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## **Introduction**

Ludger Zeevaert and Jan D. ten Thije

*Receptive Multilingualism. Linguistic analyses, language policies and didactic concepts*

This volume reveals new perspectives from different theoretical frameworks on linguistic analyses of receptive multilingualism in Europe. Receptive multilingualism refers to the language constellation in which interlocutors use their respective mother tongue while speaking to each other. Case studies are presented from contemporary settings, along with analyses of historical examples, theoretical considerations and, finally, descriptions of didactical concepts established in order to transfer and disseminate receptive multilingual competence. Receptive multilingualism cannot (yet) be regarded as an established field within research on multilingualism, even though the economic and political developments, usually denoted as globalisation, have led to a considerable increase in international communication. In fact, it has become clear, that communicative challenges connected to these developments are hardly solvable using traditional

concepts of multilingualism. Therefore, new concepts have to be developed and discussed.

At the University of Hamburg and especially at the Research Centre 538: Multilingualism pioneering work was carried out. Between 1989 and 1995 the role of semicommunication as used between speakers of Middle Low German and the Scandinavian languages was investigated.<sup>1</sup> Receptive multilingual communication as a form of language contact that had a major impact on the development of the Mainland Scandinavian languages was discussed and in the following widely accepted in the literature on Scandinavian language history (Cf. e.g. Barðdal et al. 1997: 362, Teleman 2002: 29, Josephson 2006: 22). The language situation in contemporary Scandinavia was the subject of research in a second project,<sup>2</sup> yielding several dissertations (Zeevaert 2004, Ház 2005, Golinski 2007 and Doetjes in prep.) and numerous further publications. In fact, only four out of fourteen articles in this volume actually come from the Hamburg research project on semicommunication. This shows how exchange and discussion on receptive multilingualism have spread over Europe and increasingly attracted attention of functionaries in all kind of institutions, various researchers and policy makers. So far, receptive multilingualism had been a typical bottom-up development, supported by official European organisations only to a certain extent compared to other EU language policies.

Since the mid-nineties receptive multilingualism is (being) promoted by the European commission on par with other possibilities of increasing the mobility of the European citizens in order to solve the structural problems within the European Union. Throughout, roughly speaking, the last ten years a marked increase in the research on this topic has been observable, a fact which was not least stimulated by the challenges set by the European motto, *unity in diversity*, which also refers to the linguistic situation in Europe. The increasing importance of this issue has been emphasised by the appointment of a commissioner for multilingualism. Since the beginning of 2007 there are now 27 official languages in the EU. The number of languages spoken as the mother tongue by EU citizens, however, can be estimated to be between 40 and 100, depending on whether nearly extinct languages such as e.g. Karaim in Lithuania or languages that are linguistically very close to the official language of a country like Limburgish in the Netherlands are included or not.

This volume challenges three tacit assumptions in the field of multilingual communication research, that are countered by the following statements:

- Multilingualism is a social phenomenon deeply embedded in European language history.
- Multilingual understanding does not necessarily require near-native language competency.

- English as *lingua franca* is not the one and only solution for interlingual communication in Europe.

The first assumption refers to suggestions that multilingualism is a *recent* phenomenon and is mainly related to globalisation and labour mobility. In contrast to these statements it has to be said that, in actual fact, the idea of monolingualism as the standard case for individuals and societies is the result of the emergence of nation states in Europe in the eighteenth century resulting in national linguistic homogenisation. For most countries outside of Europe and North America monolingualism is a somewhat unusual phenomenon. In many countries in Asia, South America or Africa several different mother tongues are spoken. For exogamic societies such as the Vaupés in South America multilingualism is inevitable. Marriages between members of the same speech community are prohibited, meaning that every child grows up in a bilingual environment (cf. Romaine 1994: 38). In countries like India or South Africa the use of four different languages with different family members and colleagues in everyday life is quite normal (cf. the depiction of Bhatia and Ritchie 2004: 796f., or Kamwangamalu 2004: 726f.), although a complete near native linguistic competence is not seen as a prerequisite for successful communication.

The same pattern can be observed in Europe in the Late Middle Ages and in Early Modern Times when communication was multilingual by default. One purpose of this book is to reconstruct the historical developments of various

multilingual constellations while focussing especially on receptive multilingualism. Scandinavia, Switzerland and the Habsburg Empire offer interesting historical material for the linguistic study of the main characteristics of this multilingual constellation under various conditions. It is not by coincidence that eight of the fourteen articles in this volume refer to multilingual constellations between Germanic languages. In several publications the Scandinavian language community is described as a functioning example of receptive multilingual communication and, therefore, as a model for European understanding. Already in medieval sources, e.g. the Icelandic lawbook *Grágás* ('Greylag Goose') which is passed down in manuscripts stemming from the 13th century, Scandinavia is described as a common speech area in which *dansk tunga* ('the Danish language') is spoken (cf. Melberg 1952 for a comprehensive depiction). At the same time visitors from Southern Europe (like the Spanish archbishop Rodrigo Ximenes) reported that the inhabitants of Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands and England all seemed to speak dialects of the same language (cf. Karker 1978: 7). Germanic languages are the official languages in nine EU countries (covering more or less the same area described by bishop Ximenes in the 13th century) which is more than any other language group. In sum, Germanic languages have determined multilingual history in Northern Europe considerably.

