



KATHOLIEKE
UNIVERSITEIT
LEUVEN

DEPARTEMENT TOEGEPASTE ECONOMISCHE WETENSCHAPPEN

RESEARCH REPORT 0316

**DEVELOPING LANGUAGE STRATEGIES FOR
INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES: THE
CONTRIBUTION OF TRANSLATION STUDIES**

by

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D/2003/2376/16

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The authors would like to thank Martá Calas for her constructive comments on an earlier version of this manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This article introduces translation studies in order to theorize about the ways in which multiple languages in international companies can be combined. Its purpose is to develop different language strategies based on different theoretical perspectives within translation studies. Considering the historical developments in this discipline, we identify three perspectives each with a different conception of translation and language use. These conceptions are the theoretical basis on which we develop three language strategies: a mechanical, cultural and political language strategy. For each strategy, we discuss the selection of language(s), the role of translators and the validation method, and formulate proposition about the types of texts being produced. These propositions indicate that, through their international communication process, international companies become scripted as a particular type of multilingual organization, be it a uniform, a culturally sensitive or a hybrid text.

INTRODUCTION

English is the world's way of communicating internationally, just as the Christian calendar is the world's way of tracking time, Arabic numbers are the world's way of counting, and the metric system is, for the most part, the world's way of measuring (Huntington, 1996). While this idea of a common language has long been oversold in international business, several trends indicate that doing international business will increasingly require the juggling of multiple languages. First, international communication is no longer the challenge of only an elite group of expatriate managers working in foreign subsidiaries. Through information technology and an increasing mobility, managers interact on an almost daily basis with colleagues speaking different native languages (O'Hara-Devereaux & Johansen, 1994). Second, consumers in countries where the primary language is not English expect information and support in their local languages, as will business partners (Tayeb, 2000). Third, at the societal level, as countries outside the Western sphere continue their economic resurgence, other major languages will be studied in school. People from different cultures will use these languages with each other and English speakers will find more resistance to the expectation that they use English with them, as well (Huntington,

1996). These trends all indicate that international companies are multilingual organizations in which multiple languages not only coexist side by side but also are in combination with each other.

The purpose of this article is to increase our understandings of the ways in which multiple languages can be combined. Specifically, we address the question which language strategies can be chosen by international companies to organize their international communication process. A language strategy refers to several components: the decision which language(s) can be spoken, the role of translators in creating multilingual texts, the method used to validate the translation process and, consequently, the types of texts that are expected to be produced. To develop different types of language strategies, we rely on insights from translation studies. We have turned to this discipline for three reasons. First, the focus of this discipline is to theorize on the use of multiple languages. This discipline represents a whole tradition of thinking, reflected in different conceptions of translations which draw on particular assumptions on language and culture (Venuti, 2000). We rely on these theoretical conceptions and assumptions to develop different types of language strategies.

Second, translation studies may offer additional theoretical insights to language issues in international management studies. Current international research acknowledges the importance as well as the difficulty of combining multiple languages through instances such as anecdotes in translation, language use in international teams and the discussion of back translation. These issues however can be reconsidered when approaching them from theoretical insights in translation studies. For example, a well-known anecdote of translation refers to the Pepsi Cola advertising slogan: "Come alive with Pepsi." When the campaign was introduced in Germany, the company was forced to revise the ad because it discovered that the German translation of "Come alive" was "Come out of the grave." And in Asia, the same phrase was translated to "Bring your ancestors back from the dead" (Ricks, 1999). While it is common to consider such incidents to be individual translators' blunders, translation studies point to other possible reasons. Besides the issue of translation, a recent study on international teams (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000) discussed the use of multiple languages. One of the effective international teams allowed conversations in Thai and English where team members took care to translate for non-Thai members less skilled in Thai. However, while the authors identified this behavior as an effective communication practice, translation studies may provide insights in why this

linguistic option was effective. As a last example of the possible contribution of translation studies for international research, we refer to the discussion on back translation. While this method is considered to be an effective tool to conduct cross-cultural research (Brislin, 1980), translation studies indicates that this is only one method to validate the combination of multiple languages. New theoretical perspectives suggest other approaches to validate an international communication process. Throughout our article, we will come back to these three instances and re-interpret them from the perspective of translation studies.

