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MANAGING MULTILINGUALISM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: LANGUAGE POLICY EVALUATION FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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ABSTRACT. One of the important issues raised by the European integration is that of languages and in particular how the EU institutions can cope with language diversity. In this paper, I develop an analysis aimed at assessing the quality of language regimes not in absolute terms, but rather in terms of their consistency with the actors' goals, which define what we call a 'scenario'. The paper focuses on the European Parliament as it was confronted with the challenges of enlargement. It compares the economic and political advantages and drawbacks of six language regimes under three different scenarios. Results show that various language regimes can be optimal depending on the scenario considered and that multilingualism does not imply inevitably an unsustainable increase in expenditures.

KEY WORDS: European Parliament, European Union, language policy Evaluation, language diversity, multilingualism

ABBREVIATIONS: Coreper – Committee of Permanent Representative of Member States; ECB – European Central Bank; EP – European Parliament; EU – European Union; EU-15 – EU with 15 Member States; EU-25 – EU with 25 Member States; GDP – Gross Domestic Product; MEP – Member of the European Parliament; OJ – Official Journal of the European Union

Introduction

The increase in the number of the European Union's (EU) official and working languages has been one of the main issues raised by the enlargement. Every new Member State (10), except Cyprus, has added a new language to the previous 11, and today the official and working languages of the EU are 20.[1] Of course, the EU, as

[1] Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish and Swedish. Due to a lack of qualified translators in Maltese, some temporary derogation measures to the drafting in Maltese have been adopted (OJ L 169/1, 1 May 2004).

was foreseeable, has adopted several technical and organisational measures in order to better cope with the change. The Council, for example, has adopted a system of interpreting 'upon request' for the meetings of some preparatory groups (Council of the European Union, 2005) and the Parliament has recommended length restrictions for certain documents in order to reduce the need for translation (European Parliament, 2004a). However, full multilingualism as a general principle has been finally confirmed.[2]

What could be seen at first sight as an unjustified indulgence towards 'small' languages and a waste of money is in reality a highly sensitive political question. It is common knowledge that languages fulfil two functions that cannot easily be separated: a communicative function, i.e. the transmission of information in a broad sense, and a symbolic function, associated with cultural and political traits, for example with people's sense of national identity (see Edwards, 1985). Therefore, it is not surprising that the solutions adopted by the EU often represent a compromise between different and contrasting visions about what multilingualism management is.[3] However, we do not intend to intervene directly in the political debate on the EU language regime and recommend a given model *because of* a certain universal principle. For example, in our opinion, it is not very useful to say that a given language regime is too expensive in absolute terms. Rather, what we can say is whether a given language regime is too expensive *within* a given framework, or, putting it differently, whether it is too expensive *with respect to* actors' goals.

The methodology that I follow refers to public policy analysis: first, it takes a certain institutional and political framework (or 'scenario') for given, this being defined by actors' goals in a political debate. Second, within a given scenario it evaluates which language regimes, seen as a particular type of language policy, are best suited to comply with these goals, taking into account both dimensions of language. By doing this, I deliberately follow the approach of Pool (1996) and Grin (1997), who tackle the question of the optimal language regime for the EU and show that various

[2] For the purposes of this article, no distinction is made between 'multilingual' and 'plurilingual', both being defined as referring to the presence or use of more than one language (Clyne, 1997: 301).

[3] Grin (2004a, b) and Van Parijs (2004a, b) tackle in contrasting ways the issue of linguistic justice, inequality and unfairness in communication in the EU. Haszpra (2004) and Selten (1997) analyse different economic aspects of multilingualism. Phillipson (2003) offers an in-depth analysis of the contradictions of multilingual communication within EU institutions.

solutions may be optimal, depending on the goals pursued and on demolinguistic, communicational and institutional conditions.

The paper proceeds as follows: in 'a brief overview of multilingualism management in the EU' section, I shall recall, without going into detail, how multilingualism is actually managed and what the main variables at stake are. These are variables of legal, political, cultural, functional and budgetary nature. The importance given by actors to these variables will define different possible scenarios or, putting it differently, different outcomes of a political debate. In 'language policy evaluation in the European Parliament', I apply my approach to the EP as it is confronted with the challenges of enlargement. I compare the advantages and the drawbacks of six language regimes within three different scenarios, and I finally assess which models are best suited to meet the actors' objectives. Results confirm that no language regime can be considered the best solution in absolute terms, in accordance with the theoretical conclusions of Pool (1996) and Grin (1997). Results also show that the use of more languages does not imply inevitably an unsustainable increase in expenditures. The last section provides a discussion and conclusions.

A Brief Overview of Multilingualism Management in the EU

In this section, I present the significant groups of variables that are usually recalled in the issue of European multilingualism with no claim of exhaustiveness.[4] This is necessary in order to understand the context in which I want to carry out the analysis. I consider here the institutions of the EU, its two advisory bodies, and the European Central Bank (ECB), leaving aside the issue of communication in European civil society.

