POLITICAL BOUNDARIES IN LANGUAGE POLICIES:
A DISCUSSION ON INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

Fronteiras políticas nas políticas linguísticas: uma discussão sobre o entorno institucional | Fronteras políticas en las políticas lingüísticas: una discusión sobre el entorno institucional

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Abstract: This essay approaches the issue of political boundaries in language policies, particularly concerning multilingualism, translation, and English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) in institutional settings. The study aims to analyze a broader multilingual and multiliteracy perspective stemming from Aronin and Politis' (2015), Moita Lopes' (2008), and Climent-Ferrando's conceptualizations on a philosophy of multilingualism, on border epistemology, and multilingual European Union policies, respectively. We base the analysis on recent literature on these themes, focusing on linguistic contexts in institutional settings. The study shows how multilingualism and translation policies undeniably entail political, cultural, and economic motivations. The use of EFL tends to be increasingly hybrid, also influenced by other languages, beyond specific contexts of the national state. Furthermore, multilingualism crucially promotes cooperation and tolerance among the world's diverse populations.

Keywords: Institutional Settings. Multilingualism. English as a *Lingua Franca*.

Resumo: Este trabalho aborda a questão das fronteiras políticas nas políticas linguísticas, nomeadamente em relação ao multilinguismo, à tradução e ao inglês como língua franca (ELF) em ambientes institucionais. O estudo se propõe a analisar uma perspectiva plurilíngue e de multiletramentos mais ampla, partindo das conceituações propostas por Aronin e Politis (2015), Moita Lopes (2008) e Climent-Ferrando (2016), sobre uma filosofia do multilinguismo, sobre a epistemologia das fronteiras e sobre as políticas multilíngues da União Europeia, respectivamente. A análise é baseada em literatura recente sobre esses temas, centrando-se em contextos linguísticos em ambientes institucionais. Como resultado, o estudo demonstrou como políticas de multilinguismo e de tradução inegavelmente implicam motivações políticas, culturais e econômicas. O uso do EFL tende a ser cada vez mais híbrido, também influenciado por outras línguas, para além dos contextos específicos do Estado nacional. Além disso, o multilinguismo torna-se um fator crucial para promover a cooperação e a tolerância entre as diversas populações do mundo.

Palavras-chave: Entorno institucional. Multilinguismo. Inglês como Língua Franca.

Resumen: Este trabajo aborda la cuestión de las fronteras políticas en las políticas lingüísticas, especialmente en relación con el multilingüismo, la traducción y el inglés como lengua franca (ELF) en entornos institucionales. El estudio tiene como objetivo analizar una perspectiva plurilingüe y de multialfabetización más amplia, partiendo de las conceptualizaciones propuestas por Aronin y Politis

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(2015), Moita Lopes (2008) y Climent-Ferrando (2016), sobre una filosofía del multilingüismo, sobre la epistemología de las fronteras y sobre las políticas multilingües de la Unión Europea, respectivamente. El análisis se basa en literatura reciente sobre estos temas, centrándose en contextos lingüísticos en entornos institucionales. Como resultado, el estudio ha demostrado cómo las políticas de multilingüismo y de traducción implican innegablemente motivaciones políticas, culturales y económicas. El uso del ELF tiende a ser cada vez más híbrido, también influenciado por otras lenguas, más allá de los contextos específicos del Estado nacional. Además, el multilingüismo se convierte en un factor crucial para promover la cooperación y la tolerancia entre las diversas poblaciones del mundo.

Palabras clave: Entorno institucional. Multilingüismo. Inglés como Lengua Franca.

Languages mutually influence one another, and their interaction creates, as a result, multilingual communication systems (Varcasia, 2011, p. 8)

1 INTRODUCTION

This essay approaches the issue of political boundaries in language policies, particularly concerning multilingualism, translation, and English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) in institutional settings. For that, the analysis stemmed from Aronin and Politis' (2015), Moita Lopes' (2008), and Climent-Ferrando's conceptualizations on a philosophy of multilingualism, on border epistemology, and multilingual European Union policies, respectively. The study aims to analyze a broader multilingual and multiliteracy perspective, which also comprises EFL as part of a *continuum* of language policies in the context of ever-evolving methods of dealing with diversity issues. We based the analysis on recent literature on these themes, focusing on linguistic contexts in institutional settings, and relates to 10+ years of professional experience of the author as a translator in the aviation field where EFL equals Aeronautical English and is customized for specialized purposes (Peixoto; Pimentel, 2020).

