

# University language policy choices: are linguistically distinct debates converging?

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# Abstract

Within a surprisingly short time, the role of different languages in university teaching and research has become a burning issue, a fact which is reflected in the large number of publications and colloquia devoted to this issue over the last decade. However, numerous actors (whether researchers, interuniversity cooperation agencies, learned societies, public bodies providing financial support for research) appear to work quite independently from one another, with only limited reference to work undertaken or even completed in other contexts. Does this flurry of activity generate converging concerns and policies? Or does it, on the contrary, result in dispersion and fragmentation? While it would be near impossible to provide an exhaustive answer to such questions, it is nevertheless possible to spot points of convergence and divergence between different sets of contributions. In this paper, we shall try to make out such points of convergence and divergence across work produced over the past six years in the French-, German- and English-speaking spheres, on the basis of a comparative study carried out by Switzerland's Délégation à la langue française (DLF).

# “Menu”

- I. A rough assessment
- II. The “PLU” project
- III. Preliminary findings
- IV. Tentative steps towards a policy-oriented framework

# I. Rough assessment

# Language(s) and language use in academia

- The status of the question has changed markedly over the last ten years: what wasn't even discussed has moved to the forefront and become a contentious issue
- Despite all this attention, universities and societies at large have a hard time dealing with it; they are still groping for ways to:
  - identify the **relevant variables** to conceptualise the issue
  - come up with an **analytical framework** that bring its constitutive elements together in a coherent way
  - formulate possible courses of action in full **awareness of their implications** (which means assessing the respective advantages and drawbacks of these alternatives)
  - come up with **consistent and justified policies**

# Two main patterns

## (A) Longstanding national language dominance

- In some countries:
  - the general dominance of the local/national language was taken as a matter of course, as in the earlier tiers (primary & secondary) of the education system;
  - (implicit, self-evident) linguistic rules for tertiary were derived from (implicit, self-evident) normal linguistic rules of education as a whole;
  - this view, which held sway well into the 1990s in countries like D, F, CH, A, I, E, B is currently being challenged

## (B) Early (at least “earlier”) departure from national language dominance

- In some other countries:
  - Early spread of an “outside” language — following two main patterns, but typically justified/rationalized on the grounds of inadequacy or even absence of two types of resources : appropriate language corpus and/or relevant educational materials
- ... giving rise to two sub-patterns:
  - B1: in former colonies, use of the erstwhile colonial language (most frequently English or French) – with occasional opposing trends, like the “arabization” policy in Algeria
  - B2: in countries perceiving themselves as smaller, early history of introduction of French, German, then English in tertiary education

# A global academic ecosystem?

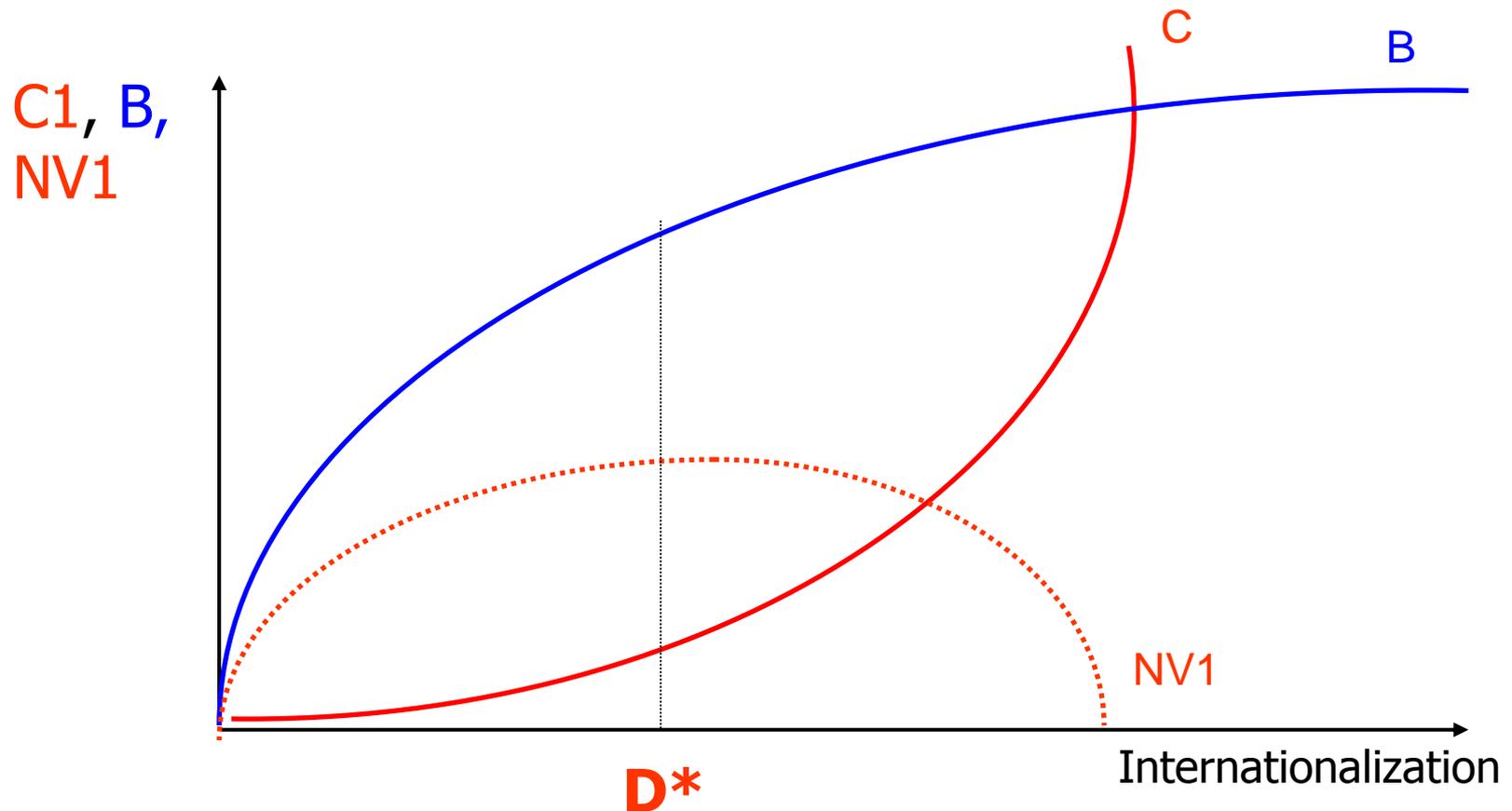
- Actual university systems do not necessarily offer pure examples of these patterns. Rather, they can be positioned on a multi-dimensional continuum:
  - teaching v. research
  - graduate v. undergraduate
  - by groups of disciplines, e.g. “hard sciences” v. “humanities”
- But patterns (A, B1, B2) may be converging – in practice, the former drifting towards the latter as part of a trend often labelled as “**internationalization**”
- However, “internationalization” is an ambiguous notion that lends itself to very different interpretations and occasionally uncontrolled shifts to other notions (e.g. “international education”), with strongly normative undertones

