

Vienna Manifesto “The cost of monolingualism“

In the framework of the “European Year of Languages 2001”, the Austrian Academy of Sciences organised the conference “The Cost of Multilingualism – Globalisation and Linguistic Diversity” in Vienna from 7 to 9 June 2001. Special emphasis was placed on the subject of multilingualism in the humanities and sciences. Scholars from 11 countries worked out the below principles and recommendations for the development of a European language policy that has to be supplemented by measures at national and regional levels:

PRINCIPLES

- a) Only if Europe’s linguistic diversity is preserved and promoted will the project of European integration succeed. On the one hand, it is impossible to make foreign language skills a prerequisite for exercising democratic rights. On the other hand, mutual understanding is indispensable for living together.
- b) There is no contradiction between using a *lingua franca* (predominantly English) in some spheres of work and actively practising multilingualism in other areas. Very often the cost of multilingualism is overestimated.
- c) It is a *sine qua non* for building a European identity to assure citizens that their mother tongues will form part of it. In some cases understanding will not be possible without a *lingua franca* (e.g. English) but European communication processes should not rely exclusively on it. The introduction of a “leading” European language would mean to favour the native speakers of this “single language” politically and economically. This fact would result in political conflicts with unforeseeable consequences.
Many cultural achievements of Europe are closely linked to the achievements of specific languages and intellectual traditions. If these languages and achievements are no longer used, this would mean a depletion and loss of Europe’s cultural diversity.
To stop practising multilingualism would have serious consequences: necessary investments would no longer be made into these languages, important skills and knowledge (e.g. in the area of translation) would be lost and valuable intellectual heritage would become inaccessible.
- d) It is the task of schools, universities and institutions of advanced training on the one hand, and of governments on the other hand to safeguard multilingualism. These sectors have to interact and create instruments to make multilingualism possible and to enhance its status. A vital element in this process is to preserve and use the existing wealth of languages by placing more emphasis on minority and migrant languages in the general educational system than in the past.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Europe urgently needs a transparent public discussion on language policy with the aim of developing guidelines for European and national language policies.
Therefore it is necessary to set up forums responsible for language-policy-related aspects of enlargement and for developing a new European approach to the language issue in which as many players of society as possible should participate (from the political and economic arenas, the media, NGOs).
2. The foundations of this new approach are as follows:
 - a) the right of all citizens to learn and use their own national and minority languages,

- b) the right of all citizens to learn at least two foreign languages in compulsory school education,
 - c) the duty of all governments to encourage and promote foreign language learning even beyond school education,
 - d) the duty of all governments to promote multilingual undertakings, institutions, homepages and the like by tax relief and bonus systems (e.g. in contract award processes) or similar measures,
 - e) the duty of all governments to organise in an exemplary way the establishment, access and utilisation of public terminology resources and to promote standardisation activities by different measures (incentive systems, legal provisions).
3. All governments should use a fixed percentage of their GDP for promoting multilingualism in education, research, politics, administration and the economic sector.
 4. The European Union is called upon to implement multilingualism in its own practices in a more credible way,
 - by extending the working language regime, e.g. based on the principle of European regions,
 - by using the Internet to achieve a greater diversity of languages,
 - by implementing recommendations providing for the support of multilingual media, journals and abstract services,
 - by involving national and sector-specific terminology resources, including those of the private sector,
 - by early use and standardisation of these terminology resources at all stages of the legislative process and by providing a transparent explanation of the terms and concepts used in all legal documents,
 - by supporting the translation of project applications, research projects, publications by publishing houses and of scientific texts published in journals,
 - by re-considering the practice of simultaneous interpretation,
 - by a greater reliability of document translations,
 - by an exchange of language teachers, even at the elementary school level
 - by increasing funds for research in the area of multilingualism (focused research).
 5. By reforming traditional foreign language teaching it would become possible to offer a wider range of languages in the educational system within a shorter period. Therefore a reform of foreign language education must be an integral part of a European language policy. Key aspects of this reform are for example:
 - early beginning of foreign language education, with a special emphasis on neighbouring languages and contact languages
 - greater flexibility in the order of languages
 - using foreign languages as working languages, while reducing the duration of traditional foreign language education
 - using intensive courses in foreign language education at school instead of extensive forms of learning during several years
 - using multimedia e-learning resources (above all technical languages)
 - promoting receptive multilingualism
 - developing curricular multilingualism by using the synergy effects of the second and the third foreign language
 - modifying the training of foreign language teachers: the philological model should be replaced by training experts in multilingualism or language and subject coordinators

- promoting stays and teaching assignments abroad of teachers and taking adequate measures to avoid disadvantages in terms of insurance and pension schemes.
6. The candidate countries should be encouraged to make the promotion of foreign language learning and the preservation of their own national and minority languages in their educational systems and in academia an integral part of their national language policies. As a result of enlargement, the European Union will have to give more consideration to the previously neglected Slavonic languages and Hungarian in language teaching, research, its language policy and terminology resources and to explore new approaches to the current informal internal working language regimes.

MULTILINGUALISM IN THE HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES

7. As regards the humanities and sciences, measures have to be taken to ensure that national languages other than English domineering as a *lingua franca* in academia will be preserved and further developed. At least in the humanities and arts, this is a crucial prerequisite for preserving academic cultures with their specific knowledge gains. This means
- to promote the bilingualism and multilingualism of scholars,
 - to develop a multilingual academic culture, e.g. by supporting multilingual abstract services and technical journals, by multilingual teaching and by supporting the translation of academic publications
 - to promote doctoral theses and theses required of candidates wishing to qualify for lecturing at a university written in the respective national (technical) language
 - not to base the evaluation of academic achievements on evaluation standards (e.g. SCI, SSCI, A&HCI) clearly preferring a *lingua franca* but, on the contrary, to encourage multilingual publications (particularly in so-called “national” fields of knowledge such as history and linguistics)
8. The ability of adequate linguistic action is a prerequisite for an effective multilingualism in the humanities and sciences. To this end it is necessary to investigate multilingual discourse communities including receptive multilingualism and synergy effects between related languages as well as the development of adequate training programmes for (fledgling) scholars.

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