## Abstract

Austrian German in the framework of the European Union

The study topic of this doctoral thesis is the "Austrian German in the framework of the European Union". When Austria became a member of the European Union in 1994, the Austrian variety of the German language[5] was "protected" under the so-called *Protocol no. 10 regarding the use of specific Austrian terms of the German language in the framework of the European Union*. Section I of this thesis presents the relevant background (e.g. concept of the pluricentricity of languages, linguistic characteristics of the Austrian variety of the German language, Austrian identity, relevant stereotypes, EU institutions and EU language policies). Section II describes the discussion about Austrian German before the EU accession culminating in Protocol no. 10 and presents the origins as well as an in-depth analysis of different aspects and effects of this Annex to the Austrian accession treaty. Furthermore, various contact phenomena of the Austrian variety with the supranational environment of the EU were subject to investigation. For this purpose, an empirical study was conducted among EU interpreters and translators. The findings of the analysis of 98 questionnaires were supplemented and supported by 14 qualitative interviews with EU language staff. In addition, interviews were conducted with the persons responsible for drafting Protocol no. 10, the coordinator for the German language of the Translation Service of the EU Commission, an assistant of an Austrian Member of European Parliament and a head of a liaison office of a federal province of Austria. A wealth of other information and data (e.g. language-related activities during the Austrian EU presidency in 1998) considered relevant for the area under investigation were analysed. To ensure maximum transparency and reliability, various annexes are included.

As the findings of this thesis show, Protocol no. 10 was a symbolic act to mitigate fears of a "linguistic annexation". Nevertheless, it has effects on the status of the Austrian variety and is the only EU document dealing with the pluricentricity of an official EU language. The majority of the respondents stated to be aware of linguistic differences between varieties of pluricentric languages but has a predominantly "monocentric" attitude that is expressed in a strong desire for a standard language. "Pluricentric" trends are based on EU concepts such as "diversity," "Europe of regions," etc. Translators and interpreters refer to linguistic variations of the Austrian German (e.g. longer or more complicated sentences, "soft" pronunciation), which are difficult to substantiate or invalidate due to a lack of empirical data. Attributes chosen to describe the Austrian variety correspond to standard images/stereotypes of Austria/Austrians and about varieties of an o-nation[6]. The findings show a tendency of both non-Austrians and Austrians to reject the use of the Austrian German in EU contexts. Under specific circumstances, this variety can however be used as a means of dissociation from Germany/Germans, both at the national and individual level. Attention has however to be drawn to the fact that German in the EU may not simply be equated with the variety of Germany since a specific EU-variety of German is evolving. All contact phenomena of the Austrian variety of the German language highlight the conflict between established national identities and a still weak "European identity".

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[5] 23 agricultural terms

[6] o-nation stands for the „other" (i.e. not dominant) nation (term according to Clyne 1995)

## Daniel Spichtinger

# RETHINKING MULTILINGUALISM AND ENGLISH IN EUROPE

From June 7 to June 9 2001 a conference entitled "The Costs of Multilingualism" was held in Vienna under the patronage of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. As a participant, I was struck by the fact that not a single plenary speaker was actually talking about the costs of multilingualism. Rather, the prevailing conference mood was that multilingualism is a good thing in general and for Europe in particular. Clyne's view that "European integration calls for... multilingualism for everyone" (2001:1) can be taken as representative of the conference as a whole. In this piece I propose that there are several problems with this view and that English as a lingua franca (ELF) can make a useful contribution to intereuropean communication. This piece is not intended as an in depth study but wants to stimulate critical discussion.

## 1.   Multilingualism: the panacea?

It is nowadays generally accepted that the rise and fall of and scientific theories is very much dependent on the sociological climate of the time (see Kuhn 1970, Latour 1999). According to Barber (1996) our contemporary era is characterised by two competing forces: localised nationalism (or tribalism) and globalisation (or globalism). Both of these forces are often described negatively: nationalism is (perhaps rightly) held responsible for the worst crimes of the last century and globalisation is seen as a factor that contributes to the unequal distribution of power and wealth around the globe. Language is an important factor within both these forces: as is well established (see for instance Wright 2001), monolingualism played an important role in the formation of the nation state. Today, the spread of one lingua franca, namely English, is often connected with globalisation and cultural homogenisation (see Phillipson 1992, 2001).Generally, the participants of the Vienna conference seemed to regard multilingualism as a panacea against *both* the global spread of English and national monolingualism.

