



**Negotiated exclusion - on the constitution of *otherness*
in a multilingual work setting**

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The custom of assigning to each individual, each territory, and each communication process “its proper language” is grounded in the premise that linguistic homogeneity is the optimal basis for a thriving individual, a prospering territory, and a well-functioning process of communication. However, this premise is scientifically untenable and should be taken seriously only as a political maxim. As such, it has brought great harm to mankind.

(Roland Posner 1991:128)

This working paper explores the different ways through which members’ language competencies are indexed as *other-than-the norm*, suggesting that this otherness in fact works as a process of implicit exclusion within particular communities of practice. We will address language policy in the transnational workplace at three levels: language policy as institutionally endorsed regulations, language policy at the level of ideology and belief, and finally language policy as instantiated in practice. Our research interest is in diversity in the workplace, more specifically language diversity and its consequences with respect to categorization, inclusion and exclusion. We have for the last three years worked in the CALPIU (Cultural and Linguistic Practices in the International University). The international university is a workplace that is characterized by transnational staff and student mobility – both short-term and long-term mobility (for a critical view of university internationalization see Mortensen, Haberland and Fabricius 2012). Extending this line of investigation, we have recently embarked on another project, also funded by the Danish Research Council (FKK), titled LINGCORP (Language and Interaction in the globalized corporation).¹ The data we are presenting here are taken from our CALPIU research, but they can serve to illustrate the issues we have started to investigate in our new research context as well.

Conceptualizations of language policy

With workplace settings having increasingly come to be characterized by communities of transnationally mobile staff and clientele, parties are required to navigate dynamically fluctuating participation frameworks and their contingent language scenarios (Mortensen, 2010). Although some interactional settings have institutionally implemented policies concerning which language is the designated medium-of-interaction, this is not necessarily implemented across all settings within an organization. Language policy may be drawn up to address the internationalized make-up of a particular institutional setting, be it for example a company, an organization or a particular programme within an organization. However, these policy documents may not be shared with all parties within the related community. For example, in the case of an institution for higher education with an international profile, students, cleaning staff, canteen employees, language teachers and administrators may each have a different level of access or lines of communication pertaining to the community’s stated language policy. In addition, individual members may also maintain their own ideological

¹ Both projects were and are based at Roskilde University. CALPIU (Cultural and Linguistic Practices in the International University) also included research partners at a number of other universities, notably in Hong Kong, Osaka and Canberra, while Lingcorp (An Ethnography of language encounters: Language and interaction in the globalized corporation) cooperates with CBS in Copenhagen.

positions with regard to the relative value of different languages within a setting, or language requirements relating to institutional position within a particular workplace.

Spolsky (2004; 2007) differentiates between three levels of language policy: that found in language management (the formally agreed instruction and documentation), beliefs (what people hold to be appropriate conduct) and practice (what people actually *do*).

“... language practices, beliefs and management are not necessarily congruent. Each may reveal a different language policy. The way people speak, the way they think they should speak, and the way they think other people should speak may regularly differ. Looking at the language policy of established nations, one commonly finds major disparities between language policy laid down in the constitution and the actual practices in the society. Within social groups, it is common to find conflicting beliefs about the value of various language choices. One is therefore faced regularly with the question of which the real language policy is.” (Spolsky, 2004: 217)

In the following, we want to highlight some examples of the relationship between what Spolsky calls these ‘levels’ of language policy, working our way down² from the top-down management perspective to actual practice in situ.

Language requirements in internationalization

To which extent is an existing language policy transmitted to the realm of practice? Sometimes it is transformed on the way to where the actually language practice happens. In Figure 1, we reproduce the “Application form” that was distributed to students in an international program at Roskilde University in the academic year 2010/2011 (the “Öresund Master in European Studies”, ÖMES). A number of these students were exclusively following courses and doing project work in German and French (although they had followed courses in English at Malmö University in the previous semester). Still it was pointed out to them that “it is essential to the success of your exchange to Roskilde University that your English proficiency is adequate to the academic level required”, and that they had to be “close to fluent in spoken and written English” in order to successfully complete their exchange stay in Roskilde.

ROSKILDE UNIVERSITY
Application Form 3

LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

Please note that it is essential to the success of your exchange to Roskilde University that your English proficiency is adequate to the academic level required. You must be close to fluent in spoken and written English.

