

Economic decisions for language diversity at work

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The need of languages and their usage in the place of profession, work and life is as different as the associated functions of identity of these languages. In this context, the value or non-value of a language cannot simply be linked to the prestige of its standard version but depends on a complex and at the same time situational bundle of factors.

The individual but also societal usage of language is generally oriented towards the two modes of action - the purposeful action and the action directed to communication. The mode of the purposive-rational action is to be connected to the function of the symbols in Bühler's Organon Model. According to this model it should be aimed for the greatest scope using the least input of resources. Thus the optimisation is carried out in terms of an economy of communication. In this economy it is being searched within languages for ideal characteristics regarding an intended future state, as for example the economical scope. It is not the maximisation of the scope that is central within the action directed to communication and within the function of symbols and signals in Bühler's Organon Model but the maximisation of the individual and societal establishment of identity in contrast to others. This mode of action is central for the individual and collective establishment of identity.

The presentation illuminates the underlying motivation for economic decisions for language diversity at work – which is linked to different types of added values of multilingualism. For the illustration, examples of majority and minority languages and of marketing activities of international companies are selected from an interdisciplinary point of view. This interdisciplinary approach leads to an adaption of the BCG portfolio approach to the field of multilingualism. It could clarify systematically and theoretically the empirical results of the economy of language.

Keywords: Multilingualism, language economics, multilingual workplace

Introduction

During the last years we notice a creeping decline of the use of foreign languages in favor of the English. The advantage to speak English is obvious: you can use this language, or better said a variation of it, across Europe and almost the whole world. So, why should we struggle with talking French, Spanish or Chinese?

In this context, it is worth mentioning that in the European Union cultural and linguistic differentiations are regarded as a pillar of the union (cf. Art. 151, Para. 1 EU-Treaty – Treaty of Amsterdam). Indeed, the European political discourse of cultural and linguistic variety shows, e.g. in form of the *Euromosaic-Study* (Nelde/Weber 2002), that speakers of regional minority languages in contrast to speakers of generally national majority languages could not resort enough to social, political, economical and institutional structures of their first language, which would



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assure the existence, the relevance and the equality of their language in the country (Nelde/Strubell/Williams 1996: 1).

From this follows the thesis that purposeful function of communication of language overlays the notification-orientated function of communication (cf. Bossong 1995) and that the language use follows an economic diktat. Regarding the economic-linguistic perspective (Rutke 2000) the following question comes up: How does linguistic development proceed under the primacy of the economic view and can the economic value of a language – merely defined by its value at the workplace – define their development as well as social status?

This question was already followed up in scientific publications in the context of the multilingual facility research: Amongst others Grin demonstrates that persons with a flexible multilingualism earn more money and they also have better career prospects with corresponding mobility. He shows for example that in Switzerland according to the second language (e.g. Rhaeto-Romanic or English) the additional income of multilingual persons is about 7 respectively 15 %. According to his data this increase can be clearly higher in monolingual countries like France or USA than it is in the quadrilingual Switzerland (Grin 1999). The need of languages and their usage in the place of profession, work and life is as different (Lüdi 2001: 72) as the associated functions of identity of these languages. In this context, the value or non-value of a language cannot simply be linked to the prestige of its standard version but depends on a complex and at the same time situational bundle of factors. Enlargements of the EU could even intensify the effect that national language communities come in a similar circumstance like regional language communities, although the language represents an official language of the EU. And on a global level all languages in comparison with English will get in this "minority situation". The ubiquity of minority problems (Bossong 1995: 36) is consequently a primal constant of a linguistic contact like the resulting asymmetric of the contact situation. Therefore an analysis of real majority-minority situations can discover the advantages and disadvantages of a language.

In the following the contribution is divided into two main strands. Firstly, it develops a model to explain the decision making for languages not only at the workplace. Therefore, the weight of the economical "balance of power" between majority and minority languages in selected countries will be examined from an interdisciplinary perspective. The portfolio approach is being selected in order to try systematically and theoretically to clarify the empirical results of the economy of language, which is applicable to different situations of multilingualism (Weber 1996, 1997; Nelde/Weber 2000). It is therefore a matter of finding empirical evidence that regional languages act as anchors in local cultures whereas common languages such as English are means of communication maximization on an international and global level. Finally, the clarifications link to the eco-linguistics factors in the non-linearity of language loss (Nelde / Weber 2002a), to show that a functionalization of language

use and the re-orientation to their identity function are also parallel processes such as globalization and regionalization – Utility and futility of languages would be relative then and language would be a secondary symbol of subjacent socio-economic differences (Nelde / Weber 1998).

