Lost in translation?

European Integration and Language Diversity

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English is constantly moving forward and elucidates its role as *lingua franca* in the European Union. At the same time the Union has 20 official languages and promotes around 150 regional or minority languages under its official motto *United in diversity*; expressing the view that each member state should promote its national language and identity simultaneously as their citizens are to feel like Europeans. This can be looked upon as a contradiction in terms because diversity can juxtapose unity although in this paper we conclude the opposite by investigating the relationship between language, identity and the process of European integration. Taking as a point of departure the fact that language is a crucial part of our identity, we argue that language as such does not have to be an obstacle for the development of 'an ever closer Union' in Europe if the general discourses are made transparent on each level of political decision-making, i.e. the regional, national and supranational level. We see the Union as the individual languages' and hence identities' advocate, defending a democratic diversity in Europe at the same time as three main working languages – English, French and German – are ensuring its necessary unity under some kind of confederal or federal supranational political system.[1]

An ever closer Union

Going back to the Treaty on European Union from Maastricht 1991, Daniel Elazar (1995), William Safran (1997) and Daniel Wincott (1996) see the introduction of this treaty as the most important change in the history of the European Community/Union since it was set up in the 1950s. It strengthened the supranational element in what for Elazar already at that time was a confederation of independent nation-states 'in fact if not in name' (Elazar 1995:5). He even argued that the European Community was close to the federal idea already in the 1960s.

> Though the American conception of federalism is today almost universally accepted as the most accurate usage, the confederal conception remains a living and legitimate aspect of the federal idea in its largest political sense. Today, the latter is most prominent among certain advocates of limited European union (the common Market exemplifies a confederal form) and among many so-called world federalists" (Elazar 1968:354-355).

The most important way of strengthening the supranational, or more correctly supra-state level of the European Union in 1991, was the establishment of a European citizenship giving Europeans with national citizenship in one of the member states the right to vote or being

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candidate in local elections and for the European Parliament in other member states. Furthermore, such a trans-national universal right for European citizens was also introduced for petitions directly to the European Parliament and for the possibility to complain to the Union's Ombudsman.

With the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 the supra-state element of the European Union was further emphasised through what can be characterised as a process of positive integration. Focus was no longer only on the development of what we see as negative rights of freedom at the supra-state level, such as civil and political rights linked to the citizenship of a member state, but also on positive rights for the pursuit of things like social and economic welfare fostered by the supra-state institutions of the Union as a political system per se. This made the European Union look much more like a supra-state confederal or federal political system than it seems from the intergovernmental treaties it is based upon (Grindheim 2004).

First with the introduction of a new treaty article on fundamental human rights (F1), which was further strengthened in Nice 2000 with the agreement on a European Charter on Human Rights and in the proposed constitution (2004) where it has been made into Title II: Fundamental Rights and Citizenship of the Union, and might in the future be developed even further into a European Bill of Rights like the one to be found in the American Constitution. Secondly, with a new article to fight discrimination on the basis of sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or faith, age or sexual orientation, plus an appendix on the possibilities for positive discrimination of disabled people (Art. 6a). Thirdly, with a new article saying that the Community should aim at eliminating inequalities and promote equality between women and men (Art. 2 and 3). And fourthly, by introducing the principle of 'citizens first' and by that bringing the Union closer to the basic ideas of the Rome Treaty

> which referred to an ever closer union of the *peoples* of Europe – they have acknowledged a common element in the body politic which constitutes the Union. This provision strongly enhances the justification for the use of concepts of federalism in the analysis of the European Community/ European Union, as individuals now have citizenship rights at both the national and supranational levels (Wincott 1996:409).

But, even though the European Union has made considerable progress towards a political system united in diversity with something like a confederal or federal supra-state institutional structure, it is widely held that it suffers from an identity problem when public opinion is taken into consideration (Eriksen and Fossum 2004, Fossum 2001, 2003, Kumm 2005, Schlesinger 1997).

