Language standardization in sociolinguistics and international business: Theory and practice across the table

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Abstract: This chapter addresses the issue of language standardization from two perspectives, bringing together a theoretical perspective offered by the discipline of sociolinguistics with a practical example from international business. We introduce the broad concept of standardization and embed the study of language standardization in the wider discussion of standards as a means of control across society. We analyze the language policy and practice of the Danish multinational, Grundfos, and use it as a "sociolinguistic laboratory" to "test" the theory of language standardization initially elaborated by Einar Haugen to explain the history of modern Norwegian. The table is then turned and a model from international business by Piekkari, Welch and Welch is used to illuminate recent Norwegian language planning. It is found that the Grundfos case works well with the Haugen model, and the international business model provides a valuable practical lesson for national language planners, both showing that a "comparative standardology" is a valuable undertaking. More voices "at the table" will allow both theory and practice to be further refined and for the role of standards across society to be better understood.

Keywords: Language standardization, language standards, corporate language, language policy and planning, Scandinavia

1 Introduction

1.1 Aims and objectives

Writing in 2011, Linn (2011: 800) noted that "linguists have tended to set aside parallels with other systems and treat [...] standardization as a peculiarly linguistic problem" and called for "more interdisciplinary thinking" (801). There is not much evidence that this has happened yet, and this chapter attempts to move that thinking forward in two principal ways.

Firstly, we seek to compare the practice of language standardization in two contrasting contexts: (a) the corporate context in international business (IB); and (b) the national context. In so doing we investigate what the IB experience can

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tell us about the nature of language standardization more broadly and also how theory developed to explain national-level cases can illuminate those from international business. Despite our apparently very different contexts for investigating language standardization (historical v. contemporary, national v. international, sociopolitical v. economic, etc.), we contest that they are mutually illuminating in theoretically interesting and practically useful ways.

Secondly, we situate both language cases in the wider standards context and thus view standardization as not just "a peculiarly linguistic problem". Standards and standardization processes are not limited to the management of language practices but are the "omnipresent conduits of a modernizing and globalizing world" (Timmermans and Epstein 2010: 71). Timmermans and Epstein (2010) make a compelling case for the interdisciplinary study of standards, and it is our objective to contribute to this endeavor by "talking across the table" between sociolinguistics and international business research.

1.2 "Talking across the table"

In pursuing our aims and objectives we address a more general methodological question arising from "talking across the table". This is a question at the heart of an interdisciplinary undertaking such as ours. Are the two examples of "standardization" really comparable? Are we talking about the same thing? Interdisciplinarity, which aims to achieve "synthesis or integration" (Golde and Gallagher 1999: 281) is a seductive world in which the disciplines involved can remain separated by deceptively common language (Bracken and Oughton 2006). The challenges of operating across disciplines have been discussed from a range of disciplinary perspectives (e.g. conservation (Campbell 2005); aging studies (Smith 2003); and (closer to home) international business studies (Cheng et al. 2009)). Researchers have investigated the issues from both philosophical and practical perspectives (for more extensive discussions, see, e.g. Frodeman et al 2010; Salter and Hearn 1996). Some of the specific issues facing the authors of the present chapter were as follows: The internal practices of a nation state do not on the face of it seem relevant to the sort of "transient multilingual communities" (Mortensen 2013: 37) exemplified by internationalizing companies. Who are the key actors and authorities involved in language standardization in international firms? Can IB inform national language agencies about language standardization and vice versa, or should they remain on their own sides of that language table?

This chapter came about as a result of Andrew Linn and Rebecca Piekkari meeting at the March 2014 conference on English in Business and Commerce, held at Charles University, Prague, as part of the *English in Europe: Opportunity or*

Threat? project. Funding generously provided by the UK Leverhulme Trust allowed them to meet again in collaboration with Guro Refsum Sanden to explore the fact that they were using the term *standardization* to describe apparently rather different language planning processes. This collaboration links two relatively young academic enterprises: historical sociolinguistics (cf. Hernández-Campoy and Conde-Silvestre 2012) and the study of language in international business and management or what might be styled the "sociolinguistics of business".

There is widespread recognition in the broader social sciences literature that standards and standardization are a "matter of central importance" and that "a proper understanding of standardization is a prerequisite for understanding the way modern society functions" (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000: 17, 15). Language policy has never been more important in an age of mass global movement and activity (Coupland 2010). Moreover, the need to standardize is everywhere – the authors of this paper even had to agree on a standard way to spell standard-ize/-ise!

1.3 Structure of the chapter

In the next section (section 2) we will discuss standards and standardization in some more detail, from the broader perspective of a "sociology of standards" as well as the specific standpoints of our respective disciplines. In section 3 we will focus on international business and explore how IB practices can be described in terms of a model of language standardization drawn from sociolinguistics. This will help us answer the question posed above of whether we are discussing the same phenomenon or not. Our focus in this chapter is on IB, and in the following section we will consider what national language planners and policy makers can learn from an IB model. In the final section (section 5) we will present our conclusions and suggestions for further research in this important field to help rectify the fact that "the study of standardization remains an underappreciated framework for the analysis of many core aspects of modernity" (Timmermans and Epstein 2010: 70).

