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## IN SEARCH FOR GOOD PRACTICES IN MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION: COMPARISON OF MULTILINGUAL UNIVERSITIES' MODELS

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**Summary.** Multilingualism in European higher education is closely connected with issues of quality and attractiveness of tertiary education in many European countries, especially in the countries and regions whose geographical locations and historical backgrounds have greatly shaped their multilingual and multicultural identities. Universities in such regions may be considered as effective examples of how multilingualism can be supported at the higher education level administratively, academically, socially, etc. Multilingualism is viewed broadly – it does not only imply the knowledge of a mother tongue and mastery of the English language but also the knowledge of languages of neighbouring countries and languages of ethnic minorities. Hence, today universities' concerns are connected with implementing multilingual educational models not limited to bilingual programmes focused on English medium teaching. The aim of this paper is to present the trilingual educational model of Narva College of the University of Tartu in comparison with other European multilingual universities' models (Switzerland, Finland, Italy, and Luxembourg) and to discuss nowadays tendencies in their development. The Narva College's model pays special attention to the support of multiculturalism and national identity, to students' counselling and creating necessary pre-conditions for achieving language mastery at higher levels in three languages, it also values the role of cooperation with the community at all possible levels and in a variety of forms and formats.

**Keywords:** higher education; multilingual university; multilingualism policy, university curricula.

### Introduction

With the EU Strategy "Europe 2020" placing a special focus on enhancing "the performance and international attractiveness of Europe's higher education" (2010:14) the issue of improving quality of higher education in multilingual Europe has become a topical theme. Quality is strongly associated with provision and support of diversity and multilingualism at societal and individual levels<sup>37</sup>, i.e. in multilingual Europe

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<sup>37</sup> The term 'multilingualism' implies the knowledge and use of two or more than two languages. Moore and Cajo (2009) associate multilingualism with "the study of social context" and they connect plurilingualism with "the study of individuals' repertoires and agency in several languages". In this article the authors define multilingualism in line with Fortanet-Gómez's suggestion to refer it to "both the social and the individual situation in which two or more languages are known and used by speakers" (ibid.).

universities pay equal attention to “the connection between language and political, economic, social, cultural and educative forces” (Fortanet-Gómez, 2012, p. 7), on the one hand, and to how university students “acquire their second and foreign languages and the psychological processes involved in this acquisition” (ibid.), on the other. Multilingualism is viewed broadly – it does not only imply the knowledge and use of a mother tongue and mastery of the English language but also the knowledge of languages of neighbouring countries and languages of ethnic minorities. Hence, today universities’ concerns are connected with implementing multilingual educational models not limited to bilingual programmes focused on English medium teaching.

The role and place of multilingualism and multiculturalism in universities should be highlighted in university development plans and everyday practices at all levels – from a university’s language policy with requirements to develop the language mastery of students, administration and academic staff, and the presence of multilingual and multicultural components in university curricula and the study processes, to the creation of a truly multilingual environment in cooperation with multilingual universities’ network partners. European multilingualism policy in higher education presupposes not only language studies and researches in this area but it also underlines the importance of studies in various languages with creating a rich and supportive learning environment. This multi-facet approach to the multilingual university studies results in a number of ways of how it can be implemented in practice, and it also indicates problem zones in the process of multilingual universities’ development.

### **Development Strategies of Multilingual Universities**

The first attempt to analyse existing challenges with the mapping of future prospects of multilingual and bi-lingual tertiary education was presented in a short summary of the second conference of multilingual universities in Helsinki (2005) by prof. V. Webb. Webb (2005) argues that though support of national and minority languages in universities is viewed as a real big European challenge, language diversity is considered to be a powerful European resource in the process of internationalization of universities and globalization. An unlimited use of study languages can constitute an additional economic asset for a university but it can be successful only on condition of effective multilingual planning by the university’s management. The advantage of multilingualism at the university level is in providing more access to professional opportunities in the labour market. However, with the advantages multilingual tertiary education can offer, the problem zones remain with insufficient knowledge of languages of instruction by both students and teaching staff, which can lead to a lowering of academic standards. Moreover, language may be used as a tool of division and limited access to resources, so that national languages of a country may be threatened if the dominance of the international academic language (English, in particular) increases. These problems mean that core questions about the nature of multilingual universities and their functioning in Europe are a matter of priority: they concern quality of academic studies, language policies and minorities and the quality assurance of international study programmes.

