

Discursive constructions of communicativeness in Swedish higher education reforms

In Sweden, many universities are adopting a local language policy, mainly as part of internationalisation in higher education. The dominant position of English is impacting on language policy on many levels, for example national and local, and this impact calls for awareness (Phillipson, 2003). In order to understand what is currently going on, this presentation will address how discourses have been operating over time, creating different perspectives of language proficiency and communicativeness in Swedish higher education.

The PhD study upon which this presentation is based draws on a model of political discourse analysis (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012) within critical discourse analysis (CDA) that guides the analysis towards discursive constructions of activity. The data, comprised of twelve Swedish governmental reform texts from 1974 to 2009, were collected inductively and analysed using the concept of legitimation (van Leeuwen, 2008) in order to find discursive patterns. The texts derive from three different reform areas, i.e. internationalisation, national language legislation and widening participation.

The analysis of the findings, so far, shows that a multitude of discourses is operating in constructions of communicativeness in Swedish higher education over time. The discourses operate both in constructions on a personal or a group level, creating specific understandings of what constitutes communicative students and communicative academics, and on an institutional level, constructing a communicative university. The most dominant discourses operating over time have to do with *success*, *solidarity* and *modernity*. These three discourses, together and separately, operate in constructions of a communicative student. They create, for example, certain understandings of what count as general communicative skills, and what constitutes multilingual proficiency. In constructions of a communicative academic, a discourse of modernity is a dominant one related to progress and mobility. In constructions of a communicative university a discourse of success is operating, mainly in relation to power of attraction. Two languages, viz. Swedish and English, have exceptional positions in the constructions of communicativeness, where tension as well as complementarity between the two of them occurs in the constructions.

The impact of discourses in constructions of communicativeness in higher education will, over time, affect language policy. Thus, operating discourses ought to be subjected to scrutiny when discussing and approving language policy at university level. The kind of linguistic awareness that such scrutiny generates can help balance current transformative trends in higher education, and even challenge them, resulting in more comprehensive institutional language policy.

Fairclough, Isabela & Fairclough, Norman (2012). *Political Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge

Phillipson, Robert (2003). *English-Only Europe? Challenging Language Policy*. London: Routledge.

van Leeuwen, Theo (2008). *Discourse and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press