Language, Culture and Business

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Introduction

Ivana Trajanoska and Claudia E. Stoian

Language, Culture and Business is a fairly recent and innovative interdisciplinary field which has been approached and studied across the world this past decade from various angles. Universities around the globe have started to offer undergraduate and graduate programs which focus on business economics, socio-cultural aspects of different disciplines and language studies since the contemporary world of business is no longer confined by national or cultural boundaries. Or, perhaps, it has never even been the case entirely. Thus, it is more than obvious that today's professionals need to have developed, even during their university studies, intercultural understanding and a wide range of competences and skills that transcend cultures, language, and disciplines. Business, culture and language have a complex and multifaceted relationship. Language is intertwined with culture in various intricate ways, and they both are essential for doing business. They impact both international and domestic trade since contemporary societies have become multicultural in their essence too. They influence workplace dynamics, management, and marketing as well. In its turn, business practices also influence culture and language by fostering exchange and change both in language and cultures.

The present book focusses on this interdisciplinary field that gathers three of the main topics of today's society, i.e. language, culture and business, with the purpose of researching and innovating their connections. Its main subject areas are Language Studies i.e., Applied Linguistics, then Cultural Studies, Communication Studies, and Business Economics. It aims to report current empirical research and review relevant theoretical advances in Communication and Cultural studies, Business, and Foreign Language Learning and Teaching, i.e., English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English as Second Language (ESL), English Language Teaching (ELT), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) etc. The book also deals with innovative approaches to English Language, Cultural, and Business Education from an intercultural and communicative perspective.

Aiming to provide insights into conceptual, practical and pedagogical issues that can be further applied in real-life situations, the work *Language,*

Culture and Business pays attention to a wide array of topics, from the cultural mythology of business, cultural heroes, management styles, social media marketing, digital storytelling to business and intercultural communication in the classroom from an international perspective. This contributes to the volume's complexity, as the authors come from different countries and backgrounds. The book is divided into three main parts, each treating the discussed topics from a different approach, namely conceptual, practical and educational, in order to offer a thorough understanding of the interplay between language, culture and business.

The first part points out to the readers several ***conceptual insights into business, communication and culture*** by linking cultural mythology to business discourse and by describing what a cultural manager and entrepreneur meant in the 1800s.

Chapter One, entitled *A Cultural Mythology of Business*, focuses on the cultural history of business. Business takes place through communication, in the form of negotiations, transactions or stories, to mention just a few. **Sorin Ciutacu** presents the relationship between mythological figures, such as Hermes and Mercurius, and meaningful terms related to business across several European languages and cultures. First, he discusses the importance and meaning of the mentioned Gods. Then, he pays attention to the concepts of *otium* and *negotium* to describe better the place of business as trade in Europe. Finally, Ciutacu compiles a brief glossary of relevant business terms and concepts frequently encountered in English and other European languages. These are then analysed culturally and etymologically. The metaphors behind the concepts discussed are used by the author to highlight that business and its relation to communication have had an important role in the becoming of mankind.

Next, **Cora Saurer - Chioreanu** focuses on an important Romanian figure of the 1800s, George Bariț. In Chapter Two, *George Bariț: Astute Entrepreneur and Cultural Manager Avant La Lettre?*, the author discusses him from a business, as well as cultural, points of view. Bariț fought for the independence of Romanian language and culture during the Habsburg Empire. His impact on the economic development of Transylvania, has, though, been ignored. Within this context, Saurer - Chioreanu presents the way George Bariț built a network as a social and cultural entrepreneur, managing ideologies and creating periodicals. She discusses in detail the case of one periodical called *Transilvania*, highlighting constantly Bariț's role as a cultural manager ahead of his time and as a one-man show.

To continue, the second part of the present book is the most extended one. The seven chapters show different ***applicative insights into (online) business communication from discursive, cultural and translating***

perspectives. The discursive perspective points out the structure of business communication in English, the negotiation styles used by professionals, various managerial styles and applications to business settings, as well as marketing and the new media.

The structure of business communication in English is discussed by **Ana Elina Martinez - Insua** in Chapter Three, *Subjects and Fragments in Business Communication in English: An Exploratory Approach to their Textual Function*. From a systemic functional perspective, the author examines fragmentary sequences and clausal subjects in order to see if they share thematic features. The data analysed are written (non-printed) business letters and spoken (public) business transactions contained in the parsed version of the British component of the *International Corpus of English.* Martinez - Insua first defines the notions of "fragments", "Themes" and "contentfulness" to set the context of her pilot study on business communication. Then, she presents the results, based on which she concludes that the units analysed share similarities in terms of constituency and differences in terms of content weight and purpose. The results, alongside further investigation on the topic, could benefit the teaching of English for Specific Purposes.

