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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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## NEWS

### LEARNME conference: from European Commissioner to sign language teacher

*Report by Jorrit Huizinga (Mercator Research Centre)*

On 18 and 19 September 2015 the final conference of the Mercator Network's LEARNMe project took place in Budapest, Hungary. The event was hosted by the Research Centre for Multilingualism of the Research Institute for Linguistics (Hungarian Academy of Sciences). The two-day programme was built around the broad concept of linguistic diversity. Specific focuses were bottom-up approaches to research and on education, learning and access to knowledge for members of linguistic minorities in Central-Europe and elsewhere.



Speakers at the conference came from a wide range of backgrounds. High-level policymakers such as European Commissioner **Tibor Navracsics** and Hungarian MEP **Ádám Kósa** were joined by renowned experts and educational practitioners from Hungary and many other European

countries. Many attendants considered this diversity to be the defining aspect of the conference. The event provided a unique opportunity to hear in one event the positions of influential politicians, the more theoretical points of view of researchers, and the daily challenges teachers and school administrators face in a multilingual setting.

Another very important novelty was the strong inclusion of sign language in the conference. The combination proved to be enriching and inspiring to both experts of spoken and sign languages. Many of the challenges speakers and teachers of lesser used spoken languages face are very recognizable to the Deaf, and vice versa. The conference organizers hope this combination will be a basis for future cooperation between speakers and researchers of both types of languages.

The conference was also used as a public venue for the discussion of the LEARNMe White Paper. This document on Linguistic Diversity is currently being revised based on the insights gained during the conference, and will be published before the end of the year. The final document will of course be presented in this newsletter.

See: [www.learnme.eu](http://www.learnme.eu).

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## How a language startup connected Syrian refugees with Arabic students



When Ghaith fled Syria in 2013, he left with more than the clothes on his back. Though refugees are commonly thought of as poor, uneducated and helpless, Ghaith, who comes from a middle-class background and was studying computer science at the University of Aleppo before the Syrian civil war, brought his education and intellectual curiosity to Beirut in 2013, where he now lives and works as a journalist and a writer.

Today, he's able to use both — and earn money for himself — as a "conversation partner" on *NaTakallam*, a non-profit that pairs Arabic students around the world with native speakers who are living as refugees. "I have time for NaTakallam and it will be great for me to fill my time, learn and benefit other students — and to get a salary that can support me in Lebanon," he tells *Mashable*.

Started this year by Columbia University graduates, NaTakallam seeks to support refugees and tell their stories through language lessons. In Lebanon, which currently hosts nearly 1.5 million Syrian refugees, the highest per capita amount in the world, most refugees are not legally allowed to work full-time, which leaves them susceptible to dangerous jobs and wage exploitation.

Source: [Mashable](#), 20 October 2015.

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## Open Learning in Minority Languages: LangOER Seminar Report

*Report by Marit Bijlsma (Mercator Research Centre)*

The seminar "*Open Education in Minority Languages: Chances and Perspectives*" organized on the 7-8 of October 2015, addressed 'How Open Education can Empower Minority Languages'. The seminar was organized in the framework of the European funded **LangOER** project and was hosted by the Fryske Akademy (home of the Mercator Research Centre).



The seminar offered interesting perspectives on open education, as it brought together experts of the field of open education with minority language representatives (e.g. Frisian, Manx, Arbëresh, Gagauzian and Latgalian). The fact that minority languages have limited or no access to open educational resources (OER), urged the participants, speakers and the consortium partners, to come up with practical and creative solutions on how to empower the "smaller languages". Participants were inspired by large scale national initiatives such as the Greek **Photodentro**, Dutch **Wikiwijs** and Norwegian **NDLA** and Welsh **OER Wales Cymru**. But what about minority languages which have limited financial and political support?

Visit the **Padlet wall** of the seminar, where all seminar highlights are collected and the **LangOER Blog** to learn more on this topic. Download the seminar program [here](#).

