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People, Products, and Professions

*Choosing a Name,
Choosing a Language
Fachleute, Firmennamen
und Fremdsprachen*

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INTRODUCTION: PROFESSIONAL NAME AND LANGUAGE CHOICES

When people collaborate in professional contexts, and more specifically, when they communicate about and through products in business contexts, they have to make a series of basic choices, one of them concerning the language used in the communication. Another, more long-term-oriented decision is the choice of a name for one's business or product. The two questions are closely related, since in both cases it is a question of self-presentation for the communicating company or business person.

The contributions in this volume address both kinds of issues. They are the result of two workshops held during the Austrian Linguistics Conference in October 2005 in Graz. One of them, the workshop "Code choice / Code switching in professional contexts", was organised by Eva Lavric, the other one, "Wirtschaft, Kommunikation und Sprache" ("Economy, Communication, and Language"), by Julia Kuhn, Fiorenza Fischer and Holger Wochele. The second workshop turned out to have a strong focus on business onomastics. The organisers found that there was a thematic connection between the contributions in the two workshops and therefore opted for a joint publication. The editing team was subsequently joined by Carmen Konzett.

Part I: Code Choice / Code Switching in Professional Contexts

Code Switching Worldwide

The volume starts off with a series of contributions about code choice and code switching in very different parts of the world. Marietta Calderón's article presents the results of approximately 100 semi-narrative interviews the author conducted with francophones who immigrated to Israel. The interviews focused on the functions of English in Israel (for example with regard to code choice and code switching) for the interviewees. It turned out that English is perceived as professionally necessary, particularly when it comes to reading. However, in contrast to Ivrit or French it is not seen as constitutive for one's personal identity.

The next paper takes the reader geographically further east: to Malaysia. Maya Khemlani David and David Yoong Soon Chye focus on code switching among caretakers in a geriatric day-centre. The main languages involved are English, Malay, Cantonese and Tamil. Drawing on studies in the field of elderese research they try to determine whether the code switches represent the phenomenon of 'talking down' or if they have other functions. Their examples show that care-takers use code switches to

display authority, but also to capture attention, to bridge language gaps and to express group solidarity. Code switching is thus used to converge as well as diverge.

Yet another part of the world constitutes the research location for **Isabel A. Knoerrich**, who studies the linguistic situation in the two enclaves Gibraltar and Ceuta. She paints a historical-political-sociological-demographic portrait of the British enclave in Spain and the Spanish enclave in Morocco followed by reflections on identity and code choice. Finally she presents some striking examples of code switching in a shop in Ceuta to illustrate the development of a research programme about usage, status and importance of the different languages in the professional lives of the two multiethnic communities.

Business Communication

Moving from a geographical focus to an activity-centered approach, the section on business communication starts with a very general contribution which sets a framework for studies on business code choices. **Bernhard Bäck**'s article presents his 3-level model of code choice in business companies, illustrated by a case study on an Austrian timber industry firm. Code choice in export-oriented business is influenced by three types of factors: economic-political macro-factors, branch- and company specific meso-factors and person- and situation related micro-factors. Bäck's example shows how these types or levels combine in an integrated model. It illustrates how the different factors responsible for code choice decisions interact to create a variety of surprising, yet always meaningful constellations.

The subsequent paper deals with a service company rather than a production enterprise: **Žofia Mrázová** studied the communication in a Parisian corporate bank, using the method of participant observation to draw a kind of linguistic sociogram or „logogram“ of code choice patterns among the staff of the international department. Her findings suggest that the firm openly privileges the language of external over internal communication in order to be able to adapt to their customers at any time.

In the next article, **Theresa Schweiger** focuses on business companies in the Lower Austrian border areas. She studies the question of how frequently they need to use Czech and Slovak for their business contacts. A questionnaire poll in small and medium-sized enterprises revealed that German is more important than English as a lingua franca and that Czech – and to a smaller extent Slovak – are used for everyday interaction and telephone communication. The results of the study also point to an increasing need for these languages in the future. For Schweiger the logical consequence would be a more wide-spread integration of Austria's neighbouring languages in the school curriculum.

In a similar study, **Kathrin Harder** looks at language politics and language planning in a business company in Southern Germany, but focusing on more basic language competences. Her study – a combination of studying official company documents and conducting interviews with the staff – reveals that English plays a dominant role in everyday communication, but that English language competence is not actively supported by the company. The results indicate a strong need for language and intercultural training in the firm.

