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Domain, domain loss and parallellingualism – a challenge for the Nordic languages

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Abstract. Introduction: A short account of the Nordic languages – especially LSPs – with regard to the phenomenon of domain loss and actions against it taking the corresponding official national documents and the Declaration on a Nordic Language Policy as point of departure.

Domain dynamics: The concept of domain loss is considered within the framework of the comprehensive concept of “domain dynamics” with its negative and positive subordinated concepts. Domain dynamics offers a more detailed and less emotionally coloured picture of modern language planning.

Domain: The term “domain” represents a least two different concepts in language and terminology planning. The roll of each one is described and introduced in different stages of the overall process of language planning eliminating the apparent incompatibility of approaches.

Parallellingualism (parallelsproglighed; Parallelsprachigkeit) is considered a provision against domain loss. However, there is no official definition. Nevertheless, a terminological analysis of the concept based on the official documents reveals different concepts and approaches which shall be discussed in detail. Hereafter, we shall set forth definitions of the different concepts, we could deduce from the official documents offering thus a more comprehensive conceptual apparatus.

Preconditions: for a successful resistance against domain loss and other measures taken in order to further parallellingualism are considered critically.

Keywords. Domain loss, domain dynamics, language planning, parallellingualism, Nordic languages.

1. Introduction

About 15 years ago, it was observed that English was increasingly invading the Nordic languages, especially the LSPs (Lund 1989). In the beginning it was just an unproved hypothesis, but already in 2001 Pia Jarvad published her well documented research into the status of the Danish language in which she proved that a considerable number of researchers in the natural sciences – but not only those – published their research results in English. A similar situation could be observed in the other Nordic countries and languages. The phenomenon was called domain loss.

Language planning has a long tradition in the Nordic countries; however, domain loss had not been a major research subject until about 2000. Alarmed by the stated situation both linguists and others started to investigate domain loss and its societal and professional consequences for the language communities in question. A loss of this kind – especially when the concept is not very well defined and considered only in isolation – causes emotional reactions and even threat. However, the negative reactions were not shared by everyone; there were also voices, which denied any negative consequences for the language and the national identity of the language users.

Nevertheless, in nearly all Nordic countries high level commissions were established and worked out basic documents with recommendations on how to face domain loss and its consequences. The governments discussed these documents and supported the basic idea of maintaining and developing the national languages including the LSPs. One of the measurements taken was to ask the universities to elaborate adequate language policies.

At a Nordic level the ‘Declaration on a Nordic Language Policy’ (2007) worked out and issued by Nordic Council of Ministers and The Nordic Council describes the common basis for a Nordic language policy. Two important statements deserve special attention.

*We in the Nordic countries consider all languages to be equal. They do not, however, all play the same role. A language may be **complete and essential to society** in relation to the language community in which it is spoken.*

*A language is **complete** in this respect if it can be used in all areas of society.*

*A language is **essential to society** if it is used in a language community for official purposes, for example education and legislation. (2007: 91).*

‘Complete’ implies that all LSPs and their corresponding levels are included; ‘essential to society’ refers to official purposes which again includes necessarily the LSPs.

Another important issue in order to maintain the Nordic languages in the above mentioned conditions and at the same time to avoid domain loss is the parallel use of languages. The Declaration states (2007: 93):

The parallel use of language refers to the concurrent use of several languages within one or more areas. None of the languages abolishes or replaces the other; they are used in parallel.

Furthermore (2007: 94):

The use of parallel languages does not only involve English; it must also be applied to the languages of the Nordic countries.

The last statement indicates that English should not be the only parallel language; however, in reality, English is today the dominant parallel language in the Nordic countries and several national documents limit the parallelity of language use explicitly to English and the national language. Parallelity between the three Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian and Swedish) is a special case of parallellingualism, because none of the speakers has to really learn the other two languages. A rather limited learning effort suffices for ensuring communication. Haugen (1966) called this phenomenon ‘semicommmunication’, however, the prefix ‘semi’ should not be taken quantitatively or literally.

