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## **Language education policy in England. Is English the elephant in the room?**

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*This paper offers a critical review of language education policies and the state of language education in England over the last decade (2000-2010), which has been characterised by a bewildering array of initiatives to promote language learning, year-on-year improved grades of school exams, and language education policies showing little coherence. Conversely, both media and student voices on the subject of language learning in the UK reveal high awareness of the UK's poor performance relative to other EU countries. This picture is interpreted within the context of Global English, proposing that a tacit assumption that English is enough offers a coherent explanation of current practices and policies. Citing economic, cultural and political arguments, the conclusion illustrates the costs to the UK of this dangerous assumption and proposes some strategies that might help to counter complacency towards language learning in the UK.*

*Keywords:* language education policy, Global English, language learning in the UK

### **Introduction**

The UK shares with the United States the paradox of multilingualism and monolingualism (Demont-Heinrich 2007; 2008), in that a great variety of ethnic minority languages (e.g. Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu, Polish) are spoken but many English speakers show little competence in other languages. (European Commission 2006), arguably a paradox arising from the global hegemony of English. The notion that language learning in the UK faces serious motivational challenges in the light of Global English has been discussed in academia, among linguists and pedagogues alike, for over a decade now (Clark & Trafford 1996; Lee et al. 1998; McPake et al. 1999; Macaro 2008). Recent substantial reports and inquiries (see below) into the current state and direction of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the UK are one expression of such public interest. By contrast, official governmental contributions on the topic generally consist of statistics about grades achieved in language exams, a generally positive discourse and a striking absence of references to Global English. In England, language education in the public sector is delivered at Primary (age 5-11),

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Secondary 11-18) and Higher Education (18+) level, but compulsory only the age groups 11-14/15. All students sit nationally standardised and accredited tests in a variety of subjects (GCSE) at age 16+, and can obtain University entry qualifications (A levels) by studying a further two school years, but language study is currently not required for either GCSE or A level (see below).

This investigation shares the notion that language education policies can be powerful political and ideological tools, which need to be interpreted in their socio-political and economic context (Shohamy 2006:76ff), possibly revealing hidden agendas. Language education policy is understood in a broad sense: As Stromquist (2002) has argued, language education policies can be

[...] active (in terms of explicit policy formulation and action) and passive (to the extent that such policies are at times neither acted upon, nor supported) agendas revealing stated and real priorities. What is critical to our understanding of active or passive agendas is that both are influenced by larger phenomena, and so the main assumption of this paper is that policy developments are mediated, shaped, even distorted by the influence of globalization, illuminating the complexity of the national, regional, and global interface. (Stromquist 2002: 37)

In the ever-growing body of literature on Global English, research on language learning focuses - understandably - on learners of English (e.g. Dörnyei 2005, Lamb 2004, Seidlhofer 2005). It is proposed here to consider how this global phenomenon affects language learners with English as L1. The distinction between "passive" and "active" policy aspects allows us to examine how the Global English phenomenon might be mediated differently at "active" and "passive" levels, i.e. comparing reports from practice, statistics, and public voices on the topic of language learning in the UK.

## **Method**

This paper analyses language education policies at Primary and Secondary level in England from 2000 to 2010, as well as UK Government-funded policies and initiatives during the same time span and small sample of public media texts on the subject, using Spolsky's (2004) notions of language ideology within policies. (As policies and practices vary somewhat within the UK, this paper will concentrate on policies in England). By juxtaposing governmental policies and initiatives with practices at school and Higher Education level, and with (public) discourses about language learning in the UK, the study aims to reveal rationales that might explain actually observed practices of language education rather than the rhetoric surrounding the topic, following Spolsky's (2004) analysis of language ideology within language policies and teaching practices. An outline of governmental inquiries and initiatives promoting language learning in the UK will serve to illustrate the level of activity in this area over the last decade.

## Public inquiries and initiatives: lots of trees - where is the wood?

Two large public inquiries have furnished the evidence for a range of initiatives aimed at stimulating language learning: the Nuffield Inquiry and the Dearing Report.