2 Standards and standardization

2.1 What is standardization?

The IB literature has become increasingly concerned with the issue of language use and (often implicit) language policies, turning the "forgotten factor" (Marschan, Welch, and Welch 1997), the "surprisingly neglected subject" (Piekkari, Welch, and Welch 2014: 9) of international business language research into an “emerging interest” (Piekkari and Tietze 2011: 267), and “a separate area of study” (Zander, Mockaitis, and Harzing 2011: 297). The importance of language and communication in IB is now so widely recognized that we have started to talk about a language-sensitive research agenda (Piekkari and Tietze 2011: 267; Tenzer, Pudelko and Harzing 2013: 510). Language standardization, defined as “efforts by top management to instill a common corporate language and harmonize internal and external communications through general rules and policies” (Piekkari and Tietze 2011: 267), has been one of the central topics for analysis and debate. However, this debate has tended to see language standardization as a bipolar issue caught in a dialectical tension between multilingualism on the one side and a *lingua franca* on the other. As argued by Janssens and Steyaert (2014: 637), research on language standardization has tended to point to either one of these solutions – multilingualism or standardization – as a black and white question with no room for colors in between.

Standardization in the history of national languages has been defined as “the construction – and subsequent dissemination – of a uniform supradialectal normative variety” (Ferguson 2006: 21). Research on this side of “the table” has also tended to be somewhat linear or “teleological”, presenting unstructured spoken language variation and a written standard variety as two ends of a completed process (Deumert and Vandenbussche 2003a: 11; McLelland and Linn 2002: vii). Janssens and Steyaert (2014) do note that standardization *practices* in the IB context are much more varied and nuanced than such a bipolar view would imply, so this begs the question of whether language standardization is best characterized simply as a series of context-specific practices or whether it can be characterized by an over-arching model.

We share Linn’s (2013: 373) view that a standard language, along with many other standards of behavior, does not hold the same appeal in society as it did several generations ago. So a further question we ask is then: what role does standardization play in an era which in many respects is characterized by *destandardization*? (see the papers in Koch and Fritz 2013; Vítečková and Chaloupková 2014). Language standardization in IB is in effect the adoption of a norm in an age where norms are often shunned and local variation is championed.[1] The sociolinguistic literature generally accepts that language behavior

1 Here we are using the term “norm” as an alternative to “standard”. These terms are not completely interchangeable in the literature, but excessive terminological complexity and very fine distinctions may not be helpful in this sort of interdisciplinary work in which clarity “across the table” is paramount.

constitutes a series of individually negotiated acts of communication rather than the adoption of a single discrete language (e.g. Blommaert and Rampton 2011; Meierkord 2012; Pennycook 2010), which would appear to go against a desire for increased standardization.

In addressing these questions we accept that language standardization is not a "once and for all" act but an on-going process. The adoption of a common corporate language (CCL), as an example of standardization in international firms, is not "the endpoint of a language policy" (Steyaert, Ostendorp, and Gaibrois 2011: 271). By the same token the idea of a national standard is the product of its time and place and susceptible to change.

Standardization is clearly not a straightforward thing either in theory or in practice. All the more reason, therefore, to engage in a process of interdisciplinary learning and respond to Timmermans and Epstein's call to "juxtapose scholarship on standards across multiple arenas of social life" (85).

2.2 Standardized languages and power

A shared system of language is a powerful tool within any community of practice, local, national or international. Like all strong mechanisms of social organization, a standard language has the power both to unite some stakeholders in the community and also to exclude those who do not have access to that means of social and professional interaction. English as "gatekeeper" of access to knowledge (classically Pennycook 1994; more recently e.g. King and Scott 2014) is probably the highest profile linguistic mechanism of social organization today (e.g. Pitkänen-Huhta and Hujo 2012 for what it means to be outside those gates), and English is of course a key issue for language standardization in IB (cf. section 3.1).

This insight is not a new one and takes us back to some of the earliest linguistic thought in the western tradition (cf. the Tower of Babel story in the *Book of Genesis*). The association of shared identity with shared language has remained a compelling trope throughout history. It drove the "springing up of the great national common languages" (Jespersen 1946: 39) as the modern nation states of Europe developed their structures and systems and cemented their hierarchies of power after the Renaissance. It lives on in recent calls by the German Christian Social Union for immigrants to speak German even in their own home (BBC News 2014). Agreeing and implementing standardized language practices is firmly associated with the establishment and embedding of power relations (Fairclough 2001; Wodak 2012; more specifically Joseph 1987 and Millar 2005), as a means for those in power "to perpetuate the power structures from which they themselves benefit" (Linn 2011: 800). As Inoue (2006: 121) puts it, "the study of language standardization, therefore, is less about language itself as function and structure, than it is about ideologies and hegemonies about language, or what is called "language ideology".

Thus language standardization has come to possess negative connotations in the discipline of sociolinguistics with its traditionally liberal political standpoint, and it would be rare to find advocates for a single standard language in the sociolinguistic literature today (although see Costa (2015) for the ongoing value of a standard in the primary school classroom). However, despite the rejection of the idea of a standard language around the end of the 20th century (see, e.g., Crowley 2003; Joseph and Taylor 1990; Milroy and Milroy 1999), in reality the appeal of a common agreed norm of language use remains strong as "part of the taken-for-granted technical and moral infrastructure of modern life" (Timmermans and Epstein 2010: 71). Beck (2002) described standards as "zombies", the living dead from a bygone age, but we refute this position and maintain that standardization has a continued role to play, perhaps especially as traditional top-down language authorities (national language councils, national dictionaries, literary models, etc.) have begun to lose their authority. We will return to this point in section 4.1. We maintain that language standardization is of continued relevance and deserves continued study and analysis, being a context where power relations may be played out under the cover of being "just" about language.

