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# La Lettre de l'OEP N°55

(July-August 2014)

<http://www.observatoireplurilinguisme.eu>

## Self-evidence and coherence

Would plurilingualism be nothing but a kind of doxa reflecting official discourse with which everybody agrees in principle, thus hiding a more nuanced reality?

The official doctrine of the Council of Europe for more than fifty years has been that plurilingualism and the great linguistic work of the European Council, namely the CEFRL (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), and a whole set of achievements which revolve around them, determine plurilingualism and are inspired by it. The CEFRL is no miracle but it has the great advantage to make different educational systems comparable and to improve their legibility. The European Council has also created numerous conventions to protect linguistic and cultural diversity.

The official doctrine of the European Union is multilingualism. The 1958 Rule n°1 lays the foundations of institutional multilingualism and states the framework of the linguistic practice to which the European institutions must refer to. The Lisbon treaty reminds the fundamental principle of respect of linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe. The European Union, and more particularly the European Commission, has contributed many recommendations, reports and decisions. The Barcelona European Council in March 2002 has particularly made it a goal for educational systems that two foreign languages should be learned from an early age.

Internationally, UNESCO has been acting with the [2001 Universal Declaration on cultural diversity](#), the International Convention on the diversity of cultural expression, the World Day for Cultural Diversity, the International Year of Languages (2008), the International Mother Language Day and all the actions to stop the quick disappearance of endangered languages. Recently UNESCO has taken up too the goal of two languages besides the mother language or the teaching language and the [UNESCO General Director](#) preaches multilingualism everywhere in the world.

Economically, the famous 2008 Davignon Report "*Languages mean business*" has been followed by a [study by The Economist Intelligence Unit](#), of the review *The Economist*, which states clearly that ...->

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La Lettre de l'OEP is translated by volunteers in [allemand](#), [anglais](#), [bulgare](#), [croate](#), [espagnol](#), [grec](#), [italien](#), [polonais](#), [portugais](#), [roumain](#) et [russe](#). The texts can be read on-line. Thanks to the translators. You can add other languages. [Please contact us](#)

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-> linguistic and cultural skills, and certainly not English monolingualism, are a necessity for the world economic development. Numerous studies are coming to the same conclusion and giving converging recommendations of which we give a [list](#).

Then the monolingualistic all-English speech is declining everywhere. The thunderous and almost warlike speeches of the 80s are now becoming rarer and seem out of time and slightly reactionary. Does it mean that the ideas underlying this outmoded and irrational speech have lost all activity and do not remain hidden under a purely conventional plurilingualism ?

Mrs Androulla Vassiliou recently declared that "[multilingualism is Europe's DNA](#)". Nevertheless all the speeches given by ...->

-> the Commissioner for Education, culture, multilingualism and youth have all been given in English since she took office in 2010. There is a contradiction between the words of whose sincerity we do not doubt and the symbol given. The writer Camille Toledo and the philologist and philosopher Heinz Wismann answered her in *Le Monde* dated 25 June by the article "[Europe's identity is translation](#)". This is not an empty phrase. For Europe to exist in the hearts of its citizens, they all must be translators, able to assume plural identities and loyalties.

The new president of the European Commission, [Jean-Claude Juncker is a polyglot](#). The vice-presidents and commissioners should be polyglots too. To be able to reign, Charles V had become a polyglot by choice and by necessity. Why not them ?

Since 1 July, Italy has been is the president of the European Union, in the person of the president of its Council of Ministers, Matteo Renzi. [Contrary to the past practice](#) which could be thought well-established, the website of the Italian presidency was to be initially in two languages, Italian and English. Together with other European associations, the OEP intervened with Matteo Renzi. French has been added to English, probably after an intervention of the French president, but not German. Why did not Angela Merkel do the same ? For the OEP, the minimum for the presidency of the Union is the language of the presiding country, and German, English, and French. It may be recalled that in 2008 the French presidency had included Italian, Spanish and Polish. In this matter, Matteo Renzi follows in the steps of the Berlusconi team of bleak memory. What a shame !

It can be supposed that the French government protects the French language and plurilingualism at the European and international levels. But what does it do at home ?

France trains its high officials in a prestigious school, the ENA (National school of administration), out of which come numerous government members as well as senior managers of large international firms.

