KEY ASPECTS OF THE USE OF ENGLISH IN EUROPE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface 5
Introduction 7
1. English in education 7
  - 1.1. Early beginnings 7
  - 1.2. Widespread introduction of English, longer courses 8
  - 1.3. English and other languages 8
  - 1.4. English as a teaching language 9
2. English in the sciences 10
3. English in the workplace 12
  - 3.1. English and internationalisation 12
  - 3.2. Extent and limits 12
  - 3.3. Company languages 13
  - 3.4. Transnational companies 14
  - 3.5. Questions arising 14
4. The use of English as a supranational language in European institutions 15
  - 4.1. Languages of the European Union 15
  - 4.2. Supranational uses 17
5. English and cultural products 18
6. English and other languages in the information society 19
7. The place of English as it exists and as it is perceived to exist 20
8. Conclusions 21
Bibliographical References 22

Preface

This text was commissioned by the *Language Policy Division* for the Conference on *Languages, diversity, citizenship: policies for plurilingualism in Europe* (13-15 November 2002). In the framework of a general discussion of diversification of language education policies, the need emerged to single out the "question" of the role of English teaching/learning in Europe for separate treatment. This problem has long been recognised as crucial for implementing any kind of diversified language teaching. At the Innsbruck Conference on "*Linguistic diversity for democratic citizenship in Europe*" (10-12 May 1999), the *Language Policy Division* was specifically asked to produce discussion papers on this particular aspect of language policy. This text, together with others in the same series, is a response to this demand from member States.

This debate should also be seen in relation to the "*Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe: from linguistic diversity to plurilingual education*". This Guide is both a descriptive and forward-looking document aimed at highlighting the complexity of the issues involved in language education, which are often addressed too simplistically. It endeavours to describe the methods and conceptual tools for analysing different language teaching situations and organising language education in accordance with Council of Europe principles. The present document also broaches this major issue, but given its subject-matter, it obviously cannot address it exhaustively.

The aim here is to review the issue of English in relation to plurilingualism, which many Council of Europe Recommendations have pinpointed as a principle and goal of language education policies. It is essential that plurilingualism be valued at the level of the individual and that their responsibility in this matter be assumed by all the education institutions concerned.

Jean-Claude Beacco et Michael Byram

Introduction

In order to make a European study of a phenomenon like the current place and spread of English, we need scientifically sourced data covering the whole of Europe and all those fields in which languages are used. This is far from being the case**.** Quite a number of studies exist that meet scientific criteria and deal with fields such as languages in science or the linguistic practices of the European Union institutions. However, very few such studies are found for businesses and the information society, and those that exist originate mainly in certain countries of western Europe. Very few come from central, eastern and southern Europe. Where they exist, they do not cross frontiers. Other data that we possess come from institutions whose main function is not the observation of languages, for example organisations which monitor scientific research, radio and TV production and, of course, language teaching. These data too are very unevenly distributed.

The study that follows tries to use the available resources in order to take stock of the situation. The choice of fields of use is fairly wide though not exhaustive. The approach is designed to be historical and critical, especially when scientific field studies are unavailable. It also tries to elucidate the meaning of the term *lingua franca* currently associated with English and the highly diverse functions embraced by that term in practice.

1. English in education

1.1. Early beginnings

While the teaching of English in continental Europe can be traced back to the 16th century, it remained restricted until the 19th century mainly to places that traded with Great Britain, and was more common outside school in professional circles (van Essen, 1997). True competition with French and German in secondary education started in the 1880s. In certain parts of Germany the teaching of English began to take preference over that of French from the 1920s onwards. Until the second world war, English was still little taught in central and eastern Europe**,** where German and French were firmly established. After the war differences in trends developed between western Europe and what were then called the East European countries. In western Europe English supplanted German and French from the 1950s onwards as the first foreign language taught in the Scandinavian countries and from the 1960s in the Netherlands. It was also during this period that the teaching of English in France started clearly to outstrip that of German. The swing from French to English occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Spain, and a little later in Portugal and Italy. In eastern Europe the teaching of Russian became compulsory after the second world war and remained so until the end of the 1980s. At the end of the Stalinist period English was re-introduced alongside German, which as the language of the German Democratic Republic was still taught, particularly in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, and alongside French, which was still taught in Romania and Bulgaria. Its importance grew progressively until the end of the 1980s (Fodor and Peluau, 2001).

