The Language Issue in the European Union

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Introduction

The fusion of the European states solves some fundamental questions for its economic and perhaps political development, but euronationalism can be read from two sides. It is either an unnatural tendency in biological species – the loss of the instinct of survival and the adoption of an alienating, suicidal strategy leading to the diluting of individual and collective traits- or it is the declaration of a romantic desire which is isolationist, protectionist and ultra-nationalistic with respect to other communities. The British swell with pride for having embraced this type of self-centered and hardly altruist philosophy -"We are Europeans but we aren't part of the Continent"-, provoking contradictory reactions ranging from anglophobia to reverence towards anglophony.

Some enormously complex matters are still in the air, and their fulfillment inconceivable since they pertain to historic inheritance: the regrouping of religious beliefs, cultural manifestations and the linguistic habits of the different communities. No member country, nor any country in the integration phase, has proposed renouncing its traditions, nor even thought at length about such formal aspects like the acceptance of the Roman alphabet to mitigate the Babel Syndrome. Consider Turkey, for example, after the educational reform of Mustafa Kemal, "Atatürk", who attacked the illiteracy problem by adopting a 29-letter Neo-Latin alphabet which replaced the 482 combinations of Arabic letters. This would today create emotional turmoil in Greece with its thousand-year-old alphabetic system, and so would it in the central and western European countries using Cyrillic, a recent alphabet conceived just two and a half centuries ago. If a simple diacritic like the tilde of the Spanish "ñ" keeps all the politicians and scholars in its linguistic area mobilized and ready for combat to spare its removal from computer keyboards, what wouldn't instigate the reduction of the Armenian alphabet (a lower medieval hybrid of Pehlvi, Greek and Syriac with 38 letters), if part of this ethnic group with no definite political borders remains swallowed up in the gut of Turkey and finds itself pulled into the bosom of the European Union?

The truth is, all the world's alphabets, without counting of course the Japanese-Chinese ideograms, are the result of the evolution of Semitic and Greek, and merit the reflection that if they have suffered important formal changes at some point in their history (compare Greek, Arabic and Cyrillic), for the same reason no

alphabet would have to have reached its final configuration yet. However, no one seems to think that that is so. On the contrary, there is a tendency to generate stable systems with specific communities in mind that have their own linguistic, political and geographical links and the utopian longing for a common alphabet and language for all European citizens is never-ending. In Rumania, a country with no literary tradition -scarcely a century- in the natural language of its inhabitants, French would still be filling the educational and cultural space had the political orientation not taken a turn and awakened the national conscience. A good number of Europeans think of English as the "lingua franca" of the future although one perceives the incipient competition of other linguistic models, such as German and French, in virtue of the vigor of the countries protecting them.

The European Linguistic Atlas

Nevertheless, the European linguistic atlas is extremely complex. According to the Ethnologue (1996), there are approximately 460 languages, of which 193 are spoken in active member states of the European Union, the Euro zone, or near integrants of it (22 varieties in Germany, 8 in Austria, 5 in Belgium, 7 in Denmark, 14 in Spain, 10 in Finland, 27 in France, 13 in Greece, 6 in Holland, 12 in England, 4 in Ireland, 33 in Italy, 3 in Luxembourg, 10 en Norway, 6 in Portugal, 10 in Sweden), and a high and undetermined number of "patois", or regional derivations, without forgetting the different sign languages for the deaf. Many of these languages are taught at schools and universities and the less fortunate of them, due to lack of officialdom, are able to appear in some type of publication. Most outstanding is the fact that a good number of communities preserve a high level of conscience of their speech as being different from that of the neighboring communities, which adds to disorienting the experts when faced with deciding if they are dealing with a language or a dialect. Bulgarians and Serbs, Valencians and Catalans, if they want to (which isn't always the case) have few problems understanding each other thanks to the proximity of their linguistic systems. But in other cases, where one would assume the mutual intelligibility between dialects of the same family, such as Croatian spoken in Croatia and that of the Austrian region of Burgenland, or between the Austrian Overwart and standard Hungarian, reality is quite different. No one questions that Italian is spoken in Italy, but Milanese urbanites will have difficulty understanding the vernacular of their fellow Neapolitans. At the same time, two communities separated by a natural or artificial dividing line (a river, mountain or customs-house) are capable of preserving the identity of their respective languages for centuries with little infiltration. We only have to visit some of France and Germany's border villages, or go from one Swiss canton to another where German dialects are spoken (but not always mutually understandable) to prove the loyalty of the inhabitants to their ancestors' legacy. On the other hand, people subjected to dominance by other ethnic groups (which happened for instance with the Polish at the beginning of the century, subject to the

