

Language Learning as the Way to European Union Multilingualism

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Multilingualism has been part of the EU policy, legislation and practices since the Treaties of Rome. At first it was associated with the language of the European institutions, including their contacts with authorities and citizens in the Member States. After the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 the promotion of language learning and individual multilingualism, combined with the linguistic diversity, became a corner stone of the EU's educational policy. In the nineties the principal attention was focused on the learning of the official languages but in the first decade of the new century the stress has been made on an inclusive language education policy to promote the learning of all languages, including regional or minority, migrant, and major world languages [2].

On 14 February 2002 the Council adopted the Resolution on the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning, which stressed that the knowledge of languages is one of the basis skills each citizen needs to take part effectively in the European knowledge society and it facilitates both integration into society and social cohesion. On 15 and 16 March 2002 the European Council meeting in Barcelona called for further improvement of the basis skills, in particular by teaching two foreign languages since the early age [1].

It was the decision of President J. M. Barroso to make "Multilingualism" part of the portfolio of one of the Commission members and on the 1st of January Commissar L. Orban became responsible for multilingualism in education, culture, interpretation, translation, and publications. This fact proved the Commission's enhanced comprehension of the multilingualism for the Union caused by such challenges as the enlargement of the EU and the Single Market, the increase of the mobility within the EU, the revival of the regions, the advent of the knowledge society, migration into the EU, and globalisation.

On 20 September 2006 the Commission set up the decision to establish the the High Level Group of Multilingualism which had to study the issue of providing the support and advice in developing initiatives and ideas for the elaboration of the approach to multilingualism in the European Union. The responsibility of the Group was to make recommendations for the Commission in the sphere of multilingualism. Commissioner Orban's political agenda centred around three objectives: 1) economic competitiveness, growth, and better jobs; 2) lifelong learning, intercultural dialogue; 3) creation of a space for European political dialogue, and communication with citizens [2].

On December 2006 the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council identified "communication in foreign languages" as one of eight key competences "necessary for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social cohesion and employability in a knowledge society" [3]. On December 30 2006

the European Parliament and the Council made a decision to set up the Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

The High Level Group of Multilingualism paid attention to the intercultural value and the cognitive benefits of language learning, the latter supports attention, perception, memory, concentration, critical thinking, problem solving, the ability to work in teams and as the result the growth of wellbeing of each citizen.

Learning other languages has an intercultural value as it encourages the openness to other people's cultures, stimulates and enhances the ability to communicate and co-operate with people across boundaries. As the result migrants set aside stereotypes and learn the language of the host country, while citizens of the host country appreciate the culture of a migrant community and become motivated to learn the language of that community. All education establishments must offer special possibilities for language learning as very often second- and third-generation migrants possess good oral skills but cannot read and write. The High Level Group of Multilingualism considers it to be a good investment, as these people could help to establish economic contacts in their countries of origin, and could play an active role in programs of assistance for newly arrived migrants [2].

Language learning as the way to multilingualism must become the basis for the Creation of a European space for political dialogue and communication with the citizen. The priorities are the translation of EU legislation into all the official languages; the attraction of experts in multilingual communication; the development of new technological tools for the translation and interpretation; strengthening the translation quality due to the increase in the number of official languages. Emphasizing the importance of joint elaboration of education programs in translation teaching the High Level Group of Multilingualism initiates the introduction of the European Master in Translation (EMT) project.

In its Resolution as of 21 November 2008 on a European strategy for multilingualism the Council of the EU calls the EU Member States to

1. promote multilingualism with a view to strengthening social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and European construction, in particular to provide teaching the language of the host country to migrants (esp. for the youth) for their successful integration and employment, while respecting the languages of their countries of origin;

2. strengthen lifelong language learning, i.e. to help the youth to master at least two foreign languages in all kinds of educational establishments; to encourage the use of digital communication technology and distance learning for teaching languages; to pay special attention to further training of teachers who could promote the teaching of non-linguistic subjects in foreign languages; to foster European mobility and exchanges among language teachers, who could spend a period of time in a country where the language they teach is spoken;

3. promote multilingualism in the European economy's competitiveness and people's mobility and employability as learning the languages helps enterprises broaden their access to world markets; language skills encourage the career development of employees; job-specific language courses are to be provided;

4. promote the linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue by encouraging the circulation of works and the dissemination of ideas and knowledge in Europe and across the world, i.e. to inform the public, in particular European professionals, about national and European assistance schemes for the translation of literary, scientific or technical texts, subtitling of audiovisual works and films; to develop the possibilities for training in translation; to encourage the development of language technologies in the field of translation and interpretation by encouraging cooperation between the Commission, the Member States, local authorities, research bodies and industry;

5. promote EU languages across the world by strengthening cooperation between Member States, their cultural institutions or other representative bodies in third countries, and promoting language partnerships and intercultural dialogue with third countries; enhancing cooperation with national and international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe and UNESCO, working in the field of language learning and linguistic and cultural diversity [1].

So, European linguistic diversity has an immense impact on knowledge production, the relevance of multilingual competence to the employability and mobility of European workers is a recognized fact by the EU itself and its Member States.

Literature

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Summary

Multilingualism is one of the principal policies of the European Union. The main stress of its language policy has been made on an inclusive language education policy to promote the learning of all languages which facilitates social cohesion, employability and the rise of the citizens' wellbeing.

Key words: language policy, multilingualism, linguistic and cultural diversity.

Резюме

Карпчук Н.П. Изучение иностранных языков как путь к мультилингвизму Европейского Союза. Мультилингвизм – одна из основных политик Европейского Союза. Основной акцент языковой политики ЕС – политика инклюзивного языкового обучения, которое способствует изучению языков, что, в свою очередь, содействует социальной сплоченности, возможности занятости и увеличению благополучия граждан.

Ключевые слова: языковая политика, мультилингвизм, лингвистическое и культурное многообразие.

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