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DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL MULTILINGUALISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PROSPECTS AND DILEMMAS

In the light of the European language policy, higher education institutions are assigned an enormous role and expectations when it comes to promoting individual multilingualism (i.e. plurilingualism). Drawing upon the language policy developments and research in this area, this paper aims to show the pathways to developing learners' plurilingual/multilingual repertoires at the tertiary level. Accordingly, the author will outline the psycholinguistic tenets of individual multilingualism as well as current priorities and recent tendencies in what has been referred to as plurilingual education. Such concepts as partial and transversal competences, intercomprehension, learning L3 through L2, CLIL, interdisciplinary communicative competence and international cooperation will be highlighted. The emphasis will be placed on the design and implementation of a coherent language policy by higher education institutions; in addition, a number of good practices institutions may take pride in and the obstacles they ultimately face will be described.

KEY WORDS: European language policy, higher education institutions, multilingualism, plurilingualism, multiple language learning.

Introduction

Actions geared towards the tapping of the full potential of multilingualism define the key area of interest among the institutions shaping the European language policy. Due to the opportunities the tertiary education sector offers when it comes to maximizing the use of languages as well as their acquisition and their further dissemination, higher education institutions (HEIs) have been recognized as 'linguistically rich environments' (European Commission 2003) and

constitute a sector playing an invaluable role in developing *individual multilingualism* (e.g. European Commission 2005), i.e. the individual ability to use more than one language, which is also referred to as *plurilingualism* (Council of Europe 2001).

The aim of the article is thus to indicate pathways to the promotion of individual multilingualism/plurilingualism in HEIs. Accordingly, the recent language education priorities and directions set for the European Member States will be indicated and the problematic issues that may arise during

the construction and implementation of language policy in HEIs will be discussed. The research method used involves a critical analysis of European documents issued in the years 1995–2010 by the European institutions influencing national trends in language education.

European Language Policy

The European language policy is coordinated at the supranational level by the Council of Europe (a Strasbourg-based institution with the Language Policy Division in Brussels and the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz), the European Union, and the European Language Council in Berlin, which is concerned exclusively with the context of HEIs. The European institutions do not impose directives upon the Member States but rather set aims, suggest main directions, offer recommendations as well as provide financial and intellectual support to enable Europeans to broaden their linguistic and cultural horizons in a relatively cohesive way.

The publication of the *White Paper on Education and Training, Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society* (1995), through which the European Union signalled that European citizens should speak at least three languages (mother tongue + two other European languages), as well as *Recommendation R (98) 6* of the Council of Europe, which emphasized the need for 'all Europeans to achieve a degree of **communicative ability** in a number of languages', set the main European language policy goal with regard to individuals that has remained prevalent in the recent years: 'Learning one lingua franca alone is not enough. The Commission's objective is a truly multilingual

European society: a society in which the rate of individual multilingualism steadily increases until every citizen has **practical skills** in at least two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue' (European Commission 2005).

Individual multilingualism in European language policy

The psycholinguistic tenets of the EU's conception of **individual multilingualism** or the Council of Europe's **plurilingualism** come down to the integration, interrelation and interplay of the knowledge, skills and experiences gathered when it comes to acquiring and using various languages (Council of Europe 2001; cf. also Cenoz and Genesee 1998, p. 17). When recorded in the complex individual repertory, i.e. multilingual/plurilingual competence, all these interacting components can be taken advantage of during manifold communicative situations. This evidences that diversity is valuable (Strubell *et al.* 2007) and adds to one's multilinguality (cf. Aronin and Ó Laoire 2004). The constant qualitative change is made explicit through the Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (DMM) proposed by Herdina and Jessner (2002) and through Hufeisen's Factor Model (e.g. Hufeisen and Marx 2007) describing the interplay of factors affecting the shape of multilingual competence.

The emphasis put on the communicative ability and practical skills indicates that the acquisition of native-like/ideal competences in each language no longer has to constitute the goal of multiple language learning as it is natural for multilinguals to operate on a continuum ranging from partial skills to full literacy in respective languages (cf.

Cook's notion of 'multicompetence' 1992, 2003; *Final Report. High Level Group on Multilingualism* 2007).

As explicated in *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (Council of Europe 2001, p. 135; Coste *et al.* 2009, p. 28–29), **partial competence** concerns a limited ability within a given language, e.g.

