

# Migration, Multilingualism and Schooling in Southern Europe



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Edited by

Sandro Caruana, Liliana Coposescu  
and Stefania Scaglione

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P U B L I S H I N G

Migration, Multilingualism and Schooling in Southern Europe,  
Edited by Sandro Caruana, Liliana Coposescu and Stefania Scaglione

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# MERIDIUM

Multilingualism in Europe as a Resource for Immigration  
Dialogue Initiative among the Universities of the Mediterranean



Education and Culture DG

**Lifelong Learning Programme**

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To Margherita and Tudor,  
newborn citizens of Europe



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## INTRODUCTION

# MIGRATION-INDUCED LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN SOUTHERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

SANDRO CARUANA, LILIANA COPOSESCU  
AND STEFANIA SCAGLIONE

0. In this introduction the themes and the reasons for having undertaken the research on which this volume is based shall be presented. After a summary of the conditions which, for several years, have contributed to the implementation of language policies in Europe, and an analysis of the important role such policies have had in various contexts (§ 1.), in § 2 consideration is given to the lines of action promoted by the major continental institutions—and by the European Commission in particular—regarding the themes of support for plurilingualism and the legitimisation of both “endogenous” and “exogenous” linguistic diversity. Some of the critical aspects of the lines of action adopted by the European Commission, including difficulties which have still not been overcome (§3.), are discussed with specific reference to the regional sub-system of Southern Europe, characterized by a comparatively very recent tradition of immigration compared to other European countries (§ 4.). The specificity of this area and the most appropriate strategies in order to promote linguistic diversity effectively within it are the subjects of interest in the MERIDIUM project (§ 5.), from which this book originates. In the last section of this introductory chapter (§ 6.), the structure of the volume is briefly outlined.

1. For at least the last twenty years, the promotion of plurilingualism and the fostering of linguistic diversity have constituted an important priority on the agenda of the European institutions. Against the backdrop of the momentous political and economic processes which developed in

the latter part of the XX century (the break-up of the Soviet Union and the resurgence of nationalisms in regional areas within the European States, the consolidation and enlargement of the European Union, the globalization of markets and of communication circuits, the huge migratory flows towards the Continent)<sup>1</sup>, language—understood in its dual function as a communicative resource and an indicator of cultural identity—has acquired an obvious strategic role in mapping out of the European model of citizenship and democratic participation: the solemn proclamation of non-discrimination on a linguistic basis, contained in articles 21,1 and 22 of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (2000), constitutes, from this point of view, a symbolic goal, with which the member States are called to align their linguistic policies in accordance with shared standards, aiming at promoting intercultural dialogue and eliminating discrimination. The aim, in brief, is to favour the progressive detachment from the *monolingual habitus* (Gogolin, 1994), which relegates plurilingualism to the level of an elitist phenomenon and presents linguistic diversity (“multilingualism”) as a real threat to the integrity of State communities.<sup>2</sup>

Overcoming such a concept becomes increasingly necessary in the face of demographic, political, cultural and economic conditions irreversibly marked by internationalization and mobility. The 480 million citizens of the European Union speak 23 different official languages, to which one should add—according to the estimates of the European Commission (2008a: 7)—at least 60 regional or minority languages, utilized by about 50 million speakers (10.6% of the population). This “endogenous” linguistic diversity takes on an unprecedented significance, when one considers the increased internal mobility of European citizens: in 2009, the citizens of the European Union resident in a country different from that of

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Patten and Kymlicka (2003: 2 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> “Multilingualism”, in Council of Europe documentation, is defined as «the presence in a geographical area, large or small, of more than one 'variety of language' i.e. the mode of speaking of a social group whether it is formally recognised as a language or not; in such an area individuals may be monolingual, speaking only their own variety»; on the other hand, “plurilingualism” refers to «the repertoire of varieties of language which many individuals use, and is therefore the opposite of monolingualism; it includes the language variety referred to as 'mother tongue' or 'first language' and any number of other languages or varieties. Thus in some multilingual areas some individuals are monolingual and some are plurilingual» (definitions given in [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Division\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Division_EN.asp), accessed September 26, 2012). In the European Commission’s documents only “multilingualism” is used, with a broad meaning.

