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Perspectives on educational language policy

Institutional and students' voices in higher education¹

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Abstract

Considering the role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the development of plurilingual competences, without which a democratic, active citizenship cannot be constructed, we carried out a study at the University of Aveiro (Portugal) aiming to: (1) identify perspectives on educational language policies in an academic context, namely in institutional and students' voices; (2) describe convergent and divergent perspectives within those voices; and (3) reflect on the contribution of such an analysis for the development and implementation of educational language policies in HEIs.

Different data collection instruments and methods were used in this study: documentary analysis (study regulations), interviews with institutional actors and student questionnaires (NTAS – non-traditional adult students). The results show that institutional actors and students share the same pragmatic perspective regarding the integration of languages

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in curricula, perceiving it in terms of employability, mobility and professional needs, and revealing a representation of languages as instrumental objects. There is also convergent thought concerning the reasons against languages integration in curricula, for which they believe HEIs should not be responsible. Divergent perspectives concern the importance attached to the integration of language courses in curricula: in contrast to institutional actors, most students believe that language learning is important in HE.

The study underlines the importance of knowing the perspectives of different academic actors on educational language policy, namely the inclusion of languages in curricula. This acknowledgement may help raise institutional awareness on the importance of implementing educational language policies, by enabling the creation of a *locus* of discussion.

Keywords: higher education institutions; educational language policy; lifelong language learning; non-traditional adult students; plurilingual competence

1. Educational language policy in higher education institutions: background

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are fundamental to social development since they are drivers of change in various areas, such as economics, culture, science and technology. Within the European context they are expected to contribute to “European integration and the necessity of maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe” (European Language Council 2001: 3). HEIs are, therefore, required to become multilingual spaces, promoting plurilingualism as a value and a competence (Beacco and Byram 2003), and contributing to the development of “an understanding and acceptance of the immense value of linguistic diversity and of less widely used languages” (Bergan 2002: 18).

This implies the development of consistent and explicit institutional language policies that consider the ever increasing contact between individuals, languages and cultures in academia and society, “with respect to the goal of multilingualism” (Tudor 2006: n.p.). This ideological discourse relating those policies to social cohesion and progress represents a great challenge to HEIs: the need to reflect about languages and the role they play within the different institutional contexts (teaching, research, and cooperation at a local, national and international society levels) and within societal dynamics. As Mackiewicz, President of the European Language Council, emphasises that “HEIs have to acknowledge that their mission has to include an institutional language policy” (2009: n.p.).

HEIs seem to be increasingly acknowledging this mission, as the results of recent research show. For instance, based on the results of the project ENLU

(European Network for the Promotion of Language Learning among all Undergraduates), Tudor points out:

A growing number of HE institutions have adopted policies designed to promote language learning. It is thus possible to speak of the emergence of the concept of HE language policy, namely the strategic decisions of HEIs to equip their students, researchers and both academic and administrative staff with communicative skills in one or more foreign languages. (2008: 51)

Nevertheless, the project is far from the possibility of being extended to a significant number of HEIs, and it can hardly be stated that most European universities are aware of this need.

With regards to their educational mission – on which this study focuses – HEIs are required to develop educational language policies that highlight languages and language education, namely by providing all graduate and undergraduate students the opportunity to choose from a wide range of language courses and take a number of credits in languages regardless of the subject in which they specialise, and by the adoption of a content and language integrated learning approach (Cummins 2000; Commission of the European Communities 1991). The *Bologna Declaration* (2001), the *Berlin Communiqué* (2003) and the recent European Commission Communication *European Higher Education in the World* (2013) stress these recommendations, relating them to the internationalisation of HEIs, and highlighting HEIs' central role in the training of plurilingual citizens who can contribute to the construction of a multicultural, democratic Europe. These recommendations have been followed by some HEIs and, indeed, “there have been changes in the public's attitude towards language policy” (Barrault-Méthy 2012: 191). This is also stressed by the European Language Council's *Working Group Higher Education Language Policy* (European Language Council 2013), created in 2011.

