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Published in:
Speaking from the margin

Publication date:
2004

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Renkema, J. (2004). Towers of Babel. A conceptual, experimental and speculative contribution to the globalisation debate. In A. Durzak, & U. Okulska (Eds.), *Speaking from the margin: global English from a European perspective* (pp. 51-68). (Polish studies in English language and literature; No. 11). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

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Towers of Babel. A conceptual, experimental and speculative contribution to the globalisation debate

Jan Renkema

Introduction

The fussy meaning of 'globalisation'

The term globalisation is as vague as pragmatics or context. In many studies (see e.g. the paper collection in Vestergaard 1999) the term is negatively evaluated as buzz word or catch word. But even in those studies clear definitions are also lacking.

A common idea is that McWorld is giving fast food information preferably via Internet in one McLanguage, a kind of impoverished English. As a result we are now in the process of McDonaldization and coca colonization of the world which is reduced (?) to an enormous American village. But is this true? And if it is true to some extent, what are the consequences for the various languages and cultural identities? (See for the position of English: Anthony 2002, Bayer 2001 and Wallraff 2000.)

Narrowing down to linguistics

First of all I want to restrict my scope to linguistics and language in use. There are studies, see e.g. Wright 2000, in which attention is paid to explaining factors in the political and the economic domain. The view in these studies is that globalisation is caused by the falling apart of economic and political borders, by the desintegration of the 'East European Empire' and by the increase of migration. In my view however these factors are not explanatory enough. Why should there be such an overwhelming linguistic influence from English/American thought on cultures and nations that have such a long tradition as here in Europe? The situation now is completely different from that at the beginning of our era in which the Roman Empire had a substantial linguistic influence on 'undeveloped' and 'barbarian' cultures and tribes in most parts of Europe.

The only thing to say here from a historical viewpoint is that a linguistic community can always develop if this is necessary for political, economic or other purposes. Apparently the users of English, or a mixture of English and their own language, take advantage of their linguistic behavior, e.g.: access to new powerful networks, easiness in social and geographical mobility, new freedom to escape from an old and restricting context, participation in international organisations and companies, etc. If they did not have these advantages they would simply not invest in the rather difficult task to learn English or to use English jargon in their own language.

Contribution to the globalisation debate

The aim of this paper is threefold. First, I want to clarify the concept of globalisation by referring to three functions of language: positioning an identity, developing a community of individuals, and exchanging information between individuals or communities. In the globalisation debate these functions are never clearly distinguished (See e.g. Beck 2000, Binsbergen 1999 and Crystal 1997). My proposal is to use the term 'globalisation' only for the third function: the exchange of information. Within this framework an important question is whether globalisation can penetrate the other more basic functions of language.

Second, I want to promote a special kind of experimental research, a kind of semantic fieldwork, in order to present empirical data on (disputed) globalisation phenomena. In this paper I present the data of an experiment concerning English-Dutch doublets in the Dutch language. If there would be a difference in connotation, just like in for example an old doublet like *hut* (Anglosaxon roots) and *mansion* (French roots) then there are arguments for the claim that foreign words have penetrated the language more deeply than only the exchange level. The experimental data show that commonly held opinions about possible connotations of English words in the Dutch language are not true. So, the results of this experiment show how important it is to have the right empirical base for globalisation research, and the need for data from other languages (See also Lagerwerf 2002).

Third, I want to contribute to the debate with four remarks on topics that are in my view underexposed in the literature on globalisation. Based on that same literature I will plea for first defining globalisation phenomena, and concepts like community. I will conclude with a more philosophical remark about the 'these-antithese' pendulum between unity and diversity and some layman's exegesis of a famous story about mankind's trial to globalisation.

Language functions in the concept of globalisation

Four views on the role of language

How can the fussy concept 'globalisation' be clarified from a linguistic point of view? First of all I want to make some distinctions in levels, layers or aspects of linguistics. Studies of the relation between language, culture and societies show that there are different views on the role of language. Wright (2000) distinguishes four views:

1. *Primordialism*

Language is seen as a mythical and mystical unifier.

