Suggesting a New European Language Policy

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A B S T R A C T

Conflict is the most intriguing aspect of contact linguistics. Throughout history ever since the Tower of Bable was left unfinished, contacts between speakers of different languages have unavoidably resulted in conflicts between speakers of those languages. Without any doubt, the European Union (EU) – above all after the decision to enlarge the community – has accepted the multidisciplinary symbolic function of language and culture as a basis for European political unification. Accordingly, European Union policy makers have had to analyze conflicts caused by monolingualism and multilingualism, all aspects of contact linguistics. Can these conflicts be solved, minimized or neutralized by strategies of language planning, language policies and language politics? Initial results of European language policy strategies permit at least a cautious measure of optimism and open broad perspectives for the future of a New Multilingualism which will be discussed in our contribution.

***Key words**: language policy, New Multilingualism, conflict*

Introduction

Following suggestions for a classification of multilingualism, this paper presents the problems confronting a European language policy in five propositions. The terms of the fifth proposition – the Europeanization of language policy – will be examined more thoroughly in order to scrutinize conflict avoidance strategies – strategies which have already proven useful in multilingual countries and which may yet serve as a starting point for a discussion on how to neutralize conflicts all over Europe. The subsequent conclusions will try to demonstrate the extent to which contact linguistics may contribute to a politico-linguistic conflict analysis within an extended Europe.

It would be like carrying coals to Newcastle if, at the beginning of the second millennium, one were to plead for multilingualism from a Brussels perspective.

In Brussels, multilingualism and multiculturality are everyday phenomena that can be encountered in innumerable situations. What is new, however, is that the inevitable interdependence of politics, economy, media culture and language has been acknowledged in the official language planning of the EU that itself has created a politico-linguistic instrument by founding a »ministry« (Directorate General XXII) which – to some extent successfully – tries to manage language issues. This official body is responsible for, among other things, cross-border academic exchange (Socrates, Erasmus, Tempus, etc.) and for the handling of indigenous minorities (or "lesser used languages" as EU terminology puts it) which are entangled in conflicts of historical and socio-economic provenance. A long, overdue and thorough analysis of these minority languages on the »Production and Reproduction of Minority Language Groups in the European Union« from 1996, known as the *Euromosaic report*, enriched and reinforced contact linguistic research in essential aspects. Language planning and language policy have thus become established in the cultural planning of European Union members in such a way that they are now even recognized by outsiders.

Some new perspectives of contact linguistics that emerged in the mid-nineties might have considerable impact on multilingualism in the next century and can be summarized as follows:

1. Multilingualism is no longer an exception to the rule for European countries with several languages, but – as in many regions of Asia and Africa – is becoming commonplace. In many cases it has already become a matter of course.

2. Whereas the predominant point of view taken in post-war sociolinguistic literature was that minorities turning to bilingualism are in danger of losing their mother tongue, multilingualism today increasingly serves as a driving economic force, creating more jobs and improving the standard of living (cross-border traffic, translation professions, supranational employers).

3. Economic factors such as globalization, promoting the major languages, are inconceivable without the strong tendencies towards regionalization that provide small and medium-sized languages in all spheres of a multilingual environment with new chances of survival.

4. Most recent developments have led from decades of defensive attitudes on the part of 'small' and 'very small' languages (German: kleine und Kleinstsprachen) towards a new line of reasoning that pinpoints the advantages of multilingual minority speakers, emphasizes them in the context of a new European discourse and thereby takes the offensive: Multilingual speakers of 'small' languages no longer need to deny their identity and exclusively assimilate to the prestigious languages. Their monolingual adversaries, however, will have to struggle much harder than before within a multilingual, multicultural Europe in order to enforce their opinion in a mono-directional, i.e. monolingual way.

First Proposition

More than ever before, speakers in the late nineties are confronted with strong demands to move towards a 'New Multilingualism'.

