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Darquennes, Jeroen; du Plessis, Theo; Soler, Josep

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Jeroen Darquennes, Theo du Plessis and Josep Soler

Language diversity management in higher education – introductory notes

It is not the first time that *Sociolinguistica* devotes an issue to the topic of language use and language policy in educational settings. Volume 3 (published in 1989) was devoted to the use of dialects in school settings in Europe. Volume 7 (published in 1993) covered multilingual concepts in the schools of Europe. Volume 24 (published in 2010) tackled the topic of foreign languages in the schools of the European Union. The present volume expands the scenery in a number of ways. First of all, the focus is not on primary and secondary schools, but on higher education. Secondly, the case studies presented in this volume are not limited to Europe (with a focus on Austria, Belgium, Catalonia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Luxembourg), but also shed light on Asia (a case study on Westminster International University at Tashkent, Uzbekistan) and South Africa (with two contributions on the University of the Free State and one on the University of KwaZulu Natal). And thirdly, not all of the contributions deal with spoken languages. The present volume also contains a chapter on sign languages and, as such, clearly distinguishes itself from most of the previous issues of the series.

With its focus on language diversity management in institutions of higher education, *Sociolinguistica* 34 connects to an expanding field of research. The first chapter contains an overview of the broad topics that are dealt with in applied linguistics, sociolinguistics and educational linguistics, including language teaching (practices), language learning, the role of languages (especially English) in the marketization of higher education, bi- and multilingual universities, language ideologies in postcolonial settings, etc. Readers will notice that some of these topics are (either prominently or partially) reflected in the 11 thematic chapters of this volume. However, what sets the contributions apart from contributions in other volumes and what constitutes a leitmotif through a considerable part of the volume is the attention given to more practical aspects related to language diversity management in higher education.

Chapter 2 (written by Jeroen Darquennes, Theo du Plessis and Josep Soler) sets the scene. Rooted in contemporary literature on university language policies and the internationalization of higher education, it offers a comprehensive overview of the different levels, stakeholders, and contexts of language use in higher education. The overview is translated into an analytical framework that can serve as a guidepost for

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sociolinguists or applied linguists interested in language issues in higher education as well as on-the-ground university administrators actively engaged in language planning activities in their institutions. **Chapter 3** (written by Lorraine Leeson and Beppie van den Bogaerde) directly links up to Chapter 2, yet concentrates on the specificities that need to be catered for when reflecting on the practical management of language diversity including sign languages. The challenges and scenarios presented in this chapter can not only be of practical help to all those engaging in the institutionalisation of sign language use in higher education. The chapter also offers a research agenda on the management of sign languages in higher education.

A chapter that could also easily spark off a number of research projects is **Chapter 4** in which Josep Soler questions the existence of a north-south divide in European higher education, meaning that northern institutions of higher education in which English has made further incursions on universities would be more internationalised than southern ones where English would be present to a lesser extent. Concentrating on the Catalan and the Estonian contexts, Soler suggests to pay a lot more attention to local, regional and national language ecologies when comparatively analysing language policies of European universities. The influence of language ideologies and socio-economic realities on language choices made at universities are some of the key issues put forward in this chapter.

That the role of English as a global language is at centre stage when it comes to making language choices is not only clear from Soler's chapter. The ubiquitous role of English in higher education runs like a thread through the case studies on universities located in Europe, South Africa and Asia.

In **Chapter 5**, Wim Vandenbussche combines a detailed overview of the legal measures as they apply to higher education in Flanders with a rich analysis of data on actual linguistic practices in Flemish universities. The situation in Flanders is compared to that in the French-speaking part of Belgium, yet the focus is on the use of English as well as on mother tongue proficiency in the Dutch-speaking community of Belgium. The data presented by Vandenbussche show that the impact of English on higher education in Flanders remains rather limited (most certainly compared to the situation in The Netherlands). If social inclusion really is to become one of the characteristics of Flemish higher education, a much bigger challenge that presents itself to the Flemish educational landscape *at large* is to guarantee the quality of Dutch language proficiency (especially basic language skills and comprehensive reading skills) of *all* the students (i. e. those growing up in a monolingual Dutch home environment as well as those growing up with a different home language, possibly in a multilingual home setting). Investing in high-quality English language programmes (in higher education) and in a solid Dutch language proficiency (from primary school onwards) could help Flemish universities to continue to successfully position themselves in a globalised academic world while preserving the vitality of Dutch as an academic language.