Third, translation studies may point scholars of organizational communication and discourse towards new research questions. In specific, the question of how to combine multiple languages in international companies may instigate research into the linguistic production of international companies through their international communication process. Although the insights in organizational communication, drawn from the linguistic turn (e.g. Reed & Hughes, 1992; Grant, Keenoy & Oswick, 1998), are parallel to evolutions in translation studies, communication and discourse scholars have not yet extended their theorizing on language and organization to the case of multiple languages such as Mandarin Chinese, English, Spanish, German or French. Reviewing recent work on communication (Corman & Poole, 2000) and language and organization (Westwood & Linstead, 2001), we see few attempts to apply the insights of multiplicity and plurivocality to the context of international companies. Therefore, in the conclusion, we will reflect on an interdisciplinary approach to study the language strategies of international companies.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Following the historical developments within translation studies (Toury, 1995; Hermans 1999; Gentzler, 2001), we identify three perspectives on translation and languages. These perspectives define translation differently, emphasizing other elements in the translation process which consequently lead to different acts of translation. The first, mechanical perspective considers translation as walking through dictionaries, the cultural perspective takes translation as traveling across cultures, and the political perspective emphasizes language competition where translation becomes an act of border patrolling. Within each perspective, we first discuss the conception of translation pointing to the different underlying assumptions regarding language and culture. We then turn to the context of international companies and develop a language strategy that corresponds to the translation conception. We formulate propositions that indicate the role of languages and translators in creating particular types of international communication. Within the cultural and political perspective, we further formulate

propositions that contrast the different language strategies with each other. In the cultural perspective, we discuss how the cultural translation strategy differs from that of the mechanical perspective, and vice versa. In the political perspective, we contrast the political language strategy with those of the mechanical and cultural perspective. These contrasting propositions further identify the differences among the three language strategies and consequently, its implications when choosing one strategy above the others. We conclude by suggesting an interdisciplinary research approach in studying the linguistic production of international companies.

A MECHANICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGES

Initially, the issue of translation was approached from many separate disciplines such as linguistics, comparative literature, semiotics, anthropology and psycholinguistics, each with their own models and paradigms. The complex and multi-dimensional nature of translation however gave rise to the need for an overarching frame which led, in the beginning of the 1970s, to the creation of an autonomous and interdisciplinary translation science, called *translation studies* after Holmes (1972). Until 1975, almost all translation scholars at that moment took the original text as the starting point and were concerned with the difficulty of translating a particular text into another language. This approach is called the source model in which translation is comparable to walking through dictionaries. We first discuss this model pointing to its underlying assumptions regarding language and culture, and then develop the language strategy that corresponds to this perspective.

Translation as Walking Dictionaries

Central to the source model is the question of how to ‘correctly’ translate a text from one language to another. The norm of ‘correct’ translation is defined from the perspective of the original text and mainly reduced to lexical items. Scholars following this model focus therefore on the linguistic traditions of the original text. Their aim is to formulate abstract rules to help translators ensure the equivalence of the text to be translated. Equivalence that aims at replicating the same situation as in the original is the central concept in this model (for a discussion of this concept, see Leonardi, 2000). Examining its theoretical assumptions, the concept of equivalence refers to a fixed and static view on communication and meaning. Communication is considered - often unconsciously, sometimes explicitly - to consist of both a deep and a surface structure (Nida & Taber,

1968). The deep structure refers to the core or the fixed meaning; the surface structure refers to the different manifest language structures in which communication takes place. Consequently, translation within this model is an act that should be able to switch from one language to another one while keeping a given fixed meaning. Further, the method of back translation is a tool to check whether any 'losses in translation' ('traduttore traditore') occurred. The commissioner(s) – the party that initiates the translation process - or the translator(s) controls the lexical-philological elements of the original text, which again refers to the assumption of the surface/deep distinction.

In setting the rules of ensuring equivalence between the original text and the translated text, translation scholars often reduced the criteria to canonized or official features of language and culture. These canonized features were not necessarily derived from the experience and criteria used by the translators but rather from the scholars' own theoretical linguistic and literary models: idealistic concepts instead of historical-empirical analyses (Toury, 1980). This trend towards canonization was embedded in the historical linguistic traditions where the study of language was reduced to the study of written language, partly even to the well-written language (Ong, 1982). Speech and discourses were not considered to belong to the study of language. Similarly, the study of culture was reduced to the study of canonized culture: 'high' culture with a capital C. Due to both reductions, translation scholars initially adopted the idea of the universal language and a homogeneous culture. Other possible elements in the translation process such as the users' perspective were at that moment overlooked because scholars, who often were translators, used to identify with the translators' goals (Toury, 1980; 1995; Lambert & Van Gorp, 1985).

To conclude, it is this assumption of homogeneity and universality that characterizes the source model within translation studies. Language is here approached from an instrumental and technical perspective: it is taken only as a means of transferring information. The act of translating is like walking through a dictionary, mechanical activities of coding and switching. Meaning is supposed to be reproduced rather than produced (Robyns, 1994).

Language Strategy from a Mechanical Perspective

In deciding on how to combine multiple languages, the basic assumption within this perspective is that a variety of languages offers no value or meaning in itself. The presence of multiple languages may complicate the international communication process, but is not considered to change the nature of this multilingual communication. For instance, sending

a translated commercial brochure from the French headquarter to a Senegalese subsidiary is similar to sending this document from the commercial department to the R&D department across the hallway. In both cases, language is considered to be a different code, and both target groups will be able to understand the message. The fact that they respectively speak a different national and professional language is assumed to make no difference. Communicating across multiple languages remains an exchange of information where most problems can be framed as technical misunderstandings.