The European Union's initiative to acknowledge and implement eleven official and working languages is unique in the history of mankind. Since the system of eleven languages was introduced in 1995, it has already borne fruit. Linguistic and cultural discrimination within the Union has since decreased rather than increa-

sed. The trend towards multilingualism, however, is not a modern concept. In his most recent contribution on old Austria's language policy[1], Hans Goebl has pointed out the deficient linguistic skills pervading contemporary Europe compared to the post-medieval Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. In contrast to modern heads of government, the Habsburg emperors could boast an amazing knowledge of languages. The "less linguistically gifted" among them mastered at least four idioms, the "most linguistically gifted" one nine different idioms or more. In light of an almost 200-year move towards monolingualism, this comparison cannot but produce meager results for our contemporary leaders, inasmuch as Blair, Prodi, Chrétien, Hashimoto, Clinton, Yeltsin, Jospin and Kohl as representatives of Great Britain, Italy, Canada, Japan, the United States, Russia, France and Germany can hardly be considered multilingual.

Besides the lack of shining examples in a new Europe, a range of socio-economic and socio-political trends further underline the necessity of a »New Multilingualism« in view of the century to come:

1. The significance of nation states and the sovereignty of their governments has weakened considerably in recent years. In most domains of society, responsibilities of national states have been taken over by "Brussels" or perhaps "Strasbourg" or "Luxembourg", thus diminishing the authority of EU-member states and their governments.

2. Neo-liberalism and internationalization have fostered tendencies towards rapidly advancing globalization that undermines the options of specific national economic and cultural legislative opportunities on the part of the individual countries and reduces their effectiveness.

3. In view of the linguistic and cultural development in Asia and Africa, it becomes quite clear that due to the comparatively rapid rejuvenation of the population pyramid – in contrast to Europe and the U.S.A. – and also due to the fact that several languages and cultures co-exist as a matter of course, multilingualism has become a global standard, whereas monolingualism is becoming the exception.

In a simplified and clear way multilingualism in Europe could be presented in the following manner: In the whole of Europe, a total of more than 100 languages are spoken (Europe I); in the European Union approx. 45 minority languages exist in addition to the eleven official and working languages, making a sum of at least 56 autochthonous languages (Europe II); after the expected extension to the east and southeast, the EU will most certainly comprise more than 70 autochthonous official and minority languages (Europe III).

Even without taking millions of members of allochthonous groups into consideration, such a confusing welter of languages and cultures can, if at all, only be managed properly by a sophisticated language planning and language policy. To this end, two obstacles must be overcome in advance, which otherwise could lead to intercultural misunderstandings.

1) Terminology

The distinction that the English language makes between *language planning, language policy* and *language politics* can be found in other European languages as well (cf. the threefold Dutch variety *taalplanning, taalbeleid* and *taalpolitiek*). In German, however, the second term, the decisive one for a European language policy, has no equivalent, since only *Sprachplanung* and *Sprach-*

politik exist. In French, the hierarchical element *(planification linguistique)* has been pushed aside in favor of a convincing term *(aménagement linguistique)*, which is related to modern democratic as well as ecolinguistic concepts and contains the meaning *linguistic household*. Because English, French and German in the context of EU multilingualism are primi inter pares and therefore decisive factors in the development of a common future language policy, the terminological differences with respect to these topics catch the eye.

2) Conceptualization

The first two contact-linguistic analyses of smaller language communities within the EU[2,3] have shown quite clearly that up to the present day, there has been no overall European concept, not even an overall European vision with respect to the linguistic and cultural coexistence of the 15 members of the Union. This is to be expected, as two divergent conceptual approaches which are hard to relate, let alone amalgamate, are an obstacle to a common attitude: Whereas a centralistic concept of language policy can be assigned to one group of states (France, for instance), some federally governed states (such as Germany) have opted for the subsidiarity principle. Other states (e.g. Great Britain) practice mixed forms of these two principles.

These differences in concept are highly significant, as decisions on language policy based on a centralist principle will – firstly – depend on the existence of national (language) legislation, which will – secondly – be implemented hierarchically from top to bottom through administrative channels.

Where the subsidiarity principle is applied, the "top" legislative level and consequently the respective national laws and decrees are often lacking (Germany and Belgium, for instance, do not have

national ministers of culture). Political decisions on language and culture are instead made at the lowest possible level (communal, regional, "Land"). Due to this more or less contrasting conceptualization, a central language policy on the part of the EU from a Brussels point of view that does not consider the particularities of the historically developed structures is hardly conceivable.