In Scandinavia receptive multilingual communication was propagated as early as the first half of the 19th century as part of the Pan-Scandinavian

movement (cf. Zeevaert 2004: 47 and Doetjes this volume). This movement gradually led to a more intensive political and cultural cooperation between the Scandinavian countries nowadays known as the Nordic Council. However, in the context of speakers of the Germanic language group outside of the Scandinavian languages this consciousness of linguistic commonalities and tradition of receptive multilingual communication is far less developed. In these cases, new didactical concepts had to be established in order to overcome any linguistic differences. It should be mentioned that already over 75 years ago Heinz Kloss (1929) designed a detailed concept of acquiring a receptive competence of the different (West) Germanic languages, aimed at establishing a mutual understanding between speakers of Afrikaans, German, Dutch, Pennsylvania Dutch, Yiddish and Frisian. At that time, his concept was mostly disregarded, seen as all attention was placed on approaches supporting the homogenisation and dissemination of national languages. Currently, a team of researchers from various European universities under the direction of Britta Hufeisen (Darmstadt) are working on the didactical implementation of the receptive multilingual approach towards the Germanic languages that we discuss more extensively below (cf. Hufeisen and Marx in prep.).

The second assumption is related to the conception that only *near-native language competency* guarantees a successful multilingual understanding. On the contrary, the contributions presented in this volume argue in favour of native-like competence no longer being a sufficient prerequisite for

adequate multilingual communication in many business and institutional settings. Consequently, this conception can or even should be replaced by a list of oral and written competencies which comprise (meta-) linguistic and intercultural understanding, action and institutional knowledge. The analyses reveal how the concept of receptive multilingualism requires more than minimal linguistic knowledge, and is neither a simple pidgin nor incomplete language learning. Instead, it represents the acquisition of receptive competencies in more than one given target language, and at the same time includes a set of specific foreign language learning strategies on the side of the hearer in receptive multilingualism.

This leads to the conclusion that *passive competence* is a misnomer for receptive competence. In receptive multilingual constellations as analysed in this volume the main effort has to be made by the hearer. In cases of any problems occurring the interactants have to decide whether they want to somehow solve the problem or choose a so-called *let it pass-strategy* (cf. Baumgarten and House, Doetjes, Dresemann, Zeevaert in this volume). In interscandinavian communicative encounters as examined by Zeevaert (2004) only few instances of accommodation strategies (slower and more accentuated pronunciation, repetitions, reformulations) could be observed. In particular cases, however, differences between (receptive) multilingual and monolingual discourses were clearly visible: in receptive multilingual discourses the terms of communication are not fixed to the socio-cultural knowledge of the members of the specific speech communities. Instead,

they have to be negotiated by the participants and can be considered as being related to *discursive interculturalities* that result from a long cooperation in cultural contact (Koole and ten Thije 1994, ten Thije 2003).

Strategies aimed at ensuring mutual understanding can be negotiated during interaction, but also predefined by thematised in seeking agreement on the preferred language constellation in advance. In the case of the Dutch-German communication analysed by Ribbert and ten Thije (this volume) this was achieved by means of a team agreement between the two persons involved prior to their working relationship at the Goethe-Institute in Amsterdam. This agreement on multilingual institutional discourse fits in well with the language policy of the local institution. The institutional embedding of the interscandinavian discourses investigated by Zeevaert (this volume) enables an official formulation of written instructions for linguistic behaviour that are handed out to the participants at the interscandinavian meetings. Even in the Swiss context official rules for multilingual communicative encounters exist, but in this case they are often overridden by general customs developed by the citizens of the multilingual communities. At least in those cases in which the speakers were not able to develop communicative competences and cultural habits during earlier exolingual encounters this negotiation on multilingual understanding cannot be carried out in advance, meaning that interlingual strategies have to be tried out and executed within the discourse itself.



Common for all these situations is the fact that a prerequisite necessary for the success of mutual understanding lies in the acquisition of new linguistic competences. These competences only partially overlap with those usually focussed on in foreign language teaching. Besides the competence in their mother tongue speakers have, differently elaborate, partial competences in other language varieties, but also knowledge about other languages which may be less developed or even wrong (cf. Coseriu 1988: 153ff.). A receptive multilingual competence as described by Lüdi (this volume) goes beyond pure linguistic knowledge and utilises those partial competences by means of developing multilingual communicative strategies. Such strategies can be developed by the participants within multilingual communication. The emergence of pidgins in situations of language contact between members of mutually incomprehensible languages shows the capability possessed by humans to establish mutual understanding if they wish to do so.

A distinct improvement in communication, though, can be reached by using strategies that go beyond the utilisation of the context or of universal linguistic commonalities and by taking advantage of any given correspondences between the languages involved. As Hufeisen and Marx (this volume) point out, the term *foreign languages*, viewed from the perspective of receptive multilingualism, has to be considered as a misnomer seen as no language can really be regarded as foreign.

However, the ability of language users to find such correspondences is limited. Hufeisen and Marx show that language learners have difficulties

recognising similarities between languages automatically. Strategies of linguistic transfer have to be made obvious with the help of didactical procedures. For the Romance languages a method of inference with the help of so-called bridge languages has already been established. Horst Klein and Tilbert Stegmann developed an elaborate method (Klein and Stegmann 2000; McCann, Klein and Stegmann 2003) working with students of Romance languages at the University of Frankfurt. It was used successfully in language instruction and is based on the technique of the “seven sieves” which are used to sieve through texts in search of lexical, morphological and syntactic correspondences in the bridge language in order to make clear the similarities between the languages. The Romance languages provide especially good conditions for this procedure seen as they are much closer related to each other than e.g. the languages of the Germanic group. Intercomprehension between the Germanic languages can profit from the EuroCom method developed originally for Romance languages. For instance, ideas taken from the implementation of the EuroCom method on the Germanic languages (Hufeisen and Marx in prep.) were used successfully in an introductory Icelandic course offered to students of Scandinavian languages without previous knowledge of Icelandic at the University of Hamburg.<sup>3</sup> The success of the method was tested. On the one hand an impressive increase in reading comprehension was reached. On the other hand special characteristics of reading in a foreign language (as described by Madeline Lutjeharms in this volume) led to less satisfactory

results for certain text types. More conscious operations of linguistic transfer were required, with the accumulation of attentional processing leading to an overexertion of the working memory which in turn led to frustration and demotivation among the test persons. In sum, research on didactical methods of automatising strategies of linguistic transfer is needed. Furthermore, the practical use has to be obvious for the learners in order to keep them motivated. The disenchanting results of the neighbouring language education in Scandinavia (cf. Zeevaert 2004: 59ff.) – as a part of their education in the mother tongue, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish pupils are also instructed in the respective languages of their Scandinavian neighbours – can mainly be attributed to a lack of motivation.

