

Tertiary Language Learning: A new potential for sustainable education at universities as key actors

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The concept of multilingualism has become increasingly important in scientific research over the past three decades. But also in the political debates at European level, the interest of the promotion of a multilingual concept within the European population could be observed, for instance since 1995 with the aim of the European Union and the Council of Europe on polyglotly. In addition to their mother tongue, EU citizens are to learn two other European languages. At the same time, discussions on the language policy level brought the relevance of multilingualism back into focus in foreign language didactics.

The Common European Framework (2001) highlighted the specific importance of a holistic view of all the language skills and cultural experiences of a person and multilingualism for the teaching of foreign languages. This involved both communicative as well as intercultural objectives. This is precisely where didactics of multilingualism and, in particular, innovative plurilingualism projects as the Tertiary Language Learning or the Multilingual Teaching through Intercomprehension are concerned é but have until now not been or only barely implemented in the educational systems. Why not promoting lifelong language learning through the educational landscapes? The desired language objectives have been formulated on the political level, now we have to act on the educational level. The universities é the catalysts and initiators for persistent innovations é are the ideal and sole promoters for implementing future-oriented multilingual concepts developing multilingual teaching study programs in order to train best qualified multilingual teachers and educators entrusted with the task to educate our youth at the highest linguistic and intercultural level. Language learning is lifelong learning and languages are our basic resource available leading to an open-minded globally-oriented and sustainable society.

This paper deals with the promotion of multilingual skills in society, and firstly presents a recently developed approach to language learning from multilingualism research. Secondly, it intends to outline a suitable approach how adequate innovative didactics of multilingualism can be implemented by the universities and which important role our educational institutions play in this process.