Language and domains:
a proposal for a domain dynamics taxonomy

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1. Introduction

In Nordic contexts there is at present, at the beginning of the new millenium, a discussion about the phenomenon of loss of domain. Loss of domain is complained about although no real research findings are available that prove anything or make explicit what exactly there is to worry about. The concept thus becomes more of a language policy catchword than a concept within the systematics of language planning. We should begin by asking ourselves: What is a domain? What do we in fact loose through a loss of domain? We will start by considering these two questions, beginning with the latter. But the principal aim of our article is to present a proposal för a taxonomy of what we will call domain dynamics.

In the research team "Nordens språk som vetenskapsspråk" (the Nordic languages as languages of science) we have since 1996 been concerned with domain dynamics in the Nordic languages. Our starting-point has been that our languages, mainly in the nineteenth century, conquered most essential domains for language usage, domains that were necessary for the general access to knowledge that has been the prerequisite for very advanced general education in the Nordic countries. This general education has given the relatively small Nordic ethnic groups a strong competitive position within culture, science and enterprise. Without it, our Nordic democracy would not be able to function so well as it does.

When a so-called expert body within the OECD in June 2002 expresses an opinion to the effect that Finland must reintroduce term fees at the universities based on the argument (presented by the chairman of the body) that those who do not receive a university education will not want to pay tax on it, this is a violent confrontation with Nordic democracy. Access to knowledge on the highest level must, in the

opinion of the citizens of the Nordic welfare states, be guaranteed anyone irrespective of his/her economic resources. Social mobility should be both a possibility and a goal. The expert body of the OECD represents a static social view. The small Nordic ethnic groups are competitive because they do not waste their resources of talent in the way more populous countries think they can afford to do. The possibility of acquiring a language fit for the domains of science must not depend on the personal financial position of the individual.

It is usual to refer to J. A. Fishman as the source of the use of domain in sociolinguistic contexts. But Fishman himself refers to Schmidt-Rohr, who in 1932 worked with expatriate Germans in multilingual environments, as the one who first spoke about domains. Fishman also stresses that Schmidt-Rohr's domain taxonomy (the family, the playground and the street, the school, church etc.) was advanced and similar to others which have been put forward during the 1960s. Fishman's own point of view (Fishman 1972/79, which is a revised version of an article written in 1965), is that different divisions of domain are needed for language for different purposes. His own definition of domain is this: 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). A study of domains of language usage reveals the connection between macro- and microsociolinguistics (Fishman 1979, 29).

In a report entitled Språkideologi og språkplanlegging i Noreg (1990) the terms domænespecialisering (Gregersen 1990, 63) and domænetab (Lund 1990, 192f) are used by two Danish researchers in connection with language planning and LSP communication. It is symptomatic that domain loss is the first thing paid attention to.

Our project "Nordens språk som vetenskapsspråk" has started from the notion that there are other elements in domain dynamics than domain loss. Even if our main focus is on LSP communication, we are aware that the following concept system, which we here present for the first time, is generally applicable; the proposals for terms are given in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, German and English:

1. domänförlust / domænetab / domenetab / Domänenverlust / domain loss

2. domänövergivande / domænefraskrivelse / domenefråskriving ('Bokmål': fraskrivelse / fraskriv(n)ing) / Domänenaufgabe / domain renouncement

3. domänerövring / domæneerobring / domeneerobring / Domäneneroberung / domain conquest

4. återerövring av domän / domænegenerobring / domenegjenerobring / Domänenwiedereroberung / domain reconquest

5. domänutvidgning / domæneudvidelse / domeneutviding ('Bokmål': also -utvidelse) / Domänenausbau / domain expansion

6. domänuppodling / domæneopdyrkning / domeneoppdyrking ('Bokmål': also oppdyrkning) / Domänenaufbau / domain cultivation

We ourselves see the domain of language usage as a specialist field for which a language is capable of being used, i.e. it has at its disposal the necessary means of expression and is therefore of use within this domain. A specialist field can in casu be defined as the domain of a science, a practical occupation or a category at a suitable level of the international Universal Decimal Classification system.

2. Domain loss

It is a fact that no language covers all possible domains at all LSP levels. This means that domain loss cannot befall a language if the language usage of the domain has never so far been fully developed.