As implied from the epigraph above, the point in this essay is that multilingualism comprises a varied range of communication systems which adapt to specific needs of a given interaction. Accordingly, language policies are typically crafted with a direct focus on promoting multilingualism or are shaped by various national or supranational policies.

Having said that, we organized the discussions in this essay with the following sections: boundary conceptualizations in a globalized world (section 1); translation theories in the context of multilingualism in institutional settings (section 2); methodology (section 3); the multilingualism-translation-*lingua-franca continuum* (section 4); the feasibility of language policies in institutional settings (section 5); and some final remarks on the state-of-the-art of the multilingualism-translation-*lingua-franca continuum*, as addressed in this essay (section 6).

2 BOUNDARY CONCEPTUALIZATIONS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

First, it is worth pointing out that multilingualism should be considered a system of rationalizing interactions in the world. Aronin and Politis (2015) employ the concept of

"edge" metaphorically, referring to it in three distinct ways: as (i) border or "boundary"; (ii) as indicating a harsh and sharp quality, a negative outcome, or as the threshold of danger; and (iii) as force, effectiveness, vigor, or energy. Ultimately, it refers to some symbolic thinking to understand how multilingualism creates mindsets and affects society in many ways.

Therefore, the concept of edge may indicate both a transitional zone, with specific features from two given adjacent territories, and a relatively stable zone, bringing light to possibilities of static and dynamic interpretations of a 'border.' Aronin and Politis (2015, p. 34) explain that "borders, in fact, have at least two functions. They divide and isolate, and they also connect." Based on that assumption, "multilingualism studies describe recognizing and experiencing boundaries, fixing them, crossing them, and breaking them" (Aronin; Politis, 2015, p. 36), comprising issues of mental lexicon, cross-linguistic interaction, interlanguage, language distance, and language contact.

In other words, we can consider multilingualism as "a space-time 'where things happen'" (Aronin; Politis, 2015, p. 46, authors' emphasis), taking into consideration that 'space-time' can be considered a seamless reference point, i.e., the place where something starts may also be the one where something ends. Under this view, several factors may encompass the constitution of an edge – or a multilingual environment.

We can compare the space-time concept with the much-debated third space of migrant identities (Bhabha, 1994), where efforts are not enough for a complete integration into a hegemonic community, even when the migrant speaks the hegemonic language and tries to follow the same social standards of ratified interactants. On the communication between two people from different cultures, Bhabha (1994, p. 53) says that:

> The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious.

Thus, when we consider border conceptualizations in a globalized world, or a border epistemology, as Moita Lopes (2008) states, it indicates that multilingualism, translation, and English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) are part of a *continuum*, as three forms of conveying representation and culture in uttered messages.

3 TRANSLATION THEORIES IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTILINGUALISM IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

To start the discussion of this item, it is crucial to bring some possible definitions for 'institution,' especially when we are talking about translation theories. The term 'institution' can encompass various contexts, such as the legal framework (Merkle, 2013), public service domain (Taibi, 2011), or encompass all forms of communication within institutions, including government and private entities (Koskinen, 2011; Kang, 2020).

When referring to the legal context, institutional translation is strictly related to official documents: "The term is rarely found in the Translation Studies literature, other than to distinguish certified and notarized translations of official documents (birth or death certificate, driver's license, school transcripts, etc.) from those that are not" (Merkle, 2013, p. 119).