2. *Perennialism*

Language is the medium in which members of a community share the same world view and, as a result of that, are the participants in that community.

3. *Modernism*

Language is a by-product of industrialisation and trade activities. Hence, linguistic unification is a logical result of world wide information exchange.

4. *Postmodernism*

Language is the tool and the product of the creative process that constructs a community.

This list prompts some questions. First, what exactly is the difference between the second and fourth view? If language enables community members to act as participants (2) then language is the tool for constructing a community (4). Secondly, what is the status of these views? Can linguistic theories be divided according to these views on the role of language? Or, are we dealing here with different aspects of language which can interact or which can be active at the same time?

Three functions of language

Because of the above-mentioned shortcomings I would like to present a somewhat different approach in which I select from the concepts of language and communication three functions which could present a better explanatory framework for linguistic globalisation phenomena. In my view three functions of language are of main importance in studying linguistic globalisation:

1. identity function
2. community function
3. exchange function

The first function, developing and preserving identity, is a sociological phenomenon. In using a special language, a special idiom, a special word, a special intonation, language users 'communicate' that they belong to the group which uses that language, that idiom etc. In my opinion this function of language is the most deeply rooted of the three. On this level the so-called 'Blut und Boden' or 'blood and belonging' discussions are situated. On this level speakers of another sociolect are marked as members of another group. Language functions as an instrument of inclusion or exclusion.

The second function, let another person participate in your non-physical, mental and cultural world, is a psycho-sociological phenomenon. If the addressed persons use the same language, the same idiom, the same special words, the same intonation etc., then the speakers have at least the impression that the intentions and meanings are 'communicated' in the essential meaning of this word: shared by the other. In my view this function can only be described adequately on the basis of the identity function, which articulates the belonging to a group of which the members form a kind of 'communio', i.e.: have something in common (a history, an important experience, education etc.). On this level the language and culture discussions

are situated. Here statements like: “English is always a defective vehicle for my thoughts” can be made. On this level also remarks on the poorness of the English language use outside the English speaking cultures have to be situated.

The third function, exchange of information, emotions and attitudes, is an economics phenomenon. If the addressed persons do not use my language or my sociolect, it is still possible to some extent to communicate about special domains in life: trade, traffic, new technologies, building a worldwide company, etc. The study of creolization and pidginization makes it clear that this kind of information exchange can result in a kind of in between language. And to the extent in which one of the parties in that exchange has more power and status, to that extent one language will dominate the other. In my opinion the discussions about globalisation have to be situated on this level. Essentially there is no difference between, for example, the worldwide Italian words in musical terminology and the worldwide American words for computer terminology. On this exchange level most statements have to be situated on the dominant position of the English language in international contact and on the penetration of American words in other languages.

These three functions of language can be related to three phenomena of which ‘globalisation’ is just one:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. identity function | tribalisation |
| 2. community function | localisation |
| 3. exchange function | globalisation |

Focussing on the identity function, language, as a group building factor, can be seen as a kind of tribalisation, nowadays coming up in trials of ethnic minorities to establish their own sub-nations against a powerful supra-language. Concerning the community function, language, as a medium of sharing your own mental and cultural world, can be seen as a reaction against the growing frequency of a supra-language that is considered too poor to communicate important domains of life. In the light of the exchange function, language, as an easy way to exchange all sorts of information, can be seen as an easy way to ‘transport’ meanings in the domains which are important for all people of this globe (trade, diplomacy, etc.). Only this kind of language use, a vivid Esperanto, is, or should be, at stake in discussions about globalisation.

In my view the confusion in the discussions about globalisation is caused by the quantity aspect of the influence of the powerful language. Due to a substantial Americanization of some parts of the lexicon of other languages (see e.g. Schäffner 2000 and Riley 1998), the essential economic phenomenon of globalisation is also considered as a phenomenon with a communicative or even identity function. And this confusion invites us to think that the world is communicating now in an American way and that other cultures are losing their identity.