In eastern Europe the requirement that Russian be taught was abandoned in the 1990s and languages were allowed to compete. This greatly benefited English, which began to be taught much more widely. Nevertheless, in countries like Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic it is in competition with German. In Romania English and French are both widely taught, the strong presence maintained by the latter being due to its recognised social and historical status (Truchot, 2001). Almost everywhere, English has become the first modern language taught and the proportions of pupils learning it are fast approaching those found in the European Union.

1.2. Widespread introduction of English, longer courses

In western Europe the teaching of English has become the general rule, and all pupils now learn English. This situation has come about at different rates depending on the country and its specific circumstances and first made its appearance in the countries of northern Europe, the Netherlands and the German-speaking countries. The trend spread to France and then to all the southern European countries. According to a recent Eurydice study (2001) covering 29 countries (the 15 Member States and the applicant countries), nine of them, including the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, and several German Länder, have made the learning of English compulsory. In the others, the obligation to learn a foreign language, in conjunction with the widespread introduction of English teaching, gives English a quasi-compulsory status, albeit one that differs on the political and cultural front.

English courses are getting longer in nearly all countries. Language learning in primary school (children under 11) is an ancient tradition in central and eastern Europe. Northern European countries have organised it on a large scale since the 1970s. It became the general rule in all non-English-speaking countries of the European Union in the 1990s. In all cases it has been or is about to be made compulsory, with learning starting between seven and ten years of age. The early learning of languages has benefited English almost exclusively. The only other language taught to any significant degree is French but even here only 4% of the school population is reached. The share of the other languages is too small to appear in the statistics.

1.3. English and other languages

While English and other languages are still competing in central and eastern Europe, such competition has virtually ceased in western Europe. The other languages are taught when the curricula include a second or third language (FL 2) but their place is much smaller than that of English. The teaching of two languages is very far from universal. During the 1990s the proportion of the school population learning French remained at 32% to 33% (including the English-speaking countries, where it is the first foreign language), while the proportion learning German - confined mainly to the northern European countries - amounted to between 18% and 19%. The learning of Spanish is largely limited to France and Luxembourg, although it is tending to increase elsewhere from a very small base. Where other languages are taught they are chosen only by marginal percentages of the school population. (Sources: Eurydice)

Membership of the European Union has undoubtedly acted as a spur. When they joined in 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden decided to diversify their strongly English-oriented language teaching. In sweden the proposition of the school population learning French rose from 3% to 20% and German from 20% to 40%. Spain, which was the last European Union country to teach only one foreign language, decided to introduce a second language as from 1997, at least outside the autonomous communities, which have more than one official language. The applicant countries have also expanded their range of languages.

1.4. English as a teaching language

The use of English as a teaching language in primary and secondary education is still quite limited in western Europe, except in the international schools. It is much more frequent in central and eastern Europe, where it is to be found in highly selective bilingual courses which admit pupils on the basis of competitive examinations. Such courses also exist for other languages (French, German, Italian) but those involving English are generally the most sought after.

This function of English is developing particularly in higher education. We have the example of institutions which issue higher-level qualifications of international repute (eg the European University Institute, Florence) and of others specialising in commerce and business (among them those delivering the Master of Business Administration (MBA) qualification). These bodies want to attract foreign students willing to pay large sums for such training and to persuade them not to prefer American or British universities.

In northern European countries, the Netherlands and more recently Germany, university courses open to foreign students make broader use of English as a teaching language. These courses compete not only with those of American and British universities and those offered by on-line education, a sector dominated by the American electronic campuses, but also with those provided by European universities which use the more widely spoken languages. This is particularly the case in the exchange programmes. The universities taking part in the European Union's Socrates programme like their students to be able to acquire additional training abroad but as those programmes take place on a basis of reciprocity they turn to English when they consider that their language forms a barrier to attracting foreign students.

We are witnessing a general process of internationalisation of higher education. In a context of competition, English represents a selling point, an inducement. This trend will probably become more pronounced with the creation of a common European higher education area - the Bologna process, which has been embraced by a number of European governments. Common diplomas will be introduced under this process. Users of English will probably be more highly prized than those using the national language as they will be considered better adapted to the globalisation context. Universities may consequently fear that by making an effort to make the usual teaching language accessible to foreign students they will appear outdated and backward-looking.

The laws of the market also encourage the use of English for publishing textbooks and other books used in universities. The major international groups which control the sector are tending to abandon uneconomic linguistic markets. In the countries concerned the only works available in a number of educational fields are in English. This is another factor that increases inequalities between linguistic communities.

