

ifa ECP Monitor Comparative Report

Language

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1. Introduction

Language promotion abroad is almost universally the central component of countries' external cultural policy (ECP) strategies. Language offers access to other cultural goods and facilitates economic and scientific exchange and cooperation. It can also contribute greatly to understanding and empathizing with another country. Indeed, it serves as the prerequisite for many other forms of ECP contacts, including education, media, scientific and artistic and cultural exchange.

Unlike other forms of ECP, in which many nations are grouped more closely together for the reach of their foreign broadcasters or appeal of their universities, language is particularly uneven. English is by far the most popular second language, with far more second language learners than native speakers. The competition then arises from the question of which language should serve as a second foreign language. Will global languages Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, Arabic be able to unseat English? And will prominent European languages like French, German, and Russian be able to rise into the top global tier?

Notably, language does not appear on lists of Joseph Nye's (2004) famous categorization of soft power resources. However, its close link to many other fields of cultural relations should clearly classify it as an important soft power asset, which Nye defines as "the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes" (Nye, 2011). Indeed, as early as the 1930s, the United Kingdom explicitly linked language promotion with foreign affairs, arguing that the newly-established British Council could help "create in a country overseas a basis of friendly knowledge and understanding of the people of this country, of their philosophy and way of life, which will lead to a sympathetic appreciation of British foreign policy" (British Council, n.d.). The use of language as a tool of foreign relations has only become more common since then.

The relationship between language promotion and soft power is clearly a two-way street. On one hand, as Yudina and Seliverstova argue, "language promotion may be a powerful tool of increasing the country's appeal in the eyes of language learners both through preparing and selection of teaching materials and providing a comprehensive insight into the culture and values of the country and its people" (2019, pp. 310). On the other, the appeal of a country's culture may increase foreigners' desire to learn its language, as dreams of studying or ordering food in another country could serve as inspiration to master the local tongue.

However, not all reasons to learn a language come from 'softer' cultural factors. Elements of 'hard' (military) and 'sharp' (economic coercion) are also clear factors. Countries with extensive economic or military leverage over other countries often influence which language others choose to learn. This is particularly where former imperial ties existed, but also where modern forms of economic dependency predominate. In many former colonies, the former language of the imperial power is still used widely, yet is viewed sceptically due to associations with oppression.

Even as promotion of languages internationally forms a cornerstone of ECP, internal linguistic divisions complicate both the national and international coherence of language policy. Within a multiethnic society, the choice to promote one language above others internationally

reflects power balances and can heighten tensions domestically. Indeed, “balance of support to minority languages and promotion of a national language throughout the country has always been a vital issue of national policy and interethnic harmony” (Yudina & Seliverstova, 2019). Countries with large levels of linguistic diversity, such as India, Belgium, or Switzerland must contend with these inherent tensions. Nations with significant diaspora populations—such as Poland and Italy—also promote their languages to groups abroad.

This report covers only several of the most widely spoken languages. As a result of the limited scope, it necessarily omits many significant and contested international linguistic relationships around the world. The report is therefore not meant to be a comprehensive account of all language policies, but rather an overview of the largest government-backed global efforts to promote national languages internationally.

2. Language policy in action

The promotion of a national language is almost universally seen as a core part of promoting a country’s image. Additionally, it is inherently tied with other ECP fields, such as media, education, and science. Language may facilitate other types of cultural ties, but the desire to conduct business or study may also strengthen the desire to learn a language. Other ECP tools, like foreign broadcasters or schools abroad, are also often used explicitly as a way to promote the home country’s language.

At the same time that language promotion is the core of national policies, in many cases it exists above the realm of particular-nation states. Many of the world’s most prominent languages—such as English, Spanish, or Arabic—are spoken by many countries around the world. Their promotion is therefore beyond the domain of any single nation. This can create possibilities for cooperation—such as Belgian-French cooperation—but also ‘free-rider’ problems, as smaller nations may be able to benefit from the language promotion efforts of larger countries that share their language.