Other languages	I am currently studying this language		I have sufficient knowledge to follow lectures		I would have sufficient knowledge to follow lectures if I had some extra preparation	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
1. English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 1—Application form as originally distributed

² we do not necessarily fully endorse the hierarchical thinking implied by the ‘level’ metaphor (‘MANAGEMENT IS UP’), since our example exactly shows that language policy is *not* simply transmitted ‘down’ in the system.

The only available language policy document on which this requirement could be assumed to be based is the Sprogpolitik for RUC 2006 [Language policy for Roskilde University 2006] (our translation, since there is no official one into any other language than Danish). The language policy document contains a section on “Language requirements” (*sprogkrav*), where it says,

“RUC understreger at internationale studerende skal have et godt niveau i engelsk ved optag.” (2006:3).

This is not necessarily worded as a requirement, but as a recommendation. Another, more specific, recommendation follows, but subjects like language studies (such as German and French) and in general, programs not taught in English (such as Danish), are exempted from it explicitly:

“Følgende totalscore anbefales ved optag på ikke-sproglige uddannelser med engelsk som undervisningssprog. TOEFL (papirversion): 550 og IELTS: 6,5. Der bør anvendes en test som indeholder både en skriftlig og mundtlig prøve.” (2006:3)

In other words, it is recommended that international students in subjects taught in English (but not English itself, which must be a ‘sproglig uddannelse’) should have a TOEFL score of 550 or an IELTS score of 6.5 (i.e. between ‘competent’ and ‘good user’).³ In the implementation of this recommendation in the Application form mentioned, the recommendation was turned into a requirement (“you must”) and extended to all programs, even those not taught in English (like Danish, German and French).

This is an example of a partial incongruence between language management at different levels, a difference between the language management as put down in the university language policy document and the requirements passed on the ‘international’ students. One document (the application form) appears to express the belief (or ideology) that internationalization *by definition* is something that happens in English⁴, and the wish to avoid admitting students to English-language programs who did not live up to the standards actually necessary to complete the program. The other (the language policy document) appears to suggest a different position.

In the ÖMES program, Danish did not play a role, while French and German did. So there was no immediate need to change the application form in order to acknowledge the fact that international students could study in Roskilde in Danish. A student from abroad who wants to study Danish in Roskilde – which is quite common – or any other subject taught in Danish, would not need knowledge of English beyond the same reading ability one would expect from a local student studying these subjects⁵. So the local coordinators of the ÖMES program for German and French modified the original application form in the way shown here in Figure 2. They did not at all refer to the language policy of the University in this connection and did not *have* to – they could justify their version of the form on the basis of *their* experiences of what had worked out in previous years. Others students from abroad – who needed Danish in the first place rather than English – were still given the original form. We do not know, though, if any student actually did not apply for a stay in Roskilde because they did not meet the requirements set out in the


³ The highest IELTS score is 9 for the “expert user” that “has full operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.” This is the only level where IELTS uses the descriptor “fluent”.

⁴ Maybe ultimately going back to the autostereotype that Korzen and Schwartz succinctly formulated as “Denmark is a little land”, and “Danish is a difficult language” (Korzen and Schwartz 1978:67).

⁵ There is at present a Japanese ph.d. student at Roskilde university student writing her thesis in Danish.

application form. It is very well thinkable that they made a ‘mental repair’ (“This cannot possibly apply to me”).

ROSKILDE UNIVERSITY
Application Form 3



LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

Mother tongue:						
Language of instruction at home institution (if different):						
Other languages	I am currently studying this language		I have sufficient knowledge to follow lectures		I would have sufficient knowledge to follow lectures if I had some extra preparation	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
1. French	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

CURRENT STUDY

Diploma/degree for which you are currently studying:

Figure 2—Application form after a change of language policy ‘from below’.

This example shows that both individual members of the above groups and subgroups (like the ‘ØMES course programmers’) may decide upon divergent recommendations and requirements of language use that are not a direct projection of the institutionally drawn up policy, or identical with the beliefs and understandings of other members in the wider university community. In addition, perceived language policy may very much differ across settings and activities. Just because a community considers a set of norms for language usage to be appropriate for a classroom activity, it does not mean that the same norms are considered appropriate in the canteen, the guidance counsellor room, or the International Office.