The need to develop and implement educational language policies at an institutional level is also emphasised by several European projects, such as TNP (Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages), ENLU (European Network for the Promotion of Language Learning among all Undergraduates), MOLAN (Network for the Exchange of Information about Good Practices that Serve to Motivate Language Learners) and DYLAN (Language Dynamics and Management of Diversity), specifically regarding teaching. The results and conclusions of these projects provide us with important clues regarding a potential framework for HEIs in this matter. Nevertheless, the challenge presents difficulties, as pointed out by Kelly: “dirtying our hands in the policy arena is a complex enterprise” (2003: 102). One of these challenges meant that the perspectives of different actors in the planning and management

of educational language policies had to be considered. Indeed, from this viewpoint, an educational language policy cannot be carried out independently of social actors, which highlights the role of both individuals and institutions (Ricento 2000). We agree with Chambers (2003) when she states that the development of an educational language policy should be transversal, relying on the collaboration of professional linguists, teachers, institutional governing bodies, deans of faculties and students. In other words, despite the fact that the responsibility for developing and implementing an educational language policy “should ultimately rest with the institutions’ leaders”, it is their obligation “to bring about cooperation of all people working in the area of languages and to involve representatives of all other subject areas and of service units” (Mackiewicz 2003: 98).

Prior to this cooperation it is essential to raise awareness among the university community about the importance of developing and implementing a (plurilingual) educational language policy (Sárdi 2005). Within this raising of awareness, diagnosing the representations of different actors and their perspectives on educational language policies becomes crucial, since representations influence practices and behaviours (Billiez and Millet 2001; Calvet 1999), functioning as a “*minded practice*” (Clandinin 1985). Indeed, representations of languages and the roles they play in the lives of individuals and institutions may function as important attitudinal obstacles to the implementation of an educational language policy coherent with the principles of plurilingualism (Chambers 2003; Tudor 2004).

2. Lifelong learning within higher education

Although HEIs have been increasingly implementing educational language policies, language education for all remains an area requiring improvement. In this sense, educational language policies must be designed in line with a lifelong learning (LLL) paradigm.

The concept of LLL, perceived as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment perspective” (European Council 2002: 7), has been acquiring a new impetus in the agenda of HEIs. This is one of the main vectors in the reconfiguration of HEIs (Prague Communiqué 2001; European University Association 2008), considering their social responsibility in the response to new needs in education and training throughout life. Language learning, and the consequent development

of plurilingual competences, are perceived as important features in the LLL process, according to several European documents: *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (Commission of the European Communities 2000), *Education and Training 2010 Programme* (European Commission 2004), *Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–2013)* (European Union 2006) or in the *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework* (European Commission 2007). Accordingly, it is believed that language learning contributes to the LLL process as a whole, since it coincides with the development of generic learning competences which are fostered in the overall LLL process. This process takes place in different contexts and institutions, such as HEIs, and should entail the promotion of LLL, including language learning, assuming “leur responsabilité de continuer à développer les compétences linguistiques de tous les étudiants” (Beacco 2009: 66–7).

In view of the above, the relationship between LLL and language education assumes dialectical and dynamic characteristics in a clear cycle where the development of language competences provides input in a LLL approach as a whole, and the same happens in the opposite direction; that is, during the LLL process the interaction with languages (in formal and informal contexts) favours the development of general competences.

Therefore, HEIs, where LLL is seen as a cornerstone (Prague Communiqué 2001), should be accessible to all (Bergen Communiqué 2005). It is essential that educational systems create more flexible learning pathways and recognise previously acquired learning processes, either through formal or informal contexts (Fejes and Andersson 2009, Leuven Communiqué 2009; London Communiqué 2007). The validation of learning outcomes, acquired through non-formal and informal learning, is essential for accessing the job market and lifelong learning. Furthermore, validation of non-formal and informal learning experiences is an essential contribution to the EU’s ambition to attain sustainable and inclusive growth, as set by the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission 2012).

The institutionalisation of the LLL paradigm has helped increasing the visibility and the value of non-formal and informal learning and, subsequently, the importance of the recognition of prior learning (Fejes and Andersson 2009).

The recognition of prior learning, understood as a response to the need to widen participation in education and training for economic advancement and social inclusion (Andersson and Harris 2006), aims to ensure: social justice, economic development or social change (Fejes and Andersson 2009). The benefits to HEIs and individuals of recognising prior learning relate to: (1) easier access to HEIs for non-traditional students; (2) acknowledging the

importance of learning outside a formal setting (e.g. learning in the workplace – non-formal learning); (3) validation of informal learning (learning which students have achieved by themselves); (4) enhancing students' pride and self-esteem for what they have accomplished as learners and (5) improving students' perception and understanding of learning as a lifelong process (Andersson and Harris 2006).

