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"Social dialogue or attempts at social dialogue have had a long history since the 1960s. Though I took an initiative when I was appointed in 1984, few of my friends would have bet even an ECU on the success or even the continuation of the social dialogue. The revitalisation of European integration must be seen in parallel with the building of social dialogue and relations between employers and unions. At first, this revitalization was essentially economic."

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As a trade union activist and campaigner for Europe, I have been interested in the European Economic and Social Committee and its work since it was founded. The institution has been much in demand and its opinions eagerly awaited, particularly given Committee members' expertise on technical standards and competition conditions. Since the Committee represents employers' and trade union organisations and certain social interest groups, it is in a position to express the perspectives and views hallmarking our societies. Hence the Committee's growing influence.

Moreover, as European Commission President, I was most keen to consult the Committee and visit it regularly to hear its overall assessment of how the European venture was progressing. Because of their knowledge and experience in this area, EESC members both understood and supported my initiative to launch tripartite social dialogue. At my request, they worked long and hard to achieve a remarkable, broad consensus on the charter of workers' rights, adopted by the European Council in December 1989.

Since that time, the Committee has taken up the challenge of what we refer to as civil society, opening up its forum to representatives of the voluntary sector, and discussing its avenues for action in a variety of reports. May this meeting point of economic, social and voluntary sector stakeholders continue to prosper, for the good of a dynamic society.

Jacques Delors

* The European Economic and Social Committee – 50 years of Participatory Democracy EESC 2008.

The thrust towards monolingualism, both in France and in the French empire, involved the dominant language "eating up" the dominated ones (glottophagie - linguistic cannibalism)

Calvet, L.J., *Linguistique et colonialisme: petit traité de glottophagie*.
Paris: Payot, 1974

The British, American and French have all been keen to impose their linguistic norms worldwide.

Phillipson, R., *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992

"I wrote the ending of "A Farewell to Arms" thirty-nine times before I was satisfied," Ernest Hemingway once told an interviewer.

"Was there a problem there?" the interviewer wanted to know.

"What was it that stumped you?"

"Getting the words right," said Hemingway.

Judith Appelbaum,

"How to get happily published", 1988

"No one can ever give a complete transcript of the ideas of a text in another language, for the simple reason that words and structures always come with cultural baggage, resonances from centuries of legal, political, and literary use that it is impossible to transfer fully."

Indeterminacy, Translation and the Law

John E. Joseph

University of Hong Kong

"Translation has played a central (though often unrecognised) role in human interaction for thousands of years".

David Crystal

Linguist

Chapter One

The European Union Language Issue

1.1 The Status of English Language in the European Union Institutions

The public debate about the language policy of the European Union is a regular feature on the cultural pages as well as in the editorials of the big national newspapers in several of its Member States.

English is the most important language in the world today because it is the most widely spoken. Many of the political, economic, and educational leaders of non-English countries have received part of their education in the universities of England and America.¹ Modern English is a mixture of many inheritances (Latin, Greek and Anglo-Saxon). Adolf Hitler once scornfully termed it "a mongrel language", yet it is this mixed heritage that makes English flexible, colourful and beautiful beyond any other language in the world. The fact that most of the words come from Latin and Greek is due to the great emphasis on classical education in the English educational system during the last three or four hundred years. In addition to the words which have come into use in the historical development of English language, English has taken many words from modern languages, banana (Spanish), shampoo (Hindi), boomerang (Australia) all these are examples of complete words lifted from other languages. Language does reflect to power.²

An Imperial language such as English is a world language which has been

1. Geoffrey A. Dudley, *New Course in Practical English*, R & Heap Publishing Co., 1989, p. 16.2.

2. *ibid* p.17.

actively promoted as an instrument of the foreign policy of the major English-speaking states.³

From a minor language in 1600, English has in less than four centuries come to be the leading language of international communication in the world today. This remarkable development, Phillipson claims⁴, is ultimately a result of 17th, 18th, and 19th century British success in colonization and trade but it was enormously accelerated by the emergence of the United States as the major military world power and technological leader in the aftermath of World War II.

A working definition of English linguistic imperialism is that the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of *structural* (material properties e.g. institutions, financial allocations) and *cultural* (inmaterial or ideological properties, e.g. attitudes, pedagogic principles) inequalities between English and other languages.⁵

Lenin is a key theorist of imperialism, building on earlier work of Kautsky and Hobson, whom quotes, largely with approval. He argued that, "If it were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism".⁶

English is also constantly expanding through scientific, literary and business contributions.⁷ Such words as *nuclear* and *fission* have become vital parts of English language during recent years.

