Freie Universität Berlin

Monolingual multilingualism?
Standard languages and their impact on multilingual
policies and practices in Europe: a historical perspective

Introduction

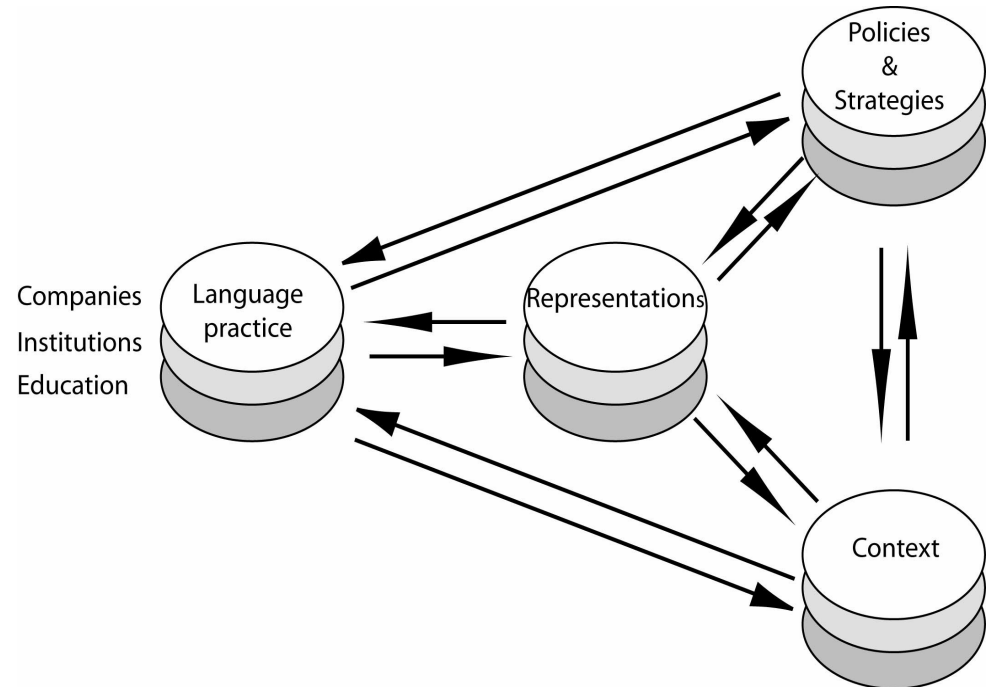*October 5th and 6th, Freie Universität Berlin*

DYLAN

- DYLAN (Language dynamics and management of diversity)

- Integrated Project funded under Framework Programme 6 (FP6) of the European Union

- 19 research institutions in 12 European countries

- 5 years (1/10/2006 – 30/9/2011)

- MAIN GOAL: identify the conditions under which Europe's linguistic diversity can be an asset for the development of knowledge and economy

http://www.dylan-project.org

DYLAN

- dimensions
  - language practice
  - language ideology (representations)
  - language policy
  - linguistic context
- terrains
  - companies
  - EU institutions
  - educational systems
- transversal questions
  - efficiency and fairness
  - emergent varieties
  - **forms of multilingualism in European history (Berlin team)**

The historical perspective

- focus on language selection across Europe through history
  - actors, motives, context
- why do some languages 'expand', and others 'decline', and how do these patterns translate into more or less multilingualism?
- based on synthesis of existing research

Standard languages & multilingualism

- conclusions from our research so far
  - standard languages important factor in selection process
  - rise of standard languages → decline of multilingualism?

Standard languages today

- formal and functional criteria
  - uniformity
  - H-variety
  - codification
  - correct usage
  - means for social mobility
  - national symbol
- only became relevant in the course of time