Still concerned with the use of English, **Ulla Kleinberger**'s contribution takes us further west as it describes the linguistic situation in large Swiss companies. Contrary to the image of multilingual Switzerland where four national languages (German, French, Italian, Rhaeto-Romanic) are spoken, English is playing an increasingly important role in Swiss firms. This is also true for German speaking Switzerland, where High German fulfills the role of lingua franca as opposed to the widely used dialect(s). New text types and new media are changing linguistic as well as stylistic habits, e.g. through the insertion of (more or less correct) English elements in order to signal internationality.

Finally, and still in Switzerland, **Helen Kurukulasuriya**'s paper is a contribution to the study of workplace interaction. She analyses informal interactions in a Swiss open-plan office using a very large corpus (a whole week of recordings). Informal interaction at the workplace is characterised by its empractic nature (it accompanies the work process), its frayed edges (i.e. the openings and closings do not include greeting formulas) and the circular structure of recurring themes. This makes informal interaction indispensable for the communication of knowledge and conflict management in a company.

Between Business and Education

Eva Lavric's paper functions as a transition between the business communication and the academic discourse sections. It traces her own path as a code-switching researcher, from the study of meaningful code choice patterns among members of a university language department, via the study of code choices in different kinds of business contexts – especially in export-import oriented companies and foreign subsidiaries of big corporate groups – to research on meaningful code choice patterns in foreign language teaching, where the mother tongue of the learners is carefully and purposefully used by the teachers in order to promote the learning process.

Code Switching in Education and in Academic Discourse

The first contribution in this section provides valuable insights into the perception language learners have of code-switching. **Martin Stegu** forges a link between code-switching and language awareness research by extending the code switching concept beyond the situation of language minorities to a context of foreign language education. 53 students of Romance philology and of international business administration were questioned about their awareness of code-switching. In spite of the differences in their studies the results are quite homogeneous: the majority of students have a positive attitude towards code-switching in multilingual situations as well as in foreign language teaching.

Still looking at language learning, although in a more professionally oriented environment, **Cornelia Feyrer** applies the concept of code-switching to the context of translatorial and translation didactic practice. Using examples from expert-lay-discourse in medicine and from the interaction of translatology students with experts in that area, she points out that switching does not only occur between mother tongue and foreign language but also between general language and language for specific purposes.

Consequently, the concept of 'code' needs to be extended to include cultural competence.

Miriam Paola Leibbrandt's contribution also belongs to the area of translatology. Her experimental study investigates the hypothesis that there is a difference between bilingually and monolingually reared simultaneous interpreters when code-switching between two translation directions. The results show that, in spite of considerable individual differences, the difficulties that monolingually reared interpreters have cannot be made up for by experience or education and that bilingually reared interpreters have an advantage when switching.

Finally, **Carmen Konzett** investigates code choices in another education and research-related professional setting. She uses an interaction analysis approach to study code choice and code switching phenomena at academic conferences. Her examples show a high level of metalinguistic awareness in the participants and a close link between a speaker's language skills and the perception of that speaker's academic competence. Code switching at academic conferences is presented as serving a whole series of purposes, ranging from signalling a change in footing to selecting an addressee to co-constructing meaning in a multilingual environment.

Code Choice in Religious Communication

Apart from business and educational/academic settings, code choice is also an important and much debated issue in religious contexts. **Ioana-Rucandra Dascalu** studies the role of Latin (in competition with the vernacular languages) in the Catholic Church, showing how its immutability and sacred character situate it at one extreme of the sociolinguistic formality scale. Although the vernaculars are needed and encouraged in order to spread the religious message to lay people, Latin is still being strongly encouraged by the Church as the universal language of Catholic faith and erudition, as is shown through a rich variety of citations.

Part II: Onomastics in Professional Contexts

Coming back to business contexts, the second part of the collection focuses on yet another kind of choice to be made by professionals: the choice of a name for their companies, brands and products.

Fiorenza Fischer's contribution gives an overview of product onomastics as a research domain and shows its importance for the external communication of companies. Her article is based on Gabriel's functional model of product names and focuses on the relationship between producers and consumers. Fischer gives vivid examples of the range of information transported by product names. At one end of the scale, the information transmitted by product names may only be comprehensible to the producer while being intransparent for the consumer. At the other end, however, product names may carry information for both the producer and the consumer.