Secondly, the contribution gives a short view into the multilingual marketing management of companies by describing the multilingual needs within the external communication (advertising) of companies acting on a global scale.

Both strands combine different scientific perspectives. The theoretical approach of this contribution is based on three approaches or different paradigms of action:

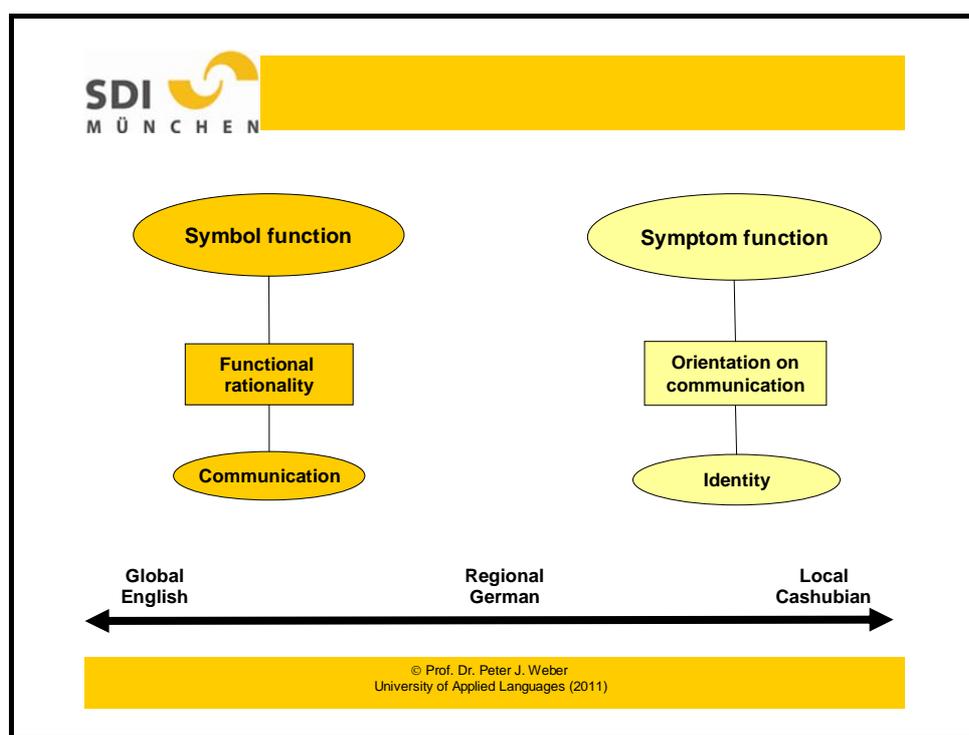
- Economics follows the paradigm of rationality: Therefore, we have to look on the rational basis of language decisions of persons and companies.
- Contactlinguistics follows the paradigm of understanding. This is the reason why we have to look about the best communication of best understanding – in this way also on emotion-based decisions.
- Linguistics of economy follows a kind of mixture: In this focus, we look about the best localisation of communication, e.g. from a global company on local markets. This we call Glocal Marketing-Management.

1 Deciding the language diversity at work

1.1 Functions of language and Portfolio Analysis

The individual use of language generally follows the two ways of action, either in terms of function-driven action or in terms actions which focus mutual understanding. Any actions following purpose of function can be combined with the symbolic function according to the Organon-model by Bühler. It implies that with the smallest possible use of resources the widest coverage has to be reached. So an optimization takes place in a sense of communication-economy. Regarding this term according to languages it is the search of optimal characteristics concerning desired status, like for example the economic scope of a language (cf. Coulmas 1992). On the other hand there is the use of language with the purpose of mutual understanding: here the focus is not on maximizing its scope but instead on an individual and social creation of identity and even maximizing this impact in order to differentiate from others. This way of action is found in Bühler’s Organon model in the functions of language as symptoms and signals.

Figure 1. Functions of language.



