Jens Braarvig, Markham J. Geller: Multilingualism, Lingua Franca and Lingua Sacra

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Jens Braarving is a professor at the University of Oslo. He is a Professor of Religious Studies and he is concerned with the linguistic aspects of religion. He is also the founder of the web page Bibliotheca Polyglotta, a multilingual resource for the study of translation. Markham J. Geller is a guest professor at the Freie Universität. While his main interest lies with Babylonian science, especially medicine, he also has links with The Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, MPIWG) in Berlin, where he is involved in projects concerned with aspects of multilingualism, lingua franca, and the globalization of knowledge. The publication which Jens Braarving and Markham J. Geller introduce takes us through a collection of essays discussing the phenomena of multilingualism, lingua franca, and lingua sacra. The essays explain how knowledge diffuses from one culture to another, how the diffusion of knowledge is closely linked to the spread of languages, and the conceptual systems languages carry by translation.

The book consists of six parts. Each part consists of several chapters. Part one consists of chapters one and two and mainly introduces the concepts of concern including lingua franca, lingua sacra, dependent, and independent languages. Lingua franca (i.e. a common language used by native speakers of different languages) and lingua sacra (i.e. languages related to religious practices) are distinguished from one another in the first chapter to emphasize their communicative purposes in relation to knowledge diffusion. The chapter also discusses their historical origins, their linguistic properties, and their conceptual networks including their social and communicative networks. The authors adopt a systematic approach to linguistics to categorize lingua franca and lingua sacra's common features, connections, and development. The second chapter discusses the notions of dependent (i.e. those that borrow a basic system of concepts from other languages) and independent languages (i.e. the language of the dominant state and its culture) to emphasize what degree of power one holds over the other. Discussing the degree of the relative power of a language is meant to emphasize how power plays a crucial role in the diffusion of knowledge and transmitting knowledge to other generations and cultures.

Part two consists of five chapters (chapters three to seven). Part two mainly discusses the notions of lingua franca, lingua sacra, and multilingualism in Europe. It focuses on knowledge diffusion in Europe in relation to how translation contributed to the change in the lexical system of most European languages. Chapters three and four are closely related in terms of referring to how German

lexicology was heavily influenced by loan words and translation strategies. Chapter three discusses the borrowings from Latin and French into medieval German in details. The discussion in chapter three is mainly about the phonological, morphological, and semantic properties of loan words providing the reader with lots of examples and cases. Chapter four discusses German terminologies and expressions originating from Latin. Gottschall (2004), a researcher whose main interests include the relationship between Vulgar Latin and German, introduces Konrad of Megenberg, an influential character at the time, who translated scientific scripts from Latin to German. Konrad's attempt to render the translated scripts in understandable German was not a complete success, nor was it a complete failure. Chapters five and six discuss knowledge diffusion in relation to the concept of lingua sacra. Chapter five discusses the different ways Abrahamic faiths, including Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, claim their languages represent the lingua sacra of God. The employment of ethnicity as a powerful ideological tool is included in the discussion to show how ethnicity has harmed or has negatively affected multilingualism in some cases. These cases included the persecution and execution of members of opposing faiths with the aim to eliminate or to decrease the chances of the survival of the language(s) of the persecuted group(s). Chapter six discusses the works of poetry that have been translated from archived Turkish folk poems (Netton, 1997). The author presents some mechanisms applied in transmitting religious knowledge, including figures of speech such as allusion. Chapter seven discusses the case of John Pell (an English mathematician), whose notes have allowed historians to understand what benefits the study of a non-Indo-European language offered to those involved in scientific and literary fields at that time.