An experiment about the function of English words in Dutch

An important question in the globalisation debate is the following one: to what extent the economically based penetration of English words, caused by the exchange function of language, would change something that already exists in a given language, in the community function. N.B. This is something completely different than adding new words for new concepts, like in the old era of the Roman Empire in which in different languages many and many words were introduced for concepts which were unknown up till that moment in other cultures, and which were adapted in a way that the average language user nowadays is not aware of their Latin roots, e.g., *street*, *cellar*, etc.

The Dutch language is known as a very open language, and is therefore a very good starting point to research the supposed mixing of the exchange and community function. In the Netherlands about 15% of the advertisements are written in English. And in about one third of the TV-spots English terms are used. Studies have shown that these English terms are poorly understood and that they are evaluated negatively. In other studies evidence is given that the evaluation of English in advertisements is related to the trendiness of the reader and product aspects. In an advertisement for Dutch wooden shoes, for example, English words are evaluated as less appropriate than in an advertisement for Levi's (for further information see Gerritsen 2001).

Notwithstanding this criticism on English in Dutch advertisements, and in spite of the obvious disadvantages of English terms in the Dutch language, the use of English is still growing. How can this be explained? One explanation is that an English word has a meaning that is slightly different from the Dutch equivalent, because it is not only another word but also a somewhat different concept, for example:

human resources manager – “chief of personal matters” (*personeelschef*)

If English and Dutch words refer to different concepts or have different connotations then one could say that the English word and the Dutch word belong to different cultures, and that the Dutch culture, by using this word, is losing some aspects in favour of the American culture, in which the job ‘human resources manager’ has some other aspects – e.g. in- and outplacing, career planning – than the Dutch job ‘chief of personal matters’ with the focus on salary, office hours, etc.

Frequently it is being suggested that English words are more often associated with trendiness and exclusivity than their Dutch equivalents. For that reason a garden centre could ask a higher price for *gardening equipment* than for the Dutch word *tuinapparatuur*. For the same reason a *gift shop* and a *bicycle home* would attract more modern and more youthful clients than the Dutch shops *cadeauwinkel* or *fietsenhandel*.

In the experiment it has been examined if corresponding English and Dutch words show up differences in their connotations. If an English word or term is

being judged as trendier and more exclusive than a Dutch word or term, and for example evokes a youthful image, then the use of English terms in advertisements would be better explicable. Furthermore it is not clear which conclusions we have to draw from the fact that English words and terms in advertisements usually are not being valued more positive. In the research that has been done so far people have only been asked to evaluate English slogans without drawing a comparison with the corresponding Dutch slogans. Therefore this experiment was aimed at the comparison of English and Dutch terms.

Material

To compare English and Dutch terms in this way, domains had to be chosen in which corresponding English and Dutch terms both exist. Therefore texts from the computer branch, in which much untranslatable English jargon is used, were not appropriate. In this case names of shops and employment advertisements were chosen. In the Netherlands Dutch as well as English names of shops are quite common (*Sacha Shoes, The Body Shop*). Also in employment advertisements English terms are often used (*human resource manager, engineer*).

Names of shops

To find English names of shops that actually exist in the Netherlands and therefore are natural, the digital versions of the Dutch Yellow Pages and the Dutch phone book were visited. The search criterion was that the Dutch equivalent should be derivable from the English name. This implied that the Dutch equivalent either could be a literal translation from the English term or a translation that strongly resembled the English name. By searching this way 27 names of shops were found in 10 different branches. After a selection procedure three branches remained (see Figure 1). The selected branches met the following criteria:

- they sold products (The difference between products and services could influence the results of the experiment.);
- they had a large and extensive selection (For the experiment it was necessary to include association questions in the questionnaire. To be able to evoke different associations only branches with a large and extensive selection could be selected.);
- the sold products differed in exclusiveness (Expensive as well as cheap products had to be included in the selection so that different associations could be evoked.);
- the kind of sold products in a shop was indisputable (When subjects are asked after the price of a product, unclarity about the selection can influence the results of the experiment.);
- English names were quite common in these branches (It would for example be unnatural to include bakeries because they hardly have English names.);

- they enabled the researchers to ask the same questions in each version of the survey.

