

## *Tanulmány*

Orsolya Katalin Szabó

### **Communication in a Democratic Multilingual Europe**

European Union Language Policy Evaluation from a Critical Perspective

#### **Abstract**

After the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, the European Union is more aware than ever that it necessitates an imminent reform. The present paper fits into the pending reconceptualisation of the European Union's legal and institutional system. Halfway between a confederation and a federation, European legislature may have direct effects on its citizens, therefore, transparency is a central element of legitimate governance in the EU. However, while the European Union has long been struggling to respect transparency through its ambitious policy of multilingualism, the ever-growing number of official/national languages puts EU institutions under enormous pressure. Since it is impossible to respect integral multilingualism under all circumstances, European institutions started to adopt ad hoc strategies implicitly. Fearing the explosion of the EU's linguistic 'powder keg' the language regime of the European Union has developed a series of contradictory aspects. Along with the critical review of the European Union's language policy, this paper raises the possibility to adopt Euro-English, an ascending, independent variety of English peculiar to Brussels bureaucracy for institutional communication. It aims to provide impetus for a comprehensive reflection on a European language policy that is capable of reconciling transparency and efficiency.

*Keywords:* transparency, efficiency, EU language policy; individual multilingualism; linguistic diversity; Euro-English

#### **Introduction**

Guided by the motto 'United in Diversity' the EU seeks to put in place an inclusive language policy, based upon a complex set of normative, institutional and theoretical components. As the policy focus has right from the beginning been the inclusion of a wide range of languages, language policy and multilingualism policy have become synonymous in the EU. However, the ever-growing number of official/national languages together with the normative aim of integral multilingualism put the EU under enormous pressure, leading to implicit, ad hoc compromises pointing towards the ever-growing use of English, although paradoxically, after the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, English is not an official language anymore. The overall objective of the paper is to outline the most important aspects of EU language policy from a critical perspective and while taking into account the 2016 referendum in the United Kingdom on breaking with the European Union. In fact, one of the numerous dilemmas that emerge after Brexit relates to the future of the European language regime and the status of English therein.

## **Research Problem**

There are a total of twenty-four official and working languages in the European Union with more than sixty indigenous regional and minority languages and many other so called non-indigenous languages spoken by immigrants. This multilingual nature of the EU is not entirely unique: as a matter of fact, the European Union is home to only 3.4 % of the total number of living languages in the world. What is rather new under the sun is the constitutional system the European Union is characterised by. It is an international entity sui generis, bearing characteristics of intergovernmental as well as of supranational nature. In fact, the European Union is considered as the world's most ambitious example of pooling state sovereignty at international level (Moravcsik 2004). Since its creation, Member States have conferred on the European Union an increasing number of competences. Thus, the EU has grown from a purely intergovernmental, economic organisation of states to a supranational, political union of states, offering a European Union citizenship supplementary to national citizenship (Kiljunen 2004). The Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union make up the core functional treaties of the EU and together with EU legislation they constitute European Union law, which has supremacy over national legislation. In parallel with this processes, the European Union has also undergone horizontal changes: the enlargement of the European community from six (1958) to twenty-seven (2020) Member States has had concrete linguistic effects on EU institutions as it implied the ongoing extension of official and working languages so as to include the official languages of all Member States. The ever-growing number of official and working languages – considered as a prerequisite for the democratic functioning of the EU – has posed severe challenges for the functioning of EU institutions, which started to adopt ad hoc strategies to cope, leading to implicit compromises and uncoordinated strategies (Gazzola 2006). This is how language policy became an underlying functional-political problem in the European Union. Since the historical roots of the notion of nation-state and the politicisation of languages lie in Europe, it is not surprising that language is a highly sensible issue for European decision-makers and any reduction of the official and working languages is considered a taboo in EU circles. (Ammon 2006)

