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Diversity Report 2008

An overview and analysis of translation statistics across Europe: Facts, trends, patterns.

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Preliminary version available also at
www.wischenbart.com/translation

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Diversity Report 2008:
Executive summary (English)

Scope and goal of the report

This report compiles and analyses statistics on books in translation across Europe over a period of more than 25 years (1979 to 2005, and in some aspects until 2008) and is based on the UNESCO Index Translationem as well as separate national book market statistics in Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, and Poland.

Data and methodology

Comparisons between the used sets of data show significant inconsistencies in individual numbers, but trends and developments turned out to be fairly representative so that overall patterns, notably flows of translations over time, as well as comparisons between countries and languages, allow a mapping process for the exchange of books by translation in Europe. While translations are certainly not, in themselves, sufficient to measure the status and the changes of cultural diversity (such as defined by the UNESCO declaration of 2001), they are significant indicators for any assessment of cultural diversity.

Findings

The top languages and countries in Europe

English is the clearly predominant original (or source) language for translations whose share grew from 40 to over 60 percent on average within 15 years until hitting apparently a ceiling by the late 1990s. In some countries of Central and Southeast Europe however, the proportion of English is below this threshold by some 10 percent – e.g. in the Czech Republic, Romania or Austria).

English is followed, in a distance, by German and French as the clear number 2 and 3 among the most popular original languages for translations, and the top 3 languages are good, between themselves, for 4 out of 5 translations. Interestingly, despite considerable dynamics of change on many levels, the proportion for the top trio rose only, in a quarter of a century, by slightly less than 10 percent from averages in the low 70s before 1989 to between 80 and 82 percent after that year, and with a decline below 80 percent most recently.

Overall several indicators hint that translation numbers may have declined recently, after a long period of steady rise. Particularly the top languages lose while a few medium sized languages tend to win, if not in any overwhelming order.

In a ranking of countries, France is likely to be the strongest target country for translations, followed by Germany which used to be the number 1 for decades. In return, only very few translations are done into English, yet we have been cautioned about the reliability of any figures available on this aspect.

There is also a noticeable decline of translations from German into West European countries, e.g. France, Italy, the Netherlands, or Denmark, but also into Czech.

Central and Southeast Europe (CEE)

Specific attention has been paid in this report to Central and Southeast Europe, on translations from these and into these languages as well as between CEE countries. This particular research interest was due to the many languages and different sizes of countries and languages in the region as well as to the desire to gain a more detailed understanding of the impact of a defining political event such as the end of the Cold War and the abolishment of the Iron Curtain in 1989.

In fact, 1989 – and as for Russian, the dissolution of the Sowjet Union in 1991 – can be clearly identified as watersheds in translation trends. Already in the 1980s, the number of translations in the region of CEE started to go down significantly. With the transition, cultural infrastructures crumbled, and only by the late 1990s, translation figures started to rise again, yet cautiously, and never met the high levels from before.

Translation numbers went down, after only a short lived peak of interest in the early 1990s. Recently, translations from major CEE languages (notably Polish, Czech, and Hungarian) into Germany, which used to work as a dynamic cultural gateway for the region, went down again, just as well as translations for France.[1] While old cultural ties between some CEE countries like Poland or Romania are reflected by above average translation numbers from the centres to their peripheries, this is not at all reciprocal.

Only very few other events aside from major political thresholds such as 1989 have an impact that can be tracked in the statistics with a certain likelihood. One exception is the Guest of Honour presentations at the Frankfurt Book Fair of Hungary in 1999 and of Poland in 2000.

The most alarming finding is probably the extremely low – and in comparison to pre-1989 roughly halved – number of intra-CEE translations pointing at a significant loss of cultural exchange through books.

Outlook

In many areas, available data are hardly sufficient (or good enough) for more detailed interpretation, not the least to extract a proper understanding of what seems to indicate at an overall decline in translations for the most recent decade.

It would be highly desirable to have market based statistics aside from the certainly valuable UNESCO data for most countries.

More complex models of data analysis and specifically of how to map culturally diversity should be developed for a better understanding of books and cultural exchanges, which form certainly important elements at the core of culture and identities in Europe.

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[1] **Note: The statistics that we could use track numbers for languages into countries, not into languages, which is of significance for languages used in several countries, e.g. France/Belgium, Germany/Austria/Switzerland, Hungary/Romania.**

Diversity Report 2008: Zusammenfassung (deutsch)

Ansatz und Ziele des Report

Dieser Report versammelt statistische Daten und Auswertungen über Bücher und Übersetzungen quer durch Europa aus mehr als 25 Jahren (1979 bis 2005 sowie in manchen Fällen bis 2008), basierend auf dem Index Translationem der UNESCO sowie davon unabhängigen Datenquellen aus Deutschland, Frankreich, Österreich, Polen und der Tschechischen Republik.

Daten und Methodik

Vergleiche zwischen den einzelnen Datensätzen förderten erhebliche Unterschiede im Einzelnen zutage. Entwicklungen und Trends aber erwiesen sich als weitgehend übereinstimmend, insbesondere wenn übergreifende Flüsse von Übersetzungen oder Vergleiche zwischen Ländern und Regionen angestellt wurden. Während Übersetzungsstatistiken gewiss nicht hinreichend für eine Bemessung kultureller Vielfalt im Sinne der UNESCO Deklaration von 2001 sind, sind sie doch ein wichtiger Indikator.

Ergebnisse

Die Top Sprachen und Länder in Europa

Englisch ist die dominante (Quell-) Sprache für Übersetzungen mit einem Anteil, der innerhalb von rund 15 Jahren bis in die späten 1990er von 40 auf mehr als 60 Prozent gestiegen ist. Bemerkenswert ist, dass einige Länder aus Zentral- und Südosteuropa, insbesondere Rumänien, Tschechien und Österreich, für Englisch um rund 10 Prozentpunkte niedrigere Werte ausweisen.

Mit einigem Abstand auf Englisch folgen Deutsch und Französisch als klare Nummer 2 und 3, und gemeinsam steht das Spitzentrio für 4 von 5 Übersetzungen. Dieser Wert unterlag im Beobachtungszeitraum nur geringfügigen Schwankungen von weniger als 10 Prozentpunkten und scheint in jüngster Zeit etwas zu fallen.

Insgesamt deutet einiges darauf hin, dass im jüngsten Jahrzehnt die Zahl der Übersetzungen eher wieder fällt, und nur vereinzelte (zumeist mittelgroße) Sprachen konnten Zugewinne verbuchen.

In einem Ländervergleich erweist sich Frankreich als das in Europa stärkste Zielland für Übersetzungen, gefolgt von Deutschland, das lange Zeit unangefochten an der Spitze lag. Nur vergleichsweise sehr wenig wird ins Englische übersetzt, doch fehlen gerade hier einigermaßen repräsentative Zahlen für eine genaue Analyse.

Zu verzeichnen ist überdies ein Rückgang bei Übersetzungen aus dem Deutschen in mehreren westeuropäischen Buchmärkten, etwa Frankreich, Italien, den Niederlanden oder Dänemark, wie auch in der Tschechischen Republik.[2]

Zentral- und Südosteuropa

Dieser Report geht exemplarisch auf Zentral- und Südosteuropa ein, auf Übersetzungen aus der und in die Region wie auch zwischen deren einzelnen Ländern und Sprachen. Unser besonderes Interesse galt der bedeutenden regionalen sprachlichen Vielfalt wie auch den Auswirkungen besonderer politischer Ereignisse wie dem Ende des Kalten Krieges und dem Fall des Eisernen Vorhanges 1989.

1989 – und im Fall von Russisch die Auflösung der Sowjetunion 1991 – erwiesen sich als Wasserscheiden. Schon in den späten 1980ern ging die Zahl von Übersetzungen in der Region merklich zurück. Nachdem wichtige kulturelle Infrastrukturen erst einmal zerbrachen, stiegen auch Übersetzungen erst wieder gegen Ende der 1990er leicht an, ohne jedoch die Werte von davor zu erreichen.

Ein erster Anstieg des Interesses an der Region in den 1990ern erwies sich als sehr kurzlebig. Seither gingen Übersetzungen in Richtung Deutschland – einem lange Zeit wichtigen Zielland für die Region – wie auch Frankreich wieder zurück. Alte kulturelle Bindungen, etwa zwischen Frankreich und Polen oder Rumänien, schlugen sich anfangs in vergleichsweise hohen Übersetzungszahlen vom Zentrum in Richtung so genannte Peripherien nieder, jedoch niemals auch in umgekehrter Richtung.

Nur ganz wenige Ereignisse, abgesehen von 1989, hinterließen in den Datenkurven deutlich nachweisbare Spuren. Eine Ausnahme sind die Gastland-Auftritte zur Frankfurter Buchmesse von Ungarn 1999 und Polen 2000.

Ein besonders alarmierendes Teilergebnis ist die sehr geringe Anzahl von Übersetzungen zwischen Ländern und Sprachen Zentral- und Südosteuropas, was auf einen klaren Verlust an kulturellem Austausch in der Region hinweist.

Ausblicke

In zahlreichen Bereichen fehlen aussagekräftige oder solide Daten für weiter führende Detailanalysen, insbesondere um Indizien genauer zu bewerten, die auf Rückgänge bei Übersetzungen in jüngster Zeit hindeuten. Es wäre wünschenswert, wenn künftig für möglichst viele Länder neben den gewiss wertvollen UNESCO Daten auch Marktstatistiken zu Übersetzungen verfügbar wären.

Besser ausgefeilte Analysemethoden und Modellierungen von kultureller Vielfalt sind die Voraussetzung, um Karten kultureller Vielfalt zu generieren und damit dieses wichtige Feld im kulturellen Austausch und in der Entwicklung kultureller Identitäten in Europa zu erhellen.

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[2] Zur Erläuterung: Die verwendeten Statistiken weisen Übersetzungen AUS Sprachen, jedoch IN Länder bzw. Buchmärkte aus, und nicht IN Sprachen – was bei Ländergruppen mit grenzüberschreitenden Sprachen wie Frankreich/Belgien, Deutschland/Österreich/Schweiz oder Ungarn/Rumänien von Bedeutung ist.

Why translation matters
Scope, goals and guidelines

> *Article 6*
> *While ensuring the free flow of ideas by word and image care should be exercised that all cultures can express themselves and make themselves known. Freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge, including in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity*.
> (Diversity / UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001)

Before and even more so since the publication of the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001, the issue of diversity has brought about a broad debate on the relationship between (predominantly) defining and receiving nations when it comes to cultural production. Yet little generally approved guidance and, even less, reliable data have been made available on how diversity can be measured.

Books and reading, and therefore publishing and the book trade are formats, activities and channels which are certainly central to the dissemination of cultural diversity. And translations of books undoubtedly play a key role to the exchange of cultures, ideas and knowledge.

Books have a special significance as they are by general consent and use a critical format when it comes to representing complex sets of ideas and knowledge, be it in fiction or non-fiction, in learned works or in art, poetry or other ways of cultural communication. Translations of books are the prerequisite to make these expressions travel, without abbreviations and shortcuts, across countries, cultures and languages. In a culturally and linguistically diverse realm such as Europe, the flows of translation for books are therefore probably a particularly valid indicator to assess, or even measure what kinds of complex ideas and knowledge are travelling, or not, and what are the patterns behind such dissemination.

But the landscape of books and translations, even for Europe, is so far largely uncharted. There are no maps available to allow an exploration of the flows of translation across the continent and between its many cultures and languages.

Being aware both of the complexities and the pitfalls of the plan to at least start such a mapping process, we opted for risking shortcomings, methodological flaws, very limited available data and limited resources, simply because we consider the moment appropriate to come up with first suggestions and at least raw and preliminary results, for several reasons:

- Over the past decade, or more symbolically speaking, since the takeover of the largest US trade publisher Random House by an ambitious German media group, Bertelsmann, in 1998, book publishing has gone both global and digital in various respects. European publishing groups are leading the industry internationally. Segments of what used to be part of the '*book*' industry not so long ago, namely professional publishing or education, not to speak of scientific journals, have become all but digitally driven ventures. The Internet has deeply changed the information on and the selling of books. In a next step, perhaps, also fiction and non-fiction books may migrate, at least partially, to digital platforms and hence will be disseminated across all borders seamlessly.

- The impact of books from English language originals seem to be paramount, at least since the landing of a British sorcerer pupil named Harry Potter, and a fictive US exploration of the foundations of Christianity, "The Da Vinci Code" of Dan Brown, with many more books having meanwhile followed the paths laid out by those paradigm changing novels. Against such a surge of what had been rapidly labelled as the "homogenization" of reading culture, people and organisations from smaller languages and cultures feel seriously threatened. However, all statistical evidence points to a much more differentiated – and more culturally diverse – universe of books and reading than the "homogenization" theory would suggest. Also, most European countries read much more domestic books than global bestsellers, with non-English originated European bestsellers forming an important additional layer of cultural and reading profiles.

- Much less attention has been paid so far to ratios and relationships between all the other languages, or to how exchanges (and translations) do or do not occur beyond the overwhelming reach of English and, at a second level, German and French originals. Even less well understood are regional developments, notably in Central, East and Southeast Europe where after the regime changes of 1989, cultural production, consumption and orientation have shown substantial discontinuities.

- For all their cultural value, the translation of books come, for publishers and therefore also for consumers, with additional cost which already in the past seems to have started to discourage some to buy rights, at least of non-mainstream books, and to invest in foreign books and writers who are often considered to be more difficult to sell than domestic writing. But again, we know only very little if these assumptions are true, or only assumptions morphing into self fulfilling market forces.

With economic turbulences and probably a recession ahead, cultural diversity via the translation of books may easily become a collateral damage when costs are cut wherever it seems easily possibly.

At such a crossroads, it will be critical to better understand the status quo and the forces of change, the resulting trends and developments ahead, and hence the cultural value of translated books.

Setting the agenda

The status quo of our understanding with regard to the translation of books in Europe is paradoxical.

On the one hand, there is a wealth of thoughtful essays available, based on a wide array of perspectives and insights, anchored in various disciplines, from political science to cultural studies to translation studies. Diversity and multilingualism have been defined as being a key to the understanding of European identities and cultures. Numerous support programs for the funding and fostering of translations have been introduced recently, notably over the past decade, on both national and supranational levels, by governments and by non-governmental actors.[3]

On the other hand, no solid empirical foundation, providing key figures and insight with regard to translations is at hand.

Are there more books translated as, say 10 or 20 years ago? Yes, certainly, at least in Europe. But what kinds of books are translated exactly? And why? What are the main trends and developments? What are the forces behind translations? As a matter of fact, we don't know for sure.

The Diversity Report 2008 has not the ambition or the means to fill this gap at once. But it modestly aims at

- Setting the agenda;
- Providing a first overview and analysis of existing data;
- Calibrating some of the sources of available data between each other in order to assess their reliability;
- Pointing to perspectives and strategies for further work.

