



MULTILINGUALISM IN ACTIVISM: CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS



A MASTER'S THESIS ON AN ACTIVIST GROUP'S LANGUAGE USE

EMANCIPATORY DISCOURSE: ACTIVE USE OF LANGUAGE FOR EQUALITY

What happens when people with different languages form an activist group? Are there inequalities in the language use? Do they use language actively for equality, the so-called "emancipatory discourse" (Janks&Ivanic 1992)?

This thesis focuses on power relations within language diversity (Piller 2016), meaning between different languages, dialects and language registers (such as formal, informal or plain language use). Critical Language Awareness (CLA) (Fairclough 1992) refers to the sensibility towards power relations in language.

CLA can be used for emancipatory discourse. The main question of this thesis is: "What role does Critical Language Awareness play in a multilingual activist group?"

One of the findings of this research was that, even though interpreting was intensively used, English and German dominated over the other 15 languages (e.g. Farsi, Arabic, Sorani). Thus, in the context of this group, those activists who spoke English and German would have a "linguistic advantage" while those who didn't speak English and German would have "linguistic disadvantage" (Piller 2016).

›INTERPRETING IS FOR ME A POLITICAL ACT‹¹

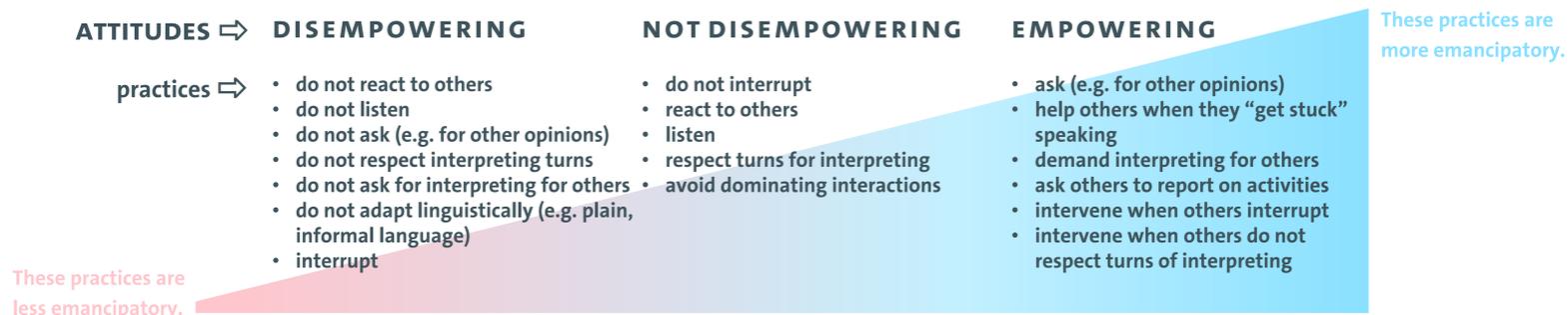
¹Quote from Interview II. The data was collected through mixed methods: 13 ethnographical observation records of public and intern meetings of the activist group and 2 guided interviews with activists. The analysis and evaluation followed Key Incident Analysis. The interpretation of the results was based on theory on language and power (Bourdieu 1992; Martín Rojo 2017) and "integration" (Berry 2005).

The following graphic presents how emancipatory discourse does or does not affect the use of language by activists in their respective power situated speaker positions. Depending on the knowledge of the dominant languages (English and German) the activists' positions are divided into linguistic disadvantaged position or linguistic advantaged position. Activists show more or less emancipatory attitudes depending on their practices:

LINGUISTIC DISADVANTAGED POSITION



LINGUISTIC ADVANTAGED POSITION



WHAT DO THESE FINDINGS MEAN?

Critical Language Awareness (CLA) had an influential role in the activist group which was researched. Several practices exemplify this, such as systematic interpreting and translation. However, the activists themselves showed very mixed grades of CLA in their practices.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The data points to a tendency for very experienced and engaged activists to be more emancipatory in their language use. Future research could clarify if there is a correspondence between activists' engagement and CLA.



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