Journal of Contemporary European Research

Volume 10, Issue 4 (2014)

Research Article

# Bottom-up Perspectives on Multilingual Ideologies in the EU: The Case of a Transnational NGO

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***Citation***

Zappettini, F. and Comanaru, R. (2014). 'Bottom-up Perspectives on Multilingual Ideologies in the EU: The Case of a Transnational NGO'*, Journal of Contemporary European Research*. 10 (4), pp. 402-422.

First published at: www.jcer.net

# Abstract

This paper investigates the discursive construction of multilingualism in citizens' discourses, aiming to fill a gap in the literature of European studies that has scarcely been concerned with language ideologies from bottom-up perspectives. In particular, we focus on the discourses of a transnational NGO to analyse how its members position themselves in relation to linguistic issues and to what extent (if so) they reproduce the EU's multilingual ideology. Deriving data from focus groups and semi-structured interviews, we contextualise our analysis against the backdrop of an increasingly 'glocalised' European site of struggle between global communication and linguistic justice. Using critical discourse analysis we aim to show how discourses of multilingualism are being negotiated at the grass-roots level. Our findings suggest that whilst citizens' discourses validate an ideal promotion and preservation of linguistic diversity in the EU, they also endorse a diglossic scenario with language performing separate identity and communicative functions. We thus argue for an understanding of European multilingualism that takes into account the transnational dynamics of the European sphere.



# Keywords

Multilingualism; language ideologies; language policies; active citizenship; critical discourse analysis


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In the last decade, multilingualism has featured prominently in the European Union's policies against the backdrop of an increasingly 'super-diverse' European community, legitimisation processes and the struggle to find a common identity. Whilst institutional discourses on multilingualism have been the focus of much literature from sociolinguistic, political, legislative and critical perspectives (Kjaer and Adamo 2013; Rindler Schjerve and Vetter 2012; Weber and Horner 2012; Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2011, 2010; Gal 2010; Extra and Gorter 2008), bottom-up approaches to multilingual ideologies and attitudes have mostly been limited to educational issues (Creese and Blackledge 2010) or conducted from quantitative perspectives (Special Eurobarometer 386 2012). By contrast, there have been relatively few qualitative insights on language ideology that have focused on citizens' views in the European context (see for example, Millar and Wilson 2007; Gubbins and Holt 2002). This is rather surprising given that the 'dilemma' between communication and identity (Mamadouh 2002; Wright 2000) in the construction of Europe is not only a concern for institutional practices but encompasses a wider ideological struggle involving issues of civic participation, social inclusion/exclusion and the transformation of cultural identities in an increasingly diverse, mobile and interconnected European society. As pointed out by Wright (2000), the language issue goes to the core of the European political project and its legitimisation if the EU aspires to be more than a trading body.

The main rationale for this article therefore lies in the need to provide bottom-up views on multilingualism in addition to the institutional ones that can contribute to better understanding of the 'language issue' in the European socio-political field. For this reason, our investigation into the discursive construction and negotiation of multilingualism focuses on an association of citizens engaged with European politics and the promotion of civic participation called Democratic Change for Europe (DC4E).[1] The organisation has been run on a voluntary basis and consists of a number of semi-structured local groups across Europe open to all EU and third-country citizens,[2] who operate at the transnational level by running debates, cultural events and (on and offline) campaigns

simultaneously across local groups. Furthermore, members who characterise themselves as transnational share an ideological commitment to the development of a European public sphere (EPS) beyond national remits.

The 'public sphere' – which, put succinctly, is 'a network for communicating information and points of view' (Habermas and Rehg 1998: 360)- has increasingly been regarded as a crucial feature of modern and deliberative democracies, as it stands for a site of civic participation and the formation of public opinion (Wodak and Koller 2010). For Habermas (1984) the public sphere is characterised by three elements: openness to participation; challenges to public authority to legitimise decisions; and an ideal of rational-critical discourse. From this stance, Habermas (ibid) suggests that a European public sphere must consolidate in which actors are able to discuss 'European' issues and to deliberate democratically through consensus. Furthermore, by challenging the logic of democratic deliberations organised around national clusters (Fraser 2007), the public sphere may provide solidarity bonds between 'strangers' and the development of what Habermas calls 'constitutional patriotism', that is a sense of belonging to a society organised around a civic (rather than ethnic) definition of community. In spite of Habermas's optimistic views, the extent to which a transnationalised EPS exists (if at all) remains a debated issue (see, for example, Triandafyllidou, Wodak and Krzyzanowski 2009; Fligstein 2008; Splichal 2006; Eriksen and Fossum 2002; Closa 2001). However, Risse (2010) contends that, notwithstanding a number of limitations, an embryonic transnational 'community of communication' has been emerging where new 'European' perspectives are negotiated at the transnational level by different actors including the media, interest groups, and non-governmental organisations. It is thus in the general context of the developing EPS that we investigate DC4E as a salient community of European citizens in which, we hypothesise, institutional meaning(s) of multilingualism are likely to be reproduced, but also transformed and reconstructed at grass-roots and transnational levels. Of course the very specificity of our object of study does not allow us to extend our findings to the general public or to advance claims that our data is representative of a general European public opinion.

The article is structured as follows: in the next section we offer a general contextualisation of language ideologies in relation to globalisation phenomena looking in particular at different philosophical and political approaches to the nature of 'language' and its use within a 'community'. This is followed by a third section which focuses on EU multilingual policies including some critical perspectives on the socio-political multilingual arrangement. We subsequently outline our theoretical framework and describe our methodology. Building on the analysis which is then set out, the conclusion engages with the main findings, suggesting that the construction of multilingualism in members' discourses somewhat departs from the institutional vision and is more orientated towards a distinct separation of the communicative and identitarian functions of language.

## LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN GLOBALISED POLITICS

Multilingualism is a polysemic construct that can refer to different dimensions: individual (the personal ability to speak more than one language), societal (the coexistence of many languages within a society) and institutional (organisational practices involving more languages). However, as the normalisation of linguistic practices (instantiated in the creation of language policies) is typically negotiated in the political arena, language policies are never exclusively about language and are often understood as embedded in wider social, political and economic contexts (Ricento 2006; Shohamy 2006; Kroskrity 2000). Within political philosophy, a traditional approach to the regulation of language use within communities (for example, in nation states) has often relied on ideologies predicated on either the function of languages as 'in-group' identity markers or on functional/communicative arguments. De Schutter (2007) for example suggests that two opposed political views have existed on the nature of language - *constitutivism* and *instrumentalism.* In broad

terms, constitutivism sees language as intrinsic to identity and of moral value, whilst for instrumentalism language is only a means to achieve other objectives through communication. De Schutter (2007) thus suggests that a constitutivist approach will typically tend to regard language and the speaker's identity as deeply interrelated, relying on a rather essentialist notion that language is intrinsic to one's culture and the ability to express ideas and concepts. From this perspective, constitutivists will argue for institutional recognition of linguistic/group identities through linguistic rights since 'language rights remedy the injustice that arises when minorities are forced to live their life in the language of majorities, who happen to possess the prerogatives of linguistic power' (De Schutter 2007: 10).

Conversely, the instrumentalist perspective illustrated by De Schutter (2007) contends that, rather than an intrinsic expression of the 'self', language is an arbitrary convention which provides the necessary tools for communication of thoughts and ideas. Therefore, in matters of language policies and linguistic justice, by and large, instrumentalists tend to downplay issues of identity whilst focusing on the instrumental functions of language and the attainment of objectives such as efficient communication, equality of opportunity, mobility, cohesion and solidarity. The different ideological orientations illustrated here are summarised in Table 1.

*Table 1. Instrumental and constitutive language ideology and policy (adapted from De Schutter, 2007)*

| | Instrumentalism | Constitutivism |
|---|---|---|
| **Underlying view of linguistic membership** | Language is external to the self, it is a tool, a convention | Language is intrinsic to the self and to one's identity |
| **Normative conclusion (language policy)** | Language should be regulated such that non-identity related goals are realised | Language should be regulated such that the identity interest of language is taken into account |

De Schutter (2007) recognises that the ideologies presented in the taxonomy above have so far resulted in the implementation of different language policies and interpretations of linguistic justice. Whilst constitutivists generally will call for protection of linguistic rights as a matter of principle, instrumentalists will support language maintenance/diversity as long as this does not represent an obstacle to communication and priority practices. Obviously these ideologies do not interplay in mutually exclusive ways, neither do they exist in a vacuum, but rather they are part of a complex social system influenced by many other factors, such as economic and cultural contexts.

We consider therefore how some literature has made sense of those processes of globalisation that we consider key to our analysis as they are impacting on and are being reflected in linguistic practices and the formation of language policies in modern European societies. First, for example, it has been recognised that intensified patterns of migration and mobility resulting in increased (linguistic) diversity in Europe, can amplify tensions between constitutivist and instrumentalist ideologies, and intertwine with discourses of human rights (Kymlicka and Patten 2003), identity and education (Blackledge 2005). A second aspect of globalisation is the intensification of economic exchange and increased communication. In relation to the response of language policies to this issue, Kibbe (2003) suggests that two models have met with strong political popularity, i.e. the 'free-market' theory of unfettered capitalism and the 'green' theory of ecological protection. Kibbe sees these two ideologies resulting in distinct 'linguistic geostrategies': the race for 'market share' among the governments representing the major international languages and the protection of endangered

languages undertaken by linguists and by those interested in linguistic human rights. Finally, much literature on transnationalism has recognised the impact of globalisation on the transnationalisation of society and public spheres, and a weakening of national systems in favour of cross-border (organised) connections (Vertovec 2009; Albert, Jacobson and Lapid 2001; Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Once again the implications for language policies have been on the one hand the reaffirmation (albeit incongruous) of de jure notions of national languages (see for example Mar-Molinero and Stevenson 2009) whilst, on the other, this has resulted in the de facto validation of hegemonic regimes with the convergence towards English as a lingua franca in cross-border communication.

Consequently, the use of English in relation to questions of social justice has been a long debated issue (Van Parijs 2011; Mar-Molinero and Stevenson 2009; Phillipson 2003; Ammon 2001). While some scholars have taken a critical approach to hegemonic practices, others have seen the diffusion of global languages as opportunities for more cross-border interaction. For example, House (2003), suggesting a pragmatic distinction between 'language for communication and language for identification', defends English as a global lingua franca from accusations of being a killer language or the embodiment of (neo)imperialist aspirations. Instead, she argues that English as a lingua franca can work in conjunction with local languages on the basis of the functional distinction raised above. In this respect, House sees a diglossic[3] scenario developing in Europe in which English is used as high language 'for various 'pockets of expertise' and non-private communication on the one hand, and national and local varieties for affective, identificatory purposes on the other hand' (2003: 261).

## MULTILINGUALISM IN EUROPE

The complexity of multilingualism has been extensively covered by a wealth of academic literature (Unger, Krzyzanowski, and Wodak 2014; Weber and Horner 2012; Van Els 2005; Wright 2000). In this study, we approach European multilingualism as a set of ideological discourses produced and promoted at institutional level by EU organs such as the Commission. In the Commission's discourses, the multilingual ideology has typically been constructed around its benefits in three main areas: social cohesion, democratic participation and the economic dimension (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2010). Whilst the first two areas can be related to 'identity marker' and functional arguments respectively, the economic dimension portrays multilingualism as 'a necessary skill' thus tying with the Lisbon strategy main agenda (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2010) and neo-functionalist ideologies that clearly promote the EU as a 'global enterprise' (Zappettini 2014).