2. Domain dynamics

The fact that domain loss was detected very soon triggered intensive research into the issue. Our research group, consisting of four persons engaged in linguistics, LSPs and terminology from four different Nordic countries, investigated not only the phenomenon of ‘domain loss’ but the conceptual field in which the concept of ‘domain loss’ is embedded. We followed the basic insight that concepts only occur in conceptual clusters or referential frameworks. After having considered empirically the linguistic reality with regard to domains and their role in the Nordic language communities, it became obvious that negative and positive concepts belong to a more comprehensive conceptual cluster with a superordinate concept which we called ‘domain dynamics’. Thus, the following concept system could be established:

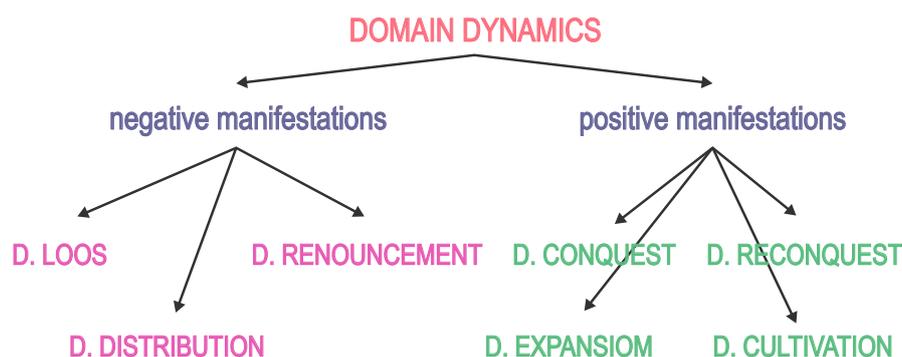


Figure 1: Concept system of domain dynamics

We defined *domain dynamics* as follows:

The interplay of social, political, economic and cultural conditions existing at a certain point of time in a language community which is characterised
by the will (directly or indirectly manifested) to maintain its overall cultural identity by a language (Gesamtsprache) that can function in all areas of life or
by the partial or complete abandonment of this identity, respectively.

Our definition of *domain loss* reads:

Loss of ability to communicate in the national language at all levels of an area of knowledge because of deficient further development of the necessary means of professional communication.

The restricted time does not allow me to offer the rest of the definitions; however, they can be found together with examples and detailed reasoning in our publications on the subject (Lauren et al. 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008; Myking 2011; Jónsson et al. 2013).

We believe that this concept system is applicable to modern language planning in general including LSPs and terminology planning, because it covers issues of status as well as corpus planning, permits the consideration of sociolinguistic factors, reflects realistic options of language planning and avoids the overemphasis of only one negative subordinate concept of the array of language planning options offered by domain dynamics. Although we focussed in our research on the situation in the Nordic countries, rather similar situations can be observed in other European language communities. Therefore, we believe that the above model and the following considerations and definitions – mutatis mutandis – can be applicable to and useful for other language communities under pressure of a dominant foreign language worldwide and especially in Europe.

3. Domain

When we analysed the concept behind the term ‘domain’, it became evident that the documents investigated operated with at least two different concepts. The first one belongs to sociolinguistics and has its roots in the writings of Schmidt-Rohr (1932) and Fishman (1979). The latter defines domain as follows:

Domains can be seen as institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrences. They are therefore names for major clusters of interaction situations that occur in particular multilingual settings. (Fishman 1979: 19)

The official documents analysed offered a variety of explanations following Fishman’s approach, for instance, the Hveem report of 2006:

By domain is meant an area of human activity in a broad sense, however limited in time and space. Higher learning and research represent in this connection a domain (my translation) (UiO 2006: 11)

The second concept refers to subject field or field of knowledge. It may be called a sociocognitive concept related to units of knowledge (concepts) which belong to a certain subject field. The ISO standard 1087 defines:

3.1.2 subject field

domain

field of special knowledge

NOTE The borderlines of a subject field are defined from a purpose-related point of view.

This approach differs considerably from the sociolinguistic one. At term level the distinction between these two concepts remains unclear; this obviously hampers professional discussion on the subject.

