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**Title**

A Global Language for Global Universities? Language in Higher Education

**Abstract**

Although higher education today takes place in increasingly multilingual societies, academic life has experienced the tendency to become more dominated by a handful of languages, principally English. In an age of globalization buffeted by strong nationalist cross-currents, the designation of a language of instruction in higher education constitutes a contested political decision fraught with very practical results. In this plenary, I examine the factors providing the impetus behind the use of English or another international language as opposed to national or regionally dominant languages. Does that choice represent a function of pragmatic considerations, ideological forces, the preservation of elite privilege, or a combination of all of these factors? Drawing on data from two major language policy projects— a study of language policy in the European Union, with a specific focus on Poland, and one on the rise of national languages in postcolonial states—I will consider the emerging trends and conflicting imperatives in operation in higher education across different societies. I will also discuss the potential impact of language policy on academia globally and within individual nations.