaboration in a university alliance can consolidate its broad community and allow for much broader exposure of students to a variety of languages.

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CONNECT-UNITA: when Technology is made available to support multilingualism

Abstract

This paper aims at describing a practical scenario in which technology is used to facilitate language learning in order to promote the integration of all groups and preserve multilingualism through the CONNECT-UNITA collaborative platform, which not only aims to help students succeed in acquiring knowledge and skills, but also to break down the barriers of geographical, temporal, social and linguistic distance. In this way, it promotes inclusion and international cooperation. CONNECT UNITA is a cooperation partnership project (KA220) submitted under the new Erasmus + programme, 2021-2027. Accepted at the end of 2021, it was launched in February 2022 for a period of 3 years. The project is led by the Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour and takes its name from the Unita European Alliance, of which UPPA has been a member since October 2020 alongside five other universities in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Romania. The core focus of UNITA is to promote and preserve Romance languages, as well as to develop cross-comprehension in terms of the ability of different speakers to make themselves understood by deploying specific communication strategies, each speaking their own language.

The following paper intends to demonstrate a case study in which technology is an auxiliary made available to languages to promote the integration of all participating groups and support multilingualism through the collaborative platform, CONNECT-UNITA. CONNECT-

UNITA aims to allow the successful acquisition of knowledge and skills amongst students, and also break down geographical, temporal, social, and linguistic barriers. Accordingly, it encourages inclusion and international cooperation. CONNECT UNITA is a cooperation partnership project (KA220), submitted within the scope of the new Erasmus+ program for 2021-2027. Accepted at the end of 2021, it was launched in February 2022, for a duration of 3 years. The project is coordinated by the Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour (UPPA) and draws its name from UNITA, the European Alliance of which the UPPA is a funder member since October 2020, alongside five other universities (Université Savoie Mont Blanc – USMB, Università degli Studi di Torino – UniTO, Universidad de Zaragoza – UNIZAR, Universiade da Beira Interior – UBI, *Universitatea de Vest* din *Timișoara – UVT*); located in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Romania respectively. The Alliance is growing steadily, with new higher education institutions (Instituto Politécnico da Guarda – IPG, Universidad Pública de Navarra – UPNA, Universitatea Transilvania din *Brașov – UniTBv*, Università degli Studi di Brescia – UNIBS), which have been integrated during a second phase, increasing the number of partners to ten. Romance languages, their transmission, and their preservation are at the center of UNITA, as well as *intercomprehension* (IC) with the ability of different speakers to make themselves understood, by developing specific communication strategies and by speaking their respective languages, as explained by our colleagues from the Università degli Studi di Torino. Besides its digital and innovative purpose, CONNECT-UNITA aims to act primarily as an alternative against the "all-English" approach, a dynamic totally in keeping with the mindset of the French Presidency of the European Union Council. What are the translation, interpretation, subtitling and dubbing tools used to facilitate students' skill development? How can artificial intelligence be made available for education, multilingual training, and international cooperation? To what extent is CONNECT-UNITA a hands-on experience in which human and technical skills are combined to provide a quality multilingual education? We will be addressing these questions today.

Before going any further with this presentation of CONNECT-UNITA, we will briefly examine the history of educational methods.

1. From Education 1.0 to Education 4.0

Let's start by presenting the vision of some researchers who have tried to characterize the first educative revolution. Education 1.0 could be defined as the period from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, during which the education system was mainly characterized by an informal transmission from person to person (between a learner and the educator).

Gradually, this transmission began to be more and more formalized, especially in the context of religious institutions. In this context, the educator was passing on knowledge and skills to small groups of people of a privileged socio-economic level, mostly male gender. Then we can observe the beginning of structuring the educational systems and creating the first universities.

For some specialists, education 2.0 appears in the context of another great revolution: the invention of printing. This revolution has definitely allowed the democratization of access to knowledge. This democratization has been accompanied by accelerated development of the education system thanks to the creation of a rich global system of schools and universities. Education has been transformed from a privilege to a fundamental right.

For several decades, society has been living through a new revolution, this has resulted in the development of information technologies, the massive deployment of computers and mobile devices, and the incredible power of the Internet. They represent a new means of disseminating knowledge and new paradigms of interaction between humans.

This accelerated technological revolution has significantly impacted the educational ecosystem, with the emergence of new generations of learners who use new forms of interaction and present new cognitive models.

This has led to the development of new pedagogical approaches capable of exploiting new technologies, more adapted to the new generations of learners to enable them to play a more active role in the learning process.

Moreover, the democratization of the educational system has continued, and information technologies have given rise to new models of mass education, such as MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), with

the promise of being able to eliminate various geographic, social, and economic barriers that limit access to education.

Can we talk about Education 4.0?

It is certain that the new information technologies facilitate the mediation between the actors of the educational process and this was demonstrated during the public health crisis caused by COVID-19 and its social distancing measures.

Even though the democratization of education has made it possible to try to guarantee the universal right to education, in part due to its massification, the quality of personalized support and the privileged relationship between the educator and the learner of the early days have been reduced over the course of the various educational revolutions.

Today, new pedagogical and technological innovations are necessary to offer more individualized, precise, and qualitative support, adapted to each learner.

In fact, the actual, generational, technological, and societal context is posing significant challenges to the educational system. Homogeneous and undifferentiated training programs cannot meet the competencies, which are sometimes still unknown to society in the future. Every learner should be able to follow *à la carte* courses and benefit from the personalized support and follow-up that he or she needs.

It is in this new context where the Connect-UNITA project fits in.

2. Towards Education 4.0: CONNECT UNITA

More concretely, the CONNECT-UNITA project aspires to meet the following objectives:

- Meet the integration requirements of learning management systems (LMS) and physical learning spaces of students and teachers of UNITA Alliance institutions and future associated partners, in order to eliminate geographic, linguistic, and temporal barriers and to encourage collaborative digital learning spaces. For this purpose, an integration platform offering an innovative solution for automatic translation services has been set up.

- Offer a unified framework to guide teachers in digital and pedagogical transformation through resource creation or adaptation and learning activities in order to eliminate difficulties limiting international collaboration in teaching and learning.
- Create an international teaching *Living Lab* for UNITA alliance's teachers and students, as well as for the international community, thanks to learnings co-conception and co-production, oriented towards both the transfer and multiplication of skills.

Figure 1 – *https://connect.univ-unita.ubi.pt/*

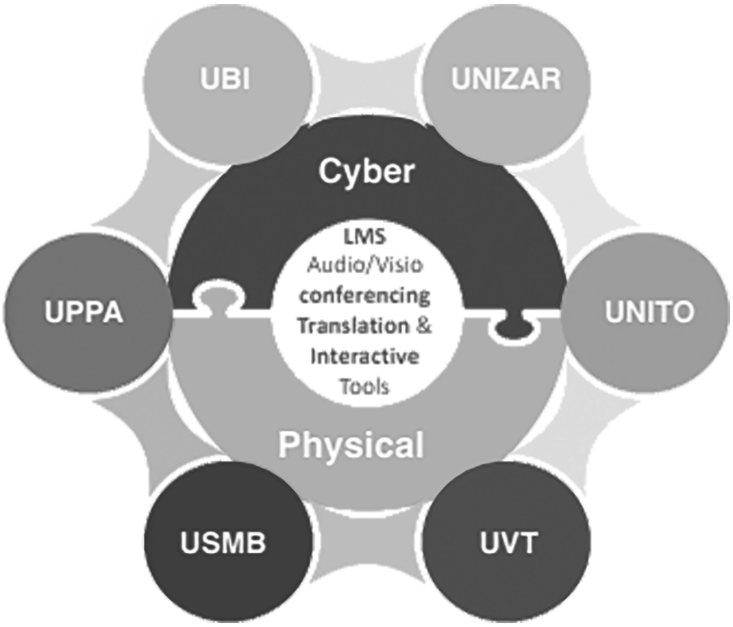
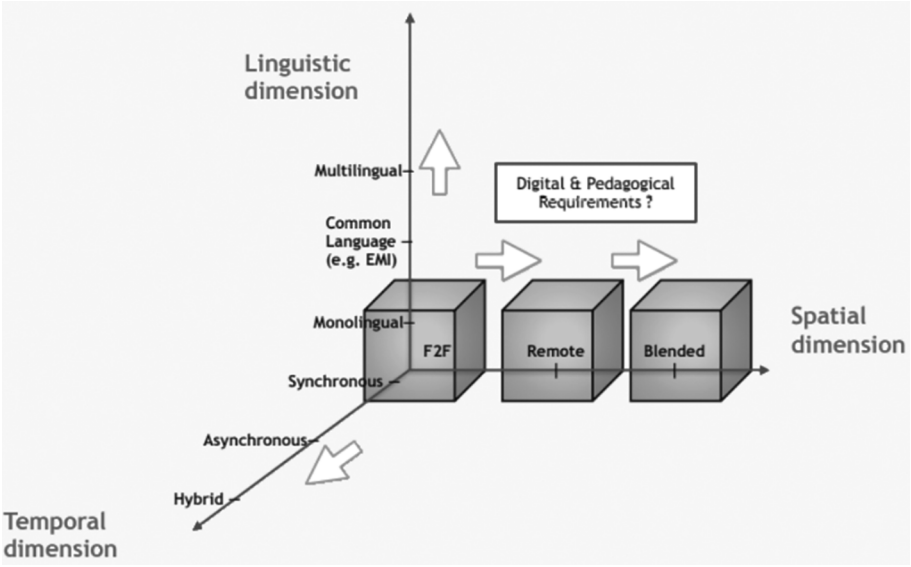


Figure 2 – *https://connect.univ-unita.ubi.pt/*



Today, we are going to focus particularly on this last objective in order to demonstrate the methodology set up to determine translation and interpretation software used in the context of the project. As we said, the idea is to select tools that facilitate learners understanding and guarantee their progression and success. In order to achieve this, a benchmarking of the different AI tools which enable to do the following tasks has been made:

- Text to speech
- Speech to text
- Written translation

A set of criteria has been established to compare the different tools. It can be seen in the next figure

- **Automatic STT:** the software transcribes speech-to-text automatically
- **Quality of transcription:** does the software transcribe exactly what is said or does it make mistakes in the transcription
- **Languages available:** how many of the languages that are part of the UNITA project are available on the software (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Romanian)

- **Translation:** software's capacity to translate at the same time as it transcribes
- **Adaptability:** possibility to modify in real time the transcription
- **Respect of GDPR:** does the software respect the European law on data protection or not
- **Cost:** free of charge or not
- **Possibility of automation:** possibility to connect two software without the intervention of a person (API)
- **Supported files formats:** what type of files formats can support the software

Based on these criteria, a rating scale has been realized. It allowed assessing the software's performance after conducting various test phases. The results of the experiments can be observed in the three next figures

Figure 3 – *Writing translator software assessment*

Standards ---------- Softwares	Automatic translation	Quality of translation	Languages available	Adaptability	Respect of GDPR	Cost	API	Supported files formats
DeepL	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
OpenNMT	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Systran	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	×	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Tradukka	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓	×	×

Figure 4 – *Speech-to-text software assessment*

Standards ---------- Softwares	Automatic STT	Quality of transcription	Languages available	Translation	Adaptability	Respect of GDPR	Cost	API	Supported files formats
BigBlueButton	×	×	✓✓✓	×	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	×	×
Watson	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	x	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓
Wordly	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓		✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
The Automatic Simultaneous Lecture Translation Service	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓		✓✓✓	✓✓
Google Chrome Subtitles	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	×	×	×		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓

Figure 5 – *Text-To-Speech software assessment*

Standards ---------- Softwares	Automatic TTS	Quality of speech	Languages available	Adaptability	Respect of GDPR	Cost	API	Supported files formats
Read Aloud	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
Natural Reader	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Synthesia	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓

The sample assessed was always the same: as it happened, it was the presentation text of the CONNECT-UNITA project which has been subjected to various translations, of text to speech. The team members' fluency in English, French, and Spanish enabled them to assess the degree of satisfaction and reliability of the translation tools. Concerning the other languages, the translation has been checked by UPPA staff, whose respective native languages are Italian, Romanian, and Portuguese, that is to say, the others languages used within the scope of the European University UNITA. Similar exercises were then also carried out to test interpreting software such as Microsoft Translator.

