

## Gained in translation

### Science at the multilingual crossroads

What was still a hazy idea in the wake of the 2008 EMWA conference in Barcelona dedicated to translation has come true: Here's the first chapter of our Medical Translation section in *TWS*.

Challenging as cross-cultural communication can be, content and nuances may occasionally fall by the wayside as facts, thoughts, and opinions are transferred from one language and culture into another. This is what is commonly referred to as being 'lost in translation'. (As a first-year translation student, I thought it referred to myself being lost in a maze of translation, so I guess the phrase has a dual meaning.)

But there's another, much brighter, side to the coin of translation that is less frequently looked at: With translation being a cross-cultural communication process that does not simply transpose words but, above all, the culture they rep-

resent, it requires us to take a very close look at both the source and target cultures and to attempt to be at home in one and in the other. There's a tremendous lot to be gained from looking at a 'foreign' culture so closely, from attempting to understand—or making ourselves understood to—a partner in dialogue who speaks a different language. The title 'gained in translation' is meant to highlight this side of the coin.

I hope for this section to be an information exchange for translators, a platform for readers and buyers of translation, a forum of multicultural science communication, and a place for debate. So—you're warmly invited to let yourselves be heard.

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## English as the lingua franca of science: A translators view on what's lost—and what's gained—in translation

By Gabi Berghammer

**There is no national science just as there is no national multiplication table; what is national is no longer science**  
*Anton Chekhov*

A few months back, I worked on writing a peer-reviewed publication for one of my clients, who, like me, is operating in a primarily German-speaking environment. The study to be reported was a survey conducted in a number of Central and Eastern European countries, with the investigators representing six European languages.

The question as to which language to write the manuscript in was therefore easily decided: To enable communication between all participating countries, we chose not to publish in German but in English. The website of the journal we had selected for submission, the official organ of an association representing German-speaking medical specialists, stated that both German and English manuscripts were acceptable.

What followed were a couple of joint sessions with the client during which we worked on the text, every time polishing our phrases and sentences to even more precisely express what needed to be said and sometimes even bargaining over nuances of terminology and style, particular-

ly when it came to the more political aspects of the publication. Ultimately, we submitted.

In due course, we received the final proofs of our manuscript. The satisfaction normally felt when faced with the almost published product of one's labour quickly gave way to astonishment: Was this really our paper? Well, yes, it was—but it had come in a German version instead of the English one we had submitted.

A few phone calls later we knew what had happened: the publisher had only recently taken over the journal. The editorial board had decided to turn the previously bilingual German-English journal into an exclusively German-language medium, but had forgotten to update their website accordingly. So they had our English publication translated into German. Also, rather than sending us the translation for review, they sent the proof for final approval.

Being a translator by training, I would have preferred to do the translation myself, particularly considering the time we had put into discussing and carefully wording specific text sections. I remained calm and canny in the face of this mishap, because I did not want to jeopardize the urgently awaited publication. Also, the editorial staff were very forthcoming and helpful.

Yet, this unexpected switch from English to German meant two things: first, publication would be delayed. Translation carries the potential for misinterpretation, requiring a thorough quality check on the part of the client or author. The final German version of the manuscript would then have to undergo an additional round of approval by all German-speaking authors. Second, ending up with a German publication instead of the originally planned English one meant that its international visibility would be reduced.

The manuscript has meanwhile been published and everyone is happy. Nevertheless, this rather unusual story provided me with some food for thought on the challenges of translation and of communicating science results in a multilingual world dominated by English as the lingua franca.

### Lost in translation

We had invested a fair amount of time to carefully word the manuscript, and there we were receiving a translation for final approval we did not even know had been commissioned. Did the translator really get all the nuances right? The translation came without a single ‘translator’s note’, something I always find rather suspicious. Can a translator really transpose a highly specialized text without having to at least comment on a single decision taken during translation?

In brief, the paper sought to obtain information on the profile of patients with inflammatory rheumatic diseases, their previous and current treatments, and the proportion of patients treated with conventional drugs but considered by their physicians to be eligible for treatment with a comparatively new class of drugs referred to as biologics.