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## European prize for Danish language project with a Dutch twist



The Danish language school Lærdansk has been awarded the European Language Label in 2015. In close collaboration with a Dutch learning company `Leerbedrijf Bronnen` a digital learning environment has been built with more than 700 digital programs. Starting in 2012 the material was developed in close cooperation with teachers from Lærdansk. The learning company is part of the Friesland College, a school for vocational education in the north of the Netherlands.

At this moment the material is used in all 12 locations of the school in Denmark. Because of the innovative character of the material Lærdansk has been awarded the European Language Label in 2015. The European Language Label contributes to the mission of the European Commission to promote multilingualism among Europeans. Every European citizen should ideally master two other EU languages alongside the mother tongue. Language Projects across Europe qualify for this label as they stand out for their innovative, creative and original approach.

The award ceremony in Copenhagen coincided with the celebration of the European Day of Languages.

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## Here's how Google Translate copes with even the rarest languages

Google Translate usually gathers its linguistic intelligence automatically from across the internet, where the world's most dominant languages have the most representation.

But to master translation involving dialects and relatively less widely used languages, Google needs input from users and native speakers. Without this community input, Google Translate won't be able to accommodate lesser-used languages.



As part of that process, late last month residents of Friesland, a northern province of the Netherlands, carried out an effort to improve Google Translate's ability to handle the local language, Frisian.

"Quality translations help bring cultures and languages online, preserving them for their own people through the web, and promoting them to the world. But our algorithms can only go so far. Since translations are generated by machines, they won't always be perfect," Google communications manager Meghan Casserly said.

Read more: [ZDNet](#), 12 October 2015.

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## UNESCO Memory of the World Register recognizes The Language Archive



The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has added to its **Memory of the World** register 64 collections from The Language Archive at the MPI. These materials contain documentation from 102 different languages spoken around the world.

**The Language Archive (TLA)** at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics preserves language materials for the future, and makes them available for scientific research and use by the wider public, among other things. The complete archive holds more than 20.000 hours of audio-visual materials from over 200 different languages. The collections added to the Memory of the World register contain unique recordings and texts of minority languages, many of which are in danger of becoming extinct. The majority of these collections were created within the DOBES (Documentation of Endangered Languages) programme funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. The UNESCO Memory of the World register is a prestigious list that contains documentary heritage of exceptional value to the world, including Anne Frank's diaries and the original "Wizard of Oz" film negatives. TLA's additions to the register are the first to contain materials that were originally created in digital form, such as digital photographs and videos.

The collections can be found via the following link: <http://hdl.handle.net/1839/00-0000-0000-001C-7D59-B@view> (user registration or an explicit access request is required for some materials).

Source: [Max Planck Institute](#), 9 October 2015.

## No advantage to being multilingual, Australian study finds

Being multi-lingual has no academic advantage, an Australian study of 5000 children has found. The research conducted by academics at Charles Sturt University and the Queensland University of Technology found speaking a language other than English did not affect children's academic outcomes at school.



"The report shows that there is no advantage or disadvantage to speaking multiple languages in terms of school readiness, literacy or numeracy," said one of the authors, **Sharynne McLeod**. McLeod says there is no advantage or disadvantage to speaking multiple languages in terms of school readiness, literacy or numeracy.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 23 per cent of the population speaks a second language at home, with Mandarin, Italian and Arabic the most popular languages. The report is the culmination of five years of research through the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children [LSAC] and a \$686,400 grant awarded through the Future Fellowships research council.

Source: **Sydney Morning Herald**, 2 October 2015.

## Occitan groups spearhead linguistic rights demonstrations in France



Pro-Occitan Calandreta federation of schools and the Institute of Occitan Studies organized demonstrations to demand that French authorities pass new legislation for the protection and promotion of the language. The two groups are confident to repeat the success of previous pro-Occitan language demonstrations held in 2005 (Carcassonne), 2007 (Béziers), 2009 (Carcassonne) and 2012 (Toulouse).

The call to demonstrate has been joined by other organizations advocating rights for non-state languages in the French Republic.

Those groups will also be holding their own protests on Saturday 24 for languages such as Breton (Carhaix), Basque (Bayonne), Corsican (Ajaccio) and German local varieties (Metz and Strasbourg).