Prussian yoke) defend themselves fervently and with equal enthusiasm against the presence of ethnic groups less favored than they (those same Polish towards the white Russians and Lithuanians). When the Turks abandoned Transylvania, leaving it in hands of the Hungarians, the Rumanian -speaking population remained subordinate to the new Magyar class. In the Balkans, philologists are attracted to the linguistic mosaic covering its geography. In Greece, small but resistant circles of speakers of Arvanitika (Albanese), Bulgarian, Pontic (Ancient Greek returned to Georgia), Rumanian, Romani, Slavic (Macedonian), Tsakano (Greek variant of the shepherds), and Turkish have all survived. Above them reigns Modern Greek (also called Neo-Hellenic), the language displacing previous ones but flattened in Turkey where 34 others are spoken. If Russia succeeds in joining the European Union, she will bring along 56 languages and an endless list of dialects.

No one is able to predict what Europe's linguistic map will look like in one or two hundred years. At the moment, what is really being heard, and what demands special attention is the push and shove of minority languages to occupy a seat in official bureaus in the same conditions as the majority languages. We could, however, venture to say that the strongest languages, that is, the most functional and useful ones and, above all, those accompanying Power, would impose themselves upon the weakest, and the eyes of the wardens of the regulatory systems will remain fixed on written language as a final goal, although unless speakers become silent, its slow but constant break-down is inevitable.

As for the search for a universal "sabir", an auxiliary language occupying the space of other languages, it is better to trust the instinct of the speakers themselves; their decisions are always made through usage. The appearance of Volapük and especially, Esperanto at the end of the 19th century, gave way to a considerable political impulse to find an open door to borderless communications, even though after World War One, the Society of Nations miserably refused to admit Esperanto as an official language. In 1954 UNESCO recognized its interest as a communicative vehicle and the Esperantists continued their labor of making the language known through translations of the classic and modern authors, among them Dante, Tolstoy, H.G. Wells, Cevantes and Blasco Ibañez. One hundred years after its birth, Esperanto lives on thanks to its followers, although with few possibilities of being accepted by the European bureaucrats. The recently created "Europanto" must be taken in jest. It is a hybrid of French, German, Spanish, English and Italian, thought up by an interpreter of the Cabinet Council of the European Union. Since grammatical rules have been reduced to a minimum the end result could not be sloppier: "*In der story des morte des Diana es esse tropo viel unclaras chosa und confusio. Porque Diana Mercedes was zo repido roulante? Waar eese de autra auto mit die bodyguardias gegone? Und supra todo, estrage coincidenza, cinquo dags alter, tambien Zuster Theresa uit Calcutta trespasse al Creator. Somechose kloppe nicht.*" We are going to discuss this language and others like it next.

Linguistic archetypes: Esperanto, Eurolang, Balbylon and Europanto

In 1990 Mark Fettes published an essay titled "Europe's Balbylon: Towards a single European Language?" earning him the Maxwell Prize for European Studies. He picks up the conflict, as expressed by André Martinet (1989), of choosing between an artificial language like Esperanto and a hegemonic national language like English. Essentially, the arguments favoring one or the other seem incompatible among themselves, taking into account the cultural, political and sociological dimension of all living languages and the limitations of a language lacking a social base, but Fettes' contribution is enlightening in comprehending the role of languages in the melding process of the European countries.

Any language can be learned at any time and for any given reason, but a natural language is an inseparable adherence of the individual and the community he was raised in forming part of a network of connections sealed with a contract of mutual recognition. The most optimistic thinkers see Europe as a cultural meeting place boasting numerous points of cohesion, while the most pessimistic pick out effortlessly the enormous cracks and scars that furrow the Old Continent. Aware of this situation, all the political institutions of the European Union have formally accepted multilingualism and cultural diversity. Promoting a common linguistic vehicle obligates making decisions in relation to one specific language, in detriment to ones' own. School and university exchange programs of the Union seek precisely to encourage mobility and cultural and linguistic enrichment of the participants "in situ", using it as the vehicle to propagate domestic values. On their part, elite polyglots move with absolute ease through the hallways where political decisions are made, and therefore feel no need to learn any of the artificial languages - Esperanto, Europanto, Eurolang, Interlingua, Balbylon 21- that patiently wait for their turn to come up. But the rest of the European population, the immense majority, doesn't need to learn a strange language either, be it natural or artificial, except for opportunistic reasons. Even if they did have to learn one, rarely would they set their eyes and ears on an artificial language whose communicative functions seem to have been limited to factual information. In any case, they will pressure their representatives in the European Parliament to try to gain ground for their national or regional languages.