Even more detailed distinctions between different concepts in the area of sociolinguistics named 'domain' were found in literature (Simonsen 2005; Ljosland 2008), analysed and discussed thoroughly in the book 'Parallellspråk og domene' (Parallellingualism and domain) (Jónsson, Laurén, Myking, Picht 2013).

However, the apparent incompatibility of the two concepts disappears when we consider their individual functions within the complex process of language planning. Therefore, it would be suitable to distinguish in language planning and language policy between **domain 1** and **domain 2**.

Domain 1, the sociolinguistic concept, designates a *strategic* concept in the field of language policy and refers to areas of a community where a language planning activity is considered desirable or even necessary. A strategy in the military sense defines always superior aims to be reached, however without fixing or prescribing in detail ways and means of realisation. In the management literature, strategy refers to plans to achieve outcomes that are consistent with certain goals or visions. Thus, domain 1 refers to the sphere of status planning.

Domain 2, the sociocognitive concept, belongs to the *tactical* (or practical) level, where professional knowledge, that is to say, subject fields and knowledge areas, is central. Conceptual analysis, knowledge ordering, planning and elaboration of LSP means such as terms and other professional means of knowledge representation are related to corpus planning and corpus maintenance. To be able to work within the framework of domain 2 professional knowledge is a *conditio sine qua non*.

Both concepts are symbiotically linked to each other, because neither can exist without the other in language planning. The strategic level is worthless without an adequate realisation at corpus level and the tactical level alone would lack a master plan, which according to all practical experience, especially from terminology, leads to isolated or insufficiently coordinated actions and projects.

4. Parallellingualism

In the above mentioned Declaration the Scandinavian term 'parallellsprøghed' was rendered by 'parallel language use'. In the following text we shall use the term parallellingualism. Since the Scandinavian term apparently is very transparent and highly motivated, no definition was offered neither in national documents (before and after the publication of the Declaration in 2007) nor in the Declaration itself which led to a variety of similar, however slightly different, interpretations and nuances in the documents analysed.

Nevertheless, in all documents parallellingualism is viewed as an adequate means against domain

loss. But what does parallellingualism really mean and how could it be defined? In order to reach a better understanding of the term, we searched the chosen corpus for predications and semantic hints which could contribute to clarify the concept. In other words we chose a terminological approach performing a conceptual analysis based on the characteristics. The result was quite surprising. After a categorisation of the predications (characteristics) extracted, we could relate the characteristics to the following semantic clusters:

1. General predications referring to the concept 'parallellingualism'
2. Predications related to absolute parallellingualism
3. Predications related to functional parallellingualism
4. Predications related to parallellingualism as language planning tool
5. Predications related to sociolinguistics in general
6. Predications related to domain
7. Predications related to languages of teaching
8. Predications related to publication policies and practices.

Ad 1 Without going into details here, a clear distinction should be made between:

- A language policy *principle* valid for all language communities which aim at parallellingualism regardless of the language combination;
- A *strategy* concept for one or more language communities which implies a range of basic decisions and conditions;
- The *individual capacity* and skills of the language user.
- It may be already suspected that the concept under analysis is not so clear cut as the term may suggest.

Ad 2 There are no positive predications about absolute parallellingualism but a series of critical comments especially on the individual skills and the general necessity of parallellingualism. The comments may be summarised as follows: The use of a professional parallel language, for instance English, means that all members of a professional community should fully master the parallel language which is hardly feasible.

Ad 3 Predications in this group mirror a more realistic picture of what is feasible and desirable. Although functional parallellingualism will not require language skills comparable with the mother tongue skills, but 'only' communicatively equivalent skills and linguistic correctness. The principle of parallellingualism is not invalidated, but just adapted to reality. We shall come back to this issue when proposing our definitions.

Ad 4 In order to speak about real parallellingualism a precondition is that two languages have comparable linguistic means at all levels of specialisation – complete vertical parallelity – which implies a permanent maintenance and expansion (positive domain dynamics) adapted to the communicative requirements and restrictions of a language community.

