

Navigating between disciplines: the experience of the Observatory on Economy, Languages and Training

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The diversity of languages presents us, as individuals and as societies, with several challenges. The co-presence of these challenges sometimes seems paradoxical. On the one hand, the diversity of languages can be conflictual and give rise, between speakers of different languages, to a form of competition for access to material and symbolic resources; the challenge is then the arbitration between diverging interests, some of which will have to be framed in order to depart from a confrontational dynamic. On the other hand, many elements of linguistic diversity are fragile and threatened with definitive marginalization; the challenge here is (insofar as we attribute any value to diversity) that of protecting, even promoting, these elements. The paradox that arises from the co-presence between the needs of arbitration on the one hand, and the protection-promotion on the other, becomes even more accentuated in a context of globalization; it can only be solved by stepping back and by establishing, from the outset, the diversity of languages itself as a societal issue to which it is incumbent to respond through a public policy of linguistic diversity. The conceptualization of such a policy, as well as its translation into a coherent set of measures, is only possible through an interdisciplinary perspective. The *Observatoire Économie-Langues-Formation* (ÉLF, University of Geneva) was created in 2003 with the ambition to contribute to the reflection on this necessary interdisciplinarity in language policies. However, this ambition is not without its difficulties. In addition to the scientific challenges inherent in any interdisciplinary undertaking, the materialization of this ambition (in the form of research projects, publications, or even teaching modules) collides with the disciplinary traditions around which institutions (universities, research funding bodies, etc.) are structured. Based on the experience of the ÉLF Observatory and some of the undertakings in which it has been involved since its creation, this presentation proposes a diagnosis of the challenges of interdisciplinarity in language policy and discusses possible strategies for dealing with them.