Developing a language strategy from this perspective, it would be preferential to select one common language that every employee can speak. This 'lingua franca' is considered to be a neutral code, without any influence on the international communication process, a tool to communicate 'easily.' We would argue that this language strategy can be found in many international companies that consider English (and sometimes French or German) as an efficient and 'easy' language to conduct business. Or in international teams where one decides to use English as the common language without asking the question whether this decision will impact their teamwork (Canney Davison & Ward, 1999). We expect that the use of one common language will be chosen by international companies who want to produce uniform texts. The logic of the source model shows us that the belief in the efficiency of using one language refers to the underlying assumption of homogenization and standardization. Communication is considered to refer to a fixed meaning and the language used to transmit this message is not relevant.

A mechanical language strategy reflects itself further in the role and position of translators. Practices that indicate a technical perspective on translation is to engage in a unidirectional communication with the translators without providing them with background information and systematic feedback, or to use secretaries or 'talented' technicians as translators. Research on the position of translators in companies (Hermans & Lambert, 1998) indicates that this mechanical perspective on translation is wide-spread. The interviewed translators often experience their commissioners as being impatient, expecting translations 'to be finished by yesterday', and asking their translators to be on permanent stand-by. They describe themselves as walking dictionaries, glorified secretaries, high-class baby-sitters or fax machines. This approach resembles a similar expectation of producing uniform texts across the company. The reason is that translators are assumed to focus on the original texts and produce 'correct' translations. Translators have here a clarifying role, acting as transmitters of the original message. Back translation

by the translators themselves or the commissioner is the method to validate the correctness of the translated texts. The assumption is that when translators know their profession, translation becomes unproblematic, a tool to transmit texts which stay the same. Going back to the Pepsi Cola example of the introduction, we could alternatively argue that the translation blunder may be the result of a mechanical language strategy. The organization may have not given the translator any contextual information assuming that a marketing campaign can be easily transferred from one language to another.

To conclude, a language strategy following the mechanical assumptions of an universal language and a homogeneous culture will select one common language, consider translators as transmitters of the original message and use back translation as validation. The expected outcomes of such international communication process are uniform texts.

Proposition 1: A language strategy of international companies that selects one common language and uses translators as transmitters will produce uniform texts that can be translated back to the original language and message.

A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGES

During the late seventies and eighties, translation studies knew a transition from the source model to the target model of translation. A new generation of theoreticians (Even-Zohar, 1978; Vanden Broeck & Lefevere, 1979; Toury, 1980; 1995; Hermans, 1985; Holmes, 1988) started to focus on the purpose and the effects of the translated text in the target culture. Translation studies wanted to become an *interdiscipline* approaching translation from many different points of view – those of translators, commissioners, and their audiences (Reiss & Vermeer, 1991) and envisaging it more as production and reproduction of previous discourse. The concept of equivalence became irrelevant since the idea of equivalence shows no awareness of the complexity of the different norms involved in the translation process (Vanden Broeck & Lefevere, 1979; Pym, 1998).

Within the target model, one group of scholars points mainly towards the cultural dimension of translation and emphasizes the creation of different texts and meanings through each translation. The act of translating becomes comparable to traveling across cultures. We first discuss this conception of translation and its underlying assumptions; we then develop the language strategy that corresponds with this cultural perspective and contrast it with the mechanical language strategy to clearly distinguish the two strategies.

Translation as Traveling

When taking the target rather than the source culture as a starting point, the cultural dimension of translational communication becomes apparent. The individual translator and reader cannot be isolated from their larger socio-cultural context. Additionally, the original writers/speakers, their translators and their audience(s) cannot claim to use homogeneous idioms since they are constantly submitted to previous combinations of translated, untranslated, and quoted discourses. Within this perspective, translation moves from an act of code switching to an intercultural activity. It basically emphasizes the interactivity between the source and target culture. The differences between the two meanings systems are to be explored because the meaning of the text is not a given but created through the interaction with its cultural target context. Translation therefore resembles a cultural process, where the translated text is both part of a particular but holistic context, and further enacts it (Snell-Hornby, 1989; Holz-Mänttari, 1984).

Conceiving translation as an interlingual interpretive use or an interpretive resemblance (Gutt, 1991) implies therefore an acceptance of (radical) changes. Translators always deform the original text through translating verbs into substantives, clarifying meanings, or expanding which slowly leads to the same result: the destruction of the original (Berman, 1985). Because of culturally different audiences, they shift the cohesion and coherence of the original texts (Blum-Kulka, 1986) and domesticate it through the use of domestic interests, dialects, registers and styles (Venuti, 2000). These changes are no longer considered to be ‘mistakes’ that deviate from the original text but are necessary to create new understanding in the other culture. For example, in China, the translation of brand names such as Coca-Cola and Colgate to local names was able to add something new to the established brand equity. The Chinese characters used to represent the Coca-Cola also mean “tastes good and makes you happy” and those used for Colgate toothpaste also mean “highly clear and clean.” This translation process considered the differences in language and consumers’ brand-name evaluations in which Chinese words are processed through visual and/or semantic cues while English words tend to be processed phonologically (Zhang & Schmitt, 2001). Given the inevitable shifts and hesitations between source oriented and target oriented options, each translation is nothing else than the establishment of a new (not pre-existing) model between two or more traditions (Toury 1980).