Status and prestige of a language play a significant role in its maintaining its meaning in a scientific context. Therefore it may be crucial in a national-regional context speaking a standard version of a National Language. This may be the case for instance in an employment-finding process. An example: before the political change the national language in the Baltic States was Russian, with the EU-extension it may be one of the official languages of the EU in the future. Regarding the European context in these countries raises a complex situation of official languages whose meaning is subject to a time-dependent political change. Thus German was an important official language in many regions before the Second World War. After World War II the Russian language took this position. Today English, the global Lingua Franca, appears as regional official language in addition to both.

The rational mode of language can underlie economic acts or vice versa the mode focusing mutual understanding can underlie communicative acting. A unilateral consideration of any mode of language, be it the rational one or the one facing mutual understanding, only originates single-sided explanatory models about the "condition" of a language or language community. The benefit of speaking a language has two dimensions which can be measured empirically in different variables: On the one hand advantages can be found in the economic idea of the human being as "homo oeconomicus" who aspires to a certain solution by using communication, e.g. the global marketing of a product range. On the other hand it lies in the idea of



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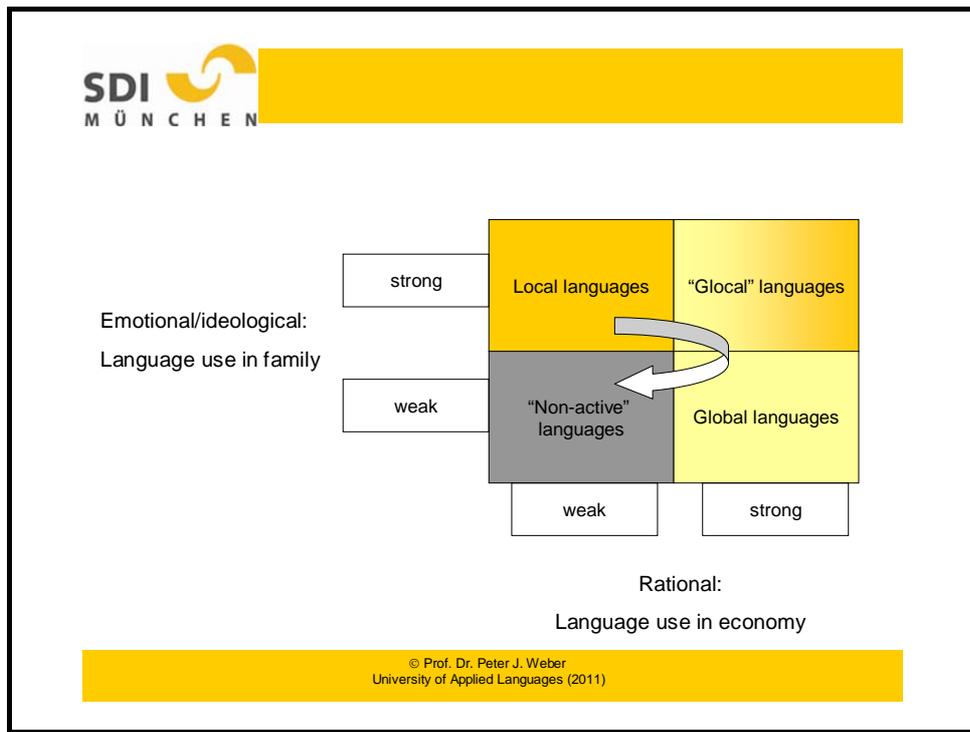
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Enlightenment on human being as an educated person. Here the function of communication as a source of identity is focused, for example regionally settling down as a product manager with the own family in a new language community. Languages cover both dimensions in a relative dependence to other languages whereas dominant languages show the tendency to fulfill both dimensions: Thus German language in Bautzen shows both dimensions whereas the Sorbian language shows the tendency of being a language of identity. According to this, personality development is characterized by the possibility of designing several linguistic identities which can be implemented and passed through at the same time.

In order to measure the added value of multilingualism in certain situations it makes sense to make a strategic approach with the help of the portfolio method. For analyzing the situations of languages an adaption of the portfolio method has been made. This took place by a focusing on those dimensions which represent in a broader sense “potential of success” for a language or a group of languages. The purpose of function in the use of a language can be measured in the variable “use in business context”. The purpose of mutual understanding for example can be measured with the variable “use inside families”.

In a portfolio analysis the social levels of the analysis orient themselves on geographic conceptualizations. According to these, languages can be put in relationship to one another with regard to their local, regional, world-regional and global use. Therewith it is possible that a language is spoken for example regionally widely spread and frequently, but is only used rarely on a global level (for instance German).