Languages battle with each other for dominance and survival. Wardhaugh's 1987, and Calvet's 1987⁸, books are general introductions to glottopolitics and how languages rise and fall. Both authors see languages as living organisms which emerge, grow, and prosper or die.

English will continue its march across Europe unless the EU acts on languages, Robert Phillipson argues. To give his words, "the use of English is expanding in continental Europe as a direct result of globalization".⁹ This he goes on to say affects commerce (use of English as a corporate language), the military (a reshaping of NATO), science, education, the media, and youth culture.

3. Phillipson, R., *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 1.

4. Phillipson, R., *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 7.

5. Phillipson, R., *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 47.

6. Lenin, V.I. 1973: 49, written in 1916, *On imperialism and Imperialists*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, cited in Phillipson, R., *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 45.

7. *ibid* p.17.

8. Phillipson, R., *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 99.

9. Phillipson, R., *Union in need of language equality*, 2003 p.1 (his book *English-Only Europe? Challenging Language Policy*).

However, the use of English is also increasing in the institutions of the European Union. Many member states are acting to strengthen national languages, including some minority languages, while investing heavily in the learning of English. Some French NGOs, Phillipson goes on to claim, are convinced that the EU is doing the bidding for transnational corporations by progressively establishing English as the sole language of the single market. The recent accession to EU membership of 10 new states, on the one hand, has consolidated the ongoing economic and political unification of Europe but, on the other, it will complicate the operation of EU institutions, through the addition of many new languages. The problem which arises, Phillipson claims, is that we now do have a common market, a common currency and, many common policies, but is there a common language policy? To give his words:

"Media coverage of language policy is misleading. Branding multilingualism in the EU as "Babel" is false, since the translation and interpretation services provide effective communication across languages."¹⁰

The terms "official language" (used in legislation) and "working language" (used in meetings) are often confused. To borrow Phillipson's example, the director of the British Council in Germany is on record as suggesting that English ought to be the "sole official language" of the EU. This is a preposterous idea, since the EU is based on the principle of equality of member states and their languages. Phillipson argues, "English is in no valid sense the lingua franca of Europe. There are several, but of course the current preeminence of English brings advantages and influence to those with a command of English. It is important to keep separate the "Europe" of member states and the "Europe" of the supranational EU institutions".¹¹

On the other hand, the Unesco monograph on "The use of vernacular languages in education" has useful definitions of two terms which are often confused. A *national language* is "the language of a political, social, and cultural entity", and an *official language* is a "language used in the business of government-legislative, executive, and judicial".¹²

Language policy has traditionally been the preserve of individual states, but many EU and Council of Europe policy statements aim at setting norms for language policies, and at diversifying the languages learned. In part, these measures are seen as counteracting the onward march of English in education and in wider society.

10. New ELT Review in Education, Guardian Newspapers Limited 2003.

11. Phillipson, R., *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 99.

12. Unesco 1953. *The use of the Vernacular Languages in Education*. Paris: Unesco, cited in Phillipson, R., *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 41.

Since the early 1990s the EU has increasingly funded cross-national collaboration in education, research and language learning. However, the funds involved in all such EU "actions" are modest when compared with the cost of agricultural subsidies (nearly half of the EU budget) and regional development. Currently the EU has 23 languages with equal rights as official and working languages. It should be pointed out that French used to be *primus inter pares*, and English is currently the linguistic cuckoo nudging it out. The language of the new member states will have the same rights, however, this does not mean that all languages are used for all purposes. The interpretation services (for roughly 50 meetings per day) permit national representatives to speak their own language. Interpretation is often a two-step affair (language X to language Y via an intermediate relay language Z), and not always into all languages.

The additional languages of the new member states will certainly increase costs, but as Phillipson claims¹³, this should be considered a fair price to pay for ensuring democratic participation in decision-making on matters that affect the lives of all EU citizens. Translating written documents is vital when they take legal effect in member states every year. Texts must be promulgated in the dominant language of each state and this is crucial for the legitimacy of the EU operation.

Participation on an equitable basis requires the use of the languages of all the member states, but in the initial drafting of texts and in informal contacts, English has pride of place. Reform of the existing system is being considered and the EU is committed to maintaining linguistic diversity in Europe. For this to be achieved, Phillipson claims, presupposes giving language policy a much higher profile, and an infrastructure in member states and in EU institutions that is well qualified to implement and monitor multilingual language policies. As things stand today, there is a serious risk, at both the national and supra-national levels, of language policy remaining entrenched in linguistic nationalism, and obscured by a false faith in English serving all equally well.

Language policy at the EU level is politically sensitive. Although it is commonly claimed that all EU languages are equal the reality is that *some are more equal than others*. That this is so can be shown by the fact that the French and the British are so keen to maintain the supremacy of their language.¹⁴

13. Phillipson, R., *Union in need of language equality*, 2003 p.3 (his book *English-Only Europe? Challenging Language Policy*).

