

## Multilingualism , Integration and the International Trade

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to bring some ideas on the importance of multilingualism towards internationalization, its effect in the international trade market and in increase of cultural diversity as well as the commitment of young generations in these important issues that improve their life quality.

Nowadays most of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual. Monolingualism is characteristic only of a minority of the world's people, Everyone is interested to expand their knowledge and the best way to achieve it is by learning more language and visiting more countries other than neighboring countries.

There are many projects organized on multilingualism all over the world which are based upon an international, interdisciplinary and intercultural collaboration, resulting from a long-standing scientific co-operation in research, teaching and educational practice between persons and institutions involved in its realization.

**Key words;** cultural diversity, internationalization, multilingualism, communication , cultural diversity etc.

### Introduction

Multilingualism is one of the main mechanisms which enables people to work and study in other member states and which strengthens integration besides other advantages such as opening people to other cultures, improving their cognitive skills and developing their mother tongue skills

A **multilingual** person, in a broad definition, is one who can communicate in more than one language, be it actively (through speaking, writing or singing) or passively (through listening, reading, or perceiving). The terms *bilingual* and *trilingual* are used to describe comparable situations in which two or three languages are involved. A multilingual person is generally referred to as a polyglot. *Poly* from Greek that means "many", *glot* also from Greek that means "language".(wikipedia, free encyclopedia)

Multilingual speakers acquire and maintain at least one language during their childhood, known as **first language** (L1) which is acquired without formal education .But there is another group of children who acquire two languages at the same time. This group is called simultaneous bilinguals and usually belong to a group of children coming from mixed marriages or are born in a country with a spoken language different from their mother tongue. Even in the case of simultaneous bilinguals one language usually dominates over the other.

There are several definitions on multilingualism given by researchers.

Multilingualism simply means knowing two or more languages and by having this knowledge one can offer itself a better life because benefits of being bilingual extend to social as well as professional life.

Researchers who study bilingual and multilingual communities around the world have argued for a broad

definition that views bilingualism as a common human condition that makes it possible for an individual to function, at some level, in more than one language.

### Advantages of multilingualism education and investment in it

Each of the world's nations has its citizens who use other languages in addition to the national language to facilitate their everyday lives. We live in ever-changing , evolving constantly shifting world , where socially construed boundaries are becoming more obscured while simultaneously making visible the spaces, dimensions, and strategies of being and becoming multiple individuals in multiple places. These spaces enable us see how people perform their multiple identities through their everyday social and linguistic activities and interactions with people ,as well as how they invest and become invested in every field of life.

In this globalized world it is important to understand that social transformation and representation happen simultaneously and reveal the nature of social categorization and position. Investments in certain forms of capital in becoming multilingual and multicultural is essential. Investments in language learning show the complex interconnections between multilingualism, globalization and identity. By understanding these interconnections we create more spaces and conditions with less constraints and with more opportunities.

There are numerous benefits of being multilingual such as improvement of linguistic abilities as well as betterment of cognitive flexibility such as divergent thinking, concept formation, verbal abilities and general reasoning. Apart of all these there is cultural diversity importance which distinguishes people of different countries but at the

same time brings them together if they work and live in the same company or same country.

Due to the influx of migrants and refugees from all over the world, Europe has become increasingly multilingual.

According to Cook (2001) "a person who speaks multiple languages has a stereoscopic vision of the world from two or more perspectives, enabling them to be more flexible in their thinking, learn reading more easily. Multilinguals, therefore, are not restricted to a single world-view, but also have a better understanding that other outlooks are possible. Indeed, this has always been seen as one of the main educational advantages of language teaching"

It is helpful while traveling to foreign countries, which have a different language. It helps you communicate effectively and be independent of translators and interpreters. In today's world of globalization, knowing a foreign language gives you opportunities to study and work abroad. It also helps in creative thinking. Bilingual persons have two or more words for each object and idea, and different meanings are sometimes attached to words by the two known languages. Therefore, a bilingual person may develop the ability to think more flexibly not only about words, but also about other things too. Once you know two languages, it becomes much easier to learn another language. Knowing three to four languages is prevalent in many parts of Europe because it gives more choices. If the country where you are a resident becomes unstable, if unrest or war breaks out as it happened in Ex-Yugoslavia, you will be able to move to the another country/countries and communicate in their language, be helped quicker and easier because you are understandable to all.