Language is the most frequently mentioned challenge, being an alleged obstacle towards further integration and cooperation within the Union (Archibugi 2005).
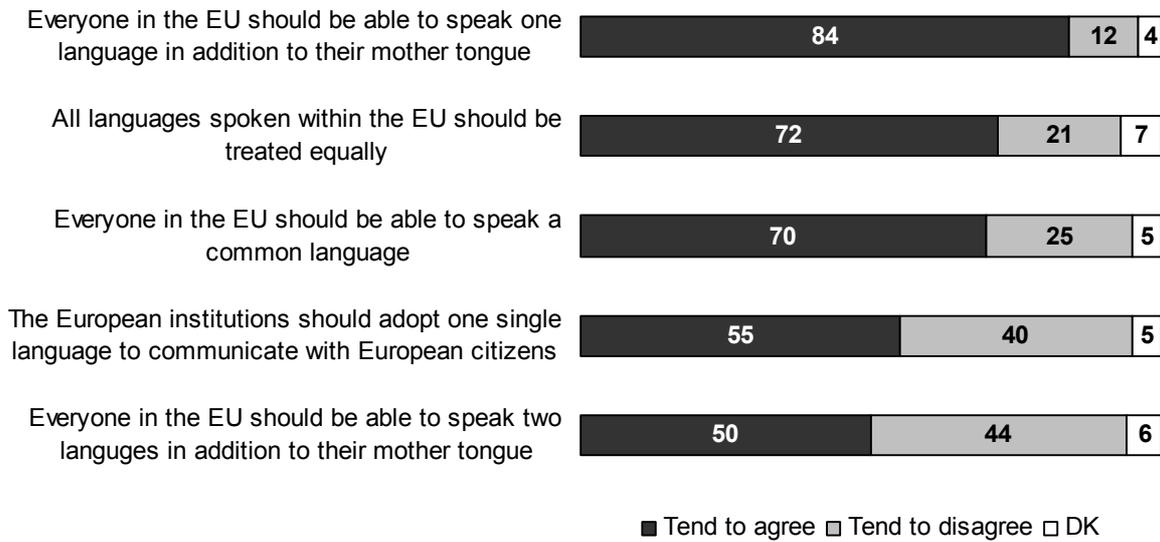
A thorough look at language and identity in relation to the process of European integration, however, has made us reconsider language as a problem. Our claim is that the divide made up of different languages is not an obstacle towards the development of 'an ever closer Union' in Europe. Because, as Christopher Lord (1998: 108) says, the kind of identity that the Union will need to achieve this, 'depend on the kind of democracy it purports to be'.

Language and identity

Language is an inevitable part of human identity. As Erik O. Eriksen (1991) and Philip Schelsinger (2005) argue, *the* most crucial part. And identity is something that is constituted in different levels. The internal relationship between the factors that make up our identity is varying and therefore difficult to define. One thing is although clear, something which is familiar to all of us, that we are identified according to how we speak even if people we are talking to are not able to see us. Linguistic diversity creates a distinction because we look upon people by the way they are talking. For instance as for dialects because they are a hallmark of difference: in the Scandinavian countries dialects are mainly connected with the region you are living in or even with the local community, in Great Britain primarily with social class, in the US they talk about different sociolects like Afro-American or Hispanic street languages in urban areas, showing that 'language' is a dynamic process based on constantly changing distinctions. In Belgium, for example, two different linguistic communities have developed their own forms of national identity (Keating 2001: vii), whereas in Switzerland four linguistic communities (and two religions) have managed to create one nation with multiple identities (Linder 1994).

Our question is if a shared collective identity presupposes *a* shared language, as Daniele Archibugi (2005) and Jacques Thomassen and Hermann Schmitt (2004) argue pertaining to the European Union. Or can translation build bridges between split languages? English is the *lingua franca* of Europe and the Western World. But will it ever be formally adopted as the only language within the European Union? Or do national languages play too strong a role concerning identity in this case? (Bartolini 2005: 213, Schlesinger 2005). A Eurobarometer survey shown in figure 1 make us ask the questions.
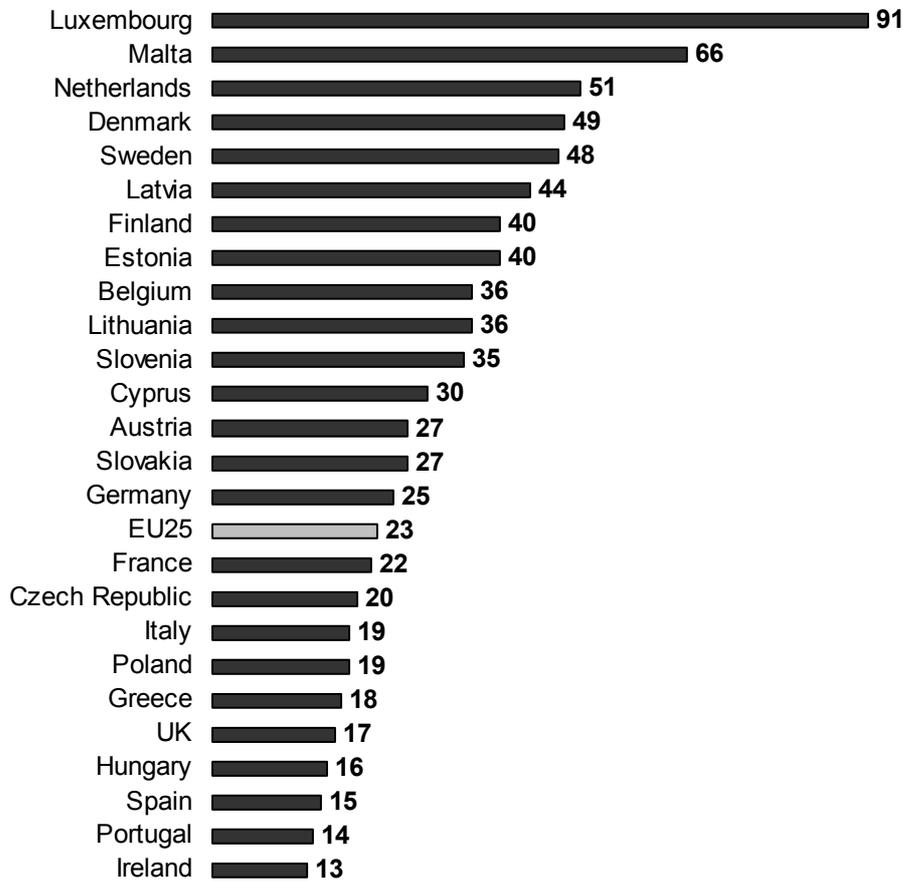
Figure 1 Europeans and their languages (percent)