2.3 A sociology of standards

Standards and the study of standards and standardization are not unique to the sphere of language, indeed Singer (1996) wrote of a more general "sociology of standards". We observe standards in all walks of life, both professional and private. As researchers we observe the norms of good research practice, and as teachers we follow the academic and interpersonal conventions of the classroom. In business we adhere to codes of ethical conduct and to the expectations of our partners regarding how we do business. In our private lives there are social norms affecting how we treat our family members and also less ethically challenging standards affecting things like what sort of lightbulb to use. Such standards differ from *rules* and *laws* in that they are *not mandatory*. We might feel compelled by the expectations of our communities to adhere to standards of behavior, and language planners and business leaders hope that we will observe their preferred language behaviors. However, it is rare that sanctions would follow from our failure to do so, since "standards are explicit rules issued without reference to the kind of authority that the leaders of organizations enjoy" (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000: 13). So standards are omnipresent, but they are a different sort of ordering principle to laws and directives, more horizontal than top-down in their effect, moderating group behavior rather than directing individual actions. Bowker and Star (1999: 14) imagine a situation where Esperanto is proposed as the standard language for international diplomacy, concluding that "without a mechanism of enforcement […] or a grass-roots movement, we shall fail".

The International Standards Organization (ISO 2015) has a standard for standards, as follows: "A standard is a document that provides requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose". We will treat this as a workable general definition of what we understand by a standard for the purposes of this chapter. We have purposefully selected a broad and inclusive definition to cover different situations and contexts in which the expectations and requirements to align one's behavior with the standard vary. A certain degree of normativity is integral to the nature of standards.

2.4 Models of language standardization

In the language policy and planning literature, the term language standardization covers "a broad spectrum of meanings", as described by Hornberger (2006: 31): "embracing both process and product […]; both language status and language corpus […]; and means ranging from recognizing or accepting an existing standard […], to creating, selecting, or imposing one". Among the earliest sociolinguistic contributions in this area are the publications collected in Garvin (1964, see also Garvin 1993), although Einar Haugen's (1966: 16–26) model of norm development is frequently credited as the first theory of language standardization. In Haugen's model the norm undergoes the following four-stage process involving: (1) selection, (2) codification, (3) implementation, and finally (4) elaboration. Whereas selection and implementation refer to the functional allocation of the norm vis-à-vis other norms in the multilingual society (i.e. status planning), codification and elaboration refer to interventions in the norm itself (i.e. corpus planning).

The first stage refers to the choice of the language to be used as the standard – the norm – in a given society. The decision usually involves choosing one, or alternatively a small number of languages, over other languages. Various criteria may influence this decision. The language selected as the standard language may for example be seen as more prestigious than others in the society (cf. Ferguson's 1959 discussion of high and low language varieties, where, for example, classical Arabic is described as more prestigious than Egyptian Arabic), or as a more efficient language for communication, by e.g. having a more developed lexicon compared to other alternatives (Nahir 1984).

Once the norm has been selected, standardization procedures are developed in the codification stage. In his later work Haugen (1983: 271–272) suggests that the codification stage consists of three main standardization processes: firstly, graphization, i.e. designing the writing system; secondly, grammatication, i.e. outlining the rules of how the language is structured; and thirdly, lexication, i.e. standardizing the list of words used in the language (lexicon). "The typical product of all codification has been a prescriptive orthography, grammar and dictionary", Haugen (1983: 272) argues.

The first and second stages may be seen as preparatory stages. The implementation of the norm takes place in the third stage, once it has been decided what language(s) and what variety or varieties of that norm are to be adopted (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 36). The implementation in itself may take various forms, but is often conducted via the education system, which traditionally has been one of most important arenas for norm implementation. The education system is an ideal mechanism for implementing a standard language since the voluntary nature of the standard is significantly circumscribed by a bipolar "right v. wrong" outcome in the assessment of pupils' language use. For example, Standard English is an ideal in education for determining correct and incorrect usage by students.

Finally, norm elaboration constitutes the fourth and final stage. This stage involves the functional development of the selected norm following its implementation. Language elaboration is natural in the sense that languages and societies change over time: "language communities need [...] to have mechanisms to modernize their language so that it continues to meet their needs" (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 44).

It follows from the foregoing presentation that standardization is a way of minimizing language diversity in a multilingual society by selecting, developing and implementing one variety as the standard language. In this way, standardization is a specific example of language planning. A frequently adopted definition of language planning is provided by Cooper (1989: 45) who states that "language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes". Standardization is often described as a goal of language planning (see e.g. Hornberger 2006; Nahir 1984). Although language standardization in itself may be seen as a language planning goal, the standardization of language practices has typically been carried out with the purpose of attaining socio-political rather than purely linguistic outcomes. It is commonly observed that language standardization serves ideological ends: "in nearly all cases the language problem to be solved is not a problem in isolation within the region or nation, but is directly associated with the political, economic, scientific, social, cultural and/or religious situation" (Karam 1974: 108).

This argument may easily be transferred to the context of IB, where language standardization is usually initiated for the attainment of non-linguistic goals (Sanden 2016). Several studies point to the fact that the implementation of a common corporate language [CCL] (or a *lingua franca*, another term with wider currency in sociolinguistics beyond IB), which is one of the most frequently used types of language standardization in multinational corporations, is often seen primarily as a pragmatic solution meant to facilitate and enhance communication and collaboration between employees with different linguistic backgrounds (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999; Neeley, Hinds, and Cramton 2012; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta 2005; Vaara et al. 2005). In their widest sense, language policies may be defined as plans, laws, rules or regulation about language use (Baldauf 2012), but in line with the literature on standards we adopt the view that standards are distinct forms of regulation from laws or rules. Where researchers operating within the sociolinguistic tradition may use the term "language policy" to investigate language regulation in a wide range of domains (e.g. Spolsky 2009), language polices in the IB literature refer to some form of language regulation in a business organization (Kangasharju, Piekkari, and Säntti, 2010). A language strategy may be seen as a broader concept than a language policy, encompassing "planned adoption of a range of techniques to facilitate effective communication with clients and suppliers abroad" (CILT 2006: 5; see also Piekkari et al. 2014: 204–229).