Figure 2. Portfolio analysis.



Regarding a choice of language driven by purpose of function the four sections of the portfolio analysis can be described as follows: Here the social classification of a language is to be seen synchronic as well as diachronic. It also depends on the chosen geographic levels of analysis which means the classification of the language can change over a period of time. Looking back on the terms introduced by Bühler the highest mark of the language function as symptom can be found in glocal languages. Nevertheless there is a high risk of dropping into /languages not used in everyday life but still being re-vitalized and re-created by academic institutions. Glocal languages are in danger of turning into these “not-used” languages against which neither a family-focused nor an economic base is proven. Instead “not-used” languages are nearly exclusively cultivated by culturally engaged groups. On the other hand the function of identity is missing in the global languages or *Linguae Francae*, like English or Spanish. That exposes them to the risk of being turned more academic because the identity-offering function and passing them on traditionally, e.g. if the economic component ceases, are missing. As an example we can observe this with the use of German in the current EU enlargement countries if the younger generation tends stronger to English as the traditional “language of advancement” than to German. The local languages usually consist of regional and minority languages but also of “small national languages” seen in a “world-regional” or global context. All of these are characterized by a strong function of creating identity yet only show low economic benefit within the scope of a geographic level of analysis.

According to that a language loss impends as soon as the component of creating identity drops. In connection with this consideration it is also possible to think of approaching these categories to the model of Abstand- und Ausbausprache (Kloss 1976, 1987). In this case local languages would be “Ausbausprachen” and global languages equivalent to “Abstandsprachen”.

At the very end, the linguistic diversity of workplaces depends to a great extent on the different linguistic needs in the public sphere and how these needs are articulated by the different players like companies, employers, employees, state etc.

1.2 Empirical data for the portfolio analysis

In the following it shall be shown how a portfolio analysis can look like by means of selected languages of the EU. The data used goes back on the EUROMOSAIC II study conducted by the Research Centre on Multilingualism in Brussels 2004. The frame work of the research was the following (Research Centre on Multilingualism 2004):

- 10 countries joining the EU on 1 May 2004
- Method: Desk and field research
- Language Use Surveys (LUS) in six countries: Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia
- Languages: German, Russian, Polish, Kashubian, Hungarian and Italian
- Data: around 2000 questionnaires (regional languages speakers between 30 and 50 years old)
- Data gathered in the following domains: language competence, family and society, everyday life, education, business world, media and leisure and identity

Fur the purpose of the portfolio analysis the data for the domains family and society and business world were re-analyzed. This portfolio analysis therefore gives a selective and synchronous insight into the language situation, similar to the portfolio analysis of the current situation of a product or service.

In order to make possible a comparability of all regional language groups in the variables *usage in family* and *usage in economy*, the age group of the 30-year-old until the 50-year-old was included in the portfolio analysis for selected regional language groups. Whilst reflecting the portfolio one has to take into account that it is only a synchronous period of time which interrelate languages as well as language groups relatively. Changing the axes or language groups can create a totally different picture. This means that only statements about current opinions on the situation of the