Esperanto

Economic pragmatism, according to Fettes, is what drives monolingualism. This leads him to calculate the advantages of a transnational system, void of emotional links, accepted by all and capable of fulfilling the communicative functions of any national language at the written and spoken level, as to also *"express the full range of transnational European thought in a manner that is felt to be satisfactory by the speaker."* English is a solid candidate for filling the

preferential chair in the EU, since it is the natural language of more than 300 million people in the entire world and the second language for thousands of millions others as the result of the colonial expansion and economic imperialism of England and the United States. On the other hand, Esperanto timidly reveals itself as a language option that, according to Richard Wood (1979), keeps its distance from ethnic groups and territories and represents no risk to the survival of other languages, as English does to Celtic or Spanish to Euskara or the indigenous languages of Latin America. Nevertheless, the demands of the different countries forming part of the European Union to raise the rank of their respective languages, without forgetting their intranational languages, are kept in a file waiting for better days. Ireland, Luxembourg, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Finland, Holland and Belgium (as far as Dutch is concerned), Italy and, finally, Norway and Sweden - when the latter adhere to the monetary union-, will not allow their languages to be left as mere official recognitions. Only England sits back letting things continue as they are, fully aware that the majority of school and university students study English; that very few adopt German, French, Spanish or Italian, and that almost no one has the option of studying Flemish, Gaelic, Swedish, Danish or Portuguese outside the country of origin.

Fettes, whose inclination towards Esperanto is manifest, believes that English is giving way to national languages outside the European context. But that is not true or anyway near being so. On the contrary, English is spreading out beyond borders and political regimes, multiplying the local versions of this language and even standardizing some of its hybrid dialects in order to alleviate the marvelous but unmanageable linguistic diversity found in India (850 languages), Papua New Guinea (826), Nigeria (478), Cameroon (282), The Untied States (176), or the Philippines (168). Besides, English fares perfectly well in countries like Holland and Sweden, although its functions are merely referential and far from leading the way at a creative and artistic level outside the academic world. Of course, this seems to be the fate and limitations of all contact languages. When a high-ranking Italian official leaves a meeting in Brussels with his colleagues, whom he communicates with in English, and picks up the phone to speak to his family in Palermo, what other language would he use but Sicilian? This is his native tongue, the language of his heart and his race; a language that has acquired consistency through generations of transmission.

In the 50's there was a well-known family in Zaragoza, Spain, who was used to speaking to each other in Spanish (the father's tongue), in Lithuanian (the mother's tongue) and Esperanto (the language of everyone, but of no one in particular). This was an exceptional situation for the place and those times, but would still be exceptional even today because Esperanto has never been the language of a community, only of a select, unique, cold, and academic microcosm. Esperantists' arguments are based on its accessibility to all types of people, independent of their metalinguistic training, and on its political and socio-ethnic

neutrality. Learning Esperanto takes ten times less effort than learning a second natural language. Taking into account its transnational identity, therefore, void of power and submission relationships, it would seem to harbour all the advantages for worldwide acceptance. However, it is surprising that, in spite of its proven capacity to solve any communicative episode and its outstanding wealth of extensive lexical repertoire and solid literature, Esperanto has not found the place it was destined for but has seen its career halted by all sorts of obstacles, especially under such despotic regimes as the Third Reich and Stalin's.

In any case, it is not possible, or we cannot comprehend, that the diffusion of Esperanto imposes a restriction in the practice of the languages and cultures of the nation, nor that a universal conspiration exists to prevent it from occupying its place. Diego Marani, the promoter of a new language, Europanto, that we will talk about later, writes (1998a), *"Esperanto was the answer to the problem of the existence of different languages. It was an instrument designed to enable people from different cultures to communicate with each other. But, in a world in which we have to learn the language of the strongest in order to survive, there is no longer any room for the ideal of a supranational artificial language, nor a neutral code of communication; it belongs to a specific culture and expresses the value of that culture."* Marani's words sound in jest, perhaps because they hide a hint of irony, but the truth is, a good part of the world population, from China to Mexico, and from Lapland to Argentina, seems to have found enormous satisfaction in imitating the values of Anglo-Saxon culture, including its language. From this perspective one of the fundamental assets of Esperanto becomes less interesting -its cultural neutrality, which keeps speakers from seeing their faces reflected in the mirror they want to look into.