Branch	English	Dutch
Clothes shops	<i>Fashion and Style 2000</i>	<i>Mode en Stijl 2000</i>
Hi-fi shops	<i>Hifi Sound and Vision Centre</i>	<i>Hifi Geluids- en beeldcentrum</i>
Giftshops	<i>Giftshop Marianne</i>	<i>Cadeauwinkel Marian</i>

Figure 1. Names of shops

Employment advertisements

For the employment advertisements during three weeks the vacancies of two Dutch newspapers were collected. An analysis of the collection showed that English terms are not equally often used in all branches and that in vacancies for the lower educated people English terms are hardly used.

To ensure the naturalness of both the English and the Dutch version from the employment advertisement the advertisement had to meet some requirements:

- the selected advertisements had to be vacancies within branches in which English terms appeared as often as Dutch terms;
- the vacancy should be from a Dutch company;
- the name of the company should be neutral;
- the text of the advertisement had to be short (otherwise the subjects had to read too much text)

Because none of the the collected advertisements did meet these requirements two advertisements were written, one for a technician and one for a teamleader. Each advertisement had an English version and a Dutch version (see Figure 2).

<p>English: Technician M/V Uw profiel: U heeft ervaring als <i>technician</i>. U bent op de hoogte van <i>high-tech developments</i> op het gebied van <i>garden equipment</i>. U bent zelfstandig en praktisch ingesteld.</p>
<p>Dutch: Technicus M/V Uw profiel: U heeft ervaring als <i>technicus</i>. U bent op de hoogte van de <i>nieuwste technische ontwikkelingen</i> op het gebied van <i>tuinapparatuur</i>. U bent zelfstandig en praktisch ingesteld.</p>
<p>English: Teamleader M/V Taakomschrijving: Het aansturen, <i>coachen</i> en <i>supporten</i> van een team van <i>communication consultants</i>. Tevens opstarten van diverse projecten. Rapportage aan het management.</p>
<p>Dutch: Teamleider M/V Taakomschrijving: Het aansturen, <i>begeleiden</i> en <i>ondersteunen</i> van een team van <i>communicatieadviseurs</i>. Tevens opstarten van diverse projecten. Rapportage aan het management.</p>

Figure 2. English/Dutch versions

Research design

Subjects

120 subjects participated in the case study, 56 men and 64 women. The subjects were split up in two age groups: 'young' and 'old'. The age group 'young' consisted of 69 persons from 18 to 25 years old. The age group 'old' was made up by 51 persons from 45 years or older.

Questionnaire

The questions concerning the material were for both versions the same and referred to the following aspects: image, exclusiveness, behavioural intentions (only for the names of shops) and text evaluations.

The questions about image were asked to find out if there was a difference in judgement of companies that use English terms and companies that use Dutch terms. The questions referred to the aspects of competence, reliability, attractiveness and trendiness of a company (see Table 1)

Competence	Reliability	Attractiveness	Trendiness The products of shop X are:
amateurish – expert	reliable – unreliable	friendly – unfriendly	trendy
incompetent – competent	honest – dishonest	polite – impolite	renewal
capable – incapable	sincere – insincere	pleasant – unpleasant	old-fashioned
		traditional	

Table 1. Aspects measured for image (scores on a sevenpoint Likertscale)

The exclusiveness-questions were asked to check if companies that use English terms were judged as more exclusive than companies that use Dutch names (see Tables 2 and 3).