The tension between the cultivation of a national language as an academic language used to educate local students and the use of English as an international lan-

guage that helps to attract (regular) students from abroad is also at the heart of language policies of universities in the Czech Republic. As explained by Tamah Sherman in **Chapter 6**, a government act stipulates that programmes accredited in English (or another foreign language) at Czech universities are not tuition-free. Using three examples, Sherman shows that, at university level, this act provokes a creative approach to finding an (economic) balance between the cultivation of a national language (Czech), providing Czech students tuition-free access to a global language, and attracting foreign students willing to pay a tuition-fee. The actual balance in each case very much depends on the way in which the interest groups that control language policy decisions approach the Czech language – using Ruiz' (1984) terminology – as a right (meaning that local students should above all other things have the right to learn in their own language), as a resource (meaning that Czech is to be cultivated also as a high prestige language of science that can also serve as a lingua franca in education in the Czech Republic), and/or as a problem (given that the exclusive use of Czech would be a barrier to internationalization).

While chapters 4, 5 and 6 already illustrate that English plays a key role in the marketization of universities as global players, that becomes even more apparent in **Chapter 7** that is devoted to the trilingual (English-French-German) University of Luxembourg. In this chapter, Melanie Wagner takes us on a tour through the university, a tour that highlights the asymmetrical use of the three languages at the level of the teaching programmes, research, university administration and external communication. Wagner's contribution not only shows that the contents of a programme, certain disciplines, or domains within disciplines influence language choices at a (multilingual) university. It also makes clear that the position of Luxembourgish as the national language of the Grand Duchy is underdeveloped at the university (something that is in contrast with the status-upgrade that Luxembourgish over the past decades experienced in society) and that hardly any attention seems to be paid to the linguistic repertoire of the many immigrants that colour Luxembourgish society and for whom French, German or English are not likely to be one of their home languages.

The invisibilisation of home languages in higher education is at the heart of **Chapter 8** in which Monika Dannerer, using Spolsky's (2009) framework, sheds light at three components of the language policy at the University of Salzburg, namely language practices, language beliefs and language management. The three components are analysed in relation to different stakeholders (university administrators, academic staff, administrative staff, and students) and to groups for whom German has a status as first, second or foreign language. Against the background of a wealth of empirical data, Dannerer approaches the tension between English (as a lingua franca) and German (as Austria's national language), on the one hand, and German (as the national majority language in Austria) and other L1s (used as home languages by recent or relatively recent immigrants), on the other, not only from a language policy perspective but also from the point of view of conflict linguistics. Her contribu-

tion is thus also to be seen as a welcome contribution to literature focusing on 'institutional language conflict', a field of research that is still in its infancy (Darquennes 2015).

Language conflict is a topic that also shimmers through in **Chapter 9** in which Sana Jeewa and Stephanie Rudwick describe the position of Bantu languages at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN). UKZN's actual language policy aims at raising the institutional and academic status of Zulu to a status comparable to that of English. As part of the strategy to achieve that highly ambitious goal, UKZN implemented a mandatory Zulu language module. All graduate students who are not able to prove knowledge of Zulu have to pass the module. That is the case for most (if not all) of the South African Indian students who attend UKZN. Jeewa and Rudwick's chapter provides us with empirical information on South African Indian students' attitudes to Zulu, in general, and the module offered at UKZN, in particular. The mandatory module does not lead to changes in the linguistic behaviour of South African Indian students. Once they pass the module, the mastery of Zulu as a (potential) component of their linguistic repertoire that could help them to boost the status and the prestige of Zulu (as the most important home language in KwaZulu Natal) is neglected. In order to elevate the status of Zulu, a much broader approach aimed at promoting Zulu in as well as outside of the university would be needed. This chapter convincingly illustrates the importance of concerted efforts of different types of actors and agencies in the development, implementation, and evaluation of language policy at university level.

