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The Mercator newsletter informs you about the news of the five Mercator Network partners:

Mercator Research Centre of the Fryske Akademy

Mercator Media

Mercator Legislation / CUSC-UB

**Stockholm
University**

Research Institute for Linguistics

Newsletter focusing on multilingual regions dealing with regional or minority languages, but also immigrant languages and smaller state languages, with emphasis on language needs arising from migration and globalisation. Submit your subscription request, comments or suggestions to: **Richard de Boer** (Fryske Akademy).

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17-19 September 2015: LEARNMe Conference in Budapest

On 18 and 19 September, the international conference of the LEARNMe project will be held in Budapest. Organization is in the hands of Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy Science, one of the Mercator Network partner institutes.

Central aims are to present the White Paper with the main outcomes of the project, to expand on topics deserving more attention, and to bring together researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders to discuss the scholarly and practical challenges of multilingualism in Europe.



Among the speakers will be **Dr Tibor Navracsics** (European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport), **Dr László Lovász** (President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences),

as well as a wide range of European experts in the fields of linguistic diversity, multilingualism and minority languages. The conference is open freely to anyone interested. Registration through the conference website is requested.

See: www.learnme.eu.

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Volunteers help with the migration crisis by teaching the local language



From German to Swedish, volunteers are doing their bit to help with the migration crisis by teaching the local language.

69-year-old retired teacher BJ is a Brit who's been living in Sweden for almost 40 years. She was approached by asylum seekers at her local migration office who wanted her to help them learn Swedish. "Until my retirement I taught German, French and English at the equivalent of sixth form level here in Sweden. I looked forward to my retirement but wanted some sort of useful social occupation, so

I started going to the local migration office premises and was soon approached by newly-arrived asylum seekers asking if I could help them learn Swedish."

Dr Otto Deutsch, a 71-year-old retired minister of the Lutheran Church in Saarbrücken, Germany, is just one of many helping with the crisis by teaching refugees languages. "I have been teaching German since 2009 to migrant kids in the kindergarten that was part of my local church. The Saarland Ministry of the Interior, Culture and European Affairs had published a call for help in our regional newspaper and I wanted to volunteer in some way. Right now I have joined a network called Netzwerk Ankommen Saarbrücken (Network Arrival Saarbrücken) that runs German classes particularly for Syrian refugees. Its run by volunteers, but facilitated by the city of Saarbrücken."

Source: [The Guardian](#), 11 September 2015.

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7-8 October 2015: Open Learning in Minority Languages (LangOER)

On 7 and 8 October, the LangOER network is organizing a seminar in Leeuwarden (The Netherlands) on the chances and perspectives of open learning in minority and regional languages. How can different language communities and cross-border collaboration advance the development of open educational resources (OER)?



The seminar *Open Learning in Minority Languages* will offer selected workshops fostering collaborations and discussions around open educational practice and regional and minority languages, up to discussions on on-going activities, and policies. The program includes presentations by OER experts Robert Schuwer (Fontys), Alastair Creelman (Linnaeus University), and Giulia Torresin (Web2Learn). The seminar is organized by the LangOER project, which is supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme.

LangOER (2014-2016) is a European network focused on enhancing the linguistic and cultural components of OER (open educational resources) by offering OER in less used languages and by enhancing sustainability through OER reuse. The seminar is hosted by the Fryske Akademy, which is the home of the Mercator Research Centre.

More information about the seminar and registration see the [LangOER events page](#).

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European Day of Languages: Drongo Festival and Frisian Google Translate



In our time of globalisation and digitisation, digital visibility has become one of the most important preconditions for (minority) language survival. The most salient aspect of this visibility is machine translation, a service which is provided by Google Translate. From 21 to 26 September, Frisian institutions join in organising a bottom-up Frisian Google Translate Event to which as many as possible literate Frisians are invited to contribute.

In the run-up to European Day of Languages (26 September),

volunteers will translate as many English sentences as possible into Frisian, because only with enough translations Frisian will become a part of Google Translate. More information about this event (in Frisian) can be found [here](#).

Another event during European Day of Languages is the annual **DRONGO Festival**, which is celebrating linguistic diversity with an exuberant two-day programme on 25-26 September in Utrecht (The Netherlands). Keynote speakers are Mamokgethi Phakeng (Unisa), Mark Lesun (Google), Roberto Navigli (Babelnet), Sharon Unsworth, and Gabriel Wyner. Lysbeth Jongbloed and Hindrik Sijens of the Fryske Akademy are joining with presentations about the Frisian language in digital realms.

See [here](#) for more events during European Day of Languages on 26 September.