The negotiation skills used by professionals in North Macedonia are described by **Anife Kasa** in Chapter Four, *Business Communication and Negotiation Skills in English in Business Professionals from R. N. Macedonia*. Macedonian companies are attempting to become increasingly involved in the international market. Thus, it has become very common in North Macedonia to use English when doing business. Moreover, using the English language for the international market has been matched with a domestic, internal use. Fluency in the English language is required in almost all job advertisements and criteria for political positions sometimes even prescribed by law, which means it is no longer a choice whether a professional speaks English, but a prerequisite. Receiving professional training in business communication and negotiation in English serves as a tool for top managers to help them represent their business internationally. Choosing the right words and techniques to communicate and negotiate, and steering the company towards a profitable future is vital for great professionalism in business. Kasa's chapter analyses the situation of Macedonian managers in regard to their business communication and negotiation skills in English and underlines the importance of professional training of business professionals of Macedonian companies in order to communicate and negotiate in English more effectively. The chapter examines the actual negotiation processes of several Macedonian companies and proposes a framework for better language improvement

with regard to better negotiation and business communication skills, and the appropriate professional training.

Going to leadership styles, **Tamara Jolevska Popov**, alongside her co-authors **Sonja Vitanova–Strezova and Jovanka Jovanchevska,** explore them through popular culture in Chapter Five, entitled *Management Styles and Leadership Lessons as Portrayed in A Song of Ice and Fire by George R. R. Martin and A Game of Thrones*. Adopting an innovative approach by analysing leadership styles, which are a hallmark of the modern business world, Popov et al. examine leadership in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*. The series, known for its complex characters and hierarchical focus, mirrors historical events like the Wars of the Roses. The novels, adapted into the TV series *Game of Thrones*, depict a multi-generational struggle for power, emphasizing leadership and decision-making at the highest levels. Although the idea of comparing managerial and leadership styles across historical and fictional contexts is not new, there has been limited research on leadership styles in Martin's fictional world. This study aims to fill that gap by analysing the diverse leadership approaches and their effects on the characters and societies within the series, which can also serve an important purpose in the contemporary world of business. As such, it explores various leadership styles depicted in the series, ranging from autocratic to democratic. It also depicts the differences between male and female leadership and their impact on the followers and the future.

Moving to applications in business, **Maowen Li** proposes a compositional model in Chapter Six, entitled *Field-Frame Compositionality Model and its Application in Business Settings.* In his chapter, Li suggests that compositionality is not limited to linguistics but is crucial for symbolic interaction in both our mental and physical worlds. This chapter argues that its principles and applications extend beyond language. By studying linguistic models through insights from neuroscience, psychology, and social studies, Li proposes the Field-Frame Compositionality Model (FFCM). FFCM conceptualises communication as the framing of attention-focused elements within semantic scenarios, influencing cognitive, emotional, and behavioural outcomes. The semantic field, derived from encyclopaedic experience, involves directing energy towards desired structures through schemas. The chapter provides an overview of FFCM and showcases its application in business through two case studies related to adopting different perspectives and, respectively, employability.

Next, **Alessia Battista** links marketing communication to social media platforms. Chapter Seven, called *Inspiring People and Migrating to New Social Media Platforms: A Corpus-Driven Approach to the Evolution of Buzzfeed's Tasty*, aims to discover more about a relatively unresearched

topic, i.e. food media brands and their business-related texts. From a diachronic perspective, the author analyses quantitatively the famous American *BuzzFeed*, paying attention to its food media brand called *Tasty*. In particular, she looks at its communication about its brand and its perception of its own aims, resources, and audience. The corpus created, *bus-comm-cor,* is highly specialised and contains several types of business-related texts, like investor presentations, annual reports, CEO letters and press statements. With the aim of creating a clearer picture, the analysis is two-fold, on the one side, it looks at the texts type mentioned above and, on the other side, at the year 2021, when the company underwent an organisational change. Battista concludes that *Tasty* has undergone changes influenced by a turn-on in the business of the brand in 2021 and thus, modified its approach to social media usage and content creation, as well as to its target audience.