Quality of teaching and research in European tertiary education area was one of the objects of the surveys and studies conducted within the frame of the British Council Language Rich Europe project (2010–2013). The practice of multilingual universities at 65 general/ public European universities was surveyed on the basis of the following eight criteria: "languages of instruction, languages of university web-sites, target groups for language support at universities, variety of second and foreign languages offered at universities to non-language students, the degree to which European language policies are used to develop and assess curricula, the number of foreign students, mobility of language and content students" (Language Rich Europe: Trends in Policies and Practices for Multilingual Europe, 2012, p. 62). All the universities which participated in the survey provide education in national languages which are the languages of most of the students they enrol within their study programmes, and which are the official languages of their countries. Twenty three universities teach in national, foreign and regional or minority languages. The role of English is becoming more and more important – according to the survey, it is the second language of the majority of European universities due to the growth of globalization in economy and research, and due to the increase in the number of students and academic staff members participating in international mobility. To follow the 2008 EC Communication on student's exchange universities support greater mobility and exchanges and make it compulsory for language students. By supporting academic mobility universities promote their studies and attract foreign students. One more important criterion for university multilingualism, under the study, was the language support provided to students of language and non-language curricula. As the project outcomes show the majority of universities (41 out of 65) offer 3 or 4 foreign languages to their students in the form of general language courses and courses of languages for specific purposes, thus enlarging the target group of students receiving language support at university. The Language Rich Europe project has underlined the importance of connecting universities' policies and strategies with recommendations and policies of the EU and the Council of Europe (CoE) on linguistic diversification and the development of plurilingual competences at all stages of education, and at university level, in particular. More than half of the surveyed universities apply language studies policy documents in their practices, which gives a structural approach to multilingual education provided by universities, and it allows to devise a policy-based model of European multilingual universities.

## **Approaches to Multilingualism by European Multilingual Universities**

In response to the growing internationalization and globalisation in education and research today traditional university language policy is aimed at international communication, with the English language taking a comparatively more important place in comparison with national, minority and regional languages. Hence, the first question to be answered by a multilingual university is how to find a good balance between all languages – lingua franca<sup>38</sup>, national and regional – to promote multilingual competence by using all languages as media of instruction (Redden, 2012). This

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38 A 'lingua franca' language is generally referred to as "an instrument for international communication between speakers who do not share a mother tongue" (Phillipson, 2008, p. 250).

decision is language-policy dependent. Multilingual university language policies are pre-conditioned by socio-political and economic factors (multilingualism is strongly connected with the needs of the labour market and economic profitability), by academic traditions and individual and pedagogical factors (Fortanet-Gómez, 2013). Moreover, in its decision of how to balance languages and to develop multilingual competence by their students, multilingual universities have to be empowered with enough financial freedom to deliver courses in parallel for several languages, to afford tandem teaching and co-teaching of content studies by content and language teachers in a team and to define the extent to which universities can support students and academic staff with language courses of general and specific content, etc. In a nutshell, realisation of multilingual universities' policies in practice is a complex procedure with a number of variables.