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Third Position Paper of the LEARNMe project published

The Mercator Network has recently published the third Position Paper (PP3) of the LEARNMe project. The first aim of the paper is to present the contents and outcomes of the third LEARNMe Workshop, which was held in Barcelona on 8 and 9 April of this year. The paper contains short syntheses of the presentations made by experts on a wide range of topics concerning smaller languages around Europe. Furthermore, descriptions have been added of the sometimes lively discussions between the experts, moderators and members of the public.



By building on the contents of the first two LEARNMe position papers, PP3 also tries to give a general overview of the entire project. More specifically, it looks at which themes and concepts have proved to be problematic for both researchers and practitioners, and which general agreements can be 'distilled' from the various debates. By doing this, PP3 is - like the other position papers - not only an important basis for the LEARNMe White Paper, but also an insightful document in itself.

PP3 was authored by prof. Xavier Vila, Guillem Pujades and other team members at CUSC-UB (University of Barcelona), with support from other partners in the Mercator Network. The document can be found on the Mercator Network (LEARNMe) website.

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CoE urges Croatia to comply with European languages charter



The Council of Europe notes with regret that on 17 August 2015, the City Council of Vukovar (Croatia), where Serbs constitute a significant proportion of the population, decided to amend the city statute in such a way as not to provide bilingual signs in Latin and Cyrillic scripts at official town buildings, institutions, squares and streets.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe had already recommended on 15 April 2015 that "the Croatian authorities continue their efforts to promote awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis the minority languages, in all aspects, including usage of signs and traditional local names with inscriptions in Cyrillic script [...], and the cultures they represent as an integral part of the cultural heritage of Croatia, both in the general curriculum at all stages of education and in the media."

The Council of Europe strongly regrets the removal of signs in minority languages through vandalism or pursuant to formal decisions aiming at limiting the presence of minority languages in the public and urges all relevant public authorities in all States Parties to fully implement the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML).

Source: [Council of Europe](#), 21 August 2015.

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TraMOOC project to break down online language barriers

A project aimed at removing the language barriers to distance learning has secured over €3m in funding from Horizon 2020.

The 'Translation for Massive Open Online Courses', or TraMOOC, project

will provide reliable machine translation for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). By eliminating language barriers to MOOCs, it's hoped that the project will provide previously excluded groups of people across the world with new educational opportunities.



The Innovation Action project runs for three years until 2018 and is co-ordinated by the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany. There are nine other partners in the consortium drawn from the higher education sector and industry from Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Source: [Horizon 2020 Projects](#).

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Bilingual children catch up in language learning by age five



Given the increasing number of non-English speaking families in the UK, concern has increased over the impact that growing up in a bilingual or non-English speaking home environment may have on children's performance and readiness for school. So are bilingual children at an educational disadvantage when starting school compared to their classmates who speak just one language?

Using Growing Up in Scotland, a nationally representative data set of 8,000 children, Joanna Clifton-Sprigg (University of Bath) compared cognitive and non-cognitive skills of three groups of children aged under six living in Scotland: those with two UK-born parents (90% of the sample); those with one UK and one foreign-born parent (9%); and those with two foreign-born parents (1%). Almost half of the children without two UK-born parents spoke both English and another language at home, compared to 1% of those children with UK-born parents.

The results of this research suggests that acquiring two languages does not affect the cognitive and non-cognitive skills of young children, such as their ability to recognise objects, match pictures, or their responsiveness and behaviour in everyday situations. It does, however, temporarily affect their knowledge of English vocabulary. While bilingual children can initially lag behind in naming vocabulary, however, the disadvantage disappears before the age of five for most of them, except for those who have two foreign-born parents.

Source: [The Conversation](#), 11 September 2015.

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Music training alters the course of adolescent auditory development

Music training, introduced as late as high school, may help improve the teenage brain's responses to sound and sharpen hearing and language skills, suggests a new Northwestern University study. The research, to be published the week of July 20 in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences \(PNAS\)](#), indicates that music instruction helps enhance skills that are critical for academic success.



The gains were seen during group music classes included in the schools' curriculum, suggesting in-school training accelerates neurodevelopment. "While music programs are often the first to be cut when the school budget is tight, these results highlight music's place in the high school curriculum," said Nina Kraus, senior study author and director of Northwestern's Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory at the School of Communication.

"Although learning to play music does not teach skills that seem directly relevant to most careers, the results suggest that music may engender what educators refer to as 'learning to learn,'" Kraus added.

Source: [PNAS](#), 20 July 2015.