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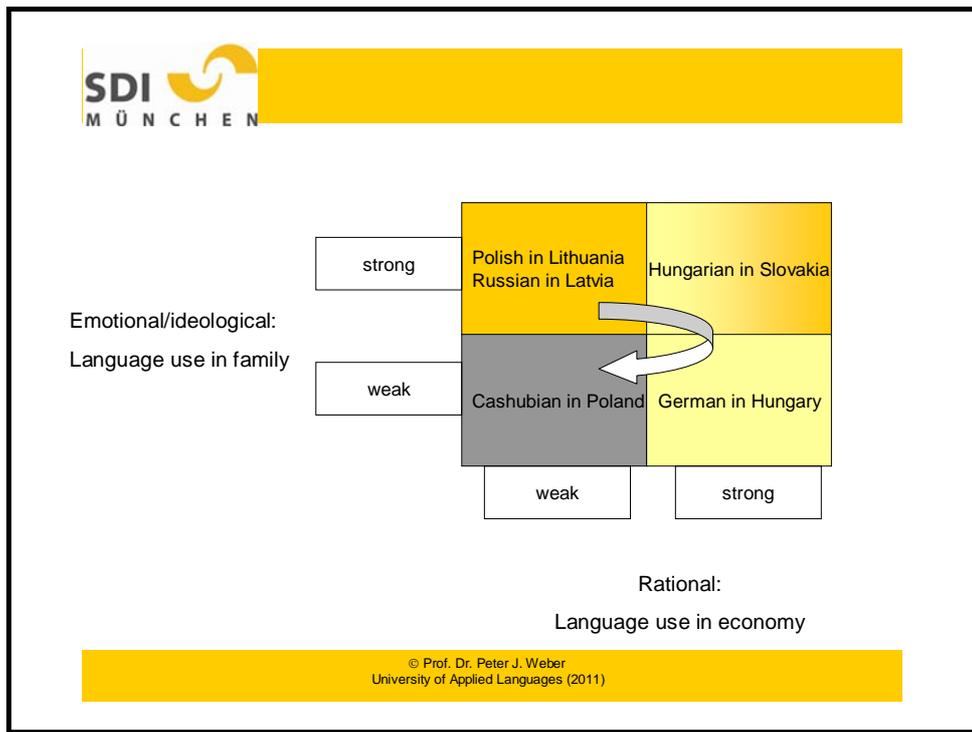
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regional language groups can be made because an absolute classification is neither wanted nor possible.

Figure 3. Portfolio analysis for selected regional languages.



Concerning the selected regional language groups one can state from the portfolio comparison that only the German language in a regional context assumes the role of a global language for the German-speaking population in Hungary. In other words, the scope of the languages, which are called regional languages in most of these countries, is limited. However, this does not have to be applicable to their standard versions as for example in the case of the German or Russian language. Also, it should be emphasized that the only stateless language *Cashubian* neither receives a distinct symbolic nor symptomatic function – at least in current opinions of the regional language group. At that point it should be searched for reasons in comparison to the stateless regional languages of the old EU-countries of which a few at least have a distinct function of identity (cf. Nelde/Weber 1998).

Polish in Lithuania is a very intensely used language in private surroundings. One receives an image of a regional language group that more or less stands its ground as an independent and autonomous group which strongly appreciates its culture and origins. Besides, as a lingua franca Russian takes up the central position as the third language which is historically reasoned – the western interlanguage English is more or less unimportant in the statements of these regional language groups.

In these short characterizations it also becomes clear that Russian, German and English take a special position as regional global languages for the 30- to 50 year-olds. This position mainly results from its distinct function as symbol. The empiric

studies show for example that in the chosen countries a significance of the English language as studied third language (after the regional first and the second national language) has increased in the group of 30 to 50 year olds. One exception in this context is only constituted by Lithuania where Russian still keeps this function. Altogether this indicates a trend in which purpose of function is increasing in the choice of language also in contexts dealing with regional languages. This orientation towards purpose of function appears in the choice of language at school, in professional life and in the media as well as in the New Media. Nevertheless local and “not-used” languages seem to offer no application possibilities in this field of adaption. Yet this purpose of function has to be mapped on a temporarily continuum in which the benefit of speaking a language is varying along the generations. This is proven by the three *Linguae Francae* German, Russian and English in the Eastern countries. All three languages in this area have in common that they currently represent global languages though having thoroughly been glocal languages in the past: German until the Second World War and Russian until joining the EU.