The ambition is to produce substance and reference for an expert discussion as well as input and orientation for the wider cultural and political debate.

This preliminary version of the Diversity Report 2008 is to be presented at an expert meeting "On Translation", on 21 November 2008 at Buch Wien 08.

A final version enriched and updated with input from the expert forum, will be issued in time after the "On Translation" conference and available for download at the conference website www.wischenbart.com/translation or directly at www.culturaltransfers.org .

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[3] To mention only a few exemplary studies, each carrying comprehensive bibliographies, we point to the following recent publications:
Wiebke Sievers: Contemporary German Prose in Britain and France (1980 – 1999). A Case Study of the Significance of Otherness in Translation. Lewiston, Queenston, 2007.
Albrecht Lempp: Europa liest. In: Kulturreport Fortschritt Europa. Hg. Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen und Robert Bosch Stiftung, et al. Stuttgart, p. 206 – 214.
Rudolf Pölzer: Kein Land des Übersetzens? Studie zum österreichischen Übersetzungsmarkt 2000 – 2004. Repräsentation – Transformation. Translating across Cultures and Societies. Hg. Michaela Wolf. Bd. 2. Wien: LIT 2007.

Translation statistics for books in Europe: Status quo of translation statistics and analysis

How good or bad are the available data?

Since 1932, UNESCO collects data on translations of books for the Index Translationem[4], certainly the vastest compilation available. But these data, collected mostly by National Libraries and comparable public institutions differ significantly from statistical surveys as provided by trade associations and other private institutions. And all sets of data reveal, at closer scrutiny, substantial inconsistencies which, at least at a first glance, bring up considerable question marks with regard to the reliability of the statistical information. Yet there is no realistic way to altogether start a new, more solid statistical survey.

For this report we therefore tried to calibrate the data sets that we used, by comparing at least selected samples, over a period of several years.

While each set of data, be it from the UNESCO or from other sources, showed questionable values at one point or another, it turned out that

- Overall trends and patterns are largely consistent between all the sets of data that could be compared;
- Absolute numbers of translations in a given country often show ups and downs that can not always be explained systematically,
- Representing translation data in percent of a country's total per year (instead of the absolute numbers) however helps to eliminate many of those problems.

These findings emphasize that the overall picture produced has a high degree of plausibility, even if details are not always accurate.

Annex I of this report has a more detailed discussion of the methodological approach used in this report.

Main sources of data in this report

The goal of this report was to work from a broad range of data sources, namely

- UNESCO Index Translationem;
- Buch und Buchhandel in Zahlen of Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels for Germany;
- Electre / Livres Hebdo for France;
- Translation statistics of the Polish Book Institute for Poland;
- Czech BookWorld News 2007/2008 with data from the National Library of the Czech Republic;

[4] http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=7810&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

- Rudolf Pölzer's analysis of various translation data on Austria between 2000 and 2004, updated by our own research for the years until 2008.

All these data were integrated into a database in order to produce
- Queries and computations which are at the basis of most lists and diagrams in this report;
- Systematic comparisons between UNESCO and other data sets, which are at the core of the calibration effort.

In addition, we could use a large and so far unpublished body of research, covering a wide array of data and sources, done by Alexandra Buchler for "Literature Across Frontiers", as well as various fragmented data collected by ourselves over the years.[5]

Limits of the Diversity Report 2008

The primary goal of this present report is to chart overall flows of translations, based on the UNESCO Index and, for a few countries (Germany, France, Poland, the Czech Republic and Austria) selected industry statistics.

For the final version, it is intended to add, at least for some trends and developments, more sophisticated statistical analysis tools and methods of representation.

Data from the most recent years – since 2000 – seem to show many new patterns hinting at overall translation numbers to decrease. Given the clearly limited reliability of the available data when it comes to analysing short term developments, it is probably too early to produce conclusive statements about these figures. This only points to the necessity of additional research in order to allow with more focused data and analysis per country and, ideally, per segment or category (e.g. fiction, children, or education) a more solid understanding of recent events.

Initially, it was planned to also having a part in this report documenting and analysing translation trends and cultural diversity on a per title basis with data from book bestseller lists from selected European book markets. While this data has been collected, its detailed analysis will reach beyond the scope of what has been realistic in this very first step of a mapping effort. Still, this is one path that will be continued.

Translations in Europe
Trends, patterns, developments

Anecdotal approaches

By its diversity in languages and the scope of its publishing industry, Europe is probably the world's richest and most dynamic region when it comes to the translation of books.

Translated books include worldwide bestselling novels, such as, most famously, the British Harry Potter series, but regional bestsellers as well often travel across

[5] http://www.lit-across-frontiers.org/

countries and languages through translations, such as Swedish crime novels with authors like Henning Mankell or Stieg Larsson, or historic accounts, for instance most recently Ildefonso Falcones' "La cathedral del mar" from and about Barcelona, or fact based, yet fictionalised thrillers covering up very real politics such as Roberto Saviano's "Gomorrha".

More often, translated books also come in much smaller print runs, deal with not only popular topics, but with highly specialized niche issues of all kinds, making books those premier containers when it comes to exchange knowledge and ideas between peoples, cultures and nations. This includes fiction, but just as well general non-fiction, children's books, educational texts or scientific works.

Sometimes, translations from small European countries or languages have become immensely popular overseas, while not finding any comparable audiences in their original vicinity. Examples are the Austrian Thomas Brezina whose fiction series for young readers have print runs of many millions in the PR China, making it the number 2 in young reading in one of the currently most competitive markets worldwide, without having any comparable following anywhere else, aside from his home country. The same is true for the Slovenian Lila Prap who has become "an icon in the world of children books and toys in Japan".[6]

Most recently, new practices seem to take shape aiming at short cutting the traditional rights and licences trade. Instead of selling translation rights, some original publishers set out to produce themselves translated versions, mostly into English. Occasionally the aim is less to distribute those translations directly to the general reading audience abroad, but to reach the attention of professional intermediaries in the hope of finding international partners for licences or co-editions. Lila Prap's Slovenian publisher Mladinska Kniga does so with every new title of this successful author. But also in the reverse direction, Chinese publishers are about to start new ventures in Europe with the same goal in mind.

Relevant parts of the writing of authors, particularly from smaller languages, are executed today in other languages then the originator's mother tongue, often enough further encouraged by authors pursuing careers in more than one country and one language, which allows them to aim at larger audiences. This is not only true for scholarly books, or for non-fiction, and the newly acquired writing language is not necessarily English, but also any other of the major, market dominating languages such as German or French. Several literary authors e.g. from Hungary took up writing in German over the past decade – and, as a result, are translated back for publication in their original mother tongue by a translator.

The global statistical framework

Globally, some 82,655 books have been translated in all the countries combined in 2004, according to UNESCO's Index Translationem. This is significantly more than the 53,423 titles that UNESCO accounted for a quarter of a century earlier, in 1979. This contradicts what had seemed to point to considerable drops in the overall curve of translations by the mid 1990s when statistics show a heavy downward dent in the previously rising curve, and the reasons for this are not entirely clear. The fact is,

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[6] **Reference provided by Miha Kovac, University of Ljubljana.**

though, that after a few years, translation numbers started to rise again, to tumble again most recently.[7] We can not be sure if this suggests that a certain overall ceiling in the global number of translated books has been reached by the early 2000's even as this carries a certain likeliness as it coincides with indications showing that also the clearly dominating language of reference, English, may have reached such a ceiling as well.

For all of the quarter century between 1979 and 2004, the top 20 languages, including notably English, French, German, Russian, Italian, Spanish and Swedish, accounted continuously for over 90 percent of these translations, and among the strongest languages of origin, Russian, after 1991, is the only major language subject to a decline by over two thirds within only a few years.

In reverse, the steady rise of English, from some 40 percent in 1979, to over 60 percent for the past almost 15 years, is the most telling success story reflected in all translation statistics. And even as this overall number may not exactly represent the number of translated books available to readers and book buyers through book shops internationally, there is no alternative survey available covering all the European book markets.

Three receiving countries top this ranking per country, Germany, Spain and France, with (according to the UNESCO data) over 10,000 translated books for each.[8] However, these figures do not mention the PR China in the top 20 segment, while China, has claimed in recent – rather realistic - trade statistics to have purchased over 10,000 translation rights per year.[9] A direct comparison of market data between PR China, France and Germany puts China even at the very top, with France (buying 6669 rights in 2007) and Germany (with 6160 rights) coming clearly behind.

The rise of China (and Chinese) as a target for translations is even more significant as in the past, translation had been primarily dominated by Europe. While the German and the Japanese book markets have been traditionally of roughly equal size, Japan's number of translation was only half of that in Germany.

Translation into English has always been minimal. While translations from English account – as will be shown in more detail below – for 60 to 70 percent in most countries, only an estimated 2 or 3 percent of all translations are into English as the target language. However, for this widely acknowledged anecdotal fact, no valid statistical source could be identified at this point, and also UNESCO cautioned us that it had no reliable data of translations into English.[10]

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[7] This clearly corrects statements as that in our essay "Why translation matters" (http://www.wischenbart.com/de/cultures/translation_overview.htm) on a general decline in the number of translations worldwide, but all the other, more detailed observations regarding the importance of translations, and notably the gap between a very few defining languages at the expense of all the others, remain fully valid.

[8] The particularly strong position of Spain may, partially at least, be due to the fact that Spanish publishing companies dominate the Latin American book market, so that almost any translation into Spanish may be included in the figures for Spain.

[9] In 2007 alone, China bought allegedly 10,255 titles. Source: Frankfurt Book Fair Newsletter, 10 November 2008.

[10] Information provided by Paul Richardson, former (founding) head of the publishing programme at Oxford Brookes University, for the UK, and by UNESCO sources.

Translations in Europe: A broad Overview

For 1979, the UNESCO Index Translationem counts a total of 48.132 translated books for all of Europe. A quarter century later, this number has increased to 73.791 in 2005, or by 53 percent. However this is down from 85561, and decreasing significantly ever since.

While it is perhaps too early to base any broader interpretations on this single indicator, a more detailed overview over translations covering roughly the past quarter of a century, from 1979 to 2004, points at several prominent patterns:

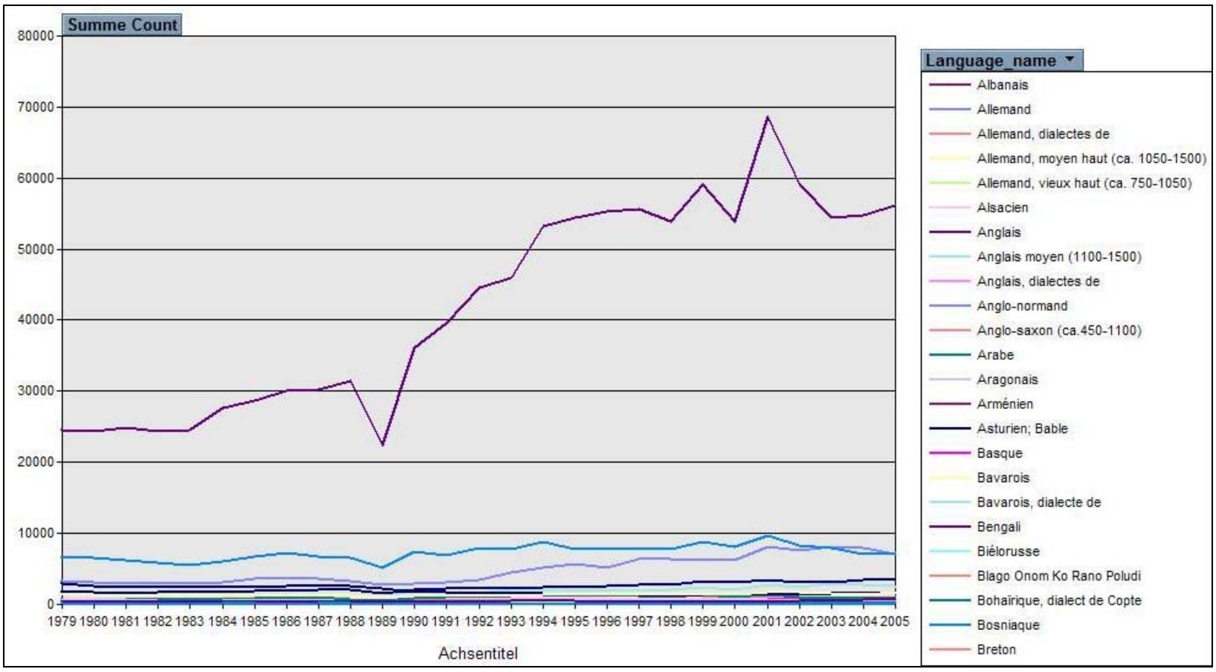

Diagram 1

As diagram 1 clearly shows,

- English is by far the dominating language of origin for translated books, and its share has been dramatically growing over the past decades. By 2004, ca. 60 percent of all translations across Europe have English originals. However, this is down from almost 65 percent in the late 1990s.

If one takes out English originals, again, a few languages are revealed to be much stronger than the broad majority of all the others:

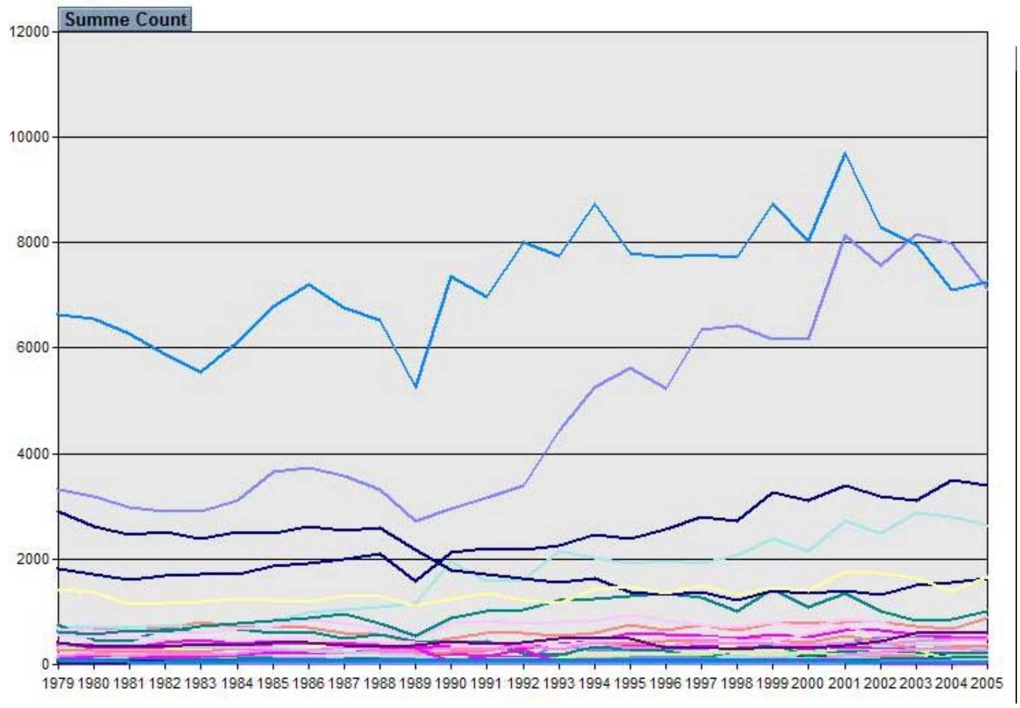

Diagram 2

German and French between themselves dominate the rest of the linguistic diversity, with a head on head race over the years between them with a slight tendency of German getting recently ahead of French.