Domain loss can be defined as loss of ability to communicate in a language on all levels of an LSP field because of deficient further development of the necessary LSP resources.

Domain loss thus always occurs when and if a language community fails to develop suitable means of communication. We can distinguish between conscious and unconscious domain losses.

To the conscious decisions which lead to (unintentional?) losses of domain we can assign for instance:

a) the publishing policy of Nordic universities, when researchers are encouraged to use especially English as the language of their publications. In the internal evaluation these publications are considered more valuable than those written in a first language;

b) language policy concerning research in enterprises where English plays such a predominant role that domain loss has been evident;

c) tuition in English in Nordic universities and other educational programmes in non-linguistic disciplines. Internationalizing and globalizing are pleaded as excuses and there is also the wish to attract exchange students.

In this connection it is taken for granted that all students (Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish etc.) know enough English to pursue their studies successfully. To call these language proficiencies in question is taboo, even if Canadian and Finnish immersion research has indicated the need for deliberate pedagogical measures; the same research has shown that a certain type of bilingual curriculum is needed for effective first language development (Laurén 1999). As a rule, neither circumstance has been taken into consideration when instruction in the Nordic countries is provided in English.

This anglifying tendency is in contrast to the intentions expressed in the descriptions of aims of all Nordic organizations concerned with language planning. Here the preservation and development of the national language(s) for all spheres of life are of central importance and the basis of the existence of these institutions.

An unconscious loss of domain on a different level is the loss of proficiency in Latin and a decreasing interest in other languages than English. German and French gave and give access to other ways of thinking, working and living. The three unconscious current losses of domain also imply abrupt breaks in the connection with settings that for centuries and even millenia have influenced the Nordic cultures.

It could also be argued that the last mentioned case (loss of proficiency in Latin, German and French) is connected with the following point, domain renouncement, which, however, primarily demands active measures; here it is above all a question of a gliding transition from one state into another.

3. Domain renouncement

Voluntary or forced abandonment of the possibility of using one's first language / national language / native language in communicative LSP contexts in multilingual settings, could serve as a definition of domain renouncement.

The term and the concept have been used by Ellingsve (1999: definition p. 114) with reference to Norway's abandonment of Norwegian terms for the international Gas Union's multilingual glossary, Chap. 10, which was intended to provide terms and definitions to be used when buying and selling gas.

Domain renouncement occurs when one renounces the use of one's language in LSP communication even if the field of knowledge, the domain, is well developed in regard to communication. The motives behind such an explicit or implicit decision are often of economic character and are mostly in contrast to an explicitly national language policy. Domain renouncement often contains an opposition between intentions and reality.

Examples of this are:

a) that contracts between parties with different first languages are drawn up in English only. The English text alone has legal validity even if there may be informative translations;

b) that language policy decisions are made to the effect that the language of a multilingual enterprise is to be English, even if by no means all employees at different levels speak English as their native language;

c) that the EU for economic reasons refrains from using all EU languages at all levels (sections, committees etc.), which means that a number of countries have voluntarily (?) abandoned any claims that their languages should be used. The

consequences can be distinctly negative or perhaps latently negative, even if this is denied in political quarters;

d) that Namibia and many other countries have deliberately chosen English (in considerably fewer cases other languages, Portuguese, French and Spanish) as the language of instruction in schools, to the great detriment of the pupils' possibility of keeping up with the instruction at all; one reason that is given being lack of confidence in the indigenous languages (cf. the history of Europe, the original denial of the raison d´être of the national languages before the fight for them, against the Latin school), another reason being lack of confidence in a country's possibility of functioning multilingually (a view encouraged by Europeans, mainly English-speaking ones, with their internationally non-applicable traditions; see Laurén 2002).

4. Domain conquest

This term implies that a language develops means of communication needed for communication at all levels of a field of LSP for which previously means of communication were lacking or only available in an insufficient degree. In other words, it is a question of creating LSP means of communication for domains which, for sociocultural or economic reasons, have achieved a different status in a language community. Ellingsve (1999, 133) mentions "nasjonal erobring av domene" as a possible concept without entering upon the topic in more detail.

