

***Languages and Economy in the Globalization Era in a Multilingual Territory:
the case of the Valley of Aosta.***

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Abstract

The study of the links between multilingualism, economy and social and political aspects of globalization makes it possible to better understand the debate that is taking place about language policies, in which the trend towards linguistic uniformity and the defence of multilingualism seem to oppose.

The article means to offer a contribution to the reflection about the relationship between these issues starting from an actual case, that of Aosta Valley, whose territory brings together the key issues in the game: wide spread languages, minority languages and immigrant languages, mobility of people and international contacts, economy based mainly on the territory. The exposition will not explore the bonds linking languages, economy and globalization in their entirety, but will try to contribute to the debate about the future of multilingualism on the basis of these factors.

Key words:

Globalization, Economy of language, Multilingualism, Multiculturalism, Linguistic Policy, Education

1. Introduction

The processes related to globalization are analyzed primarily for the effects they have on the economic sphere. The questions they raise in the linguistic ambit are less explored. These questions mainly regard the growing importance of the dominant languages and their potentially hegemonic role, the future role of other languages that are currently having international spread but which are announcing their decline, the place that will be granted to local minority languages which are at risk of extinction and the modalities of integration of the immigrant languages in the host societies.

We are witnessing on one side the dominion of some languages, a veritable industry (involving publishers, media, services, education), that are considered to be indispensable assets to have access to education and to the labour market. At the same time, the less widely spoken languages, considered as assets belonging to the intangible heritage of mankind, are promoted through cultural and linguistic operations in agreement with other initiatives of local development (concerning the environment and the territory). Finally, the immigrant languages are generally considered from the social and educative points of view of acceptance and inclusion more than as cultural and economic resources *per se*.

2. The Babel of Languages

The exact number of languages present in the world cannot be precisely quantified also in view of the fact that the concept of language itself is a matter of debate in the scientific community (Note 1). The Ethnologue (Note 2). association reviews 7,105, of which only about 200 are standardized in written form, while most of the linguistic systems are transmitted orally. UNESCO in the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger identifies 2,471 endangered languages or nearly extinct, classifying them on the basis of the total number of speakers, on the intergenerational capacity of transmission and on the range of the sociolinguistic dominions (Table 1). Equal importance for the survival of a language has its vitality and presence in new sociolinguistic dominions such as, for example, the media, and the presence of a stable norm, of a written tradition, and of a literature. A further factor of fragility is the absence of linguistic policies capable of safeguarding these languages and of promoting their presence in different sectors, particularly in the education system.

As to the geographic distribution, 32.4% of the total amount of languages are spoken in Asia, 30% in Africa, 18.5% in the area of the Pacific Ocean, 14.9% in the three Americas, 4% in Europe (Note 3).

About 5,000 languages are concentrated in only 22 countries even if normally different linguistic communities coexist in the same nation, whose relations of power depend on the number of speakers, on the spread in the territory, on the statute, the prestige, and the international weight of every single language. A language with a substantial number of speakers, supported by a written tradition and a codified norm, has greater weight compared with another language devoid of a written tradition, used solely for everyday communicative purpose and within a limited community of speakers.

The linguistic policies vary considerably according to the territories. Some countries implement plurilingual policies, that is to say, they promote the study of the territorial languages in their education systems. In Luxemburg, the pupils are educated in the three official languages of the country, Luxembourgian, German and French. Other countries are endowed with legislations protecting the least spoken languages, the so called minority languages.

In Italy, three regions have obtained autonomy statutes because of the presence of linguistic minorities: Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trentino Alto Adige, and the Valley of Aosta. The historical minority languages (Note 4) are protected and enhanced by Act 482 of 1999, that enforces article 6 of the Italian Constitution. In Mexico, a federal norm of 2003, the Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas (Note 5), resumed in the legislations of other federated states, safeguards the Amerindian languages. In other countries linguistic policies strongly based on the issue of identity have allowed minority languages to consolidate, according to the paradigm that the sociolinguist Fishman (1991) defines as the Reversing Language Shift: it is the case of Catalan in the autonomous Community of Catalonia and of French in Québec.

