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Language is business. The challenges of a single digital market in a multilingual society

Abstract

Our current society is strongly internationalized by modern means of transport, the globalization of markets and the use of digital tools. In such an internationally oriented society, it is clear that anybody who is more or less proficient in just one language, their own mother tongue, is excluded from a huge amount of information, from understanding other cultures and from a wider world view. “Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenze meiner Welt”,¹ we are told by Wittgenstein. In this lecture I will briefly discuss the added value of multilingualism, its economic factors in our modern globalized world and the business community’s attitude towards multilingualism. I will conclude with some figures regarding the language industry in the European Union that show that the market demands many motivated specialists in the field of applied linguistics. How do we make the language sector more attractive to young people?

1. Introduction

Until recently, language studies were mostly associated with the learning of a language or the study of its literature. At most universities, the philological approach to language would be highly traditional in character. In recent years, however, the emphasis has clearly shifted to communication in all its facets. The flourishing of courses that approach language from a more economic viewpoint also testifies to this. In this context, ‘economic viewpoint’ refers to the market, the national market in the first place but also, inextricably bound up with it, the European market and finally on other continents as well. Examples of these courses are studies in communication management, translation and interpreting, multilingual communication, translation technology and computational linguistics, etc.

Apart from that, there are quite a few social developments that are contributing to a new perspective on language:

- The fast evolution of science and technology, leading to the emergence of countless new concepts, represented by terms that each needs their counterparts in various languages.
- The influence and changes caused by rapid technological growth in all areas of our society, creating a need for faster and more reliable information.

¹ “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”.

- International exchanges as well as political, economic and cultural cooperation, causing an enormous increase in multilingual contacts.
- The mass production of consumer goods, leading to an increasingly global economy, in which businesses need to take into account both the international rules of the game and local markets.

The new term *language industry* refers to these new developments and is a collective term for all kinds of language processes and services. *Industry* here refers to the hard figures: the cost price of language and the price of correct information.

In Flanders and the Netherlands, the Dutch Language Union has carried out research into the economic significance of language. Organizations such as De Taalsector (Flanders) and De Taalstudio (Netherlands) keep their fingers on the pulse of language and the economy.

2. What does the language industry encompass?

A study by the European Commission distinguished between the following broad categories: translation, interpreting, the localization of software and websites, audiovisual translation (subtitling and dubbing of visual materials) and language acquisition through e-learning. We can add to these the development of language technology and the supporting of multilingual conferences.

Technological and non-technological solutions focus on different aspects. On the one hand there are the non-technological solutions, such as translation, interpreting, editing, localization and language acquisition. On the other hand, there are the technological solutions, such as machine translation, computer-aided translation, video conferences with interpreters, multilingual search machines, data-mining (the analysis of large amounts of data) and multilingual terminology banks for specific businesses or disciplines, etc.

The language industry follows economic trends: we are living in a knowledge economy, which is closely connected to the concept of an ‘information society’. Knowledge, data and data processing are of increasing importance in business. The classic division of Western society into different eras of development is well-known: Europe was an agricultural society until the middle of the eighteenth century. Its growing wealth was linked to the agricultural products it produced and traded. After 1750, a totally new process emerged as a result of the industrial revolution. Especially England was at the forefront of this development. Small workshops grew into large factories, which together made up large-scale industry. Because of this growth, the price of products plummeted, making them available to increasing numbers of people. This evolution continued throughout the nineteenth century, first in Europe and later in the rest of the world. At the moment, that development is being brought to an even higher level. We are now seeing an economy in which knowledge as a production factor is increasingly important compared

to the three traditional production factors of labor, resources and capital. Our attention is shifting from diamonds and coal to brains and knowledge. The knowledge economy is spreading to all sectors and appealing to all possible parties.

Anybody who wants to find a job and survive in this knowledge economy must be able to understand complex processes and read fairly complicated instructions and texts.

3. A wealth of markets and economic activities. Applications in the linguistic field required!

In an interview with the highly experienced translation expert Abied Alsulaiman, he described how he ended up in the translation business after university. In the beginning he was sometimes asked to do a translation. After all, his language combination was quite rare: Dutch, Arabic and Hebrew. Soon he was given a lot of work for the court as a sworn translator and in 1993 he set up his own translation bureau. His work is a direct reflection of economic activity in a number of sectors in Belgium. To start with, there is the importance of Antwerp harbor. Apart from import and export, shipping itself involves a lot of translation work, for example the shipping documents. Ships bound for the Arab world must have all of the papers in Arabic as well. A second field is customs, again an aspect of international dealings.