However, from another perspective, institutional translation may also refer to non-professional translations and interpretations (Taibi, 2011), as in the case of public service translation (or community translation). Taibi (2011) defines it as a type of translation aimed at a specific audience in situations of high vulnerability or low literacy. He supports this perspective with a definition coined by Niska (2002, p. 1), which refers to "written translation of informative texts, addressed by authorities or institutions to people who do not understand texts in the language of the text producer." That sort of translation would have the ultimate purpose of empowering this population.

In the third sense, which appears more coherent in broader contexts, institutional translation is approached from a sociological stance (Koskinen, 2011). So, it can be understood as any discourse reflecting intrinsic social values to human interaction in society. In that sense, institutional translation may refer to different national or supranational levels of governance.

We can extend such a conceptualization as follows:

> The division between institutional and non-institutional kinds of translation is not clear-cut; translations can rather be placed on a continuum or a cline of increasing institutionality. While all translations are affected by some kinds of institutional constraints, 'institutional translation' refers to those occupying the extreme end of the continuum.
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> Prime examples of institutional translation include: official documents of government agencies and local authorities of bilingual or multilingual countries; translating in the European Union, the United Nations and other international or supranational organizations, and international courts of law (Koskinen, 2011, p. 57).

In that sense, 'institutional' is a classification that refers to the communicative function of a given discourse, along with a skopos theory, and that may also be designed in an idiosyncratic way, not equivalent to a natural language, especially in supranational contexts. In line with this, Kang (2020), in her overview of the state-of-the-art institutional translation, explains that there has been an evolution in research carried out in the field. So, we may refer to the institutional translation as "the act or product of linguistic mediation carried out by individual or collective actors on behalf of or for the benefit of institutions" (Kang, 2020, p. 256), whether these institutions are government or private. Within this context, it is paramount that the discourse produced is based on values of democracy, justice, multilingualism, transparency, and access to information and knowledge (Kang, 2020); and, in the case of private companies, it also has the purpose of protecting commercial interests and maximizing economic profit.

Considering this terminological background and focusing on the third perspective (Koskinen, 2011; Kang, 2020), it is easier to understand how ideology may play a significant role in defining multilingual and translation policies.

From Mossop (1988), who analyzed translators' motivation in institutional settings, or Lefevere (1992), who studied how people use literature to shape institutional values, we can have examples of how people entangle language policies with political, economic, and cultural demands. There is no way out of it.

As a result, translation theories in the context of multilingual institutional settings are strongly tied to identity issues and, from that, it is paramount to think about what identity means and how a person can express his/her identity.

If we draw an analogy with the case of indigenous languages, we can observe that, even if a particular country recognizes a minority language officially, people may not always use that language in official contexts. It is possible to mention two examples to support this argument: the use of sign language in Brazil and the use of Welsh in Wales.

In Brazil, much political debate has taken place to enable the interpreting of sign language in institutional settings, and some laws were recently published to guarantee this right of sign language speakers (Gorovitz, 2021). However, it was mostly a matter of inclusion and accessibility, and not related to a purpose of stating one's identity. Sign language speakers identify themselves as Brazilians, and can express their positions in sign language. So they could have a fuller understanding of critical information for their role as citizens and their relationship with their government.

In the case of the Welsh language spoken in Wales, the government values the use of this language and requires it in official contexts. Nonetheless, for matters of pragmatism, people may use English, the first official language, instead of Welsh, because there are fewer and fewer Welsh speakers in the country. In 2001, 21% could speak Welsh, but only 19% had this ability in 2011 (Meylaerts; Nunez, 2018, p. 20). Then, as further explained by Meylaerts and Nunez (2018), "the Welsh government has been active in promoting the Welsh language so as to create equality between the treatment of the English and Welsh languages," although "English-Welsh translation is not so much about granting greater access as it is about creating language equality and thus recognizing the use of Welsh as a valid choice" (Meylaerts; Nunez, 2018, p. 20-26). So, regarding the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service, partly funded by the Welsh government,

> in order to maximize resources and possibly avoid the political backlash of spending too much money on translation for foreigners, no local council engages in translation automatically. When it comes to languages in Wales, the English-Welsh dichotomy monopolizes most of the conversations" (Meylaerts; Nunez, 2018, p. 23).