Second Proposition

Contact-linguistic models serve in a special way to illustrate the multidisciplinary nature of multilingual phenomena.

Contact linguistics by definition has a multidisciplinary nature, covers language contact phenomena of different kinds (linguistic and extra-linguistic) and contributes furthermore substantially to conflict analysis and conflict resolution[4,5].

In our opinion, four contact-linguistic assumptions have a special significance for the handling of language conflicts and their neutralization:

1. There is neither contact nor conflict between languages, but between speakers and language communities[6,7]. As a consequence, the possibility of comparing one single language in different contexts (e.g. Italian in Slovenia and in Switzerland) is highly restricted. Having a multiplicity of causes, these contacts and conflicts appear under various forms – from the open outbreak of hostilities (Kosovo 1998) to the sublimation of "subcutaneous" conflicts in societies with a strong need for harmony (Scandinavia). A major cause for the frequency of all kinds of conflicts in linguistic communities is the asymmetry of any kind of multilingualism. Congruent language communities with an identical number of speakers, with languages that enjoy an iden-

tical prestige and with an identical national product and a comparable standard of living, do not exist. Therefore, contact without conflict is hard to find.

2. Even if the statement that there is no linguistic contact without linguistic conflict[8] might appear somewhat exaggerated, there is – in the field of European languages – no contact situation which cannot be described as a linguistic conflict at the same time. Noteworthy in this context is Mattheier's view of linguistic conflicts among monolingual speakers[9].

3. Contact linguistics usually considers language as an essential secondary symbol of underlying primary causes of conflict of a socio-economic, political, religious, psychological or historic nature. Linguistic conflict thus somehow appears to be the "lesser evil", since linguistic conflicts in many cases are much easier to correct and neutralize than conflicts that primarily have socio-political and other extra-linguistic causes. Politicalization and ideologicalization of the language factor frequently lead to conflicts in which language often appears to be a matter of minor importance but is easily employed as secondary symbol. There is an endless list of examples in contemporary Eastern and Southern Europe. Bosnia-Herzegovina: Will a "Bosnian" language arise next to Serbo-Croat (abandoned in 1992) and its successor languages Serbian and Croatian? Moldavia: Is it possible to maintain the unity of a state, if the land is divided by the same language into different alphabets (Latin and Cyrillic) and a different lexicon? Byelorussia: Can a language survive in a young state, if only 10% of the school children are taught in Byelorussian?

4. Contact linguistics not only demonstrates that conflicts shouldn't only be considered as negative but proves at the same time that new structures can emerge from conflicts, structures which – in the case of minority speakers – might be more favorable than the previous ones.

Third Proposition

Linguistic conflicts in Europe not only have an historical character. They are already preprogrammed for the future by European language politicians.

Apart from the traditional language conflicts of a historical origin, there are at present conflicts between migrants and indigenous populations, between autochthonous and allochthonous groups fighting for or against their assimilation, integration, etc. These are "natural" conflicts that I therefore would like to distinguish from "artificial" conflicts created by the introduction of new structures of (language) policy. Discussion of such conflicts leads us to a comparison of the old story of Babylon with modern Brussels: 4000 translators and interpreters working in currently 11 official and working languages in Europe II, often influenced and 'afflicted' by dozens of minority languages, most of them fighting for their survival. It's almost a mathematical problem: If there are ten possibilities to use each of eleven languages, that makes 110 combinations – a number the Flemish artist Pieter Breughel could hardly have taken into consideration when he created his famous painting on the construction of the tower of Babel, as his building does not provide enough room for as many booths for simultaneous interpreting as presently needed in the EU Commission. It should be evident by now that the creation of a homogenous Europe in itself does not guarantee the solution of conflicts, whether naturally evolved or artificially created ones.

What then are the possible solutions?

1. The introduction of a planned language (Esperanto, sign language) etc.;

2. The acceptance of a strong vehicular language as a *lingua franca* (English);

3. The preference for a few major languages (such as German, French and English);

4. The maintenance of the *status quo* (11 official and working languages).

Can the present order (solution 4), i.e. the acceptance of linguistic diversity, be further expanded and continued? To avoid Babylonian conditions, some restrictions on the freedom of language choice will certainly have to be put up with. The extension of the EU will have to disrupt the pattern of the almost automatic acknowledgement of national languages as community languages in favor of solution 3, or yet another new one.