Efforts to promote and share languages abroad are manifold and many such initiatives are not state-led. In order to give a comparative portrait, however, this report details state-lead initiatives to promote languages. Particularly, it discusses the use of language courses and institutes (foreign broadcasting, schools, and universities are discussed in additional reports, and all are closely tied to language policy). The following sections detail such efforts from nations which speak several of the most commonly spoken global languages.

3. Primary actors in international language promotion

3.1. Lingua Franca

The distribution of language influence around the world is one of the most uneven of any of the ECP fields. No other language carries the same global influence as English, granting the Anglophone countries an inherent advantage in “soft power” as well as fields of cultural power such as education, media, and culture. Due largely to the fact that mass communication was born as the United Kingdom’s and United States’ economic and military power spanned the globe, English became the *lingua franca*. Anglophone countries therefore enjoy a privileged position due to the natural appeal of their native tongue and have to expend relatively little energy on promoting the English language, even as they benefit mightily from its centrality.

The importance of English is largely an artefact of the historical trends of imperialism and the rise of mass communication. The British Empire was the largest colonial empire in history, comprising more than a quarter of the world’s population at the time of its greatest expansion. The common past and continuing cultural, linguistic, political and economic ties between Great Britain and the former colonies are also reflected in the foreign cultural and educational policy of the Commonwealth of Nations.

As it is typical of many British ECP fields, the value of language is expressed in explicitly economic terms. In 2014, the British Academy described the English language as an “important British soft power asset as it makes it easy for ‘Brand Britain’ to project itself successfully” (Quoted in Yudina & Seliverstova, 2019). English’s use worldwide also facilitates internationalizing UK universities and increasing London’s role as a center of international business.

The British Council is the primary instrument of UK language policy. The United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (formerly the Foreign and Commonwealth Office) founded the British Committee for Relations in 1934 to create a “friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of Britain and the world” (British Council, 2017). The British Council still fulfils this mission today by promoting programs in the priority areas of education, culture and society. It has 177 offices in over 116 countries (British Council, 2019).

In 2019, the British Council had a revenue of €1.33 billion, up from 1.1 billion in 2015. However, only about 15% of these funds are provided by the Foreign Office as “grant-in aid” (€ 201 million in 2019) (British Council, 2019). In order to close this gap, the British Council uses English courses and language exams, which are subject to a fee, to finance its other services and programs. In 2019, some 420,000 people studied English with the British Council, while 4 million took the IELTS and other exams (Ibid.). In the absence of substantial government funding, tests and language courses have become an increasingly important component of the Council’s business model. Still, the British Council has managed to grow in the new environment: its FTE count has increased by roughly 1,000 since 2016 (British Council, 2016).

Despite efforts to trim costs, the reach of the British Council is impressive. In addition to in-person contacts, the British Council reaches a total of nearly 800 million people each year,

with 80 million of them direct contacts, the rest through indirect means such as online and through social media (British Council, 2019). It currently employs over 2,500 teachers and has trained over 168,000 (Ibid.). Teacher training is a significant part of BC's work, as English teachers worldwide are encouraged to use its resources and the Council benefits from growing numbers of English teachers worldwide. The BBC and BC also work together with online English offerings, predominantly through teachingenglish.org.uk.