A counterexample is given in the material provided by *NUAS*, an organisation which arranges meetings of employees from Scandinavian universities and applies receptive multilingualism at their conferences (cf. Zeevaert in this volume). This material is sent to the participants of the meetings in advance and contains most importantly information on useful strategies suggested in order to cope with the special communicative conditions. Limited complexity and a clear structure make it possible to work through the material in a short time.

Zeevaert's (2004, this volume) analyses of those meetings give the impression of a well-functioning communication. The participants use the linguistic instructions as a starting point for the development of a receptive multilingual competence. During the course of the interactions the

participants gain experience and at the same time acquire metalinguistic knowledge about the languages involved, but also knowledge about successful strategies of communication which in turn can be integrated into their communicative competence. In different constellations in which the participants reveal diverse experiences those varied competences can lead to individually differing strategies, but likewise in the multilingual settings as described by Werlen (this volume) discourse traditions are established in order to cope with the peculiarities of this multilingual situation.

The third – nowadays hardly tacit – assumption refers to the conception that the mastery of *English as Lingua Franca* is the most plausible solution for all international communication in Europe. Even though English is learned as a foreign language by the majority of the EU citizens the distribution of competence is rather erratic between and inside the different countries depending on varying traditions and levels of education, not to mention the fact that it is easier for speakers of Germanic languages to master English than for learners from other language groups. In their contribution to this volume Baumgarten and House come to the conclusion that even in discourses carried out by rather proficient speakers of English as a foreign language communicative incongruities still tend to exist mainly resulting from the speakers' different (socio)linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Complete mutual intelligibility between the different varieties of *lingua franca* English cannot be taken for granted, and the results presented by

Dresemann (in this volume) indicate that participants in international business encounters cannot rely solely on their knowledge of English. The contributions in this book do not dispute the importance of English as an international language. However, they exemplify how – depending on the typological distance of the languages involved, the language competencies of the participants, the given institutional preconditions and the non-linguistic purposes that have to be realised – the method of receptive multilingualism can be a far more efficient way of gaining mutual understanding than the use of English as a *lingua franca*. Europe is in need of a language policy that accounts for the diversified regional interests instead of issuing solutions that run counter to the actual local requirements. The learning of this lesson is one of the major challenges facing a common European language policy.

#### *The contents of the contributions*

##### *Part 1: Historical Development of Receptive Multilingualism*

**Kurt Braunmüller** presents a survey of the linguistic situation in northern Europe in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Times. At that time receptive multilingualism was just one aspect of a complex diglossic/multilingual situation. It was used mainly in face-to-face trading communication. Complete bilingualism was rather an exception, and merchants more often than not only possessed partial competences or a

passive competence in the second language. This communicative situation was not unusual for people in the Middle Ages seen as no standard language existed and every speaker used his own dialect and was used to having to identify sound correspondences, grammatical morphemes and divergent terms and transfer them into his own dialect. Furthermore the use of a *lingua franca* was influenced by the speaker's origin, that is to say by his mother tongue, leading to syntactic and semantic differences between the speakers. In some contexts even intrasentential code mixing was not unusual.

Latin was primarily the language of the church, the sciences and of higher education, in other words of written domains, whereas Low German was the *lingua franca* in trading situations, but also for political consultations in face-to-face communication. Low German was a prestigious language for the upper classes in northern Europe and the source of extensive lexical borrowing. Due to both the close genetic relationship and the frequent contact between Low German and the Scandinavian languages mutual understanding in oral communication was possible. Seen as they only remained in the Scandinavian towns for shorter periods the Hanseatic merchants generally did not acquire an active command of the Scandinavian languages. Common traditions of commerce and the familiarity with the terms of trade combined with processes of linguistic accommodation enabled successful face-to-face communication. Due to the fact that Middle Low German was the more prestigious language in this contact situation the

accommodation was often performed by the Scandinavians and resulted in a broad lexical, but also morphological influence of Middle Low German on Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. In the course of time, however, the persistent contact led to the acquisition of deeper knowledge of the other languages improving the success rate of receptive multilingual communication even more.

Finally, nationalism put an end to this way of unmediated communication between genetically closely related languages. In contrast to the European Economic Community, which developed from a trading organisation to a supranational political alliance, the Hansa was confronted with growing national efforts towards the end of the Middle Ages causing trading restrictions and ultimately the closing of all trading offices and either the migration or an integration and linguistic assimilation of the merchants. Furthermore, political power was centralised and linguistic standardisation leading to the formation of national languages initiated. It became necessary to demonstrate one's political loyalty by means of practising linguistic loyalty, and this development also implicated a certain loss of linguistic flexibility. The speakers were no longer confronted with dealing with deviating language varieties. A modern example for this coherence is the fact that Norwegians, who already have to deal with different spoken and written varieties of Norwegian inside their own borders, perform much better in tests on interscandinavian comprehension than their Danish or

Swedish neighbours (cf. the contributions by Delsing and Doetjes in this volume).