Having said that, we will explain how the discussion unfolds in the next section.

4 METHODOLOGY

To analyze a broader multilingual and multiliteracy perspective, as a view to propose an approach comprising EFL as part of a *continuum* of language policies in a context of ever-evolving methods of dealing with diversity issues, we base the

methodology of this essay on bibliographical research, and on the author's personal experience. The literature focuses on linguistic contexts in institutional settings. The professional experience relates to practices in a specialized environment (aviation), where EFL equals Aeronautical English and is customized for specialized purposes (Peixoto; Pimentel, 2020).

Based on this methodology design, the discussion in this essay focused on characterizing the proposed Multilingualism-Translation-*Lingua-Franca continuum* and debating issues regarding the feasibility of language policies in institutional settings in practical terms.

5 THE MULTILINGUALISM-TRANSLATION-*LINGUA*-FRANCA CONTINUUM

A broader context of multilingualism helps us understand how every policy ever designed in the world has been founded on political or economic reasons. Multilingualism policies are not different from any other more general policy. In that sense, the issue of boundary conceptualizations enlightens the concept of a Multilingualism-Translation-*Lingua-Franca continuum*.

At this point, it is worth clarifying that the term 'language policy' is not easy to define, as its scope might be different. The most common language policies are aimed in educational settings, and they may derive from principles of law, economics, or legal, economic, or political philosophy in institutional settings. Then, translation policies are enforced based on those necessities, to be implemented as mere political rhetoric or as actual policies for the benefit of society (Climent-Ferrando, 2016).

In the case of the European Union, referenced as a benchmark, it was the largest institution to implement a diverse and successful language policy based on some core European values. However, even for this institution, language policies started to be adapted after the three main enlargements, as the European Union has been challenged to implement multilingualism to a full extent (Cosmai, 2014; Climent-Ferrando, 2016). In this context, globalization entails tension, as more practical necessities might take the central stage.

Concerning minority groups, the European context sheds some light on that when minority languages are seen as not necessarily occupying the same space as their hegemonic counterparts. (Auer; Wei, 2007; Núñez, 2016; Meylaerts, 2013). In that sense, multilingualism and translation share concepts of borders (not only political but also cultural and so on) as the most expressive representation of how a globalized world motivates language policies at the end.

In the European Union, multilingualism has a much broader semantic meaning, as Krzyzanowski and Wodak (2011) propose in a graphical representation, and Climent-Ferrando (2016) replicates. Taking into consideration these ramifications of multilingualism, ELF (in a green box) was included, as proposed in this essay, as an extension to the direct meaning (in red contour) of intercultural dialogue and social cohesion, as shown in Figure 1 below:
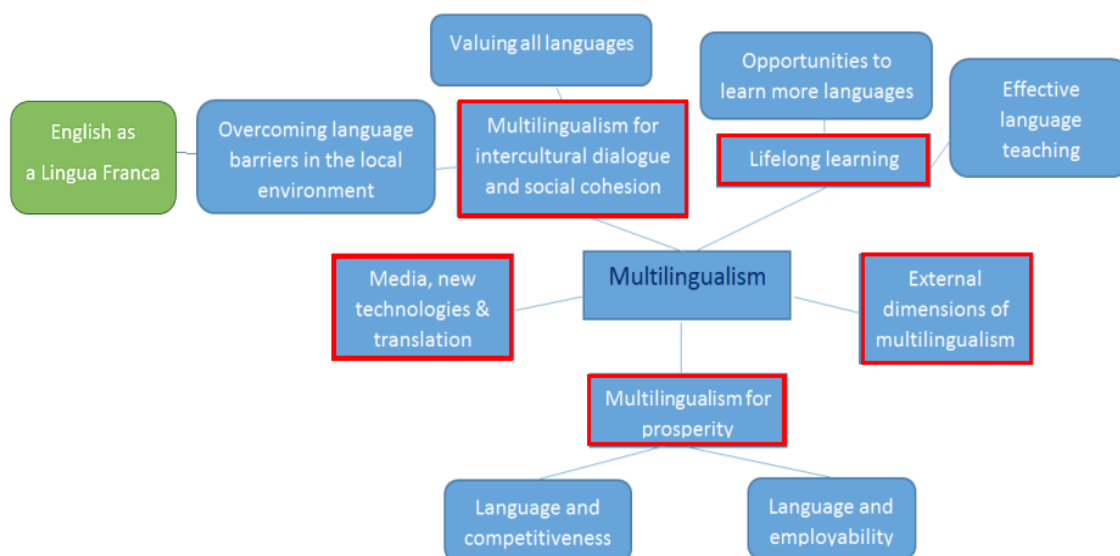
Figure 1 – Semantic Field of Multilingualism in the EU's Language Policy of 2008
Source: Adapted from Krzyzanowski and Wodak (2011 *apud* Climent-Ferrando, 2016, p. 9).