Age of the customers	Mean prices of sold products
younger than 18 years	very cheap
between 18 and 25 years	cheap
between 25 and 35 years	average
between 35 and 45 years	expensive
between 45 and 55 years	very expensive
older than 55 years	

Table 2. Aspects measured for exclusiveness of the shopnames
(one answer had to be chosen)

Age of applicant	Required experience	Required educational level	Number of people to manage	Height of salary
18-25 years	< 1 year	<i>mbo</i>	< 5 people	< € 680
25-35 years	1-2 years	<i>hbo</i>	5-10 people	€ 680-1135
35-45 years	2-3 years	university	10-15 people	€ 1135-1590
45-55 years	≥ 3 years		> 15 people	€ 1590-2045
> 55 years				> € 2045

Table 3. Aspects measured for exclusiveness of the employment advertisements (one answer had to be chosen)

The behavioural intentions were only measured for the names of shops (see Table 4).

I would like to be kept informed about X.
I would become a regular customer from X.
I would go inside X, but buy nothing.
I would pass by X.
I would go inside X and buy something.
I would take a look in the shop-window, but not go inside.

Table 4. Aspects measured for behavioural intentions (for the shop names only) (scores on a sevenpoint Likertscale)

The text evaluations served as a check to examine if the younger subjects judged the English terms as more attractive than the older subjects did. Furthermore, it was examined if the Dutch and English versions were found equally natural.

Attractiveness	Naturalness
The name X/employment advertisement is:	The name X/employment advertisement is:
unattractive	no average name for a shop/employment advertisement
meaningless	a common name for a shop/employment advertisement
attractive	could actually exist in the Netherlands
appealing	

Table 5. Aspects measured for the text evaluations (scores on a sevenpoint Likertscale)

After these questions concerning the material the subjects were invited to answer some personal questions. These questions dealt with the subjects' sex, age and education, knowledge of English and attitude towards English terms (see Table 6).

Attitude	Knowledge
English words should be avoided if there are also good Dutch terms for them. I consider the attention for the preservation of the Dutch language as a form of nationalism. I am bothered about the unnecessary use of English terms. To me it is important that in future the Dutch language keeps existing. I would regret if in 20 years the main language in the Netherlands is English. To me English terms are boastful.	My knowledge of the English language is excellent. I avoid situations in which I have to speak English. I understand English series and films without reading the subtitles.

Table 6. Questions to determine the knowledge of English and the attitude against English terms (scores on a sevenpoint Likertscale)

Design

For this experiment a 'between subjects' design was chosen. The dependent variables were image, exclusiveness and text evaluation. The independent variables were version and age group. In each age group half of the subjects received the questionnaire with the Dutch versions of the names of shops and the employment advertisements, and the other half got the questionnaire with the English versions. What is more, half of the questionnaires started with the names of shops and the other half with the employment advertisements. The data were processed with the statistical program SPSS by way of a MANOVA.

Hypotheses

In this experiment the following eight hypotheses are tested. These hypotheses were chosen because many contributors to the globalisation debate would like to make a positive prediction to these 'statements'.

1. A company which has an English name or uses an English advertisement is being judged as more exclusive.
2. The 'young' are more positive about companies that have an English name or use an English advertisement.
3. The 'old' are more positive about companies which have a Dutch name or use a Dutch advertisement.
4. A company which has an English name or uses an English advertisement is being judged as trendier.
5. The 'young' have more positive behavioural intentions against companies that use English terms.
6. The 'old' have more positive behavioural intentions against companies which use Dutch terms.
7. The 'young' judge English names of shops and employment advertisements as more attractive.
8. The 'old' judge Dutch names of shops and employment advertisements as more attractive.

Results

In Table 7 the results for the names of shops on image, exclusiveness, behavioural intentions and text evaluation are presented. For the readability only the significant results are showed.

