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Receptive multilingualism in participatory bodies at Dutch universities

Abstract:

When Dutch is the main administrative language at universities, internationals may be excluded in participatory bodies (*medezeggenschapsorganen*). When English is chosen, Dutch members with lower English proficiency are excluded. Instead of monolingualism or additive multilingualism, universities can benefit from inclusive multilingualism (Backus et al., 2013). Inclusive multilingualism integrates strategies such as lingua receptiva (receptive multilingualism), English as a lingua franca, code-switching, or translation/interpretation (Backus et al., 2013; ten Thije, 2019) and encourages interlocutors to help each other understand. Utrecht University's project Multilingualism and Participation (*Meertaligheid en Medezeggenschap* or M&M) produced a choice model that enables councils to select communicative modes based on linguistic repertoires (Groothoff et al., 2022). Lingua receptiva combined with translation/interpretation proved to be effective for the University Council, as internationals could participate immediately by hearing Dutch and speaking English. Tools and services were developed to facilitate multilingual communication, including a course in which internationals improve receptive Dutch proficiencies (listening, reading) and gain institutional knowledge to make participation more effective (Groothoff et al., 2022).

The current CoRe project (de Graaff & ten Thije, 2022) expands upon M&M and explores a communicative receptive approach to language learning and use. This presentation will discuss results from the sub-project on multilingual meeting discourse. Ehlich and Rehbein's (1986) Knowledge Model of Functional Pragmatics is used to reconstruct speech actions between interlocutors who hear one language and speak another. Results illustrate how the inclusiveness of the choice model is constrained by meeting structure. Tensions are visible when considering the chairperson, who influences language use by upholding language policy, appointing speakers, and checking understanding (Morwood, 2021) as a bystander (Bührig & ten Thije, 2023). Adding a multilingual dimension to institutional and intercultural

discourse frameworks (Koole & ten Thije, 1994), this sub-project shows how language diversity is managed in multilingual academic settings.

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