# What does “internationalization” actually mean?

- There is no doubt that “internationalization” is a key aspect of the language issues at hand...
- and as a concept, it constitutes a (legitimate) attempt to come to grips with this rapid change, but it is obviously not sufficient
- However, we still don’t really know what it means
- In discourse from various sources, “internationalization” is never questioned, whether positively or normatively:
  - it is apparently accepted as just “happening”; its causes, dynamics and effects are often left unaddressed;
  - whether it’s good or bad is only partly examined, and inadequately conceptualized
- The simple truth (common to many social processes) that it might simultaneously be good *and* bad is often overlooked

# 'Internationalization': benefits and costs

(like many social processes, it is *both good and bad*)



# A highly complex issue

- What are its **causes**?
  - globalization ?
  - the spread of a culture of “evaluation” and “competition” in academia?
  - the development of NTICs?
- What are its **dynamics**?
  - is it a “natural” consequence of structural conditions?
  - is it abetted by deliberate strategies of linguistic imperialism?
  - is it the result of alienation/servility (Fr.: “à plat-ventrisme”) in some segments of academia?
- What is **good** and what is **bad** about it?
  - answering this question requires a proper identification and measurement of the advantages and drawbacks of alternatives (→ preceding slide + slide #23)
- What **can** or **should** be done about it?
  - is local/national-level action possible/desirable?
  - should action be internationally coordinated if it is to be effective at all?

# An increasingly visible, but still disorderly debate

- **In the media and among politicians:** some very self-assured, unquestioned and often clichéd pronouncements (e.g. “English is the language of science”, “il faut faire sauter le tabou de l’anglais”)
- **In research:** a mass of facts (sometimes anecdotal, sometimes well-established) and claims (some carefully argued, others less so) suggesting that:
  - the empirical reality of actual language use in academia *is* more complex than is often assumed
  - the weighing of the pros and cons of competing claims has **never** been carried out with adequate rigor and depth
- **Generally:** many voices, but often with scant reference to work already carried out by others
  - in other institutional contexts, disciplines or languages

# Questions from civil society

- Actors are asking questions about the issue
  - in op-ed columns
  - through associations with an interest in language issues
  - as taxpayers
- Such questions are difficult to answer owing to the complexity of the issue and to the multifaceted [disorderly] nature of the the debates
- There's a need to reconnoiter and describe the terrain even *before* engaging in an assessment
- In the rest of this talk: some pointers from such an exercise carried out by Switzerland's DLF, with (i) a focus on CH; (ii) linkages with debates in France and Germany, as well as European-level debates often taking place in English

## II. The “PLU” project

# The DLF's “PLU” project

- DLF = *Délégation à la langue française [de Suisse romande]*
- PLU = politiques linguistiques universitaires
- In order to be able to venture some tentative answers to our constituency, a preliminary “mapping” of the terrain

# Organising informational inputs

- 11 types of inputs:
  1. (profiles of) key actors (identifying e.g. learned societies, private or public bodies addressing the issue of language in academia)
  2. information brochures
  3. talks/lectures
  4. press releases
  5. official documents (regulations, by-laws, etc.)
  6. on line-only documents
  7. internal documents (CH only)
  8. events specifically addressing the issue of language(s) in academia
  9. scientific publications
  10. reports (regarding the activity of an institution or a specific event), of which typically only a small part addresses the issue
  11. other inputs

# The “proto-” data base

- This structuring of raw inputs generates a “proto-” data base:
  1. lending itself to simple searches
  2. which can be used in the short run for addressing questions raised by stakeholders
  3. which will be used by the DLF to develop a background document to be discussed with other institutions
  4. which can serve as a basis for designing a “proper” data base at a subsequent stage

