

## MULTILINGUALISM AS A RESOURCE OF THE SUSTAINABLE UNIVERSITY

### Project 1: Language in Sciences



### *Multilingualism and Linguistic Reflexivity on the Example of Sustainability Research*

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#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Contemporary academic settings are characterised by increased mobility and multilingualism, on the one hand, and the rise of English as the globally dominant academic Lingua Franca, on the other. Scholars are therefore called to position themselves when it comes to processing, producing and disseminating scientific knowledge in terms of the linguistic strategies they adopt, taking into account the demands of their local faculty cultures and disciplinary traditions as well as the economic and professional implications of communicating with a global academic audience. The backdrop against which such decisions take shape is the ongoing debate about the plights and blessings of English as academic Lingua Franca (Carli/Ammon 2008), a debate that is frequently linked to issues of language policy and planning and is deeply ideological and normative in nature. However, empirically grounded research into the role of multilingualism in the professional discourse practices of individual scholars is still scarce.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The project examines conditions, strategies and consequences of multilingual scientific practice. We focus on researchers' perspectives on their language options and the impact of available working languages, as well as on conceptualizations of multilingualism, taking into account factors such as academic discipline, status group and mobility.

#### METHODS

- Semi-structured interviews with about 20 post-doctoral and professorial scholars at Hamburg University from various disciplinary backgrounds
- Selection of participants according to criteria such as status group, mobility, discipline
- Qualitative analysis based on conversation analytic and sociolinguistic approaches

#### MAIN QUESTIONS

- In which languages do participants interact and write, and how do scientific language preferences vary in relation to status group, disciplinary background and professional mobility?
- Does scientific writing in different languages influence scientific concept formation, and what is the role of visual representations in multilingual science?
- How do participants position themselves in relation to popular presuppositions in the German public discourse on the status of academic languages?

#### HYPOTHESES

- The project provides empirical data for critical reflection on habitualised ways of thinking and acting and aims at contribute to the creation of alternative models of practice.
- Results from the project will contribute to the debate on the status of academic languages in Germany.

#### LITERATURE

Carli, Augusto/ Ammon, Ulrich (eds.) (2008). Linguistic inequality in scientific communication today. What can future applied linguistics do to mitigate disadvantages for non-anglophones? AILA Review 20.

Gnutzmann, Claus (ed.) (2008). English in Academia. Catalyst or Barrier? Tübingen: Narr.

Lillis, Theresa/ Curry, Mary Jane (2010). Academic Writing in a Global Context: The politics and practices of publishing in English. London: Routledge.