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Language Policy, Planning & Inter/Supra-national Organisations

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Introduction

Regional and global integration (economic, political, legislative) has given rise to, and long been facilitated by, highly influential organisations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), not to mention the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). Global integration and communication within these organisations also presents the benefits and challenges of linguistic heterogeneity. In dealing with this, different choices are made and we witness a plethora of language policies, planning activities and practices amongst these and other inter/supra-national organisations. Despite differences in operation often similar questions and tensions arise which have been, and continue to be debated by administrative officers, delegates and academics. These relate primarily to issues of language equity/justice, efficiency in communication and the financial and other non-material costs related to supporting communication through different media and via multilingual means to diverse constituencies within and outside of the organisation. In discussing these challenges, this paper draws on a number of issues previously debated and documented in McEntee-Atalianis (2015, 2017, 2020 and forthcoming) using the United Nations as a case study. The paper initially describes the evolution of the UN's language policy and the difficulties that the organisation has and is still experiencing in implementing its multilingual policy, before considering how these policies could be reviewed and/or changed to address their ongoing struggles with efficiency; equity and cost of maintaining multilingual provision.

Philosophical Orientations and Historical and Contemporary Developments in LPP

As noted by de Varennes (2012) in his insightful review of language policy in supranational organisations, different philosophical and consequently operational orientations can be found. For example, some organisations adhere more closely to the protection of language rights and a recognition of the importance of respecting and acknowledging a strong link between language and (national) identity. While others have traditionally been less concerned about language rights and more about observing good practice.

An example of the former orientation is the EU, which has, since its inception when it set out the provisions for the language system in *Regulation no.1*, April 15th 1958, agreed an institutional policy which respects and incorporates the nominated national languages of all Member States. As a consequence, with each new EU enlargement there has been a concomitant increase in language provision. Currently there are 24 official languages¹ and 27 Member States. The EU employs the largest number of interpreters and translators in the world however its provision is complex, sometimes inconsistent, and there are budgetary and practical constraints which mitigate against full multilingual support across the many levels of its' institutions, entities and bodies (see Ammon

¹ These include: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish.

2012, Gazzola 2006, Kruse & Ammon 2018, Krzyzanowski & Wodak 2010, McEntee-Atalianis, forthcoming, Truchot 2004, van der Jeught 2015, Wright 2009).

In contrast, the UN arguably falls into the second category - ‘observing good practice’ in its selection and implementation of languages for its operation (McEntee-Atalianis forthcoming). Since its early beginnings as the ‘League of Nations’ English and French played a prominent role, along with the languages of the victors of the second world war. Spanish too was recognised as an important addition to the portfolio, given the high number of speakers amongst the founding States. Five languages were therefore enshrined in Article 111 of the treaty – Chinese, French, Russian, English and Spanish - recognised “as equally authentic”. Only two – English and French – became the working languages of the administration (the Secretariat) due to practical constraints and these have persisted. Codification of language practices took place in 1946 at the first General Assembly (Resolution 2 (1)) and it was here that Chinese, Russian and Spanish were recognised as official languages of the Organisation (along with English and French) and therefore equally subject to the provision of translation services. English and French were recognised as official and working languages and supported by interpreter and translation services. The policy at this time only extended to the General Assembly and not all UN entities however.

Over ensuing decades, the language policy and linguistic practices in the organisation changed and expanded to facilitate the expansion of the official languages into more domains of use (including acting as working languages). Arabic was also incorporated into the organisation after much lobbying from Arab States; not to mention support given to other (national/regional) languages/dialects in outreach work via the organisation’s network of information centres and the work of the Secretariat at the UN, via what is now termed ‘The Department of Global Communications’. The latter has been/is responsible for raising public awareness and support for the work of the UN. This is strategically enacted via the establishment of campaigns, relationships with civil society and the conveyance of information via traditional and online media.