In this sense, HEIs should be prepared to recognise prior learning, and should be ready for new demands and challenges, such as receiving new publics with different profiles (Berlin Communiqué 2003). Receiving non-traditional adult students (NTAS) requires a change in both administrators and academics' perspectives. In fact, the enrolment of this new public in HEIs is clear evidence that the three main goals of the Bologna Process are being met: mobility, employability and lifelong learning. Hence, the entrance mechanisms in HE for this new public are based in an LLL perspective, since students' previous life story and experience are valued in the selection process.

In Portugal, special requirements for accessing HE have been in force since 2006 for NTAS who have not received the formal education traditionally required for higher-level studies. The Decree-Law No. 64 of 2006 emphasises that in order to attend an HEI, NTAS should possess the knowledge and the necessary competencies, acquired during their personal, professional and social pathways. Another specificity of these new candidates is their age group. Besides not having attended secondary education or holding an equivalent qualification, they must be over 23 years old, hence the expression “over 23” when referring to this type of access and admission to HE. Evaluating these students' ability to attend university necessarily entails: (1) assessing the candidate's CV and qualifications; (2) evaluating the motivations stated during an interview or in a cover letter; and (3) submitting the candidate to theoretical and practical tests to evaluate knowledge and skills related to the course to which they are applying (Decree-Law No. 64 of 2006).

Furthermore, holding a degree increases NTAS' chances of mobility and/or employability, enabling them to progress in their career, since they are usually full- or part-time workers. Their previous experience and life story also help them to develop a different attitude towards education. In dividing their time between their jobs and university, these students are fully aware of the possible application of the competences and knowledge they have gained. HE is very often a chance for NTAS to pursue a career or update knowledge for career advancement (Correia and Mesquita 2006; Johnson and Merrill 2004; Lynch et al. 1989). Due to the fact that NTAS work and study at the same time, they link the academic and professional contexts. In view of the above, we think that

their opinions on educational language policy should be considered since they are aware of the needs and dynamics of these two contexts, and can provide important input to policymakers.

Within this framework, we believe that the inclusion of NTAS in HE is the result of the implementation of LLL by HEIs in a clear LLL process. One of the most important goals in the dynamic reconfiguration of HEIs is thus highlighted by recognising and valuing prior learning (formal, non-formal and informal). Taking into account the opinion of NTAS also underlines the importance of widening access to HE to new publics. On the other hand, considering the opinions of NTAS, who, for the reasons stated above are more aware of what they need than traditional students, is a way of emphasising the crucial role that HEIs play in the social and economic development of society, particularly concerning language learning needs.

3. The study at the University of Aveiro: institutional and students' voices on educational language policy

Considering the previous framework, a study was undertaken at the University of Aveiro (UA), Portugal, on the academic community's perceptions of educational language policies in HEIs, and the relation to lifelong language learning, aiming to answer three fundamental questions:

- (1) What perspectives on educational language policies emerge in this academic context, namely from institutional and NTAS' voices?
- (2) What are the convergent and divergent perspectives within those voices?
- (3) How can this study contribute to the development and implementation of educational language policies in HEIs, namely in the UA?

In order to answer the first two questions, different instruments and methods were used to collect data about institutional and student perspectives (Table 1).

Table 1. Data collection instruments

Institutional voices	Student voices
Document analysis of Study Regulations:	Online Questionnaire completed by 195 NTAS (response rate of 40.2%)
University of Aveiro Study Regulation	
University of Aveiro Graduation and Master's Regulation	
University of Aveiro "Over 23" Access Regulation	
Semi-structured interviews:	
Institutional Actor 1 (IA_1)	
Institutional Actor 2 (IA_2)	
Institutional Actor 3 (IA_3)	
Institutional Actor 4 (IA_4)	
Institutional Actor 5 (IA_5)	
Institutional Actor 6 (IA_6)	
Institutional Actor 7 (IA_7)	

As far as the institutional voices are concerned, besides the documentary collection, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with seven institutional actors who were responsible for teaching and management at UA in the academic year 2007/2008, and content analysis was applied. The interviews comprised four parts with questions on educational language policy, training and language education, languages and research, languages and interaction with society. Table 2 below illustrates the objectives and the questions specifically analysed for this study.

