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## **Abertura / Opening**

Senhora Secretaria de Estado,  
excelências,  
senhoras e senhores,  
caros colegas:

tenho o prazer de saudá-los na abertura do sexto encontro anual da EFNIL, *Federação Européia das Instituições Nacionais para as Línguas*. Assim como há cinco anos, escolhemos novamente um tema especialmente importante para a situação lingüística em nossos países, bem como para a política de línguas nacional e européia: *A Utilização da Língua nos Negócios e no Comércio na Europa*. A Comissão Européia já tem se ocupado deste tema há algum tempo. Por esta razão, alegro-me com a presença dos vários representantes de instituições públicas européias. Tenho também o prazer de saudar os representantes de organizações européias aos quais o tema seja provavelmente ainda mais próximo do que a nós lingüistas e planeadores. Alegro-nos também que colegas de organizações lingüísticas afins tenham atendido ao nosso convite. Aqueles que não estão diretamente envolvidos pode parecer estranho que diversas organizações de especialistas estejam engajadas a favor da diversidade lingüística européia. Em vista dos muitos aspectos e da complexidade de nossas línguas, não existe concorrência, mas uma contínua divisão de trabalho. Contudo, até o momento não há um trabalho conjunto em termos concretos. Seria do interesse de nosso objetivo comum se pudéssemos utilizar este encontro também para discutir possibilidades concretas de cooperação.<sup>1</sup>

(Let me now stop pretending to be fluent in Portuguese and change to English.)

Before I make a few comments on our present topic, I will briefly recall the general themes of our previous conferences in order to demonstrate a certain thematic coherence and continuity of the activities of EFNIL. At the founding conference in Stockholm in 2003, we heard and discussed reports on changes of linguistic domains and on

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<sup>1</sup> I salute you to the 6th Annual Conference of EFNIL, the *European Federation of National Institutions for Language*. As in the previous five years, we have chosen again a theme of special importance for the linguistic situation in our countries and, correspondingly, for national and European language policy: *Language Use in Business and Commerce in Europe*. Since some time, the European Commission has also been occupying itself with this topic. I am very glad, therefore, that several representatives of European authorities have come to this conference. I am also glad to welcome representatives of European professional organizations who have an even closer connection to this theme than we linguists and language planners. We are also pleased that colleagues from similar language organizations accepted our invitation. For an outsider, it may be surprising that several organizations of language specialists are dealing with the European linguistic diversity. In view of the many aspects and the complexity of our languages, there is, however, no competition but rather division of labor. Until now, there has been little co-operation. It would be fortunate in the interest of our common goals if this conference could also be used to explore avenues for concrete co-operation.

language legislation in several European countries. In Paris 2004, we dealt with cooperation in terminology work and translation. The theme of our conference in Brussels 2005 was *Plurilingual Europeans in multilingual Europe: language learning and language policy*. In Madrid 2006, we treated *Pluricentric languages in multilingual Europe*, and finally, in Riga 2007, our topic was *National and European language policies*. The contributions to last year's conference have recently appeared as a book publication that was included in your conference documents.

Now, at this conference, the general theme is *Language Use in Business and Commerce in Europe*. The esteemed previous speakers already stressed the importance of this topic from a European perspective and the perspective of our hosting country. Let me briefly discuss the interest that EFNIL and its member institutions take in this topic. At first sight, none of our members are particularly engaged in business and commerce. Some of us produce dictionaries, grammars, or teaching materials for the instruction of our languages as first or foreign languages. The commercial aspect of these activities is, however, in most cases only peripheral. Some of us co-operate also in the development of terminologies for various fields of industry and trade, again without being directly involved in industrial or commercial processes. Thus, why should we care about the linguistic aspects of business and commerce? The answers come from linguistics as a descriptive science and from the fields of language planning and language policy. One of the fathers of modern linguistics Ferdinand de Saussure conceived language as a 'fait social', a social fact. Contemporary linguistics does not limit the description of a language to just a repertoire of sounds, words, and grammatical patterns, but also studies the actual use of language within the domains of a linguistic community, that is, within the different social and situational contexts with regard to the purposes for which the language is being used. Because of their importance for a society, the various realms of business and commerce are especially interesting domains of language use. All speakers of a language are, in some way or another, subject to communication in business and/or commerce, be it as workers, administrators, or managers of a production firm, as employees of a bank or a trading company, or most often as customers of the products and services offered by industry and commerce. Thus, the specific linguistic forms and uses of language within industry and trade are interconnected with verbal communication in other domains. The phenomena of the professional uses of language have been studied in linguistics since the late 19th century under headings such as *languages for special purposes (LSP)*, *langues techniques*, *lenguajes técnicos*, *Fachsprachen*, *vaktaalen*, etc.