Statement	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	DK
Everyone in the EU should be able to speak one language in addition to their mother tongue	84	12	4
All languages spoken within the EU should be treated equally	72	21	7
Everyone in the EU should be able to speak a common language	70	25	5
The European institutions should adopt one single language to communicate with European citizens	55	40	5
Everyone in the EU should be able to speak two languges in addition to their mother tongue	50	44	6

■ Tend to agree ☐ Tend to disagree ☐ DK

Source: Special Eurobarometer 243 (2006).

Although 70 percent of Europeans in this survey tend to agree with the statement that everybody in the Union should be able to speak a common language, only 55 percent agree that the European institutions should use only one language when communicating with its citizens. This speaks in favor of multiculturalism and thereby also multilingualism. People want to be able to continue using their own language but at the same time they recognise the need for speaking a more globalised language as well. As can be seen from figure 2 (next page) quite a few EU citizens also report to have read a book, newspaper or magazine over the last 12 months, with great variations between northern and southern Europe and between small and big countries.

**Figure 2 Read a book, newspaper or magazine
in a language other than your mother tongue
in the last 12 months**

Country	Value
Luxembourg	91
Malta	66
Netherlands	51
Denmark	49
Sweden	48
Latvia	44
Finland	40
Estonia	40
Belgium	36
Lithuania	36
Slovenia	35
Cyprus	30
Austria	27
Slovakia	27
Germany	25
EU25	23
France	22
Czech Republic	20
Italy	19
Poland	19
Greece	18
UK	17
Hungary	16
Spain	15
Portugal	14
Ireland	13

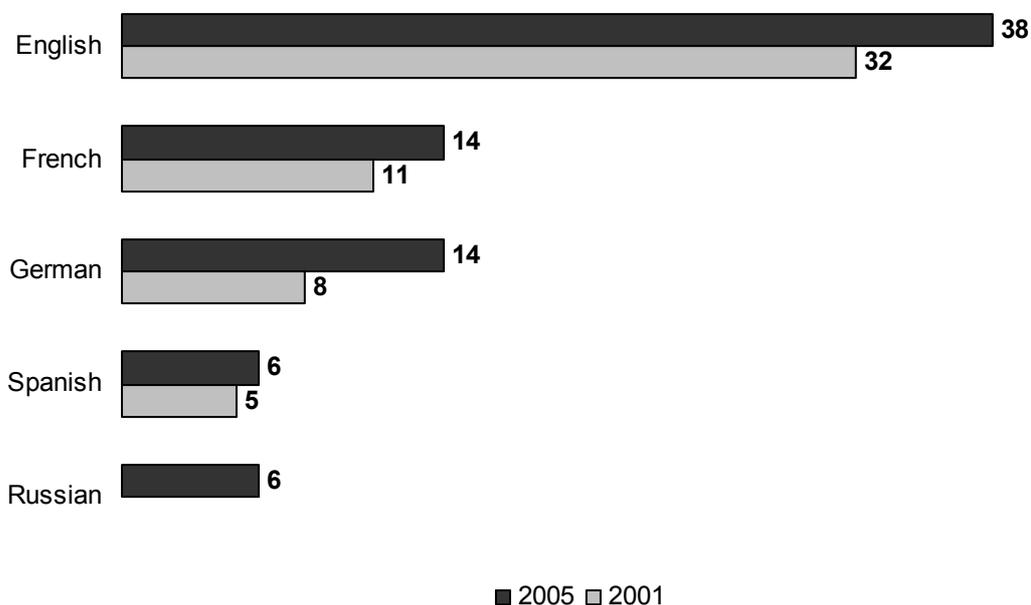Source: Special Eurobarometer 251 (2006).

We know that multicultural societies tend to decrease national identities, which can be said to be in favor of the possibility to develop a common European identity (Christopher Lord, p.c.) and supporting our argument about language not being an obstacle to this.

Stein Rokkan expresses a similar view about languages and identities, here in the words of Peter Flora (1999: 171): 'While language is only one of several expressions of identity, it is the most pervasive and obvious stigma of distinctiveness'. For Rokkan language played a major role in the nation-building processes of European states after the French Revolution in 1789, but as he argued back in the 1970s

> The building of a national territorial community in fact forced the great majority of subjects into some level of bilinguality: one language for close interaction within the immediate community, and at least one other for communication over longer distances. The first is the language of the home and local friendship circle, the other of markets, networks of external contacts, and agencies of control and administration (ibid.)

If we look metaphorically upon the European Union as a community, this description fits to the point: National languages are mainly used within the borders of the nation-state, while English, French and German are the main working languages at the intergovernmental and supra-state level of the Union. Most people do also report to have one of the three languages as their second or third language, depending upon where they come from: North-West of Europe/New Central and Eastern European member states (English), Continental Europe (German) and Southern Europe (French). Especially common is English but after the enlargement of the European Union 1 May 2004 we see that the balance between French and German is changing and that Russian is becoming a language of transnational communication in the Union, cf. figure 3.