There are other assumptions simultaneously playing in favor and against Esperanto as a language of universal usefulness: its Indoeuropean linguistic sediment makes it theoretically accessible to 50% of the world population, although in practice, its different morpho-syntactical and phonological components are absolutely unrecognizable to people lacking metalinguistic awareness or a special willingness to learn this language. On the other hand, Esperantists still debate the protean nature of their language, or on the contrary, its stable and thus, trustworthy, character. Natural systems maintain a rigid structure and are not easily manipulated, taking centuries to produce movements that affect their fundamental bases, although certain components are exposed to radical changes. The argument that Esperanto has no limits of any kind (political, geographical, demographical, socio-ethnnic or linguistic), might increase the optimism of its speakers, who have not yet renounced their missionary and premonitory ardour about the dangers threatening the supremacy of the English language or that of its alternatives, such as Chinese, Japanese and Spanish; but neither does it contribute much to winning the trust of potential clients, accustomed to a language where they can recognize themselves, their ancestors, their generational peers, their neighbors, friends and enemies. They

are not very inclined to accept a language born exclusively to help Humanity cross the barriers of incommunication and facilitate, through its pragmatic and rationalist philosophy, the practice of equality, fraternity and universality.

What has been said so far about Esperanto is equally valid for the rest of the artificial languages we have heard of; about 70 in all, the majority of which have had, or will have, a short life-span. We will refer to three recently constructed systems: Eurolang, Balbylon 21 and Europanto.

Eurolang

Eurolang, in the words of its creator (Philip Hunt 1995), " *est desineda estar facila lernar par persons qui parle ocidenta Europa langs. Lernavanta persons probablae pos lernar it in week-fini, suficientae bonae que los pos lectar journals qui est scribeda in eurolang.*" (Eurolang is thought to be easily learned by people who speak western European languages. A trained person should be able to learn enough in a weekend to be able to read newspapers written in Eurolang). By "trained person" Hunt means a university graduate. The inventor resorts to Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, German and English as main lexifier languages, reducing morphology to a minimum while maintaining, on the other hand, a syntactic structure true to Romance languages, although fairly complex, as can be seen in its subordinate sentences. The inventor is on the verge of completing a grammar of Eurolang and a basic vocabulary. *"Because of the underlying simplicity of Eurolang, the important aspects of its spelling and grammar can be written on one sheet of A4 paper."* In order to make his language known and offer material guaranteeing its launching, Hunt offers a "Quick Reference to Eurolang", a self-learning guide -"Lernu Eurolang"-, a dictionary, and various texts written in that language. One of his presumed collaborators, Christopher Zervic, has a web page for the curious at heart.

Balbylon 21

Balbylon 21 is an association that has initiated the promotion of a language which, according to its authors, is to become the language of the 21st century. It is a synthetic language combining diverse lexical and grammatical elements from other languages. They argue that all present languages have come to their productive limit. *"After classic authors of the past it's difficult to say something original. Almost all listens as a feeble copy."* This requires the introduction of a language offering greater guarantees of being long-lasting and far-reaching. A way to achieve this is by combining words from different languages *" like we use the direct product in mathematics to form complex objects from simple ones."* Languages form lexical networks and each word is linked to images and emotions. The links between words from various languages make up a small part in comparison to the internal connections of each language. Thus, Balbylon 21 proposes to create numerous links between different languages to form a three-dimensional

superstructure exceeding the dimensions of any other single language. This requires the participation of many people: " *Our purpose is to give some examples, to show new possibilities, to convince you to take part in this game,* " the first step being to offer several examples, show its possibilities and motivate people to become interested in this *game*. Balbylon 21 starts off with a set of conjunctions, presented like islands, taken from two or three languages. Little by little, the islands grow and overlap. Finally, in the distant future, enthusiasts will extract examples from less familiar languages, especially from those in Unesco's "red book" on languages in danger of extinction. The promoters of Balbylon 21 end with a biblical reference: *"At some moment of human history in Balbylon the God decided to make many different languages. Time has come to start opposite process: make one from many."*

Balbylon 21's call sounds delivered from a pulpit. We don't know whether to take it seriously or as a joke, since many initiatives with similar principles already exist. The only thing it offers at the moment is a simple list of expressions and lexical groupings, thus limiting us to the association's advice: wait and see what happens to so primitive a language as this.