# (Proto-) data base: V1-8

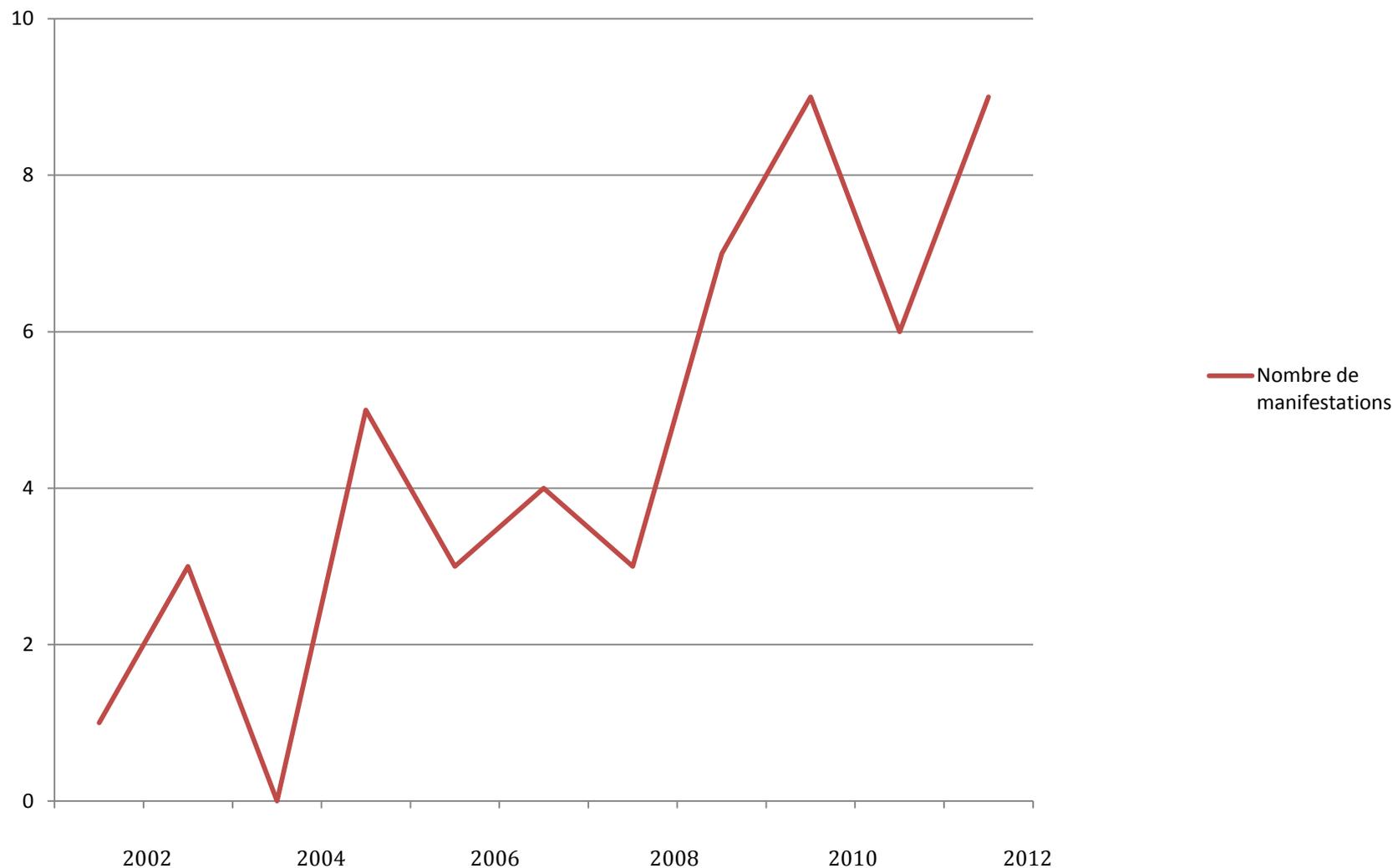
#	Type	Référence	Auteur/Nom	Titre/Intitulé	Année	Date	Lieu	Page(s)
#	communication	Krämer2009	Krämer, Walter	Die Deutsche Sprache in den	2009		Bamberg	DE
#	publication	LaMadeleine2007	La Madeleine, Bonnie Lee	Lost in translation	2007			DE
#	communication	Lenzen2011	Lenzen, Dieter	Sprachlichkeit in Europa und an	2011	12/04/2011	Hamburg	DE
#	publication	Lieberman2008	Lieberman, James	English-Only Science in a Multilingual	2008			
#	publication	LoBianco2012?	Lo Bianco, Joseph	Globalization of Universities and	2012?			
#	document officiel	LU-CH2010	Kanton Luzern	Leistungsauftrag des Kantons Luzern	2010			CH
#	publication	Lüdi2002	Lüdi, Georges	Welche Sprache(n) für die	2002			CH
#	publication	Mackiewicz/CILT2003	Mackiewicz, Wolfgang	Language policy and language	2003			UK
#	communication	Mackiewicz2005	Mackiewicz, Wolfgang ; CEL/ELC	Language in higher education and	2005	15/04/2005	Jyväskylän yliopisto	FI
#	communication	Mackiewicz2011	Mackiewicz, Wolfgang	CELAN - Network for the promotion of	2011	07/02/2011	Brussels	BE
#	publication	Mathé2009	Mathé, Isabelle	Le plurilinguisme à l'université	2009			FR
#	publication	Mauranen2010	Mauranen, Anna	Features of English as a lingua franca	2010			FI
#	divers	Mocikat/Dieter2009	Mocikat, Ralph ; Dieter, Hermann	Leserbrief von R. Mocikat und H.H.	2009	23/12/2009		DE
#	divers	Mocikat/Thielmann/E	Mocikat, Ralph ; Thielmann,	„Lost in Translation - or worse" - Brief	2007	06/03/2007		DE
#	publication	Mocikat2007	Mocikat, Ralph	Die Anglisierung der	2007			DE
#	publication	Mocikat2008	Mocikat, Ralph	Sprache als heuristisches Werkzeug im	2008			DE
#	publication	Mocikat2009	Mocikat, Ralph	Die Diktatur der Zitatendizes: Folgen	2009			
#	publication	Mocikat2010	Mocikat, Ralph	Fertigwissen in der Einheitssprache.	2010			DE
#	publication	Montgomery2004	Montgomery, Scott	Of Towers, Walls, and Fields:	2004			UK
#	publication	Montgomery2008	Montgomery, Catherine	Global futures, global communities?	2008			UK
#	publication	Motz2005	Motz, Markus	Englisch oder Deutsch in	2005			DE
#	publication	MULC2007	Maastricht University Language	Researching Content and Language	2007			NL
#	document officiel	NE2002/2011	Grand Conseil de la République	Loi sur l'Université (LU)	2002/20			CH
#	acteur-clé	NUT	Nederlandstalige Universitaire					BE/NL
#	acteur-clé	OEP	Observatoire européen du					FR
#	manifestation	OEP2005	Observatoire européen du	1ères Assises européennes du	2005	24/11/2005	Paris	FR
#	manifestation	OEP2009	Observatoire européen du	2èmes Assises européennes du	2009	18/06/2009	Berlin	DE
#	manifestation	OEP2012	Observatoire européen du	3èmes Assises européennes du	2012	10/10/2012	Rome	IT

