D11.5 – Recommendations for multilingual communication

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INTRODUCTION

The Arqus Alliance is committed to fostering a multilingual environment across its partner universities. Its commitment aligns with the **Arqus Language Policy**, which advocates a *Multilingual University model*. This model integrates local and global dimensions and recognises linguistic and cultural diversity as key assets for academic exchange, intercultural understanding and global dialogue. By supporting linguistic diversity, the Alliance also aims to improve academic, administrative and social interactions. Promoting plurilingualism and multiculturalism creates an inclusive space where linguistic diversity is both valued and used to facilitate communication and collaboration.

Multilingual communication plays a crucial role in the following:

- fostering inclusivity and mutual understanding
- equipping students and staff with skills for global engagement

Arqus Working Group 11 Plurilingual and Intercultural Hub therefore organises activities that

- enhance the plurilingual competence of Arqus students and staff;
- strengthen intercultural competence for democratic citizenship; and
- promote the distribution and use of multilingual resources and tools.

In addition, the Hub has developed recommendations for effective multilingual communication within the Alliance. These recommendations aim to remove barriers for members who may not yet be proficient in English or other Arqus languages. This document presents these recommendations, drawing on theoretical principles, practical challenges and emerging technological solutions – including artificial intelligence (AI).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, the importance of language learning has become more evident than ever. Internationalisation has highlighted the need for effective communication across cultures and prompted institutions like the Council of Europe to emphasise the value of linguistic diversity and competence.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2001, 2020) embodies this understanding and presents language as a powerful tool for creating opportunity and success across social, educational and professional domains. This perspective aligns closely with the Council of Europe's commitment to ensuring quality inclusive education as a fundamental right. In support of this vision, The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers also encourages the use of the CEFR to promote not only language learning but also democratic citizenship, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue (Council of Europe, 2022).

Central to this vision is the concept of plurilingualism, which goes beyond the mere coexistence of multiple languages. It emphasises the complex and interconnected nature of linguistic competence within individuals. Rather than viewing language skills as isolated abilities, plurilingual competence is understood as a unified capability. This perspective allows individuals to strategically draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire in various contexts, thereby enriching communication and a deeper intercultural understanding.

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The concepts of multilingualism and plurilingualism are often used interchangeably, but the CEFR distinguishes between the two as follows:

- multilingualism: the coexistence of multiple languages at societal and individual levels
- plurilingualism: an individual's dynamic and evolving linguistic repertoire, where proficiency in different languages may vary

The CEFR recognises plurilingualism as fluid and evolving and allows for a flexible understanding of language learning – where languages serve as tools for communication rather than isolated skill sets (Council of Europe, 2020: 30).

Plurilingualism can be examined through various perspectives:

- sociological and historical**:** the natural coexistence of multiple languages in communities
- personal and aspirational**:** supporting individuals in developing linguistic and cultural competencies
- educational philosophy**:** encouraging language learning methodologies that embrace diversity
- sociopolitical dimension**:** advocating for the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity as part of European identity

These perspectives are increasingly embedded in European educational policies and reinforce plurilingual education as essential for a more inclusive and culturally aware society (Council of Europe, 2020: 31). Some of the reasons for encouraging plurilingualism – and pluriculturalism – is that, by experiencing them, individuals:

- draw upon pre-existing sociolinguistic and pragmatic competencies, which they further develop;
- gain a better perception of both the general and specific aspects of linguistic organisation across different languages (a form of metalinguistic or interlinguistic awareness); and
- improve their learning strategies and ability to establish relationships with new people and situations.

To some extent, plurilingual and pluricultural competence can therefore accelerate further learning in linguistic and cultural domains (see section 6.1.3.3 of the CEFR). However, neither pluriculturalism nor the notion of intercultural competence, briefly referenced in Sections 5.1.1.3 and 5.1.2.2 of the CEFR, are extensively developed in the original framework. The implications of plurilingualism and intercultural competence for curriculum design related to the CEFR are addressed in the *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education* (Beacco et al. 2016). Additionally, a detailed taxonomy of aspects of plurilingual and pluricultural competence linked to pluralistic approaches is available in the *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* (FREPA or CARAP in French) (Candelier et al., 2012) from the European Centre for Modern Languages at the Council of Europe. The recommendations provided here align with these frameworks as well as with the **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)**, which promotes openness, responsibility and collaboration in research and education. CoARA's principles support the Arqus Alliance's multilingual communication efforts by advocating for inclusive participation, transparent decision-making and institutional knowledge-sharing.

