Monolingualism or multiple versions for Erasmus+ Guidelines? Incompatibilities and utopia.

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To cite this article:

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Abstract

Since the ECSC Treaty signed in Paris in 1951, marking the beginning of the commun destiny of the first international integration organization until the most recent decisions, such as the single currency or the immigration policies, it is a matter of fact that European Union progresses only with harmonious dialogue and joint actions, built on mutual respect of others' differences. Nowadays, in the rapidly changing societies, financial concurrence and geopolitical stakes together with arrogance, or dominance, often outweigh the plurilingual communication, thereby leading to worries about linguistic equality within the Union; hence, the subject of the present stydy. Communication in this polyglottic supranational union should be based on an equal pattern, without what the impact of English as lingua franca[1] may be contested and criticised. This combined with the fact that translations are not fully compatible with the English text, implies that European Union does not always resonate at the same frequencies.

Keywords: Erasmus+, EU, incompatibilities, intercultural communication, monolingualism, translation.

Introduction

«In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God»[2]. The definition of logos in communication has been amongst the most controversial since Bible Translation, and the symbolic power of word in that phrase suggests various contexts of interpretation. Indeed, if such interpretation of ancient Greek was a source of vigorous debate many years ago, we can easily understand the complexity of multilingual communication in European Union nowadays. The discourse on the linguistic interaction within a framework of complex social reality, due to the increase of needs and to the phenomenon of globalization, creates various reactions, especially in linguistically heterogenous communities.

The present contribution investigates the linguistic practices in the EU and the current status of translation of official documents regarding Erasmus Charter for Higher Education. Most precisely, the study focuses on the Call for Proposals KA3 Applicant's Guidelines for the selection year 2016. We have chosen 2016 to match with the year of organisation of the 4th International Conference *Foreign Language Teaching in Tertiary Education,* which took place in Igoumenitsa. Moreover, the choice of the topic is guided by personnal experience. In fact, two years ago, the Department of Modern Greek Studies of Montpellier University, applied for Erasmus+ Programme and encountered a few obstacles, which call for a deeper consideration of the idea of linguistic equality in EU.

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[1] http://www.euractiv.fr/section/langues-culture/news/l-anglais-se-confirme-comme-la-lingua-franca-de-l-europe/

[2] «Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος», New Testament, *The Gospel of John*.

The methodology we have adopted in order to proceed with data analysis is the observation of incompatibilities and the objective comparison of Guidelines' French and English versions, intending to show textual divergences and translation shifts. We should stress here that our aim is not to judge the translation outcome but only to give some illustrative examples of textual differences and inconsistencies that may call for further research. Our operational approach is based on three major stages. Firstly, we have inscribed textual material that has been modified, more or less consciously, during the reproduction process. Doing so, we have provided an overall picture of changes or adjustments. Secondly, we have divided changes into categories, such as grammatical problems, lexical mismatches or cultural inaccuracies and finally, we have considered relevant gaps in translation. The first part entitled *Ideals vs Realities*, focuses on the obvious deviations from the conventions and contains hypotheses and questions designed to stimulate further reflections, while in the second part entitled *A closer look at linguistic discords,* we expose few examples and make some comments on the results.

1 Ideals vs Realities

The EU policy of linguistic equality presupposes equal use of all official languages. All the more, the quality of equivalence between translations in other languages should be considered an inherent requirement and an undeniable criterion. So, the foremost aim when translating should be to offer equal value for all versions. Despite this concept, an in-depth look focusing on our corpus highlights two elements: incompatibilites and utopia. Indeed, the relationship between them can be twofold.

On the one hand, we are referring to the common idea of utopic equivalence while translating from one linguistic and cultural context to another. Of course, we cannot do an introspective study of the translation process and it is impossible to know how and why the translator had chosen certain options, but our study proves that sometimes translation may be incompatible or partial. Indeed, differences between English and French versions highlight textual or semantic incompatibilities and these correlations draw on the core utopian concepts of translation, namely i) perfect fidelity and ii) absolute equivalence. On the other hand, we are referring to the priorities, expectations and ambitions of the EU, which all appear to have changed within the last years and to the principle of linguistic diversity, which is not always taken into account and respected. Yet, in disagreement with linguistic rules and the EU's spirit of plurality, Applicants' Guidelines had been published initially in English and translated only in German and in French afterwards. This is a common practice regarding the translation of certain official EU information even today. In theory, monolingualism is not compatible with the EU's principles and the unequal use of languages may lead to conflicts about linguistic discrimination[3]. Ideally, all languages should be used in websites and official documents, but this seems to be an impractical and idealistic scheme. To our knowledge, among the thirty decentralised agencies of the EU, twenty one propose their website in English or in two working languages. The European Banking

