

Minority Language: Mirandese

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Language policy in the European Union

Introduction

The European Union strives to protect and promote multilingualism, as it believes it to be an essential aspect to Europe's competitiveness. Language learning is therefore considered a priority. It is a part of the European's union policy that all citizens master at least two languages as well as their mother tongue. This is a way to promote intercultural living and mobility.

Linguistic Diversity

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU was adopted in the year 2000 and was made legally binding in the Treaty of Lisbon. This treaty's focus is to promote linguistic diversity by the use of education. The aim is to prohibit any discrimination based on language. As well as placing an obligation on the European union to respect linguistic diversity.

Respect for language diversity as well as cultural openness is extremely important and it therefore that every citizen in the EU has the right to write to any institutions referred to in article 24 of the TFEU and be answered in the same language.

Aim of the EU Language policy

The aim of the European Union's language policy is to create an inclusive and respectful environment towards all member state languages. This is to be achieved mainly through education when children can be exposed to more languages than their mother tongue, this is known as the 'mother tongue + two' objective. They are to be taught at least two languages which are foreign to them when they begin elementary school. As mobility between the countries of the European union plays a significant role in the professional, employment, and educational opportunities of many citizens, having foreign language skills is no longer considered a luxury but a must for many people. Language teaching and learning is a priority set out by the *Educational and Training 2020* strategic network which states, "education and training should enable all citizens to acquire and develop skills and competencies needed for their employability and foster further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue."

Programmes and Achievements

- The **Erasmus plus** programme has started in the year 2014, and focuses on developing a notion of language learning, improvement as well as cultural diversity. When students travel abroad to study for a certain amount of time, it will definitely contribute to the improvement of their language skills as well as their multi-cultural understanding. The *Erasmus+ Programme Guide* states: "The opportunities put in place to offer linguistic support are aimed to make mobility more efficient and effective, to improve learning performance and therefore contribute to the specific objective of the Programme." This program is therefore undeniably beneficial to all its participants.

- The **Creative Europe Programme** is another which supports this objective of linguistic education by providing financial support as well providing services for the translation of various books and manuscripts.

Preserving and Promoting Minority Languages

- The **Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning** specializes in the fields of regional minority languages of the European Union. The research centre promotes these languages using various means including:

ADUM- which is designed to inform organisations as well as individuals who work to protect and promote regional or minority languages, about the possible funding opportunities provided throughout Europe.

CRAMLAP- (Celtic, Regional and Minority Languages Abroad Project) has an interest in promoting many regional minority languages in Europe through education, focusing especially on the Celtic minority languages

NPLD- Network of European Language Planning Boards, was established to promote co-operation between minority language planning boards in Europe.

An Active Approach

Regarding less spoken, or disappearing languages in Europe, a strategy has been developed to promote these languages. Its short term action plan includes three areas:

1. " Lifelong language learning"
2. " Improving the teaching of foreign languages"
3. " Creating a language-friendly environment". (European Parliament Commission, 2003).

Multilingualism Policy

- In 2008 the Commission adopted a communication entitled ‘Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment’, which laid down a framework for the EU’s policy on multilingualism.
- Raising awareness of the importance of foreign languages, for example by annually celebrating the European day of Languages on September 26th.
- Online observatory for multilingualism, for example the *Poliglotti4.eu* is a project which provides teachers and learners with an efficient and powerful toolkit to enhance and improve their teaching and learning language abilities.

In conclusion, education in foreign languages as well as enhanced language teaching and learning skills have become an important aspect to the European union to promote and protect minority languages, and enhance multi-culture within Europe.

Language policy in Portugal

Language policy

We observed that the Portugal language policy has a big focus on Portuguese like a non-mother language, because it's spoken in various different continents and states (for example: Africa – Angola, South America – Brazil, etc.) There are several organization which promotes this language in foreign countries like *Instituto Camões* or *CLPL*

Promotion Portuguese language doesn't include just ex-colonies, but also the European countries and countries across the world. This is why we can also study Portuguese language and literature in Czech Republic. There is also good example with China, we can learn Portuguese here in 24 universities which has Portuguese program. For us, like foreigners, the institution CLPL give us a chance to study Portuguese in Portugal's universities as a foreign language. We can find an example in Minho University (situated in Braga). There is a program called: "Master's in Portuguese as non-Native Language - Portuguese as Foreign Language and Second Language." In this example we can clearly see that Portuguese government promote also Portuguese for „close“ foreigners – which is everyone form ex-colonies, or anyone who is just keen on studying Portuguese at advanced level.