## **Methods**

### ***Definition of key terms***

Firstly, I find it important to clarify some key notions of this paper. EU language policy is underpinned by the language ideology of multilingualism. The notion of language ideology stands for culturally and socially embedded metalinguistic conceptualisations of language and its forms of usage (Blommaert 2005). Language users have various conceptions of language and language use, and these conceptions guide their communicative behaviour. They use language on the basis of the conceptions they have, and thus they actually reproduce those conceptions through speech. These ideological constructs conceal ambitions for power and authority and as such constitute an implicit status planning: the designation of which languages should be dominant and which should be relegated to a lower status (May 2001). Based on policy papers it can be deduced that the notion of multilingualism, the key language ideology of EU language policy, is a twofold concept in the EU. While the Council of Europe

distinguishes between collective multilingualism and individual plurilingualism, in the European Union, the term ‘multilingualism’ encompasses both levels; that is, when an individual learns several languages and also when several communities using different languages coexist within a given geographic area. Accordingly, in the terminology of the European Union multilingualism policy is based on the creation of an environment in which all languages may fully prevail, the speakers of those languages have equal rights (plural monolingualism), and in which the teaching and learning of many languages can flourish (individual plurilingualism).<sup>1</sup>

### ***Language policy analysis – methodology***

Language planning domains were first described by Kloss (1966) as status and corpus planning, which Cooper (1989) complemented with the notion of acquisition planning. Language status planning is the allocation of functions for a specific language, corpus planning refers to corpus building through creating new words or terms, spelling and orthography reforms, while acquisition planning involves efforts to influence the allocation of users of languages. The European Union implements language policy in all three domains. Status planning is carried out by the Council of the European Union, or else, by Member States acting unanimously in the Council of the European Union. The decision is not about selecting a vernacular to be the standard language, as is the case at national level but about giving an additional EU status to some of the languages officially recognized in the Member States. The European Union is also engaged in corpus planning, as the official languages must fulfil new functions at supranational level. Within the framework of its acquisition planning activity, the European Union has also been promoting language learning through a wide range of framework strategies and concrete programs. Considering the complex and multifaceted nature of language policy, one way of navigating through its different aspects is offered by Kroon’s representation of language policy as a cube (Kroon 2003), modified by Ahn (2007) to adapt it to the European Union. Z-axis pertains to the geo-political locale at which a policy is being formulated; Y-axis pertains to the status of the language being planned; the X-axis pertains to planning domains. When it comes to Z-axis, the present paper is dealing specifically with EU-level language policy as a geo-political locale. It intends to focus on status planning and acquisition planning as the transmission of language ideology is carried out fundamentally in these two planning domains (I agree with Fishman (2005) who claims that planning activities overlap and corpus planning is simply one facet of status planning). Finally, when it comes to the status of language, the paper focuses on national/official languages and regional/lesser used languages as the language categories EU language policy mostly target. (Figure 1)

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Multilingualism: between policy objectives and implementation, EP Study, 2008.