Europanto

Diego Marani's expectations on his Europanto (1998b) follow a different course. It is not a language in itself, but "*a linguistic provocation*", since it lacks grammatical rules and a structure of its own, except that of the English language, taking its lexicon from the more common languages with a common root (for instance, from Latin, such as in *juvenile, joven, jeune, juventus, giovane*) or by choosing words that belong to universal heritage (*amigo, muchacha, bazooka, blitzkrieg, chili-con-carne, coiffeur, kaputt*). It becomes impossible to describe the system sustaining Europanto: no such system exists. *The strength of Europanto is that it does not have to be studied: to be able to read, write or speak the language, people use whatever linguistic knowledge they already possess, i.e. a very basic knowledge of English and the other major European languages which derives from their everyday experience... But it is not a language, nor is it intended to become one.*" To try to describe its present formless state is " *like planting a seed and wanting to take a photograph of the tree.*" The development of the language must be observed first before beginning to analyze its rules. The most that can be hoped for is that people understand each other without needing to resort to a *lingua franca*.

Scholars, suspicious by nature, will wonder: if Europanto is not a system, and is not backed by rules familiar to all, communication must be unfeasible. However, Europanto's success lays in its anarchic configuration: individual speakers choose components from their own language they intuitively perceive as universal, and add them to their English, German, French, Spanish, or basic Italian, trying to make them understandable to a foreigner. The result is an impure, corrupt, and absolutely

arbitrary language, so simple that grammar books and dictionaries are not needed to decipher it. The following letter written to Marani by a psychologist shows this:

"Eu am enchantata della creazione of diese neue lengua. I laugh sem arrêt, es ist irréistible,tiene tellement des recursos, that everybody has to EuropantoTM sprechen. J'adore hablar und thinkear ohne preoccupazione alguma. Adelante gehen et thanks!"

Let's look at the following quotation, with a surprise included:

"Alle dieci et demie war ich in templo. Poste_ chès le signore von Mayrn, post prandium la sigra Chatherine chès uns, wir habemus jou☐ colle carte de Tarok, _ sept heur siamo andati spazieren in den horto aulico. Faceva le plus pulchra tempestas von der Welt."

These are observations presumably written in 1780 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in his sister's diary and reproduced in August of !998 in the newspaper *La Republica* by a journalist claiming the text to be *"multilingue e intraducibile."* Any Europantist would immediately know what the young Mozart in such notes was referring to.

Marani works as an interpreter in the General Secretariat of the Cabinet Council of the European Union in Brussels and must have plenty of free time to dedicate his efforts to such an unusual project which drives him to write regularly for the weekly magazine *Le Soir Illustre*. A play also just opened in New York where one of its characters uses Europanto written by Marani, himself. The publication of a series of stories, "The Adventures of Inspector Cabillot" (Ed. Fayard), was initiated in Paris on January 6th, 1999, *"eine collection des novas, rocambolantes, exilarantes adventures des primero Europantophone polizero in der mundo!"*. Marani confesses to being more of a clown than a professional linguist, unable to take apart the essence of his creation or even compose it, and following his own instinct, with no rules or prescriptions. The echo of his activity has been widely received by his admirers through internet and the most prestigious media like the *BBC*, the *National Post* (Canada), *Le Temps* (Switzerland), the French television channel *FR2*, *The Sunday Telegraph, Montreal Gazette, Sydsvenske Dagbladet* (Sweden), *Pour le Science* and the electronic editions of *The New York Times* and *La Reppublica* (Italy).

Marani is neither a fool, nor is he pretentious, but very smart and inventive. His logic stems from the fact that English is a universally accepted language everyone tries to learn. Nevertheless, the final product is not the natural English of the British, Americans, Canadians or Australians, but rather an illegitimate version, denaturalized by linguistic incompetence and the contributions non-native speakers make with extractions from their own mother tongues. It is a dialect recognizable by all, even by native English speakers, in spite of its multiple deviations from the

norm. It is not difficult to imagine a group of participants at an international trade fair where Chinese, Thais, Botswanians, Mexicans, Egyptians, Turks or Rumanians are forced to speak to each other in frustrating English, although utilitarian and intelligible enough to carry out business transactions.

The process doesn't end there. Marani proposes internationalizing English, isolating it from the Anglo-American culture. Since it is impossible to compete with it, the aim is "*to cause the language to implode, to destroy it from within*", flooding with all sorts of barbarisms. Europanto's effect on English, according to the *BBC*, is that of *"a linguistic virus"*. Marani is not ruffled. *"The worst that would happen is that the level of understanding would remain the same."* But if the speaker resorts to words from his own language and manage to get others to understand him without using excess body language, the benefit is mutual. That is the mechanism moving the gears of Europanto. English is thus converted into a type of crossword puzzle whose squares are to be filled with loans from other languages. *"If they are native speakers of Germanic languages, they will use a mixture of Germanic languages, while they will use a mixture of Romance languages if their mother tongues are Romance languages."* It is safe to say that there would not be one Europanto, but several; at least a Germanic variant and a Romance one. With time, a universal Europanto will emerge composed of both.