In the same field of online communication, but from cultural and translating perspectives, **Hsiu-Chih Sheu** and **Lucy Elwood** focus on Chinese food travel Vlogs. Chapter Eight, *Going Deep!": Intercultural Communication and Translation in Chinese Food Travel Vlogs*, presents the qualitative analysis of several Chinese travel food vlogs created by a famous vlogger called *The Food Ranger*, as well as the comments generated by the users. More exactly, the authors look at three different issues, namely the intercultural communication strategies used by the vlogger to present Chinese food culture to a global audience, the translation strategies used in doing that, and the way users answer to his vlogs. The vlogger employs dual languages as he talks to locals in Chinese and to the camera in English, accompanied by dual-language subtitles. Sheu and Elwood find attitudes of openness and curiosity and skills of discovery and interaction as intercultural communication strategies used by the vlogger in order to present Chinese food. Critical cultural awareness lacks though from his intercultural competence skill. As translation strategies, the vlogger uses predominantly foreignisation through transliteration (pinyin) and literal translation, as well as domestication by means of adaptation and exegetic translation. Not all the translations are totally successful and transmit the exact source text meaning into the target text and culture. The Western users' responses to the vlogs are usually positive, the vloggers' skill to communicate with the locals being the most praised one. The authors point out the importance of bilingual food vlogs as platforms for interaction and discovery, on the one hand, and as informal language learning tools, on the other hand. Further studies are suggested to explore multilingualism and subtitling in vlogs.

Continuing the (inter)cultural perspective, **Evgenija Koleski** discusses intercultural communication in management. In Chapter Nine, *Intercultural Communication in Management: Needed Skills for Effective Intercultural Communication of Macedonian Managers*, Koleski aims at investigating if there is a gap between the necessary intercultural communicative skills for effective business communication and the ones that managers from the Republic of North Macedonia have. Moreover, she aims at giving recommendations on how managers could develop further their intercultural skills in order to become more interculturally competent for effective intercultural business communication. The empirical research examines to what extent Macedonian managers had developed intercultural communication skills during their higher and informal education, what their attitude was towards the importance of intercultural communication skills, and to what extent they were aware of the needs and the global trends of working on developing intercultural communication skills. The chapter concludes that managers in Macedonian companies should further develop their intercultural communication skills. Although, generally aware of the importance of having intercultural communication skills for successful business communication, managers in Macedonian companies lack intercultural communication training and are willing to take up training of this kind. Koleski's solution consists of offering comprehensive and individualised trainings imbued with practical knowledge in companies whose managers are involved in communication with people from different cultural backgrounds focusing on intercultural communication. She suggests that special attention should be paid to the skills that are required for successful intercultural communication in the business setting and the specific, individual skills the managers lack. Moreover, according to Koleski, the building of the intercultural competence should start even before they enter the labour market, i.e., in tertiary and secondary education.

Finally, the last part of the book *Language, Culture and Business* links theory and practice to the classroom and describes some ***pedagogical insights into teaching business, translation and intercultural communication***.

Chapter 10, *Business Language as a means to Engage Students in Sustainable Development*, deals with a Spanish Business Language module taught at Cardiff University in the United Kingdom. The author, **Carlos A. Sanz Mingo**, sets the module in the framework of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), paying attention to how ESD influences teaching and language learning in the UK. Business Spanish is quite complex as it involves several different skills, namely linguistic, cultural

and business, and, at the same time, it relates to issues like global challenges and sustainable future. A module should consider such complexity and prepare students to acquire the above-mentioned skills and awareness. In line with this, Sanz Mingo presents the module he teaches, *The World and Language of Business (Spanish),* and then, focuses on assessment. He proposes several ways of assessing students, as for example formal letters, scenarios, essays and oral tasks. In the end, the author reflects on future challenges in education, mainly the inception of AI in the learning and teaching experiences.

Finally, the last chapter, Chapter Eleven, entitled *Intercultural Communicative Competence in Translation Training: A Pedagogical Perspective*, continues the pedagogical perspective on teaching and learning intercultural communicative competence (ICC), shifting the focus from business to translation classes. **Claudia E. Stoian** and **Ivana Trajanoska** emphasise the importance of this competence in preparing translators and the lack of attention it actually receives. Either as a separate module or as integrated in the translation curricula, ICC should not be ignored by teachers and trainers of translation. As cultural mediators living and working in a globalised society, translators need to be able to understand, adapt and communicate successfully in any situation. The authors propose several activities to do in class to raise students' curiosity and cultural awareness of their own culture and others', and to reflect on stereotyping and misunderstanding situations and on the solutions they could find. They also indicate more specialised activities that require translating texts for different audiences, while paying attention to culturemes. Stoian and Trajanoska conclude by indicating the need for further studies to find better ways to assess students in their ICC, as real-life situations are quite difficult to replicate in class.