Figure 3 What languages Europeans speak (percent)

Source: Special Eurobarometer 243 (2006), based upon EB 55.1 for 2001 and EB 64.3 for 2005.

The current view upon the relationship between language and identity among most researchers concerning identity-development in the EU is like Mattias Kumm (2005: 59-60) has pointed out:

'The absence of a well-developed public sphere in Europe and a common language in particular presents a considerable obstacle for such an [robust European] identity to develop.' If so, what does the term national identity contain?

Anthony Smith (1991), proposes five characteristics of national identity

- a historical territory or homeland
- common myths and historical memories
- common mass public culture
- common legal rights and duties for all members
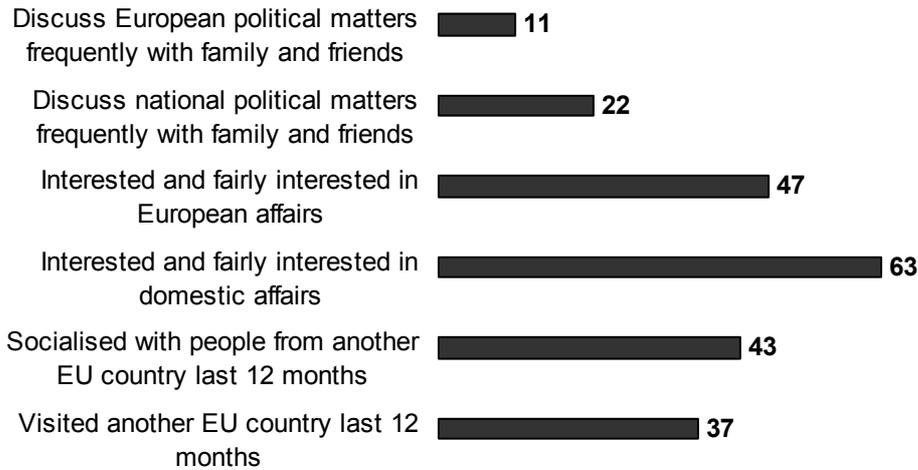- a common economy with territorial mobility for members

One factor is missing here, in fact the main asset in Rokkan's theory: a common language that the majority of the population speaks. It could be a part of 'common mass public culture' but it is inevitable an essential part of our identity that should be specified. We define national identity as something which presupposes a nation and a language,[2] and therefore we can not speak of national identities before nations and states have developed.[3]

Concerning the EU, the first attempt at establishing some kind of a formal common European identity came at the European Council meeting at Fontainebleau in June 1984 (Burgess 2000: 160). Since then, much has happened and many attempts have been made on shaping a more coherent identity. Now it is clear that the European Union is affecting the identities of its member states (Bulmer and Lequesne 2005: 4). The feeling of belonging to a united community creates either a weakened national identity or a stronger feeling of being European, as figure 4 (next page) might be an indication of.

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[2] As an implication of the need for cleavages: 'Collective identity – a sense of "we" against "them" – is both an important consequence of political mobilization processes and a precondition for the ability to transform "objective" conflicts to subjectively perceived political cleavages' (Aardal and Waldahl 2004: 253-254).

[3] We do not attempt to draw a firm distinction between the concepts of *nation* and *state*. Following Sweeney (2005), we recognise that state differs from nation insofar as the former invokes territoriality and a government.

Figure 4 How European are Europeans? (percent)

Category	Percent
Discuss European political matters frequently with family and friends	11
Discuss national political matters frequently with family and friends	22
Interested and fairly interested in European affairs	47
Interested and fairly interested in domestic affairs	63
Socialised with people from another EU country last 12 months	43
Visited another EU country last 12 months	37

Source: Special Eurobarometer 251 (2006).

This also affects the relationship between democratisation and identity because either a weakened or strengthened identity is assumed to have democratic consequences. Lord (2003) states that democratisation and identity stand in a relationship where the former presupposes an understanding of the latter. We cannot talk about the European Union being democratic or not without realising that we need to know how identity so to speak 'works' (see also Lord 2004). In our framework, where identity is intertwined with language, we see that it is crucial both for the European Union and the member states to retain their diversity. Weakened national identities entail that the EU should increase their strength by supporting the national and minority languages. This is as all know also status quo. It therefore seems that the Union is balancing the loss of national identity by way of supporting the outmost important element of one's identity: the languages. The question now becomes: Is our view of language and identity empirically supported? We will address this below, but first some notes about language and nation-states.

Elisabeth Bakke (1995) argues against the view that a common (written) language is a prerequisite for people to feel like a nation, because nations exists that do not share languages with each other. We disagree on the grounds that for the people of these nations language is a specific part of their identity but that does not automatically imply that they have a common identity. People from the United States and England speaks English (with minor dialectal differences), but have quite different identities where the language plays an important part of making them Americans and English.