3. Towards Only One Language?

We have seen how the criteria contributing to the international prestige of a language do not depend solely on the number of speakers (Note 6). Among the most spoken languages in the world, the first place is occupied by Mandarin Chinese, followed by Spanish, English and Hindi. However, among these languages, only English has a predominant role due to its planetary diffusion and the economic, political and cultural importance of the countries of the English-speaking area and notably of the United States of America. For the same reasons, other less widespread languages enjoy international prestige: it is the case of French, that is situated at the sixteenth place in the list of the most spoken languages, but that owes its reputation mainly to French-speaking populations and to its use as an official language in international boards such as ONU (Note 7) and the Council of Europe.

The weight of some international languages has been strengthened by the media and by Internet in particular. English is evidently dominant while other languages, although they are largely spoken, are under represented (Note 8): French, largely spoken in the African countries, where the percentage of access to Internet is low, is less present than we might expect.

The globalization of the cultural industry, where the U.S. presence is prevalent in sectors such as the economy of knowledge, cinema, TV, publishing, music, has had another major role in the diffusion of the English language. The importance of this market has driven the countries of the European Union, especially France (Note 9), to ask that for some of these sectors the principles of progressive liberalization of exchanges are derogated from, posing the so called cultural exception that grants public financial support to the film and audio visual industry in favour of the national production.

This complex interlacing of relations of power between the dominant language (English), international languages and less spoken languages is represented by the linguist Louis-Jean Calvet (1999) as a “galaxy” around which important cultural, linguistic and economic interests gravitate with English, *la langue hypercentrale*, in its centre. Calvet identifies two trends for each level of this gravitational model, the former that leads to a horizontal bilingualism (acquisition of a second language at the same level as the mother tongue) and the latter towards a vertical bilingualism leading to the acquisition of a language of higher level. This trend would lead to gradually abandoning the less spread languages to the advantage of the most spoken ones, particularly of English as the most important language of the international trade:

English is not a mandatory supranational language. But there is a tendency to make it so. This is very clearly the case in the EU institutions despite genuine efforts to encourage plurilingualism. In the many other institutional co-operation bodies which are appearing in Europe it is found that the use of that language is regarded as automatic, even though no other mode of communication has

been investigated (Truchot 2002: 17).

The phenomenon of the extinction of a language is not new and is utterly natural. Some languages were born and disappeared without leaving any mark of their existence; the languages that have survived for more than a millennium, such as Chinese, Greek, Hebrew are rare. However, according to the UNESCO observatory this phenomenon seems to be accelerating in the last decades and the percentage of languages due to disappear might reach 50% in the course of the 21st century (Note 10).

The economic attraction of the most spoken languages, as mentioned above, and the gradual disappearance of the traditional life styles, accelerated by globalization, would be the foundation of this phenomenon without precedent in the whole history of mankind and of its evolution, whose outcome is the impoverishment of the collective cultural heritage. In this sense, the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (Note 11) records the right of communities and individuals to linguistic diversity in the three political, cultural and economic dimensions:

In a political perspective, the goal of conceiving a way of organizing linguistic diversity so as to permit the effective participation of language communities in this new growth model;

In a cultural perspective, the goal of rendering the worldwide communications space compatible with the equitable participation of all peoples, language communities and individuals in the development process;

In an economic perspective, the goal of fostering sustainable development based on the participation of all and on respect for the ecological balance of societies and for equitable relationships between all languages and cultures.

4. Multilingualism as a Human Right

Without entering here in the argumentations of the proponents of a global lingua franca and of their opponents, it is however undeniable that the knowledge of widespread languages, especially English, is now part of the basic language skills necessary to access information and knowledge and to integrate into the global market. At the same time and probably in part, as a reaction to this trend towards cultural and linguistic homogeneity, in recent times we are witnessing a certain awareness of the importance of safeguarding cultural and linguistic diversity, based on the principle that no language is “too small” to be deprived of protection and that all languages are equal in dignity and are worthy of protection and respect. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression (Note 12), dating back to 2005, recognizes equal dignity to all languages:

The protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions presuppose the recognition of equal dignity of and respect for all cultures, including the cultures of persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples. (art.2, comma 3)

The Convention equally recognizes the importance of cultural diversity and includes its protection in the logic of sustainable development:

Cultural diversity: the common heritage of humanity. Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future

generations. (art.1)

Even the European Council in their resolution of 21 November 2008 (Note 13) for a European strategy in favour of multilingualism, emphasizes the importance and the value of linguistic diversity inscribing it into the European identity and advocates its protection, asserting its importance as a source of creativity and of divergent thinking:

- linguistic and cultural diversity is part and parcel of the European identity; it is at once a shared heritage, a wealth, a challenge and an asset for Europe;
- multilingualism is a major cross-cutting theme encompassing the social, cultural, economic and therefore educational spheres;
- the promotion of less widely used European languages represents an important contribution to multilingualism;
- significant efforts should still be made to promote language learning and to value the cultural aspects of linguistic diversity at all levels of education and training, while also improving information on the variety of European languages and their dissemination across the world;
- multilingualism is also of particular significance in promoting cultural diversity, inter alia in the field of media and content online, and intercultural dialogue within Europe and with the other regions of the world; translation, on account of the links it establishes between languages and cultures and the broad access it provides to works and ideas, plays a special role in this process;
- linguistic diversity within Europe constitutes an added value for the development of economic and cultural relations between the European Union and the rest of the world;
- multilingualism contributes to developing creativity by allowing access to other ways of thinking, interpreting the world and expressing the imagination.

Two poles can synthesize the linguistic policies that seek to regulate the relationships between plurilingualism and globalization. A liberal one that lets the laws of the market act and regulate the relationships between the languages in terms of their economic importance and a pole that inscribes the right to plurilingualism among the universal rights of man in an ecological and alter-globalization logic of preservation of diversity, that, in certain cases, may lead to claims of nationalistic nature (Boyer 2008: 49).

5. Linguistic Policies in Favour of Multilingualism

The term multilingualism (Note 14) is relatively recent and covers individual and social aspects. In officially multilingual societies such as Switzerland, Belgium and Finland, monolingual citizens can live. The opposite is equally true. A multilingual citizen can live in an officially monolingual country. The fact then that a society calls itself multilingual does not mean that it promotes or supports multilingualism.

A policy in favour of multilingualism must then take these fundamental variables into account: the territories to which this policy is applied (regions, communities of municipalities, municipalities) and the right of the individual to decide which language he means to use. It is mainly at this level that interventions of linguistic planning will take place. The case of the European Union is exemplary: in the official documents it is stated that multilingualism is part of the European identity and it must be defended and promoted, re-asserting the principle that the safeguard of one's language and one's identity is an

individual's right; on the other hand the implementation of actions in favour of multilingualism is entrusted to the member states and the territorial unities according to the subsidizing principle, because these must take the local specificity of this linguistic diversity into account.

6. Plurilingual Citizens and Language Policies.

Among the factors that may contribute to the safeguard of a language and consequently to the promotion of multilingualism as highlighted above, the magazine *Ethnologue* takes two in consideration that have not yet been recalled here: the number of those who connect their ethnic identity with their language (whether or not they speak that languages) and information about the use of second languages. The former is of cultural identity nature: a speaker may not speak a language, or may have a passive competence of it, but he may consider it important for the construction of his own identity; the latter is of linguistic nature and is linked to the presence of bilingual or plurilingual speakers, that is to say people capable of expressing themselves fluently in two or more languages.

Also the development of plurilingualism is a recent trend in linguistics and in the education science; till the 60s of the XXth century, bi-plurilingualism was rather considered as a handicap and therefore it was to be avoided, particularly in the education ambit. It is thanks to the studies in Canada, related to the Immersion Programmes, that the perspective changed and the bilingual individual began to be considered as a more adaptable individual, sensitive to linguistic varieties, perceptive towards cultural diversity, capable of making fruitful comparisons between languages. At the same time we have witnessed the diffusion of early language teaching in different education systems, even getting to implementing bi-plurilingual education projects in some countries.

At European level, the European Commission in the White Paper education and training of 1996 identifies in the proficiency in three Community languages (the mother tongue, the language of the neighbour and a widely spread language) a crucial objective to introduce oneself into the European education and work fields. This policy has been fruitful: the Eurobarometer enquiry of 2012, promoted by the European Commission in 27 member States of the Union, pointed out that half of the interviewed people are capable of keeping a conversation going in another language, while a quarter do so in at least two languages, one out of ten is capable of carrying out a conversation in at least three languages beside L1. The five most widely spread languages, used as second languages by European people, are English (38%), French (12%), German (11 %), Spanish (7 %) and Russian (5%).