In LSP linguistics, we sometimes make a rough distinction that might also be useful for our discussion at this conference, the division into three spheres or subdomains of language uses of an industry or a trade:<sup>2</sup> (1) First, the language of theory, that is, primarily the terminology of the science or sciences relevant for a particular industry or trade, for instance, the linguistic specifics of physics, chemistry, engineering, etc. relevant for

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<sup>2</sup> See: Hahn, Walter v. (1973): *Fachsprachen*. In: *Lexikon der Germanistischen Linguistik*. Hg. v. Altmann, Hans Peter u.a. Tübingen, p. 283-269. Ischreyt, Heinz (1965): *Studien zum Verhältnis von Sprache und Technik*. Düsseldorf, p. 41ff.

the automobile industry, or the terminology of business administration and economics used by trading companies or banks. (2) The second subdomain is the language of workshops, that is, the language use among insiders, for instance, in a chemical factory laboratory, in the workshop of an automobile plant, or in the offices of a trading company or a bank. (3) The third subdomain, finally, is the language of distribution, that is, the use of language for selling products or services to customers, many of whom are laymen in the particular field of an industry or trade. Language of distribution, of course, also includes the language use in advertising.

Research in many languages has found ample evidence that language use in the various professional domains and the general use of a language mutually influence each other. Traditional linguistics has concentrated on languages for special purposes as varieties of one and the same language and considered other languages only when lexical items of a technical vocabulary were taken as loan words from another language. The planned and unplanned development of terminologies for the various domains of business and commerce took an important role in the development of those languages that are also used as official standard languages in our countries, one of the reasons why our topic is relevant for EFNIL.

As with natural sciences, technologies, and humanities, the special terminologies of business and commerce have, for centuries, been subject to exchange and borrowing between European languages. One has only to remember that parts of the banking terminology of several European languages were taken from Italian or that a great number of terms in the automobile and railway industry of many countries originated in French or English. The common Latin roots of many items of the technical terminologies of almost all European languages have also to be mentioned.

Since several decades, the linguistic situation of business and commerce has become more complex in most countries. The influence of other languages on the professional communication in these domains as in some other fields is no longer limited to the borrowing and adaptation of single foreign words or phrases, but extends to the use of other languages, especially English, besides or instead of the individual national language. This is of special interest not only for descriptive linguistics but also for language planning and language policy in the various countries and regions because it concerns also the terminology work done for the official language(es) of each country. If another language is used for professional communication in particular domains, terminology work for the individual standard language would become superfluous and pointless. But there are even more important reasons for our interest in the linguistic conditions of business and commerce in our countries.

It took several centuries to emancipate the various European languages from Latin and to develop them into standard languages that can be used in all domains for all communicative purposes. We all know that until the early modern age the common language of political, religious, and scientific domains of most European countries and regions was Latin. The rise of national languages was a slow process that took for some languages until the 19th century to develop into *Ausbausprachen*, as the German

sociolinguist Heinz Kloss<sup>3</sup> used to say, that is, into fully developed languages that exist not just in regional varieties limited to local and private domains but are also used as standard varieties for literature, science, politics, business, and trade. They are the languages the members of EFNIL are mainly concerned with.