By and large, multilingual ideologies have applied to: a) internal practices where official and working languages are used within the EU institutions; and b) the societal level where the EU has promoted a model of multilingual polity which intends to 'protect' and 'promote' linguistic diversity.[4] At the societal level, policies have been introduced, inter alia, aimed at enabling communication between citizens and institutions in any of the EU's official languages and some of the regional languages. Furthermore, all national official languages of the European Union member states have official status within the EU. Such a 'panarchic' policy regime (Grin 2008) is complemented by the practices of EU officials who often resort to practices of multilingualism to accommodate an interlocutor and allow for smooth communication (Wodak, Krzyżanowski and Forchtner 2012). The EU also makes special provision for European citizens whose mother tongue is a regional language (for example, Welsh) providing a certain level of translation and interpretation services.

On the other hand, the limitations of devising multilingual (and for that matter cultural) policies at a supranational level has been widely acknowledged (see for example King et al. 2011; Kraus 2011; and, with specific regards to cultural policies, Sassatelli 2009). The promotion and protection of a plurilingual Europe can only be implemented in practice insofar as individual member states are

willing to do so as the EU cannot impose on national policies regarding multilingualism and language learning.

Wright (2000) offers an interesting account of the tensions and contradictions that exist in the EU's multilingual proposition, suggesting that 'the present EU strategy of promoting plurilingualism is admirable in its idealism […] but Utopian' (p. 8). Wright advocates the development of a community of communication among Europeans in order to legitimise the Union, which otherwise would 'just be a trading association run in an autocratic way' (ibid.). She argues that a system of 'personal bilingualism and social *diglossia*' could provide the best solution for European communication needs and language preservation. In other words, she envisages an ideal scenario for the EU with English performing a communicative function, whilst the identity function would be embodied by mother tongues. Wright (2009) recognises the political implications of such a choice as any formal legitimisation of English would infringe the principle of equality and linguistic justice. However, she invites us to reconsider the rigidity of such a principle, which she sees as anchored in the 'ideological legacies from nation building and colonial empire' (p. 93), arguing that 'history demonstrates that communities and individuals usually achieve the communication networks they need, whether this happens in a planned or an unplanned way' (Wright 2009: 8). Kraus (2008) proposes another model for dealing with the issues of multilingualism in Europe and avoiding the creation of a diglossic society. He suggests that an attainable solution is the support for 'converging multilingualism' a model which, in Kraus's view, 'attempts to find a necessarily precarious balance between pragmatism and respect for diversity' (p. 176).

In a similar vein, Archibugi (2005) supports the notion of striking the right balance in the quest for the language of democracy within the EU by envisaging the adoption of a vehicular language for improving communication (that he sees best represented by Esperanto), whilst retaining the multicultural approach to the recognition of individual languages. This approach would do away with the notion of official languages. Archibugi (2005) rests his argument on the cosmopolitan perspective that:

> in the face of common problems, cosmopolitanism seeks to apply democratic procedures, implementing public policies designed to remove linguistic barriers, even if this implies that some members of the population who are not fluent in the language used for public purposes might be somehow disadvantaged (p. 544).

From this premise, Archibugi opposes Kymlicka's idea that democratic politics must be in the vernacular, arguing that 'it is the responsibility of individuals and governments to remove the language barriers that obstruct communication' (p. 545).

These various theoretical models point to the complexity of the issue of multilingualism in Europe, both at an institutional and societal level. In our view, therefore, the promotion and protection of the cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe is not only a policy issue, but needs to be addressed from a wider perspective, including citizens' perspectives. Whilst these have sometimes been voiced explicitly (for example in the consultations conducted with the EU Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism, 2009) we contend that views at the grass-roots level have largely been underestimated and thus turn to the exploration of those views.

## METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### *Theoretical Assumptions*

Our theoretical framework draws on the general tenet of critical discourse analysis (CDA) that sees society and language as mutually constitutive (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). We refer here to the

term discourse in its amplest meaning of text carrying different social properties in different contexts. We thus interpret discourses not only as representations but also as constitutive of 'social reality' and the 'objects' of discourse (Foucault 1984). From this perspective, the analysis of discourses informs our theoretical understanding of 'language in use' and, at the same time, represents our heuristic approach to the analysis. We treat ideology as instantiated in discourse, that is, we believe that linguistic structures and elements dialogically relate to systematic representations/organisations of the world. We therefore regard discourses of multilingualism as meta-representations of society at large and furthermore as embedded in wider socio-historical contexts, such as globalisation and EU integration. Crucially, in line with CDA, we also assume that ideologies can be (re)produced, challenged and dynamically transformed in discourses through a variety of discursive strategies such as, for example, (de)legitimisation, justification, recontextualisation and so on (see for example Wodak et al. 2009).

In approaching the analysis of our data we rely in particular on Van Dijk's (1997) socio-cognitive framework which sees ideologies as acquired, expressed, enacted and reproduced in and through discourse as cognitive structures socially 'stored' and shared in 'schemas' and realised through linguistic features. For Van Dijk, discourse may be ideologically `marked' and thus pointing to specific 'schemas' as the speaker draws for instance on a 'collective memory', or invokes specific discursive strategies and other phonological, syntactic, lexical and/or contextual elements. Moreover, for Van Dijk, such elements are not always explicit but can underline discourses as 'implicatures' or metaphors and therefore become inferable through interpretation.

## *Research Aims and Procedure*

This article contributes to existing perspectives on the EU's multilingual setup (see, for example, Kjaer and Adamo 2013; Rindler Schjerve and Vetter 2012; Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2011 and 2010) by providing qualitative insights from a bottom-up perspective. Our main aim is to ascertain if, to what extent and how multilingual ideologies (as fostered by the EU institutions) are reproduced, (re)constructed and negotiated at grass-roots level in and through discourses of citizens engaged in the debate on Europe. We emphasise however that our analysis does not intend to focus on multilingualism as a communicative practice of our informant organisation as such, but rather on the socio-cognitive dimension enacted in discourse by its members. Moreover, we take an interpretative approach to the data analysis in line with social constructivist views of discourse[5] (defined in the following section). Our research is therefore guided by the following questions: 1) How is European multilingualism ideologically (re)produced at grass-roots level?; 2) How are the ideological tensions of EU's multilingualism reflected and negotiated in the discourses of members?

