

Dorte Lønsmann (Copenhagen Business School)

## **Embracing or resisting corporate language policies**

[dl.abc@cbs.dk](mailto:dl.abc@cbs.dk)

While corporate language policies and particularly the use of English as a corporate language have been studied in MNCs for almost two decades now, very little has been written about the implementation of new language policies. This paper presents the results of a study of the barriers experienced in companies implementing a language policy. The central question for the study is: Which factors influence employees' reception of a language policy? The paper focuses on three factors: 1) the local linguistic context, specifically the opportunity/necessity to use the corporate language in specific teams, i.e., the relevance of the new corporate language policy to specific teams and employees within an organisation; 2) Employees' communicative competence in the corporate language; and 3) Educational background and job type. The analysis is based on data sets from two Danish companies, one MNC and one medium-sized. Both companies have recently introduced English as a corporate language in the Danish part of the organisation. Data was collected using ethnographic methods. The two data sets consist of participant observation in the two companies, individual interviews with the employees responsible for making and implementing the language policy and focus group interviews with three sets of employees in each company. The paper contributes to the field of professional communication by exploring when and why corporate language policies encounter resistance. This will shed light on the implementation phase of language policy-making - an under-researched topic in the field of language and international business.

*Dorte Lønsmann is an Assistant Professor at the Department of International Business Communication at Copenhagen Business School and a member of the LINGCORP research group. Her research interests include language ideologies, language and identity and English as a global language. Her current research focuses on multilingual workplaces.*