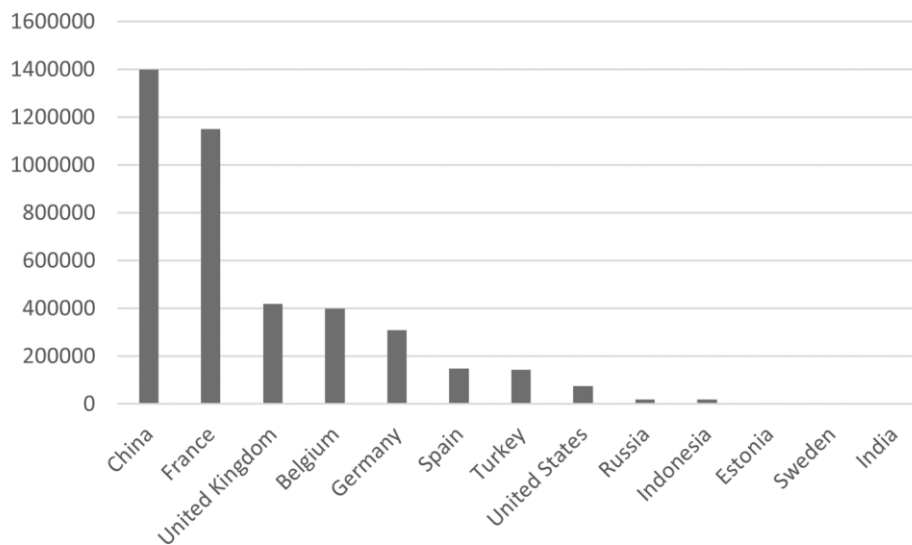
The largest English-speaking country in the world, the United States, plays a substantially less active role in language promotion than the UK. Indeed, language policy expert James Crawford has written that the US language policy is “to not have a policy” (Crawford, 1992). Although language plays a relatively minor role in US ECP, largely due to the advantages the English language possesses, there are some notable programs.

The Office of English Language Programs develops the language programs of the American government. The office works closely with the US embassies and their Regional Language Officers, who manage the programs locally. English language programs have a total budget of \$46 million in 2019, up from \$42.1 in 2015 (ACPD, 2019). Supporting English teachers abroad and offering language courses is primarily seen as an opportunity to prepare people for exchange programs and study visits to the US (ibid., p. 137). For example, the English Access Microscholarship Program allows underprivileged youth from more than 80 countries to participate in two-year language courses.

For the US, the most important assets for language promotion do not directly involve the state. American culture—such as television, music, and film—has an immense influence in promoting language learning abroad. These assets then tie into the political objectives of the US' official language and ECP strategies.

In a further sign of English's significance, many smaller countries have largely abandoned promoting their native language, instead focusing on the use of English. For example, many of the Nordic countries accept that English is the dominant language and conduct the rest of their ECP in it. The Netherlands mostly use English as a language of instruction in their schools abroad and have a wide variety of English-taught university courses, although there has been some domestic backlash to the latter.

Although English-speaking countries reap substantial benefits from their mother tongue being adopted by much of the world, it can carry some downsides. For example, roughly two-thirds of the UK—and similar percentage of the United States—do not speak any other languages. While relying on others to learn English can work most of the time, it does limit many native speakers' ability to interact and connect with the rest of the world in the way that only speaking the language can offer. Some scholars have even argued that knowing English as a second language confers more power to the learner than the native speaker. As Rose (2008) points out, knowledge of English as a foreign language “does not confer soft power on Anglophones but on Europeans using it in interactions with monoglot American and English speakers.”

Chart 1: Number of language learners, 2019

Source: ECP Monitor

3.2. Global languages

Although it lacks the same global dimension as English, Mandarin Chinese has the greatest number of native speakers, at nearly one billion native speakers and over 1.1 billion total speakers. Despite the massive absolute quantity of Mandarin speakers in the world, the vast majority of are concentrated within mainland China. Due to China's rising economic power, however, its use is increasing globally.

China's governmental efforts back up this trend. The Confucius Institutes and Classrooms are the best-known instruments of Chinese foreign cultural and educational policy and fall under the Ministry of Education. They were founded in 2004 as part of the "Cultural Bridge" initiative, which also invested in training Chinese teachers and supplying a better range of teaching materials (Scheng, 2015, p. 64). Although the rapid economic rise in China has raised concerns about "Chinese threats", it has also boosted global demand for Chinese language teaching (Ding, 2008, p. 117). The main focus of the institutes and classrooms is therefore on offering Chinese courses and standardized HSK tests (known as the "Chinese TOEFL"). In most institutes, language promotion is supplemented by smaller, mostly traditional cultural programs, which account for about 10 percent of the activities (Smits, 2014, p. 15).