Table 2. Interviews with institutional actors

Objectives	Questions
Identify institutional representations concerning the importance of developing an educational language policy that promotes language learning within graduate education, namely language courses in curricula.	- Do you consider it relevant to integrate language courses in all curricula? Why/Why not?
Describe institutional language representations (status, purposes, importance) within graduate education, as far as the integration of language courses in the curriculum is concerned.	- In your opinion what type of criteria should be behind the choice of those language courses? Why?

In order to access students' voices, an online questionnaire was sent by email to all NTAS attending UA during the academic years 2006/2007 to 2010/2011 (a total of 485 NTAS). The questionnaire was completed by 195 NTAS (40.2%). For the analysis of the collected data, the Statistical Package for the

Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 18) was used and content analysis was applied to the answers to the open questions. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: (1) general characterisation (age, gender, nationality, academic qualifications, job, and attended degree at UA); (2) lifelong learning (language biography and lifelong learning representations); and (3) degree and languages (advantages of degrees and HE contributions to language learning). The questionnaire comprised 18 questions and although most of them were closed, it also included opened questions that enabled the researchers to access NTAS' lifelong language learning representations. For this study a selection of questions was analysed (see Table 3):

Table 3. Questionnaire for NTAS

Objectives	Questions
Identify NTAS' representations concerning HEIs policies, namely of:	- Do you consider learning languages important in Higher Education?
Language learning (which languages, why, etc.)	- Given the choice, which languages would you include in your curriculum? - What made you choose those languages?
The contribution of HE to language education	- Do you think that a Higher Education degree favours the development of your language skills, even if your study programme does not include foreign languages?

It is important to underline that this study focuses on a transitional period at the University of Aveiro as far as teaching and curriculum design are concerned (implementation of the Bologna Process). So, we considered it would be important to observe how curricular restructuring proceeded between 2006 and 2010, and how questions of language policy emerged within it.

4. Data analysis

We will begin the data analysis by answering our first research question – “What perspectives on educational language policies emerge in the academic context, namely in institutional and students' voices?” – focusing firstly on the institutional voice and then on the student. Subsequently, both perspectives are compared in order to identify convergent and divergent perspectives within them. This comparison helps understand how these perspectives may contribute to the development and implementation of educational language policies in HEIs.

4.1. Institutional voice

By analysing the three Study Regulations, we conclude that the issue of language education within 1st Cycle degrees is not explicitly addressed. However, it is indirectly tackled when institutional documents emphasise the following aspects: (1) the need to create a European Higher Education Area where mobility is privileged; (2) the importance of HEIs' internationalisation at graduation level; and (3) the valorisation of students' previously acquired competences (including linguistic skills). Therefore, although the Study Regulations do not include recommendations regarding educational language policies, we believe the importance of developing plurilingual and pluricultural competences is addressed implicitly.

Once the data were analysed, institutional actors were interviewed in order to identify (and relate): (1) representations concerning the importance of developing an educational language policy to promote language learning within graduate education; and (2) representations of languages and their role within individuals and societies' lives and within the institution's dynamics.

Four interviewees believed that it is important to include language courses in all curricula (IA_1, IA_2, IA_4 and IA_7). The main reasons given are pragmatic and linked to employability and mobility. Language learning is, therefore, valued by these actors because it empowers students to access the job market and desired professions ("economic criterion", Dabène 1997): "I'm talking about 1st Cycle students/all of them must leave the university speaking English correctly in order to get good jobs/this must be acknowledged by the institution" (IA_4:018); "I notice that those who can speak English have more career opportunities" (IA_1:06). Undoubtedly, this demonstrates a representation of languages as objects of economic and professional empowerment (Calvet 1999; Lehtonen and Karjalainen 2008), where English is the only language mentioned. Besides this representation, some of the reasons given show that languages, English almost exclusively, are perceived as institutional strategies for achieving graduate education internationalisation (de Wit 2002), namely by adopting a CLIL approach: "I think that English is very important to the institution's competitiveness as far as education is concerned/this not only includes modules, but also entire 2nd Cycle degrees in English" (IA_1:050).