Protests coincide in time with a renewed danger that the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by France could again be stopped. Les Republicains party (formerly UMP party, conservative) introduced a motion in the French Senate law committee aimed at rejecting a constitutional bill proposed by France's socialist government which would allow the ratification of the Charter. According to Les Republicains, the Charter ratification would amount to an attack on the French language, and could violate the principle of republican equality.

Source: **Nationalia**, 22 October 2015.

## Mercator Research Centre Library searchable via Tresoar catalogue

The catalogue of the library of Mercator Research Centre can be searched in the catalogue of Tresoar (Frisian Historical and Literary Centre in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, the Netherlands) by the following link:

<http://katalogus.tresoar.nl/>



The database with bibliographic data consists of more than 6,500 entries, both books and articles. They deal with minority languages, bilingual and multilingual education, language learning, language policy and related subjects. In the catalogue, books can be recognized by the signature **Merc**, e.g. **Merc100Gbe125** in the description of the information. A part of the library can be found in the quiet room in Tresoar, near the circulationdesk, the other part especially books in and on minority languages are stored in the warehouse of Tresoar.

For help ask the fellow worker at the circulationdesk or at [www.tresoar.nl](http://www.tresoar.nl) or by email of the information specialist of Mercator **Eily Albers** ([eaibers@fryske-akademy.nl](mailto:eaibers@fryske-akademy.nl)). The collection

can also be found in [WorldCat](#), a global library resource.

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## INTERESTING LINKS

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**Lingquest App:** Lingquest is a game that helps you to discover the similarities and differences in the world's languages. Developed by the Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

**How to Say No in Turkish: Navigating a New Language**, by Bernd Brunner in the Paris Review, 20 October 2015.

**The well established academic journal Language, Culture and Curriculum (LCC)** created a special website with most read articles in 2014 and 2015, all free accessible. Also free to view is the recent special issue on **Content-Based Instruction and CLIL: Moving Forward in the 21st Century**.

**How the Manx language came back from the dead.** Article from *The Guardian's* series 'The case for language learning'.

**Multilingualism is magic**, says Professor Christa van der Walt. Allowing students to use more than one language at university opens many doors.

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## EVENTS

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**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.

**7-9 December 2015, Leuven (BE): International Research Workshop CLARe 2015 "Language Use in Later Life"**, KU Leuven, Belgium.

**15 December 2015, Udine (IT): SUNS EUROPE: Europe's Festival of Performing Arts in Minority Languages**, Udine, Italy.

**17-18 December 2015, Leuven (BE): Morphology Days 2015**, KU Leuven, Belgium.

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

**17-18 February 2016, Frankfurt am Main (DE): Multilingual CALL: Multilingual Language Learning with Digital Media in Primary and Secondary Classrooms**, Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

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

**17-18 March 2016, Riga (LV): Grammatical and Lexical Variance in Language System.** 52nd Prof. Arturs Ozols Conference, Latvijas Universitate, Riga, Latvia.

**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.

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**8-9 April 2016, Nottingham (UK): Diachronic Corpora, Genre, and Language Change**  
International conference, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom.

**6-8 June 2016, Glasgow (UK): SOILLSE Conference 2016: Small Language Planning: Communities in Crisis**  
International conference, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom.

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The database with bibliographic data consists of more than 6500 entries, both books and articles. They deal with minority languages, bilingual and multilingual education, language learning, language policy and related subjects.