their citizenship constituted 2.4% of the total population (about 12 million people) and 2.8% of the work force.<sup>3</sup> There is also, naturally, the impact of non-EU migration: in the same year, 2009, non-EU citizens resident within the borders of the European Union were almost 20 million (4% of the total population and 4.5% of the work force)<sup>4</sup> and 776,000 individuals, 90% of whom were non-EU citizens, acquired the citizenship of a country of the European Union (Sartori, 2011).

For several years the overall demographic balance of the European Union, as in many of the member States, has benefitted considerably from the input of intra- and extra-European immigration: according to EUROSTAT, in 2009 the migratory balance of the population of the 27-member European Union contributed 1.8% to the overall demographic balance (2.8%), as against a natural balance of 1%. In the long term, the projections of Lanzieri (2011) estimate that in 2061 the percentage of residents with a “foreign”<sup>5</sup> background, in the European Union, will vary between 26.5% and 34.6%, reaching one-third of the population in most of the Countries of Mediterranean and Northern-Central Europe (Lanzieri, 2011: 24). Such a scenario forcefully highlights the outdated nature of the traditional monolingual “territorial” model typical of the nation-State: if, at an individual level, plurilingualism constitutes, more and more, an indispensable exploitable resource for geographical and social mobility, at the level of policies, its real strategic value is represented by the optimization of multilingualism, which can guarantee democratic participation in the life of the State, social cohesion and equal opportunities for all those who—citizens or not—live and work in the European Union.

Such an approach is, after all, in line with the stand taken after the Second World War by the most important international organizations, in supporting respect for individual linguistic identity and safeguarding

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<sup>3</sup> EUROSTAT data; see:

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>,  
accessed September 26, 2012

<sup>4</sup> EUROSTAT data.

<sup>5</sup> Following Lanzieri (2011: 6) and «according to international recommendations (UNECE, 2006; §398), persons with a foreign background are ‘...those persons whose parents were born outside the country. The persons in this group may or may not have directly experienced an international migration.’ [...] Thus, limiting the analysis to two generations, foreign-born persons whose parents were born abroad (the so-called ‘first generation’ of migrants), together with native-born persons whose parents were born abroad (the ‘second generation’), we can define a group of persons with a foreign background.»

linguistic diversity, within the framework of the principles protecting human rights and conserving humanity's intangible cultural heritage (e.g. United Nations, 1948, 1966, 1992; Council of Europe, 1992, 1995; UNESCO, 2003). Furthermore, international research and reflection have now shown clearly that the phenomena of contact between languages, both in the individual skills of the speakers, and in the widespread communicative practices in the community, constitute the norm, and not the exception, both from a historical perspective and from a synchronic global perspective; the issues related to increasing linguistic diversity in European societies are not therefore due to multilingualism *per se*, but derive, in fact, from «a certain [ideological] context in which this multilingualism is *seen* as a problem, or, rather, creates problems» (Auer and Wei, 2007: 3).

2. In line with this approach, guidance documents such as the *Action Plan 2004-2006 for the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity* (European Commission, 2003), the *New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism* (European Commission, 2005), the publication *Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment* (European Commission, 2008c) outline a completely “ecological” approach to plurilingualism, in which institutional, economic and social bodies are simultaneously asked to implement structural and cultural conditions which will facilitate and encourage the acquisition, maintenance, use of more than one language on the part of citizens, without prejudice to their status (be they official, regional or minority languages), or their origin (“autochthonous/endogenous” or “allochthonous/exogenous”).

