

# MoDiME Languages

## Facts, stakes, and outlooks

The conferences of the National and International Association of Foreign Languages (ANLEA-AILEA) regularly focus on the vitality of languages and, in particular, on the importance of regional languages, as factors of identity, guarantors of a shared past and history, and proof of the enthusiasm of the people and communities that continue to share them.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, a new term has emerged to describe the least widely spread and least taught languages: MoDiME languages. This concept reflects the tension between their possible disappearance (according to UNESCO, “7,000 languages are spoken in the world, but 25 disappear every year”<sup>2</sup>) and their capacity for renewal. Globalization seems to be hastening the demise of the most minority languages. MoDiMEs, more commonly known as rare, minority, regional, dialectal, local, or patois languages, are, in the eyes of linguists, “no less worthy of interest from a linguistic point of view, but their use is most often limited to a restricted area and they are generally only spoken in small territories.”<sup>3</sup>

Will these languages have the capacity to resist, survive, and reinvent themselves? How does globalization threaten the place of MoDiME languages? While dominant languages can influence languages that are de facto considered dominated, leading to cultural assimilation, linguistic mixing, or a broader phenomenon of acculturation, the influence is not one-sided. Majority languages are also forced to adapt by finding new ways to coexist, rethinking their position vis-à-vis MoDiMEs, or even encouraging their preservation. At the ANLEA/AILEA congress in Strasbourg in 2022, business leaders came together to highlight, for example, the need to master several languages in cross-border regions. Languages cannot always be mutually exclusive in order to exist.

The aim of this new issue of the *RILEA*<sup>4</sup> journal is to reflect on the dynamics of languages in contact and, in particular, to take stock of the situation of so-called MoDiME languages, developing the discussion around three main themes:

### 1. Social, cultural, linguistic, and translation issues?

The way in which a language is designated influences how it is perceived. A language becomes a minority language when it is no longer shared across a given territory. This

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<sup>1</sup> ANLEA/AILEA Congress in Saint-Etienne (2019): Louis-Jean Calvet spoke about linguistic globalization and Olivier Galin spoke about “gaga yesterday and today.” ANLEA/AILEA Congress in Brest (2021): Screening of films in Breton by director Sébastien Le Guillou and concert in Celtic languages by singers Brigitte Kloareg from Brest, Margaret Bennett from the Isle of Skye, Deirbhile Ni Bhrolchain from Ireland, and Mary-Anne Roberts, originally from Trinidad and Tobago and now living in Wales. ANLEA/AILEA Congress in Strasbourg (2022): Business leaders discuss the Alsatian dialect.

<sup>2</sup> Sophie Bécherel, “7,000 languages are spoken around the world, but 25 disappear every year,” *Society*, Radio France.fr, February 7, 2021, <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/7-000-langues-sont-parlees-dans-le-monde-mais-25-disparaissent-chaque-annee-5795372>, accessed February 20, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Henriette Walter, “French: a successful patois?” in *French in Every Sense*, Paris, Editions Robert Laffont, 1988, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Link to the online journal: <https://anlea.org/revue-rilea/>

categorization has consequences for its status, representation, and use. The interaction between dominant languages and so-called regional, dialectal, or sociolectal languages raises major political and ideological issues, particularly in terms of normativity, discrimination, and marginalization. MoDiME languages provide a local, identity-based, and emotional anchor that shapes social and human relationships.

How can we describe a language that becomes a minority language when it has fewer speakers within a given territory? Does its designation change how it is perceived or even used? If a MoDiME language provides a stronger local, identity-based, and emotional anchor, what role can it play in the phenomenon of glocalization, which is supposed to take local specificities into account?

Do the variants of a language on a global scale divide its speakers? How can we question the proper use of a language? Is the norm linguistic, political, social, or is it, in essence, a principle of glottophobia? What causes a community to have a negative perception of its own language?

What are the political and ideological issues surrounding interactions between so-called regional, dialectal, and sociolectal languages and national languages (or even state languages) in a given territory? How might this be reflected in language policies?

How are MoDiME languages finding their place on the internet via NICTs and in the era of AI development?

## **2. Educational issues and teaching policies**

The teaching of MoDiME languages in universities and schools plays an important role in their transmission and preservation. Promoting their learning makes it possible to move beyond a purely utilitarian approach to languages and to understand their continuum from an intercultural perspective. Diverse and pluralistic language teaching can then become the guarantor of the vitality of languages and cultural diversity.

What are the challenges of teaching MoDiME languages in terms of student training and intergenerational transmission? How do current education policies incorporate these languages into school and university curricula? What effects does schooling in a national lingua franca have on a child whose mother tongue is a regional or dialectal language in terms of continuity or discontinuity between languages? Finally, how can programs be adapted for foreign students, enabling them to better integrate into university and society while also promoting their complex, multilingual identity?

## **3. Geopolitical, economic, commercial, and legal issues**

In a globalized world, the use of MoDiME languages in international exchanges challenges the dominance of certain languages such as English or Spanish. Encouraging linguistic

diversity would help to rebalance the power relations in diplomatic and trade negotiations. Companies, whether by necessity or choice, are adopting communication and marketing strategies that incorporate MoDiME languages.

Can regional and minority languages play a significant role in economic exchanges? Can they be a marketing asset and contribute to a local and sustainable economy? What are the consequences for the drafting of technical, regulatory, and legal documents? Finally, in the face of migration challenges and the issues surrounding political and climate refugees, how can MoDiME languages be integrated into reception and social integration structures? To what extent do they sometimes push dominant languages to reposition themselves for better implementation of commercial or economic policies? What about in the legal field?

This call invites contributions in the form of scientific articles as well as testimonials, interviews, and feedback based on the proposed questions, the list of which is not exhaustive. Articles may be written in the main languages of LEA training programs: German, English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, French, Italian, and Russian. For any other language, the approval of the journal's editorial board will be required. Articles may be written in MoDiME languages, in bilingual versions, or in one of the languages accepted by our regulations, provided that the MoDiME language version can be proofread by an academic.

Abstracts (500 words) accompanied by a brief bio-bibliography should be sent before **November 15, 2025**, to Sophie GONDOLLE ([sophie.gondolle@univ-brest.fr](mailto:sophie.gondolle@univ-brest.fr)), Maria-José Fernandez ([fernandezv@univ-brest.fr](mailto:fernandezv@univ-brest.fr)), and Molly Chatalic ([molly.chatalic@univ-brest.fr](mailto:molly.chatalic@univ-brest.fr)) at the University of Western Brittany (Brest).

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## Suggested reading

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