2. English in the sciences

Scientific research is the field whose linguistic practices have been the most thoroughly studied. It has been the subject of several sociolinguistic studies (particularly Skudlik 1990, Truchot 1990, Ammon 1998 and 2001) and numerous symposia. Official reports record the languages used in publications and databases. All the analyses show clearly the factors that have led to the large-scale use of English. After the second world war much of the world's scientific potential became concentrated in the United States. One of the consequences was the leading position acquired by that country in scientific publishing and in the storage and dissemination of scientific and technical information (STI). The design, production and dissemination of knowledge then became internationalised and globalised, especially in the fields with the greatest economic implications. However, American research remained at the centre of the process and the United States has always been strongly involved for strategic reasons (East-West relations, US business interests).

Observers (Confland, in Cassen, 1990) have shown that, of some 100,000 scientific journals published worldwide, 50% were in English but that what counts is the "hard core" of world scientific publishing, composed of about 4,000 to 5,000 journals. The latter publish articles which serve as references. It is these journals that receive priority indexing in computerised files, i.e. in databases set up for the collection and circulation of scientific information. They belong to a very small number of international publishing houses and appear for the most part entirely in English. Moreover, the United States has the greatest concentration of databases, as well as the most influential ones, such as the Science Citation Index (SCI) of the Institute for Scientific Information in Philadelphia. Over 90% of the information in these US databases is extracted from articles in English taken mostly from English-language journals. In European databases the position given to other languages is hardly any greater and references in English predominate.

Initially established in the publication of papers, the primacy of English subsequently spread to other fundamental language practices in scientific activity. It has become the main language for access to scientific information because researchers tend to look first of all in the "hard core" for information, which is increasingly sent over the Internet. With the internationalisation of science, English is tending to become the dominant, and often the sole, language used for discussions in symposia, congresses and similar events. Its use extends to exchanges of work in scientific laboratories where there are foreign researchers, especially if they are in countries whose languages are localised and little taught. The organisation of research at a European level also tends to promote the use of English in academic circles and in publications, networks, programmes and institutions. The European Union's scientific programmes, for example, are managed entirely in English, from invitations to tender to completion.

Most journals of repute published in other languages have considered it necessary to resort to English if they are to secure an international audience. Examples are *Les Annales de l'Institut Pasteur*, *Psychologische Forschung*, *Physikalische Zeitung* and *Nuovo Cimento*. Languages unable to act as a transmitter of scientific results become devalued. The devaluation process extends even to users of those languages. This is particularly the case with researcher-assessment procedures, which routinely credit work in English. Ammon (1998) reports a comparative test in which the English versions of the same articles were systematically assessed more favourably than those in Dutch or the Scandinavian languages.

Languages marginalised as regards the transmission of scientific results tend also to be excluded from the field of university research. In Sweden the practice of writing doctoral theses in English is now common to most disciplines. A study performed at Uppsala University in 1993-94 (Gunnarson, 2001) shows that nearly 100% of theses in the exact sciences, engineering and medicine, 75% in the arts and 66% in the social sciences are written in English. In Switzerland, English is increasingly chosen even though it is a country where the more widely spoken languages are used. In 1975, 8% of theses were in English, reaching 20% in 1991. English made rapid strides in the 1990s, especially in the German-speaking universities. In 1996, 61% of theses in the natural sciences at Zurich University were in English, compared with 39% at Lausanne University (Murray, Dingwall 2001). In Germany doctoral theses may be in English as well as German. Ammon (1998) shows that English is widely used. In the majority of theses the use of English is combined with that of German, and for a smaller but not insignificant number English alone is used.

Not all languages are necessarily abandoned for the purposes of transmitting scientific and technical knowledge. Studies and summaries used by researchers when they wish to take stock of their discipline as a whole as it relates to their particular specialisation or to obtain information about other disciplines are published in the more widely used languages. In French this is the case with the journals *Médecine-Sciences* and *Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des Sciences* or, for a wider public, the monthly review *La Recherche*. However, such opportunities to transmit scientific information are rarer in the less widely used languages. One consequence is the increasing shortage of terminology which afflicts them and causes them to be further devalued.

The use of English is nowadays seen as unquestioned. Yet this has not always been so. In a book on languages of scientific communication in the 1970s (The Foreign Language Barrier, 1983), J.A.Large noted that part of world research was published at that time in languages other than English and advised English-speaking scientists to learn foreign languages.