Ad 5 Some predications in this part of the analysis modify parallellingualism as a principle, because they introduce the concept of 'main language' referring to the national language. If parallellingualism is considered a rigid principle, the term is inappropriate, since parallelity excludes subordination. Another interpretation of these predications could be that a given communication situation determines the choice of language which obeys the principle of expediency and optimal communication. In this case the principle of parallellingualism is not questioned but just made more flexible and the choice is left to the user's judgement of the communication situation. However, since the choice of the language is left to the user, parallellingualism may split up in many individual degrees.

Ad 6 The terms which could indicate domain names are vague and seem to refer to rather heterogeneous entities; one may doubt whether they refer to the same category or to different concepts of domain. However, all these denominations of domains refer to the strategic level, that is, the status level. Domains in the sociolinguistic sense are not suitable for work at corpus level; for instance, how to delimit the terminology of the domain ‘university’ or ‘language of science’?

Ad 7 and 8 Predications referring to the languages of teaching underline the necessity of the use of English especially at MA level. The central argument is to fulfil the requirements of globalisation. However, it is a fact that by no means will all graduates in all university disciplines work in international environments, which implies that they also must be familiar with the national means of professional communication. Farmer Jensen will not communicate with the vet in English about milk fever.

As to the language of publication of scientific research various predications express the need for publication of research results in the two parallel languages as a democratic right. In addition, parallellingualism also in this field will support the maintenance and development of the national language. A critical and criticised issue is the internal higher ranking of publications written in English at universities without taking in consideration the content or the relevance of other publication languages.

The conceptual analysis of the apparently very transparent term parallellingualism reveals indeterminacy and even contradictions. Without any doubt some of the conceptual differences manifest in the documents analysed are due to individual interpretations and adaptations to national preferences and although central characteristics remain more or less constant in the five Nordic countries there is no satisfactory definition. In reality, there are several concepts hidden behind the term parallellingualism, which impedes only one definition.

In addition, several other questions may be asked which have not been treated in the documents, for instance:

- Is complete parallellingualism for all persons working in a certain domain or field of knowledge really possible?
- How extensive would the personal effort be (years of study, energy invested in language learning, etc.) in order to reach the ideal goal? Ammon reckons with 10,000 – 12.000 hours. (Ammon 1998).
- Given predefined number of years of study, what impact will learning to achieve parallellingualism have on the study of the subject matter?
- Does there exist a realistic relation between the ‘benefit’ and the achievement of parallellingualism for an entire professional community?

As the declared aim of parallellingualism is to neutralise the negative effects of domain dynamics, to preserve the Nordic languages and to maintain them as complete languages essential to society, we are in the field of language planning. This is parallellingualism as a language planning tool. – That will cover one facet of parallellingualism since many explanations and predications contain the concepts ‘principle’ and ‘strategy’ which means corpus level is not sufficiently attended to.

Another facet of parallellingualism refers to the individual speaker’s ability and skills to master two languages without qualitative distinction. This concept focuses on the human being.

This division already indicates the existence of at least two different concepts of parallellingualism:

- Parallellingualism as language planning tool, and
- Parallellingualism as human ability.

In order to distinguish between these two concepts, we propose the following set of definitions:

Parallel language

Complete foreign language the use of which is on a par with the mother tongue within all areas of society, knowledge fields and levels.

Note: A parallel language neither displaces, subordinates nor substitutes the mother tongue. The mother tongue must be maintained and developed as complete language in order to ensure parallelity. While this is a theoretical possibility, there are practical challenges that may impede its realisation.

Parallellingualism as language planning tool

Parallellingualism (principle)

Basic principle in language planning which means that two complete languages essential to society are used without either of the languages being discriminated against.

To put into practice this principle it seems useful to distinguish between three levels of realisation:

- Strategic level
- Operative level
- Tactical level

According to these levels we offer the following definitions:

Strategic parallellingualism

Language planning strategy the aim of which is to realise the principle of parallellingualism and to ensure that two languages used in parallel in a language community at status and corpus level are maintained and developed as complete languages representing the communicative means in all relevant knowledge fields including the professional stratification.

Operative parallellingualism

Link between the strategic and the tactical level in language planning the aim of which is to realise the strategic goals at domain I level.

