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30 minute presentation (can also be shortened to 20 minutes)
research areas: sociolinguistics, language contact

“Brain Gain statt (*instead of*) Brain Drain”: The Role of English in German Education

“Für die meisten von uns ist es fast schon selbstverständlich, außer Deutsch – Englisch zu sprechen.” (“*For most of us [Germans] it is almost normal to speak English in addition to German.*”)

Edelgard Buhlmann,
Germany’s Federal Minister for Education and Research

Although there is extensive research on Anglicisms in German (cf. for example Carstensen 1965; Carstensen et al 1993-96; Fink 1970, 1980, 1995), few studies look beyond lexical borrowing to consider other aspects and dimensions of English-German contact. Exceptions by Berns (1988, 1990, 1992), for example, address socio-cultural issues for learning and using English in Germany, as well as specific topics such as bilingualism in the German legal domain. Still, much research is needed for a better, more comprehensive understanding of the impact of English in Germany. In summarizing past scholarship on English influence on German, Clyne (1995: 202) underlines this fact by explicitly calling “for macrosociolinguistic studies on the use of functions of (spoken and written) English in the German-language countries, both internally and in communication with people from other countries.”

This qualitative study addresses Clyne’s desideratum in part by examining the role of English in one German domain of use: education. Using B. Kachru’s (1990) theoretical model for the non-native use of English as an additional language, this paper examines the impact of English in primary and secondary schooling as well as higher education in Germany. An analysis of statistics from state, federal, and European government sources outlines the sharp increase in learning English in the last decades, where now 94% of secondary pupils are learning the language (Eurydice 2000: 158, 162). The discussion next focuses on European and federal policy initiatives for internationalizing higher education, in particular the Bologna Declaration of 1999 with its aim of creating a “European area of higher education.” The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2000, 2001) articulates its own efforts towards internationalization with the motto “*Brain Gain statt Brain Drain*”, which in expressing the priority to attract more foreign students and scholars also symbolizes the significant role English plays within the domain. Policy initiatives in Germany entail various forms of Englishization, ranging from the introduction of *Bachelor* and *Master* degrees still taught in German, to new internationally-oriented degree programs offering initial if not all coursework in English. The discussion includes data collected in 2001 for one of the first international programs inaugurated in 1998, which in spite of a nearly all-German faculty has all instruction, classroom discussion, and readings in English.