

The English language in Danish Higher Education and in Denmark: perspectives on language practice and language ideology

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Structure of the talk

- English in Denmark
- English at Roskilde University Humanities Program (HIB)
- CALPIU
- Language Ideologies, constructs and attitudes
- Transient Multilingual Communities and their challenges
- Methods and Data
- Ideologies new and old



Three Publications...

- Fabricius, A., & Mortensen, J. (2013). Language Ideology and the notion of 'construct resource': a case study of modern RP. In T. Kristiansen, & S. Grondelaars (Eds.), *Language (de)standardisation in Late Modern Europe: Experimental studies*. (pp. 375-402). Oslo: Novus forlag.
- Mortensen, J., & Fabricius, A. (2014). Language ideologies in Danish Higher Education: Exploring student perspectives. In A. K. Hultgren, F. Gregersen, & J. Thøgersen (Eds.), *English in Nordic Universities: Ideologies and Practices*. (pp. 193–223). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Mortensen, J. 2014. "Language policy from below: Language choice in student project groups in a multilingual university setting." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 35:4, 425-442.

English in Denmark

- English "from above and from below" (Preisler 1999)
- Taught in primary school now from age 7; English also taught in senior high schools and in trade high schools
- Emerged as prestige register through subcultural influence of various kinds after WW2 (Preisler 1999)
- A 'complementary language' (Preisler 2009)
- Lundbeck: "You speak Danish when you can – but you speak English to those who do not understand Danish" (Lønsmann 2011:130)
- Also a more general norm in Danish society
- Denmark's prime second language cf 'parallel language' discourse
- Fears of domain loss (e.g. in scientific writing) expressed 'from above' (Harder 2009)

English in Dk Higher Education: Roskilde

- HIB programme established in 1989 (first English-medium UG programme in DK)
- Originally English, French and German as working languages
- The latter two have eroded in practice over time
- Student-led problem-oriented Project work 50% of curriculum
- Project group meetings a rich source of ethnographic data

CALPIU

- **Cultural and Linguistic Practices at the International University**
- Funded by the Danish Research council for the Humanities 2009-2013
- See calpiu.dk for sub-projects and publications
- Classroom teaching and project supervision, student work groups and administrative encounters as main research locations

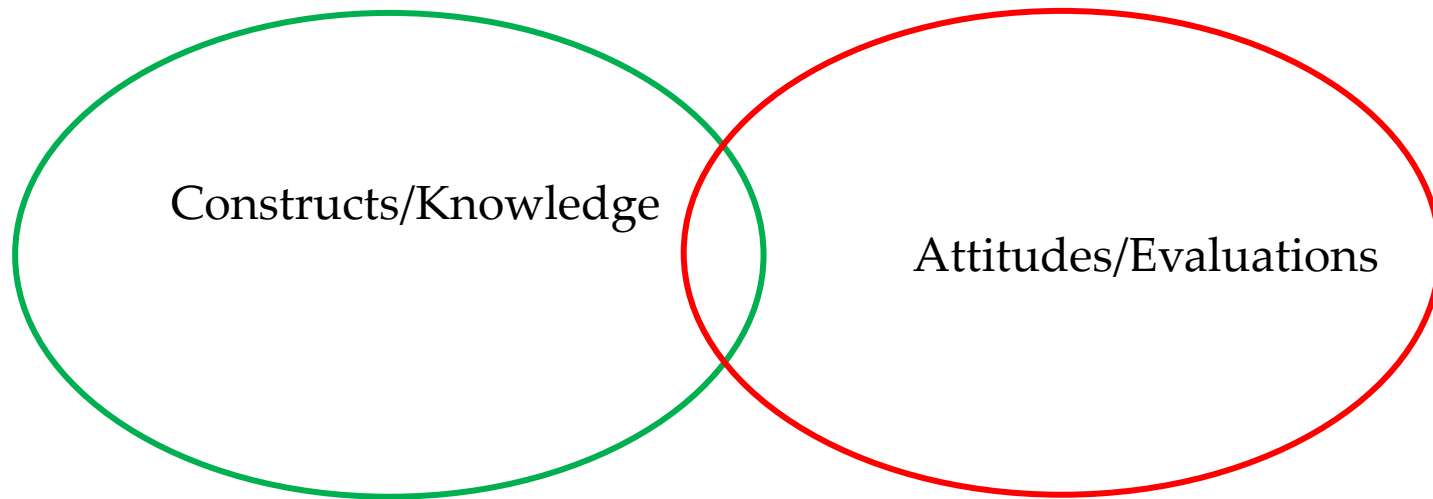
Language Ideology

- "a mediating link between social structures and forms of talk" (Woolard and Schiefflin 1994: 55)
- "language users' ideologies bridge their sociocultural experience and their linguistic and discursive resources by constituting those linguistic and discursive forms as indexically tied to features of their sociocultural experience" (Kroskrity 2004: 507)