We follow Eriksen (1991) who emphasises that a state is not in need of *one* national language in order to be a state. Furthermore, he says that an identity is only meaningful when you are able to contrast it with other identities, as Bernt Aardal and Ragnar Waldahl (2004) also argue. Within the European Union, with its 20 official languages, this is very much the case. Languages are one important part of it, historical circumstances another. Hence, The European Charter of Fundamental Rights has also respect for linguistic and cultural diversity enshrined in it (European Commission 2004: 8). Furthermore, the Union's officials and politicians are naturally aware of the relationship between identity and language, and the effort put upon translation is a way of showing this, as well as its cultural responsibility.

We see that the European Union balances the need for a European identity and a national identity by how the languages of the Union are supported. If the Union had chosen otherwise, the consequences could have been fatal. It is often said that the belongingness to a linguistic community is only made pertinent when the community is threatened by extinction (Eriksen 1991). This is only assumptions since the history turned out otherwise. Recent research seems to speak in favor of our position. Hans Jörg Trenz (2005) shows that there are changes in how people conceive of the European Union in regions where the Union's initiatives have provided a positive development for their language. If the Union is able to keep up this work, it could very well be that the European identity slightly changes in a more positive way throughout the Union.

The way they talk

Stein Rokkan argued decades ago that 'The more diversified a community, the more the diacritical marks may prove important in defending separate identities without interfering with specific exchanges in daily life' (cited in Flora 1999: 208). Switzerland is the best example: The nation-state does not have a supra-national language but consists of four different languages: German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romance. Thereby the inhabitants of Switzerland do not have such a strong feeling of belongingness and it is necessary to strengthen this feeling, which has been done in various ways (Corbellari 2005).

The example of Switzerland may anyhow be considered an argument against the hypotheses that language is the hallmark of identity, insofar as it after all constitutes a nation. Other nations where this applies are e.g. Belgium (national level), Spain (regional level) and Italy (local level). As said above, a state is not in need of just one language in order to be a state. Despite multiple languages they do indeed function as a coherent unity with a rather strange feeling of identity. The parallel to the European Union is striking: In both cases we have a large community with a multitude of languages spoken and allowed. Since these countries after all are

nation-states, this entails that the European project is not doomed to fail on the grounds of multilingualism.

Language and identity can also be interconnected in another way. In pursuing the goal of developing a common European identity it is important to consider to what extent people of Europe have a mutual understanding of the 'European language', a metaphor describing the language which exists in Brussels and among executives in the member states. Just as we can speak of a 'football language', a 'linguistic language' and a 'political science language', we can speak of this 'European language' or European jargon. Every organisation, institution or academic field has its own jargon, a vocabulary normally understandable just for those within this field, and its own discourse strategies and 'way of talking'.

One problem with the European Union is that most people probably do not understand the European jargon and therefore easily speak about a lack of information and hence a democratic deficit within the Union. But how much do they understand of what politicians at the regional and nation-state levels in Europe talk about when they are together? The jargon of politicians in general can be hard to get a grip of, even when watching debates on television or reading disputes in newspapers or at the Internet. Moreover, is it really necessary for everyone to understand the language of politicians when the politicians speak among themselves?

All member states of the EU have a multilevel system of government with representative democratic institutions at local, regional and national level, and in fact we only have to understand the jargon or language of politicians and their parties when deciding for elections at the different levels in order to evaluate if they are doing the job they said they would do at the next election. This is not to say that politicians necessarily are or should be creating a distance towards their electorates, but that politics as any other sector of society even at the national, regional and local level constitutes its own 'language' which simply can not be 'open' to all if its going to function for the best of all.

Accounts of lack of integration in the European Union and its relation to language and identity have taken languages as the main problem per se. Data show some opposing tendencies. By now, we know that 'there is strong evidence that many of those who live in the European Union already have a multi-tired sense of belonging' (Lord 1998: 111). Building a European identity has to start from scratch as there is no kind of primordial identity to build up on, as Lord (1998: 114) argues. Suggestions go in the direction of creating a European identity the same way as European nation-states once developed theirs (Eriksen and Fossum 2004, Fossum 2001, 2003, Holsen 1998), and that the political and social citizenship is vital in order to create this kind of identity (Holsen 1998).

The main problem regarding this is that the European Union is not a post-national unity of the kind that the above theories require. It seems quite clear that the term 'post-national' is inappropriate. Consequently, a European identity cannot be build like the national ones due to historical circumstances (Rokkan 1983, 1999) and because the Union does not have a primordial identity to build upon. The European Union is something new, which merits new invented tools, and hence, our claim that language is not a problem for the Union would make better sense if it was possible to transform the general discourses from one country and one language to another country and another language. Especially with respect to the Union itself and the communication with its member states. We therefore turn to a discussion about translation, which in fact supports our claim that language as such does not have to be an obstacle for the development of 'an ever closer Union' in Europe.
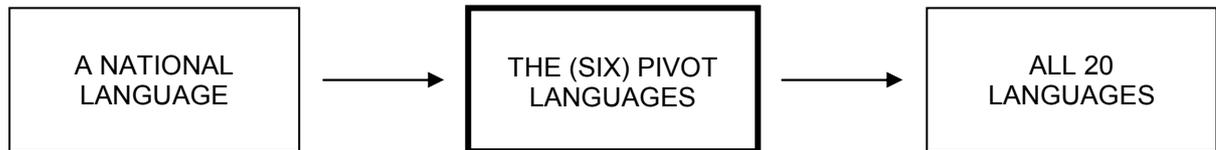
Lost in translation?