3. English in the workplace

3.1. English and internationalisation

During the 19th century and the first part of the 20th the economic development of European countries took place within national frontiers and for certain of them in conjunction with, and with the aid of, their colonial empires. Development was assisted by their national languages. During that period the economic relations between countries were mainly commercial and some countries built their prosperity on this trade. However, no *lingua franca* emerged.

After the second world war the European countries' economies became progressively internationalised, in other words they became part of the growing worldwide flow of technical know-how, raw materials, capital, goods and services. The economies of the Scandinavian countries quickly adapted. The large firms in those countries were also the first in Europe to find that their national languages did not have sufficient "impact" to form part of this process. Most of them turned towards English. This practice was highlighted by the work of Hollqvist (1984), who described in detail the use of English in Swedish firms. In some of them, such as Ericsson (telephones) and S.A.S. (air transport), English enjoyed a status described by Hollqvist as that of "company language". This means that its use was required for all forms of written and oral communication involving persons of different linguistic origins, at least at the firms' head offices. Hollqvist also mentions the Volvo group (private cars and industrial vehicles), which gave English official status as far back as January 1975. Other languages, particularly German, Spanish and French, are also used in those companies but mainly for outside contacts.

In other western European countries, the internationalisation of the economy has similarly led to an increased use of English, as can be seen from the expansion in language training for adults in the 1970s and 1980s. However, English was not the only language used. In addition, the assignment of official status to English for business purposes as in Sweden seems to have remained an exception. Mention may be made of the Airbus Industries consortium founded in the 1980s by the main German, French, British and Spanish aircraft manufacturers. The group reports that English is used as the common working language for all its factories, the main ones of which are in Toulouse and Hamburg. But no study has been performed and evidence suggests the existence of complex modes of communication between the different national groups involved. Coulmas (1992) also mentions the cases of the German tyre manufacturer Continental and the Dutch electronics company Philips but does not refer to any studies concerning them.

3.2. Extent and limits

The extent and limits of the use of English at that time were brought out in studies carried out in Strasbourg in 1984 and 1986. The first study (Cox, in Truchot 1990) concerned a branch of General Motors (GM) in Strasbourg. English was regularly used there by the management and its departments, i.e. by about 250 people out of a staff of 2250. Use fluctuated but was an everyday fact and could be estimated at an average of one or two hours per day, and much more in the case of senior executives. It was required by the company's head office in Detroit, which communicated with its branches throughout the world only in English. As a result, horizontal relations between branches were also conducted in English. At that time the Strasbourg factory had an American manager who spoke no French. The second study (D. Cenki, in Truchot 1990) concerned France Telecom, which was then called Télécommunications françaises and constituted one of the two departments of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. Its subsequent evolution into a multinational company illustrates the economic changes which occurred afterwards. Out of a staff of 150,000, about 5,000 worked in sectors which sold services and technology outside France and made everyday use of foreign languages, mainly English, but also others, including Spanish and Arabic.

These studies reveal the two main reasons why English was used for working purposes at the time: first, exports and the search for markets and, second, the establishment of large multinational foreign companies. It should be noted that not all American multinationals used English as much as General Motors and that multinationals of other origins used it too. It is also worth noting that the share of the major foreign companies in the French economy, on the one hand, and the degree of internationalisation of French companies, on the other, were markedly smaller than they would become 15 years later.

3.3. Company languages

It was quite common in the 1980s for German and French companies entering the international market to incorporate the use of their language of origin in the internationalisation process alongside English and the languages of the countries where they established themselves. In the study mentioned above France Telecom states that it used to use French together with Spanish for its contacts with Latin America. Another case known is that of Rhône Poulenc (chemicals, pharmaceutical) before its merger with Hoechst to form Aventis in 1999. This company willingly admitted at the time that it was actively involved in the dissemination of French. Foreign executives of the firm in Italy, Germany, Spain and even in the United States (in its Rorer subsidiary) said they were accustomed to express themselves in French. It reported at the same time that it made substantial use of English, in France as well, but there is no study on the respective shares of the two languages in the company's operations. At the beginning of the 1990s its training policy included a dozen languages.

Siemens AG, with its head office in Munich, was known until the end of the 1990s for allocating an important role to German. Relations between head office and branches and among the latter were conducted partly in that language together with English, which was used in certain sectors. It had the reputation of being demanding as regards the knowledge of German possessed by the non-German-speakers whom it recruited and whom it trained in its language school, the Siemens Sprachenschule in Munich, or in the countries where its branches were established.

