



RT 1.5 UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN DENMARK LANGUAGE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES IN THE CORPORATE SECTOR IN DENMARK : MOTIVATIONS AND REPRESENTATION

This paper considers the articulations of language policies and strategies and their organizational motivations in the Danish corporate sector. This focus allows us to investigate the degree to which multilingualism is (or is not) institutionalized in the Danish business context and to analyze the rationalities underpinning such multilingualism. The theoretical framework draws primarily on social representations theory and critical discourse analysis, in the form of a critical engagement with Moscovici's work on social representations. The data consists of primarily written materials of various textual genres: language policies and guides of three, large companies as well as documents (brochures, articles in professional magazines) produced by actors at the national level, namely the Confederation of Danish Industry and the Association of Communication and Language. These are supplemented with interview data taken from a case-study from a previous project. The analyses suggest that language policies rely on three major arguments: the need for organizational efficiency achieved by means of a common language (i.e. English); the need for diversity, both from the perspective of Danish and foreign languages other than English; the need for quality in communication and image. A further related issue is that of the relationship between culture and language. A number of possible, sometimes disputed, social representations are in evidence in relation to multilingualism, language and languages, for instance multilingualism as a barrier, or as a bridge or as an organizational (rather than individual) resource; 'good' language as a carrier of values; Danish as a threatened language; English as the only language needed. What is clear is that ideas about multilingualism relate to local purposes and strategies. The Confederation of Danish Industry, for instance, seems particularly engaged in promoting multilingualism without undermining the status of English in Denmark, particularly in relation to Danish. Hence, not only is the actual term 'multilingualism' beginning to emerge, if only sporadically, in their discourse, but it is identified with the use of English as a corporate language, a practice often viewed as a threat to multilingualism. Future work will focus on collecting interview data from managerial and non-managerial staff across a number of Danish companies to further explore these and other issues (including the transversal issues of efficiency and fairness).