The impact of the actions promoted by the European institutions has been remarkable, especially in some sectors. In general terms, the gradual spread of a culture which favours language learning and use among European citizens—especially the youngest and most educated—is borne out by the results of some statistical surveys (EUROBAROMETER 2001, 2006, 2007, 2012), according to which:

- Among European citizens, there is an increase in both the perception of the inherent usefulness of learning foreign languages (in 2001, 80% of the respondents were in favour of this view; in 2005, 83%), and the ability to engage in a conversation in a European language other than their own (47% in 2001; 56% in 2005; 54% in 2012);
- the intention or desire to acquire or improve their proficiency in a foreign language was expressed by 60% of the European citizens interviewed (EUROBAROMETER, 2007: 48).

More specifically, as regards the structural measures adopted by individual national educational systems, with the aim of supporting the plurilingual growth of the young generations, the Eurydice reports (2004; 2009; EACEA-Eurydice, 2008) highlight significant progress:

- the study of a foreign language from primary school level and of at least another foreign language during the period of compulsory education are required in almost all the countries of the European Union; the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teaching method has been introduced, at least on an experimental basis, in many countries; and many regional or minority languages are included in the curriculum (EACEA-Eurydice, 2008);
- the vast majority of EU countries have included intercultural dialogue among the general objectives of school curricula and adopt specific measures for the integration of children whose L1 is different from the official language of their country of residence; some countries are also committed to supporting the language and culture of origin of immigrants through organized courses, either at the expense of the host country, or in accordance with bilateral agreements with countries of origin (Eurydice 2004; EACEA-Eurydice, 2009).

In terms of educational policies, the European Union and the European Commission have benefited from the continued collaboration with the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, which has produced important operational tools for the development of plurilingual skills among European citizens: the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, the *European Language Portfolio* (2001), reference guides *From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education*, *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* (CoE, 2007, 1 ed. Beacco and Byram, 2003), *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education* (Beacco *et al.*, 2010) and *Language Education Policy Profiles*<sup>6</sup>.

3. However, in spite of the considerations presented above, a more analytical consideration of the progress achieved so far is required, in order to understand how the exhortations of the European institutions in favour of pluri- and multilingualism have been implemented, both by the central authorities of individual States and by the citizens themselves. The

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<sup>6</sup> See [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Profils\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Profils_en.asp) (accessed September 26, 2012).

measures taken towards this goal are mainly grounded on a pragmatic and instrumental vision, which focuses on the formally certified acquisition of foreign languages with economic and professional marketability. From the above-mentioned surveys by the EUROBAROMETER (2006, 2012), for example, it can be seen that, among the languages that respondents believe should be known by young people, English registered an increase from 77% of preferences in 2005 to 79% in 2012, while preferences for the other major European languages decreased (-13% for French, -8% for German, -3% for Spanish). Moreover, minor EU languages, regional or minority languages and non-European languages generally did not improve their position (ranging from 0% to 4%)<sup>7</sup>.

Such a “market demand” obviously justifies or supports the choices of education authorities, which, according to the EACEA-Eurydice (2008) report, have greatly favoured English, by making it the most widely taught foreign language, at primary level, in all European countries (except Belgium and Luxembourg). On the other hand, over the years 2001-2006, the European average percentage of pupils studying a foreign language other than English in general secondary education (ISCED 2 and 3) has never exceeded around 24%, compared to an increase from 74% to 86% approximately for English (EACEA-Eurydice, 2008: 74 ff.).

