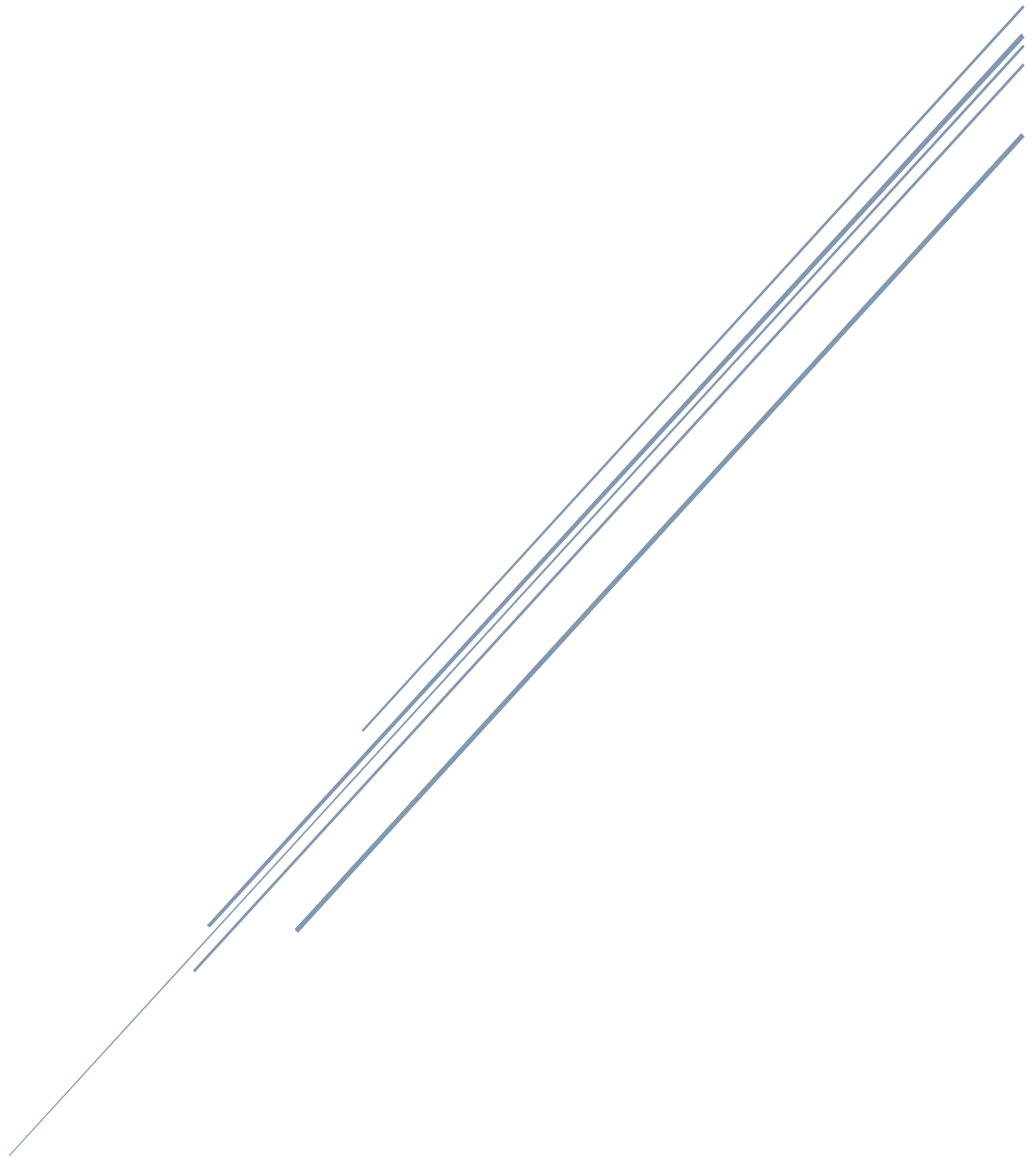


LANGUAGE POLICY

Committee Report

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University of Twente
University Council Internal Committee 01/02/2019

This report was written after discussing the “UT Language Policy” (UR 18 028) at the 14th and 28th of March 2018 and receiving it again September that year. After the first internal discussions in the council in September, the language policy proved itself a complicated subject and a temporary committee was installed. This committee is now reporting back to the council and executive board.

Background

The developments surrounding language at the UT are mainly the result of the internationalisation Vision 2015-2020 (UR 15 010) that passed through the council in 2015. In the debate on the proposed internationalisation vision, the board made several commitments to the council. The committee found that the commitments were properly adhered to, as explained in an explanatory e-mail by the head of internationalisation on request of the committee (see appendix A), except for one, which needs further elaboration.