On the other hand, three interviewees (IA_3, IA_5, IA_6) stated that HEIs are not responsible for language education because English is mandatory in elementary and secondary schools or otherwise because it should be pursued by individuals on their own initiative: "in Portugal language learning is ensured by basic and secondary schooling" (IA_3:014); "languages may be acquired in other

contexts/if a person enjoys learning languages s/he should go to a language school” (IA_6:064). Moreover, they emphasise the existence of several extra-curricular language evening courses at the Department of Languages and Cultures that can be attended by interested students, provided they can afford the tuition fees.

The results above show that the institutional discourse (within the Study Regulations and in the interviews) does not show a concern for the role of language learning, evidencing a devaluation of plurilingualism. This result is reflected, for example, in the low number of degrees with language courses in their programmes: in 2009/2010, only 15 1st Cycle degrees (of a total of 50) included language courses, only 11 of these being non-language specialist degrees and the majority being polytechnic study programmes (Accounting, Commerce, Documentation and Archive Management, Electro-Technical Engineering, Finance, Information Technologies, Legal Technician Studies and Public Sector and Local Government Management) (Table 4). It must be noted that the English language is taught in all 11 programmes (both technical and not), but mainly with pragmatic and utilitarian purposes, as concluded in a previous study of language programmes (Pinto and Araújo e Sá 2010).

Table 4. 1st Cycle Degrees with language courses in their curricula (Academic Year 2009/2010)

	Degree	Languages courses
Language Specialists	Languages and Business Relations	English, German, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic
	Languages and Editorial Studies	English, German, Spanish, French
	Languages, Literatures and Cultures	English, German, Spanish, French, Portuguese
	Translation	English, French, German, Spanish.
Other	Accounting	Technical English
	Basic Education	Portuguese
	Biomedical sciences	English
	Commerce	English, Portuguese
	Documentation and Archive Management	Portuguese, English, French
	Electro-Technical Engineering	English, French
	Finance	Technical English
	Information Technologies	Technical English
	Legal Technician Studies	English, Portuguese
	Public Sector and Local Government Management	English, French, German
	Tourism	English, French

4.2. Students' voices

The analysis of the answers given by the students showed that NTAS are almost unanimous (n. 172 from a total of 195) when considering the importance of language learning in HE. Although not all NTAS agree with the integration of language courses in their curricula, the fact is that most think it is important, as shown in Table 5:

Table 5. NTAS' opinion concerning the integration of language courses into curricula

Public	Agree with Language Integration in the Curriculum	Reasons
NTAS With languages in curricula – n. 76 (39%)	"Yes" – n. 61	<i>"it [English] is the most used in bibliographical research."</i> (NTAS 1)
		<i>"it [English] is the most used language in my work place."</i> (NTAS 109)
		<i>"Because it [English] is the most used language in written and oral communication."</i> (NTAS 194)
	No answer – n. 15	
NTAS Without language courses in curricula – n. 90 (46%)	"Yes" – n. 62	<i>"There is a wide gap in the area of languages, because without them professional viability is incomplete in spite of the knowledge in other areas."</i> (NTAS 5)
		<i>"All the books recommended by the professors are in English."</i> (NTAS 25)
		<i>"Because English language is compulsory worldwide."</i> (NTAS 71)
		<i>"Great job opportunities outside Portugal."</i> (NTAS 97)
	"No" – n. 15	<i>"I don't intend to go abroad."</i> (NTAS 104)
		<i>"The number of hours in the curricula should be for specialised courses."</i> (NTAS 152)
		<i>"I do not consider the learning of foreign languages very important or fundamental for my degree."</i> (NTAS 170)
		<i>"The need to learn languages should already have been considered in secondary school or autonomously by all students."</i> (NTAS 187)
	No answer – n. 13	
No answer – n. 29 NTAS (15%)		
TOTAL – 195 NTAS (100%)		

When asked which languages they would include in their curricula if given the choice, most NTAS taking degrees which include language courses (n. 76) said that they would choose English (n. 38) due to its universal use, professional requirements and academic purposes (such as reading bibliographies in English). Other languages were also referred to: Spanish (n. 15), French (n. 6), German (n. 6), Chinese (n. 4), Italian (n. 4), Arabic (n. 3), Russian (n. 2), African Languages (n. 1) and Portuguese (n. 1). The reasons given are, mainly, linked to empowerment of individuals for professional and personal gain. So, whether these NTAS suggested that English (the NTAS' preference) or another language should be included in their degrees, the reasons given were almost exclusively pragmatic.