To conclude, the assumption within this cultural perspective is that languages are a key to the active understanding and creation of the various cultures. Translation is here a concept that allows for the discovery and (re)production of culturally rooted discourses. In

contrast with the walking dictionary perspective, translation becomes a process of (inter)cultural production and intercultural definitions. It functions as a 'third' language, a zone between the original text and the translated one where the differences between the multiple meaning systems can be explored. Translation (and communication) is an active inscription into the new context, altering the translated text and creating a so-called remainder (Lecerle, 1990). In this view, translation is similar to the traveling experience through which one understands other cultures while also rediscovering one's own.

Language Strategy from a Cultural Perspective

The question of how to combine multiple languages becomes very different when organizations are accepted to be culturally embedded and languages become a key to the active understanding and creation of the various cultures. Within this perspective, an international company will opt for a language strategy where the multiplicity of languages is respected. It will avoid rushing into assimilation procedures by deciding on one common language. Instead, different languages can be used in different local contexts and in interaction with each other.

We expect that this language strategy will create international communication in which cultural specificity is acknowledged and cultural sensitivity is created. Because language is key to the understanding and creation of cultures, international companies allow a variety of cultures through allowing a variety of languages. Local cultures are not just transposed into the headquarters' cultures. Studies on expatriates (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992; Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall & Stroh, 1999) clearly indicate that skills such as cultural responsiveness, cultural adaptability and cross-cultural communication are crucial to perform effectively in the host company. Work adjustment is achieved through learning the dynamics of multicultural situations where the best way to pick up the subtle – yet important - social cues is via the local language. Furthermore, using the local language changes the expatriate's engagement with local employees and creates openness for local meanings and discourses. Going back to the Earley and Mosakowski's study (2000) on international teams, this cultural perspective may provide us with an explanation of why allowing conversations in both Thai and English was positively evaluated. This language strategy may be effective because it took into account the cultural context of the team members. This approach may have handled the problem of team members becoming

frustrated and possibly withdrawing when cultural nuances became important and lacking the language skills to express these complex issues.

Within the cultural perspective, the act of translation cannot be performed by secretaries or talented technicians. Rather, we expect that in this language strategy native speakers will be selected as translators because they are considered as key informants of a specific culture. This practice belongs today to the initial quality requirements in contemporary business translation. Reliance on such translators will produce culturally specific text because they will be more able to understand the target culture than outside translators. They can take the cultural specificity of a text into account and act like mediators. An additional method to validate the translation is to pre-test the text among the expected audiences. Through counter-checking with multiple samples of potential users, it becomes possible to establish interactivity with the targeted audience and domesticate the text if necessary. This validation method is different from back translation because of its inclusion of potential users. From a cultural perspective, back translation is even considered to be no translation because it only controls linguistic patterns and excludes the users' discursive sensitivities. Consequently, a culturally translated text will be different from the original one, creating variation but reflecting a cultural sensitivity that translators who focus on the original text will not achieve. A study on the translation department of Siemens (Herrlitz & Loos, 1994) seems to support this proposition. In translating a letter from a Dutch manager to a German colleague, it was found that the German translator replaced the indirect wording from the Dutch manager when thanking the German colleague for his extraordinary efforts by a direct phrase. As reason for this domestication, the translator argued that the German colleague being the user would not have interpreted the letter as a sincere appreciation. Such translation actions indicate how translation is a cultural production, rather than a technical tool to transmit a message.

A language strategy according to the cultural perspective does not necessarily imply that the native speaking translators have to be integrated into the company in spatial or organizational terms. Besides hiring in-house translators, one can expect commissioners to build close relationships with particular translation agencies. Because external translators need to be able to translate in close relationships with the users and their contexts, the aim of such close relationships is to develop company-specific knowledge. In general, the commissioner will use those translators who are able to bridge and explore actively the space between various speakers, languages, texts, and cultures.

To conclude, a language strategy following the cultural assumptions where languages are considered key to the creation of cultures will opt for a set of multiple, local languages, approaches translators as mediators between different cultural meaning systems and will use counter-checking with multiple samples of potential users as validation. The expected outcomes of such international communication process are culturally specific texts.

Proposition 2: A language strategy of international companies that allows several languages and uses translators as mediators produce culturally specific texts that have been counter-checked with multiple samples of potential users.