# (Proto-) data base: V9-12

Résumé/Informations/Extrait	Remarques/Précision	WWW	Fichier télé-chargeab
	In: Plurilinguisme,		
Co-constructing communicative	In: Helsinki English		<a href="#">pdf</a>
Dieser Leserbrief ist eine Reaktion auf	In: Frankfurter		<a href="#">pdf</a>
Leserbrief von R. Mocikat, W. Thielmann	In: nature.com	<a href="#">url</a>	
Dieser Artikel von R. Mocikat wurde für	In: Forschung und		<a href="#">pdf</a>
Die Sprache in den Naturwissenschaften	In: Osnabrücker		
	In: GAIA Volume 18,	<a href="#">url</a>	<a href="#">pdf</a>
Ein Aspekt des „Bologna-Prozesses“ ist	In: Forschung und		<a href="#">pdf</a>
Language in science is in the midst of introduction and aims of the paper	In: Science, Vol. 303, cf. Haberland 2008		<a href="#">pdf</a> <a href="#">par</a>
Internationale Studiengänge als eine	Frankfurt a. M.: Lang.	<a href="#">url</a>	
Contributors	Selected peer-reviewed		
Art. 5	*Art.5 (p.2), Art.65		<a href="#">pdf</a>
DE NUT HEEFT EEN PLATFORM- EN	Dutch-Belgian	<a href="#">url</a>	<a href="#">pdf</a>
L'Observatoire européen du		<a href="#">url</a>	
Le plurilinguisme est une condition de	L'Observatoire publie	<a href="#">url</a>	
	Centre Français de	<a href="#">url</a>	
Le plurilinguisme n'implique pas l'abolition		<a href="#">url</a>	

### III. Preliminary findings

# Example: annual number of events\*, 2002 to 2012 ( $\Sigma=50$ )



# Three overall traits

- **Fragmentation:** some convergence on issues like “internationalization” (“a new trope”?) but relatively little in the way of common, coordinated positions – even in fairly small, self-contained contexts like CH
- **Change:** incipient efforts to move towards explicit acknowledgement of the issues at hand, and more coordination in addressing them (AUF, HRK, SAGW/ASSH; CALPIU; etc.)
- **Few explicit policy orientations:**
  - *in specific contexts* – most universities have not (yet) developed a full-fledged language policy, and much remains implicit
  - *generally* – no analytically robust framework is available yet as a source for policy selection and design

# The core problem: under-identification of questions

- Emphasis on pedagogy (e.g. “**how?**”) and on the associated organisational implications
- Frequent oversight of social, political and economic implications (questions: “**what?**” and “**why?**”)
  - What is a proper language policy? By what criteria can ‘X’ be said to be better than ‘Y’?
  - A policy should be **allocatively efficient** (are scarce resources properly used? e.g.: *what are its implications for scientific creativity?*) and **distributively fair** (who wins, who loses, and how much, and is this distribution socially, politically, ethically available?)
- Until these points are addressed, neither universities nor the societies in which they are embedded can make **adequately informed choices**.