There are, however, several problems with this assessment. Firstly, it is ironic that many of very same languages now promoted as an antidote against the "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson 1992) of English were (and sometimes still are) guilty of the same offence against minority languages. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated by French language policy, which promoted French as the one and only national language at the time of the French revolution, and afterwards (see Wright 2001) – a policy which is still visible in current legislation against the use of English loans. On a European level, however, France has turned into a champion of multilingualism. Thus, the suspicion that multilingualism on the EU level is often used to cover a vested interest of promoting one's national language is not unfounded.

Secondly, one wonders whether Europe has ever been truly multilingual. To be sure, many languages are and have been spoken in Europe. But as soon as the modern nation state began to emerge other languages than the national were discriminated against. Although language and identity are closely linked, the equation "national language equals national identity" is a construct introduced to facilitate nation building. Because of the mental remnants of this process, multilingualism is often still seen as a problem rather than an asset, particularly when the languages involved are not prestigious (West) European ones but the languages of immigrants and refugees (see Krumm 2001). Thus, while multilingualism exists on a basic level, there seems to be little acceptance of it within the European public and the European cultural tradition. This situation contrasts sharply with the tradition of many African countries where even schoolchildren often speak five or six languages (see Brann 1989).

Thirdly, English as a lingua franca (ELF) is a phenomenon that deserves to be analysed in a differentiated way and not in the simple black and white framework of linguistic imperialism. Therefore, the importance of ELF for intereuropean communication will be sketched out in the last chapter of this paper. Prior to that, it is necessary to outline the language problem in institutions of the EU.

## 2.   Multilingualism and the European Political Arena: The EU's language problem

The main underlying reason for the EU's language problem is that it official appraisal of and insistence on multilingualism (see European Commission Joint Interpreting and Conference System) which makes pragmatic solutions difficult and leads to a taboo on the discussion of language use in its institutions. Because a particular language is still seen as being strongly linked with a particular nation or nations any move away from the EU's multilingual doctrine towards the official designation of working languages

would be seen as an affront by those nations whose languages are not among the group selected for official use. Unofficially, of course, English and French have been working languages for some time, but this is, for the reason given above, rarely acknowledged. Wright argues that

> [b]ecause there is a refusal to admit that two *lingua francas* are actually in use in all the institutions, there has been no discussion on whether these choices are the best possible nor is there coherent planning to ensure all politicians at EU level have access to them (2001: 174, original emphasis).

The plenary address given by McClusky (2001) at the Vienna conference is remarkable as it moves away from the usual endorsement of multilingualism for all purposes. The acting Director-General of the Translation Service of the European Commission freely admits the existence of working languages and argues that "multilingualism is used where it is needed" (2001: 4), that is on all occasions which are of interest to the European public but not for internal affairs which are conducted in the working languages. In general, the EU's web page seems to follow this approach. The Commissions important white paper on internal reform, for instance, is available in all official languages.[1] However, the EU's governance web page[2] also provides documents written during the preparatory stage of the white paper, and these are usually available only in one or two working languages, in the overwhelming majority English and/or French.

However, because of the commitment to multilingualism made in the treaties of Rome (Article 217), Maastricht and Amsterdam, even the unofficial designation of working languages seems to be legally questionable and may be challenged by anyone who feels excluded (the Spanish, for instance). The way out of this dilemma, however, is *not* to remain quiet about the use of unofficial working languages and to ignore the legal, organisational and structural challenges. Rather, the EU needs to carefully reflect on its language use. It is important to differentiate between varying language needs of different European bodies. Parliament does not have the same language needs as the Commission or the European Court of Justice (see van Els 2000: 3-6). Furthermore, within each of these institutions a functional distinction must be applied. At some level, such as unofficial consultations and other preparatory work, it will be useful to use English as a lingua franca (and possibly a limited set of additional languages); at a more formal level (final versions of legislation, for instance) full-fledged multilingualism will be required. Thus, provisions for the use of a few working languages need to be introduced in the treaties.

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[1] The information on enlargement, previously only available in English, seems to have been translated as well.