Unlike the British Council or the Goethe-Institut, the Confucius Institutes and classrooms are set up as joint ventures. Confucius Institutes are in most cases connected to local universities, while Confucius classrooms are attached to schools. As a rule, the Chinese partners are also universities certified by Hanban, the headquarters of the Confucius Institutes (Scheng, 2015, p. 94). However, there are also exceptions, such as the Confucius Institute for Business in London, which is supported by a British and a Chinese university as well as various business enterprises (Ibid., p. 96).

The institutes are jointly financed by both partners, which allows for a rapid geographic expansion with relatively modest overall funding. The Hanban provides the initial costs of around \$100,000 to \$150,000 (approx. €85,000-125,000), bears the costs for books and teaching materials and the secondment of Chinese teachers. The local partners provide rooms and personnel and cover half of the running costs. In developing countries, China often bears the entire cost (Hanban, 2015, p. 99). In 2015, China spent a total of about €240.5 million on the institutes, while the international partners invested about €358.9 million (Hanban, 2015, p. 15). Hanban states that it has spent more than \$2 billion on Confucius Institutes worldwide from 2008 to 2016; starting in 2017, it no longer reports spending on the program.

This cooperation model enabled the Confucius network to expand extremely quickly, even though it has repeatedly met with criticism, especially in the West. At the end of 2019, there were already about 550 Confucius Institutes and 1,100 Confucius classrooms in 154 countries. This represents a remarkable growth less than two decades after the opening of the first institutes in Uzbekistan and South Korea (Hanban, 2015, p. 3). In the first five years, a new institute was opened every five days on average (Hefele et al., 2015, p. 64). Still, even this rapid growth has not met its aspiration. China had aimed to establish 1,000 Confucius Institutes worldwide by 2020 (Smits, 2014, p. 7), but it has not come close to meeting this goal. Currently most institutes and classrooms can be found in the USA and Europe, but the number in Africa and Asia is also rising steadily.

There has been some pushback against the Confucius Institutes, however. As a 2019 article finds that “eight decisions to terminate their renewable CI agreements were all made by the host institutions—Macmaster University in Ontario in 2013, Chicago and Penn State universities in 2014, Stockholm University in 2015, and most recently the University of West Florida, Texas A&M University, the University of North Florida and the University of Michigan in 2018” (Liu, 2019). In a sign of the perceived geopolitical stakes, a US official has asked Taiwan to step in and take over some of the responsibilities for teaching Mandarin that the CIs had previously assumed (Aspinwall, 2021).

The Spanish language trails only Chinese as the language with the second most native speakers in the world and third most total speakers. It is expected it will become the world’s second most important language of economic exchange, mainly due to the growth of the Latin American and North American markets (there are 52 million Spanish speakers in the US) (MINCOTUR, 2015). Spanish is highly popular, attracting almost 22 million learners in 110 countries in 2019, which makes it the fourth most studied foreign language globally (Instituto Cervantes, 2019a). In the digital space, Spanish is the third most common language. Although not consistent, there have been some strategies to try and strengthen the position of Spanish as the second most used language online. This includes for example the Plan for the promotion of language technologies by the Digital Agenda of the Spanish government (Villarroya & Ateca-Amestoy, 2019).

Instituto Cervantes (IC) is the main body responsible for the international dissemination of Spanish through teaching and official certification. Along with the Cervantes headquarters, this objective is carried out through the accredited institutions (Cervantes Accreditation System for Centers - SACIC). 205 such centers exist, 164 of which are located in Spain. Over three-quarters of the other institutes are based in South America (Instituto Cervantes, 2019b).

