

April 2023

REVIEW OF THE 2023 ECSPM SYMPOSIUM

This year's symposium began and ended with expressions of appreciation to the University of Strasbourg which hosted the successful symposium on THE SOCIAL ROLE OF EDUCATION: Civil society and multilingualism for inclusiveness, social and epistemic justice in democratic societies. Very special thanks to the university's Vice-President of European and International Relations, **Irini Tsamadou-Jacobberger**, who graciously welcomed everyone, physically present and online, on the first day of the symposium, but who had also collaborated with us during the planning and organisation stage. Gratitude to all the academics and researchers who contributed to this scholarly event giving all participants (70 physically present and 102 online) the opportunity to discuss issues linked to the symposium theme but also numerous fascinating points that were raised during talks and discussions, in line with the [symposium programme](#).

This symposium was honoured to have the patronage of the Council of Europe's General Secretary, **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, and the sponsorship of the CoE's Education Department, Directorate of Democratic Participation. It was a privilege to have it hosted by the University of Strasbourg, and supported by GEO (Groupe d'études orientales, slaves et néo-helléniques) research centre and the Strasbourg University International Relations Office. During the two and a half exciting days we were in the wonderful premises of Strasbourg University, enjoying their hospitality and benefitting from the technical support and secretarial assistance afforded to us. We also benefitted from the use of the European Live Translator (ELITR), which the ECSPM had leased, so that the spoken English or French used by our contributors could be rendered in written form in any of the 43 EUROSAL languages.

The highlight of the event was an inspired and inspiring speech by **Katrín Jakobsdóttir**, Prime Minister of Iceland – the country which was presiding over the Council of Europe (CoE) at the time. The P.M., whose brilliant speech will be uploaded on the symposium webpage along with speakers' PPT presentations, set the high standard of our symposium, which was honoured by **Villano Qiriazzi**, Head of the Education Department of the Directorate of Democratic Participation of the CoE. His excellent talk was informative and enlightening as to the work of the Council of Europe to which the ECSPM was invited, by Qiriazzi, to contribute in different ways – one of them being to advocate the CoE's Recommendation CM/Rec (2022) on "The importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture". Responding to the CoE's request, contributors to the symposium agreed to refer explicitly to this Recommendation in the "ECSPM Declaration for Multilingualism in Higher Education" which is to be disseminated throughout Europe, as the President of the ECSPM, **Bessie Dendrinós**, explained when she was sketching the organisation's academic profile.

The follow up to a splendid start was a valuable panel on "Higher Education for social inclusion and linguistic justice", chaired by Bessie Dendrinós, which brought together three distinguished scholars: **Ianthi Tsimpli** from the University of Cambridge, **François Grin** from the University of Geneva, and **Anne Lequy** from the Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences. The first two presented the outcomes and the impact on civil society, policy makers and educators of two seminal research multilingualism projects that were very different from one another and conducted in very dissimilar geopolitical settings – in the EU (Grin) and in India (Tsimpli). The third eminent contributor (Lequy), shared with the symposium participants the position of the

European University Association (EUA), which represents more than 850 universities in 49 European countries, influencing EU policies on higher education, research, and innovation.

François Grin, one of the two keynote speakers of the Francophone academia, who argued that hard evidence is needed for policy makers and civil society to be convinced that multilingualism in society and education has advantages over monolingualism, presented a range of recent quantitative results on the effects of multilingualism on creative interests and achievements at both individual and group levels. ECSPM-CURUM member from the University of Gent, **Piet Van Avermaet**, was his discussant and he posed interesting questions to Grin, about how we measure creativity quantitatively and qualitatively, as did the audience.

In her talk, our honorary speaker **Anne Lequy** shed additional light on the role of the EUA in reshaping European Higher Education, questions related to the challenges of multilingualism, because one of its primary aims is student and staff mobility across Europe, a multicultural-multilingual continent. She also focused on the EUA's vision for 2030, which centres on the four university missions, i.e., Learning & Teaching, Research, Innovation and Culture, all of which, she acknowledged, are linked to multilingualism. ECSPM-CURUM member from the University of Konstanz **Theodoros Marinis** was her discussant and he facilitated a dialogue between Lequy and the audience, finally leading her to invite the interested members of the ECSPM-CURUM to respond to a call for Working Groups (WGs) by the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment ([CoARA](#)), which the ECSPM joined in 2023 with a view to making multilingualism a more pronounced issue in research criteria for university assessment.