By embracing plurilingualism and promoting multilingual communication, the Arqus Alliance strengthens its commitment to inclusion, intercultural exchange and global engagement. These recommendations

provide guidelines for effective multilingual strategies within the Alliance in order to ensure equitable access to academic and social participation for all members, regardless of their linguistic background.

These efforts align with broader European initiatives that aim to:

- enhance language education;
- promote democratic citizenship; and
- support the diverse linguistic identities of students and staff across the Arqus Alliance.

BEST PRACTICES

This section provides an overview of best practices for efficient multilingual communication. In addition, it gives examples of events with a multilingual component that have previously taken place at Arqus Universities.

EVENTS INVOLVING STUDENTS

- Tandem events with multilingual activities, for example, presentations in at least two languages, after which students find their tandem partners; language "desks" for the "big" languages; tandem partner search, in which each student has a name tag with the languages they offer and are looking for; and a tandem database that is used to find tandem partners for various languages. Events are held each semester and target university students (Leipzig University).

- Tandem events called Let's team up – culture hunters, language tandems. Frequency: each semester; target group: Wrocław University students and students from exchange programmes (e.g. Erasmus) who want to communicate and develop their social skills in English, German, Italian and Spanish (University of Wrocław, Foreign Languages Centre).

- Tandem events called Intercambio Lingüístico held weekly and organised by the Modern Language Centre of the University of Granada.

- Business Meet Up workshops that provide the opportunity for company representatives and students to meet; in Spring Semester 2024/25 workshops were held in English and German (University of Wrocław, Foreign Languages Centre).

- Creation of a multilingual campus in order to expand multilingual teaching and the collaborative and participatory development of a multilingual campus. Preparation in the coming years: testing and implementing computer-assisted translation, using live translation apps and integrating augmented reality translations (University of Graz).

ORGANISING CONFERENCES, ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS AND TALKS

- Implementing institutional guidelines on the use of languages in the official communication of the University that outline the measures to be taken in order to guarantee inclusive and effective intercultural communication, for example, the document *Politiche linguistiche per la*

comunicazione locale e globale (translated version: *Language Policies for Local and Global Communication*) on the use of Italian and English (University of Padua)

- Plenary presentations and talks simultaneously translated (Leipzig University and Vilnius University)
- Conference sessions – held in multiple languages, for example, in Lithuanian, German, English and Spanish (Vilnius University)
- Conference programme – in two languages, for example, Lithuanian and English (Vilnius University)
- Name tags at conferences indicating the languages spoken by attendees in order to foster multilingual encounters
- Presentation or panel being able to use their preferred language (Leipzig University)
- Lunch menus – in multiple languages (Arqus annual conferences) or in two languages, for example, Lithuanian and English (Vilnius University)

COMMUNICATING IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Multilingual Instagram posts in German and English or another language (Leipzig University)
- Multilingual news posts on Facebook in Lithuanian and English https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1AAKQ2wLZ6/ (Vilnius University)

SPECIAL EVENTS AIMED AT RAISING AWARENESS OF LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

- Taster classes for Basque, Galician or Catalan on Open Day; film screenings; music events; and competitions (Leipzig University)
- Free courses for less widely spoken languages, for example, Estonian, Romanian and Georgian. Courses are provided both to university staff and students as well as interested community members (Vilnius University)
- The European Day of Languages celebrations, including Bridging Cultures: The Power of Multilingualism in a Globalized World initiative (Vilnius University)
- Free language classes for transition year students organised during the national #ThinkLanguages week (Maynooth University)
- Irish language courses are made available free of charge to all staff from A1 to B2 levels at Maynooth University. Registered MU students can also take A1–B2 classes as an extramural course of study at greatly reduced rates. TEG exams, Irish language proficiency exams which are administered by the Centre for Irish language at Maynooth University, are also offered to staff and students at discounted rates.

- ✓ **Know** your target audience by gathering data on attendees through registration forms, surveys or other sources and identify language preferences, culture practices and accessibility needs.

- ✓ **Engage** local partners by collaborating with local organisations, cultural institutions and community groups to enhance the event's credibility and authenticity.

- ✓ **Provide** simultaneous interpreting of plenary sessions (if and/or where possible) during Arqus annual conferences, academic events, roundtable discussions and talks. If simultaneous translation is not possible, we recommend that the presentation material be displayed in English (e.g. as subtitles on a screen) while the speakers deliver their talk in their native or first language.