- performing selected language activities (e.g. reception, production or interaction);
- functioning in a particular domain and performing specific tasks (e.g. communicating the most usual information at a post office);
- employing individual general competences (e.g. knowledge about cultures or ability to learn);
- making use of the developed components of communicative competence (e.g. linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic or discursive).

However, in order to take advantage of the partial competences, development of **transversal competence** is of particular importance as it implies strategic ability to transfer knowledge/skills across languages (Council of Europe 2001, p. 169; Candelier *et al.* 2010).

European conception of language education

The abovementioned conceptualization of one's linguistic repertoire generates a new paradigm of language education embodying a synergic global view of language learning. **Plurilingual education** is said to reflect 'the current *Copernican revolution* in language teaching; it centres on learners and on developing their individual plurilingual [i.e.

multilingual, KC] repertoire, and not on the specific languages they are supposed to acquire' (Council of Europe 2010, p. 16).

This further stipulates curricular *coordination of language teaching* (e.g. planning the order of learning and linking languages) and *coherence in teaching* (e.g. making use of mutual comprehension of related languages) (Council of Europe 2007, p. 103–104).

Recent projects of the ECML include pluralistic approaches denoting 'didactic approaches which use teaching/learning activities involving several (i.e. more than one) varieties of languages' (Candelier *et al.* 2010) and comprise:

- **awakening to languages** – may confront the learner with every kind of linguistic variety studied or not;
- **the intercomprehension of related languages** – studying a number of languages belonging to the same linguistic family while the focus is placed on comprehension;
- **integrated didactic approaches to different languages studied,** i.e. one language of education serves as a springboard to facilitate the acquisition of subsequent foreign language, at the same time expanding the basis for yet another language learning process.

The institutions share a comparable view on general language education policy measures (cf. *Recommendation R (98) 6*, Komorowska 2010). *Council Resolution of 21 November 2008 on a European strategy for multilingualism* offers a fair inventory of the common European recommendations and tools with regard to life-long learning aimed at developing individual multilingualism, including

- high-quality language and culture education options enabling people to master at least two foreign languages;
- a wide selection of languages taught (including those less-widely-used varieties) in education;
- ICT tools and distance learning as well as pluralistic approaches and initiatives such as the European Language Label;
- tools for learner assessment, including the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, *the Europass Language Passport, the European Indicator of Language Competence*;
- the training of language teachers to enable the instruction of non-linguistic subjects in foreign languages (CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning);
- mobility and exchange programmes among language teachers and learners as part of the *Lifelong Learning Programme*, for instance.

Towards individual multilingualism in HEIs

As expressed by the European Language Council (2001b), 'Universities must provide students, regardless of their field of specialisation, with opportunities for improving their knowledge in languages, for learning new languages, and for becoming more independent in their language learning.'

This is also concomitant with fulfilling the European objectives of maintaining linguistic diversity or intercultural dialogue. In this way, acquiring languages is not regarded exclusively as a personal asset but also as a societal advantage (European Commission 2003, cf. link between language skills and economic growth evidenced in *ELAN* 2006).

Living up to those expectations translates into incorporating European language policy strategies and recommendations by HEIs, drawing upon the most essential directions in this field, creating favourable conditions of language teaching and learning, including the design and selection of appropriate methodology, as well as developing positive attitudes to language education in particular and life-long learning in general.

Nevertheless, the construction of language policy in HEIs – although it shows great potential – is not devoid of challenges and institutional obstacles; however, most importantly, it demands well-thought-out actions to develop a 'plurilingual and pluricultural European citizen that is open to the world' (European Language Council 2001a).

European recommendations for high education (HE) contexts

European priorities concerning the promotion of the *multilingual/plurilingual profile of the learner* underlie the recommendations for the higher education context; some of these will be outlined here. They are also in harmony with the objectives of the Bologna Process (directed towards increasing mobility of graduates and their later employability) as well as the Lisbon Strategy goal of building a competitive knowledge-based economy.

The European Language Council in its *Language Studies in Higher Education: A Key Contribution to European Integration* (2001b) – also known as *Berlin Declara-*

tion – highlighted the following prominent elements that should feature prominently in the HE programmes:

- a number of credits in languages for students in undergraduate education;
- independent language learning environments, ICT and e-learning;
- co-operation with speakers of different languages;
- a wide variety of languages, including less widely used and/or less taught languages;
- (portions of) degree programmes in other languages.