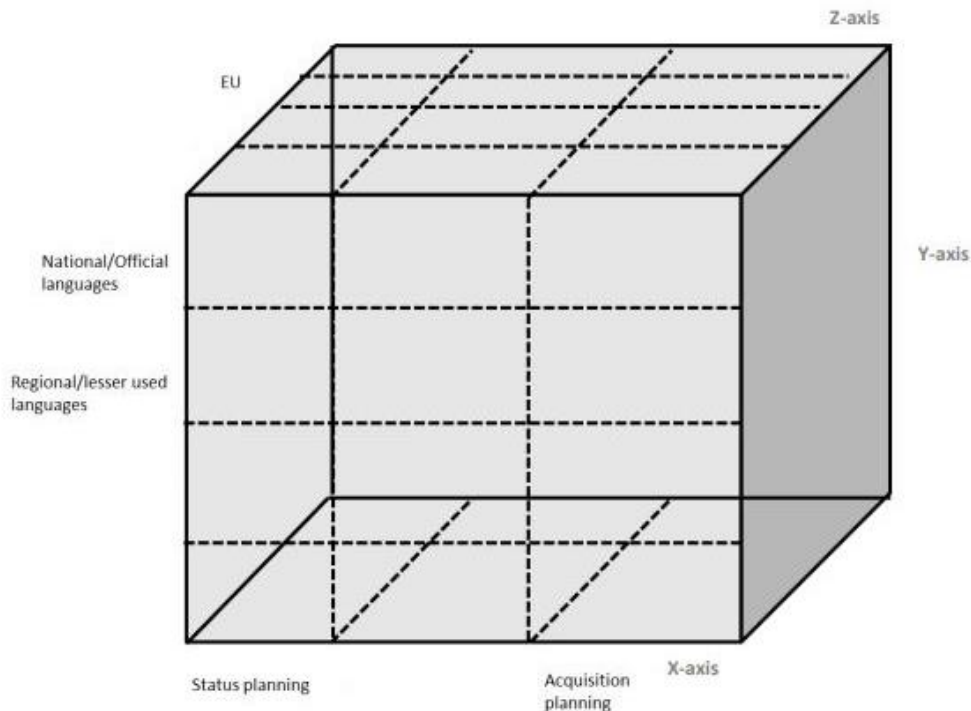


Figure 1. Paper focus as represented by a language policy cube (Source: Ahn 2007)

As a first step, I observed the diachronic evolution of multilingualism policy in the EU based on European Union law sources and EU policy documents in order to outline the general framework of EU language policy. In an aim to make a closer examination, I reviewed the rules of procedure of major EU institutions. This was particularly important given that Council Regulation No. 1/1958 gives the right for all EU institutions to stipulate in their rules of procedure what languages to use in specific cases. I also reviewed major language policy related EU policy documents, including Council resolutions, European Commission communications, EP resolutions. These institutional documents confirmed my premises about the lack of an overarching political vision with each institution expressing their position on multilingualism according to their functional characteristics and needs. As a final step, I examined concrete language practices in major EU institutions focusing especially on the European Parliament basing my research on empirical studies carried by Ammon (2012), Fischer (2010), Forchtner (2014), Gazzola (2006, 2013, 2014) Kraus (2008), Kruse & Ammon (2013) Krzyzanowski & Wodak (2010, 2013).

## Results

Based on EU law sources and policy documents, it was established that multilingualism as the focus of EU language policy developed in three phases between the years 1950 and 2000 [Figure 2]. First, the European Union allocated the languages designated by Member States in functional categories with working and official languages of the EU government being at top of the hierarchy. The linguistic constitution of the EU, that is, Regulation No. 1/1958 of the

Council put official languages with equal rights on a statutory basis. The next level of multilingualism was added between the 1980s and 1990s when the transmission of a linguistic ideology heavily skewed in favour of the official languages needed to be rebalanced from the 1980-1990s on in favour of minority languages. Thus, EU language policy was complemented with minority language protection. The third stage corresponds to the development of individual multilingualism as a separate policy agenda. The EU White Paper on Education and Training: Teaching and Learning –Towards the Learning Society (1995) supplemented the idea of multilingualism with the individual level by encouraging EU citizens to learn another language of the European Union as well as one more foreign language (1 + 2 formula). In the latter stage, the promotion of individual multilingual skills should have in theory equally favoured the learning of all European languages but this ideal has come up against such macro-dynamics as the predominance of English on the global market of languages. The EU has sought to correct this dissonant effect by a progressive shift of ideology from inclusiveness to the economic value of multilingual skills, which implicitly legitimises the convergence towards English.

The founding fathers considered Europe as an entity of national languages, and the assumption made was that a mostly monolingual citizen could, if necessary and with the external assistance of the EU translation service, be put into the position of being ‘multilingual’ (Moliner et al. 2013). However, with the ever-growing number of official languages this became ever more difficult. The EU has adopted several ad hoc technical and organisational measures to better cope with this situation but related policy documents clearly show there is no overarching policy with this regard. The language issue has always been approached in a rather arbitrary manner. As Ammon points out (2006), while there is a relatively stable agreement on the unsustainability of integral multilingualism, decision-makers fear a lack of consensus, saying that Member States would evidently avoid any domain and functional losses for their languages. Thus, during the past few decades of European integration, the two facets of multilingualism, that is plural monolingualism and individual plurilingualism, have become increasingly inconsistent. The unsustainable and contradictory nature of European language continues to produce anomalies in the functioning of the European Union, which I intend to typologise in this paper as normative and functional deficits.

