

Linguistic diversity at a crossroads

Policy, preservation and innovation in a globalised world

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This new issue of the *European Journal of Language Policy* grapples with one of the most pressing challenges of our time: sustaining linguistic diversity among the dual forces of globalisation and homogenisation. The seven studies featured here – spanning the Gulf states, European classrooms, Central Asian media and transnational alliances – paint a nuanced picture of both vulnerability and resilience, urging policymakers to adopt strategies that balance preservation with adaptability.

The first paper exemplifies the paradox of globalisation showing the transformation of Oman and the United Arab Emirates into multicultural hubs. While economic liberalisation has urged dynamism, the ascendancy of English threatens to erase linguistic heritage, endangering languages with millennia-old roots. This tension is not unique to the Gulf; it mirrors broader global patterns where dominant languages overshadow local ones. The authors' call for a research-driven revitalisation agenda underscores an urgent truth: linguistic diversity cannot survive without intentional, equitable policy frameworks that elevate marginalised languages alongside global *lingua francas*.

The Slovenian minority in Italy, in the second paper, offers a cautionary tale. Post-WWII measures to resist assimilation successfully preserved the language but at a cost: the community's insularity stifled linguistic dynamism, limiting its capacity to evolve. This case highlights a critical dilemma – how to protect minority languages without fossilising them. Policies must foster environments where languages thrive as living systems, adaptable to modern contexts while retaining the cultural essence.

Multilingual education is the topic of the next contribution. Europe's embrace of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) reflects ambitious efforts to marry language learning with subject mastery. Yet, as revealed in the study, inconsistent integration of disciplinary literacies and uneven teacher training undermine its potential. Worse, English's dominance

in CLIL programmes risks replicating the very linguistic hierarchies it seeks to dismantle. Similar challenges plague Kazakhstan (in the following paper), where rigid curricula and resource gaps hinder bilingual education goals tied to sustainable development. These findings demand systemic reforms: standardised teacher training, flexible curricula and assessments that value multilingual literacy equally.

The subsequent papers have studies on Kazakhstani discourse that illuminate language's role in shaping cultural identity. The analysis of "straightforwardness" in the media reveals how communicative values are negotiated in bilingual contexts, blending simplicity with cultural nuance. Meanwhile, the cross-cultural comparison of periphrasis in the Kazakh, British and Spanish media demonstrates how euphemism serves divergent societal priorities – softening dissent in Kazakhstan, amplifying emotional impact in Britain, and enriching imagery in Spain. Such research underscores language's dual function: a reflection of values and a tool for navigating a sensitive socio-political terrain.

Among these challenges, the European Universities Initiative (EUI) offers hope (as also explained in our text published in the last issue (Conceição 2024)). The UNITA-Universitas Montium alliance exemplifies how linguistic diversity can drive academic mobility and community building. By leveraging intercomprehension among Romance languages, UNITA fosters collaboration without erasing local identities. However, its success hinges on linguistic kinship – a reminder that solutions must be context-specific. This model challenges policymakers to rethink multilingualism not as a burden but as a catalyst for innovation and inclusion.

The studies in this issue collectively argue for policies that reject false binaries – global vs local, preservation vs progress. They also expose some merging key priorities:

- equitable multilingualism: raise awareness of endangered languages and enhance their usage through education, media and legislation, ensuring they co-exist with dominant ones;
- teacher empowerment: invest in professional development to bridge the gap between policy and classroom practice;
- adaptive preservation: support minority languages through frameworks that encourage evolution, not isolation;
- transnational collaboration: scale initiatives like European university alliances, adapting their development to diverse linguistic contexts.

As Europe navigates its own multilingual landscape, these insights resonate profoundly. Linguistic diversity is not a relic of the past but a cornerstone of inclusive futures. Let this issue serve as a rallying cry; in a world increasingly shaped by connectivity, our language policies must cultivate diversity as a living, breathing resource – one that enriches both local identities and global dialogue.

References

Conceição, M.C. (2024) 'Language and Languages Policies within European Union Alliances', *European Journal of Language Policy* 16(2): 207–10.