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Whistled Turkish challenges notions about language and the brain



Generally speaking, language processing is a job for the brain's left hemisphere. That's true whether that language is spoken, written, or signed. But researchers reporting in the Cell Press journal *Current Biology* on August 17 have discovered an exception to this rule in a most remarkable form: whistled Turkish.

"We are unbelievably lucky that such a language indeed exists," says Onur Güntürkün of Ruhr-University Bochum in Germany. "It is a true experiment of nature."

Whistled Turkish is exactly what it sounds like: Turkish that has been adapted into a series of whistles. This method of communicating was popular in the old days, before the advent of telephones, in small villages in Turkey as a means for long-distance communication. In comparison to spoken Turkish, whistled Turkish carries much farther. While whistled-Turkish speakers use "normal" Turkish at close range, they switch to the whistled form when at a distance of, say, 50 to 90 meters away.

Source: [Science Daily](#), 17 August 2015.

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Expert in the Spotlight for September 2015: Julia Sallabank

Julia Sallabank is working as Senior Lecturer in Language Support and Revitalisation at the Department of Linguistics at SOAS, University of London, London, United Kingdom, in teaching and researching on language revitalisation, policy and planning. She has always been fascinated with her heritage language, Giernesiei (Guernsey, Channel Islands) although her family don't speak it.



"I've been doing research on learning and teaching very small languages. Many programmes focus on children and schools, but adult new speakers are a vital link often forgotten. How can we best promote adult learning of minority languages? My background in applied linguistics has been very useful, although there are major differences between teaching and learning a large language and a minority one."

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INTERESTING LINKS

[How a language that went unspoken for a half-century was brought back from the dead.](#) Daniel W. Hieber reports on the renaissance of the Native American language Chitimacha.

[Getting past the 'indigenous' vs. 'immigrant' language debate.](#) Speakers of emergent vernaculars are so distained they don't even get a term of their own, says Dr Dave Sayers of Sheffield Hallam University.

[Urban Diversities and Language Policies in Medium-Sized Linguistic Communities.](#) Book edited by Emili Boix-Fuster (CUSC-UB) examines medium-sized linguistic communities in urban contexts against the backdrop of the language policies which have been implemented in these respective areas.

[They learn the CLIL way, but do they like it? Affectivity and cognition in upper-primary CLIL classes.](#) Agnieszka Otwinowska and Małgorzata Foryś in *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, on basic interpersonal communication skills vs. cognitive academic language proficiency in CLIL classes.

[Weatherman nails longest Welsh place name in TV report.](#) Liam Dutton flawlessly pronounced Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch during a *Channel 4* news broadcast.

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EVENTS

[14-17 September 2015, Barcelona \(ES\): 4th Barcelona Summer School on Bilingualism and Multilingualism Workshop](#), Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain.

17-19 September 2015, Budapest (HU): Mercator-LEARNMe Conference on Minority Language Research, Educational Practice and Policy, Research Institute for Linguistics, Hungarian Academy of Science, Budapest, Hungary.

25-26 September 2015, Utrecht (NL): DRONGO Festival, Language festival, Jaarbeurs Utrecht, The Netherlands.

26 September 2015: European Day of Languages. More than 250 events celebrating linguistic diversity all over Europe.

7-8 October 2015, Leeuwarden (NL): Open Learning in Minority Languages: Chances and Perspectives, LANGoer seminar hosted by Fryske Akademy/Mercator Research Centre, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands.

29-30 October 2015, London (UK): Interpreting Communities: Minority Writing in European Literary Fields, conference at the Institute of Modern Languages Research (IMLR), London.

12-13 November 2015, London (UK): 2nd UCL Graduate Conference in Linguistics, London, United Kingdom.

18-20 November 2015, Trento (IT): Theory of Language and the Debate on Language Origins, Trento, Italy. Call deadline: 5 August 2015.

23-26 November 2015, Auckland (NZ): 4th International Conference on Language, Education and Diversity (LED 2015), University of Auckland, New Zealand.

17-18 December 2015, Leuven (BE): Morphology Days 2015, KU Leuven, Belgium. Call deadline: 1 July 2015.

24-26 January 2016, Valencia (ES): 3rd International Conference on Linguistic & Psycholinguistic Approaches to Text Structure, KU Leuven, Belgium. Call deadline: 20 July 2015.

18-20 February 2016, Tbilisi (GE): The Impact of Socio-Political Transformations on Language and Identity, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia. Call deadline: 31 July 2015.

30 March-1 April 2016, Strasbourg (FR): The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants: Lessons from Research. Symposium organised by the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe. Call deadline: 15 September 2015.

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