

Are 'diversity management' and monolingualism compatible? About learning and using foreign languages in a context of globalisation

Sind 'diversity management' und Einsprachigkeit kompatibel? Vom Fremdsprachenlernen und -gebrauch unter dem Einfluss der Globalisierung

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Ideologies and communication practices vary hugely in multilingual workplaces. On the one hand, many companies include Diversity Management in their corporate culture because there are theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that a company which employs a diverse workforce enhances its opportunities in a global marketplace whilst improving employee satisfaction and thus productivity. On the other hand, globally oriented companies, often the same ones, choose English preferentially as their corporate language as it has become widely accepted that this is the language of international business. Thus, diversity in general (i.e. cultural diversity) and linguistic diversity are dissociated.

In the framework of the European research project DYLAN (<http://dylan-project.org>), which is concerned with language dynamics and the management of diversity, we have gathered a vast corpus of semi-directive interviews and official documents in order to understand the measures adopted by companies as regards language management (recruitment and promotion policies, language teaching, norms for internal and external communication, etc.). In addition, we have analysed the language practice in these companies by recording a set of dyadic and polyadic interactions in meetings, at the workplace, in coffee breaks, etc. in order to compare the practice with the companies' corporate culture.

There were, indeed, many interactions in (often approximate) English but there were also others illustrating a variety of alternative monolingual (local languages) or multilingual strategies (such as variable language choice, receptive multilingualism and multilingual speech). More surprisingly, leaders of Swiss-based global companies in the pharmaceutical industry and agribusiness not only accept what one of them called *euses Chuderwälsch-Esperanto* [our gibberish Esperanto], but start realising that LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY (e.g. the use of up to ninety languages not only for external, but also for internal communication) can be an asset for including employees across the world in an emotional way, for facilitating the construction of new knowledge, and for promoting creativity and innovation through improving cognitive

diversity. Thus, strategies promoting linguistic diversity and the choice of English as corporate language coexist in the same companies.

What are the implications of all these developments for European educational language policies? It seems plausible that, at least in some cases, monolingual individuals and companies operating on a monolingual basis face disadvantages in a global marketplace. If we accept the premise that the educational systems' mission is to prepare young people for the working world, one of the major challenges is to equip them with multilingual repertoires as a prerequisite for succeeding in a world characterised by growing mobility and a massive increase in multilingualism. On the one hand, this means learning and/or teaching other languages in addition to English. On the other, the stakeholders will have to revise their conception of multilingual competences and move away from 'additionist' views (a multilingual competence is not equal to several monolingual competences) towards the kind of repertoires which are partially shared and perceived by the participants as resources to be used according to the situation, i.e. in a 'situated way'. Thus, the main challenge for foreign language teachers is to coach learners in learning ONE particular language and allow them, at the same time, to conceive of all of their languages combined as a tool kit to be used in pluriglossic environments.

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