The emergence of standard languages

- standardization to enhance intelligibility
  - uniform written languages
  - elaboration of written standard
- ideological value of standardization for the creation of social identity
  - quest for the 'ideal language form' by an educated elite (uniformity, strict rules)
    - 'A language without a standard was regarded as "in a manner barbarous" […] Civilization implied following a code of behaviour, including linguistic behaviour.' (Burke 2004:89)
  - only in the 19th century, more people started to care about correct usage
    - context: class consciousness, meritocracy, democratic participation, rise of nation-states
    - motive: speaking the same language or variety of a language was meant to guarantee equality of opportunity
- **common trends & differences across Europe?**
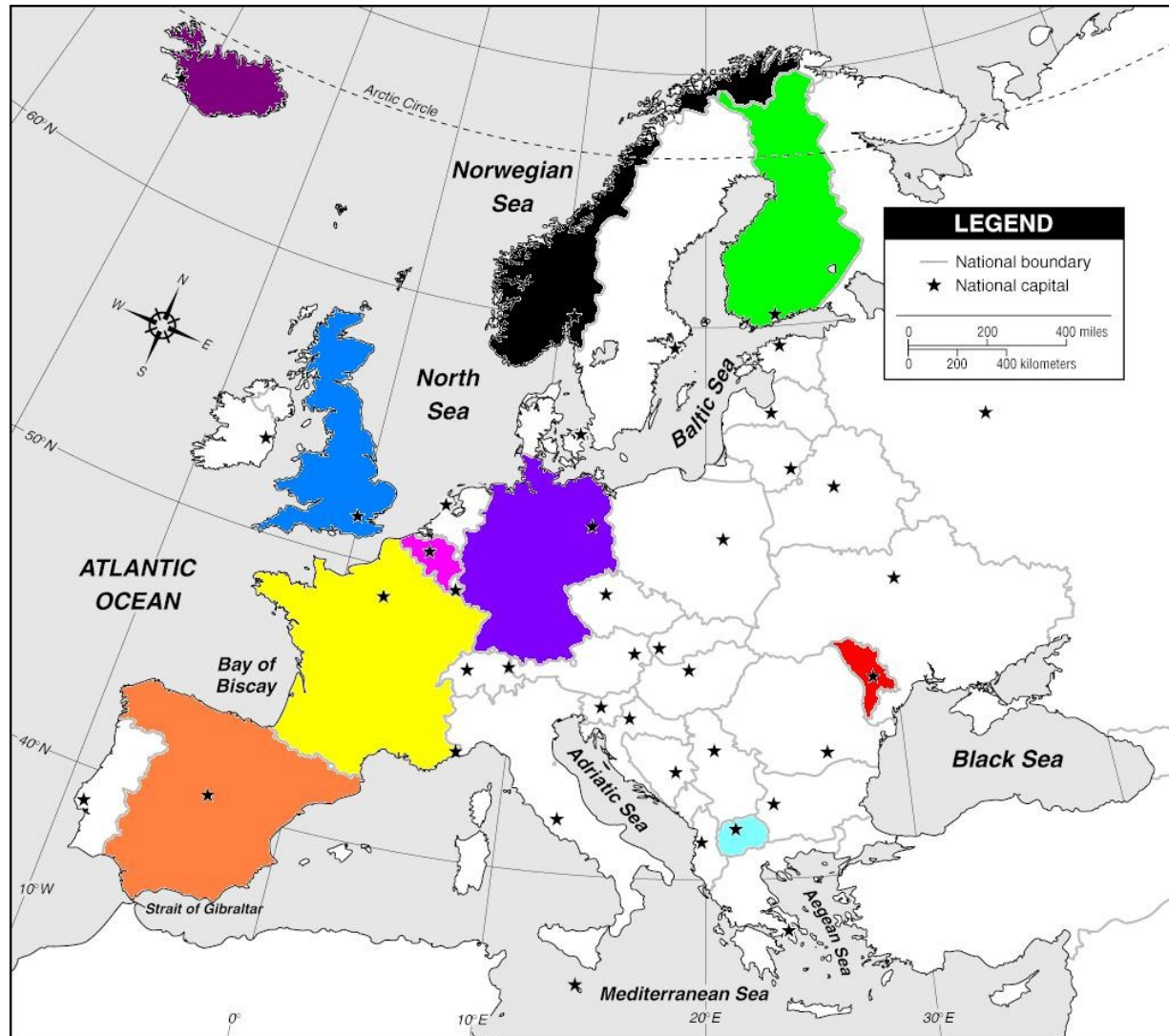
Multilingualism in European history

- in Early Modern Europe, multilingualism was more common than monolingualism

- multilingual monarchs, diplomats & scientists

- common European tradition of language learning until the 18th century, followed by national traditions of language learning from the 19th century onward

- (also) functional multilingualism

– evidence from: *Colloquia et dictionariolum* (1536 – 1703, ca. 100 editions all over Europe, from bi- to octolingual)

  - 'Who hath ever ben able to get with one speach the friendship of sundri nations? Hou many are ther becom riche, without the knowledg of divers languages? Who can wel rule Landes and Cities, knowing none other language than his mother tong onlies?'

  - 'Wie heeft er oyt connen vercrijghen met een sprake de vrientschap van verscheyden natien? '

  - 'Wieviel seind reich worden ohne dieser sprachen wissenschafft?'

  - 'Quem soube bein gouvernar cidades o provincias sem saber outra lingoa?' (Venice, 1656)

Multilingualism in European history

- for the 19th century there is evidence that monolingualism was regarded as progressive and democratic whereas multilingualism was regarded as backward

- present-day Europe
  - Europe less multilingual than other continents
  - (1) still: multilingual practices are very common in everyday life
  - (2) on the other hand: efforts to promote multilingualism (within EU policy since the 1990s)
  - how does (1) relate to (2) ?

Standard languages and multilingualism

- Possible relationship between the rise of standard languages and (the decline of) multilingualism
  - symbolic function of standard languages is more relevant to discussions on multilingualism than its communicative function
  - e.g. hostility towards variation and conception of a language as pure and free of variation
  - e.g. ideological value of ONE BEST VARIETY for social and national cohesion
- key question for this workshop
  - is there (in your specific context) evidence for a relationship between the increasing importance of a standard language as social and national symbol & the value of multilingualism?
  - even negative impact on multilingualism?

Questions

– Which social, political, ideological or economic changes taking place from the Middle Ages onwards were relevant to the selection of one or more varieties as 'standard' (and the 'rejection' of others)?

– In which period in history took selection of those varieties as standard place?

– In which (political/economic/cultural) centers did the selection process take place?

– Who were the actors behind the selection process? What were their motives?

Questions

- What has been the relationship between standard and other varieties over time?

- What was the value of individual multilingualism, of language learning?

- Which form of communication prevailed in contact with other language communities (receptive bilingualism, lingua franca)?

- What were common attitudes towards language mixing? Towards the use of lingua francas?

Questions

- Would you say that there is a relationship between (the rise of / prevalence of) standard languages and multilingualism in your special case?

- Do standard languages play the crucial role we suggested in the introduction in your context as well?

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