In brief, the paradoxical risk that the emphasis on the economic and employment benefits of plurilingualism will favour only a few supposedly most useful languages is becoming a concrete reality. The deeply-rooted and widespread ideology, that there is a hierarchy of importance among languages could lead to the thwarting of pluralistic principles on which European language policies are based. In fact, giving exclusive prominence to such a market-oriented logic:

- would penalize the dissemination and development of other European languages, limiting their use solely to national contexts and gradually discouraging their utilization in strategic areas for development, such as scientific research and international relations;
- would abate the commitment to the preservation and intergenerational transmission of languages considered “weak” in terms of status, such as regional languages, on the one hand, and non-

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<sup>7</sup> The only remarkable exception to this trend is represented by Chinese, which in 2012 obtained 14% of preferences, whereas in 2005 it garnered 2%. Given the current relevance of China in the global economy, such a result seems to demonstrate the substantially instrumental vision underpinning public opinion judgments about language learning.



autochthonous languages brought in by migration, on the other. This is an indirect, but evident, violation of respect for individual linguistic identity and linguistic diversity.<sup>8</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this research to study in depth the problems regarding EU lesser-used languages as well as those of regional or minority languages.<sup>9</sup> We will focus, instead, on critical issues faced by allochthonous languages, which tend to be greatly amplified both by their complete lack of status within the host society, and by the prejudices related to integration and towards immigration.

In fact, as Extra and Gorter (2007: 23) rightly point out:

established majority groups often make strong demands on IM [immigrant minority] groups for integration in terms of assimilation and are commonly very reluctant to promote or even accept the notion of cultural diversity as a determining characteristic of an increasingly multicultural environment.

This widespread attitude is matched by a persistent difficulty in recognizing the languages of origin of migrants in terms of public policies of individual countries, with particularly serious effects on education.

According to the EACEA-Eurydice (2009) report, the countries of the European Union still present very varied and, in many cases, objectively difficult conditions as regards the availability of courses to help migrants to maintain/strengthen their skills in their mother tongue. In recent years, the inherent "weakness" of the status of these languages within the host countries has been further aggravated by the limited resources allocated to the school systems: in times of economic hardship, the countries which have not set in motion bilateral agreements with the migrants' countries of origin subordinate the decision on whether or not to start a (migrant) mother tongue course to the demand and availability of human and material resources; also, States that had previously distinguished themselves for their commendable attention to the maintenance of the languages of origin of foreign nationals (e.g. Sweden and the Netherlands) have preferred to use the resources to enhance the teaching of the instructional language as L2, favouring an approach ismuch more based—with regard to immigrant children—on the "deficit theory" (in the instructional language) rather than on the exploitation of the richness of language skills they bring.

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<sup>8</sup> See, in this regard, the recommendations of the European Parliament (2009).

<sup>9</sup> In the context of the vast bibliography, see, among others, de Swaan (2001), Nic Shuibhne (2002), Hogan-Brun and Wolff (2003), Phillipson (2003).

The educational choices just mentioned contribute to the perpetuation of conditions of disadvantage and exclusion for immigrant minors or children of immigrants, as shown by the data summarized in the recent Green Paper on *Migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems* (European Commission, 2008); moreover, they hinder the growth of a full plurilingual and intercultural awareness in the citizens of the host countries, insofar as they make “invisible” the complexity of the repertoire of a large part of society and of the school population. In its many interventions on these issues, the Council of Europe has never failed to point out that multilingualism brought in by migration can and should contribute to a rethinking of curricula towards a plurilingual and intercultural education for all, which

realises the universal right to quality education, covering: acquisition of competences, knowledge, dispositions and attitudes, diversity of learning experiences, and construction of individual and collective cultural identities. Its aim is to make teaching more effective, and increase the contribution it makes, both to school success for the most vulnerable learners, and to social cohesion (Beacco *et al.*, 2010: 7)

To this end, an exemplary synthesis of the conceptual key-lines on which the European educational systems should converge is offered by Gogolin (2002: 19 ff.):

- 1) *Reform of traditional canons of language education* according to the criteria:
  - 1a. language potential and needs among the given population of a region
  - 1b. integration of all languages existing on a territory into the canon of officially accepted and taught—i.e. legitimate—school languages;
- 2) *Language as the medium of instruction*: abandonment of the principle of monolingual organization of school systems;
- 3) *Education and learning under the conditions of plurilingualism*:
  - 3a. Recognition and acceptance of the fact that multilingualism is a general condition for all (language) education in European, i.e. linguistically plural, societies;
  - 3b. Introduction of “heteroglossic literacy” as a general aim of general education.

