

PARALLELLINGUALISM AND PARALLEL LANGUAGE USE IN THE RHETORIC OF NORDIC LANGUAGE PLANNING. FROM CONFUSION TO RELATIVE CLARITY AND CONSCIOUS EFFORTS

1 BACKGROUND

Language issues are political issues. This becomes evident when following current debates about globalization and its effects on the position of national languages. In his critique of the depoliticizing of language in recent political discussions, Ives (2010: 517) points out that in order to understand the complex ongoing changes concerning language, political community and globalization, we need more explicit engagement with the politics of language. An example, of when such deeper engagement seems to be needed is in the discussions of multilingualism in the European Union (Phillipson, 2003; Van Parijs, 2004) as well as of the role of English in globalization (cf. e.g. Fishman 1998).

The politics of language often equate with protectionist efforts in the form of restrictive language policies. One of the most notable examples of such policies was the "Loi Toubon" in France in 1994, a law promoting the French language by making it compulsory in all official and some commercial contexts. Interestingly, there have been similar efforts made with English. The drive for public recognition of other languages and the pressure of increased immigration, mainly from South-America and China in the USA led the US Senate to vote on the status of English as the "national language" of the United States (Hulse 2006).

Nevertheless, most cases of language policies and legislation seem to have their roots in the spread of English as the dominant language in business, computing, law, science and politics (see Fishman 1998). Language policies reflecting this development have been introduced all over Europe, including the Nordic countries. In 2006, the Nordic ministers of education adopted a Nordic declaration on language policy describing the linguistic rights of Nordic citizens and setting goals for a Nordic language policy. In Sweden, a new language policy for multilingual Sweden was enacted in 2005 that declared Swedish to be the main language of Sweden. In Denmark there is no official statutory document that nominates Danish as the national language, but the Danish language authority has set various guidelines in order to strengthen the position of the Danish language, see for example the report "Sprog til tiden" of 2008. In Norway, a similar document was published in 2008 under the name of "Mål og mening. Ein heilskapleg norsk språkpolitikk" that aimed to secure the position of the Norwegian language in relation to English (Kultur- og kyrkjedepartementet 2008: 14). The document was unanimously approved by Stortinget (the Norwegian parliament) in 2009, and it has a strong political authority. In Finland, a plan of action for the Finnish language was initiated by the Research Institute for the Languages in Finland in 2009. The recommendations in the plan concern public administration, education at different levels, research, technology, and enterprises. The paper also discusses the EU context and cultural aspects. (Suomen kielen tulevaisuus 2009.) A similar plan was published in 2003 for Swedish, the minority language with equal status to Finnish in Finland (Tandelfelt 2003). Recently, in 2011, a steering group set up by the Swedish Assembly of Finland, led by President Ahtisaari released an action programme with 25 proposals for supporting a Finland with two national languages (Folktinget 2011).

Interestingly, Phillipson (2008) comments that the political and academic circles in Scandinavian countries seem to be concerned about the risks of domain loss, but that there is no adequate research on the topic because the issue is surrounded by many terminological problems. One of the problematic concepts is that of 'domain' (cf. Picht 2011). Another very good example of the terminological problems connected with the issue is the introduction of the term parallellingualism (see for example Linn & Oakes 2007: 65). The Nordic equivalent of the term is frequently used in the Nordic rhetoric of language planning to describe a principle of co-existence of two languages in a society, namely a national language and English. The present article is a concept analytical discussion concentrating on the concept of parallellingualism. The discussion is based on the official debate and written documentation on language policy in the Nordic countries. The methods used are terminological concept analysis and content analysis.

2 THE PREMISE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIVE NEEDS

The concept of parallellingualism, 'parallelspråklighet' in Swedish, was first introduced in the Nordic language policy discussion by Olle Josephson in 2001. The idea was that parallellingualism would be a possible counter to the serious threat to the existence of minor languages, like the Nordic languages, as "complete languages", that is, languages that can be used in all areas affecting a society's life. In other words, the concept was seen as a positive phenomenon that would be beneficial for the Nordic countries in the globalized world.

The concept was considered important because minor language communities cannot cope with the challenge of globalization using their mother tongue as the only means of communication. Furthermore, it is a fact that English at the moment is the language used in all internationally relevant areas, whether we are talking about scientific areas (exchange of knowledge, including teaching and publishing activity), enterprises with international connections or cultural and societal life beyond the boundaries of the language community in question. Another fact is that languages such as French, Spanish and German have suffered domain losses within the field of scientific publication activities, the number of language studies in these languages has decreased and the use of these languages in internationally dominated trade and industry has diminished.