To conclude, understanding the interplay between business, culture, and language is essential for both higher education institutions and organisations. By appreciating and integrating these meeting points, on one hand, universities can develop comprehensive and eclectic interdisciplinary study programs which will enable students to develop the much-needed competences and skills to thrive in the contemporary societies and on the global market. On the other hand, organisations can enhance their global reach, build stronger relationships, and achieve greater success by understanding the cultural influence on business practices such as decision making, hierarchy and power-distance, negotiation and communication styles. It will also make them even more aware of the indispensable need to continuously invest in their employees' cross-cultural and language skills training and development and appreciate

their employees' cultural and language diversity. Promoting diversity and inclusion within the workplace can create an environment where different cultural perspectives and languages are valued, leading to innovative ideas and solutions.

The book *Language, Culture and Business* targets academics, researchers, educators and other professionals working in the mentioned fields and aims to provide them with useful tools for successful communication in a globalised and intercultural market. The complexity of exploring the intersection of language, culture and business from an international perspective makes the work interesting to all sort of professionals, from teachers, trainers, managers, advertisers, to researchers and theoreticians.

PART ONE

CONCEPTUAL INSIGHTS INTO BUSINESS, COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

CHAPTER ONE

BUSINESS MYTHOLOGY:
A CULTURAL HISTORY

SORIN CIUTACU

1. Introduction

This chapter belonging to the cultural history of business sets out to delve into the mythological figures and meaningful terms/concepts containing metaphors and other figures of speech related to business across European languages and cultures (Latin, Greek and Germanic). It purports to show through comparatively commented upon symbols and stories and through a brief glossary of terms and concepts containing metaphors that the idea of business frequently associated with communication enjoys a high-ranking place in the becoming of mankind seeking out common ground in order to meet its needs always in a relationship with Otherness.

We define business here as encompassing all the senses from the most abstract one as the state of being busy through to the general economic one and down to the most prototypical one as trade or commerce. Business in ancient times stood under the aegis of the Gods named Hermes by Greeks and Mercurius (Mercury) by Romans. A generous part of the chapter will be dedicated to the comparative mythology of Hermes and Mercurius. Next, we shall look at the *otium-negotium* concepts defining contemplative and active life in ancient Rome, respectively. We shall see that much of the ancient outlook on business remains valid and relevant today.

The practical side of the chapter will take in a brief glossary of business terms and concepts that have made a career in English and sundry other European languages. They show up in this type of discourse with a certain kind of frequency and evince a certain kind of relevance. The cultural and etymological analysis of this array of terms/ concepts that pertain to business will follow for each entry and we shall point out how

most of these hark back to metaphors whose patterns we recognise and which we use daily in English and other European languages.

Business is also a form of communication, and business involves communication as stories, the discourse of transactions and the discourse of negotiations make up an important part of communication that includes metaphors. Admittedly, the manner in which we frame how we behave and we do business occurs through metaphors. Moreover, "science, history, and art have something in common: they all depend on metaphor, on the recognition of patterns, on the realization that something is "like" something else." (Gaddis, 2004, 1)

2. Business as trade means crossing boundaries

Like any form of communication itself business betokens an exchange of a special kind and the prototypical business activity leading back to the dawn of mankind is commerce or trade. Once the states and their ensuing borders appeared, there also emerged what we call foreign trade that brought along intercultural interaction and linguistic contact between different tradesmen. And this happened along border lines and border stones, which paradoxically find themselves in a no man's land, exactly like their patron God Hermes.

We agree with Brown (1947) that in ancient Greece and Rome the dawn of trade made its appearance along borders as these were neutral territories, far from the madding military crowds. If we look upon trade markets as a no man's land, we may think of them as common ground, that is exactly what communication needs. Communication is the vector of negotiation, the heart of trade, which, in turn is the prototypical activity of business in ancient times. No wonder that Hermes should take over the office of communication along borders and across borders.

Brown (1947) claims that "crossing the boundary" represented the gist of trade and business in general. This is proved by the very Greek words for "buy" and "do business" that hail from a root meaning "beyond, across". By attempting to demonstrate the kindred essence of trade and theft, Brown adduces the argument that the inhabitants of archaic Rome looked upon "legitimate acquisitions as thefts".

Another interesting aspect is the observation that the dominant interpreters of Hermes as the patron of trade and thieves agree that the exclusive archaic aristocracy in Greece used to deem tradesmen as thieves, as these broke the rules of gift exchange, and as these also stole across borders. We should know that gift exchange rules of archaic Greek aristocracy shut out lower class inhabitants and foreigners from the trading

loop. If we look at the Greek verb naming the concept "steal", *κλέπτω,* we realise that the verb is the bearer of this ambiguity, pointing out both to theft and to underhand transgressions or transitions.