According to the Treaties, it is the responsibility of the Council to decide on the EUs language regime, by unanimous vote, without prejudice to the Statute of the Court of Justice (Article 290 of the EC Treaty and Article 190 of the Euratom Treaty). In 1958 the Council approved Regulation no. 1, the text containing the basic provisions for the language regime of European institutions.[5] Since then, the language regime has been extended to new languages at every enlargement on request of new Member States and the

[4] For more detailed descriptions (see, e.g., Labrie, 1993; De Swaan, 2001; Herbillon, 2003; Phillipson, 2003; De Elera, 2004; Gazzola, 2006).

[5] OJ L 17, 6 October 1958, p. 385, as amended after every new enlargement.

engagement of the EU towards multilingualism has been confirmed to date. For example, Regulation no. 1/58 has been modified in 2005 so that Irish will become an official and working language of the EU in 2007, whereas until now it has only been one of the languages of the Treaties.[6] Second, in some particular cases, by request of a Member State and at its own expense, it will also be allowed to use 'languages other than the languages referred to in Regulation no. 1/58, whose *status* is recognised by the Constitution of a Member State on all or part of its territory or the use of which as a national language is authorised by law' (OJ C 148, 18 June 2005 p. 1–2).

Although no difference is made between official and working languages in Regulation no. 1/58 (art. 1), in the literature there is an operational distinction between them. Thus, 'official languages' of the EU are generally defined as those used in communication between institutions and the outside world, and 'working languages' of the EU as those used between institutions, within institutions and during internal meetings convened by the institutions (Labrie, 1993: 82). For the purposes of this paper, I adopt these definitions.

Table 1 shows how multilingual communication in the EU is currently managed. In communication towards citizens and the Member States, the EU tries to adopt full multilingual communication in the 20 official languages, which is managed through language services.[7] For its internal activities, in general, two different approaches have been adopted. The first one concerns the activities of representative institutions and bodies, namely, the European Parliament (EP), which represents the European peoples; the Council, representing the interests of the national governments; the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, representing, respectively, the forces of European economic and social life, and regional and local authorities within the Union. Here multilingual communication in the 20 working languages has generally been implemented, although different solutions can be adopted within the same institution, as we will see hereafter. On the contrary, for a second group of institutions and bodies, which includes in particular the Commission, the Court of Auditors, the European Central Bank and to a certain extent the Court of Justice,

[6] OJ L 156, 18 June 2005 p. 3–4. As regards the languages of the Treaties, see for example article 314 European Community (EC) Treaty.

[7] With respect to this, see art. 2–5 of the Regulation no. 1/58.

TABLE 1

Official and working languages in the EU institutions, advisory bodies and ECB.

Institution or body	Official languages	Working languages
European Parliament	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
Council of the European Union (Ministers' meetings)	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
European Commission	All 20 languages	English, French, German
Court of Justice	All 20 languages + Irish	French
Court of Auditors	All 20 languages	English, French, German
Economic and Social Committee	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
Committee of the Regions	All 20 languages	All 20 languages
European Central Bank	All 20 languages	English

Source: table compiled by the author using the EU website (www.europa.eu.int), Herbillon (2003) and information supplied directly by EU officials.

multilingual communication is usually managed through a limitation of the number of working languages.

It is necessary to stress that, although article 6 of Regulation no. 1/58 authorises a certain degree of flexibility with regards to the use of languages for internal activities, there are no rules stating specifically which languages have to be used as working languages.[8] Hence, the choice of working languages is just a matter of practice and no language can *a priori* be excluded from being chosen (nor could it be legally, as the Regulation makes no difference between official and working languages). English, French and German, for instance, are not the 'official' working language of the Commission, but just the most commonly used languages for its internal activities (even if German is used far less than the other two).

Reasons Working in Favour of Full Multilingual Communication

Legal issues constitute the first domain to be considered. It is common knowledge that one crucial aspect of the norms of Community law is the immediate impact they have on the subjective legal situation of the EU institutions themselves, of Member States and of individuals. Given this context, while all citizens and companies are obliged to know and comply with Community law, the problem is to decide whether it is admissible to ask them to acquire such

[8] See for example article 6 of the rules of procedure of the Commission, or articles 17.2 and 17.6 of the rules of procedure of the ECB.

knowledge in a language that they do not master fully. Limiting the official languages would therefore impair equality of rights (Fenet 2001; De Elera 2004).[9]

A second significant group of variables relates to political issues, namely democratic participation, the equality of representatives and the prestige of the Member States. With regards to the question of the people's participation in the Union's political life, it is to be noted that the EU tries to engage in communication in as 'inclusive' a way as possible, as this is supposed to be the best way to enable people to participate in EU political activities (and, to some extent, to control it).[10] A second political aspect concerns the role of political forces in representative institutions and bodies (see above). Here, the EU follows the principle of the equality of political representatives, as equality is recognised between what representatives represent, and as it is necessary to avoid having a limitation in the use of languages which could translate into an unjustified reduction of the political weight of those who cannot discuss issues in the language that they prefer (Galle 1994: 10; Herbillon 2003: 34).[11] A system of equal treatment of languages is therefore established and the working languages are 20.