The same goes for the food industry. All Belgian food products exported to the Arab world must have a detailed list of ingredients in Arabic, so translations were done for well-known chocolate brands such as Côte d'Or and Leonidas.

And what about the textile industry? Levi Strauss & Co. is an American clothing company mostly known as the producer of Levi's jeans. It has a branch in Belgium but its factories are in Sousse, in Tunisia. Everything related to work processes, contracts, etc. needs translating. Zara also produces in the Arab world and Marks & Spencer has a factory in Tangiers, in Morocco. So work galore for translators!

In the medical sector, Abied Alsulaiman was approached by Janssen Pharmaceutica in Beerse (Belgium), a prominent and innovative company that develops medicines. Apart from the information on package inserts, he also translated general health information into Arabic. Even didactic films about health needed subtitling in Arabic. Talk about a varied job!

Microsoft made a video on how to use Windows. This was provided with Arabic subtitles. And what about the building industry? Besix is Belgium's largest building company. Its activities include the construction of buildings, infrastructure, environmental projects and roads. In 2014, the company had a turnover of €2 billion and employed 18,000 people in 22 countries spread over 5 continents. Besix has built almost every building in Dubai. In order to become better-known in the Arab world and to penetrate its market, the company made a promotional film and had it subtitled in Arabic.

Language and economy: as soon as the economy in a certain sector improves, multilingual communication and the need for communication specialists automatically follow. But even when the economy is going through a crisis, it is necessary to make investments and to tap new markets. And especially then, good communication and multilingual communication are of vital importance.

4. Another growing industry: tourism. An important economic pillar for many countries

Strong tourist activity is good for the economy, there's no two ways about it. The revenue from tourism and business travel in Flanders is increasing every year, a development with a positive effect on the Flemish economy. In the Netherlands, the evolution of tourism is observed by Holland Marketing. On their website we can read: tourism is not just fun, it is also important for the Netherlands: in 2016, *€75.7 billion* were spent on tourism and recreation. Besides, the hospitality industry provides paid employment to around 590,000 people, or over 6 percent of the working population.

The importance of tourism is shown by the fact that the government uses a specific measuring instrument to monitor its development. A Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) is an internationally recognized instrument to record the economic influence of tourism. The tourist industry is not a well-defined or clearly perceptible economic sector but rather a diverse collection of (parts of) various business sectors. Two indicators reveal the economic importance of tourism: on the one hand the **gross value added of tourism industries**, i.e. the value added generated by tourism services used by both tourists and non-tourists; on the other hand the **direct gross value added of tourism**, i.e. the value added which is generated by tourism services and other business services used by tourists only.

In addition, the impact of international business (MICE: Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions) is also measured. In the Netherlands, over 2.3 million multi-day organized business trips are made, amounting to around 5.1 million nights spent in accommodation. The turnover of multi-day business meetings is estimated at around *€2.3 billion*. These business trips contribute substantially to employment in the Netherlands. At the same time, they have a considerable impact on language and communication processes. That is why more and more professional agencies are employed to organize international congresses. They are often called Convention & Visitors Bureaus and they can provide all the necessary information on a region and its locations, hotels and facilities. The language industry is also heavily involved in the organization of multilingual international congresses, as the European Commission points out. On the website of Holland Marketing we find a great deal of data and interesting information, but not a word

is said about the impact of language on all of these tourist and business activities. How to put a country on the tourist map? How many flyers, websites etc. need translating for target groups? How to draw foreign visitors to the Netherlands or Flanders? The answer to this question is as simple as it is obvious: by communicating in the target languages of the customers you are aiming at. Translating for the tourism industry is a specialism. It calls for a communication strategy as well as good copywriters and content writers, translators and marketers. What sort of texts are translated? Tourist brochures, flyers, websites, travel guides, mailings, newsletters, blogs and other documents in various language combinations.