3. Hermes as a prototypical Greek God of trade and kindred pursuits

The arrival of Hermes as patron God of trade and thieves is considered by many scholars as the allegorical expression of the coin-based exchange economy. The emergence and use of coins ultimately forced the archaic Greek aristocrats to join in the trading fold if they did not want to lag behind, as coins betokened a much wider and more democratic participation in the economic game. That is why story of the theft of Apollo's cows by Hermes is deemed to be an allegorical narration of this paradigm shift in the so-called barter economy. We agree with this scholar.

Let us not forget that coins are themselves a metaphor for fluidity and Hermes stands for this fluid state, too. Not by chance Hermes' counterpart, the Roman God Mercury embodies fluidity par excellence as the metal named after him is dubbed *quicksilver*, a symbol for the transitional, fluid state of things and beings that usually stick to their principle of individuation, as Nietzsche would name it.

Most scholars agree that Hermes holds sway over the reign of exchange as it is Zeus that bestowed the office of the ruler of exchange upon Hermes if we were to go by how the Homeric hymn describes him. That is why we believe that the idea of exchange is central to the prototypical comprehension of Hermes' areas of responsibility. If Hermes is in charge of herds, he acts as a go-between entity fostering an interaction between humans and their herds grazing on the land that nourishes and promotes life. If Hermes is in charge of trade, tradesmen, roads and travellers, he makes possible the exchange of artefacts between sundry groups of people and states. If Hermes is the patron God of magic and divination, he mediates the exchange between earth-dwellers and the divinities. If Hermes is a psychopomp God, he makes possible the exchange between the realm of the living earthlings and the netherworld. If Hermes holds sway over the realm of language and knowledge, he furthers the exchange of messages between individual people and between cultures. If Hermes is also in charge of skills and professions, he eggs people on to professional pursuits and designs.

Speaking of trade and exchange across cultural lines, Curtin (2002, 1) claims that they

have played a crucial role in human history, being perhaps the most important external stimuli to change, leaving aside the unmeasurable and less-benign influence of military conquest. External stimulation, in turn, has been the most important single source of change and development in art, science, and technology. Perhaps this goes without saying, since no human group could invent by itself more than a small part of its cultural and technical heritage.

We agree with Curtin (2002, 2) that

the earliest trade between different communities took place at the border between them. Linguistic evidence suggests that this was the case in ancient Greece, and later on, Hermes was both the god of trade and the god of the boundary stones separating one city from another.

Symbolically, Hermes is portrayed as the son of Zeus and the nymph Maia, and he acts as the herald of the Greek Gods. In Greek mythology, Hermes also discharges the functions which dub him the God of trade, land travel, shepherds, literature, oratory, translations, athletics and thieves. His attributes of cunning and shrewdness make him stand out in the Greek pantheon. Among the Greek Gods, Hermes, "the God of the opposites" (Garagalza, 2013, 4) is entrusted with the task of carrying linguistic messages of the Gods.

Drawing on Turner's concept of liminality (Turner, 1974), we can look upon the symbol of Hermes in the new light of the limen concept or rather border concept. Borders are the outcome of a tug of war along a thin strip of no man's land marked out by boundary stones. Like Hermes, who is always on the move, along borders where one does not abide (abiding in a place at leisure typifies *otium*), but one is always keen on crossing them as transitions typify *negotium*. Hermes is a lucky candidate for being the mythological founder of hermeneutics as the science of interpreting messages and texts for it lies in Hermes' character to travel and to bear and interpret messages from the immortal realm to the mortal realm. $\tilde{\eta}\theta o\varsigma$ $\dot{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\dot{\omega}\pi\omega$ $\delta\alpha\acute{\iota}\mu\omega\nu$ (*Ethos anthropoi daimon*), Heraclitus used to say: "A man's character is his fate."

Hermes is the God of opposites and he also presides over the fate of tradesmen, travellers of all kinds and language interpreters among others. Scholars remark that these pursuits involve a transition of some kind as these individuals somehow deal with objects that move around without actually owning them. Hermes emerges as the paradoxical God of borders as points of transition lacking patrimonial status.