Language laws: Mirandese

The Mirandese language, as an addition to the Portuguese language, was established as an official language in Portugal in 1999. This was done by the *Portuguese Constitution* (Law 7/99 regulated by Despatch Order 35/99).

Act 7/99 on the legal recognition of the Mirandese community's linguistic rights

Assembly of the Republic

Official Recognition of Linguistic Rights of the Mirandese Community

The Assembly of the Republic states, in the terms of Article 161, line c) of the Constitution, in order to enact it as a general law of the Republic, that:

Article 1

The present document focus on the recognition and promotion of the Mirandese language.

Article 2

The Portuguese state recognizes the right to develop and promote the Mirandese language, as cultural patrimony, instrument of communication and support of the identity of Terra da Miranda.

Article 3

The State recognizes the children's right to learn Mirandese, in the terms of its regulation.

Article 4

The public institutions placed in the Council of Miranda do Douro will be able to issue their documents along with a version in Mirandese language.

Article 5

The state recognizes the right to scientific and educational support concerning the formation of Mirandese language and culture teaching staff, in the terms of its regulation.

Article 6

This bill will be regulated in a period of 90 days after its enforcement.

Article 7

The present bill will come into force 30 days after its date of issue.

Approved on the 19th November, 1998.

The President of The Assembly of the Republic, António de Almeida Santos.

Promulgated on the 15th January, 1999.

The Prime Minister, António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres

Other Language Laws in Portugal

- In order to acquire Portuguese nationality, applicants must take a Portuguese language test (Order 1403-A/2006).
- The Television Law (Law 27/2007) states that at least 50% of the air time must be given to broadcasting programmes in the Portuguese language and at least 20% for creative works in Portuguese
- The Radio Law (Law 4/2001, as amended by Law 7/2006) commits broadcasters to an annual minimum quota for the dissemination of Portuguese music. This minimum quota varies annually from 25 and 40%
- The Regulatory Authority (ERC - Entidade Reguladora da Comunicação Social) is responsible for monitoring and controlling this law enforcement.

Teaching Abroad

It is promoting the learning and teaching of Portuguese through which the best results can be seen. There is an increasing demand for teachers, translators, and interpreters. It has become increasingly in demand in countries such as Senegal, Namibia, South Africa, as well as Argentina, Uruguay, and Colombia.

The Orthographic Agreement

This agreement, in Portuguese called *Acordo Ortográfico da Língua Portuguesa de 1990*, is an international treaty which is very important to the Portuguese because its purpose is to create a unified orthography for the Portuguese Language, which would therefore be used by all the countries where this language is spoken.

This agreement has met some controversy. The Portuguese government believed that it "will ease the knowledge and dissemination of the Portuguese language". This opinion is also shared by many linguists. Whereas many writers believe that the orthographic agreement would essentially lead to an inevitable "deterioration" of the language.

Approach to the Mirandese Language

The cultural and linguistic heritage represented by the Mirandese Language is recognized and respected by the national government, which puts forth significant efforts to help protect, preserve and promote this language in a variety of ways.

- The teaching of Mirandese (in the area spoken) is considered compulsory for the for the senior students of the primary school classes (ages 9-12).
- It is also an optional subject in the years of secondary school
- Works such as short stories and literature has been published in Mirandese to promote the language
- Festivals, songs, the Arts and theatre all, on certain occasions, take place in the Mirandese language.

Focus on Mirandese

The origins and the history of Mirandese

The origin of the Mirandese language goes back to 1284. Until that year, territory where Mirandese were spoken (mainly country of Miranda do Douro) belonged to Spain. During the Roman occupation, Miranda do Douro was part of Asturica Augusta, Spanish territory today. Then, between the 7th and 12th centuries the territory was part of the diocese of Astorga, also now in Spain. After formation of Portugal, it still have its own independence and as it was isolated from other (it had privileged status together with Leon). This helped to conserve the language.

