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# Is multilingualism seen as added-value in bibliodiversity?

A literature review focussed on business and research contexts

Ana Balula and Delfim Leão

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## Introduction

- 1 Nowadays, the role of language in research practice tends to be secondary, since there seems to be a tacit assumption that English is widely accepted as language of communication. Besides, it tends to be promoted in (inter)national and European research and innovation policies – mainly written in English and with no or scarce reference to language use or multilingualism (e.g. Horizon 2020 EU Framework Research and Innovation Programme and the European Research Area, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Report on the need to integrate Social Sciences and Humanities with Science and Engineering in Horizon 2020, Digital Single Market Policy – Citizen Science). The same happens in business context, in which, given the increasing need for internationalisation, as well as labour pooling and poaching, the use of English as *lingua franca* seems to be inevitable. In fact, in both contexts, there is a need for a common international means of communication and of general information disclosure, but the use of mother tongue tends to be more effective for in-depth understanding, and knowledge co-creation and sharing.
- 2 In this setting, the two-way knowledge-transfer between research and business areas should lay on the concept of ‘bibliodiversity’, defined by the International Alliance of Independent Publishers (2018) as “cultural diversity applied to the world of books”; thereof, underlining the need to encompass a diversity of languages, scientific areas, publication formats, and actors. Thus, there are firm grounds to state that bibliodiversity, through multilingual publishing, can “protect both national languages and English and to sustain the diversity of academic rhetorical traditions” (Kuteeva and Mauranen 2014, 3), by reaching specialists and wider audiences in a complementary way. Thereof, it is of the utmost relevance to understand how bibliodiversity, in its manifold formats and

multilingual forms, is promoted through practices and high-level programmatic involvement.

- 3 Given the growing need to strengthen the bonds between the business tissue and research, the purpose of this study is synthetizing evidence in the literature as to i) the dynamics of communication and knowledge-sharing within linguistically diverse business and research networks and ii) the role of multilingualism within bibliodiversity in scholarly communication, in order to boost business development.

## Methodology

- 4 This is a study of exploratory nature and the method used is in the scope of an integrative literature review, which allows for summing up past research to identify global research trends based on *in vivo* content analysis of the research *corpus* (Cooper, 1984). As Torracco (2005) explains, the integrative literature review method can be assumed as a means to produce knowledge about a theme, as well as to provide direction for research and practice, once “new knowledge about previous research is created through critical analysis; synthesis builds on this to create new perspectives on the topic as a whole” (Torraco 2005, 363). Russell (2005) also points out that the use of this method may enable a more comprehensive understanding of themes/ topics, i.e. the clarification of how these are influenced by and/or influence border areas, as well as research gaps and future needs.
- 5 This method subdivides into several stages, namely: problem formulation, data collection, data evaluation and selection, data analysis, interpretation and presentation of results (Russel 2005). Consequently, in a first moment, the problem underlying this work was clearly defined, which focusses on the dynamics around mono- and multilingualism in communication and knowledge-sharing in business and research networks, as well as on evidence as to the role of multilingualism within bibliodiversity in scholarly communication.
- 6 The selected database was Google Scholar and the search terms used were: bibliodiversity, publishing, research, multilingualism, language diversity, business, knowledge-sharing – combined with the Boolean operators OR and AND. In terms of criteria, the selected works were scholarly peer-reviewed papers published in open access, between 2018 and 2019, and written in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese or Spanish (the languages known by the authors).
- 7 The search was carried out on 14 January 2019 and the results were reviewed to eliminate duplication. This selection yielded 119 works; nevertheless, a preliminary content analysis based on the relevance to meet this research’s goals resulted in the selection of 12 documents. The retrieved documents were analysed resorting to qualitative content analysis of the abstracts, introduction and conclusion sections. Subsequently, since the *corpus* codification structure emerged from the analysis, it translated into the final category framework.