Part three also consists of five chapters (Chapters eight to twelve) covering knowledge diffusion in the Ancient Near East region. Chapter eight studies the vast corpus of the Sumerian inscriptions that aided historians in documenting the dominant languages at the time. Historians reported that the spoken language at that time resisted change because these languages were widespread. They also reported misunderstandings between Sumerians and other groups because of inaccurate translations. Chapter nine discusses the Semitic root in Akkadian lexicography. The chapter emphasizes the idea that the relationship between script and language is usually one of convention, not necessity. For instance, Akkadian sequencing of words lacked the advantage of order in their scripts due to the use of a syllabic writing system. However, the Akkadian adoption of an alphabetical writing system at a later stage made it easier to sequence words in an alphabetical order. Chapter

ten discusses how researchers' different perceptions of multilingualism at different historical stages influenced its categorization (i.e. to categorize it as a social or a linguistic concept). For instance, on one hand, multilingualism in the Elamite kingdom was first perceived as a social construct in which various languages marked territorial entities. On the other hand, multilingualism in the Achaemenid Empire was perceived as a linguistic construct in which attempts were made to attend to the communication problems that were caused by the existence of multiple languages in the territories of the empire. Chapter eleven discusses the multilingual features of diplomatic treaties in Near Eastern ancient documents in terms of their historical value and formality. The chapter discusses the existence of different versions of the same document as a consequence of multilingualism. The existence of different versions led to different legal obligations and consequences in these treaties. Chapter twelve discusses multilingualism in Graeco-Roman Egypt. The main source for inspecting the relationship between Egypt and Greece is the inscriptions on temple doors. The chapter discusses how multilingualism affected the religious beliefs in the two cultures.

Part four consists of two chapters (chapters thirteen and fourteen) discussing knowledge diffusion in India and Central Asia. Chapter thirteen analyzes poetry and its contribution to knowledge transmission in some Indo-Iranian regions, and demonstrates how poetry facilitated the spread of sacrificial rituals in ancient cultures. Chapter fourteen discusses multilingualism in Turfan. The linguistic diversity that existed in Turfan at the time was attributed to the series of translations of written texts., which aided researchers in determining the linguistic properties and linguistic diversity of the place.

Part five consists of three chapters (Chapters fifteen to seventeen) presenting an insight into knowledge diffusion in China. Chapter fifteen places the focus on multilingualism in China. The ethnic and linguistic details discovered in ancient Chinese scripts suggest that non-Chinese languages were not officially recognized, and, what is more, since the unification of China required a common language multilingualism was discouraged. Chapter sixteen demonstrates how Buddhist Sanskrit affected Chinese and Tibetan's choice of lexical ontologies. The discussion focuses on the Tang dynasty reign due to the high intellectual activity in China and Tibet at the time. The translations of the sacred scripts employed expressions carrying religious and philosophical connotations, which suggests that the transmission of knowledge followed a systematic order. The main concern of the chapter is to report on the frequency of loan words in relation to the number of loan

translation in the receiving language. Chapter seventeen discusses Classical Chinese as a lingua franca from the second to the third centuries CE as the medium of diplomatic contact, scholarship, and literary expression. The discussion is about the process through which Classical Chinese was introduced to the Korean Peninsula, and why hybrid writing systems with both syllabic and alphabetical alternatives were unable to displace Classical Chinese from its status as a lingua franca and a lingua sacra.

Part six consists of one chapter (Chapter eighteen), in which the case of multilingualism and Lingua franca in America in the Indigenous civilizations follows. The chapter comprises an array of topics including the orthography of loanwords and calques, multilingualism, Lingua franca from a sociolinguistic perspective, lingua nobilis, lingua sacra where certain groups created a common set of words for religious purposes, and examples of various graphic communication scripts that represent cases of multilingualism and lingua franca. Lingua franca is expanded on in respect to its regional distribution, lingua franca languages of the same language family on the one hand, and lingua franca languages from different language families on the other.

To sum up, Braarvig and Geller's publication succeeds in paving a way for more research in the historic development of knowledge diffusion through maintaining the conflicting argumentation that it was successful in some instances, whereas in other instances it was not so. The statement is firmly supported with plentiful examples. Interpreters, translation strategies, and scriptures are included to illustrate how knowledge diffuses from one culture (or generation) to another. On the other hand, multilingualism is presented as a phenomenon that imposed difficulties in knowledge diffusion, which are attributed to the different versions of the same scripts that varied according to storytellers' modifications (either intentional or unintentional) based on their linguistic experience. The book is recommended to experts both in the field of linguistics and history, and invites them for more research through its discussions and the systematic presentation of the historical events that either aided or harmed knowledge diffusion based on the linguistic knowledge of the interpreters and storytellers in the historic eras.

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