The initial vision set out, among other goals, to transform all bachelor programmes to English, or, whenever this was not possible, have an English parallel of the study program. This proposition was heavily criticised by the council. The consensus was found that the program itself should have the right to determine whether to change its educational language (UR 15 050). However, in 2014, when the board made the first version of the internationalisation vision, the decision to shift to English completely was already communicated to the faculties. Some faculties picked this up very pro-actively and drafted plans to switch to English. The question of whether the programmes should switch was not present. Then, when the council contested this proposition, the commitment had to be implemented. This had to be done with retroactive aspect because the plans, that were not agreed upon by the respective bodies, were executed from the 14th of September 2014 until the 29th of April 2015. On the 1st of May the commitments of the board were clearly communicated to the faculties in May (CvB UIT-1163). However, this change in the decision of the board created confusion in the organisation and complicated the decision-making process (UR 16 004). In September of 2015 the formulation of the shift regarding language changed back into the decision by the board in 2014 (CvB UIT-1464), which added to the confusion surrounding the situation.

Since September 2015, the shift has been mediated and implemented further. The communication and relation between the board and council has improved greatly during this period. Most bachelor programmes of the UT switched to English over the period of three years and body was given to becoming an international organisation with the function matrix and its implementation.

Relevance

This committee was initiated when UR 18 028 was sent to the council for the second time. This does not mean that this report solely applies to this document and its nuances. The committee has addressed the situation of language use and its purpose at the University of Twente in full and this is reflected upon in this report.

Status of language use

At the university most bachelor programmes are offered in English, some with a very clear reason, some with a less clear reason. Four programmes are offered in Dutch, being “technische natuurkunde”, “biomedische technologie”, “gezondheidswetenschappen”, and “technische geneeskunde”. However, English is becoming the dominant language at the university. It is observed that both the education on this institution and the organisation of the university are increasingly using the English language. However, not all students are fully competent in the English language. With the emphasis on students of the Dutch bachelor programmes who are not required to be competent in the English language to follow their education. These students should be approached in the language in which they follow their education to ensure full comprehension of the message and not exclude the student from participation in their study related activities.

The position of the Dutch language on this university must be ensured, especially now that English is becoming more prevalent. The UT is an educational institution in the Netherlands, with a certain obligation to its citizens. With ensuring the position of the Dutch language on the university, the following two topics should at least be taken into account: the students following Dutch-taught programmes and maintenance of Dutch as an academic language. The former has been elaborated upon earlier. The latter follows from the letter, “Internationalisering in evenwicht” of the minister of Education, Culture, and Science to the House of Representatives in June. She explicitly states that the institutions have the obligation to ensure and maintain Dutch as a language in science and education, partially to allow Dutch students who have no interest to do their studies in the English language, to still be able to study. This, together with the position of the Dutch student at the UT, and the recent development in language usage creates a significant amount of tension.

Educating in English

Language competency is a very general skill and is tested in a similar way, like done at the Cambridge English tests. When it comes to education, we notice that the current required level does not allow all teachers to reach a certain level of didactical skill in a language different from their mother tongue. The lecturing is sufficient on a theoretical level, but often it is noticed that it is not very vivid and interactive since the lecturer is not always fully comfortable in the English language. This has an effect on their spontaneity, capacity to draw relations for the sake of comprehension, and, hence, an effect on their didactical skill. Therefore, the focus of any future language test or check should lay on the didactical skill of the educational staff.

The student is benefited by improved didactical skill of an educator, but there is another point to focus on. The understandability of a lecturer with a significantly different language competency or background. Naturally, several instances have occurred where a professor could not be understood by the students because of his different language competency and background. This should be kept in mind, especially since the university has indicated ambitions to attract more professors outside of the Netherlands. This could be mediated by offering language courses to educational staff and students, to increase their comfort and confidence in the English language, and by offering culture courses to students and staff, making them aware of the differences in language competency and background such that they can adapt to this.

Language support

There are courses on offer for students and staff to improve their English in multiple ways. However, it is constantly brought up that the offer does not match the demand for the courses and the language support for staff can only be executed marginally. The commissioners of internationalisation indicated that the TCP language centre does not have the capacity to facilitate and mediate the transition well. In this transition, the comfort of the

educational staff with the new language should have top priority, but this does require more personal support from the universities side.

Aside from that, students, both international and Dutch, should be able follow courses in Dutch to ensure that their language competency match the requirements of their goals. This could be to get a job in the Netherlands or to perform research in Dutch. For students there are no Dutch classes beyond B2 level, nor are there any classes focused on academic writing in Dutch or Dutch for the working field. These would be major improvements for the offer of language support to students.