The origins are directly traceable to Latin, from which the three main linguistic varieties evolved in the mediaeval period: Galician-Portuguese, Castilian (Spanish) and Asturian-Leonese, the first giving origin to Portuguese and the last giving origin to Mirandese. Most interesting attribute is the fact that historically it does not originate from Portuguese. Since it is neither a Portuguese nor a Spanish dialect its preservation has been possible only because it was in a geographically conservative and peripheral area. The Asturian-Leonese, language in Spain shares similarities with Mirandese. Yet they should not be regarded as the same language. In truth, they represent two geographically opposed areas. Further, the orthography or graphic systems of both languages differ as a consequence of relevant phonological differences.

Important moment came in the 19th century with linguist José Leite de Vasconcelos. He was the first linguist ever to put into writing this "oral language." Up until then, no written documents were known, although some documented traits can be found in mediaeval texts of this language, for example wills, donations, buying and selling contracts and town laws

Recently, a specialist in Mirandese António Bárbolo Alves, lecturer of Instituto Camões (Portugal) at the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis (France) published a book entitled *Mirandese Oral Literature - A Series of Mirandese texts* and Moisés Pires will soon publish a grammar book and a dictionary.

Geography

The area where is Mirandese spoken is around 500 square kilometres and shares a frontier with Spain. It includes the district of Bragança in the county of Miranda do Douro, a small part of the Vimioso county and a small number of villages in Spain. The area is based on agriculture (wheat, potatoes and oil), wine-growing and livestock farming (sheep and cattle). There is no industry. The Miranda and Picote lives from hydroelectric dams and tourism.

Statistic data: speakers

Speakers of Mirandese number approximately 15 000, but normally speak the language just 10 000. This number is almost entirely concentrated in the small villages with fewer than 3 000 inhabitants. Occasional speaker are counted in the other 5 000. This included Mirandese emigrants who return from the cities of Portugal to spend their holidays in Miranda.

As the time goes, the mentality of the younger generations have changed. They have different traditional values and with it, it has critical impact on the number of speakers as well as on the loss of interest in Mirandese.

Sociolinguistic domains:

Education

As we mentioned before, the studying of Mirandese is compulsory for the for senior students of the primary school classes (ages 9-12). The students has been also encouraged to study Mirandese, they can choose it as an optional subject in the secondary schools in the area.

Judicial authorities

The only official language used in court is Portuguese, although Mirandese is sometimes spoken and interpreters are normally available.

Public authorities and services

Portuguese is the only language used by the public services. Although Mirandese is used on signs indicating place names in the area, the authorities tend to be rather reticent when it comes to the adoption of forenames and surnames in Mirandese.

Mass media and information technology

Mirandese is not used at all in the mass media, apart from a very few articles that have appeared in the local press. But some articles in the local newspapers as well as radio and television features have demonstrated that the language is still alive in the region.

The Arts

Literature: The production of literature in Mirandese (about ten works) comprises mainly anthologies of poetry, religious works and a few school textbooks.

Music: Traditional Mirandese music is alive and well, and numerous performances of folk songs and dances are given every year. A disc produced by the *Centro de Estudios de Folclore de Zamora*, with recordings of several such performances, was awarded the National Prize for Culture in Spain in 1987.

Cultural activities: Mirandese also plays a part in conferences and seminars on the cultural heritage and folk traditions of the region, exhibitions of craftwork, of local costumes, paintings, photographs, etc. For example, we must highlight the *Primeiras Jornadas de Língua e Cultura Mirandesa* and the *Encontro Regional de Variação Linguística*.

The business world

Mirandese is spoken, though never exclusively, in the course of particular commercial and agricultural activities.

Family and social use of the language

It seems that the vast majority of parents continue to pass on Mirandese to their children. As far as the social use of the language is concerned, the fact that Mirandese speakers are perceived as somewhat backward by comparison with Portuguese speakers does constitute an obstacle to the extension of the language.

Portuguese is not the mother tongue of Mirandese speakers, but the contiguity of Portuguese and Mirandese has been peaceful. On the one hand, Portuguese is used in most situations of daily life: employment, schools and public services. On the other hand, Mirandese is used among peers, family members, neighbours and between people from small villages.