14. Sella – Mazi, H., *Ideologies, Meanings and Translation, "Strong" and "Weak" languages in the European Union, Aspects of Linguistic Hegemonism*, Centre for the Greek Language, Vol. B 1996.

This argumentation leads to the conclusion that there is an urgent need for the EU to agree on the criteria that can guide policies for maintaining the equality of the speakers of different languages. The Europeans, Phillipson claims, are evolving multiple linguistic identities in local, national and international languages. He emphasizes the fact that, "whatever one thinks of the EU, it is through its languages that this variant of globalization is being shaped and implemented. Allowing market principles a free rein is a recipe for English, and probably American English at that, spreading at the expense of all the languages of Europe".¹⁵

Although English has provided a sort of lingua franca (The term *lingua franca* is now frequently applied to dominant international languages which happen to be the former colonial languages -for instance "English as the lingua franca of international scientific contact".¹⁶) for the European community, there are some problems standing in the way of its universal adoption. In his analysis, "English yes, but equal languages rights first", Phillipson¹⁷ argues that the European Union's bid to create unity will remain *an ideal* without a better policy on languages. The languages of each Member State are official and working languages for the European Parliament and the Commission in Brussels. Since there has never been a close fit between language and state in Europe, three of Belgium's languages are in use, Dutch, French and German, and two of Finland's, Finnish and Swedish, whereas the only language from Spain is Spanish, even though there are more speakers of Catalan than of Danish or Finnish. The generalization that can be made is that demography is less important than political clout, nationally and internationally. Many languages in Europe have no EU rights. EU languages permeate the ongoing processes of creating a "union" of EU states, a new supra-national economic and political entity.

Language is a sensitive political issue, as it is a profound symbol of national and personal identity. As language, culture and education are in principle matters for individual Member States rather than the Union, language policy at the supra-national level is largely implicit and covert. Phillipson says that as some languages are more "international" than others, the actual equality of the 23 languages has in fact always been a myth.¹⁸

15. Phillipson, R., 2001, "English yes, but equal language rights first." *Guardian Weekly*. August 26, 2002, p.2.

16. Phillipson, R., *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 41.

17. Phillipson, R., 2001, "English yes, but equal language rights first." *Guardian Weekly*. August 26, 2002, p. 3.

18. Phillipson, R., 2001, "English yes, but equal language rights first." *Guardian Weekly*. August 26, 2002, p. 8

On the contrary, Swaan claims that the EU boasts the most polyglot institutions in the world¹⁹, "this is due to the emergence of the European Union as an integrating economy and body politic, with fifteen member states already, and another dozen waiting in the wings ..." In fact there is hardly a language policy for the European Parliament, or for the Commission's bureaucracy, let alone for "l'Europe des citoyens"²⁰, for civil society in the European Union. From the start, the official languages of the member states were recognized as languages of the, then, Community. Initially, without much discussion, French was accepted as the working language of the Commission's budding bureaucracy. It is obviously clear that the same treaties and arrangements that governed the language regime in those post-wars years still do so today with only incidental alterations, while the Union has vastly increased in membership, population, competence, budget, scope and complexity. In terms of our model of the world language system, national language unification occurs when a central language, surrounded by a number of more or less peripheral ones, gradually comes to predominate, as it becomes the second language of almost all citizens and the mother tongue of a growing majority, and finally succeeds in driving out the peripheral languages from practically all domains.

France and Britain represent, according to Swaan, typical cases of such a language constellation. In many respects, he argues²¹, the languages that today compete for *hegemony*, as a means of pan-European communication are contemporary English and French which according to him, are the most telling examples of languages that once won out over domestic rivals and now must compete at the all-Europe level.

Swaan²² distinguishes four levels of communication within the European Union language constellation. The first two have to do with the "l'Europe des citoyens" and the other two with the "l'Europe des institutions".

- a. with domestic communication (separate national societies) within each member state the official language is the mother tongue of the vast majority

19. De Swaan, A., *Words of the World*, Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers, 2001, p. 144.

20. It is for the sake of the European identity that the EU tempts or allures its citizens by introducing the *citoyennete de l'Union* (= citizenship of the Union) a rendering of the term which Sella and Ioakimides criticise for being obscure.