- ✓ **Incorporate** language-related tools in order to include participants with a hearing impairment in as many conference activities as possible (e.g. live-captioning services on screens or professional sign language interpreters for keynote speeches).

- ✓ **Hold** non-plenary sessions in various languages during Arqus annual conferences and any other academic events.

- ✓ **Adopt** institutional guidelines on the use of languages in the official communication of the University that outline the measures to be taken in order to guarantee inclusive and effective intercultural communication.

- ✓ **Implement** the two tools that have been developed by the Plurilingual and Intercultural Hub: (1) *Arqus Terminological Database*, which includes many key terms that Arqus members will need when writing Arqus texts. It currently has four terminology collections and seven languages and contains an ad-hoc glossary on inclusion and accessibility; (2) *Arqus English Style Guide*, which is designed to help improve the quality and consistency of texts written for an international audience within the context of the Arqus Alliance. Using these resources can help increase efficient communication during multilingual events, as well as ensure terminological precision and consistency.

- ✓ **Raise** university communities' awareness of languages other than English and **expand** multilingual teaching and the collaborative and participatory development via multiple channels, including social media, workshops, multilingual campuses, special events and free courses via multilingual campuses.

- ✓ **Ensure** that speaker lineups and content represent a variety of backgrounds and perspectives, including gender, race, ethnicity and cultural backgrounds.

CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

CHALLENGES RELATED TO HUMAN RESOURCES

FINDING SKILLED INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS AND THE HIGH COSTS OF HIRING SUCH SPECIALISTS

Mitigation strategy: plan well in advance to book interpreters, use university language departments to recruit student interpreters (a way for them to gain practical experience) and use AI-powered live translation for less critical sessions

TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

Issues with interpreting equipment (e.g. headsets and microphones) and poor integration of live translation tools

Mitigation strategy: conduct technical rehearsals before the event, have a university technical support team on standby and use reliable digital platforms with built-in multilingual support (e.g. Zoom with real-time captions)

INTEGRATING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

ONLINE MULTILINGUAL EVENTS

For **online multilingual events**, we recommend AI-powered translation features to enhance accessibility:

- ✓ **Microsoft Teams** provides an AI interpreter feature for real-time speech-to-speech translation, which allows participants to listen and speak in their preferred language.
- ✓ **Zoom** offers translated captions that automatically convert spoken content into multiple languages and a language interpretation feature where designated interpreters provide real-time translations via separate audio channels.

Both platforms also support **third-party AI integrations** like **Wordly** for enhanced multilingual support.

IN-PERSON MULTILINGUAL EVENTS

For **in-person multilingual events**, AI-powered tools can also be used to enhance accessibility and communication. These AI tools require paid subscriptions, yet they still reduce costs and logistical challenges compared to traditional human interpreters while at the same time they improve multilingual inclusivity. The price is based on the event size and features:

- ✓ Wordly provides **real-time AI translation and captions** for live conferences, which allows attendees to read or listen to translations on their devices without human interpreters.
- ✓ Interprefy offers **AI speech translation and multilingual captioning**, which is ideal for hybrid and large-scale events.

INTERCULTURAL ISSUES

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN LANGUAGE USE

Different cultures may have varying communication norms, and certain phrases or jokes may not be well-received across all groups.

Recommendation: Use neutral, inclusive language and avoid idioms and jokes that may not translate well. Refer to the Inclusive and Gender Neutral Writing section in the Arqus English Style Guide.

DIETARY AND EVENT CUSTOMISATION

Dietary restrictions because of cultural or religious reasons might be overlooked, which could lead to exclusion.

Recommendation: Offer diverse food options that respect dietary and religious restrictions, clearly label menus and obtain the information regarding the participants' diets in advance.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, many of these recommendations can be easily implemented and at a very low or at no additional cost. Please also see Deliverable 11.4, *Web space with Arqus language resources*, in which we have included a list of language resources and services that each of the Arqus Universities provides in the form of fact sheets. We hope that this will make it easier for you to access the language resources and/or contact the relevant office to inquire about specific language services. We thank you in advance for taking the time to consider how to best integrate multilingual aspects into your events.

The recommendations provided in this document are intended to serve as a foundation for the development of effective multilingual strategies within the Alliance. Furthermore, using these recommendations is a way to ensure that all members – regardless of their language background – have equitable access to academic and social participation in Arqus events. These efforts align with broader European initiatives to enhance language education, promote democratic citizenship, and support plurilingualism and multiculturalism and the diverse linguistic identities of students and staff across the Arqus Alliance.

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