



EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY FOR PLURILINGUALISM

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5th European Conference for Plurilingualism

« The Plurilingualism in the Sustainable Development :
The hidden dimension » (Bucharest 23-24 may 2019)

2nd Call for Papers

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<http://www.observatoireplurilinguisme.eu>

Éditorial – "Plurilingualism in sustainable development",
theme of the 5th European Conference on Plurilingualism,
triple challenge: scientific, political and media

By establishing a web of links between languages and development, we are entering an area where language issues are rarely present, while many of the works on languages actually concern development issues.



By choosing "sustainable development" as the theme for the 5th Congress, we questioned ourselves as linguists on the validity of the expression "sustainable development". As if "sustainable development" was more or less than development. The addition of the adjective may express a restriction in relation to the meaning of the word development, or on the contrary an extension to say that sustainable development is more than development. In any case, the association of the two terms is absurd, because development cannot fail to be sustainable, because if it is not, it is no longer development. And do not say that "sustainable" is a bad translation of "sustainable", because unsustainable development is not development either and cannot be sustainable. ...->

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-> In fact, the term, which appeared in the 1960s to designate a global programme focusing on environmental aspects, was clearly based on communication objectives. Jacques Chirac, rightly (see the text above from the 2016 exhibition at the Musée des Arts premiers), drew attention to endangered languages and to "cultural diversity as one of the pillars of sustainable development". So be it! But to question all aspects of development in the light of the questions raised by languages and language, to raise the question of the relationship between languages and language and economic, social and cultural development, is to launch a triple challenge, scientific, political and media.

The scientific challenge is first of all epistemological in the sense that we must know what we are talking about when we talk about language. As long as languages are considered as grammars, it will be impossible to progress. ...->

-> The challenge is also a university challenge due to the need to go beyond the disciplinary fields.

The debate is not new and some will say that it is even outdated. There are indeed psycholinguists, sociolinguists and cognitive linguists. Much research has focused on language problems in companies and organizations. The economic impact of languages has also been studied. It has therefore been a long time since linguistics has been outside its scope and the study of languages and language has become an integral part of many fields. But for large disciplinary fields, language remains a poorly identified object that has no real place.

Regardless of the researchers who have integrated languages and language into their field of study, the first question for the vast majority of researchers is which representation of languages and language prevails.

This is a very representative text of the very simplistic nature that probably a very large majority of scientists, and they are not the only ones, make up languages and language. "Or the operation which consists in a translation from one language to another (note: we assume that the words of each language correspond one to one). The elements to which it refers are words. If we start with French words, and translate them from French to English, then from English to Spanish, we can return to the original French by translating them from Spanish to French, which is still part of the translation package. This set of operations, which transforms the linguistic expressions of each word, has as its invariant the meaning of these words.

This small excerpt from Jean Ullmo's *La pensée scientifique moderne* (Flammarion, 1969, p. 258) is typical of a rudimentary conception of language and language. Jean Ullmo obviously did not seek to act as a linguist, but the mere fact that he relied in this way on the example of *translation* to support his demonstration shows the extent of the general cultural deficit of a large part of the scientific community when it comes to languages and language. And it is likely that the situation is the same today as it was half a century ago when Jean Ullmo wrote his book.

Because there is indeed at the root a problem of general culture that concerns the whole of society.

If, on the contrary, we consider language as an *environment* (as Leibniz already conceived), in which we live 24 hours a day and from our first day until our death, we make a complete change of perspective.

If language is in everything and everywhere, it is likely to be related to development and therefore to sustainable development.

Hervé Le Bras and Emmanuel Todd write in *the invention of France* (Librairie générale française, 1981, p. 269) "In the north of France, peasants and bourgeois have embarked on the astonishing adventure of mass literacy. Instead of freezing society, universal education pushes it and sets it in motion. By changing elementary and early human relationships, it disrupts the anthropology of the neighbourhood.

Going to school, following a schedule, keeping quiet, obeying a teacher, connecting with classmates, all these activities replace family learning in the fields and evenings. The concrete school environment transforms human relationships as much as the content of books. "And further on (ibid. p. 276) "the progress of ->

-> education will indeed ignore Paris and develop essentially from Lorraine in two currents: one will spread to the whole west, the other to the south".

Through the issue of education and literacy, Hervé Le Bras and Emmanuel Todd deal well with language and language, and the relationship they establish with development is immediate.

We could postpone the approach on Africa, which has been developing for about twenty years. Education and languages are at the heart of African development. Fortunately, research is beginning to emerge (see the POCLANDE network below).

So raising the question of the relationship between languages and development is a scientific question of the utmost importance, it is a scientific challenge, but it is also a political challenge.

The most widespread idea in political circles concerning languages is that of language as a communication tool.