Following this invitation, it was decided by ECSPM members present at the assembly held on 23 March from 17:00-18.:30, that ECSPM-CURUM would consider the needs for a WG on issues of multilingualism and respond to the call. However, for the immediate future it was decided to collaborate on a proposal for a **CoARA WG on “Multilingualism and language bias”** whose aim is to promote multilingualism in research, publications, education, and institutional engagement by providing CoARA and other institutions with an implementation plan and a toolkit to facilitate adoption of multilingual academic practices and valuation of diverse research outputs irrespective of the language of communication. An equally important aim is to ensure that multilingualism counts in HEIs' quality assessment. Lead scientific proposer is the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, joined by many other institutions alongside ECSPM, such as Eurodoc, Marie Curie Alumni Association, Universities of Norway, Adam Mickiewicz University Poznan, EuroScience, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, OPERAS, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Sorbonne Université, Leiden University, University of Milan and more. [The ECSPM Declaration for Multilingualism in HE](#) is mentioned in the proposal.

Upon an official welcome and an impressive introduction to the event, in four languages (French, English, German and Alsatian), by **Michel Deneken**, President of the University of Strasbourg, **Bessie Dendrinis** made a brief introduction to the 2023 Symposium, explaining that it is a follow up of the work the ECSPM-CURUM has been doing for research-based policy recommendations and scholarly inquiry with the intent to strengthen the role of European HE in transforming attitudes to languages, multi- and plurilingualism, so as to facilitate more inclusive learning environments and to make international communication possible without jeopardising social agents' linguistic and cultural identities. After referring to the previous two annual events – the 2022 Symposium on [“Language\(s\) and the construction of knowledge in European HE”](#) and the 2021 Symposium on [“Multilingualism in HE in Europe”](#) Dendrinis explained that the vision of

ECSPM is related to the potential of universities to contribute to human and social development in democratic societies, through respect for linguistic-cultural diversity and heteroglossia.

Three sessions of the symposium considered the challenges resulting from the increasing “internationalisation” of HE, which has led to more and more academic institutions in non-English speaking countries offering English Medium Instruction thus contributing to the Englishisation and the colonisation of academic disciplinary knowledge – an issue critiqued at previous ECSPM symposia:

- **Luke Holmes** and **Caroline Kerfoot**, from the Centre for Research on Bilingualism of Stockholm University which is a member of the ECSPM-CURUM, carried out an interesting dialogue entitled ‘Of ethics and multilingualism in internationalising university life’ followed by stimulating questions by their discussant, **Maria Zerva** of the University of Strasbourg.
- **Peggy Candas** and **Chloé Faucompré** put forth their proposal for a global, plurilingual strategy of curriculum internationalization which they have been implementing at their institution, the University of Strasbourg, when working with language teachers and presented “Teachers’ representations after training sessions: Hesitating between ‘English first’ and plurilingualism”. **Andrea Young**, from the University of Strasbourg also, was their discussant and she asked questions them which needed to be clarified for the audience.
- **Jos Swanenberg** from the University of Tilburg pointed to the negative social consequences resulting from the language policies of Dutch universities which have favoured English that supposedly facilitates internationalisation. As such in recent years, some universities have become officially bilingual and others have switched to English only-policies, while in most of them English is lingua franca on campus ignoring the many languages students bring to campus and to society, some languages more than others. Swanenberg’s contribution, complemented with substantial comments by his discussant, **Massimiliano Spotti**, also from the University of Tilburg and member of the ECSPM-CURUM, constituted a plea against linguisticism and in favour of linguistic fairness at Dutch universities.

Isabelle Légise, our keynote speaker from the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), gave a talk which departed from some basic concepts and research results in two domains – health and education – involving plurilingual citizens in multilingual societies and show edhow (little) they are taken into account by public policies and the collective imagination in France. **Nikolay Slavkov**, CCERBAL of the University of Ottawa, was her discussant and raised pertinent questions to the speaker herself and prompted the audience to interact with the speaker.