[2] http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/governance/white_paper/index_en.htm

## 3. English as Lingua Franca: Implications for the EU and a wider European Context

Today, English is often bedevilled as the language of globalisation, cultural homogenisation or even Americanisation. There is often little realisation that, through its global use for international and intranational purposes, the English language has acquired a "multicultural identity" (Bathia 1997). Indeed, it has even be proposed that the English language belongs to all those who use it (Widdowson 1994).

In the European context, however, it seems that English is still very often perceived as a "foreign" language in competition with the respective "national" language. I suggest that it would be useful for Europe to consider the experience of developing countries such as Nigeria or India who have retained English, despite it being the language of the former colonial oppressor. In these multilingual societies English fulfils an important role as the intranational lingua franca.[3] Although there are, of course, pronounced differences between former British colonies and European countries, I do think that we can learn from the way the former have appropriated English for their local purposes.

What we need to do, then, is nothing less than to sever the mental link between language and nation state. This is surely difficult, as language has become a prime marker of nationality (those who speak French are French, those who do not are not) but it has to be realised that this reasoning is not a law of nature but a human construct. Again, the experience from countries outside of Europe is helpful. Surely, the Indians would not have retained English if they would still regard it as the language of their British oppressors. The way forward is to make the language our own, to appropriate it for European purposes (Berns 1995). It has to be realised that, although the spread of English is connected with American power, there is nothing intrinsic in the language that ties it to Americans or British (or Australians, or Irish or New Zealanders or Canadians).[4] Although English speaking countries do try to connect the teaching of English with teaching their values (see Phillipson's [1992] evidence), pupils are able to

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[3] Phillipson (1992) argues that English functions as an imperialist tool in these countries. It may be true that access to English is often not equally distributed in the so-called "third world". However, the solution cannot be to "put the blame on English", as Phillipson does, but rather to ensure equal access to English (Holborow 1999: 89-94, Spichtinger 2000: 17).

[4] At this stage I disagree with Clyne (2001) who seems to think that English is not suitable as a European lingua franca **because of its linguistic structure**. Surely, if it was possible to adapt to the use English as lingua franca in a country where Hindi is spoken there should be no difficulty in Europe.

use the language for their own purposes which may include reading "subversive" material.[5]

In the EU, officials have already developed their own (specialist) variety of English - sometimes called "EU-English", "Eurospeak" or "Euro-English" (see Born [1996: 70-75] for a detailed description). Ironically, the very same people who use this variety often regard it as improper English. It thus is important to point out that Euro-English is not "bad" English, it is simply English appropriated for the purposes of those working in the European institutions. Generally, for progressive linguists

> ...the relevant question to ask is not: what is correct in relation to a native-speaker norm (RP or otherwise) but: what is appropriate and necessary to be able to communicate in specific situations (Dalton and Seidlhofer 1994:12, compare also Berns 1990: 44-5).

This is the second mental shift that needs to be accomplished: once it is realised that English is a lingua franca, the native speaker looses his or her special status because the emphasis shifts from approximating a native form to intelligibility.[6] Or, in other words, adopting English as a lingua franca does not mean more but less advantages for the native speaker. Unfortunately, most EU officials - as well as the European populace at large - remain locked in an unquestioning acceptance of native-speaker standards. The translation service of the European Commission, for instance, prides itself on its high standards and wide expertise (McClusky 2001:2) but makes no effort to critically examine these standards and their validity in a lingua franca context (this is also apparent in Bern's [2001] interview with "Herr Mayer", a high ranking EU official).

In the EU institutions English is spoken in a restricted setting for specific purposes, often involving a considerable number of technical terms. But what about the outside context, that is the role of English as a lingua franca for ordinary citizens of the EU? As English is the foreign language thought most widely in European schools one can safely assume that many of the interactions between citizens from different EU countries will take place in this language, although it might be a form of "school English" rather different from the variety spoken by native speakers. Already, 71 percent of Europeans say that everyone in the EU should be able to speak one foreign

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[5] It may be argued, then, that it is oppressive to keep access to English from people, rather than the other way round.

[6] The reliance on native speakers as models is questionable because international interaction in English does increasingly not involve native speakers anymore (Jenkins 2000:1, Kachru 1991: 10). Furthermore, Smith and Rafiqzad (1983 [1979]) reveal that even when native speaker are involved, they are **not** always the ones who are best understood. Follow up studies have repeatedly confirmed these findings (see the references in Jenkins 2000: 94-5).

language and 69.4 percent agree that this first foreign language should be English (Eurobaromoter 2001: 5-6). By contrast, only 32,4 percent agree that everyone should be able to speak two languages (Eurobaromoter 2001: 6) which could be regarded as another indicator of the European mistrust towards true multilingualism.