Until now, the entry exam to this school was proposing a large choice of foreign languages. But, [for the 2014 entry exam](#), the registration for the language test is made automatically for English, and a derogation must be applied to for another language among seven (German, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Chinese Mandarin, Portuguese and Russian). Why should a candidate who masters German perfectly (and probably English too) be discriminated against to the profit of a candidate who masters English only. The reform is then a prize to the lack of culture. This is very serious because it is obvious that this is a first step towards a single foreign language at the entry exam when this exam is a reference for all other civil service exams. The [entry exam to the ENM](#) (National School of Magistrates) has already limited the language test to an English test, when English is totally useless professionally for almost all magistrates.

Why should a candidate mastering English be chosen instead of a candidate mastering Arabic or Portuguese ? The reasoning underlying these great reforms is literally grotesque. It is true that the minister in office at that time was Ms Rachida Dati, mayor of the 7<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris, ...->

->...is the development of English teaching in nursery schools.

The situation in higher education is no better. The language sector, either the departments of "language and civilisation", including the departments of English studies, and the departments of applied languages are in difficulty, and for the non-linguistics trainings the tendency is to leave the languages aside or to teach English only, on the assumption that languages are the responsibility of secondary education. It is at once a poorly instrumental conception of living languages and one's back turned to the deepest demands of today's world.

As universities should be, according to a certain ideology, managed like firms, they do some business besides their missions of public service. This is the reason why many higher education institutions have developed trainings in English only for foreign students who do not master the language of the host country. This phenomenon is European and it has taken a great importance in Germany, in France and in Italy.

Today in Germany, it is noticed that foreign students from such trainings know less German at the end of their training than they did at the beginning, and that they are unemployable in German firms either abroad or in Germany itself. These trainings are commerce and nothing else. The strategic mistake is total.

We do not need international monolingualists, if we want to be competitive, [we need multilingual graduates](#). In spite of a law voted in July 2013 by the French Parliament, these trainings keep developing in France, [the minister not doing anything to enforce the law](#). Luckily, higher education institutions are autonomous and the law applies to them without any implementing decree or ministerial circular. The courts will settle the question.

The self-evidence is plurilingualism which, according to the Council of Europe, is the capacity to use several foreign languages ...->

<p>-&gt; at different skill levels, and to have and experience of several cultures. Living languages are not boring, they are wonderful opening to the world and a source of fulfilment, an unrivaled part of general culture. Living languages are no tools to communicate in suffering, they carry the diversity of the world (tell me the colours of the world !), they must be seen, according to Henri Meschonnic's phrase, "as an infinite to be explored, an infinite of meaning...". This is a fundamental cultural question. ...-&gt;</p>	<p>-&gt; ...Coherence is lacking most. Why do we find ourselves in this situation ? This is a broad topic. One thing is for sure, there is a lot of work ahead, and <b><u>we need you...</u></b></p>
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**Articles not to be missed**

[A petition for teaching Arabic in public schools. Why it is important](#)  
 Teaching Arabic in French public schools is neglected in spite of a strong demand.  
 ...



[UNESCO takes up the objective of 2 languages besides the main teaching language \(1+2\)](#)  
 ...



[6 Multilingual Benefits That You Only Get If You Speak Another Language](#)  
 "If we spoke a different language, we would perceive a somewhat different world."...

[Migration, Multilingualism and Schooling in Southern European countries](#)  
 MERIDIUM (*Multilingualism in Europe as a Resource for Immigration— Dialogue Initiative among the Universities of the Mediterranean*) is a three-year project (2009-2011) co-financed by the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), Key Activity 2 Languages.



[Euractiv. Learning languages a way out of crisis, says Vassiliou](#)  
 Learning foreign languages can become a way for Europeans to exit the economic doldrums and find employment opportunities across borders, says language and culture Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou.  
 ...



[Multilinguismo, arma di seduzione dell'UE](#)  
 Rivista di affari europei  
 di Marta Minotti  
 Una devastante onda di pessimismo ha sommerso l'Europa ...



[Coupe du Monde : lorsque les joueurs font sortir à coups d'injures un arbitre. Quelle langue parlent-ils ?](#)  
 ...



[The charter of plurilingualism in the upper Rhine](#)  
 Plurilingualism is not only a cultural aspiration, it is also an economic necessity. This is concretely proven by the Cette évidence se vérifie concrètement dans la [Charter of plurilingualism in the upper Rhine](#) dated May 2013.  
 ...



[Abdou Diouf pleads for cultural and linguistic diversity](#)

Significant dates in the life of l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) during the last 10 years, last year's results, nationalism and globalisation, human rights and homophobia, closer ties between Québec and Africa: these are the topics Abdou Diouf, general secretary of the OIF will talk about.