	<b>Conceptualisation of European multilingualism policy from the 1950s until recent days</b>		
<b>Stages of the European integration process</b>	Until the 1970s – consolidation of the European project	1980s and 1990s	1990s and 2000s – increasing influence of the global context
<b>EU language policy focus</b>	Equal dignity of all official languages of EU Member States	Growing protection of language diversity (minority languages)	Promotion of plurilingual competences of individuals

*Figure 2. Focus of EU multilingualism policy in the different stages of European integration (Source: Author)*

### ***Normative Deficits***

This paper calls as normative deficits all norm-related contradictions that characterise the EU language policy. Normative deficits include

- contradictory regulations on internal multilingualism;
- precarious minority language protection;
- policy marginalisation;
- legally precarious position of English in the language regime.

Official regulations suggest that European languages with an official status in the Member States enjoy an equal status in the European Union. In reality, however, this equality is challenged by pragmatic solutions adopted by EU institutions, although in EU law sources there is no clear normative basis for determining precisely how many languages should be used in specific contexts. Article 1 of Council Regulation No. 1/1958 stipulates the equality of European languages, while Article 6 states that the institutions of the Community may stipulate in their rules of procedure which of the languages are to be used in specific cases. Article 1 does not explicitly distinguish between official and working languages, meaning that when integral multilingualism mutates into selective multilingualism in practice, any restricted group of languages EU institutions may choose to adopt for their internal work in their rules of procedure, they cannot be referred to as working languages. This paradox led to the rise of the informal linguistic category of commonly used languages or *de facto* working languages, that is, the languages the institutions may decide to use in their internal work. These languages cannot officially be called working languages, because they are inseparable from the official language category. In absence of well-defined guidelines on which languages to use in specific cases, EU institutions have adopted different patterns of multilingualism, which implies that regulations on internal multilingualism are different, there is little coordination and agreements about the internal language regime are mostly unofficial and/or non-consensual statements.<sup>2</sup> According to Wodak & Krzyzanowski (2013), the adoption of different language practices depends mostly on the functional characteristics of each institution. At the European Parliament, where the key ideology is that of the expression of national standpoints, multilingualism is in most cases driven by the MEPs' need to express their position from a nationally specific standpoint and thus in their national language. The European Commission, on the other hand, is not directly responsible to the national audiences, thus its internal linguistic practices remain guided by ideologies rooted in the principle of internal institutional efficiency and can be summarised as a quest for a common linguistic denominator.

The most crucial aspect of EU norms is the immediate impact they have on EU institutions, Member States and individuals. Given this context, the question arises whether it is acceptable to ask legal subjects to acquire knowledge in a language that they do not fully master, as is the case of those EU citizens whose mother tongue is not among the official and working languages of the Community (Gazzola 2006). This line of thought leads to another critical aspect of European language regulations, that is, the EU's narrow interpretation of the meaning of cultural and linguistic diversity. The European Union acknowledges as official the

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<sup>2</sup> When the European External Action Service (EEAS) as the diplomatic service of the EU was set up in 2010, its website became available to the public in two languages. The internal vacancies continue to require predominantly knowledge of English and French in spite of the fact that Germany has been opposing to the bilingual language regime right from the beginning.