The chronological development of the changing policy is shown in Table 1 and described here. In 1948 Spanish took on the status of working language of the General Assembly (GA), although not of the Secretariat. It was not until 1968 that Spanish became the working language of the Security Council (SC). Russian also expanded its status - from official to working language of the GA in the same year but its use took time to gain traction, only supported in the main GA committees following a GA resolution of 1980. Following a request by the GA it was recognised as an official and working of the SC and the Economic and Social Council in the early 1980s. Chinese became a working language of the GA in 1973; taking on working language status in the SC in 1974.

While minor changes have been made this time, essentially the decisions taken in the early 1970s, which were based on the balance of power at the time, have defined the language regime within the organisation to this day.

Table 1: Language Policy Changes at the United Nations

Year	Language(s)/Initiatives	Domain & status (official/working language)
1948	Spanish	General Assembly (working language)
1968	Spanish Russian	Security Council (working language) General Assembly (working language)

1969	Russian	Security Council (working language)
1973	Arabic	General Assembly (working & official)
	Chinese	General Assembly (working language)
1974	Chinese	Security Council (working language)

Currently at Headquarters in New York six official languages are supported *de jure* particularly for the work of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. English and French continue to support the work of the Organisation's administrative body (the Secretariat), in addition to the work of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. The linguistic provision within the Organisation's affiliated/specialised agencies (e.g. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO, the World Health Organisation, WHO) is similar, although the number of working languages varies. For example, at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in London, three working languages operate (English, French and Spanish).

With the marked exceptions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights, (which has been translated into 525 languages and dialects and in 1999 noted to be the most translated document in the world, with translations ranging alphabetically from Abkhaz to Zulu, www.ohchr.org/udhr/pages/introduction), the UN Charter, and most recently, the Sustainable Development Goals, few documents within the organisation have been produced in languages beyond the main six. Multilingualism is predominantly supported at high levels of functioning (e.g. plenary meetings) but English is often found to dominate in lower level meetings, such as correspondence or working groups. English is also found to be the dominant language by which information from the organisation is disseminated on the internet (McEntee-Atalianis, 2015, 2017) and this is no less apparent in the organisation's 63 information centres (ICs). These operate in the regions of Africa, the Arab States, the Americas, Asia and Pacific, and Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States imparting information about the UN system in the countries in which they are situated. They work in five out of the six official languages (with the exception of Chinese), however most work only in one or two. In 2013 they produced promotional (print and multi-media) material in 40 languages and maintained websites in 30 local languages.² However in just seven years there has been a significant increase in this provision, such that in 2020 UNICS produced and disseminated publications in 153 local languages (<https://unic.un.org/aroundworld/unic/en/whatWeDo/productsAndServices/publications>).

The latter tells a partial story however; analysis of website languages in 2017 (McEntee-Atalianis 2017), revealed an uneven picture of local language provision which somewhat hides a significant disparity with regard to the languages available on the internet across the centres. For example, UNRIC Brussels (Belgium) supported 13 languages, while UNIC Acca (Ghana) only supported one - English. The greatest disparity in provision was found to be between Europe and the

² These included: Armenian, Bahasa Indonesia, Bangla; Belarusian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Georgian, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Kazakh, Kiswahili, Malagasy, Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak, Slovene, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu and Uzbek. Materials ranged from brochures to video and audio press kits.

Commonwealth, in contrast to all other regions. Only two Centres out of 16 in Africa (note a continent with the most diverse linguistic ecology) supported a local language - Kiswahili (UNIC Dar es Salaam and UNIC Nairobi); while only English and Portuguese were maintained in the Americas by UNIC Rio de Janeiro; in contrast to six local languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Bengali/Bangla; Hindi; Japanese; Persian and Urdu) on a few websites in Asia and Pacific (across 11 ICs). 24 languages appear on websites in Europe and the Commonwealth (supported by 14 ICs) – with the greatest number of websites and languages supported by UNRIC Brussels (Belgium) and UNIS Vienna (Austria).