### *The Nuffield Inquiry 2000*

This inquiry, launched in response to an independent working group with representatives from the world of business and employment, set itself the specific aim of reviewing the UK's language capabilities and future needs for policies, strategic planning and initiatives. Chaired by a media star and an ambassador (Sir Trevor McDonald and Sir John Boyd), the committee was asked to assess language skills needs over the next 20 years and make specific policy recommendations as a result of its findings. In May 2000, the inquiry published its final report, summarised in the slogan *English is not enough* (Anon 2002:6), thus directly addressing the danger of the UK "resting" on its L1 skills only. The report stated that the Government had no coherent approach to language learning and concluded: "by any reliable measure, we are doing badly." (Anon 2002:5)

Some 15 recommendations were made, for instance:

- making a 16+ language qualification an HE entry requirement
- designating languages a key skill
- offering language learning from the age of 7
- diversifying teaching to offer more languages currently taught less
- campaigning to promote languages
- implementing a "language supremo" to improve leadership in all aspects of UK language tuition. (Executive Summary)(Anon 2002)

The government response was publicly to acknowledge its shared vision for language learning:

There is no doubt that, despite the dominance of English as a world language, the ability to speak another language - or several languages - is increasingly important in our competitive and global economy. We need to be sure that in our schools, colleges, and through lifelong learning, we are building sound foundations for the sustainability of Modern Foreign Languages. (Department for Education and Employment 2002:1)

However, only a small number of recommendations were implemented, and, notably, making languages a key skill or University entry requirement were not taken up - instead, much hope was placed on Specialist Language Colleges to continue producing linguists of a high standard. One consequence of the inquiry was the launch of the Nuffield Languages Programme, aiming to implement above mentioned recommendations. *The National Languages Strategy for England*, 2002 with its slogan *Languages for all: languages for life*, was developed, including an entitlement to language learning for children aged 7-11 (Key stage 2), and a stipulation that all 7-14 year olds should study languages. (CILT 2002)

### *The Dearing Report (2007)*

Responding to the decline in language learning at school, the government ordered an extensive review of the progress of the National Strategy for Languages, presided over by Lord (Ron) Dearing. Like the Nuffield report, the Dearing Report concluded that MFL teaching was in crisis. The Dearing Report also explicitly compared the huge incentive to learn English in non-English speaking countries to the demotivating effect Global English has on learners in England:

In other countries, the role of English as a world language, and the way it permeates the culture of young people, provides an incentive to learn it and facilitates learning. (Languages Review 2007:11)

The report also comments that pupils find languages “boring and difficult” (Languages Review 2007:7). Among the recommendations were an increase in the number of Specialist Language Colleges, development of a statutory curriculum for Primary Languages, and the launch of campaigns to promote languages, engage employers in supporting language learning, create Open Schools for languages, and much more. The report also suggested developing alternatives to the main language exam sat by students in England at the age of 16, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE; standards are deemed to be roughly at level 2 of the International Standard of Classification in Education = ISCED), not only in response to well-rehearsed concerns about the pedagogical merits of the current Modern Languages National Curriculum (Greenfell 2000: 23; see also Dobson 1998), but also in an attempt to engage a wider range of students in the study of languages. Most recently, the 2010 change in UK government has seen two proposed executions of these recommendations withdrawn: primary languages will not be made compulsory, and a proposed Diploma in Languages - designed as an alternative to the GCSE - will not be launched.

Rather than implementing many of the reports’ recommendations, the outgoing Labour government concentrated much effort in targeted initiatives to promote language learning - these will be outlined next. It remains uncertain to what extent such initiatives will be continued under the new coalition government.

### *Campaigns and Initiatives*

Of the many government-funded initiatives to promote language learning in the UK, only the larger ones will be discussed here in order to offer an overview of their diversity. Many of these are by organised by CILT (the National Centre for Languages), the UK standard-setting body for languages, which offers advice on all issues relating to language learning and teaching.

#### **Promoting languages in HE**

*Routes into Languages* is an £8 million university outreach programme to promote HE language studies among secondary school students. Government-funded university consortia work together on a regional level to encourage language

studies in schools and colleges. The initiative started in 2006/7 and funding has been extended until 2011.

### **Promoting languages at school**

The website *MYLO* was designed to re-introduce fun into language learning, offering games, movies and blogs.

The initiative *Atlas* offers a taste of languages at school. This initiative by University College London and the School of Oriental and African Studies aims to give students a flavour of studying languages at University.

A CILT website dedicated to 14-19 year olds and their teachers illustrates hundreds of "good practice" examples for teaching languages to this age group.

### **Promoting community languages**

Britain is very multilingual; in England, more than 1 in 8 children enter Primary school with a language other than English, such as Bengali, Hindi, Chinese, Urdu, Gujarati, Russian or Polish (DfDS 2005). The initiative *Our Languages* which started in 2007, aims to increase the status of community languages and promote their teaching and learning. The initiative currently supports projects in over 90 schools.