3.4. Transnational companies

The granting of special status to English and the advertising of that status spread throughout large firms during the 1990s, and particularly among those trying to achieve a global position through takeovers and mergers. Examples are ABB (Asean-Brown-Boveri), Alcatel, Aventis, Daimler-Chrysler, EADS (European Aerospace Defence and Space), Novartis and Vivendi. Until the early 1990s these companies were particularly solidly established in their countries of origin, had a highly organised head office in those countries and covered a whole network of branches. Nowadays they regard themselves as transnational companies which are less identifiable with particular countries or which may even wish not to be identified with specific countries. They accordingly change their names and the location of their head offices and declare English to be their official language.

Aventis resulted in this way from the merger of Rhône-Poulenc and Hoechst, two companies previously identified very clearly with their countries of origin, France and Germany. Its head office has been located in Strasbourg, a city which has no links with the founder companies but instead probably has a practical advantage and symbolic importance. Its decision to confer a special status on English is deliberately flaunted by its top executives. Alain Godard, President of Aventis Crop Science, formerly Rhône-Poulence Agro (recently sold to the Bader group), has declared: "Vice-President Gerhart Prante and I speak with the same voice in English, the company's official language." (*Le Monde*, 08.02.2000). Its Director of Human Resources was even more explicit: "We must build a common culture around English, which is establishing itself as our working language" (*Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace*, 12.04.2001). At the end of the 1990s Siemens AG decided that German was no longer appropriate to its global scale and replaced it with English, which was identified as a company language. English became the official language of Daimler-Chrysler from the moment when Daimler-Benz (Mercedes) and Chrysler merged. However, German is still very much in evidence in Mercedes plants outside Germany.

3.5. Questions arising

These remarks concern a part of what might be called the tip of the iceberg of linguistic practices in industry. The reality of these practices should be looked at. Does the ostentatious adoption of English reflect the genuine use of English or the need to display an image (international or global)? If it is found that English is actually used, is this the result of a communication problem? What other reasons might there be? To establish a power relationship based on that language? To create a business culture? What are the place and relative functions of English and the other languages, particularly the languages of the host countries? Is allowance made for the concept of a national language? Does such a concept mean anything? What about languages other than the national language? When a national or other language is taken into account, what are the motives for such a step: organisational or productivity requirements, relations with staff? Do the staff have the capacity to impose linguistic practices, to assert an identity? Or do they feel it necessary to abandon the field to a dominant language and to accept the power relationships imposed by management? Do those who use it feel more highly valued? Different? What happens to the language of the country from which the company originates? What is the situation in SMEs? The studies in this sector have been carried out with a view to providing guidance to companies. They provide information about the use of foreign languages for export (Hagen, 1999). What is the situation regarding practices at work, for example in companies which have gone international?

In principle there are two abundant sources of data regarding languages in the workplace: language-knowledge requirements in job vacancies, and demand for language training. However, these data are themselves subjects of research. Does, for example, the requirement to know English in a job vacancy represent an economic need? Are the linguistic requirements for posts based on a study of the practices relating to the posts in question? Or are they simply social or cultural requirements designed to show that the applicant's educational background matches the responsibility involved, to guarantee that the applicant has been in contact with economic or business-management models regarded as references or to prove that the persons concerned are mobile and adaptable and not too deeply rooted in their national culture or attached to their specific identity? When there is a demand for English training, does this correspond to a practice in the job, to the desire of part of the staff not to be sidelined in relations with a management which expresses itself in that language, or to a fear of being sacked when the next merger occurs?

4. The use of English as a supranational language in European institutions

As Europe is made up of independent nation states, it is normally at that level that the official language policies governing public life are defined. In fact, other entities compete with them. We have seen the situation in the multinational companies. International organisations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, NATO, the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and the European Union have been set up since the second world war. The powers and resources conferred on the EU give it a real supranational power. We must therefore examine the extent to which this supranational power is also exercised in linguistic matters.

4.1. Languages of the European Union

The EU Treaties are relatively silent about linguistic matters. The 1957 Treaty of Rome confines itself to delegating to the Council of Ministers the task of drafting rules governing the languages of the institutions. These rules, which were adopted in 1958, state that when a new country joins its official language shall become an official and working language of the Community institutions. These rules have been applied automatically upon each new accession. The linguistic arrangements apply in their entirety to the circulation of official documents, i.e. those adopted by the decision-making bodies, which are translated into the official language of each of the Member States prior to being circulated within them. They also apply, albeit in a variable way, to political representation on the Council (representatives of national governments) and to the Parliament. Substantial resources are allocated to the language service. However, the linguistic rules do not apply to in-house communications, which are governed by rules of procedure that give preference to two chief vehicular languages, English and French. German is generally designated as a third language but is little used.