Showing the importance of international cooperation, the dissemination of language has taken a “new pan-Hispanic” turn (Rizzo, 2020). Apart from the Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera (DELE) certification issued by the Instituto Cervantes, in 2016, a new examination system, the International Spanish Language Assessment Service (SIELE) has been introduced. This initiative treats Spanish as a universal language and embraces different dialects from Hispanophone countries. The other important actor in language policy, the Spanish Royal Academy (Real Academia Española - RAE) which oversees the standardization of the Spanish language (dictionaries, grammars, etc) has also moved from its traditional Euro-centric Hispanism towards modernity and commitment to pan-Hispanism. The Cervantes institute alone offered 16,247 language and teacher courses in 2018/19, administered to 148,670 students, and DELE certifications were awarded to 118,586 candidates.

Unlike Spanish and Chinese, Arabic has no single leader in international promotion, as nine different countries can claim to have over 10 million Arabic speakers. A smaller handful are truly active in the international language sphere, however. Recently, Qatar has reemphasized the importance of Arabic language instruction. For example, the Qatari government passed ‘The Law on the Protection of the Arabic Language’ in early 2019 (Qatar Tribune, 2019). The law reverses earlier decisions to teach certain subjects in English, and mandates Arabic instruction with few exceptions. The law also expands efforts to spread Arabic abroad through institutions such as the Qatar National Library, and through the international debate competition QatarDebate, which now mandates participation in Arabic.

The promotion of the Arabic language also factors into Saudi Arabia’s engagement abroad. This is achieved through the Saudi ‘Educational Missions’ abroad. In 2017, these missions were dispatched to twelve countries with the vision to spread Islamic culture and the Arabic language (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2017). The ‘missions’ consist of Saudi teachers being sent to the respective countries to teach – 297 teachers in total. By far the majority of these teachers are sent to Bahrain, where 211 teachers were sent (ibid.). Although the division of labor of these teachers is not clearly specified, the fact Arabic is already Bahrain’s official language indicates that language often constitutes only a secondary function of these teachers. Bahrain is followed by the Maldives (33 teachers), Niger (14 teachers) and Burkina Faso (14 teachers) (ibid.).

4. Additional actors in international language promotion

Below the world’s truly global languages—English, Mandarin, Spanish, and Arabic—another group of languages with roughly 100-300 million speakers is also highly relevant. Most of these originate in India or Europe and include Hindi, Bengali, French, German, Russian, Turkish, and Portuguese. All are highly influential but derive their power from different sources. India’s sheer size grants Hindi and Bengali great importance. France’s colonial history and its language’s role in international institutions are sources of its power. Germany’s economic might increases reasons to learn the language, while the geopolitical heft of Russia and Turkey boost their mother tongues.

Hindi is the official language of the Indian constitution and one of the most spoken in the world, with over 300 million native speakers (fourth worldwide). However, 21 further

languages are also mentioned officially, and 96.7 percent of the Indian population speak one of these languages as their mother tongue, complicating India's external language policy (The Indian Express, 2018). In light of the British colonial history in India, English has remained a vital and widely spoken second language, although its association with British imperialism has not been forgotten (Bhattacharya, 2017).

The Hindi language is promoted abroad by a Hindi language teacher deployed to each of the India's ICCs in the 36 countries worldwide. These teachers are centrally selected through the ICCR and deployed to the centers for two years (ICCR, 2020). Additionally, the ICCR has launched the 'Propagation of Hindi Overseas' scheme, also implemented in cooperation with Kendriya Hindi Sansthan. The council has also identified particular interest in learning Hindi and Sanskrit in both Europe and the Indian neighborhood. In this context, the ICCR publishes the Hindi-language magazine 'Gagananchal' bi-monthly, which is widely available online (ICCR, 2020a). The scheme supports Hindi classes for international students in one of the Hindi instruction institutes in India. In 2014, 132 students from 35 different countries were granted this opportunity. The most frequently represented nationalities were Chinese (20) and South Korean (20), followed by Russia (11) (Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, 2016).