ICs have long disseminated information about the UN using traditional media (television and radio programmes) but in recent years concerted efforts have enhanced digital technology - websites, social media platforms and mobile telephones, in order to “to reach a wider and younger audience in a timely and effective manner” (United Nations, 2015a, p.11, paragraph 48). In 2015 it was reported that 76% (48/63) of ICs had Facebook accounts and 63% (40/63) hosted Twitter accounts, but less than half of these (17) were in languages other than English. 29 (46%) had YouTube accounts in twelve languages (including English). Over the years ICs, as other bodies of the UN have had to confront and manage resource constraints and have been forced to explore ‘cost-neutral’ alternatives in order to sustain multilingual provision. Innovative ventures have ensued such as the IC in Rio de Janeiro working collaboratively with the UN in Brazil to support the provision of Facebook and Twitter pages in Portuguese; the IC in Islamabad in 2014 signing an Memorandum of Understanding with a Pakistani³ network (PTV World) in order to translate news and campaigns into Urdu and 23 regional languages (United Nations, 2015a, p.11 and 12 paragraph 49 and 52); as well as other ad hoc partnerships with Universities and local UN teams or the UN Communications Group, e.g. UNRIC in Brussels partnered with Universities to provide ‘virtual interns’ (United Nations, 2015b, p. 19, paragraph 95) for the translation of UN documents. Nonetheless many initiatives have been ad hoc and piecemeal and many stakeholders internationally can still not access vital information via a language or media that is easily accessible.

As noted, ICs provide inconsistent and differing support in local languages and this variation appears to be subject to a number of variables, including: the linguistic expertise of personnel; local demand and resources; the considered importance of targeted campaigns or work streams in national settings (e.g. AIDS & Malaria campaigns in Africa, the roll out of the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs); and whether a nation supports (at least) one of the UN’s official languages, in which case the latter may be favoured over other national languages, despite a nation’s desire for information to be disseminated in their official or local language(s). While greater attempts have been made in recent years to translate the SDGs into local languages to reach as many people as possible, an independent report commissioned by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in 2013 noted a “lack of local language use” (p.15) in comparison to the dominance of English and UN documents relating to sustainability remaining untranslated, even into the UN’s official languages.

The ICs are under the auspices of the Department of Global Communications which provides documents and information in the organisation’s six languages – although English is often dominant or acts as the source document from which translations are made. UN radio and News Centre coverage is in all six languages, with the addition of programmes in Kiswahili, Portuguese, Urdu, Hindi and Bengla. Social media platforms have been developed in the official languages and several others. The Department of Global Communication Non-Governmental Organisation Resource Centre has extended its linguistic capability to include German, Italian, Portuguese and Ukrainian.

³ A study conducted by the UN Pakistan “Communication Group” found 61% of Pakistanis were indifferent about the UN. This prompted the development of the ‘One UN Programme’ in a bid to engage multiple sectors and agents e.g. media; government institutions (both federal and provisional; civil society; and the general public.

Moreover, the Office of Legal Affairs has published multilingual documents (such as the treaty series), in 150 languages, and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law hosts a multilingual case law database and library.

Disparity in Provision

Acknowledging the disparity in provision afforded even to the official languages of the UN, especially the continued dominance of English, concerted efforts have been made to review current practice and mainstream multilingualism internally and in the external/outreach and field work of the organisation. A number of activities and increasingly detailed multilingualism resolutions have ensued. The impetus for this in recent years can, in part, be traced to an organisation-wide inspection of language use in 2010, as well as, the appointment of a 'Co-ordinator of Multilingualism', a senior official – the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management - responsible for overseeing and promoting multilingualism in the Organisation.