# Responses to the linguistic dimensions of “internationalization”

- Beyond a general (and inadequately informed) endorsement of internationalization, its linguistic implications are little known
- Closer examination of the 12 Swiss universities reveals three types of responses :
  - *laissez-faire* (*apparent* non-policy)
  - promotion of English (“fast” and “slow” variants)
  - promotion of multilingualism (not always unequivocal)

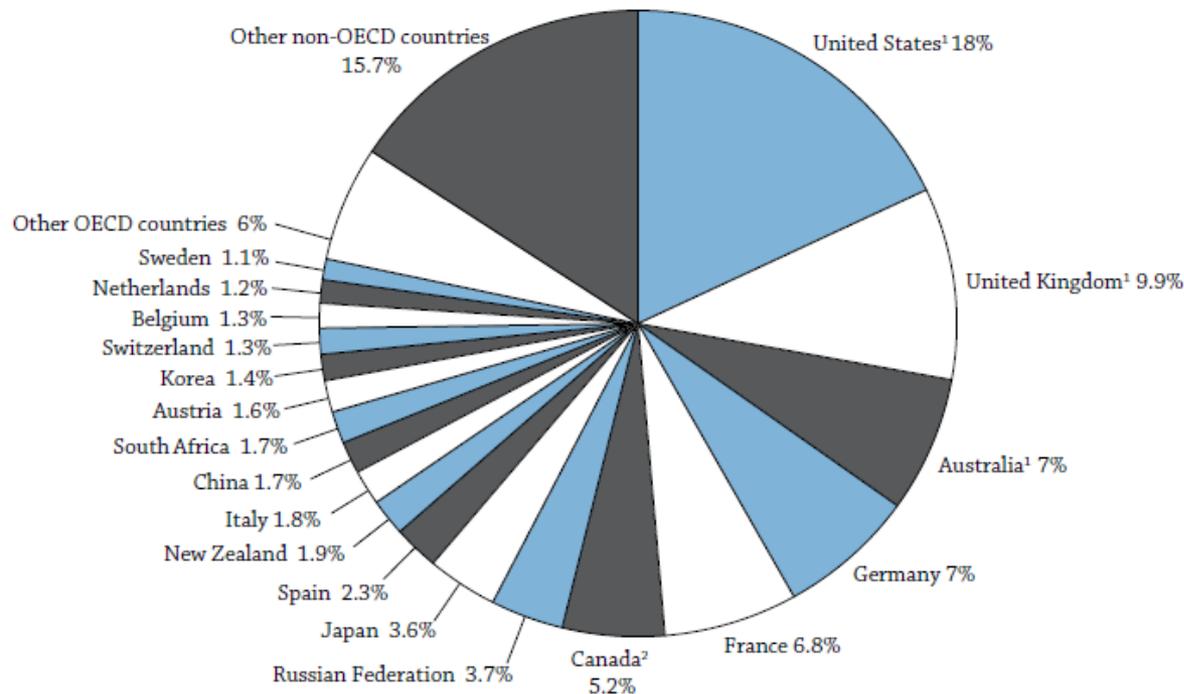
# Can language-related patterns be detected in the choice of response?

- Within Switzerland:
  - differences between universities and possible link with language region?
- Outside of Switzerland: is there a different emphasis in discourse in
  - France / francophonie?
  - German-speaking sphere?

# Switzerland: an overrepresented destination

**Chart C3.2. Distribution of foreign students in tertiary education, by country of destination (2009)**

*Percentage of foreign tertiary students reported to the OECD who are enrolled in each country of destination*



1. Data relate to international students defined on the basis of their country of residence.

2. Year of reference 2008.

**Source:** OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics for most data on non-OECD destinations. Table C3.6, available on line. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2011](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2011)).

**StatLink**  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932461560>

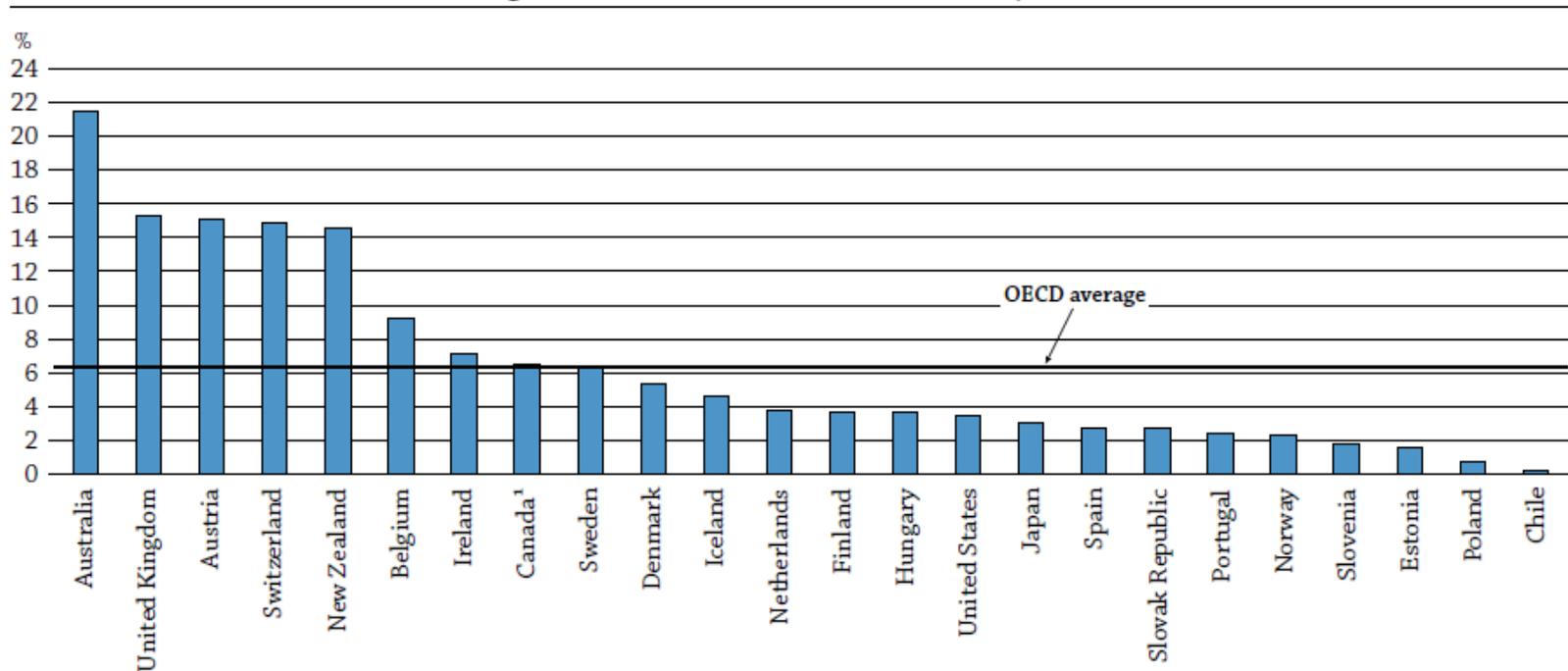
# National ratios of over-representation in international student mobility

