

The language policy arrangements and practice of language hierarchies in the EU Institutions

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Multilingualism in the EU, understood as crosslingual and translingual practice including translation and interpreting, both in the institutions and in a broader translocal, societal sense enabled by media and digital affordances, can be discussed in an ethnographic language policy research perspective. What catches the eye of any observer in the field is the expanding dominance of lingua franca English (LFE) resources in various constellations of use, and language ideological changes unfolding in social practice through indexical processes of sociolinguistic enregisterment. Exploring this change, my emic observations of spoken discourse and simultaneous interpreting in the European Parliament enquire how LFE resources deployed on the floor fulfil variational identity constitutive sociolinguistic functions of horizontal and vertical social differentiation, integrating and integrated into plurilingual repertoires. The ongoing change in status, corpus, and acquisition pertaining to these translingual practices of performed language policy often sits uneasy with the conventional channel paradigm of EU multilingualism, and hierarchies therein, sustained by interpreting and translation services conceptualised in language policies designed for parity and fairness.

In my talk I would like to present these points of contradiction and complementarity, and raise questions for discussion on how the wide availability of machine translation (MT) solutions would potentially impact them.