

# MAGNIFICATION OF EXCLUSION BY ENGLISH

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The fact that the sun rises in English, but is born every day in Portuguese (*nascer do sol*), indicates, despite its being the same natural phenomenon, culturally different ways of comprehending it. Or the fact that English knows two words for freedom—liberty and freedom—could draw the attention of German speakers to an important inner difference in the concept of freedom that may have been previously unknown to them. The same applies to Russian *pravda* and *istina*, which illuminate two different aspects of truth. A strengthening of the ethical-moral component of truth (*pravda*) would be very welcome in times of populism and fake news. In other words, detours

via foreign languages can sharpen one's attention and own thinking.

There can be no thinking without language and no language without thinking. Every language, with its grammar, vocabulary, etc., also forms its own thinking and culture. Those who speak several languages are able to put things into perspective by thinking in perspective, from different positions—an indispensable quality for a better understanding of the globalized world. "English only" commandeers precisely this fertile position between languages and threatens to reduce all other languages to mere dialects in a kind of linguistic imperialism. The productive tension that separates and at the same time connects languages threatens to wane under the weight of globalized English. Another consequence of this is the homogenization of thought and expression all over the world. The idea of only one language goes hand in hand with a dangerously uniform way of thinking, as for example the financial crisis of 2008 has shown. In addition, the standardization of global English is having an impact on the English language itself. It explodes the idea of one globally spoken English. Linguists have been speaking of "World Englishes" since 1977; a linguistics journal of the same name appeared in 1985. In their standard work *International English: A Guide to Varieties of English Around the World*, Peter Trudgill and Jean Hannah show thirteen different varieties of Englishes. On the other hand, there is also International English, which is becoming increasingly dominant in politics, business, higher education and tourism. It is practice-oriented, a pure "tool", and as such a carrier of the digital revolution and economic and technological progress. Thus it is closely linked to a machine-like notion of virtuality, which has very little to do with the living imagination of humans as linguistic beings.

### **The language of modern science**

This also applies to the modern sciences, which are based on an ancient, Aristotelian understanding of thinking as a process of depicting the world that takes place without language. This thought process is universal and the same for all human beings. Thinking and communicating the thought are separate events that follow each other. The Greek term *logos*, which adorns the name of most sciences as a suffix, refers precisely to their inseparability. For the sciences, especially for the natural sciences, words are communicative instruments, a kind of pipeline through which the scientific results circulate. The linguistic expression does not seem to influence the content it transports in any way. *Language must be transparent*. It follows from this that there is no specific difference between languages on the basis of which one could be

privileged. And yet education in European sciences in modern times was linked to the replacement of the single language of Latin and the development of popular languages. The "back to things" was linked to the rejection of the authorities mediated by Latin scholarship. The loss of Latin as a *lingua franca* was partly offset by intensive translating activities and the multilingualism of researchers. The internationality of scientific thought was not guaranteed by the mere existence of an international language, but rather by the intensive exchange among the languages and cultures of Europe.

Today, the myth of the universal language English takes the place of Latin, with the significant difference that Latin was an artificial scholarly language in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance that nobody had as their mother tongue. It is a myth because, among other things, linguists have been talking about Englishes for many years, rather than English as such. English is a pluricentric language. That is its strength. On the other hand, it is exposed to great centrifugal forces. The constantly growing number of second- and foreign-language users leads to uncontrollable language change. What about the linguistic accuracy of scientific English under these circumstances? How much linguistic carelessness can precise, scientific conceptual work afford? What happens to other national standard languages that can no longer participate in technical and scientific progress? Are they degraded to dialects? Isn't Oxford English the first language to be condemned?