21. De Swaan, A., *Words of the World*, Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers, 2001, p. 146.

22. De Swaan, A., *Words of the World*, Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers, 2001 p. 145.

- b. with transnational communication (civil society in the Union at large) between the citizens of Europe, several languages compete for predominance in various areas of the Union. At this level *English* is paramount but still competes with French in southern Europe and with German in Central Europe.
These two levels concern "civil society", domestic and transnational, respectively. The next two levels concern the European institutions.
- c. with formal, public communication: the European Parliament and the European Council of Ministers in their official sessions, and the European Commission in its external contacts. Here, the founding treaty applies, which recognizes all official languages of the member states as languages of the Union and,
- d. with the Commission's internal bureaucracy (the institutional level which concerns the routine, informal meetings and discussions of officials and politicians in the offices, corridors and committee rooms of the Union venues), where the officials have adopted a few "working languages" in their everyday contacts and in-house correspondence.

On the formal, public occasions (category c. above), when the Council of Ministers or the Parliament are in session or when major committees meet, all official languages of the member states are treated on an equal footing, this touches the foundations of the Union. First of all, the founding treaties stipulate the fundamental equality of all constituent states, and this also pertains to their languages.

Second, the Council, the Parliament and the Commission can take decisions that directly affect the citizens of the member states, and it is a fundamental democratic principle that such laws are written in the languages of the states where they apply.²³ Thus the institutional multilingualism of the Union is deeply rooted in the constitution of the Community and the succeeding Union, an issue of equality between member states and of democratic governance.

When it comes to official policy, no decision to change the language regime of the governing bodies has ever been agreed upon.

English is the language with the greatest communication value, in the European Parliament and its position seems to be even stronger there than in the Union at large. *French* is second, quite close to English.

Swaan emphasizes that when the language regime for the plenary parlia-

23. De Swaan, A., *Words of the World*, Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers, 2001 p. 166.

mentary sessions or for the publication of binding decisions by the Union is at stake, decision-making must be unanimous, and every proposal will be defeated by the veto of the country affected.²⁴

Just as in the United Nations bureaucracy, where English and French are the "working languages", in the Union also French is slowly losing ground to English, and has been ever since Britain became a member in 1973. Germany's increasingly insistent demands for the adoption of German as a third working language in the Commission have so far not been met. Apparently, Swaan argues, the practice of using English and French, plus the language of the acting presidency, commands a solid majority against a proposal that would add German. In fact, candidates for a position with the Commission are required to be fluent in English and French (MEPs are expressly exempt from any language requirements).

The major argument against the multilingual regime of the Union is of course its cost in time, but above all in money. However, its multilingualism is a visible and audible manifestation of the Union's respect for the equality and autonomy of the member nations. It allows the Union's citizens to have direct access, in their own language, to its missives, regulations and deliberations, as is their democratic entitlement. Moreover, Swaan comments, everyday practice does not conform to the full multilingualism that is the rule: the lower in the hierarchy, the more informal the meetings, the fewer the languages used. It is usually the case that among themselves, the "eurofonctionnaires" and the political insiders mostly use English and French. They have even come up with a "curieux mélange" called "frenglish" or "franglais", like in the expression, to borrow Swaan's example, "faire du stop and go". The bureaucratic routine has given rise to a lingo of terms, titles, references and abbreviations that is comprehensible to the "fonctionnariat" only, but shared by all officials alike, irrespective of nationality or mother tongue.

The European language debate is governed by the dilemma between maintaining a multiplicity of languages and improving communication in the Union. Amalgamation among European languages is unlikely. At the

24. De Swaan, A., *Words of the World*, Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers, 2001 p. 169, 221 Article 217 of the Treaty of Rome (1957) stipulates that the language regime of the Community's institutions is determined unanimously by the Council of Ministers. The Treaty leaves it to the institutions to determine how the regime shall be applied. The Treaty of Nice (2001) may imply that the present unanimity requirement will be replaced by a qualified majority from the year 2005. The use of French and English within the Commission is based on customary law. Cf. Truchot, 2001.

first level, EU national languages will retain most of their functions in the domestic context, i.e. for domestic interaction, while transnational functions will be fulfilled by the super –central languages that ensure Europe– wide communication, again mostly English. As Swaan puts it²⁵, a state of diglossia will prevail.

At the second level, that of civil Europe, statistics and survey data all concur that English is the first language of transnational communication, while French and may be German play secondary roles in the corresponding regions and for a limited scope of cultural and commercial exchanges.

At the third level, that of the Union’s governing bodies, all official languages of the Union are used for:

- public and ceremonial occasions,
- externally binding regulations, and
- correspondence with the member states and their citizens.

On the fourth level, only English and French are used for internal communication in the meeting rooms of the Commission and the corridors of Parliament, whereas German, in third place, lags far behind.

The fact that the key EU institutions have bases in francophone cities, Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg means that lots of French will continue to be spoken in the EU’s corridors and meeting rooms. But the grip of English has tightened still more since the accession of ten more countries, mainly from central Europe. Of these new member states, 60% speak English as their second language and only 20% or so speak French.

