

STUBE Hessen seminar

„The power of language“

4th November until 6th November 2016 in Marburg

- Seminar instructor:** Mr. Christoph Jöcker, World University Service
- Co-instructor:** Ms Ainura Berekbulova from Kazakhstan, Student B.A. NGO Management, Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences
- Lecturers:** Ms Melisa Bel Adasme: “The power of language – The language of power! How language helps construct our representations of the world”
- Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran: “Language policies in education: Obstacle to achieve SDG 4?”
- Ms Fatimat Olafusi: “Is it Globalisation that endangers languages?”
- Target group:** Hessian students from Africa, Asia and Latin-America
Refugees studying and or living in Hessen
- Educational purpose:** Language is more than a key to communication. Languages represent cultural diversity in a society. UNESCO proclaimed the 21st February as the International Mother Language Day. According to UNESCO, about half of the 6000 languages which are still spoken today are in danger of disappearing. Therefore, UNESCO called on its member states "to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by people of the world".
- Starting from an instruction to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the Seminary aimed to explore how languages influence ones perception of the world. Languages not only shape the way of thinking. Moreover languages are used to construct power and to maintain it.
- In a second step the seminary focused on the way how language relates to education and how it can increase or restrict the access to education. Multilingual or mother tongue-based bilingual approaches in education can contribute to the achievement of goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aims to ensure quality and inclusive education.
- Finally, the seminary examined whether globalisation endangers languages. Are English or Chinese languages a threat to the variety of languages worldwide?
- Participants:** The number of registrations totalled up to 53 and a number of 22 students participated at this English speaking seminar (12 women, 10 men). Out of 22 participants, 11 participants attended a STUBE seminar for the first time. All in all, the number of represented countries totalled up to 13. Divided by regions, 10 students from Africa, 4 students from Asia, 2 students from Latin-America 3 students from Europe participated at the seminar.

Seminar process

Friday, 4th November 2016

The seminar started with the welcoming of students and refugees by the instructor Christoph Jöcker and the co-instructor Ainura Berekbulova. Christoph Jöcker replaced Ms Daria Gorniak who was absent due to health reasons.

The programme started at 7pm, Mr Jöcker and Ms Berebulova introduced themselves. The co-instructor presented the various offers of STUBE to the new participants. She also gave a brief orientation about the STUBE rules that should be followed during the seminar and she assigned duties like taking pictures to some participants who volunteered. Following the more general introduction, Ms Berebulova initiated a game and invited the participants to get to know each other. The co-instructor presented the programme for the whole seminar and explained the intentions of the various workshops. Finally, she gave an instruction to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Saturday, 5th November 2016

After the breakfast, the co-instructor started the seminar with an introduction of the first speaker **Ms Melisa Bel Adasme** from Argentina. She is a master student in sociology at the Goethe-University Frankfurt. The presentation of Ms Adasme was titled **“The power of language – The language of power! How language helps construct our representations of the world”**. She started the workshop with a presentation of the agenda, objectives and the outline. Before getting into the content, Ms Adasme invited the participants for an energizer called “sociometric activity” where participants were asked to

- find all people who speak the same language;
- arrange in groups according to the number of spoken language;
- arrange in groups according to the number of language the person grew up speaking;
- line up according the time participants have been speaking English;
- line up according the time participants have been speaking German.

This dynamic game in the beginning of the presentation revealed a broad multilingual diversity within the group of participants. In the first part of her presentation **“The power of language”**, Ms Adasme reflected on language from an individual and personal perspective. She lined out some key elements of language as an arbitrary system of sounds and symbols which is used for many purposes by a group of people: For example to communicate with each other, to express cultural identity and/ or to convey social relationships. Languages differ from each other in their sounds, grammar, vocabulary and patterns of discourse. They vary in the number of their vowel and consonant sounds, from less than a dozen to over a hundred. Languages are yet related to each other like the members of a family when they have common origins.