4. With regard to the above-mentioned issues, the situation of the countries of Southern Europe is particularly interesting, because of the distinctive features of this area of the Continent compared to the rest of the

European Union. In fact, in terms of matters related to the integration of immigrants, Southern Europe is today facing very particular conditions: unlike the States of North-Western Europe, countries in this area have only recently become an immigration destination. On the contrary, until the 1970s, these countries often experienced significant mass migration to other European States or to other continents.

According to estimates by the United Nations Population Division (UNDP), over the last two decades, the percentage of the immigrant population in the Southern European Countries has risen from 2.9% to 9.5%, compared to the current 10.8% in Northern European Countries and the 12.4% of Western European Countries; however, the average growth rate of immigration over the last twenty years has been significantly higher in Southern Europe than in the two European regions mentioned above.

This rapid transition to the condition of immigration-receptor countries has necessitated, with unprecedented urgency, a number of adjustments, particularly in the area of educational policy. In many states in the South of Europe, such policies are often characterized by limitations related, on the one hand, to inadequate teacher training as regards plurilingual and intercultural education and, on the other hand, to the lack of awareness, on the part of school authorities and society as a whole, of the extent and value of immigrant children's language skills in their respective languages of origin. The overall picture is further complicated by the significantly different composition, from country to country, of migration, which may diverge to different degrees in terms of nationality and/or language use. The socio-demographic fabric of the host society, which provides varied conditions for the integration of migrants, may also vary considerably from one area to another.

5. On the basis of the above considerations, seven universities in six countries (Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain)<sup>10</sup> have collaborated in the MERIDIUM Project (*Multilingualism in Europe as a Resource for Immigration—Dialogue Initiative Among the Universities of the Mediterranean*), a network project that aims to provide active support for the promotion of the European policy of pluri-/multilingualism in Southern European countries. In this project particular attention has been given to the development of strategies geared to increase awareness of the

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<sup>10</sup> The institutions which are participating in this project are the University for Foreigners of Perugia (responsible for coordination), the University of Malta, the Universidade Nova of Lisbon, Transylvania University of Brasov, Babeş-Bolyai University—Cluj-Napoca, the Università del Litorale—Capodistria, the University of Salamanca.

institutions and society towards exogenous linguistic diversity, promote its value and assess the efficacy of measures being taken.

The participation of two Romanian universities is a key aspect of the MERIDIUM network: in fact, it permits, within the network, a direct exchange of information and experience between a country which in recent years has experienced a period of high emigration (IOM, 2008) and countries—above all, Italy and Spain—to which migration flows are directed and from which, in many cases, immigrants are returning home after a longer or shorter stay. The partnership between these universities constitutes an extremely significant instance of the usefulness of creating opportunities for collaboration which can support the maintenance of L1 in the migration setting, while, at the same time, favouring the preservation and the further acquisition of skills in L2 after the return to the country of origin.

In its first three years of activity (2009-2011), the project has had two fundamental aims:

- to analyze, through research in the field, the sociolinguistic contexts and the school culture in areas, in the partner countries, with a high level of migration (inbound and outbound);
- to plan initiatives to promote the dissemination of a plurilingual and intercultural awareness among the institutional parties and the larger society, starting from the specific context of primary education (pupils, teachers, school authorities, families).

6. This book provides a synthesis of the scientific results obtained from the MERIDIUM project, not only through the research and the activities conducted by groups of the network, but also thanks to the reflections arising from the MERIDIUM International Conference "Multilingualism and Migration Flows in Mediterranean Europe" (University for Foreigners of Perugia, 23-25 November 2011).