### Terminology

To be fair—the translation was not all bad, and most of the terminology was translated correctly. However, there were a number of terminological inaccuracies (Table 1).

### Terminological inaccuracies

For example, the German text used *biologische Mittel* as a translation for the class of agents that were the focus of the survey, i.e., ‘biological agents’ or ‘biologics’. Not only does the German word *Mittel* bring to mind some natural or herbal ‘remedy’ instead of a class of highly sophisticated drugs, *biologische Mittel* is simply not the technical term used for biologics, which is *Biologika*.

Also, the text talked about contraindications to prescribing biologics, one of which is ‘a history of or current malignancy’. This was translated into German as *eine überstandene oder aktuelle Malignität*. Even a cursory look through the Summary of Product Characteristics would have shown that what was meant was *eine überstandene oder aktuell bestehende Tumorerkrankung*. Although both ‘malignancy’ and *Malignität* can refer to any disease tending to become progressively worse and resulting in death, the meaning of the German *Malignität* appears to be more general still, referring to anything from cancer to epileptic seizures or catatonia.

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With our manuscript originating in Austria, translating ‘specialized clinic’ as *Spezialprechstunde* was not quite fitting because this word is not used in Austria. Why translate ‘clinic’ with *Sprechstunde* instead of the more straightforward *Ambulanz*, which would have resulted in *Spezialambulanz*, a term used in both language areas.

### Leaving source-language terms in the translation

Leaving English source-language terms in the translation often simply is an easy way out for those who do not take an effort to think about a fitting term in the target language. There are numerous English terms that have entered medical parlance in German, such as *Compliance*, *First-pass-Effekt*, or *Intent-to-treat*, and have become accepted technical terms. Generally, however, why not attempt to find a target-language equivalent for a source-language term? For example, why use *Score* in German when there are good words to use instead, such as *Wert* or *Index*? Why translate ‘Cox-2 inhibitors’ as *Cox-2-Inhibitoren* and not as *Cox-2-Hemmer*?

### Phraseology

In terms of phraseology—in my opinion the more challenging aspect of any medical translation—the translation had some noteworthy shortcomings. For example, the translation contained a number of unusual collocations and unidiomatic translations.

### Unusual collocations

A ‘mild disease course’ was translated as *milder Krankheitsverlauf*, an Anglicism which should more appropriately have been translated as *leichter Verlauf*.

Throughout the text, the German translation used *leiden unter* instead of *leiden an*, the former meaning to ‘suffer under’ and the latter to ‘suffer from’. Whereas ‘suffering from’ a disease is an objective statement, ‘suffering under’ refers to anything causing subjective suffering, such as pain. Patients may have a disease they ‘suffer from’ but they may not necessarily also ‘suffer under’.

### Unidiomatic translations

One of the major temptations to resist when translating is to translate word by word, more often than not resulting in unidiomatic text smacking of translation. Translators must dissociate themselves from the source language—free themselves of the grip of the source text—and find adequate and idiomatic means of expression in the target language.

For example, the phrase *800 Patienten wurden als geeignet für die Therapie mit Biologika eingestuft* reflects the word order of the English source text and should more appropriately have read something like *800 Patienten kamen nach Auffassung ihres behandelnden Arztes für eine Therapie mit Biologika in Frage*.

At other times, sticking more closely to the source text may be just fine. For example, why translate ‘median disease

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duration' as *Medianwert der Krankheitsdauer* instead of the verbatim *mediane Krankheitsdauer*?

The same goes for the phrase 'a score of 10 indicates very severe symptoms', which was translated as *eine Punktzahl von 10 besagt, dass der Patient unter sehr schweren Symptomen leidet*. Choosing a translation closer to the source text, such as *ein Wert von 10 steht für sehr schwere Symptomatik* would have resulted in a more idiomatic and 50% shorter phrase.