French continued to dominate in the internal communications of the institutions from their foundation in the 1950s until the mid-1970s. English was introduced as a vehicular language in the 1970s. However, French remained the main language until the early 1990s. Several studies carried out at that time stressed this French predominance (Fosty, 1985; Gehnen, 1991; Schlossmacher, 1994). The most commonly advanced reasons are that French was the language most common to the six founding countries (the official language in three of them, a widely taught foreign language in the others), that the United Kingdom was not a member of the Six and that the main institutions were situated in Brussels and Luxembourg. Factors such as the strong representation of French-speakers (Belgian, French and Luxembourger) in the administration and French investment in ensuring the continued use of French should not be overlooked. Within the institutions they like to speak of an "organisation culture" but no study has been done to analyse its nature. The organisation of the administration along French lines and the existence of a hierarchical authority partly based on the use of French may explain this continued dominance, but this is only theory.

The introduction of English as a vehicular language coincides more with the increasing influence it has exerted on international communication in Europe than with the accession of the United Kingdom and Ireland in 1973. English was initially used in sectors such as the economy, technology and science. Its share expanded gradually, slowly at first and then faster and faster from the end of the 1980s. The chief data available for assessing the trend are the proportions of primary texts (languages in which documents sent for translation were originally drafted) produced in each of the vehicular languages. The case of the European Commission, the main producer of documents out of all the institutions (over a million pages per year), is the most revealing.

Languages of primary texts produced by the European Commission
(in %)

	French	English	German	Other
1986	58	26	11	5
1989	49	30	9	12
1991	48	35	6	11
1996	38.5	44.7	5.1	11.7
1997	40.4	45.3	5.4	8.9
1998	37	48	5	10
1999	35	52	5	8

(Truchot 2001)

This table shows the rise of English and the relative fall of French in written use over a 14-year period. In fact, during the 1980s and 1990s the factors favouring English continued to accumulate. Among them were the effects of internationalisation of the economy and of globalisation resulting in the use of English in the chief fields falling within EU competence, the spread of English teaching and the expansion in knowledge of the language, the training of new generations of diplomats and officials in American and British universities or in English-language faculties in Europe and the enlargement of the EU in 1995 to embrace countries where English is in common use. It is conceivable that diplomats and officials who have a much better mastery of English than French have difficulty in accepting a power system where French occupies a substantial place and would prefer to replace it with another based on the preponderance of English. However, French is still very present, with a certain form of bilingualism appearing to be the rule in the institutions (Wright, 2000).

4.2. Supranational uses

A 1991 study (Labrie, 1993) showed that for communication among themselves 63% of Commission officials used French and 33% English. However, for contacts with officials or experts from the Member States, the figures were 22% French and 31% English for oral communication and 6% French and 59% English for written communication. Vast areas of semi-internal and external communication have opened up and are continuing to grow with the implementation of the Single Act in 1993, the extension of responsibilities as a result of the Treaties of Maastricht in 1992 and Amsterdam in 1997, the enlargement of 1995 and that anticipated over the next few years. The European Commission wields an increasing number of administrative and managerial responsibilities: single market, common agricultural policy, programmes. These areas of communication usually fall outside the official linguistic arrangements and even the internal arrangements. The actual linguistic practices in those areas are not very well known but English is believed to be very widely used. This happens with the increasingly numerous working meetings attended by representatives of the Member States. It also happens in the case of meetings of experts: the institutions organise some 4,000 meetings every year, 75% of which do not have simultaneous interpretation. Many reports are commissioned from consultants, who are generally asked to work in English. Programmes, too, tend to be administered in English. For relations with non-member countries, French is used with French-speaking Africa, Spanish with Latin America and English with large parts of the rest of the world. Relations with the institutions of individual states are normally conducted in the languages of those states. Because of the time needed for translation, however, the primary texts are often circulated just as they were drafted, in French and English. Reports by experts and consultants circulate in the language in which they were drafted.