Taking into consideration the language situation today in the Nordic countries, the idea of parallellingualism was introduced in order to satisfy international communicative needs and to ensure professional communication in the mother tongue. In the light of these general considerations parallellingualism appeared to be an ideal solution. However, the concept is connected with at least two problems that may cause confusion. First, it does not seem to have an appropriate definition, and second, the Nordic language term parallelspråklighet seems to have two alternative equivalents in English, namely parallellingualism and parallel language use. Before discussing these issues, we will first take a closer look at which problem it is that the concept is supposed to solve, because this necessarily affects how it should be defined. Above we mentioned that originally the problem to be solved by parallellingualism was the loss of status of minor languages as complete languages. Simultaneously, meeting the challenges of globalization and enhancing international communication were mentioned as benefits. However, the questions that language policy discussions are addressing seem to vary, which creates confusion around the use of the concept of parallellingualism. The following problems are amongst those that have arisen in the discussions:

- Nordic languages are endangered to the point of being threatened with extinction (as the Encyclopedia of language and linguistics List of Languages claims [Brown 2006:143-487])
- Nordic languages are losing the domain of science to English
- Nordic researchers are happy to hand over the domain of science to English because they think they are so good at it
- English monolingualism (lingua franca) suffocates innovation and new-thinking by not allowing thinking as precise as in the mother tongue
- not even the good command of English in the Nordic countries is guaranteeing their strong position in the economic competition of the global world
- Nordic researchers and students cannot perform sufficiently internationally because they concentrate on functioning on their own languages.

Comparing the problems indicated reveals that each could not be solved by the same means. Different measures and language policies are needed. In summary, it would be beneficial for the discussion if the diffuse topics were clearly analysed and the different aims with the "remedies" were made explicit.

3 INSIGHTS INTO THE INTENSION OF THE CONCEPT OF PARALLELLINGUALISM

In the Nordic discussions of language policy, the Nordic equivalent of the term parallellingualism has typically been used more often as an everyday word with a rather fuzzy and context-sensitive meaning than as a term representing a concept with an operational definition within a subject field. In addition, those engaging in the discussion have resorted to broad descriptions of the concept rather than terminological definitions with essential characteristics. We will present some examples of such descriptions below. There are no definitions contained in the pertinent official documents. However, when

analysing the official documents, one finds chunks of explanations and even characteristics which give rise to doubts about the clear meaning that the authors intended to convey.

3.1 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

On the basis of the official documents, central articles and contributions to the general discussion, several characteristics can be isolated that offer an insight into the intension of the concept of parallellingualism:

1. two languages are used side by side
2. the two languages are used simultaneously
3. there must occur neither supersession nor substitution of one of the languages
4. there must be neither subordination nor marginalization of one of the two languages
5. the main areas of application are the sciences, higher learning and trade and industry, meaning a series of functional realms
6. English and the national language can be used in all areas of society
7. parallellingualism will lead to the development of LSPs and the corresponding terminologies in the national language for all areas relevant to the society for which the national language is the main language.

Comparing these statements it becomes obvious that they are not free of contradictions. The first contradiction is that in some documents, the general expression two languages is used. This implies that in principle, any language apart from the national language can function as a parallel language – not only English. In the majority of the cases, however, (international) English is explicitly stated to be the second language in question. The fact that any language is mentioned seems to be political cosmetics, especially if we consider the ever weaker status of French, Spanish and German in the Nordic countries. The second contradiction can be derived from the indication of the national language as a main language - although with reservations. In that case the idea of equal status is invalidated.

According to Harder (2008) parallellingualism is balanced domain-specific bilingualism that exists when two languages are used side by side and when one language is not subordinated or marginalized in relation to the other (translation Heribert Picht). Very similar wording can be found in the Nordic declaration (2007: 13f):

Parallellingualism means the simultaneous use of several languages within one or several domains. One language does not supersede the other; the languages are used in parallel. (Translation HP.)

Harder's definition does not offer sufficient characteristics for a more profound understanding of the concept. However, it seems important to state that his concept is related to domains. The Nordic declaration and other documents also talk rather vaguely about areas without indication of what kind of areas. From the rest of the declaration, however, it can be deduced that the authors mean professional areas, which establishes a clear relation to LSP and professional communication. In a report from a conference on language use within institutions of higher learning the Norwegian Språkrådet (2011) describes parallellingualism as a systematic equal status of two or various languages in academic sphere. Thus, in order to be able to elaborate a reasonable definition of the concept of parallellingualism a widely accepted definition of the area of application (domain) has to be reached. In other words, it must be made clear what 'domain' stands for with respect to parallellingualism.

