



European Observatory on Plurilingualism



Newsletter N°40 (March-April 2011)

<http://www.observatoireplurilinguisme.eu/>

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Translations into [German](#), [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Greek](#), [Italian](#), [Portuguese](#), [Romanian](#) and [Russian](#) available online.

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1) Teaching English in Kindergarten: A Mockery from the Political Discourse

1. A minister who contradicts himself within the space of two days

Some of us would recall that at the end of January, Luc Chatel, French Minister for Education, declared that "the learning of English as early as kindergarten" should be developed. A few days later, during the [Expolangues exhibition in Paris](#), the same minister, when interviewed about the place given to other languages, clarified in saying that his ambition is not just for English but other languages as well. Some are surprised that we can talk of "learning" in kindergarten, then the minister moderated his view and then talks about "exposure". Questioned on the means, the minister avoids the question and invoked Internet. In other words, within the space of a couple of days, he minister will have said something and its opposite.

2. Two approaches are being opposed.

In fact, saying firstly "learning English in kindergarten", then "exposure to English and other languages" is to say one thing and its contrary. The truth is that we are at the level of the discourse and not the reality.

The reality of the teaching of foreign languages is not a priority for the National Education in France. If it were the case, the teaching of languages would be in the management board of the education system. In its twentieth edition of the [Etat de l'école \(The state of school\)](#) published in November 2010, modern languages are not among the 29 chosen indicators.

On the other hand, we discover another reality: the percentage of pupils entering secondary education without having sufficient basic knowledge of French which would allow them to understand properly written statements, in other words the proportion of pupils having huge difficulties in reading when starting secondary education increased from 14.9% in 1997 to 19% in 2007. It is an average of course; for the priority education zones (ZEP), the percentage has increased from 20.9% to 31.3%. As children are not stupider than formerly, it is the system which is deteriorating.

Let's calculate quickly: 20% of an age group, that is about 150,000 children are sent into an obvious

path of failure for the rest of their studies and thus in life. It is a national disaster, which the minister obviously and carefully avoids to mention.

The administration is not blind. The general inspection of the National Education published an [important report on the subject in 2006](#) on the irrevocable diagnostic giving all the directions to get out of it. Obviously, what should be a national priority is not seen as such by the government. Not profitable enough undoubtedly! The teaching of English in kindergarten will not help the level in French, nor in English or any other language of the children living in difficult or moderately difficult areas. If some experiments have started in the 7th arrondissement in Paris, under the impetus of its mayor, Rachida Dati, it is not coincidence. The teaching of English in kindergarten is not for everybody. Let's try to understand.

3. Do judges have to speak English?

When she was Justice Minister, why did Rachida Dati impose English in the entrance competition to the École Nationale de la Magistrature (high school to become magistrate)? However, and to paraphrase some British minister (see [Newsletter of the EOP N°35](#)), who can speak French and other European languages: English is completely useless for a judge. Arabic would be more useful, not necessarily to speak it as, in France since 1539, French has been replacing Latin as the language for justice and administration, but because there are more French citizens having Arabic as mother tongue in France than citizens of Anglophone origins.

Why then impose English, the other languages being only optional, at the entry competition at the École Nationale de la Magistrature? The answer is undoubtedly that our elites do not have yet shaped mind.

4. The shaped thought of "*What else*"? or the implicit chorus: "Heaven can wait!"

Many of us know the wonderful series of [advertisement videos](#) for coffee capsules whose main characters are interpreted by George Clooney and John Malkovich. We know the influence of the ads on youth and society in large, all the more when it is helped by two actors who are so unanimously popular as Clooney and Malkovich. Such an advertisement can be read at several levels and would have various influences. The first level is the atmosphere created by the feeling of sophistication, luxury and perfection to which every one is supposed to aspire and identify oneself. The second level is the symbolic organisation of the world where God speak English, obviously! God loves luxury and sophistication, God is greedy as he deprives George from his bag of capsules. The entry to paradise for George, who is not zealous enough, is then differed. God says: "Heaven can wait George, but nor for its capsules". A third level of reading: Paradise in the advertisement. Everybody knows the world of financial capitalism as being a new religion. As was said with humour and modestly by Lloyd Blankfein, CEO of Goldman Sachs, during the financial crises of subprimes: "I am only a banker doing God's job". Indeed...

What's the relationship between Luc Chatel mentioned at the beginning of this article and this ad for capsules of coffee? Simply the non-said and the implicit of the discourse! The hidden message – hidden because it is deep, and deep because it is hidden-, is the following: "If you do not speak English, you will not go the Heaven!".