In this section we have discussed how language policy documents at a management level work to exclude certain groups of prospective student from the university. These students are categorized on the basis of language proficiency. However, the basis upon which a student is deemed a suitable candidate or not differs depending on the entry point into the university. We turn now to individual ideological positions regarding language policy, and to do so, we must draw on a different type of data. Rather than policy documents, we rely here on interview data.

Categorization, inclusion and exclusion at a Chinese restaurant

With our second example, taken from a CALPIU sub-project that dealt with levels of motivation for transnationally mobile students to learn Danish, we want to illustrate some beliefs relating to language choosing in a workplace. The workplace in question is a Chinese restaurant where as far as we know no formally agreed language management exists. We see, however, that implicit categorizations and ideas about what the proper language choice is, are seen to play a role in determining which languages are spoken in the setting. The four languages discussed here are English, Danish, Putonghua (Standard Mandarin) and Cantonese. One may assume, since the participants in the situations described only have access to their subset of languages, that what could be called the ‘repertoire’ of the interactants is sufficient to settle language choices: in any given

communication situation, people speak the language which belongs to the subset of their repertoires that they share. Apparently it is not that simple, and even these simple examples make us question the very concept of repertoire as a set of languages associated with a speaker as their property.

A student originally from China (Ming Yue)⁶ reports about her time in Denmark before she started learning Danish after five years' stay. For a while, Ming Yue worked in a Chinese restaurant. There she never spoke Chinese with Chinese customers, because these visitors from China spoke Cantonese:

EXAMPLE 1 HH-DLI-ind2-20100914-IN INT-interviewer MIN-Ming Yue

1703 INT: er when you have
1704 PPP: (1.2)
1705 INT: or had Chinese customers
1706 MIN: mm
1707 INT: would they speak Chinese or would they speak English with you
1708 MIN: they speak Cantonese
1709 PPP: (0.5)
1710 INT: okay
1711 PPP: (0.6)
1712 MIN: erm the boss was from Hong Kong

She appears to account for the normative language choices of the customers (Cantonese) as relating to the origins of the boss (Hong Kong). Although we are not able to verify this, it may be that this particular Chinese restaurant served Hong Kong cuisine and as such typically attracted a Cantonese speaking clientele. Ming Yue does not elaborate here on how she was able to communicate with these customers, not being able to speak Cantonese herself. As to communication with the owner, Ming Yue did not use English with her as a lingua franca, but tried a kind of receptive multilingualism as we know it from Scandinavia (Zeevaert 2007), but apparently with much less success:

EXAMPLE 2 HH-DLI-ind2-20100914-IN INT-interviewer MIN-Ming Yue

1715 INT okay the boss so what did you (0.2)
1716 do do do you understand Cantonese
1717 MIN:]no]
1718 PPP: (0.2)
1719 INT: no
1720 PPP: (0.4)
1721 INT: so you spoke English with the boss or
1722 MIN: er n- I speak Chinese to her and she speak Cantonese back to me
1723 PPP: (0.2)
1724 INT: okay
1725 MIN: really poor communication but we didn't need
1726 need to understand each other that much
1727 INT:]no] no ((laughter))

Ming Yue states that she and her boss didn't need to understand each other so much. This may be due to the organization of work at a restaurant being much more routine than, for example, the ordering of dishes and beverages. Another thing concerned those Danish customers who in the beginning spoke Danish to her *because* they – apparently paradoxically – believed she was a Danish speaker exactly because she looked Asian:

EXAMPLE 3 HH-DLI-ind2-20100914-IN INT-interviewer MIN-Ming Yue

1771 MIN: y- yeah bec- because there are a lot of er Danish
1772 people with Asian face look like right
1773 INT: okay
1774 MIN: so it's sometimes it's t- it's easier
1775 to start with Danish if you are Danish
1776 INT: yeah
1777 MIN: then the- you have you you're not sure if this
1778 person me as a Danish]or] it's er
1779 INT:]yeah]

⁶ The name is a pseudonym.