The God of travellers, Hermes is fitted out with winged sandals (*talaria*), which allow him to commute swiftly between the realms of the

humans and of the immortal Gods. Other objects attributed to Hermes may be the winged helmet or hat (*petasos*) and the *caduceus*. By being so quick and mobile, Hermes readies himself for playing the part as the soul carrier into the afterlife, being assigned this psychopomp role. This assigned role extended over time as Hermes came to be the patron God of roads and thence of boundaries, of travellers, of land travel itself and of trade as merchants ferry their wares down these roads. (see also Long, 1987)

Most scholars agree that, since the beginning, Hermes has been a God endowed with magic powers and a master of initiation and divination rituals, able to get in touch with the otherworldly entities and to play the go-between part between the upper and nether realms. These scholars seem to suggest that Hermes started out his mythological life as a God with starkly chthonic attributes. (see also Otto, 1979)

Being well versed in the worldly and otherworldly things, almost as *polytropos* as Ulysses, Hermes has earned himself the title of "the divine trickster", about which Homer writes a *Hymn to Hermes*. The effigy of Hermes features him accompanied by his main symbol, which is the *caduceus*, a winged staff fitted out with two interlocking snakes. (see also Littleton, 2002)

The most researchers believe that "Hermes" stems from Greek ἕρμα (*herma*), "stone heap." The etymology of ἕρμα itself is still a moot point. However, Beekes (2010) throws out the *herma* etymology and claims a Pre-Greek origin. A few scholars claim that "Hermes" hails from a primordial noun meaning "one cairn". A few other researchers believe that Hermes may be connected with the Vedic term Sarama. (see also Mallory and Adams, 2006; Beekes, 2010)

Interesting enough is the fact that if we agree to its (still uncertain) IE origin, we may find out that this "stone heap" etymology itself hails from Indo-European *ser-* ("to bind, put together"). This is highly plausible as we immediately see the connection with the Latin verb *sero, serare* meaning to join and the Latin *nomen dicendi sermō* meaning: conversation, discussion, speech, talk, discourse, language, manner of speaking or, even, sermon. Thus, in a symbolic manner, the Greek God Hermes is the patron of speech, a fact implicitly acknowledged by the Latin noun *sermo*, which conceives of speech as a metaphor of binding together words seen as stones.

To continue, we will have a look at Hermes from a comparative perspective. If we analyse the attributes, by and large we find that Hermes is the equivalent of Thoth of Egypt. Thoth, the cunning messenger of Egyptian Gods, is deemed by scholars to have made up the mythological origins of occult and riddle some *Hermes Trismegistus*, or "Threefold Great

Hermes." Hermes Trismegistos is the mythological author who penned alchemical and astrological texts and other esoteric writings. Thoth himself is credited with having created hieroglyphics and having set up the custom of calendar-keeping and self-same Thoth was entrusted with the attribute of a judge that utter rulings regarding the souls of the departed. Tradition has it that *Hermes Trismegistus* penned the Hermetic Books, whose number reaches 36,525 items teeming with Egyptian esoteric wisdom. (see also Long, 1987)

In ancient Sumer, Hermes must have been equal to Gud, a God with a slightly different portfolio as Gud was known to foster bountiful harvest, fair weather and bumper crops. In Assyria, Hermes's equivalent was Nabu, known as the "herald". With a different series of attributes, Nabu acted as the heavenly secretary, monitoring the words of the Gods. Scholars agree that this gift enabled him to be deemed the Assyrian God of knowledge and the God who kept track of the destiny of all people in the future.

To the Germanic peoples, Hermes was tantamount to Wodan, for Wodan (Woden/Odin) discharged the same functions as Hermes in Nordic mythology. In the Italic peninsula, in the Etruscan pantheon, it must have been God Turms that was considered equal to Hermes. Turms was set up by the Etruscans as the one who ferried the departed souls to the netherworld, and was the messenger of the Gods, to boot. Last, but not least, as we have already said, Hermes was Mercurius in the Roman pantheon and he was dubbed as *Alipes*, with a metonymy that describes him as the one fitted out with winged feet.

4. Mercurius as a prototypical Roman God of trade and kindred pursuits

We will now have a look at Mercurius, the counterpart of Greek Hermes from Roman mythology. As we pore over the features of Mercurius (Mercury), we remark that many of Hermes' attributes belong to him, a name stemming from the Latin noun *merx*, meaning "merchandise," underpinning the etymology of the English words: "merchant" and "commerce." (de Vaan, 2011)

Moreover, the Latin root of *merx* also shows up in deponent verb *mercari* meaning to trade, and its plural *merces* may have different meanings like wages but also wares. Intriguing is its possible link with the Indo-European root **merĝ*- designating a "boundary or border". For this we refer the reader to Old English *mearc* to be found in the name of the kingdom of Mercia, Old Norse *mark*. For Mercurius, we refer the reader to

the following components: Latin *margō*, *marginis* and Greek οὖρος (guardian) (see the analogical pattern in the proper noun *Arctūrus/ Ἀρκτοῦρος* guardian of the bear). Thus, we understand that his metonymic name means "guardian of borders," referring to his role as the mediator between the upper and nether realms. (see also Mallory and Adams, 2006)

