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The (Nordic) university as a multilingual site

A new perspective on academia?

Plan

Conceptual framework

UCPH as context

Parallel language use and multilingualism

Language policy and interaction in practice

Ex of diversified language needs

Conceptual framework: a new lense

Sites of multilingualism: spaces cohabitated by an array of languages and variants of languages (Preece 2011)

Reorient university language policy to embrace a more complex and dynamic use of languages in practice; e.g. through Interpretive policy analysis (Moore and Wiley 2015)

Preece & Martin (2009): Imagining higher education as a multilingual space (Language and Education 24:1, 3-8)

van der Walt (2013): Multilingual Higher Education. Beyond English Medium Orientations

Phillipson (in press): Additive university multilingualism

Van Leeuwen (2004): Multilingual universities in Europe. Models and realities

Conceptual framework: orientations

Language as problem:

Language education aims at transition to the dominant majority language (or English)

Bilingualism is related to cognitive difficulties and reduced academic achievement

Language learning is generally subtractive

Language as right:

Academic programs for linguistic minorities facilitate equal access to education

Language as ressource:

Languages are resources for everyone

Bi-/Multilingualism can enhance academic achievement

Language learning is generally additive

(Ruiz 1983/Hult & Hornberger 2016)

Student at pharmaceutical school (Laursen 2013)

[Being bilingual means] a person who knows two languages. But here [in the university] it is taken as if you are a foreigner. So bilingual means foreigner. But there are many people who know more than one language. Danes also know English; this also applies to the Swedes who come here. But they are not seen as bilingual.

It is better to use that [i.e. Danish as a second language] because it is nicer than saying foreigner or second generation immigrant … therefore they invented that expression. It is different for me than for those who grew up here. I came when I was 21 so for me it is fine to be seen as bilingual

Terminology

European Council:

Multilingual contexts

Individual and dynamic plurilingual competences

University of Copenhagen

Founded in Medieval Copenhagen in 1479

Today a research-based, public university with six faculties:

- Health and Medical Sciences
- Humanities
- Law
- Science
- Social Sciences
- Theology

100 departments, more than 200 study programs

40.000 students (BA and MA), 7.000 employees (faculty, administrative staff, PhD students)

Changing demography

Sharp increase in number of newly recruited, international
researchers (making up 12-35 % of all)

Jürna´s survey (2014): 150 international researchers at UCPH

Reporting a total of 34 different languages in their repertoire
26 of these reported to have English as their L1

Increase in full degree international students (around 15 %)

No common language policy: but a policy for language of
instruction at SCIENCE, for meetings at some departments
and a mission statement of parallel language use

Languages at UCPH (cf Mortensen & Haberland 2012)

Type of university	Period	Organizing principle	Language programs	Medium of instruction
Medieval	- 1700	auctoritas	Classic	Latin
Enlighten-ment	1700-1850	ratio	Classic, German & French (Danish)	Latin, Reading in German & French (Danish)
National	1850-1990	nation state	Danish European	Danish (reading in English)
Postnational	1990-	market	Danish, European, Asian, Middle East (40+)	Danish English

Language Rich Europe (Extra & Yagmur 2012)

Survey on "trends in policies and practices for multilingualism in Europe"

65 European universities prioritized initiatives which may strenghten multilingualism. 3 Danish universities:

High priority: student mobility

attract more international students

English-medium instruction

Middle priority: foreign language programs (not English)

languages for non-language students ("CLIL")

Low priority: Danish language support

attract more national minority students

UCPH language policy (Destination 2012)

The basis for the language policy is the principle of parallel language use. English will be used to an increasing extent as the medium of instruction and of text books, and as the emerging lingua franca of research. It is also important that Danish is maintained as a complete, functional language within higher education and when communicating research (public outreach)

Destination 2012

UCPH shall [plan the language policy so that we] profit from the special opportunity of already carrying out research and teaching in a number of languages. Students must be given easily available opportunities to acquire competence in another foreign language and another culture than the anglosaxon.