It should be noted that this is not always the case, as it depends on the nature of the meeting. In the Council, for example, the equal treatment of the 20 working languages is always respected for meetings of national ministers, as well as for meetings of the European Council, whereas for meetings of Coreper and certain preparatory groups, fewer working languages are used (Herbillon, 2003: 34–35). Finally, political and symbolic questions relating to the prestige of the Member States also have to be considered. An equal treatment of the Member States' official languages has ultimately been seen as an aspect of the equal treatment of the parties of the treaty. Accordingly, communication with the parties generally implies using 20 official languages. Prestige also plays a role in internal communication, but in a different way (see below).

[9] Some authors propose that the EU, in order to reduce costs, should accept a certain degree of disenfranchisement, interpreted as "the percentage of citizens who would lose their ability to understand EU documents and some discussions" (Ginsburgh & Weber 2005: 278).

[10] On this subject in general and on democratic participation and linguistic diversity in particular (see Bourdieu, De Swaan, Hagège, Fumaroli, & Wallerstein, 2001; Habermas, 2001; Ives, 2004; Van Parijs, 2004a).

[11] For reasons of space this paper will not discuss the tricky question of the situation of speakers of minority and extra-European languages.

Cultural issues also play a role. The Treaty of Maastricht gave the Union the power to act in the fields of culture and training, though only in 'support' of actions undertaken by Member States (see Articles 151 and 149 of the EC Treaty). Following this, greater attention was paid to cultural diversity and the plurality of languages, and efforts were made to protect and promote them as such. On the other hand, as Mayer and Palmowski have remarked, there is not a real common cultural identity within the EU and 'if anything, then, Europe's cultural hallmark has been precisely its heterogeneity and multiplicity' (Mayer and Palmowski, 2004: 582). In this sense, external – and to a lesser extent, internal – multilingual communication can be seen as a facet of the support given by the EU to linguistic and cultural diversity.

Reasons Working Against Full Multilingual Communication

A fourth important issue in multilingual environments such as the EU concerns efficiency in communication. Working in different languages slows down work, especially when written texts need to be translated. In the EU, where work is carried out substantially by 'international officials' and not by political representatives, multilingual communication for internal activities is generally managed through the limiting of the number of working language. Therefore, particular attention is paid to the level of international officials' language skills. We use the term international officials in a broad sense in order to include EU commissioners, the judges of the Court of Justice, the members of the Court of Auditors and of the ECB. The ambassadors working in Coreper and experts working in the preparatory groups of the Council are also included in this definition.

However, while limiting working languages can be justified by pragmatic reasons, as in the case of the Commission's preparatory works, there is considerable disagreement over the formal criteria for deciding which and how many working languages there should be, and their respective fields of action. As a consequence, the establishment of 'linguistic hierarchies' is entrusted to the delicate equilibrium of custom (Phillipson, 2003), and in this realm of the 'unspoken' arguments of symbolic and diplomatic nature arise and have arisen (see Phillipson, 2003: 22; Galli Della Loggia, 2005).

Finally, budgetary issues also have to be included in the set of the relevant variables. With regards to the costs of multilingualism, the key figures can be summarised in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Expenditures for translation and interpretation in 1999 and estimated expenditures for translation and interpretation per year at full cruising speed after the enlargement (reached approximately in 2006–2007). Figures in current euros.

	Translation		Interpretation		Total	
	1999	2006–7[a]	1999	2006–7	1999[b]	2006–7
Costs (m)	€ 523	€ 807	€ 163	€ 238	€ 686	€ 1045
% on total EU budget (%)	0.6	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.8	1
% on administrative expenditure in the EU (%)	11.6	13	3.6	3.8	15.2	16.8
Cost per citizen per year	€ 1.4	€ 1.8	€ 0.4	€ 0.5	€ 1.8	€ 2.3

Source: Table compiled by the author using OJ C 219 E, 1 August 2000 (pp. 128–129), European Commission (1999: 93, 2005a, b) and information supplied directly by EU officials.

[a]"The costs for translation include salaries, social security, overheads for infrastructure etc., cost of external translation and operating costs" (European Commission, 2005b). Therefore, these figures have to be regarded as an estimate of the costs directly involved in multilingualism.

[b]From the Commission's summary reply however it is impossible to understand whether and how these figures take account of all indirect costs.

It is worth noting that claims for the limiting of languages to be used usually insist on the need to avoid an 'unsustainable explosion of costs'. However, behind this 'rhetoric of crisis' the same logical error always reappears: the fact that a service is costly does not mean that it is *ipso facto* too expensive (Grin, 1997: 4). The perception of how expensive a service is depends on the subjective value that the observer or the society attributes to it.

Language Policy Evaluation in the European Parliament

Policy makers involved in decisions about multilingualism management assign different degrees of importance to the variables just presented and thus create different 'sets of priorities'. I define 'set of priorities' simply as the outcome of a political debate. Within this framework, different language policies (such as a language regime) can be assessed in terms of their capacity to be consistent with the goals set by actors. It is important to stress that both dimensions of languages must be taken into consideration and an analysis restricted to one of these two functions is likely to be

partial and incomplete. For example, deciding to use one working language rather than another is not just a matter of choosing between 'networks' that give access to a certain number of 'users', but is also and always an implicit choice regarding the allocation of symbolic resources (in sense used by Bourdieu, 1991).