Provisions were also laid out in terms of specialist language and language-related programmes, including modern language programmes (e.g. teaching in the target language and learning another European language apart from the major language), teacher education (e.g. the study of another language alongside the major language or area of specialisation), and translation/interpreting programmes (including LWULs and offering such BA qualifications as professional communicators, language mediators, and MA-related qualifications, i.e. professional translators and interpreters).

As stressed by the European Union in *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism* (2005, p. 10–11), due to the lack of transparent specification of what is required in all professions demanding language expertise, each HE training programme needs to be constantly updated so that students will be able to acquire appropriate skills, be offered the right tools and gain practical insight into working environments. Moreover, in accordance with *From Linguistic Diversity*

to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the Development of Language Policies in Europe (Council of Europe 2007, p. 98), HEIs are 'the locus of transition from imposed acquisition at school to freely choosing to learn languages'. Yet, it is not only the diversity of languages offered that is at issue, as what seems to be also crucial is that university language education should be diversified in terms of *functions of languages* (Council of Europe 2007, p. 99) in, for example, the course chosen by students, in students' personal learning, in knowledge instruction (the use of languages in education), in the international relations of higher education institutions (including e.g. online education, teacher and student mobility, training periods abroad, presence of foreign students).

Among the aspects emphasized, the *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004 – 2006* was sending students abroad for at least one term to study in a foreign language (including the opportunity to learn the language of the host country through Erasmus Intensive Language Courses, i.e. EILC) and enabling them to obtain an officially recognized language qualification as part of their degree programme. As indicated in the *Report on the implementation of the Action Plan 'Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity'* (2007) nearly 10 000 students took part in EILC between 2004–2006, on account of which not only did the participants strengthen their linguistic abilities, they also had a chance to develop their intercultural competence. Furthermore, at this point – echoing the calls of the Council of Europe and the European Language Council – the EU turned to all HEIs to set up their coherent language policy.

European goals in practice: constructing HE language policy

The European Language Council (2001a, p. 3) clarifies that 'as each university moves forward, making educational and academic choices in relation to language, it must develop a language policy which will determine these choices'.

Accordingly, the degree of achieving a potential of developing individual multilingualism is determined by how well each HEI is able to adjust the European principles to its own macro- and micro- context.

An array of helpful reference matters (in the form of **objectives, methods and strategies**) related to policy construction has been addressed in *Universities and language policy in Europe* (European Language Council, 2001a) – also referred to as 'the framework of a language policy for European universities' – and included, for instance:

- **Among objectives:** the specification of competences to be developed (strategic competence, i.e. strategies for learning and communicating; intercultural and plurilingual competence); language choice, e.g. dilemma of incorporating English vs. other languages in curricula (cf. the notion of 'multilingualism with English' by Hoffman 2000; or Klein's 2007 proposed conversion of the policy equation from '2+1' into 'Mother Tongue+English+1');
- **Among methods**: the de-compartmentalization of disciplines and languages ('inter-languages' and 'interdisciplinary learning'); introducing language transversality, thanks to which languages could be seen as 'key skills' (cf. Eurydice 2002) and 'graduate skills'; accentuating transversal

learning; learning to learn; learner autonomy; new research fields; self-assessment tools; and mobility opportunities;

- **Among strategies**: the HEI becoming a consultative partner, 'co-developing' its plurilingual students; recognizing itself as an institution conscious of its role using, e.g. negotiation of goals.

With view to develop HE language policy efficiently, Tudor (2008) recommends that HEIs consult various institutional actors (e.g. faculty heads, language specialists) as well as evaluate their own existing practices by conducting a SWOT analysis, taking into account

- current language teaching-learning practice (e.g. the number of students having access to language learning);
- current language teaching-learning infrastructure (e.g. engagement of either a language centre or faculty in organizing language education);
- current levels of language skills, including both students and institutional actors (e.g. setting realistic targets);
- attitudes to language learning (of students, faculty, etc);
- strategic positioning of the institution (stance on internationalization, employability of its graduates, academic mobility).

In this way, as Tudor (2008, p. 54) argues, 'creating a profile of the target institution on each of these factors makes it possible to assess the current situation, identify potentially productive lines of action, and to establish priorities.'

However, a list of thoroughly discussed reference points for the development of HE language policy compiled by Tudor and

Mackiewicz (2009) might prove equally helpful.