By means of three Scandinavian case studies Braunmüller's article points out the role of receptive multilingualism as a triggering factor in the development of the modern Scandinavian languages. Receptive multilingualism was the starting point of L2 language acquisition by adults. German speakers compared the definite article *þann/þan/þat* with the Middle Low German article with a *d-* in the onset and consequently replaced the Scandinavian fricative with the familiar obstruent *d*. This pronunciation was taken up by Scandinavians as a kind of prestige pronunciation and ultimately led to the modern Mainland Scandinavian forms *den/det/de*. In a similar manner the Low German periphrastic genitive was adopted by the Scandinavian languages as the result of a reanalysis. Even the decrease of V1 patterns in main clauses is described as being influenced by adult L2-learning, viz. as a simplification of syntactic variation in the target language following the model of the source language. In this sense receptive multilingualism represents a sufficient starting point for second language acquisition, especially for adults.

A second historical example of a multilingual setting involving receptive multilingualism is contributed by **Rosita Rindler Schjerve** and **Eva Vetter**. The authors describe the language policy of the Habsburg Empire in the 19th century as an exception to the general development of linguistic homogenisation that played a central role in the formation of nation states as



described by Kurt Braunmüller. German as the language of the politically dominant ethnic group functioned as a *lingua franca* but never became an all-embracing state language. Like in many other historical multilingual situations primary data referring to the actual language use is not available. The reason for the lack of contemporary reports on the language use in multilingual settings could be seen in the fact that such situations were not considered to be unusual and thus not newsworthy. Therefore, this investigation is based on official documents of language policy that regulate the multilingual communication and can thus be seen as reactions to contemporary problems and thus as a fitting description of the situation. Even though the Habsburg language policy was based on the principles of pluralist equality and democratic participation and was aimed at meeting the linguistic requirements of the various ethnic groups throughout the different parts of the empire, it was far from being unambiguous and could differ considerably over time and geographical space. This fact is illustrated by three case studies of three specific domains – education, administration and the judiciary – in the different crown lands of Bohemia, Galicia and Trieste. The centralistic Habsburg Empire and the European Union as an economic and political alliance of equal member states can only be compared to each other to a limited extent. The noteworthiness of the Habsburg model of multilingualism lies in the fact that it is one of the few documented examples of linguistic pluralism and that the reasons for its success and failure can both be described and utilised in the context of the contemporary

European language policy. One important reason for the failure of the implementation of principles of a pluralistic language policy in the Habsburg Empire was that on behalf of an equation between the central power and the political elites in the different territories the interests of the minorities were neglected. For a modern European language policy to be successful the lesson has to be learned that it needs to be based on a set of commonly shared values and principles constituting the ideological basis for democratic decision-making and the solving of problems. The case studies from the Habsburg Empire illustrate that it will be crucial for the EU to find a balance between the necessity for a certain homogenisation of the member states and the respect with regard to their differences. Centralistic interventions may thwart the aim of democratic equality if they disregard diversified regional interests, and it is at least doubtful whether the tendency towards 'English only', which at the moment can be observed within the EU and is surely looked upon especially by the smaller countries as a way to reach democratic equality in the linguistic domain, will be accepted by all members. The experiences from the Habsburg Empire are one of the few examples which can be used to build a multilingual supranational commonwealth on common political grounds in Europe.

*Part 2: Receptive multilingualism in discourse*

**Anne Ribbert** and **Jan D. ten Thije** review three different factors that influence the occurrence of receptive multilingualism in German Dutch

interlingual contact, namely factors referring to social and linguistic relations between nation states, the institutional constellations within nation states and factors related to the perspectives of the individual interactants. Compared to Scandinavian languages, German and Dutch are not as closely related (Goossens 1985). Moreover, Germany and the Netherlands have a more discordant common history resulting from the Second World War (Westheide 1997). Consequently, the willingness to exercise receptive multilingualism in German Dutch interlingual contact is – irrespective of any existing language correspondences – negatively influenced by their social history (Herrlitz 1997). Nevertheless, Beneke (1996, cit. in Loos 1997) states that in the Dutch-German border area receptive multilingualism is increasing. On the basis of a pilot study carried out at the Goethe Institute in Amsterdam the authors illustrate the occurrence and success of receptive multilingualism within institutional cooperation. Moreover, the study reveals that the existence of key words is an important prerequisite in order to successfully make use of receptive multilingualism. According to Koole and ten Thije (1994) the cognitive structure of institutional key words can be characterised as follows: they represent common institutional knowledge, they are abstract frames whose slots are filled in by concrete knowledge elements, and are connected to institutional purposes. In order to investigate processes of understanding facilitated by key words the authors also address intercultural characteristics of receptive multilingualism. Research into intercultural communication has for a long time focussed on

misunderstanding. Bührig and ten Thije (2006) reveal a shift of attention towards successful intercultural discourse. In actual fact, the article reveals how key words contribute to intercultural understanding by means of exemplarily reconstructing the manner in which cultural apparatuses (Rehbein 2006) are applied by the interactants.

**Ludger Zeevaert** aims at giving a theoretical subsumption of the term *receptive multilingualism* and related terms such as *polyglot dialogue*, *semi-communication* and *intercomprehension*. It is common that these terms denote differing situations of communicative encounters between members of different speech communities. However, in contrast to interpreting, the use of a *lingua franca* or L2 communication, those situations are characterised by the fact that the speakers do not aim at communicating in a common discourse language but stick to their own L1 while being able to understand the respective L1 of their counterpart. Referring to Maturana's radical constructivistic approach to communication, Zeevaert questions the opinion of receptive multilingualism being a form of 'passive' multilingualism. Based on examples from interscandinavian professional discourses he describes the role of the hearer in receptive multilingual communication as an active one. Thus, it is not the speaker who creates information by sending a message to a hearer. The information is far more created by the hearer in the process of integrating the speaker's utterances into his cognitive space and thus reducing his own uncertainty. Following this model a prerequisite for successful communication is a consensual

