**How do you manage multilingualism (Dutch and English) at the MA level?**

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**Through bi-weekly posts, MA staff participating in the USO-project on internationalisation will share concrete teaching tools and activities through which we aim to enhance ‘tailor-made’ internationalisation.**

**This week: International classroom: lessons learned from the MA in Intercultural Communication**

**Multilingualism and language policy in the MA**

**In the academic year 2016-2017, the MA in Intercultural Communication (HUM) welcomed nine international students for the first time. These nine students made up about 16 percent of our total enrolment.**

**The one-year Master’s programme in Intercultural Communication has a characteristic two-part structure. All students take the general introductory courses together, but they must also choose a language track out of the seven the programme offers (German, Spanish, English, Dutch, Italian, French and Multilingual) and take courses in that language.** **The motto of the ICC MA is ‘Diversity is our core business’. With respect to the MA motto, the arrival of international students provided an opportunity to develop a language policy to facilitate teaching and working in Dutch as well as in English. Its main aim was facilitating the experience of multilingualism. This policy was applied to the general introduction courses** (two separate, but combined, courses with overlapping course goals and assessments requiring intensive collaboration between four lecturers )**.**

**The rationale of this policy is clear: The job market for our students is abroad as well as in the Netherlands. Therefore, it is important that Dutch students also develop intercultural competencies in Dutch. At the same time, all students have to learn terminology and intercultural capacities in English. In actual fact, all students have to experience and cope with multilingual situations. They have to learn that successful communication in an international setting is based on the use and understanding of multiple languages at the same time. This rationale and these purposes have been supported and put forward by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) recently in the publication** [*Nederlands en/of Engels? taalkeuze met beleid in het nederlands hoger onderwijs*](https://www.knaw.nl/en/news/publications/nederlands-en-of-engels) **(Amsterdam, 2017).**

**Language policy implementation**

**To implement the language policy in the general introductory courses in the MA in Intercultural Communication, the lectures were given in English and the tutorials were given in either Dutch or in English. However, any language was allowed to be used by the students (e.g. when asking questions) if translated into another language (or languages) that everyone present could understand. The group assignments could be handed in in either Dutch or English. Students were supposed to agree in advance on which language they would use in their team assignments. The individual final exam could be taken in either Dutch or English.  
 With regard to assessment, the grading rubrics included attention to grammar and style of the chosen language both in the assessment of oral presentations and of written products. The assessment with respect to content was the same for everyone regardless of the language of submission. These elements of the language policy were, we thought, well communicated to the students at the beginning of the programme.**

**Diversity in tutorial groups**

**The organisation of the course resembled the before mentioned motto “Diversity is our core business”. That meant that at the beginning of the year the MA coordinator divided the students among the three tutorial groups according to their chosen language track, BA degree, linguistic skills and experience. An important criteria for this division was to represent disciplinary, linguistic and cultural variation in each of the tutorial groups.**

**The teaching staff consisted of four lecturers, one American English and three Dutch speakers. The English-speaking lecturer supervised two ‘English tutorial groups’ whereas the Dutch tutorial group was supervised by a Dutch speaking lecturer. The course manuals were in Dutch and English. Blackboard was only in English. The faculty made a budget available for all translations. The complete text of the language policy from the course manual you can find here.**

**Evaluation**

**Although the preparation was time consuming because of fine tuning and weekly preparatory meetings, the actual implementation was fun. Students were stimulated to work together in diverse teams and had to negotiate their own language policy for their teams. Terminological issues and the consequences of the application of different academic writing conventions popped up regularly as time went on. Students had to switch perspectives on a regular basis between cultural and linguistic issues. Moreover, students experienced some instances of Lingua Receptiva (Dutch notion: ‘luistertaal’) in which students speak different languages to each other and still understand each other. This pilot has shown, that the international classroom could indeed be analysed as an illustration of a cultural and linguistically diverse workplace in itself.**

**These successes, however, do not mean that everything went perfectly. The students evaluated the transparency and efficiency of the language policy with an 2.9 and 2.8 (on a scale 1-5) respectively in Caracal evaluation. It was proposed that more attention should be paid to the explanation of this policy at the beginning in order to avoid confusion and stress. Some of the students desired more lectures by English native speakers. One of the native English students also reflected upon norm setting. She wrote: ”Being a native speaker in a diverse group of students, it was interesting to see how other students might rely on me for proof reading and my feelings about that (positive and generous).”Apparently, the position of native English speaking students needs special attention in the international classroom. They should be made aware of different linguistic norms and how they can be maintained.**

**Future developments**

**The maintenance of native speaker norms for assessing and grading international and national students is a recurrent issue in the debate on internationalisation. In fact, it is important to consider whether we need to develop two grading sets for assessing students’ work in English: next to the English native speaker norms, an elaborated norm set for English as Lingua Franca should be available. At the Faculty of Humanities a special Committee is working to address this challenge. With regard to the future development of multilingual language policies, it is also important to consider the Dutch proficiency of international students and teachers. In fact, the KNAW report (2017) includes the urgent advice to pay more attention to the need for training in Dutch language proficiency for international students and teachers. Command of Dutch facilitates their integration into Dutch society, as many of students would like to remain in and contribute to the Dutch society, economy and faculty.**

**At the moment the MA in Intercultural Communication does not aim at providing Dutch proficiency for international students, but it would be good to consider the reciprocal requirements for a Dutch and English language policy in the future. It would be reasonable to teach international students receptive proficiencies in Dutch, so that could understand Dutch in a *lingua receptiva mode*. As a consequence they could participate better in the multilingual classes and find an internship in Dutch society more easily . As many international students stay after their master in the Netherlands, this would improve their opportunities to integrate in Dutch society as well.**

**Attachment: Language policy in courses ‘Communication, Diversity and Organisation’ and “Research Methods Intercultural Communication’ 2016-2017.**

**Learning to cope with linguistic diversity and multilingualism is an important objective of the Master's programme in Intercultural Communication. Therefore, for both Research Training and Communication, Diversity and Organisation, we have set up a language policy that takes into account the linguistic skills of students and professors and which in addition makes efficient communication possible between all people involved. This means that the official language can vary by course meeting. The following details apply:**

1. **The lectures for the CDO course as well as the RT course, will be given in English. Nevertheless, students may ask questions in Dutch or any of the other languages in the programme tracks as long as the professor and/or the other students can translate the question into English.**
2. **For tutorial groups 1 and 3 the following understandings apply:**

* **The official language in the tutorials is English, but questions may be asked in Dutch or any of the other languages in the programme tracks as long as the professor and/or the other students can translate the question into English.**
* **The assignments for both courses, CDO and RT, may be handed in either in Dutch or in English. However, you will have to decide this beforehand together with your team. Within each assignment you must stick to one chosen language (See paragraph 7 for the explanation of the assignments).**
* **Thus, a team’s portfolio may contain assignments in English as well as in Dutch.**
* **The recommendations you write for the chosen organisation, have to be written in the language that the organisation understands.**
* **Each team should choose one language for the justification of the task division for the execution of each of the assignments. For the individual reflections, you may individually choose Dutch or English.**
* **You have the choice to take the CDO exam in either English or Dutch.**

1. **Tutorial group 2: The tutorials will be given in Dutch. The official language is Dutch and both the assignments and the CDO exam will be given in Dutch.**
2. **Attention will be paid to grammar and style of the chosen language (Dutch or English) in the assessment of written products for the course.**
3. **The assessment with respect to content, will be the same for everyone regardless of the language of submission.**