Our data consists of four focus groups and nine individual interviews conducted in two waves between 2010 and 2013. In total we spoke directly to 26 members from seven different local branches of DC4E (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and the UK). All the NGO branches were initially approached through contact with gatekeepers and participants were sought. The 26 respondents who agreed to participate in our study thus represent a self-selecting sample of DC4E members and, therefore, are not necessarily representative of the organisation's view at large. Furthermore, due to the mixed national make-up of each local group (see note 2), we were not able to control the sample for 'national' or 'regional' variables (i.e. the nationality, residency and other affiliations of participants). Instead, in the light of the NGO identity and the contextualisation of their activities in the wider EPS we decided to treat the data at a transnational level. We were, however, able to profile our informants through socio-demographic data (age group, language proficiency, nationality, etc.) collected via a questionnaire distributed to each participant before commencing the interview. A summary of these details and further

information on the circumstances of group and individual interviews are provided in Tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix.

The rationale for combining focus groups and individual interviews was to maximise the main advantages of two methods of collection for discursive purposes. Focus groups have been increasingly used in social sciences to explore shared opinions and beliefs because of the dynamic interaction that can emerge out of the discussion whilst staying focused on the topic (Litosseliti 2003). Individual interviews, on the other hand, provide informants with a more personal setting, which can allow the emergence and elaboration of personal narratives.

The focus groups were moderated by the authors in the local language (i.e. English, Italian and Romanian). Individual interviews were also conducted by the authors in English by request of the interviewees, except in two cases when they were conducted in Italian as the language was mutually shared by the interviewees and the interviewer. Discussions focused on a number of European issues and different topics related to multilingualism, which had been derived from the literature and previous ethnographic investigation of the NGO. These were: a) orientation towards constitutive/instrumental views of language; b) the social and political significance of multilingualism; c) views on the institutional use of languages; d) language and democratic practices; e) the use of English in Europe.

However, rather than strictly structuring the discussion protocol or following a specific order, the topics were loosely introduced by the moderators/interviewers as prompts to elicit the discussion, so that different themes were also allowed to emerge. In general, moderators acted as facilitators whilst being aware of their potential role of co-constructors of the 'social reality' of participants. All data was audio recorded, transcribed and, if needed, translated into English. Data was subsequently coded and systematically treated for linguistic insights in relation to the following categories: i) macro-propositions and recurrent discursive themes; ii) speakers' enunciative positioning and their ideological orientation; iii) linguistic strategies realised in talk; iv) specific linguistic features such as metaphors and figurative language and their argumentative purpose. The following section provides insight into these discussions and the emergent categories examined.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### *Discursive (Re)Constructions of Languages and Multilingualism: Constitutive vs. Instrumental Views*

Several members spoke about languages referring to cultural aspects, often associating languages with the identities of their speakers, stressing thereby their constitutive function. Some, for example, metaphorically represented languages as 'living' entities and subject to 'life/death' cycles (but also to transformation). Overall, we noticed a positive evaluation of multilingualism as a desirable individual and social practice linked to the expression of one's culture. Most members highlighted the intercultural function of multilingualism providing new opportunities for 'seeing the world from different angles/perspectives' whilst retaining a significant social meaning of group affiliation. In these discourses, we thus recognise the recontextualisation of the overarching institutional frame on the social cohesion function of multilingualism 'bringing the peoples of Europe together'. The following extract is an example of how the speaker draws on the 'common house' metaphor which has often been deployed in institutional representations of a united Europe (Drulak 2004; Chilton and Ilyin 1993):

CL4: [language] gives you the freedom to go anywhere, and you feel at home

In a number of cases, however these positive views were expressed by members with generic and somewhat idealised statements referring, for example, to oversimplified notions of national or official languages associated with (member) states. In our view this would therefore indicate the ideological reproduction of the EU hierarchical system. In some cases, rather essentialist interpretations of 'national' cultures emerged as well as certain misconceptions on languages as in the following extract where the speaker mistakenly assumes the mutual intelligibility of Romanian and Bulgarian:

> LO2: ... Let's say people in Romania were speaking to people in Bulgaria in English you know and they're not speaking to each other in Romanian or Bulgarian and that's a real shame.

By contrast, we also found more critical views that challenged established EU discourses. One member, for example, challenged a representation of Europe as the 'sum of its parts' and of Europeanness as the 'simple' interconnection of cultures which has often been promoted in institutional discourses:

> CL5: Well I do not know, ... the European term, I should be very very European since I am connected with so many cultures, but I find it to be just a rhetorical tool that actually means nothing.

Another critical view emerged in relation to the 'nature' of languages and their instrumental use in politics. For example one suggested that:

> BO3: language is a means and thus it should not be an obstacle, however it can be dragged by its hair into politics so that it represents an obstacle.

In this case the speaker highlights the instrumental function of language in two ways: firstly through the explicit enunciation that 'language is a means [for communication]' and secondly through the personification of language, for which he uses the metaphor of 'language dragged by its hair'. Although the speaker here uses a passive form that backgrounds the 'dragger' (the agent) we can still infer his reference to and negative valuation of the instrumental use of languages for nationalistic political agendas in the construction of nation states.

### *'Promotion' and 'Protection' of Languages*

In general we recognised that a number of arguments were constructed on either the '*topos* of zero-sum' (that is the logical premise that one language does not take away from others) or on the assumption of an 'ecology of languages', whereby languages can be lost at the expense of the system. For example, in dismissing Esperanto as a viable option as a common language, LO3 said:

> LO3: I feel it's more like we have lots of languages and, and there's no need to sort of lose everyone's language to create this new one.