A small spicy detail: the first ads of the said coffee brand were subtitled in French (in France). The last one is sub-titled in English. Very simple! The word of God does not have to be understood. It is understood by submission only.

The significance of this message changes and becomes: "If you give up you language, you will not go to heaven." If you do not understand, it does not matter. You do not need to understand God's language.

This ad is not an isolated example. Let's try and understand why the INSERM, a French research body, registers its patents in English when it can do it in French and it will not cost more. Because it is said that the European language is English, and if you give up your language, you will not go to heaven.

Why does the French Minister for Research invite the bearers of "Excellence initiative projects" to present the [originality and scientific ambition of their project ... in English](#) ? Is it because French does not allow presenting a scientific statement and if you give up your language, heaven can wait.

Why do the future primary school teachers much show abilities in English only, and that a primary school teacher in a bilingual French-German school has to give up his/her classes in German for English which (s)he has to learn with tapes during the summer? Because if you do not teach English, heaven can wait!

We said that the minister was in the world of discourse and not in reality. We were wrong. Discourse is part of reality. It is our everyday life...

To read:

L'oligarchie ça suffit, vive la démocratie, Hervé Kempf, Seuil, 2011.

Propaganda, Edward Bernays, Zones-la-Découverte, 2007.

La Banque, Marc Roche, Albin Michel, 2010.

Propagande, médias et démocratie, Noam Chomsky, écosociété, 2004.

De la propagande, Noam Chomsky, Fayard, 2002.

La conquête des esprits, Yves Eudes, Maspero, 1982.

2) Among [the most recent update of the site](#)

- [Une loi pour mieux reconnaître les minorités linguistiques en Slovaquie fait débat](#)
- [Jugendsprachen: mehrsprachig - kontrastiv - interkulturell \(Eva Neuland\)](#)
- [« My IDEX is rich... » Histoires de langue à l'université](#)
- [Les enfants élèves dans un environnement bilingue peuvent distinguer...](#)
- [Lehren und Lernen in deutschsprachigen Grenzregionen](#)
- [Scotland's Language Myths: 3. It's a waste of children's time learning Gaelic or Scots](#)
- [Eldia project: European Language Diversity for All](#)
- [Littérature : Traducteurs à l'honneur \(RFI\)](#)
- [J'apprends avec deux langues - Apreni amb doas lengas](#)
- [XIII Jornadas de Estudios de Lingüística: "Multilingüismo y enseñanza de lenguas"](#)
- [Les langues de la découverte scientifique \(A.Danchin\)](#)
- ["Mother Tongues and Multilingualism: Research Findings from..."](#)
- [Symposium: Mehrsprachigkeit und Bildung at the Leipzig Book Fair](#)
- [Pétition "Faut-il sauver l'allemand ?"](#)
- [Multilingualism in Europe: prospects and practices in East-Central Europe](#)
- [Lanzamiento por parte de la OLAC de un nuevo buscador sobre las lenguas](#)
- [Entre écrire et traduire : réflexions autour de la traduction \(vidéo\)](#)
- [Vergleichungstafeln der europäischen Stamm-Sprachen und Süd-, West- Asiatischer](#)
- [2nd Barcelona Summer School on Bi- and Multilingualism](#)
- [Traduire l'Europe \(4-12 mars 2011\)](#)
- [Comment les langues s'empilent dans la tête](#)
- [Translation is the Language of Europe \(6-7 Oct 2011, Vilnius\)](#)
- [Avoir l'anglais pour langue maternelle, c'est dominer le monde !](#)
- [Francophonu : observateur des langues au sein des organisation internationales](#)
- [Dans les entreprises lorraines, le plurilinguisme avant l'anglais](#)
- [Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft Vol 13, Nr4 : Mehrsprachigkeit](#)
- [Language Diversity in the USA \(Kim Potowski\)](#)
- [UE : Le Tribunal annule un appel à manifestation d'intérêt...](#)