Nevertheless, a policy in favour of multilingualism cannot stalemate the minority languages and the immigration languages that should be taken into consideration in the education ambit, as clearly illustrated in the Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe - From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education:

In order to achieve commitment even more clearly to an education policy that is not reduced to a juxtaposition of languages and is given the means to create space for the less commonly spoken and taught languages (whether national, regional, minority, community, extra-European, etc), it is indispensable to explore all the resources of plurilingualism. (Guide: 27-28)

If the minority languages begin to be the object of initiatives of protection and promotion in the education ambit, the immigration languages are still scarcely considered and the case of the city of Manchester (Note 15), in which 150 languages and cultures live together and are considered as an economic resource for the

enterprises and the commercial exchanges, is a happy exception.

7. The Valley of Aosta : Between Local and Global

The analysis of the situation in the Valley of Aosta (Note 16) may appear interesting for the presence in a limited territory of the various factors that come into play in the study of the relationship between language, economy and policy. Being a multilingual region in which languages and dialects coexist with different statutes, the region was granted an Autonomy Statute that recognizes Italian and French as official languages, and promotes the German language of the municipalities of the Lys Valley to safeguard the linguistic and cultural traditions of its populations. Being a border region, it entertains privileged economic and political relationship with the Transalpine regions of France (Savoie and Haute Savoie) and Switzerland (Valais). Being a mountain region, its economy is based primarily on the service sector, particularly on tourism. Being a Region that has an early bilingual education system throughout the entire pupils' schooling, it has become a permanent laboratory of bi-plurilingual education (Note 17).

The outcomes of a study carried out in close cooperation with the Council of Europe (Note 18) have highlighted that:

The Autonomous Region Valley of Aosta enjoys a number of very positive factors for the establishment and success of a language policy suited to the current political, cultural and economic challenges: the promotion of a certain linguistic diversity, the importance of the means and the resources at the service of this goal, the existence of researches of very high level in language teaching, international openness and cross-border cooperation of several institutions, commitment of many teachers and school principals and a widely shared sentiment of convergence between a policy aiming at high level linguistic expertise and the economic needs of the Region. Importantly, these factors are present simultaneously. (Profil: 113).

7.1. The Linguistic Situation

The Region is characterized by the coexistence of multiple languages with different statuses: in addition to the high official linguistic varieties (Italian and French) of its socio-linguistic repertoire, we find the native varieties of the area (Franco-Provencal), those of more ancient provenance (the Walser dialects of the Lys Valley and the Piedmontese dialect in the contact area with the neighbouring Piedmont) or more recently imported languages from other Italian regions (immigrant Italian dialects, such as Venetian and Calabrian).

The outcomes of recent sociolinguistic studies about the three languages of identity, Italian, French and Franco-Provencal (Plurilinguisme administratif et scolaire en Vallée d'Aoste 2001, Puolato 2006) agree on certain aspects: the predominance of Italian as the privileged code in all contexts of use; the actual restriction of the use of French in a few institutional contexts; the persistence of Franco-Provencal primarily as the communication code within the families particularly in the rural context, even if the UNESCO Atlas classifies Franco-Provencal among the "definitely endangered" languages, while one of the Walser variant, Töitschu, is indicated as "severely endangered". French, in spite of its actual functional marginalization, still retains a certain prestige as it is related to the identity values of the regional social group (Profil 2008).

The "Plurilinguisme administratif et scolaire en Vallée d'Aoste" investigation, worked out in 2001 and quoted in the Regional Report as a preparatory study for the Profile of the educational language policies in

the Valley of Aosta, highlighted that 96.01 % of the residents in the Valley say they can speak Italian, 75.41% French and 55.77% Franco-Provencal. The investigation also shows that 24.88% of the people in Aosta Valley can speak the two official languages (Italian and French) and that 50.53% can speak three languages: Italian, French and Franco-Provencal. These figures would place the Valley of Aosta well above the European average, as detected by the Eurobarometer 2012 investigation, according to which a quarter of the European population is capable of keeping a conversation going in two languages beside the mother tongue (Note 19).