### **Promoting languages at work**

The initiative *Languages work* aims to promote careers involving languages. CILT'S Business Language Champions programme aimed at employers and future employees, promotes the professional benefits of languages to young people.

### **Promoting adult language learning**

The *Asset language ladder* offers an alternative to traditional qualifications, and the UK adult/vocational *European Language Portfolio* (ELP) has been developed for use by adults who are learning languages for work or social purposes (CILT 2007).

### **Promoting language teaching**

The CILT *Graduate Teacher Programme* (GTP) is a teacher training programme for native speakers of French, Spanish and German who want to teach languages in a secondary setting.

To summarise, the two large inquiries of the last decade share more than their main findings and resulting recommendations: both explicitly link the current dismal state of affairs in language learning to the British being speakers of the most powerful global language (Crystal 2003), and the subsequent demotivating effect on learners. Of the many recommendations both inquiries offered, the one relating to launching initiatives stands out as having been implemented with some conviction. These government initiatives align with the official positive governmental response to the inquiries' recommendations (op.cit.) but their linguistic benefits remain uncertain. "Active" governmental

policies and actual practices of language teaching will give a better indication of this. Therefore, the next section will contrast the more “active” policies of the last decade with facts and statistics about practices on the ground.

### **Active versus passive policy: the picture on the ground**

Having presented a plethora of initiatives targeting the promotion of language learning at all levels and for all target groups, this section investigates how “active” policy actually interacts with “passive” policy at all these levels, i.e. how official policy is translated into take-up levels of languages and teaching practice.

#### *At primary school level*

A convincing case for early language tuition was made a number of years ago, outlining its linguistic, cognitive, social, pedagogical and cultural advantages (see e.g. Johnstone 2001; Collier & Thomas 2004). Thus, introducing languages at primary level seems most welcome (if somewhat overdue), as the UK, with the exception of the private sector, seems to lag behind other European countries in this respect (Nikolov & Curtain 2000). The *National Languages Strategy* (2002) introduced an entitlement for every primary school child to learn a language:

Every child should have the opportunity, throughout Key Stage 2, to study a foreign language and develop their interest in the culture of other nations. They should have access to high quality teaching and learning opportunities, making use of native speakers and e-learning. (National Languages Strategy 2002:16)

Quoting a report from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the Department for Education and Employment highlighted achievements such as:

The vast majority of pupils are learning a language in Key Stage 2 in curriculum time.  
Well over half of schools are teaching it to every year group in Key Stage 2.  
The average number of minutes per week is 30–40 (the aim is 60 minutes per week). (Department for Education and Employment 2010)

Looking at the implementation of this “entitlement”, a first conundrum concerns the fact that this initiative was never accompanied by a curriculum. A late realisation of the problems associated with this led to the development of a loose “framework” in 2005, but no compulsory curriculum. The resulting diversity of material covered, varying pedagogical approaches, and different languages taught in different primary schools create problems at the point of transition to secondary schools, usually forcing staff to teach from beginner’s level again. The demotivating effect of this on students has been documented (Hunt et al. 2005: 373). Problems at the teacher level, such as proficiency, language teaching skills and provision of teacher training, are a further concern (Macrory & McLachlan 2009).

If these problems might be attributed to (a lack of) "active" policy and support, it is all the more important to see how the "entitlement" is translated at the school level. In 2008, French was taught in 89% of primary schools, Spanish in 25% of schools, German in 10% of schools and others in less than 3% of schools (Italian, Chinese, Japanese or Urdu, CILT 2010) (adding up to over 100% as schools may teach more than one language). This division of languages, with an overwhelming dominance of French, reflects neither the distribution of languages taught at secondary level, nor community languages actually spoken in the UK. More interesting still, in 2009, only 69% of primary schools were satisfying the "entitlement" - without those that were not facing any consequences (Times Educational Supplement 2009).