The European Union is using a lot of time and money translating papers and in meetings. One sentence makes one sentence is the principle behind this, which is a way of working that is different from how translations are made in literature or in newspaper-articles where translations are based on the larger meaning and context as a basis. Translating one to one can be quite difficult if the meaning is to remain identical. Only future studies can tell us if the national languages in the European Union are changing because of this strategy, meaning that texts will be formulated in a way that makes them easier translatable. As an example is the EU already using machine translations extensively, but the texts are always post-edited by humans.

At present, much work is therefore put upon creating a well-written original text. The Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) has an editing service whose task it is to improve the language of original texts before translation (DGT 2005: 6). Draft legislations and draft policy papers in the European Commission are produced in one or more of the three working languages of the Union, whereas the final texts are only translated into all the Union's languages at the end stage (European Commission 2004: 19). In the European Parliament, the situation is different, insofar as they have developed a system of six 'pivot' languages, which are English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish (European Commission 2004: 19).

Inasmuch as the Parliament has to translate many documents into all languages rapidly, it would have required an enormous amount of translators if for example a Spanish document was to be translated into all the other 19 languages. Instead, it is translated into the pivot languages and then translated further. The same procedure is used when e.g. the European Parliament has a

joint discussion and interpreters turn to one of the 'pivot' languages. Thus, we have a three-step process in translating which can be illustrated like in figure 5.

Figure 5: Translation process in European Parliament and of oral interpreters

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┌──────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
│ A NATIONAL   │  ───▶  │ THE (SIX) PIVOT │ ───▶ │   ALL 20     │
│ LANGUAGE     │        │ LANGUAGES    │        │  LANGUAGES   │
└──────────────┘        └──────────────┘        └──────────────┘
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This way of working is of course economically reasonable and in many ways practical, but necessarily a linguistic shortcut, using the term of the European Commission (2004: 20), which requires major activity of quality control. Another way of reducing the costs is to use private agencies to translate 'less essential documents' (European Commission 2004: 20).

When a text goes through two steps of translation it is highly probable that the meaning will change perhaps even twice. The ambiguity invoked in every language becomes especially marked when trying to translate different constructions. This is obvious when translating between languages with different degrees of grammatical markings, like German and Swedish. The German case marking has to be translated with use of other grammatical functions and this could make the texts less clearly. Despite these differences, though, it is possible to make good translations between most languages (Koller 2004), and the hypothesis that all languages are identical on a certain level of abstraction (Chomsky 1986), makes this even more plausible. In principle it should be able to express the same things in different languages (Koller 2004: 181, 183). We therefore assume that this is the situation, and ignore some of the difficulties this assumption creates.

The EU has 1 650 full time translators and each of them have specialised in translating documents about particular areas of the Commission's work (DGT: 4).[4] Problem arises when certain concepts are to be translated or expressed. Fossum (2003: 332) shows an example of how different lexical entities have different meaning in different languages. When the European Charter of Fundamental Rights was drafted there was a dispute about whether there should be any reference to religion as a European value. The French version was adapted, and it contains 'spirituelle' instead of 'religieuse', whereas the German and Dutch versions were not, and contain

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[4] See DGT (2005) for a full overview of the different areas.

'geistig-religios'. Hence, we have two versions of the Charter where the words have different connotations. According to Fossum (2003), this reveals that the Charter is not written in the spirit of deep diversity, as could be argued, and that each language has different contexts that the versions are translated into. It is more naturally to write 'geistig-religios' in German and Holland than in France.

Although semantics is a mental phenomenon, this does not mean that *every* word has an equal meaning in every language. In an ideal situation, the latter would have been the case. Instead, *some* words are colored by e.g. political parties and also because of historical developments within a country. One of the problems concerning translation concerns just this. Not only is a concept like for example 'market economy' presupposed differently within the countries, the translation creates further difficulties especially when translating the context of the word. However, this problem is small and rarely becomes pertinent. It is necessary to focus on the main factors, and as such are these words not important for the overall development of the Union.

A shared collective identity does not presuppose a *lingua franca* but this identity can not be of the same character as the nation- or regionally based identities. The reason for the former is translation and the ability to transfer the meaning of the main 'European ideas'. This is not saying that this ability creates a public engagement and thereby gets the people of Europe interested in the concepts of the Union. People can have more than one identity and the linguistic diversity is not an obstacle for creating this. It may be possible to transform the context of meaning into the Union as a whole, so that issues are presented in such a way that they create a common understanding which is identifiable for the common European.[5]