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[3] Attemps to create a European Patent based on English, French and German languages have been considered to be discriminatory from Italy and Spain. Within the same context, starting from 2016, the European Personnel Selection Office will publish notices regarding its selection procedure in all official EU languages', instead of just French, German and English. Source: http://www.euractiv.com/section/languages-culture/news/eu-to-publish-job-ads-in-all-languages/

Authority webpage is translated in twenty-three languages[4]. The webpage of the Directorate-General for Translation (European Commission's translation service) is available in English, French and German. For other websites, such as the European Defence Agency or the Agency of the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER), the knowledge of English language is required in order for users to be adequately informed. Consequently, does the dominance of English as *lingua franca,* lead to the necessity to strenghten national identites in order to preserve European diversity? As a matter of fact, the EU embraces core values, which must be protected and promoted within member states. Those values are: respect for human rights, freedom for movement for goods, services, capital and persons, dignity, democracy, equality and the rule of law. In addition of its general objectives (freedom, security, peace, justice) the Union is committed to promoting multilingualism, to respect cultural or linguistic diversity and to ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.

A whole series of questions arise here as to whether the EU promotes the predominance of English and encourages linguistic diversity, and if there is equal access of all citizens to European Union information. Is it possible to communicate on an equal and isodynamic basis in a polyglottic EU? Is the simple use of English as a *lingua franca* sustainable? Is plurilingualism an impasse? According to Firth's definition the *English Lingua Franca* is «a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication» (Firth, 1996: 240). Defined in this way, it seems a conclusive evidence for the EU. Nevertheless, we wonder if there is no gainsaying that the EU, as the foremost representative institution, is challenged to play a major role in this phenomenon. If we were not referring to the Union, we could have admitted Chomsky's theory arguing that linguistic competence is intuitive, monolingual, and developing in a homogeneous community. However, within communities which accomodate many language groups, it is imperative to assume an equilibrium based on language diversity. Paradoxically, it is important to mention that Erasmus+ Programme for selection 2015 was published first in English and was translated only in German and in French, and only after the first round Applications' deadline (Hoppe, 2015: 9). What about the other EU languages? It should be also stressed that on original version's cover page is mentioned: «In the case of conflicting meanings between language versions, the English version prevails»[5]. With other words, by translating first in English and by accepting that the English text is the correct one, it is as if ELF was officially recognised.

Afterall, the Programme Guidelines were translated depending upon the means of each participant (ministries, universities, associations, private institutions etc). What was the result? Different versions, often contradictory, were produced and information was not always relevant. Consequently, several translations were done to fill this void, and this ultimately has resulted in an increase of cost. Needless to say that English speakers, given easy and early access to the information, could have taken advantage of this opportunity to apply for funds to the detriment of other Applicants. It is undeniable that native speakers have a more favorable position: given the fact that English is their mother tongue, they can benefit from this situation by saving money or

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[4] The European Union has twenty-four official and working languages (Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portugueuse, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish).
[5] «Veuillez noter qu'en cas de différence(s) entre traductions, la version anglaise prévaut». Source: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/guide-du-candidat-eacea-eche-102015.pdf

investing in other projects, breaking though the principle of equality between all EU member states.

In regard to economics, a plausible hypothesis is the following: because of the latest financial recession and the European sovereign debt crises, the EU was obliged to implement a series of financial support measures and we suppose that the use of English, in some cases, could contribute to significant cost reduction. Is it after all a cost-saving solution? We cannot bring an answer to this question but we can report the general idea according to which the use of some of the EU languages (instead of all of them) may contribute to save money and this could be the reason of reducing or skipping translations. We shouldn't forget though to calculate the real cost by taking into account all expenses (Hoppe, 2015: 9)[6] and not only the cost represented for the translations done in-house. According to official data based on rough estimations «the cost of all language services in all EU institutions amounts to less than 1% of the annual general budget of the EU. Divided by the population of the EU, this comes to around €2 per person per year»[7]. The same source estimates that translation services cost 330M euros a year, an amount which corresponds approximately to €0.60 for every EU citizen and that since 2004. Moreover, the Commission has been able to handle vastly increased demand for translations as new countries have joined the EU — and continue its primary duty of providing legislation in all official languages — without increasing costs unduly. The website notifies also that from 2004 to 2013, the number of official EU languages doubled from eleven to twenty-four, but Commission translation costs increased by only 20%. In the light of these considerations, we believe that the translation of Erasmus+ Guidelines in the twenty-four official languages is absolutely feasible and we guess that it would impose only a slight increase for every EU citizen. An initiative in this regard would be greatly appreciated.