1780 MIN: Korean adopted baby grown up in Denmark
1781 INT: |yeah yeah|
1782 PPP: (0.2)
1783 INT: yeah
1784 MIN: so you have no idea
1785 (0.2) so normally people will start with Danish
1786 INT: |yeah|
1787 PPP: (0.2)
1788 MIN: and er when they
1789 INT: |yeah|
1790 PPP: (0.3)
1791 MIN: when they discover that I cannot speak Danish then they
1792 switch to English immediately

Here, Ming Yue offers an account for instances of language choice on the part of the Danish customers. She believes that customers categorize her initially as a Danish speaker, suggesting as a reason for this the commonplace presence of Asian-Danes in Denmark.

What is interesting here is that we both have a small transient multilingual community at the restaurant itself, which can build up a pattern of medium choosing that seems to be relatively fixed (between employer and employee), and around it the language choosing patterns of what could be called fleeting encounters with the customers. What the interview data also shows is an orientation to category devices denoting ‘nationality’ and ‘ethnicity’ being associated with particular language repertoires. This type of categorization work could be seen to form the bedrock of language policy at a management level, such as that discussed in the opening section. This is, however, not without problems, as we will discuss next.

How to describe language choice practices

There is a huge body of research on interaction in multilingual settings, but it is largely focussed on stable multilingual communities where most members have similar or at least comparable access to the relevant languages. A concept such as ‘domain’ (Fishman 1972), which has become so fashionable (especially in the neologism ‘domain loss’, which probably originated in Denmark or Norway), is really not defined outside such stable multilingual communities (Simonsen 2002; Haberland 2005). In our research both in the CALPIU Research Center and in the Lingcorp project, we have dealt with a quite different type of multilingual communities, which one could call ‘transient multilingual communities’ (Mortensen 2013:37, 39; in preparation). But the language choice practices of transient multilingual communities are not just different from those in stable multilingual communities, they are also different from those found in fleeting contacts that we experience both at universities and at workplaces.

From a common-sense point of view we can talk about ‘interlingual encounters’, and Ulrich Ammon (1991:121f., see also Haberland 1993:98) has provided a very neat and suggestive notation for this kind of situations. Ammon assumes that all speakers in such an encounter have a ‘repertoire’ of languages, of which at least one is designated as belonging to them properly, i.e. as being ‘their’ language. In Ammon’s notation, the primary language belonging to this speaker is noted with small letters. The actually used language in the encounter is written in capital letters, be it the language of the one of the speakers or the other, or a ‘third’ language, a lingua franca.

So Ming Yue’s communication with her boss from Hong Kong can be noted as

PT – CA⁷

⁷ Strictly speaking, Ammon does not consider the possibility of ‘polyglot dialog’ (Posner 1991), where both speakers use what he considers ‘their’ language, i.e. where both languages involved ‘dominate’: “Großbuchstaben symbolisieren Dominanz und Kleinbuchstaben Dominiertheit der betreffenden Sprache in der jeweiligen Kommunikationssituation.” (1991:122).

Which means that she uses Putonghua (PT)⁸ and her boss Cantonese (CA); both written in capital letters because they actually are ‘active’ languages.

The (unsuccessful) attempt of the Danish customers to speak Danish to her would be noted as

DA – pt

with Danish (DA) as the dominant language while Putonghua (pt) is not used. This is not successful, since Ming Yue does not understand or speak Danish at that stage.

Communication with the customers becomes successful, when English (EN) is used as a lingua franca, with both Danish (da) and Putonghua (pt) becoming ‘sleepers’:

da – EN – pt

Neat as the model might look, there are a number of problems with it. Although speakers often unabashedly categorize other speakers by their mother tongue (albeit sometimes indirectly, “the boss was from Hong Kong”), it is often quite irrelevant whether a speaker actually uses his or her first language or another language, so when a language is ‘dormant’, it is sometimes the question why one should let it go into the model at all.⁹ Although languages often are ascribed to other speakers as one of their properties (like being bald, wearing glasses or being a Catholic), it is probably better to consider languages as a case of ‘distributed cognition’ (Hutchins 1995), a form of practice shared with other participants. Seen like that, the distribution does not have to be even – some people can accomplish a successful order of a *café tallat* in Catalan together with their interactants, while maybe not being able to have a conversation in that language with the same people. Languages should therefore not be considered as a kind of object one can *have*, but media in which one can *share* practices with others.