Multilingualism helps to better understand and appreciate people of other countries, thereby lessening racism, xenophobia, and intolerance, as the learning of a new language usually brings with it a revelation of a new culture

As Kruger says (Independent education 2010) In today's world where there is a growing focus on creative thinking, it is interesting to note that pupils who are exposed to a multilingual environment are more comfortable engaging with creative thought. Furthermore, they display a superior performance in evaluating hypotheses. I believe that the ability to learn more than one language is an innate capability. Yes, for some pupils, learning a second, a third or even a fourth language can be a challenging task, but the reason for the difficulty is not necessarily a cognitive challenge. And even with marginal success in learning a second or third language, the advantages are substantial.

### Languages and Integration

In order to assess the role of language in integration and multiculturalism, we should begin by listing the main functions of language. Language is:

- the most important medium of human communication;
- a symbol of identity;
- an expression of culture;
- a medium of cognitive and conceptual development;

- an instrument of action (Language is, for instance, sufficient to perform acts such as promise, complaint, invitation, and reprimand).

These functions are the arena in which the relationship between English and community languages and expression of multiple identities are played out. Multilingualism enables us to consider diversity, dynamism and hybridity.

Acquisition of the host country language(s) is important for various aspects of newcomer integration Host country language proficiency is strongly related not only to the labor market outcomes, but also to the indicators of social integration.

The German Chancellor Angela Merkel in her talks with Turkish prime minister added that it is unacceptable to be an excuse for Turks living in Germany not to learn the German language. The language of the country one lives in is the precondition for good integration. She was talking about the Turkish immigrants but this should be applicable for everyone no matter which country they live in. We have the example of Serbians living in the Republic of Kosova There is no excuse for them not to speak Albanian and encourage new generations to learn other languages apart from their own if they want to be integrated in the new society even though many of them can speak Albanian as they were born and grown up in Kosova.. "This is about everybody keeping their roots, their culture and their belief, but those of the third and fourth generation living in Germany should be able to participate in our social life."<sup>1</sup>

On a social level, multilingualism exposes one to other cultures, which promotes acceptance, respect and embraces diversity. It promotes relations between different linguistic communities. Although it may not always create harmony between communities which share the same institutions, it nevertheless facilitates interactions between them, the exchange of ideas and even the development of common social objectives. Learning a language other than one's own, or even several languages, is also a means of demonstrating that we want to become "cultural intermediaries" who want to eradicate social divisions that still too often separate members of different linguistic communities. Multilingualism has a mediating effect by promoting the passage over the invisible boundary between the unknown and the known as well as between the refusal and acceptance of differences. The understanding of others leads to acceptance. Acceptance promotes tolerance and the diversification of one's vision of the world.

### International trade with or without languages

Wherever economic internationalization processes are involved, 'economy' and 'multilingualism' prove to be two sides of the same coin: without international trade the spectrum of linguistic contacts would be much smaller, language families such as the Indo-European would not exist, at least in their present form. German would not

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<sup>1</sup> DW-WORLD.E - (26.03.2010)

have such terms as "Konto" (account), "Bilanz" (balance sheet) or "Scheck" (cheque) and the symbol for the British pound sterling "£" would certainly not have been derived from the Italian 'libra'. On the other hand it is true that, for example, without the willingness to practise multilingualism trading routes such as the Silk Road would not have been opened up, or that the trading associations such as the Hanseatic League and the Fuggers would not have enjoyed the success that enabled them to act as central economic forces in Europe for centuries. And last but not least it should be mentioned in this connection that it was precisely Jacob Fugger who was said to have given the – now highly topical – advice, when conducting business negotiations speak your own language and understand the foreign tongue.<sup>2</sup>

Multilingual skills provide export benefits and better access to New Emerging Markets. English does not suffice in economic relations as many tenders are lost through lack of skills in local languages. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) increasingly use the specific language of the country to which they export so as to gain ground in emerging markets. The study shows that multilingualism and economic competitiveness are closely linked. Swedish, French and German SMEs all use multilingualism as a strategy for exportations to varying degrees. Businesses can greatly benefit from building the cultural and linguistic skills of their employees. Speaking another language can open new markets up to you that were previously closed. Because English predominates as the 'global language' of trade and commerce, people often forget that the ability to conduct business with a non-English speaker in their own language, and with knowledge of their cultural values and norms, can build lasting bridges and forge links with that individual or company for many years to come.