2 A closer look at linguistic discords

Comparative analysis has revealed that the two versions often present inaccuracies more or less significant, which may lead to misunderstandings. We have found various translation procedures, such as additions, omissions, paraphrases and mismatches. In some cases, native French speakers may judge the text as ungrammatical, obscure, and ambiguous and may not display the patience or the linguistic skills to check the original English version for clarification. Such phenomenon will also lead to a communication failure to the benefit of English speaking Applicants. Mona Baker makes a clear distinction between dimensional and non-dimensional mismatches. She considers «dimensional mismatches to be errors that have to do with language use; non-dimensional mismatches are referring to the denotative meanings of original elements and breaches of the target language system at various levels» (Baker, 2009: 224). Within the framework of the present study, research has been carried out at the level of semantic, morphosyntactic and pragmatic analysis. In this paper, due to space restrictions, we only provide a synthesis, which summarizes the findings of our comparative study. For sake of clarity, we have analysed changes and developed a representative taxonomy of adopted strategies and translational approaches.

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[6] Reducing translations does not reduce the need for translations. Translations may be then assigned to private agencies and cost will be transferred elsewhere. Dominique Hoppe argues that «EU spends approximately 1,1 billion euros per year on language services, which corresponds at less than 1% of the budget, which means at 0,0087% of Gross Domestic Product, thus at 2,70 euros per citizen aged over 15 years old».
[7] http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/faq/index_en.htm.

2.1 Additions and omissions

The most common practice seems to be the addition and the omission of information in the source or in the target language. Evidently, translation process is not merely a word transfer given that every text has its own contextual background and the translator should tend to respect it. Moreover, (s)he must be daring enough to make the necessary changes. However, sometimes by adding or by deleting textual material, the message may be altered. An indication of this kind of changes is given below:

Table 1: Omissions and additions in SL or in TL

English version (ST)	French version (TT)
Any Higher Education Institution wanting to apply…needs to have a **valid** Erasmus Charter for Higher Education.	Tout établissement d'enseignement supérieur souhaitant participer…doit disposer de la Charte Erasmus pour l'enseignement supérieur **afin d'être éligible**.
Participate in the Erasmus+: EU programme education, training, youth and sport 2014-2020 **(hereafter: the Programme)** needs to have…	Participer au programme Erasmus+ de l'UE pour l'éducation, la formation, la jeunesse et le sport 2014-2020 doit disposer…
Any Higher Education Institution (HEI) wanting to **apply and/or** participate	Tout établissement d'enseignement supérieur (EES) souhaitant participer
Linking higher education, research and business	**Activer le triangle de la connaissance**: faire le lien entre l'enseignement supérieur, la recherche et les entreprises
The selection of mobile staff and students **and the award of grants** in a fair, transparent, coherent…	La sélection du personnel et des étudiants mobiles de façon juste, transparente, cohérente…
Therefore, the HEI should make mobility and cooperation the central elements of its **institutional** policy	L'EES devrait dès lors faire de la mobilité et**/ou** de la coopération des éléments centraux de sa politique
With this in mind, HEIs should devise and **publicise** a system	Les EES devraient ainsi élaborer un système
Key Action 1 « Learning Mobility for Individuals »	Action clé 1 « Mobilité des individus **à des fins d'éducation et de formation** »
Take into account the results of internal monitoring of **European and** international mobility	Tenir compte des résultats du suivi interne des activités internationales de mobilité
Ensure equal access **and opportunities**	Assurer l'égalité d'accès
Supplementary support for inbound/ outbound mobility participants	Aide supplémentaire aux participants à la mobilité entrante **(en provenance des pays tiers)** / sortante

The first and most obvious comment to make is the translator's attempt to convey the meaning without reproducing the form of the original. In principle, the central problem of translating has always been whether to respect the letter or not, but the above examples illustrate differences, which strengthen the idea that the French version was not translated directly from the English one. Indeed, it looks more like a translation from another translation or from a previous English version because some elements in the second column do not exist in the text on the left. Translator(s) have adopted a method, which deviates from source text feautures and the outcome shows non-compliance to the English version. Such kind of translation which is not completely

faithful to the original and where textual feautures clash with language conventions, reflets the free translation method; a dynamic approach which reproduces the message rather than the form.