## The call for bibliodiversity: *lingua franca* vs *lingua unica*

- 8 An important aspect frequently mentioned in the literature is the fact that employers tend to seek workers who can transition easily between several languages, cultures and

skills (Payan, Svensson, Høgevoid, and Sedbrook 2015). This translates into the individual and organisational incorporation of several conceptual frameworks, namely as to “content (subject matter), communication (language), cognition (learning and thinking) and culture (social awareness of self and ‘otherness’)” (Coyle 2007, 550). This integrated perspective implies that language plays a pivotal role in different levels of competence and practice, including understanding and interpreting information, interacting both orally and in writing and collaborating. Based on these premises, the analysis of the gathered data aimed at putting into perspective the dynamics as to language use within the business context and between business and research networks – being the latter seen as crucial for boosting competitiveness of the former (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Categorisation of the corpus regarding the dynamics of communication and knowledge-sharing within business and research networks**

| Categories   | Indicators   | Studies   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>1. Global Englishisation</b>                    | 1.1. language in information- and knowledge-sharing in business context  | Ahmad (2018), Angouri and Piekkari (2018), Detzen and Loehlein (2018), Kalb and Maas (2018), Negrea (2018), Silversten (2018) |
|  | 1.2. language in information- and knowledge-sharing in research networks | Heinemann (2018), Levitt and Crul (2018), Mounier (2018)  |
| <b>2. Competitive advantage of multilingualism</b> | 2.1. balanced multilingualism in internationalisation                    | Angouri and Piekkari (2018), Detzen and Loehlein (2018), Kalb and Maas (2018), Silversten (2018)                              |

- 9 Silversten (2018, 1) points out that, in business context, “a shared international language seems necessary to achieve the aims of exchanging knowledge in a single 'market' and of recognizing and supporting excellence across countries”. Looking back in time, several languages that were used as international communication languages are being extensively replaced by global Englishisation, i.e. English tends to be used as *lingua franca* (Silversten 2018). Nevertheless, a recent case-based study developed by Detzen and Loehlein (2018, 2031) put forth evidence that “the client languages, rather than English as the corporate language, [...] mediate, define, and structure intra- and inter-organizational relationships”, i.e. the businesses’ multilingual absorptive capacity is seen as a pivotal commodity that should be activated according to the businesses’ needs.
- 10 Ahmad (2018) analyses the influence of language on knowledge-sharing in multilingual organisations and underlines that globalisation and immigration are resulting in a substantial growth of linguistically diverse workforces – which appears to be impacting organisations at manifold levels. On the one hand, the employees’ multilingual proficiency seems to positively correlate with their performance, once the possibility to access more information is seen as an empowerment factor, resulting in the creation of (in)formal hierarchies within the workforce (Angouri and Piekkari 2018), i.e. “a channel of influence through which intraorganisational power is exerted” (Detzen and Loehlein, 2018, 2048). On the other hand, at a deeper level, language also “influences knowledge-

sharing interactions between employees” (Ahmad 2018, 4) within the organisations, as well as in business-to-business (B2B) and research-business interaction (Ahmad 2018; Angouri and Piekkari 2018).

- 11 In terms of information availability, which underpins the co-construction of knowledge, the use of English as *lingua franca* promotes the dissemination of research outputs and breakthroughs. Nonetheless, authors like Levitt and Crul (2018) state that: i) research in other languages tends to be underestimated and ii) not writing in one’s native language may be very demanding and time consuming by implying the transference between different conceptual mind-sets. In fact, high impact journals tend not to promote inclusion in terms of research development and information access because of their language restrictions; additionally, many scholars are strongly advised by their higher education institutions to publish in these journals to promote the institution’s reputation. Consequently, in the words of Levitt and Crul (2018, 45), “in such a context, publishing in non-hegemonic journals has almost become an activist statement”.
- 12 Mounier (2018) also underlines that, in European scholarly publications – and in particular in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) – multilingualism still stands out as a paramount fragmentation factor, sometimes inhibiting information- and knowledge-sharing. To mitigate this frailty, the author proposes the indexation of “all types of content (primary sources, publications, grey literature) in different languages and across different countries” – a trait that could be added in future development of existing platforms, such as the *Isidore discovery platform* (Mounier 2018, 304). Furthermore, as sustained by Heinemann (2018), the value of research structures and networks is dramatically grounded on their relevance for information- and experience-sharing to support the co-creation of knowledge. Thereof, “a sustainable research infrastructure needs to constantly reevaluate the status quo” (Heinemann 2018, 12) – especially in terms of effective relevance for different target groups – which poses as challenging for every research area and tremendously defying for the particular case of SSH.
- 13 Regarding internationalisation, Kalb and Maas (2018) state that English plays a key role in international business, but that its use within multilingual environments should be further researched. Angouri and Piekkari (2018, 22) even argue that “extensive understanding of the multinational organisation in IB [international business] scholarship can fruitfully advance current research on the multilingual workplace in the socio/linguistic field”. Studies as the ones developed by Detzen and Loehlein (2018) and Kalb and Maas (2018) add that linguistic diversity can actually boost competitive advantage, especially in business structures that disregard issues of translation and value the workforce multilingual competence. Nonetheless, when it comes to research, the value of publications tends to be defined by structures that recognise the monolingual hegemony of English as the scientific language, not reflecting the growing multilingual state of the contexts (Siversten 2018). In particular when it comes to SSH, multilingualism is mostly seen as a problem in scholarly publishing evaluation, also because of its limited coverage in reputable (essentially monolingual) databases.
- 14 In this scenario, Siversten (2018, 2) proposes a dynamic, evidence-based approach to bridge the gap and minimise tension between “strategies for internationalization and excellence in research on the one hand and strategies for societal relevance and participation on the other” – i.e. balanced multilingualism. As described by the author (Siversten 2018, 2) this concept comprises:

all the communication purposes in all different areas of research, and all the languages needed to fulfil these purposes, in a holistic manner without exclusions or priorities. Balanced multilingualism is also to establish instruments for documenting and measuring the use of language for all the different purposes in research, thereby providing the basis for the monitoring of further globalization of research in a more responsible direction.

- 15 This approach is grounded on the continuous, dynamic interaction that there should be between science and society. Given that several languages are used in these broadly interconnected contexts and by various interlocutors (researchers, scholars, business stakeholders...), it is crucial to underline that the use of a sole language in research and social/business interaction, i.e. global Englishisation, should not be an option. This linguistic predominance tends not to serve multifarious purposes – i.e. to meet its goals and fully address its responsibilities, science development, based on information- and knowledge-sharing – consequently urging for multilingualism (Siversten 2018).
- 16 Linguistic diversity also appears to have an important contribution to bibliodiversity in publications, thus promoting cohesion and identity within organisations and research networks, as well as inclusiveness and equity, as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Categorisation of the corpus as to the role of multilingualism within bibliodiversity in scientific publishing**

| Categories                                       | Indicators  | Studies  |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Language in organisations                     | 1.1. Language as cohesion/divide factor                       | Balduini <i>et al.</i> (2018), Detzen and Loehlein (2018), Kalb and Maas (2018), Mounier (2018), Negrea (2018), Siversten (2018) |
| 2. Bibliodiversity: policies and business models | 2.1. Bibliodiversity underpinning democracy and inclusiveness | Brusati, Fedele, and Ianniello (2019)  |
|  | 2.2. Bibliodiversity and publication business models          | Heinemann (2018), Speicher <i>et al.</i> (2018)  |

- 17 As Detzen and Loehlein (2018, 2031) refer, organisations seem to recognise the advantages of linguistic flexibility; nonetheless, there are “tensions along language lines, suggesting that language can be a means of creating cohesion and division within the firms”. Thus, multilingual competence stands out as a critical channel for information transfer and knowledge development and reinforces the businesses’ openness towards the outside world (Negrea 2018). Therefore, Kalb and Maas (2018, 61) emphasise that “English as an institutionalised second corporate language hinders the maintenance of in-depth relationships” within organisational networks; consequently, there are clear advantages in implementing internal multilingual information and knowledge management strategies along with external multilingual approaches.
- 18 Furthermore, assuming that an individual identity translates into and is continuously reshaped by discourse (in context) and intercultural communication, the option for

Englishisation and/or multilingual approaches in business and research environments necessarily impacts identities. As Detzen and Loehlein (2018, 2048–2049) explain:

identities are created and maintained along language lines, as the (...) linguascapes engage in distancing processes, both discursively and organizationally. To be precise, the underlying nationality narratives and stereotypes on the language groups are continuously constructed and de-constructed.