	shopname 1				shopname 2				shopname 3			
	version		age group		version		age group		version		age group	
	EN	NL	young	old	EN	NL	young	old	EN	NL	young	old
Image												
trendiness	5.45	4.85	5.11	5.19	4.84	4.39	4.64	4.60	4.11	3.93	3.76	4.27
Exclusiveness												
price	3.35	3.37	3.33	3.94	3.44	3.09	3.32	3.21	2.80	3.13	2.97	2.96
age of the target group	2.73	3.45	3.01	3.16	3.02	3.15	3.07	3.10	3.21	3.68	3.49	3.39
Behavioural Intentions												
go in, buy something	3.63	3.10	3.46	3.27	3.51	3.33	3.55	3.29	3.46	3.69	3.46	3.69
go in, buy nothing	3.73	4.34	4.40	3.67	4.07	4.36	4.02	4.02	4.06	4.29	4.45	3.90
Textevaluation												
attractiveness	4.64	3.61	4.11	4.14	4.62	3.77	4.43	3.96	3.78	3.71	3.76	3.73

Table 7. Results for the names of shops on image, exclusiveness, behavioural intentions and text evaluation (scores on a seven point scale)

For image there was a version effect for shopname 1 on the aspect trendiness. Both age groups judged the English version (*Fashion and Style 2000*) as trendier than the Dutch equivalent (*Mode en Sijl 2000*). The English name scored 5.45 and the Dutch name 4.85.

The results for exclusiveness showed several effects. For shopname 1 there was a version effect for the age of the target group. Both age groups attributed a younger target group to the English version (*Fashion and Style 2000*). The English shopname scored 2.73 and the Dutch shopname 3.45. For shopname 2 there was a version effect for price. With the English version (*Hifi Sound and Vision Centre*) both age groups estimated the price of the products higher than with the Dutch version (*Hifi Geluids- en Beeldcentrum*). The score for the English name was 3.44 and for the Dutch name 3.09. For shopname 3 there were two version effects, one for the age of the target group and one for price. Both age groups attributed a younger target group to the English version (*Giftshop Marianne*). 2.80 was the score for the English shopname versus 3.13 for the Dutch shopname. With the Dutch version (*Cadeauwinkel Marian*) both age groups es-

estimated the price of the products higher than with the English version (English version 3.21, Dutch version 3.68).

For behavioural intentions there were version effects for “go in, buy something” and for “go in, buy nothing”. With the Dutch version (*Mode en Stijl 2000*) both age groups indicated more often that they would go in without buying something (4.34 versus 3.73) and with the English version (*Fashion and Style 2000*) both age groups more often indicated that they would go in and buy something (3.63 versus 3.10).

The results for text evaluation showed that there was twice a version effect for attractiveness. Both age groups judged the English versions of shopname 1 and 2 (*Fashion and Style 2000 & Hifi Sound and Vision Centre*) as more attractive than the Dutch versions (*Mode en Stijl 2000 & Hifi Geluids- en Beeldcentrum*). For shopname 1 the English version scored 4.64 and the Dutch version 3.61. For shopname 2 the score for the English name was 4.62 and for the Dutch name 3.77.

In Table 8 the results for the employment advertisements on image, exclusiveness and text evaluation are presented. For the readability only the significant results are showed.

	advertisement 1				advertisement 2			
	version		age group		version		age group	
	EN	NL	young	old	EN	NL	young	old
Image								
competence	5.39	5.44	5.58	5.25	5.38	5.41	5.45	5.33
trendiness	5.32	5.02	4.95	5.38	4.91	4.82	4.69	5.05
Exclusiveness								
experience applicant	3.13	3.36	3.10	3.39	2.60	2.65	2.52	2.73
salary applicant	4.04	4.07	3.68	4.43	3.03	3.10	2.70	3.43
Textevaluation								
naturalness	4.70	5.10	5.14	5.14	4.39	4.97	4.98	4.37

Table 8. Results for the employment advertisements on image, exclusiveness and text evaluation (scores on a seven point scale)

For image there was an age group effect for advertisement 1 on the aspect trendiness. The age group ‘old’ judged both text versions from employment advertisement 1 as trendier than the age group ‘young’ (5.38 versus 4.95).