The problems in promoting and maintaining minority languages encountered by the EU ministry mentioned at the beginning – an authority which had been pursuing language policies for smaller languages in cooperation with European minorities (Directorate General XXII) – clearly pinpoint the delicacy and complexity of any commitment on the part of a political authority.

There is no agreement on how many minority languages and speakers exist in Europe II (40 – 50 minorities, depending on different contact-linguistic definitions, with as many as 30 to 55 million speakers from a total of 380 million "unionists" in Europe II), nor on how to refer to them (the term "lesser used languages" sounds somewhat helpless and artificial and is translated into French as »langues moins répandues«, which is not entirely equivalent), nor on common guidelines for a language policy with respect to the language communities, which – due to their historically developed social structures – can

hardly be compared. If the politicians concerned with minority languages were not adopting such an exemplary attitude of reserve, new "artificial" conflicts would almost be inevitable.

Fourth Proposition

The share of individual European languages in the present language conflicts varies. German as biggest EU language plays a special part.

Although German with 95 to 100 million speakers is the most widely spoken language in Europe apart from Russian, its secondary and tertiary role as a foreign language in school, as an original language for EU tender procedures and decrees, as a negotiating language in multinational summits, as a colloquial language in the European institutions – in summary: as an international language – catches the eye. This might be due to, among other things, the comparatively high conflict potential inherent in the German language. Some examples will suffice to illustrate this:

1. German is characterized by a high degree of *conflict imperilment*, as its frequency of contact is higher than that of other countries. Today's Germany borders nine states; in most of its neighboring countries, German is spoken (either as a minority or as a majority language). In at least fifteen states (Europe II and III) German is the official or a minority language.

2. As far as allochthonous minorities are concerned, Germany experiences an extremely high degree of *conflict diversification*. Just consider the spectrum of immigrants who for the past twenty years have been striving for acceptance and integration. For those not familiar with the situation it is certainly not 'easy' to distinguish the different terms used with respect to these newcomers

and – when the terms used display a semantic similarity – to reveal the different ideological points of view inherent or even hidden behind them. For example: Fremdarbeiter (transit worker), Gastarbeiter (guest worker), ausländischer Arbeitnehmer (foreign worker), Arbeitsimmigrant (immigrant worker), Arbeitsemigrant (emigrant worker), Umsiedler (resettler), Aussiedler (person repatriated), Spätaussiedler (late repatriate, person of German origin repatriated relatively late after 1945), Rücksiedler (returnee), Asylant (person granted political asylum), Asylsucher (person seeking political asylum), Wirtschaftsflüchtling (economic refugee), Migrant (migrant), Remigrant (returning migrant), to mention only a few. Intercultural communication within Europe II faces another misunderstanding with respect to conflict revealing itself in the fact that the other member countries (with the exception of Luxembourg) do not experience similar numbers of people coming into the country. Consequently, due to the lack of a comparable factual and ideological background, a considerable number of terms cannot be adequately translated into their language.

3. Ideology obviously plays a particular part in language contacts with German. Germany's past – above all the Third Reich and World War II – can be seen as an *historical conflict burden*. The construction of images (Dutch: beeldvorming) or development of stereotypes[10] is all too familiar from the entertainment industry. Since the fifties (!), popular TV serials and sitcoms such as *Hogan's Heroes* (USA, broadcast in 1998 in Central Europe on weekdays on cable TV) or most recently *Allo, allo* (Great Britain, broadcast in 1998 on different Western European channels) are perfect examples of a biased black-and-white representation of the Germans as simpletons – naïve, stodgy scoundrels, wrapped up with a touch of folkloristically underpinned sympathy: a real gift for researchers on attitude and prejudice. Because of this kind of coming to terms with the past ("Vergangenheitsbewältigung") – the acquisition of the language is – at least for European students of German – impeded by a concomitant extra-linguistic burden that complicates access to the German language.