Cultural and Mechanical Language Strategies Compared

To clearly differentiate this cultural language strategy from the mechanical perspective, we further develop propositions in which the weakness of the mechanical language strategy is identified from a cultural perspective and vice versa. The following example from our own research illustrates how the expected outcome of producing uniform texts through a mechanical language strategy was not realized. A Flemish organization in Belgium had written its mission statement first in its native language, Dutch. Because of the need for a multilingual website, it asked its in-house translation services - who outsourced translations to an agency - to translate the mission statement into four languages. When the translated texts came back, the translators - who were native speakers of the targeted audiences - explicitly commented and questioned the Dutch, original mission statement. After heavy discussions where the translators were being criticized for not knowing their profession, the organization started re-writing their mission statement. Taking into account the translators' questions, hesitations and comments, the commissioner rewrote the mission statement in a circular way, altering its original meaning. This example clearly illustrates how the uniformity of a message, i.e. mission statement, cannot be assumed because the text will be differently interpreted in different cultural contexts. A monolingual text may promote a strong identity on behalf of the company but it is never a guarantee for a cultural understanding by different target groups. Furthermore, this example illustrates how the translation process of combining multiple languages may lead to a new 'original' text in which the text is a co-production of multiple cultures.

Proposition 3: Uniform texts as produced by a mechanical language strategy may lack cultural specificity because they are produced in isolation of the target groups.

Vice versa, a mechanical perspective would criticize a cultural language strategy for undermining the original text as intended by the issuing commissioner. The requested changes made by the multiple users may produce multiple culturally specific texts, each with its own domestications. As a result, these texts all have their own variety, possibly leading to different understandings in different cultures. Or, as illustrated in the previous example, a new (not pre-existing) text may be created in which the original intention and message is altered. In both cases, the strong profile of the issuing institution tends to get weakened. The variations may go beyond the intended standard with the danger of losing the message which one tries to communicate.

Proposition 4: Culturally specific texts as produced by a cultural language strategy may neglect the original text as intended by the issuing commissioner.

A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGES

Similar to the cultural perspective, the political perspective follows the target model of translation but it stresses a different (and complementary) dimension by focusing on how the source and target systems are connected in a political decision making process. In line with the growing interests in power, politics, (cultural) diversity and differences in the nineties (Venuti, 1998), another group of translation scholars mainly redefines the translation phenomenon as a constant struggle and competition between different value systems and stresses the importance of status and power relationships of languages and cultures. As in the previous sections, we first discuss the meaning of the translation process, which is here comparable to border patrolling, and identify its underlying assumptions. We then develop the language strategy according to this political perspective and contrast it with the mechanical and cultural language strategies.

Translation as Border Patrolling

Besides the (multi)cultural embeddedness of the translation process, other scholars within the target model emphasize the power relations that are inherently connected to the different norms of the (different) perspectives involved. They argue that in any translation at least two linguistic, cultural traditions meet. This implies that 1) they are in conflict and that 2) new combinations of value systems are being reproduced where either the source or the target system may be dominant (Toury, 1980; Lambert & Van Gorp, 1985). Translation becomes directly connected to power relationships and to the weight of voices involved in

the translation activities. Consequently, attention is given to the role of the commissioner and the selection of the 'lingua franca.' While the role of the commissioner has generally been neglected in translation studies, some scholars argue its crucial importance (Reiss & Vermeer, 1991; Lefevere, 1995). It is the commissioner who decides to translate or not to translate, and who therefore imposes (part of) the initial norms. Within this perspective, zero-translation (the decision not to translate) is also an act of power since it restricts and controls information and participation. The non-translation of cultural traditions and products in colonial situations clearly illustrates the power potential of translation (Lambert, 1994). When the cultural products are seen as a threat for one's power, the destruction of these cultural products can even be considered as a negative translation (Lefevere, 1995).

Similar, the selection of a given 'lingua franca' will indicate which realities can be created and is considered to be a political process, implying the possibility of power games and post-colonial relations (Greenblatt, 1991). The belief in the equality of languages, or in 'ethnolinguistic democracy' (Fishman, 1993) can never be taken for granted. Ethnolinguistic democracy or "the right of both parties in an interaction to use their own languages and to receive in their own languages in return, regardless of the power or size differentials that differentiate between" (Fishman, 1993: 11) is here the main issue at stake. In the nineties, this political perspective gained considerable attention, influenced by the so-called minority perspectives of feminism (Simon, 1996; Von Flotow, 1997), postcolonialism (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1998), and sexuality (Harvey, 1998) and by societal trends like globalization (Neederveen Pieterse, 1994; Venuti, 2000). These perspectives question the marginal position given to translation and define translation as a form of resistance to dominant norms and to the primacy given to the source text.

An illustration of how translation can be considered an instrument to deny voice is the discussion of translating literature in little-known languages into widely-known languages (such as English/American or Russian) to gain access to the world (Vanderauwera, 1990). Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa* (1980) was a worldwide best seller only after it had become *The Name of the Rose* (tr. William Reaver) in 1983. Authors speaking little-known languages question the advice given by the cultural perspective that translators should translate into their native tongue. How many native speakers of English/American possess knowledge of a little-known language that allows them not only to avoid howlers, but also to understand most of the literary, cultural, historical or political reverberations of the

original text? The suggestion here is to work in a team representing both language groups, which fundamentally alters the decision about who is taking part in the translation process (Vanderauwera, 1990).