We can never secure against the abuse of ambiguity, after all ambiguity is a result of the fact that humans understand things differently. Even if the European Union adopted *one* language as its main language, this would not stop politicians and other opinion makers of interpreting their own meaning of different concepts. A well known example is the way different parties uses various words when describing their opponents and the way 'liberalism' is interpreted at the right and at the left in many party systems.
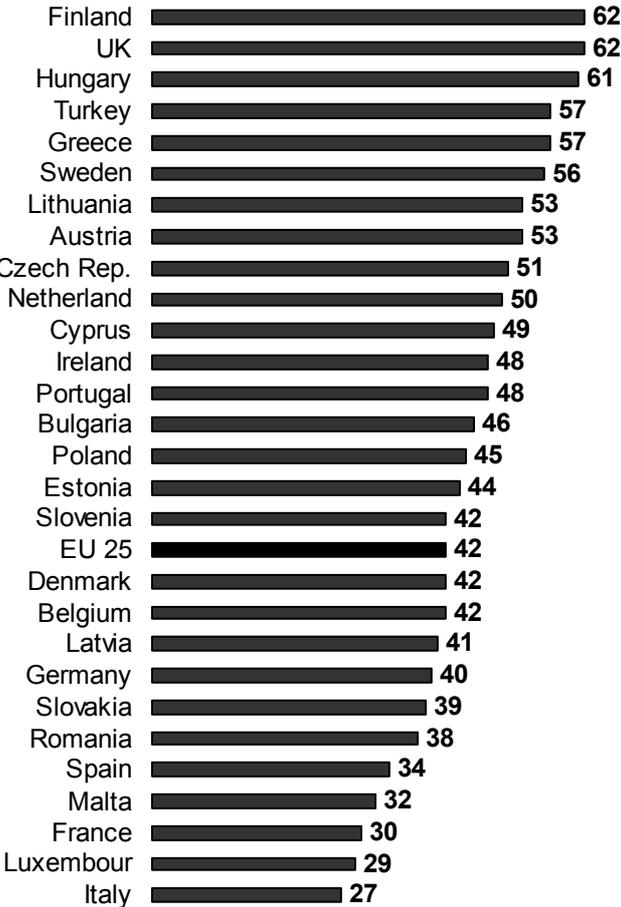
It is also a fact that most Europeans do not read documents from the Union at all and therefore they probably do not have much effect on the public. The difficulties emerging in communicating a joint understanding of the work done by the EU's own institutions is not that

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[5] Concerning the means of translation it would be even simpler if the translators were able to translate the special concepts using words which would mean approximately the same in different countries. This makes the process much harder and not at least more dependent on the individuals that perform the translations. Remember also that each translator is specialised in one area and thereby having good knowledge about the area in question.

important concerning just language. There are more severe challenges, for instance whether the EU has chosen the best way of organising its democratic institutions when it comes to engage the electorates etc.

What then about the identity we have mentioned several times without specifying? This identity can not likely be of any post-national sort, like Fossum (2001) argues in favor of, since this would presuppose that the institution had a clear amount of nation-like-characteristics (cf. above). It has not. As shown in figure 6, where European citizens at the time of the last enlargement were asked to rank their feeling of being European in relation to their national identity, national identities are far stronger than a common European identity all across today's Union.

Figure 6 National identity first (percentage)

Country	Percentage
Finland	62
UK	62
Hungary	61
Turkey	57
Greece	57
Sweden	56
Lithuania	53
Austria	53
Czech Rep.	51
Netherland	50
Cyprus	49
Ireland	48
Portugal	48
Bulgaria	46
Poland	45
Estonia	44
Slovenia	42
EU 25	42
Denmark	42
Belgium	42
Latvia	41
Germany	40
Slovakia	39
Romania	38
Spain	34
Malta	32
France	30
Luxembour	29
Italy	27

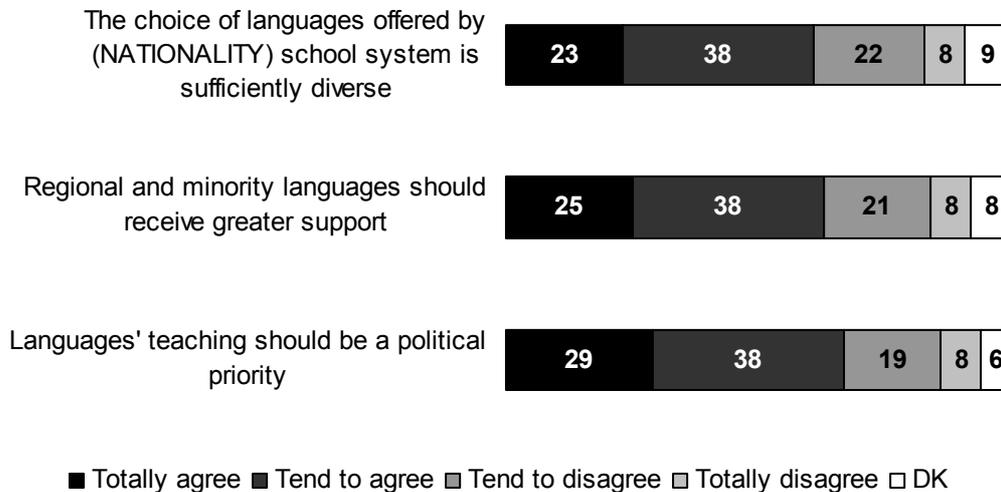Source: Eurobarometer 61, May 2004.