Diagram 3

However, when not translated languages are compared, but translating countries, France recently took over from Germany the title of Europe's strongest translation market - a trend that is documented not only by the UNESCO Index, but also by industry statistics produced by Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels for Germany, and Electre for France.[11]

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[11] **Germany's Börsenverein publishes the yearbook "Buch und Buchhandel in Zahlen", the Electre figures are published annually by Livres Hebo, yet only back until 2004. In diagramm 4,**

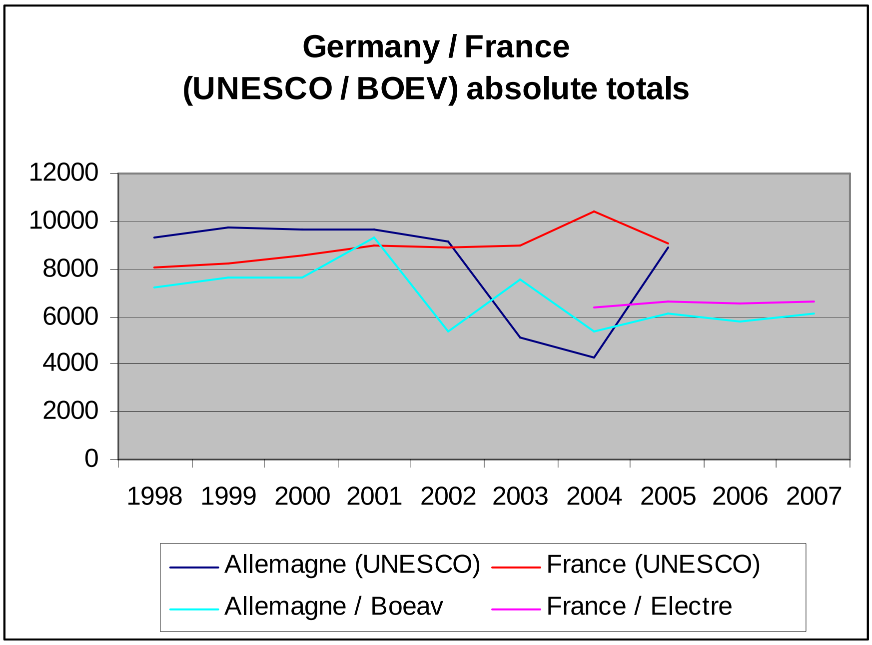

Diagram 4

Behind those clearly leading languages, another group of 5 languages shows some interesting developments over the past quarter century: While Italian and Spanish rose steadily to number 4 and 5 respectively, and Swedish followed on a more modest level, we observe a dramatic decline of Russian around and after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1991 and the demise of the Soviet Union, yet with a cautious rise again more recently, as Russia finds back to a more prominent political and economic position at the world stage. Dutch meanwhile enjoys modest growth, but no spectacular moves.

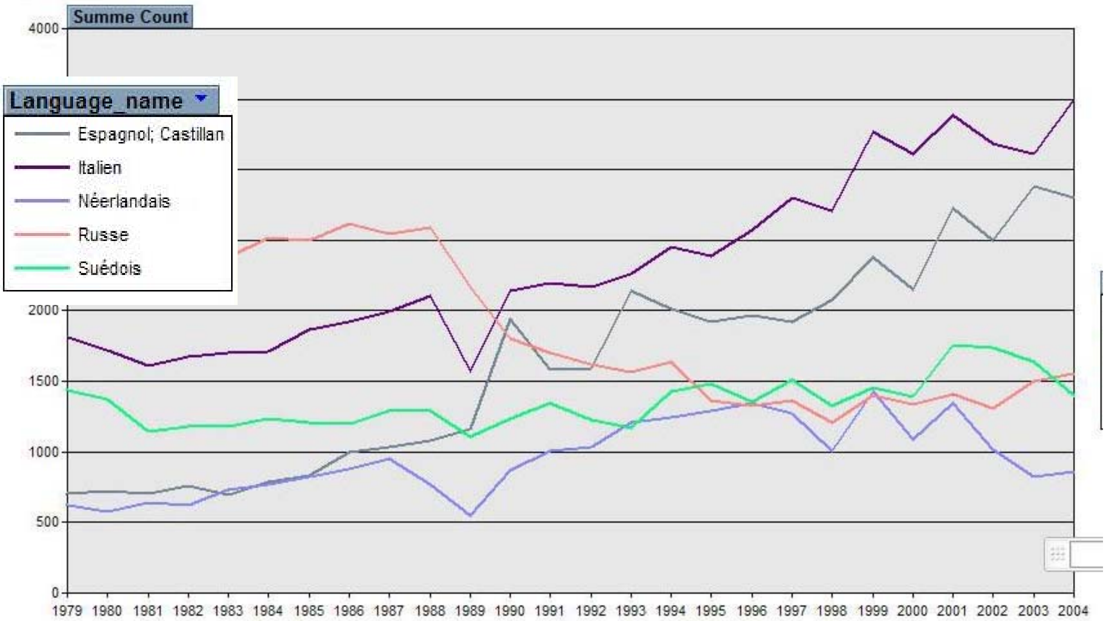

Diagram 5

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the curves for UNESCO data as well as of Börsenverein versus Electre hint at slight, yet steady growth of France and a decrease for Germany.

These trends translate into an interesting overall picture as shown in this table (by order of 2006 figures):

	1979	*1989*	*1999*	*2006*
English	51,10%	53,66%	63,96%	60,44%
French	13,79%	12,60%	9,51%	10,73%
German	6,87%	6,52%	7,08%	6,97%
Top 3 languages	**71,76%**	**72,77%**	**80,56%**	**78,14%**
Italien	3,77%	3,78%	3,61%	3,46%
Russian	6,03%	5,19%	1,55%	2,85%
Spanish	1,46%	2,78%	2,70%	2,43%
Swedish	2,99%	2,65%	1,66%	2,06%
Dutch	1,28%	1,31%	1,55%	1,38%
Top 8 languages	**87,30%**	**88,48%**	**91,62%**	**90,32%**

With only a few exceptions, the basic grit of the proportions between languages is amazingly stable over a long period of time, with

- Only a trio of languages accounting for roughly 4 out of 5 translations
- The Top 8 accounting for a stunning 9 out of 10 translations, and
- All the other languages combined representing only one tenth of all translations.

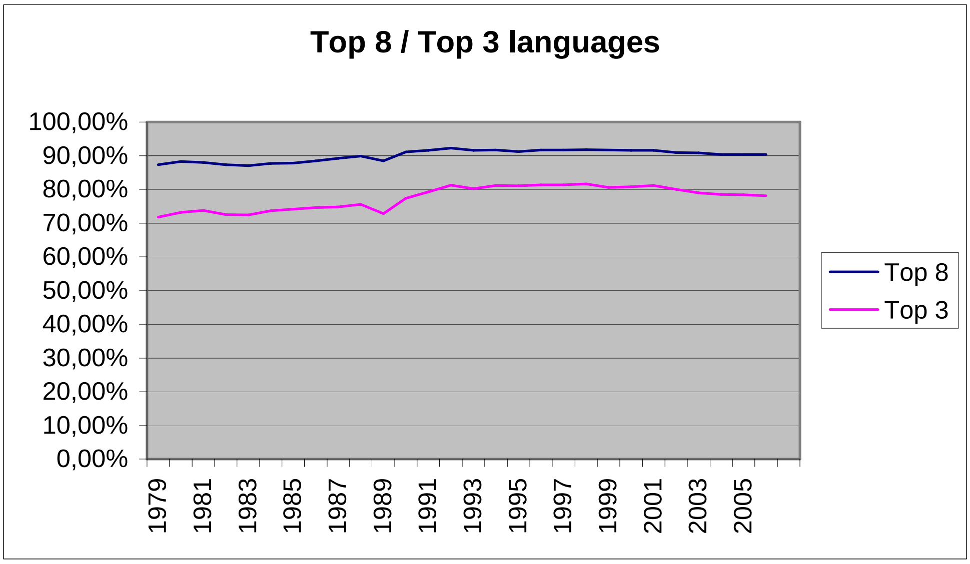

Diagram 6

However, data from the last decade, since the 1990s, hint that a certain ceiling has been reached by the top languages, and particularly for English.

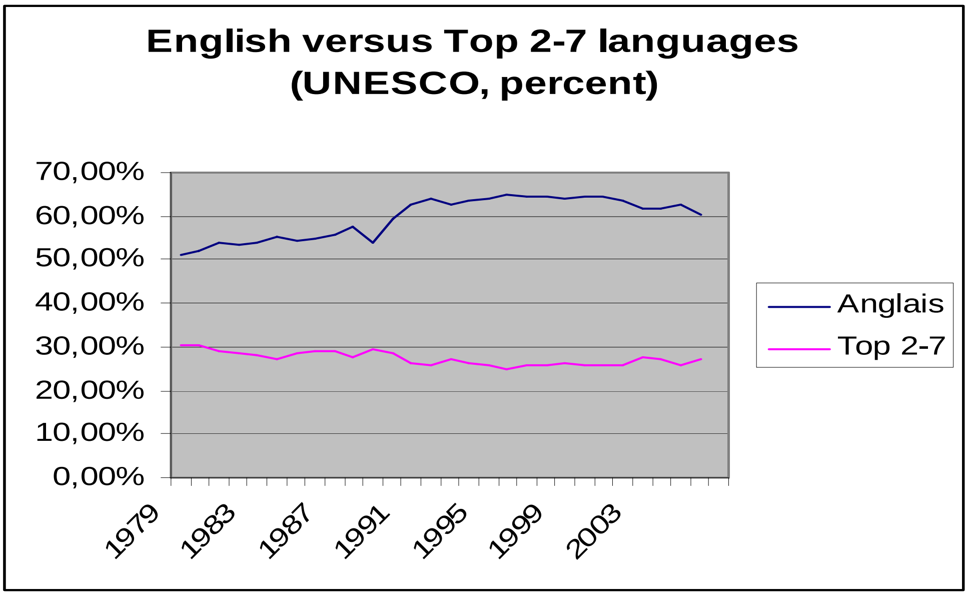

Diagram 7

The share of all the – in comparison to English - smaller languages combined is steadily rising, if slightly, again.

Central European languages

The region of Central and Southeast Europe is of particular interest for a survey of translation statistics for several reasons, as it

- Accounts for many different languages, of various numbers of speakers;
- Has recently been the theatre of tremendous political, economical and cultural change;
- Has, over the past decade, seen the creation of various funding strategies and support schemes for translation, both from national governments within the region as from non-governmental organisations within and out of the region.

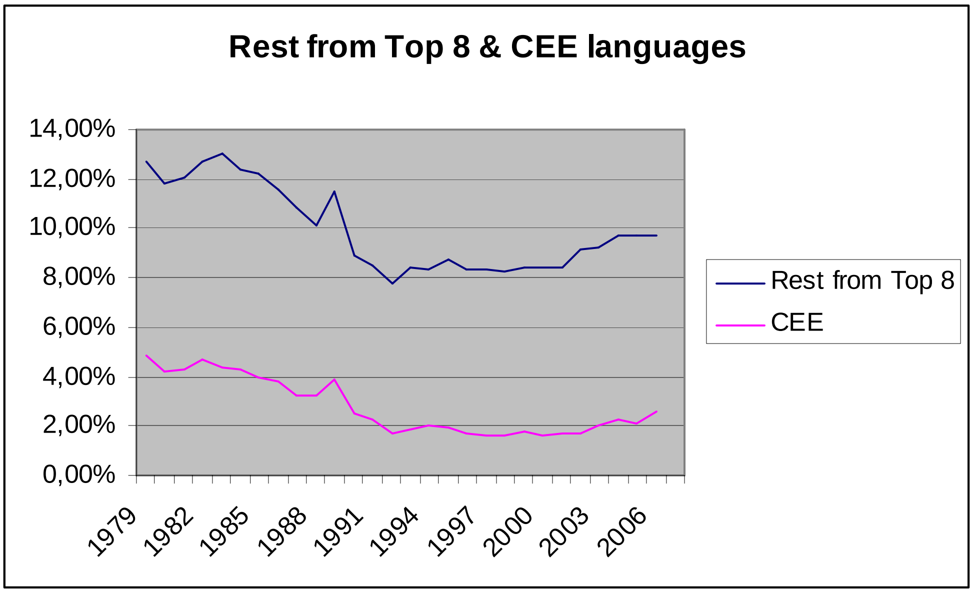

Diagram 8

A comparison between translations from all smaller languages combined (all languages except the top 8) and major Central and East European (CEE) languages combined shows two curves which seem to be tightly synchronized: The fundamental trend for 7 main languages of Central Europe (that is Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Slovenian, Romanian and Bulgarian) over the past quarter century is that of a dramatic decline in the 1980s, followed, after a flat trend in the early 1990s, by a slow growth over the past decade. It is remarkable how closely the same curve is inscribed by the development of translations from Russian over the same period of time.

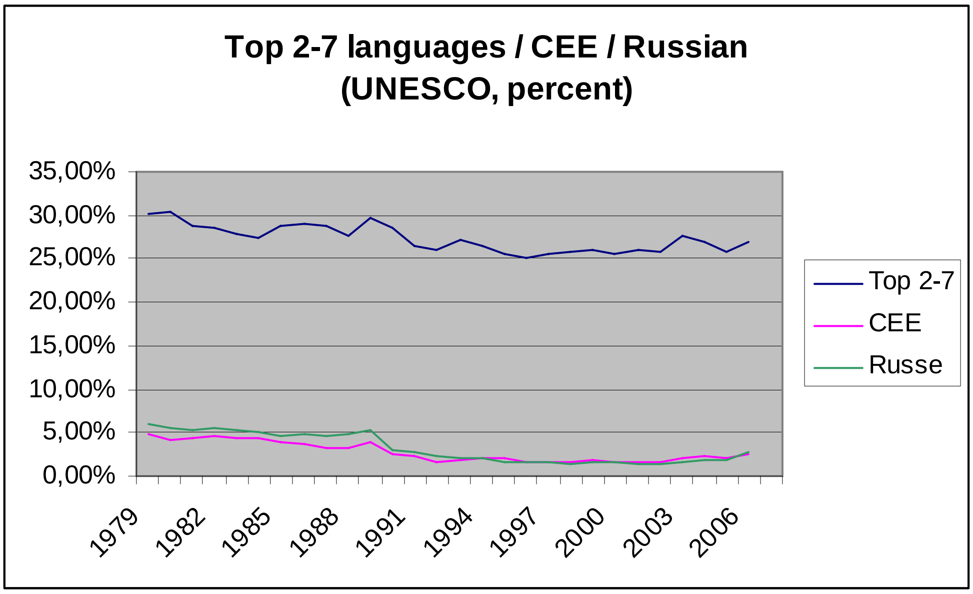

Diagram 9

It has to be noted as well, that the gap is not widening between the (West) European 6 major languages aside from English (that is German, French, Italian, Spanish, Swedish and Dutch).