Within the political perspective, the act of translation is no longer considered a mechanical code switching or an 'open' cultural transfer. The assumption is that there is always a degree of manipulation (Hermans, 1985) or negotiation (Pym, 1998) implied. The performative act of translation lies in the process of influence, persuasion and resistance. Because borders tend to refer to space and protectionist behavior (Pym, 1993), translation becomes an act of border patrolling that decides who can enter the circuit of power and play games. Before any translation is initiated, translation already implies a decision of which parties will be involved and who will be able to influence the translation. Consequently, translation is an act of power, determining who is acknowledged as a full-fledged partner, who is allowed to communicate and whose interests can influence the decision making.

To conclude, in the political perspective, languages and cultures are not just juxtaposed but in constant competition. This perspective emphasizes the role of translation in maintaining dominant positions or empowering new voices. Because translation is at the heart of colonial encounters (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1998: 16) perpetuating the superiority of some cultures over others, it becomes a possibility to reverse the unequal power relations and make oppressed voices part of the conversation. As a final reflection, we point to the recent discussion on the bilateral relationship between source and target system as being too static. Because international and global networks rather than local initiatives are an important origin of communicational exchanges (Lambert, 1989; Pym, 1998), bilateral relationships tend to be replaced by large-scale and complex networks. This implies that the translated texts are not only a combination of the values of the source and target systems but also from other systems in the network such as clients, suppliers, employees, legal systems who all can influence the translation process. This shift towards the multilateral construction of communication is also discussed in international (business) contexts, where, instigated through globalization, a multiple range of linguistic contexts is simultaneously present (Parker, 1997).

Language Strategy from a Political Perspective

A language strategy developed from the political perspective will depart from the assumptions that multiple languages represent a context of language competition. Different languages and cultures are not neutral but reflect differences in status and power. Consequently, the language strategy in an international company is a way to decide which languages can be spoken and therefore, which groups and/or individuals will be involved in the international communication process and impact its outcomes. We expect that the choice of one common language versus multiple languages will influence the power structure - the symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1992) - within the international company. Because language is a way to control the international communication process, language fluency of the dominant language or of multiple languages becomes a way to enhance one's own interests and power. This reasoning is supported by a study examining communication patterns within the Japanese unit of a U.S. company with an English-only language policy (Gudykunst, 1988). In this company, American supervisors judged a young Japanese manager being fluent in English to be more intelligent and ambitious than his (older) Japanese colleagues. According to Gudykunst (1988), the English-only language policy established a communication-based hierarchy in the company which provided the English speaking Japanese person with language based roles such as an interpreter and mediator. These language roles became a source of power since they gave the person access to valuable technical and corporate information as well as the possibility to include him (and his Japanese colleagues) in the decision making process.

Whereas learning the dominant language can be a way to belong to the in-group, learning marginal languages may be a way to reform the dominant power structure. A company's language strategy that for instance stimulates expatriates to learn and use the language of the country of assignment, is likely to soften the dominant and control position of the expatriates in the foreign subsidiary. The reasons can be twofold. Such a language policy may invite less-powerful groups in the target organization to enter the organizing process. Or it may keep the less flexible members in the home organization away from power positions. The relevance of this reasoning may also be applied to Earley and Mosakowski's (2000) findings. The relationship between language and power may offer us an alternative explanation for the effectiveness of the policy to allow conversations in both Thai and English. Its reason may not at all be the result of sensitivity to cultural nuances – as advocated by the cultural perspective – but of the choice to use both Thai and English as the working language. Crucial in this linguistic option is not only the use of two languages

but also the decision making process itself of deciding who can influence the linguistic choice. In addition, the communication process will result in a hybrid text. Through the combined practice of English and Thai, the different linguistic realities are interwoven beyond the single control of one party, and Thai and English interventions alternate the position of the source and target system.

If translation is an act of border patrolling, we also expect that translators become actors in the power game. They are negotiators who will guard the interests of the different value systems. Such a role is taken when international companies want to produce texts which are feasible for all parties in the network. Even before texts are produced and communicated, translators act as informants of a particular value system. Their task is to provide the commissioner with information about the interests of the target systems and possible conflicts. The combination of all information will result in the production of a hybrid text in which the different perspectives are aligned. External translation agencies are here preferred because they have more wide-spread knowledge of the different parties' value systems than in-house translators who are likely to identify with the commissioner. Translators therefore act as 'antennas on the market' providing the commissioner with valuable information before s/he actually communicates. This strategy can be found in international companies such as Coca-Cola when testing out a new marketing campaign. Before this marketing campaign is produced and distributed in different target systems, translators test its feasibility and negotiate changes. The result is a hybrid text because the outcome of the negotiation represents a mixture of perspectives, influences and concerns. Consequently, it is difficult to trace back the initial source and even target texts because the interaction and negotiation of the multiple systems produce a new text.

