



UNIVERSITÀ
di VERONA

Dipartimento
di LINGUE
E LETTERATURE STRANIERE



MULTILINVR



Conseil Européen pour les Langues
European Language Council



International conference

Multilingualism in professional life Manifestations, management

Università di Verona
Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Straniere
25th-26th November 2021

Call for papers

The [Department of Foreign Languages and Literature of the University of Verona](#), in collaboration with the [Progetto di Eccellenza : le Digital Humanities applicate alle lingue e letterature straniere](#) (Project of Excellence in the Digital Humanities), is organising an international conference with the aim of exploring the question of multilingualism in business and industry and what this implies for acquiring the relevant language skills.

Building on the two-year [MultilinVR project](#), which analysed the language needs of businesses in the Verona region and the experience of specialised training in language skills, it is time to reflect more globally on multilingualism in the professional context and to open up new avenues of research.

To start off with, it is important to take stock of how globalisation, immigration, transnational lifestyles, increasing mobility (including professional mobility) have played a decisive role in the way multilingualism is perceived. Multilingualism can take on different forms, individual, social, state-based, and involve various players such as supranational institutions, international organisations and establishments of higher learning. In this sense, multilingualism is a question of public interest. The recent conference of the European Observatory for Plurilingualism (EOP) stressed the fact that multilingual skills are an essential asset in the present-day context. All this

implies that exploring multilingualism, while preserving and promoting it, is a major issue in our societies. It is an opportunity to seize and a challenge to respond to. Multilingualism has become a crucial issue at a time when Brexit (Kelly 2018) calls into question the linguistic *status quo* in Europe challenging the dogma of English as the *lingua franca* (Tietze 2004) in European institutions and in trade.

This conference aims at exploring multilingualism and what impact it has in professional contexts, in particular those strongly impacted by the phenomenon.

It is now an accepted fact that correct management of languages in the workplace has a direct effect on a firm's competitiveness (Grin 2010; Zorzi *et al.* 2012; Truchot 2015; Gerolimich & Vecchiato 2016; Brivio 2018). The competitive advantages of multilingualism are well documented (Carrère *et al.* 2016; Hogan-Brun 2017; Gazzola 2017; Gazzola & Mazzacani 2017). Many studies show that there is a link between foreign language skills and successful export performance (PIMLICO Project 2011). Research by English-speaking experts (Angouri 2013; Feely & Harzing 2003; Ginsburgh & Weber 2011; Welch 2005) has focused on multilingualism as a strategic management tool used in an essentially pragmatic context. In Scandinavia several studies have stressed the dynamics of power associated with multilingualism (Andersen & Rasmussen 2004; Fredriksson *et al.* 2006; Lønsmann & Mortensen 2018). The importance of *affect* should not be underestimated either in business negotiations (Allred *et al.* 1997) nor the emotional resonance that using the negotiating partner's language can procure (Bordia & Bordia 2015). This brings us to further investigate strategies used to promote multilingual communication, calling on translators and/or interpreters (Clouet 2019), adapting websites (Mattioda 2015), hiring native speakers or staff with language skills, providing language learning facilities. Furthermore, the question will be addressed as to how companies can best define and contribute to a meaningful strategic management of the language question in business.

At the same time, it goes without saying that companies which lack inhouse language skills are bound to miss out on many commercial opportunities, as the ELAN (2006) study has revealed, among other research carried out on European institutions (Lüdi 2012; Berthoud *et al.* 2013) and in multilingual countries such as Switzerland (Grin 2010; Lüdi *et al.* 2016). To this it should be added that companies may fail to formulate clearly their foreign language needs and requirements when recruiting new staff members. What then is holding companies back from adopting an upfront language policy designed to promote multilingualism in the firm? Why in many contexts do companies put up with "tinkering" with language questions (Lavric 2012), where it is up to the staff to make up for bad language planning? What is standing in the way of putting value and recognition of multilingual and multicultural skills for non-national staff members?

Multilingualism also has its downsides. It is true that it brings professional enrichment and personal satisfaction (Grin 2015) as well as socio-economic advantages. But it is also the case that multilingual interaction (Mondada & Nussbaum 2012) or quite simply interaction in a foreign language can also give rise to difficulties in communication (Harzing & Feely 2008; Yanaprasart 2012) or accentuate inequality (Duchêne 2011). The imagined advantages of globish *globish* (Canale *et al.* 2014; Tréguer-Felten 2018), staff embarrassment (Neeley 2013), misunderstandings

(Mauranen 2006) or inept handling of intercultural conflicts: all need to be addressed, taken onboard and, as far as possible, and steps taken to solve the problems.

Thought will be given to linguistic (Chicon *et al.* 2012; Saulière 2014) and cultural heterogeneity in professional contexts (Garzone 2000) and practical solutions sought for new needs in training (Mourlhon-Dallies 2008), intercultural management (Dumitriu & Capdevila 2012), communication management (Lacoste 2001) and cooperation as they have been carried out experimentally in the workplace.

Proposed papers may correspond to the following orientations (non-exhaustive list):

1. Observing good practices in companies and cases of language management
2. Economic value of languages
3. Needs in multilingual terminology in business communication
4. Integrating non native-speaking workers by taking into account their multilingual skills
5. Managing intercultural differences in multilingual firms
6. The limit of the all-English mantra: case studies
7. The role of translation in professional contexts
8. Learning languages for professional reasons
9. European language policies and recommendations concerning the workplace

Proposed papers should be sent to the following address: info@multilinguismoverona.eu by the **21st of June 2021**. Please note the following requirements:

- Word format or compatible
- Author(s): papers are anonymous. The author's particulars (surname, given name, affiliation, email address) are to be provided in the body of the message
- Length: around 500 words (not counting the bibliography)
- Language of paper: English, French, Italian
- Please note which orientation the paper is intended for

Each proposed paper will be examined double-blind by the scientific committee.

Important dates

21st June 2021: Deadline for submitting abstracts

9th July 2021: Results of evaluation given

17th September: Provisional programme sent out

1st October 2021: definitive programme sent out

25th-26th November 2021: Conference held. Details on how it will be organised (on the spot, hybrid, distance) will be given in September.

It is planned to publish papers from the conference.

Scientific committee

Alexandra Albuquerque, Polytechnic Institute of Oporto

Chiara Battisti, Università di Verona

Maria Francesca Bonadonna, Università di Verona

Concetta Cavallini, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro

Manuel Célio Conceição, Universidade do Algarve - CEL/ELC

Dardo De Vecchi, Kedge Business School, Marseille

Paolo Frassi, Università di Verona

Laurent Gajo, Université de Genève

Michele Gazzola, Ulster University

John Humbley, Université de Paris

Christine Jacquet-Pfau, Cergy Paris Université

Chiara Molinari, Università degli Studi di Milano

Kris Peeters, Universiteit Antwerpen - CEL/ELC

Paola Puccini, Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna

Giovanni Tallarico, Università di Verona

Sara Vecchiato, Università degli Studi di Udine

Maria Teresa Zanola, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - CEL/ELC

Silvia Domenica Zollo, Università di Verona

Organising committee (Università di Verona)

Nicoletta Armentano

Maria Francesca Bonadonna

Paolo Frassi

Giovanni Tallarico

Silvia Domenica Zollo

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