The 2010 review targeted 25 UN organisations and, based on self-reported practices, investigated five domains of language use – conference provision, institutional partnerships, outreach, recruitment and training. The report published in 2011 (JIU/REP/2011/4) highlighted a number of areas in need of improvement and made 15 recommendations, directed at Executive Heads and legislative bodies of the organisation, which included (in short):

- “ - the appointment of a 'Co-ordinator for Multilingualism';
- the development of a unified definition of 'official' and 'working' languages;
- staff (dependant on duties) to be fluent in one working language and have 'good knowledge' of a second;
- frequent assessment of user need in the official languages to ensure equitable language use and develop appropriate strategies to support multilingualism;
- development of a working group to support the sharing of resources in order to limit costs and enhance the efficiency and productivity of conference and language services;
- budgetary planning to support language services for any new institutional bodies;
- awareness and compliance with agreements between the UN and the International Associations of Conference Interpreters and Translators;
- ensuring resources for language examination training and succession planning;
- the development of multilingual websites supporting all official and working languages;
- the promotion and support of 'language-related events' to enhance international awareness of the challenges of multilingualism and to encourage partnerships with internal and external parties (e.g. Member States, academia);
- field work (e.g. humanitarian, peace-keeping) to be undertaken and made available in all official and working languages and the beneficiary's local language(s); and
- legislative bodies to support all necessary arrangements to ensure the deliverance of 'core' work in all of the working and official languages of the organisation.” (McEntee-Atalianis 2015: 301)

The report identified widespread use of the official languages but also critically acknowledged an over-use and reliance on English due to pragmatic and economic constraints. The organisation was considered to be taking a 'piecemeal and fragmented approach' (p.iv) to multilingualism. It was especially critical of Executive Heads and the Co-ordinator of Multilingualism who were deemed as ineffectual in ensuring parity amongst the organisation's languages. They, along with Member States, were called on to address the hegemony of English and the disparity between the other languages which mitigated again linguistic and participatory equity.

The initial response to the report by the Secretary-General of the time, Ban Ki-moon (United Nations 2012, A/67/78/Add.1) on behalf of the UN system organisations, acknowledged the findings and accepted the recommendations. His response was tempered with a warning however – that in order to improve the situation it must be acknowledged that the Organisation was functioning within tight budgetary resources and therefore any recommendations for change must be tested using cost-benefit analyses along with ‘cost-neutral’ initiatives to improve the multilingual situation.

A resolution including many of the recommendations forwarded by the inspectors and incorporated in the JIU report, including other commitments was adopted by the GA in July 2011.

Despite their admirable aims, many of these recommendations have yet to come to fruition. Nonetheless, in recent years, especially following the support of the current Secretary-General, António Guterres, the Co-ordinator of Multilingualism, and other Secretariat members in charge of multilingualism, it has become a strategic priority and is increasingly championed as a ‘core value’ of the organisation. This is no less evident in Guterres recent report to the GA (United Nations 2019, A/73/761 p.2) in which he asserts:

Multilingualism promotes unity in diversity, international understanding, tolerance and dialogue; contributes to the ownership and sustainability of the actions taken by the United Nations; and is a means of improving the efficiency, performance and transparency of the organisation.

The report goes on to document the most elaborate and intensified work programme to date, documenting actions needed to mainstream multilingualism and ensure parity amongst the organisation’s languages. Actions have included, e.g. mainstreaming multilingualism in the work programmes of departments; establishing language requirements for job vacancies; surveying (staff) linguistic expertise; setting minimum standards to support multilingual websites; encouraging and offering language learning opportunities within and outside of Headquarters; nurturing and supporting ‘language days’; engaging with academia⁴. However, despite these efforts the organisation still has to function under increasing work pressures and mandates with limited resources and there has been a continued push to find “creative solutions” (United Nations 2015a) to combat linguistic inequity and the sustained dominance of English, both on and off-line.