Language requirements of students

All students enrolling into a bachelor degree programme need Cambridge C1 (Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)) level English (or C2 (Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)), IELTS 6.0, TOEFL 80). Whether a student has to provide proof of this depends on the country of origin. Dutch students with a VWO diploma and students from the EU, except for selected countries with Roman languages, are exempted from the need to provide explicit proof of their language competency. In the master programmes the required level of English is IELTS 6.5, or TOEFL 90, which is still in the range of Cambridge C1 (CAE) and C2 (CPE), while students with a related bachelor degree from the University of Twente are directly admissible to these master programmes. This makes the C2 English requirement an indirect intended learning outcome of the bachelor. However, the bachelor programmes do not assess the level of English of the student in a structured manner nor do all programmes include an academic writing or English course. This means there is no manner in which the language competency of a student is tested before they start their master, not at the end of the bachelor, nor at the beginning of the master. A short-term solution observed by the committee was hiring native speaking students as TAs to feedback the use of language in a student report next to the normal tasks of a TA.

In some cases, it is also noticed that some students, present on all levels (Bsc, Msc, Phd, Pde), do not have enough English language competency to effectively collaborate with others. This happens both to students who are obliged to prove their competency upon entrance and to those who do not. It was also observed that exchange students have similar problems, especially when they do not come from English-taught programmes.

Internationalisation

The policy for language inevitably ties into the universities ambitions with regards to internationalisation. The University of Twente has clearly set-out to become an institution that is present at the international stage and educates its students to be 'global citizens'. It should be made very clear, though, that internationalisation and having more international students at this university are vastly different from each other. Internationalisation embodies more than just language, even a programme taught in Dutch can be an international programme. Internationalisation is about what the student experiences in the realm of culture and cultural differences and what it is taught. This was witnessed when the ITC master programmes went up for recognition as an international programme.

As internationalisation goes into the content of the programmes it has a direct effect on the curricula and learning goals thereof. The main and most tangible competency related to internationalisation is inter-cultural communication, like was stated in the "Manifest Internationalisation Study Associations". Part of this is learned during projects when collaborating with people from other cultures, but the students are not educated in this field and therefore have no grips to work with when these situations go wrong. Internationalisation is a good ambition, but it should be implemented in the programmes. Which also means the international character aimed for needs criteria by which it can be tested, for example the inter-cultural competencies.

In the process of internationalisation, the 'global citizen' is often named. However, there is not a clear vision present what is meant by educating the global citizen. Educating the global citizen should be the framework for internationalisation and a shared goal of the organisation. This requires a clear and agreed upon vision on what this global citizen entails.

It is also not clear who is leading this change within the university, not necessarily on a policy level. The commissioners of internationalisation seem like a good start, but this is not very directly connected to the students and staff. It is generally found odd that a university which is so internationally focused does not have an international office to facilitate the international students on this university and lead the change towards an institution with an international character in its full form.

Implementation

The implementation plans for the language policy seem to ensure the desired change well. All formal bodies will switch to English per the 1st of January 2019, this includes minutes, decisions, regulatory documents, and agendas. In these bodies the spoken language in a formal meeting is up to the discretion of the members of the meeting. This is a sensible step to effectively make a change in the organisation. There are, however, some possible complications in this process.

The language skill requirements are set out in a rubric, with the height of the skill requirement based on the salary scale of the employee. This creates an odd situation when a secretary, who deals with a lot of paper work and writing, is less competent in the English language than the person it is writing for, who deals with way less writing. Or in a case where a service desk employee does not understand a request because of the complicated language use or thick accent. Therefore, it is believed to be a better approach to base the language skill requirement on the function one executes.

In the process of changing the formal bodies to English it is unclear who to approach when any difficulties or problems arise and which specific documents are required by law to be in Dutch and which are allowed to be in English. This is the support that should be facilitated well to ensure a smooth transition and satisfied employees. The TCP language centre seems a logical place to seek this support, but it needs a high enough capacity to do so.

Governance

The internationalisation vision (UR 15 010) set out to achieve multiple shifts in the organisation and the UT visible on the international field. Both to effectively move in this direction and to know when to adjust the approach to the goal or the goals respectively, it is important to be able to measure these goals set out in the policy. How the goals are ultimately evaluated is not made very clear in the document and there are no clear criteria set for every goal.

Within the process of this shift in language and character of the university it is essential to ensure uniform communication and formulation within the organisation about the changing language on the university. The consequences of differences in formulation have been experienced before (CvB UIT-1163; CvB UIT-1464; UR 16 004) and should be avoided. Besides this, it is also vital to ensure to name every single exception to avoid confusion and show acceptance of the decisions made at the respective levels, which was present in UR 18 028.