3.2 THE CONCEPT OF DOMAIN

The concept 'domain' was introduced into sociolinguistics by Fishman (1979: 19) who characterizes domains as institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrences. They are therefore names for "major clusters of interaction situations that occur in particular multilingual settings" (ibid.). Today we can observe two main interpretations of the concept. The first interpretation is based on a sociolinguistic understanding with many similarities to Fishman's definition. Domain is here defined as areas of use such as institutions of higher learning, organizations, trade and industry. The second interpretation represents a completely different viewpoint. In this understanding, domain stands for different subject fields, fields of knowledge or disciplines; usually the traditional array of disciplines such as natural sciences, social

sciences and humanities with their corresponding subdivisions and inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary fields of knowledge (cf. e.g. Jarvad 2001). The same train of thought was applied by various authors working in the field of terminology, for instance the works of Laurén, Myking, Jónsson and Picht (2004, 2008). They define 'domain' as a "subject field or field of knowledge with the corresponding linguistic and other professional communicative resources."

In the Nordic discussions of language policies concerning language and globalization, the question of domain loss for national languages has been considered a serious threat. In the context of LSP planning, a Nordic research group (Laurén, Myking, Picht 2004) has proposed a concept system called 'domain dynamics' in which 'domain loss' is only one of the concepts necessary for the description of the reality in the field. The concept system is illustrated in Figure 1.

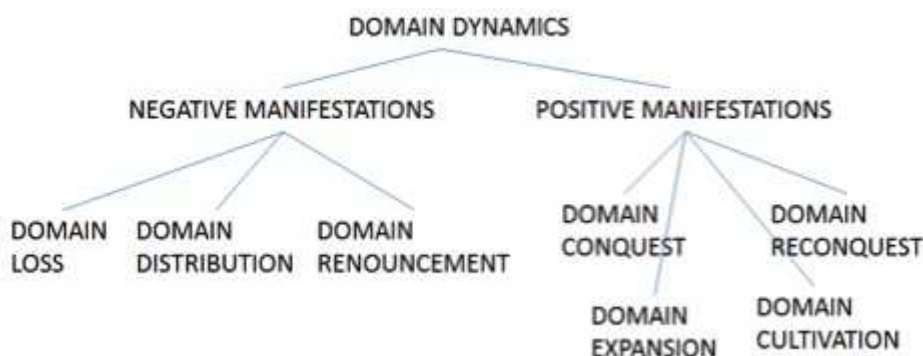


Figure 1. Domain dynamics as a concept system.

In the context of domain dynamics, 'domain loss' can be defined as a loss of ability to communicate in a language at all levels of an LSP field because of deficient further development of the necessary LSP resources. Domain loss therefore always occurs if a language community fails to develop suitable means of communication (Laurén, Myking & Picht 2004).

In the documents discussing Nordic language policy, the following interpretations have been presented as candidates for domains where parallellingualism is used and needed: all areas of society, all areas relevant for the Nordic society, a series of functional realms, and science, higher learning, trade and industry. The first three interpretations reveal that the concept of domain is understood rather vaguely; in fact these are arguably not domains at all. Nevertheless, they may function as the superordinate concept for a specification of domains. The last one, including as it does four different contexts, comes closer to the above mentioned sociolinguistic conception of a domain, but leaves the concept of domain as an explicit field of knowledge unclear. However, in these "domains" parallellingualism can exist, but its practical application still needs a solid dose of relativism.

4 PARALLELLINGUALISM AND PARALLEL LANGUAGE USE – SYNONYMY OR POLYSEMY?

As stated above, the concept of parallellspråkighet may cause some confusion when used in English because the Nordic language term is rendered by two terms. These are parallellingualism and parallel language use. The confusion caused by the two alternative terms illustrates how the choice of term in another language lends additional characteristics and interpretations to the concept (cf. Nissilä & Pilke 2004: 208). In this case, the term parallellingualism seems to be referring to **a state of affairs**, whereas the term parallel language use (NB. also the Nynorsk equivalent parallellspråksbruk) stands for **a concept of action**. In addition, it seems that the semantics of 'parallel' includes two dimensions: spatial and temporal. The spatial aspect includes two points or lines equidistant from one another or the same overall direction where two lines do not intersect or coincide at any point. The temporal aspect again includes the idea of performing multiple tasks at the same time. The interpretation is further complicated by the dimensions of individual and social, but also of the quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Both spatial and temporal dimensions can very well be applied to a social practice where different people stand for different tasks and the collective result of their actions is a state of affairs, but the spatial dimension does not make much sense when describing **individual action** because the languages do coincide and intersect in the individual's head or in their functions. The temporal aspect is equally problematic for the

concept of action because it is not possible for an individual to use two languages at the same time. It therefore seems that the concept must be understood as something social rather than individual, and that in the final definition it should be stated how much (quantity) and what kind of language use (quality) is required before the state of affairs is attained.