Rk	Country	Ratio
1	New Zealand	30.2
2	Australia	22.3
3	Austria	13.0
4	Switzerland	11.7
5	United Kingdom	10.9
6	Canada	10.5
7	Belgium	8.3
8	Sweden	8.1

Rk	Country	Ratio
9	France	7.2
10	Germany	5.8
11	Netherlands	4.9
12	United States	4.0
13	Spain	3.5
14	South Africa	2.3
15	Italy	2.0
16	South Korea	2.0

# CH: strong foreign student presence

**Chart C3.4. Student mobility in tertiary education (2009)**  
*Percentage of international students in tertiary enrolments*



**Note:** The data presented in this chart are not comparable with data on foreign students in tertiary education presented in pre-2006 editions of *Education at a Glance* or elsewhere in this chapter.

1. Year of reference 2008.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of international students in tertiary education.

**Source:** OECD, Table C3.1. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2011](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2011)).

**StatLink**  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932461541>

# The “laissez-faire” approach

- Ex.: University of Basle (German-speaking Switzerland), e-mail message of the University’s Secretary-General, 11.01.12, my italics:

“Die Universität Basel verfolgt keine explizite Sprachpolitik, sondern bekennt sich zum Prinzip der grösstmöglichen *Liberalität*. Sie ist aufgrund ihrer geografischen Verortung natürlich primär eine deutschsprachige Universität, die sich aber im Zuge der *Internationalisierung* zunehmend auch dem *Englischen* als Umgangs- und Unterrichtssprache öffnet”
- “Laissez-faire”...
  - is ostensibly justified on the basis of “freedom”, with no apparent consideration of other criteria
  - results in a drift towards increased use of one language (English)
  - can obviously *not* be interpreted as the *absence* of a policy
- *Swiss examples: UNIBAS [D], UNIBE [D], UNINE [F], UNISG [D]*

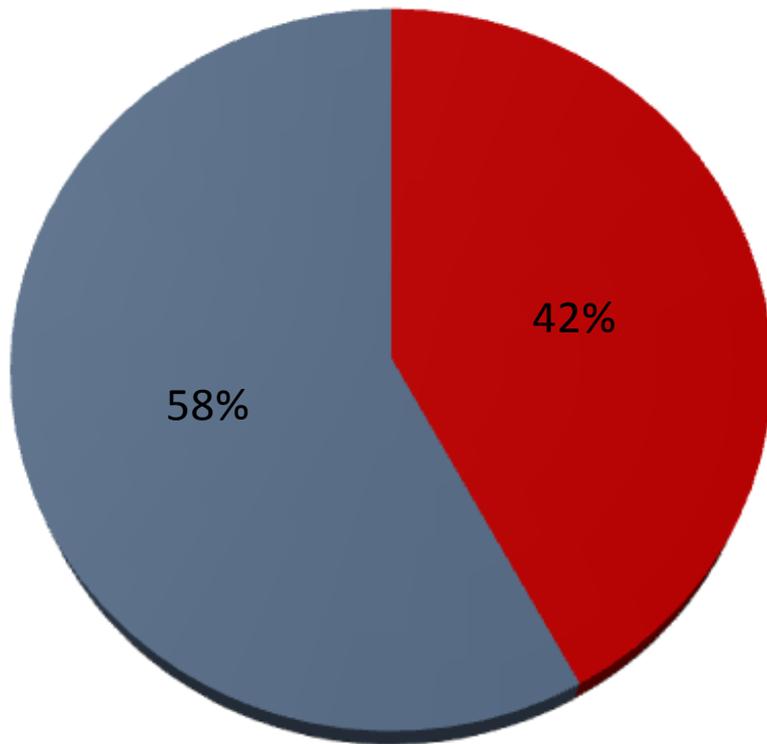
# The “promotion of English” approach

- Even if the result is not always visibly different, the implicit or explicit motivations are:
  - prestige
  - competitiveness
  - faith in university rankings
- Two archetypes:
  - “quick” shift to English-medium university education in MAs and BAs
  - “slow” shift, sometimes presented as a pro-multilingualism approach
- This clearly presupposes a hierarchy of languages
- *Swiss examples: USI [I], UNILU [D], UNIZH [D], EPFL [F], ETHZ [D]*