sphere common for both speaker and hearer. The suggested active role of the hearer becomes obvious particularly in the context of receptive multilingual communication seen as a common language as a part of this consensual sphere is missing. Due to either active learning (in the case of mutually unintelligible languages) or overlaps between the respective languages involved (in the case of mutually intelligible languages), parts of the linguistic systems of the participants involved in the communication are identical. In contrast to communication between speakers of the same speech community with identical codes, however, it can not be taken for granted that an utterance will always be understood. Of course the context – or the consensual sphere of speaker and hearer – can help to support successful communication. People sharing common cultural traditions, common professional knowledge or general common interests are consequently more successful in establishing mutual understanding than people without a common background. One of the few examples of institutionalised receptive multilingual communication is interscandinavian semicommunication. As shown in the contributions by Delsing and Doetjes in this volume, the level of the understanding of Danish by Swedes and Swedish by Danes does not suggest that a spontaneous, unimpeded understanding between speakers of these languages would be possible. Zeevaert's analyses of interscandinavian discourses, however, do not reveal any severe difficulties in understanding that would justify a characterisation of those discourses as problematic. He comes to the conclusion that one

main factor for the success of the communication is the common professional background of the participants. But also the fact that the conversations are held by larger groups, partly from the same country, helps to facilitate the communication seen as it eases the pressure on the individual speakers. In some cases even signals of second language acquisition can be observed, mostly in discussion groups with participants more experienced in interscandinavian communication. They include strategies of dealing with trouble sources, but also metalinguistic knowledge which is at least partly acquired during the discourses. The disadvantage of L2 or *lingua franca* communication compared to receptive multilingualism can be seen in the discourse behaviour of speakers who are not able to use their mother tongue (mostly Finns and Icelanders who have to speak Swedish or Danish). Those speakers take part in the discourse less actively. A second European area where receptive multilingualism is practiced is Switzerland. **Iwar Werlen** provides an outline of Swiss multilingualism which is characterised by a demand for linguistic peace. Switzerland is a multilingual state with four official languages, even though the language borders on a whole are separated quite clearly meaning that individual bilingualism is rather an exceptional case. In contrast to Switzerland as a whole, most of the 26 cantons have only one official language. In recent years language policy has been directed at supporting receptive multilingualism by means of teaching a second national language in primary school with emphasis on the importance of receptive competences. For the

communication of people from different language backgrounds the default model in Switzerland is the territoriality principle, i.e. the discourse language is the official language spoken in the respective area. In bilingual regions, however, different models are used. Werlen analyses language use in public or semi-public places in two cities in the bilingual Swiss cantons Berne and Fribourg. The situation in the German/French bilingual city of Biel/Bienne can be characterised as a double monolingualism system. Two educational systems, a French and a German one, exist, and communication with the administration can be carried out either in French or German. Since no clear separation exists between the two language groups, German-speaking children automatically acquire French and French-speaking children acquire German as an L2. In addition to this, French and German are taught as foreign languages at school from the age of 11 onwards. In Fribourg/Freiburg, another French/German bilingual city, German is a minority language. Therefore French is expected to be the default language used in informal communicative encounters between unacquainted interlocutors in public places. The results from test recordings confirm this assumption. Interestingly enough, in cases in which French speaking persons were addressed in (Swiss) German and vice versa one could observe differences between the two cities Biel/Bienne and Fribourg/Freiburg. In Biel in most cases the addressee accommodates his choice of language to the addresser, especially in service encounters in which the greeting of the customer decides on the language of discourse. Even if one of the

interlocutors has limited knowledge of the respective discourse language this does not affect the usage of the Biel model. In Fribourg, however, in cases in which a French speaking person is addressed in (Swiss) German the conversation will continue in a receptive multilingual mode unless the addresser accommodates to the addressee's language. This article supports – like other articles in this volume – the opinion that receptive multilingualism is a significant, democratic option for multilingual societies. In multilingual settings different usages of language choice will automatically develop under different circumstances. However, the Swiss model shows that political influence on those usages is also possible.

The contribution by **Georges Lüdi** also deals with examples from authentic receptive multilingual discourses in Switzerland. In contrast to Werlen's observation of casual discourse he analyses the internal organisational communication in different Swiss companies. Patterns of language choice are less clear in these institutions than in the bilingual Swiss cities where traditions for language use have developed. In the examples analysed by Lüdi the interlocutors have to negotiate the language choice while making use of all communicative resources they dispose of. The status and action potentials of the participants play an important role in this kind of institutional discourse, leading to the conclusion that the Swiss model of receptive multilingualism is, in contrast to Werlen's examples from Fribourg, by no means self-evident. Even in cases in which the official language policy of a company follows the Swiss model differing patterns of



language choices can nevertheless be observed. In actual fact, bilingual bank discourses adequately illustrate those difficulties. The discourse data analysed by Lüdi originated from the fusion of a monolingual French-speaking and a monolingual German-speaking bank. The receptive competences of the interlocutors are not always sufficient in order to be able to stick to a receptive multilingual mode, and various techniques such as accommodation to the language of other interlocutors, language mixing or linguistic mediation by means of translations or short summaries by linguistically more skilled discourse participants can be frequently found in the discourses. In addition to this, a problem that appeared only marginally in the data investigated by Werlen plays an important role in Lüdi's examples. He refers to the constellation as not being bilingual but rather trilingual, given the fact that in monolingual settings the German-speaking employees usually speak their local Swiss-German dialects, whereas the German acquired by the French-speaking employees is the written standard variety. Thus, the use of Swiss-German in certain contexts automatically excludes the French-speaking interlocutors. A different strategy was observed in the discussions at a scientific colloquium involving participants from different French, German and Swiss universities. In this constellation the language choice in discourse was not defined in advance, and the participants had to negotiate their linguistic behaviour within the discussion. The large number of instances of language crossing in which speakers do not use their L1, but instead, for reasons of politeness, switch to the L1 of

their interlocutor or to the *lingua franca* English, show that the practical implementation of the theoretical concept of receptive multilingualism leads to different outcomes in different constellations. Nevertheless, all examples of receptive multilingual discourse investigated in the article can be described as being successful.