**Nuances lost in translation**

Finally, some nuances of the source text were not adequately transposed into the target language. For example, the phrase 'one limitation of our study' was translated as

*die Aussagekraft unserer Studie ist insofern eingeschränkt*, suggesting that the entire study did not allow reliable conclusions to be drawn. What was meant, obviously, was that there was one specific aspect of the study that could not be sufficiently answered.

To translate 'the results of our study reflect' with *unsere Studie belegt* is again overstating the point. The original did not say 'proves', a word hardly ever used in reporting research results, knowing that no single study ever 'proves' anything. The simple word *zeigen* would have done the job.

Inaccuracies such as those presented above may appear negligible when looked at individually, but taken together, they can seriously distort the character or even message of a text. Our text was easily identifiable as a translation.

Table 1 Translation decisions

Source text	Original translation	Suggested translation
<b>Terminological inaccuracies</b>		
Numerous recent reports have convincingly demonstrated the efficacy and tolerability of <i>biological agents</i> in the symptomatic treatment of rheumatic diseases.	Viele aktuelle Berichte belegen die Wirksamkeit und Verträglichkeit von <i>biologischen Mitteln</i> zur symptomatischen Behandlung rheumatischer Erkrankungen überzeugend.	Die Wirksamkeit und gute Verträglichkeit der <i>Biologika</i> in der symptomatischen Behandlung rheumatischer Erkrankungen ist durch zahlreiche Studien überzeugend belegt.
Other reasons given included a history of tuberculosis, good efficacy of current therapy, a history of or current <i>malignancy</i> , or the desire of the patient to get pregnant.	Andere angegebene Gründe waren Tuberkulose in der Vorgeschichte, gute Wirksamkeit der jetzigen Therapie, eine überstandene oder aktuelle <i>Malignität</i> oder Kinderwunsch.	Weitere Gründe waren Tuberkulose in der Krankengeschichte, gute Wirksamkeit der aktuellen Therapie, eine überstandene oder aktuell bestehende <i>Tumorerkrankung</i> oder Kinderwunsch.
1200 patients had consulted <i>specialized clinics</i> .	1200 Patienten hatten <i>Spezialsprechstunden</i> besucht.	1200 Patienten hatten <i>Spezialambulanzen</i> aufgesucht.
<b>Leaving source-language terms</b>		
A score of 10 indicates very severe symptoms.	Ein <i>Score</i> von 10 steht für schwere Symptome.	Ein <i>Wert</i> von 10 steht für sehr schwere Symptomatik.
<b>Unusual collocations</b>		
The course of the disease may range from <i>mild</i> to severe.	Die Krankheit kann <i>mild</i> bis schwer verlaufen.	Die Krankheit kann einen <i>leichten</i> bis schweren Verlauf nehmen.
Overall, 600 patients had <i>suffered</i> or were suffering <i>from</i> enthesopathies.	Insgesamt <i>litten</i> 600 Patienten <i>unter</i> Enthesiopathien oder hatten früher unter ihnen gelitten.	Insgesamt <i>litten</i> 600 Patienten früher oder aktuell <i>an</i> Enthesiopathien.
<b>Unidiomatic translations</b>		
A total of 800 patients surveyed were <i>considered eligible for treatment</i> .	Insgesamt 800 Patienten <i>wurden als geeignet für die Therapie eingestuft</i> .	Insgesamt kamen 800 Patienten <i>nach Auffassung ihres behandelnden Arztes für eine Therapie mit Biologika in Frage</i> .
An <i>important criterion for considering</i> the use of biologics is...	Ein <i>wichtiges Kriterium für die Entscheidung für</i> die Therapie mit biologischen Mitteln ist...	Ein <i>wichtiges Entscheidungskriterium für</i> eine Biologika-Behandlung ist...
<i>Median disease duration</i> ranged from 5 to 10 years.	Der <i>Medianwert der Krankheitsdauer</i> schwankte zwischen 5 und 10 Jahren.	Die <i>mediane Krankheitsdauer</i> lag zwischen 5 und 10 Jahren.
A score of 0 signifies no symptoms and a score of 10 indicates very severe symptoms.	Ein <i>Score</i> von 0 steht für keine Symptome, <i>während eine Punktzahl von 10 besagt, dass der Patient unter sehr schweren Symptomen leidet</i> .	Ein <i>Wert</i> von 0 steht für keine, <i>ein Wert von 10 für sehr schwere Symptomatik</i> .
<b>Nuances lost in translation</b>		
One <i>limitation of our study</i> is that...	Die <i>Aussagekraft unserer Studie ist insofern eingeschränkt</i> , als...	Eine <i>Einschränkung unserer Studie</i> liegt darin, dass...
Overall, the results of our study <i>reflect</i> the willingness of physicians to prescribe biologicals in a high proportion of their patients.	Insgesamt <i>belegt</i> unsere Studie die Bereitschaft der Ärzte, einem hohen Anteil ihrer Patienten eine Biologika-Therapie zu verschreiben.	Insgesamt <i>zeigt</i> unsere Studie die grundsätzliche Bereitschaft der befragten Ärzte, einem hohen Anteil ihrer Patienten eine Biologika-Therapie zu verschreiben.