This work of prospecting different tools is part of a concern to adapt the content of the classes to the different profiles of learners since, within

the scope of the UNITA Alliance, students can be French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, or even Romanian speakers. Of course, in the end, the idea is to train all our staff and students in *intercomprehension* but for now, it cannot be denied that the use of English remains predominant. However, substantive work is carried out to preserve the linguistic specificities of each partner in order to ensure an easier and more inclusive learning for all our users. For that, the translation and interpreting tools that have been studied will have several uses in an educational context:

- Translation of teaching aids (especially PowerPoint presentations)
- Subtitling of video clips
- Simultaneous interpreting...

In springtime, CONNECT-UNITA will be launched in a first large-scale project: BIP4BIPS. This is a Blended Intensive Program (BIP) for teachers involved in the training of future school teachers, in other words, future primary school teachers. As the Blended Intensive Program is a new Erasmus+ medium that must comply with a certain number of norms (number of partner universities, number of participants, duration, teaching methods) and in order to prepare our teachers for this type of system, we decided to create this BIP4BIPS that will become a real support tool for internationalization. For this first edition, the CONNECT-UNITA project team will participate as well as teachers from the Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, the Instituto Politécnico da Guarda, and the Universidad Pública de Navarra, which are among the new partners of the UNITA Alliance. We have chosen to address this BIP4BIPS to teachers on purpose for them to have access to the overall tools which may help build some hybrid mobility for their students. Around thirty hours will represent this BIP4BIPS: twelve hours in distance learning and eighteen hours of face-to-face learning through a five days long physical mobility. In the virtual part, among other things, we will offer an awareness of translation and interpretation tools which will allow adapting course content to different kinds of audiences. Let's not forget that any Blended Intensive Program (BIP) must include short-term physical mobility, and therefore, the question of languages plays a major role because the students may have to discover a university which

is located in a country whose language they not know. Accordingly, this is very important that the students (but also the teachers) have the tools to facilitate linguistic communication.

Of course, CONNECT-UNITA is still in development and so far, we do not have all the tools that help us to assess the positive impact that our machine traveling through time, space, and languages will have in the learning process. However, it does not seem exaggerated to say that this is an outstanding tool that will enable us to meet the challenges raised by the subject of languages within European Alliances.

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Per linguas ad mundum: How the University of Potsdam's Center for Languages and Key Competences (Zessko) fosters multilingualism and cosmopolitanism in the European Digital UniverCity (EDUC)

Abstract

Since 2019, the University of Potsdam has held the leading role in the consortium "European Digital UniverCity" (EDUC), which has successfully broadened the international scope of research and teaching. EDUC boasts "50 collaborative teaching projects from 245 teachers, reaching approximately 8,000 students" (website). These projects foster innovative forms of exchange among the students as well as the administrative and academic staff of the European partners. The "City" in "EDUC" connotes the personal relationships, social engagement, and democratic values of an inclusive European *polis*.

Two of the University's seven EDUC planned outcomes are internationalization at home (via virtual exchange scenarios and online classes) and language courses and language e-tandems. What is more, EDUC should serve to enhance the intercultural skills and language competencies of the University's students and staff via on site, blended learning or fully online classes in one (or several) of the eight European languages of the alliance: Czech, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Spanish, and English. In theory, this linguistic diversity provides students with the possibility to exceed the European Commission's goal of mastering two European languages in addition to their native language.

The University's Center for Languages and Key Competences (Zessko) has long helped students in Potsdam strengthen their language skills and intercultural competence. With its focus on onsite and virtual mobility, EDUC has been a catalyst of innovation for Zessko in these areas. What is more, EDUC has helped Zessko assume a more central role in the strategic development of the University. This presentation provides information about this role in terms of student and staff (virtual) mobility, innovative language teaching, and the promotion of multilingualism and intercultural competence at Zessko.

The European university alliance "European Digital UniverCity" (EDUC) boasts "50 collaborative teaching projects from 245 teachers, reaching approximately 8,000 students" (EDUC Alliance). The "Digital" in "EDUC" stands for innovative forms of digital exchange among the students and administrative and academic staff of the partner institutions. With its special emphasis on "City," the term "UniverCity" connotes the personal relationships, social engagement, and democratic values of an inclusive European *polis*.

Since 2019, the University of Potsdam has held the leading role in EDUC, and this has broadened the University's international scope of research and teaching even further. Two of the University's seven planned EDUC outcomes are internationalization at home (via virtual exchange scenarios and online classes) and language courses and language e-tandems. What is more, EDUC should serve to enhance the intercultural skills and language competencies of the University's students and staff via on-site, blended-learning or fully online classes in one (or several) of the eight European languages of the alliance: Czech, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Spanish – and English. In theory, this linguistic diversity provides students with the possibility to exceed the European Commission's goal of mastering two European languages in addition to their native language.

Since its founding in 1994, the University's Language Center, which in 2010 became the Center for Languages and Key Competences (hereafter referred to as "Zessko"), has helped students in Potsdam strengthen their language skills and intercultural competence. With its focus on onsite and

virtual mobility, EDUC has been a catalyst of innovation for Zessko in these areas. What is more, EDUC has fostered Zessko's central role in the strategic international development of the University.

This paper highlights the challenges and opportunities facing the University of Potsdam (and Zessko in particular) with regard to the promotion of multilingualism in the EDUC alliance. In the context of general discussions on multilingualism in Europe, I will discuss measures in the areas of internationalization and student and staff (virtual) mobility, present EDUC collaborative online language projects, and offer some recommendations for promoting multilingualism in EDUC. My analysis of the planned EDUC outcomes will illustrate that academic collaboration between the EDUC institutions' language centers drives both the "Digital" and the "City" in EDUC. However, strategic milestones for not only "doing Europe" but also "communicating Europe" (Romaine, 2013 p. 118) at EDUC institutions are necessary in order to put theory into practice.

Multilingualism is part and parcel of both internationalization policies and student and staff mobility programs of universities around the world. The European Parliamentary Research Service defines multilingualism as "the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives" (Katsarova 2011, p. 2). In most cases, multilingualism equates to "monolingual multilingualism": the use of the country's official language (or languages) and English. The predominant role of English is underscored in the current internationalization strategy of the University of Potsdam:

> [t]he University promotes multilingualism among its students and expands intercultural competence in their studies and career through the services of Zessko. This goes hand in hand with the expansion of a competitive and internationally compliant range of degree programs. Teaching in English in bachelor's degree programs also acts as a "currency" for being admitted to partner institutions abroad and the number of these degree programs will be increased. (University of Potsdam)

With academic language courses in 11 languages and its supplementary certificate "Intercultural Competence in Academic and Professional

Contexts"[1], Zessko is thus positioned as a major promoter – if not the promoter – of multilingualism at the University of Potsdam. Yet, ultimately, an instructor's or a student's proficiency in English is the measure of the multilingual and intercultural competence of the individual and of the University.

This emphasis on advancing the English skills of students and staff is certainly not specific to the University of Potsdam. The challenge that the dominance of English poses to multilingualism in education in the EU has already been addressed by many scholars. Already in 2013, Suzanne Romaine wrote:

> A massive global shift to English medium instruction is well underway in many countries as a key part of educational strategy aimed at improving English proficiency in order to increase economic competitiveness. In response to these realities, English has rapidly become the first preferred foreign language studied in EU schools, with nearly 90 % of students learning it. (p. 121)

Fostering digital skills, virtual and physical mobility, collaborative teaching and research projects, and a cosmopolitan university community based on shared European values comprise the defining features of EDUC internationalization. This is reflected in the experience of a Zessko media center librarian at the Intensive Language Week in September 2021 at the Masaryk University in Brno[2]. The English language course for support staff focused on not only the English skills but also the creative thinking, communicative dynamics, and feedback and self-reflection skills of the participants. However, it was the cultural diversity of the participants and their interaction that made the greatest impression on the colleague.

This example shows that cosmopolitanism can, but does not necessarily have to, evidence multilingualism. As in the case of this staff workshop, by striving for cosmopolitanism within the EDUC Alliance, that which is local to a culture (such as language) can become subordinate to that which is shared (such as English).

[1] https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/zessko/key-competences-studiumplus/supplementary-certificates/intercultural-competence.

[2] https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/zessko/explore-zessko/news-archive/archiv-2021/erasmus-brno-2021.

English for academic and for professional purposes is certainly a major focus of language centers in higher education. However, the language center is that cosmopolitan, intercultural *topos* at which multiculturalism is lived at universities. Many staff members at university language centers (such as Zessko) are native speakers of a target language and are themselves multilingual, speaking more than one language in addition to their native language.

From its founding in 1994 to becoming Zessko in 2010, the motto of the former Language Center was *per linguas ad mundum* (through languages to the world). Subject-specific language courses were offered not only in English but also in French, Russian, and Spanish (such as for Legal Purposes). Courses in English and French for Legal Purposes continue to be offered. These courses have always been part of the longstanding dual German-French Law Degree Program with Université Paris Nanterre, which is now also an EDUC member[3]. Students from both institutions complete a part of their study program in person at their partner institution, and digital formats are now being introduced to facilitate pre-stay language practice.

The "Digital" in EDUC – in the form of shared digital tools and a learning platform – is the motor that drives virtual mobility and virtual exchange. These virtual mobility measures allow students and staff to participate in short-term, flexible, international collaborative scenarios. Ideally, these scenarios lead up to an in-person stay at a partner institution, where "[c]ourses [are available] in English or local languages" (EDUC Alliance).

As early as the early 2000s, telelearning projects with the Monterey Institute of International Studies and with the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute in Moscow were offered at the Language Center of the University of Potsdam. Such telelearning projects were generally developed based on an instructor's contacts at these institutions and not on the University's internationalization strategy. European university alliances (EUAs) like EDUC now provide language centers and their staff with a strategic framework to develop shared curricula for the long term. A better alignment of a language center's course offerings with its

[3] https://jura-potsdam-paris.de/sprach-und-uebersetzungskurse/.

university's EUA policy and goals helps to raise interest in and discussion about the role of languages – and language centers – in EUAs.

At Zessko, there have been three collaborative online learning projects developed with EDUC partners: English for Business Purposes (with the Université Paris Nanterre), Russian for Political Science (with the University of Pécs in Hungary), and language cafés in English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish. The two subject language courses are not a tandem model; a third language is learned collaboratively and online. True to the "City" in EDUC, the students learn about their EDUC partner's institution and student life in their partner country.

In four sessions of the English for Business Purposes course, German and French students form teams to pitch a new concept for a student organization. In addition to presenting and providing feedback in English, the students completed a written self-reflection after each session, focusing on group dynamics, communication, advocacy skills, and other topics. A similar course is being planned with EDUC partner Masaryk University in Brno as discussed at Masaryk Univerity's conference "Exploring Language for Specific Purposes in Business and Economics at Tertiary Level" in September 2022.

In addition to a subject language course in English, Zessko staff worked with colleagues in Pécs to develop a five-week Russian course module that focused on the political order of post-Soviet states. Divided into small, mixed groups, the students from Potsdam and Pécs chose a post-Soviet state for their project work. In addition to completing various exercises on the topic, the students presented and discussed their findings at the end of the project. Students and staff reported that the format offered very good opportunities for intensive training in Russian as a language of communication. Even outside of class, students arranged to meet in their groups to work on the topic and exchange ideas via chat and video conferencing.

The students in both courses confirmed that their work in the EDUC partnership greatly enriched the traditional classroom format. Communicating in a language that was neither group's native language provided an opportunity to put international communication into practice. At the same time, the project also fostered transferable skills such as patience and mutual respect.