# The “multilingualism-oriented” approach

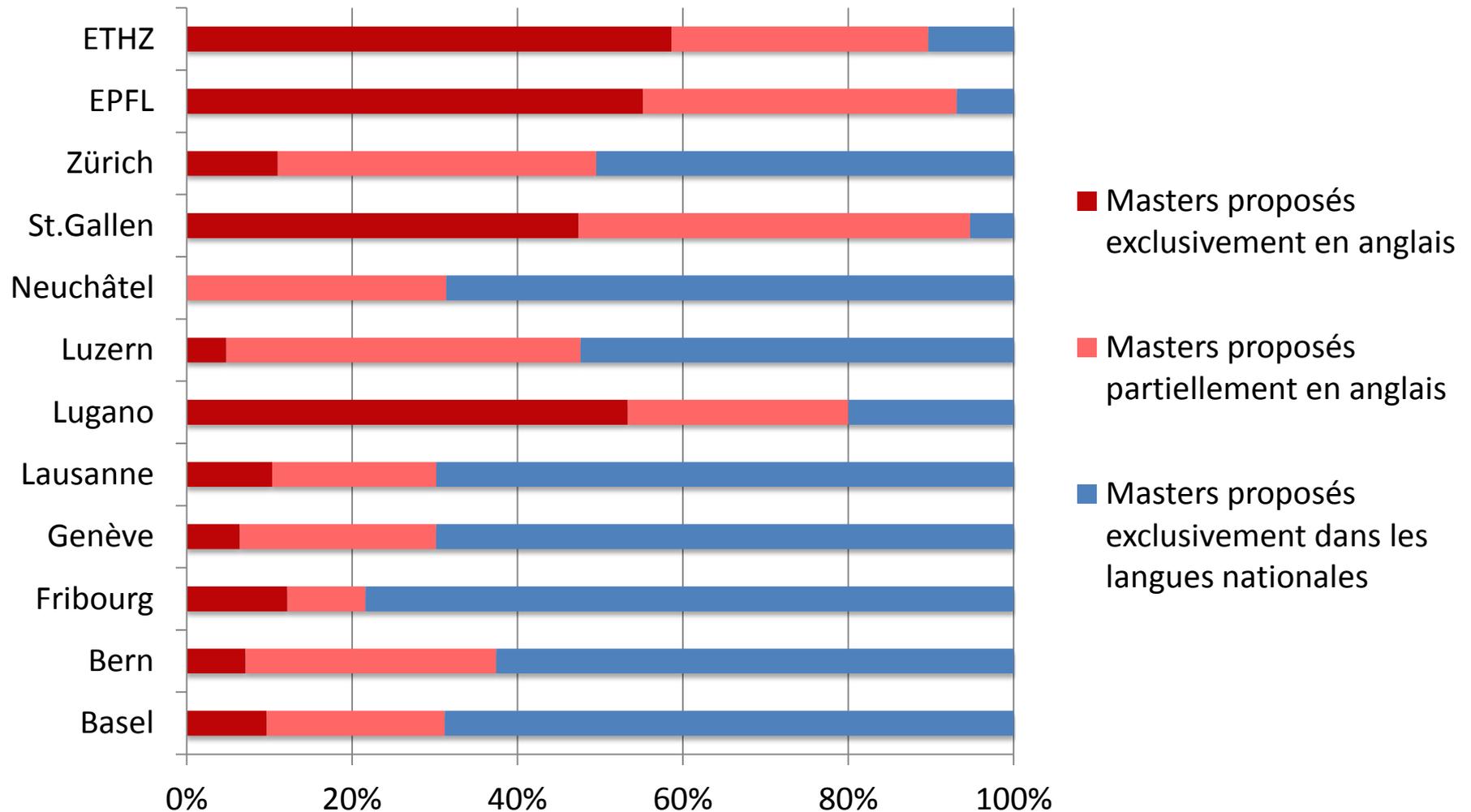
- Explicit discourse in favor of linguistic diversity, including
  - in advanced/postgraduate degrees
  - in the practice of research
- English is included in the range of “components of diversity”, but without exclusive or priority status
- Reference is sometimes made to (what might be called) the intrinsic productivity of linguistic diversity for:
  - production of knowledge (creativity, innovation)
  - transmission of knowledge (pedagogical effectiveness)
- *Swiss examples: UNIFR [F/D], UNIGE [F], UNIL [F]*

# Share of MA programs in English (all Swiss Universities)



■ programmes de Master proposés exclusivement ou partiellement en anglais

# Share of MA programs partly or only in English (by university)



# The “pro-multilingualism” approach in practice

- “internationalization” sometimes barely disguises strong showing of English (→ *slo-mo anglicisation?*)
- the use of English may displace local/national languages from some programmes/courses
- the issue, of course, is not “English”, but linguistic hegemony
- *intriguing ambiguity: BA-level bilingual programmes as a transition towards more or less English?*