We do not consider the languages that a person uses as members of a set of his or her ‘languages’ with a special, designated member of this set being the language users proper language (often called mother tongue, a highly ideologically loaded term), a set that is considered the persons repertoire. Hence the term ‘interlingual communication’ – as reflected in Ammon’s notation for such encounters – does not necessarily make sense to us, since it assumes that people in these cases use the secondary members of their repertoire set when they meet people whom they share some of their repertoire with, but not their the designated member of that set, the language properly belonging to them. We rather think of languages as media in which participants can accomplish a task by having access to them in different ways and to different degrees.

⁸ Putonghua (Standard Mandarin), which Ming Yue calls ‘Chinese’

⁹ The following example occurred in a café in Lleida, Catalonia, in November 2011:

1 Customer: Un café tallat.

2 Waitress: Si, un café cortado.

This could be rewritten as

1 x – CA

2 x – ES – ca

But it is irrelevant which language the customers ‘proper’ (first) language is (hence ‘x’). Also, it is quite possible that what ‘really’ went on was

1 x – CA

2 x – ES

i.e. the waitress did not use Spanish as a kind of ‘foreigner talk’ to be used with non-members of the community, but was simply not a Catalan speaker (but understood Catalan).

This means that we see exclusion and inclusion not as a question of who ‘has’ a language or not, but as who can accomplish what and with whom by using a medium (which can belong to one language or more).

On the other hand, we can see that participants do exactly what we reject as analytical conceptualization. They ascribe languages to people as one of their properties and do not see them as something people can *do*, but never can do on their own, rather always in interaction. In the following section, we turn to interactional practices, and ways through which members within a community may treat someone in his institutional capacity as not conforming to the norm, due to what is treated as an *absence* in his language repertoire.

Choosing a medium

Returning to Spolsky’s conceptualizations of language policy, language practices are considered to constitute the actualization of a particular community’s policies concerning appropriate language conduct, including of course that at the level of language choice. This *practiced language policy* (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012) draws on regular patterns of language usage, with “practice form[ing] a recognisable and analysable set of patterns” (Spolsky and Shohamy 2000: 29). These in turn constitute interactional norms. As Bonacina-Pugh (2012: 219) writes:

“interactional norms are the implicit understanding that speakers have of what language (choice) act is appropriate or not in a given context. Speakers use these norms as “schemes” (Garfinkel 1967) to interpret each others’ language (choice) acts; that is, “a point of reference or action template for interpretation” (Seedhouse 2004: 10).”

Regularity, recognizable practices and underlying norms may point to relatively stable communities, where members rely on shared understandings. Here, members whose practices do not correlate with overall normative expectations may be interpreted by others in the community as somewhat deviant. Indeed, they may be treated as such also. These deviant cases can be identified through participants displaying an orientation to the particular conduct/act as requiring repair, or being marked in some way or other. By looking at the ways the participants treat these interactional moments, an analyst can get at the normative expectations. Furthermore, they offer valuable insight into the ways in which members of a community are constituted as being deviant.

We turn now to build an empirical account of one such practice, and to demonstrate how deviation from a normative interactional pattern by a member of the community can impact upon their status as a member of their institutional category.

Since participants in linguistically hybrid and diverse settings where language choice is *not* institutionally predetermined (or has not been communicated to all parties) have to settle for one or several of their potentially shared media, *language choosing* (the act of selecting or negotiating a medium of interaction) becomes a relevant activity in which interlocutors are engaged (Hazel & Mortensen, 2013). Within stable or even temporarily established groups, participants can rely on prior experience and knowledge of other members’ linguistic backgrounds. However, in encounters where participants have no prior knowledge of one another, language choosing is negotiated from the outset.

In the following analysis, we will start by demonstrating a particular recurrent practice for entering into a service encounter at an international office help desk. Here, clients approach the help desk counter with queries relating to procedural matters, requests to process particular administrative documents, or general information requests on such topics as accommodation, study exchange programmes, and institutional requirements. The clients may be Danish, generally students embarking on study exchange programmes such as Erasmus, or ‘incoming’ students from other countries. The help

desk is staffed on a rotation basis by members of the international office administrative team. Our analysis will then come to alight upon a number of cases where interactional trouble occurs. We will demonstrate how when the normative expectations of a particular category of person and the activities implied by that category do not converge, the person may be categorized as deviant, i.e. not fitting the category. At this stage, work is performed to re-configure the category to fit the person, before the activity can proceed.