Learning second language 'slows brain ageing'

[Poliglotti4.eu](#) 02/06/2014

Researchers found that reading, verbal fluency and intelligence were improved in a study of 262 people tested either aged 11 or in their seventies.



**Announcements and publications**



[In Paris, a museum to discover the languages of the world](#)

The language plays a central role in our lives, even in our dreams. The 170m<sup>2</sup>-wide permanent exhibition MUNDOLINGUA invites you to discover the secrets of language during an unusual visit with many different themes. The exhibition is open to all, either beginners or experts. It proposes several levels, reading and listening on touchscreens, games, many unusual objects such as a sound head, a language tree, syntax cubes and bricks, many instruments used by linguists, a copy of the Rosetta Stone, the encrypting machine Enigma, etc.

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Open every day from 10am to 7pm



[The Guide to good linguistic practices at work](#)

What languages do you speak in your job ?  
How can we reconcile the use of French, our normal working language, with the needs of global communication ?  
Why are languages such a wonderful asset for business?  
...

[A lire](#)

*Les Cahiers de l'OEPE*  
Call for support 2014

[Plurilingualism and scientific creativity](#)

The European Observatory of Plurilingualism created in April 2014, *Les cahiers de l'OEPE* in which will be published the proceedings of “ Assises du plurilinguisme ”, and also the contributions to the conferences and workshops organised by he European Observatory of Plurilingualism or in collaboration with other institutions.

Deadline : 1 May 2015

	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><a href="#">The First World Congress for Linguistic Rights</a></u>  <b>will take place in Teramo, in Italy, from 19 to 23 May 2015.</b></p> <p>This Congress will unite the 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the <u><a href="#">International Academy of Linguistic Law</a></u> about law and language and the 9<sup>th</sup> Days of Linguistic Rights. Besides IALL and the <u><a href="#">Association LEM-Italia</a></u>, this meeting is sponsored by the scientific partnership of the <u><a href="#">European Observatory of Plurilingualism</a></u>, the <u><a href="#">International Observatory of Linguistic Rights</a></u>, the <u><a href="#">Gruppo di Politiche linguistiche della Società di Linguistica Italiana</a></u>, the <u><a href="#">DORIF-Università</a></u>, the network of Eurolinguistics, and of numerous universities in the world and particularly the University of Teramo which will host the Congress.</p> <p>Deadline : 31 August 2014</p>
	<p>© University Council of Modern Languages, University of Southampton  <u><a href="#">14/07/2014 Two major campaigns for languages launched today</a></u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By All Party Parliamentary Group on Languages</li> <li>2. By the University Council of Modern Languages</li> </ol>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><a href="#">5. Bremer Symposium zum Sprachenlernen und -lehren</a></u></p> <p>Inhalt &amp; Vielfalt: Neue Herausforderungen für das Sprachenlernen und -lehren an Hochschulen</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Freitag, 20. Februar bis Samstag, 21. Februar 2015  an der Universität Bremen  Anmeldung : ab dem 1. September 2014</p>
	<p>Le GEPE, Groupe d'étude sur le plurilinguisme européen (EA 1339 LiLPa), organise les 25 et 26 septembre 2014 à l'université de Strasbourg un colloque intitulé :</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u><a href="#">Émergence des notions de « droits linguistiques » et « droits à la langue ».</a></u>  <u><a href="#">Les apports d'une approche historique</a></u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Inscription avant le 15 septembre 2014</p>
	<p>International Conference Montpellier III - Initiative ELAN Afrique (OIF)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Teaching and learning languages  in bilingual and multilingual contexts</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">26-27 March 2015, Université Montpellier III  Call for contributions (Deadline : 15 September 2014)</p>
	<p>Le numéro 6/2014 des Cahiers du GEPE (Groupe d'étude sur le plurilinguisme européen) est paru</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Politiques linguistiques en Europe.</b>  <b>La question du Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues (CECR)</b></p> <p>Il est disponible gratuitement en ligne :</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u><a href="http://www.cahiersdugepe.fr/index.php?id=2608">http://www.cahiersdugepe.fr/index.php?id=2608</a></u></p>
	<p><u><a href="#">Quaderna n°2 - Plurilinguisme : de l'expérience multiculturelle à l'expérimentation</a></u></p> <p>En tant que revue transdisciplinaire multilingue, <i>Quaderna</i> ne pouvait pas faire l'économie d'une réflexion sur les enjeux poétiques, cognitifs et politiques du plurilinguisme...</p>

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