Most of the NTAS taking degrees that did not include language courses stated that their degrees should include languages (n. 62), specifically English (n. 57). This is due to academic requirements such as reading bibliographies in English, the universal use of the language, professional mobility and employability. Other languages referred to by a minority were Spanish (n. 3), French (n. 1), Russian (n. 1) and Chinese (n. 1), and they were always mentioned alongside English. The main reasons given for these choices are related to academic and professional requirements. Once again, we can conclude that most of these NTAS perceived languages as objects of economic and professional empowerment, and regretted the fact that their degrees did not include foreign languages.

At a first glance we can also conclude that students value the inclusion of language courses, since all the NTAS who learned languages as part of their curricula strongly agreed with this. Conversely, 15 NTAS whose degrees did not include language courses were clearly against it, stating that language learning should not take place in HE, which may lead us to question the overall perspective of language education policies adopted by HEIs.

A more thorough analysis of the answers given by these 15 NTAS shows that they thought that language skills should be acquired in previous cycles or through autodidactic means. So, we can state that those who think that curricula should not include languages expect university students to develop language competences before attending HE.

When asked whether they thought an HE degree generally favoured the development of language skills, even if their curricula do not include language courses, 140 NTAS answered affirmatively, stating that taking an HE degree improves language skills by: (1) reading bibliographies in foreign languages (n. 80); (2) communicating with teachers and foreign colleagues (n. 25); and (3) browsing the web and using software in English (n. 5).

It can be concluded that given that NTAS are in employment, they are aware of their needs and what to expect from HEIs to fill any gaps, namely as far as language education is concerned. Although they value the positive contribution of attending HE to language learning and plurilingual competences, they mention only English as the language they need or wish to improve.

4.3. Institutional and students' voices: convergent and divergent perspectives

The analysis of both institutional and students' discourses has allowed us to identify convergent and divergent perspectives on educational language policies in HEIs. We conclude that convergent perspectives are related to the reasons for integrating (or not) language courses in curricula (see Table 6).

Table 6. Convergent perspectives regarding the integration inclusion of languages in curricula

In favour of integrating languages into curricula	Against integrating languages into curricula
Pragmatic reasons associated with: - employability and professional needs - mobility <div style="text-align: center;">↓ English</div>	HEIs are not responsible for language education because: - schools should be responsible - it is a personal decision (auto-didactical perspective)

So, the main reasons stated for integrating language learning into curricula reveal an “economic criterion” (Dabène 1997) linked to the concepts of the “marché linguistique” (Bourdieu 1982) and the “valeur marchande” of languages (Calvet 1999). This shows a representation of languages, in this case English, as objects of empowerment that enable professional and social mobility and promote greater access to well-paid careers. In this sense, language learning is perceived as an investment from a consumerist perspective (Rimbert 1995) and within “un point de vue d’usager” (Castellotti et al. 2001: 101). The humanist perspective of languages as important instruments to encourage interpersonal relationships and social cohesion is not evident in the data collected.

On the other hand, the reasons for languages not being included in curricula show a disengagement of HEIs from language learning by both students and institutional actors responsible for the education sector. This perspective shows that the role HEIs could play in promoting LLL is still not very clear (Mackiewicz 2002).

There are divergent perspectives regarding the importance given to the

integration of language learning in curricula. As this study shows, three institutional actors interviewed stated that language education should not be a crucial responsibility of HEIs. Slightly unexpectedly, these actors were the Head of the Department of Languages and Cultures, the Graduation Vice-Rector and the Institutional Officer for the Erasmus Programme. Due to the nature of their positions within the university, these actors would traditionally have defended a broader perspective of language learning within HE. On the other hand, the majority of the students believe that language learning is essential in HE, even if it has a merely utilitarian purpose. Moreover, their initial expectations have not only been enriched, but also seem to have been dashed, by the institutional educational language policy.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Considering the divergent perspectives on educational language policies that emerge in institutional and students' voices, we believe that this study highlights the importance of knowing and understanding the perspectives of professional linguists, teachers and other language specialists on educational language policies, but it is also important to include the whole academic community, that is, students' perspective too. Indeed, students may play an important role in the planning and development of educational language policies since "they are sometimes more immediately aware of the importance of languages than university and faculty management" (Sárdi 2005: n.p.).