In order to make the comparison between alternatives possible, it is necessary to assess the advantages and drawbacks (or 'costs' and 'benefits' in a broad sense) of each option.[12] However, a cost-benefit analysis of alternative language regimes requires some way of measuring variables that are qualitative, intangible and symbolic. While expenditures for language services are expressed in monetary form, how can 'equality' or 'prestige' be quantified? I shall not attempt to find an exhaustive answer to this subject, which would require much more space and theoretical treatment.[13] In my opinion, it is more useful to focus on a single example instead and try to approach these issues from a concrete perspective. The case of the EP preparing for enlargement is a good example for this purpose as it is a rare case for which empirical data is available. For this reason, it offers a fertile ground to carry out a detailed analysis and it also furnishes a concrete frame in which it is possible to deal with the problem of measuring intangible variables.

In the EP, before enlargement, language services provided for the direct interpretation and translation into and from all 11 official languages, in accordance with a total symmetry model, with a set of non-systematic exceptions[14] (see appendix for all technical terms). How has the EP faced the difficult challenge of the enlargement to include nine new languages and hence to reconcile financial criteria with political imperatives? Was equality 'too expensive' to be guaranteed? Let us examine the situation before enlargement and focus on the debate on the solutions proposed in the *Preparing the Parliament for the Enlarged European Union* Report (Podestà, 2001c). In the working document 'Linguistic policy: further options' (Podestà, 2001a), annexed to the report, seven different language regimes were proposed. However, it is important to note that the models were conceived under the hypothesis of 21 official languages, because it was not sure if Cyprus would have been reunified before the enlargement, hence requiring the adoption of Turkish as one of the official languages. Hence, where necessary, I

[12] See in particular Grin and Vaillancourt (1997: 49–50).

[13] We refer for example to Grin (1998).

[14] The Finnish booth, for example, provided bi-active interpretation into all languages and in sometimes the relay was employed (Podestà, 2001b).

have adjusted figures for 20 languages (Table A1, see appendix).[15] The seven models proposed were:

1. *Monolingualism*: use of a single official and working language.
2. *Nationalisation*: maintenance of the pre-enlargement structure and simple transfer of financial responsibility alone to the Member States, or transfer of the complete workload to the Member States.
3. *Reduced multilingualism*: use of only six official and working languages.
4. *Asymmetric systems*: these make it possible to speak/write in all 21 official languages, but listen/read in only a limited number of languages (three options are considered: 20-1, 20-3 or 20-6).
5. *Controlled multilingualism*: this model was proposed to ensure that all Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) had the right to speak/write and to listen/read in the language that they prefer; the difference between this and pure multilingualism resides in the internal process of linguistic mediation. The controlled multilingualism model was based on the systematic adoption of management correctives, sometimes already in use in some multilingual meetings before enlargement, such as making use of bi-active interpretation for the new languages and gradually extending this system to the former 11 working languages, greater use of *pivot* languages (three in particular), and other measures such as remote interpretation or greater use of external freelance linguistic staff.
6. *Full multilingualism with management correctives* (henceforth 'corrected full multilingualism'): that was, the extension to all languages of the former system for 11 languages. Unfortunately, no more is said and therefore it is not specified how the existing management correctives would have been adapted and extended to the post-enlargement situation.[16]
7. *Pure full multilingualism* with 20 languages, with no kind of management corrective.

Costs have been divided into two categories: running costs and social costs (Podestà, 2001a). Running costs are the costs chargeable

[15] As an approximation, I have adapted figures in Table A1 using a ratio of 20/21 (except for models 1 and 3 as it is not necessary). A similar procedure was employed by Grin (2004b). In any case, this does not change significantly the final picture (see Gazzola, 2006 for a scenario with 21 languages).

[16] In order to keep the analysis of model 5 tractable, we shall make some further working assumptions in the next paragraphs.

to the budget of the EP for the normal operation of a named language regime. Social costs refer to the costs to be borne for an early reduction of the staff currently employed, if a model differing from the pre-enlargement one implies such staff cuts. However, rather than in absolute terms, it is more useful to consider the costs of a language regime in relative terms, that is, in terms of what percentage of the EP budget they represent, in terms of percentage of the aggregate EU GDP, and finally in per capita terms. In 2002, the direct and indirect costs attributable to multilingualism in the EP were 274 million euros (Table A2, see appendix). According to Podestà (2001a), in 2002 this represented almost 30% of the total EP budget. However, the working document does not specify which expenditure ceiling has been used to compute this percentage. Hence, we also propose a more conservative estimate of about 27%, which is based on annual expenditure ceiling for 2002 (see Table A3 in the appendix). In absolute terms, the expenditure for multilingualism in 2002 corresponded to 0.003% of the EU-15 GDP for that year (0.7 € per capita).

It is plausible to assume that the percentage for 2002 has remained virtually the same over the previous few years, at least since the 1995 enlargement. In particular, the number of official and working languages has not changed from 1995 to 2004, nor have budget allocations for administrative expenses increased disproportionately in real terms (European Commission, 1999). Hence, as a rule of thumb, I adopt a share of more or less 27–30% of the EP's budget as a parameter of the 'financial sustainability' of a language regime, interpreted as the hallmark of compatibility between expenditures for multilingualism and other items, within a given budget. In addition, I use the GDP share and cost per capita as absolute terms for comparisons.