Student feedback in these two courses illustrate that students are aware of the link between EUAs and working academically in a foreign language. Yet it is also important for students (and staff) to have low-threshold, extracurricular opportunities to practice their foreign language skills. Language cafés provide students such an opportunity. Led by native speakers of a language (either staff or student assistants), language cafés provide learners of a language to speak the language in a no-risk setting. And, language cafés are a way to build community based on languages in EUAs. The University of Siegen, a member of the ATHENA European University, offers online language cafés for all ATHENA students. The University of Potsdam also offers language cafés at Zessko, alternating weekly from online to in-person, for all EDUC students and staff. Following discussions with the University chancellor and the personnel department, the language cafés have now been opened to staff as a professional development measure.

The interest of the university administration in the language cafés at Zessko shows that European university alliances have sparked awareness not only about multilingualism but also about the role that languages could and should play in EUAs. Yet, as mentioned at the outset of this paper, measures need to be taken and milestones need to be set in order to ensure that at least the languages of all members of a European university alliance are promoted – in keeping with the recommendations of the *European Union Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism* (2011).

Knowledge that is generated in research, teaching and transfer in European university alliances needs to be disseminated in languages in addition to English to ensure greater accessibility. Texts emanating from EU institutions are "strategic sites for articulating language ideologies". They "[shape] the ways in which politicians and policy makers conceptualize and attempt to manage linguistic diversity and multilingualism" (Romaine 2013, p. 117).

Language policies of EUAs thus need to be developed locally and monitored centrally. University faculties should define key research partners in the EUA, consider how and to which degree collaborative research and teaching could take place, and communicate this to the language centers. Based on the capacity they have, language centers could then provide subject-specific language courses that focus on culturally specific modes of academic communication of the partner institution. Departments of English and

American Studies, of Romance Languages, and of Slavic Languages in the EUA could also offer shared courses in linguistics and literature in the target language for dual majors and prospective teachers.

The EU's motto is *in varietate concordia*, or "unity in diversity." To ensure that they promote cultural and linguistic diversity, EUAs and their members should commit themselves to promoting multilingualism among students and staff. To identify and cover common needs for language courses, the language centers in the EUA should meet regularly to present and promote current course offerings. For EDUC, Université Paris Nanterre coordinated these meetings; since the person responsible left the University, the meetings have not taken place. What is more, EUA language centers should work together to develop shared courses (either online or in-person) for students, researchers, and support staff. Finding a staff partner – perhaps the most time-consuming step in collaborative online teaching projects – could be facilitated by this regular exchange.

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Fostering multilingualism within the European University of the Seas (SEA-EU) Alliance

Abstract

SEA-EU envisions establishing a distinctly international, pluri-ethnic, multilingual and interdisciplinary European University. The nine universities of the alliance in Cádiz, Brest, Kiel, Gdańsk, Split, Malta, Naples, Bodø and Algarve are linked through their coastal nature, with marine and maritime studies as a sign of identity both from a research and teaching perspective. They aim at creating conditions in which all members of the universities will be able to freely participate with each other. Overcoming barriers, increasing mobility and promoting the development of language and intercultural skills has been a focus from the beginning.

Two SEA-EU language initiatives and two further activities are presented as best-practice examples that enhance multilingualism, multiculturalism and increase language learning opportunities to encourage students and staff to learn, improve or practice languages that are native within the alliance.

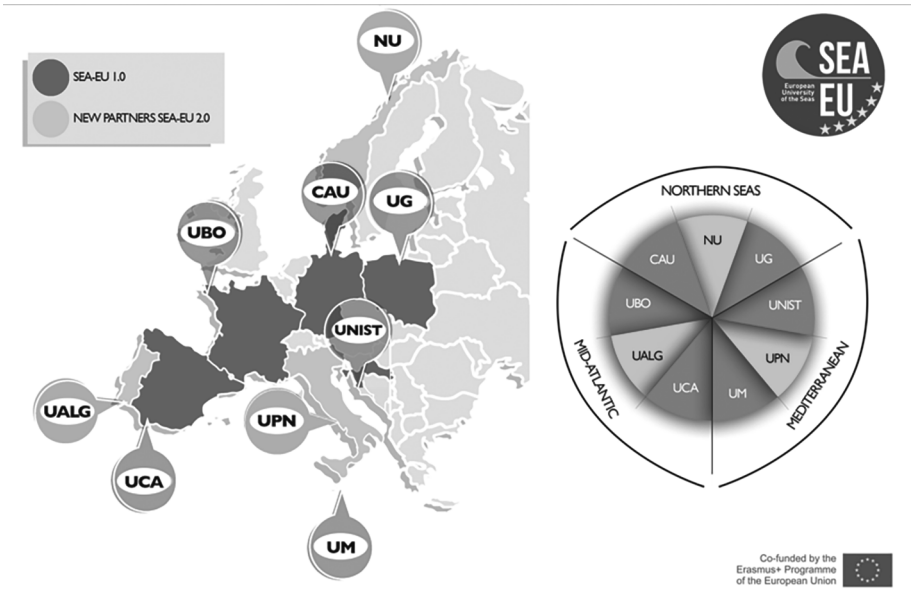
The SEA-EU Virtual Language Courses (VLC) is an activity based on the principle of reciprocity. On a platform where each SEA-EU partner lists language courses, these are offered to participants from the other partner universities. A team of local VLC coordinators jointly agreed on basic

guidelines, procedures and quality standards, which were then adapted for local implementation. In the test phase from October 2021 to April 2022, 33 VLC courses were offered and while reaching a high number of registrations, challenges also emerged mainly related to financing, drop-out rates and dissemination.
The SEA-EU Virtual Tandem Language Exchange (VTLE) supports independent and flexible one-to-one language learning, and in the roles of both learner and teacher the focus is on practising speaking skills. In the international context of the SEA-EU alliance this virtual (or physical) partnership provides an opportunity to combine language improvement and an intercultural exchange with a native or near-native speaker to the mutual benefit of both partners. First developed as a locally-implemented and manually-coordinated offer at Kiel University, it has developed to an alliance-wide offer with a tailor-made semi-automated matching system and an alliance-wide virtual team of coordinators.
The focus of this article is on aims, implementation and reflection of these complimentary activities during the first phase of SEA-EU. Challenges and issues are discussed taking contributions from other university alliances' presenters and further experts into account. Finally, questions are raised on how best to continue, adapt and scale the existing as well as new language tasks and initiatives awaiting the SEA-EU alliance in the recently started second phase, such the importance of language policies as a means of structurally implementing and institutionalising multilingualism.

1. Introduction

The first round of the SEA-EU university alliance started in 2019 with six partner universities and continues for a second phase, SEA-EU 2.0 or SEA-EU For All, from January 2023 with three new partners. All universities of the consortium, situated at the periphery of Europe, are coastal universities as the identity of SEA-EU is related to the sea. Being on the fringe, these cities are not generally very multilingual and this has an effect on how other languages are perceived and on the efforts needed to develop multiculturalism.

Figure 1 – *Partners in the first and second phases of SEA-EU: Kiel University (CAU), NORD University Bodø (NU), University of Gdańsk (UG), University of Split (UNIST), University of Naples Parthenope (UPN), University of Malta (UM), University of Cádiz (UCA), University of Algarve (UALG), University of Western Brittany, Brest (UBO)*



While language competences are an issue that features in many aspects throughout the alliance, the focus of the 2022 CEL/ELC forum was mainly covered by the Identity Subcommittee (ISC), in which language, humanities and social science experts, student representatives and administrative and technical staff of all SEA-EU universities focused on strengthening the European Identity. One central theme of the subcommittee was fostering multilingualism and intercultural understanding through the increase of language competence.

As stated in the SEA-EU proposal, language competences are at the heart of a true European identity. The ISC has as its guiding principles the importance of developing competence in the English language, the recognition and celebration of local languages and dialects and competence in a third language. For SEA-EU and many other European university alliances there is a choice of similar yet different ways to achieve those goals. For all concerned, developing these initiatives and

activities is a balancing act of what to do, how much to do, in what direction to go and how best to do it. Time of students and staff at the universities and within the alliance is limited and if, for example, time is invested in improving English, how much time and resources are then available to learn other languages or do other activities?

2. The SEA-EU Diversity Capsules and the SEA-EU Lab

The Diversity Capsules are short videos, under five minutes, combined in an online course and produced in the local language with subtitles in English to aid comprehension. Teachers and experts from the different universities present the history, economy, natural environment and cultural identity of the local and unique background of each partner in the alliance and in addition to the rich culture, students are introduced to the wealth of languages spoken within the alliance.

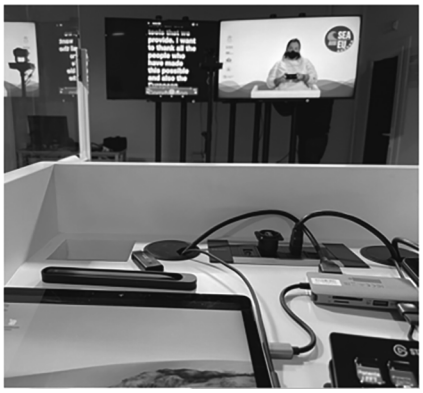
Figure 2 – *The SEA-EU Diversity Capsules*

While local and minority languages as well as cultural diversity is very important, English is vital not only for the success and future of the students, academic and administrative staff but also for the day-to-day working of the alliance. As in many if not all alliances, it is often challenging to get people to take part in the activities of the alliance. For a significant number of people, their English skills are believed or perceived as a huge barrier to contribute with confidence.

One step to breaking this barrier for administrative staff has already been achieved by SEA-EU in the first phase. Having fought for this for some time, specific tailor-made language courses offered internally by partner universities can now be taken by administrative staff during working hours and it is appreciated by the staff as something the alliance was able to implement. As a result, the participation in these courses has greatly increased.

Funded through the alliance, the SEA-EU labs are mini recording studios with the latest technology allowing teaching and administrative staff to record talks or to participate in online classes. One important and confidence-building feature is the auto cue. People are looking straight into the camera but see at the same time the text in the auto cue. This guides them through what they want to say and the English they want to use. Many more staff, e.g. lecturers recording part of a class to be shared with the partners in the alliance, agreed to participate in this type of activity than would otherwise have been the case without this possibility.

Figure 3 – *The SEA-EU lab*



3. The SEA-EU Virtual Language Courses (VLC)

Task 4.4 of the first phase states that all students and staff of the alliance should be given the chance to acquire knowledge in three of the seven languages used within the alliance. The VLC was set up to help achieve this goal and aimed to enhance multilingualism and increase language learning opportunities, encourage students and staff to learn, improve or practice a language and to support learners to develop knowledge in their chosen language(s).

Initiated by the SEA-EU language team at Kiel University, discussed and approved by the ISC, it was then offered throughout the alliance via a central platform serving as access point and providing all course and registration information. The A1 and A2 (CEFR) courses are additional and optional language courses for students and staff.

The VLC implements the following principles:

- Reciprocity – each university contributes by offering courses in their native language that are open first to participants of the other universities with open places available for members of the home university.
- Maximum Impact – to increase the level of multilingualism university-wide the offer should target all students and staff of all universities of the alliance.

- Flexibility – courses to suit the diverse needs, decision of language level, various formats, times and content, e.g., morning, lunch and evening classes from one or two weeks up to two months in intensive or extensive formats, workshops as well as one language course in Russian that unfortunately was offered just weeks before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and had to be cancelled as no-one signed up. Courses are offered as they become available.
- Inclusion – all languages of the alliance to be represented as far as possible, all offers free of charge and conducted online so no additional travelling costs arise.
- Decentralised administration: a federated system with local autonomy and clearly defined responsibilities. Each university nominated a coordinator who jointly agreed on common guidelines, procedures and quality standards and who each takes responsibility for the local implementation, adaptation and course organisation.