The development of the main languages in 7 new member states of the European Union, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Slovenian, Romanian and Bulgarian, produces results that, at first, seem rather confusing.

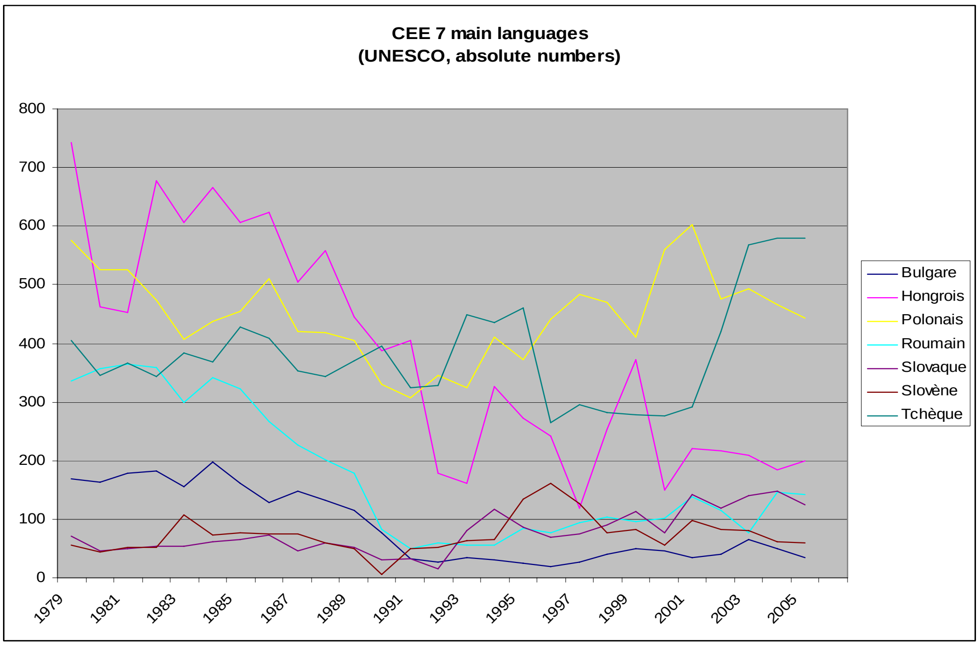

Diagram 10

A more detailed analysis quickly reveals interesting findings: In terms of translations, Central Europe is not one region, but two sets of countries with hugely diverging dynamics: There are two languages - with very divergent numbers of speakers -, Polish and Czech, who, after a period of decline or stability, entered a period of significant growth over the past decade.

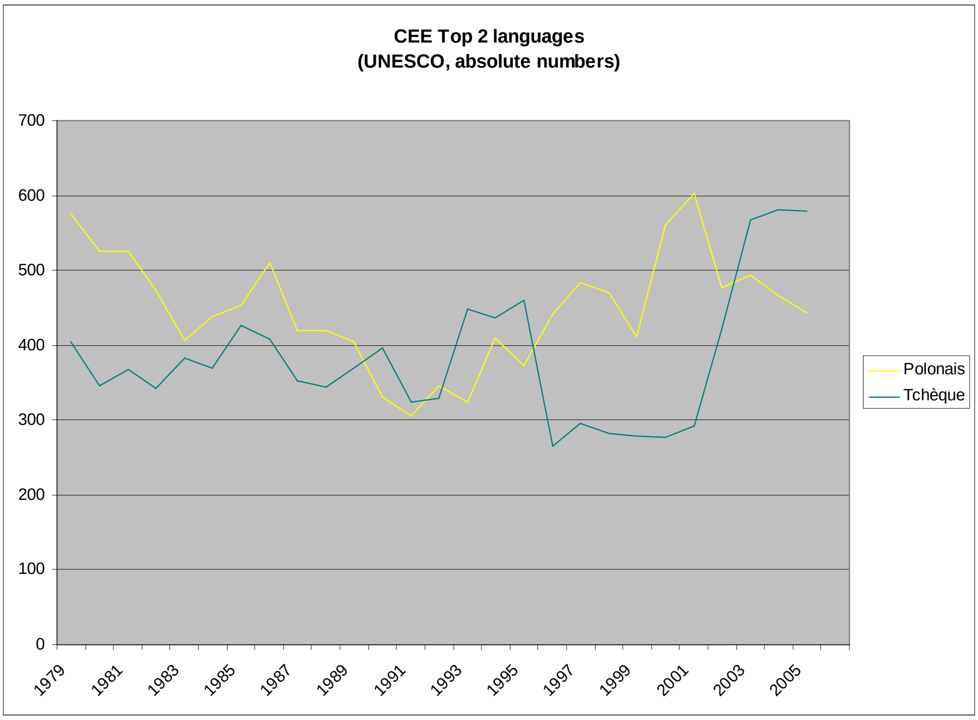

Diagram 11

On the other hand, there are 4 languages of, again, substantially diverging numbers of speakers, Hungarian, Slovenian, Slovak, Romanian and Bulgarian, which could never make up the loss from the stagnation in the pre-1989 decade.

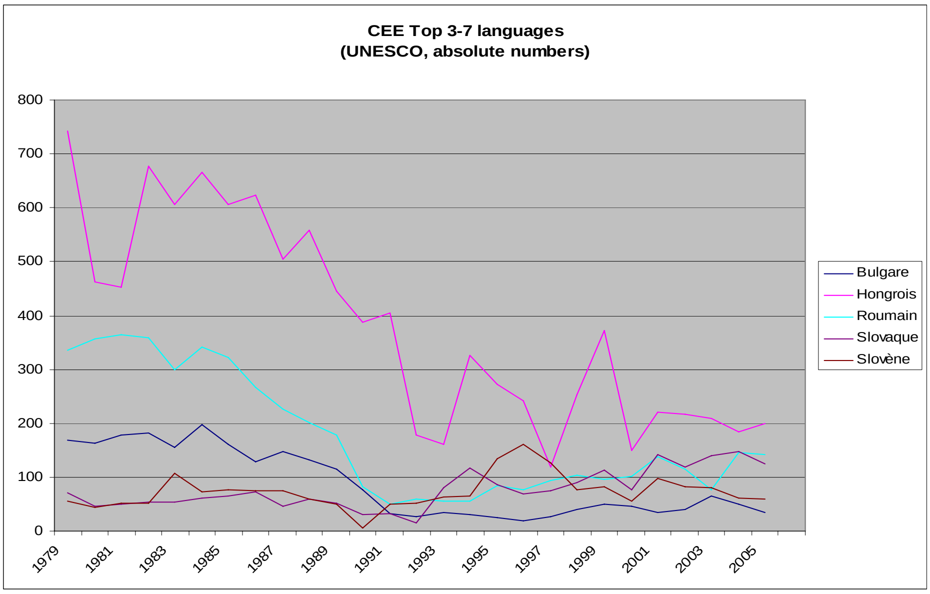

Diagram 12

The same development, not in absolute numbers of translations, but in percentage of the European total, shows that all of those CEE languages lost enormously ground with the fall of the Iron Curtain which, in terms of book production and of translation, was the equivalent of a protective shield against influences from outside of a planned economy with strictly limited offers to readers. Even since then, all the 7 major CEE languages under scrutiny here remain clearly niche languages in the wider European context.

Aside from those broader trends, a few events connected to active policy initiatives with regard to fostering and funding translation can be identified in the complex picture:

- The impact of Hungary as the guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1999
- The impact of Poland as the guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2000
- Probably a translation funding scheme introduced for translations from Czech in 1998[12]

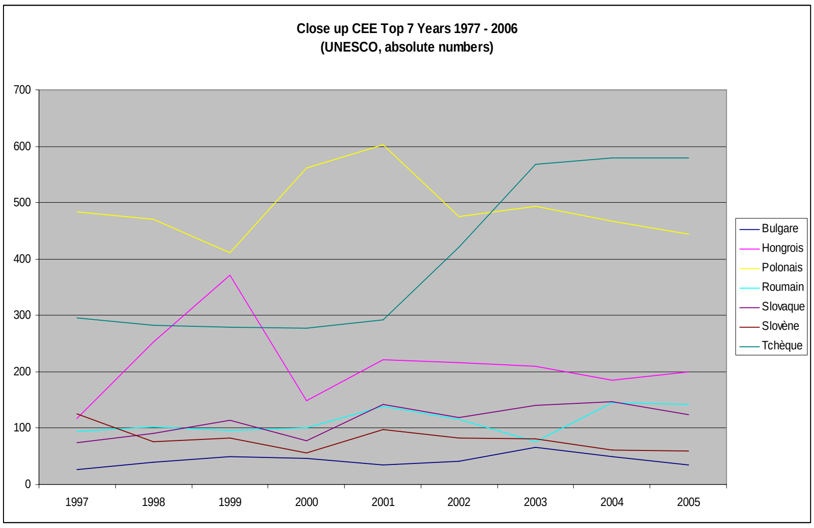

Diagram 13

The perspective of incoming translations per country

After focusing on the dynamics between languages across Europe, it is of similar interest to choose a reverse perspective by analyzing how various countries deal with translations, and how those patterns change – or change not so much.

The certainly most stunning pattern is the emergence of several new strongholds for incoming translations, and again this development unites countries of very varied shapes and sizes, namely France, Poland, or the Czech Republic.

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[12] **Information provided by Dana Kalinova, Svet Knihy.**

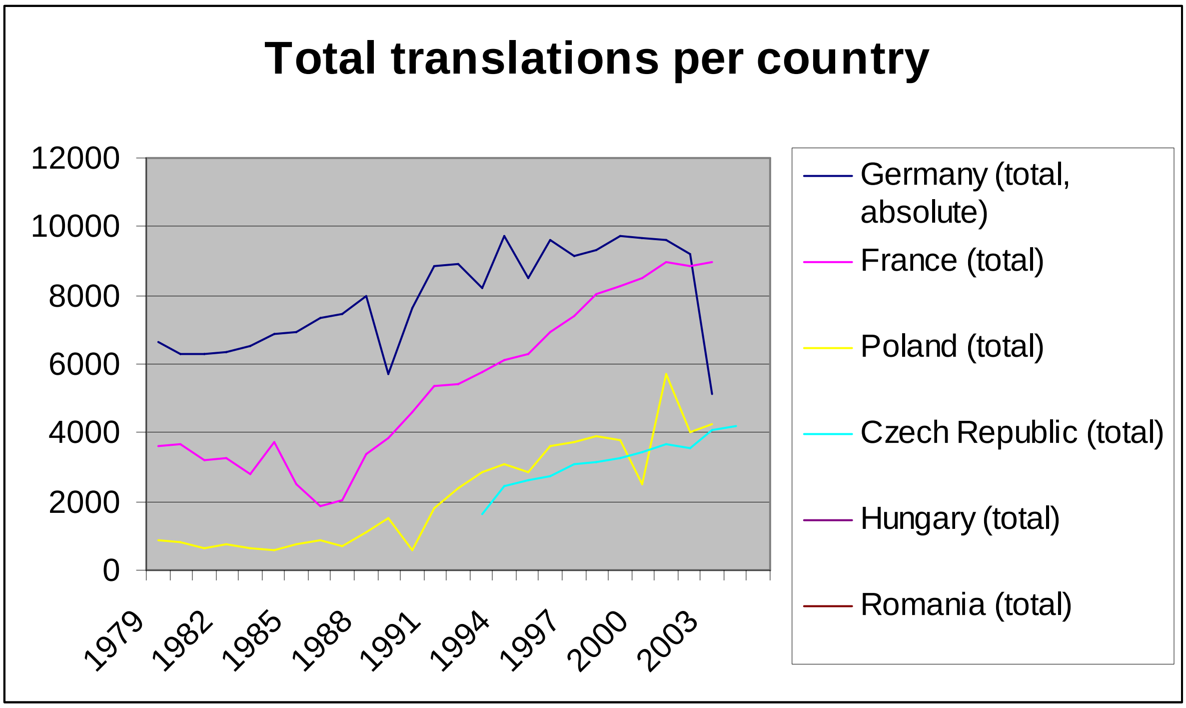

Diagram 14

It seems reasonable though to be more cautious with regard to the reliability of the data in this country centred perspective, because for each country it relies on only one single source.

For example, Germany's dramatic decline as shown in the blue curve for the most recent period since 2003 is probably a collecting issue rather than a trend. This is why for individual languages per country percentages are more solid as they absorb certain collecting flaws.

Per country views

Germany

Germany, for over half a century, was considered the largest buyer of translation rights. In recent years, several indicators as well as statistics both from UNESCO and Boersenverein (BOEV) hint at a continuous decrease.

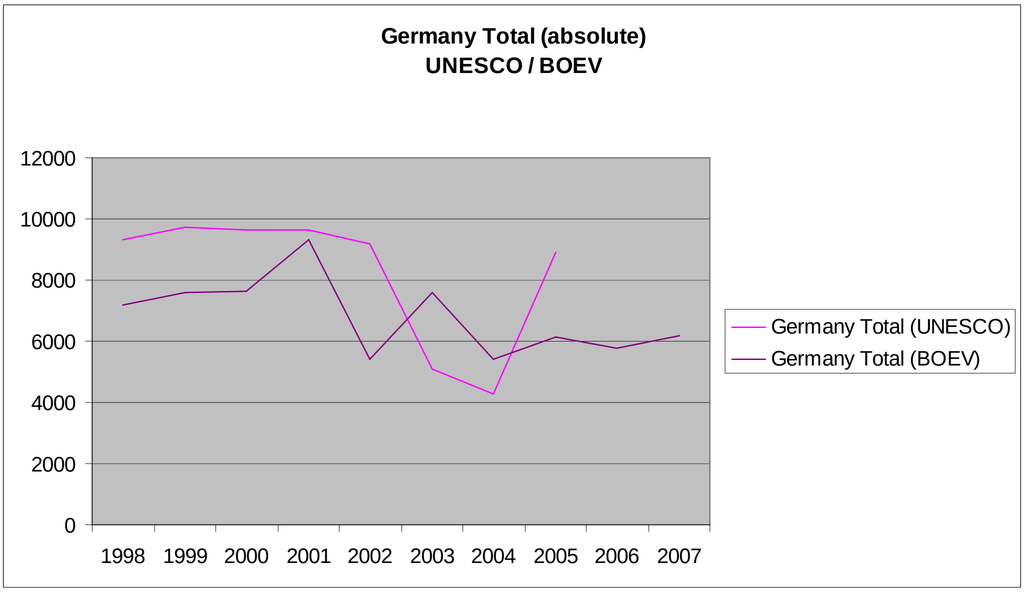

Diagram 15

Queried on the plausibility not only of the downward trend, but more precisely on the considerable fluctuations over the past decade, Boersenverein assured that there was no change in methodology, as only new titles (and no re-editions) were included in the figures. The relatively wild fever curve is supposed to give a realistic picture of the market.[13] A controversy between publishers and translators over fees is going on since ca. 2001 which certainly influences decisions bout rights acquisitions, but does not be sufficient for the entire fluctuations.

