

Multilingualism in Higher Education versus Facilitators' Professional Language Competencies in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this article is to highlight the critical importance of facilitators' (professors, lecturers and tutors) professional language competencies for multilingualism in higher education to work effectively. It is through facilitator use of appropriate language (discourse) that concepts are unraveled for students to learn and to build representational structures that constitute the basis for understanding unfamiliar subject matter, and for self-expression. The competencies ultimately influence the outcome of multilingual higher education, as it is dependent on skillful relevant professional language scaffolding of student learning and for designing of coursework materials for both linguistic and academic proficiency. The combination of discourse and professional language facilitation embed the recognition that students' linguistic and academic development is intentional and shaped by the sociocultural system across time. The researcher concludes that facilitators need to be appropriately and explicitly 'apprenticed' and socialized in professional language knowledge so that students can appropriate relevant discourse necessary for both academic and real world expression.