Persistent Challenges

As noted above, with only a few changes over the years, the drivers for the establishment of the language policy at the UN has persisted over time, i.e. support within the organisation has been given to the languages of the politically dominant players post-second world war, in addition to Arabic and Spanish. However persistent challenges remain, as similarly found in other supra-national/international organisations. These include battling efficiency of communication with equity of provision, in addition to stark budgetary constraints. It is clear that the *de jure* policy, in practice falls somewhat short of the *de facto* reality. As such, often just a few languages dominate, with English, in particular, being the most dominant. Member States and stake-holders often point to such issues as time delays in accessing documents, as English is often the source language from which other documents are translated; or note how English dominates UN news channels or internet sites. Despite the latter complaints, few nations wish to increase the budget for language support or necessarily prioritise language issues (see McEntee-Atalianis & Vessey 2020). Many of the pressures and evolving practices lie outside of the control of those (particularly the Secretariat) implementing

⁴ e.g. see details of a workshop carried out at Headquarters by the author and Francis Hult (University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) in May 2019 – <https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/multilingualism-network-focal-points>.

the policy. They are often left attempting to combat the symptoms of linguistic inequity rather than the cause.

Possible Solutions

At present the language policy of the UN (as many international organisations) favours linguistic inclusivity. The notion of restricting the number of official and working languages would contravene the principles of equality of rights and democratic participation and cultural diversity. However, reducing linguistic provision may be perceived to act in the interests of pragmatic and practical need e.g. accelerating work flows (especially for the language support services) and reducing costs of personnel and material. The latter needs to be carefully analysed however for ‘...the same logical error always reappears [when arguing for changes to practice in order to reduce cost or increase efficiency]: the fact that a service is costly does not mean that it is *ipso facto* too expensive...how expensive a service is depends on the subjective value that the observer or the society attributes to it’ Gazzola (2006: 400). With the latter in mind, should reform to the current language regime be undertaken two distinct alternatives, with possible degrees of nuance, (see Table 2 below) could be considered (see McEntee-Atalianis, 2015 & forthcoming). These alternatives have been debated in the academic literature – they include: favouring regimes⁵ in which lingua franca dominate (e.g. see debates for and against this perspective in Cogo and Jenkins 2010; Mac Giolla Chríost and Bonotti 2018; Quell 1997; Seidlhofer, 2003; van Els 2005; Van Parijs 2013; Wright 2009) or regimes in which flexibility of monolingual and multilingual provision is afforded, depending upon the communicative context and event. The latter would allow for both monolingual and multilingual operations and provision depending on the needs of the interactional event; the weighting of values/principles/priorities e.g. relative degree of disenfranchisement; efficiency and cost (e.g. see Fidrmuc & Ginsburgh 2007; Fidrmuc *et al* 2008; Gazzola 2006; 2016; Gazzola & Grin 2013; Ginsburgh & Weber 2011; Ginsburgh *et al* 2017; Grin 2008; McEntee-Atalianis 2015 and Pool 1996).

Prior to exploring the nature of these possible regimes, let us consider the benefits and costs to supporting either of these perspectives.

In the former instance the adoption of a ‘reductionist perspective’ (McEntee-Atalianis, forthcoming), i.e. reducing language use and provision to lingua franca, would arguably formalise the current dominance of lingua franca in international organisations. Arguments in favour of this practice include:

- reducing the cost of language services (interpreters/translators) which would, as a consequence, obviate the need to address ongoing complaints about language services (e.g. efficiency, quality and quantity of material interpreted/translated);
- reducing rates of disenfranchisement particularly for those members whose languages are not provided for by the current language policy, as all would be expected to use one or two official/working language(s) and therefore all (but L1 users) would equally share the burden of learning and using the same L2/Lx;
- since, in the case of English, the majority of users would not be L1 speakers – English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) – would become dominant, arguably wresting ownership of the language from L1 users;
- and finally, with current levels of English language users internationally, some argue that provision in English would support greater public access and engagement with the activities and mission of organisations.