At qualitative level, the Regional Structure for the evaluation of the education system (SREV) started an investigation in the framework of the PISA-OCSE tests, with a convention between the Region, the Italian Institute for the evaluation of the education systems (INVALSI) and the OCSE boards: they have actually decided to revive the tests of the PISA 2009 investigation (Programme for International Student Assessment) in the Spring of 2010. The tests were administered to the same students of 2009, half of them took the test in the French version and the other half took it in the Italian version. The purpose of the survey, in the case of the tests conducted in French, was to ascertain to what extent the Aosta Valley students were capable of solving the problems proposed by the tests using the French language in the three tested areas: reading, mathematics and science. The analysis of the data (SREV 2013) concluded that the high school students obtained results comparable to those obtained by their partners in French speaking countries and all of them are well above the OCSE average, considering that the high school students make up half of the school population in Aosta Valley. Greater difficulties instead are found in the technical schools and in particular in the vocational ones, where the outcomes are lower. The issue is important anyhow, because it highlights the crucial role of the school in the preservation of the French language, confirming the validity of the regional bi-plurilingual education model.

Over the past few decades the languages of international migration were added to the identity languages, a relatively recent phenomenon but continuously growing. The latest private data published by the National Institute of Statistics refer to 2012 and show 9,148 residents with foreign citizenships in Aosta Valley, equal to 7.2% of the total regional population, a datum that is close to the national average but that is still significantly lower than that of the regions of Northern Italy. As to the countries of origin (National Institute of Statistics data 2010), Morocco (26.5%) is first, followed by Rumania (23.3%) and Albania (10.5%): residents coming from these countries are more than half of all the foreigners living in the Valley of Aosta.

The tension between the force of identity in a region that shows a strong political will to affirm its specificity, notably with regard to the place and the role of languages in society, and a rapidly changing sociolinguistic environment that sees the quick decrease of the percentage of population linked to the values of their cultural heritage, leads to a rapid evolution of language policies, however maintained within the scope of the statutory principles.

7.2. The Language Education Policies

The education system implemented in the Valley of Aosta derives from its Autonomy Statute which makes it possible to adapt the national norms to the regional situation. At present, the education system provides for equitable teaching of the two official languages, Italian and French, from kindergarten to high school. English is taught as a foreign language starting from the primary school. Actually, it was introduced as a compulsory subject in the primary schools of the Valley of Aosta in 1998/99, anticipating the Italian reform of 2003. In the pre-primary and primary schools Italian and French are used as languages to impart

education with the same number of hours, while in the following school levels the non-linguistic disciplines may be taught in both French and English according to the CLIL methodology, with different timetables depending on the degree and type of schools.

With the reform bill of the first school level (n. 18/2005), we witness a certain favour towards plurilingualism and an attempt to meet the needs of the different communities: those people who are native of the Region and see a vehicle of identity in the regional minority languages (French, Franco-Provencal and the Walser languages); and those people who are from other regions or nations who would like that greater weight were granted to the languages of large international communication, especially to English. In this sense, the regional regulations emphasize the importance of taking into account the specificities, the traditions and the cultural and linguistic values typical of the Valley of Aosta, that is to promote the knowledge of the Franco-Provencal language and culture, to ensure the teaching of German in the municipalities where the Walser populations live and to protect and enhance the cultural and linguistic specificities present in the regional context within the broader European cultural framework. The bilingual peculiarity of the school system of the Valley of Aosta becomes then a prerequisite for the development of plurilingual education, favouring the European citizenship and the respect of the cultural and linguistic diversities present in the territory.

Considering the possible scenarios, as described by Daniel Coste (2006) for the Valley of Aosta, which combine and systematize the languages present in the territory (official languages, school languages, minority languages, immigrant languages) in a curriculum covering the whole schooling careers of the students, the education system of Aosta Valley is orienting towards a scenario of plurilingual education. This scenario is open to Europe through:

- generalized initiatives of *éveil aux langues*, awakening to language (Note 20), at pre-primary and primary schools with the European project Comenius Regio, « Des contes dans nos langues: du bilinguisme au plurilinguisme » (Note 21),
- three models of the European Portfolio of Languages adapted to the regional multilingual context,
- the implementation of new school departments that allow students to acquire the bi-national EsaBac diploma (Final State Exam and Baccalauréat). In these departments the teaching of history is developed in the French language, according to the multi-perspective approach, and structured periods of residence in France are provided for the students (*périodes de scolarisation temporaire*).