The method used to validate such translation of international communication is to examine the decision making process that decides on the language uses and the translation process. The translation process is checked through examining which target systems were involved in the decision making process and who of them was able to influence the decision. Rather than to focus back on the source system (as in back-translation), attention is given to the consultation of all relevant partners in the network. Further, the validation is interested in how the power structure in an international company may have changed in order to balance the different interests of certain parties.

To conclude, the language strategy following the political perspective focuses on the decision making process that initiates, produces and transforms the translation process and

on the complex negotiating and influencing among the different stakeholders involved in the translation. Language and translation decide who is included and excluded in the organizational communication and translators act as negotiators between the different value systems and discourses that different actors bring along. The expected outcomes of such international communication process are hybrid texts whose quality will be dependent upon the influence exchange among the different players.

Proposition 5: A language strategy of international companies that conceives languages as instruments of inclusion and exclusion and that initiates the communication by identifying the major stakeholders while using translators as negotiators between competing value systems will produce hybrid texts that are new combinations of value systems.

Political and Mechanical Language Strategy Compared

To clearly differentiate the political language strategy from the mechanical perspective, we compare both types of strategies and formulate propositions indicating the issues associated with each language strategy. The main critique of the political perspective on a mechanical language policy refers to the ignorance of inequality. When considering the case of the common language, this mechanical strategy is likely to raise questions of linguistic inequality. For instance, Canney Davison and Ward (1999) discuss how the presence of native English speaking persons in international teams, whose common language is English, creates patterns of dominance and stereotyping. Non-native English speaking team members are inhibited to fully contribute to the team's task. This finding indicates that a common language makes communication indeed possible but that the texts produced in such instances reflect and reinforce the perspective of the dominant individual or subgroup. Therefore, uniform texts can not be considered to be neutral or value-free; they are expressions of the dominant perspective in the communication network.

Proposition 6: Uniform texts as produced by a mechanical language strategy may only incorporate the interests of the most powerful parties within the communication network.

Reversely, the main critique of the mechanical perspective on the political language strategy refers to the possible exclusion of the issuing commissioner. Given its concern for the commissioner of the translation and the original text, the mechanical perspective questions the influence of the partners in the network on the translation process. Once the translation process is initiated, the commissioner may lose its impact because the different

parties have the possibility to create a hybrid text. Through empowering other parties, the content of these texts may no longer be recognizable for the original commissioner and s/he may have silenced him/herself. Further, the negotiation among these different value systems makes it difficult to trace the degree to which each perspective influenced the hybrid text. Through the multiple interactions, the focus of the translation process may be lost as well as the original intended message. Given their experience in producing multilingual websites, headquarters of many international companies may recognize themselves in this critique. Websites in different languages of one company are not in juxtaposition but change constantly due to the interactivity with local parties and internet users. It is not possible to control this production in a centralized way. Consequently, headquarters may not recognize themselves in the hybrid representation, feeling unable to steer their own identity formation.

Proposition 7: Hybrid texts as produced by a political language strategy may lead to the exclusion of the issuing commissioner.

Political and Cultural Language Strategy Compared

Comparing the political and cultural perspective with each other, the main critique of the political perspective on a cultural language policy refers to the unawareness of the power inequality among different cultural identities. From a political perspective, it is 'naïve' to think that respecting the local sensitivities is equal to excluding global influences and dominant discourses. A culturally specific text may be presented as 'local' and 'original' but its production is always the result of a negotiation process between at least two value systems, and consequently, a translation. Behind any local text, there is always a global strategy. An example of presenting local texts which hide the translation process is the language strategy of the European Union. It is their policy to never indicate on a document whether or not the text is a translation. For instance, when a country joins the EU, 100.000 pages of 'acquis communautaire' have to be translated. These translated texts (their origin is a combination of texts from multiple European countries) are presented as 'originals' in order for the country's parliament to accept it as part of their own constitution. That the local texts also import new (European) discourses in the country is kept invisible to the local audiences. From the political perspective, culturally sensitive texts may be insensitive to the global effects of the underlying political decision making process.

Proposition 8: Culturally specific texts as produced by a cultural language strategy may be blind to the underlying decision making process of producing local texts.

Reversely, the main critique of the cultural perspective on the political language strategy refers to the political emphasis of hybrid texts through which their cultural meanings may be lost. The purpose of creating new hybrid texts may be so focused on incorporating multiple interests that it ignores the cultural specificity. Consequently, the hybrid texts lack cultural sensitivity for the target systems. An example of this critique can be found in a case, mentioned by Steyaert and Janssens (1997), concerning a merger between a Flemish and Walloon company. To counterbalance us-versus-them tensions between the Flemish and French speaking employees, a Belgian company decided to choose English as the common language instead of Flemish, French or both of them. While the choice of this third language could be considered a hybrid solution because the language of one cultural group was not chosen above the other one, it did not solve the tensions. Both parties had difficulty in accepting English as the language to express themselves and considered the choice of English a compromise that did not respect their cultural values and ways of expressing themselves. Neither the Flemish nor the French speaking employees felt respected in their cultural identity. From the cultural perspective, the hybrid text is a compromise rather than a new 'third' model.