Since not later than the middle of the last century, the process of developing language varieties into comprising standard languages for all communicative purposes seems to be being gradually reversed, that is, the traditional European standard languages have begun to lose some of their domains of professional communication to English or a globalised variety of English. This has been described and discussed in detail for the language use in science. As we know, most physicists, chemists, biologists, and other natural scientists do not publish in their native languages any longer but in English. Some of them even teach in English and – as I do now – read their conference papers in English. I will not discuss this here. However, it should be plausible that if this process goes on, European languages such as Swedish, German, Portuguese, Polish, and others that developed their professional varieties over centuries will lose certain professional domains and after some time cannot be used any longer for communication in these domains. Since the language use in professional domains also has influence on the general use of a language, the future development of various European languages will not be mainly influenced by language internal processes of their professional domains but increasingly by English as an international LSP. This is considered by many linguistic patriots, as we may call them, as detrimental to the present and future development of their native languages. Cultural critics see it as a danger for the linguistic diversity of Europe as a whole that is essential for the cultural diversity and wealth of our continent.

On the other hand, there are obvious practical reasons for the use of other languages besides or instead of the individual national language, especially in business and commerce. Many industries and trades are internationally interlaced and have an increasing demand for communication with partners and customers in other linguistic communities. Thus, the use of a common vehicular language, a *lingua franca*, seems to suggest itself for contacts between speakers of different native languages. And this way out is, apparently, being taken by an increasing number of industries and trade companies of our countries that use English as a universal auxiliary language for their international business contacts, and in some cases, also for internal communication. In this connection, one of the questions we would like to have answers for is: To what extent is English being used in business and commerce **besides** the official languages of the various countries and to what extent is it being used **instead** of the national language of the countries. The answers will, probably, differ not only depending on the type of industry or trade and on the various countries but also on the three subdomains of the LSPs I sketched before, that is, communication in the field of professional theory, within the actual workshops, and in the distribution of goods and services.

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<sup>3</sup> Kloss, Heinz (1978): *Die Entwicklung neuer germanischer Kultursprachen seit 1800*. 2. erw. Aufl. Düsseldorf: Schwann.

Recent studies showed that the tendency towards professional bilingualism of the individual official language and English in business and commerce may not only be detrimental to the national languages of the countries in question but may also have economical disadvantages. Due to the international interconnection and interlacement of most industries and trades in Europe and beyond, these disadvantages cannot, of course, be avoided by going back to national monolingual communication. On the contrary, there are, apparently, findings and arguments for an increased use of more than just two languages in business and commerce. Some of them have been recently presented under the heading *Languages mean business. Companies work better with languages* as *Recommendations from the Business Forum for Multilingualism established by the European Commission*.<sup>4</sup> I will refrain from quoting or summarizing these recommendations. Some of you are familiar with them and others can easily find them on the internet. For us, the actual research behind these recommendations is of greater interest, especially the ELAN report. Therefore, I am very glad that we could win several scholars who were engaged in research for ELAN and in similar studies as speakers for this conference. It is my pleasure to welcome these guest speakers and to thank them for presenting us some of their findings and the conclusions drawn from them. Let me also give our thanks in advance to those of our colleagues from several member institutions who will report on the situation in their countries with regards to the general theme of this conference.

In order not to steal from the time of the following speakers, let me hasten to give our thanks, last but by no means least, to our member organization, the Instituto Camoes, for hosting this conference. Final thanks will have to wait until the closing session tomorrow afternoon before many of us will depart. However, the fact that so many of us have come and are here in this hall now is convincing empirical proof that the preparation of this event has been successful. Let me also take the occasion to give special thanks to the president of the Instituto Camoes Simonetta Luz Afonso. She is guilty, I should better say, responsible for having EFNIL meet here, because she invited us two years ago to hold our annual conference 2008 here in Lisbon, the city that is also known in all member states of the Union as the city of the European Reform Treaty.

Let us now continue our work on this year's theme.

Thank you for your attention.

Vielen Dank!

Merci beaucoup!

Muito obrigado!

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<sup>4</sup> The recommendations can be found on the Internet under: [http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/orban/docs/business\\_papers/davignon\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/orban/docs/business_papers/davignon_en.pdf).