The first part of the book contains the contributions of European scholars who, while not directly participating in the MERIDIUM Project, provided accounts of important scientific and institutional experiences during the MERIDIUM International Conference. These interventions deal mainly with the problematic implications and the opportunities related to linguistic diversity in the current European context.

In the opening chapter, the contribution of Cornelia Ilie tackles the controversial issue of freedom of expression in a multilingual and multicultural society. It deals specifically with the limits and principles of responsibility that must be identified, so that one can freely express opinions, also and especially when these are in conflict with the views of

others. If freedom of speech, like respect for diversity, is an essential value of European democracy, reflecting on the ways in which to combine these two poles in public discourse emerges with particular urgency in a European scenario increasingly exposed to the risk that there will be distinct public spheres separating migrants and citizens.

The role of dominant languages in present-day multilingual societies is discussed by Román Álvarez Rodríguez, who highlights the origins and prospects of the complex interplay between language, identity and power. The existence of a dialectical relationship not only between dominant languages and those which have become minority languages, but also between dominant languages with different status (e. g. English and Spanish) is an inescapable aspect of global communication. This, rather than creating a conflict, could represent an opportunity for cultural progress and openness to others.

In addressing the specific issue of plurilingualism resulting from immigration, the contribution of Joana Duarte draws attention to the need for deeper reflection on the systemic features of the school contexts in which immigrant pupils are placed: in the face of the extensive scientific evidence attesting the difficulties encountered by these students in achieving educational goals, there have been few studies aiming at establishing how much the observed educational disparities are affected by the organizational and aptitude characteristics of the host schools, where, to a great extent, there is still the widespread monolingual habitus which tends to fuel, with regard to immigrant pupils, the "deficit theory".

The other three contributions in the first part of the book are concerned with national contexts directly involved in the MERIDIUM Project.

Within a legal framework such as the Slovenian one, that legitimizes and protects national minorities (Italian and Hungarian) and scattered minorities (Roma), Ana Kralj discusses the foreclosures against new minorities, often from other States of the former Yugoslavia. The author highlights the rifts in the social fabric which originate from this situation and which have repercussions on both the macro-level of the relationships between ethno-linguistic groups, and the micro-level of daily individual interactions.

The contribution of Marina Chini raises, with regard to the Italian context, several issues related to the study of linguistic diversity induced, in recent decades, by migration flows entering the Peninsula: to date, research on linguistic repertoires, customs and linguistic attitudes of immigrants in Italy are still at an early stage and there are few systematic surveys able to provide information comparable with the data already acquired in other European and non-European contexts. Chini addresses

the need to plan targeted interventions in order to promote both a better language integration of immigrants, and real possibilities for them to maintain their languages of origin.

Concrete examples of educational activities for the promotion of positive attitudes towards plurilingualism and the development of intercultural skills are discussed by Antoinette Camilleri Grima with regard to the Maltese context: even though bilingualism is present, education in Maltese schools could be further enhanced through the adoption of diversified methodologies, directed at increasing Maltese pupils' motivation to study languages, but, above all, to ensure the integration of students whose L1 is different from the instructional language, through increased attention to the affective and cognitive dimensions in relationship with linguistic diversity.

The second part of the book focuses entirely on presentations resulting from the MERIDIUM Project and on illustrating some of the most significant results obtained from the research carried out in each one of the countries of the network.

Chapters 7 and 8 illustrate the stages of the project and the methodology used for the identification and analysis of case studies; a brief comparative outline of the samples of informants involved in the research in the respective countries being studied is also included.

The final six chapters of this volume, written by the different units of the network, deal with issues of particular significance in the respective national contexts. In fact, as has already been noted, even though all the countries in the network are linked by recent migration dynamics, each has distinctive characteristics, both as regards the organization of the educational systems, and in terms of the patterns of the migratory flows. While bearing in mind the importance of tracing a basic comparative framework, it is only through a context-specific analysis that it will be possible to discuss, in detail, what could be the most suitable instruments and methods of intervention within each individual context.

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