THE ENGLISH-MEDIUM ENGINEERING CLASSROOM: SPACES OF MULTILINGUALISM AND INDIVIDUAL REPERTOIRES

Stef Slembrouck & Alexander De Soete– 22 May 2024
SPACES VS PEOPLE

— Traditional view: language community = a people-focused concept, in which the language user can be bilingual/multilingual
— “Spaces of multilingualism” = a shift of attention to the ways in which languages and language repertoires are tied to their use (or not) in particular spaces as part the activities that unfold in them

“A change in spatial environment clearly affects our capacity to deploy linguistic resources and skills and imposes requirements on us which we may fail to meet – a quite common globalization experience which we accept as a sociolinguistic problem.”

“Spaces of multilingualism”, Language and Communication, 2005, p. 197
POLYCENTRICITY

— A globalisation-affected perspective on the distribution of languages within a space.
— An increasing disjuncture in spatial distributions of Ls, i.e. units of language are no longer straightforwardly tied to a community's presence (dominant or diasporic)
— A center has a language regime
  1. Likelihood of languages used
  2. (Normative) expectations that (a) certain language(s) will or can be used
  3. Value of a language in terms of its importance, officialdom, having street currency, on/off-the-record use, etc.

“Understanding multilingualism ... requires an understanding of the connections between different centers and their orders” ... and “... semiotizable practices in spaces ...”

“Polycentricity and interactional regimes in global neighborhoods”, In: Ethnography, 2005, p. 207
POLYCENTRICITY CTD.

— Centers are "scaled" entities, incl. they are networked, in scalar ways
— Centers process people, who may frequent different centres with diverging language regimes within a single geographical area
— Centers “scan” and “serve” populations of users
— Centers exert a normative influence on populations of users
SPACE, FRAME AND ALIGNMENT

– Goffman’s notion of frame connects spaces with people by being activity-focused
– Frame is both a socio-cognitive and action-dependent concept
– Frame = an enacted spatial configuration

Goffman, 1974; Bourdieu, 1977
Empirically focus on the dynamics of shifting alignments within an activity-specific frame, so as to bring together spatialised distributions (cf. “expectations”) and person-based repertoires as manifest in frame-relevant behaviour (cf. “enacted alignments”)

This enables an enacted perspective on “policy”, such as has been developed and advocated by Michael Lipsky’s notion of the “street level bureaucrat”

Note the “in-between” perspective that is thus being adopted, as preferred in interactional sociolinguistics
STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY IN THE EMI CLASSROOM

— Street-level bureaucracy

○ From study of public policy/administration
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  o Public service worker: intermediate position (policy & citizens)
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Brodkin, 2012, p. 941
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— Street-level bureaucracy

- From study of public policy/administration
- Public service worker: intermediate position (policy & citizens)
- Operate with relative discretion
- “Discretionary actions” become policy
- Never a matter of “just” implementation, but also policy production
Institutional language policy

Classroom Practice

Implementation
Negotiation
Transformation

De Soete & Slembrouck, 2023
CONTEXT: INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

— Flemish Higher Education Institution
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— Dutch-medium instruction = norm
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— EMI courses and programs (with restrictions)
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— Flemish Higher Education Institution
— Dutch-medium instruction = norm
— EMI courses and programs (with restrictions)
— Multilingual communicative competence
— “Separate monolingualisms”
DATA EXCERPT: CONTEXT

— English-medium industrial design engineering course
- **English-medium industrial design engineering course**
- **Seasoned EMI lecturer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>COURSES</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>EMI EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>C1 CERTIFICATION</th>
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<td>BIO 1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Coordinating teacher</td>
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<td>Supporting teacher, coach</td>
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<td>Professor</td>
<td>Coordinating teacher, coach</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>ITACE</td>
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<td>DESIGN 1</td>
<td>Professor</td>
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<td>9 years</td>
<td>ITACE</td>
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<td>Design engineering lecturer 2</td>
<td>DESIGN 1</td>
<td>Professor</td>
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<td>12 years</td>
<td>IELTS</td>
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<td>DESIGN 1</td>
<td>PhD student</td>
<td>Supporting teacher, coach</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>None</td>
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</table>
DATA EXCERPT: CONTEXT

— English-medium industrial design engineering course
— Seasoned EMI lecturer
— Audience: domestic + international students
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- Set the scene for and manage translanguaging practices
- Open in terms of initiation, closed in terms of supervision
- Lecturer = local EMI policy maker
CONCLUSION

— Negotiation = a decision-making process:

- Expectations of place & activity (cf. multilingualism)
- Individual repertoires of interactants (cf. plurilingualism)
REFERENCES

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