Still, due to this linguistic diversity, Indian ECP relating to language is not only associated with one single language. While the largest portion of the Indian Chairs abroad, deployed by the ICCR, are in charge of instructing Indian Studies, several professors are also delegated to instruct Indian languages. In 2019, 32 Chairs were deployed for the instruction and study of Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil and Urdu in a total of 23 countries. Total support for Indian Chairs by the ICCR amounts to €1.1 million (ICCR, 2020). Their function exceeds beyond the mere instruction of Indian languages to also multiplying research pertaining to them. The specific curricula and contents of Hindi studies are coordinated with Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, the Central Hindi Institute, which is responsible for promoting Hindi as a national language within India (Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, 2020).

In contrast to Hindi, French has fairly few native speakers in the core country, but a large reach around the world. The French language also plays a special role in France's ECP. Due to colonial history and French's importance in international institutions like the EU, NATO, and UN, it enjoys an outsize importance relative to France's population of only 67 million. France is actively pushing its language's importance worldwide. In 2018, President Macron unveiled an ambitious plan called the 'International Strategy for the French Language and Multilingualism,' which seeks to establish French as one of the top three global languages worldwide. It is explicitly linked to geopolitics—the text mentions the rising multipolarity of power and the need for linguistic multipolarity to mirror this. In an effort to embrace a global role for French, language standardization has been relaxed in favour of accepting local differences.

To help achieve this, the Institut français was created in 2010 to promote French language and culture abroad. The Institute's most recent annual report described "the French language at the heart of our action" (Institut français 2019, p. 7). In France and 131 other countries, 832 Alliance française institutes also offer French lessons, award the DELF and DALF French language certificates and organize cultural events. In 2018, nearly half a million people worldwide took part in Alliance française language courses (Alliance française, 2019). Over the past decade, the number of course participants has risen by almost 60 percent. The Alliance française can truthfully claim to be "the world's largest language school" (Steinkamp, 2014).

In addition to the agency in Paris, the Institut français consists of a network of 98 national institutes with 128 branches, some of them historic, which now operate under the same name and logo to improve the visibility of foreign cultural policy. Other important language institutions include LabelFrancÉducation, which offers bilingual courses. Recently, there was also a significant increase in the number of schools that were labelled FrancÉducation. LabelFrancÉducation has 130,000 students enrolled in primary and secondary education. Another program, FLAM (French as a First Language), is also an extension of French language policy. FLAM has 170 subsidized associations in 42 countries.

German has roughly the same amount of first language speakers as French (about 75 million), yet far fewer second language speakers (60 million versus 190 million). Still, German is rising in popularity due to Germany's economic importance as the largest economy in Europe. The main institution in language promotion, the Goethe-Institut, was founded in 1951 as the successor to the German Academy (DA). The Institute is an association based in Munich whose purpose is "to promote knowledge of the German language abroad, to foster international cultural cooperation and to convey a comprehensive picture of Germany through information about cultural, social and political life" (GI, 2016).

Germany is in a complex position with regard to language. On one hand, foreign students often struggle to learn the language, and the linguistic picture at home has become increasingly Anglicized. However, worldwide interest in German as a foreign language remains high, especially in Europe and in regions with close economic ties to Germany. In China, India as well as in other countries in Asia, South America and the Near and Middle East the number of German learners is increasing. German is seen as an important aspect for a career in the home country and as a "bridge to Germany" to work or study there. There is a clear economic link with the desire to learn German: for example the offerings of the Goethe-Institut in Spain, which were in great demand at the low point of the economic crisis. After the country began to recover economically, demand for German courses also fell (Urban, 2015).