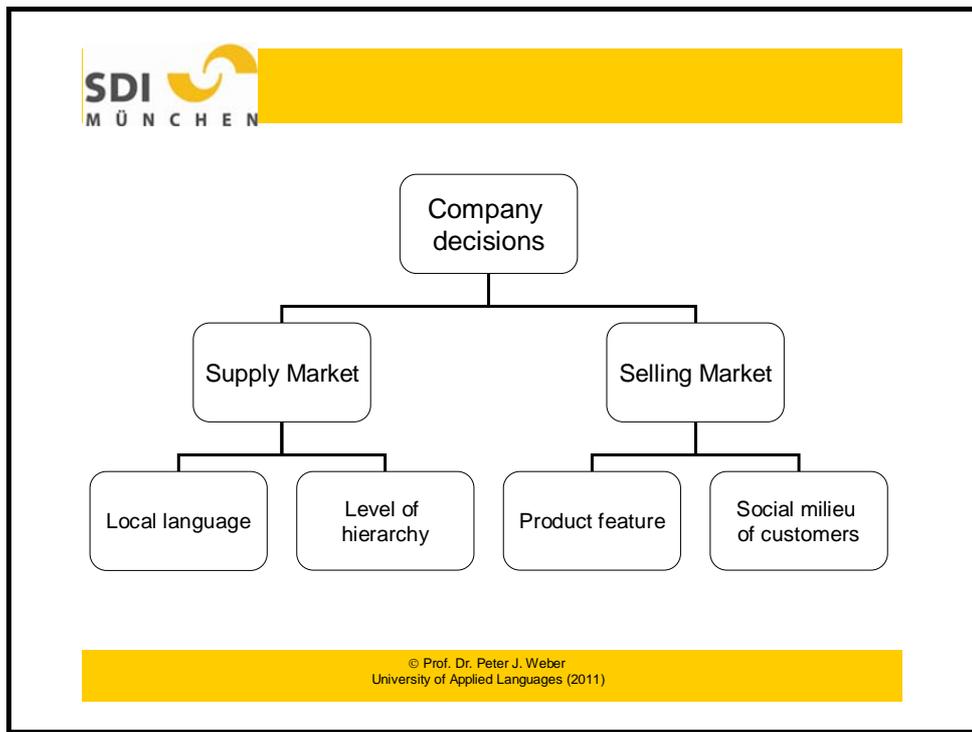
Considering all the data – also from other border regions – we can state in general the following: The added value of multilingualism is not absolutely measurable but the result of the value of different languages in different individual and/or social situations. This leads us to the second main strand of this contribution where we look into the external communication of companies.

2 Embedding different languages into the communication process of the company

2.1 Glocal Marketing Management

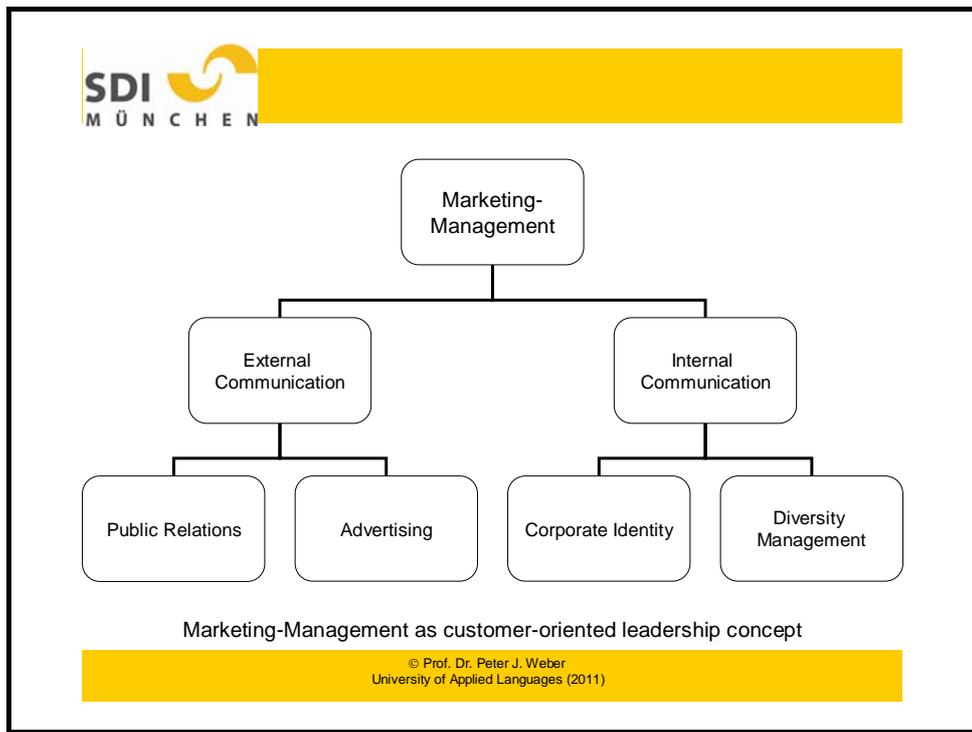
If we argue in the context of companies we have to distinguish between two markets companies are working in: the supply and the selling market. On both markets, languages decisions follow clear rational reasons.

Figure 4. Decision making in companies.



For reasons of productivity and economy companies have to work with the best local human resources – they are dependent on skills but also on languages used in the area and in the company. This brings in the level of hierarchy. Employees at a higher level have to speak the local language for acceptance within the departments, the company language and a global language.