In addition to these structured initiatives, there are numerous specific initiatives to promote plurilingualism, such as projects of European partnership, virtual twinning, exchanges, study periods and stages abroad for teachers and students financed by Community and regional funds (Profil 2007).

The system therefore is moving along the axis indicated by the Profil (2009):

Although the argumentations (...) are essentially devoted to the «historical languages » of the Valley of Aosta, the principles and the values that are expressed concern all the languages present in the Region. Evidently in Aosta Valley a particular space must be assigned to certain languages in the students' school curricula and in the public support for the promotion of these languages. But the education towards linguistic and cultural tolerance, the development of the desire to learn languages throughout one's life and the enhancement of all the languages that make up the plurilingual repertoire of each individual cannot be marginal objectives, particularly in a region that bases its identity on the claim of its diversity (Profil 2009: 113).

7.3. The Global Market and Languages

The importance of languages in a region cannot be measured solely on the basis of their asset value, but also taking the economic data into consideration. The economic situation of the Valley of Aosta has transformed rapidly and commerce, tourism and services have become dominant. About three quarters of the regional added value (76.2%) come from services, 22.6% from industry and the remaining part from the primary sector (Italian National Institute of Statistics data 2011). The development of the services sector is accompanied by increased need of language skills, since they play an important role in this sector and in the tourist and commercial activities, which globally contribute to about 22% of the regional product (Italian National Institute of Statistics data 2011).

However objective data are lacking about the linguistic needs of the local economy, capable of orienting the language education policies. As a matter of fact no researches are currently to be found concerning the economy of languages. According to Grin (2005), the analysis of the educational policies from the economic point of view would allow to address the problem in terms of allocation and distribution of resources, and therefore in terms of efficiency and equity. This analysis would complete the picture of the factors to be taken into account in order to define the scenario towards which the human and economic resources should be targeted, and it would justify adopting a scenario that privileges plurilingualism, as compared to other scenarios such as that of « tout à l'anglais » that is emerging at national level as a result of the current reforms of the national education system.

7.4. Facing the Challenges

The challenges facing the policy decision makers of the Region are well outlined in the Profil and concern on one side the way to enhance and complement the other languages that make up the present multilingual repertoire of the Valley of Aosta, and on the other side they concern the strategies to cope with the evolution linked to globalization, transforming a view based on identity into an asset for the future, without putting into question the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Region.

Without any objective data on the importance and the economic value of plurilingualism and on studies about the relationship between the historical plurilingualism and the actual plurilingualism of the population, we run the risk of being stuck on ideological positions that oppose the advocates of tradition against the advocates of modernity, and to perpetrate a war between languages that has no reason to be. As highlighted by the Profil: « Sous la bannière du bilinguisme, c'est bien la réalité multilingue qui constitue une « question de survie » pour l'autonomie de la Région. »

7. Conclusions

In this article we have seen how the great cultural and linguistic diversity of mankind is threatened by several factors, some of which are related to globalization. Although several rules have been worked out concerning language protection, some of which have actually proved to be effective, it has not been possible to stop the process of impoverishment of the cultural and linguistic heritage of humanity. The voices raised in favour of linguistic diversity are mainly based on the importance of maintaining this diversity for ideological reasons, to comply with the values related to human rights.

The choice of multilingualism as an asset and as a possible scenario to safeguard linguistic diversity requires further studies, such as those carried out by 20 research centres in 12 European countries within

the Dylan project (Note 22), that justify its feasibility beyond the formulations of principle.

The analysis of the situation in the Valley of Aosta has shown us that, even in the presence of effective language policies, the evolution of society requires constant adaptations in language planning as well as tools to manage public resources responding to the principles of transparency, effectiveness and equity. The economic factor is still largely under-explored and studies in this direction might bring new perspectives and serve to direct future choices better, if we mean to pursue a policy in favour of multilingualism that is not essentially founded on ideological principles solely related to identity.

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Sitography

The norms concerning languages are compiled by Jacques Leclerc, a member of the CEFAN (Chaire pour le développement de la recherche sur la culture d'expression française en Amérique du Nord) in the University of Laval website: <http://www.tlfg.ulaval.ca/axl/Langues/LOIS-LINGUISTIQUES-index.htm>

As To The Education System In The Valley Of Aosta:

Webécole - <http://www.scuole.vda.it/webecole/index.php>

SREV - http://www.regione.vda.it/istruzione/srev/default_i.asp

l'École valdôtaine <http://www.scuole.vda.it/webecole/Ecole/home.htm>

Notes

Note 1. Between language and dialect there is no difference that can be explained in purely linguistic terms and the other factors that are being considered (social recognition, usage areas and social prestige) are largely influenced by political and economic choices.

