

Norming or norms?

Language policy and language choice in a Danish company where English is the corporate language

DORTE LØNSMANN

This article investigates norms for language choice in an international company in Denmark with English as a corporate language. The study investigates the connection between the lack of a language policy and the corporate culture which values freedom from rules and regulations. The study also shows how an absence of a language policy leads to a wide range of expectations and interpretations of the phrase 'English as a corporate language'. Language norms in the company include norms for codeswitching and norms for language choice. Norms for language choice centre on the language competence of addressees and emphasise the important role Danish plays in the linguistic environment in the company. Finally, the results from the study show that the often-used term 'domain loss' and the associated competition metaphor are neither adequate nor fruitful for an understanding of the relationship between Danish and English in Denmark. Instead the two languages enter into a complementary relationship, at least at the level of norms, while language practices are more complex and dynamic than that.