Conclusion

The language policy remains a complicated subject. It has a lot of different facets as shown in this report. The foundation that is needed to create peace with the course set out with the language policy, is clearly communicating to the organisation about the board's ambitions regarding the programmes and acting accordingly. The decision was made to have the respective programme decide on the educational language. Programmes made these choices and it is of high importance to honour these decisions fully. This should be reflected in any communication regarding this matter and should not suggest in any way that the programme will eventually change its language to English. To take away some other common concerns in the organisation it is important to explain and discuss the position of the Dutch language at this university and ensure broad and intensive support for student and staff less comfortable with the English language. Besides that, it is observed that it is important for the board to follow up on the shift in language with the step to internationalisation, after it has been raised numerous times from multiple organs that a change in language use does not imply internationalisation. In this step to internationalisation and creating a more inclusive environment for international students an international office would be a logical body to initiate, also considering the ambitions and character of the university. All in all, the committee is confident that accepting how and where the process went wrong in the past, creates the possibility to shape the current process in a way with which everyone is satisfied.

Appendix A

Specific commitments concerning internationalization vision (as mentioned in the annex of the vision)

<p>- De keuze voor de invulling van de term <i>Internationalisering en eventueel het overgaan naar Engels in een bachelor opleiding, aan de opleidingen wordt gelaten en dat dit punt expliciet wordt opgenomen in de Internationaliseringsvisie 2015 – 2020;</i></p>	<p>As mentioned before, the text of the concept version has been altered in the final version as it is known within the organization right now and is accepted by the council. https://www.utwente.nl/nl/uraad/themas/vision2020/010-aangepaste-internationaliseringsvisie-2015-2020-d.d.-10-03-2015.pdf</p> <p>Deans have been informed that the choice to offer bachelor education in English is a decision taken on faculty level. This has been done via a formal letter (cvb uit 1163). In a number of meetings between the CvB and the deans this has been reconfirmed orally by the CvB.</p>
<p>- Als een opleiding kiest voor <i>Engelstaligheid, die keuze wordt voorzien van een implementatieplan, waarin beschreven staat:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>wat overgaan in het Engels precies inhoudt (language of instruction, of ooktentamens/opdrachten, of ook sociale voertaal; deel of geheel van de opleiding in het Engels, etc.) en langs welk tijdsfad die overgang plaatsvindt;</i> - <i>op welke wijze studenten die bij instroom in de bachelor het Engels onvoldoendemachtig zijn, worden ondersteund om op het juiste niveau te komen</i> - <i>welk niveau Engels bij docenten gewenst is en hoe dit niveau bereikt en geborgdgaat worden;</i> 	<p>We (S&B) have checked every year with the bachelor programmes about their possible plans to change to English. This has been done via E-mail and letter (see cvb uit 1464) for example). It has also been a topic of debate between CvB and decanen for example during the planning and control meetings (najaarsoverleggen en voorjaarsoverleggen). If a concrete implementation plan was not present or was not good enough, deans have been asked to provide with updated versions.</p> <p>The level of English of students has been a more generic topic which has also been addressed in the current Language Policy which is in your possession.</p> <p>The level of English of teachers has been a topic of HR policy and the management of the educational programmes for many years (since 2006)</p>
<p>- <i>Het bovenstaande plan in expliciet overleg met OLD en OLC tot stand komt;-</i></p>	<p>This has been part of the communication to the deans, and checked regularly as stated above</p>
<p>- <i>De taal van de opleiding wordt gezien als behorend tot de inhoud van de opleiding en de examens (art. 7.13, lid 2, sub a WHW) en dientengevolge advies</i></p>	<p>Yes CvB has mentioned this explicitly in the communication with the deans</p>

<p><i>plichtig is binnen de OLC's en faculteitsraden; voor de procedure wordt hierbij de Gedragscode Voertalen gevolgd;</i></p> <p>-</p>	
<p><i>- Studenten die begonnen zijn aan een Nederlandstalige Bachelor opleiding gedurende hun nominale studieduur niet te maken krijgen met een generieke verandering van voertaal anders dan bij de nu bestaande praktijk tenzij in overleg met betreffende studenten tot een maatwerk oplossing wordt gekomen; -</i></p>	<p>This has been mentioned as well, the way that educational programmes have implemented this depends on the specific situation of the programme. CvB has also asked this to the deans. At the same time, up till now no critics of any students that this has not been arranged has reached the CvB</p>
<p><i>- Opleidingen na een besluit tot verandering van voertaal, dit eerst op de twee daaropvolgende open dagen duidelijk en eenduidig communiceren en pas het daarop volgend academisch jaar de overgang maken.</i></p>	<p>This has been and still is the way that M&C acts.</p>