5. The impact of multilingualism on European business

Internationalization, caused by modern transport, the globalization of markets and the use of digital aids such as the internet, is having a huge impact on society today. As a result, the number of migrants is growing. On the one hand, highly skilled workers are employed in the global economy, causing them to move to other countries. Young students are encouraged to add an international component to their studies by making use of scholarships. On the other hand, many employees with low-level education seek their fortunes in other countries, trying to find a better life by emigrating. In such an internationally oriented society, it is clear that anybody who is more or less proficient in just one language, their own mother tongue, is excluded from a huge amount of information, from understanding other cultures and from a wider world view.

In the following, I will analyze the additional value of multilingualism, challenges in dealing with multilingualism at school, and its effects on the economy. I will also discuss the business community's attitude towards multilingualism, rounding off my contribution with some figures regarding the language industry in the European Union (EU).

Digital society and the globalization of the economy have thoroughly changed European economic activities. Employers and employees are working with and in various languages. Multilingualism should no longer be regarded as a trump card or a bonus point; it is of vital importance for businesses. Digital communication dissolves not only national and regional barriers but also language barriers.

Business in Belgium, a small but labor-intensive and multilingual country in the heart of the EU, is part of a large European market with 27 countries and 24 official languages. Providing multilingual services is a strategic choice to do business on a pan-European level and to optimize competition between businesses.

A study by the Directorate-General for Translation of the EU presents some figures on multilingual business practices in the EU: in 2009, around a third of the 500 largest companies had their headquarters in Europe. Furthermore, around

20 million small and medium-sized companies in Europe represent around 99 percent of the European business sector.

Although the EU represents only 7 percent of the world population, trade with the rest of the world covers about 20 percent of all global imports and exports. With its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of around US\$ 18.5 billion (2014), the EU economy is a world leader, followed by China, the USA and the other (non-EU) G20 countries

The EU economy is characterized by the increasing importance of its services sector (banking, tourism, transport, insurance, etc.), representing over 60 percent of the GDP. Industry and agriculture are still important sectors but their economic significance has fallen considerably.

The impact of multilingualism on business can hardly be underestimated. Indeed, it has been shown that companies with a lack of multilingual employees lose markets. In her book *Linguanomics* (2017), Gabrielle Hogan-Brunn describes this situation in clear terms: “One in four UK and one in six US businesses is losing out due to lack of language skills and cultural awareness in their workforce”.

6. The language industry. Economic value and growth forecast

Common Sense Advisory is a research firm that does yearly research into the market of the language industry. In their report of 2018 they describe the language services market as rapidly growing with a global turnover of US\$ 46.52 billion.

In their report they refer to the enormous impact of global digital transformation (GDX), its effects on the production of information and adaptation to other languages and local markets. How can a sector such as the language industry be so successful, even during a recession? Very simple. Multilingualism is necessary to let businesses grow and capture new markets. Even in times of financial crisis and economic decline, businesses invest in language and communication. The large translation companies (the so-called Language Service Providers or LSPs) are growing at 20 percent annually, some even at 30 percent.

7. Multilingualism in Europe. What are the strong and weak points?

In a European study of translation and multilingualism, an analysis is made of the strong and weak points of businesses in relation to international trade and multilingualism, as shown in the following table 1.

SWOT	Strong points	Weak points
Internal	<p>Many languages are used (European multilingual space).</p> <p>International policy: many businesses want to serve international markets (multilingual websites).</p> <p>Collaboration with employees who speak foreign languages. Preference is given to multilingual candidates in selection procedures (language tests, ...).</p> <p>Development and use of language technology software (for non-specialized translation, handled by the company itself).</p>	<p>Lack of linguistic knowledge in many countries.</p> <p>Communication problems with customers (different cultures, intercultural problems). For Europe specifically with Asian and Indian customers.</p> <p>Extra costs (translating and interpreting).</p>
External	<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Growth in digital and multilingual information.</p> <p>Increasing number of foreign customers.</p> <p>New educational initiatives.</p> <p>New opportunities (for specialized translation supported by computer-aided translation software and the language industry).</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Growing need of linguistic knowledge.</p> <p>Difficulties finding multilingual employees with the right profile.</p> <p>Growing number of employees with low-level education.</p> <p>Loss of markets.</p> <p>Loss of control over the management of multilingual information and diversity.</p>

Table 1: Analysis of the strong and weak points of businesses in relation to international trade and multilingualism

According to the same European report, companies are taking concrete measures to be able to respond better to the multilingualism of markets. These measures may involve the following steps:

- Companies recruit multilingual employees and offer language courses to advance multilingualism. They also encourage employees to work for the company abroad in order to be promoted thanks to international mobility.
- Companies can make a difference on local markets by recruiting locally and signing contracts with local partners.