Elwys de Stefani's contribution looks at product names from the perspective of the consumer, in their use and function during interactions rather than isolated from their situated context. In a supermarket in Italian Switzerland customers were filmed choosing products. Significant examples of these video recordings are presented and studied using Conversation Analysis methods. The analyses show that the product name may play a role in the decision making process of the potential customers, depending on their previous experiences. In order to achieve an adequate interpretation of the situation one has to take into consideration the non-verbal activities of the interactants.

Shifting the focus from the consumer to the producer, **Eva Martha Eckkrammer** devotes her contribution to ergatonymic elements in the pharmaconym, i.e., the appearance of the producer (or marketing authorisation holder or distributor) of a pharmaceutical as an element in its name. She shows that the formation of pharmaconyms is highly specific because in contrast to other product names they involve a large number of scientific elements, which make them less transparent/comprehensible for customers/patients: typical pharmaconyms include elements referring to the medical substance, the pathology or the therapeutic effect of the drug. Eckkrammer also shows which formation patterns the inclusion of names of companies in product names can be assigned to.

Sigrid Muselmann deals with the semantico-cultural elements in the names of Italian food products. Food names are generally traditional and conservative and have their roots in family names, place names, the name of the country (Italy), cultural elements, proper names, animal names, names of saints, etc. They can also contain foreign language elements. The author shows how these semantico-cultural elements trigger different associations in customers/recipients of different languages and cultures (e.g. Italy vs Germany). She suggests further studies to discover these interculturally different networks of associations, values and attitudes towards cultural-semantic elements in brand names.

In his contribution about the transformation of naming practices in the South African wine industry, **Bertie Neethling** starts off by outlining South Africa's wine production history. He mentions several languages that are used to name South African wines although they are not native African. He then points out that so far, a large part of South Africa's population has not been particularly interested in wine. The wine industry has realised this and is now trying to win over these customers by labeling the wines with African names. Neethling discusses the creation and introduction of African product names and gives a number of examples of names from African languages.

After this series of papers focusing on product names, a number of contributors center their research on the names of businesses. **Paula Sjöblom** studies the linguistic origins of Finnish company names. She first looks at them from a synchronic perspective, identifying acronyms, proper names, internationalisms, etc. Then she switches over to a diachronic approach and describes their linguistic origins. Sjöblom distinguishes monolingual, multilingual and universal names of companies. The universal names consist of international lexemes (especially in small companies), quasi-words (especially in large companies) and proper names, for which the language of origin is not important. Sjöblom then goes on to depict the diachronic changes since 1840. She shows that globalisation has led to a development from simple proper names and purely Finnish or Swedish appellatives towards internationally comprehensible names of companies, with an increase in the number and variety of languages used.

The formation of ergonyms, that is, the names of business companies and institutions, is motivated by different aspects, for example by the national history of a country. In a pilot study **Julia Kuhn** researches the ergonyms of two cities (Paris and Mexico DF) contrastively in view of their historical reference. One of the results of this study shows that Mexico's historic anthroponyms in ergonyms display a strong outwards-orientation. Only a small part of the ergonyms involving the names of persons refer to Mexican history. Some of the historic person names that feature in the Mexican ergonyms are names of artists. Kuhn's contribution extends her perspective to the whole country of Mexico and shows which names are used, who were the people behind them and which kinds of companies have taken these names.

The aim of **Holger Wochele's** paper is to achieve a synchronic and diachronic comparison of names of hotels in Romania and selected Italian regions. In both countries, hotels in cities and touristic coastal regions are predominantly named to refer to 'comfort', 'elites' and 'internationality'. In mountain regions, however, the hotel names more often refer to the local region itself. While in South Tyrol bilingual names or German and Ladinic names are common, other Italian regions with minority or regional languages (Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sicily) do not display this practice. In Romania, non-Romanian hotel names in minority languages are very rare. From a historical point of view, the radical changes in Romania's political history are also reflected in the naming of its hotels.

The study of language and naming choices in the context of professional and/or business communication has revealed itself to be an extremely rich and fertile field of linguistic research, of which the contributions in this volume allow but a small glimpse. The options for self-presentation of professional or business partners through the choice of a name and the choice of a language could be the subject of larger studies centred around certain professions, certain economic sectors, certain types of professional activities, etc. Furthermore, cross-cultural comparisons seem a very promising approach in this area. And last but not least, only very few research studies (except e.g. Neethling, Sjöblom, and Wochele in this volume) have looked at the phenomenon where our two thematic fields overlap, i.e. the choice of a language for the name of a business or a product.

Part I: Code Choice / Code Switching in Professional Contexts