Problems at the implementation level could, however, have been anticipated: the last decade has seen some empirical research, based on Scottish data, into success criteria for primary languages teaching (Johnstone 2003, see also Hunt et al. 2005). Johnstone (2003), for instance, found that the factors *exposure to the target language*, *status of the target language*, *quality of teaching* and *teacher interaction* all play a role in the success of language tuition at primary level. Applying these criteria to the primary entitlement would have had very different outcomes indeed. For instance, taking account of *exposure to different target languages* at local level could direct schools towards offering languages spoken in their local community (e.g. Bengali, Urdu). Furthermore, taking account of the *status of the target language* could direct schools towards offering increasingly important world languages such as Mandarin and Japanese, while criteria relating to teaching skills would dictate ensuring a high standard of teacher training. As demonstrated above, however, none of these are currently implemented: the choice of languages taught at primary level seems to be dictated by what (non-specialist language) teachers might be able to offer fortuitously, without linguistic training. The Dearing Report, meanwhile, has recognised that the initiative will only have linguistic success if problems of transition to secondary level are resolved (Languages Review 2007:10).

To summarise, lack of cohesion, coordination and forward planning - especially at the point of transition, as well as the fact that 31% of schools continue not to implement the "entitlement" without incurring any penalties, suggest that improving linguistic proficiency is not central to the entitlement. Furthermore, although the outgoing government had decided to make the "entitlement" compulsory, the incoming government has rejected this move.

### *At secondary school level*

One governmental flagship concerning language learning is the GCSE grade achieved by students aged 16. These grades are awarded as letters in a sliding scale from A\* to G, with A\* representing the highest level of achievement, and A\*, A, B and C grades considered good grades. In 1994, only about 53% of those sitting a language GCSE achieved a grade between A\*- C, and there has been a steady improvement of foreign language grades at GCSE level up until 2009, when 71% of pupils achieved Grade A\*-C grades. (CILT 2010)

The dramatic year-on-year improvement, however, has to be read in relation to the number of students sitting a language GCSE exam: in 2004, compulsory language learning for students aged 14+ was abolished in England. This legislation had huge effects on the number of students studying a language up

to GCSE: 78% in 2001, 68% in 2004, 59% in 2005, 51% in 2006, 46% in 2007, 44% in 2008, 44% in 2009, 40% in 2010. (CILT press release 20/1/10; Roderio 2009) Perhaps more surprisingly, even in the years 1997 to 2004 when a GCSE in a Modern Language was compulsory, only 74% of students actually sat a Modern Language GCSE. Thus, schools allowed some 26% of students, coming from about half of the UK's secondary schools, to forgo this legal requirement. No penalties for this unlawful practice are reported. (GCSE language entries by Key Stage 4 pupils, 1994 - 2009, all schools in England, CILT 2010)

Today, each school may decide on how to implement language tuition, with most private schools still making language learning compulsory up to age 16, but currently three quarters of schools in England have made languages optional at age 14+, creating an ever increasing dichotomy between a minority of high-achieving pupils opting for languages and others: the grade increase is thus a result of falling numbers and increasing self-selection of more able students rather than an indication of improvement of proficiency.

A look at the exams taken at age 18 in England, A-levels, reveals a very similar pattern: the percentages of students achieving A- C grades (A\* for A-level did not exist until 2010) were as follows in 2009: 85% in French, 84% in German, 86% in Spanish, and 91% in other languages. For comparison, only 78% achieved these grades in English, and 82% in Maths, and A-C results improved at both GCSE and A level at a faster rate than in any other subject. However, a glance at the numbers taking up a language at A-level reveals the same decline and "elitist" tendencies as for GCSE: there was a 25% decrease in entries for A level language between 1996 and 2009, 45% in French, 45% in German. The figures since 2008, however, suggest the decline has bottomed out. (CILT 2010)

A comparison of the achievements of UK schools with those elsewhere in Europe is also very revealing: Coleman (2009: 117f) quotes European Commission (2006) statistics that demonstrate that, within the EU, the UK has the lowest average number of foreign languages studied at school, with 0.6 at ISCED level 2 (equivalent to GCSE). For comparison, 16 year old students in the Netherlands study an average of 2.7 foreign languages. At ISCED level 3 (equivalent to A-level), UK students only study an average of 0.1 languages. For comparison, students in Luxemburg study an average of 3 foreign languages at this level.

To conclude, even before schools were legally allowed to drop language tuition from the age of 14 onwards, more than a quarter of students did so de facto. The official abolition of compulsory language education at age 14+ had a devastating effect on what was already a poor uptake of languages in England, the improved exam results only serving as testimony to the increasingly elitist nature of language qualifications. This decline has had inevitable consequences for the university sector: numbers of languages undergraduates decreased by 4% from 2003 to 2007/8 and have been stagnant since. Many UK languages departments have either been closed down (e.g. UWE, Belfast, Sussex), are under threat of closure, or have had to close programmes (e.g. Warwick: French & Spanish, Bradford: M.A. in Interpreting and Translation).