This is as expected due to languages and other factors. The historical circumstances of each nation-state is important (like Rokkan emphasised), and it seems like the European identity largely is constructed without the great impact of languages. Diversity among the languages makes it possible to construct an identity in the first place, but it is not among the core ingredients in the identity. What these core ingredients are is opaque at present, but we think they have to do with geographical and governmental issues. Europe is distinct from the other parts of the world, and the way most people conceive of the Union is through governmental issues that interact in they daily life. The question we are left with then is what kind of consequences this have for the way European integration is being described and explained?

Defending democratic diversity

We have argued that a variety of languages is not an obstacle towards a common European identity because translation can build bridges and make it possible to create some sort of a common European discourse without a single language. The last point we want to discuss, is the effort of the Union on saving national languages. This has made the European Union a defender of democratic diversity, because it is always an advantage to use one's own language (Kymlicka 2001). However, there is a huge difference between saying that this is an advantage and that the Union should adopt one common language. The former makes it possible to retain linguistic diversity and multiple identities whereas the latter does not. Importantly, since the EU builds on this point, we will focus on three levels where the Union functions as a defender of democratic diversity: the regional, nation-state and the European institutions themselves.

Regional and minority languages have for long received much support from the European Union. The engagement has created results, as we now see minority languages gaining strength and increase in use (see the results reported in Trenz 2005). In fact, as can be seen from figure 7, 63 percent of EU citizens say that they totally or tend to agree that regional and minority languages should receive greater support in the Union (European Commission 2006: 60).

Figure 7 European integration and language diversity (percent)

	Totally agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Totally disagree	DK
The choice of languages offered by (NATIONALITY) school system is sufficiently diverse	23	38	22	8	9
Regional and minority languages should receive greater support	25	38	21	8	8
Languages' teaching should be a political priority	29	38	19	8	6

■ Totally agree ■ Tend to agree ■ Tend to disagree □ Totally disagree □ DK

Source: Special Eurobarometer 243 (2006).

The effort on this issue is important on the grounds that it makes it possible for people having a minority language as their native language to easier participate in the current debates. Not at least is it valuable to feel recognised because one's own language is just as much valued as other's. Hence it is an important identity factor and a part of the democratisation. If the Union can contribute to strengthen regional and local identities, it makes it easier to develop a variety of a European one. If people are aware of the contribution made by the Union in such cases, they might also change their attitudes towards the Union and thereby feel more like belonging to a greater society, that is, to feel more European.

On the nation-state level the European Union is also a guarantor of democratic diversity. Since the Union has not adopted one language of communication, it has made it possible for the member states to retain their national languages and thereby for people to keep on using their mother tongue. If the EU translated all treaties and directives into one of its three main languages, and these had to be incorporated into each nation-state's legislation in their original language, this would quickly have contributed to transform the governments' use of language and thereby also ordinary people's language (Lohndal 2006). Inasmuch as this has not happened, the member states have been able to continue using their own languages in legislation and within the government.

As an example, consider the Draft Treaty establishing the Constitution for Europe, which was translated into all official languages. The immense debate this Treaty created had not been possible if not this translation had happened. The use of vernaculars is therefore very important in order to maintain a good and healthy democracy, says Will Kymlicka (2001): If the parliaments had to use another language whenever debating legislative matters, this would damage the process of decision making. Because people very rarely have the same competence in a foreign language as in their native language, they are not able to communicate on the same high level and with the same nuances. Therefore, democracy and the vernacular are in tight connection:

> Democratic politics is politics in the vernacular. The average citizen feels at ease only when he discusses political questions in his own language. As a general rule, only elites are fluent in more than one language and have the chance to maintain and develop their linguistic skills continuously and feel at ease discussing political questions in different languages in a multilingual atmosphere (Kymlicka 2001: 214).

This does not entail that the European Union itself is undemocratic. Quite the opposite proves true (Lord 2004). As we have seen, many means are used in order to create diversity in the European institutions by way of translation, for instance for the members of the European Parliament who can use their own languages and still make themselves perfectly understood in the assembly.

The EU seems to accumulate the efforts put on the regional and national levels and to institutionalise the dualism between the particular and the universal. The Union deals with agreed upon opinions and creates a common foundation for its member states while the particulars are handled in each member state and by regional institutions in member states with a federal character. The linguistic diversity makes democracy in the European Union possible because language and identity are intertwined in a special way, where the latter mainly depends on the former. *United in diversity* seems to be particularly well formulated, as the diversity in fact creates the foundation for the unity to exist. As long as history and the trajectories of identity formation (Rokkan 1975, 1983, 1999) can not be ignored, further developments can not start from scratch, but from the already established formations. The European Union has recognized this important fact and thereby made it possible for itself to expand further according to its vision of 'an ever closer Union' in Europe.

Conclusion

Language has a huge impact on identity formation and therefore must be considered vital when looking at the development of the European Union. The European identity is mainly constructed without the impact of a common language and is thereby weaker than any of the member-state or regional identities which are highly connected with language. But a *lingua franca* is not necessary to create a common European identity insofar as translations are able to transfer the discourses of the Union among its member states. Ambiguity is anyhow present, which would not have created any 'thicker' identity formation within a *lingua franca* because such a trajectory could be even more filled with large obstacles. The motto *United in diversity* illustrates that the language diversity creates the foundation for the EU to grow further towards an 'ever closer Union' and defending democratic diversity in Europe.

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