

A theory of contact situations and the study of academic competence

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The concept of academic competence (Marriott 2000) must be viewed within the context of globalization. It owes much to the intensification of cultural contact within the current historical period when, among other forms of variation, variation in academic systems is strongly perceived, evaluated and adjustment is sought. Contact between varying academic systems is thus “managed” in the sense that word is used in management theory (Jernudd and Neustupný 1987) that deals with noting, evaluation and adjustment of deviations from norms.

Theories of contact have existed for decades in linguistics, the study of communication and other disciplines, but it is time to transform them to theories of interaction contact in general. Contact situations must be seen not merely as situations in which processes of misunderstanding occur, but as situations in which a number of social processes, including those of power, assert themselves. One of the concepts that must be accommodated in this model is contact between “major” and “minor” academic systems (E. Neustupný 1997-98). Another question is that of the assimilation of academics (or acquirers of academic systems) into socially strong systems. Finally, we are obliged not to limit ourselves to the old frameworks of cultural relativism. It is necessary to work towards a theoretically based evaluation of academic patterns.

This paper will deal with the issues mentioned above while working towards a general model for the analysis of academic competence in contact.

References

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