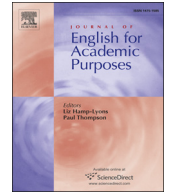




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Parallel language use in academic and outreach publication: A case study of policy and practice



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A B S T R A C T

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Parallel language use has been accepted as the guiding principle for university language policy writers in the Nordic region. However, the extent to which parallel language use reflects the actual publication practices of academics is yet to be established. This study begins to address the gap by investigating the languages used for academic and outreach publication in three departments at a major Swedish university. Questionnaire and database trawl results reveal that English, Swedish and other languages are used for academic and outreach publication, although Swedish dominates in the outreach domain. Furthermore, results derived from semi-structured interviews with 15 informants suggest that language practices are primarily determined by pragmatic forces such as intended audience, publication outlet, topic and genre, rather than by ideological or language-political factors.

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1. Introduction

The status of English as an international language of academia is now uncontested (e.g., [Ferguson, 2007](#); [Hoffman, 2000](#); [Petersen & Shaw, 2002](#)). Indeed, the push for scholars across disciplines to publish articles in international and primarily English-language, high impact journals has not relented, despite the socio-political and linguistic concerns over domain loss, competence attrition, diglossia, and perceived disadvantages faced by non-native English speakers (e.g., [Bennett, 2007](#); [Curry & Lillis, 2004](#); [Ferguson, Pérez-Llantada, & Plo, 2011](#); [Flowerdew, 2008](#); [Giannoni, 2008](#); [Gunnarsson, 2000](#); [Pennycook, 2000](#); [Phillipson, 2009](#)).

The counterpoint to this focus on the transnational nature of English-language academic knowledge dissemination, and subsequent decline in local-language publication outlets, is the local demand for accountability through outreach publication, and academic visibility through the medium of local languages. The implications of these demands have gained less attention, but are no less current in view of recent language-regulatory steps taken by national and supranational bodies. For example, in the Nordic region, the Declaration on a Nordic Language Policy ([Nordic Council of Ministers, 2007](#)) establishes *parallel language use* as the principle for language management at the tertiary level (e.g., [Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012](#); [Kuteeva, 2011](#); [Kuteeva & Airey, in press](#)), and has formed the basis of university language policies in the region ([Ferguson, 2012](#)). The policy states that knowledge dissemination in local languages is to be promoted, and that universities are to develop and implement strategies which facilitate multilingual practices and enable language choice. The vision is a complex multilingual scenario, in which scholars theoretically function both within transnational English-medium and national local-language academic discourse communities, while at the same time disseminating findings to a lay-oriented audience in local languages.

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However, for a language policy to be viable, it must be “congruent with the observable sociolinguistic reality” (Lindström, 2012: 51). Thus, there is a need for research into academics’ “reality” when it comes to the relationship between English and local languages in their publication practices. Uzuner (2008) reviews investigations into scholars’ participation in global academic communities, and highlights the need for more case-studies. Much of the canon pertains to China and post-colonial environments (e.g., Flowerdew, 2000; Liu, 2004), central and Eastern European contexts (e.g., Curry & Lillis, 2004; Duszak & Lewkowicz, 2008), and Southern Europe (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Ferguson et al., 2011). Within the Scandinavian context, Petersen and Shaw (2002) provide a rich analysis, exploring the relations between local and transnational disciplinary communities, and argue that the nature of the discourse community impacts language choice, while Kuteeva and Airey (in press) found disciplinary knowledge-making practices to be influential. Ferguson (2007, p. 17) also views disciplinary factors as a driving force; in disciplines whose objects of study are local-culturally driven such as Law, language practice is described as “academic bilingualism”, with English becoming increasingly significant as a language of scholarly enterprise (Berg, Hult, & King, 2001).

A common thread is that academics are assigned an agentive role in determining their publication practices, both in terms of language and genre choice, shaped “by social actions, practices, ideologies and the resources available to those who wish to publish” Duszak and Lewkowicz (2008, p. 108). However, with the exception of Anderson (2013), there appears to be little up-to-date empirical research into the interaction between language policy, language choice and actual publication practices.

Thus, the interplay between language intervention strategies as they are experienced “at the grass-roots level” (Lindström, 2012) and scholars’ knowledge dissemination practices needs further research, particularly as much of the current discussion is opinion-based (e.g., Phillipson, 2009; Preisler, 2009). Given that parallel language policy has been described as “a test case for language planning” in tertiary education (Ferguson, 2007, p. 32), the Swedish context constitutes a timely focus. The aim of the present study is to explore to what extent parallel language use is an ideological goal or a professional reality for academics working in three departments in the Humanities faculty at a major Swedish university. While it is generally accepted that the language of academic publication in the natural and exact sciences is English, less is known about the humanities. History, Anthropology and General Linguistics were chosen as these disciplines constitute a relatively broad spread in terms of epistemologies, research methodologies, and target discourse communities. In addition, while History is firmly rooted in the humanities, Anthropology and General Linguistics straddle the disciplinary boundary with the social sciences. More specifically, my research questions are as follows:

- 1) Which genres and languages have informants used to disseminate findings in the period 2007–2012?
- 2) What factors drive this practice?
- 3) To what extent does the policy of parallel language use reflect practice?

The article is organized as follows: I begin by providing a brief introduction to the sociolinguistic landscape in Sweden. Following the methodology section, the results of a genre and language questionnaire and database trawl are presented and discussed in light of interview data. The findings are then placed within the wider debate of university language management, and implications for EAP are discussed.

2. The Swedish scenario: a very brief overview

English has been used as a language of scholarly publication in Sweden since the 1950s (Kuteeva, 2011), and is now clearly dominant in the natural and exact sciences. However, the extent to which English has made inroads into the humanities and social sciences is less clear. For example, a recent study has shown that in 2009, on the graduate level, 94% of theses in the natural sciences were published in English, compared to 65% in the social sciences and 37% in the humanities (Salö, 2010). But this data only provides a partial picture as it does not report publication patterns for professional-level academic and outreach genres.

In terms of language attitudes, Olsson and Sheridan (2012) surveyed 35 academics by questionnaire at a Swedish university to explore their views on how English may affect the viability of Swedish as an academic language across disciplines. Despite the authors’ approach being rooted in a tradition which emphasizes the potential “threat” English poses for national languages (see e.g., Phillipson, 2009; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996), their informants were generally positive about the use of English in their professional lives. Kuteeva and McGrath (in press) also report that academic English does not pose a significant challenge for majority of their informants.

Concerns have been raised by some sociolinguists about the potential detrimental effects of English hegemony in academia on the Swedish language (e.g., Gunnarsson, 2000; Teleman & Westman, 1997), although more recent research suggests that concerns over issues such as domain loss (a problematic concept in itself, and subject to different interpretations) may be unwarranted (Ferguson, 2007; Preisler, 2009).

From an ideological perspective, internationalization of the academy has largely been embraced; Sweden is reported as having high levels of international academic involvement (El-Khawas, 2002), with non-nationals representing a significant proportion of the faculty (Marimon, Lietaert, & Grigolo, 2009) and Swedish scholars having high-level English-language skills (Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012; Olsson & Sheridan, 2012). Thus, parallel language policy in Sweden can be viewed as a language-political attempt to navigate the space between the promotion of international academic involvement, and the possible

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