In addition to the 157 locations in 98 countries, Goethe includes a dense network of other local forms of presence, such as Goethe Centers, cultural societies, reading rooms as well as examination and language learning centers. Altogether, interested parties can access the resources and services of the Goethe-Institut in almost 1,100 contact points (Goethe-Institut, 2019). In 2018/19, more than a 300,000 people took part in the Goethe Institut's German courses, with over 700,000 taking exams (Goethe-Institut, 2019). Beyond GI's activities, German is very popular as a second language in much of Europe. The PASCH school network allows many students to achieve German qualifications abroad and German is widely taught in local schools.

In recent years, the Goethe-Institut has also focused on supporting migrants and refugees—both abroad and in Germany. For example, the Institute provided the language guide "Willkommen!" for Arabic-speaking refugees to German initial reception facilities (Goethe Institut, 2017). The foreign broadcaster Deutsche Welle also has extensive German-language offerings, with an online reach of nearly 190,000 (Deutsche Welle, 2020).

Fellow German-speaking country Austria is also active promoting the German language, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. At ten locations of the Austria Institute (Belgrade, Budapest, Bratislava, Brno, Moscow, Rome, Sarajevo, Warsaw, Krakow and Wroclaw),

around 11,000 people attend German language courses every year. All institutes offer certification for the internationally recognized Austrian Language Diploma in German (ÖSD), which also cooperates with Goethe for some examinations.

Russian, once the language of a large empire, has made a resurgence in importance for Russia's ECP. A 2014 government document spells out the perceived political stakes, arguing that the language must be promoted to “attract attention of people abroad to the Russian language, offer more opportunities of studying Russian with a view to expand the country's influence and project a positive image of the country abroad, to enhance its international standing to protect its geopolitical interests” (Russian Federation, 2014). From this statement, we can see that Russia views language in similarly political terms as to the United States.

The promotion agency Rossotrudnichestvo is responsible for the implementation of various government language programs, reaching over 18,000 students in 2019. For example, Rossotrudnichestvo, as part of the Federal Target Programme “Russian Language” (2011-2015), provided teaching material to over 7,000 schools to support Russian language teaching (Smits, 2014, p. 10). The organization operates 60 Russian language courses at Russian Science Centres in 58 countries (Arefiev, 2017). The language institutes are most concentrated in Western Europe (21.5%), Eastern Europe and the Balkans (19.7%), the Middle East and North Africa (17.1%), Asia (16.6%), and CIS countries (11.5%) (Arefiev, 2017).

The Foundation Russkiy Mir was established in July 2007—the official ‘Year of the Russian Language’—by a decree of President Putin to promote the Russian language and culture worldwide (Smits, 2014, p. 11). Following the example of the Chinese Confucius Institutes, the Foundation supports Russian centers in cooperation with foreign universities, libraries and other educational institutions. Equipped with extensive libraries, the centers not only offer language courses, but also serve as information and event locations. The program is active in over 65 countries and has between 80-120 employees (Heatmap British Council, 2018). Additionally, the Foundation supports external projects that meet its objectives, such as the translation of Russian-language authors (Van Herpen, 2015, p. 38).

The federal support program Russkiy jazyk (“Russian Language”) have been implemented since 2006 in order to strengthen the Russian language at home and abroad. The trigger was the feared loss of importance of the Russian language. Although Russian was still one of the most widely spoken languages in the world in the mid-2000s, the number of Russian-speaking people declined steadily. International cooperation of the Pushkin Institute, which offers Russian courses for foreign students in Moscow, is also to be expanded further. Events such as festivals, education and book fairs and competitions should also continue to contribute to the prestige of the Russian language and education abroad (Russkiy Mir, 2015).

The Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, first established in 1966, is based in Moscow and offers training for both Russian foreign language instructors and students of the Russian language. It offers summer and term-length courses at highly subsidized rates of roughly €350 per month (Pushkin, 2020). In total, there are at least 250,000 Russian teachers in the world, including over 100,000 in Russia (Arefiev, 2017).