2.5 Standards of language

Commentators from sociolinguistics may be keen to "kill off" standard languages and standardization as the functions of a now outmoded political system. It is nonetheless common to hear voices in the media and beyond bemoaning the demise of language standards, based on the prevailing view that the standard is something elevated and something to aim towards. More fluid, creative language practices, such as SMS language or language in advertising, are in comparison associated with a moral decline and are to be abhorred. In various European countries there is a thriving market in guides to better language use, which taps into the anxiety felt by parents and fanned by journalists that the language just isn't what it used to be. In Britain, for example, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* by H. W. Fowler, first published in 1926, remains in print nearly a century later (Allen 2008). Standardization doesn't just entail the development of a code of language conduct; it also implies something aspirational. A standard is not just a common denominator, rather it is a benchmark, an ideal form against which other forms can be judged. By contrast "non-standard" is often equated with "substandard", and in the context of a national language this results in the perception of hierarchies. Pretty quickly hierarchies of language usage come to equate with social hierarchies, and a command of the standard variety places its users in a more elevated position in society than those using different varieties. Standardization in IB is also more than just a practical way of addressing a business need as efficiently as possible. As in the national context, language also fulfils a symbolic role (see Hübschmannová and Neustupný (1996) for an example of standardization having multiple functions), and it is to a case study from IB that we now turn.

3 International business: Learning from theory

3.1 Language standardization in IB

Language standardization in IB is first and foremost a form of human resource management (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999). By managing the language practices of employees on the front-line through language policies, companies seek to avoid the "hassle" of operating in multiple languages (Zander et al. 2011). As a result, adopting a CCL, such as British or US English, has become one of the most commonly used tools of language standardization in IB. Yet, language standardization may also come in other forms than "status planning", i.e. the functional allocation of languages used in a multilingual community vis-à-vis each other (Kloss 1969; see also Haugen 1966). Feely (2004: 93), for example, discusses how Caterpillar in 1970 launched a language system called CCE (Caterpillar Controlled English), which only allowed a vocabulary of 8000 words, including product terminology. Another example of language standardization is provided by Kangasharju et al. (2010), who discuss how Nokia's language policy specifies the appropriate "tone of voice" of communication. They argue that Nokia language policy takes the use of the English language for granted so that the main attention is not on the language per se, but on the practices and style of communication (Kangasharju et al. 2010: 148). Thus, language standardization in IB could entail a common corporate language, a standard vocabulary or even an appropriate tone of voice.

Language policies and strategies may be developed for a number of reasons. Previous research has found that companies may develop such policies in response to emergent language needs triggered by, for example, international mergers (Piekkari et al. 2005; Vaara et al. 2005) or acquisitions (Neeley et al. 2012), leading to the implementation of an English language mandate. English language policies may also take the form of more long-term strategies developed by the company with the purpose of "branding" themselves as international, e.g. to attract foreign professionals (Crugnola 2005), or simply to increase international trade and export opportunities (Clarke 2000). All of these reasons pertain particularly to Nordic firms, as the Nordic languages are spoken by relatively small language groups. As argued by Piekkari et al. (2014: 14–22), Nordic-based firms will have to address foreign language demands at an early stage of their internationalization processes if they have any aspirations of success outside of the Nordic region.

Thus far we know little about the competences of those who typically develop language policies in companies and business organizations. Yet the issue of agency – the authority charged with the language policy and its implementation – may be a potentially important factor. In the sociolinguistic literature, the "language planner" (Baldauf 1982; 2006) or "language manager" (Spolsky 2009) is seen as playing a key part in the language planning process. There are good reasons for acknowledging the role of agency in corporate language planning too. Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio (2011), for example, observe that the top management is often unaware of – and therefore insensitive to – the language needs of employees further down the organizational hierarchy. Also case studies reported by Fredriksson et al. (2006) and Lønsmann (2011) suggest that the top management's decision to implement a standard language doesn't always coincide with linguistic reality on the front-line, creating a mismatch between *de facto* and *de jure* language policies, and we will return to this issue in section 4 below.

The adoption of a language policy that favors one language, or a small number of languages, over other commonly used languages in the company will by definition also favor native or high-proficiency speakers of that language. The fact that language competences may be used strategically to gain power and influence has been found in previous studies by Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1997; 1999) and Vaara et al. (2005). Individuals who find themselves benefitting from language policy-decisions – gatekeepers – may use this power to filter, distort and block information, possibly in a negative, counter-productive way (Marschan et al. 1997: 596). For this reason Vaara et al. (2005: 595–596) argue that language policies should not be treated merely as practical means to solve communication problems, but rather as an exercise of power, and we will also revisit this concern at national level later.

3.2 Corporate language standardization the Haugen way

As previously noted, language standardization has received limited scholarly attention in IB. Unlike in the sociolinguistic literature, there is no underlying theoretical foundation one can draw on in order to understand the dynamics of this phenomenon as it unfolds in business organizations. Consequently, this section aims to explore whether the experience of sociolinguistics in analyzing and modelling language standardization can provide a helpful lesson also in IB. Can, for example, Haugen's model of language standardization explain the process of language standardization in a multinational company?