Two thought-provoking contributions offered symposium participants an opportunity to reflect on theoretical perspectives about learning and thinking through languaging – a term which is by no means new but has recently become rather popular in bi/multilingualism literature.

- The first one was by **Laura Gurney**, from the University of Waikato, New Zealand, who spoke on “Academic literacies and (inter) disciplinary assemblages: thinking through languaging in HE”. When Gurney completed her talk, ECSPM member **Linda Fisher**, from the University of Cambridge, who was Gurney’s discussant, had the time to highlight only a few of the points which connected Gurney’s ideas to the theme of the symposium.
- The second contribution was prepared by **Paul J. Thibault**, from the University of Agder in Norway and **Mark E. King** from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Singapore. Entitled “Learn in language, through language, and about language”, during the presentation basically it was argued that learning reflects inter-individual dynamics that are shaped by biology and culture and what they term ecologies of learning and teaching. **Nicolina Montesano**

Montessori, from Utrecht University of Applied Sciences was the discussant, but was afforded very little time to delve into and involve the audience into questioning a highly original, valuable proposal on the dynamics of learning ecologies in HE.

The second and third symposium days both ended with two exciting panels consisting of scholars from Europe, the USA, the UK, and Western Asia, all of whom contributed to the symposium's fruitful outcomes.

- The deliberations of the second day of the symposium day were concluded with an excellent panel chaired by **Antonella Sorace**, from the University of Edinburgh, who is general director and founder of the Bilingualism Matters (BM) Research and Information Centre. The panel was coordinated by **Tanja Rinker**, from the Katholische Universität Eichstätt – Ingolstadt, who is on the BM board of directors. The panel discussed the role of universities in bridging research on multilingualism and society, with valuable contributions by **Monica Barni** from UniSTRASI, representing the BM Branch of Siena; **Frances Blanchette** from Penn State University, representing the Penn State BM Branch which is housed by the Center for Language Science; **Nicole Busby**, from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, representing the Tromsø BM Branch and **Carmit Altman**, from the Bar Ilan University, representing and the BM Branch of Israel.

The symposium came to an end with an excellent session – a panel chaired by **Irini Tsamadou-Jacobberger** from the University of Strasbourg, founding member of GEO (Groupe d'études orientales, slaves et néo-helléniques) research centre that is a member of the ECSPM-CURUM, and coordinated by **Guðrún Gísladóttir**, ECSPM General Secretary. **Waldemar Martyniuk** from Jagiellonian University, representing ALTE that is a member of the ECSPM, gave a truly comprehensive synopsis of all deliberations at the symposium, pointing to future actions of our organisation. **Andrea Young**, director of the LiLPA at the University of Strasbourg, a research centre that is a member of the ECSPM-CURUM, complemented Martyniuk's synopsis highlighting important insights and critique particularly as regards consequences of HE internationalisation policies. **Thomas Tinnefeld** from Saarland University of Applied Sciences, provided the audience with a very useful analysis of the "[ECSPM Declaration for Multilingualism in Higher Education](#)", pointing to its advantages and why it is important to promote it with a view to petitioning its adoption – the petition being addressed to: (a) the Education Department of the Council of Europe, (b) the Higher Education Unit of European Commission (EAC.B.1), (c) the European University Association (EUA), and (d) the Higher Education Institutions across Europe. Finally, **Terry Lamb**, University of Westminster and President of FIPLV, who took part in the drafting of the CoE's Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 on "[The importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture](#)" presented the document in detail to the audience, explaining its significance and contributing to the unanimous decision to refer explicitly to this document in the "[ECSPM Declaration for Multilingualism in Higher Education](#)" – a Declaration to be disseminated through a petition on the "change.org" platform, so stakeholders across Europe may sign it.

At the closing the session, the ECSPM president and the Executive Committee members presented the conclusions drawn from the symposium, held a brief discussion with the audience about the symposium's impact and thanked everyone who took part in the event online and contributed with feedback.