Entering into the service encounter

In the data set of 90 video-recorded interactions, participants enter into a focused service encounter in one of 3 ways: 1. The staff member is present at the counter when the client approaches; 2. the client is already present at the counter and the staff member arrives to attend to the client; and 3. the staff member is already engaged with attending to a client when the next client arrives and takes up a queuing position, approaching the counter on completion of the prior encounter (Hazel, 2012). Across all types of approach, a common general pattern for entering into the focused encounter is represented in the following transcripts:

EXAMPLE 4 LTSH-day8-SE-1223 STA-staff; CLI-client

19 STA: hej≈
20 CLI: ≈hej
21 Ps: (0.6)
22 CLI: øhm vi er tre der lige har fundet et udvekslingsophold

EXAMPLE 5 LTSH-day6-SE-1144 STA-staff; CLI-client

4 STA: hʁi:ʔ
5 CLI: ʔhi:ʔ
6 Ps: (1.2)
7 CLI: eɦrm: I'm:: international student↗
8 STA: yeah=
9 CLI: =and I'm comi:ng because of eh student card↗

EXAMPLE 6 LTSH-day8-SE-1123 STA-staff; CLI-client

17 CLI: hej
18 STA: hej
19 CLI: øh jeg har et spørgsmål

EXAMPLE 7 LTSH-day8-SE-1205 STA-staff; CLI-client

18 CLI: hi
19 STA: hi
20 (0.9)
21 CLI: um I got a question I received this letter

In these examples, we note a canonical greeting sequence followed by a pre-speech token in the form of a hesitation marker (for example 'ehrm' or 'øhm'), following which the client starts formulating the reason for the visit. These sequences are themselves part of larger action sequences, where participants physically coordinate on a stepwise basis a shift from co-presence to co-participation. For example, the greeting tokens ('hej' or 'hi') are preceded by a convergence of trajectories as the participants coordinate moving into position at the counter, they establish eye contact and may subsequently produce some kind of facial gesture such as a smile. Following the exchange of greetings, the clients tend to withdraw gaze. The client produces the pre-speech token, projecting him or her as next-speaker, and then moves into formulating the topic of their visit as the participants stabilize their physical configuration either side of the counter, usually coming into contact with the counter at the same time. The client then orients gaze to the staff member, the staff produces a 'go-ahead' token, and the client continues with their formulation.

Language choice on entering into the service encounter

As we see from the above excerpts, participants manage to settle upon the medium-for-interaction almost immediately. Indeed, the transcripts appear to show that regardless of who initiates the greeting sequence, the language chosen for this is, here either Danish or English, is immediately adopted by the participants for the encounter. This, however, is somewhat misleading. Although a Danish greeting 'hej' and an English 'hi' can sound distinctly different, in these settings there is both a great deal of variety in how this greeting is produced, and there are participants for whom the Danish 'hej' and an English 'hi' may sound very much alike. As such, the greeting tokens here can be said to display a level of ambiguity as to which language they actually represent. Indeed, this ambiguity acts as a resource for negotiating the language for the rest of the encounter.

Two interactional patterns

Auer (1984) has proposed that there is a preference in conversation for same language talk. This, he argued, is the unmarked choice for the overwhelming amount of conversation. Later work by Auer and by Gafaranga has built on this further to discuss a medium of interaction, which can include bilingual medium formats too. These variations in medium format are, however, typical of stable bilingual communities, and are absent from the data set used here.

Returning to the excerpts, we note two patterns. The first has the 1st greeting produced by staff member (STA), with the client (CLI) producing the return greeting.

LTSH-day8-SE-1223 (Ex.1)

01 STA: hej/hi≈
 02 CLI: ≈hej/hi
 03 (0.6)
 04 CLI: øhm vi er tre der lige har fundet et udvekslingsophold

Pattern 2

01 → STA: 1st greeting
 02 CLI: 2nd greeting
 03 (0.6)
 04 CLI: topic initiation turn

LTSH-day6-SE-1144 (Ex.2)

01 STA: hʁi:/hejʁ
 02 CLI: ʁhi:/hejʁ
 03 (1.2)
 04 CLI: ehm: I'm:: international student↗

Here, the client is in the position to treat the 1st greeting (produced by the staff member) as *either* Danish or English. This allows for the client to respond in the same language and proceeding to the next turn where the medium becomes disambiguated, either as Danish as in the first example, or English as in the second.