Indexicality

- Piercian indexical signs: "smoke is an index of fire"
- Linguistic indices are not however physical manifestations but symbols (in the sense of 'conventional signs') treated as though they were indices (signs with physical links, for example)
- Signs are, importantly, relational

Language Ideologies



The 'construct' resource

- An ideological postulate about language variation and social meaning
- emerges historically, circulates in society
- an isolatable (and relational) unit at the linguistic form/social meaning interface
- above the level of the individual linguistic sign
- located firmly within language ideology
- emergent in interaction
- can crystallize in metalinguistic talk ... and stylization (Fabricius and Mortensen 2013)

An example (Fabricius and Mortensen 2013)

- “RP is posh and Southern”

38 INT: hmm

39 F07: erm (0.4) Northerners I've heard saying that Southerners are

40 posh and [ooh I had] to speak all posh and Southern today and

41 INT: [mhm]



(Fabricius and Mortensen 2013: 368)

Construct resource

- Particular type of hyper-articulation of the LOT vowel within the lexical item 'posh'
- Social and indexical meanings surrounding class distinctions in the UK
- An accent stylisation construct resource

Transient Multilingual Communities

- Typical of/salient within late modernity (?)
- Ad hoc groups of people, short durations
- Formed for a specific purpose eg a semester class
- Multilingual members have potentially widely different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and norms
- Such groups abound at internationalised universities for example
- (In Europe of different types than Anglophone countries)

A challenge to mainstream sociolinguistics?

- if sociolinguistics has in the past presupposed stable communities ...
- "Predicated on a set of shared norms" (Labov 1968:251)
- "Language is the property of the community" as theoretical tenet in these cases
- Speakers share norms of usage and of evaluation ('posh', and others...)
- This relates to the challenges of studying 'language and globalisation' (Coupland 2003, Blommaert 2010)

Our research question..

- Can we find any shared norms or construct resources in transient multilingual communities (of practice)/accumulations of people?
- If so, where do they come from?
- Are they in some sense recognisable as well as moulded anew in the present setting, where English in Higher Education in Denmark is a relative newcomer?

Mortensen 2014:438-9

- I believe this observation points to a more general issue, namely that in ‘transient multilingual communities’ – of which student project groups and international student cohorts more broadly can be considered prime examples – norms for language choice must continuously be forged anew through practice.
- Such constant moulding and remoulding of norms for language choice is to some extent in opposition to the practices of language choice in stable multilingual communities that form the basis of much foundational theory in this field of [interactional, qualitative] sociolinguistics (e.g. Fishman 1972; Gumperz 1982).

Mortensen 2014: 439

- In 'traditional' multilingual communities (which, although more stable than transient communities, are of course not stable in any absolute sense), norms for language choice and language alternation are likely to be conventionalised to a higher degree, and thus less likely to be (re-)shaped in and by specific situations
- Language policy in a transient multilingual community is in no small measure accomplished through local practice

Mortensen 2014:439

- Societal norm : Danish
 - Institutional norm : English / Danish (as 'parallel languages')
 - (Project) Group norm : English (+Danish)
 - (Personal norms...)
-
- See e.g. the language 'enforcers' in the above article

Looking at transient multilingual settings

- E.g. an English-medium programme at a Danish University
- Data: sociolinguistic interviews conducted by Janus Mortensen
- Methods: qualitative and interactional; a sociolinguistic analysis of 'construct resource' segments, key moments, 'rich points'
- One key interview question "does accent matter?" as a way into explicit discussions of language practices and norms
- (A question with a history...)