It is worth noting that thanks to such initiatives as the 2-year project of the *European Network for the Promotion of Language Learning Among All Undergraduates,* results of constructing language policy in European universities and meeting the European strategic goals were investigated through case studies, good practices, and analyses commissioned in order for European universities to draw upon (cf. Chambers 2003, *Language policy in higher education in Europe: a pilot survey;* Tudor 2005, 2008). Among the exemplary case studies, Sárdi (2006) described a university college in Hungary in which the foreign language programme incorporated teaching LSP exclusively to all undergraduate students, introducing subject-specific courses in FLs, and the development of an independent learning centre, which all led the institution to receive the European Language Label 2005.

Problematic issues

Unsurprisingly – despite the positive developments – there are diverse problematic issues which have been traced across Europe in the HE context.

The Council of Europe (2007, p. 82) itself identifies factors that might go against developing individual multilingualism; these relate to varied perceptions of languages and of knowing/learning them, the place of languages in examinations, as well as the reasons of purely administrative nature, such as the costs of teaching, availability of teachers and their timetables, etc. The abovementioned aspects go hand in hand with the list of obstacles reported in *Higher Education Language Policy in Europe: A*

snapshot of Action and Trend (Tudor 2005); These are a few of the problems addressed: 'the major European languages are taught', 'The faculty of Humanities would not be able to finance all language teachers for the whole university', 'Poor understanding of the role of languages for students by the professors', 'There are still many lecturers who do not know foreign languages themselves', or 'Cooperation between faculties and language centres' or even 'Rivalries between different departments'.

The fact that the academic teachers from the above-mentioned study do not present satisfying command of foreign languages is tantamount to their inability to conduct CLIL-based classes, their greater reservations about promoting and incorporating foreign materials or resorting to other language-related matters during their classes. Inevitably, this has negative influence on students' motivation towards using languages for the purposes of such courses.

The lack of cooperation or even rivalry between HE departments, in turn, sheds an unfavourable light on students' participation in interdisciplinary projects that incorporate a foreign language (cf. an exemplary project with satisfactory results conducted in the University of Manchester between 2004-2006, described in Lorenzo-Zamorano 2009), inter- and intra-faculty initiatives or international projects, which not only require the use of skills appropriate for dealing with multilingual communication (e.g. using strategies of intercomprehension) but also enhance interdisciplinary communicative competence, i.e. the ability to interact in interdisciplinary environments, negotiate the meaning of specialist terms from other disciplines or critically evaluate practices, products, identify and apply strategies from

one's own and other disciplines (Woods 2007). Accordingly, students might experience 'difficulties relating their 'language world' to the other areas in the curriculum' (Lorenzo-Zamorano 2009, p. 66).

In the case of language courses only, in turn, as Coste et al (2009, p. 24) claim, the *separatist* ('or language by language ') *approach* still prevails in Europe over the *integrated plurilingual approach:* 'Each language has its own syllabus, (...) the four skills (oral and written comprehension and expression) are covered and a communicative approach tends to be employed, (...) [with] native-speaker competence for each language'.

This highlights that Member States still need time to fully acknowledge the potential of partial competences (*Promotion of Multilingualism,* 2008). Nevertheless, there are projects which do show that such integration is both feasible and may be successful, as it was with the 'EaG' (*L3 English after L2 German)* project – implemented in University of Darmstad – that 'introduced a curriculum for autonomous self-study which used L2 German as a bridge language as a way to facilitate the development of receptive competencies in English as the L3' (Hufeisen and Jessner 2009, p. 120).

Conclusions

There are of course no ready-made solutions that will fit each context. Nevertheless, irrespective of the degree of success attained when it comes to implementing institutional changes, it is of utmost importance that all HE institutions become involved in promoting and developing individual multilingualism, since – as evidenced by Lehtonen and Karjalainen's research (2009, p. 418) on workplace language needs – 'a knowledge of other languages is helpful in many cases, but knowing which ones is somewhat tricky'. Moreover, as emphasised in the document on *Key Competencies*, 'The likelihood of anybody staying in the same job, the same economic sector or in paid employment throughout the entire period of working life is becoming increasingly remote' (Eurydice 2002, p. 11).

This all means that the traditional 'reactive approach' to language education based on identifiable goals will not suffice any longer; instead, through providing students with opportunities to develop their multilingual/ plurilingual competence alongside with all the components such a repertoire underlies, HE decision-makers will promote the **proactive approach**, 'geared to helping students prepare a potential for future language use and language learning' (Tudor 2004, p. 7).