- [El periódico The Guardian comenta el libro del lingüista Nicholas Ostler...](#)
- [eTwinning et le multilinguisme \(Portalingua\)](#)
- [Science et langage - Une émouvante gémellité \(Y. Quéré\)](#)
- [Le français à la peine chez les Anglais \(Courrier International\)](#)
- [Bruxelles: le personnel des hôpitaux joue les traducteurs](#)
- [Le Monde : Tout miser sur l'apprentissage de l'anglais relève...](#)
- [French is too important to be left to middle-class Francophiles](#)
- [La chanson française à l'étranger...en français dans le texte \(JC Amboise\)](#)
- [Anglais en maternelle : les précisions de Luc Chatel \(Vous Nous Ils\)](#)
- [Création d'un double diplôme franco-italien « Valorisation et développement...](#)
- [« Au bistro du coin » : le premier film français doublé en sept langues régionales](#)
- [L'apprentissage des langues progresse-t-il en France ? \(Le Monde, Dossier\)](#)
- [Parents As Successful teacherS \(PASS\)](#)
- [Les langues des élèves étrangers valorisées](#)
- [Apprendre l'anglais dès trois ans, une idée mal accueillie \(AFP\)](#)
- [Education : plus d'anglais, moins de postes \(Le Figaro\)](#)
- [L'apprentissage de l'anglais dès la maternelle ?](#)
- [Chatel veut imposer l'anglais en maternelle sans budget](#)
- [Language Rich Europe Blog on Multilingualism](#)
- [L'anglais en maternelle ? C'est être en retard d'une modernité](#)

3) European year of Volunteering, a year for the EOP. Support the EOP

If you enjoy the Newsletter, if you enjoy the Internet website of the EOP and in general, if you would like to support its action, you can [become a member of EOP](#) or [make a donation](#). The EOP, plurilingualism, and the languages need your support.

4) Launch of the Platform for plurilingualism in Businesses (Business Platform for Multilingualism)



The Communication of the European Commission on multilingualism in September 2005 at the European Council and European Parliament: "A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism", planned the set-up of two platforms with the civil society. On February 11th last, the platform for multilingualism in Businesses was officially launched with 13 partners, including the EOP. It is the [Celan Project](#): a network for the promotion of linguistic strategy for competitiveness and employability.

5) Research centre of the EOP: research Seminars on Plurilingualism

- In partnership with the Department Études Interculturelles de Langues Appliquées, École doctorale 132 : Research seminar University Paris 7 – Denis Diderot/OEP

Linguistic Policies and Plurilingualism

Next and final meetings:

- 29th April 2011: **Linguistic Policies and Plurilingualism in France: the case of Breton**
Denis Costaouec (University Paris V)
[To know more and to register](#)

6) Announcements and publications

- [L'aménagement linguistique en Haïti: enjeux, défis et propositions](#) (co-edited by Éditions de State University of Haiti (Port-au-Prince) and of Cidihca (Montréal))

- European Centre for Modern Languages of the European Council (CELV/ECML) is launching a [call for submission](#) for its fourth year of activities programme in short term (2012-2015)
- [Number 2 du Magazine d'Anticipation Politique](#), produced by the LEAP (Laboratoire européen d'anticipation politique / European Laboratory for Political Anticipation)
- [Pétition pour sauver les langues à l'Université de Glasgow](#)
- 15th edition of the newsletter of the ARFE (Association Européenne des Régions Frontalières / European Association of Border Regions) is now available in [French](#), [English](#), and [German](#)
- Number 51-2 of the magazine TAL dedicated to: Multilingualism and TAL, directed by Emmanuel Morin and Holger Schwenk, was on line at this [address](#)
- [Retour au collège : ma journée en ZEP pour des ateliers d'écriture](#), by Mabrouck Rachedi, writer, for Rue89
- La [Lettre d'info de la Clé des langues N°31 mars 2011](#)
- [La francophonie, bibliographie analytique de la recherche internationale](#), Erfurt, Jürgen / Amelina, Maria, Peter Lang, 2011
- [Enseigner les langues-cultures à l'ère de la complexité/Teaching Language and Culture in an Era of Complexity](#) – Approches interdisciplinaires pour un monde en reliance/Interdisciplinary Approaches for an Interrelated World, Aden, Joëlle / Grimshaw, Trevor / Penz, Hermine (dir./eds.), [Peter Lang Verlag](#), 2011
- [n° 21 du Courriel européen des langues](#), *the new middle course program of the CELV/ECML*
- [Intercompréhension\(s\) : repères, interrogations et perspectives](#), [SYNERGIES EUROPE](#), Number 5 – Year 2010, Magazine of [GERFLINT](#)
- [ISB8 - International Symposium on Bilingualism Oslo 2011](#)
- [Les Langues Modernes n° 4-2011 : « L'environnement et les langues vivantes »](#) (call for submissions)
- [Les Langues Modernes n°1-2012 : « L'évaluation avec le CECRL »](#) (call for submissions)
- [ParisBerlin, mars 2011, n°62](#)
- [L'arrivée des langues indo-européennes en Europe \(Pour la science\)](#)
- [Courriel européen des langues - janvier 2011](#)
- [Langue et espace \(VIAUT Alain, PAILHÉ Joël\)](#)
- [DLF-Bruxelles-Europe : Infolettre N°23](#)

7) [To read again the former Newsletters of the EOP, click here](#)

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