English is not a mandatory supranational language. But there is a tendency to make it so. This is very clearly the case in the EU institutions despite genuine efforts to encourage plurilingualism. In the many other institutional co-operation bodies which are appearing in Europe it is found that use of that language is regarded as automatic, even though no other mode of communication has been investigated. Thus, in Eurocorps (the intergovernmental body for military co-operation) in Strasbourg, communications not involving the command of troops tend to be conducted in English although the question has never actually been discussed. Generally speaking, it is English that is used in administering the aid and assistance programmes for the central and eastern European countries. Observers have also remarked that English enjoys a special status in the international operations in the former Yugoslavia. As Gret Haller, the ambassador and mediator in Bosnia, has pointed out on the strength of her experience there, no one listens to what you say if you do not speak English because English is the language of power and, by speaking another language, you show you have no power (Council of Europe, 2001). It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the tendency to use English as a *lingua franca* is not motivated by practical considerations alone.

5. English and cultural products

During the second half of the 20th century, the production and dissemination of culture were profoundly transformed. Ever-changing technical means now allow culture to be disseminated on a world, or at least international, scale. Industrial and commercial structures suitable for the global market have been set up. Their "cultural products" are geared to that market and compete in each country with national production. It would be superfluous to stress the dominant role of the American production and distribution in the audiovidual sector. The report published in 1999 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) shows that the world market for cultural products is increasingly concentrated around Hollywood (50% of its revenue comes from abroad compared with scarcely 30% in 1980): "[The US] claimed 70% of the film market in Europe in 1996 … and 83% in Latin America and 50% in Japan." (extract quoted by *Le Monde*, 13 July 1999)

The European Audiovisual Observatory noted that in 2000, in the 15 countries of the European Union, the market share of American films had again risen, while that of European films had fallen to 22.5% with strong national variations. Film distribution in Europe amounts essentially to a confrontation between American films and national productions which are not distributed outside the countries where they are made. The only non-English-language films with a visible presence outside national frontiers are French and French-language films, which have a distribution in Europe of about 3% (outside France, where their market share is around 30%: 37% in 1997, 27% in 1998, 31.5% in 1999 and 41% in 2001).

The linguistic impact of this situation varies according to the film's linguistic treatment: dubbing, sub-titles or voice-overs. As their costs are very different, their use depends on cost-benefit criteria. The most expensive option, dubbing, is chosen where a large linguistic market (German, Spanish, Italian, French) seems to make it cost-effective. Where the market is smaller (the Scandinavian languages, Dutch, Portuguese), sub-titles are used. When resources are too small, a voice-over is used. This is a commonly used technique in some central European countries. The way in which the Hollywood dominance of the cinema is treated linguistically also depends on the laws of the market.

Linguistic requirements in the case of television do not, however, seem to be the same as for films shown in cinemas. According to Richard Parker (1995), satellites can supply programmes and advertising instantaneously in 24 western European languages but television viewers - as has been shown on several occasions by market surveys - want television in their own language. This requirement probably explains why the content of TV programmes has developed in the way it has. While US TV serials dominated programmes in the 1980s, nowadays the most successful TV films or programmes are those produced locally in the language of the country. However, this requirement is probably easier to meet in Europe's richest and biggest countries.

Besides the cinema, numerous opportunities for contact with English are afforded by the distribution of other cultural products, for example pop songs, sporting events and electronic games. Thus in 2001, the Eurovision Song Contest, which brings together performers from all European countries, was conducted exclusively in English, with no place left for the other languages. Yet side by side with this phenomenon of the standardised song there exists a dynamic popular type of song which manifests itself in a wide variety of national, regional and extra-European languages. But it is difficult to determine the relative share of these two modes of expression.

6. English and other languages in the information society

Information technology together with its applications is considered to have been a major factor in the introduction of the use of English. In actual fact, all computing tools and products can in principle be used in any other language. However, extension to other languages is limited by the often insurmountable obstacles caused by under-development problems in various parts of the world. In Europe there are wide ranges of computer products in the languages of the largest and richest countries. Conversely, the languages of the central and eastern European countries (where the GDP is on average 75% below that of the European Union), less widely used national languages and minority languages are handicapped. In order to obtain software in its own language, a country such as Iceland has to do battle with companies like Microsoft, which do not consider that it constitutes a profitable market.

When the conditions for profitability exist, the relative use of English and the other languages is likewise governed by the market. In France, for example, out of 6,000 CD-ROMs available on the market in 1998, 43% were in French. This was a 95% increase over 1995 and signifies an increase in the number of users of this type of product. The supply of French products has expanded particularly in the area of culture and communication, while for English supply has tended to focus on leisure, a sector in which the user's knowledge of the language is less fundamental (Roy, 1998). The supply of computerised products for professional use is also developing in different languages, but the multinationals often prefer to use the English versions rather than adapt them to the staffs at their various sites. However, certain firms consider that linguistic adaptations are more productive than the cost of a failure to understand. Attitudes and perceptions also play a part. For instance, computer experts often prefer products in English even though the same products are available in their national language, probably for reasons of status and peer recognition.