The results for exclusiveness showed several effects. For advertisement 1 there was an age group effect for “experience applicant” and “salary applicant”. The age group ‘old’ attributed more experience and a higher salary to both text versions than the age group ‘young’. For experience the ‘old’ scored 3.39 and the ‘young’ 3.10; for salary the score of the ‘old’ was 4.43 and the score of the

'young' 3.68). For advertisement 2 there was also an age group effect for "salary applicant". Again the age group 'old' attributed a higher salary to both text versions than the age group 'young'.

For text evaluation there was a version effect on the aspect of naturalness for advertisement 1. Both age groups judged the Dutch version of the employment advertisement as more natural than the English version (5.10 versus 4.70). The results for advertisement 2 showed that there were two effects. First, a version effect on the aspect of naturalness. Both age groups judged the Dutch version of the employment advertisement as more natural than the English version. The Dutch version scored 4.97 and the English version 4.39.

Table 9 presents the results for the (negative) attitude towards English and the knowledge of English.

	version		age group	
	<i>English</i>	<i>Dutch</i>	<i>young</i>	<i>old</i>
knowledge	5.09	5.10	5.55	4.29
negative attitude	4.83	4.95	4.29	5.49

Table 9. Results for knowledge of English and negative attitude towards English (scores on a seven point scale)

There was an age group effect for knowledge and attitude. The age group 'young' had more knowledge of the English language than the age group 'old'. The 'young' scored 5.55 and the 'old' 4.29. The age group 'old' had a more negative attitude against the use of English terms in the Dutch language than the age group 'young' (5.49 versus 4.29).

The results of this experiment show that the eight hypotheses about English are not true. So, the discussion about the influence of English terms in Dutch is based on some wrong assumptions. There is no evidence for the existence of differences in connotations between English terms and their corresponding Dutch equivalents. So this cannot be presented as a reason for the use of English terms in the Dutch-speaking regions. The only reason which can 'justify' the use of English terms in the Netherlands is that English within the domain of names of shops is evaluated as more attractive than Dutch. The reason for the attractiveness of English within this domain could be the greater extent of exclusiveness that could be associated with English names. However attractiveness does not have any influence on image and behavioural intentions. And, more important, this attractiveness has nothing to do with connotational aspects in the image research. So the results of this experiment tend to the conclusion that the use of English doublets in Dutch is only a phenomenon within the exchange function and not within the community or identity function of language.

The future of the globalisation debate: four speculative remarks

Globalisation phenomena in discourse

In order to prove the influence of globalisation on the lexicon of a language we did some experimental research that could serve as a base for a comparative research in other countries. See above. But, if one wants to study empirically based research on globalisation phenomena in discourse, then one has to do a long literature research with rather limited results.

Let me give one recent example: *Globalization discourse: a view from the East*, by John Flowerdew of the University of Hongkong (2002). Flowerdew refers to a seminal paper by Pardo (2001: 94) in the critical discourse paradigms (see also Luke 2002), citing her following statement that could be the starting point for discourse analysis concerning globalisation phenomena: "In any kind of political expansion, language is one of the most powerful resources for the transmission of values, economic, political and cultural." Then Flowerdew gives an analysis of a speech of the Hong Kong chief executive. He found as the most salient discursive features of this speech: the use of lists, nominalisation, metaphorisation, the use of statistics and some modality features. Of course, these are important findings, giving support to some results in the study of bureaucratic language, but the question arises how these findings have to be related to globalisation. Is this the western, American way of presenting governmental issues? Does for example the Eastern or Chinese way of governing make use of other linguistic phenomena? An answer to these questions would be a real starting point for the study of globalisation patterns in discourse. If these questions cannot be answered, then this speech, to put it sharply, is not a specimen of the 'globalisation of discourse' but of the 'discourse of globalisation'.

There are of course the studies in the Hofstede paradigm of cultural values. But these studies are based on a theory about cultural differences and are mainly giving results in terms of attitudes. If we want to study globalisation on the discourse level, then we have to study structures of interaction or patterns in discourse. In my view it is very important to start where people like S oderberg (1999) stop: the forms of discourse in intercultural communication. A good framework for the study of these forms can be found in Scollon and Scollon (1995).