Mercurius is an important God in Roman religion and mythology as he appears among the 12 *Dii Consentes* consecrated to the classical Roman pantheon. Mercurius holds the status of the God of trade, messages, communication, oratory, divination, but he also presided over mortals as the patron of financial gain, travellers, boundaries, luck, tricksters, and robbers, and last, but not least, he acts as the hardworking psychopomp God entrusted with ferrying the souls of the departed over to the netherworld and, of course, as the very "messenger of the Gods".

Romans worshipped Mercurius also by celebrating his name day, *Mercuralia*, on May 15th. It was customary for tradesmen to hallow their shops and even themselves with splashed on fountain water especially collected from a well drilled in a place named Porta Capena in Rome.

Mercurius as the God of negotiation and mediation had been honoured since as early as 495 BC by the Roman citizens. The outstanding honour was paid to him through the erection of a temple built on the premises of Circus Maximus found on the Aventine Hill. Scholars agree that this token of worship bespoke people's acknowledgement for both Mercurius' role as a merchants' patron and an appeasing mediator between the plebeian class and the patricians' class.

As a messenger of Gods, Mercurius is like Hermes a God of exchange since this exchange feature might be the very common ground or denominator bringing all his attributes and responsibilities under the same heading. As the God of travellers and trade, Mercurius is seen like Hermes as the God defining and crossing borders. As a border guard, Mercurius can stand as patron of thieves and trickery, same as Hermes. Invoked by earthlings, Mercurius can thus further mortals' boon or can shield mortals from heinous trickery or thievery or can foster the powers of the mortals' mind; However, Mercurius can also wreak havoc in one's life, or can allow robbers into one's house or can beguile one's reason into believing baleful tricks. All these happenings can befall mortals. (see also Long, 1987)

Like other Gods, Mercurius became a syncretic product. This phenomenon tied in well with the huge cultural aggregation and assimilation as the Roman Empire stretching out to trans-European dimensions. The so-called *interpretatio romana* allows us to understand how the attributes

of Mercurius naturally lump him alongside the Germanic God Odin/Wodan/Woden and the Celtic God Lugus/Lugh among the Celts.

Mercurius seems to be the most versatile and accessible Roman God thanks to his prototypical attribute exactly as Hermes as God of universal exchange. As Romans were both skilled warriors and artful tradesmen, it is no wonder that Mercurius should have been accepted and assimilated by people of many provinces under the sway of Rome. Mercury's importance in Rome is evident in the number of words used in modern English that are still influenced by him. His speed, association with commerce, and the tricks he played are remembered also in the English language to this day.

As for his ancestry, scholars agree that in Roman mythology, Mercurius had two alternative sets of parents: Mercurius was either the son of Maia, daughter of the Titan Atlas, and of Jupiter, or the son of Caelus and of Dies. Some scholars are of the opinion that in archaic Latium, Mercurius must have borne a resemblance to God Turms of Etruscan stock with similar attributes. The scholars remark that Mercurius emerges as gripping the usual snake interlaced *caduceus* with his left hand. (see also West, 2007)

Roman Mercurius often stands out as the patron God of wheat trade. As wheat was a staple product, Mercurius was called upon to watch over one's abundance and trade thrift especially in Gaul, where some scholars claim that he was frequently worshipped. His literary career with Ovid contains a story according to which it is Mercurius that ferried Morpheus' dreams from the valley of Somnus to human beings that are asleep. (see also Bonnefoy, 1992)

According to well-documented research, as we said, Mercurius is a syncretic product lumping together the attributes of the earlier God named Dei Lucrii, of the Etruscan God Turms we mentioned previously and of the Greek God Hermes. All scholars agree that right from the start, Mercurius had possessed the same attributes and features as the Greek God and the Roman images of Mercurius show him wearing sandals (*talaria*) and a helmet (*petasos*), as he walks around gripping the *caduceus*, a herald's wand or staff decked out with two interlocking snakes as we said before. Legend has it that the *caduceus* represented Apollo's gift to Hermes. Exactly like Hermes, Mercurius was portrayed in the presence of symbolic animals, all of them underlining the message of God's attributes. (Bonnefoy, 1992)

If the Greeks looked upon Hermes as the messenger God, they also held Hermes, the God of trade in high esteem as he shielded the travellers and especially the tradesmen that ferried their wares across the ancient world. Hermes had to intercede as a skilled and artful diplomat in untold

wars and other conflicts ablaze between the competing city states. The Roman Empire also waxed at the expense of the domestic fighting of these Greek city states by availing themselves of the Greeks' vulnerability.