# Language region-related trends?

- No clear-cut association
- It may be too early for an assessment
- Within CH: stronger sensitivity to multilingualism (where “multilingualism means  $> 2$ ) in bilingual universities (UNIFR) or historically French-speaking universities (UNIGE, UNIL)

# Country / language sphere traits (1)

- Despite strong similarities between different clusters of discourse, differences in emphasis can be detected:
- “German” discourse tends to focus on the issue of whether German remains a “language of science”; it is the absence of German from the processes of knowledge creation, along with the **‘dissociation’ of German from science**, that seems to cause more concern
- „Um Mehrsprachigkeit zu fördern und **langfristig das Deutsche als Wissenschaftssprache zu erhalten**, ist ein reflektierter Umgang mit sprachpolitisch relevanten Entscheidungen erforderlich.“ (HRK *Empfehlungen*, Nov. 2011)

# Country/language sphere traits (2)

- “French” discourse tends to highlight the presence or absence of French from the **operations of academia in general (teaching, research and administration)**, with some emphasis on teaching; meta-issues of legitimacy and recognition appear to be the chief sources of concern
- “L'Agence universitaire de la Francophonie participe à la construction d'un espace scientifique en français [...] L'adhérent s'engage tout particulièrement à maintenir et développer l'usage du français **dans ses activités de diffusion, de formation, d'enseignement et de recherche**” (*Charte d'adhésion à l'AUF*, [http://www.auf.org/IMG/pdf/Charte\\_adhesion\\_2011.pdf](http://www.auf.org/IMG/pdf/Charte_adhesion_2011.pdf))

## IV. Tentative steps towards a policy-oriented framework

# Five common beliefs [JP]

- Choices are apparently made by academic authorities on the basis of very **general** assumptions, which are often **implicit** and always **unverified**.
  - Explicit:
    - Need to attract the “best” students
    - “Others do it, so we must do it too”
    - “English is the language of science”
  - Implicit:
    - the NET material costs of a shift to a dominant language (whether English or other) are (assumed to be) minor
    - There are (supposedly) no non-material costs associated with this shift (and if there are some, they are summarily passed off as a *necessary* implication of “internationalization”)
- **Each of these assumptions can and must be challenged for well-informed policy choice**

# Challenging widespread beliefs

- Are foreign students **necessarily** better?
- How **plausible** is it that the best “allophone non-anglophone” students pick an English-medium program in a non-English-speaking country (instead of going to the the USA, Britain or Australia)?
- What is known about the **actual level of competence** in English of allophone non-anglophones?
- What is the actual nature and magnitude of the link between the degree of **internationalisation** of an academic institution and its scientific **quality**? How is it assessed/measured?
- What are the **material and symbolic costs** of competing strategies regarding language(s)?
- How congruent are policies with the **actual practices of actors**? (e.g. DYLAN European project in FP6: highly differentiated practices and strong presence of L1s: [www.dylan-project.org](http://www.dylan-project.org))

# Some further pitfalls to avoid

- As for any complex issue, debate on language(s) in universities in a context of “internationalization” may get sidetracked:
  - Narrow definition of allocative implications of alternative policies
  - Narrow definition of the groups with “standing” in distributive evaluation
  - Artificially contrived oppositions [in some quarters of AL] between supposedly different “visions” of language
  - “English as a lingua franca” [meaning: distinct from English?...]

# Among the tools for challenging beliefs: a typology of language issues at universities

- Five types/groups of activities:
  - Languages taught as subjects
  - Language(s) of instruction
  - Language(s) used in research (carrying out of research activities proper *and* publication for different audiences)
  - Language(s) of administration
  - Language(s) of external communication
- Three tiers/levels of action:
  - General policy orientations (G)
  - Organisational questions (O)
  - Pedagogical questions (P)

# Overview of language practices (*examples*)

SUBJECTS	INSTRUCTION	RESEARCH	ADMINISTRATION	EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION
<p><b>G:</b> What languages, up to what level, for whom – and for what reasons?</p> <p><b>O:</b> What budget implications?</p> <p><b>P:</b> How best to impart the skills aimed at?</p>	<p><b>G:</b> Should FLs (=“LOTLOs”) be used? In which programmes or courses? Why?</p> <p><b>O:</b> What need for associated services for teaching staff (e.g. language centre)?</p> <p><b>P:</b> What impact on ways of teaching?</p>	<p><b>G:</b> should FLs / LWCs be used? For which research activities? Why?</p> <p><b>O:</b> What need for associated services for teaching &amp; research staff?</p> <p><b>P:</b> Implications for training of different profiles of PhD students?</p>	<p><b>G:</b> Any <i>good</i> reason to use FLs in admin?</p> <p><b>O:</b> What implications for internal by-laws? What need for support for admin staff?</p> <p><b>P:</b> Specific issues concerning training and language rights of admin staff?</p>	<p><b>G:</b> Institutional image aimed at; targeted student profile and recruitment?</p> <p><b>P:</b> Setting up of language quality assurance</p> <p><b>O:</b> specific issues concerning international affairs officers</p>

# Much work to be done!

1. Closer examination of documents and broadening of information base
2. More systematic identification of trends
3. Reconsideration of the causes and processes determining the dynamics of language in university teaching and scientific research
4. Identification and measurement of the social, cultural, political and economic effects of alternative strategies
5. Comparative assessment of these strategies in terms of efficiency and fairness
6. Policy proposals for efficient and fair strategies

Merci – Danke – Grazie – Grazia – Tak