### *Community languages*

The UK shares with the US the paradox of "tremendous linguistic diversity combined with widespread and pronounced English monolingualism" (Demont-

Heinrich 2007:114). Linguistic diversity in the UK is indeed considerable: some 14.3 % of all primary school children and 10.6 % of secondary school children speak a first language other than English (DCFS 2008).

To reflect this diversity, the vast majority of community languages can be taken as GCSE exam subjects, such as Punjabi, Urdu, Japanese, Polish, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Arabic, and diversification into the teaching of such languages is recommended by the National Language Strategy (DCSF 2008). However, a glance at the languages mainly taught in English schools - predominantly French, German and Spanish - reveals they bear no relation to community languages spoken by students (Slattery 2004; Footit 2005)<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, compared to the numbers of students with community languages, the take-up of GCSEs in community languages is minute: in 2007, a total of 5520 students took a GCSE in a community language, nearly 100% of them mother tongue speakers who received little or no tuition in school. The figure represents less than 1% of all language GCSEs taken. Poor provision for the teaching of community languages can be found at all levels: secondary (Roderio 2009), primary (Govaris & Kaldi 2010), teacher training (Anderson 2008), and at HE level: no degree courses for the most widely spoken community languages Urdu, Cantonese, Punjabi, Bengali were available in the UK until 2008, when one institution (School of Oriental and African Studies, SOAS) started offering Bengali. The poor status of community languages is echoed by official Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, Governmental school inspection body) reports (Ofsted 2007) as well as in the public media (BBC 2008, Guardian 2008).

Together with Slattery (2004), we can conclude that the official welcoming of community languages does not match take-up, and that current practice indicates a tokenist attitude towards community languages.

## **Public voices: pointing out the elephant**

If official policies and initiatives show a lack of efficiency and coherence, and make no acknowledgement of Global English, public discourse reveals a very different picture: language students and the media alike often report on linguistic deficiency in the UK, and link this to Global English. A few quotations from university languages students at the Open University, and Newcastle and Durham universities, offered as open comments at the end of a quantitative survey on motivation in language learning in the age of Global English (Lanvers 2010), illustrate this:

I think it is harder for English to learn other languages because French, Spanish etc. are keen to speak English and they are normally better at our language than we are at theirs because they are brought up speaking it. (Newcastle student)

Disagree that British students are just as capable of learning languages as other Europeans: this is due to society and necessity. (Durham student)

... most of us are very ignorant and xenophobic. (Durham student)

... there is a general misconception in the UK that people all over the world speak English. This probably comes down to the fact that UK tourists abroad

often spend their holidays in 'tourist areas' where all the waiters and hotel staff have a decent level of English - it rarely occurs to us that such people need to be able to speak the language of their clients/customers in order to do their jobs. (OU student)

It [learning a language] also helps 'us British' to overcome our 'Island mentality'. (OU student)

The globalisation of English should not deter people from having an interest in other languages. (OU student)

The shortcomings in UK language proficiency discussed by academics (Godsland 2010; Coleman 2009, 2006), including at research level (Lewitt et al. 2009), are frequently echoed in the public media, again linking the phenomenon to Global English. A few headlines from UK large distribution media may serve to illustrate this point:

Poor language skills "hamper UK".(BBC 2009a)

Better language skills essential, executives told. (BBC 2009b)

Chattering Classes. Modern Languages Are Increasingly Becoming an Elite. (Guardian 2007)

Threat of Closure for University Language Departments. (Guardian 2009)

Foreign Language GCSEs to fall to 20 year low. (Telegraph 2009)

Similarly, the HE publication Times Higher Education echoes the concerns over the decline in language teaching at university level:

Languages come under threat as demand falls (Times Higher Education 2002)

UK heads for bottom of the class for poor linguistic skills.(Times Higher Education 2007)

Don't you understand? Irene Macías deplores many Britons' pitiful foreign language skills and employers' apparent ignorance about its growing importance (Times Higher Education 2010)

Student opinions and media concerns are borne out by official statistics on language competencies in Europe: according to a 2006 Eurobarometer survey, 62% of UK adults (the second largest percentage after Ireland with 66%) cannot converse in anything other than their mother tongue, compared to, for instance, 9% in the Netherlands and 33% in Germany. (European Commission 2006)).