To estimate how much of the planned budget of the enlarged EP a language regime would absorb, it is necessary to refer to expenditure ceilings for the 2000–2006 period set out in the Berlin Interinstitutional Agreement of 6 May 1999. I focus on the period after enlargement, that is, mid-2004–2006 (30 months). Working under some assumptions reflected in the figures in Table A3 (see appendix), I estimate € 1252.3 million to be the average annual expenditure ceiling envisaged in the budget for the enlarged EP. Finally I also propose some rough estimations for the 2007–2013 period (Table A4, see appendix), based on the Financial Perspectives 2007–2013 as set out in the Brussels Interinstitutional Agreement (December 2005) and as adopted by the EP in May 2006.

Assessing Language Regimes

For the purposes of analysis, I characterise each model by using two variables: a budgetary variable (the cost by year) and a political one, that is, the degree of equality that they ensure among the MEPs. I focus on the equality of the parties as it has always been regarded as the most relevant variable for the legitimacy of the EP, while other non-monetary variables, such as efficiency in communication, have been considered as less important (see for instance Galle, 1994). The reason underlying this choice is the following: MEPs are directly elected by European people and not engaged by the EU institutions. Hence, if we choose a language regime that excludes some languages, we run the risk of having some candidates that cannot work once elected. On the other hand, if we choose a particular restricted language regime prior to elections we run the risk of influencing electors' voting choices, as electors are no longer free to vote for their preferred candidates regardless of their linguistic skills. In other words, reducing *a priori* the number of working languages in the name of communicative efficiency in the EP is again and first of all a political decision.

The economic costs are not difficult to measure because they can, in essence, be identified with expenses for the linguistic services and indirect expenses related to multilingualism.[17] But what exactly is meant by 'equality'? Two observers may have opposite opinions on whether a situation reflects equality, for the simple reason that they define equality in different ways. Take the example of a language regime 'A' that allows MEPs to speak and to listen in their mother tongue, assuming that everyone is monolingual and that all their mother tongues are official and working languages. Does this situation respect the equality of the parties? *X* could answer positively, as everyone has the right to speak and to listen in her mother tongue. However, *Y* could disagree. Assume, for example, that two languages, within the set of the official languages, are used as *pivot* languages. Therefore, *Y* could point out that two groups of MEPs receive a direct interpretation, while the others can only listen to speeches through two mediations and thus with a higher probability

[17] For the purposes of this paper I make no distinction between 'cost' and 'expenditure'.

of error, at a later time and of lower quality than the MEPs who can enjoy a direct mediation.[18] Similar considerations can be made for translation. *X* could reply that *Y* is right, but that in any case the language regime '*A*' guarantees 'enough equality' and that it is not worthy spending more resources in order to have 'more equality.'

Thus, different definitions of equality can be seen quite simply as different ways of attributing value to it. We can therefore prepare an ordinal scale of definitions from the most to the least strict, and map it onto decreasing degrees of importance assigned to equality by actors. Putting it differently, each definition corresponds to the 'quantity of equality' desired by actors. For my purposes, I distinguish three definitions of equality, from the most to the least strict:

(a) equality is achieved when MEPs are guaranteed the right to express themselves and receive communications in their own language *and* at the same time all MEPs' languages are treated absolutely equally;
(b) equality is achieved when MEPs are guaranteed the right to express themselves and receive communications in their own language;
(c) equality is achieved when MEPs are guaranteed at least the right to express themselves in their own language.

I assume that all MEPs have at least one of the current EU official languages as their mother tongue.[19] Now, given that a principle of equality must be defined somehow, I define 'political cost' as the abandonment of this principle. The political cost is treated as a dichotomous variable.

The three definitions allow us to define three possible outcomes of the political debate on equality. We can therefore outline three different scenarios, each scenario being characterised by the importance it assigns to equality and by the average annual expenditure ceiling for the EP for the mid-2004–2006 period. Although the latter figure is subject to political debate and therefore potentially

[18] A triple mediated communication would pose problems related to reliability and communication lag. For this reason, a doubly mediated message is considered a binding constraint (International Association of Conference Interpreters – http://www.aiic.org).

[19] For simplicity it is assumed that speakers of minority or extra-European languages are bilingual, but further research is needed to deliberately take this point into account. Logically speaking, condition (a) would imply that using a neutral language, such as Latin or Esperanto, as the only *pivot* language would comply with this condition. Again, for reasons of space, I disregard this option.

TABLE 3

Trade-off between economic costs and equality – Economic figures at 2002 prices.