Climent-Ferrando (2016) revised this primary scenario in 2008. He proposed a set of approaches to languages based on multilingualism and linguistic diversity. Along with our discussion, we also add ELF (in a green box) as a third approach to linguistic work carried out in the realm of the European Union.
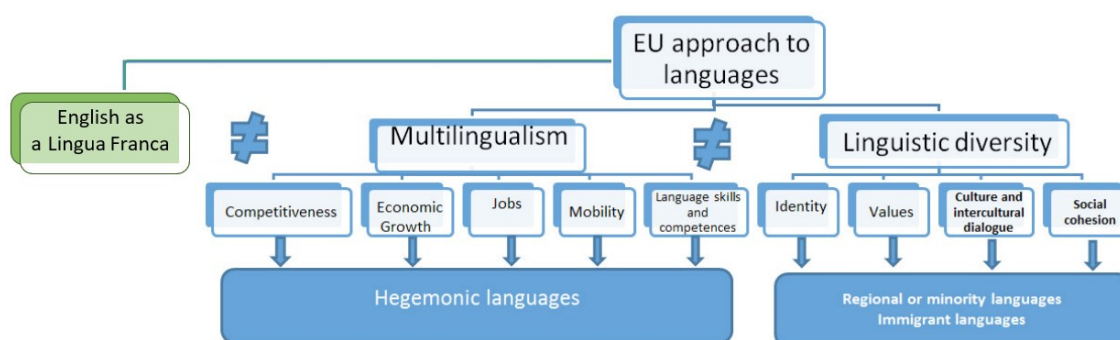

Figure 2 – The Current Semantic Field of the EU Approach to Languages
Source: Adapted from Climent-Ferrando (2016, p.11).

As a direct conclusion from the panorama shown in Figure 2, it is possible to understand how multilingualism can be a resource that also entails inequality. People usually link the sense of cognitive mobility (Climent-Ferrando, 2016, apud Kraus; Kazlauskaite-Gürbüz, 2014) to high skills of competitiveness in a job market, a reality that does not apply to most people in the labor force.

Along with this, English as a *Lingua Franca* has been an approach that has been more broadly developed after WW2. Before that, other *linguae francae* were in use, such as Latin and French, i.e., it is not a new concept. *Linguae francae* are generally created to ease communication, trying to disseminate a sort of formatted language that could be

used as a more practical one, sometimes making use of jargon as well. Ideally created as an alternative for a specific group of users who share the same context, it can become more spread in particular cases, when a *lingua franca* becomes a reference in other communities and may also incorporate some other adaptation throughout the time.

When addressing the concept of *lingua franca* from the perspective of multilingualism as well, an insight is taken on how English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) has also been influenced by the vast plurality of languages in the world, and some scholars even use the term "World Englishes" to emphasize those hybrid forms of non-native English. Kachru (1992) was one of the first scholars to propose a deeper debate on this classification, and many discussions have developed nowadays, even leading to the launching of a specialized Journal fully dedicated to *World Englishes* (Wiley Online Library, 2019), founded by Kachru and Smith.

It is relevant to add that ELF may also be tailored to fit specialized contexts, as in the case of Aviation, where Aeronautical English is designed with some adapted words to avoid misunderstandings.