The second pattern involves the client (CLI) producing the first greeting with the staff member (STA) responding.

LTSH-day8-SE-1123 (Ex.3)

01 CLI: hej/hi
 02 STA: hej/hi
 03 CLI: øh jeg har et spørgsmål

Pattern 1

LTSH-day8-SE-1205 (Ex.4)

18 CLI: hej/hi
 19 STA: hej/hi
 20 (0.9)
 21 CLI: um I got a question I received this letter

01→ CLI: 1st greeting
 02 STA: 2nd greeting
 03 CLI: topic initiation turn

In this pattern, the initial ‘ambiguous’ *hej/hi* greeting token is responded to with a similarly ambiguous return greeting from the staff member. The client is then in the position to treat this return greeting as either Danish or English, and to proceed to formulate the next turn in that medium-of-interaction.

The organization of talk in opening the encounters

Taken together, we observe that both patterns allow participants, even when meeting one another for the first time, to smoothly navigate a path into the encounter without needing to negotiate beforehand in what medium the encounter should be. The ambiguous greeting token allows for participants to treat one another’s greeting as aligning with their own preferred medium for the encounter (Hazel, 2012). Furthermore, the organization of this entry into the encounter affords the client superior interactional rights to select the medium-of-interaction. In both patterns, the post-greeting slot is taken by the client, who is then always the party who is in the last position to treat the staff member’s greeting as being produced in the client’s preferred medium-of-interaction. This then evidences a practice where the client is granted the final say on the preferred medium.

Interactional norms

The above patterns for entering into a service encounter at this International Office help desk then display a particular organization of affording *the client the right* to select one of a number of languages to serve as medium-for-interaction, here Danish or English. This in turn displays categorization work on the part of the participants, who at this early stage are able to display within their turn organization an institutional orientation, where there is an asymmetrical distribution of interactional rights and obligations. Here, one participant is the service provider, and the other the client to be served. Spolsky writes: “In the workplace, the languages of managers and of customers turn out to acquire extra value” (2007: 6). Here, we see how this plays out in the field. Secondly, the categories are linked with particular category bound predicates relating to language repertoires. Particularly, the category ‘International Office staff member’ is oriented to as being able to deal with a client in whichever language the client selects (from the collection consisting of Danish and English).

The deviant (case)

The preceding sections detail a set of related patterns through which participants, who on the whole have no previous knowledge of one another, are able to settle upon a medium-for-interaction without any explicit negotiation needing to be conducted. The way these openings are organized allows for the participants to move smoothly and immediately into the service encounter, which constitutes the business-at-hand. In the current data set, there are a number of deviant cases, where the step-wise move into this business-at-hand is momentarily suspended. On these occasions, the participants produce what can be characterized as an insertion sequence, where some interactional trouble is attended to, before the encounter can proceed. In the following excerpt, the client approaches the help desk counter and he and the staff member initiate the canonical sequence described above. However, the encounter hits trouble when the staff member initiates medium repair (Gafaranga 2000).

EXAMPLE 8 LTSH-day4-SE-1201 STA-staff; CLI-client

- 17 CLI: hi↗/hej↗
18 (1.1)
19 STA: hi/hej
20 (0.3)
21 CLI: eh jeg kan godt tænk mig at eh: (.)
eh I’ve been thinking about eh



(Line omitted)

Staff returns to the counter

11 STA: so may I help you
 12 (0.5)
 13 TOM: yeah
 14 (0.3)
 15 TOM: er danish or english
 16 (0.2)
 17 STA: er n- english
 18 (0.2)
 19 ERI: heh heh alright
 20 TOM: english
 21 ERI: (0.7)
 22 TOM: vil du (.) [jeg vil xx xxxx]
 23 STA: [heh heh heh]
 24 ERI: well we came up here actually to to hear about
 the exchange student programme
 25 STA: yeah