- The internal communication of a company may improve by organizing multilingual company meetings in several so-called ‘corporate languages’.
- Companies set up an adjusted, multilingual documentation system and a multilingual terminology list in order to develop an internal company language. Digital communication should also be improved. A company’s intranet can be made multilingual; its customer website should be written in clear language *and*, of course, in the languages of its customers.

8. E-commerce. The emerging factor in the economy calls for multilingual websites

E-commerce is booming and online sales numbers are going up every year. The Belgians and Dutch mostly buy services on the internet, such as plane tickets, holidays, hotel bookings and insurance. But concerts are popular as well, as are shops like Bol.com and Zalando. Supermarkets like the Colruyt group and Albert Heijn also have successful web shops. This economic success is the result of good communication: the set-up of the websites and their ease of use but also their multilingualism! The Colruyt website opens with a bilingual screen: Dutch/French, typical of the Belgian market, of course, and users can go to their own language with one click. Everything is completely supported in both languages. Many e-shops give the option to select the language of your choice. At the very least, everything is translated into the languages of the countries where orders can be placed. A European study showed that nine out of ten consumers want to consult a website in their own language.

Dutch *Marktplaats.nl* and Belgian *tweedehands.be* are daughters of eBay, just like the French iBazar. In 2018, eBay had a revenue of US\$ 2.2 billion and it employs approximately 14,000 people globally. But what about the languages? People want to buy and sell in their own language. Linguistic dynamics are of vital importance and the company is not able to keep a check on everything since it does not sell its own goods. Its users are the buyers and sellers. This calls for strict organization behind the scenes in order to guarantee a proper display of the multilingual information. But the greatest challenge for eBay was to operate on the Russian market. How to translate your supply into Russian, knowing that the supply is changing constantly? That is not a job for humans; it can only be done by a smart translation machine. Language technology is of great importance here and leads to big profits. eBay made a one-time investment in technology that cost around US\$ 20 million and now makes an annual profit of between US\$ 50 and 100 million on the Russian market. Language and economics go hand in hand!

9. Models of internal and external communication in business

9.1 Internal communication

Companies often use a specific language strategy to streamline their internal communication. They usually choose one of the following models:

- **Learning languages:** companies can choose to use one or two official languages and make them obligatory. International companies usually opt for French and English (the OECD or NATO, for example).
- **Multilateral translation:** the radical alternative to learning languages is to translate each language used into all other languages used. The best known example of this is the language policy of the European Commission.
- **Translation of a central language into one or two other languages** that are also used within the company.

Complete multilateral translation is quite rare. Usually a combination of learning one or more languages and translation is the preferred solution.

9.2 External communication

Of course, external communication is a different matter altogether. A company that takes its customers and local markets seriously has no choice: all target languages must be taken into account to enable optimal customer acceptance. Companies are well aware of these challenges and obstacles and do everything they can to reach their customers in all languages and all parts of the world. Hanf and Muir (2010) outline the problems as follows: “La diversité linguistique [est] de nature à constituer un obstacle à la libre circulation des personnes, services et marchandises” [Linguistic diversity forms an obstacle to the freedom of movement of people, services and goods].

Multilingual information has another communication target: “For many cultures it is a point of *national and cultural pride* to have service literature translated; translated material is therefore recognized as an important marketing tool”, according to Kamprath and Adolphson, who carried out research into the internal and external communication of the American company Caterpillar. The main activity of Caterpillar Inc., often shortened to CAT, is the design and construction of heavy machinery for civil engineering and mining. An interesting detail is that in 1972, the company developed a special subset of language: *Caterpillar Fundamental English* (CFE). This language was a drastically simplified form of English. It was hoped that all technicians, also in other countries, would use this elementary English. *This was a clear ‘English Only’ language strategy.*

Caterpillar Fundamental English was more or less the same as BASIC English (Ch. K Ogden), the first attempt to present a controlled version of English.