The Bologna declaration from 1991 sparked off new thoughts and initiatives within HE in Europe – not least in the Nordic countries. This meant an increasing use of English as a means of instruction. Some see this as an unintentional and uncritical transition into English, fearing domain loss and a decaying national language. Others view the increasing use of English as a way to get more students, as a way forward and a guarantee for the future. Noone knows what the future brings, but maybe it is possible to find a parallel language strategy which will benefit the Nordic languages as well as English (Nordic report approx. 2002)

Declaration on a Nordic Language Policy 2006

Four issues to work with:

- Language comprehension and language skills
- The parallel use of languages
- Multilingualism
- The Nordic countries as a linguistic pioneering region

Parallel use of English and the languages of the Nordic countries – as "languages of science", as medium-of-instruction, as elements in university language policies

Multilingualism: "almost 200 other languages as mother tongues of Nordic residents" maintenance and development

What does parallel language use mean?

Nordic language declaration: primarily protecting national languages against English, very little focus on multilingualism or second language use (Ekberg 2015)

Nordic studies: Is English a problem?

Ljosland, Airey, Kuteeva, Jensen, Thøgersen, Tange, Hellekjær, Kling etc.

And what kind of English? Mauranen, Mortensen, Larsen, Bjørkman, Jenkins, Seidlhofer etc.

Gregersen et al *(2014): Hvor parallelt*. Nordisk Ministerråd

5 country reports, introduction and a set of policy recommendations: *English as medium of instruction at Nordic universities. How to do it?*

Interactional perspective

We have several studies on EMI, especially lecturing, and on attitudes to English and Danish

But we need more studies of informal academic fora

E.g. interaction in EMI and DMI classrooms
During sessions of questions and answers
During exams
In project and group work

during coffee breaks and lunches
during meetings

Cf. Mortensen´s Transient Multilingual Community

Diversified needs

3 examples:

Why learn Danish if you are an internationally recruited researcher?

What are the language needs of different students?

Why study your heritage or minority language?

In which work related situations is Danish important to you?

To be able to understand spoken Danish when group
conversations are in Danish. Not necessarily be able
to respond in Danish, but to keep up with a
conversation

I would like to be able to understand meetings and
conversations… more complex written documents
such as minutes, without using Google translate

Teaching

I would like to write my cv in Danish and the cover
letter and be able to do some conversation about job
finding

When do you use Danish?

2 surveys with researchers (2014: 70 and 2015: 86)

For academic purposes

read e-mails about research	37 %
read e-mails about teaching	34 %
read articles and books	17 %
write e-mails about teaching	17 %
listen to lectures	15 %
Write e-mails about research	15 %
Read students´ assignments	14 %
Discuss with colleagues	9 %
Administer exams	6 %
I do not use Danish	62 %

When do you use Danish?

For practical purposes

Read administrative info from my department	56 %
Read agendas and minutes from meetings	37 %
Listen to meetings in my unit	31 %
Listen to meetings outside my unit	23 %
Write e-mails on administration	23 %
Talk on the phone	13 %
Write agendas and minutes	10 %
Write evaluations	5 %
Talk during meetings in my unit	5 %
I do not use Danish	37 %

When do you use Danish?

For social purposes

Informal conversations	55 %
Lunch with colleagues	31 %
After work	18 %
Sports with colleagues	9 %
I do not use Danish	42 %

Variation in students´ prior use of Danish

Exposure/access	Danish entrance exam	Foreign entrance exam
Students with Danish L1	Majority students, incl. bilinguals	Students with Danish family background
Students with prior exposure to Danish as L2 in school or as neighbour language	Minority students	Some Nordic students
Students with Danish L2 classes after high school	Refugees	Minority students and full degree with *Studieprøven*
Students with no prior exposure to Danish		Some Nordic students

What are the language needs?