To conclude, both the public debate in the media, student opinion and research on proficiency in the UK differs from governmental official discourse in at least two respects: it freely acknowledges the very poor UK performance, and links this to the phenomenon of Global English - in the case of the languages students, spontaneously and unequivocally.

## Discussion

Language learning in England is shaped by a contrast between rhetoric and reality. The rhetoric is characterised by:

- a token effort to improve tuition, as exemplified in the community languages GCSE and primary languages entitlement,
- a plethora of activities aimed at fostering languages,
- positive discourse focusing on achievement, as exemplified in reports on improvement of grades
- an absence of references to Global English

With respect to the last two points in particular, governmental discourse differs starkly from that in the public domain, among academics (Ensslin & Johnson 2006, Coleman 2009) and among language students, as demonstrated above. Furthermore, economists and businesspeople alike have spoken out against the linguistic complacency in the UK. The economist Foreman-Peck (2007) has stated:

The trade results imply that the consequences of British relative underinvestment in languages amount to the equivalent of between a three and a seven percent tax on British exports.(p.5)

[...]

British SME's [small and medium enterprises] lower investment in language skills is not compensated by the advantages of being native English-speakers, as far as export intensity is concerned. Indeed the best estimate is that there is a substantial negative effect on exports that must be attributed to language complacency. (p.12)

[...]

the minimum possible gains from optimal investment in languages for Britain in 2005 was £9 billion.(p.23)

The Director General of the Institute of Directors Miles Templeman, a powerful voice in business, has warned:

The fact is, more and more businesses are looking for employees with language skills, and these career opportunities have to be highlighted for young people. As the complicated process we now call 'globalisation' accelerates, the ability to communicate internationally becomes a pre-requisite for success on so many different levels. That hoary old adage, 'Everyone speaks English', thereby absolving us of the need to learn other languages, will consign the UK to the slow lane of global culture, politics and business (CILT 2005:3)

Contrast this to the view of the outgoing Prime Minister, Gordon Brown:

[...] as the global economy expands, Britain can attract companies because of the skills that we have to offer here. If you have skills, educated in Britain, you can work almost anywhere in the world. (Brown 2008)

In addition to stark anglocentricism, the Brown quotation also demonstrates linguisticism (Spolsky 2004:ix) and a lack of awareness of the complexity of Global English, betraying the assumption that British English will continue to be seen as the desirable high status variety. In the light of ever increasing numbers of English L2 speakers, who have long since overtaken numbers of L1 speakers (Crystal 2003), this assumption is both unfounded and dangerous. If this monolingual and UK-centric view costs the UK as dearly as Foreman-Peck has calculated, it seems highly timely for policy makers to tackle the English is enough fallacy at its roots and acknowledge Global English as a real threat and demotivator for UK language learning. Economic linguists (Grin 2001) and voices from business can help provide facts to underpin arguments for language learning.

## Conclusion

Regretfully, Shohamy's (2006:141) observation:

It is [also] interesting to note how rarely the consequences of language education policies ever get examined. This shows that policies of this sort are mostly lip service and not meaningful.

seems to offer a plausible explanation of the language education policies discussed here. The assumption that English is enough, coupled with actions of tokenism to defuse precisely this accusation, presents a coherent rationalisation of a seemingly diffuse picture. Shohamy also argues (2006:55, 153ff) that unveiling such hidden agendas can be an important step towards their disempowerment. Already, public media and language students make frequent reference to this rationale, even if only to disagree with it. Such open discussion can only help to give greater voice to economists and businesspeople (see above) pointing out the fallacies of this assumption.

The *English is enough* fallacy is often accompanied by misconceptions about the spread of Global English. Here, focusing on other world languages such as Chinese, Arabic and Spanish, could help to offer new motivational perspectives for language learners in the UK. The first impetus of change, however, must lie not in yet another motivation-raising initiative but with "active policies": only coherent policies relevant for the future of the UK, aligning tuition at primary, secondary and HE level, stand a chance, but these also need to be linked to "passive" practice policies, for instance implementing penalties if schools fail to follow through. Such alignment would indeed show real commitment to halting the decline in language learning and to meeting the UK's language needs. In short, it would show that government is finally "walking the talk" (Coleman 2009: 125).

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1)</sup> In this respect, the status of Community Languages in the UK bears resemblance to that in Finland.

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