Opposing views argue strongly for fairness and equity of language provision for Member States and citizens to be able to access and operate in their own languages (or those beyond any proposed

⁵ Whereby ‘regime’ is defined as procedural regulations for language provision and use in line with Pool (1996) and/or as ‘language practices as well as conceptions of language and language use ... and acted upon by language users.’ (Cardinal and Sonntag 2015:6).

restricted lingua franca), if these are provided for by the institution. L1 users, they argue benefit disproportionately from a system in which their language is supported both directly and indirectly since they do not have to learn another language or allocate resources for interpretation or translation, language teaching/learning and such services as proof-readers or editors. Moreover, those whose languages are provided for by language services arguably benefit rhetorically and practically in working/correspondence and plenary meetings – i.e. in fora in which democratic debate and decision-making is undertaken since they have access to written material and can debate in their L1. In contrast, some have identified difficulties in negotiations in which lingua franca are used, arguing that politicians and diplomats frequently misunderstand one another when using an L2/Lx (see Barbier 2018). Beyond the practical exigencies of the work place, some also argue that the use of lingua franca, such as English, affords disproportionate cultural and symbolic status to their users while having the potential to undermine the status of those who are not L1 users. The latter also contributing to the diffusion (in the case of English) of Anglophone ideology and culture. Moreover, arguments in support of ELF as a neutral, democratic variety of English have been challenged (e.g. see Gazzola & Grin 2013; Phillipson 2003, 2008, 2012).

Proposals for Reform

The complexity of the issue is only partially detailed here, nonetheless many acknowledge that current language policies in supra/international organisations are far from fit for purpose. Appreciating that no one scenario would be ideal we look nonetheless to the possibility of a *reformative* approach (McEntee-Atalianis, forthcoming) in which the persistent challenges to the implementation of current multilingual regimes would be assessed via a re-evaluation and review of the regulatory principles and provisions articulated in the organisation's language policy and multilingual resolutions.

A first step would involve a systematic policy analysis which would undertake a comparison of the effectiveness and fairness of different language scenarios, taking into account different goals of the linguistic exchange, demolinguistic statistics and communicative need/capacity. Policy analyses, such as those undertaken by language economists (e.g. see Grin 2001; Grin & Vaillancourt, 1997, Grin, Sfreddo, and Vaillancourt 2010) and language policy theorists are able to account for allocative and distributive effects. The former (allocative) permits an analysis of comparative cost and efficiency, while the latter, (distributive), takes into account the relative impact of different linguistic scenarios on individuals/groups i.e. who are the winners/losers of particular regimes and how might one rebalance positive/negative effects. Such analyses are crucial for organisations with constrained resources since they address considerations of “resource allocation” – efficient use of limited resources; and “resource distribution” – net gains and losses (see Grin 2008:75), also taking into account the draw of lingua franca (McEntee-Atalianis, forthcoming).

Different scenarios can be used to test the degree of disenfranchisement in different contexts and work domains. As noted above, while no one scenario may be perfect, a dynamic ecology in which different language scenarios operate for different groups/activities/meetings should be tested. For example, different configurations of official/working languages can be modelled to simulate changes in priorities/need, e.g. amount of financial support; equity of language provision (all or just some of the official languages); linguistic expertise and constitution of personnel in any grouping; group size; expediency of debate; field/outreach demands; access to language specialists (interpreter/translators); preference for lingua franca. Different scenarios can be used to model changing priorities, goals, restrictions and/or fluidity of competence and language choice amongst a group of language users in different settings (e.g. plenary meetings; administrative work of the organisation; working groups; field and outreach work). Such scenarios may inform planning in addition to such considerations as the development of compensatory schemes for those whose languages are not supported by the language regime e.g. language taxes (see Ammon 2006), in

which those whose L1 is catered for, may financially or practically (e.g. via language learning) support those whose language needs are not catered for.

An example of such modelling for a specialised agency of the UN (accounting for six official and three working languages - English, French and Spanish) is provided in Table 2 below (see McEntee-Atalianis 2015: 317).