BASIC stood for British, American, Scientific, International & Commercial. The language was limited to 850 words: 100 words denoting action, 600 words denoting things and 150 words denoting quality. Grammatical words are not taken into account.

However, this system was abandoned ten years later. Preference was given to a much richer language, *Caterpillar Technical English* (CTE), containing 70,000 words, but with a terminology that was mapped out clearly and unambiguously. This may seem a lot of words, but it was a deliberate selection from the more than one million terms and words used in communications at Caterpillar at the time.

Basic principles of CTE:

- One term relates to one concept, so one meaning per term
- Clear syntax

This made it possible to translate the source language, English, effortlessly into other target languages. *So the company changed from a monolingual to a multilingual strategy.* Indeed, multilingualism in external communications proved to be absolutely necessary, for technicians and customers alike. At the moment, Caterpillar has a complete website in six languages: English, Chinese, German, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Especially in the case of safety instructions, the use of the customers' own language is crucial. It significantly improves safety.

Unfortunately there are also many known examples of companies suffering losses because of a lack of multilingual and correct communication. The lack of documentation in the language of the users sometimes even leads to tragic errors. In the hospital of Épinal in France, 23 patients received the wrong radiation when they were treated for a tumor. Medical staff had misunderstood the English instructions and delivered too high a dose of radiation. Since insurance claims concerning the lack of correct information in a target language or a wrong translation into a target language are increasingly common, companies will have to pay more attention to the characteristics of each local market and to the multilingualism of their communications.

10. English only? My smartphone speaks Finnish. The secret of localization

However *globalized* the economy, markets are strategically won or lost by the flexibility with which companies adjust to their customers. This is called *localization*. *Glocalization* is the term that denotes both processes. *Globalization* as an economic strategy is partly pursued by the internationalization of products but it cannot do without a second pillar: *localization*, or adaptation to local markets. Localization means translating, intercultural communication and adapting to local situations. It concerns factual data that need changing, such as local currencies, monetary units, units of measurement, dates, safety instructions, etc. Let the following example serve as clarification:

What does the date *11/12/13* mean? The British will interpret this as *11 December 2013*, the Americans as *12 November 2013*, and the Japanese as *13 December 2011*. In this context, also compare the following time indications: *two o'clock in the afternoon* becomes *2 pm (UK)* and *14h (FR)*.

Even within one and the same language, certain adjustments are required, depending on the market. Manuals for the French market should contain different instructions from those in manuals for the Canadian, Swiss or Belgian markets, to give an example. We may conclude that localizing products for foreign markets involves two aspects: adjusting the product itself and adjusting its linguistic and intercultural components. Both are extremely important when convincing customers to buy a product.

This requires great skills from a localization team. Such a team is formed not only of translators and language specialists who know the local markets but also of intercultural communication specialists, local market experts, computer specialists and product developers, etc. Indeed, it has been shown that companies with a lack of multilingual employees lose markets and have more trouble standing up to the competition.

[Localisation is] the linguistic and cultural adaptation of digital content to the requirements and locale of a foreign market, and the provision of services and technologies for the management of multilingualism across the digital global information flow. (Schäler 2007, 157)

In order to represent this schematically, the three concepts can be presented connected to these processes in the following way (see table 2):

	Internationalization	Localization	Globalization
Definition	The process of making all materials functional in all languages with regard to their linguistic and cultural data, regardless of functionality	The adaptation of products, services and digital content to a cultural-linguistic market	The strategy to take a product or a service to the global market. This mostly concerns sales and marketing.
Team	Software developers, writers of digital content	Translators, proofreaders, software developers, project managers, testers, publishers	Marketing and sales departments
Stage	Development and creation of a digital project or service (this is the prerequisite for localization)	Translation and adaptation of text, user interface and cultural conventions	Launching of the product or the service which has been internationalized <i>and</i> localized

Table 2: Concepts connected to processes

10.1 What exactly does localization entail?

It is necessary to distinguish between two kinds of localization: the adaptation and translation of computer software on the one hand, and the adaptation and localization of products and their related information on the other.