4. German, the biggest minority language in Europe I, II and III, is confronted with totally divergent concepts of the term "state" and contrasting political ideas, structures and hence *minority conflicts*. It must certainly not have been easy for Germans outside of traditional German-speaking countries to find ideological common ground between their own culture and the culture of the host country, between previously socialist and western democracies, between socio-economically underprivileged majorities and majorities taking part in the neo-liberal upswing, as a quick glance at the list of the most important countries with German as minority language shows: Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, the Baltic countries, Russia, Poland.

5. As a *conflict of prejudice* there becomes apparent a learning conflict that starts from the assumption that German is particularly hard to learn. Objective linguistic criteria of argumentation are mixed with subjective ones as Herbert Christ was able to demonstrate convincingly[11,12].

6. Furthermore, the acquisition as well as the mastering of a German standard language is complicated by a *conflict of pluricentricity*. The words 'butcher' (English) and 'boucher' (French)

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have not one but several equivalents that appear to be understood by all German speakers. Only one of these translations, however, belongs to their respective – actively used – idiolect or sociolect (Schlachter, Schlächter, Fleischer, Metzger etc.).

7. Finally, German presents itself as a *potential European conflict language*, inasmuch as the qualitative and quantitative underrepresentation on an international level (cf. the use of German in international organizations such as UN, Unesco, but also in the EU) in case of a socio-economic or political disadvantage on the basis of their relatively limited right of co-determination might cause tensions. For the time being, however, the Germans are demonstrating a high degree of discipline, i.e. they refrain from deducing any claim to power from the promotion and funding of international institutions and try to avoid most conflicts that might result from linguistic discrimination.

It would be desirable to analyze the issue of "German in Conflict" presented here in a multidisciplinary setting in order to deduce strategies to avoid conflicts. In a European context – characterized by numerous tensions and conflicts frequently centred around suppressed, underprivileged or simply small language communities (minorities) – the next objective should be to try to put strategies which have contributed to a conflict neutralization to the test.

Fifth Proposition

A successful subsidiary language policy in Europe II in view of conflict neutralisation must be 'Europeanized', that is, must become an integral part of a European language policy.

Which concepts have multilingual states in Europe developed, and which of them have succeeded in leading multilingual language communities towards a more peaceful coexistence? In spite of to some extent completely different starting points in some cases, it is possible to discern several common concepts to which countries like Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland and the conflict avoidance strategies used there have largely contributed.

1) The territoriality principle

Many monolinguals think that in bilingual countries all citizens speak two languages. Bilingualism, however, might better mean that two languages exist side by side and enjoy – in theory, at least – the same status and the same rights.

This so-called institutionalized multilingualism is a consequence of the territoriality principle that forces the people living in a given region, declared as monolingual by the authorities in charge, to use the regional language at least for official communication. The territoriality principle must be distinguished from the personality principle. The latter allows each speaker to use his or her mother tongue or another language in all official and private domains, regardless of where he or she lives.

Although the rather inflexible territoriality principle arouses criticism, it does work quite well in several multilingual countries, particularly in more prosperous ones like Canada, Belgium and Switzerland. Initially these two principles of multilingualism were opposed to one another – as was the case in Belgium, where up until the 1960's, the personality principle had prevailed. The linguistic asymmetry in the country and the ensuing high prestige of the Romance language brought about a high degree of Frenchification of the country. Most remarkable are the results of the territoriality principle in the bilingual capital, Brussels. Here, the notorious »liberté du

père (!) de famille« (the freedom of the head of the family to choose one of the national languages) was not abandoned till the seventies. Instead of a bilingualised structure, Brussels has now settled on two parallel monolingual systems in the official domains (education, administration, work place). In accordance with the territoriality principle, the two major parts of the country (Flanders and Wallonia), with the exception of few language border communities, are either monolingually French or Dutch.

This implementation of the territoriality principle was received by outsiders with both aversion and admiration, as it had obviously served to preserve a small multilingual nation. In the case of Belgium, the consequences for the individual speaker nevertheless are severe: if social advancement before the introduction of this concept was inevitably tied to the mastering of two languages (at least in the case of the Flemish and German population), many spheres of today's life can be managed in one language only – the language of the respective region.