Proposition 9: Hybrid texts as produced by a political language strategy may be compromises of political games that neglect the cultural specificity.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A RESEARCH AGENDA OF LANGUAGE STRATEGIES OF INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES

The purpose of this article was to develop language strategies that can help international companies to organize their international communication process. We started from the premise that the international communication process does not only imply the presence of multiple languages but also requires a combination of these multiple languages. To decide on ways in which multiple languages can be combined, we further argued the need for theoretical insights on languages. We turned to the domain of translation studies because of its tradition of theorizing on the use of multiple languages and the concept of translation. Following three perspectives within this discipline, we discussed three different conceptions of language and its assumptions about language and culture. These

assumptions were the basis to develop a mechanical, cultural and political language strategy. Within each language strategy, we further discussed the role of languages, the role of translators, the method of validation and the type of texts to be produced (see Table 1 for a summary). To clearly differentiate the languages strategies from each other, we formulated propositions not only about the type of international communication each language strategy is expected to produce but also about their weaknesses given the perspective of the two other strategies.

Insert Table 1 about here

To conclude this article, we would like to reflect on research on international communication. With the formulation of testable propositions, we hope to have initiated a research agenda that addresses the main question of how to combine multiple languages in international companies. As our examples illustrate, international companies are confronted with this challenge in their daily organizational communication practices. They make decisions about use of languages and translation, and consequently create their own language strategy. The long-term effects of these decisions, however, are unknown and sometimes even ignored. Nevertheless, our theoretical discussions on language strategies suggest that these effects may be profound. Through its international communication process, international companies become scripted as a particular type of multilingual organization, be it a uniform, a culturally sensitive or a hybrid text. Our theoretical discussions indicate that the presence of multiple languages requires more than handling information exchange. The presence and use of multiple languages are performative actions, shaping the international company through its cultural and political dimension. The juggling of multiple languages implies both a cultural remainder that constantly creates variation and a political negotiation that can strengthen or weaken this requisite variation. Research on international communication therefore is challenged with examining the linguistic production of international companies and its long-term effects.

Further, we suggest an interdisciplinary approach to study international communication. Collaboration among scholars from international management, organizational communication and translation studies may offer the necessary complementary insights to understand the combination of multiple languages in international companies. International

management scholars are knowledgeable in international companies' strategies, crucial to consider the strategic implications of different language strategies. They further can indicate ways in which language strategies can be integrated into the overall company's strategy. Organizational communication scholars can contribute by framing translation as organizational communication and not as a special form of international communication. Because the domains of organization communication and translation studies seem to have similar conceptions on language, due to the linguistic turn in social and literary sciences, they can relate translation to theoretical conceptions of language in organizations. The linguistic production of international companies can be approached as, for example, conversations, narratives and stories, metaphors, discourses, language games and texts. Through this approach, language strategies can be understood as a core organizational issue. Finally, translation scholars can, besides their contributions we have identified in this article, share their research experience in examining translation processes. Their insights in literary and legal translations may further help to identify the crucial components of translation processes in business contexts.

International companies are multilingual organizations making decisions about the ways in which multiple languages are being combined. With the theoretical insights from translation studies, we have pointed towards the mechanical, cultural and political linguistic production of these language decisions. We hope that future collaboration among scholars from international management, organizational communication and translation studies will lead to further enhancement of these theoretical insights. In this era of globalization, the need to select from a theoretically grounded range of language strategies is high for international companies that are confronted with the challenge of combining multiple languages.

TABLE 1

Language Strategies from a Mechanical, Cultural and Political Perspective

Language Strategy	Mechanical Perspective	Cultural Perspective	Political Perspective
Assumptions derived from translation studies	Universal language and homogeneous culture	Languages are key to the creation of cultures	Competition due to status and power relationships of languages and culture
Role of languages	One common language (lingua franca)	Set of multiple, local languages	Instrument to include or exclude
Role of translators	Transmitters of the original message	Mediators between different cultural meaning systems	Negotiators between competing value systems
Method of validation	Back translation by the commissioner(s) or translator(s)	Counter-checking with multiple samples of potential users	Deciding which partners are involved in the communication process
Expected outcome	Production of uniform texts	Production of culturally specific texts	Production of hybrid texts
Critique from a mechanical perspective	\	Culturally specific texts neglect the original text	Hybrid texts lead to the exclusion of the commissioner(s)
Critique from a cultural perspective	Uniform texts lack cultural specificity	\	Hybrid texts are compromises, neglecting the cultural specificity
Critique from a political perspective	Uniform texts only incorporate interests of most powerful parties	Culturally specific texts are blind to the underlying decision making process	\

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