10.1.1 Software localization

All software packages need adapting to a large number of local markets, and especially when developing new software products, terminology is very important as it is an integral part of the operational components of the software (i.e. the commands a user needs to operate the software). This means that effective and careful terminology management is a crucial factor in the development of new software. The translation of software, also called *software localization*, is the fastest growing market in the language industry. To understand how software is susceptible to markets and local languages, we first need to look at how language encroaches on software.

Software translation has three aspects. The first aspect concerns the *user interface*. When using a program, all kinds of terms and instructions appear on the screen. These can be in German, English, Chinese or any other language. The second aspect is the *help function*; all explanations of functions and solutions for potential problems must be clearly written in the language of the customer. Moreover, the help function must match seamlessly with the user interface regarding terms and codes. The third part that needs translating is the *documentation*. This can come in the form of a book or an online module. Again, all terminology should consistently refer to the software itself.

10.1.2 Adapting products and related information to local markets

One country, one language, one culture used to be a fairly common attitude among companies trying to launch a product on the market. This slogan is no longer used and many companies are pursuing a new one: *The world speaks one language – yours*. This means that each language has its rights and that the information is adapted to the language and culture of the individual customer.

Apart from that, it is obligatory to translate technical documentation into the customer's language. European resolution C411/1998 states that all technical documentation related to a product must be translated into the language or languages of the country where the product is to be sold. More importantly: a product is not complete until the full manual is available in the relevant language(s).

There are countless European legal initiatives to protect customers and to make sure the necessary information is made available in the right language. For example, we can read on the website of a supplier of heat pumps: "The following documents are delivered for the end user in Dutch: *planning and technical documentation, an installation manual, a user manual, and completion and repair documentation*".

10.2 Profit estimates for localization projects

Investments in the localization of products or services are often seen, quite one-sidedly, as being very expensive but in all cases the *return on investment* should be calculated. Several parameters can be used to this end. On the one hand there are measuring instruments to evaluate the effectivity of production and workflow. On the other hand there are instruments to measure the total value of an investment for the whole company.

If the whole process of translating various texts for foreign markets is taken as an example, the following elements must be measured to gain insights into the efficiency of the translating process: the translation costs per word and per page, the costs of revision, the costs in case of delay (number of days of delay), the percentage of the text that can be reused (for example in a translation memory),

the costs per drawing or diagram, the costs of an internal employee compared to an external translation agency, etc.

To give an example: if a European company wants to launch one or several products on the Japanese market, its management will be interested in questions such as: what will the additional value be for us? What does it cost to localize our products for the Japanese market and what will the expected turnover be? It will be necessary to measure things such as: what will sales with a localized product yield compared to sales with a non-localized product? Will the shareholders approve of this? How much does localization cost and how much can the new market return?

10.3 Localization is an absolute necessity on the market

Taking local markets into account brings great benefits to industry, customers and governments. It is of great importance that we should also pay attention to the fact that the localization of information and products can save lives, especially when people do not have direct access to information in their own language. Furthermore, localization holds two important trump cards. The supplier or the company is far better equipped to launch the product on the market and will make a greater profit. The second advantage is that clients will buy a product much more readily if all related information (on a website, in a user manual, etc.) is available in their own language.

Website translations should not be servile and literal but should be made attractive by using especially adapted visual material. It is also important to realize that different markets may have different ways of dealing with certain products.

In today's rapidly evolving digital world, keyboards for computers, tablets, smartphones and all kinds of other devices form a special challenge when it comes to adaptation to local markets. Not only the alphabets and characters of various languages are an issue, there is also often a need for technical and software solutions. How else can it be possible to set up a Finnish or Arabic or Estonian keyboard on your smartphone? Have you ever wondered how it is possible that Microsoft Office is also available in Dutch? The same goes for Chinese customers, who can buy a version of Microsoft Office in their own language, not to mention the Arabic version, which is read from right to left.

In a growing international world, where more and more people are migrants and society is reaching an ever higher degree of diversity, it is very important that governments and companies also offer information in various languages, adapted to the various cultures of the country's residents.