Language regime	Political cost according to the definition of equality			Average economic cost (in € m)	% on EP average annual expenditure ceiling (%)	% on EU – 25 GDP[a] (%)	Per capita cost (in €)[b]
	(a)	(b)	(c)				
Monolingualism	Yes	Yes	Yes	108	9	0.001	0.2
Reduced multilingualism	Yes	Yes	Yes	186	15	0.002	0.4
Asymmetric systems							
(20-1)	Yes	Yes	No	375	30	0.004	0.8
(20-3)	Yes	Yes	No	385	31	0.004	0.8
(20-6)	Yes	Yes	No	405	33	0.004	0.9
Controlled multilingualism[c]	Yes	No	No	427	34	0.004	0.9
Corrected full multilingualism	Yes	No	No	496	40	0.005	1.1
Pure full multilingualism	No	No	No	992	79	0.010	2.2

Source: Table compiled by the author.

[a]Average EU-25 GDP for 2004–2006 at 2002 prices.

[b]Computed on the average EU-25 population for the 2003–2005 period (Source: Eurostat).

[c]The costs of the controlled multilingualism model are not *a priori* in contradiction with figures in Table 2 for two reasons. The EP is the institution where the costs of multilingualism are highest; second, figures in Table 2 are likely to not include all the detailed indirect costs reported in Podestà (2001a: 11).

variable, for the purposes of research I use the expenditure ceilings fixed in 1999, and thus I treat them as an exogenous variable. Within each of these scenarios, I examine which regimes meet the condition of financial and political sustainability, the latter being defined as the absence of political cost. If a language regime meets both conditions, it is said to be 'eligible'.

One point must be clarified first: the 'nationalisation' type of language regime is not very amenable to analysis of political cost, as it would be up to each Member State to decide whether or not to provide linguistic services for its language and no information on their preferences and strategies is available.

In Table 3, I present the average annual cost of each language regime as well as the proportion of the average annual expenditure ceiling that this cost represents. Then, I discuss which language regimes comply with the condition of respect for equality, for each of the three definitions.

Under the first conception of equality (a) all models except for model 6 give rise to a political cost. In particular, models 4 and 5 do not strictly comply with the principle of the equal treatment of languages. It is worth repeating, however, that it is not very clear how the set of rules and exceptions of the pre-enlargement model would have been applied to model 5 (see Podestà, 2001a). In the pre-enlargement situation, the equality between languages was fully guaranteed (in spite of some non-systematic exceptions in interpreting) and therefore it could be said to comply with (a) (but see below). Here, I have made the plausible assumption that some of the exceptions of the pre-enlargement model would have become more frequent – therefore making the model too distant from the conception (a) – but in any case remaining less systematic than model 4.

The systematic use of three *pivot* languages taken from the set of official languages envisaged in model 4, for example, forces some MEPs to systematically receive interpreting or translations through two mediations, and thus to suffer the drawbacks pointed out previously. Moreover, the unequal treatment of languages has also to be considered in its symbolic dimension. Thus, this regime gives rise to the unequal treatment of peers because of the inequality in the use of their languages. Nevertheless, in view of the Berlin Financial Perspectives, in 2004 choosing the pure full multilingual model was not a financially sustainable option. In this case, the trade-off between economic costs and political costs is at its maxi-

mum: to avoid paying a political cost, we end up paying the maximum economic cost.

Under the second conception of equality, (b), the only three possible choices to avoid a political cost in 2004 were models 4–6. Upon closer examination, however, while both models 4 and 5 ensure compliance with the condition of equality in conception (b), only the controlled multilingualism model comes close to the condition of financial sustainability. Finally, if we adopt the third conception of equality, (c), language regimes which guarantee equality only among passive languages become politically acceptable and models of type 3 become eligible. Models 1 and 2, however, were always politically unacceptable and never represented an eligible language regime.

Discussion and Conclusions

Following the research lines of Pool (1996) and Grin (1997), this paper has assessed six different language regimes (seen here as language policies) in terms of their financial and political sustainability within three given scenarios, each of them being defined by a certain outcome of the political debate on equality (in which we deliberately do not enter) and by given budget constraints.

According to the results, in the first scenario no language regime was an eligible solution in 2004 (and thus it was not possible to guarantee maximum equality). In the second scenario, only one solution was eligible and in the third scenario four language regimes were eligible. Notice that, as 'political cost' is treated as a dichotomous variable, in the third scenario the only difference between models 3 and 4 is that the asymmetric systems are less expensive. Thus, if we assume that within the group of eligible language regimes actors prefer the cheapest one, the asymmetric model (20-1) should be considered the best.

Note that the controlled multilingualism model is not much more expensive than asymmetric systems, as it absorbs a percentage of the budget just 1% higher than the (20-3) asymmetric systems and 4% higher than the (20-1) asymmetric system. This means that ensuring a degree of equality between MEPs higher than the simple 'passive equality', does not cost 'too much more' as it could have seemed at a first sight. Finally, data show that both the asymmetrical model and controlled multilingualism are more expensive than the pre-enlarged model (+0.001% in terms of EU GDP and

+0.1 or 0.2 € in terms of per capita costs). However, these differences appear to be negligible in absolute terms. Moreover, we have to take into account that the average GDP per capita in the 10 new Member States is much less than the average GDP per capita in the EU-15.[20] This is another element that explains the increase in per capita costs. On the other hand, data suggest that the only way to really cut down on expenses for multilingualism is by drastically reducing the number of official and working languages and therefore infringing on even the less strict conception of equality. Finally, notice that the main conclusions hold also for the 2007–2013 period when 21 languages are considered, while the financial sustainability gets slightly worse in a scenario with 23 languages (Table A4).