The Belgian government is highly sensitive as to the consideration of the rights of the individual language communities in the country. Even very small minorities are granted equal rights. One part of the German-speaking minority in eastern Belgium, amounting to less than 1% of the total population, benefits from the language regulation policy between the two major parts of the country and is more or less treated like the Dutch- and French-speaking population. German has become the third national language all over the country. In Brussels' airport, for instance, all signs display four languages – the three official ones Dutch, French, German and in addition – as the language of international air traffic – English; and these consistently in this order, to avoid any discrimination of one language community. Also the police in charge of Belgian motorways takes into account all three national languages: In case of a traffic violation the driver is first granted the choice between three national languages. The language chosen is used for entry in the record.

Of course, such procedures are expensive, but they seem quite sensible in the context of conflict avoidance strategies. How many other countries are prepared to grant a language with as few speakers a similar status? If that status were denied, however, this kind of linguistic asymmetry would eventually entail greater conflicts with an economic as well as a political impact. With some restrictions the Belgian way of handling conflicts may henceforth be considered as a model for language planning on the part of the European Union.

2) De-emotionalization

Another favorable outcome of the language dispute in Belgium is a certain de-emotionalization of the language question. But it is far from easy to strip language and cultural conflicts of their emotional elements. With the introduction of the territoriality principle, the Belgian legislators had hoped that strict language regulation in a few basic spheres of life would leave enough room for as much freedom as possible in the use of language in other areas. Whereas the monolingualism mandated by the territoriality principle in most multilingual countries affects at least two domains (education and public administration), the work place has been added in Belgium. As already indicated, the language of a territory must be used in all formal contracts between employers and employees. Accordingly, tensions resulting from a socially determined language choice (if e.g. a higher-ranking official used a different language than the trade union representatives) are reduced.

Along with language legislation, a plan for federalization and regionalization was developed in order to prevent a centralized language planning policy following the French model. Since such regionalized (in Belgian terms "communalized") language planning within the different language groups is implemented only in a few but nevertheless decisive spheres of life, the government adopts a rather permissive attitude in other domains and compensates for the strictness of the laws on language and culture with liberality and tolerance.

3) Language censuses

Instead of following the example of North America and Russia, where the population is assigned to the existing majority and minority languages according to large-scale language surveys ("Census"), Belgium has sought its own way in numerical registration of minorities, proceeding on the principle that the rights and duties of a majority or a minority are not exclusively dependent on their number. That the size of a language community is no longer the decisive factor in the field of language planning entails that all considerations with respect to the protection of a language community start from the assumption that in order to achieve equal rights, a numerically and socio-economically underprivileged minority deserves more support than the majority it is confronted with. Hence, the Belgian government has abandoned numerical language surveys as part of population census, thereby certainly contributing greatly to de-emotionalization.

As Belgium in this respect distinctly differs from most other multilingual nations, we will take a closer look at the topic of language censuses, which seems to be a crucial factor for conflict. We have emphasized that bilingualism is always asymmetrical, that bilingual people will for some reason or other, depending on their socio-economic status, their cultural identity, etc., always prefer *one* language. Therefore, a collection of data on bi- or multilingualism in the form of a numerical survey of the speakers will hardly produce socially reliable information on a particular region. In the census of 1933, for instance, 93% of the inhabitants of Martelingen/Martelange, a small bilingual village near the border between Luxembourg and Belgium, claimed to speak German, and only 7% declared themselves to be francophone[13]. In 1947, when the last official census was conducted in Belgium, the situation seemed to be reversed: The majority of speakers claimed to be francophone, whereas only a few percent regarded themselves as speakers of German. The reason is all too obvious: Most village residents were bilingual at the time of both censuses, but in 1933 German from an ideological point of view (in the era of fascism) was in favor, whereas in 1947 – after the end of World War II – the same language was not very popular anymore. People found it more "convenient" to turn to French. Therefore quantitative data from a language census in multilingual conflict situations should be treated with some scepticism, as the information on multilingualism which they seem to deliver is often distorted by extra-linguistic factors.

4) Positive discrimination

As a logical consequence of the preliminary considerations on de-emotionalization and language censuses, the focus of interest now is the positive discrimination of language minorities – an aspect which could be of considerable use for the language minorities of a future Europe. Positive discrimination means that minorities are granted more rights and advantages than they would be entitled to according to the proportional system, and this in order to be able to develop their potential for language maintenance and

growth in ways comparable to that of the majority.