One of the obvious conclusions to be drawn is that every outsourced translation needs to undergo careful revision, particularly when working with translators one does not (yet) know. To yield the best results, every translation should be considered a cooperative effort [1] between the translator and the client or author and, ideally, between a linguist and a subject-matter expert.

Also, selecting a professional translator with a sound linguistic, procedural, and medical background who is capable of reading between the lines to not only translate words but implied meaning is essential. Being among the first critical readers of the source text, a well-versed translator will often spot inconsistencies or point out missing links, providing additional value.

However, I found the unintended switch from English to German remarkable in yet another way.

### English—the lingua franca of science

It highlighted many of the challenges non-English-speaking authors face when entering the international scientific arena. For scientists whose native language is not English, one of the first questions is “What language will I publish in?”

In our case, having to publish in German instead of English meant two things: First, it made the paper inaccessible to those co-authors who had no command of German. Second, dissemination of a German paper is limited to a comparatively small language area.

Since the end of World War II, there has been a consistent increase in the proportion of scientific papers written in English, paralleled by a decrease in the use of other languages. What about the role of German in scientific reporting? Isn't the commitment of a journal to publish in a particular national language a step in the right direction towards maintaining multilingualism?

### Loss of cultural diversity?

The hegemony of English is an indisputable but oft-deplored fact.

With language and culture so intricately intertwined, many are concerned that the supremacy of English will lead to a loss of cultural diversity. Complex systems are more adaptable to change [2]. Diversity enables society to draw on a large pool of different views, strategies, and behaviours, unleashing society's creative potential and leading to innovation [3]. Losing this diversity may compromise the ‘health of human society’ [2].

On a socio-political note one might argue that, as vernacular languages cease to function as languages of science, one of the main achievements of the era of enlightenment, that of replacing Latin as the prevailing language of science with the language of the people to enable them to participate in public discourse may be reversed and science may again become elitist [4, 5].

Also, increasing and uncritical internationalization may lead to terms for new concepts simply being unavailable in

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national languages, degrading our mother tongues to regional dialects used only to fulfil general daily functions, but not in learned speech [4].

While these arguments are most certainly true and relevant, the advantages of one common language of science are obvious.

### Lingua franca—not a novel concept

Science has always been dominated by one or few languages. The first centres of learning were located in Greece, and Greek dominated the medical writing of the time. When Greece was absorbed by the Roman Empire in the second century AD, the centres of learning moved to Egypt, and medical texts were translated primarily into Arabic. However, Greek continued to dominate teaching and research for centuries. Between 1000 and 1800, Latin was the main medium of teaching and learning. By 1800, Latin had been replaced almost entirely by local languages. However, having retained a strong Greco-Latin terminological core [6] with a smattering of Arabic, all Western languages of medicine still reflect all of these historical influences.