In Germany as in almost all countries, English is by far the strongest original language for book translations. However, the curve seems to have hit a ceiling a decade from now, while translations from French decrease continuously for a long period in time.

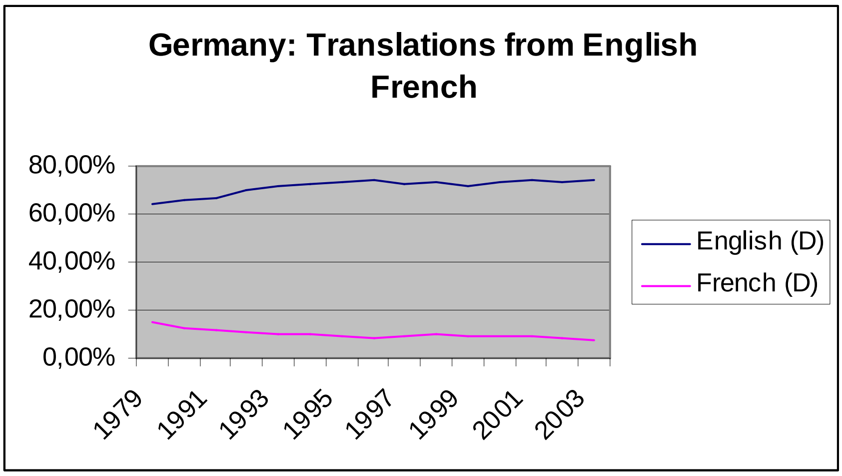

Diagram 16

Another area of continuous general decrease in the number of translations are translations from Central and East European languages targeted at German

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[13] **Communication from Gertraud Majer, stastistician at Boersenverein.**

audiences. This is even more remarkable as Germany has a tradition as the gateway into and from CEE, and both funding schemes and specialist attention – through various cultural exchange programs is available since 1989 to foster the role of Germany as a cultural bridge to the region.

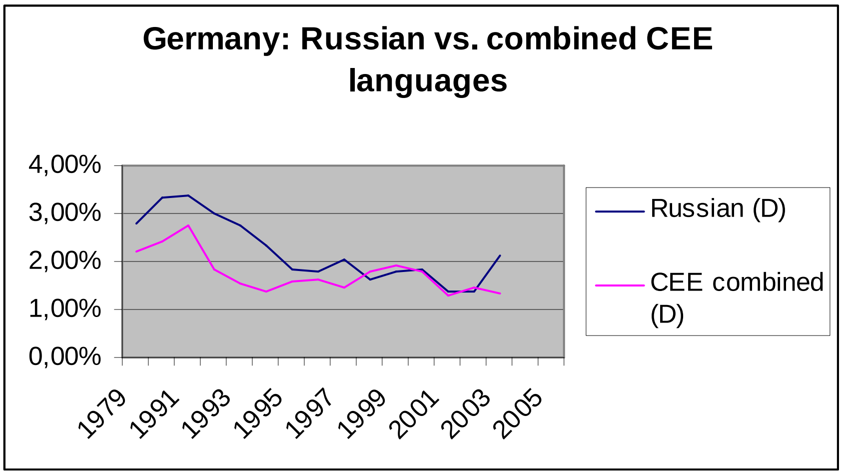

Diagram 17

Expectedly, the decline of Russian can be identified, and at first, after 1989, a strong impulse to translate from (and to re-discover) CEE languages which partly makes up for the loss of Russian. However, even all main CEE languages combined can never quite surpass Russian. And in a long term perspective, the combined CEE languages decline as well.[14]

Meanwhile one can recognize a rather flat and steady development for most middle sized Western languages (e.g. Dutch, Italian, or Spanish) into German, with one exception: Swedish. The significant rise of interest for Scandinavia – and notably Swedish crime fiction – seems to be the engine of the rise of Swedish.

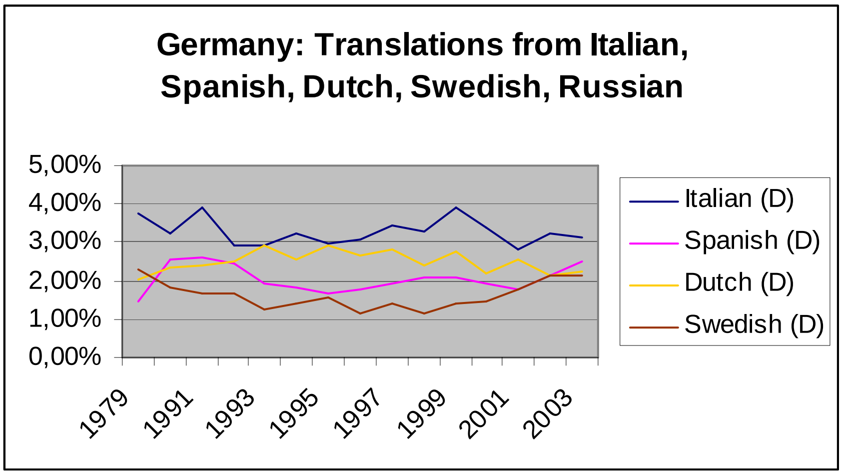

Diagram 18

[14] **The numbers here are based on West Germany before 1990, and on all of Germany after re-unification.**

France

In France, the impact of translations in the overall book market has grown continuously over a number of years, not only according to data, but also to various industry analyses notably from the French trade magazine Livres Hebdo.

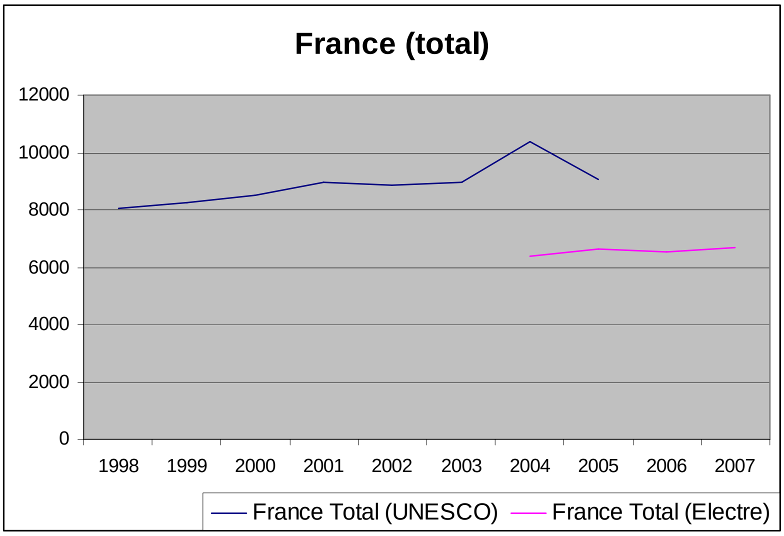

Diagram 19

There may be more than one driving factor behind this development. The French publishing industry has changed and considerably internationalized over the past decade, which is not only reflected in the ascent of two major groups with considerable international ambitions, Hachette Livres which is close to become the largest trade publisher in the USA and a strong player in the UK as well, and Editis, but also by the muscle of medium sized independent companies who always have understood themselves as houses with a strong eye on attractive titles from abroad. The French annual trade show, Salon du Livre in Paris, had been turned very successfully into a strong media event, with particular emphasis on a foreign country each year as the guest of honour.

Over the past several years, France seems to have surpassed Germany as the Number 1 in translations, both according to market statistics provided by BOEV (for Germany) and Electre (for France) as well as by the general trend as mirrored in the UNESCO data.

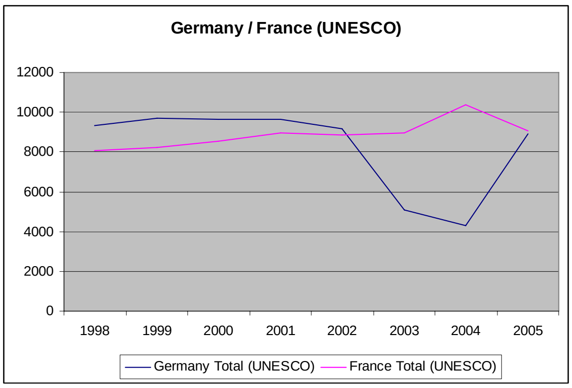

Diagram 20

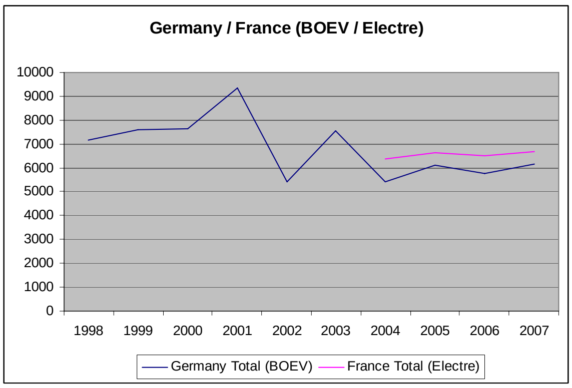

Diagram 21

Despite the (at least assumed) tradition of France to show a certain cultural reluctance towards the English speaking world, the data, both from UNESCO and from market sources give remarkably high values around or even above the line of 70 percent. The market data of BOEV and Electre have France even in a lead over Germany when it comes to translations from English.

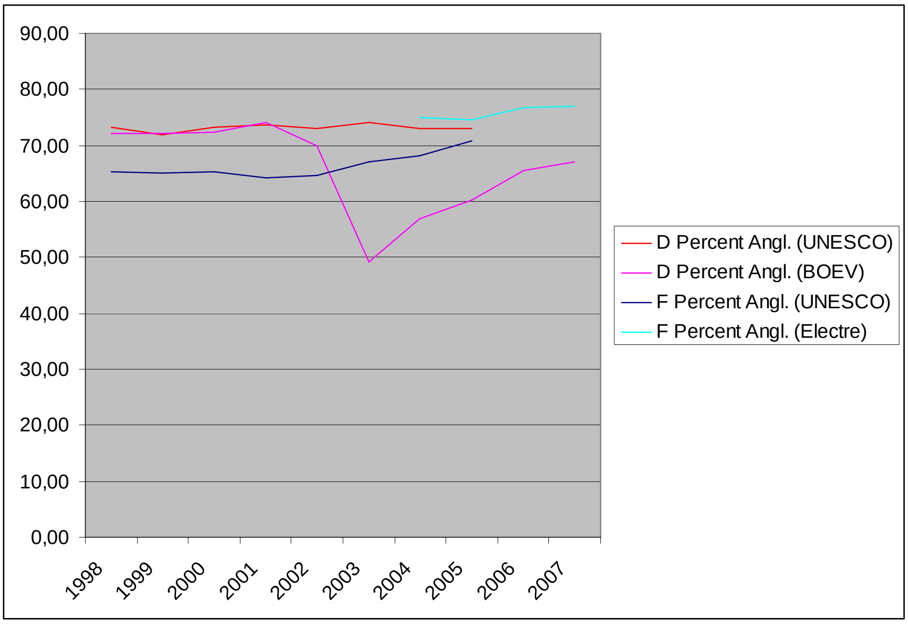

Diagram 22

Most other languages than English however are either flat or even indicate to be in decline – with the exception, most recently, of Russian and, on a more modest level, Swedish, which are on the rise.

Again, more detailed research, preferably based on market data, and ideally with break downs at least for fiction and for children's books, would be required to better understand the detailed dynamics of those languages behind the top group made of English, German, Italian and, well behind the top trio, Spanish. But even from what we can see here, it can be deducted that those countries and cultures with especially strong historical ties to France, as for example between Romania, or Poland, do not find a reciprocal echo in France. Translation numbers from Polish or Romanian into French are very modest indeed.

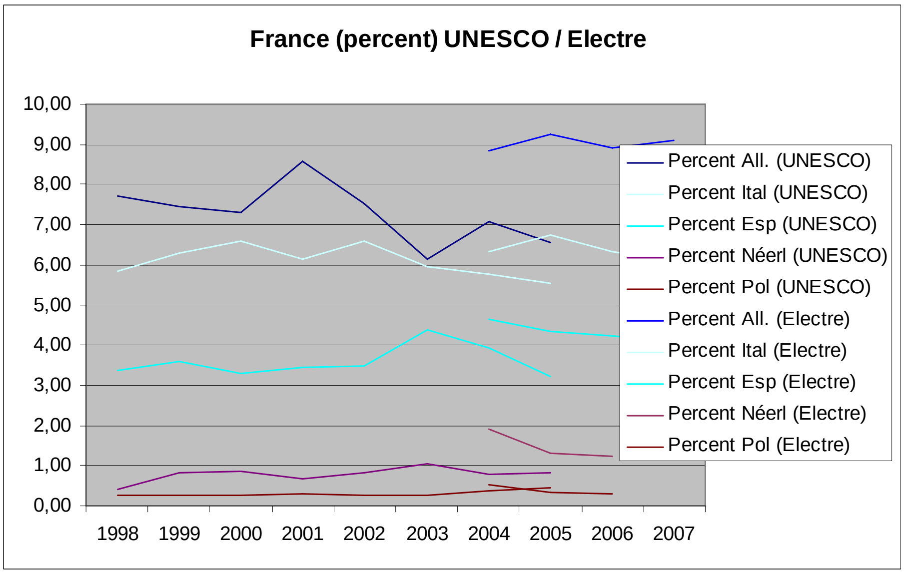

Diagram 23

Altogether, the French pattern does not hold evidence of any “exception culturelle” (or “cultural exception”) but that of France as one of the very few globally leading languages and cultural markets which are strong in exporting their culture, but very selective in what, reversely, is taken in. The hierarchy of the incoming languages is clearly dominated by their global international strength (with English coming in first, followed by German, Italian, Spanish – and with clearly only minority shares for all of the rest). And this pattern is reflected by UNESCO and by market data with little differences.