These variables can be illustrated by considering education models applied by the founders of the multilingual universities' network – the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, the University of Helsinki, Finland, the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy, and the University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg, which hosted international conferences on bilingualism and plurilingualism in 2000, 2005, 2007 and 2010 respectively. The model of **the University of Fribourg** is pre-conditioned by its location in a bilingual French and German speaking area, which makes it the only European university which offers a full range of courses in two languages. Future students are required to have a full command of one of the languages (at the level of "independent (vantage) user (B2)"<sup>39</sup> at least), and they can choose their full study programme in either German or French. Additionally they have adjunct studies of languages and are given language courses (general or for specific purposes) at the Language Centre. The bilingual curriculum is also an option at the university and it does not require any pre-requisites for being enrolled within it. The student decides himself/herself which mode of studies is the most attractive for him/her. Language support is also provided by means of the students' language tandem and by a wide participation in various student mobility programmes (University of Fribourg: Languages, 2014). The basic principles of the university's model as summarised by Langner and Imbach (2000, p. 467) are: "sensitivity to the cultural and linguistic situation of the region to ensure the balance between languages, and the development of the concept of multilingualism, which includes the use of all languages in daily academic life, administration, self-learning, and students' support".

The requirements of internationalism and bilingualism at **the University of Helsinki** are defined in its Language policy document of 2007. The document outlines the University's position towards languages – languages are considered to be a powerful resource within the academic community, especially in relation to internationalism. Language skills provide support for understanding foreign cultures and introducing the Finnish culture to its students. The University takes it as its special responsibility to preserve and support national languages (Finnish and Swedish). However, the dominant role of English in some research areas and publications is accepted as one of the factors of the internationalisation of Finnish tertiary education. The model of university studies can be described as trilingual as special attention is paid to the improvement of communication skills in all three languages, which presupposes

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<sup>39</sup> Reference to language mastery levels is given in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) available at [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp).

that "all academic staff members are fluent in all three languages and can provide adequate language support within the range of the disciplines in which they taught" (Fortanet-Gómez, 2013, pp. 87). The University of Helsinki is bilingual by law: bilingual degrees are offered in a variety of subjects. Bilingualism is supported institutionally by managerial actions and initiatives of Vice-Rector for Bilingual Affairs, Deans for Bilingual Affairs (at each Faculty), and Bilingual Affairs Committee of Students. Students studying subjects with no Swedish teaching and with Swedish as their first language "are entitled to write degree papers and examinations in Swedish, though teaching is in Finnish" (Bilingual University, 2014, para. 2). Support of multilingualism is maintained at the level of academic studies, research, societal interaction, university services, the day-to-day visibility with a high standard of the language used at all university activities and materials (University of Helsinki Language Policy, 2007). Language studies receive appropriate scaffolding in the University's Language Centre in a similar way to the University's of Fribourg: by general language courses and language courses for specific purposes. A similar language support is also provided by the Centre for Language Studies of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano.

**The Free University of Bozen-Bolzano** is a multilingual university where different subjects are taught in three languages (German, Italian, Latin) and English as lingua franca. The Mission Statement (2014) underlines the importance of the region's context in the definition of the University's aims to provide a multilingual, international education. The contact between languages and cultures in the area is supported by the University's curricula and extra-curricular activities. The model of multilingual studies of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano has three important components: 1) language requirements for enrolment with a particular study programme; 2) a flexible proportion of courses in various languages; 3) presence of monolingual, bi-, multi-lingual courses in university's curricula (Veronezi, 2005). The language requirements for admission to studies presuppose a one language mastery for most of the first year students, but starting from the second and third years of studies mastery of other languages of instruction is mandatory to reach functional trilingualism at the end of students' university studies. Language studies are supported with general and for specific purposes language classes; subject matter classes have language scaffolding and content and language integrated learning. The proportion of teaching in German, Italian and English is defined by University faculties to meet specifics of the specialities they teach, for example, a German medium instruction at Bachelor's level with University's three faculties (School of Economics and Management, Faculty of Design and Art, Faculty of Computer Science) varies from 25% to 40% and 5% percent correspondingly (Veronesi, 2005). At the Master's level the volume of German media teaching remains at 25% with the School of Economics and Management but it is completely substituted by English with the Faculty of Computer Science, where the dominating language is English (100%). However, with the Faculty of Education there are three modes of teaching – monolingual (in German and Italian), bi-lingual (German and Italian), trilingual (German, Italian, Latin). Language models of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano are also supported by the usage of the languages of instruction in the community of Bozen-Bolzano and via autonomous studies of students. Great attention is paid to extra-curricular activities and cooperation with communities and the labour market to enhance multilingualism outside the classroom.