In an attempt to answer this question, we consider the language policy of a Danish multinational, Grundfos (Sanden 2015a). Grundfos is one of the world's leading producers of pumps for a wide range of functions, including pumps for water supply as well as circulator pumps for heating and air-conditioning. The company was founded in 1945 by Danish entrepreneur, Poul Due Jensen, and has remained in private ownership since the start-up. Today the majority of shares are owned by the Poul Due Jensen Foundation. Over the past 70 years, Grundfos has undergone steady international growth and is now present in 57 countries worldwide. The group has approximately 19,000 employees in total, where 4500 of these are located in Denmark (Grundfos annual report 2013). Only 10 of Grundfos' international companies (i.e. 17.5 %) are located in English-speaking countries, making Grundfos a truly multilingual, multinational corporation (cf. Fredriksson et al. 2006). In response to their multilingual linguistic-communicative environment, Grundfos published their first language policy in 2002. An updated version came out two years later in 2004. Although these documents officially recognize English as the corporate language of Grundfos, the use of English as a *de facto* corporate language was also common practice before the language policies were formally adopted.

The policy is presented as a handbook of around 70 pages in a B5 page format, and bears the title *Med andre ord* … [In other words …]. Although the document is relatively lengthy, it contains lots of illustrations and several title pages without text. In terms of content, the handbook primarily outlines recommendations for appropriate use of Danish (2002 version) and British English (2004 version). In the English version, chapter 1, for example, looks at "what to consider before you start writing", and chapter 2 "how do you make structure and layout support your text?". The following chapter, chapter 3, is called "how do you write?", and deals with different types of writing techniques and best practice examples of good communication. The Danish version is almost identical to the English version in terms of content.

The most interesting part of the language policy document is found in chapter 5: "what is special about language in Grundfos?". Recalling Haugen's four-stage model of language standardization, the following excerpt from Grundfos' language policy (2004: 46) provides a useful illustration of the first stage – norm selection:

> GRUNDFOS' CORPORATE LANGUAGE IS BRITISH ENGLISH
> Being an international group of companies Grundfos needs a shared corporate language, and this shared language is British English.

> What is understood by corporate language?
> Corporate language does not mean that everybody employed by Grundfos all over the world must speak and write English in all communication. It simply means that English is the language we have chosen as our shared language. In practical terms this means that we always write in English at Group level. When communicating among the companies in the Group or among colleagues in the different companies, we write in English in situations where other companies or colleagues from other companies may need to understand or may benefit from being able to understand the written material. It follows from this that communication within a local Grundfos company will – and should – be in the local language.

Interestingly, in addition to formalizing British English as the corporate language of Grundfos at the group level, this language policy statement also opens up for the use of local language communication internally in the local Grundfos companies. Consequently, the language policy makes two separate decisions on norm selection. We may draw a parallel to Lønsmann's (2011) study of language choice in the Danish pharmaceutical company Lundbeck, where the author introduces the sociolinguistic concept of a *domain* in IB (Fishman 1972; Hultgren 2016 for a history and critique of the concept; see also Spolsky 2009). In particular, Lønsmann discusses how the introduction of English as a corporate language in some Danish companies has been linked with a threat of "domain loss" – i.e. English "taking over" a domain previously dominated by Danish (see Jónsson et al. (2013) for a fuller discussion of this concept in Nordic language planning). Consequently, the Danish language is perceived to be suffering under the adoption of an English language mandate. The fear of triggering domain loss in the local Grundfos companies may explain the normative undertone found in the wording of the language policy text, cf. the statement "communication within a local Grundfos company will – and should – be in the local language".

Unlike the conventional model of language standardization presented in the sociolinguistic literature (though exceptions do occur – see e.g. Combs and Penfield (2012) for a discussion of language activism), Grundfos' language policy is actually the result of a bottom-up language planning process. The development of the policy was initiated by a group of front-line employees working with language issues in various departments in the company's headquarters in Denmark. In an article published shortly after the release of the first language policy version, the authors of the Danish language policy text state the following (Da Silva et al. 2003: 168):

> We are proud to inform that "Med andre ord…" [*In other words*…] is not the result of a strategic decision made by Grundfos' Executive board. It is the result of a real – please excuse the term – bottom-up process. "Med andre ord…" was developed because five language

> specialists from five different departments thought that Grundfos should have a language policy. And if no one else was going to take the initiative, we would like to take the challenge ourselves.[2]

The executive board of Grundfos later approved the language policy before it was implemented in the organization.

Moving on to the second stage in Haugen's model, norm codification, this has been described as a three-step procedure consisting of graphization, grammatication, and lexication (cf. section 2.4). Designing a new writing system (graphization) or inventing new grammar rules (grammatication) can hardly be seen as necessary given that Grundfos' selected language norms are already well-established norms in their own right. It is difficult to imagine that a company would choose to develop their own company language from scratch. However, a comment may be made with regard to lexication (i.e. corpus planning). Several previous studies (de Vecchi 2012, 2014; Fredriksson et al. 2006; Welch et al. 2005) point to the use of company-specific terminology in company-internal communication, often referred to as "company speak". It is evident that the use of company speak in Grundfos has triggered a process of lexication; the following excerpt is taken from the Grundfos language policy (2004: 78):

> MultiTerm Dictionary is Grundfos' own electronic dictionary of Grundfos terms. In MultiTerm Dictionary you will find terms, phrases, names, titles, abbreviations, units, etc. in the form that we have chosen in Grundfos.

The third stage in Haugen's model, norm implementation, refers to the application of the selected norm after codification has taken place. Transferred to the corporate context, the implementation of a language policy bears some resemblance to this. First of all, it may be worth emphasizing that employees need to be made aware of the language policy if they are expected to follow it. In the case of Siemens, for example, Fredriksson et al. (2006) found that front-line respondents were unable to provide information about Siemens language policy, and that some even questioned its existence. Likewise, in their study of corporate language policies in six Finnish firms, Kangasharju et al. (2010) note that knowledge and awareness of these policies are limited.