In search for language communities

The notion of language community is almost as diffuse as the terms 'culture' and 'globalisation' itself. We are used to thinking of communities and languages in a one-to-one relation. But this is far from true. In almost every country different communities can be distinguished within one nation wide community. In the Netherlands, for example, the community of the Amsterdam canal region, and the communities of the Bible belt area in the middle of the country are very different.

There is a very interesting study of the identity of the French-speaking community in Belgium from Degn (1999). On the basis of an analysis of a French-Belgian weekly it is made plausible that there have to be distinguished at least four communities: a. Belgian, b. Walloon, c. French, d. European.

But there is an even more interesting point to make that is also related to the notion of globalisation: the power of institutional variance in uniforming differences between nations or cultures within one institution on the one hand, and creating more and more differences between institutions on the other hand. Henceforth the institutional differences seem to gain more power in the process of global information exchange. Very common is the idea that the national governments are losing power to international organisations and companies. In the Netherlands a much heard remark is that the talking is for the Hague but the decision for Brussels as the headquarters of the European Community. This idea is supported by findings of S derberg (1999). In this research on intercultural problems in international companies it is reported that the interviewees relatively seldom refer to differences between national cultures. Obviously the factor institutional characteristics was more important.

Glocalisation

In the process of globalisation and anti-globalisation there could be a hidden force at work that could have much explanatory power as far as the community and identity functions are concerned. This power can roughly be described as the dynamics between unity versus diversity, adaptation versus isolation, or assimilation versus fragmentation. This force is indicated in the much-cited quotation of Barber (1992: 18): "Our planet is falling precipitantly apart and coming reluctantly together at the same moment." See for example also Bausinger (1999: 14):

There is a certain necessity involved in the widening of identity horizons – but is not a simple transfer from narrow to greater adherences and identities; quite often the wider orientation brings an increase in value of the more narrow connections
(Bausinger 1999: 14).

A plausible view of communication is that language in use is always making a 'pendulum' movement between unity and diversity. If the unifying forces are too strong then a diversifying movement is coming up. If speakers come to the conclusion that they have to move too far from their own experiences towards the mental and cultural world of the addressed persons, then they will make a withdrawing movement. If communicators feel that communication is only possible in specific domains then they will pay more attention to their old, more familiar domains of interaction. And vice versa, if the members of a culture become aware of some inbreeding or isolating developments in their own culture, they will be more eager to adapt new blood, new influences. Having an identity without interaction with other identities is having no identity. This means that the recent anti-

globalistic tendencies can be understood as a logical reaction towards too much uniformity that causes a too big gap between global requirements for exchange of information and local needs for communication.

Globalisation and identity

In the bosom of the globalisation debate lives the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, renewed by some critics as the Twin Towers of Babel. What ‘explains’ this story about the possibility of one language for the world?

And the Lord said: ‘Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language (...)
Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand
one another’s speech’

(Genesis 11: 6-7).

This famous biblical story prompts many speculations about what exactly the characteristics are of that situation with one common language, in the days in which a haughty mankind wants to besiege heaven. In any case it must have something to do with total understanding, otherwise the verb ‘understand’ was not used. But most interesting is that the diversity of languages in a plausible interpretation can be considered as a by-product of something else. After the Flood the divine blessing for all the living creature was (Genesis 8:17): “let them teem on the earth and be fruitful and multiply on earth.” But mankind had fulfilled only one part of the divine blessing, ‘be fertile and increase’, and not ‘fill the earth’. Mankind preferred to gather together, and in doing so they became overconfident, losing their different identities in their bent for a totalitarian community. That is why God compelled mankind to spread all over the earth. Only in this way could people offer resistance to totalitarian ways of building communities and reach their own identity. So, the birth of different languages was the result of their dispersion all over the world with the eventual result that the common language was forgotten. Out of this famous story we can learn for our new era of globalisation that – if one common language is possible at all – it can only be born in a non-totalitarian context if there is reciprocal respect for each other’s identity and community.

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