Status dimension

- "The status dimension is present in the interviews whenever native varieties of English are being placed within a hierarchy, either explicitly or implicitly, or when they are seen as a yardstick against which one's own competence or that of others can be measured" (Mortensen and Fabricius 2014: 219)

Solidarity dimension

- "The solidarity dimension comes into play in contexts when cooperation is being foregrounded, for instance when it pays to be at the same level as your group members" (ibid)

Data example 1: non-local student

*INT: um do you do you think it it mat- uhm •
it matters what sort of English •
that people speak here at university •
does it matter what sort of accent they have or
(2.5) •

*IN4: not at all •
(0.3) •

*INT: [I think um]
[not at all no] •

*IN4: I'm (.) now it's more difficult for me •
to understand the real English (.) •

*INT: mm •

*IN4: than um (0.7) •
mm whatever (0.2) •
I mean I can understand (0.4) •
German accent (0.7) •
French accent (.) •
but when it comes the (.) •
real English from mean the States or the um (.)
unite- um or the um (0.3) •
Great Britain then it's like whuu (0.2) •
then I have problems •

Data example 2: non-local student

*IN3: [um] because when you have British or •
native English speaking (0.3) [er] •

*INT: [mm] •

*IN3: you know that they know (.) the language very well
[so you] try to like (0.5) •

*INT: [mm]

*IN3: get up to their standards •

*INT: al[right yeah] •

*IN3: [but you know that] you cannot really •

*INT: mm mm •

*IN3: er but when you have (0.6) •
so then it's kinda like focus on language (0.3) •

*IN3: whilst then when you speak with people you know •
who was not (.) native English [then you] just •

*INT: [mm]

*IN3: talk normal •

Data example 3: the troubled 'mixed' group

*IN4: xxx it was also about the language •
*INT: 「mm」 •
*IN4: 「I'm」 not sure they mention it (0.2) but we did (1.0)
*INT: you 「mentioned」 •
*IN4: 「we were」 of course I asked •
*INT: okay ≈ •
*IN4: ≈ if it was about (0.4) •
*INT: okay •
*IN4: the erm (2.0) •
because you always have this feeling that (0.7) •
sometimes I didn't understand the jokes or (0.2) •
「hmpf」 「I」 don't know things like this •
*INT: 「mm」 「mm」 •
*IN4: they know more English than us and that's xxx •
I 「mean」 (0.2) •
*INT: 「mm」
*IN4: that's how it is •

Data example 4: Danish student, on proficiency

- *IN1: hvis især men men øh- •
det er måske ikke så meget med accent på HIB •
der er det mere med •
hvordan hvor god du er til det •
(0.3) •
- *INT: o'kay! •
- *IN1: [hvis du ikke] er så god •
(0.8) •
- *IN1: øh til at formulere dig og sådan så så kan du hurtigt sådan s-
(0.2) s- så mister jeg i hvert fald fokus •
- *INT: ja •
- *IN1: synes jeg så er det ikke så interessant (0.4) •

Data example 5: another Danish student (lecture setting)

*IN2: øhm så det har jeg været enormt øh (0.3) •
positivt overrasket [over] •
*INT: [ja] •
*INT: der havde du xxx været en lille smule •
[bekymret for hvad der ville xxx] •
*IN2: [jeg havde været en lille smule bekymret for at] •
at det blev sådan noget •
and then øh (0.4) then we have to øhm (0.2) •
ja sådan noget •
*INT: den slags •
*IN2: hvor man tænker politikerne der skal øh tale engelsk ikke såeh
*INT: ja •
*IN2: så har man lidt den man ≈ •
*INT: ≈ okay ≈ •
*IN2: ≈ frygtede •
*INT: ja •

‘Politicians’ English’ as construct resource

- The story of Villy Søndal (Foreign Minister during the Climate Summit in Copenhagen, November 2009).
- "The ice is **melting** at the **Poles**"
- Alveolar l where native English varieties have dark ɫ
- *Det Nye Talkshow*, Anders Lund Madsen
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1bpjK0m5Wo>
- A piece of ‘linguistic bullying’

Data example 6: non-locals in group work

*IN4: you are (.) you am er (0.5) •
empathize (0.2) •

*INT: mm •

*IN4: with the other because you know that you have problems •
with the language the other has problems with the language •

*INT: mm •

*IN4: so he (.) ha- doesn't understand you then you try •
to explain and it's not a problem (0.4) •
but the Danish know more English than all the international
(.) students ≈ •