Throughout history, therefore, dominance in a particular aspect of culture has had direct repercussions on language. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, German was still a prerequisite language of the scientific community, not least because of the outstanding achievements of scientists like Koch, Billroth, or Röntgen. Medical journals such as *Acta Medica Scandinavica* published articles in German, and the *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift* enjoyed a wide readership in Japan [7].

World War II changed this picture fundamentally, resulting not only in the emigration of much of the German-speaking scientific community, among them Carl Djerassi, Albert Einstein, or Eric Kandel, to name only a selected few. Also, the post-war period was characterized by strong anti-German sentiments and a lack of economic prospects.

As a result of the rise of the USA to the position of a world power after 1945 and its dominant role in science, favoured, as we have seen, by the political developments in Europe in the first half of the century, publishing research results in English today is the only way to gain wide visibility and to actively participate in international scientific discourse [8].

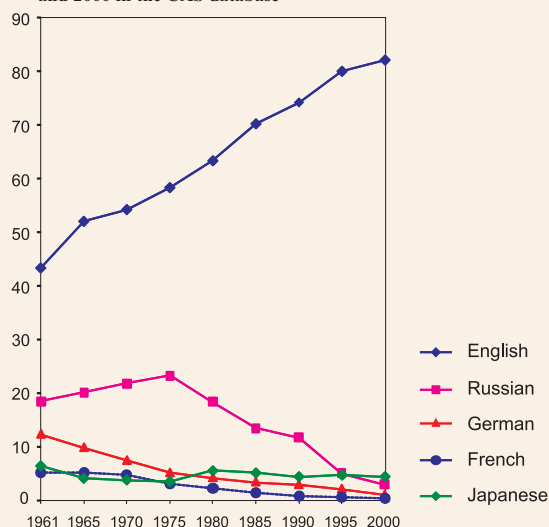
### Increase in scientific papers written in English

One bibliometric study based on information retrieved from the Chemical Abstract Service (CAS) database showed that the proportion of English publications in the area of chemistry increased from 54% in 1970 to 82% in 2000 [9]. At the same time, the proportion of publications in other languages decreased (Figure 1).

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**Figure 1** Proportion of major languages in journal papers between 1961 and 2000 in the CAS database

Adapted with permission from Table 1 in [9].

Between 1970 and 2000, the proportion of English publications originating in non-English-speaking countries increased from 31% to 58%. The study also looked at the proportions of English papers originating in a given country. For example, the share of English papers written by French scientists increased from 16% in 1970 to 93% in 2000.

### Advantages of a unifying language of science

For readers, the advantages of this development, which is likely to be generalisable to other areas of scientific research, are that more than 80% of publications are accessible to readers with a command of English. As a result, non-English speaking scientists have to learn but one foreign language instead of many, facilitating faster distribution of knowledge and preventing duplication of work [9].

For authors, the use of English means that their research will be available to a much wider audience. The international discussion and exchange this fosters is likely to be a motivating factor stimulating further research [9]. Also, the use of a common language is one prerequisite for international peer-review to function.

Similar figures come from a report by the information scientist Eugene Garfield. In the late 1990s, the Pasteur Institute in Paris decided to no longer publish its *Annales de l'Institut Pasteur* in French, but to switch to English. Whereas in 1973 about 15% of manuscripts had been submitted in English, close to 100% of articles in 1987 were English. What followed was an uproar among both the French media and politicians, with *Le Monde* even proposing that this change sounded “the death-knell for French-language science” [8, 10].

In Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Scandinavia, decisions in favour of English as the prime

language of scientific reporting have also been taken. In Germany, concerned voices have talked about the *Preisgabe eines Stücks nationaler Identität* [11] or ‘surrendering part of our national identity’ and more recently about the *geistige Selbstkolonialisierung unserer Gesellschaft* [12], the ‘intellectual self-colonization of our society’.

In my opinion, the use of a common language of science, one of the few truly universal human undertakings, does not necessarily affect the use of our native tongues.

