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Multilingualism as problem or resource?

Negotiating space for languages other than Swedish and English in university language planning

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Multilingualism as problem or resource? Negotiating space for languages other than Swedish and English in university language planning

In the Nordic countries, university language policy and planning (LPP) centers on balancing the use of the national language(s) vis-à-vis English (Gregersen, 2014), conceptualized as parallel-language use (Josephson, 2005; Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012). The strong presence of English leads to tension between language dominance and language diversity (Liyanage, 2018), and LPP research has paid less attention to diversity/multilingualism than to parallel-language use in the Nordic context. In the present study, we address this research gap by focusing on how space was negotiated in real time for languages other than Swedish and English during language-policy negotiations by a committee while they were drafting a language-policy document at a Swedish university. Using an ethnographic discourse analytic approach (Barakos & Unger, 2016; Hult, 2015) and applying Ruiz's (1984) orientations to language framework, we analyse transcribed audio-recorded language-policy committee meetings, textual data used in the meetings and ethnographic notes taken during meetings. Analysis reveals what languages were brought in to the negotiations to play a role in the University's language practices, and by whose agency they were brought in. The analysis further reveals that different languages were variously positioned as problem or resource, and that the problem and resource orientations were co-present in the policy negotiations.

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