By contrast PR2 argued*:*

> PR2: I think that that's really is great, you know this idea of, of finding the balance and not, you know in this, in this kind of quest to kind of see how the integration, how people can work together, exactly not losing the individual cultures.

Thus whilst most members seemed to agree on the benefits of individual multilingualism (that is, learning more languages through personal initiative), opinions were split and conflicting on the institutional commitment to protect and promote languages. On the one hand, we recognised constitutivist ideological stances subscribing to the protection of linguistic rights as an indispensable

universal/human right and therefore a European value to safeguard. On the other hand, however, some members questioned the desirability of defending languages out of principle, raising the issue of artificiality of normative approaches, thus clearly orientating towards instrumental ideologies. We thus found significant differences among our informants over whether - and to what extent - protection should apply to which language. Significantly, most members debated the definition of what counts as language or dialect[6] (which was perceived as a convenient discriminant in guiding policy approaches):

> BO4: the question is if we really need to protect every single language, I mean Venetian, Neapolitan, Sardinian which after all are dialects.

In this respect, ultimately, most members fell back on institutional definitions of minority and regional, as formulated in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe). We thus found an implicit instrumentalist approach supporting a general ideological orientation towards a selective maintenance of linguistic diversity and a reproduction of national ideologies that perceive certain institutionalised languages as more prestigious and with a higher status than others.

Similarly, in reference to the promotion and protection of languages through education, we recognised contrasting views. Some members argued in favour of keeping alive as many languages as possible through schooling policies. A large number of members, however, tended to support policies that would develop competences in much needed and viable common denominators of communication in Europe (i.e. English) as a priority. To support their ideological stances, most members engaged in strategies of justification aimed at legitimising hegemonic practices, whereby dominant languages were naturalised through historic frames. These views were conspicuous in the Italian and Romanian focus groups. The Italian members discussed at length the reproduction of global languages throughout history, offering examples of how Latin, French in the past and lately English emerged as dominant languages in relation to specific socio-economic conditions. Italian member BO4 for instance represented the cycles of history through tropes of movements such as 'waves' of cultural diffusion/dominance and this premise allowed the respondent to justify the social promotion of important languages because 'language follows the movement of history'.

Furthermore, we found that often the 'agentivisation' of history was recontextualised into economic discourses. This strategy allowed some members to construct a relationship between economic power and language diffusion and crucially to justify the supremacy of certain languages vis-à-vis others in relation to a linguistic market. In the following extract, for example, BO5 refers to patterns of economic highs and lows to represent and justify the reproduction of hegemonic languages in education as dictated by the market (a linguistic realisation achieved via the term 'boom' that implies a sudden surge for demand and supply):

> BO5: until thirty years ago there was French, then English boomed (...), in the future I don't know, but perhaps we'll stop studying English and we'll take up Chinese.

We found similar perspectives held by our Romanian informants who, during the discussion, brought to the fore several economic arguments in relation to the benefits of multilingualism as exemplified by the following extract:

> CL2: The economic benefits come through English, look, since I can speak English, now I work in a place where I need to speak English otherwise I couldn't ... Languages continue to exist anyway till the end of the world, but I think talking about a language of communication that will be English from now on, and local languages will resist, and local and every country that speaks other language those will resist anyway, I will still write in Romanian and nobody will have anything against it.

> CL1: You say [...] English from now on, but 200 years they would have said it was French from then on …
>
> CL2: Yes, but there was no globalisation then, and maybe only if the planet will deglobalise it will change, but until then ...

In this example, CL2 encapsulates many discursive patterns emerging from our data. The first one highlights the constraints of the linguistic market that citizens are engaged with, and the tensions between ideal and de facto situations. The second is the use of interdiscursive links with themes of globalisation, which were also often put forward by members to construct a general understanding of the value of languages as determined by social and economic contexts. In this respect, we recognised a conceptualisation of the economic benefits of multilingualism conspicuously divergent from the institutional ideology that regards all languages as equal.

### *Reconciling 'Unity' and 'Diversity': What Is the Language of Democracy?*

'Ideational vs. practical' tensions clearly emerged when discussing multilingualism in relation to the issue of how best to ensure democracy, whilst encouraging the development of a transnational EPS and an ever closer Union. By and large, however, we found that our informants showed an ideological orientation towards supporting a common language that could facilitate communication, as for example in the following extract:

> RO1: I think [English] should be encouraged ...and yes it would give an advantage to English and Irish speakers but ... I think sometimes it goes like that, … some groups in society have advantages over others and the role of the state or of an institution like the EU is to make sure that these natural advantages do not make those people step over others ...

Here, RO1 recognises the tension between ideational and pragmatic aspects acknowledging that the official promotion of English could be seen as an infringement of the principle of equality, however the respondent seems to reconcile the instrumental and constitutivist ideologies of language with the 'watchdog' function of the EU.

Another similar perspective is exemplified in this extract from the Romanian focus group:

> CL4: Now, I think it depends partly on what democracy means for each person, what the person understands by the term democracy, and we could then make an analysis between what the EU says in there that multilingualism underlies democracy and what I think democracy is.

Similarly, in reference to internal multilingual practices of the EU institutions most members tended to endorse the selective multilingualism of the Commission primarily on functional and pragmatic reasons. For example:

> LO2: I think [these contradictions] are just historical, they are a little bit uncomfortable but if it was decided that … the lingua franca of the EU institutions could be Maltese then everybody would have to ... you know, take a break for the next three or four years and learn Maltese and then get together again, it's, it is just not practical … the biggest, the widest spoken languages in Europe in that order aren't they, they are English, French and German and that's the reason they're spoken purely for a practical reason … ehm it's a bit unfortunate maybe everybody should learn Maltese (laughs) ... but it is a fact we are going to have to learn to live with.