Figure 4 – *The VLC Logo*

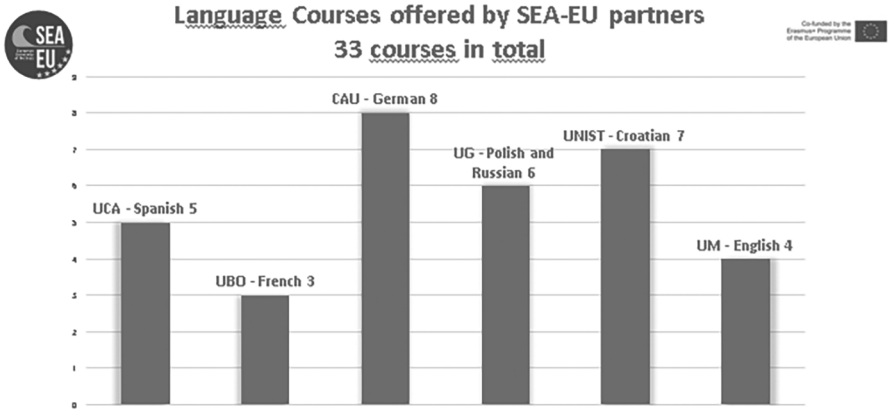
Great efforts were taken to maintain existing offers and structures. Each university potentially had a pool of language teachers already and/or existing courses that could be opened to the alliance. With regards to materials, in some cases, free eBooks for students were available for some languages. For certification a template for a 'certificate of participation' in courses within the alliance was centrally provided. Among the things to avoid were in particular high costs so each university minimised additional financial resources needed for the courses and for their administration as much as possible. Efforts were also made to ensure the

programme was easily accessible and not set hurdles too high for both the organisers and for the participants.

Central to this initiative are the common guidelines vs. the local implementation and adaptation. The common guidelines include the timeframe for this pilot activity. Each university would endeavour to offer at least one course per month with a minimum of 20 hours of contact-time for each course. Courses are first offered in the native language of the university. Evaluation for each course is carried out by both participants and teachers. The responsibility to register and maintain a database of their course participants lies with each university. Courses should be available to students and staff of all six universities through a landing platform on the SEA-EU website homepage. Kiel University provided templates for course proposal data, the evaluation and the certificate of attendance to ensure consistent quality and uniform data supply for smooth processes.

During the trial period from October 2021 to April 2022 a total of 33 courses were offered, with some universities more active than others and some languages more popular than others. Not all courses were implemented mostly because despite high registration numbers, the minimum participation number was not reached.

Figure 5 – *VLC courses offered at universities during the trial phase from October 2021 to April 2022. Maltese was offered on demand but no course started*



Seven courses were either cancelled or none of the participants received a certificate (2 courses at UCA, 2 courses at UNIST and 3 at UG (2 Polish and the Russian course)). Of the total 621 registered participants including the cancelled courses, 195 finished their course successfully and received a certificate of attendance, a success rate of 31.4%. Excluding the registrations of the cancelled courses, the percentage lies at 32.7%.

What did the trial period show? The local coordinators were highly motivated, worked mostly complimentarily on top of their regular working hours and there was a lot of interest from students and staff in a ratio of about 2 to 1 in these courses, with a high number of registrations. The two interlinked but distinct processes of joint agreements and a context-dependent and locally adapted implementation provided maximum of flexibility while ensuring high quality standards. Dissemination worked in some universities better than in others and the low-cost/low-hurdle platform achieved a sustainable activity that can be expended to accommodate a range of course offers in the future. More languages and courses are already being offered, e.g., a sign language teaser and a Christmas Workshop in German. As outlined earlier, the main focus will be on English offers to encourage students and staff to be active in the alliance.

The main challenges in this activity, which was mirrored in other alliances' presentations, were the high drop-out rates and insufficient resources, mainly financing. Keeping the courses free of charge needs a budget to pay for teachers, administration and dissemination. All these aspects need to be addressed in SEA-EU 2.0. As many participants expressed their will and wish to continue learning the language, the concept could be expanded to include higher language levels. A systematic approach of offering courses from A1 to C2 seems unrealistic given the necessary coordination and funding. However, opening the language levels will attract more learners and allow universities to focus on existing and established course programmes (such as the English courses at UM). Qualifying learners for higher levels could also bridge the gap between the SEA-EU VLC and Virtual Tandem Language Exchange (VTLE), which offers to match tandem partners from within the alliance starting at B1 learning level.

4. The SEA-EU Virtual Tandem Language Exchange (VTLE)

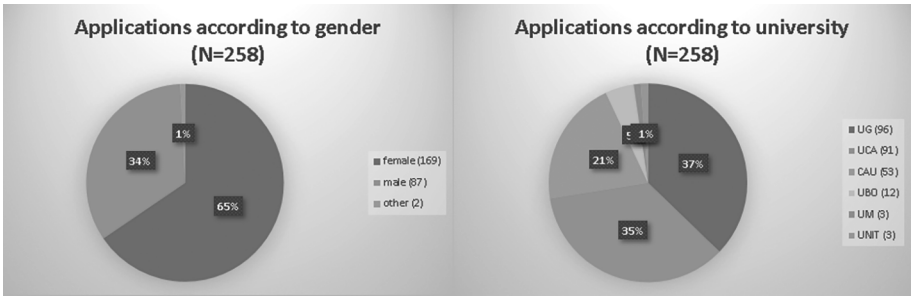
Based on reciprocity, respect and learner autonomy, the SEA-EU Virtual Tandem Language Exchange (VTLE) is a virtual (or physical) partnership, which aims at supporting independent and flexible one-to-one language learning with a focus on practicing speaking skills in authentic contexts, bridging the gap between 'classroom' and 'real' language and communication. The partners take on roles of both learner and teacher at language levels B1 (CEFR) for the learner and native/near-native speaker (C1/C2 CEFR) for the teacher. The VTLE can facilitate a development in communication skills on its own or complement more formal language instruction and further multilingualism within SEA-EU and beyond by providing an opportunity to combine language improvement and an intercultural exchange to the mutual benefit of all tandem participants across the Alliance.

Similar to the VCL, this activity was first initiated by the Kiel SEA-EU language team, then discussed and approved to expand the offer alliance-wide by the ISC. It aimed to create and assess a pilot activity, initially based on a manually-coordinated offer which included decisions on target groups, language levels, enrolment conditions, the registration and matching processes, evaluation as well as learner support material (liaising with other German universities). This was then scaled and adapted as an alliance-wide service. With local funding, a tailor-made semi-automated matching system was developed based on and adapting the framework and workflow of the CAU pilot activity. A logo was created and guidelines drafted.

Figure 6 – *The logo of the SEA-EU Virtual Tandem Language Exchange*

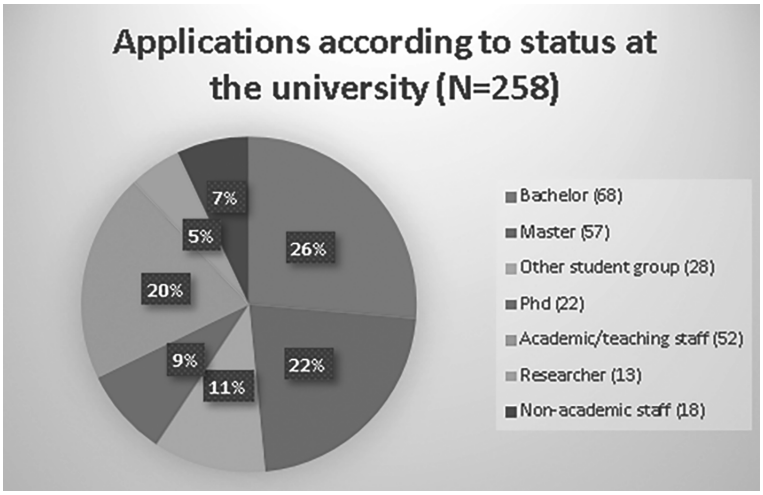
The VTLE was set up on the SEA-EU language page (https://sea-eu.org/virtual-tandem-language-exchange/) and the alliance-wide launch disseminated via the Identity Subcommittee. First the Kiel language team coordinated the service, then in order to include all universities a team of local coordinators was set up to collaborate and share the workload with Kiel as the back-up team. An evaluation of the VTLE processes and the virtual office was conducted after the first trial phase, resulting in a second trial phase for more practice. Statistics of applications, matches, languages and tandems were collected manually, but with local funding a statistics module for the VTLE system is being developed.

Chart 1 – *Applications according to gender and university in numbers (test period Oct 2020 to Jan 2023)*



As of December 2022, 258 applications from all SEA-EU partners were in the application pool. 153 applications were from students, 87 from academic/teaching staff and 18 from non-academic staff. Four tandems have successfully finished, nine were in progress, 14 did not start or failed. All languages of the Alliance (except Maltese) and 12 other European and non-European languages were in demand while all seven SEA-EU languages and 17 other European and non-European languages were offered to teach. Applications show a high demand for English but very few offers to teach it. Feedback from the successful tandems was very positive.

Chart 2 – *Applications according to status at the university in numbers (test period Oct 2020 to Jan 2023)*



The VTLE trial period in the first SEA-EU phase has shown that there is a demand with all status groups at all universities of the Alliance and the requested and offered languages range from those native to the Alliance to other European and further to non-European languages. In addition, this service can be coordinated by an alliance-wide virtual team using a semi-automated matching system.

Figure 7 – *Overview of tandems in progress and the demand of languages to learn and teach (test period Oct 2020 to Jan 2023)*

Issues to be addressed in the second phase of SEA-EU are to include the three new universities and adapt and scale the service accordingly along with a renewed and increased dissemination. The focus on English competence by all members of the alliance ties in with the demand for English tandems shown in the trial period and which could not be matched due to a lack of teaching offers. To balance out the language demands and offers for more matches is as important as to increase the number of staff, in particular administrative, taking part in the tandem service. Compared with students, staff often have a different maybe more specific motivation to improve and practise their language skills.

5. Discussion

Common issues and challenges among the presenting university alliances include the need to battle high drop-out rates. Measures discussed within the SEA-EU ISC were the introduction of ECTS-credit points or micro-credentials for some or all of the VLC courses. This would require a collaboration of all SEA-EU universities at a higher administrative level. An

alliance-wide certificate programme (with/without credit points) or the development of a SEA-EU language portfolio could be developed as has already been done by other alliances. Officially recognised national/global examinations could be offered. (Nominal) course fees could be charged. While this may increase the value of the course and the commitment of participants, the introduction of fees was rejected as being excessively challenging to implement and not embracing the ERASMUS+ principle of equity and not furthering inclusion.

The development and implementation of language policies (LP) was discussed at some length. One alliance was able to implement a common language policy in less than eight months. A very intense process including conferences, board meetings, discussions, feedback, suggestions and changes and adaptation resulted in all universities agreeing to the policy. Another comment clarified that the purpose of a language policy is seen not simply as a document of intent but as Clark (2022) states "language in general is now explicitly cited as a factor in EMI and internationalization in general. Language is recognized as the basis for planning, programming and implementing new courses and activities, launching projects, hiring staff, and developing university communication, and the LP is seen as a reference for the choices related to language within the University."

With regard to language tandems, it was pointed out how important it is to provide guidelines and support for the tandem partners. Playing it 'wild' with no further contact with the learners after matching has many pitfalls. The SEA-EU VTLE is not guided but provides guidelines to support the partners on the principals of how to conduct tandems and also on the learning process. For similar programmes such as language cafés, training of the student leaders was requested by the students themselves and proved very helpful.

The biggest challenge on many levels in all alliances was sufficient funding for the implementation of language projects. As it stands, many activities in which staff are involved are done complementarily and on top of their workload. This is confirmed by the report of the local VLC coordinators. To support projects some universities applied successfully for local funding as was the case with both the SEA-EU VTLE and VLC. As one presenter put it: most universities struggle with funding but multilingualism has a value so it must be valued by sufficient funding!

6. Outlook

The general objective of SEA-EU 2.0 is to consolidate this strategic aggregation building a true European University alliance, in which the ultimate goal is to create a new multi-campus University endowed with a legal entity. Objective 6 aims to enhance the effective use of English as the main mode of communication within the Alliance, while at the same time promoting multilingualism by encouraging respect for and knowledge of the local languages of the consortium, i.e., German, French, Italian, English, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, Croatian, Norwegian and Maltese.

