

Language Policy for Broadcasting in Malta

Michael Spagnol



Prof. Spagnol's contribution critically examined the broadcasting sector, embracing radio, television, and digital media, as a primary engine of linguistic planning. Broadcasting establishes what is considered "correct" or prestigious language.

The Regulatory Landscape

Spagnol detailed the current framework, which relies on the Broadcasting Act and the Code on the Proper Use of the Maltese Language. This code distributes responsibility across three tiers:

1. Individual Broadcasters (presenters/journalists).
2. Station Management (editorial boards).
3. The Broadcasting Authority.

Theoretical Critique

Using the standard models of language planning, Spagnol categorized the current approach:

- **Status Planning (Strong):** The law effectively mandates the use of Maltese on national stations.
- **Corpus Planning (Weak):** There is little direct support for developing the language itself (e.g., providing broadcasters with glossaries for new EU terminology).
- **Acquisition Planning (Secondary):** Improving the linguistic competence of speakers is treated as a byproduct.

Conclusion

The current policy is static and punitive ("don't make mistakes") rather than developmental ("here is how to speak well"). Spagnol called for a shift to a forward-looking strategy that embraces the digital reality where English currently dominates.