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Editor's Introductory Note on JELiX's Special Issue in the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

2010 has been the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. How can this topic be relevant for Eurolinguistics or linguistics in general? And how can Eurolinguistics or linguistics in general be relevant for this topic? It seems clear that a higher command of a language or of several languages gives people better opportunities to interact with other people (thus combating social exclusion) and to find better job opportunities (thus combating poverty). But different languages and language combinations may be differently powerful in that combat. This is one issue that some researchers have been dealing with since the 1960's, trying to bring together linguistics and economics (cf. Coulmas 2005 for a first overview).

The clear majority of such studies have focused on the socioeconomic situation of individuals. Comparatively few of them (among them Pool 1972 and Coulmas 1992) have focused on the relation between a country's socioeconomic performance and its language sociologies and policies. Therefore, I offered a seminar which was to focus on the interplay between language policies, poverty in general and the status of minorities. We started by discussing books and articles from the relevant literature and discovered that we were facing largely untilled soil. It would still be necessary to simply formulate and test all kinds of hypotheses to contribute to the still incomplete mosaic of socioeconomic linguistics, which could then serve as a basis for decisions on language policies. We therefore continued by enlarging old and asking new questions. Several students wrote papers on different questions.

For this special issue of the *Journal for EuroLinguistiX*, three studies stemming from this seminar have been selected to make a Eurolinguistic contribution to the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The first article (by Joachim Grzega, in English) asks whether language can make someone economically human and happy and relates the socioeconomic Happy Planet Index, the Human Development Index and the Human Poverty Index to 12 categories of language policies for official contexts and to 4 categories of culture-specific communicative behavior and values. The second article (by Anja Eckelt, in German) represents the revised part of a Master's thesis, asks how many native speakers of a country's official language are necessary for socioeconomic success and relates very diverse socioeconomic data, including poverty, to the number of native speakers of the official languages (and thus indirectly to the issue of social exclusion). The third article is a seminar paper (by Jörg Göhler, in German) that asks whether protection of regional and minority languages automatically means protection from poverty and unemployment (and thus indirectly social exclusion). The three contributions also aim at supporting the further development of socioeconomic linguistics. It would be in the sense of *EuroLinguistiX* if socioeconomic linguistics was actually a kind of humanistic linguistics, which combines financial-monitarian, ecological and social-psychological aspects.

References

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