For example, Harder's review of the concept presented above concerns parallelsproglighed, parallellingualism, not parallel language use, as the formulation of the definition reveals. If parallellingualism is seen as a state of affairs, as Harder's description (domain specific bilingualism) implies, the language use within any subject field or domain is naturally characterized by multilingualism. This means that both monolingual and multilingual situations are possible within the domain. In this respect, domains (i.e. subject fields) differ. For example, within medicine, English is the norm for academic research, but clinical applications still happen in the mother tongue. In Finland, for example, there is a scientific society, Duodecim, which works to improve the standing of the Finnish language in medicine. The organization has a terminological board and publishes the most important medical journal in Finnish. They also publish both terminological publications and those for professionals and the general public. In other words, there is intense development of the LSP resources going on in Finnish, in spite (or because) of the fact that the academic research is undertaken through the lingua franca, English.

In spite of the obvious potential of parallellingualism, it is arguable that there are many areas that are less affected or not at all affected by globalization and where the national language is the predominant means of communication. One has to consider that socialization into a society is dependent on a good command of the national language. In addition, knowledge transfer takes place at different levels and not only at universities. Furthermore, by no means all people with an academic degree will be employed in international enterprises, institutions or organizations, meaning that it is not a given that the internal or external customers of those graduates will understand English. One cannot for example imagine a vet talking English to a Danish or Finnish farmer about milk fever. Professional schools of different kinds (for example within handicraft and agriculture) generally cannot use English as their teaching language, because the students' general command of English is not sufficient, especially with regard to LSP. These examples raise the question about the extension of the "domain" in which parallellingualism should be exercised. All areas of society may need foreign languages to some extent, but not to the extent that the Nordic discussion of parallellingualism implies.

These few examples show that a national language which includes all relevant LSPs and their registers is indispensable for the satisfactory functioning of a society. As a state of the art, parallellingualism can be understood as a collective practice of multilingualism. Figure 2 illustrates the functioning of a multilingual domain in research, which is everyday life for many researchers with minor languages as their mother tongue. Research questions can arise from discussions in the mother tongue (marked in red), be developed into abstracts, papers, or articles in English and in other languages (marked in blue). The Figure illustrates the concept by showing how two languages can function in relation to each other within one subject field.

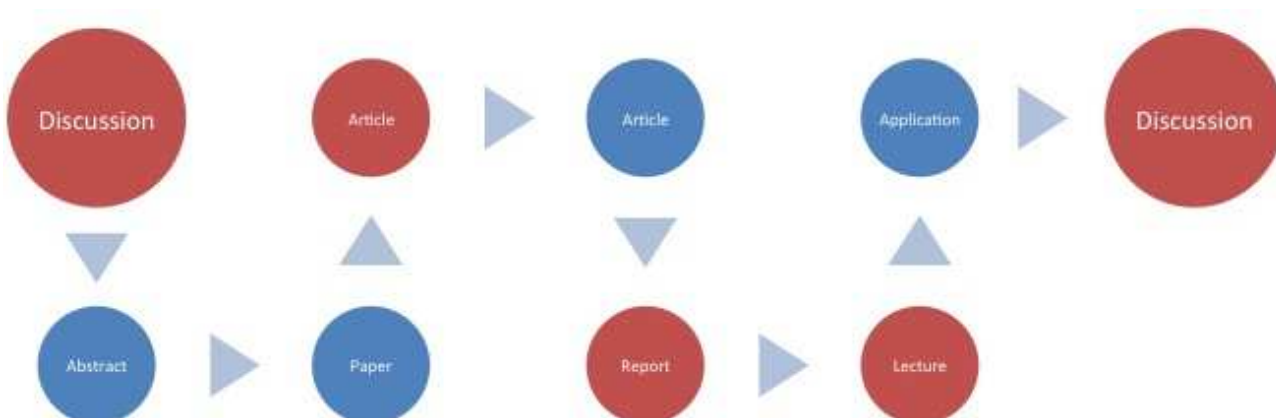


Figure 2. A multilingual domain in research.