Note 2. Data drawn from Ethnologue Language of the word: <http://www.ethnologue.com>

Note 3. Ibid

Note 4. The languages and cultures of the Albanian, Catalan, Germanic, Greek, Slovenian and Croatian populations are protected as well as the languages of those populations speaking French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitane and Sardinian. Act 482 of 1999 – [Online] Available: <http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/994821.htm>

Note 5. Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas – [Online] Available: <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/257.pdf>

Note 6. It is important to remember that the statistical data on the spread of languages are not always reliable because they are based on the number of inhabitants.

Note 7. Cf. “A l'ONU, forte progression du français”, in France-Amérique, le journal français aux Etats-Unis, 26 septembre 2013, [Online] Available: http://www.france-amerique.com/articles/2013/09/26/a_1_onu_forte_progression_du_francais.html

Note 8. Data drawn from a study carried out by W3Techs: http://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content_language/all

Note 9. As to the definition of the term “exception culturelle” Cf. [Online] Available <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/politique/diversite/exception.htm>

Note 10. Data drawn from Ethnologue: Language of the word: <https://www.ethnologue.com/>

Note 11. Universal declaration on linguistic rights, World Conference on Linguistic Rights Barcelona,

Spain, 9 June 1996, [Online] Available: <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/linguistic.pdf p.3>

Note 12. UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression [Online] Available: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/cultural-diversity/diversity-of-cultural-expressions/the-convention/convention-text/>

Note 13. Council Resolution of 21 November 2008 on a European strategy for multilingualism , Official Journal C 320 16/12/2008 P. 0001 – 0003, [Online] Available: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:320:0001:01:en:HTML>

Note 14. In this article the terms multilingualism and plurilingualism are used as synonyms.

Note 15. See University of Manchester, Multilingual Manchester, <http://mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/>

Note 16. The Valley of Aosta is the smallest Italian region (area 3262 km²) and the least populated one (128,230 inhabitants, National Institute of Statistics, 2012). It has an Autonomy Statute (Constitutional Law n 4 of February 26, 1948), amended by the Constitutional Law n. 2 of January 31, 2001) due to the presence of minority language groups on its territory.

Note 17. See in this regard: Cavalli, Marisa, 2005: *Éducation bilingue et plurilinguisme. Le cas du Val d’Aoste*, Collection LAL (Langue et Apprentissage des Langues), Crédif, Didier, Paris, 370p.

Note 18. The Council of Europe Language Policy Division offers expertise to assist member States who so wish in reflecting upon their language education policy. This activity provides member States (or regions and cities) with the opportunity to undertake a self-evaluation of their policy in a spirit of dialogue with Council of Europe experts, with a view to focusing on possible future policy developments within the country. A Language Education Policy Profile is a process of reflection by the authorities and involving civil society, together with the Council of Europe experts who have the function of acting as catalysts in this process. The process involves the elaboration of a series of two complementary documents published by the Council of Europe: the Country Report (or Regional/City Report) developed by authorities and the Profile of Language Education Policy of the concerned country (or region/city) - http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/profils_EN.asp?

Note 19. The above figure is to be taken with caution because the PASVA investigation dates as far back as 2001, whereas no other investigations of this magnitude have been worked out. In general then these measurements have been made with different methodologies and are based on the perception of the speaker of his language skills and not on objective measurements.

Note 20. Awakening to language is used to describe approaches in which some of the learning activities are concerned with languages which the school generally does not intend to teach. - <http://carap.ecml.at>

Note 21. For more information cf. the project site <http://www.comenius.scuole.vda.it/>

Note 22. The Dylan project - http://www.dylan-project.org/Dylan_en/home/home.php

Table 1. Classification criteria of languages at risk of extinction - UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger

Degree of endangerment	International Language Transmission
Safe	language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted >> not included in the Atlas
Vulnerable	most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)

Definitely endangered	children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home
Severely endangered	Language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves
critically endangered	the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently
Extinct	there are no speakers left >> included in the Atlas if presumably extinct since the 1950s