2.2 Paraphrases

Under this heading falls another type of free translation related to the use of paraphrase, which occurs when the translator wishes to supplement certain features of the source text. The aim is actually to be of assistance to the target text reader, but this kind of translation should be used with care. Dryden argued that paraphrase is the best way to avoid both servile fidelity to the original, which according to him is a mere metaphrase and adaptation, which stands for imitation. Dryden observes translation procedure and provides a most insightful description: «First, that of Metaphrase, or turning an Author Word by Word, and Line by Line, from one Language into another. (…). The second way is that of Paraphrase, or Translation with Latitude, where the Author is kept in view by the Translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not altered. (…). The Third way is that of Imitation, where the Translator (if now he has not lost that Name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sence, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the Original, to run division on the Ground-work, as he pleases (…)» (Dryden, 1705). We agree that rewording, the so-called paraphrase, corresponds more or less to faithful translation, however we wonder if there is room for such kind of adjustment in European Union texts given their legal status. We believe that in our case study translator(s) should have preferred formal equivalence so as all versions could stand as equally valid. Otherwise, different interpretations may give rise to confusion and possible loopholes in the communication. On the contrary, sometimes paraphrase is used to explicit the message. For instance: «Indicate the location of these mobility activities» rendered as «Indiquer le lieu où ces activités de mobilité ont été organisées». Let's look at a few selective examples of textual incompatibility, which illustrate that during the process of translating, the translator(s) often choose(s) phrases much longer than the original.

Table 2: Paraphrases

English version (ST)	French version (TT)
Monitoring of the ECHE compliance of their HEIs' Erasmus Policy **Statements**	Vérifier le respect des principes de la charte par leurs EES **sur base de leur déclaration** en matière de stratégie Erasmus
Support student and staff mobility, **including** from under-represented groups	Soutenir la mobilité des étudiants et du personnel **issus notamment** de groupes sous-représentés
Further develop **non-discrimination** policies	Développer davantage les politiques **de lutte** contre **la discrimination**
EU and non-EU strategy	La stratégie **au sein des pays participants et avec les pays tiers**

In the process of language transfer to another system the source text words are constantly renewed in order to match morphological and syntactic properties of the target text. In the examples cited above, attempts have been made to achieve a better understanding using the device of paraphrase, however as the examples show, periphrastic constructions based on the mechanism of linguistic replacement trigger off more or less significant changes.

2.3 Mismatches or ambiguities

Apart from additions, omissions and paraphrase, the concept of denotative equivalence, as shown in the table below, is another difficulty that a translator often faces. In view of the fact that the outcome stands for a communicative and semantic translation, the translator must bear in mind that the reader has not eventually the same understanding of the identical message and sometimes, he has no access to the original. The examples chosen below illustrate that the translator(s) give(s) another emphasis to some words or phrases, supposedly referring to the same thing, and his/their choices incur the risk of ambiguous interpretations. Indeed, not all variables are adequate and relevant in every context and the suitable target language structure must be preferred to avoid mismatches and possible erroneous interpretations.

Table 3: Mismatches or ambiguities

English version (ST)	French version (TT)
Coherent **and documented** way, **in line** with **the stipulations** of its contract	Cohérente **avec la documentation publiée, et en ligne** avec le contrat **signé**
Religion or **belief**	La religion ou **les convictions**
Privacy	**Vie privée**
Property	**Fortune**
Joint degrees	Diplômes **communs**
Capacity Building Partnerships	Les projets visant à renforcer les **capacités** soutenant la coopération
Mobile participants from all **backgrounds**	Participants mobiles de tous **horizons**
The 48 European countries taking part in the Bologna Process have agreed that each mobile graduate in **their** respective country…	Les 48 pays européens participant au processus de Bologne ont convenu que chaque « diplômé mobile » dans **son** pays respectif…
Therefore, each HEI from a signatory country of the Bologna Declaration which **applies** fo the Charter	Tous les EES des pays signataires de la déclaration de Bologne qui **demandent à recevoir** la Charte
The Diploma supplement should list **recognised** modules/units/training activities undertaken during the student's mobility	Le supplément au diplôme devrait énumérer les activités des modules/unités/formations **reconnues** qui ont été réalisées pendant la période de mobilité de l'étudiant
Within the framework of an institutional mobility culture which involves the whole **academic** community	Dans le cadre d'une culture de mobilité de l'établissement impliquant l'ensemble de la communauté **académique**