The vast majority of linguists are the first to be at fault in disclosing this misconception. Because before allowing communication, you have to have something to communicate. However, language is inseparable from the act of thinking. For Vygotski, "thought is accomplished in the word" (*Thought & Language, The Dispute, 1957-1997*) and for Chomsky, who vigorously contests the dogma of communication, "language is essentially an instrument of thought" (*What kind of creatures are we?, Lux, p. 29*). It is regrettable that the idea of an "instrument" has been used, suggesting that language and thought could be separable, which is not Chomsky's idea...→

The idea of the language as a communication tool, or the grammar language, two different ideas that go hand in hand, is the dominant idea. For example, the "common foundation of knowledge, skills and culture", which forms Article L. 122-1-1-1 of the French Education Code, is a perfect illustration of this...->

-> The common base, which was established by the decree of 11 July 2006, is itself based on the law of 23 April 2005 on the orientation and programme for the future of the school, and consists of five training areas that define the main training challenges during compulsory schooling.

The first area is "languages for thinking and communicating", which is a good start. But the French language, foreign languages and, where applicable, regional languages, are on the same level as scientific languages, computer and media languages as well as languages of the arts and the body, while the mother tongue or languages are the basis for all other learning.

And to drive the nail down, the humanities, representations of the world and human activity, the understanding of societies in time and space, the interpretation of their cultural productions and knowledge of the contemporary social world, come in fifth place, as if the act of thinking were a purely speculative act that could be separated from its environment...

Between the two, we will find project management and teamwork, and very curiously "the formation of the person and the citizen" which aims at life in society, collective action and citizenship, moral and civic formation respectful of personal choices and individual responsibilities, as if these questions had nothing to do with the understanding of societies in time and space and of their cultural productions.

There is thus a great deal of confusion, the common feature of which is the negation of the linguistic fact...->

-> The general culture with which we are imbued totally ignores the linguistic fact. A manual of general culture, which we will not mention, deals with the linguistic fact in a twenty-fifth of 48 sheets, which borders with "authority", "contract", "suburban", "hero", "intellectual", "show", "old", etc. Or a totally fragmented knowledge in which it is difficult to distinguish anything other than a simple varnish to pass the oral exams successfully, i.e. the opposite of a real culture.

The political challenge leads to a media challenge in a context marked by the digital revolution, which brings with it the best and the worst. The media environment obviously unconsciously shares the dominant linguistic dogma.

So to ask the question of the relationship between languages and development is to force oneself to move away from a purely scientific debate and place it also in the concrete and everyday life that the media should not be able to ignore. It is to invite scientists and the media to work, certainly differently, but on the same subjects. ◀

Annonces et parutions

5es Assises européennes du plurilinguisme

23-24 mai 2019 – Bucarest

(OEP et Académie d'Études Économiques de Bucarest)

Le plurilinguisme dans le développement durable :

La dimension cachée

2^e Appel à communication (date limite : 15 décembre 2018)

L'UNESCO nous rappelle que la diversité linguistique et le multilinguisme sont essentiels pour le développement durable, mais l'attention se porte essentiellement sur les langues menacées et place la sauvegarde de la diversité linguistique sur le même plan que la biodiversité. La question des langues en danger est en effet essentielle, et quelques études suggèrent que la disparition des langues présente des risques importants pour la conservation de la biodiversité. Ce que nous voulons faire apparaître, c'est que les langues entrent en jeu dans tous les processus économiques, sociaux et culturels qui sont à la base du développement. La culture, l'éducation et la santé sont des facteurs de développement majeurs dont l'accumulation du capital est plus une conséquence qu'une cause et, où que l'on se place dans le monde, on peut en faire le constat, le rôle de la langue est omniprésent. Qu'il s'agisse de pauvreté, d'épanouissement personnel, d'ascension sociale, de cohésion sociale, de circulation des savoirs et des idées, de développement territorial, d'identité, de performance économique, de migrations, de la révolution numérique, de la guerre et de la paix, on retrouve à des degrés divers des questions de langues. Les langues sont donc la dimension cachée du développement durable qu'il nous appartient de faire émerger. Évidemment, les politiques linguistiques, quand elles existent, ne sont pas neutres. Il nous faut donc tenter de répondre à la question : en quoi les politiques linguistiques peuvent-elles contribuer au développement durable ?

[Lire et télécharger l'appel à communication](#)

Congrès international "Les territoires de la linguistique pour le développement" (appel à communication - date limite : 31 janvier 2019)

*Premier Congrès international du Réseau POCLANDE
(Populations, Cultures, Langues et Développement)*

www.poclande.fr

Bordeaux, France | 23-25 octobre 2019

Université Bordeaux Montaigne | Maison des Sciences de l'Homme d'Aquitaine

Domaine universitaire 33607-Pessac (France)

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L'OEP est engagé dans un combat de longue haleine qui est un combat nécessaire, aux multiples enjeux. Il faut être présent pour les grandes et petites décisions. C'est la mission que s'est donnée l'OEP. Ensemble il faut redoubler d'effort. Vous pouvez apporter un soutien humain, en participant à son action, ou un soutien matériel en adhérant à l'OEP ou en lui faisant un don.

**C'est le moment d'[adhérer à l'OEP](#)
et de partager**