With three new partners to include in the consortium the challenge is to make this wide variety of languages available to students and staff who are interested in learning more about them, while developing the effective use of English at the same time. Multilingualism does include English but it needs careful handling so that English does not overshadow other and local languages. The activities that were started during the first phase were experimented with by means of a pilot phase and worked well. But now with an increased number of members the issue of scalability needs to be considered. Transferring successful initiatives to much larger groups of students and staff may result in a loss of efficiency or not be practical at a larger scale, and some may require drastic changes in the way they are organised to make them feasible.

SEA-EU 2.0 aims to ensure the effective use of English as a means of communication, scholarship, teaching and learning within the Alliance and beyond. This includes needs assessments of the language situation in each partner university, to strengthen the English-friendly approach, e.g., by developing student and staff service manuals to work towards a truly bilingual university, offering more and more specialised courses, to organise staff weeks for EMI training, summer courses and other activities for other types of language learning and personal exchange, to expand the Virtual Tandem Language Exchange and to set up the SEA-EU language policy taking into account those language policies that already exist in the partner universities and supporting the development of a local language policy for those universities who do not yet have one. On an institutional level a language policy makes languages visible for all members of the university and they become an integral tool to consider for all activities of the university.

7. Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Dr Jonathan Durgadoo for his integral role in developing the VLE and VTLE. The members of the SEA-EU Identity Subcommittee have given their unceasing and invaluable contributions in feedback and ideas to get the VLC and VTLE going, to keep it running, to troubleshoot as necessary and to improve the concept. Many took on the function of local coordinator and together with the additionally appointed coordinators gave the service substance and a face. We also express our gratitude to the language team at Kiel University, and especially the student assistants: Ms Stina Grill, Ms Melissa Bruland, Mr Jan-Christian Wilkening and Mr Jan-Niklas Kirchheim as well as to Ms Johanna Scheffler and Ms Irene de Andres, who ensured a swift set up and maintained of the VLC and VTLE pages on the SEA-EU website. We express our thanks to colleagues at UBO for creating the SEA-EU VLC sub-brand logo. All have made it possible for members of all six universities of the SEA-EU alliance to learn a new language or improve their skills.

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Intercomprehension in UNITA: promoting multilingualism in the framework of the European Universities Initiative

Abstract

Following the Bologna Process, the dimension of internationalisation has profoundly affected a large part of the life and structure of universities through physical mobilities, transfer of knowledge, and the growth of global citizenship. Nevertheless, the European Higher Education Area is experiencing a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, universities promote multilingualism, and on the other, they encourage the use of one lingua franca – namely English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) – as a unique practice to implement internationalisation of education.

This paper shows that another way is possible. Through the experience of pluralistic approaches, with a particular focus on intercomprehension (IC), students, teachers, and administrative staff can be trained to communicate with each other by using their mother tongue. Within the European University Alliance UNITA-Universitas montium a whole work package (WP3) is dedicated to implementing intercomprehension for the first time on a large scale, empowering both students, staff, and citizens through active use of IC strategies. WP3 is developing and testing new syllabuses and creating new resources which have already started to produce excellent results in terms of openness to linguistic and cultural diversity, autonomous and learner-centred language learning, and motivation in the area of language learning. At the end of the first phase of the European Universities Initiative UNITA will provide a wide range

of materials to be shared and disseminated in the EHEA and beyond to foster practices of international multilingual communication in academia.

Since the Bologna Process, the dimension of internationalisation has profoundly affected a large portion of the life and structure of universities. As Teichler (2009, in Pulcini/Campagna 2015) points out, the phenomenon has involved physical mobility (mainly of students, but also of academic staff and occasionally of administrative staff), the mutual recognition of credits, the international transfer of knowledge, and a general trend to foster international mobility among students aimed at promoting the growth of the global citizen.

In addition to these issues that are mainly related to the promotion of the circulation of people, knowledge, and ideas, Pulcini/Campagna (2015) emphasise another crucial manifestation of internationalisation in European higher education: the recognition (and respect for) national linguistic and cultural diversity, which contrasts with the reality of monolingualism within plurilingualism and the promotion of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) as the only solution for homogeneous and cross-cultural communication. So much so that Pulcini/Campagna (2015), echoing Philipson (2006), speak of a 'European paradox': promoting multilingualism on the one hand, yet encouraging one language to take over from the others.

Certainly, the introduction of EMI has made it possible to internationalise our universities by opening them up more to foreign students, making them more attractive and train students from different European countries by giving them the basic tools to communicate with each other on a plurilingual basis. De Mauro (2014: 82) observed that "if we want a Europe in which citizens, to take up Aristotle's idea, speak a language to discuss together 'what is right and what is not, what is convenient and what is not for the common European polis', today this language is undoubtedly English". Though, in today's context, in which societies are characterised by an ever-increasing linguistic and cultural super-diversity (Blommaert, 2013; Vertovec, 2007), amplified by the contacts made possible by the development of communication technologies (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011), the European universities

can no longer limit themselves to the use of English as a lingua franca as a means of communication of disciplinary knowledge.

As a matter of fact, many authors (e.g. Anquetil and Garbarino 2018) have recently observed that the use of EMI can be limiting. Research by Gueche Fotso (2018) carried out within the University of Bamenda, Cameroon, shows that in Francophone Africa, teachers obliged to teach in English, on the one hand, do not feel prepared and on the other hand report having problems guaranteeing the quality of their teaching, particularly during the transition period towards greater English proficiency. Even when the English language competence of the teacher is guaranteed, there can be problems of no small importance.

The data collected by Pulcini/Campagna (2015), for example, reveal some critical issues in the EMI context: first of all, the language level of the students which, where – as is often the case – it proves to be insufficient, becomes the cause of major difficulties in dealing with the complexities of the disciplines. And the linguistic deficit inevitably has repercussions on the contents and the way the courses are delivered, since teaching in a language other than the mother tongue requires simplification and accommodation strategies, strategies of adaptation, which often result in a reduced coherence of the contents and in the students' failure to achieve re-elaboration skills. Added to this are the objective difficulties of a teaching staff unprepared to use an imperfectly mastered language to deal with complex topics in pedagogical contexts.

As Thøgersen's (2013) research points out, courses taught in parallel in Danish and English show important discursive differences, depending on the language used: when the course takes place in the mother tongue common to the teacher and his or her audience, the discourse is more interactive, whereas when the teacher uses English, the discourse corresponds more to an oralised written text. The analysis goes beyond this simple observation: if the aim of a university course is to introduce and guide the student into the scientific discourse of a discipline, including through argued critical reflection and practical examples, the teacher's discourse in English, which is more impersonal, will end up resembling more of a practice aimed at producing the expected discourse than a real reflection with consequent discussion. Thøgersen states:

> If the aim [of oral teaching] is a deeper understanding of the subject matter, it is assumed that the lecturer through informal presentations may act as a guide into the specialist discourse [...] However, the lecturer acts also as a 'coach' into the specialist discourse: [...] through his examples and corrections [he] shows the proper use of the specialist discourse, [...] presents students in class the discourse they are expected to use during the exam. In this lecturer's performance, it can be argued that the shift in medium of instruction leads to a shift in teacher mode from "discourse guide" in L1 to "discourse coach" in L2." (2013: 197-198)

For the aforementioned reasons, but also due to the fact that different languages allow for a greater openness to diversity and confrontation, the discovery of the richness of the linguistic and cultural landscape, the acceptability (Blanchet, 2018) of the other from oneself and the search for new avenues for scientific progress, UNITA intends to develop a strategy for active multilingualism which tackles the challenge to preserve and enhance the linguistic and cultural heritage of the partner universities through plural approaches, with particular reference to the principles of intercomprehension (IC).

Figure 1 – *LOST (but found) IN IC*
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwhmnP1STMA)

An ancestral practice, currently employed by the populations of the various countries of Europe even before the creation of national languages (Garbarino & Bonvino, 2022; Meissner et al., 2004), intercomprehension enables the establishment of equal communication between people of different languages who can each freely express themselves in their own idiom, be it national or regional, and who can make use of all their linguistic competences, using them as a resource to be drawn on in order to understand and be understood.

Nowadays, proposing active multilingualism through intercomprehension means being aware that new interaction practices and new complex, digital and multilingual literacies are developing (Garbarino & Olivier, 2020), illustrated by what Androutsopoulos (2007: 208) calls "linguistic bricolage" and more generally by translanguaging practices (García & Wei, 2014). It means observing these practices and accompanying them through a reflection based on mutual understanding, training in multilingual dialogue and the discursive co-construction of meanings, allowing speakers to give order to the creative chaos, to avoid getting lost in mixed languages, and on the contrary developing a greater awareness and mastery of one's mother tongue-culture.

In this sense, good IC practices are no different from those implemented in EMI contexts or – more generally – in multilingual educational practices: focus on pronunciation, intonation and speed of speech, the use of repetitions and reformulations, exemplification, strict internal coherence of discourse, the use of scaffolding tools, and attention to intercultural aspects (see for IC Bonvino & Garbarino, 2022, for EMI TAEC project – EMI Handbook 2020). A prerequisite for all is the metalinguistic reflection and the exploitation of one's own encyclopaedia and personal linguistic biography. If in our complex societies, the reform of the scientific method is inseparable from a reform of thinking, itself inseparable from a reform of teaching (Morin & Bibard, 2018: XXV), language learning will also have to evolve. In these terms, the horizons of language education, aimed at providing literacy in the mother tongue and in at least one foreign language, will have to adapt to the new demands of ensuring multilingual literacy, embracing a complementary perspective that takes into account the multiplicity of the real and the potential multilingualism of all individuals (Piccardo, 2013, 2017, 2019). And such

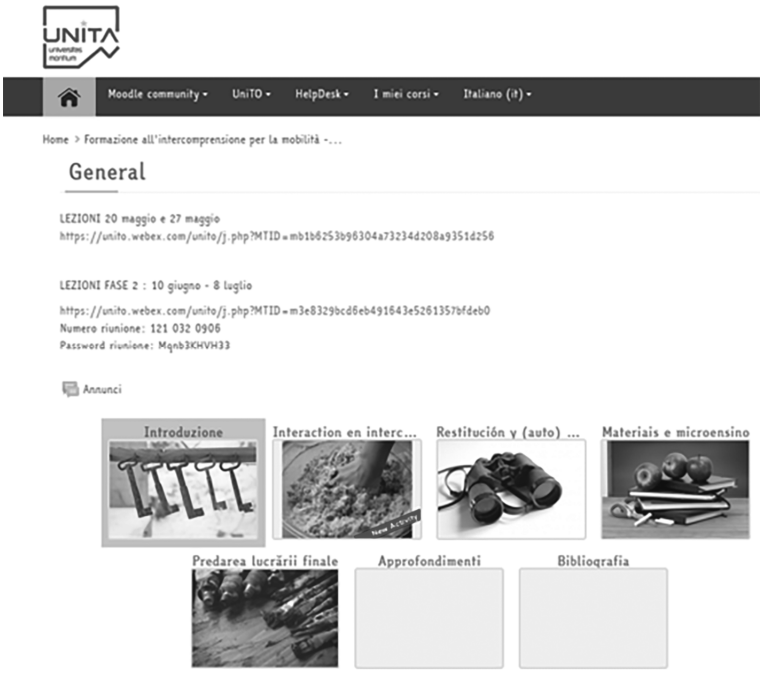
education must embrace all levels of the vertical curriculum, reaching significantly even – and especially – to the highest end of education: that of the university and its actors.

To train the current and future citizens and researchers in multilingual communication through intercomprehension also means to allow and encourage a more complete and holistic dialogue between disciplines, in a perspective that considers diversity not only as an issue but as an epistemological, political and ontological principle (Castellotti et al., 2016: 49). In this way, rich in knowledge conveyed by specific terminologies, sometimes difficult to translate into other languages although coming from the same Latin matrix, the different disciplines can only benefit from the enrichment allowed by this approach.