2 Til oplysning [...] vil vi gerne – og ikke uden stolthed – slå fast at "Med andre ord ..." ikke er et resultat af en strategisk beslutning truffet på Grundfos' direktionsgang. Den er et resultat af en ægte – undskyld udtrykket – bottom-up proces. "Med andre ord ..." blev til fordi fem sprogmedarbejdere fra fem forskellige afdelinger mente at Grundfos måtte have en sprogpolitik. Og hvis ingen andre ville tage initiativet, ville vi tage udfordringen op på egen hånd.

An interesting aspect of Grundfos' language policy is that the English-language version of the document (2004) has in fact been used in English language training for employees. This language training is something that the respective Grundfos companies offer in-house to staff members who would like to improve their English language skills. The language policy handbook has been physically distributed to Grundfos' international companies (Sanden 2015a: 277) and included in some of these companies' English language training programs. In this way, Grundfos' "implementation strategy" does in fact coincide with common practice in the national context, where the education system has traditionally held a central position (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 36), as described in section 2.4.

The most obvious example of norm elaboration (the fourth stage in Haugen's model) is the continuous development of the Grundfos dictionary. It is administered by Grundfos' in-house translation department, whose main function is to translate product catalogues and operation manuals for Grundfos' products (i.e. external communication). In effect, the translation department has taken the role of agency by managing and overseeing the inclusion of new terms in the dictionary, based on feedback from Grundfos' employees. When Grundfos' (English) language policy was issued in 2004, the dictionary consisted of terms in three languages: English, Danish and German. By 2014 Grundfos had established company-specific dictionaries in 30 languages. The extension of the Grundfos dictionary to new languages demonstrates how elaboration may dynamically feed into norm selection as new language versions continue to appear. This observation is in line with Kaplan and Baldauf (1997: 49) who argue that all stages in Haugen's model in reality may overlap and even occur simultaneously.

We can conclude that Grundfos has engaged in a number of language planning activities over a relatively short period of time. Some of these activities have been quite extensive. Based on interviews with communication professionals in the company, Sanden (2015a: 258) reports that Grundfos' English dictionary in 2013 contained over 7000 terms. Grundfos therefore demonstrates that companies can be seen as "sociolinguistic laboratories" with their own company-specific forces at work.

4 Sociolinguistics: Learning from practice

4.1 Standardization and authority

It is clear from the preceding section that the model of language standardization developed by Haugen to explain the development of written Norwegian but subsequently used to model the standardization of other languages besides (cf. Deumert and Vandenbussche 2003b) proves relevant and instructive when applied to the case of language standardization in IB. On the face of it, 19th-century Norwegian nationalism and 21st-century internationalization do seem rather different contexts, and so the applicability of the model does suggest that, while specific case studies are highly "situated", i.e. they are based on local conditions and local needs, there are certain common principles of standardization. This reinforces the point we made above about language standardization being understood as part of a wider notion of standards as organizing principles in society.

The Grundfos example is very interesting from the point of view of understanding *in practice* the issue of standardization and power which has occupied so much of the sociolinguistic debate (again see above). At national level, Milroy and Milroy (1999: 22) are clear that each of the stages in Haugen's model involves the strengthening of control over the language by "influential people", and authority in the standardization process, for better or for worse, lies in the hands of certain readily identifiable agents in society. Thus, in the case of Norwegian, it is clear who wrote the grammars and dictionaries to codify the language in the 19th century and who developed and implemented the language reforms which characterize language planning in Norway during the course of the subsequent century (summarized in Linn and Oakes 2007: 72–77; for a fuller account see Jahr 2014). *In Other Words* ... includes an introduction from the group president, recommending its adoption (a good example of "managerial commitment" – see below), but the language guidance is characterized by the more dispersed authority which tends to be typical of standards as opposed to directives (though cf. Neeley 2011; SanAntonio 1987).

The traditional role of expert agencies (such as language councils) and authoritative texts (such as major national dictionaries) has given way in recent decades to the unaccountable (and sometimes invisible) authority of corporate staff. Further examples of this development are guidelines for journalists working on a particular newspaper or media outlet, such as the 2015 *Guardian and Observer Style Guide* (Guardian 2015), written by two production editors, and (most influential and at the same time unaccountable of them all) computer spell-checkers (see, e.g. Blackwood 2013 for a discussion of the role of different language authorities in France). This is a question – who are *de facto* the language authorities and how is that authority legitimated? – which merits further and ongoing study at both national and corporate level. What is clear at both levels, however, is that there is a disjuncture between standardizers on the one hand and language users on the ground on the other. Linn (2010a) shows how the language policy "voice" in Norway and the voice of actual language users are effectively talking past each other and not engaging (see, however, Røyneland (2013) for a counter-example). Similarly, Tange (2008: 171), researching the attitudes of Grundfos employees towards the language policy, identifies what she calls a "dual orientation" or, more prosaically, a "gap" between those with a global outlook and those on the front-line who want a more locally oriented approach to language standardization.

It seems to us, then, that both theoretical and practical issues involved in understanding the nature of effective language standardization can be usefully illuminated by this sort of "comparative standardology" (Joseph 1987: 13). There is limited space to pursue the comparison in detail here. However, just as the conversation across the table in section 3 above involved the application of a model developed to describe nation-level standardization to an IB case study, so we will now briefly consider how a model from IB research can shed light on ongoing state-level language planning.