Austria[15]

Austria is a case study of specific interest as it is a small country (and market), yet within one of the top leading languages (German).

Overall, the number of translations made in Austria (or, by Austrian publishers) is relatively modest, with according to UNESCO, between 200 and 300 translations on average since 1989 (and a few singular peaks around 1999), and with 180 and 120 translations per year according to market statistics[16], yet both with a tendency of decline.

Really remarkable – and in contrast to all other countries analysed thus far - are the break downs for individual languages in Austria. It has to be noted that most of the international trade books in Austrian retail (as well as an overwhelming part of trade books in general) are imported from German (and one or the other Swiss) publishers, while Austrian publishers show a tendency to specialize on domestic topics, targeting local audiences.

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[15] The analysis of translations in Austria dwells on a separate forthcoming study sponsored with a special grant by Kulturamt der Stadt Wien, Geschäftsgruppe Kultur und Wissenschaft. The study is due for release by the end of 2007 on culturaltransfers.org

[16] Rudolf Pölzer set out in his book „Kein Land des Übersetzens?“, Vienna 2007 (for bibliographic details, see footnote 1), to count the number of translations from various sources, notably the yearbooks of IG Autoren in Literaturhaus Wien, for the years 2000 to 2004, and we updated this research until 2008 data.

The most surprising result in a close up on Austria is probably this: UNESCO data indicate that the percentage of translations from English in Austrian publishing is clearly at the lower end, as compared to most other European countries. If at all, Austria follows the patterns of some CEE countries which also have a more modest impact of translations from English (e.g. Romania, or the Czech Republic). The overall tendency of English is downward, towards an exceptional 50 percent (against a ca. 60 percent average for Europe).

Market figures, however, which we could compile at least for the past decade (2000 until 2008) show an even much more significant deviation from the general European standards, with English accounting only for a maximum of 46 percent (in 2001) and a low of less than 30 percent (in 2004), yet again with a general trend downward, and with a curve that seems to be pretty much in parallel to the UNESCO curve.

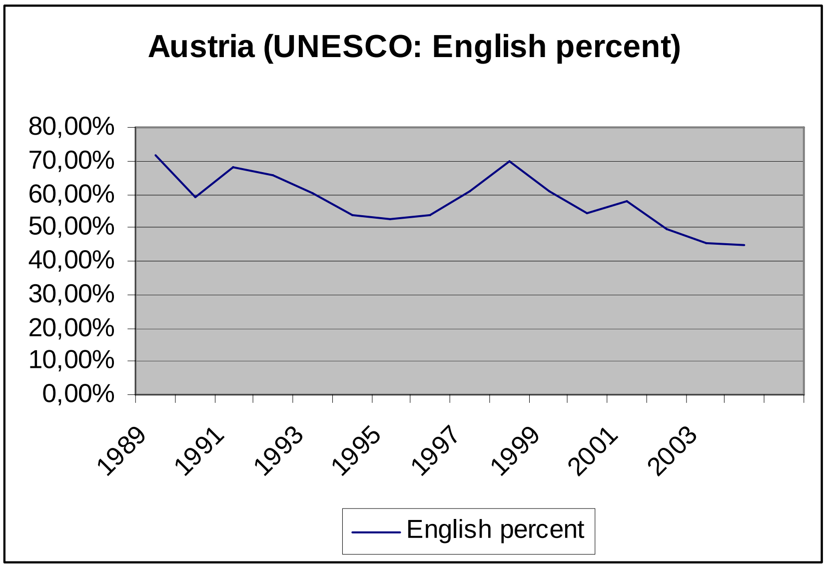

Diagram 24

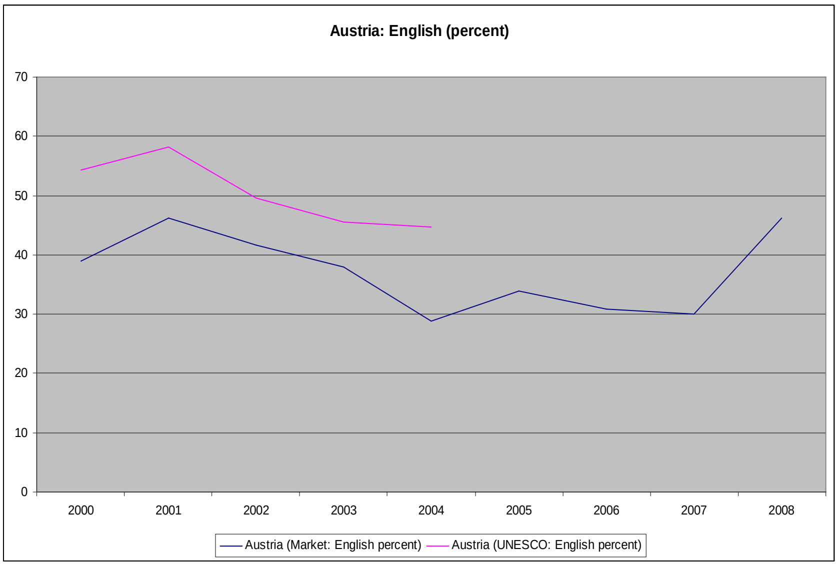

Diagram 25

Most remarkably, this deviation seems to apply only for two languages, English – and Slovenian, while most of the others are roughly confirm to other countries' average values. With ca. 9 percent of all translations made by Austrian publishers, Slovenian has a clearly above average standard in Austrian publishing by the simple fact that this reflects the interaction with the culturally highly active ethnical minority of Slovenes in the province of Carinthia.

French is, in a European comparison, also above average with values between 10 and 18 percent (according to market statistics, but still within the usual range, as French is the second strongest language of origin, and Italian is number 3 (with mostly single digit numbers of translations per year).

Interestingly, all the neighbouring languages of Central Europe have altogether below average representation in Austrian publishing, both according to UNESCO and to market statistics, with low single digit title numbers per language and year. The only significant exception is Hungarian in the year 1999, when Hungary was the guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair and special funding grants for translations were available. A similar offer by Poland in the following year, again due to Frankfurt, did not find any relevant echo in Austrian publishing.

Portraits of languages into different countries

English (overview)

English is the clearly dominating original language all over Europe. But the degree of domination as well as the curve of growth show significant variants. None of the CEE countries shows the same heavy degree of penetration by English as the Netherlands with more than 70 percent, and the Czech Republic can be regarded even as a country resisting the more general development as English never got above the limit of 60 percent, and over the past decade even declined to value close to 50 percent.

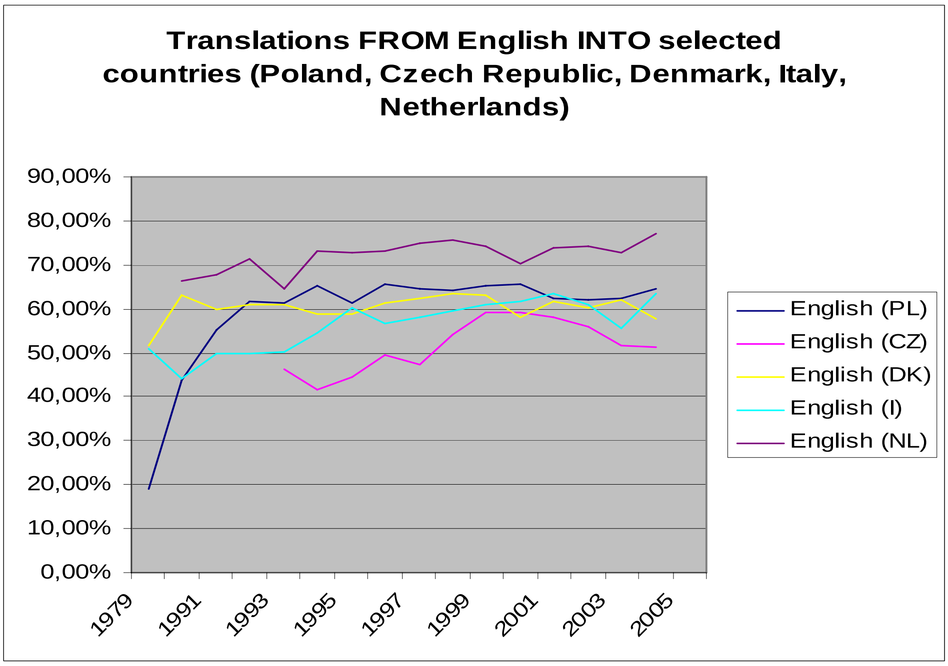

Diagram 26

German (overview)

While the general pattern for English is largely that of substantial and continuous growth, namely in the 1990s, German is largely in continuous decline over the same period. Even in countries where German used to be a particularly strong reference, as in the Netherlands, in Denmark or – even if this was often controversial – in France, the share of translations from German was more than halved in just two decades.

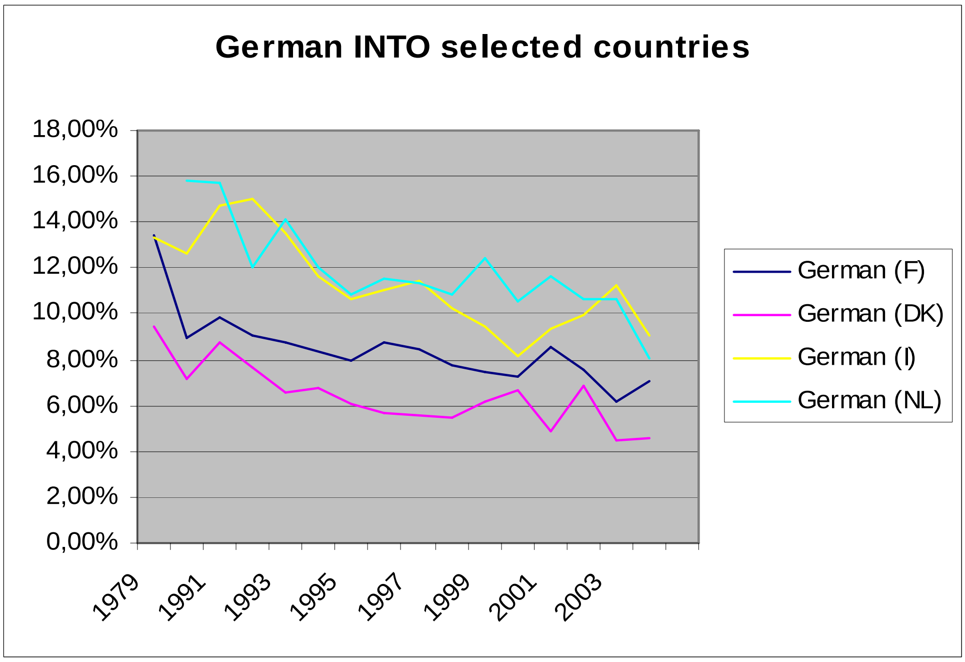

Diagram 27

CEE countries

German into CEE countries

It is interesting to note that the share of translations from German into major CEE countries and their languages shows a variety of trends, from a steady development into Romanian and Polish (with Poland having been the strongest buyer for German translation rights in the late 1990s and early 2000s), yet with steep decline into Czech, and with substantial and continuous growth into Hungarian.

The pattern of German translations into Hungarian and Polish also makes it clear that there is no reciprocity in translations between countries and languages. The clearly recognizable peaks of Hungarian and Polish translations into German before and after their countries being the guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair is absolutely not mirrored in the respective reverse direction.

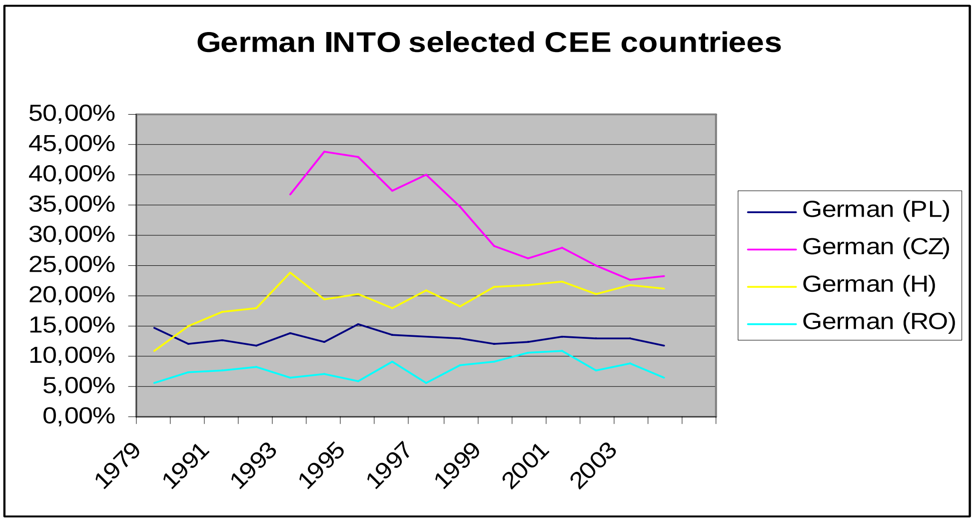

Diagram 28

French

Translations from French into CEE countries and languages have a similar baseline of continuous decrease, with a few obvious differences of course, when compared to German.

In Romania, French translations are paramount which is based on century old close ties in culture, language and politics.

For all other languages, levels of entry are lower than for German around 1989, as the transition to democracy and the integration to the West sets in. Most surprisingly is probably the rapid decline of translations from French in Poland, as old cultural ties with Paris obviously play only a modest role when books come to the market.

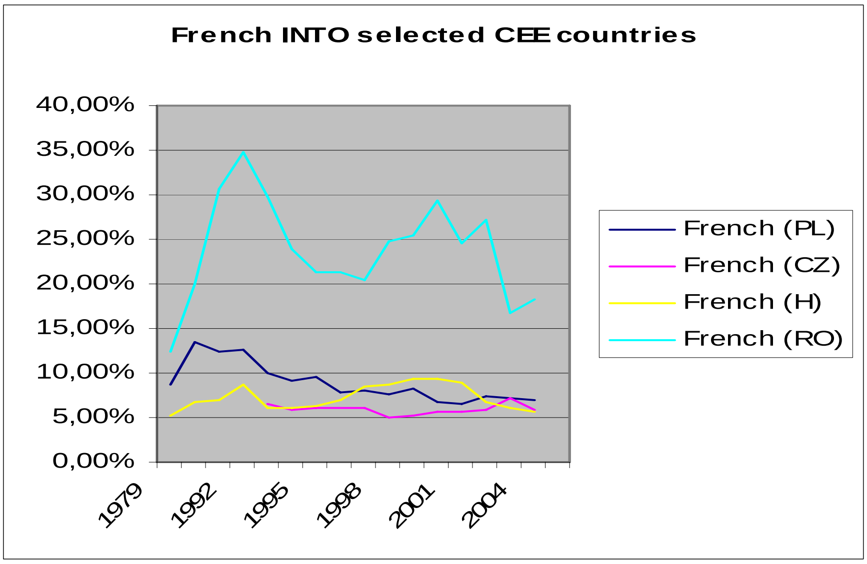

Diagram 29

CEE languages

Combined CEE languages INTO France and Germany

One of the most sobering charts is perhaps the one depicting the overall development of several major CEE languages of origin combined in their impact onto the reading markets in Germany and in France.