Figure 5. The Marketing Management.



On the selling market the language chosen depends strongly on the market where the product is sold, but also from the product feature and at this place from the social milieu the customers are coming from. In the following our focus lies on the external communication where we can see the need of different languages to act on a global market.

From a theoretical and practical point of view the distinction between International Marketing and Glocal Marketing is very important for the understanding of (language) diversity at the workplace:

“International marketing (IM) or global marketing refers to marketing carried out by companies overseas or across national borderlines. This strategy uses an extension of the techniques used in the home country of a firm. It refers to the firm-level marketing practices across the border including market identification and targeting, entry mode selection, marketing mix, and strategic decisions to compete in international markets. According to the American Marketing Association (AMA) "international marketing is the multinational process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives.“ (Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_marketing).

For the economic decisions for (language) diversity at the work place the adaption to the Glocal Marketing would be very important: Glocal marketing (GM) refers to marketing carried out by companies adapting different languages and cultures on different supply and selling markets. This strategy uses an extension of the common marketing techniques to the cultural dimensions. It refers to the firm-level marketing practices across the border including market identification and targeting, entry mode selection, marketing mix, and strategic decisions to compete in glocal markets. Glocal markets are typical national markets riddled with global elements. The more a product is known on a global level the more it needs global characteristics and advertising, the more it is emotional attractive the more it needs to be addressed on a local level in view of language and culture.

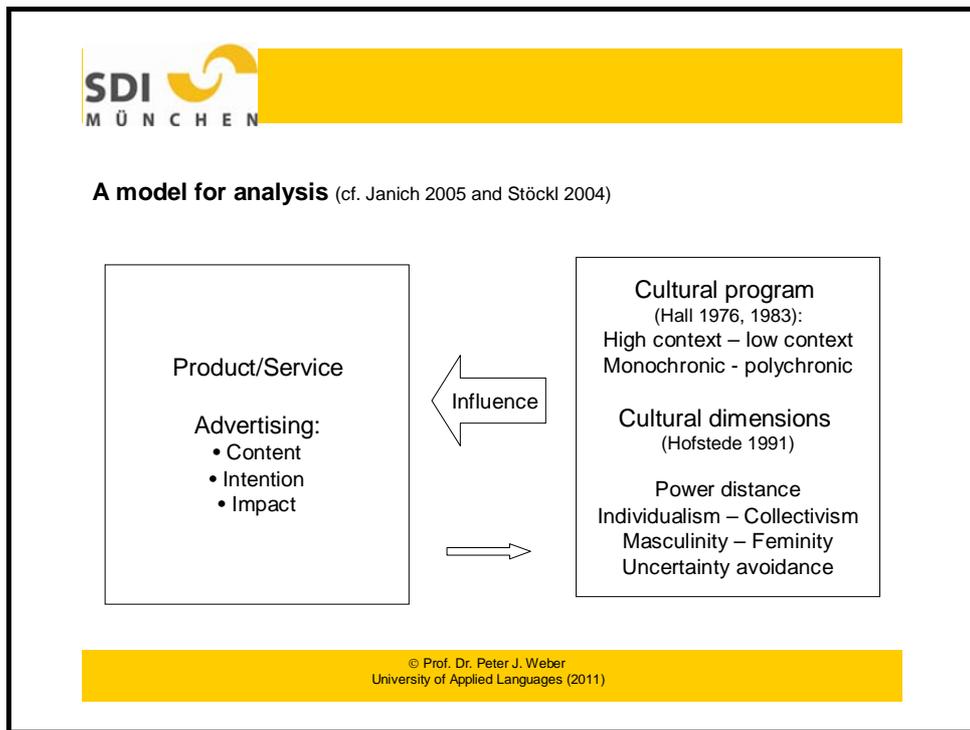
2.2 Example for culture and language oriented marketing

Following Rao (2008²) three main strands could be distinguished for the language and cultural related marketing:

- Ethnic Consumer Behaviors: designing a culture bound marketing mix
- Majority versus minority related consumer behaviors: adapting the marketing mix to growing diversity in the society
- Organizational cultures and relationships: adapting the companies as learning organizations to the multilingual and multicultural markets