The advantage of Europanto over any other language, including Esperanto, is that it requires no studying. Since its spelling is void of uproductive symbols, the speakers use their own linguistic knowledge to adequately interpret what they see and to make what they write understandable. Only the vocabulary needs to be "Europantized", or, in other words, resorting whenever feasible to familiar lexicon for almost all words that, as we indicated above, belong to the common heap or share the same root. *"The list of words from different languages that have become international is now very long and could form the basis of Europanto vocabulary."* In regard to pronunciation, Marani prefers to put it on hold, waiting for the speakers themselves to mark their preferences as they use it.

It seems interesting to take a closer look at Europanto in a written text for Belgium readers, that is, in its Germanic variant with some Romance components, and analyzed by Marani, himself.

Aquello augusto postmeridio, Cabillot was in seine officio un crossverba in europanto solvente. Out del window, under eine unhabitual sun splendente, la city suffoqued van calor. Zweideca vertical: "Esse greco, esse blanco und se mange", quatro litteras. Cabillot was nicht zo bravo in crossverbas. Seine boss le obliged crossverbas te make ut el cervello in exercizio te keep, aber aquello postmeridio inspector Cabillot was mucho somnolento. Wat esse greco, esse blanco und se mange? tinqued. May esse el glace-cream? No, dat esse italiano aber greco nicht. Cabillot slowemente closed los eyos und sich endormed op seine buro. Der telefono ringante presto lo rewakened.

"Hallo-cocco! Cabillot parlante!"
"Aqui Capitan What! Come subito in meine officio!"
"Yesvohl, mein capitan!" responded Cabillot out van der door sich
envolante.
Capitan What was muchissimo nervoso der map des Europas regardante
und seine computero excitatissimo allumante.
"Cabillot! Nos habe esto messagio on el computero gefinden! Regarde
alstubitte!" op el muro

"The present participle has a Latin form (solvente, splendente, ringante, regardante, envolante, allumante), which is both universally understandable and also very productive as it can be formed from a noun as well. The superlative "issimo" also comes from Latin, but it is easily understood by Germanic speakers. The auxiliary verbs "have" and "be" have been turned into the clearly Latin based forms "esse" and "habe" for the present tense, while for the past tense the English form "was" is used. Many prepositions and possessive forms have been borrowed from Germanic languages (und, van, on, op, aber, meine, seine, sich), while for the articles and some of the pronouns there is a certain overlapping between Germanic and Romance languages (nos, el, esto, lo, del, dat, der). The past tense of the verbs is formed by using the English suffix "ed", even in the case of "Europantized" verbs (rewakened, responded, suffoqued, tinqued, endormed). Some irregular English verb forms remain irregular in Europanto so as to be more easily recognizable, while the English verb "find" is "Europantized" into "gefinden" for the past participle form by adding the Germanic past form to the English root. "Yesvohl" and "alstubitte" are two examples of interjections which, although formed by mixing two Germanic languages, are also widely understood by speakers of Romance languages. In general, Europanto borrows the most efficient and easily understood words from each language, "Europantizing" them whenever possible. The word "unhabitual", for example, makes use of the English privative prefix "un" to create a word which is not English, but pure Europanto."

We leave Marani here, wishing him luck with his Europanto, the most irregular communication system on the face of the earth. Accustomed as we are to mixed variants of English such as New Guniea's Tok Pisin, Haitian Creole, or Jamaican Rasta, Europanto cannot surprise us, since the principles of hybridization are basically the same for all the languages of the world. The difference that marks Europanto is that its origin is not in spontaneity, but in planning, even though the latter was carried out in jazz rhythm. In the end, what matter is understanding one another: *"Speak freely,"* Marani says, *"and if what comes out is understandable then you have reached your aim."* (Marani on the BBC, 1998).

## Conclusions

We have seen the philosophy of three movements underlying the language issue in the European Union:

1) English-only to bring Babel to an end, eliminate costly and ineffective multilingual policies and open the way to the triumph of cosmopolitanism, anglosaxon imperialism, cultural genocide, and Orwellian-like linguistic uniformity;

2) A planned global-language to overcome the limitations and dangers of cultural, political and intranational identity, and above all, of retrograde nationalism and regionalism;

3) Cultural and linguistic ecology ("une Europe des peuples, des cultures et des langues"), which guarantees the levelling of linguistics rights of member states, but which may bring back the evils of separatism in a backward movement away from unionism.