**Bettina Dresemann** analyses the occurrence of receptive multilingualism in business communication. English is the number one language used in business communication today. However, sometimes various languages are applied within one discourse leading to various ambiguities appearing. In actual fact, interactants need to grasp utterances in a language they do not actually understand. Therefore, the author argues that participants in international business encounters cannot rely on their linguistic knowledge alone (i.e. mainly lexical and semantic knowledge), and consequently have to refer to other elements of the discourse such as tyings and cues, which enable them to relate the utterance to the situation, e.g. a business negotiation. Furthermore, discourse knowledge enables the interpretation of the utterance in combination with institutional, professional and general knowledge such as knowledge on international business constellations in general. Only taking this knowledge structure into account is it possible to explain how participants manage to understand each other and are able to act in linguistically ambiguous situations. The ability to draw conclusions from linguistic and non-linguistic cues and to combine them with other forms of knowledge, such as pragmatic and institutional knowledge, is

therefore extremely essential for successful communication in multilingual (business) discourses.

English as a *lingua franca* plays a prominent role in communication between speakers from different speech communities, not only in business discourses, but also in private encounters. Even in areas with a strong tradition of receptive multilingual understanding English has gained ground as a means of establishing communication on equal grounds (cf. the contributions by Delsing and Lüdi in this volume). **Nicole Baumgarten** and **Juliane House** compare discourses between L1-English speakers with those of speakers of English as a *lingua franca* while paying special respect to the linguistic construction of subjectivity in the context of *I + verb* constructions (e.g. *I think, I don't know, I mean*). The analysis is based on Halliday's classification of verbal process types. Baumgarten and House find differences in the expression of subjectivity between L1 English and *lingua franca* English discourses, but also between the different groups of *lingua franca* users. On the one hand the *lingua franca* users have a more restricted repertoire of means for the expression of subjectivity, on the other hand the distribution of the different process types also differs. The *lingua franca* users seem to overgeneralise and refer to the basic meanings of a structure, possibly in awareness of miscommunication, avoiding more grammaticalised structures and pragmatical usage, whereas L1 speakers of English tend to use certain constructions as verbal routines. A comparison both between different *lingua franca* discourses and also between different

speakers reveals considerable individual differences that can partly be attributed to the speaker's L1. Other factors, however, may also play a role in the emergence of differences. A characteristic feature shared by *lingua franca* English discourses and receptive multilingual communication (as described by Zeevaert in this volume) is the use of the so-called 'let-it-pass' strategy. Incomprehensible or inadequate utterances are often simply ignored by the discourse participants. This could be seen as a preference for a restriction of the communication to the level of a mere exchange of informational content in both settings. The study is not able to invalidate arguments that were raised against *lingua franca* communication and described it as less precise, monotonous, toilsome and as lacking a cultural integration (cf. e.g. Finkenstaedt and Schröder 1990). Even if in most cases of supranational communication throughout Europe it will not be possible to substitute the use of English with receptive multilingual communication due to the lack of receptive competences, the results from the study manage to raise the question as to whether differences between the usage of English as an L1 and *lingua franca* English actually influence the communication between L1 and L2 speakers of English. It should be seriously analysed in which contexts receptive multilingualism would actually be a profitable option.

*Part 3: Testing mutual understanding in receptive multilingual  
communication*

The mainland Scandinavian languages Danish, Norwegian and Swedish are usually characterised as mutually comprehensible. In most interscandinavian encounters Scandinavians use their mother tongue expecting to be understood by their fellow Scandinavians. This impression of generally successful communication is confirmed e.g. by Zeevaert's (in this volume) analyses. However, different studies in this field, but also understanding problems frequently reported by the participants in interscandinavian meetings suggest that receptive multilingual communication in Scandinavia is in fact not always unproblematic. In order to describe the mechanisms of receptive multilingual communication in Scandinavia objective measurements of the degree of mutual intelligibility are necessary. These measurements could also help to explain why this way of communication does not play a more prominent role in the Romance or Slavic language areas, even though the linguistic overlaps are comparable to those in Scandinavia, and to rate the importance of non-linguistic factors such as attitudes or cultural and political factors for mutual understanding in a more reliable manner. **Gerard Doetjes** presents an overview of the different studies of Scandinavian intercomprehension that have been performed since the 1950ies and describes the methodological problems connected to the different approaches. He comes to the conclusion that the test results are heavily influenced by the choice of method, a fact which has

to be taken into account when applying the results to further research.

Doetjes tries to determine how the difficulty level, but also how the type of questions used in the tests influence the results. Test types using pre-formulated answers enable the test persons to rely both on the text and on the information given implicitly in the questionnaire, whereas in the case of open questions the participants have to rely more on information gathered from the texts themselves. This leads to higher average scores in the multiple-choice test and to lower scores in tests demanding summaries.

Therefore, in order to be able to determine the reliability of a test, it might be useful to recalculate the results on the basis of Doetjes' comparison of the different methods under otherwise stable test conditions. Moreover, the results support Lutjeharms' description of the processing levels referring to the reading of related languages in such a way that longer summaries providing a wider range of possibilities to make use of formulations found in the test text led to better results compared to short summaries that require a more advanced processing of the content and a certain act of dissociating from the formal side of the test text.