Examples of this are:

a) that a Norwegian stock of oil terms has been created (Myking & Sæbøe 2001);

b) that terms and phraseology in regional languages for parliamentary legislation have been created in Nigeria (Antia 2000);

c) that a basic set of terms in Sami language has been created for mathematics, linguistics, chemistry and physics to be used in the comprehensive school.

5. Reconquest of domain

Reconquest of domain occurs when a language community originally had means of expression for a field of knowledge but for different reasons failed to develop these concurrently with the development of the field of knowledge in question. Often the language used for this field has been changed. A precondition for reconquest is that a language community becomes aware that it is of crucial importance to be able to communicate in this domain in the native language. The degree of essentiality can be decided on the basis of different factors such as language policy, sociocultural or economic reasons.

Examples of this are:

a) that modern Icelandic terminology has been created for areas such as fishing, shipping, philosophy and mathematics (Jónsson 2001 a and 2001 b)

b) elements in the development of Hebrew in modern times; elements in the planning of Baltic languages and Ukrainian as well as other languages in the former Soviet Union in post-Soviet times.

6. Domain expansion

It is possible to talk about domain expansion when the substantial development within a field of knowledge demands the creation of means of expression in order to enable people to discuss and write about the expansion of knowledge. This domain expansion implies that the means of expression are created simultaneously with the growth of the the field of knowledge or shortly after
the new knowledge has been introduced into society.

Changes in the status of a language which has been shown lower priority or suppressed can also be seen as an instance of domain expansion.

Examples of this:

- the creation of a stock of terms for the field of environmental knowledge, where also previously existing fields of knowledge are included in new contexts; incidentally a phenomenon that occurs in many fields of knowledge; linguistic expansion follows cognitive expansion.

7. Domain cultivation

Domain cultivation has certain features in common with the previous concept (for instance simultaneous development), but the difference lies in the fact that the whole field of knowledge is in the process of being created. The new knowledge has not existed before, nor has it formed parts that can be marked off from other already well-developed fields.

Examples of this are:

a) the creation of a set of terms for IT, the theory of designing, gene technology;
b) the change of the status of Sami, Catalan and Basque by law.

8. Final words

The concept system for domain dynamics which we have briefly presented above is a tool that is needed for language planning from both a synchronic and a diachronic point of view, both for the practical work of language planning and for purely theoretical analysis. As a means of assistance it makes us conscious of the dynamics which is connected with the applicability of language. Some elements of the dynamics are of a conscious kind, some of an unconscious kind.

The concept system is applicable on both the individual and the collective level, and there is a simple causal connection between these levels. The present one-sided favouring of English on the part of the Nordic universities has the result that some

individual researchers never themselves learn to master the scientific language usage of their own field completely in their first language; that is, their personal domain conquest never takes place. When sufficiently many individual researchers in the field have failed to make this domain conquest, the language community will suffer a domain loss with regard to its language usage. Such a domain loss with all its consequences is, however, probably unintentional. The favouring of the national language typical of earlier nationalistic periods was, at the end of the twentieth century, succeeded by a quasi-internationalization which, absurdly enough, has led to a momentary neglect of all languages apart from English. Discussing the consequences of the one-sided Anglification seems to be taboo; not even the consequent impaired competitiveness in relation to the Anglo-Saxon countries has so far yet changed the situation.

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ABSTRACT

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'Domäne' ist eine Benennung, die schon früh in die Soziolinguistik Eingang gefunden hat. Jedoch erst in dem letzten Jahrzehnt ist die Benennung und der Begriff 'Domänenverlust' immer häufiger anzutreffen; dies kann vor allem darauf zurückgeführt werden, dass die Vorherrschaft des Englischen in bestimmten Wissenschaftsbereichen als Bedrohung der Funktionstauglichkeit der anderen Sprachen angesehen wird.

Die Sprachplanung benötigt für sowohl die Theorie wie die Praxis einen klaren Begriffsapparat.

Ausgehend von der Fachkommunikation wird in diesem Artikel ein Begriffsapparat vorgelegt, der von der Domänendynamik ausgeht. Wenn man etwas verloren hat, kann man es auch zurückerobern. Daher ist es nur logisch auch von anderem als nur dem Domänenverlust zu sprechen. Obwohl die Beispiele des Artikels vorzugsweise aus dem Bereich der Wissenschaftssprache stammen, ist der Begriffsapparat auch auf weitere Bereiche übertragbar.

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