Here the speaker legitimises the status quo of institutional practices through different discursive strategies. They firstly refer to historical reasons, presumably in reference to the historical practices of the Commission's working languages (political continuity). Secondly, LO2 appeals to practical reasons by offering the counterargument that if the Maltese language were adopted instead it would have practical negative consequences. Such an argument seems to recontextualise the debate that took place during Malta negotiating accession to the EU.[7] Finally, the speaker appeals to the logic of big numbers (the widest spoken languages), reproducing notions of pecking order and prestige which they then downplay with some linguistic hedging ('a bit uncomfortable', 'a bit unfortunate').

In most cases it would appear that finding a balance of interests in evaluating language practices against the benefits of democratic participation was a major ideological orientation for members. This notion also seemed to apply to the internal practices of the organisation itself. For example, in discussing the editing of the NGO magazine, AM1 valued the pros and cons of having different articles in different languages:

> AM1: The more general things are written in English and then there are pages that are in our own language and we in the Netherlands we always also write it in English because […] a lot of Dutch people know English anyway. But in other countries they, they write in their own language and I think that's also ... it excludes other people from reading it, I don't know, it's, for their own people it ..., it makes the (…) the, the threshold or something a bit lower but it's …, I think it's always, it's always standing in between a little.

For AM1, lowering a metaphorical threshold to allow more citizens to enter the debate was a compromise worth accepting even if it impinged on her own contribution to the community. In this sense, we recognised a strategy of accommodation of the lower threshold in which language represented a proxy for civic equality. The issue of commitment to the NGO activity was also raised by VA1 who argued:

> VA1: I will say it's a practical issue, it depends also on each person, it depends on how much you want to give … I mean … if I believe in this network and I believe in the transnational level then it's a must that I speak English to work.

Notably, the ideological positioning of English native speaker members in this respect was orientated towards recognising their head start and conceding that English only is not enough. Native speakers of English thus adopted a positioning of solidarity as exemplified by the following extract in which LO3, the member interviewed in London, adopted the metaphorical representation of house to express their stance:

> LO3: It's just […] like having friends that you don't make an effort with, making them always come to your house rather than you go and visit them, that kind of thing.

### *A diglossic scenario*

Our data robustly suggest that most members portrayed an existing, or envisaged a future, diglossic scenario where a language of large diffusion (for the time being identified with English but open to being superseded by Chinese for instance) would enable communication across different native speakers whilst the same speakers would additionally retain their personal language. This argument was often discursively constructed along a functional distinction between languages for communication and languages for identity that largely tallies with Wright's and House's arguments (see above). For example, the interplay between the communicative and identity functions of language is illustrated by the following extract:

> RO1: Well I think that my dream, my vision is that Europe be united politically and for this to happen […] we need to have a language in common […] I'm really a fan of English not because I see this as a sort of cultural imperialism because by now English has nothing to do with England any more or with the UK …
>
> MO: Can I just ask you to explain what you mean by English is no longer related to England, do you mean the English identity?
>
> RO1: Yes, that's exactly it, I don't see it as an imposition of cultural imperatives from the Brits, you know, by now English is the language of Eur … by now, you know, if aliens came to the Earth, by now, they'd probably try and talk to us in English … it's the language of old England it is the language of the US but it is the language of the EU too …

There is a series of ideological assumptions inferable from this passage. The first one relates to Europe as a united polity with a common language and which is offered as a statement of necessity (supported by the modal verb 'we need'). In this sense, the speaker's discursive strategy appears to legitimise the de facto dominance of English on instrumental grounds. However, we can also infer a sort of evaluative process in weighing and juxtaposing the effects associated with linguistic hegemony (cultural imperialism) and support for it. In their argument of justification, RO1 refers to a cognitive schema of universality through which they place Europe in a global, indeed universal context. In this context, the respondent naturalises expectations of being able to communicate with others through the hyperbolic and futuristic imagery of 'aliens' communicating with humans. Crucially, in support of this construction, RO1 clearly decouples utilitarian from identitarian aspects of the English language, appealing to the modernity of this argument (signalled by the temporal expression 'by now').

Further examples of the deconstruction/decoupling of English into separate 'communication' and 'identity' languages emerged in this exchange in which *globish* (that is a simplified version of English) is seen capable of performing the communicative function, whilst the identitarian function remains anchored to *classical* English:

> BO1: In my opinion we really need to distinguish, there are two languages, one is for work and every-day communication, globish, right? And then there's English.
>
> BO6: Indeed there's also the Euro-English of bureaucracy that has got nothing to do with Shakespeare's language, which is the language of the English.

### *Homogenisation and Cultural Diffusion*

A final theme that emerged from our data relates to the members' ideological orientation towards globalising flows and the risk of cultural homogenisation impacting on (and deriving from) languages. Whilst different views emerged in discourse, overall we noticed a conspicuous tendency to accommodate and justify global transformations, whilst downplaying the potential negatives. We will present one example of how these representations were achieved by quoting PR2, who told us:

> PR2: We speak of homogeneity in the whole world [but] we have been also homogenifying a lot in … many countries and some people have seen it as a threat but in the end people are happy about that. I don't know if I take the example of France … in the sixteenth century probably people were not happy that they were forced to speak French and they preferred to keep their own language, their own culture and etc. - - but the result is that now the French culture, let's say, is part of a more global diversity, as long as people are aware of ehm … ehm not necessarily of the fact that there is this process of ehm of homogenifying

> but also ehm if they are aware of what can be done in a different way ehm then there is no problem. It's … it's a question of creativity yeah, I think.

In this case the member used a distinct discursive strategy aimed at relativising the globalisation of culture by an argument of historical analogy. Comparing the current process of global homogenisation with that of French language standardisation, the member portrayed the former positively and was able to represent it as 'part of the more global diversity'. The argument rests on a temporal dimension, which assumes linguistic change through standardisation as a positive development (realised through the propositions people were not happy/people are happy).