### Science—one of the few truly universal human activities

Fortunately, language does not only play a role in scientific reporting. There are multiple other areas where language is used. Practicing clinicians communicate with their patients in their mother tongue. Clinicians talk to each other in their native language—an environment in which linguistic preciseness is a key prerequisite [7].

Equally important, vernacular language is—and should remain—the primary medium of education, teaching, and training [7]. Journalism likewise has an important role in communicating science to the general public and translating research into terms the public will understand.

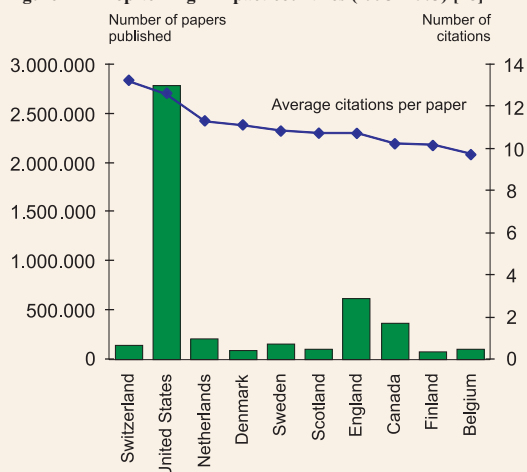
Finally, not all science is dominated by English [13]. Rather, the sciences can be grouped into those relying on English as their lingua franca, such as chemistry, physics, and specific areas of medicine, those that are influenced by English, such as the applied natural sciences, clinical medicine, economics, sociology, and philosophy, and those that are still primarily based on national languages, such as law, theology, literature, or philology [13, 14]. Thus, national languages appear to play a dominant role in those areas of learning that are permeated with culturally determined terms and concepts that escape exact classification and are not easily translatable.

### Are English-speaking scientists at a competitive advantage?

Another main argument of the critics of English as the language of science is that native speakers of English are at a clear competitive advantage over those who first have to acquire sufficient skills to report their findings in a language not their own. As a result, non-English-speaking countries carry a disproportionate burden of language training and translation costs, and this is considered unfair [15, 16]. However, are researchers from non-English-speaking countries really at that huge of a disadvantage? For example, based on papers indexed by Thomson ISI [17] between 1993 and 2003, the country ranking highest in terms of average citations per paper is Switzerland (Figure 2) [18]. Even though the US ranks second, it is closely followed by the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden.

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Figure 2 Top-ten high-impact countries (1993–2003) [18]



Adapted from In-cites.com by Thomson Reuters [18]

Admittedly, the hurdle non-native-speakers of English face towards participation in scientific discourse is higher than for people whose first language is English. Yet, as one commentator put it, “science should not be primarily concerned about fairness” [19], which is a political issue. “Science is about achieving the best and fastest results for the lowest cost. So what if some people have it a little easier? [...] You have to bring the disenfranchised up and make sure they have assistance and opportunity” [19].

### Increase awareness of the Anglophone world

A number of ways have been proposed to make this happen. One is to increase the awareness of the Anglophone world, including journal reviewers and editors, of the added effort non-native speakers have to undertake to publish in English [16, 20, 21]. The incident I described above bears proof of how complicated it can be to get one’s research published when languages other than English come into play.

Wim Crusio, a Dutch scientist who has lived and worked in Germany and France, had to learn German and French to be able not only to get a plumber or do his shopping, but also to teach and participate in scientific discourse. And, he added, “of course I had to learn English in order to survive as a scientist. My occupation [...] has taken me on a fascinating trip to different places and countries and has immensely enriched my life. Still, the casual way with which some native English speakers brush away my 30-year efforts to master their language is sometimes galling” [22].

### Increase funding for translation

Yet another way of supporting non-native speakers of English that has been proposed is to increase funding for science translation [19, 20]. Indeed, being cross-cultural communicators, translators are well poised to support authors in getting their messages across cultural and linguistic borders.

As linguistic experts, translators can also take their share in preserving the integrity of the language(s) they work in. They should constantly be on the lookout for the most fitting target-language term or phrase for a particular source-language concept or even coin new terms for new concepts, not giving in to the temptation of uncritically using English terms in translation.