In the case of asymmetric and particularly institutionalized multilingualism discussed here, the structure of the educational system should, if necessary, explicitly promote the minority in order to give it a chance to produce similar results to those of the majority. In practice, this could imply the acceptance of smaller class sizes for speakers of smaller languages in school, or the provision of better pay for teachers confronted with special "multilingual" requirements. Because they are weaker in terms of social prestige and number, minority students should enjoy more rights and advantages, so as to obtain equal promotion prospects in the long run.

Another form of positive discrimination is to reward all those who earn their living in a bilingual surrounding. A postman in a multilingual town, for instance, could earn more than his monolingual colleague, because the requirements are higher. This would obviously lead to an improvement in prestige and status of bilinguals.

5) Market economy and language

In the wake of the de-emotionalization of the language dispute in Belgium, other ways to avoid and resolve conflicts have emerged. Today, the multilingual situation in Belgium can be described as particularly liberal in respect of the three national languages as well as the most important foreign and neighboring languages. It now has become much easier for individual speakers to choose the language they need according to their personal and professional objectives. Individual linguistic behavior and individual language acquisition correspond to the free market. In this way, multilingualism, freed from numerous historical and social prejudices, stereotypes and emotions, could adapt to supply and demand.

In addition, there is a purely economic aspect: Brussels' function as a capital and an international meeting point has further increased the willingness among its population to learn foreign languages, since the mastering of additional languages pays off[14]. Thus, the Belgian example shows that economically based language choice, determined by supply and demand, is a more successful motive for multilingualism than a centralized language planning policy which – being static and therefore rather inflexible – poorly adapts itself to ever-changing language needs.

Conclusions

After having discussed European, especially Belgian solutions to some of the problems caused by the existing multilingual situation, it must be emphasized that there is no general model for multilingualism that can be implemented in all cultures, for all countries and under all circumstances. The specific context of each multilingual situation must be mirrored in the regional and overall language policy of the respective country. Policy must be made to measure the language community in question in order to be able to correspond to the existing economic needs. The different examples presented here indicate quite clearly that a single politico-linguistic program for the solution of the language problems within a unified Europe is bound to fail. There are no general, overall solutions. Language policy must be adjusted to each specific case, situation and context.

Common efforts of allochthonous and autochthonous groups

Despite the fact that allochthonous and autochthonous groups predominantly draw attention to the comparatively poor prestige of their languages and cultures as a common disadvantage with respect to the dominant group, up till now

only very little if any cooperation in the demand for linguistic rights is to be discerned in Europe on the part of these two groups. The need for this kind of cooperation, however, should be obvious, as comparable disadvantages require common solutions. Undoubtedly, the new, often socially defined minorities such as the migrants, guest workers, returnees, expatriates, resettlers, refugees, emigrants and transmigrants come to the fore of European politics. All of these groups have given rise to a new consciousness among minority populations, resulting much rather in a promotion of indigenous minorities than in their suppression. They as well share new trends such as a renaissance of dialects and minority languages. A new, regional consciousness, aimed at smaller units – like the »small is beautiful« movement of the sixties and seventies – has succeeded in directing the attention of researchers, politicians and those in charge of cultural matters more and more to minorities whose socio-cultural and also economical-political significance cannot be questioned any further in a culturally viable Europe.

Still, the attitude of majority groups towards linguistic and cultural minorities tends to be much more negative in the case of allochthonous groups than in the case of autochthonous minorities. Confrontations between indigenous minorities and dominant majorities on the one hand and migrants and dominant majorities on the other take place on different levels (social, political, economic, cultural), even as discrimination on the part of the majority makes itself felt in a similar form.

In contact linguistics, only very few researchers have investigated both minority groups in one go – in spite of the positive effects that might be entailed by common action. In the Netherlands, Switzerland and France, autochthonous and allochthonous groups are described and analyzed in entirely different ways, due to ideological reasons or reasons inherent to research. In Great Britain, for example, there is a lack of contact between those linguists concerned with the so-called "decolonized" languages on the one hand and the researchers analyzing the Celtic languages in Scotland and Wales on the other. Without any doubt, the apparent extralinguistic differences among conflict situations are a reason for this lack of cooperation. Therefore it is not surprising that there are hardly any proposals for conflict resolution that aim at neutralizing similar linguistic conflicts among both groups.