After nearly three years of experimentation, the benefits described above are tangible, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. To date, several syllabi have already been implemented for IC training of students from some courses at the several universities in the alliance, students from the various disciplines preparing to leave for Erasmus, language teachers training in IC teaching, non-linguistic teachers welcoming foreign students into their classes, and administrative staff. In addition, during the first two years of activity, several language cafés and ateliers brought together IC students and teachers from the different partner universities in one virtual classroom. And in order to provide basic training for those who do not fall into the above categories, a fully online introductory course to IC was created on the Start@unito open-access platform.

In five semesters, numerous students and teachers were trained in IC. An innovative action in the landscape of IC theory and practice is the training programme for trainers (Fig. 2), with 50 teachers trained within the Alliance being able to start independent training courses in their own institutions, thus making the increase in IC courses offered in partner universities possible (see Table 1, 2 and 3).

Figure 2 – *Trainer course Moodle platform*



The 30-hour courses for Erasmus students before or during the mobility made it possible to introduce principles of multilingual and intercultural communication in classes made up of students mobile between different partner universities, who were given an open IC badge with a communicative objective. Curricular courses and workshops involved numerous language students who worked in the classroom to discover, develop and enhance IC strategies, and online to carry out collaborative work in multilingual groups in a COIL perspective.

At the end of the training, students reports show that these trainings enabled them to open up to linguistic and cultural diversity:

> La **diversità** è il nostro maggior **valore** e non deve essere temuta;
>
> riconoscere **una lingua non studiata come amica**, e non come sconosciuta;
>
> è interessante notare come **L'IC aiuti percepire una lingua come amica** e non nemica, L'IC potrebbe davvero creare **più coesione** non solo europea ma mondiale;

> Ce cours éduque aussi à **l'ouverture d'esprit** et amène à découvrir les différentes cultures derrière chaque langue

and to motivating, more autonomous and learner-centred learning:

> J'ai **compris par moi-même** qu'en écoutant attentivement, on peut arriver à créer des liens entre les langues romanes [sic] et **c'est encourageant**;
>
> foi de imensa importância, aprender e **compreender na teoria algo que fazemos inconscientemente**.

As stated by some participants, this innovative approach can be discouraging at first: "Au début de ces cours je voulais abandonner mais finalement je suis contente d'être arrivée jusqu'à la fin." However, in the trainees' testimonies, we read that the change created in those who discover plural approaches – and IC in particular – is such that many ask themselves why it is not more widespread, and commit themselves to become ambassadors for the techniques acquired, by incorporating them into their future teaching practices ("If one day I teach I will make a frontline effort to make IC known: it is a pity so few people practice it and know it"), or by designing a thesis project on plural approaches.

The dynamic created in just a few semesters already makes it possible to imagine that by the end of the project period, many of UNITA's actors will be able to interact, each speaking their own language and mastering all the strategies necessary for communication in IC. Action research will accompany the ongoing experimentation, allowing the construction of tested and reliable syllabi and the collection of good practices for international multilingual communication.

Table 1 – *Intercomprehension in UNITA: activities and participants A.Y. 2020.21*

INSTITUTION	COURSE	PARTICIPANTS
UNITO	Intercomprensione fra lingue affini	63
	Laboratorio di intercomprensione fra lingue affini	29
	IC training for students' mobility	42
	IC for students' mobility (pilot)	9

INSTITUTION	COURSE	PARTICIPANTS
	IC for rural mobility	6
UPPA	Café des langues	27
USMB	IC (quinzaine des langues)	19
		11
		9
	Atelier IC	4
UVT	Cafenea lingvistică	30
	Atelier IC	11
UBI	Seminário em Intercompreensão	7
ALL	IC for Trainers	26
Tot. Alliance		342

Table 2 – *Intercomprehension in UNITA: activities and participants A.Y. 2021-22*

INSTITUTION	ACTIVITY TYPE	PARTICIPANTS
UNITO	Intercomprensione fra lingue affini	36
	Laboratorio di intercomprensione fra lingue affini	40
	IC training for students' mobility	25
	IC for students' mobility	29
	BIP	23
UPPA	Intercompréhension en langues romanes FLE	13
	Intercompréhension en langues romanes FLE	17
	Intercompréhension en langues romanes Licences	9

INSTITUTION	ACTIVITY TYPE	PARTICIPANTS
	Intercompréhension en langues romanes	20
USMB	Intercompréhension en langues romanes LEA	20
	Intercompréhension en langues romanes LLCER	57
	Intercompréhension en langues romanes POLYTECH	10
	Intercompréhension en langues romanes FLE	9
	Intercompréhension en langues romanes (teachers)	7
UVT	Cafenea lingvistică	
	Atelier IC	15
	Intercomprehensiunea în limbile romanice: texte și contexte de comunicare (sem I)	36
	Intercomprehensiunea în limbile romanice: texte și contexte de comunicare (sem II)	
	Atelier de inițiere în intercomprehensiune (adm. Staff)	13
	Atelier de inițiere în intercomprehensiune (teachers)	16
UBI	Seminário em Intercompreensão	7
ALL	IC for Teachers	35
ALL	IC for Trainers	11
Tot. Alliance		1158

Table 3 – *Intercomprehension in UNITA: activities and participants A.Y. 2022-23*

INSTITUTION	ACTIVITY TYPE	PARTICIPANTS
UNITO	Intercomprensione tra lingue affini	135
UNITO	Laboratorio di intercomprensione fra lingue affini	61
UNIZAR	La Intercomprensión como herramienta de comunicación	37
UPPA	Intercompréhension en langues romanes	25
UPPA	Intercompréhension en langues romanes – niveau 1	26
UPPA	Intercompréhension en langues romanes – niveau 2	7
UPPA	Intercompréhension en langues romanes – Master 1 FLE	10
UPPA	Intercompréhension en langues romanes – Master 1 FLE	4
UPPA	Intercompréhension en langues romanes – Master 2 FLE	5
UPPA	Intercompréhension pour la recherche	12
UVT	Cafenea lingvistică. C*u și despre Amor*	6
UVT	Cafenea lingvistică. *Ex libris. Despre intercomprehensiune*	9
UVT	Atelier de inițiere în intercomprehensiune în cadrul Săptămânii de inițiere „Bun venit la UVT" (I)	39
UVT	Atelier de inițiere în intercomprehensiune în cadrul Săptămânii de inițiere „Bun venit la UVT" (II)	16
UVT	Cafenea lingvistică autumnală. *Ex libris: Intercomprehensiune*	17

INSTITUTION	ACTIVITY TYPE	PARTICIPANTS
UVT	Cafenea lingvistică. *Despre vacanță... înainte de vacanță*	30
UVT	Disciplină complementară transversală (DCT): Intercomprehensiunea limbilor romanice: texte și contexte de comunicare (I)	26
UVT	Disciplină complementară transversală (DCT): Intercomprehensiunea limbilor romanice: texte și contexte de comunicare (II)	10
UVT	Intercomprehensiunea limbilor romanice (curs obligatoriu)	12
UVT	Romanian as a foreign language (curs)	38
USMB	TANDEMS en intercompréhension	20
USMB	Blended Intensive Programme	22
ALL	IC for Staff	28
ALL	IC for Teachers	16
ALL	IC for Trainers	20
Tot Alliance		643

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Unita Website: https://univ-unita.eu/Sites/

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Creating online language oifferings in the Ulysseus European University Alliance

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present the meaning of multilingualism in the cooperation of six higher education institutions when planning and building up a new European university. This paper shows how the role of multilingualism is taken into account in different phases of the cooperation including a language programme and other activities the universities plan and create together. The Ulysseus European University is an alliance of six European universities. All six institutions share the goal of building together a dynamic and versatile European University alliance in line with European values. Ulysseus addresses five European key goals: modernizing European Universities, contributing to local and regional development, reducing the competence gap, enhancing the knowledge and practice of European values, and promoting an open-to-the-world model of European University. The participating universities are Universidad de Sevilla, Spain (coordinator), Université Côte-d'Azur, France, Università di Genova, Italy, Technical University of Koŝice, Slovakia, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Finland, and Management Center Innsbrück, Austria.

Ulysseus European University Alliance develops activities which enhance multilingualism, internationalization, and intercultural competence within the alliance and beyond. These activities include, among other things, an international student union, mobility programmes for the students and the staff members and a mentoring programme for the teachers within

Ulysseus. The paper will focus on the +2 Language Programme (+2LP) based on the European Union's Language Policy 2022. The policy aims to ensure that all EU citizens are proficient in two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue.

1. Introduction

In the global world, languages and language skills matter more than ever before. They enhance our possibilities to understand each other, and they enable worldwide cooperation between people from different countries and cultures. Thus, languages create mutual understanding and respect.

Multilingualism has a key role when developing global cooperation; when all the languages have an equal status in an international community, everyone will be heard, understood and appreciated. This is one of the leading motives when building up the Ulysseus European University Alliance.

During its 10-year journey Ulysseus will work towards the development of the policy objectives of the European Education Area.

2. Ulysseus European University for the citizens of the future

The Ulysseus European University is an alliance of six European universities: Université Côte-d'Azur, France, Università di Genova, Italy, Universidad de Sevilla, Spain (coordinator), Technical University of Koŝice, Slovakia, Haaga-Helia ammattikorkeakoulu, Finland and Management Center Innsbrück, Austria. All six institutions share the goal of building together a dynamic and versatile European University alliance in line with European values. Ulysseus addresses five European key goals: modernizing European Universities, contributing to local and regional development, reducing the competence gap, enhancing the knowledge and practice of European values and promoting an open-to-the-world model of European University.

The workpackage 3: "Building up comptences for the future", led by Haaga-Helia UAS responds to the European key goal 3 "to reduce the

competence gap" by preparing highly digital, multilingual and entrepreneurial European citizens-through a range of combined innovative learning and teaching activities, with specific attention to career development and boosting competences that will be relevant in the future.

Ulysseus adheres to the essential pedagogical principles outlined by the alliance, with a focus on incorporating genuinely multilingual and multicultural tools within the co-creation process of educational activities. The overarching goal of Ulysseus is to cultivate outward-looking, transdisciplinary, student-centered, flexible, and work-based pedagogical practices that establish strong and long-lasting connections between academia, government, industry, and civil society. These innovative pedagogical practices implemented across all learning domains within Ulysseus have laid a robust foundation for future-oriented working life competencies.

3. New forms of language learning

Multilingual competence is one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning set by the European Commision in 2018. Language skills and multilingual competence are also demanded in the international working life when companies and organizations hire new employees (Pirhonen, 2023).

The above-mentioned aspects were taken into account when naming the Ulysseus +2 Language Programme (+2LP). The name originates from the European Union's Language Policy (European Parliament, 2017), which aims to ensure that all EU citizens are proficient in two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue.

If not before, Covid19 forced the whole education system to adopt new pedagogical methods (Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2020), and in higher education institutions (HEI) the new era showed how much flexibility e-learning offers to both students and institutions. Ulysseus' online language course package responds to this demand perfectly. The online foreign language courses created in the +2LP complement the partner universities' own range of courses.

The offering consists partly of existing language courses and partly of entirely new courses to meet the needs of the Ulysseus cooperation. Online courses were produced in ten different languages at several proficiency levels as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, European Union, 2018, 2020). The proficiency levels have been created by using descriptors for different competences and sub-competences. The descriptors are not language specific; they are relevant and applicable in all languages. The six-level-scale (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) specifies progressive mastery of the skills defined. (Council of Europe, European Union, 2018, 2020)

The Ulysseus language offering starts at the elementary level (A1) in all ten languages and the language can be studied up to the level of an independent language learner, B1 or B2, depending on the language. In total, 36 online courses were created under the +2LP. The languages and the CEFR-levels are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – *Languages and CEFR-levels in +2LP*

Language	**Level**
English	A1 – A2 – B1 – B2
French	A1 – A2 – B1 – B2
German	A1 – A2 – B1 – B2
Italian	A1 – A2 – B1 – B2
Russian	A1 – A2 – B1 – B2
Spanish	A1 – A2 – B1 – B2
Arabic	A1 – A2 – B1
Chinese	A1 – A2 – B1
Finnish	A1 – A2 – B1
Slovak	A1 – A2 – B1

4. Open and digital language courses

A1 level courses in six languages have open access, i.e., they are open to anyone interested, including those outside the Ulysseus community. The languages are English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish. This openness supports and diversifies the European language storage, and it promotes the open-to-the-world model of the Ulysseus European University and life-long learning of European citizens.