Mercurius heaved into sight to complete the picture of the deities' gallery when Rome conquered all their neighbours step by step. If Romans were good warriors, we might even say that they were even better merchants. This may spell out the prominent position of Mercurius amidst the Roman Gods, too. Artful tradesmen and skilled negotiators, the Romans knew how to bring *pax romana* to the conquered peoples and how to foster their complex *interpretatio romana* in such a way as to strive for the common spiritual ground wherever they went. (see also Long, 1987)

Rome's thrift hinged upon successful trade. Mercurius was summoned to watch over the merchant roads and Mediterranean routes. Rome was in dire need of wheat from Sicily and Egypt, gold and silver from Dacia, wood and wheat from Gaul, and iron ore from Britannia and Hispania. One should imagine how important the wheat transports were for the populace of Rome. If there happened any failed consignment of wheat, the poor inhabitants of Rome might face starvation and with this famine looming ahead they might rise in arms in spontaneous uproars against the establishment. (see also André and Hus, 1974)

Should Mercurius fail to acquit himself of this task, that is the case in which trade roads were not safe enough and the sea voyages turned out to be fraught with risk and danger, the Romans might have believed that they had fallen out of Mercurius' favour and might have feared for their future as a solid economic empire. Such was the outstanding role granted to Mercurius as the God of trade and travellers.

5. *Otium* and *Negotium* as hallmarks of Roman civilisation

If the mythological double figure of Hermes/Mercurius betokens the pursuit that we call business in a symbolical way among other fields, we shall now turn towards two opposite concepts from the self-same ancient Roman history namely: *otium* and *negotium*. The two concepts denote *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* with many aspects that are relevant for today's busy life.

We believe that the discussion of the concept *otium* in opposition to *negotium* will shed more light on the essence of business as a perennial pursuit. Latin *otium* covers an array of meanings involving what we call meaningful leisure time for mostly autotelic pursuits like playing, winding down, reading, musing, etc. Its etymology is uncertain; it may stem from Proto-Italic **autiom*, from Proto-Indo-European **h₂ewtyom* ("forlorn,

deserted"), from Proto-Indo-European *h_2ew ("off, away from"). (de Vaan, 2011). Romans may have referred to *otium* as the time spent by someone after retirement from one's public service job or from one's private job.

Definitely Romans pitted this *otium* against the state of being active in public life, *negotium* meaning which generally indicated the state of being busy or engaged in an ongoing pursuit in public life. But *otium* may have also referred to temporary spans of leisure time devoted to one's intellectual growth and may have implied writing letters or other texts, reading philosophy and preparing some speeches. Of course, Roman *otium* was enjoyed by those who could afford it like politicians, lawyers, businessmen or writers.

By looking into the cultural values of *otium* with Cicero, we find that his spin put on *otium* reflects the positive sense of the Greek word σχολή (*schole*, "leisure") which carries a heap of Greek philosophical usage. Researchers claim that *otium* is not a translation of the Greek word *schole* as *otium* still represents what we call essential Roman civilization. Yet it is noteworthy to claim the magnificent career of this Greek term in the European languages via Latin *schola*.

We know that the essence of the philosophical trend in Greek cities was talking, which took place sometimes as people walked or sat down, but everything happed at leisure. The perception of a slow, leisure pace was decisive for the success of discussions and of educational outcome. Here is how Greek σχολή came to mean education and how it further underpinned the view of school tuition. (see also Burkert, 1985)

A startling fact is remarked by scholars: colloquial Latin *otium* takes on a negative meaning being pitted against *officium,* meaning duty. In Roman republican times politicians and businessmen considered that the individuals should first acquit themselves of their *officium* and only afterwards should they indulge in *otium* whereas *negotium* denoted those outside of leisure pursuits that had to be attended to. The Greek concept laden pursuits later on took in all sorts of hobbies and carrying on long-winded conversations. (see André and Hus, 1974)

Reading the comments thrown in by André and Hus (1974) we realise that the initial usage of *otium* actually referred us to Roman military service as it described the idle time spent by the soldiers at wintertime starkly different from the state of being busy described by *negotium* characterising the remaining months. According to the Roman custom the year split into ten months reserved for *negotium* encompassing warfare and agricultural pursuits so that the rest of the months, January and February could be allotted to the idle time called *otium*.