The role of language planning agencies (LPAs) in higher education in South Africa is at the heart of **Chapter 10**. Making a distinction between regulatory, productive and promotional language planning functions, Theo du Plessis analyses the role of LPAs involved in these functions in relation to (1) the institutionalisation of Afrikaans as alternative language of higher education during the period 1910–1961, and (2) post-1994 initiatives regarding the elevation of the Bantu languages (more specifically the Southern African Bantu or Sintu languages) and the extension of their use in higher education. The well-contextualised and detailed reconstruction of both cases gives rise to an appraisal of LPAs. The bottom-line in the South African context is that interaction between a variety of LPAs is needed in order for a language policy in higher education to succeed, whereby one should not overestimate the role of LPAs with a regulative function and a productive function, and most certainly not underestimate the role of LPAs with a promotional function. To put it more bluntly: *de jure* claiming to be promoting the elevation of the status of the Sintu languages and the extension of their use will amount to nothing if it is flanked by *de facto* promoting access to higher education through English as the dominant language. Creating not just a symbolic status equilibrium between English and the other official languages is but one of the language challenges with which the Rainbow Nation is confronted. Another major challenge is related to the underdeveloped (English) literacy skills of the freshmen who massively find their way to South African universities.

In **Chapter 11**, Colleen du Plessis discusses the massification and diversification in South African tertiary language education to the example of the Bachelor in Education at the University of the Free State. Massification is a big issue in South Africa because universities are meant to contribute to creating a socially inclusive society and have to offer generic one-year English courses in order to compensate for the inferior standard of basic education. Using sophisticated statistical tools to analyse the results of a large-scale English test, Colleen du Plessis' chapter offers illuminating data on language proficiency in general as well as on English proficiency of undergraduate BEd students before and after completion of the one-year English course. The chapter can be read as a plea for universities and policy makers in South Africa to be much more attentive to the complex sociolinguistic realities in which the students grow up and, as a consequence, to the financial and human resources that are needed if higher education indeed is supposed to successfully contribute to social inclusion and the further democratization of society.

Taking the sociolinguistic reality outside of university into account is precisely something that Andrew Linn and his collaborators did when they engaged in carefully developing a language policy for Westminster International University at Tashkent (WIUT), a private institution founded in 2002 in partnership with the University of Westminster (London, UK). In **Chapter 12,** Andrew Linn, Anastasiya Bezborodova and Saida Radjabzade present the findings of a questionnaire survey and interviews that formed the basis of WIUT's language policy that is based on the principles of pragmatism and tolerance. Linn reports that working on WIUT's language policy has been "a rare opportunity to work on language policy in a little-studied context, from its genesis, through the background research, its formulation and finally to see its reception and the initial approach to its implementation". He adds that the chapter is to be read as "a report by a researcher of language planning and policy on his team's experience of language policy development (and challenges for implementation) in a multilingual and little studied national context".

In fact, most of the contributions in this volume have been written by scholars who were or are either actively involved in language policy and/or internationalization activities at university level and whose experiences most certainly colour the way in which they tackle questions related to language diversity management. That became clear during the two international workshops that were organised at the University of Namur (Belgium) in preparation of this volume. Those workshops allowed the great majority of the authors (only Anastasiya Bezborodova, Saida Radjabzade and Beppie van den Bogaerde weren't able to join us) to discuss the preliminary versions of their papers before those papers circulated for a mix of open and blind double peer review. We opted for such a mix because especially the open peer review process gave us the opportunity to collaboratively augment the quality of the chapters. We hope that the volume will contribute in a positive way to further research addressing some of the new questions that have arisen from the contributions in this volume. We trust that the analytical framework presented in chapter 2 will be helpful in this regard and we

would welcome further discussions on its theoretical adequacy in understanding the complex world of managing languages in higher education, particularly in a post-COVID-19 era.

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