Table 2: Modelling language regimes

Regime	Number of Official & Working Languages	Type	Direction of translation & interpretation	Language learning needs
Monarchic	1	English	0	English by non-Anglophones
Oligarchic	3	English, French, Spanish	6	English, French
Panarchic	6	All official & working languages	$n(n-1)=6 \times 5 = 30$	None
Hegemonic	6	All official & working languages	$2(n-1)=2 \times (6-1) = 10$	None
Triple symmetrical relay	6	All official & working languages	$r(2n-r-1)=3(2 \times 6-3-1)=24$	None

The configurations of language scenarios/regimes vary, taking into account the number and type of official and working languages supported within an organisation, the number and direction of translation and interpretation, and the language learning needs of personnel. Possible regimes which may function for different events are presented in Table 2 (see McEntee-Atalianis 2015 for more details).⁶

The first regime listed in the table - 'Monarchic' - simulates support for the use of English-only. This contrasts with an Oligarchic scenario in which three languages (the current working languages) would be utilised. The current UN regime which supports language use in the GA, Council and Committee meetings is represented by the Panarchic system, whereby all official/working languages are provided with interpretation and translation facilities. Limitations imposed on interpretation and translation are accounted for by the 'Hegemonic' and 'Triple symmetrical relay' regimes. In these regimes all organisational languages are supported however translation and interpretation is facilitated through a pivot language, such as English (Hegemonic) or via three working languages (Triple symmetrical relay). In the latter three cases further reductions in provision could occur if demand for translation/interpretation were not needed.

In modelling such scenarios, the language skills (active and passive) and the language learning requirements of personnel (amongst other needs) should be taken into account. Indeed, Gazzola *et al* (2019) have developed a set of mathematical indicators, (where there is available data to determine the language skills of actors, e.g. administrators, diplomats), which can serve as a valuable tool in the assessment of different communication scenarios in multilingual organisations. Such

⁶ The modelling is adapted from Grin's (2008:78) consideration of the EU, which was based on previous work by Pool (1991) and Gazzalo (2005).

indices have the potential to inform language policy reviews: testing the feasibility of implementing different monolingual/multilingual scenarios and taking into account users' passive as well as active language skills.

Such scenarios and recommendations for reform require extensive further research and willingness on the part of the organisational membership themselves to adapt to new working models. To date, there is limited data available on the language skills of personnel working for and within inter/supranational organisations or the linguistic needs and demands of specific work contexts or meetings. Indeed, any proposals for change to language planning and practice within supranational/international organisations will only succeed through a detailed and nuanced analysis of current and evolving language dynamics as well as attitude studies. Studies must incorporate considerations of user preferences in addition to economic and operational constraints. This will enable a review of official and working languages and the feasibility of multiple language regimes operating within and across different agencies of the UN.

Conclusion

This paper has drawn on existing accounts of language policy and planning in inter/supranational organisations and recommendations for reform; drawing in particular on published research on the United Nations. The challenges in supporting and implementing a multilingual language policy reflects issues documented elsewhere in relation to other inter/supranational organisations – particularly the challenges of ensuring language equity/justice, efficiency in communication and limiting cost.

Since inter/supranational organisations have generally expanded their membership in recent decades and have increasingly played an outward facing role, (such that they are no longer just responsible for engaging Member States but also civil society, NGOs, international businesses etc.) the time is now ripe to review the policies in place. If, as suggested above, a reformative approach was adopted, current methodological and analytical tools are available to support a rigorous review and the development of new plans. Methods developed and long-established in ethnography, sociolinguistics and social-psychology could be used to assess the potential of different language scenarios/regimes, drawing on data about current language use/competence and speaker attitudes. Such methods and analyses could be combined with those developed in language economics to address the costs (both financial and non-financial) and benefits of alternative/fluid scenarios. It is contended that in developing fluid language scenarios (e.g. supporting lingua franca and multilingual regimes) a balance can be struck between the challenges of ensuring equity, efficiency and limiting costs. Such analyses will serve to inform policy makers and improve current working practices.

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