Our main research focus lies in a further question how external communication depends on different culture and languages. In this case, the companies need multilingual workforce to cope with the challenges of the markets. The following figure shows roughly the research frame work we are working in:

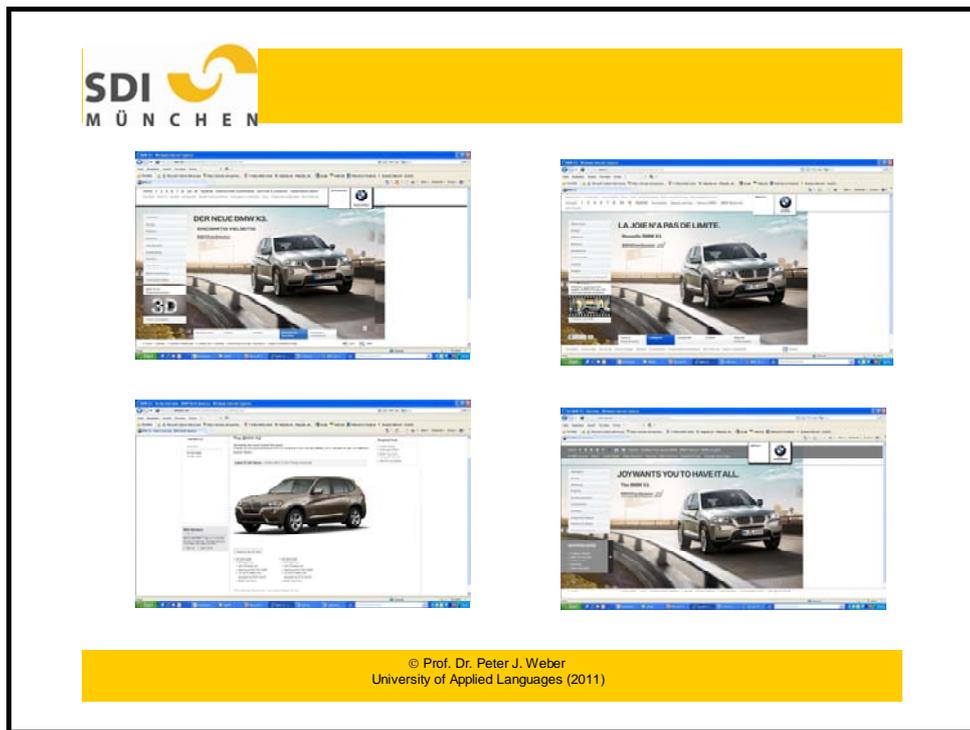
Figure 6. Research framework.



By analyzing different advertising messages we could summarize that the two basic parts of every advertising message are language bound: the message and the reason for benefit while the basic message seems to be language free. An example are the BMW websites in different cultures. If we look at four different cultures following the mentioned model we could describe them as follows:

- France: high context, polychronic, large power distance, individualist, feminine and strong uncertainty avoidance
- China: high context, polychronic, high power distance, collectivist, masculine and weak uncertainty avoidance
- USA: low context, monochronic, small power distance, individualist, masculine and weak uncertainty avoidance
- Germany: low context, monochronic, small power distance, individualist, masculine and strong uncertainty avoidance

Figure 7. Language-oriented analysis of advertising.



A deep view on the websites shows that the advertising for the model X3 is more emotional concerning culture and language in France and China than in the US and in Germany. The production of websites in this language bound way would be impossible with human capital without disposing of language and culture related knowledge.

Outlook

In general, language diversity at the workplace depends merely from the economic objectives of the companies. If language diversity helps to reach these objectives it would be also in the focus of the management in companies. In this light, languages are more a tool than an added value in the production chain of the companies.

The research within the Marketing Management of companies shows also that international marketing focuses on the strategies of the companies on the supply market. They are linked to diversity management because of the need for multilingual and multicultural employees. Glocal marketing – as an alternative approach to International Marketing – focuses on the selling market. They are linked to the concept of mass customization to customize products and services to a very broad market by respecting local, regional and national distinctions. Overall, the decisions are very rational by respecting the emotional side of the markets where companies are operating – the emotional side is closely linked to language and culture.

In summary, we will see in the future one lingua franca for the world and a plurality of glocal linguae francae for the customization of companies in different regions of the world. From an economic point of view it could be argued that the future of companies depends also from good decisions concerning the language and cultural diversity on the supply and the selling market.

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