What was the solution preferred by the EP? The answer to this key question was finally that, although 'the Regulation no. 1/58 allows the institutions a degree of flexibility as regards the use of a restricted number of working languages to be employed in connection with their internal activities, [...] the Committee takes the view that Parliament *should not* exercise that option for its essential activities. Instead [...] it wishes to confirm the key provisions of the Rules of Procedure designed to guarantee full equality between languages and thus to respect the democratic legitimacy of elected Members' (Podestà, 2001c: 7) – my emphasis.

Therefore, the EP did not choose to adopt asymmetric systems, and cost reduction was not maximised, implying a preference for conception (b) over (c). However, the phrase 'full equality between languages' is somewhat misleading, as *strictu sensu* model 4 does not comply with the (a) conception of equality between languages, while the pre-enlargement language regime did. One could argue that even the pre-enlargement regime did not strictly comply with the (a) condition of equality, as there were some exceptions, even if they were considered as temporary and not systematic. Nevertheless, if this is the case, we could conclude here that model 4 at least has the merit of *maintaining compliance* with the (b) conception of equality and therefore avoiding political cost.

In any case, even if they are not eligible as a general solution, this does not mean that there is no room for asymmetric systems.

[20] Source: Eurostat.

According to my estimations, the controlled multilingualism model would consume, in any case, a slightly higher percentage of the budget of the EP than the pre-enlargement model. Not surprisingly, the controlled multilingualism regime should be applied only for plenary sessions, for meetings of the bodies of the EP,[21] of parliamentary committees and of political groups; in other cases, systems based on the 'real needs' of the Members should be implemented (Podestà, 2001c: 5–7). This means that where no specifics are provided by the rules of procedure and where MEPs decide that a weakening of the conception of equality is politically more acceptable – this is likely to be the case for meetings of a non-decisional and non-legislative nature, such as delegations outside the places of work, for meetings of group leaders, etc. – asymmetric systems could be used. In relation to this issue, we have to take into account the fact that the MEPs' language skills have increased in the last decade (Mamadouh and Hofman, 2001). However, there are still groups of monolingual MEPs[22] and even fluent knowledge of a foreign language may not be enough to ensure effective political decision-making (Mamadouh and Hofman, 2001: 76).

The current EP language regime is actually based on the controlled multilingualism model, even if, as was foreseeable, it has been renegotiated and adapted from the previous situation. The number of *pivot* languages, for instance, is quite flexible and is not necessarily three (European Parliament, 2004b). In any case, a first complete assessment of this regime can only be made in the future, once the situation becomes more stable (European Parliament, 2004a).

Further research could be carried out for the other institutions or bodies, in order to evaluate what language regimes are best suited to manage multilingualism within each specific context. For example, the new system of interpreting 'upon request' adopted by the Council for some preparatory meetings is particularly well suited to this kind of study. As the total cost of interpreting upon request needs to be set off against annual envelopes of € 2 million in two six-month instalments for each language (Council of the European Union, 2005), this opens the door to an interesting strategic interaction between different-sized delegations as regards their language choices.

[21] Bureau, Conference of Presidents, College of Quaestors, Conference of Committee Chairmen and Conference of Delegation Chairmen.

[22] Although no data are available on the language skills of the new MEP, it is reasonable to assume that the percentage of monolinguals MEPS is as least as large as it was before the enlargement.

Appendix

TABLE A1

Cost predictions for alternative language regimes for the enlarged EP 2004–2014, in € m (2002). Original version with 21 languages.

Model	Social costs				Annual average	
	Running costs	First year (2004–2005)	Years 2–10	Total cost	Simple (total/10)	Mid-2004–2006, 30 months
Monolingualism[a]	25	95	75	1020	102	108
Nationalisation[b]	145	69	55	2014	201	206
Reduced multilingualism	149	42	33	1829	183	186
Asymmetric system						
(21-1)	322	82	65	3887	389	394
(21-3)	348	64	51	4003	400	404
(21-6)	389	42	33	4229	423	425
Controlled multilingualism	443	7	4	4473	447	448
Corrected full multilingualism	521	–	–	5210	521	521
Pure full multilingualism	1042	–	–	10,420	1042	1042

Source: Table compiled by the author using Podestà (2001a: 11).

[a]The running costs of monolingualism are not zero because "whatever language the Union chose, large parts of the globe would not use it, and a language unit would have to be retained in order to facilitate external relations" (Podestà, 2001a: 4).

[b]The cost calculation for 'nationalization' refers to the version that envisages the transfer of the complete workload to Member States. The cost of nationalization is positive as "a sizeable number of staff and a wide range of facilities would still be required at Union level" (Podestà, 2001a).

TABLE A2

Costs of multilingualism in the EP in 2002.