national languages of Member States, except for Luxembourgish. There exists, however, a significant contrast between small state languages and big regional languages, as speakers of several big regional tongues outnumber speakers of small state languages.<sup>3</sup> There are approximately sixty minority languages in Europe, taking the definition in the Charter of Regional and Minority Languages into account. Apart from Iceland, minority languages are spoken in all other European countries and their speakers in the EU make up approximately 40-50 million people, roughly 10% of the European population. As the 2008 EP study on multilingualism<sup>4</sup> demonstrates, the European Parliament has been particularly proactive in the protection of regional and minority languages at the EU level. Minority language protection became an issue from the 1980s on, proposing contradictory agendas with other layers of language policy. By means of the supporting normative competence the EU holds in this field, the EP has called on Member States and the European Union itself to take appropriate measures to respect and protect regional and minority languages as well as ethnic minorities in general through a series of resolutions. A separate budget line for minority languages and the foundation of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) were concrete results of this position. The first resolutions were really ground-breaking. The Parliament adopted the Arfé Resolution in 1983. In this earliest document, the EP called on the European Community to review EU and national legislation that discriminates against minority languages as well as to encourage regional and folk cultures in cultural programmes and regional economic projects. The 1987 Kuijpers Resolution laid the groundwork for the adoption of the Charter of Regional and Minority Languages under the auspices of the Council of Europe and called on the Commission to take into account the language of regional and ethnic minorities not only when working out various measures in the field of cultural and educational policy but also in the Community's information publications. The 1994 Killilea Resolution encouraged the inclusion of non-territorial, autochthonous languages (Roma, Sinti, Yiddish) as well as languages spoken on overseas territories belonging to Member States in the measures in favour of minority languages and cultures. Despite the efforts, however, minority language protection started to decline from the 2000s on. In the already mentioned 2008 study, the European Parliament provided a watershed assessment of multilingualism policy and distinguished individual multilingualism from linguistic diversity, calling them conflicting policy agendas. It observed that acquisition-planning activities are influenced and underpinned by harder priorities like economic competitiveness and labour market mobility, while linguistic diversity policy by soft issues like inclusion and human rights, thus individual multilingualism policy is simply more highly prioritised than linguistic diversity policy in terms of concrete actions. There was a similar argumentation in a 2010 EP study<sup>5</sup> that revealed that the EU fails to adopt a long-term, overarching interpretation of the meaning of cultural and linguistic diversity and EU linguistic diversity policies are overshadowed by (individual) multilingualism policies. Up until these days, one of the greatest deficiencies of European minority language protection is related to the refusal to ratify the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages, the only internationally binding legal instrument in the

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<sup>3</sup> Following the accession of Malta, Maltese, with approximately 0.3 million speakers, is an official language, whereas Welsh, which is spoken by 0.5 million people in Wales, is not recognised in the EU.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Multilingualism: between policy objectives and implementation, EP Study, 2008

<sup>5</sup> Source: European Parliament Study on Implementing the UNESCO Convention of 2005 in the European Union

world devoted to the protection and promotion of regional and minority languages. Apart from the potential future EU Member States unwilling to ratify (Northern Macedonia), one of the EU's founding states, that is, France has since the beginning been unwilling to accede to the treaty. It seems evident that until there is a comprehensive agreement on the importance of minority language protection shared by all EU Member States, it is difficult to imagine significant breakthrough with this regard.

From a normative point of view, a further dubious element in European language policy is its gradual marginalisation. When it comes to regional and minority languages, Wright (2016) underlines that the decreasing institutional interest is demonstrated by the withdrawal of financial resources. The budget line opened with the intent to provide funding for the promotion of regional and minority languages was suppressed in 2002 after a ruling by the European Court of Justice arguing that it lacked an adequate legal basis. As a result of its demise, regional and minority communities have to apply for funding within the mainstream, where competition is far greater. The European Parliament reiterated the need to specific funding for endangered language communities in its 2013 report on endangered languages but without any concrete result. The two institutional strongholds of European minority language protection, Mercator, a network of research and documentation centres dealing with regional and minority languages in the EU and the European Bureau of Lesser Used Language (EBLUL), battling for the acknowledgement of minority rights, both underwent budget cuts in the years 2000. The EBLUL's operational grant was discontinued in 2007 despite recommendations from the European Parliament. The bureau was further replaced by the European Language Equality Network (ELEN), a non-governmental organisation that has no financial ties with European institutions. The same marginalisation is also true for official languages. After the year 2010, the multilingualism portfolio went from being a separate Commissioner portfolio to just one of the many fields the Commissioner for Education and Culture was responsible for and then eventually faded away under the Juncker and von der Leyen Commissions. Multilingualism appears in European public discourse as a tool to stimulate growth and jobs. Brussels NGOs lobbying for the promotion of linguistic diversity (e.g. Network to Promote Language Diversity (NPLD) strongly condemn this approach saying that an inclusive European language policy must allow for the recognition and equitable organisation of the continent's linguistic diversity. The continuous marginalisation of the area fortifies the subordinate nature of multilingualism policy giving the impression that language policy is not a codified policy area but can be deduced from other policy areas (Krzyzanowski & Wodak 2013).