There is a strong relation between language and economic activity, diverse lines about the role of language in production, consumption and exchange. E.g. the study of language use in advertising and consumer relations for goods in their own language. Researchers such as Sabourin (1985- Benefits of linguistic diversity and **multilingualism**)- have studied more about the role of minority language maintenance as factor of regional economic vitality and matching between employees on linguistic dimensions in a firm. Generally the concepts of supply, demand and market for any good or service also apply to language goods.

### Language and Cultural diversity

Cultures are transmitted through languages and languages also reflect the history of the people who have used them. The phrase cultural diversity can refer to having different cultures respecting each other's differences. The phrase cultural diversity is sometime misused to mean the variety of human societies or cultures in a specific region, or in the world as a whole;

but these phenomenon are multiculturalism rather than cultural diversity. The culturally destructive action of globalization is often said to have a negative effect on the world's cultural diversity. Children become linguistically and culturally competent members of their community through interactions with caregivers and other more competent members of their community (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Through this language socialization, children learn the behaviors that are culturally appropriate in their community.

Language and cultural diversity is important because our country, our workplaces and our schools include persons of various ethnics groups and interests. We can learn from one another, but first we must have a level of understanding about one another in order to work together effectively. Cultural diversity also helps people to dispel negative stereotypes about one another. Cultural diversity is when you have people from different countries who of course have different beliefs, speak different languages, male and female living and working together peacefully.

Language and cultural diversity is a term used to mean that a group or area contains people from many different cultures and backgrounds. These areas are considered diverse because everyone is unique and different...

A well known analogy between linguistic and ecological diversity is the 'language garden analogy' proposed by Garcia (in Baker and Prays Jones 1998:205). According to Garcia it would be dull and boring to travel around the world and see that all gardens are of the same one-color flower. The variety of flowers of different shapes, sizes and colors makes our visual and aesthetic experience rich and enjoyable. Linguistic diversity also makes the world more interesting and colorful but as in the case of flowers it makes the garden more difficult to tend

According to Garcia who compares flower and languages "Some flowers and some languages spread very quickly and others need extra care and protection". Language diversity requires planning and care involving actions such as:

- Adding flowers to the garden: Learning other languages can be an enriching experience
- Protecting rare flowers: Protecting languages at risk through legislation and education
- Nurturing flowers in danger of extinction: Intervention may be necessary and may imply positive economic discrimination
- Controlling flowers that spread quickly and naturally: Spread can be allowed if it does not kill other species.

This can be compared to the mixed marriages where each parent of a child speaks a different first language, the child who is bilingual can communicate freely with both, developing a close relationship with them. At the same time, both parents are passing to the child a rich heritage on their part. Being bilingual creates a bridge between generations, for instance, with grandparents. Generally what happens if parents migrate, is that the children learn only the local language. They are ignorant of their mother tongue, which creates a barrier in communication with their relatives. Being able to

<sup>2</sup> CILT - The National Centre for Languages (Ed.), ELAN: Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise. 2006

communicate between generations helps to establish a sense of belonging to an extended family. It leads to access to more information resources. A bilingual person can read books or literature that exists in both the known languages and that would otherwise be unavailable. It leads to exposure to different cultures. A language is usually closely related to the culture of the speaker. To read a book or a poem or to listen to a song in the original language is a completely different experience than to read/hear the translation. Exposure to a second set of customs, traditions and history provides a different viewpoint on many questions and makes life a lot more interesting and rewarding. Knowing two languages places one in a position to think about language itself, to reflect on its functions, and to treat it as an object of thought.

And finally one should keep in mind that a globalized English (internationalish, globalish or McLanguage) will also be used outside Europe as an emergency language. It can therefore be quite useful for emergency cases in Europe, too, but is hardly suitable as the linguistic means of fostering a European identity.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper was to bring some ideas on the importance of multilingualism towards internationalization, its effect in the international trade market and in increase of cultural diversity as well as the commitment of young generations in these important issues that improve their life quality. We discussed the benefits that international trade from multilingualism, its effect on cultural diversity as well as the investment needed in multilingual education.

The Government of every country should continue to make innovations to its robust official language training programs for newcomers and all nations living in it in order to have better integration in the society for everyone. That said, at a time when population mobility and intercultural contact is at an all-time high in human history, formal acknowledgement of multilingualism – and of non-official languages - is also something that integration and language policy should take into account. And it is important to follow the Fugger's highly topical advice- when conducting business negotiations speak your own language and understand the foreign tongue.

***If I'm selling to you, I speak your language. If I'm buying, dann müssen Sie Deutsch sprechen (Willy Brandt)***

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