Re-evaluation of the situation

This field of contact linguistic research certainly is a growing and constantly changing one. There are some obvious reasons:

Firstly, the rural communities who preserved the language and other identity marks of their minority were mostly located at the periphery of the various European states and for this reason often considered as marginal in the past. If they wanted to participate in welfare and economic progress, they had to integrate themselves into the process of urbanization and industrialization. In the course of this process – if it took place – they often lost their particularities, including their language. Now, quite a few of these communities find themselves in the heart of a new Europe, as they are located along the borderlines and therefore lie on the new crucial contact axes. From a geographical and a geo-political point of view, they are hence no longer in a marginal position. Furthermore, it may well be that a supranational Europe will be much more prepared to tolerate regionalism than the former national states. This implies that these communities are now undergoing a process of shifts in social structure. This process must be analyzed

from a contact linguistic viewpoint. For a better understanding of what has been and still is going on in some of these communities, we should, above all, take a closer look at those groups of speakers who have managed to preserve their language and tradition. Minority groups such as the Catalans give a clear idea of what can contribute to the maintenance and promotion of a minority group. In this context, local and regional development deserves more attention.

Secondly, multilingualism in Europe's major cities is a rather new phenomenon. In some cases, it has already been examined more closely on an empirical level, in others, a lot remains to be done in order to improve the insight into contact-linguistic developments. In this area, research on prejudice incorporates linguistics, and problems and conflicts can arise from multilingual and multicultural contacts. These can be sociologically explained by attempts of the dominant group to secure social advancement for its members, but also by a feeling of being threatened as the arrival of other groups seems to blur their own identity.

Thirdly, the problem of languages in the European Union remains widely undiscussed and therefore unsolved. Whatever the solution will be – three, four, eleven or more working languages – the Europe of the future will not be monolingual. The entry of the Scandinavian neighbors – countries where English has always been favored as a second language – and Austria to the Union in 1995 could possibly change the linguistic balance of power in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg and already has enlivened the debate.

Fourthly, we must examine the language conflicts along EU borders to former Eastern-Bloc countries, where language seems to be developing more and more into a symbol of resurgent nationalism. Here, one has to distinguish between conflicts with historical roots and those which have been kindled artificially – for reasons related to the redefining of borders, the foundation of new states or for simply ideological reasons. Accordingly, potential causes for language conflict exist not only in Europe but all over the world as well. They frequently become noticeable as polarizing tendencies: Beside cross-border associations (NAFTA in North and Central America, EU in Europe II), nationalism and regionalism are simultaneously growing (Euregio, the Alps-Adriatic region, newly founded states like Slovenia and Estonia, among many others). History has taught us about the possible consequences of the suppression of conflicts. Therefore, we contact linguists should produce sensible contributions to the analysis, description and control of the complicated linguistic situations occurring every day in front of the researcher's eyes all over the world.

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PRIJEDLOG NOVE EUROPSKE JEZIČNE POLITIKE

S A Ž E T A K

Konflikt je najzanimljiviji vid kontaktne lingvistike. Tijekom povijesti još otkada je Babilonska kula ostala nedovršena, dodiri među govornicima različitih jezika neizostavno dovode do sukoba između govornika tih jezika. Europska Unija (EU) je, posebno nakon odluke o širenju zajednice, nedvojbeno prihvatila multidisciplinarnu simboličku ulogu jezika i kulture kao temelj za europsko političko jedinstvo. U skladu s tim, političari Europske Unije morali su analizirati konflikte prouzročene jednojezičnošću i višejezičnošću te sve vidove kontaktne lingvistike. Mogu li ti konflikti biti riješeni, svedeni na najmanju moguću mjeru ili neutralizirani strategijama jezičnog planiranja i jezične politike? Početni rezultati europskih jezičnih političkih strategija dozvoljavaju barem skromni optimizam i velike izglede za budućnost »nove višejezičnosti« o kojoj se govori u našem prilogu.