When the staff member moves to attend to them, he skips the greeting sequence, producing an offer of assistance instead (line 11). This is done in English, and can be seen to act to constrain the available languages, indeed occasioning a shift on the part of the clients from Danish, which they were using up till this point, to English. This strategy uses the preference for ‘same language across turns’ (Auer, 1984; Gafaranga, 2000; Neville and Wagner 2011) to prompt the adoption of the staff member’s preferred medium. Although an efficient way to avoid having to perform subsequent medium repair sequences as witnessed in example 5, this is not always successful. Here in example 6, although Tom accepts the offer of assistance, he still follows it up with an insertion sequence in which he, in English, inquires after the staff member’s preferred medium-of-interaction. In a somewhat delayed format, STA responds with ‘English’ (line 17). The clients accept and restate this (line 19 & 20), with Tom accompanying it with laughter. Tom then turns to Erik and asks, now in Danish, whether he would ‘like to’ and marks this with some laughter tokens, which the staff members then also produces in overlap¹⁰. Erik then turns to the staff member and starts formulating in English the reason for the visit.

A possible explanation for the dispreferred format of STA’s response in line 17 is that it goes against the norm described above – *client has the right to select* – and this makes explicit the accountable absence of expected linguistic resources. Compounding this, the clients subsequently exclude him from the participation framework as they briefly converse between one another in Danish. Mondada, discussing plurilingual resources in international workplace meetings, describes how

“display of local activities is achieved by the exhibition of the intra-group specific linguistic resources; whereas the display of common tasks, related to an inter-site participation space, is achieved through the exploitation of common resources” (2004: 38)

By selecting Danish for the subsequent insertion sequence, Tom occasions a locally constituted in-group that consists of the two speakers of *both English and Danish*, which contrasts with the staff member’s repertoire. Here they negotiate who will act as next speaker in the common participation framework of the institutional activity. Erik then self-selects and initiates the move into the service encounter (lines 23 & 24), re-engaging the staff member within the participation framework.

We have seen how a particular set of patterns for the sequential organization of entering into a service encounter in an international environment exploit the linguistic ambiguity of a greeting token to settle efficiently on the medium-for-interaction. The way these

¹⁰ We are unable to hear in the recording what the rest of Tom’s turn in line 22 relates to.

sequences unfold allows participants, who may never have met one another before, to move swiftly into the business-at-hand without needing to first topicalize the respective participants' linguistic repertoires. The organization evidences a particular interactional norm, where the client is afforded superior rights to select between the local language, Danish, and a lingua franca, here English, as medium for the ensuing encounter. The implications of this norm are that the client should be able to select one of those languages, while the member of staff should be able to deal with both. As such, a particular category-bound predicate associated with the institutional status of those staffing the help desk is bilingual competence in Danish and English. Where this is not the case, as in examples 5 and 6, participants display an orientation to this *non-observance* (Spolsky & Shohamy 2000), treating the member of staff as being *deviant*.

Conclusion

In this working paper, we have looked at language policy at 3 levels: that relating to institutional management documentation, that at the level of personal accounts, and at the level of situated practice.

In the first section we demonstrated how prospective international students at a Danish university are excluded to varying degrees through different policies being suggested or implemented by different sections of the overall organization.

Secondly, we looked at one member's understanding of language choice within a multilingual workplace, including her account of what she interprets as the other participants' view of normal, not deviant language choices.

In the final section, we have detailed a number of practices through which culturally and linguistically diverse members are able to settle upon a language for conducting these service encounters (which in this case is usually, but not exclusively Danish or English). We demonstrate how they are able to do this by drawing on membership knowledge of the settings, including normative expectations regarding language competencies of the various category bound groups relevant to the setting. Where these language competencies do not align with expectation, however, members-in-interaction display an orientation to this issue as relevant to attend to before an activity can proceed. These sequences in turn disrupt the progression of the activity, adding extra interactional work.

When the normative expectations of a particular category of person and the activities implied by that category do not converge, the person may be categorized as deviant, i.e. not fitting the category. At this stage, work needs to be done to re-configure the category to fit the person. Through video-based interaction analysis of service encounters, we have demonstrated how a member's language competencies are indexed against their institutional status, and how their status is topicalized as *other-than-the-norm*. Our findings show that *otherness* in the workplace is constituted locally by both (or all) parties to an interaction, rather than given beforehand by the macro context of the workplace internationalization or occasioned as a social act imposed unilaterally by one person upon another.

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