A quick glance at the above list points out that even though the translation seems to be smooth and natural, there might be accuracy failure because of the use of an unsuitable match, or of an inappropriate word or even sometimes because of the lack of correspondance. For instance, the term academic in France refers mostly to the French literary Academy. In Switzerland and in Belgium the term «academic» is synonymous with «of university». We believe that in this context, it would be more appropriate to choose «communauté universitaire». This example gives an insight into the nature of polysemy and the use of similar words with different meanings such as false friends. In this respect, it is quite surprising that sometimes the French document contains a different perspective or identical terms that have been translated in different ways. We may

wonder if the translation is the result of teamwork. For instance, the verb «implement» is rendered both as «mettre en œuvre» and «être appliqué». The verb «develop» as «accroître», «renforcer», «mettre sur pied». The adjectives «lower» and «disadvantaged» are both translated as «defavorisé». Another example is while in the English version we read «This strategy acknowledges the key contribution of mobile staff and students, and of participation in European and international cooperation projects, to the quality of its higher education programmes and student experience», the relevant passage in the French version is rendered as follows: «Cette stratégie reconnaît la contribution essentielle apportée par le personnel et les étudiants mobiles et la participation aux projets de coopération européenne et internationale, à la qualité de ses propres programmes d'enseignement supérieur et à l'expérience de ses étudiants». The French sentence suggests that strategy acknowledges two different elements: contribution and participation. But the English version mentions that strategy acknowledges the equal key contribution of mobile staff and of participation to the quality. In French, it should be better to provide amplification; otherwise the message may be quite ambiguous. The sentence could be as follows: «Cette stratégie reconnaît la contribution essentielle apportée par le personnel et les étudiants mobiles, *ainsi que par* la participation aux projets de coopération européenne et internationale, à la qualité de ses propres programmes d'enseignement supérieur et à l'expérience de ses étudiants».

Though linguistic discords should be evident from the examples above, we can briefly outline here that stylistic errors, inaccuracies, paraphrases, omissions and additions, allow us to suppose that translation was done either from a novice translator or from a non-French native speaker. It is also relevant to say that the translation enterprise in an institutional setting is an activity involving a network of participants and technological tools. Therefore, the translator does not act solely and the outcome is far from being an individual task. Mason notes that «it is at least plausible to suggest that large institutions may develop translational cultures of their own. This might happen because Guidelines are issued to all translators working for the institution, in the form of glossaries, style guides, codes of practice and so on; or it might simply be a development which grows over a period of years out of shared experience, the need to find common approaches to recurring problems or through advice and training offered to new employees. Relatively little has been written about such phenomena and the issue of institutional approaches to translating might be considered to be a neglected factor within the field of translation studies» (Mason, 2003: 175).

Conclusion

Based on a brief overview of comparative analysis of our corpus, the purpose of this paper was to study both linguistic and translation practices of Erasmus+ Guidelines for the selection 2016 and to propose new insights, bringing into the debate the study of monolingualism in the EU. Yet, about twelve years ago, Mason argued that this topic needed further investigation and he sustained that « the whole issue of institutional cultures of translating… is worthy of a more systematic exploration, across a range of institutions and language pairs» (Mason, 2003: 187).

Evidently, the European Commission's translation service, the use of new information and communication technologies, the translation and drafting resources, the EU terminology database, the organizations and agencies sustaining linguistic diversity and all relevant efforts undertaken from UE, aim to promote multilingualism and to prove that the matter of linguistic

plurality and polymorphy is particularly dear to the Commission. However, even though all official languages are theoretically considered to be working languages, some official documents – like the one that inspired the present study – are often translated only in English, French and German; three languages, which are unofficially accepted as the usual working languages. Erasmus+ Guidelines in those three languages are not always published at the same time and the French version is not 100% compatible with the English one. From a translator's point of view, it would be interesting to study the German translation as well, and look out for incompatibilities. Which was the source text in that case, the English original or the French translation?

Throughout this study, we also tried to think which could be the impact on Erasmus+ Applicants in EU. The purpose was to show both that the English language as a medium of communication and the awareness of ELF as the common language, in a multilingual community, are not neccesarily indicative of effectiveness, and even less of equity. Likewise, we have provided examples of linguistic variations to highlight the burning issue of equivalent transfer in translation. Overall, linguistic imbalance makes the EU look like a modern Babel that resonates at incompatible frequencies in a pluricultural context. If we manage to limit this phenomenon, it would mean that translation, as the unique acceptable language[8] of Europe, has the necessary authority to restore equilibrium and that member states do have the potential and the ability to act together harmoniously within the respect of their differences. Well, this is another way of reminding the crucial necessity of learning languages and of training and educating skillful and experienced translators. This is a large topic and in this paper we shall limit ourselves to the conviction that taking a deeper look at the concept of polyphony in the EU does not imply to weaken the English language. Just the opposite is true.

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[8] We refer to the famous phrase uttered from Umberto Eco: « La lingua dell'Europa è la traduzione » (The language of Europe is Translation). Eco, U. (1993). Conference of Literary Translation. November 14th, Arles.

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