- 19 At the European level, the official start of a multilingual European community was marked in 1956 with the translation of treaties into four languages (Dutch, French, German and Italian), as requested by the state members at the time (Brusati, Fedele, and Ianniello 2019). Underlying this change is the need to give voice to national representatives in EU institutions to guarantee political and democratic legitimacy, as well as transparency. Consequently, as Brusati, Fedele, and Ianniello (2019, 259) mention, “the social gain to be derived from allowing all citizens to use their own language when dealing with EU institutions was far greater than such a small cost”. For similar reasons, as well as to promote inclusiveness and equity in terms of access to information, most of the diverse (research) documents produced by the EU organisms are available in Open Access (OA) repositories, e.g. OpenAIRE (see <https://www.openaire.eu/>), JRC Publications Repository (see <http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/>), Open Repository Base on International Strategic Studies (see <https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/>). In fact, the creation of the infrastructure *European Open Science Cloud* by the European Commission to support open science in Europe was a recent important step towards bringing “together researchers from multiple disciplines and various infrastructures using different tools and languages and integrate their research” (Heinemann 2018, 2). Thus, the combination of multilingualism with OA may confer societal relevance to research.
- 20 Even though at the European level there is funding for disseminating information in Open Access (OA), it is not easy to find ideal business models for OA when it comes to research. Speicher *et al.* (2018) put forth a case-based analysis of the potentialities and constraints of several business models that are used individually or combined, namely: i) article processing charges (APCs) or book processing charges (BPCs); ii) freemium; iii) collaboration/coalition; iv) community; v) grant; vi) endowment; vii) library funding; viii) institutions; ix) revenue: services; x) revenue: sales of print. Nonetheless, the authors (Speicher *et al.* 2018, 6) underline from the beginning that “an ecosystem in which all of these models co-exist, used in different ways by different organisations, is likely to be the case for the foreseeable future”.
- 21 The research landscape is definitely marked by a multitude of approaches to OA publishing, a situation that can be explained by the very “disparate nature of the publishers, their ‘bibliodiversity’ and multilingual nature, and the general lack of funding” (Speicher *et al.* 2018, 5), and especially when comparing SSH against STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). On the one hand, the latter gives preference to the publication of journal articles, whose publication costs are made by APCs. On the other hand, models used in SSH are more scattered – including library or institutional crowdsourcing, grants, partnership or funding subsidies, revenues from commercial activities or even community volunteering – and continue to pay more attention to the publication of monographs, and, consequently, the issue of BPCs is gaining relevance. The use of a varying combination range of the abovementioned models constitutes in itself an emerging trending expression of bibliodiversity, since, as Mounier

(2018, 305) concludes, it “is the necessary condition of a rich dialogue between different ways of pursuing the same aim: the advancement of knowledge for everyone”.

## Final considerations

- 22 Balanced multilingualism seems to pose as an opportunity to embrace business development, once it favours knowledge-sharing and equity, and promotes network enlargement and diversification, by enabling interaction with multinational and multidisciplinary stakeholders, as well as information artefacts – i.e. bibliodiversity. In fact, global multilingual information-sharing along with negotiated co-construction of new knowledge are emerging as an important means to mitigate constraints underlying static technical translations and to bridge research and businesses worldwide. These necessarily pose as win-win possibilities, by promoting in-depth understanding and enrichment of the involved parties through multilingual technical discourse and intercultural communication.
  - 23 In order to have more effective business models and policies bridging business and research contexts, discussion has to open to manifold stakeholders, taking on OA and bibliodiversity as key pillar for stimulating and supporting knowledge-sharing and co-construction. Thus, researchers and scholars, in particular those operating in the SSH area, are urged to proactively put forward strategies that embody their effective contribution and added-value for answering ongoing and ever-growing economic and societal challenges. In this scenario, Englishisation is deemed to play a pivotal role in the ignition of cross-sectorial communication. Nonetheless, the use of English should not be seen as a sole linguistic option, since the need for communicating in a *lingua franca* does not necessarily imply the adoption of a *lingua unica* – being the combination of balanced multilingualism and bibliodiversity foreseen as a much more fertile approach, in cultural, identitarian, and even in economic terms.
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## ABSTRACT

Given the growing need to strengthen the bonds between the business tissue and research, the purpose of this study is synthetizing evidence in the literature as to i) the dynamics of knowledge-sharing and communication within linguistically diverse business and research networks and ii) the role of multilingualism within bibliodiversity in scientific publishing, in order to boost business development. Nowadays, the role of language in research practice tends to be secondary, since there seems to be a tacit assumption that English is widely accepted as language of communication. Besides, it tends to be promoted in (inter)national and European research and innovation policies—mainly written in English and with no reference to language use or multilingualism. The same happens in business context, in which, given the increasing need for internationalisation, as well as labour pooling and poaching, the use of English as *lingua franca* seems to be inevitable. In fact, in both contexts, there is a need for a common international means of communication and of general information disclosure, but the use of mother tongue seems to be more effective for in-depth understanding, and knowledge co-creation and sharing. The results of the content analysis and interpretation allowed for the definition of categories in the scope of: i) Englishisation and balanced multilingualism, ii) organisational language policies, and iii) added-value of language diversity.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** sharing, knowledge, bibliodiversity, research, business, multilingualism, language policy

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