UNIVERSITY OF THESSALY

Abstract for keynote speech

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Beyond the Probable: Maintaining Agency and Justice in AI-saturated Multilingual Education

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Debates about AI in language education often ask what digital tools can do, how effectively teachers might use them, and how academic misconduct might be contained. In this talk, I take a different starting point. Drawing on Intentional Dynamics Theory (IDT; Stelma & Kostoulas, 2021), I ask how multilingual education is being reshaped as AI is woven into it, and who, or what, is driving this reconfiguration.

IDT describes educational ecologies in terms of four dynamics: normative, contingent, creative and intentional. Large language models, I suggest, are at their core engines of normativity. Shaped by statistical probability and sociotechnical decisions about their development, they amplify dominant languages, standard varieties and conventional expression, and reproduce inequalities that these encode. Without rejecting normativity as such, I argue that normativity operating on an unprecedented scale, while presenting itself as 'neutral' infrastructure, compromises identity and voice, especially among the linguistically vulnerable.

In search of what might counterbalance it, I explore the roles of contingent and creative dynamics. Classes respond to perturbations contingently, through improvisation, repurposing, and occasionally resistance. However, contingency alone produces drift, not direction. Creative dynamics, visible in plurilingual arts-based pedagogy, can open spaces for the improbable and the hybrid, yet creativity is easily absorbed back into the norm. Direction comes from the intentional element, by which I mean the situated meaning-making through which teachers and learners shape what technology is *for*.

The intentional, however, is not inherently emancipatory, which leads me to juxtapose conservative and transformative trajectories for AI-saturated language education. Discussing these in connection with our work at the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (Kostoulas et al., 2027), I argue against determinism: possible futures are enacted rather than fated, and justice —social, linguistic and epistemic— offers a criterion for choosing between them.

Kostoulas, A., Dubrac, A.-L., Ljalikova, A., Pöltzleitner, E., & Séror, J. (2027, in press). *Guidelines for the ethical use of artificial intelligence in language education*. European Centre for Modern Languages.

Stelma, J. & Kostoulas, A. (2021). *The intentional dynamics of TESOL*. De Gruyter.