4.2 National standardization the Piekkari, Welch and Welch way

We earlier explored the suggestion that language standards and standardization are "zombies", something from an age when standard behavior and top-down standards were key to how society functioned, and that standardization is no longer relevant in an age of apparent destandardization. Nekvapil (2008: 260) defines destandardization as follows: "Destandardization means on the one hand that standard language ceases to be used in certain situations or communicative domains, and on the other that it is becoming increasingly varied as it incorporates, to a much larger extent, elements extrinsic to it until now". In our discussion we have established, however, that standards remain a potent force and that there is an evident need for them, but that standardization today may look rather different compared with the 19th century. There is a "standardization cycle" (Joseph 2008: 408–410), such that standardization keeps adapting to new situations and contexts.

Norwegian from the mid-19th century up to the mid-20th century is literally the "textbook case" of language planning and, as we have seen, the context for which Haugen developed his model of how a norm or standard develops (the distinction between *norm* and *standard* is one of the numerous unexploded terminological mines in this field, and we won't step on it just now – see footnote 1 above). Developing the Norwegian language has since 1972 been the responsibility of the Language Council of Norway [Språkrådet]. The first half of the 20th century, as described in Haugen (1966) was characterized by a policy of unification between the two written standards used in Norway (respectively Nynorsk and Bokmål). This proved to be a deeply unpopular policy, and in the decades following Haugen's book it was progressively abandoned, such that the policy now is that the two standard written varieties will be allowed to develop autonomously and without further attempts to engineer their fusion. The various reforms which sought to bring Nynorsk and Bokmål together were all examples of standardization in practice, entailing the selection, codification, elaboration and (non-) acceptance of successive new forms and norms. With the change in official policy, however, standardization has not gone away. There was an extensive reform of Bokmål in 1981, for example (see Rambø 1999), and a reform of Nynorsk was finally agreed in 2012 (Røyneland 2013). How should the Language Council be handling ongoing language management in the 21st century? The most pressing challenge nationally is managing the increasing use of English in ever more situations, the *domain loss* problem mentioned above (see Linn 2010b). So what can the Language Council learn from IB where these issues are live ones and an object of research on the business side of our table?

Based on their extensive discussion of language in the field of IB, Piekkari, Welch and Welch (PWW) (2014) propose a model of language strategy based on a more general model of business strategy development. The strategy has three stages, as follows: *formulation*; *implementation and adaptation*; *performance monitoring and control* (205). The *formulation* stage is equivalent to Haugen's first two stages, described above as preparatory stages, i.e. those relating to the form of the language: selection and codification. The *implementation and adaptation* stage in the process also accords well with their equivalent stages in Haugen's model, i.e. elaboration and acceptance. What is significantly different in the PWW model is the presence of *performance monitoring and control*.

We will not spend much time here on the formulation stage as it is the experience of IB in implementing language standardization strategies that concerns us. We will simply note that the first decade of the 21st century witnessed widespread debate on language issues at government level across the Nordic countries and the publication of extensive language strategies in each country. The Norwegian version – *Mål og meining* (Kultur- og kyrkjedepartementet 2008) focused on the issue of domain loss and the development of a new strategy of "parallel language use" to combat it. PWW note that "firms need to be flexible – able and prepared to change strategies as conditions evolve" (204). Policy development at national level is (as the relativities of scale necessitate) a much slower affair than in the business context, but it is true that Norwegian national language policy has changed to respond to new language imperatives. However, as PWW go on to note: "Business is often criticized for being too focused on the formulation and planning stage, and not paying enough attention to ensuring successful implementation. This is the difficult stage ..." (205). This is also the difficult stage at national level, and there are significant lessons for governments and other high-level agencies to be learned from business. “There needs to be strong follow through”, but in both IB and in nation states the challenge is the presence of “implementation barriers” (212).

The implementation stage (as Piekkari, Welch and Welch simply call it when discussed in terms of a specifically language strategy) is further subdivided into five “implementation components” (212), as follows: *managerial commitment*; *resource allocation*; *inter-unit interaction*; *language procedures*; *incentives*. *Managerial commitment* was clearly evident on the launch of the Norwegian strategy. It was formally presented by the relevant government minister (Trond Giske, Minister for Church and Culture) at a major launch in June 2008. PWW suggest that “an important statement of managerial commitment would be the appointment of a designated language officer” who would act as a “language champion”, and indeed in 2003 at the start of the process which led to the 2008 strategy, a new role of Language Director was established to head up the Language Council. PWW note that a key aspect of this role is to “evangelize”, and the first post-holder, Sylfest Lomheim, was certainly committed to the task of raising the profile in the media and elsewhere of the supposed threat from English and the danger of ensuing domain loss. *Resource allocation* followed. It was suggested on the launch of the language strategy that NOK 100 million (approx. EUR 10 million) might be allocated to the development of a national digital language bank, and “resource allocation can send a strong signal of strategic intent and managerial commitment” (PWW 2014: 217). In terms of *inter-unit interaction and language*, it is the case in national institutions such as universities, which have developed their own language policies in the wake of the national ones, that “implementing a language strategy as intended by top management may be negated by work-related contingencies” (219). In universities the need to internationalize comes into conflict with a cultural responsibility to nurture and further the use of the national languages (see papers in Hultgren, Gregersen, and Thøgersen 2014). *Language procedures* have been developed in the form of “step-by-step guidelines” for higher education and for business, for example. It is not clear, however, that there are significant *incentives* to follow the strategy of increased use of Norwegian, and in fact in the academic context, it is more advantageous to publish in English since English-language journals typically provide more “points” which count toward career advancement in the university and college sector.