As Peixoto and Pimentel (2020, p. 4) explain, in Aeronautical English:

> some phonological and even syntactic rules differ from general English, in order to avoid errors and misunderstandings, and also promote a more efficient radiocommunication. For example, phonemes and lexical stress of numbers are tailored for that purpose in the aeronautical context, as in the case of numbers 'three' (pronounced /tree/), 'four' (pronounced /fower/) and 'nine' (pronounced /niner/). Regarding syntax, some determiners and prepositions are omitted, as in the case of 'to', as a way to avoid confusion with 'two' or 'too.'

Likewise, English used in legislation in the European Commission and the European Parliament, produced by non-native speakers and considered a hybrid form, is a sort of *Euro English* or *EU Speak*, not used in other common contexts (Cosmai, 2014). It is generally regarded as mistranslations of English that originate a specialized jargon (Cosmai, 2014).[1]

Some authors prefer to refer to this whole scenario (Multilingualism, Translation, and ELF) as linguistic and cultural mediation (Ivanov, 2021), where procedures are considered more complex, comprising situated decisions to enable better communication. In other words, it is not just a matter of plain "transfer" from one language to another but adaptation and suitability to contexts of identity and legitimacy, especially in institutional settings, as we will address in the next section.

6 FEASIBILITY OF LANGUAGE POLICIES IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

After raising some understandings of boundary conceptualizations regarding multilingualism and translation theories applied to institutional settings, the feasibility of

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[1] It is crucial to highlight that non-hegemonic languages tend to incorporate more hegemonic elements to better align with a mainstream perspective. In regulatory contexts, this effort may be (tacitly or mandatorily) more expected to enable all parties to fit a more controlled perspective.

language policies will be debated from a perspective addressing the Multilingualism-Translation-*Lingua-Franca continuum*.

As debated by Cosmai (2014), multilingualism in Europe is a complex issue because of the purpose of protecting the multiculturality of several countries on the continent. Working with so many languages in the European Parliament has shown evidence that it is not feasible to implement on a large scale. For all interactions, this experience certainly contributed to improving the theoretical background on multilingualism and translation policies, with the development of consistent know-how on "transferring" linguistic and cultural peculiarities. In addition, the implementation of linguistic mediation, when applying different ways to deal with multilingualism in the institutional architecture, also contributed to building a sound perspective on this issue.

In that process of linguistic mediation, it was mostly relevant to consider languages to be used as vehicular, working, procedural, and official (Best, 2014), according to the actual necessity of the interaction. Some authors might not regard that "solution" as coherent, as in the case of Climent-Ferrando (2016, p. 11), who refers to that as a process of linguistic neoliberalism that "has evidenced the lack of a principled, real commitment and normative coherence of the EU towards its languages." Nonetheless, it seems that this narrowing of "translation scope," let's say, is the very fact, in the end, that guarantees the intended cohesion in the European community. In that sense, Best (2014) seems coherent when he says that "the EU's policy of multilingualism and the 'architecture' and 'machinery' developed by this supranational entity [is meant] to optimize multilingual translation practice and interlingual mediation" (Best, 2014, p.25). On that, House (2013, p. 288) mentions five possible types of translation: for "'basic understanding', 'for information', 'for publication', 'for EU image', and 'legislation.'"

Differently from a dichotomic perspective of multilingualism as poles between (i) market approach and (ii) identity and social inclusion, language policies applied to this context are part of a Multilingualism-Translation-*Lingua-Franca continuum*, where language function – not identity alone – is the vehicle to ensure integrity in procedures held at the European Union.

It is very difficult, as mentioned earlier in this study, to consider political, economic, and cultural issues to be so clear-cut in any language policy. Even minority languages, as in the case of Welsh, have adapted some rules on language diversity to best suit a given context, to the benefit of practical purposes. And the same applies to individuals, who must make decision on which language to use.