The Internet was created in English in the United States and initially developed exclusively in that language. In the early 1990s, 98% of sites were in English. Many other languages are now becoming integrated into the global network under the economic conditions just mentioned. There are studies that attempt to demonstrate this integration. Observations in 1997 showed that 84% of Web sites were in English. The other languages with a representation of over 1% were

German, Spanish, French, Italian, Japanese and Swedish, their share varying according to the study (Roy, 1998). A 2001 study of the number of Web pages revealed a fall in the amount of English (68.4%) and an increase for several European languages (German 5.8%, French 3%, Spanish 2.4%, Russian 1.9%), as well as for non-European languages (Japanese 5.9%, Chinese 3.9%)(emarketer.com, cited by Maurais, 2001).

At the same time the number of non-English-language users has increased considerably. Whereas 66% of users were concentrated in the USA (60%), English-speaking Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom in 1997, 43.7% of Internet users were of non-English mother tongue in 1999 and 52.5% in 2001 (euromktg.com, cited by Maurais, 2001). It is believed that a base of two million potential users is needed for a wide range of products to appear on the Web. By 2001, twelve European languages had exceeded this threshold. The sites created within each country are by a large majority in a national language. In 1998, 70% of .de sites in Germany were in German. In Spain 85% of .es sites were in Spanish. The average for countries with widely spoken languages worked out at 75% (proportion for .fr). The other sites created were in English and to a very limited extent in other languages (regional languages included). As regards surfing practices, Internet users are considered to behave more or less like TV and radio "zappers", i.e. they prefer their own language. However, no studies aimed at shedding light on these practices have been performed.

7. The place of English as it exists and as it is perceived to exist

The place of English in Europe can be viewed from several angles: as it is; as it is believed to be; as one would like it to be. To define this place as it is, we need to look at the phenomenon on a wider scale and in greater depth. We already possess information that provides an indication of the role of English in communication, as well as its social function and the close relationship between its use and the laws of the market. We must also have comparative data, analyse different types of linguistic situations and understand the interactions between English and the other languages in those situations. It is paradoxical that so little is known about language in the workplace, even though this is the most common motivation factor for leaning English.

In the absence of proper studies, the place of English is seen as it is believed to be. It is associated with values which dominate contemporary society, where the only dimension appropriate to modernity is international and global. English is the only language associated with that dimension, regardless of how widespread other languages may be on the international scene. English enjoys prestige in people's minds, particularly when it comes to how they see their skills and the use which they say they make of that language or which they feel should be made of it.

Yet the status of English in language education policies, that is to say its place and the teaching methods used in education systems, is based on piecemeal data and on the subjective elements referred to above. It is hard to see what other grounds a French Minister of Education could have had for his suggestion in 1997 that English be given the status of second language in the education system. Following the same logic, David Graddol, the author in 1997 of a study for the British Council on the future of English, considers in a further study (2001) that it is necessary to take into account the “the repositioning” of English as a *lingua franca* in Europe" and teach it as a second language. He takes a critical view of the *Common European Framework of Reference for languages* of the Council of Europe, which sees it as a foreign language. However, the examples he quotes in order to illustrate this new position are drawn from studies done in Denmark, a country which cannot really be deemed representative of Europe as a whole in this matter. Furthermore, because of its political, cultural and social implications, such a status for English cannot be based simply on a recognition of that language's position.

8. Conclusions

While the use of English in the fields analysed here is connected with internationalisation in its various forms, such use also encroaches in every case on the internal practices of national communities. The degree of encroachment varies with the field and the community. It is particularly significant in northern Europe. Elsewhere English is also identified with what is international and global, but such identification seems to go well beyond its real function as a vehicular language, especially in countries with widely spoken languages. Apart from a genuine role as a *lingua franca*, it is probable that the use that is said to be made of it does not always correspond to the situation on the ground and that there are cases where its use does not correspond to a real necessity.

What gives English its status, therefore, is not so much its utilitarian function as the prestige attached to it and the social role attributed to it. This distinction between the functions of a language which is useful because no other language is capable of ensuring communication, and use, a presence which is governed by ideological considerations not yet being drawn by research. The history of language, however, bears witness to the relevance of such a distinction.

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