

From Confusio Linguarum to Intercultural Dialogue

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Abstract

Particularly in the Mediterranean basin, Europe has a history of speaking multiple languages and contain heterogeneity that enriches its character yet at times leads to violent conflict. This paper demonstrates how a series of “linguistic misunderstandings”, the inability to read or make sense of the “other”, ultimately has produced an over-determined source of bias and international divisions. These semantic divisions has historically turned misunderstanding into conviction: the ancient Greeks belittled “barbarians” just for their speech, and mutual incomprehension between the Eastern and Western Christian worlds led to a theological divide between 1054 that is yet to heal. Linguistics was often weaponized, a tool of exclusion rather than a bridge of solidarity in those contexts.

This paper goes beyond a historical description and defends that, in the light of present-day conflicts, an organized intercultural dialogue is needed to overcome “confusio linguarum”. In a context where conflict withholds communication, it sees international exchange of students and language among younger populations as a key mechanism for peace flow.

Centred around a common “hermeneutic space,” these initiatives can turn historical barriers into promises for collaborative advancement. It's only by updating our communicative practices that we can begin to unlearn pervasive “semantic fractures” built up over the decades, like so much prejudice in our society. In conclusion, modern conflicts have complex origins, but they often are aggravated by the absence of real dialogue. Thus, the imperative to promote mutual understanding through circulation of scholarship and culture remains a pillar and central strategy for enabling deep-seated understandings that ameliorate misperceptions and minimize frictions in a world that trends more towards fragmentation than unity.

Keywords: Intercultural dialogue, Linguistic misunderstandings, Mediterranean region, *Confusio linguarum*, Semantic fractures, International academic mobility, Peacebuilding