Not only is the initial and expected peek of new curiosity after 1989 extremely short lived. Overall levels are extremely modest, and even at peek levels below 3 percent of all translations in a year, moving further down in a continuous trend of stagnation, ending, in the case of France not only below one percent. This level is also only half of what it used to be a decade before the fall of the Iron Curtain, in 1979, when combined major CEE languages accounted for 1,99 percent.

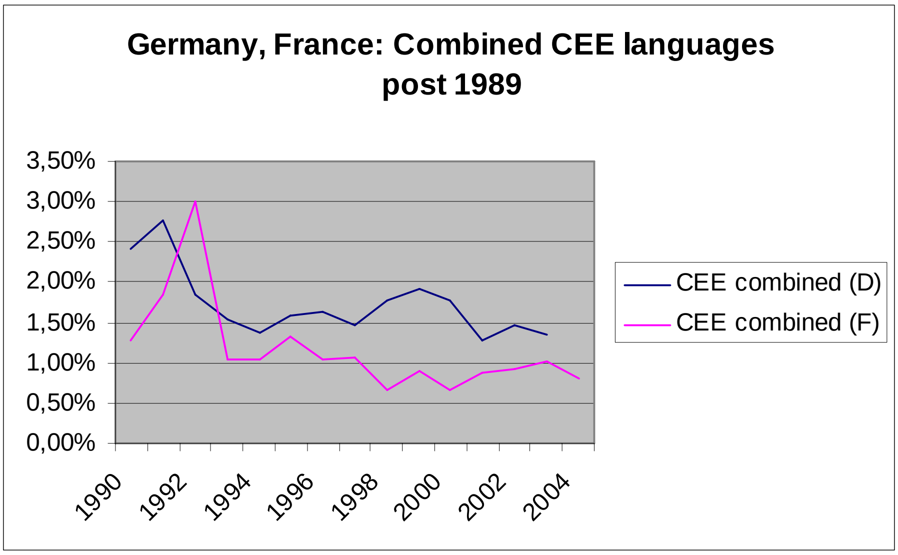

Diagram 30

Translations of major languages INTO selected CEE countries

It is worth to have a few close ups for various languages into selected CEE countries.

Poland

In 1979, less than one out of five translations into Polish were from English originals (19,16 %), almost at even with Russian (at 18,59 %), and not so much superior to German (14,71%). French accounted for 8,67 % of all translations that travelled to Poland.

At the outset of the revolution of 1989, this ratio had already changed, with English up at 35,99 % against Russian with only 12,51 % anymore, and German a little lighter than before, at 12,64, at even level with French (11,24 %).

Another decade later, English had almost doubled at 64,24 % and hit a ceiling. German was still at 11,93 %, and French back to 7,50 %. Russian had hit the bottom at 1,40 %.

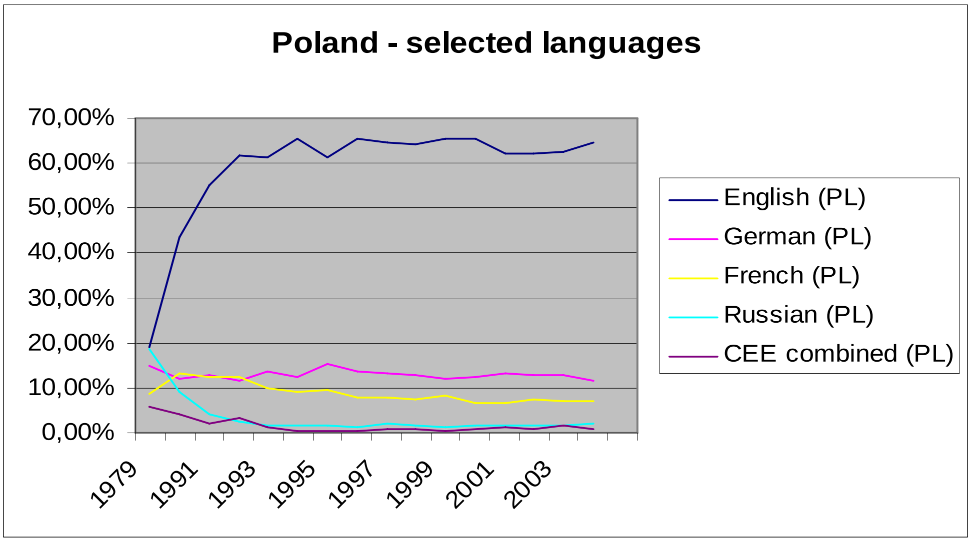

Diagram 31

The curves get more distinct when English is taken out.

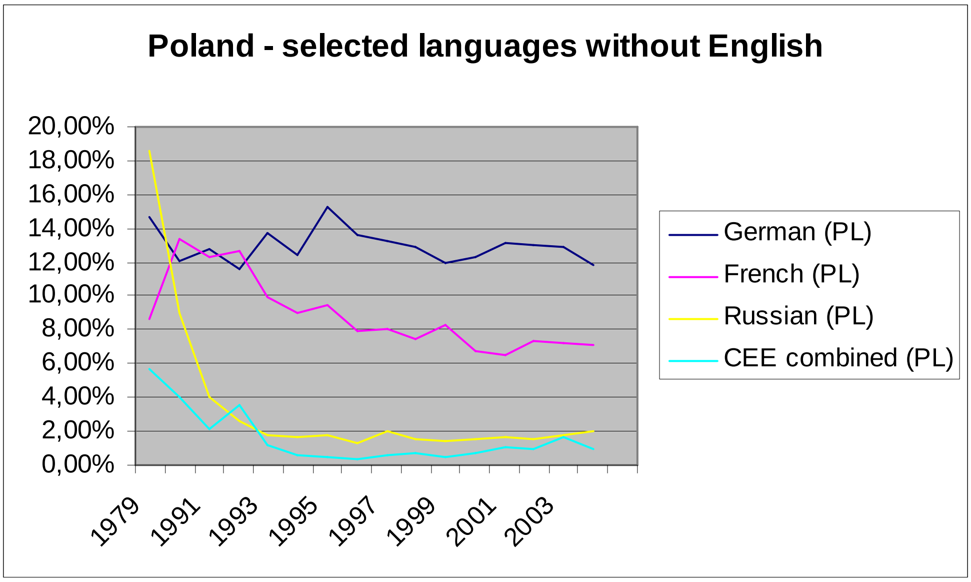

Diagram 32

Hungary

Hungary shows a pattern similar to Poland, with English exploding from a modest 12,03 % in 1979, hitting a ceiling by the early 1990s, at a lower level however than in Poland.

The interesting difference is the relative success of German which grew from 10,83 % in 1979 (which is roughly equivalent to Polish values) to over 20 percent, while Russian all but disappears.

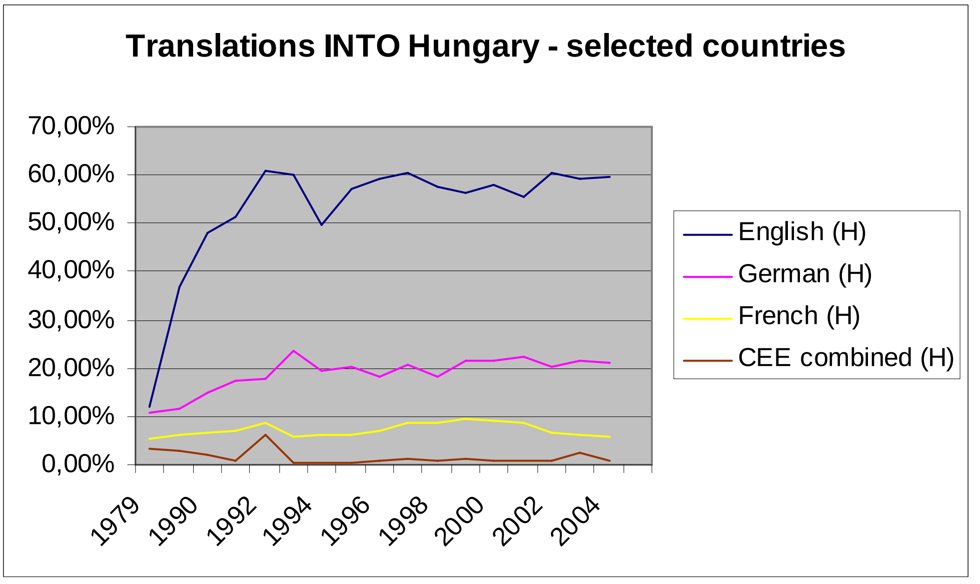

Diagram 33

Romania

Substantially different is the pattern of Romania, with the lowest English numbers, peaking at 60 % shortly after the revolution of 1989, and going back down below the line of 50 % thereafter, while French defends its singularly high level, yet with a decline in recent years, while German – despite of close ties and a still substantial, yet dwindling German minority – is below rates of Hungary or even Poland.

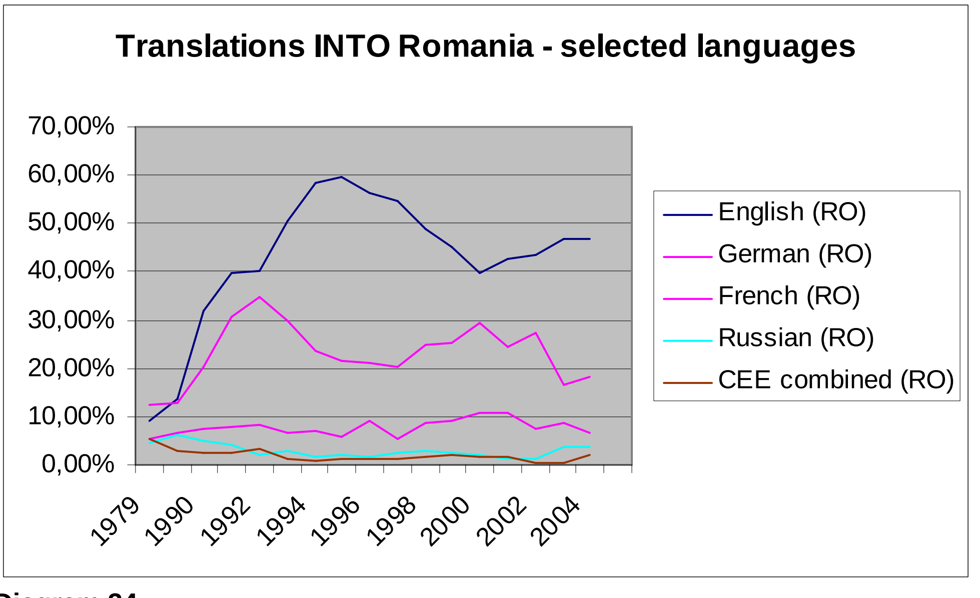

Diagram 34

Czech Republic

For reasons not entirely transparent, translations into the Czech Republic differ a lot from the rest of CEE.

English hit the ceiling at a low level of slightly less than 60 %, only to decline thereafter.

German started after the Velvet Revolution shortly on par with English, declining steeply ever since, while French could never find a solid foot hold.

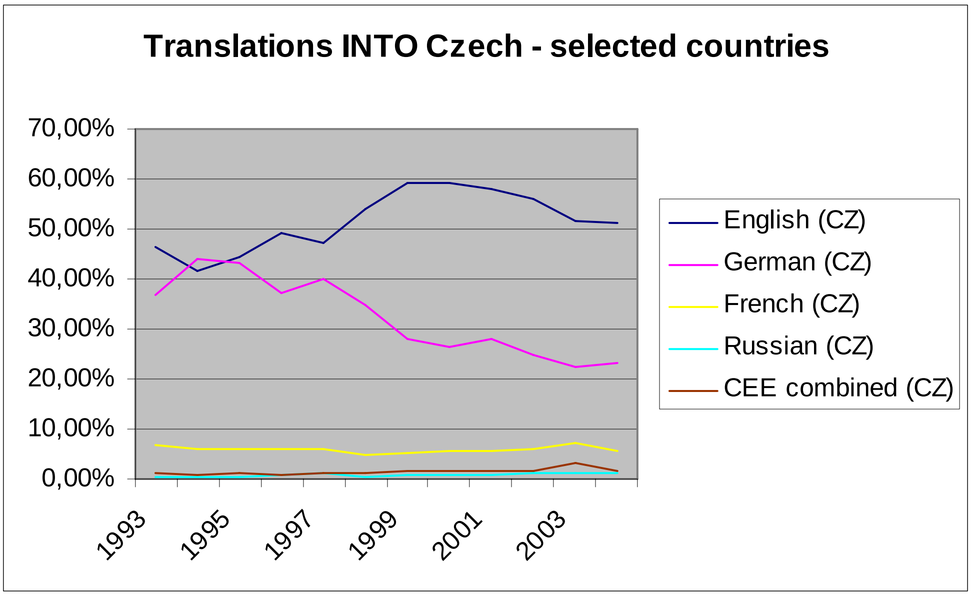

Diagram 35

Most striking is the gradual growth of translations from other CEE languages.

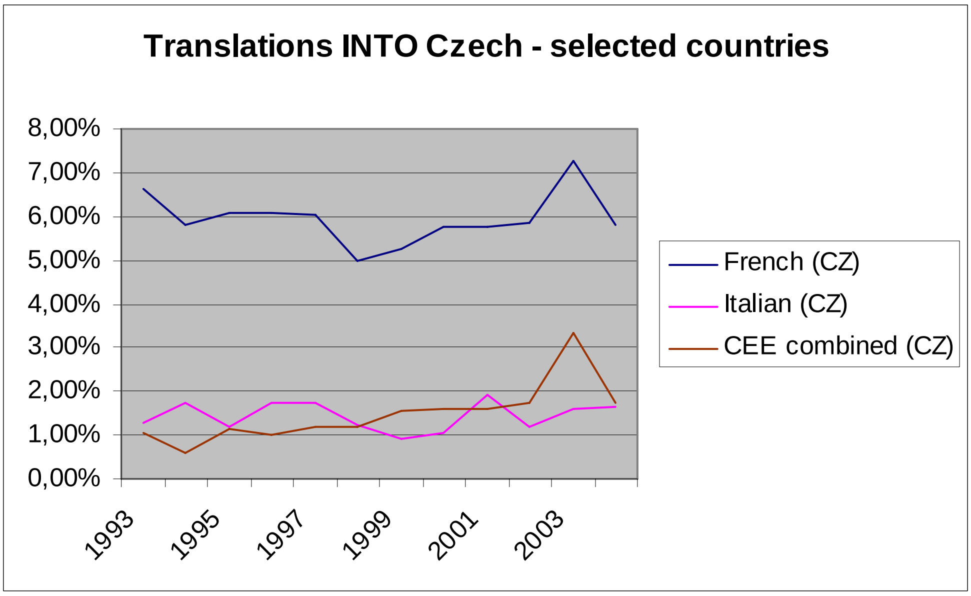

Diagram 36

Intra CEE exchange is, after a brief surge post 1989 , very poor

The prominence – at very modest levels though – of inter CEE translations in the Czech Republic contrasts with the wider picture of the exchange within the region.