It is obvious from the foregoing discussion that the position of French in the Community has been steadily eroded as the language is losing ground to English which has in fact become the lingua franca of the European Union. It is the language with the greatest communication value, both in the European Union and the European Parliament where it is the linking language. However, the strong position of the official languages in Europe protects them in the unavoidable rivalry with English.²⁶

25. De Swaan, A., *Words of the World*, Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers, 2001 p. 167.

26. De Swaan, A., *Words of the World*, Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers, 2001, p. 175.

1.2 The Common Myths about Multilingualism in the European Union – Aspects of the Linguistic Hegemonism of English

Multilingualism (linchpin) is an essential element in the construction of Europe and it really is a fact of life. This inevitably results in a considerable volume of language work within the Commission. In the European Union multilingualism takes on an aspect which is at the very basis of democracy, namely the right of every citizen to be informed and to be heard in his or her own language. Every proposal made by the Commission is the fruit of cooperation with outside contacts – committees of national government experts, representatives of the private sector, universities, and economic and social interests – whose opinions are required before any decision can be taken.²⁷

It was on 15 April 1958 when the Council of what is now the European Union, enacted its first regulation, which on the basis of this inalienable right, laid down that the official languages of the Member States should be both the official languages of the Community and the working languages of the Community institutions.

In the Council-meetings it is usually the case that all the EU languages are used. However, it should be pointed out that in dinner table conversations English, French and German are the languages mainly used.

Language is a part of national and personal identity. In the context of the European Union, the word "multilingual" has taken on a meaning that goes beyond its dictionary definition of "speaking or using many languages", or "written or printed in many languages". Equal status for the official languages²⁸ or multilingualism goes to the heart of what the European Union is all about. Wagner *et al* (Translation Service, European Commission) hold that, "for the people working for the EU multilingualism is a fundamental principle with the additional meaning of "equal rights for all official languages".²⁹

At the outset in the 1950s there were six Member States and between them there were four official languages: Dutch, French, German and Italian.

27. europa.eu.int/comm/translation/en/enintro.html

28. Wagner, E., Bech, S. and Martinez, J. M., *Translating for the European Union Institutions*, St. Jerome publishing, 2002, p. 10, *official languages* (for legislation, etc.) vs *working languages* (for use in meetings) vs *procedural languages* (English, French and German, the languages in which documents have to be provided before they can be adopted at a meeting of the Commission.)

29. Wagner, E., Bech, S. and Martinez, J. M., *Translating for the European Union Institutions*, St. Jerome publishing, 2002, p. 1.

Now after the most recent accessions, 2003, the European Union has 25 Member States and so the number of official languages has grown to about 23³⁰. It is fair for someone to ask why we need and use so many official languages. As Wagner *et al* put it, "why can't we manage with a smaller number, like the United Nations, UNESCO, NATO³¹, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Organisation, the OECD and other international organizations which manage with a much smaller number?" The answer is simple: the European Union passes laws and those other organisations don't. Those organizations function perfectly well without every citizen necessarily understanding the language or languages they work in.

On the same ground, McCluskey, an acting director general in the Translation Service of the European Commission has observed that the European Union is the only international organization which, in its areas of jurisdiction, passes laws directly binding on its Member States and their citizens.³²

Another scholar, Kristina Cunningham, argues that, "people cannot be expected to comply with laws if they cannot understand them. The word "Union" denotes a much deeper level of integration than the intergovernmental co-operation taking place in organizations like the UN. The European Union aspires to be a "Union of Citizens". Its institutions produce legislation that applies directly to all citizens in all Member States and must therefore be expressed in their official languages".³³

Article 249 of the Treaty establishing the European Community (EC Treaty) describes the different types of legal instrument produced by the European Union institutions (regulations, decisions, directives, recommendations and opinions).

The important point is that most of these instruments are binding in some

30. In Malta, English is the official language, but the national language, Maltese, is constitutionally important. Cyprus is officially a bilingual country with Greek and Turkish as its official languages. Greek is already an official EU language but Turkish is not.

31. NATO with its sixteen members gets by with English and French, the 23 members of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE make do with two official languages, English, French, the UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION has six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, the EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION, uses only English, for all its six members.