On all proficiency levels, the Ulysseus language offering includes courses ranging from fully self-paced, non-stop, to more guided, teacher-led courses with online lessons. All courses were produced on Ulysseus' own digital learning management system.

The design work of Ulysseus language courses is led and coordinated by an international team with a representative from each partner university. The team started the collaboration in spring 2021 by creating the Ulysseus +2LP Framework and Design Handbook to guide the work and the outputs of the +2LP. The team also identified existing online foreign language courses at each partner university in order to be able to choose the courses which could be adapted to the common Ulysseus offering.

Next, it was verified that both the existing courses and the new ones meet the needs and criteria for Ulysseus courses. This mutual quality assurance work started in 2021, according to the criteria established by the team. The work continued until March 2023 when the courses were delivered. The team worked effectively and in good spirits. Each partner university brought its special experience and know-how to the cooperation. All courses produced in +2LP offer different points of view, approaches and materials as they are based on various multicultural backgrounds. This heterogeneity makes the +2LP course offering unique, creates cross-cultural synergies and widens the perspectives of all actors involved.

5. The benefits of the cooperation

The aim of the +2LP is aligned with the European Union's Language Policy, and the plan is that by 2030 the majority of Ulysseus students will

be studying two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue. However, not just students gain benefits and possibilities from the Ulysseus +2LP but the partnership also creates a rich language offering for teachers, staff members and the wider public alike.

The +2LP offers students from different partner universities an opportunity to study languages and take courses at levels that are not available at their home institutions. It also offers the students several possibilities to study and cooperate in a multilingual and intercultural community. As stated in research, studying multilingually enhances the students' language learning (Pirhonen, 2023) and prepares them for their future careers. Thus, the Ulysseus community can offer students authentic experiences and contacts, preparing them for situations they are likely to encounter later in working life.

Also, Ulysseus offers language teachers new ways of doing things both pedagogically and language-wise when teaching multilingual and intercultural groups. In particular, the teachers of less widely studied languages might be able to have more courses to teach and more students in their groups when teaching internationally, for there is likely to be a greater demand for language courses in the Ulysseus community than at individual universities.

Cooperation also offers teachers an opportunity to challenge and enhance their digipedagogical competences as all Ulysseus language courses are offered online. The advancement of technology has revolutionized online language learning by providing increased accessibility and convenience. Digital classrooms also facilitate interaction between participants from diverse backgrounds, enabling exploration of linguistic diversity and cultural exchange. This development has far-reaching implications for language education, as it broadens the impact of learning, and provides opportunities for learners to engage with languages and cultures outside of their immediate environment.

In addition to offering the students and the teachers of participating Ulysseus universities new opportunities, also the non-academic staff's international possibilities widen. The versatile Ulysseus language offering is meant for all, and it is naturally available for all staff members, too. Therefore, learning new languages or improving one's existing language

skills is possible by choosing a language and a course, and then participating conveniently online from the home institution.

In the future, the types of Ulysseus online courses available will vary, and there will be different options from instructor-led academic language courses to courses that have a more reciprocal and self-directed approach. There are also international summer and winter schools organized separately for different groups, for students and staff members alike, and plenty of other options: workshops, student and staff exchanges, webinars etc., too.

Ulysseus has already organized a summer camp in a Blended Intensive Programme format for its non-academic staff in 2022 concentrating on intercultural communication, languages, diversity and inclusion within the alliance, and feedback from the participants of the first edition was excellent. The second implementation will take place in summer 2023, and the application numbers are very high. Thus, the camp will continue its journey as a rotating model in the second phase of Ulysseus focusing even more on multilingualism and intercultural communication.

So, Ulysseus offers not just language studies and chances to utilize language skills but also possibilities for improving one's intercultural competence and learning to navigate in a multicultural and multilingual university. When working together with colleagues from several Ulysseus universities from all over Europe, multiculturalism is a natural part of working life. Language skills and deeper cultural understanding together entail possibilities for versatile international networking and cooperation. These, in turn, open career opportunities and generate multicultural open-to-the world European citizens: may it be students, teachers or other members of the universities' staff.

6. Digital learning meeting today's needs

The rapid advancement of technology has led to the widespread use of digital resources in language learning. The European Union has recognized the potential of technology in education and has set up an updated Digital Education Action Plan for 2021-2027 to provide high-quality, inclusive, and accessible digital education to all learners in Europe and beyond. This

chapter focuses on the role of digital language learning through the Ulysseus Digital Platform.

The use of digital platforms in language learning has become increasingly prevalent, with the Ulysseus Digital Platform serving as an example of effective implementation. Ulysseus offers all of its language courses through the digital platform, utilizing a customized Learning Management System that caters to Ulysseus' specific needs. Ulysseus students and staff are guaranteed easy access to the platform through a common identification system. For learners outside the Ulysseus community, a guest access method has been developed.

Various digital tools are employed in Ulysseus digital language courses, including written, audio and video material using internal and external resources as well as taking advantage of Moodle resources such as H5P tests and Moodle exams. Also the learners produce material in different formats during the courses. Some courses are entirely automated, providing non-stop access for learners both within and outside of the Ulysseus community. This feature allows learners to engage in language learning at their own pace and on their own terms, making language education more accessible than ever before.

Self-directed learning (SDL) has been defined as a process by which learners direct and coordinate their efforts, thoughts, and feelings in order to achieve their learning goals (Zimmerman, 2000). The concept of self-directed learning, has been raised as one of the most critical personal skills for the twenty-first Century.

Ulysseus digital and self-directed learning meets the needs of today's higher education students belonging to the generation Z. It is stated that the Z's are technologically savvy, born into an integrated and globally connected world and they are in constant contact with people 24/7 (Rothman, 2016). Generation Z students expect a teaching environment in which they can interact in a similar way to in their virtual worlds, thus replacing "communication" with "interaction" (Cilliers, 2017). As learners, they need instant feedback, are easily bored, prefer collaboration, require flexibility and independence, need personalised learning paths and are not limited by geography, proximity or time zones (Rothman, 2016), thus providing new challenges for higher education practices and pedagogies.

Whenever the concept of self-directed learning or students' individual learning is discussed, the question of the teacher's role is raised. Self-directed learning, even though it supposes a teacher-free environment, is not meant to exclude teachers. On the contrary, self-directed learning as such, should be led and supported by teachers. The teacher's role is to lead students towards developing independent critical thinking and learning skills. The Ulysseus +2LP presents a range of language learning options, including teacher-led courses with online classes, self-paced courses with no direct teacher involvement, and courses that incorporate partial automation with guidance and feedback provided by a teacher. Research has demonstrated that students exhibit a favorable attitude toward the integration of digital tools in language education (Bećirović et al., 2021). Consistent with these findings, the feedback provided by Ulysseus language course students affirms the efficacy of virtual language instruction, particularly for individuals who lack access to similar educational opportunities within their home institution.

7. How to reach the learners

Ulysseus has implemented a comprehensive marketing plan at the start of its journey. Leveraging its website, Ulysseus has established a wide-reaching platform to showcase all of its activities to the public. In order to target specific audiences, user data is analyzed to provide personalized information. Moreover, Ulysseus employs a multi-channel approach by integrating social media platforms, podcasts and newsletters. A distinctive mobile and web-based application, named Match4Cooperation (M4C), with the primary objective of fostering cohesion and synergy among the Ulysseus community by providing a centralized mobile-friendly platform for their interaction.

To further boost its marketing efforts, the Ulysseus Dissemination Office collaborates with its partners to engage in internal marketing activities. Such efforts include publishing content on their respective social media channels and webpages, participating in student events and fairs, and other similar activities. This concerted approach serves to heighten Ulysseus' brand awareness, while simultaneously enhancing the visibility of its activities.

The collective marketing endeavors of the partners and the Ulysseus Dissemination office have already shown fruitful outcomes as evidenced by the enrollment of over 1000 students from various parts of the globe, with language course participants constituting a significant part of the learner body.

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Towards an inclusive language policy in higher education. Policy proposals

Abstract

Universities are taking on the increasing pressures to reform higher education systems and rethink institutional priorities in an increasingly globalized world. And they have embarked upon the process of "getting international" for students to become global citizens. As preconized by the UNESCO's concept paper on Higher Education "the globalisation of the world's economies and a growing acceptance that knowledge societies need highly skilled and competent knowledge workers" is at the core of HE debates.

As a result, English is increasingly becoming the dominant language in HE institutions, replacing other national and local languages. Language policy and language management in Higher Education has, therefore, become a source of concern for universities as the policies adopted may have direct consequences in terms of access to education for all, participation and inclusion. These consequences, however need to be thoroughly studied as these policies might be leaving both people and language communities behind.

This policy brief is aimed at analysing the current state of affairs on the increasing presence of English in HE institutions worldwide. It is divided into three sections. Firstly, it provides an overview of the current academic debates. Second, it analyses the close link between the language policies in HE to the UN's Sustainable 2030 Agenda, and lastly, it offers a set of concrete proposals and recommendations to ensure an equitable approach to multilingual policies in Higher Education.

1. Introduction. The language debates in Higher Education. A bird's-eye view

The world of higher education is changing at a rapid pace. Universities are taking on the pressure to reform higher education systems and rethink institutional priorities in an increasingly interconnected world. At the turn of the millennium, universities from all around the world have embarked upon the process of "getting international" for students to become "global citizens" (Vila & Bretxa, eds. 2015). UNESCO's concept note for 2022 World Higher Education Conference succinctly summarizes this trend: "The globalisation of the world's economies and a growing acceptance that knowledge societies need highly skilled and competent knowledge workers"[1].

The quest for "going international" has led to the blossoming of English-medium courses in countries where this language had not been often used (Brenn-White & van Res, 2012), sparking academic and policy debates on multilingualism – or to be more precise, the increasing use of English in replacement of other languages in Higher Education. Voices such as Gunnarsson (2001), Phillipson (2009) and many others denounce the progress of English at the expense of other languages while other scholars claim we should more cautious pointing to the specificities of the relationship between English and other languages in local contexts as it should not be forgotten that it is all languages that are being globalized (Blommaert, 2010).

[1] World Higher Education Conference WHEC2022 Reinventing Higher Education for a Sustainable Future, p. 2.

While it is true that the internationalization debates and the role of English were initially focused on the European Nordic countries (e.g. Hultgren et al. 2014), they have become a source of concern in all corners of the world, including South Africa (Madiba, 2014), Latin America (Hamel, 2013), India (Groff, 2017), Saudi Arabia (Ryhan, 2014) and Europe, Vila & Breta (2015), among many other scholarly voices.

Universities are today under increasing pressure from seemingly opposed policy agendas. On the one hand, they are under increasing pressure to produce "highly skilled and competent knowledge workers", and thus adopting English as the language of international communication. On the other, universities have often been perceived as key national flagships, assets of the nation (Soler & Gallego-Balsà, 2019). Two seemingly opposing trends: the globalizing or internationalist versus the cultural or regionalist. As a result, different languages are positioned in ways that conflict, with a clash between languages of wider communication (basically English) and national/local languages, in what has been referred also as the *mobility vs inclusion trade-off*[2]. Managing these trends has become a major source of concern for HE institutions, governments and international organizations alike.