The present official policy of the EU seems to be building on a vision of pluralism and diversity, as expressed by the Multilingual Information Society (MLIS) in their Work Programme for the years 1996-1998, and whose main guidelines are reproduced below.[12] A radical change in the attitudes of individual countries and in the legislation of the European Community is unlikely to occur in the next few decades.

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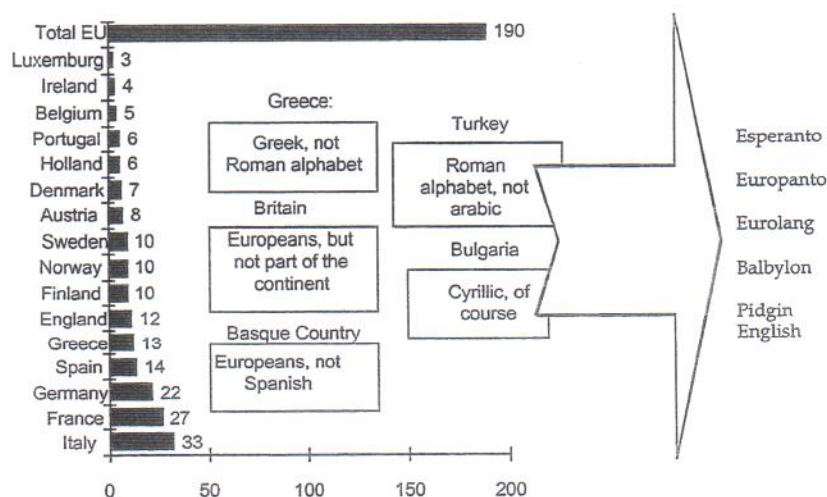
[1] Multilingual Information Society (MLIS). Work Programme for the years 1996-1998.

1. Rationale for the programme

European citizens must be able to participate in and benefit from the global information society. Human communication is at the heart of the information society, and in a richly multilingual area such as the EU, full participation will require multilingual facilities for creating, exchanging and accessing information across language borders, throughout Europe and beyond. To achieve full citizen participation, the efforts of private companies and public organizations in the Member States need to be supplemented with support on a European scale. Effective stimulation and co-ordination at the European level will help to ensure the availability of multilingual facilities for rapid, cost-effective communication throughout the countries of the Community, and with the rest of the world. A detailed analysis of needs and possible ways to fulfill them is given in the Commission's Communication, COM(95) 486, "the Multilingual Information Society"

2. Aims of the programme

MLIS complements and cooperates with activities which support multilingualism in Europe, exploits existing experience and knowledge of multilingual issues and solutions, mobilizes actors in both the public and private sectors, and shapes future strategic directions with the following aims: to raise awareness of and stimulate provision of multilingual services in the Community, utilizing language technologies, resources and standards; to create favorable conditions for the development of the language industries; to reduce the cost of information transfer among languages, in particular for the sake of SMEs; to contribute to the promotion of the linguistic; diversity of the Community. The programme will co-finance pilot projects (with public and private organizations), stimulate concertation and commission studies to improve understanding of the issues for the actors concerned.

3. Realistic expectations

The programme's resources are modest in terms of time and budget. The area addressed is vast, whereas there is rather limited experience in promoting a multilingual Europe outside the field of language education, in particular in the context of the ongoing rapid evolution of communications. And there is no well-defined category of actors that share as their main goal the promotion of multilingualism. This 3-year MLIS programme is therefore selective in order to have a measurable impact: establishing frameworks to bring actors together for greater synergies; demonstrating what can be achieved with today's means in business and public sectors; catalyzing immediate and future initiatives of the private and public sector actors and of the Community.

4. Action lines

The core objective for the MLIS programme is to create the right conditions for a multilingual information society by building on current European initiatives and stimulating collaboration among relevant groups of similar actors exploiting the opportunities offered by an increasingly networked environment. A coherent set of actions will focus on three main lines of action. a) Supporting the creation of a framework of services for European language resources, b) Encouraging the use of language technologies, resources and standards, c) Promoting the use of advanced language tools in the Community and Member States public sector
The coherence of these actions will be fostered and the effects of the actions enhanced through a number of accompanying measures.

5. Exploitation of synergies

The MLIS Decision emphasizes the need for cooperation and coordination with other initiatives whether they have an impact on multilingualism, are public or private, national or Community-wide. The Commission will set up practical concertation mechanisms with the national language bodies and the private sector, with various European organizations in the translation domain, with language resource suppliers and dictionary publishers and other business sectors for which multilingualism is a key factor for successful operations. Links with particular programmes and organizations are given below.