In a survey with Icelandic students at Danish universities, they experience these problems (Hauksdottir 2012:61)

To understand spoken Danish	45%	38%
To speak Danish	35%	46%
Danish pronunciation	27%	32%
Vocabulary	16%	17%
To write in Danish	12%	9%
Grammar	4%	7%
Other language problems	6%	7%
N	136	158

Language attitudes related to learners of Danish

Danes are like this, if you do say things precisely as they want to hear them, then they cannot understand what you say, or maybe they do not even (Hauksdóttir 2012: 104)

Interview with previous head of studies at UCPH (Lund & Bertelsen 2008: 205):

Danish students find life too short to deal with people with uncertain spoken proficiency

Are Nordic students legitimate speakers of Danish? What happens with their position over time?

cf Kuteeva 2014: on "nativeness" embedded in parallel language use (Swedish-English)

Heritage language students

- Exam paper from student of Russian: Why a problem to have students who are native speakers in language programs?

Calls for a differentiated approach in language teaching

- US discussion on the profile of foreign language departments

Modern Language Association (2007): Foreign Languages and Higher Education. New Structures for a Changed World

Transforming foreign language departments, with a new goal of strengthening students´ translingual and transcultural competence

Heritage language students

MLA (2008: 290) recommends an integrated curriculum

"We expect that more students will continue language study if courses incorporate cultural inquiry at all levels and if advanced courses address more subject areas while continuing to explicitly advance language competency"

Including language programs for heritage speakers

Valdés (2005): Bilingualism, Heritage Language Learners, and SLA Research. Opportunities Lost or Seized?

The greatest challenge is the design of instruction which is not appropriate for L1 users of the language studied

Interviews with students in language programs

Student of	Arabic 1	Arabic 2	German	Polish
Home languages	Danish & Arabic dialect	Arabic dialect & Danish	Standard German & Danish	Polish & (Danish)
L1 oral comp.	Receptive	Rec. & prod.	Rec. & prod.	Rec. & prod.
L1 literacy	no	yes	yes	yes
Previous L1 instruction	no	Primary School	Secondary School Certificate	Polish embassy Certificate

Motivation to study heritage language

Language expertise/affiliation/inheritance (Leung, Harris & Rampton 1997)

Arabic 1: inheritance

    Not really interested in the language/languages

    needed to find out "where I came from"

Arabic 2: expertise/affiliation

    Interested in languages in general

    "Arabic is part of me, not something of the past"

German: expertise/affiliation

    "part of my comfort zone" and a general academic interest

Polish: expertise

    "I knew Polish grammar, history etc. but wanted a deeper knowledge"

Arabic program

Six months preparatory intensive course with a focus on grammar, Latin terminology and on introducing Standard Arabic, very little on language proficiency

After the prep. course: focus on content and reading (many texts in Danish or English)

Medium-of-instruction and exams: Danish (or English)

Arabic 1: "When I talked Arabic with my peer students, none of them understood it. They were used to watching videos produced by the teachers or from a TV-station in Standard Arabic"

Arabic 2:

"I think that they were quite happy about having us on the course, but they did not know how to grasp our needs. We learn differently"

Arabic 1:

"There was a certain resistance towards us"

[When I started] I felt really limited. I understood everything, but could not speak Standard Arabic and had to develop my written language"

"After I had cracked the code, I decided on a strategy of rote-learning. I played the parrot"

German: [For students of German in general] "language in practice is the problem, especially the spoken language"

"There is a tradition for a focus on accuracy, which means that many students dare not speak in class"

A background in Germany and a German schooling had provided both adequate language proficiency and metalanguage

Polish: "I felt welcome, but too bad they did not encourage us [who knew some Polish] to go to Poland for a study exchange
"I knew nothing about cases, grammar, terminology, metalanguage"

bas

Language proficiency and other areas

MLA: critical of the two-tier structure of programs

First basic language proficiency – then literature, history, media, no integration

The four students have experienced the same foci and structure

Within language, a strong focus on descriptive grammar with some phonetics

Basic language proficiency was either taken care of in the preparatory course, during exchange periods or taken for granted

Little focus on developing the academic repertoire in the language

Conclusion

In terms of demography, Nordic universities are already sites of multilingualism

Their language policies are still regulated by a balance between the national language(s) and English

And language discussions are dominated by a problem orientation

A more ressource oriented approach to diversity will bring about better learning opportunities, a more democratic and equity based organization and strengthen general language awareness