## CONCLUSIONS

In this article we have highlighted the many tensions of the EU's multilingual ideology and aimed to establish if and how these are reproduced and negotiated at grass-roots level. Our data show that the ideological tensions are somewhat present in the discourses of our respondents through a range of cognitive orientations towards constitutivist views of languages at one end and instrumentalist views at the other. The emergent construction of multilingualism in our data, however, reflects the institutional one(s) to different extents. Overall, our informants endorsed an idealistic vision of Europe as a multicultural/multilingual community and in this sense they largely reproduce the ideological 'ecology of languages' fostered by the EU. It must be noted, however, that often the notion of language is restricted to official and national categories, thus effectively reproducing a 'pecking order' of languages. Such vision is consistently emerging in discourses of promotion of languages, where we found an ideological split on the actual implementation of policies that would either favour one or more languages.

Whilst we used the constitutivist/instrumentalist taxonomy to guide inductively our analytical approach to member's ideological orientations to language, we must emphasise that no member portrayed their perspective in such dichotomic terms. One major insight emerging from our analysis is that most members seemed to be willing to accommodate instrumental and constitutivist ideologies in a diglossic situation whereby a high common language would coexist with individual low languages. Different arguments were put forward in support of such an either existing or envisaged arrangement. For example, discourses of globalisation were conspicuously linked to the need for competitiveness in the linguistic market and such discourses offered the premises for supporting the use of dominant languages as valuable linguistic capital. Thus, although most members referred to languages as 'resources', a clear preference for English was generally argued in contrast to mainstream institutional discourses (and the rhetorical notion of the equality of languages).

Furthermore, where our data appears to be most divergent from most institutional conceptualisations of languages is in the fact that members appeal to an ideological separation of the identity and communication aspects of language. Such conceptual separation of different functions of language enabled our respondents to construct a set of arguments aimed at legitimising hegemonic practices whether within their own organisation or at an institutional level. Crucially, we thus found that the notion of multilingualism as an expression of democracy (as portrayed in institutional discourses) appears reproduced only to a small extent in our sample. Instead, discourses of democracy are often reconstructed as the necessity of promoting civic debate and improving participation in the EPS. In this light, our data suggest that most members tended to conceptualise democracy as a universal language of its own that should find concrete expression in the most pragmatic forms. Similarly, the notion of linguistic justice was mainly interpreted as the democratic benefits deriving from the construction of Europe which could be sped up by increased interaction in a shared language.

On these last few considerations we recognise some of Wright's (2000) perspectives on the state of a 'community of communication' in the EU discussed earlier. One is that communication networks develop informed by ideological stances that are not necessarily determined by institutional planning. Another important insight is that the decoupling of identity and communication enacted by our informants in their discourses is an ideological departure from nationalistic and colonial views and arguably a move towards a post-national direction, although we cannot dismiss the idea that such views exist in embryonic forms and are partly contradicted by the discursive validation of national/official languages, if only used as convenient labels. Nevertheless our data would tally with existing arguments on social agency and the power of discourse in structuring change. Of course, we must recognise the specificity of our sample, a transnational organisation engaged with reforming Europe, which does not permit the generalisability of such claims to the wider definition of European citizens. Nonetheless, this study may provide potential grounds for future studies to investigate language issues in the EPS. In particular we have deliberately resisted cross-country comparisons or the analysis of 'national' variables, in the belief that a definition of multilingualism must necessarily take into account the transnational dimension of communication in the EPS. We believe that more research should be carried out in this field for there are significant social and political implications for language ideology in the construction of Europe.

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*Appendix 1. Summarising socio-demographic data collected through questionnaires at focus groups*

| Focus Group | Cardiff - UK | | | Cluj - Romania | | | | | | Bologna - Italy | | | | | | London (pilot)- UK | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | 22/04/2012 | | | 14/09/2011 | | | | | | 21/04/2011 | | | | | | 06/04/2011 | |
| Duration (mins) | 65 | | | 84 | | | | | | 70 | | | | | | 36 | |
| Participant Code | CA1 | CA2 | CA3 | CL1 | CL2 | CL3 | CL4 | CL5 | CL6 | BO1 | BO2 | BO3 | BO4 | BO5 | BO6 | LO1 | LO2 |
| Age Group | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18-24 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | | | | | X | |
| 25-34 | | | | | | | | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X |
| 35+ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Male/Female | F | F | F | F | M | M | F | M | F | F | F | M | F | F | M | M | M |
| Occupation | Student | Student | Student | Student | Unemployed | Employee | Student | NGO Coordin. | Youth Worker/ Student | Journalist | Researcher | Student | Student | Employee | Employee | Researcher | Employee |
| Nationality | Turkish | Romanian | British | Romanian | Hungarian | Romanian | Romanian | Romanian | Romanian | Italian | Italian | Italian | German /Russian | Italian | Italian/French | Italian | British |
| Current Country Of Residence | UK | Wales | Wales | Romania | Romania | Romania | Romania | Romania | Romania | Italy | Italy | Italy | Germany | Italy | Italy | UK | UK |
| Lived Abroad | Cyprus 4yrs; UK 2yrs | Sweden 6mths | France 9mths | Belgium 7mths; Greece 3mths | Germany 3mths; Netherlands 1mth | Italy 8mths | France 4mths; Austria 3wks | | | France 9mths; Tanzania 3mths | Spain 1yr; Belgium 9mths; UK 6mths | Germany 1mth | Russia 13yrs; Spain 2yrs; Italy 1yr; Slovakia 1mth | France 6mths | UK 4mths; Ireland 4mths; France 9mths | Ireland 1mth; France 4mths; USA 5mths | France 1yr; Spain 6mths; Lebanon 1yr |
| First Language | Turkish | Romanian | English | Romanian | Hungarian | Romanian | Romanian | Romanian | Romanian | Italian | Italian | Italian | Russian | Italian | Italian | Italian | English |
| Other Languages; Self Reported Proficiency | ENG 5 | ENG 5 | FR 5 | FR 5 | GER 5 | ENG 3 | ENG 5 | FR 5 | ENG 4 | ENG 4 | ENG 5 | ENG 5 | GER 5 | ENG 4 | FR 5 | ENG 3 | GER 5 |
| | FR 3 | SW 4 | | ENG 4 | ROM 5 | IT 3 | FR 5 | ENG 5 | FR 2 | FR 3 | FR 3 | GER 1 | SP 4 | FR 4.5 | ENG 3 | FR 3 | FR 4 |
| | | FR 1 | | GER 2.5 | ENG 4 | | IT 4 | IT 4 | SP 1 | | SP 4 | FR 1 | IT 4 | SP 3 | | | |
| | | | | GR 2 | | | GER 2 | SP 3 | | | | | ENG 3 | | | | |
| | | | | IT 1 | | | SP 2 | RU 2 | | | | | FR 2 | | | | |
| | | | | | | | HUN 1 | GR 2 | | | | | POR 1 | | | | |