Research and development

MLIS and RTD programmes co-exist and will benefit from each other. The Language Engineering programme, in particular, encourages industry to advance and diversify its offer of marketable technology-based products. This is in the interest of MLIS because it implies a better and richer supply. On the other hand, user needs observed by MLIS may identify RTD requirements which could be taken up by national and Community programmes, whereas mobilizing the market, as MLIS does, stimulates industrial activity and consequently the need for more and diversified RTD. The Language Engineering programme initiated actions such as EUROMAP and ELRA which support MLIS objectives. There will be no duplication of actions, and results will be exploited for the benefit of suppliers and users irrespective of their origin.

User-driven initiatives

Many Community projects and programmes are trans-European and multilingual by nature or by objective. A table showing the Community programmes of closest relevance and their relationship to MLIS is reproduced as an Annex for ease of reference. Of particular relevance is the INFO 2000 programme that promotes multimedia content in the information society. Making content available in many language versions creates potentially interesting business opportunities. INFO 2000 and MLIS share the user-driven approach. MLIS will make use of facilities set up by INFO 2000, such as the MIDAS network for collecting and disseminating information and raising awareness.

Translation and Interpretation departments of the Community Institutions

These are the largest organizations of their kind worldwide, as is their potential for uptake of new methods, tools and resources. They are experienced reference organizations for many actors in the field of multilingualism, and for the user-driven MLIS programme cooperation is essential. The third action line supports this explicitly, whereas the other action lines contribute to cooperation.

International cooperation initiatives

Various Community programmes support developments in or together with non-member countries in a significant way. Among these are PHARE, TACIS and MEDA, which address central and eastern Europe and the Mediterranean area. If organizations in the countries concerned propose to address language issues, such as setting up electronic language resource or translation services in association with their counterparts in the Community, coordination between the international cooperation programmes and MLIS will be pursued.

International organizations

Intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations and their Agencies share multilingual experiences with the Community institutions. The Commission will continue to exchange views and cooperate with them. The Commission has many links with European and international standards organizations such as Cen/Cenelec and ISO on language-related standards. They will be encouraged to step up this important activity, and to develop standards in new fields. MLIS will promote the application of agreed standards, such as Unicode for character coding, methodologies for terminology creation and ISO 9000 application to the language industry.

6. Supporting the creation of a framework of services for European language resources (action line 1)

Language resources such as dictionaries, terminologies, large-scale collections of texts (corpora) and speech recordings form the essential materials for a broad range of language activities, from authoring and language learning and translation to the development of language tools and applications, multilingual interfaces and language teaching programmes. Considerable investment has already been made, and

continues to be made, by Member States, the Commission, and private companies in producing language resources of varying size and complexity. This scattered and often incompatible material should now be intelligently linked into a dynamic and open service framework, an open European electronic market place. MLIS will stimulate private and public owners and creators of language resources and tools to make them accessible electronically, and will seek the support of private associations interested in such a construction; such as European associations of publishers, the European Language Resources Association and the European Association for Terminology.

7. Encouraging the use of modern language technologies, resources and standards (action line 2)
Users and suppliers of language services, SMEs in particular, will benefit from an improved knowledge of language characteristics of markets and a better understanding of where, why and how to exploit tools, standards and resources to meet the needs in a multilingual information society. The Commission will encourage business to use advanced tools and services and will promote best practice through pilot and demonstration projects, for instance in the diversified translation field. The programme will seek the support of private associations in this field, such as business associations and the associations of translation companies and translation schools, and will build upon experience of public authorities and companies.

8. Promoting the use of advanced language tools in the Community and the Member States' public sector (action line 3).
Communication is increasing between citizens, Community institutions, the Member States and other regional administrations, particularly as a consequence of economic integration and the freer movement of people. The language services of the Community institutions have a unique experience in handling cross-language communication. The expertise now includes a highly advanced model for the use of translation technology and a vast set of language resources and tools. MLIS will enable public administrations in the Member States and the private sector to share the experience and tools of the EU institutions. The Commission will seek cooperation with Member States in developing solutions comprising their languages. The private sector plays an essential role in these efforts and will be offered access to the Communities' resources, legal constraints permitting. Support will be sought from organizations such as the Conference of Translation Departments of the European States and the Community Inter-institutional Translation Committee.

9. Accompanying measures
The actions of the programme will be enhanced and their coherence fostered through a number of accompanying measures. The use of standards will be promoted through the activities launched under the various action lines, while MLIS will break new ground in documenting and measuring the nature, extent and prospects for the market for language services. New initiatives will be taken to raise awareness and demonstrate the issues at stake and the solutions envisaged. They will ensure wide dissemination of the results of the MLIS actions and of other relevant programmes and link them into a broader international context.

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