

Bi- and Multilingual Universities  
Helsinki 1-3 September 2005

Abstract

**Squaring the pyramid: internationalization, plurilingualism, and the university**

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Universities are by definition arguably concerned with seeking and extending knowledge across national and linguistic boundaries. The concept of the university after all predates the concept of the nation-state. University education may well imply acquiring competences to extract knowledge from sources in other languages or convey knowledge and skills to speakers of other languages. To this extent universities are internationalized. However, for reasons such as economic development, globalization, demographics, universities are embarking on a new phase in internationalization, one which increasingly involves recruiting students and staff from across the world.

An internationalizing university today will often establish a policy that overtly or covertly implies English-medium education, while at the same time expressing public support for language development. Yet in practice this may not amount to bilingual or multilingual education. In this paper we compare the practices of internationalization with respect to language in two faculties at Maastricht University, economics and health sciences. We relate these practices to findings from surveys of graduates, which suggest that the graduates' perceived competence in foreign languages exceeds the foreign language requirements of the jobs they are doing.

We conclude that the policy of internationalization as practised at Maastricht University implies education through English, that internationalization may mean multilingualism at institutional level but not at the individual level, and that the additional languages that students do acquire are largely acquired outside the educational programmes the students are studying.

233 words