The alternative term to parallellingualism, parallel language use seems to refer to an individual action rather than a societal practice. If parallel language use is to be defined as a concept of action it should be

done in terms of typical characteristics of concepts of action in general. These are agent, aim, method, circumstances, place and time (Pilke 2000: 320).

For example, from an individual researcher's point of view the characteristics for the domain of research can be:

- Agent (who): researcher who is a speaker of a minor language
- Aim (why): to function nationally and internationally
- Method (how): by applying a double strategy
- Circumstances (under which conditions): globalization
- Place (where): university
- Time (when): always

Each of the characteristics can then be discussed further. For example, when it comes to the **agent**, it should be made clear whether the concept should be looked at as a social level phenomenon or something an individual is responsible for or both. The concept also requires that the agent is a speaker of a minor language, in which case we need to define what we mean by minor language. The following interpretations and points of view arise: the term minor language can designate (cf. Språkrådet 2011):

- the languages of national minorities (e.g. Swedish in Finland),
- lesser-used languages (e.g. Russian in Finland),
- languages of limited diffusion (e.g. Danish),
- less-taught languages (other than Spanish, French, and German), and
- endangered languages (e.g. North Frisian) in relation to extinct languages (e.g. Merya).

As the list shows, the concept of minor language is far from clear, but in the example above, it comes closest to applying to languages of limited diffusion.

Of all the defining characteristics, **aim** is the most important because it answers the question to which problem parallel language use provides a solution. The **aim** set for parallel language use in the example is that in order to be successful, a researcher needs to reach out to a national audience (e.g. students, fellow researchers in the home country), but also to an international audience (e.g. the research field internationally). It follows that a national language would have functioning LSP resources for relevant fields of research in order to guarantee the precise thinking allowed in the mother tongue, thereby allowing as much new-thinking as possible for the benefit of the society (utilizing all human resources available to solve problems of the world).

As **method** the above example offers a double strategy. By double strategy we mean a process of linguistic decision-making, which requires a conscious effort by individuals and collectives within a domain. For the individual researcher it is a question of choice. One needs to decide what to publish in what language. Inevitably, the intended readership and publication forum dictate the kinds of contents that can be presented. In order to cover both the needs of global science and the needs of local societies, both national language and lingua franca are required. For example, Uwe Pörksen has stated that in research on Ibsen, referring to Ibsen only in English leads to "Ibsen without Ibsen". However, it should be noted that the decisions made by individuals should be guided by a more comprehensive strategy and conscious efforts by the language community, that is, shared aims within the field.

The circumstances in which individual researchers work today are characterized by globalization. Phillipson (2011) lists the following causal factors that drive globalization processes: European integration as a regional variant of globalization; the EU as a project, product and process; and Global English as project, product and process. He states that all these are permeated by language policy, and are therefore subject to the requirements of serious status planning.

The universities' task is twofold: apart from the obligation to publish in foreign languages in order to fulfill the requirements of internationalization and globalization, they have to serve society. That means that they have to cultivate the LSPs of a foreign and of the national language, which could be the promising fundament for parallellingualism. Furthermore, any discrimination in favour of research publications in the national language is counter-productive to the project of parallellingualism.

The aspect of time for parallel language use can be said to be connected with the Bologna process, a single European higher education and research initiative that was instigated at the start of the century and was supposed to be completed in 2010. This development has by 2011 led to a situation where

English as a lingua academica is structurally favoured, so affecting esteem and career prospects (Phillipson 2011).

To sum up, as the discussion above reveals, 'parallelsproglighed' covers two concepts (polysemy), which becomes obvious in English because of the two alternative terms used. Each of the terms indicates a different interpretation (state of affairs, static or action, dynamic). In the rhetoric of Nordic language planning, such a distinction is not applied, which leads to ambiguity and terminological confusion. Therefore, in practical applications, for example at universities, 'parallelsproglighed' can be manifested in very different forms.

5 FROM IDEALS TO PRACTICE

As the discussion above illustrates, the term and the concept of parallellingualism and domain have been applied in various contexts without a precise definition or deeper consideration. Because of the vagueness of the concept, very different kinds of practices of language use count as parallellingualism, which dilutes the original idea of parallelism. One example is the **language policies and strategies** lately introduced in different organizations, such as universities. Even though there are some successful examples – the Faculty of Engineering at Lund University in Sweden and The Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use (CIP) at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark comes to mind – there are also many that only include a list of principles without defining who is responsible for what and what consequences the principles have in a broader perspective. What is more, many universities have not reacted to the issue at all.

