

Multilingualism and Knowledge Production

CONCEPT NOTE



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1. MULTILINGUAL WORKING

Multilingual Working as a dimension of MIDEQ is carried by WP11 and is an overall responsibility of the Hub itself. It was written into the original proposal and drew on the research of previous funded projects including *The Listening Zone* and *Researching Multilingually at Borders*.

Languages are key category in identity and thus also a key element in intersectionality. Without address they remain inaudible and invisible carriers of knowledge, translation remains under theorised as both structure and as method and the rapidly evolving technical landscape of language support, language learning and language technologies are used in ways which are without critical engagement.

Multilingualism is the dominant mode of being and living for the majority of world's population. It is estimated that 95% of the world's population are multilingual and that in migrant groups multilingualism takes on additional valences to that in indigenous communities. In addition, the migration cities are centres of multilingual and polyglottic concentration requiring differing linguistic methodological engagements to those in rural areas. Border towns and cities offer additional multilingual complexities.

Multilingualism is a core ethical issue and value. It is also central to the strategic directions of the work MIDEQ is undertaking to consider the inequalities present in questions of knowledge production. Without multilingual knowledges and methodologies and reflection, critically, on these, then languages outwith the mainstream colonial languages of the academy, and especially languages other than English, will remain peripheral. To embrace the epistemologies and methodologies of the periphery and especially migratory methodologies and epistemologies, then multilingualism must be practiced, reflected upon critically and adapted as a permanent methodology and site of epistemological growth.

1.1 HOW DO WE ENGAGE IN MULTILINGUAL WORKING?

How, in practical terms, might MIDEQ engage internally and externally in multilingual working? Key aspects to consider in this regard include the following:

- Consideration of language in a similar way to other protected characteristics. This would then mean that it is embedded in internal and external events through use of interpreters; through finding mechanisms for translation where appropriate and through a multilingual research strategy which allows for equity in the modes and means of knowledge production.
- Use of technical tools which are now largely open source and which, whilst patchy and inequitable, are improving in functionality and are fit for many if not most of the purposes we might require.
- Consideration of strategic multilingual working whereby we chose to operate in different languages for some of our meetings, having to take turns in who is experiencing translation.
- Consideration of use of community translation whereby we enable the translation between ourselves but ensure that this does not blunt participation or exploit one or two key individuals.
- Use of regular stated reminders and gratitude to those working in a language which is not their mother tongue and acknowledgement of what the weight is of the colonial tongue
- Use of multilingual arts to enable some liberation towards ecologyising languages and translanguaging – both concepts which pertain within applied linguistics and translation studies at present.
- Research workshops on the political economy of the invention of both monolingualism and multilingualism
- Language audit.
- Reflective interviews (WP11 is beginning to see how these might follow some of the fieldwork) with researchers on how they are working and researching multilingually to discover the extent of the multilingual ecologies in the hub and also the modes of migration.
- Research outputs which may not be written multilingually but engage in language awareness raising
- Use of and adoption by researchers of language learning methods from in person classes to apps alongside their work with reflection on what a difference multilinguality makes to their research and to fieldwork, but also to analysis and presentation.

2. ADDRESSING THEMES FOR CHANGE

How might this address the 3 themes identified for change and the movement of the Hub from a monolithic structure funded by the UK to a structure which is appropriate to the research and impact environment of south-south migration, following a network model and with a diversified funding portfolio?

- It strengthens capacity and firmly centres the multilingualisms and sociolinguistics of the south as opposed to the monolingual reporting mechanisms of the north.
- It centres migratory languages, or begins the process of acknowledging the need to centre migratory languages
- It changes the narrative by change the means and modes of conceptualisation and representation.



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Suggested citation

Phipps, A. (2020). Concept Note: Multilingualism and Knowledge Production, MIDEQ Working Paper. Glasgow: MIDEQ. Available at:
<https://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/unesco/researchprojects/mideq/#relatedpublications>

Cover image

Music room. Dr Gameli Tordzro, University of Glasgow.

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