### Language policy

Language and policy and political theory : Building bridges, Assessing Breaches / [ed.by] Thomas Ricento, Yael Peled and Peter Ives – Heidelberg : Soriger, 2014. – isbn 9783319150833 – signature Merc100Gsp83 – keywords: language policy; - Previously publ.in Language Policy, Vol. 13, Issue no. 4, 2014

Language policy in higher education : the case of medium-sized languages / [ed. by] F.Xavier Vila and Vanessa Bretxa – Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2015. – signature: Merc100Gbe248 – keywords: language policy; higher education; cross-cultural studies; multilingualism;

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### Language teaching

Teaching languages with technology : Communicative approaches to interactive whiteboard use : A resource book for teacher development / [ed. by] Euline Cutrim Schmid and Shona Whyte – London : Bloomsbury, 2014. – isbn 9781623560850 – signature: Merc100Gsla258 – keywords: language teaching; technological innovations;

The importance of competences in the language(s) of schooling for equity and quality in education and for educational success : Recommendation CM/REc (2014) 5 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 2 april 2014 and explanatory memorandum – Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2014 – signature Merc100Gsla259 – keywords: Language policy; language education; language planning;

Developing critical languaculture pedagogies in higher education : theory and practice / Adriana Raquel Díaz – Bristol : Multilingual Matters, 2013. – isbn 9781783090341 – signature: Merc100Gsla260 – keywords: language teachers; higher education; pedagogies;

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### Multilingualism / Bilingualism

Assessing multilingual children : disentangling bilingualism from language impairment / [ed.by] Sharon Armon-Lotem, Jan de Jong and Natalia Meir. – Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2015. – isbn 9781783093113 – signature Merc100Gbe251 – keyword: language development; language disorders; children; language development;

The multilingual turn in languages education : opportunities and challenges/ [ed. by] Jea Conteh and Gabriela Meier – Bristol : Multilingual Matters, 2014 – isbn 9781783092222 – signature Merc100Gsla261 – keywords: multicultural education; multilingualism; social aspects; bilingual education;

Multilingualism / Anat Stavans and Charlotte Hoffmann – Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2015 – isbn 9781107471481 – signature Merc100Gsb238 – keywords: multilingualism; sociolinguistics; second language acquisition;

	Multilingual education: between language learning and translanguaging / [ed. by] Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter – University of Basque Country, 2015 – isbn 9781107477513 – signature Merc100Gbe250 – keywords: Bilingual education; Multilingualism; Language acquisition; Language contact;
	Flexibel multilingual education : putting children's needs first / Jean-Jacques Weber – Bristol : Multilingual Matters, 2014 – isbn 9781783091980 – signature: Merc100Gbe247 – keywords: Second language acquisition; multilingual education; children;
	Issues in the assessment of bilinguals / [ed. by] Virginia C. Mueller Gathercole – Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2013. – isbn 9781783090082 – signature Merc100Gsb235 - keywords: bilingualism; multilingual sociolinguistics; assessment;
	<b>Linguistics / Sociolinguistics</b>
	Pedagogical grammar / Casey Keck and Youjin Kim – Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014. – isbn 9789027212184 – signature Merc100Gsla265 – keyword: Languages, applied linguistics; cognitive grammar;
	Cognitive sociolinguistics: social and cultural variation in cognition and language use / [ed. by] Martin Pütz, Justyne A. Robinson and Monika Reif . - Amsterdam : John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014. – isbn 9789027202789 – signature: Merc100Gsg273 – keywords: Sociolinguistics; cognitive psychology; discourse analysis;
	Language, youth and identity in the 21st century : linguistic practices across urban spaces / [ed.by] Jacomine Nortier and Bente A. Svendsen – Cambridge : Cambridge University press, 2015 – isbn 9781107016989 – signature: Merc100Gsb237 – keywords: multilingual sociolinguistics
	Exploring digital communication : language in action / Caroline Tagg – London : Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2015 – isbn 9780415524933 – signature Merc100Gsg272 – keywords: Communication and technology; digital communications- social aspects; online social networks; applied linguistics; study and teaching;
	The linguistic integration of adult migrants : from one country to another, from one language to another / Council of Europe – Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2014. – isbn 9789287178718 – signature: Merc100Gsg265 – keywords: multiculturalism; cultural pluralism; cross-cultural studies;
	<b>Endangered languages</b>
	From dust to digital: tenyears of the Endangered Archives Programme / [ed. by] Maja Kominko – Cambridge : Open Book Publishers, 2015 – isbn 97817833740635 – signature: Merc100Gs99 – keywords: Endangered languages; digitization; Archival materials;

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