The final point in this section regards the normatively precarious position of English in the current EU language regime. Naturally, Brexit is a key issue that cannot pass unnoticed in this paper. The 23 June 2016 referendum in the United Kingdom on breaking with the European Union leaves the future of European integration with several question marks. One of the numerous dilemmas that emerge further to Brexit relates to the future of English in the EU. In fact, newspaper headlines a couple of days after the British vote already referred to the European Union's alleged intention to drop English as an official EU language, since it will no longer be the official tongue of any Member State. English is one of the EU's 24 official languages because the United Kingdom identified it as its own official language, but since the UK completed the process to leave the EU, English has practically lost this status as Ireland and Malta have declared Gaelic and Maltese respectively as their official languages for the European Union. However, English is not only a working language in the EU institutions, but



it is actually the most frequently used tongue among EU civil servants, as demonstrated – among others – by Forchtner (2014) and Krzyzanowski & Wodak (2010). In order to change the status of English in the current language regime, Council Regulation 1/1958 on official languages has to be changed unanimously by all Member States. Rumours on the possible exclusion of English stirred up indignation among EU public servants who highlight among others that altering language combinations in the EU would necessitate the additional recruitment of translators and interpreters, which could take years to organise.<sup>6</sup> It is evident that English stands on solid foundations within the European language regime, independently of the support of the United Kingdom. However, if English is to remain an official language in the European language regime, its legal background has to be clarified. How may a language play such a pivotal role in EU communication as English without having the necessary legal fundament for such a role not being an official language of any EU Member State?

### ***Functional Deficits***

European language policy impacts the functioning of all European institutions to a greater or lesser extent. Nevertheless, Gazzola (2006) highlights that the European Parliament is particularly key from the perspective of language policy since it is the only directly elected body in the EU and as such its transparent functioning is of utmost importance. European Parliament everyday work shows, however, such elements of difficulty as

- ad hoc language selection according to the hierarchy of meeting configurations;
- excessive monolingualisms hindering transnational dialogue;
- burdensome translation services.

The European Parliament has often been praised for being the only truly multilingual institution in the EU and is considered as the most generous language regime in EU institutions (Kruse & Ammon 2013). Before the eastern enlargement, EP language services did provide direct interpretation and translation into and from all official languages. After the enlargements, however, the Parliament logically had to limit integral multilingualism to what it calls controlled full multilingualism. As laid down in the Parliament's Code of Conduct on Multilingualism, controlled full multilingualism means that while the right of MEPs to use the official language of their choice in Parliament shall be fully respected, resources to be devoted to multilingualism shall be controlled by means of management on the basis of listeners' real needs (Gazzola 2006).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the EP states in its rules of procedure that although all Parliament documents shall be drawn up in the official languages and in the plenary all Members of the EP have the right to speak and to be addressed in all official languages, in smaller-scale meetings (committees, delegations) only official languages used and requested by the members and substitutes of that committee or delegation shall be used. The above lays the groundwork for language selection according to the hierarchy of meeting configurations. In informal working groups or in sessions of special committees, negotiation is primarily

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<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/languages-culture/news/english-will-remain-an-official-language-of-the-eu/>

<sup>7</sup> Controlled multilingualism model is based on the systematic adoption of management correctives such as bi-active interpretation, greater use of pivot languages, remote interpretation or the employment of external freelance linguistic staff.

conducted in bigger European languages, particularly in English. The importance of small-scale meetings is, however, particularly high because ‘real work’ does not take place in the plenary sessions but rather in the meetings of the numerous committees and working groups that shape the parliamentary decision-making process (Gazzola 2006).

The previous line of thought takes us to another critical element, that is, the lack of multilingual skills among constituting members of the European Parliament. Kraus (2008) summarizes this aspect in an exhaustive manner. For the MEPs theoretically no specific foreign knowledge is required to carry out their duties. But in practice, an MEP can hardly represent public interest if he or she does not possess the language skills to actively participate in the decision-making process. Since translations usually arrive late, a Member of Parliament who wants to be informed on the issues to be discussed in advance of political decisions is advised to speak some bigger European languages in order not to suffer disadvantages within the institutional communication network of the EU. The European Parliament should in theory be the main forum of political discussion on current EU issues but in practice, it has a rather weak profile as a public forum for developing transnational political discourse. This is also connected with the problem of language barriers since it is not easy to imagine how a lively political debate could be conducted in twenty-four or more languages (the European Parliament also uses third-country languages). Instead of a transnational dialogue, the result is plenary sessions made up of brief statements delivered as monologues, highlighting mostly national points of view in national languages.