32. McCluskey, B., *Respecting multilingualism in the enlargement of the European Commission*, 2001.

33. Cunningham, K., *Translating for a larger Union – can we cope with more than 11 languages?* 2001.

way, and that is why they have to be translated into all the official languages of the EU. To cite Wagner *et al*, it is simply a matter of democracy. It is a legal obligation and a democratic necessity to present Community legislation to European citizens in their own language in order to guarantee equality before the law".³⁴

That this is so can be proved by the fact that when new Member States join the EU, the Treaties are translated into the new official languages, and these new language versions are as "authentic" (legally valid) as the four initial versions. This however raises the question why the official languages do not include all the languages spoken in the European Union. For instance, why don't speakers of Welsh, Basque, Catalan and Breton have the same rights to use their languages for dealings with the institutions? The answer is that the "official language" of each Member State is the one it has stipulated during the membership negotiations. The choice is not dictated by the EU institutions.

The Member States themselves have taken a political decision to keep the number of official languages within limits in order to minimize administrative difficulties and costs. Several of the Member States share one or more official languages with a neighbouring country. This is instanced by Austria and Germany which share German and Ireland³⁵ and the United Kingdom which share English and so on.³⁶

In the subsequent discussion we will devote some space to the legal basis of multilingualism.

After World War II ended in 1945, Jean Monnet, a French statesman, promoted the idea of gradually uniting the democratic European nations both economically and politically. As a result, in 1951, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany signed the Treaty of Paris, which established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). ECSC began its operations in 1952. Building on the limited economic and political goals of ECSC, the countries of Western Europe developed an unpre-

34. Wagner, E., *et al*, *Translating for the European Union Institutions*, St.Jerome publishing, 2002, p. 3.

35. Irish is a Treaty language but not an official language or a working language of the institutions, although it may be used as an official language for cases in the European Court of Justice. The Court's rules of procedure also exist in Irish.

36. Council Regulation No 1, determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community (as amended) Article 8: If a Member State has more than one official language, the language to be used shall, at the request of such State, be governed by the general rules of its law. (Doen at Brussels, 15 April 1958, For the Council, The President V. Larock).

cedented level of integration and cooperation. The degree of legal integration, supranational political authority, and economic integration in the EU greatly surpasses that of other international organizations. Indeed, as Duisenberg put it, although the EU has not replaced the nation-state, its institutions increasingly resemble a parliamentary democratic political system at the supranational level.³⁷

The 1951 Treaty of Paris, did not mention multilingualism, this first Treaty was *authentic*³⁸ only in French. Language matters and the policy of multilingualism did not feature in the two Treaties of Rome signed in 1957 either. All we had in those Treaties was a brief provision to the effect that:

"the rules governing the languages of the institutions of the Community shall (...) be determined by the Council of the European Economic Community, acting unanimously."³⁹

In consequence, it was only when the Treaties of Rome entered into force on 1 January 1958, that the very first Regulation adopted by the Council of national ministers dealt with the official languages and working languages to be used.

The right referred to in the Article 2 – to write to the EU institutions in any official language, and to receive a reply in that language – has been enshrined in the Treaty as amended in Amestrdam in 1997.

Article 4 of Council Regulation No 1 refers to the feat of, "drafting in 11/23 languages", an expression Wagner *et al* claim, coined to avoid mentioning "translations". To give their words, "this is not a conspiracy to reduce translators' visibility; it is simply the logical consequence of the principle according to which all official languages have equal status".⁴⁰

The concept of "equally authentic texts" in different languages is encountered in the Final Provisions of the EC Treaty and safeguards the equal rights of all languages and therefore the national identity of all Member States. It reflects the desire that there should be no *dominant languages* or *cultures* in the European Union. As good Europeans, we may subscribe to these laudable intentions, but we, the *linguists/translators*, know too well that perfect equivalence of different language versions is impossible. On the other hand, for *lawyers*, multiple authenticity and "drafting in 11/23 languages" present no

37. Duisenberg, W. F., President of the European Bank. "*The Past and Future of European Integration: A Central Banker's Perspective*", 26 September, 2000.

38. authentic means "legally valid" rather than original (langue faisant foi).

39. (Article 217 of the EC Treaty, or Article 290 in the consolidated version) consolidated = incorporating the successive amendments made

40. Wagner, E., *et al*, *Translating for the European Union Institutions*, St. Jerome publishing, 2002, p. 7.

problems because as Wagner *et al* argue, "if equal meaning is not possible, there should at least be equal effect; and if that does not arise, one can try to solve the problem by invoking equal intent."⁴¹

An important point sometimes overlooked is that the legal instruments produced in the European Union institutions are converted into multilingual instruments by translators. It is the translator's main duty to safeguard linguistic equality, in doing so they must always understand the context and purpose of what they are translating.

The myth that all EU documents are translated into all official languages, is not true. Wagner *et al* claim that all laws and many "outgoing" documents do have to be translated into all the official languages, because they are of general application and have to be published.