Thus far, then, national language standardization is supported to a large extent by the experience of that in internationalizing companies. *Performance monitoring and control* is the component missing from the Haugen model, and performance monitoring and control has been largely absent from national-level language standardization in Norway. Without this there will be precious little commitment to the desired standardized language practices as outlined in the language strategy and in the most recent language reforms.

Language guidelines for the business community, elaborated jointly by the Language Council and the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, entitled *Bruk norsk når du kan, og engelsk når du må* [Use Norwegian when you can, and English when you have to], were explicitly mere consciousness-raising and not seriously intended to influence or standardize language behaviors (see Linn 2010a: 301–302 for a discussion). Kristoffersen et al. (2013: 208) find that in higher education, "little has subsequently been done to transform the goals [of parallel language use] into concrete practice". In his extensive analysis of the implementation of the 2008 national language strategy, Johansen (2012) is damning in his verdict:

> The language report, at first glance, gives the impression of considerable power to act. One sector after the other is surveyed – business and employment, research and higher education, the culture and media sector, etc. – and the survey leads in each case to a point-by-point exposition of "prioritized undertakings". All in all there are 109 such undertakings in this report; it seems to promise a massive commitment, with activities on a broad front. It can therefore come as a surprise when it is revealed that only a small part of these undertakings has in fact been seen through or begun [...] It sets out with a powerful appeal to action, which little by little gets lost; the more carefully one reads, the more it gets lost. (Johansen 2012: 78–79)[3]

If the Norwegian authorities, nationally and institutionally, have a serious commitment to rectifying these criticisms, it is the final stage of the PWW model of the implementation of language strategy which needs addressing.

5 Conclusions

Standardization spans across all spheres of life and is a key activity in managing societies. This chapter has been concerned with language standardization, a particular form of standardization, which is multifaceted and complex and cuts

3 Språkmeldingen gir, ved første øyekast, inntrykk av betydelig handlekraft. Det ene saksfelt etter det andre blir gjennomgått – nærings- og arbeidsliv, forskning og høyere utdanning, kultur- og mediesektoren osv. – og gjennomgangen leder i hvert tilfelle fram til en punktvis oppstilling av «prioriterte tiltak». Til sammen er det 109 slike tiltak i denne meldingen; det synes å varsle en massiv satsing, med aktivitet på bred front. Det kan derfor komme som en overraskelse når det viser seg at det bare er en liten del av disse tiltakene som faktisk er blitt gjennomført eller påbegynt [...]Den går ut med en kraftfull appell til handling, som litt etter litt fortaper seg; jo nøyere man leser, og jo mer man ser etter, desto mer fortaper den seg.

across various levels and units of analysis. As a research topic, language standardization invites multiple theoretical lenses and perspectives to shed light on it. Therefore cross-fertilization, especially between related fields, is called for.

For the purpose of this chapter an interdisciplinary and international team gathered around the table to engage in a conversation about language standardization seen from our different perspectives. We compared language standardization at the national level with that at the corporate level. In doing so, we also contrasted a historical perspective with a more contemporary view. This generated several key insights. IB researchers have seldom explicitly drawn on sociolinguistics in their endeavor; instead they have been oriented to investigate the phenomenon empirically. For them, the theoretical models of language standardization from sociolinguistics introduce an explicit *process* perspective. While much of the IB research is cross-sectional focusing on one particular stage – namely the implementation of language standardization – Haugen's (1966) four-stage model covers the process in its entirety. We applied Haugen's dynamic model to a real company case, Grundfos (Sanden 2015a), to understand how it plays out in the context of international firms. This exercise revealed that Grundfos' translation department and communication specialists acted as organizational agents who can initiate, maintain and up-date language practices during the standardization process. To date, such actors have largely remained silent and faceless in IB research, perhaps because their entrepreneurial role has not been considered part of the standardization process in international firms.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, international firms are more agile and dynamic than public organizations such as universities embedded in national contexts. Firms tend continuously to adjust and change their language policies and practices. In this regard, they are like "natural laboratories" which provide sociolinguists the opportunity to "test" and simulate long-term effects of national language policies. Compared to sociolinguistics, IB research places more emphasis on the follow-up and monitoring of the goals set for language standardization. For example, in the Japanese firm Rakuten, employees were threatened with layoffs if they did not reach the required level of English language fluency (e.g. Neeley 2011). Such strictly binding language strategies are rare, but this is an aspect of practice which governments and national institutions need to take more seriously if they are truly committed to language planning. In many international firms, the gulf between *de facto* and *de jure* language policies is wide (Sanden 2015b) and employees exploit this as a way of coping with the multilingual reality. We would argue that this discrepancy between language policy and practice can be seen as a subtle response to the general trend of destandardization in society at large. It also reflects the increasing emphasis on softer, more subtle and indirect mechanisms of control and coordination in IB research since the 1980s (Martinez and Jarillo 1989).

This chapter is an initial attempt to talk across the table. We believe that the phenomenon of language standardization offers particularly promising territory for sociolinguistics and IB researchers to engage in collaborative theoretical and empirical work across disciplinary boundaries. The discussion above indicates that the two fields can also enrich each other methodologically. Janssens and Steyaert (2014) invite IB researchers to uncover the use of linguistic resources at the micro level in MNCs and shed light on how language is "done" at the workplace. Moreover, an analysis of the interplay between daily language practices and macro-level language policies and ideologies would be worthwhile. Our initial conversation has already suggested that more voices are needed at the table, and that language standardization is best understood by embedding it in a fuller conversation around the broader "sociology of standards".

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