A multilingual community and the advantages of the location in the country bordered by three countries in the very heart of Europe create unique opportunities for multilingual education at **the University of Luxembourg**, which has its characteristic trilingual educational model. This model follows a number of rules. First of all, all university courses are to be bilingual with the second language being present in the volume of at least 25%. At least 20% of all courses should be taught in the three languages of instruction (French, English, and German). Language mastery requirements are defined separately for students (competence in the language of instruction should be sufficient for studies they are enrolled in); for academic staff (competence in two or, ideally, three university languages – French, English, and German), and for administrative staff (at least three and, ideally, four languages – French, English, German, and Luxembourgish) (University of Luxembourg: Multilingualism, 2014). Thus, functional usage of all university/community languages is declared to be an important component of the multilingual model of the University of Luxembourg.

All above described models of multilingual universities have several features in common. They all provide degree education in three languages, with English being present in all models. The languages of instruction are languages of local communities and, at the same time, they include languages with the status of a State language. The proposition of language teaching in all languages of instruction is regulated by language policy documents and the needs of particular courses and degree programmes. There are clearly defined language requirements to admission and completion of studies. Language support is provided systematically by the universities in the variety of forms: from general language courses to language for specific purposes classes and content and language integrated learning. All these universities are located in such areas where both historical and geographical background conditions create pre-requisites for successful communication in all languages of instruction.

### **How to Assess a University's Multilingualism: the Case of Narva College of the University of Tartu, Estonia**

In reality, the degree to which a university might be considered multilingual can be defined on the basis of a number of criteria characterising the role and place of languages in academic (teaching and learning), research, administrative contexts of the university itself and in outside the university context (community, labour market, etc). The language context is shaped by students' mother tongues, languages of instruction, languages of administration, languages of environment and the language of the labour market (Leeuwen, 2004). According to Leeuwen (2004), a detailed analysis of how these aspects are interconnected and in which proportion they are presented in all these language contexts might explain challenges that multilingual universities face. Moreover, the language of institutional communication and institutional information as well as the language of research make the language usage background of a multilingual university clearer. To apply the above criteria and language usage aspects for the analysis of multilingualism at the university level the case of Narva College of the University of Tartu might be very useful.

The language context of Narva College of the University of Tartu, as well as that of any European multilingual university, is pre-determined by its historical and geographical

position. The College is located in the EU/ Russia border city of Narva with the majority of its population being native speakers of Russian. Hence, students' mother tongue is predominantly Russian, but all students are prepared by their secondary education to three of the College's languages of instruction – Estonian, Russian and English. The dominant proportion of Russian in the students' daily communication makes Narva College an interesting case in view of the language context at the state level.

According to the Main Law of the Republic of Estonia (1992, Chapter 1, § 6), the Estonian language is the only official language. The Language Act (2011, Chapter 1) is aimed at protecting and preservation of the Estonian language, and it has to ensure the use of the Estonian language as the main language for communication in all spheres of public life. The act also regulates the use of foreign and national minority languages and defines proficiency concerning the use of the Estonian language in all spheres of the Estonian society's life. The language usage context at the state level shapes the language usage contexts at the tertiary education level: the Universities Act (1995, § 22/8) states that "the official language of instruction in Estonian universities is the Estonian language, but the Council of a University can take a decision on teaching in several languages". Realisation of this power by Narva College's Council allows it to administer studies in the official State language, Estonian (at least 60%), in the language of the regional minority (Russian), and in the English language – the language of its teacher education curricula and the language of its international studies (the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) module), mobility and research. Thus, the language context of the College can be summarised in the following table, where L1 stands for Estonian, L2 – Russian, L3 – English:

1.	Students' mother tongue	L1	L2	
2.	Language of instruction	L1		L2
3.	Language of administration	L1		
4.	Language of environment	L2		
5.	Language of the labour market	L1	L2	L3
6.	Language of communication and institutional information	L1	L2	L3
7.	Language of research	L1	L3	

**Fig. 1. Narva College's trilingual context**

The College is bilingual in two contexts – mother tongue and language of environment – each with approximately the same dominant proportion of the Russian language. With the exception of the language of administration area (100% in Estonian), in other language contexts the College's model is trilingual. Estonian has the most (up to 60%) share in the languages of instruction, communication, institutional information and labour market. Russian and English are used in almost equal proportion in these areas. Close research contacts with Russia and the growing internationalization of the curricula make the use of English and Russian in research area more significant in comparison with Estonian. The only monolingual context in the language picture of the College's life is connected with the language of administration. However, it does not mean that administration staff communicate essentially in Estonian – in fact, all

members of administration are trilingual and can use any of the languages for daily communication purposes. In the official university context Estonian is the language of administration and management. This characteristic feature provides an additional opportunity for practicing Estonian in the College.

Language mastery of all three languages of the College is maintained and supported by the College's policies and strategies. A set of clearly defined regulations of enrolment in study programmes of the College (teacher education curricula ("Early Years Teacher in Multilingual School", "Primary School Teacher in Multilingual School", "Teacher of Humanities in Multilingual School"); "Youth Work", "Entrepreneurship and Management") and requirements set to language mastery upon completion of studies make the procedure visible. The language support is provided with content and language integrated learning, general language courses and language for specific purposes courses (Russian, Estonian, and English). In this respect Narva College follows the models of language studies of multilingual universities. However, the model of Narva College makes a particular focus on additional aspects and services which contribute to multilingualism of the College as an institution of higher education.

All College's curricula have courses and modules which foster a multicultural component, for example, "Multicultural Component in Education", "Multicultural Aspects in Studies in a Second Language", "Multicultural Society". Students' positive attitude and motivation for studies in a second or foreign language is an important indicator of a student's well-being. Satisfaction with the level and quality of studies is a powerful motivational component of students' involvement. Individual and group counselling belongs to the College's model of studies and is one of its strong points. Students' assessment of content and language integrated learning, of the availability of multilingual authentic study materials, of the presence of a safe and enriching learning environment, of active learning and teaching methods is carried out on a regular basis. For example, an ESF (European Social Fund) funded research into "Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Practices of Narva College of the University of Tartu" (2011) provided academic and administrative staff with research-based evidence of the implementation of multilingual practices in Narva College at the level of teaching and student support. One of the aims of the research was to give recommendations for the improvement of multilingual practices at the College. At the administrative-organizational level the support has to be given to the implementation of the CLIL approach to teaching within all the College's curricula and to regular in-service trainings of the academic staff in CLIL. Multilingualism and multiculturalism, tandem/ cooperative teaching should be priority topics for the professional development of the College's academic staff. It was recommended to plan academic studies on the basis of a student's language needs with an appropriate support within the system of pedagogical-psychological counseling. The institutional support of all these initiatives, including additional financial support for lecturers who are engaged in the implementation of core CLIL components (4Cs (culture, content, communication, cognition) class planning and self-reflection, authentic formative assessment, use of authentic materials, creation of a psychologically safe and supportive learning environment which is aimed at decreasing the degree of anxiety and discomfort with teaching content in a foreign language) is directly linked with



improving of teaching and learning at the level of student-centered CLIL methodology (Burdakova, Džalalova, Raud, 2011).

Regular monitoring and studies of university practices is believed to be an important quality assurance indicator and an assessment tool. Every new intake of students brings a different profile of students' language mastery, and the College has to update its approaches to fostering and supporting multilingualism at academic, research and administrative levels while still keeping in focus the ultimate goal of providing qualitative education in three languages and leading its students to B2/C1 (independent (vantage)/proficient (effective operational proficiency) user) mastery of Estonian, Russian and English, depending on the curricula requirements set to achieve study completion.