LEGEND: ENG- English; FR - French; GER - German; GR - Greek; HUN - Hungarian; IT - Italian, POR - Portuguese; ROM - Romanian; RU - Russian; SP - Spanish; SW - Swedish.

*Appendix 2: Summary of socio-demographic data collected through questionnaires at individual interviews*

| Interview | Rome - Italy | Berlin - Germany | Berlin - Germany | London - UK | Prague- Czech Republic | Prague - Czech Republic | Sofia - Bulgaria | Valencia - Spain | Amsterdam - Netherlands |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | 20/04/2010 | 16/02/2013 | 08/02/2013 | 18/01/2013 | 24/01/2013 | 27/01/2013 | 21/01/2013 | 24/01/2013 | 09/02/2013 |
| Duration | 36 | 52 | 41 | 45 | 65 | 42 | 61 | 56 | 80 |
| Participant Code | RO1 | BE1 | BE2 | LO3 | PR1 | PR2 | SO1 | VA1 | AM1 |
| Age Group | | | | | | | | | |
| 18-24 | | | | | | | | | |
| 25-34 | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 35+ | | | X | | | | | | |
| Male/Female | F | F | M | F | F | F | M | F | F |
| Occupation | NGO Worker | Unemployed | Cultural Manager | Student | Human Rights officer | Admin/education sector | PhD Student | Journalist | Temp clerk |
| Nationality | Italian | German | Italian | British | French | American | Bulgarian | Spanish | Dutch |
| Country Of Residence | Italy/UK | Germany | Germany | UK | Czech Republic | Czech Republic | Slovenia | Spain | Netherlands |
| Lived Abroad | Canada 2yrs; UK 8yrs; Spain 1yr | Italy 9mths | Spain 6mths; Austria 3yrs; Germany 7yrs | | Germany 3yrs; UK 1yr; Romania 8mths; Czech Republic 2yrs | Czech Republic 5yrs | Croatia 3mths; Malta 6mths; Macedonia 3yrs | Netherlands 2yrs; Hungary 1mth; Russia 1mth; Finland 1mth | Sweden 1yr; Australia 2mths |
| First Language | Italian | German | Italian | English | French | English | Bulgarian | Spanish | Dutch |
| Other Languages; Self Reported Proficiency | ENG 5 | ENG 4 | ENG 4 | GER 2 | ENG 5 | SP 3 | ENG 5 | ENG 3 | ENG 5 |
| | SP 5 | IT 3 | GER 3 | FR 1 | GER 5 | CZ 3 | MAC 5 | IT 1 | GER 4 |
| | POR 2 | FR 2 | SP 2 | SP 1 | ROM 3 | | SB-CR 4 | CAT 5 | FR 2 |
| | | SP 1 | | | IT 3 | | RU 3 | | SP 1 |
| | | TUR 1 | | | CZ 2 | | | | |

LEGEND: CAT - Catalan; CZ - Czech; ENG - English; FR - French; GER - German; GR - Greek; HUN - Hungarian; IT - Italian; MAC - Macedonian POR - Portuguese; ROM - Romanian; RU - Russian; SB-CR - Serbo-Croatian; SP - Spanish; SW - Swedish; TUR - Turkish.

## *Acknowledgements*

We are grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and to Maxine David for her help and support in the publication process.

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[1] We use a pseudonym to protect the anonymity of the NGO. DC4E was set up in the post-constitutional crisis of the Treaty of Lisbon when the EU sought to improve the communication gap between citizens and the institutions, and citizens themselves launched 'Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate' (see http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/decisionmaking_process/a30000_en.htm).
[2] This means that the geographical location of each group is not necessarily reflected in the national composition of that group (i.e. the Cardiff branch is made up of Romanian, Turkish as well as British nationals).
[3] In sociolinguistics the term *diglossia* refers to language practices in a community whereby a 'high' version of language is used for formal or literary purposes whereas a 'low' version is used for everyday conversation.
[4] For more details of the EU's multilingual policies and a critique of meanings of 'protection' and 'promotion' see Strubell (2007).
[5] In this article, language is understood as both the object (multilingual ideologies) and the tool (discourses of multilingualism) of investigation.
[6] The question of the difference between languages and dialects has been long debated in linguistic disciplines. From a linguistic perspective, the difference hinges on their mutual intelligibility whereby two mutually intelligible systems of communication (such as Castellan and Catalan) are considered dialects of the wider family of Romance languages. In sociolinguistics, the distinction tends to refer to the socio-economic and historical prestige or status acquired by a language through institutionalisation and standardisation (so that Norwegian and Danish, for example, are mutually intelligible but are regarded as separate languages).
[7] On that occasion it was discussed whether Maltese should be recognised as another EU official language given that it is spoken by a comparatively small number of people and, as the national language of Malta, it coexists along with English (which has official status) and Italian (which is widely spoken) the latter two already being official languages of the EU. In 2007, Maltese was eventually granted 'EU official language status' after a transitional period of three years during which the institutions were not obliged to draft all acts in Maltese.

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