

Translation at the European Union and English as a Lingua Franca: Can erasing language hierarchy foster multilingualism?

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ABSTRACT

The tension between unity vs. multiplicity seems to be at the heart of the European Union (EU). In terms of language, whereas the EU funds numerous projects to foster multilingualism, it is becoming an increasingly monolingual institution because of the ad hoc use of English as a lingua franca. Furthermore, the issue of the EU's translation medium and its alleged transparency, neutrality and universality plays a pivotal role in this debate. Even though translating and interpreting are some of the key activities carried out by EU institutions, very little is said about its mechanisms, as there is no real distinction between originals and translations. Does this strategy really erase linguistic hierarchy or reinforce it by pushing it out of the debate? The aim of this paper is to explore this main question and propose various ways out of the dilemma.

KEYWORDS: English as a lingua franca, European Union, multilingualism, translation