In the official documents the only suggestions made are about who might maintain, plan, develop and update a domain's national LSP and terminology, and precisely how all that might be achieved. It is obvious that hardly any institutions would be able to fulfill this task for all possible domains at all levels.

Before discussing practical matters and measures, several superordinate and extremely complex questions with political, economic, sociological and psychological facets have to be answered.

1. How can the linguistic awareness of a language community be developed?
2. Is there a willingness within a language community to maintain the national language as a complete language?
3. Can all or most members of a language community recognize the negative consequences of the loss of a complete language?
4. Can an explicit language policy support the planning, maintenance and further development of a complete national language?
5. How can an entire professional community at all levels be motivated to maintain and develop their LSP and its corresponding terminology?

As long as no positive and viable answers are found, parallel language use will remain a dream and wishful thinking. Finally, as a kind of conclusion, we will set forth some proposals and measures. Several of them are already included in the official documents. A **language policy** is by no means solely a legal issue. Some of the Nordic countries have a legally defined language policy; others follow a more liberal attitude by leaving it to the national players (universities, institutions, and enterprises) to design and implement a language policy. Both models have their strengths and weaknesses, and the realization of a defined language policy depends on the language awareness (including skills, knowledge and attitudes) of the people towards their national language and other languages, the willingness of the national players to support parallellingualism economically as a national project, and the readiness of the government to support the chosen language policy. It is evident that parallellingualism in practice cannot live only on an idealistic idea and through some enthusiastic advocates; it needs an institutional framework supported economically by all interested parties and professionally staffed, especially by well-trained and experienced terminologists.

One important measure would be the creation of terminological data banks which professionals in different functions and at different levels, such as researchers, teachers and authors of teaching material, could access. Term banks should be institutions combined with a service function similar to the consulting service offered by TNC or the Danish Language Council. Term banks could also be joint efforts of different institutions as for example the Bank of Finnish Terminology in Arts and Sciences that is currently establishing a bank of Finnish terminology that covers many disciplines of arts and sciences that are

practiced in Finland. The project is a joint effort by the University of Helsinki and the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies as well as other institutions. (See BFT 2011.)

6 CONCLUSION

The present paper has discussed the concept of parallellingualism based on the debate and documentation of language policy in the Nordic countries from a concept analytical point of view. We have demonstrated how one concept, 'parallelsproglighed', has been used in order to solve many different kinds of problems of language use, even though the definition of the concept remains weak or arguably even contradictory. A concept analysis reveals that the term parallelsproglighed has been used more as an everyday word acquiring its meaning from each context rather than being used as a technical term representing a concept with a precise definition. In this way the term has become an umbrella for various practical solutions concerning language use in organizations as well as in society at large. The analysis of characteristics of the concept also reveals that the discussion in English includes polysemy, where one term seems to stand for a state of art (parellellingualism) and another for action (parallel language use). This adds to the overall confusion surrounding the concept. From a terminological point of view, the semantics of the word parallel do not seem to provide optimal tools for describing what the concept is all about. A simple solution suggested by Brock-Utne (2007: 377) is that the expression multilingualism should be used instead of parallellingualism if the context, in her case the language strategy of the University of Oslo, involves more than two languages:

Parallel normally means two. Even though the committee explains that to them "parallel-lingualism" means encouraging staff and students to attain high levels of proficiency in foreign languages (sic), while preserving Norwegian as the primary language, one is likely to think that the committee encourages Norwegian academics to have two languages, English and Norwegian. If the committee wants to encourage staff and students to attain high levels of proficiency in foreign languages like German, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Arabic or Kiswahili the expression "parallel-lingualism" does not give the right connotations. What about multilingualism?

Another potential solution is proposed by Garcia (2007: xiii) who talks about: 'translanguaging...[which]...normalizes bilingualism without diglossic functional separation'. In our opinion, this term could very well be used for the concept of parallel language use even in a broader sense than bilingualism alone. In this way it would be possible to attain at least relative clarity and avoid additional confusion caused by new terms without a properly defined concept to refer to.

In the light of our results we can conclude that more explicit engagement and conscious efforts with language policy are needed. A good macro-level strategy is necessary in order to guarantee functioning micro-level practices. What could be called a "linguistic consequence evaluation" of strategic decisions is also required. By this we mean a process which incorporates estimating the consequences of the proposed measures in advance of their implementation.

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