For example, although the author of this essay is a Portuguese language native speaker, she decided to write it in English for merely practical purposes: most of the bibliography was in English, so it would not be necessary to translate quoted excerpts, and English, the world most spread *Lingua Franca*, also enables reaching a broader academic audience, who will read the text as a primary source. In short, it had little to do with some standing about the author's identity as a Brazilian.

English has spread so much as a *Lingua Franca* that, at present, there are many more non-native speakers than native speakers. As House (2013) mentions, there are four non-native speakers to every native speaker of English in the world, which influences the English language itself, making it hybrid. That precisely shows how multilingualism is essentially related to a *Lingua Franca*.

If a language is addressed as the only way to express one's identity, it risks strengthening a biased perspective on the issue of multilingualism. It is worth drawing a line between possibilities and necessities, i.e., the fact it is possible for a person to do something does not mean that person must do it. Minority languages must be included as official languages, but it does not have to be used in every single context to preserve one's identity, especially in cases where a more feasible purpose is needed, as in the case of the European Union.

In the context of national identity, language has often been equated with the concept of a nation-state, both historically and in contemporary times. As Auer and Wei (2007, p. 1-2) say: "a new nation state almost inevitably entailed the 'invention' of a new standard language."

For example, Oliveira (2008) points out that in Brazil, at the time of the Marquis de Pombal, the implementation of the Portuguese language as a national language intended to exclude important ethnical groups. From another perspective, Santos (2016) explains that different variations of Portuguese (from Portugal, from Brazil, and from "the African countries") are considered "different languages" mainly for editorial purposes. In this last case, Santos (2016) highlights that lexical differences are generally dictated by technical and scientific organizations also to spread influence and power. She believes that all Portuguese variations should be unified as an *International Portuguese Language*.

Linguae Francae are also varied, as mentioned before, as they may have different origins and can also be tailored for different purposes, as in the case of Aeronautical English. They have the goal of easing international communication, "therefore they do not coincide with definitions of a national language itself" (House, 2013, p. 288), what is also confirmed by the fact that it is possible to have an artificial *Lingua Franca*, as it is the case of Esperanto.

It seems that the main discussion would rest on different conceptualizations between uniformization and standardization approaches from the perspective of making the use of different languages feasible in multicultural environments since, as pointed out by Heller (2007, p. 540), "more and more, we all have to deal with the multiplicity of material and symbolic resources, language(s) among them, as part of our daily lives." In the end, it is necessary to face the undeniable fact and inexorable truth that

> this is a historical moment of discursive shift, one in which the political economic conditions of the globalized new economy are intimately tied to new ways of using language, and new ways of understanding what language is, and how it is connected to social identity and social relations (Heller, 2007, p. 548).

7 FINAL REMARKS

As discussed in this text, multilingualism and translation policies entail political, cultural, and economic motivations. Although there is criticism towards utilitarian perspectives, it is impossible to dissociate policies from economic interests or even timewise approaches in a globalized world.

The ideal solution would be extensive language learning. However, this is not always possible and, in the case of the EU, for example, language diversity is high.

Alongside this context, the use of ELF tends to be more and more hybrid, also influenced by other languages, which points out how multilingualism is much beyond the specific contexts of a national State. In EU procedures, where there is a well-recognized multilingual and multicultural institutional setting, mostly non-native speakers use English, resulting in specific idiosyncratic features known as *EuroEnglish* or *EU Speak*.

Based on these considerations, we can state that multilingualism vs. translation is far from being a "solved" complex issue. However, multiculturality and multiliteracy are much more diffuse linguistic abilities than it is possible to identify in a fine-grained analysis.

Thanks to the European experience, it becomes clear that multilingualism is undeniably a crucial factor in promoting cooperation and tolerance among the world's diverse populations. In Auer and Wei's words (2007, p. 12), "far from being a problem, multilingualism is part of the solution for our future. Social stability, economic development, tolerance, and cooperation between groups is possible only when multilingualism is respected."

Additional considerations on the development of translation studies regarding government and academic settings (Peixoto, 2021) are certainly relevant to this discussion, as they may shed some light on deeper reasons for the implementation of language policies applied to multilingualism and translation, but this is a debate to be raised in another text.

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