

Language in Societies

Language policy in a monolingual society: A self-contradiction or the reality?

Multilingualism and plurilingualism at Danish universities equal to English: What about Danish and the other languages?

The European Union recognise the importance of acquisition of foreign language competencies and intercultural knowledge. In 2003, a new Danish University Law was introduced with the strengthening of the internationalisation as one of the main purposes. Since then things have changed more rapidly than expected at Danish Universities. A massive transition to English as language of instruction has taken place in many study programmes. The English studies attract large amounts of students while foreign languages as German and French are suffering from loss of students and money.

In scientific literature English also has taken over as most Danish researchers have to present their results in English with the subsequent loss of terminology in Danish. The Danish Government has recommended that Danish, in order not to loose domain, should be used side by side with English. The universities have to preserve Danish as language of instruction, but English as medium of instruction is equal to internationalisation, foreign students and money.

Most Danish universities present themselves as “international” universities, others see themselves as multilingual, but many of them are only universities teaching in English. According to official recommendations they have to formulate a language policy.

In this paper I will discuss the complexity of problems concerning the language policies of the Danish international, multilingual or plurilingual universities.