In this essay I have argued that two shifts in out thinking about multilingualism and English as a lingua franca are necessary. First, the doctrine that a language is always tied to a particular nation needs to be rejected and it needs to be realised that English has become today's lingua franca. From this the second shift, namely the rejection of the native speaker as the standard setting authority, follows logically. Keeping these shifts in mind, what are the pillars of EU language policy to be? The Vienna Manifesto, the final document of the conference initially mentioned, suggests increasing the number of working languages to include regional languages (2001:2, item 4). My conclusions are rather different: I would follow McClusky in that a distinction needs to be made according to level and domain of use. For internal working documents EFL should be sufficient. However, because of the large number of monolinguals in Europe legislation must be available in all national languages once it has reached the final stage.

One is certainly not in favour of replacing national identity and language with a supranational one. Instead we should endeavour, as Haarmann (1991: 111-112) suggests, to achieve a *balanced* identity where the basic needs of national self-recognition do not collide with supranational integration. This aim would be achieved if it were realised that it is perfectly possible to be a Viennese, an Austrian and a European and that, consequently, one can speak German as one's national and English as one's European language as well as other languages.[7] Such an approach would not attempt to replace or displace the national language but to add a European lingua franca layer.

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[7] The use of English as a lingua franca does of course not mean that no other foreign languages should be learnt at school. However, ELF does entail a rethinking of how English is thought and learnt (see Gnutzmann 1998, Spichtinger 2000).

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## Abstract

Ausgehend von der Konferenz "die Kosten der Mehrsprachigkeit" nehme ich im ersten Teil meines Artikel eine kritische Haltung zum Thema Multilingualismus ein. Der hehre Slogan von Mehrsprachigkeit dient oft der Förderung der eigenen Sprache und nationalem Prestigedenken. Im Vergleich mit dem außereuropäischen Raum sind Zweifel angebracht, ob die europäische Bevölkerung jemals wirklich multilingual war. Ganz im Gegenteil: der Europäer scheint der Mehrsprachigkeit gegenüber eher skeptisch eingestellt. In Gegensatz zur offiziellen Lobpreisung der Mehrsprachigkeit haben sich in der EU Kommission bereits Englisch und Französisch als inoffizielle Arbeitssprachen herausgebildet; aber da kein Land auf den Status seiner Sprache verzichten will, ist es politisch schwierig diese Situation zu formalisieren. Ich argumentiere, dass es nötig sein wird in den EU-Verträgen eine Unterscheidung in offizielle Amtssprachen, in denen fertige Gesetzestexte veröffentlicht werden, und in Arbeitssprachen, in denen inoffizielle Vorbereitungen abgewickelt werden, zu treffen.

Im zweiten Teil befasse ich mich mit den Auswirkungen der Globalisierung des Englischen. Obwohl die Macht der USA sicher zu der Ausbreitung des Englischen beiträgt, gibt es im Prinzip nichts was das Englische unweigerlich und unveränderlich an ein einziges Land bindet. Dies wird am Beispiel Indiens gezeigt, wo Englisch als Landessprache gilt, obwohl es einst Sprache des kolonialen Unterdrückers (d.i. Großbritannien) war. Für Europa heißt das, das wir die Verbindung zwischen Sprache und Nationalstaat hinterfragen müssen und keine Scheu haben sollten, Englisch für die Zwecke der intereuropäischen Kommunikation zu nützen. Wir sollten Englisch als internationale Sprache sehen, die keinem - oder allen - gehört. Damit verschwindet auch der Vorteil der Muttersprachler des Englischen, denn nicht mehr die „Native Speaker" Norm, sondern Kriterien der internationalen Verständlichkeit werden als Maßstab herangezogen. Englisch als Lingua Franca sollte aber auch nicht als Ersatz für Nationalsprachen verstanden werden, sondern zu einer ausgewogenen Identität beitragen, in der die Lingua Franca auf der europäischen Ebene mit der Nationalsprache auf staatlicher Ebene friedlich co-existiert.