

Opening Address^(*)

Como Presidente da Comissão Organizadora deste colóquio internacional, gostaria, antes de mais, de dirigir umas breves palavras de saudação e boas-vindas a todos os presentes nesta sessão inaugural, desejando-lhes uma proveitosa participação nos trabalhos que decorrerão nesta mesma Faculdade nos dias de hoje e amanhã.

Aos Senhores Presidentes dos Conselhos Directivo, Científico e Pedagógico da Faculdade, assim como às Presidentes do Departamento de Estudos Portugueses e Estudos Românicos e da sua Secção de Linguística, cuja presença nesta cerimónia muito nos honra, aproveito para expressar o nosso agradecimento sincero por todo apoio que nos foi concedido pela Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto.

Agradeço também ao Centro de Linguística da Universidade do Porto, nas pessoas do seu Coordenador Científico e da sua Presidente da Comissão Directiva, a forma como, nomeadamente através de uma comparticipação financeira, se quis associar a esta realização.

Além da Faculdade e do Centro de Linguística, outras entidades nos apoiaram na organização deste evento, pelo que me é muito grato nomear também a Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, através do seu Programa FACC e Programa Operacional Ciência, Tecnologia, Inovação do Quadro Comunitário de Apoio III, a Embaixada de Espanha em Lisboa, através dos seus Serviços Culturais, o Consulado da República Federal da Alemanha no Porto e a delegação portuense da companhia aérea alemã Lufthansa.

Aos funcionários da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto D. Maria Helena Santos e Sr. João Pedro Costa, bem como à D. Deolinda Gomes, do Centro de Linguística da Universidade do Porto, gostaria de deixar expressos os agradecimentos da Comissão Organizadora pela forma solícita e diligente como souberam aligeirar muitos dos afazeres organizativos inerentes a uma realização deste tipo.

^(*) This text was read by Prof. Maria da Graça Pinto at the opening session of the conference.

Aux orateurs invités de ce colloque, je ne peux que remercier vivement leur disponibilité pour y participer. Je vous souhaite un agréable séjour à Porto et je suis bien sûre que votre présence aidera tous les participants dans cette initiative à mieux comprendre certains des plus importants et bouleversants défis qui se posent aux sociétés européennes actuelles.

D'une certaine façon, quelques-uns de nos invités sont déjà des amis de cette faculté, étant donné que ce n'est pas la première fois qu'ils nous visitent. Je pense très spécialement au 5ème congrès international de la *Société Internationale de Psycholinguistique Appliquée*, que nous avons organisé ici en 1997 et qui nous a donné l'occasion d'apprendre immensément avec les communications des Professeurs Tatiana Slama-Cazacu, Stefania Stame, Diane Ponterotto et Susanna Annese. Nous attendons donc avec un grand intérêt vos interventions.

Aux Professeurs Miquel Siguan, Andrée Tabouret-Keller et Bernd Spillner, que nous recevons pour la première fois — en espérant que l'avenir nous permettra d'approfondir ce contact —, je voudrais adresser une bienvenue très spéciale et leur dire que c'est un grand honneur de compter sur eux dans notre programme.

Etant donné que le thème de ce colloque est la diversité linguistique, je me permets de présenter quelques idées en anglais.

When my colleague João Veloso asked me if I would agree to organise with him a restricted invitational conference with a few European scholars, I not only accepted the idea, but also found it very interesting.

As we all know, European universities and higher education institutions are now discussing the harmonisation of European Higher Education and a conference on topics concerning multilingualism and multiculturalism in Europe, as well as the new technologies, was naturally welcomed.

The proposals of the invited speakers on the main topic of the conference will certainly contribute to the debate which is expected to take place within the University by its members (teachers, students and administrative staff) as European citizens, conscious of their role in the European area.

The challenges implied by the Bologna Declaration (1999), which takes up the ideas of the Sorbonne Declaration (1998) and is followed, among others, by the Prague meeting (2001), as far as the establishment, by 2010, of the European Higher Education Area is concerned, could then find a moment of reflection at this conference.

The main topic of the conference is also not alien to what can be read in the documents connected with the above mentioned European area: respect for the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems, and University autonomy.

Moreover, in the «Déclaration conjointe sur l'harmonisation de l'architecture du système européen de l'enseignement supérieur», signed in Paris (Sorbonne), on 25 May 1998, by four European ministers in charge of Higher Education (from France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom), a passage is to be found which is echoed by the title we proposed for this conference: "Dans le cycle conduisant à la licence, les étudiants devraient se voir offrir des programmes suffisamment diversifiés, comprenant notamment la possibilité de suivre des études pluridisciplinaires, d'acquérir une compétence en langues vivantes et d'utiliser les nouvelles technologies de l'information".

Does the content of this quotation correspond to the challenges we will be faced with in the new millennium regarding what European citizens are expecting so that they obtain the competences required by the “society of knowledge”?

Neither is this question rhetorical nor does the answer to it deserve common agreement.

It is unquestionable that Europe is multilingual and it is desirable that European citizens become plurilingual.

According to G. Engwall (2001), the idea of affording European citizens a multicultural and multilingual Europe is in agreement with the decision of the Council of Europe and the European Union to establish 2001 as the European Year of Languages.

European citizens must therefore defend their languages and cultures and privilege the diversity as far as it gives witness to their identity, not failing to respect the necessity of the existence of Europe as an area with common interests.

To this purpose, and bearing in mind the European area where we live, I agree with G. Haug (2001) when he says that it is so bad not to speak English as to speak but English.

As far as the new technologies are concerned, they will very probably lead us to question the percentage of the world population we are taking into consideration when we refer to them and, on the other hand, will help us to associate their existence with the problem of globalisation and of the new literacies.

And because I believe that, in this context, it is not only a prerogative of the Ministers of Education to establish what the “European Higher Education Area” must be, I hope that this conference meets the demand which is present in the documents connected with the establishment of the mentioned area. Indeed, University teachers and students must present proposals, must be proactive, and must be actors in this process.

As far as we — linguists or psycholinguists — are concerned, it is my feeling that people expect from us, due to our training, knowledge, preparation and sensitivity, a very valuable contribution to the establishment of a European area where everybody should feel at home, regardless of the language and culture involved.

REFERENCES

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