But the situation is different for "incoming" documents of the type mentioned in Article 2 of Regulation No 1⁴², reports from Member States and correspondence from individuals, sent for processing within the institutions. To cite Wagner *et al*, "it may be sufficient to translate these into one language for information, (usually English or French), since all Eurocrats know English or French or else they learn them fast".⁴³

One other myth that multilingualism absorbs a huge proportion of the EU budget is simply not true because translation and interpreting form part of the administration budget and administration absorbs only 5.25% of the total budget. In other words the cost of multilingualism is lower than is often assumed.

A third myth claims that it would be easy to reduce the number of working languages. The political significance of multilingualism and the difficulty of altering the language regime should not be underestimated. It is always possible to introduce unofficial restrictions in exceptional circumstances. It is rumoured, Wagner *et al* say, that the members of the Commission are capable of communicating in English when the topic is so confidential that the interpreters have to be sent out of the meeting room. Likewise, all Eurocrats are required to work in English and/or French, regardless of their mother tongue.

41. Wagner, E., *et al*, *Translating for the European Union Institutions*, St. Jerome publishing 2002, p. 7.

42. Council Regulation No 1, Article 2, Documents which a Member State or a person subject to the jurisdiction of a Member State sends to institutions of the Community may be drafted in any one of the official languages selected by the sender. The reply shall be drafted in the same language.

43. Wagner, E., *et al*, *Translating for the European Union Institutions*, St. Jerome publishing, 2002, p. 9.

Unnecessary translation and interpreting, Wagner *et al* hold, can be avoided by informal arrangements.⁴⁴

On the other hand, all proposals for formal reductions in the number of languages have been rejected by the Member States, because of national sensitivities and for the legal reasons already mentioned. It should be pointed out that when representatives of the Member States are discussing EU legislative proposals, they expect to have all the language versions, and political incidents may occur if they are not available.

The European Community lends cautious support to the promotion of the "regional" minority languages (e.g. Irish, Welsh), and supports a "European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages" for this purpose. "Lesser used" refers to 31 of the 60-65 autochthonous European languages, the mother tongues of close to 50 million of the 320 million citizens of Member States.⁴⁵

A point which is worth mentioning regarding the language used in the EU texts is jargon or Euro-speak. Euro-speak, Wagner *et al* argue, is excusable when used to refer to genuinely "European" concepts that have no equivalent at national level; and they may be convenient because they avoid confusion. We will borrow the example Wagner *et al* cite to endorse this view. The word "subsidiarity", taking EU decisions and action at the lowest feasible regional, national or central level, is probably preferable to the word "devolution", which does mean the same, because in the UK, "devolution" is conventionally used to refer to toleration with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.⁴⁶

With every new enlargement of the European Union to include new member countries and as this gigantic project of creating a united Europe goes into its next historic stage, critical noises are made about the EU language policy, which gives small countries the "privilege" of having their language elevated to the status of an official and working language of the European institutions.

The *raison d'être* of multilingualism is that it should not be apparent to the European person-in-the-street. To quote Wagner *et al*, "for a banker in London, the EU is a political animal that speaks fluent English – yet at the same time, a farmer in Crete can communicate with the EU institutions as if they spoke only Greek. Looked at this way, from the average citizen's point of view, the EU institutions are monolingual. That is what makes them unique among international organizations.

A secondary benefit is that the EU institutions can speak to a large pro-

44. Wagner, E., *et al*, *Translating for the European Union Institutions*, St. Jerome publishing, 2002, p. 67.

45. Phillipson, R., *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 95.

46. Wagner, E., *et al*, *Translating for the European Union Institutions*, St. Jerome publishing, 2002, p. 64.

portion of the world's population in their own language –English, French, Spanish and Portuguese which are all world languages too".⁴⁷

As far as interpretation in the EU is concerned, in the future scenario of 23 official languages, full interpretation (from all languages into all languages) the situation will depend on interpretation via *pivot languages* (for example, providing "Polish into Greek" by interpreting from Polish into English, and then from English into Greek). It is clear that full interpretation will have to be restricted to the highest-level meetings, such as plenary session of the European Parliament and ministerial meetings.

EU languages are developing through their contact with the other EEC languages.⁴⁸ In English plural pronouns are used to refer to collective nouns if the individual members of the collective are in focus:

e.g. The government said **THEY** were opposed to this.

The point to be made here is that EU languages are changing under the influence of English as the above-mentioned form is already found in Danish.

On the other hand, according to *Lingua Franca Nova*,⁴⁹ English has, "...one of the worst spelling systems of any language using a western alphabet. Unless it were to dramatically alter its spelling –not a likely event– it will continue to mystify those who learn it as a second language, not to mention its own native speakers!"

The foregoing argument points to the conclusion that the current official language policy of the EU, which declares that all members should be entitled to speak with their own voices, does not seem to be taken seriously.