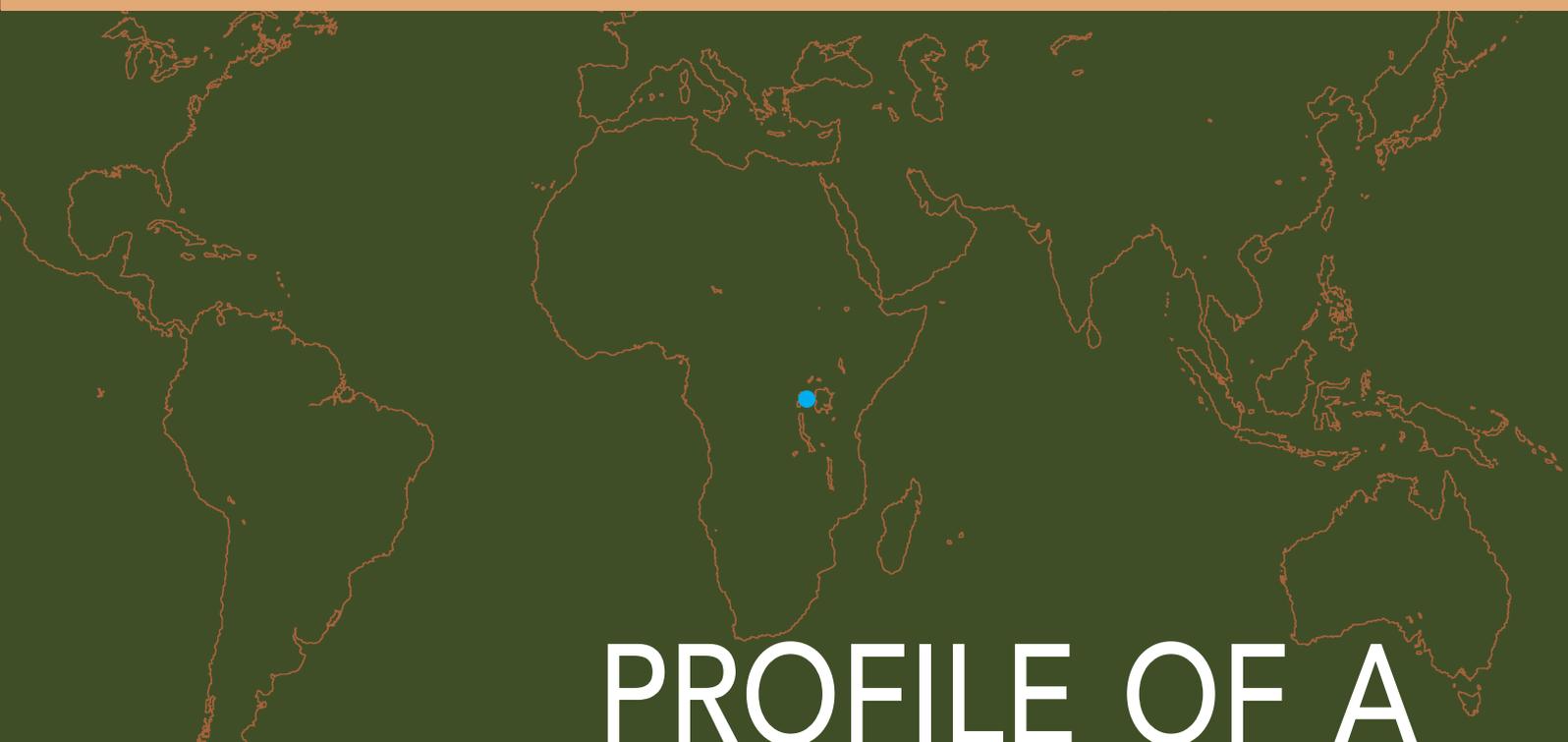
### **Multilingual thinking is required**

The scientific approach posits that all researchers around the world work on very similar things within a special field using the same methods and under the same conditions. The communication language used must be consistent worldwide. A single language should make it easier for researchers to communicate. However, the price for this methodically prescribed, universal unification in the name of scientific objectivity is high. It suppresses the cultural and linguistic differences of researchers, a cognitive and emotional richness that is reflected in the quality of research. Encountering different ways of thinking which arise from different languages opens new perspectives, which makes it possible to relativize and verify one's own ways of thinking. It is about the critical appropriation and productive implementation of other points of view in one's own thinking and acting. Through thinking and understanding in different languages, a sensitisation to the linguistic composition of scientific knowledge is also created. Ultimately, it is a question of understanding that questions pre-reflexive, linguistically and philosophically naive concepts of knowledge. English is therefore not enough as a *lingua franca* in the sciences.

New forms of encounter between different languages and cultures must be created, whether in laboratories or at scientific conferences. The multilingualism of researchers and the translation of scientific journals into different languages should be promoted. In addition, the different scientific cultures must come into closer contact with each other. Opening up to African, Arabic or Chinese forms of knowledge is a necessity of the hour and could, for example, counter the danger that French-speaking countries in Africa become excluded from the scientific community. Opening means here not simply the translation of these forms into other languages, but the crucial encounter that takes place between these forms and our scientific culture.







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