Last, but not least to mention, is the factor of outside university contexts and labour market's demands. Extra-curricular activities in case of Narva College of the University of Tartu play a significant role in the Estonian language mastery support due to the location in a predominantly Russian medium area. The shortage of the natural Estonian language environment is compensated by the College's staff active usage of Estonian and by College's great efforts in making Narva College a centre for the Estonian language and culture in the region.

## **Conclusion**

The comparative analysis of four multilingual universities' models and the analysis of the key aspects of the trilingual model of education applied by Narva College of the University of Tartu suggest five distinct levels of creating a truly multilingual environment: 1) university polices and state policies in language studies/specialists' training; 2) university's administration and management; 3) academic life, including teaching, learning (incl. in-service training for academic and administrative staff) and research in multilingualism and multiculturalism; 4) pedagogical-psychological individual and group counselling for students; 5) all outside university extra-curricular activities to connect with communities and the labour market. These are the levels which can be taken as the criteria to assess multilingual universities' models. With all possible differences in the implementation of the multilingual university model these aspects should be given first priority.

Today university multilingualism is undoubtedly a question of prestige and quality assurance which contributes to the international image of a university. Universities with languages of instruction being regional or minority languages are located in border regions and places where minorities live in compact areas. The proportion in which languages are presented in multilingual universities' curricula is strongly related to the historical and geographical backgrounds and expectations and needs of the community/society to which a university provides its services. Effective language studies, with the reaching of a corresponding language competence seem to be the basis for successful operation of a multilingual university. This basis should be supported institutionally by adopting clearly defined and effectively realised language polices, which are to follow national language policies and needs of the labour market. Actions to preserve regional and minority languages as languages of instruction at a university should be realised together with the carrying out of university researches

into multilingualism and multilingual/multicultural classrooms. In this respect the importance of comparative studies of multilingual universities' practices is believed to be a powerful trigger in search for good and effective ways of making universities truly multilingual.

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## **GEROSIOS PATIRTIES PAIEŠKA DAUGIAKALBIAME ŠVIETIME: DAUGIAKALBIŲ UNIVERSITETŲ MODELIŲ PALYGINIMAS**

**Santrauka.** Daugelyje Europos šalių daugiakalbystė aukštajame moksle tampriai susijusi su aukštojo mokslo kokybės ir patrauklumo klausimais, ypač tose šalyse ir regionuose, kurių geografinė padėtis bei istorinė patirtis lėmė daugiakalbio ir daugiakultūrio identiteto susiformavimą. Tokių regionų universitetai tampa gerais pavyzdžiais, kaip daugiakalbystė gali būti puoselėjama aukštojoje mokykloje administraciniame, akademiname, socialiniame ir kituose lygmenyse. Daugiakalbystė – plati sąvoka, apimanti ne tik gimtosios kalbos žinias ir gerą anglų kalbos kompetenciją, bet ir gebėjimą komunikuoti kaimyninių šalių ar tautinių mažumų kalbomis. Tad šiandienos universitetų rūpestis – kurti ir diegti daugiakalbius studijų modelius, kurie neapsiribotų dvikalbėmis programomis, išskirtinai orientuotomis į studijas anglų kalba. Šio tyrimo tikslas – pristatyti Tartu universiteto Narvos filialo trikalbį studijų modelį, palyginti jį su kitų Europos universitetų daugiakalbiais modeliais (Šveicarijos, Suomijos, Italijos ir Liuksemburgo) bei aptarti naujausias šių modelių plėtojimo tendencijas. Narvos filialo modelyje ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas daugiakultūriškumui ir tautiniam identitetui plėtoti, studentams konsultuoti ir reikiamoms sąlygoms, tobulinant kalbines kompetencijas aukštesniuose trijų kalbų lygiuose, sudaryti. Čia taip pat vertinamas bendradarbiavimas su bendruomene visuose įmanomuose lygmenyse įvairiomis formomis ir formatais.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** aukštasis mokslas, daugiakalbis universitetas, daugiakalbystės politika, universitetinis studijų turinys.