How is this done in Scandinavian countries? Whether you are driving a Volvo, have an IKEA couch in your living room, listen to music on Spotify via a Bang & Olufsen stereo system or drink your milk or soft drink from a Tetra Pak carton, you are using a Scandinavian product. With a population of barely 26 million,

Scandinavia has the most top brands per capita in the world. The official languages in this region of the world are *Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian* (two versions: *Nynorsk* and *Bokmal*), *Icelandic, Faroese, Sami, Meänkieli* and *Greenlandic* and the minority languages *Yiddish* (in Sweden) and *German* (in Denmark); the Iranian language *Romani* is a minority language in Sweden, Norway and Finland. For this part of the world, language strategy is also important. With a quarter of its population made up of first or second generation migrants, Sweden has a clear language policy. Everyone who is not a native speaker of Swedish is entitled to an interpreter without having to pay for this service. This means there is a great need for good translators and language specialists who can cope with all of these language combinations, and Sweden's translation and interpreting industry is growing strongly. For economic reasons, all technical documents and information related to goods for the Scandinavian market are translated into the above-mentioned official languages. It is also a very expensive market: Swedish is among the most expensive target and source languages in the translation industry, ranking more or less equal to Japanese. All consumer products and apps are localized into at least five languages: Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Finnish and Icelandic. Whoever thought that language and localization are not important, should think again.

10.4 Classic errors in the localization of texts, products and websites

The most frequently made errors in the localization of products and their related texts and websites are: *omitting to translate, careless and bad translations*, and finally *a lack of knowledge of and respect for the unique cultural characteristics of the new market*.

No translation: This often amounts to a company pursuing an *English-only policy*. Some companies make the cardinal error of believing they can enter a new, foreign market without translation. This used to happen very often but fortunately this is not so much the case anymore on the level of user goods. However, between businesses (*Business2Business*), English is often the only means of communication. Beauty products, on the other hand, are often promoted in French. Still, a proper description and a user manual in the language of the customer are indispensable.

People who like drinking tea may have heard of the delicious French brand *Le Palais des Thés*. They have excellent tea but the Parisian company only uses French and English and as a result loses out on substantial markets. In Flanders and the Netherlands they do not open any shops or selling points because they do not want to invest in the translation into Dutch. The Spanish market also stays closed to them for the same reason. It is quite an investment indeed but one that could yield a great profit. This way, markets are lost because of a lack of multilingualism.

The absence of a translation into the target language of the market may also have legal consequences. SC Johnson, an American company producing, among other things, insect repellents, was fined for exporting nine pesticides without having translated the instructions for use into the main languages of the market.

Wrong and careless translation: The advertising campaign of pen manufacturer Parker went wrong in Mexico because the English slogan ‘It won’t leak in your pocket and embarrass you’ was carelessly translated into Spanish. *Embarrass* was replaced by *embarazar*, so the new slogan for the Mexican market read: ‘It won’t leak in your pocket and make you pregnant’.

HSBC Bank experienced just how much a bad translation and poor adaptation to markets can cost. In several countries, the very popular campaign *Assume Nothing* ended up with the tagline *Do Nothing*. The result? The bank had to invest US\$ 10 million in a new campaign to repair the damage done to their image.

Lack of respect for cultural characteristics: How important it is for a company to take the needs of local markets into account is shown by the success of new telecommunication businesses that regard *transcreation* as their key activity. *Transcreation* is a relatively new concept used by marketing and advertising professionals. The term conveys the idea that adapting a message to another culture is a complex matter. It concerns language but, even more so, culture. The marketing of a product in a new market should be completely adapted to the local characteristics of that market in order for the product to call up the same emotions as in the original market. From the color choice of a campaign, to the name of a product, to the humor in a slogan: anything can be used to achieve this. In the market, this is also called *creative translating*, *cross-market copywriting*, *international copy adaptation*, etc. Ignoring the aspect of transcreation in the process of launching a new product can be quite embarrassing, as Puma, the German sports brand, learnt the hard way. In 2011, the United Arab Emirates celebrated its 40th National Day. In honor of the occasion, Puma released a special limited collection of sneakers in the colors of the Emirate flag. But the Arabs thought it a disgrace that this product was put on the market. For them, it showed a gross lack of respect to project the image of a flag onto a shoe because in their culture, a shoe is something dirty which touches the ground. Puma was forced to take the shoe off the market.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, language diversity is increasingly important to businesses as the economic impact of language is huge. Complex processes of localization and transcreation are becoming increasingly necessary. Language is the ideal vehicle for economic expansion. The market needs new language jobs and profiles. Young people need to be able to discover these new challenges. This might be a task and a mission for the EFNIL.

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