



An Economics of Multilingualism?

A Review of the Volume

Hogan-Burn, Gabrielle: *Linguanomics: What Is the Market Potential of Multilingualism?*¹

Erna Aletta WEGHOFER-VAD

National University of Public Service

Doctoral School of Public Administration Sciences

e-mail: weghofererna@gmail.com

The long-awaited work of Gabrielle Hogan-Burn outlines with all the power of attention and thoroughness the relationship between multilingualism and the economy. The professor at the University of Bristol has been researching the relationship between migration and multilingualism, minority language use, language policies, and the economy for many years, primarily in the European context. Most of her work presents the situation in Eastern European states.

In this book, she scrutinizes the perfect Babylonian multilingualism shaped by globalization, the Internet, and mass tourism. She is looking for answers to questions about the costs and benefits of present multilingualism worldwide. What challenges need to be met, what are the disadvantages of the situation, and what are the objections to multilingualism in globalization? The author rightly raises the question: can our only advantage or disadvantage be a single language in this situation, a common language policy that unites language diversity? Discussions about present-day multilingualism are often overshadowed by errors and prejudices. In her work entitled *Linguanomics*, Gabrielle Hogan-Burn is looking for answers to these questions, keeping an objective distance from the subject.

The title itself is a talkative play on words: the term *linguanomics* mixes the English words *language* and *economics*, and the author stresses the economic utility of language in the title.

Who is this book directed to? According to the intentions of the author, the target is a heterogeneous readership, i.e. it strives to address a large number of legal professionals, language policy makers, economists, academics, and university students. She is trying to point out from different perspectives the economic aspects of multilingualism, demonstrating it with a wide range of descriptions, using resources from both the online and the offline world.

1 Edited by Bloomsbury Academic Publication, 2017.

Reading Gabrielle Hogan-Brun's work, I would like to draw attention to three positive aspects of the volume: behind all the words, statements, and conclusions of the author, there lies a solid professional understanding that makes the work itself and its conclusions absolutely authentic. The discussion of the facts and issues presented shows serious, prepared, and up-to-date professionalism. The author is not biased against the issue that is presented as she analyses the relations between languages and economic actors from a sufficient distance.

The work is relatively short compared to an average book: it is only 168 pages long; the preface is followed by five major chapters, the afterword notes, glossary, bibliography, and index.

The five main chapters are preceded by an opening, introductory section whose title is also out of the box and highly suggestive: *Setting the Scene*. Using examples from everyday practice, it points out the usefulness of knowledge of more than one language, illustrating typical problems of businesses in the absence of language skills. With this short introduction, the author intends to influence the readers by encouraging them to formulate their own thoughts on the relationship between multilingualism and economy. The afterword of the volume will return to this introduction, summarizing all the findings and information that the readers may need in forming their own opinion.

The first chapter, *Trading across Cultures: Then and Now*, follows the historical development of the economy, emphasizing the necessary relationship between the economy and languages. She identifies multilingual communication as the basis for effective operation from the ancient Egyptians to today's economic organizations, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the South East Asian Free Trade Area (AFTA). At first, the author focuses on the Middle East and the famous trade routes, including the Silk Road, and then she details the relationship between trade and power, the effects of mobility (travel). The second part of this chapter focuses on Europe-related colonialism, giving special attention to the detailed analysis of the concept of lingua franca in the last subsection.

The second chapter, *Economic Aspects of Languages Today*, switches from the past to the present. From many perspectives, it reveals the economic realities of multilingualism that characterize today's society. Going beyond national contexts, it analyses and evaluates the language policies of international organizations.

In the third chapter titled *Managing Multilingualism*, the author outlines the importance of multilingual communication through the example of mistakes and disasters taken from practical life, but at the same time she feels the need to highlight the value of the costs incurred. She also highlights the language policies adopted and applied by different educational institutions, schools, and universities and outlines the challenges and opportunities for society and the business environment in terms of mono- and multilingualism. Finally, she draws

attention to an important and current problem, namely, the relationship between the language repertoire and the supply of labour.

In the fourth chapter, the author hits a more personal note. She is looking for answers to the question as to whether it is worth learning foreign languages. She points out that the demand for certain languages is revived or even slackened by the influence of some market players and that this marketable knowledge exacerbates or even disadvantages the employee. At the same time, some personal limitations may prevent the acquisition of additional languages or the improvement of a language spoken at a basic level, thereby reducing the employee's chances on the market.

The fifth chapter is entitled *Languages in the Marketplace*. In this chapter, the author analyses the opportunities offered by language management in the workplace, interpreter services, language teaching, and tourism. She also points out the pitfalls and opportunities of computer science, programming, and technological development that can all greatly influence the market position of languages.

The monograph concludes with a short, concise afterword, in which the author summarizes the main points of her theory and outlines the potential opportunities intrinsic to multilingualism.

The present book is not necessarily research-oriented. The structure and language of the text is not just for the professionals, the content is made available by the author to anyone who is interested in the subject independently of their profession and has a certain level of knowledge of the relationship between multilingualism and the economy. It does not build on new research but rather synthesises linguistic and economic knowledge in order to assess the relationship between different languages and economic aspects.

The strength of Gabrielle Hogan-Brun's writing lies in her intrinsic, less technical, rather descriptive language. She bases her argument on a combination of linguistic and economic aspects. In fact, she offers a kind of alternative view of why we should prefer language learning instead of giving it up for different reasons.

The used literature consists of up-to-date works, is international in its nature, and encompasses and corroborates the aspects and issues discussed, thus stressing the authenticity of the author's pioneering work.