Further Ms Adasme reflected on the following points:

- Languages as living exchange systems of meaning change over time. The meaning and symbols of words are subject to change.
- Relation between language and thought: Ways of thinking tend to be partly shaped by language and can be described in different linguistic categories like perception, classification and abstract thinking. Language contributes to the shaping of thought and different languages do so in different ways.
- Linguistic diversity and multilingualism exist on different levels like the individual, the social and the institutional level.

To bridge the first and the second part of the presentation, participants were asked to do a small exercise called **“Language portrayal”**: The task was to create a poster visualising one's individual linguistic resources and repertoire: The individual languages and dialects spoken or important for any other reason using different colours, for example by drawing „language islands” It was asked to visualise emotions, attitudes and mind-sets towards these languages by choosing the size and the place of the language islands according to their use or meaning.

In the second part of the presentation **“The language of power”** Ms Adasme reflected on language from a social and structural perspective, especially on

- Power, language and social relations,
- Language as a vehicle for discrimination,
- and ways of undermining the language of power.

The afternoon workshop was performed by **Dr. Rajesh Ramachandran** who is a researcher at the African-Asian Options (AFRASO) research group at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Research of the Goethe University in Frankfurt. The presentation titled **“Language policies in education: Obstacle to achieve SDG 4?”**. The three main facets his research tried to answer are:

- What are the consequences of official language choices?
 - Official language is the language in which the affairs of the community - education, government, public administration - are conducted.
- How do countries choose official language policies or what are the factors affecting official language choice?
- Which channels influence individual preferences concerning the choice of the official language?

Mr. Ramchandran argued that one of the defining features distinguishing the “developed” from the “developing” world today is the choice of their official language. Developed nations choose official language/s that typically belong to and are spoken by the majority of the population whereas official languages in most developing countries are not the native language of any indigenous group. Further the official languages in developing countries tend to be very “distant” to the languages locally spoken.

In his research he found evidence that the “choice” of an official language measured as a function of the linguistic distance between the official and indigenous languages can affect socio-economic development.

Sunday 6th November 2016

After the breakfast, the co-instructor asked the participants to come up with a warm-up game. Following this, **Mrs Fatimat Olafusi** from Nigeria who is a student of International Management at the FOM University of Applied Sciences in Frankfurt held the presentation **“Is it Globalisation that endangers languages?”**. She delivered an overview about languages spoken on earth as well as figured out that a number of languages are in the danger to extinct. She reflected on the social and historical reasons why languages can extinct and what are the consequences of the extinction of a language? She focused on following points:

- What are the most spoken languages on earth?
- How many languages exist on earth? How many are in danger of extinction?
- How long does it take for a language to extinct?
- What are the reasons for language extinction?
- What are the consequences of language extinction?

After the presentation Mr. Jöcker and Ms. Berebulova closed the seminar and asked participants to fill in a short evaluation form.

Used methods

Following methods were used: different games to get to know each other, warming-up games, discussion and question rounds, teamwork in groups (2, and 4-6 participants), world café, power point-presentation, Video and two different methods for evaluation.

Impressions from the seminar and evaluation

Lessons learned and appreciations:

- I liked all aspects.
- It keeps people thinking! It’s good!
- A lot of discussion, diversity of the group, good games to get to know each other
- I learned a lot from the other participants, from other continents and countries.
- Language policies in education: a lot of scientific data given by a speaker.
- Presentation kinds of obstacles to achieve SDG 4.

- It is important that we preserve our mother tongue, because it has economic implication. But we must also learn one or two international languages.
- I will keep in mind to avoid the extinction of my native language by starting to learn it first and try to pass it to my generation.
- The topic was very interesting, I loved it.
- I like the topic and I learned that language is a power.
- I learned how languages are extincting and to respect and preserve culture and languages.
- I learnt a lot about language.

About discontent and lacking:

- Exchange: I felt a bit frustrated while trying to bring my point across.
- Technical problems, but that is natural.
- That we didn't have enough time to discuss.
- I wish we also visit some historical places in Marburg.
- Ich denke, dass die Jugendherberge nicht sehr gut war.
- The way participants interrupt the referee.

14th November 2016

Christoph Jöcker

World University Service