The INS investigation presented by **Lars-Olof Delsing** is the most recent analysis on the intercomprehension of Scandinavian languages. It was funded by *Nordiska kulturfonden* ('the Nordic Cultural Fund') and carried out between 2003-2005. It is aimed at describing the changes in mutual understanding in Scandinavia which have occurred since the last extensive study performed by Maurud over 30 years ago. This new investigation was

felt to be necessary due to the considerable changes experienced by the Nordic countries since the 70ies. Internationalisation and globalisation have influenced the national economies, new media have amplified the choice of international TV- and radio channels, and a large number of working migrants and refugees have contributed to a wide-scale change in the structure of the Scandinavian societies. Better connections such as the Öresund bridge between Denmark and Sweden or the Svinesund bridge connecting Sweden and Norway support the mobility between the Scandinavian countries and would therefore be expected to improve interscandinavian comprehension. On the other hand, changes in the school system clearly support the importance of English, and also the EU membership of Denmark, Finland and Sweden has diminished the importance of the interscandinavian cooperation. 1200 pupils from all Scandinavian countries were tested in Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and English. The investigation was enhanced by testing the parents of some of the pupils in order to be able to compare language comprehension between different generations. The test consisted of an extract from a TV show, a radio newscast and a newspaper article. The language understanding was tested by means of open questions referring to the contents and by asking for translations of certain words from the text.

The results of the test more or less confirm the results from Maurud's study. In some crucial points, however, the design of Delsing's investigation differs considerably from that of Maurud, for example with respect to the

number of participants, the geographical distribution of the test persons and also the inclusion of Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Finland and Iceland. A comparison with Maurud's results, and also with the results from the adult control group, indicates that the level of intercomprehension in Scandinavia is decreasing, especially in Denmark and Sweden. Even though the results from the investigation may seem disenchanting with respect to the success of receptive bilingualism in Scandinavia, especially when compared to the understanding of English, the article also points out that comprehension tests cannot be seen to present a realistic picture of interscandinavian communication. In real life, context and non-linguistic behaviour positively influence understanding, and a crucial advantage of receptive multilingualism, viz. the ability to make use of the mother tongue, is not accounted for in the test.

*Part 4: Determining the possibilities of reading comprehension in related languages*

**Madeline Lutjeharms'** contribution refers to the special conditions of reading comprehension in related languages. It is focussed on the different processing levels that can be identified in the context of reading. When reading in a foreign language, lower levels of processing such as word recognition or syntactic analysis require attentional resources, in contrast to L1 reading where the processing of such form-based linguistic information generally functions automatically. Comprehension strategies comparable to



those of hearers in receptive multilingual discourse can be observed (e.g. guessing, skipping parts of the text). Another problem is also reported in the context of oral communication between speakers of Danish and Swedish (cf. Teleman 1981: 105). In some cases the processing on the form level requires so much capacity that the reader is not able to notice the content. This article pays special attention to the processing of cognates. Cognates play an important role in receptive multilingual communication between related languages, and methods such as EuroCom (cf. Hufeisen and Marx in this volume) make use of cognates in order to establish a faster and more efficient access to related languages. In reading, in contrast to speaking, even non-relevant languages are activated. For the decoding of a German text by Dutch speakers not only the closely related L1, but also the genetically more remote English language has effects on word recognition.<sup>4</sup> However, Lutjeharms was able to identify individual differences between learners in their ability to detect correspondences between related languages, and the application of the ‘seven sieves’ approach, a method of explicitly establishing conscious formal correspondences between those languages relevant for the different process levels, is a good way to improve this skill.

The role of deceptive cognates (‘false friends’) is discussed in a controversial manner in the research on receptive multilingualism. On the one hand, psycholinguistic experiments suggest that cognates, as opposed to their non-cognate equivalents, show a common representation in the mental

lexicon, facilitating automatic processing. On the other hand, it has been observed that deceptive cognates require conscious processing in order to prevent the activation of the (misleading) L1-meaning. Such effects must be considered when developing special methods for text-comprehension in related languages.

**Robert Möller** presents his results from a project which simulates Dutch-German reading comprehension with the help of a computer programme. Dutch and German are closely related, but not spontaneously mutually intelligible languages. However, even though the linguistic distance is no larger than between e.g. Danish and Swedish, receptive multilingual communication is an almost unknown phenomenon between the speakers of the two languages (for a detailed explanation see Ribbert and ten Thije's article in this volume). The analytical structures of Dutch can very often be deduced from similar German variants, whereas the German grammatical morphology often remains quite opaque for a speaker of Dutch. Due to these asymmetrical morphological differences for a German reader of Dutch texts the threshold which has to be overcome is quite low, especially if learning aids required to deal with the lexical differences, but also with sound correspondences, are at hand. Due to this fact, one of the aims of the project is to develop such learning aids. The comparability of the recognition of words by a computer programme to the reading of a text by a human being is certainly limited, seen as human readers are able to make use of the context or even to make guesses. However, one advantage computers have

over humans when objectively measuring language differences is the fact that they are less oblivious than humans. Furthermore, it is possible to reset their memory and thus perform a test under different conditions without running the risk of the results being influenced by individual differences. The programme NL-D-KOG, which contains a list of Dutch-German correspondences mainly based on the Old High German consonant shift, was used to compare the 5,000 most frequent Dutch words to their German counterparts. To determine the distance between the Dutch and German cognates, and thus the respective costs for identifying them, the Levenshtein algorithm was used. The result of the comparison was that 77% of the Dutch words were identified correctly. This suggests that, given an adequate set of correspondence rules, the majority of Dutch vocabulary should be accessible for a German reader. A comparison of the results with those of other empirical studies on Dutch-German mutual understanding leads to the conclusion that Dutch-German receptive multilingualism is actually a feasible option. Moreover, given different sets of rules, the programme can also be used to determine the distance between other languages and thus make predictions about the possibility of intercomprehension.