Note: Domains are institutions such as universities or authorities and economic entities in a broad sense which transform the strategy into operative planning and its realisation within the framework of the mentioned entities. It is the task of this level to take into account the horizontal and vertical specialisation within the domains (domain2).

Tactical parallellingualism

In language planning this level comprises planning, maintenance and development of corpus.

Note: Corpus work means in practice first and foremost terminology work. Corpus work can be considered a link to and a condition for parallellingualism as individual linguistic ability.

Parallellingualism as individual ability

Absolute parallellingualism

Complete mastering of the LGP and at least one or several LSPs of the parallel

language relevant to the speaker's professional activity.

Note: There must not be any qualitative difference in mastering the parallel languages. Absolute parallellingualism is considered an ideal.

Functional parallellingualism

High level mastering of the parallel language which ensures linguistically and professionally appropriate communication within one or more subject fields relevant to the speaker.

Note: In opposition to 'absolute parallellingualism' it is not required to master the foreign language at mother tongue level.

The potential of parallingualism

It is obvious that minor language communities such as the Nordic would not be able to participate in globalisation if their international communication were based only on their mother tongues. It is a fact that English is the language required within all areas with international contacts such as politics, science, trade, cultural matters, publication, knowledge transfer, etc. Therefore, the concept of parallellingualism seems to be an adequate means – especially in the present situation of the Nordic languages – on the one hand to satisfy the communicative needs related to internationalisation, and on the other to ensure and to maintain complete mother tongues.

However, there is a difference between the potential of an idea and its realisation.

5. Preconditions

The official texts contain only general statements concerning how the realisation of parallellingualism should or could be carried out. Therefore, before language policy measurements and working models can be discussed seriously and implemented, several very general and highly complex political, economic, sociological and psychological questions should be discussed and solved:

1. How can the linguistic consciousness of a language community be developed?
2. Is there in a language community a clearly manifested will to maintain the mother tongue as a complete language?
3. Can all or at least the majority of the members of a language community recognise the negative consequences of the loss of a complete language?
4. Can an explicit language policy ensure planning, maintenance and future development of a complete language?
5. How can a professional community at all levels be motivated to maintain and to develop its LSP and terminologies?
6. Is a language community willing to provide the necessary economic and human resources?

While these questions of language attitudes and ideologies remain without satisfactory answer, a realisation of the principle of parallellingualism will be problematic.

6. Conclusions

The level of activities related to the implementation of parallellingualism in the Nordic countries differs due to national conditions; in all Nordic countries the universities have elaborated language policies with the overriding aim of realising parallellingualism, however with slightly

different foci. One common characteristic is the increasing number of studies taught in English especially at MA level.

With regard to institutions, Denmark and Norway founded new or reorganised existing institutions shaping their profile towards parallellingualism; Finland as a bilingual country continues with its existing institutional structure; in Sweden activities of this kind seem to be rather reduced and in Iceland a major restructuring did not favour the institutional framework.

Three Nordic countries have issued language laws; in Norway the discussion is still going on and Denmark refused to issue a language law proper, but delegated the issue to lower ranking regulations.

Truly, there have been critical voices with regard to parallellingualism and its realisation within a political framework – although the idea itself was not questioned (Johansen 2012). The criticism is justified with regard to the insufficient visible results after five years and the lack of higher level coordination. However, official – and especially political – documents usually indicate desirable aims, but they are not plans of action and coordination at operative level. Language planning is always a long term project with a time horizon of at least one generation and subject to indeterminacy of various kinds. However, we still believe that language planning is possible, although the aim may be adjusted to changed circumstances and the result may not correspond one hundred percent to the original expectation. In language planning a partial success is still a progress in the right direction.

7. Notes

Final remark:

The pronoun ‘we’ in the above text refers to our Nordic research group consisting of

Dr. Sigurdur Jónsson, Iceland

Prof. em. fil.dr. Christer Laurén, Finland

Prof. fil.dr. Johan Myking, Norway

Prof. em. fil.dr.h.c. Heribert Picht, Denmark.

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