Multilingualism has always been prominent in EU policy narratives. Education policy is not an exception, the European Education Area repeats the vision of 'all citizens to learn at least two languages and to begin learning foreign languages at an early age.' Although this is in principle a pro-multilingualism stance, the picture is more complex when put in close scrutiny. Multilingualism in policy documents is typically associated with national languages which in and by itself is a political and reduced representation of linguistic diversity as it reproduces the one-state one-language fallacy (Climent-Ferrando, 2016). Elsewhere (Angouri, 2013; Angouri and Piekkari, 2018) we have referred to a monolingual view of multilingualism reinforcing the nation state construct in which the one language, one nation, one people is fundamental. This, evidently, does not reflect the diversity of language varieties that make up the 'nation state' construct. The disconnect between national varieties labelled as 'standard

[2] For a full account of the mobility & inclusion concepts applied to multilingualism management, see the MIME Vademecum, Mobility and Inclusion in a Multilingual Europe).

languages' is well established in classic sociolinguistic literature (e.g., Milroy, 2001). Official/national languages, typically, correspond to the linguistic variety of the most powerful groups in a given national context and hence the symbolic power associated with them. Following from this position then, which linguistic varieties are promoted in what domains of activity is a political decision. Pro-multilingualism policy statements, therefore, often perpetuate a monolingual ideology in European societies – despite the deep disconnect with the reality of Europe historically and at present.

Language policies in educational domains often portray the same idea of one-nation/one language. In HE, which is our focus, reflect the same lack of engagement with and acknowledgment of the politics of language. Policy documents are: often too high level to capture diversity of practice; omit the complexity of language practice by focusing on language of instruction only; avoid engaging with the politics of language in the assessment and evaluation of academic work or remain ambiguous for being translatable for classroom practice.

As recently as February 2022, the Council of Europe adopted the Recommendation CM(Rec)2022(1) on the *importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education for democratic Culture*, which urged Member States to "review their policies and practices to ensure students are equipped with the linguistic and cultural resources needed to participate in the democratic processes of Europe's diverse societies". Along these lines, the Council of the EU approved the Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages in 2019 as language skills are at the heart of the vision to create a European Education Area. The UNESCO Chair on Language Policies for Multilingualism has placed this theme at the core of its policy agenda and so has the EUTOPIA European University Alliance and its Multilingualism & Diversity Learning Community.

2. Language Policy trends in Higher Education. Multilingualism as a synonym of "more English"?

The increasing number of courses in English as a medium of instruction (EMI) is having direct consequences in a variety of HE fields.

For instance, with regard to teaching and learning activities a recent comparative overview of studies about EMI in the Nordic countries demonstrates that university students cope reasonably well with EMI, but they take more time to achieve similar results to L1 programmes (Airey et al. 2015). Moreover, some investigations of 2-year EMI Master's programmes in Finland indicate that students display problems in using conceptual language (Lehtonen et al. 2003).

In terms of quality of education in higher education, there are a number of studies about how university instructors cope with EMI as it depends on many factors. For example, in an early study of English-medium university courses in the Netherlands, Vinke et al. (1998: 391) demonstrated that "there is a distinct difference between (the experience of) conducting courses in English and in the mother tongue". Such a difference includes limitations in vocabulary, redundancy, clarity and accuracy of expression; a reduced ability to cope with unexpected issues that go beyond a lecturer's preparation for a given class; larger workload with regard to preparation time and (mental) energy; diminished self-esteem about the quality of one's own teaching; and increased importance of pedagogical skills. Also exploring English-medium courses in the Dutch university system, Klaassen (2001: 176) argued that teacher pedagogy – that is, student-centred teaching – trumps a lecturer's proficiency in English.

In terms of students' participation in the classroom, several studies (e.g. Vila & Bretxa, eds. 2015) point at a more limited comprehension and a lower class participation when students are compelled to participate in English (in non-Anglophone countries). In sum, using English as a medium of instruction is a complex undertaking that requires a high command of English on the part of both faculty and professors.

Another source of concern is the implication of the increasing use of English for research, publication or academic orientation. As indicated by Altbach & de Wit (2019), the consequences of the increasing use of English in research could be summarized as follows:

a) Studies show that the most highly cited journals and articles are in English. Academics from non-English environments are disadvantaged in several ways. Their facility in English, which is not their native language, will often be imperfect.

b) Lack of alignment with local needs and dominance of western paradigms in research.
c) English-medium international journals limit the possibilities to contribute to scientific debate in local languages for local communities. This is especially important in fields such as the humanities and social sciences, which are deeply rooted in multilingual and multicultural activities.
d) There is also a concern about the role of colonial languages in the developing world, and particularly in Africa. Local languages are used in public primary and secondary education, but, with some exceptions, not in higher education. The risks of such policies are high: elitism in access of higher education; deterioration of quality of education and research; lack of alignment with local needs; and dominance of western paradigms.

3. Linking Language Policies in HE to the 2030 Sustainable Agenda

Language is a major resource for indexing belonging and a gatekeeper for inclusion/exclusion between different groups. Although 'multilingualism in HE' is used to describe the international nature of modern institutions, we have seen that there is a hierarchy of languages. Language use in HE contexts is as political as in other domains of society. As highlighted by the United Nations' Leaving No-one Behind (LNOB) initiative, "Many of the barriers people face in accessing services, resources and equal opportunities are not simply accidents of fate or a lack of availability of resources, but rather the result of discriminatory laws, policies and social practices that leave particular groups of people further and further behind".

The increasing use of English in Higher Education is a planned, deliberate language policy that has consolidated over the past years in HE institutions around the world, under the alleged rhetoric of internationalisation, progress and excellence. The practical consequences, however, need to be thoroughly studied as these policies might be leaving both people and language communities behind.

The politics of multilingualism are rarely addressed in language policy documents, and this is the case for EU policy too. Language use and

language choice in multilingual settings is a political act. Speakers through their choices perpetuate or challenge societal asymmetries; language choice and language use never take place in a power vacuum. Language policies in HE matter because the most disadvantaged groups in society tend to have least access to the dominant languages. Language use in HE contexts is, therefore, as political as in other domains of society and language varieties are part and parcel of the negotiation of power asymmetries between speakers of the languages that form each linguistic ecosystem.

As already analysed by S. Romaine (2016), as an increasing number of HE institutions turn to English as a medium of education, English becomes an essential basic skill that needs to be achieved. Where access to English is unequal, the gap between different students will widen. Under the rhetoric of excellence and internationalisation, some language policy choices might be achieving discrimination and exclusion. In sum, language policies in educational domains, and particularly HE which is our focus, must be revisited to ensure an equitable approach to multilingualism, a combination between the international and the local.

4. Proposals for an inclusive and sustainable Multilingualism Policy in HE

The time is ripe to challenge this persistent multilingualism paradox; on the one hand multilingualism is associated with mobility, productivity and knowledge creation. On the other hand, our society and our institutions continue to operate on a monolingual ideal. We need a different framework to promote the importance of multilingual pedagogies for economic growth, global competitiveness, social cohesion, mobility and for unlocking our students' creative potential if we really want multilingual policies that societies will see relevant and which then HE institutions will be able to adopt and implement.

Revisiting language policies in Higher Education entails reconceptualising the concept of multilingualism itself, beyond than the sum of (more) English to the detriment of national language/s. With the exception of discipline specific debates (e.g., multilingual education has been receiving attention in linguistics and education studies see e.g., work

in Wyse, Hayward, Pandya, 2015), multilingual education is still not widely discussed and language use is associated with proficiency, which is only a part of how speakers decide which variety is appropriate for what purpose. This also applies to multilingual pedagogies which are rare and generally not part of teacher training in most European countries – despite the significance of language for participation and inclusion to education and the diversity and change in the demographics that make the European classrooms.

We must adopt a dynamic, nuanced and politically informed definition of multilingualism, which will lead to a language policy that enables and empowers language users, and supports the development and application of multilingual pedagogies. The following proposals can help move the debates along these lines:

1. When dealing with the language policy of a particular HE institution, it is paramount to also consider the actual language practices that teachers and students are engaging in as well as the potentially different and conflicting communicative and academic aims agents might be pursuing (Dafouz and Smit, 2016). This means abandoning a static view of languages as bounded entities (English, Swedish, Dutch, etc.), which have been the way language management has been traditionally tackled in all education levels, and embracing instead a more dynamic perspective that focuses on ***linguistic repertoires***.
2. If we consider that the lack of language competences is one of the main barriers to participation in European education, training and mobility in the EU, we can easily infer that the ability to use one's linguistic repertoire and to develop one's multilingual competence constitute added value for students, researchers, and staff. The ability to use the various linguistic repertoires of students, researchers and staff makes the linguistic environment in HE open to embracing linguistic diversity, leaving no one behind and ensuring equal participation.
3. As Airey et al. (2015) propose: "it is not enough to simply incorporate generalized references to the language of instruction of the form 'in this course students will practice the use of disciplinary English'. Rather we suggest more specific references along the lines of "in this course the following skills will be developed in the following

language(s)'. We suggest, therefore, going from a static conception of multilingualism – understood as the sum of the languages of instruction as a static/rigid element – to a more dynamic, fluid conception of multilingual competences in a specific environment, that is, in a specific ***linguistic ecosystem***.

4. We argue that approaching and developing pedagogies for HE as a ***linguistic ecosystem*** can provide opportunities for speakers of different varieties to use their own linguistic resources in the process of their learning. This can then flatten hierarchies between varieties and 'legitimise', i.e. empower, students and staff in using the totality of their linguistic resource.
5. We are proposing a holistic and pragmatic view of language and language use in HE – one that recognises the complexities of language use between speakers of different varieties, some of which might be considered as less 'standard' or less 'valuable' than others. Put in other terms, we must explore the full potential of the linguistic repertoire of all stakeholders involved in HE institutions. This goes fully in line with the current trends and recommendations for reform of HE institutions, which encourage universities and other competent institutions and agencies to engage in research that contributes to international understanding of plurilingualism, intercultural dialogue and the linguistic repertoires of citizens at all educational levels and in all social domains.
6. We do not suggest that HE should not develop students' proficiency in a given dominant language. To the contrary, all students should have access to the competences that are necessary for fully participating and growing academically, professionally and personally. However, ignoring and excluding the language capital of many students and staff is reducing the learning capacity and the capital those students bring to their own learning and to that of their peers. Further to this, multilingual pedagogies can enrich the diversification, decolonisation and decentralisation of HE curricula which is necessary for providing students an opportunity to develop a deep understanding of historical and synchronic asymmetries and ways to challenge the status quo.
7. Language policies in HE should be conceptualized in a more context-sensitive way. Rather that formulation a one-size-fits-all (English)

solutions, an equitable language policy needs to acknowledge the local language as well as the dynamics of social and geographical mobility giving rise to particular language repertoires. Considering this combination of "the local" and "the international", we aim to propose the principle of ***auto-centered multilingualism*** (Kraus, P.A: Climent-Ferrando, 2018, et.al.). Applied to HE language policies, it aims to tackle the trade-off between mobility and inclusion, between the international and the local languages. Under this principle, the local languages must occupy a central position in HE public institutions as their main purpose is to serve the society they are in. At the same time, the linguistic repertoire of students must also be valorised and used, as well as English.

From this perspective, a dynamic, nuanced and politically informed definition of multilingualism should lead to a language policy that enables and empowers language users, and supports the development and application of multilingual pedagogies. Classic sociolinguistic work (Gumperz, 1982) has argued long ago that the use of language (and of given language varieties) in a way that is considered appropriate and can secure access to resources is related to social and political knowledge and power structures that go beyond language understood as a system of meaning-making signs.

Universities are rich linguistic ecosystems in which multiple linguistic varieties are in contact and co-exist. Some varieties are more prominent than others and hold symbolic roles as language/s of instruction, of majority communities or of high prestige. As they become more globally oriented, the linguistic complexity increases. HE institutions must ensure that the language policies adopted are aimed at ensuring equal opportunities, services and resources for the society they serve while engaging in international research and networks of excellence. Their policies and practices must ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary linguistic and cultural resources needed to fully participate in today's interconnected societies.

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finito di stampare
nel mese di giugno 2024
presso la LITOGRAFIA SOLARI
Peschiera Borromeo (MI)