The results from a test carried out on the reading comprehension of languages from the western branch of the Germanic language group are presented by **Renée van Bezooijen** and **Charlotte Gooskens**. The relationship between Dutch, Frisian and Afrikaans is comparable to the mainland Scandinavian situation. (West) Frisian, a language spoken in the

Netherlands, was originally very closely related to English but has converged to Dutch throughout the course of time due to the strong influence of the national language. The opposite is true for Afrikaans, a language spoken by approx. 6 million people in South Africa. It originated from different Dutch dialects spoken by colonists in the Cape region in the 17th century, but developed into an *Ausbau* language in the 19th century. Gooskens and van Bezooijen analyse the understanding of written Frisian and Afrikaans by testing 20 native speakers of Dutch and correlate their results both with the linguistic distance between the languages involved and with the attitudes towards the speakers. The comprehension was tested by means of a cloze test based on newspaper articles. All participants were tested for both Afrikaans and Frisian. In addition to this, their attitudes towards the languages were assessed. The results show a far better understanding of Afrikaans than of Frisian, and even the attitudes towards South Africans turned out to be more positive than towards Frisians. A more detailed analysis of the results, however, did not reveal any significant correlation on an individual level. Linguistic distance was measured on the basis of the number of cognates and non-cognates, the transparency of the lexical correspondences and the Levenshtein distance, a method used to objectively determine the similarity of words (a detailed description of this method is also found in Möller's contribution to this volume). An important result which could be seen from those measurements is the fact that it is not the number of cognates – which is larger for Frisian and Dutch than for

Afrikaans and Dutch – but rather the number of non-cognates which is decisive for the degree of understanding. Even though the amount of Frisian/Dutch non-cognates is only slightly higher than the amount of Afrikaans/Dutch non-cognates this may affect the comprehension considerably given the fact that they primarily involve content words, meaning that just one unintelligible word is enough to impede the understanding of a whole sentence. A second result, namely the higher Levenshtein distance between Frisian and Dutch compared to Afrikaans and Dutch, corresponds very well to Lutjeharms analysis of reading texts in foreign languages. It has to be assumed that the identification of cognates is less obvious and thus requires more effort for Dutch/Frisian than for Dutch/Afrikaans due to the higher Levenshtein distance. Following this assumption, for a Dutch reader the processing of the content should be affected more by difficulties in identifying cognates in Frisian than in Afrikaans.

On the basis of various models of L3 learning **Britta Hufeisen** and **Nicole Marx** argue that L2 acquisition differs qualitatively from the acquisition of further foreign languages. These differences are described in Hufeisen's factor model. In addition to neurophysiological, learner external, emotional, cognitive and linguistic factors which influence L2 acquisition, the learner of a third language can also make use of previous experiences with learning techniques and strategies that can be variably successful from learner to learner. Such experiences, e.g. with different methods of learning

vocabulary, should have a positive effect on the acquisition of a further language. But also the linguistic knowledge acquired when learning a language can be useful for the acquisition of further, especially related languages. The dominance of English as a first foreign language in the vast amount of European countries has the effect that other languages such as German, Spanish or French are typically acquired as L3s. This article presents different methods of L3 learning that make use of the strategic and linguistic knowledge already acquired by learners in the process of their L2 acquisition. In an experimental study carried out by Nicole Marx it was shown that this previous knowledge is not automatically activated in L3 learning, but that methods of sensitising the learners for similarities between the new language and languages already acquired clearly had a positive effect on the learning process. One such method of sensitisation is the EuroCom method which aims at optimising inference techniques in language learning. This is achieved by means of a comparison of languages on different linguistic levels, the so called 'seven sieves'. This method was tested in an English language course at the Technical University of Darmstadt (Germany). The course was designed for students who had learned German as a foreign language but had no knowledge of English and felt the need to be able to read English texts for their studies or their later professions without being able to spend too much time on acquiring productive skills in a traditional language course. The positive results from the projects support the concept of receptive multilingualism.

We would like to thank all authors who contributed to this volume for their efforts in promoting the research on receptive multilingualism. We are also deeply grateful to the Research Centre 538: Multilingualism for including this volume in its series *Hamburg Studies on Multilingualism* and to Conxita Lleó, Jürgen Meisel, Monika Rothweiler and especially Juliane House for their energetic support of this project. Very special thanks go to the numerous anonymous reviewers for their valuable advice and also to Nicholas Burke for his efforts to transform parts of the book into acceptable English. We hope that this book will encourage further research on receptive multilingualism.

<sup>1</sup> DFG project *Niederdeutsch und Skandinavien* ('Low German and Scandinavia'), 1989 – 1995, principal investigator Kurt Braummüller.

<sup>2</sup> Project *Semikommunikation und rezepive Mehrsprachigkeit im heutigen Skandinavien* ('Semicommunication and Receptive Multilingualism in contemporary Scandinavia') at the DFG Research Centre 538: Multilingualism, 1999 – 2005, principal investigator Kurt Braummüller.

<sup>3</sup> A short survey of the results was presented by Zeevaert (2006). To test the success of the method the participants were divided up in two groups in the beginning of the course and were equipped with two different short texts taken from an Icelandic newspaper along with four open questions and four multiple choice questions. At the end of the course the test was repeated, but the texts were exchanged between the groups in order to avoid the participants already being familiar with the text. For one of the texts the percentage rate of correct answers increased from 15% to 50%, a quite impressive affirmation of the effectiveness of the EuroCom method. For the other text, however, hardly any increase in the amount of correct answers could be observed. From a discussion of the results with the respective students it became clear that in contrast to the first text, a report about scabies spread by ducks, a narrative structure facilitating the identification of the content was missing in the second text. Due to this fact, guessing strategies were not successful.

<sup>4</sup> Similar effects were observed by Doetjes (in prep.) in tests on Danish-Swedish intercomprehension.

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