Cost of multilingualism	Allocation (%)	Amount €
Directorate general	100	91 707 693
Translators	100	36 029 504
Interpreters	100	33 192 000
Auxiliary session interpreters and freelance translators	15	34 289 377
Subtotal (1): *Staff directly involved in multilingualism*		195 218 574[a]
Language courses/subsidies		1 600 000
Quota of members' secretarial allowances		9 375 000
Buildings and associated expenses		15 895 498
Other expenses (overheads, telecommunications, etc.)		15 445 089
Publication and information expenses		25 131 818
Contributions to expenses of political groups		11 286 330
Subtotal (2): *Other expenses attributable to multilingualism*		78 733 735
Total **(1 + 2)**		273 952 309
Percentage % of total 2002 preliminary draft estimates		30%
Percentage % on EP expenditure ceiling for 2002 (using Table A3)		27%
Percentage of EU-15 GDP		0.003%
Per capita cost (EU-15)		0.7€

Source: Table compiled by the author using Podestà (2001a: 12).
[a]In effect, taking into account an annual adjustment, the amount of the expenditures for multilingualism in the EP given in OJ C 219 E, 1 August 2000 (pp. 128–29), comes close to the amount shown below of 195 million Euro.

The general working assumptions used are that (Podestà, 2001c: 11–12). (a) the EP continues to maintain a 20% share of the heading 5 total as the amount earmarked for administrative expenses; (b) the EP receives a 20% share of the Heading 8 appropriations earmarked specifically for administrative expenses; (c) this last amount is concentrated over two and a half years (mid-2004–2006). This assumption is reasonable to the extent that the problem of an increase in the official and working languages only arise after enlargement, i.e., with the start of the 2004–2009 legislature. Notice that we have used conservative estimates of the EP budget ceilings as the estimates are computed net of staff contributions to the pension scheme.

TABLE A3

Budgetary predictions for the European Parliament 2002–006, in € m (2002).

Financial perspective	2002	2003	2004 (1/2)	2004 (2/2)	2005	2006
Heading 5 –'administration'	5012	5119	2612.5	2612.5	5332	5439
(a) Parliament's share of 20%	1002.4	1023.8	522.5	522.5	1066.4	1087.8
Share of heading 8 administrative expenses – 'available for accession'	395	437	240	240	480	480
(b) Parliament's share of 20%	79.0	87.4	48.0	48.0	96.0	96.0
(c) the amount in (b) is concentrated over the period mid-2004–2006 (30 months)	0	0		94	180	180
Total resources of parliament after enlargement (a + c)	1002.4	1023.8	522.5	616.5	1246.4	1267.8
Annual expenditure ceiling after enlargement (based on 2 and a half years)				1252.3		

Source: Table compiled by the author using Podestà (2001c: 12).

TABLE A4

Predictions of financial sustainability for the EP, 2007–2013, in € m (2002 prices).

Language regime	% on EP average annual expenditure ceiling with 21 languages (%)	% on EP average annual expenditure ceiling with 23 languages (%)
Monolingualism	7	7
Reduced multilingualism (6-6)	13	13
Asymmetric system		
(2*x*-1)	28	31
(2*x*−3)	29	32
(2*x*−6)	31	34
Controlled multilingualism	33	36
Corrected full multilingualism	38	42
Pure full multilingualism	76	83

Source: Table compiled by the author using Podestà (2001c: 12) and www.europa.eu.int.

According to official figures (Financial Perspectives, 2007–2013), the amount of money allocated to administrative expenditures at 2002 prices is on average 6838 € million per year. Assuming that

the EP will continue to receive a 20% share of this sum, I calculate an annual average expenditure ceiling of 1328 € million. Using this figure, we get a rough estimate of the "financial sustainability" of each language regime. Figures with 21 languages (say, 20 official languages + Irish) slightly differ from those provided in Table A1, as social costs considered here do not include higher social costs for the first year (2004) but only social cost from 2007 onwards. To compute estimates for 23 languages (say, 20 languages + Irish, Bulgarian and Romanian) I have used a ratio of 23/21.

Types and Techniques of Interpretation and Translation

Passive languages are languages *from* which interpretation or translation is provided.

Active languages are languages *into* which interpretation or translation is provided. (Full) Symmetric regime: interpretation is provided directly from and into all languages. The possible linguistic combinations (L_n) are:

$$L_n = n(n-1), \tag{1}$$

where n stands for the number of languages considered. With 20 official languages we have 380 combinations.

Asymmetric system: the number of languages, which are passive and active at the same time differs from the number of languages considered. The typical case is when speakers can speak in their own language but will only be interpreted into a limited number of languages. The number of possible linguistic combinations (L_a) is:

$$L_a = a(n-1). \tag{2}$$

Where n is a given number of languages within which only a are both active and passive (with $a < n$ and $a > 1$). A 20-6 model ($a = 6$ and $n = 20$) implies 114 combinations.

Relay: interpretation or translation involves two stages: language X is interpreted into language Z, known as the '*pivot*' language, and then from language Z into language Y. Assuming that a message cannot be mediated more than twice, the number of linguistic combinations (L_p) is:

$$L_p = p(2n - p - 1), \tag{3}$$

where p represents the number of *pivot* languages and n the total number of languages considered (where $p < n$). With 20 languages, six of which are *pivot* languages, the number of possible combinations is 198.

Bi-active interpretation: in this case, interpretation into language B from language A is provided by the same interpreter who interprets from language B into language A.

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