Another responsibility, I believe, translators should take is to adhere to the highest linguistic standards at every level of text production. To fulfil these functions, translators have to constantly challenge themselves to maintain a high level of linguistic competence, to stay abreast of the latest developments in their fields of specialization, and to be firmly rooted both in the source and the target language cultures.

### English as a ‘relais’ language

Even though increased funding for translation will sound like a great idea to all translators, translation is not a cure-all for the challenges of multilingualism. Translation is a relatively slow and costly process. A perfect example is the European Union, founded to bring European countries closer together again in the wake of a war that had shown some of the uglier faces of ‘cultural diversity’.

The EU, dedicated to the grand and laudable goal of preserving cultural pluralism and each of its 23 mother tongues, appears to be seriously hampered by its commitment to multilingualism. Today, some 15% of EU staff are dedicated to translating or interpreting, and more than one third of the administrative budget of the EU goes into language mediation. In what is most likely the world’s largest translation agency, the backlog of texts that should—but perhaps never will—be converted into each of the 23 EU mother tongues is increasing [23, 24]. And every newly added language makes this process more tedious and costly [25].

An additional challenge is to find translators in some of the rarer language pairs, such as Finnish-Greek or Lithuanian-Italian. One way of solving the language pair problem is the use of English (or French) as a ‘relais’ language, with some of the ‘smaller’ EU languages first translated into English and then into other ‘small’ languages [11].

This concept brings us right back to the importance of a lingua franca in a multilingual world.

### What’s the cost?

Yes, transposing words, concepts, meaning, and thoughts between languages and cultures—no matter whether through translation proper or, more generally, by people with different mother tongues simply wanting to talk to and understand each other—takes both time and extra effort. But in today’s ‘global village’, this challenge is here to stay.

Bilingualism—having a sound and solid command of one’s mother tongue and a good command of English—does not appear to complicate but to simplify matters.

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It has been commented that “the fundamental unfairness of the system seems surprisingly acceptable to the international community” [21], suggesting that this may be because non-native English speakers have themselves already invested considerably in the learning and use of English and do not want to surrender this advantage [21]. I would like to attempt a different explanation.

### What's to gain?

Most non-English-speaking scientists publishing in English may not see learning and using English (or any other language) as a disadvantage, but as something that enriches their professional and personal lives. The European Union puts it this way: “The ability to understand and communicate in more than one language—already a daily reality for the majority of people across the globe—is a desirable life-skill for all European citizens. It encourages us to become more open to other people’s cultures and outlooks, improves cognitive skills and strengthens learners’ mother tongue skills” [26].

This also brings to mind a more than 20-year-old quote by Eugene Garfield: “... the French language is not threatened by

French scientists who publish in English or any other language. It is the complacently monolingual English-speaking world that needs to worry. By not learning foreign languages, it risks being left out of the conversation in an increasingly global and multilingual business community” [8].

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## Out of office reply

All official road signs in Wales are bilingual. The Swansea local authority was keen to stop heavy goods vehicle using a road near a supermarket. They decided to erect a sign which would state in English, "No entry for heavy goods vehicles. Residential site only". The in-house translator was asked to produce a translation. The request was sent to him by email. Naturally when the authority received a reply to the email they assumed this was the translation they needed, so they had the bilingual sign made and erected. It had not been standing long before someone pointed out that the Welsh read "I am not in the office at the moment. Please send any work to be translated."

Bad translations from English into Welsh are apparently quite common. A Welsh magazine *Golwg* collects examples which have included a road sign for cyclists telling them they had problems with an ‘inflamed bladder’ and one for pedestrians in Cardiff which read 'Look Right' in English and 'Look Left' in Welsh.

The managing editor of *Golwg* thought that one of the problems is that everything is first written in English and then translated, whereas a better approach would be to create the signs in both languages separately.

Source: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/wales/7702913.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/7702913.stm)