Language Vitality

Language Vitality and Endangerment

UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages

	Franco Provençal	Rusyn	Sardinian	Mirandese
Intergenerational Language Transmission	3	2	3	3+
Absolute Number of Speakers	147000	34000	1000000	15000
	3	2	5	2
Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population	2	2	x	2
Shifts in Domains of Language Use	1	3	3	3
Response to New Domains and Media	2	2	4	2
Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy	2	4	5	4
Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use	3	3	3	3
Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language	2	2	4	2
Type and Quality of Documentation	2	2	3+	x

Factor 1: Intergenerational Language Transmission

Mirandese was given the score of 3+. The language is spoken by young generations, as well as the parents and grandparents. In the areas where Mirandese is spoken, it can be considered as a second mother tongue to the children. Nevertheless it is not spoken by all children. It is between unsafe and definitely endangered.

Factor 2: Absolute Number of Speakers

The absolute number of speakers of Mirandese is approximately 15 000. The score 2 was given because this is a considerably small number of people who know and speak the language.

Factor 3: Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population

The score of 2 was given because the language is considered severely endangered as only a minority speak the language.

Factor 4: Shifts in Domains of Language Use

A score of 3 was given to Mirandese. This is known as "dwindling domains" and it refers to when the language is not the dominant language amongst the children. They are now referred to as *receptive bilinguals* because they do not use the language day to day. The parents also start using the dominant language as opposed to the minority language. When it comes to Mirandese, it is still taught to the younger generations, though it is undeniably stronger amongst the older ones.

Factor 5: Response to New Domains and Media

Mirandese was given the score of 2. Spreading the language into new domains is not too successful. Mirandese has managed to spread into some new domains. Including the Arts, literature, the internet, and schools. It is taught at the elementary and secondary school level. Therefore it is considered as a "coping" language.

Factor 6: Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy

Though Mirandese is mostly preserved through the oral tradition, there are some pieces of literature written in this language. Mirandese was given a score of 4. Written materials exist, dictionaries exist, and children are being taught the language at school through written textbooks.

Factor 7: Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use

In this area, Mirandese got a score of 3. Mirandese can be used in administration, for example the justice system. People who wish to talk Mirandese in court, have the right to and will be provided a translator. nevertheless, Portuguese is preferred as well as more common.

Factor 8: Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language

In this area, Mirandese scored a 2. While some members of the Mirandese community support language maintenance, others can be quite indifferent. This is especially visible with the younger generations who are not very inclined to learning Mirandese and prefer speaking the more popular Portuguese.

Brief research of origin of Mirandese words

From our research which we done for the class Minority language (available from the link https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wo7b-unRW_APjNsyHz-RUNITBI7ylhoV-XhSnsLjcJM/edit?ts=5661534f#gid=1719305554) we can see that the Mirandese language has been mostly influenced by Portuguese and Spanish. Most of the words have the same meaning, but they change their morphemes because of the influence of pronunciation of other languages which surrounded Mirandese. With this knowledge, we can say that only 25% of the words used in our research have origin in Mirandese, other 75% were influenced.

Example of Mirandese

The chest-nut tree (in English)

Once upon a time a wife told her husband:

-Oh my husband, if you ever passed away,
I would perish with sorrow for you.

"Oh for God' s sake, you sorry for me?!"

One day, the man pretended to be dead and
they went to bury him up in the hills and
there were some chestnut trees and
he held on to one tree and
he got home and his wife
was singing like a clarion

[The man] grabbed a stick:

"Oh damn, so you were the one
who was sorry for me?!"

It is said he beat her till he got tired.

The following year, people say,
he died once and for all.
The woman told her family friend:

"Ah Godfather, save me from the chestnut tree,
that it won't do the same as last year."

L Castanho (in Mirandese)

Era una beç una tie que le dezie assi pal tiu:

-Ah home, se te morrisses you morrie-me
de pena por ti!

-Ai, balga-me Dius, si habies de tener tanta
pena de mi?!

-Un die, l tiu fizo-se muôrto i
fúrun-lo a anterrar i iba a las cuôstas arriba i
habie uns castanheiros i
agarrou-se i
chegou a casa la mulhier
staba a cantar cumu un clarin.

Agarrou nun bargalho:

- Ah caragho, tu eras
a que tinha pena por mim?!

Diç que lê dou tanta, tanta porrada,
até que se cansou.

L anho adelante
diç que se morriu de beç
La tieque diç assi al cumpadre:

- Ah cumpadre, librai-me l castaño
que nun me faga cumo l outro anho!

Resources

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