The results herein show that, from an institutional perspective, there are homogeneous representations regarding the importance of languages and language education. These representations highlight the role of a single language – English – as an object of professional empowerment for students. This may justify the predominance of English in the few degrees offering languages and the suggestion made by some interviewees of increasing the number of 2nd and 3rd Cycles degrees fully taught in English, as a way of attracting foreign students and teachers and thus promoting internationalisation. This type of instrumental representation of languages, particularly English, had already been observed in previous studies undertaken in various educational contexts in Portugal (Andrade et al. 2007). According to this study, students also show a pragmatic view of languages, mainly English. However, the inclusion of language learning in HE is more valued by students than by institutional actors.

If we take the perspective of the ideological positioning developed in part 1, in which HEIs are perceived as multilingual spaces promoting plurilingualism as a

value and a competence, the results herein show a reductive perception of what an educational language policy in HEIs may be. In effect, language learning should not solely rely on the individual's professional concerns and on the institution's internationalisation, but should also promote other relationships with languages, leading to the development of democratic societies, citizenship and its values (such as solidarity and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity). Phipps and Gonzalez underline the above statements when they refer to the process of teaching and learning languages today: "the ways in which we teach and learn languages today are so marked by functional and technicist approaches, in the service of employability and the market, or in the service of philology, that they have become detached from human ways of being" (2004: xv).

From our perspective, the representations observed are mainly explained by a restrictive conception of language which values its instrumental dimension. This conception, held by different academic actors, may influence the educational language policies they advocate: "Les enjeux généraux de l'enseignement de la langue sont en partie déterminés par la conception que l'on a de la langue elle-même" (Council of Europe 2009: 39).

Developing an educational language policy in HE, therefore, requires a reflection about languages and about the role of language competences and the possibilities they offer individuals, such as moving "in different cultural and linguistic environments, so they can take on social, economic, political and scientific responsibilities at a European and international level" (European Language Council 2001: 6). So that this reflection may be consistently developed and transversally shared by the various academic actors, a *locus* of discussion must be created in which educational language policies can be built collaboratively. We believe that studies like this one can contribute to the constitution of those enlarged spaces of discussion.

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Abbreviations list

CEC – Commission of the European Communities

EC – European Council

ELC – European Language Council

HE – Higher Education

HEIs – Higher Education Institutions

LLL – Lifelong learning

NTAS – Non-traditional adult students

Résumé

Tout en valorisant le rôle des institutions d'enseignement supérieur (IES) dans le développement des compétences plurilingues des sujets, ces compétences étant aussi comprises dans leur rapport avec la construction d'une citoyenneté active, nous avons développé une étude dans l'Université d'Aveiro avec les objectifs suivants : (1) identifier des points de vue sur les politiques linguistiques éducatives à l'université, en particulier dans les discours institutionnels et les voix des étudiants ; (2) décrire des convergences/divergences entre ces points de vue; (3) discuter les implications de cette analyse pour le développement et la mise en œuvre d'une politique linguistique éducative dans les IES.

Nous avons mobilisé différentes méthodes de recueil et d'analyse de données: analyse de documents (Programmes d'Études) ; interviews à des responsables institutionnels; questionnaires aux étudiants (adultes non-traditionnels).

Les résultats montrent que les responsables institutionnels et ce groupe d'étudiants partagent un point de vue pragmatique concernant l'intégration des langues dans les curricula, mettant en valeur leur rôle en termes d'employabilité et de mobilité professionnelle. De même, ils pensent que le développement des compétences en langues n'est pas une responsabilité de l'Université. Pourtant, à la différence des acteurs institutionnels, les étudiants soulignent l'apprentissage des langues comme un atout à l'université. L'étude met en évidence la nécessité de connaître la pensée de différents acteurs pour concevoir des politiques linguistiques à l'université. Cette connaissance peut contribuer à éveiller la conscience, au sein de l'académie, de la valeur des langues et à la création d'espaces de discussion de cette question, qui reste assez sous-estimée.

Mots-clés : institutions d'enseignement supérieur ; politiques linguistiques éducatives ; apprentissage tout au long de la vie ; étudiants adultes non-traditionnels ; compétence plurilingue