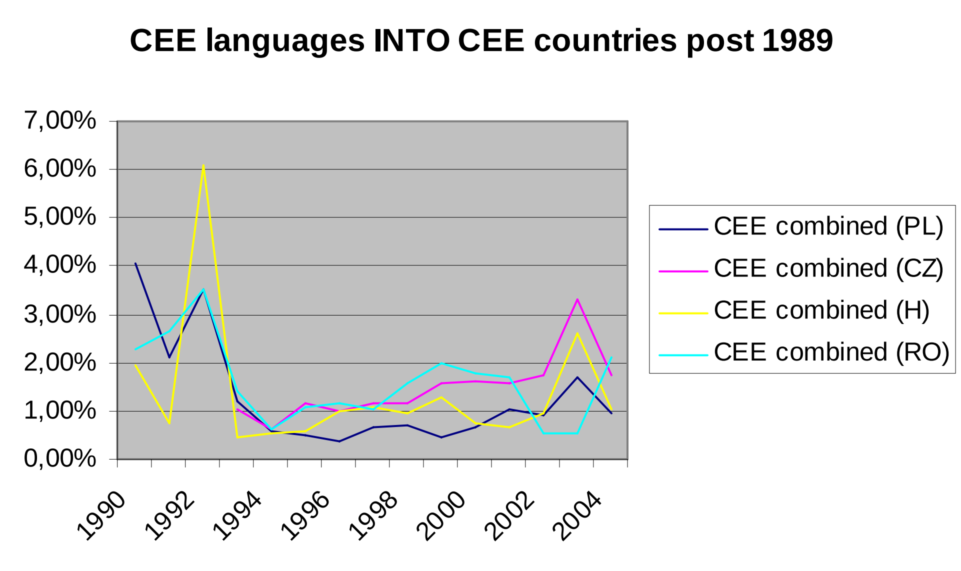

Diagram 37

Overall, the numbers of translations within the region of CEE have generally settled at a staggeringly low level, with a significant peak immediately after 1989 which was extremely short lived and killed not the least by crumbling infrastructures in all the concerned countries, as particularly Socialist distribution networks fell apart, and new structures were not yet available. A decade later, markets had been reorganised, which is reflected in a steady, yet slow growth at very humble levels. The peaks most recently should be taken perhaps with some caution, and rather encourage more detailed research than rapid interpretations.

Findings, conclusions and outlook

Findings from the data analysis

The predominance of English – and yet, perhaps, the limits of the sky

A set of basic findings of this report concerned, not surprisingly, the tremendous predominance of English as an original language, which resulted from a steady rise from 40 to over 60 percent on average within 25 years. In the mid 1990s though, the growth of English seems to have reached a ceiling at around 60 percent.

This trend closely mirrored probably less the rise of the USA as a superpower than the much more complex developments of globalisation – driven, aside from the USA, by the UK's muscle as the world's strongest export nation for cultural goods, but also by all other driving forces making English the lingua franca of the late 20th and early 21st century.

In return, it is remarkable that no reliable statistics could be identified to track in a similar way translations into English – which are assumed to be only between 2 and 3 percent of all translations.

This blind spot of our understanding urgently calls for a relevant research effort indeed.

English is followed, yet in a distance, by strong positions of German and French, the decline of Russian, and, as for the top receiving countries, the strength of Germany and France.

The 3 global leaders for translations: France, Germany - and PR China

Solid indications have it that France has recently overtaken Germany as the world's number one haven for translations. This change of guards has been reported in French trade media, but hardly anywhere else. This however needs to be put in a perspective as China is catching up and has reached at least the group of the top 3.

France shows a remarkable continuity of growth as a nation of translation – and hence of welcoming literatures and books from abroad. More in depth analysis would be required to better understand the effects of both a very continuous cultural policy and a self confident industry, a development characterized by huge structural change among the largest companies, and strong medium sized or independent publishing ventures looking out for new perspectives, plus with significant new entrants recently.

Meanwhile in Germany, the traditionally heaviest buyer of translation rights since 1945, translations have been the subject of controversy and legal battles with regard to the remuneration of translators' fees. Many publishers may have indeed been discouraged to continue their tradition of a cultural gateway.

It may be highly interesting to have additional research to understand what this means with respect to these countries' culturally minded readership - if there is some discrepancy with the workings of the translation market versus the cultural appetites of their audiences.

The strong position of Spain, according to UNESCO data, may need additional research for a more detailed understanding of Spanish publishing as being the hub for all of Spanish language publishing outside the USA, but covering all of Latin America.

More surprising, and again inviting additional research, is the reach of several regional languages, notably Italian, Swedish and probably also Polish.

Central and Southeast Europe: The shattered regional networks

What used to be called uniformly the “transition countries” after 1989 mirrors today– in an expected, yet so far rarely documented way – a set of largely diverse developments. Having undergone continuous decline already in the late years of Socialist government, large parts of the cultural industries and infrastructure, including notably book publishing and distribution, have broken down in the 1990s before, step by step, new book publishing and trade structures could emerge in the late 1990s. At this point, also translations into and from these languages and countries re-emerged, yet never on average reaching pre-1989 highs.

More interestingly perhaps is how different developments in these countries are during the most recent decade, with a wide disparity between more dynamic countries and languages such as in Poland and the Czech, and all of the others.

Most alarming is however the shattered network of cultural communication through books between all those countries and languages of Central and Southeast Europe, making proof of a deep fragmentation throughout the region.

Policy lessons: Strong fundamentals versus weak intentional actions.

What are the main forces driving – or disrupting – translations, and to what extend can the available data be connected to such forces or to specific events or interventions?

At first, the assessment is sobering, as translation streams clearly tend to follow broad fundamental developments in the concerned societies and their cultures: In the observed period, 1989 is the defining threshold, and overarching trends such as internationalisation, together with closely related power plays seem to be the shaping forces.

This said, a few considerably lesser events maybe be possible to be traced across the analysed statistics, notably the very heavily media and market focused “Guest of Honour” program of the Frankfurt Book Fair featuring prominently Hungary and Poland in 1999 and 2000 respectively. Perhaps also a few translation funding programs may have left identifiable traces. But more detailed data and analysis would be required for really conclusive findings.

Overall, the past decade can reasonably be called the most complex period, as cultural internationalisation grew across all media, with the Internet and globalisation helping, and European integration brought at first 10 and then again another 2 new members into the tightly woven network of the Union.

Overall, all the translation fostering programs and political integration combined could not really counteract to the even broader pattern of fragmentation between cultures and languages, or bridge the gap between the few relevant transfer languages – English, and in a distance, German and French – and all of the rest.

Cultural policies may have relative effects, but within clearly set limits. They can positively influence deeper trends, but hardly change the wider paradigms.

Outlook: Research priorities and perspectives.

The most challenging finding of this report is the wide gap between the overall importance of book translations for cultural diversity, and the very limited solid knowledge we have about its detailed workings.

The analysis of available data and sources as presented in this report brought evidence that these data are good enough to outline general patterns and developments, especially to provide a general overview of the tremendous scope of current change.

They are certainly not sufficient for any deeper understanding for, e.g. forecasting or, even less, defining regulating measures.

From our experiences, two lines of research should be urgently taken up from this point:

(a) Dig up and integrate translation data from European book markets, notably by strongly encouraging book statistics projects by the Federation of European Publishers (as well as similar projects planned by UNESCO and third parties) in order to put specific emphasis on translation data, as a measure for both cultural diversity and, more pragmatically, the role of books in the flow of information and ideas across Europe;
(b) Compare general flows of translations to per title / per author / per language developments, which can be achieved based on existing sales information, as has been already begun in the comparative analysis of bestseller lists across Europe.

We strongly suggest to update this report on a regular basis, and to drill down more deeply in various areas in order to getting a more detailed understanding of the key issues and the main forces driving the changing cultural book and reading landscapes in front of us.

In this respect, we will a be committed to do our best that this Diversity Report 2008 will not be an arbitrary snapshot, but argue for a continuous effort to observe cultural diversity in books in a methodical way.

Annex I: Methodology

This report is based on translation statistics from a variety of sources. If not noted differently, numbers and diagrams are based on the UNESCO Index Translationem.

However, we initially tried to calibrate the UNESCO statistics for five countries (Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, and Poland) with national book market data from independent sources. A m*ore detailed description of the data sources will be included in the final version of this report*.

It has turned out that individual values for a given country or language may diverge considerably. However, overall trends reflecting trends and developments over several years, as well as distributions between languages are largely consistent.

Broadly, UNESCO's absolute numbers are generally higher than market figures. This is probably due to several reasons: Market statistics generally are only about new titles, while library statistics which are most commonly the sources for the UNESCO Index, also account re-editions, and eventually publications outside of the book markets.

We are fully aware that, aside from the findings, this approach raises many questions, with regard to fundamental issues such as the relationship between cultural diversity, books and book statistics, to the compatibility of the data and sources used, and to the reliability of the interpretation.

The goal of this report has been in all modesty to provide a most transparent and certainly preliminary mapping effort, presenting a significant amount of data in a transparent way as to allow and encourage further research and more sophisticated analysis strategies. In this perspective, we strongly encourage critical feedback and corrections in order to open the view for a more consistent understanding of what we had set out to observe.

Annex II: Acknowledgements

This report dwells on the support, previous research and input from a wide range of individuals and institutions without whom it would not have been conceivable.

ERSTE Stiftung and its Programme Director Culture, Christine Böhler, provided the funding which only turned the Diversity Report 2008 from an idea into a realistic project. Kulturamt der Stadt Wien – Kultur und Wissenschaft, headed by Hubert Christian Ehalt, contributed additional funding for a forthcoming study on translation in Vienna which in parts has been integrated into this report.

Reed Messe Wien, and particularly Eckart Nussbaumer of its New Business team, have understood from early on why Buch Wien should be the platform to present such a report in the wider framework of its goal to become the forum for a continuous exchange between publishers and various book professionals as well as readers interested in cultural diversity and books.

Annemarie Türk of Kulturkontakt Austria enthusiastically embraced the initiative and co-initiated the On Translation conference at Buch Wien 08 where this report is to be presented.

Those opportunities however required, in order to form a perspective, a wide range of preliminary initiatives and work by individuals and institutions who for many years have already spent time and energy on the study of translations and on ways how to better understand what makes book translations work in the publishing environment, notably Alexandra Büchler of Literature Across Frontiers, who already had set out earlier to collect a broad number of statistical sources, Karl Anton Fröschl of University of Vienna, Yana Genova of NextPage, Péter Inkei of the Budapest Observatory, Miha Kovac of the University of Ljubljana, Albrecht Lempp of Stiftung für Deutsch-Polnische Zusammenarbeit, Rudolf Pölzer of University of Vienna, Paul Richardson of (formerly) Oxford Brookes University, who all had shared the obsession of collecting data and giving input and critical comments to better understand the data, while Dana Kalinova of Svet Knihy had brought many of us together at first on a seminar on translation at the Prague BookWorld in 2006.

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Much of the actual work in preparing this report came from my colleagues Jennifer Jursitzky and Sabina Muriale who never despaired over the mountains of numbers or the lack of solid (intellectual or material) ground underneath our feet, and instead kept going confidently, and with a charming smile.

Thank you all very much. And as for the readers and, hopefully, users of this report, please provide us with your critical feedback, yet be mild in your judgement of the shortcomings in our path finding effort in a sometimes really confusing world.

Diversity Report 2008:

Scope and goal of the report

This report compiles and analyses statistics on books in translation across Europe over a period of more than 25 years (1979 to 2005, and in some aspects until 2008) and is based on the UNESCO Index Translationem as well as separate national book market statistics in Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, and Poland.

The top languages and countries in Europe

English is the clearly predominant original (or source) language for translations whose share grew from 40 to over 60 percent on average within 15 years until hitting apparently a ceiling by the late 1990s. In some countries of Central and Southeast Europe however, the proportion of English is below this threshold by some 10 percent – e.g. in the Czech Republic, Romania or Austria).

English is followed, in a distance, by German and French as the clear number 2 and 3 among the most popular original languages for translations, and the top 3 languages are good, between themselves, for 4 out of 5 translations. Interestingly, despite considerable dynamics of change on many levels, the proportion for the top trio rose only, in a quarter of a century, by slightly less than 10 percent from averages in the low 70s before 1989 to between 80 and 82 percent after that year, and with a decline below 80 percent most recently.

Overall, several indicators hint that translation numbers may went down over the past few years, after a long and steady rise, and particularly the top languages lose while a few medium sized languages tend to win, if not in any overwhelming order.

In a ranking of countries, France is likely to be the strongest target country for translations, followed by Germany which used to be the number 1 for decades. In return, only very few translations are done into English, yet we have been cautioned about the reliability of any figures available on this aspect.

There is also a noticeable decline of translations from German into West European countries, e.g. France, Italy, the Netherlands, or Denmark, but also into Czech.

Central and Southeast Europe (CEE)

Specific attention has been paid in this report to Central and Southeast Europe, on translations from these and into these languages as well as between CEE countries. This particular research interest was due to the many languages and different sizes of countries and languages in the region as well as to the desire to gain a more detailed understanding of the impact of a defining political event such as the end of the Cold War and the abolishment of the Iron Curtain in 1989.

In fact, 1989 – and as for Russian, the dissolution of the Sowjet Union in 1991 – can be clearly identified as watersheds in translation trends. Already in the 1980s, the number of translations in the region of CEE started to go down significantly. With the transition, cultural infrastructures crumbled, and only by the late 1990s, translation figures started to rise again, yet cautiously, and never met the high levels from before.

Translation numbers went down, after only a short lived peak of interest in the early 1990s. Recently, translations from major CEE languages (notably Polish, Czech, and Hungarian) into Germany, which used to work as a dynamic cultural gateway for the region, went down again, just as well as translations for France. While old cultural ties between some CEE countries like Poland or Romania are reflected by above average translation numbers from the centres to their peripheries, this is not at all reciprocal.

Only very few other events aside from major political thresholds such as 1989 have an impact that can be tracked in the statistics with a certain likelihood. One exception is the Guest of Honour presentations at the Frankfurt Book Fair of Hungary in 1999 and of Poland in 2000.

The most alarming finding is probably the extremely low – and in comparison to pre-1989 roughly halved – number of intra-CEE translations pointing at a significant loss of cultural exchange through books.