

Vienna Theses on Language Policy - 11+1 demands for strengthening social participation

The Vienna Theses on Language Policy were developed in the run-up to the XVII International Conference of Teachers of German in Vienna ([IDT 2022](#)) by an international group of experts (see [link](#)). They were presented during IDT 2022 and adopted at the closing event on August 20, 2022. The theses are addressed to politicians as well as to experts in the field. They follow the conference motto [*mit.spache.teil.haben](#). The ultimate goal of language learning and teaching as well as of language education intertwined with subject learning is the development of discourse skills that enable and promote responsible participation in decision-making processes and equal participation in society.

1. Learning German takes place in a **multilingual society**. Learners themselves bring multilingual and multicultural experiences and competencies to the classroom that must be taken into account. This must be supported by a language policy that takes into account societal and individual resources as well as global and regional perspectives and circumstances. The linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of society must be reflected in the design of teaching materials and learning opportunities, in curricula, in the selection of teaching content, in education, training and continuing education, and in research.
2. **International collaborations** must be facilitated and promoted both financially and structurally. They are particularly successful when all parties have equal rights and the cooperation is based on an open and transparent exchange, for which appropriate framework conditions must be ensured. The professional associations for German as a foreign and/or second language require special support and recognition so that they can fulfill their tasks of networking and transferring expertise through a strengthened position.
3. The guiding principle of German learning and teaching must be the idea of **empowerment**, i.e. the development of language competence that is designed from the outset for self-directed further learning and participation in society as well as in the workplace. The different interests and needs of the learners must be met with demand-oriented and diverse offerings. They are not "human resources", but must be seen and protected as subjects in their human dignity. This applies to job-specific German teaching and to adult education as well as to language teaching and learning in general.
4. Language repertoires can enable participation in social processes. Language education in the context of migration must therefore be oriented towards the **realities of migrants' lives** and their needs for work and everyday life. Language skills must be separated from residence law issues and must not be required as a central prerequisite for the labor market or for receiving social benefits. Language must not be misused as an instrument of discrimination.
5. It must be possible to design **German lessons in schools** worldwide in such a way that the **entire linguistic repertoire** of the students is used as a resource and that linguistic learning is interlinked with subject-specific learning and with the teaching of generic competencies. Curricula and learning goals must be formulated accordingly, and language support and language education must be able to take place **continuously** from preschool education to the end of the school career.
6. In the higher education context, **fellowship programs** and **research funding** need to be expanded through government support to increase the mobility and collaborative opportunities of

students, teachers, and researchers who contribute significantly to successful language learning. They must be given access to the desired study and research opportunities regardless of their socioeconomic background, especially for stays in German-speaking countries.

7. **Research** must not be appropriated or restricted by (educational) policy. Its **freedom** and **diversity** in the subject DaF/DaZ must be secured. Results of DaF/DaZ research must be noticed by (educational) policy and implemented in appropriate measures. Transdisciplinary and international cooperation in research must be promoted as well as the opening of scientific communication for the global professional community and the general public.
8. **Teachers** worldwide must have **access to high-quality training programs** that meet high quality standards and take into account recent developments in the subject as well as regional and institutional differences in the respective teaching and learning cultures. Different financial requirements must not be an obstacle. Participation in certification programs must be promoted with all possible means and recognized and appreciated in the respective professional context.
9. The **working conditions of teachers** in curricular and extra-curricular institutions must be improved. There is a need to ensure adequate pay, a balance between teaching time and time for preparation, and employment contracts with long-term prospects and further certification opportunities.
10. The **digital transformation** has opened up a variety of new possibilities for language learning and teaching, e.g., in face-to-face classes, for self-learning phases, and in the virtual classroom. Digitization also facilitates international cooperation in research and language policy. However, digital offerings cannot replace exchanges at in-person meetings, and they must not lead to a reduction in on-site human resources. To ensure that digitization does not exacerbate existing disparities, access to the digital world must be ensured for all, e.g., in the form of appropriate technical equipment and training opportunities.
11. The learning of the German language is understood as language education, which also includes aesthetic and culturally reflective learning as well as the examination of sustainable lifestyles, human rights and gender equality. Language learning aims to promote a **culture of peace and non-violence** as well as an appreciation of cultural diversity through the development of discourse skills. In this way, language learning contributes to **sustainable development** and to strengthening a cosmopolitan attitude.

Language policy must be established **as an independent policy field** that positions itself on an equal footing in discussions with other policy fields and is not, as has been the case to date, seen merely as a tangential issue. The establishment and shaping of language policy as an independent policy field is just as much a task for individual states as for supranational and non-governmental institutions and networks, and is always understood on the basis of societal and individual multilingualism and the goal of participation.

Status: August 9, 2022