*INT: ≈ mm ≈ •

*IN4: ≈ usually •

*INT: mm •
(0.9) •

Data example 7: authenticity troubles

*IN1: [der var] en fyr af fra vores (0.4) •
fra vores hus som nu er droppet ud som havde den (0.6) •
den værste (0.4) britiske accent •

*INT: okay •
(0.2) •

*IN1: og så var jeg sådan jamen hvorfor har du det har du boet der har du
rejst der sådan nej det havde han havde faktisk aldrig været der •
(0.3) og så tænkte jeg okay er det bare fra tv eller sådan •

*INT: ja •

*IN1: så synes jeg bare det er øv at man prøver at påtager sig noget •

*INT: okay [ja] •

*IN1: [løh] sådan som slet ikke har nogen relation til en •
(0.4) •

*INT: ja •
(1.6) •

Data example 8: solidarity troubles

*IN1: og (.) det tror jeg måske var lidt sådan svært •
så der vænnede jeg mig faktisk til eller indså at (0.6) •
du er nødt til at skrue lidt ned •

*INT: mm •
(1.0) •

*IN1: hvilket faktisk er lidt vanvittigt fordi det kan man jo ikke •
du kan jo ikke skrue ned for øh for dit sprog (0.2) •
altså [det er jo] egentlig vanvittigt [så] ≈ •

*INT: [nej nej] [ja]

*WOM: ≈ men det tror jeg faktisk lidt jeg indså at jeg var nødt til
og så (.) fik jeg sådan en underlig accent efter det (0.6) •

*INT: okay ((laughing)) •

*WOM: så udviklede min accent sig [den] blev sådan lidt •

*INT: [ja] •
(0.6) •

*WOM: latterlig •

Data example 8

- Swings between status and solidarity considerations
- Not wanting to intimidate others/peers
- But from another perspective it appeared 'strange' and 'ridiculous' (no longer statusful)

A language-ideological cloudscape...

STATUS

DANES' GOOD
ENGLISH

THE 'REAL'
ENGLISH

DANES' NOT SO GOOD
ENGLISH...

NATIVES/NON-
NATIVES

ADJUSTING (ACCENT)
TO NOT STICK OUT

TALKING 'NORMAL'

SOLVING MIS-
UNDERSTANDINGS
TOGETHER

BEING 'AUTHENTIC'

SOLIDARITY

What have we learned?

- A semi-recognisable language-attitudinal story of Status and Solidarity
- But these are also fitted into the specific setting of this transient multilingual community with its networks of personal relationships in the cohort
- Contingencies of lectures (STATUS issues) and group work (SOLIDARITY issues) are potentially different
- The actual processes behind the (re)formation of these norms and over time is a further research area...

Excerpt numbers from Mortensen and Fabricius (2014)

- excerpt 1: lines 93-104 (interviewee 1)- data example 4 here
- excerpt 3: lines 109-123 (interviewee 4)- data example 3 here
- excerpt 4b: lines 59-72 (interviewee 2)- data example 5 here
- excerpt 5: lines 93-108 (interviewee 3)- data example 2 here
- excerpt 6: lines 15-36 (interviewee 4)- data example 1 here
- excerpt 7: lines 164-177 (interviewee 4)- data example 6 here
- excerpt 8: lines 322-338 (interviewee 1)- data example 8 here
- excerpt 9: lines 171-187 (interviewee 1)- data example 7 here

Abstract

This paper explores the present situation of the complex and changing role that the English language is now playing in Denmark as a whole, with a specific focus on Danish Higher Education. The self-conscious 'internationalisation' of Danish Higher Education has been a complex process, and has been the focus of a four-year research project at Roskilde University called CALPIU (Cultural and Linguistic Practices in the International University). The talk will begin by sketching the general context and its inbuilt linguistic complexities, and then move to discuss a more focused study which examined attitudes towards different forms of English, as expressed in qualitative interviews conducted with four students at an international study program in Denmark. The students belong to a so-called transient multilingual community in which historically-accrued language ideologies cannot necessarily be assumed to be shared by all members. Our analysis suggests that **the students see competence and effectiveness as important parameters** in their evaluation of different forms of English in the university context, irrespective of the provenance of the speaker, but **they also subscribe to familiar language ideologies that favour 'native' English varieties and accents over other kinds of English, although these also get remade in the particular contexts the students operate in.** This could be seen as a contradiction between ideologies, but we argue that the contradiction is only apparent.

Thank you!