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INDIVIDUALIOSIOS DAUGIAKALBYSTĖS UGDYMAS AUKŠTOSIOSE MOKYKLOSE: PERSPEKTYVOS IR PROBLEMOS

Santrauka

Straipsnyje pateikiami ir aprašomi būdai, kaip ugdyti daugiakalbystę (angl. multilingual) ir kalbų įvairovę (angl. plurilingual) per trečiąją studijų pakopą. Iš pradžių apibūdinami Europos kalbų

DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL MULTILINGUALISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PROSPECTS AND DILEMMAS

Summary

The article is an attempt at presenting and discussing pathways for developing learners' multilingual/plurilingual repertoires at the tertiary level.

politikos tikslai, vardijamos institucijos, atsakingos už šių tikslų įgyvendinimą. Paskui aptariami individualios daugiakalbystės ir kalbų įvairovės psicholingvistiniai pagrindai ir pateikiamos edukologinės įžvalgos, kadangi minėtosios sąvokos yra visų Europos Tarybos, Europos Sąjungos ir Europos Kalbų Tarybos kalbų politikos ir kalbų mokymo veiklos ašis.

Remiantis kalbų politikos pasiekimais (t. y. dokumentais, rekomendacijomis) ir pabrėžiant studentų daugiakalbystės ir kalbų įvairovės holistinio ugdymo vertę, įvardijami šiandienos švietimo prioritetai ugdant daugiakalbį žmogų. Tokių prioritetų sudėliojimas svarbus formuojant kalbų mokymosi uždavinius aukštosiose mokyklose.

Straipsnyje analizuojama, kaip Europos kalbų politikos tikslai, Bolonijos proceso ir Lisabonos strategijos direktyvos dera su trečiosios švietimo pakopos specifika. Pabrėžiamas Europos raginimas, siekis, kad kiekviena aukštoji mokykla parengtų nuoseklią kalbų politiką, kuri padėtų ugdyti daugiakalbius ateities specialistus.

Šiame straipsnyje pateikti bendrieji metmenys kalbos politikai kurti, kurie grindžiami gerąja praktika ir tyrimais, atliktais dalyvaujant projekte „Europos kalbų mokymosi skatinimo tinklas tarp visų bakalaurantų" (angl. „European Network For The Promotion Of Language Learning Among All Undergraduates", trumpiau ENLU). Taip pat atsižvelgiama į probleminius klausimus, kurie gali trukdyti šiems procesams sėkmingai vykti. Pabrėžiama iniciatyvaus kalbų mokymo trečiojoje pakopoje reikšmė, juk daugiakalbiai studentai yra geriau pasirengę dirbti Europoje ir susidoroti su kalbomis susijusiais iššūkiais.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Europos kalbų politika, aukštojo mokslo institucijos, duagiakalbystė, kalbų įvairovė, kelių kalbų išmokimas.

It opens with the European language policy goals and institutions responsible for setting them; on this basis, the section elaborates upon the psycholinguistic underpinnings and educational implications of individual multilingualism/ plurilingualism, as the two concepts have become the focus of actions undertaken in the field of European language policy and language education by the Council of Europe, the European Union or the European Language Council. On the basis of language policy developments (i.e. documents, recommendations) and by underscoring the value of holistic development of learners' plurilingual/ multilingual repertoires (including transversal competences and partial competences), the author intends to indicate current priorities and show most recent tendencies in what has been referred to as plurilingual education, since this influences the language teaching/learning in higher education context.

Accordingly, the next section that deals with higher education presents the adjustment of the European language policy objectives to the specificity of the tertiary education level, which also stays under the influence of the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy directives. In this way, the author stresses the European calls to draw up a coherent language policy by each higher education institution as this shapes the degree of success in developing future multilingual professionals. Thus, the reference framework for decision-makers to draw upon when it comes to policy construction has been outlined, including good practices, research conducted as part of the ENLU network, and problematic issues that might hinder the process.

In the concluding part, the emphasis has been placed on adopting a proactive rather than reactive approach to language education at the tertiary level, as having their repertoire diversified, students will be better prepared to face the challenges stemming from the European workplace language needs.

KEY WORDS: European language policy, higher education institutions, multilingualism, plurilingualism, multiple language learning.