Turkey has also become increasingly active in promoting its language, especially in its region and in the Turkic speaking countries. The Yunus Emre Cultural Center (YEE) was founded in 2007 at the direct decree of President Erdoğan. Its stated aim is to “provide services abroad

to people who want to have education in the fields of Turkish language, culture and art, to improve the friendship between Turkey and other countries and increase cultural exchange” (Yunus Emre Institute, n.d.d). With 58 centers in 48 countries, YEE pledges to increase its number of locations to 100 by 2023, as part of the centenary of the Turkish Republic (Yunus Emre Institute, n.d.a). Turkish cinema, an important element of the country’s ECP, is internationalised in partnership with YEE. According to its own figures, its total budget was nearly €26 million in 2019 (Yunus Emre Institute, 2019, p. 140).

A significant part of YEE’s efforts center around teaching the Turkish language abroad. The individual Institutes offer Turkish lessons and exams, ranging from the beginner to intermediate levels. As of 2020, nearly 150,000 students had taken courses from YEE, a figure that grows slightly every year (Yunus Emre Institute, n.d.c). Its 2017 revenues for language courses were 3,048,100 ₺ (Yunus Emre Institute, 2018a, p. 149). YEE offers a scholarship to students who wish to learn Turkish, offering between 250 and 525 EUR per month (European Funding Guide, n.d.). It also organizes a summer school every year for roughly 700 students, who take immersive language courses and tour some of the most famous historical sites in Turkey (Yunus Emre Institute, 2018b).

The geographic distribution of Yunus Emre Centers reflects Turkey’s regional aims, rather than a broader global ambition. Of 58 institutes, only those in Washington, Johannesburg, Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, and Seoul fall outside of Turkey’s immediate vicinity of MENA, Europe and Central Asia (Yunus Emre Institute, n.d). The individual institutes seek to “carry out studies for Turkish teaching in the cultural centers established abroad to accomplish the purposes of this law as well as conducting culture and art activities to promote our country, and giving support to scientific research” (Yunus Emre Institute, n.d.b).

The Turkic Council, originally founded in 2009, serves as the umbrella organization for the Turkic Speaking Countries. The idea for the council was first put forward by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2006. It consists of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey, with Hungary, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan holding observer status (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.a). The development agency TIKa also works on promoting Turkish, with many projects designed to spread the language, such as a school that was recently reconstructed in North Macedonia and offers Turkish language courses (TIKA, 2019, p. 37).

5. Conclusion

Language is at the center of almost every country’s ECP, yet only a privileged handful can claim truly global significance. English remains the undisputed global language, with nearly three times as many second language learners as native speakers. Still, the competition for second place is intensifying, as the sheer scale of Mandarin speakers contends with the widespread appeal of Spanish and Arabic. Below that tier, others vie to carve out spaces for their mother tongues, whether that is in neighboring regions, in foreign business, or international institutions.

Language’s relation with the rest of ECP and with the concept of ‘soft power’ is complex. Linguistic ties can serve as the basis for many other interactions, such as education, business, cultural, and scientific cooperation. However, not all reasons to learn a language occur on a

level playing field. Power both shapes and responds to linguistic acquisition. As Yudina & Seliverstova (2019) find, “on the one hand, soft power can be a good basis of [spreading a language]. On the other, language promotion facilitates soft power through a closer study of the country’s culture, mentality and values.”

This interplay contributes to many of the fundamental tensions within countries’ efforts to promote their languages abroad. Should countries focus on traditional economic, military, and cultural forms of power and hope that the desire to learn their language follows? Or teach the language as widely as possible, hoping to reap economic and political benefits later? The countries in this report are spread along this entire spectrum, with many employing different strategies at different points in time.

While strategies toward language promotion differ, the belief that more people around the world knowing a certain country’s language is beneficial to that country is nearly universal. Many smaller and midsize countries now participate in the struggle as well. While English looks to be cementing its place at the top of the language hierarchy, the race for the rest of the podium is intense, and many of the world’s great powers are likely to fuse language with foreign policy ever-more explicitly in the coming years.

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