In Poland, for instance, the intensity of penetration of the Polish language by English is beginning to create a backlash; there have been attempts to introduce legislation to ban foreign borrowings, and coinages⁵⁰. The Proposed Polish Language Act – which forbids the exclusive use of foreign languages in product and service names, with the exception of proper names and trademarks, legal contracts, advertising, labels, forms, bills and receipts – was

47. Wagner, E., *et al*, *Translating for the European Union Institutions*, St.Jerome publishing, 2002, p. 105-106.

48. Pedersen, V. H., *Translation and Linguistic Change as Exemplified in a Number of Translations into Danish within the EEC*, *Essays on Translation*, Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, Kobenhavn, 1988, p. 59.

49. *Lingua Franca Nova*, 2002, *Lingua Franca Homepage*. August 26, 2002, p. 3 (Online).

50. Kwiecinski, P., *Translation Strategies in a Rapidly Transforming Culture*, *A Central European Perspective in The Translator – Studies in Intercultural Communications*, Vol. 4. Number 2. 1998.

defeated in parliament in 1996, but is likely to be reintroduced and debated again in the near future.

To bring our discussion to a close one could naturally raise the following two crucial questions:

- a. Could the EU function with a single working language?, and
- b. Isn't current EU language policy unfair to speakers of "minority" languages such as Catalan and Welsh?

This remains to be answered.

1.3 Cross-Cultural Implications

As a language with many origins, Romance, Germanic, Celtic and so on, English was bound to be a mess. But its elasticity makes it messier, as well as stronger. When it comes to new words, English puts up few barriers to entry. The past decade, for instance, has produced a host of Internettery, computerese and phonebabble.

The success or failure of a language, professor Aitchison argues, has little to do with its inherent qualities, "and everything to do with the power of the people who speak it."⁵¹ And that is particularly true of English.

But languages are not only a medium of communication, which enable nation to speak to nation. They are also repositories of culture and identity. And in many countries the all-engulfing advance of English threatens to damage or destroy much local culture. This is sometimes lamented even in England itself, for though the language that now sweeps the world is called English, the culture carried with it is American.

On the other hand, whereas the triumph of English destroys the tongues of others, native English speakers are becoming less competent at other languages and this isolates them from the literature, history and ideas of other peoples. It is, in short, a thoroughly dubious triumph.

Perhaps the most effective way of keeping a language alive, is to give it a political purpose just as Israeli nation-building has converted Hebrew from being a merely written language into a national tongue.

One big question now is whether the generalised use of English as a first

51. Professor Jean Aitchison of Oxford University, *The triumph of English, A world empire by other means*, *The Economist* print edition, Dec. 20th 2001.

or second language will accelerate the political integration of the EU⁵². The spread of English will lower the language barrier which has, arguably, obstructed pan-European political debate. It will open the way to the formation of pan-European public opinion, and to politicians with pan-European appeal. But there have been empires, like the Soviet one, which had common languages and still fell apart. History has shown that a language can help a good political system work better, but it cannot rescue a bad one.

As has already been pointed out, each of the EU Member States has a unique cultural and legal heritage that contributed to the final versions of the succession of Treaties. While each of the Treaties was provided to each Member State in its own language and stated to represent the full and *complete intent* of the documents, it is clear that the implications of these Treaties extends far beyond the written word and the intent of the Treaties appears to be more in the form of an overall constitution for the United States of Europe.

While it is clear that the members of the EU have an enormous amount of cultural diversity, there are sufficiently compelling reasons for the members to embrace and celebrate these differences as being in their best economic interests. A number of provisions of the Treaties specifically address the cross-cultural and social implications inherent in forging a union from a wide range of disparate member nations. People are just people and everyone comes complete with a ready-made, pre-formed set of preconceptions, biases, and prejudices about the world and other people. This framework will be built up slowly but surely over the years as we learn lessons from our parents, educators, peers, the media and personal experiences with other people and institutions. We all use this framework to understand what is going on around us and in order to communicate with other people. While this framework is usually efficient, we couldn't get along without it, it is fraught with opportunities to misinterpretation and prejudgements, which just cannot be avoided. We all do it and we do it all the time without realizing because we have to just get along in a complicated and changing world. When we meet other people, we immediately form a general opinion about those people based on how they are dressed, what the surroundings may be, how they talk and act, and generally how they appear to us. Based on this first impression, we then form an approach as to how to proceed when dealing with this individual: if the person appears dangerous, we flee; if the person appears friendly, we may strike up a conversation.

These preconceptions about other people take on particular significance

52. The European Union, After Babel, a new common tongue. The Economist print edition, Aug. 5th 2004.