

May 29th
Panel Four
EU Language policies
12.00-13.00 EET

Chairs: Prof. Dr. Madeleine Danova, Dean of Faculty of Classical and Modern Philologies, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski and Assoc. prof. Dr. Galina Rousseva-Sokolova, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philologies, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

Language and identity in Europe: The multilingual city and its citizens

Abstract

This paper shares new research perspectives on the theme of European linguistic and cultural identity, in the context of a multilingual Europe, particularly in urban settings. The presenter explores the extent to which diversity, and in particular linguistic diversity, affects identity formation across the European Union, from Ireland to Bulgaria, and beyond its borders. The paper illustrates both the importance of this research theme and the potential for further development in theory, policy and praxis. Case studies and other empirical findings will be shared for a deeper understanding of language and identity in complex social contexts within an evolving geopolitical and cultural landscape.

Dr. Lorna Carson is Head of the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences and Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. She is also the founding Director of the Trinity Centre for Asian Studies, a multidisciplinary teaching and research centre. Her research on language learning addresses issues located at the interface between individual and societal multilingualism, with a particular attention on the language classroom, with a focus on language learning, language education policy and assessment.

Multilingualism, plurilingualism and language learning in the EU

Abstract

The EU policy that children should learn two languages from an early age is usually referred to as developing ‘multilingualism’, but also increasingly as ‘plurilingualism’. I will discuss the difference between multilingualism and plurilingualism in the individual language learner and raise some questions about the implications for designing curricula for languages and other subjects.

Michael Byram studied languages at King's College Cambridge, wrote a PhD in Danish literature, and then taught French and German in secondary and adult education. He was at Durham University from 1980, now Professor Emeritus. He has trained teachers and researched linguistic minorities and foreign language education. In the 2000s he was Adviser to the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. He is now involved in the Council of Europe's work on Competences for Democratic Culture.

EU language policies: Are they still relevant in the time of coronavirus?

Abstract

Languages - Multilingualism - have been an important and explicit part of the European project, for the European Union since at least the 1980s with the establishment of the European Bureau for Lesser used Languages and then the Erasmus and Lingua programmes supporting mobility and foreign language education respectively. For the next 30 years this policy was developed and refined through such initiatives as the 1995 *White Paper on Education and Training - Towards the Learning Society*, the Lisbon Strategy which specified the need for European citizens to acquire 3 languages and the 2005 *Framework Strategy on Multilingualism*. This defined 'the ability to understand and communicate in more than one language' as 'a desirable life-skill for all European citizens' encouraging us to 'become more open to other people's cultures and outlooks', improving cognitive skills and strengthening 'learners' mother-tongue skills' as well as enabling 'people to take advantage of the freedom to work or study in another Member State'.

Over rather a longer period the Council of Europe was supporting multilingualism as a key element of democratic citizenship and developing and promoting new approaches to language learning - for all people - as well as greater clarity in understanding the process of language learning, teaching and assessment (*The Common European Framework of Reference..*)

By 2010, however, there was a tendency, exacerbated no doubt by the consequences of the financial crisis to pull back from some of the more optimistic expectations of this multilingual dream. This was reflected in the reallocation of resources and new priorities, within the European Union and the Council of Europe and in many national government policies. At that time we carried out a small project to examine the progress of European Language policies and to make suggestions on further developments, taking account of these changes but also looking forward to more positive possibilities by 2020 (*Languages in Europe Towards 2020*). In this brief talk I will review the progress that had been made by 2010 and the solutions which were then suggested. I will also consider the effects of the current global crisis in relation to multilingualism and the aspiration for 'unity in diversity'. Perhaps inevitably as we are living this experience rather than observing it with hindsight I will raise more questions and doubts than answers and certainties.

Dr Lid King was Director of the UK National Centre for Languages and then National Director for Languages in England responsible for the National Languages Strategy (2003 to 2011). As Director of the Languages Company he has advised national and regional administrations on languages and has coordinated and supported projects on language policy and languages pedagogy.