As a final point I would like to share a few thoughts about translation services in the EU which employs the greatest number of translators and interpreters among political organisations in the world. The European Parliament and the European Court of Justice, whose interpreting services are combined, employ 500 permanent and 2,700 freelance interpreters, and 300-400 of them are engaged each day. (Ammon 2012) Despite these incredible efforts to work transparently, translation in the EU and in the European Parliament in particular, is subject of much criticism. Critical aspects of EU translation services were highlighted by empirical research carried out by numerous authors, including Ammon (2012), Fischer (2012), Gazzola (2006) Kraus (2008), Kruse & Ammon (2013) Krzyzanowski & Wodak (2013). Delays in the translation of working documents necessary for the work of MEPs are examples of such complaints. When it comes to oral interpretation, services are often described as confusing and fuzzy. Most of the time interpreters are required to work from and into their mother tongue, which leaves much space for misunderstandings and translation mistakes. There is also a difference in terms of quality between interpretation to and from bigger and smaller languages. The latter are mostly translated through a relay language, which also increases the feeling for the speakers of those languages of being disadvantaged. The interpretation service aims to create the necessary circumstances for all EU Members of Parliament to use their mother tongue for their speeches. When using their mother tongue, however, some parliamentarians might also have a hidden agenda: disguised as a transparent action, some MEPs might want to speak their national language in order to postpone votes in the plenary and thus manipulate EU decision-making process.

## **Discussion**

Regional integration disrupts the link between language and territory and new forms of speech communities come into existence. The European Union is a particularly exciting and complex example to this phenomenon. It has been outlined previously that the current EU language regime produces (normative) anomalies and (functional) difficulties day by day, resulting in the implicit use of a limited group of languages, in particular that of English, without sufficient legal basis for such a choice. While the status of national languages still stir up strong emotions in Europe, in EU circles the regular use of English led to a nativisation process, pointing towards the potential evolution of an endonormative Euro-specific English variety (Mollin 2006). The idea of a single working language is not at all irrational. It would reduce the language handicap of most EU officials that would only need to develop competence in one foreign language. In addition, the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU would further facilitate the appropriation of the language. The detachment of English from the Anglo-Saxon community means that the language acts less as an agent for cultural transmission and more as a tool of communication. As such, when compared to other European languages used for internal communication, Euro-English could come nearest to the notion of an auxiliary language by putting all participants of communication on a par (Li 2003). We can assume that while adopting Euro-English for intra-institutional communication, the EU would be able to concentrate resources on multilingualism at the external level of communication, that is, towards its citizens. This would not only be an efficient and cost-effective solution but could also be more acceptable politically, considering the new circumstances created by Brexit, whereby none of the Member States has English as its designated official language.

Overall, European language policy is a highly complex issue. As a policy field that incites strong and contrasting emotions in a continent where the politicisation of languages finds its historical roots, it is still a taboo in EU circles. The result is a language regime producing normative and functional deficits. Language protection policy for regional and minority languages has been literally decommissioned. The European Commission seems increasingly eager to further the strategic, political and economic aspects of language learning as a tool to promote global competitiveness despite the European Parliament's periodic attempts to call for more inclusivity. The consistent and explicit management of the different stages of policy formation could have led to a scenario in which the rise of individual multilingual competences would have allowed a gradual and planned reduction of working languages at the institutional level with a view to overcoming national barriers. Instead, an unbalanced and incoherent structure has developed. The institutional arrangements of plural monolingualisms have led European institutions to make compromises that weaken the coherence of inclusive language policies. It seems beyond question that EU decision-makers should explicitly address questions pertaining to EU language policy within the framework of a coordinated and comprehensive policy reshuffle. However, any attempt to make a reform should necessarily go hand in hand with the regularisation of the status of English in the European language regime.

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Orsolya Katalin Szabó  
Sapienza University of Rome, Italy  
Department of Communication and Social Research  
Via Salaria, 113,  
00198 Roma RM  
orsolya.katalin.szabo@gmail.com