

Abstract

Circle U combines multiple national languages, English as our main European and global academic language, and many more first and second languages that students and staff bring along. Against this background, we want to find out more about the roles of languages in research and about the language-related needs that Circle U researchers experience when doing research. Constituted by nine universities (Aarhus University, Belgrade University, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Kingston College London, UCLouvain, University of Oslo, Université Paris Cité, University of Pisa, University of Vienna and Aarhus University (Denmark)), Circle U encompasses universities with different degrees of Englishization as well as societal contexts in which language awareness/identities have played various roles historically. This poster presents the result of the first step of our study: the survey we undertook from late October 2024 until early January 2025 using GoogleForms.

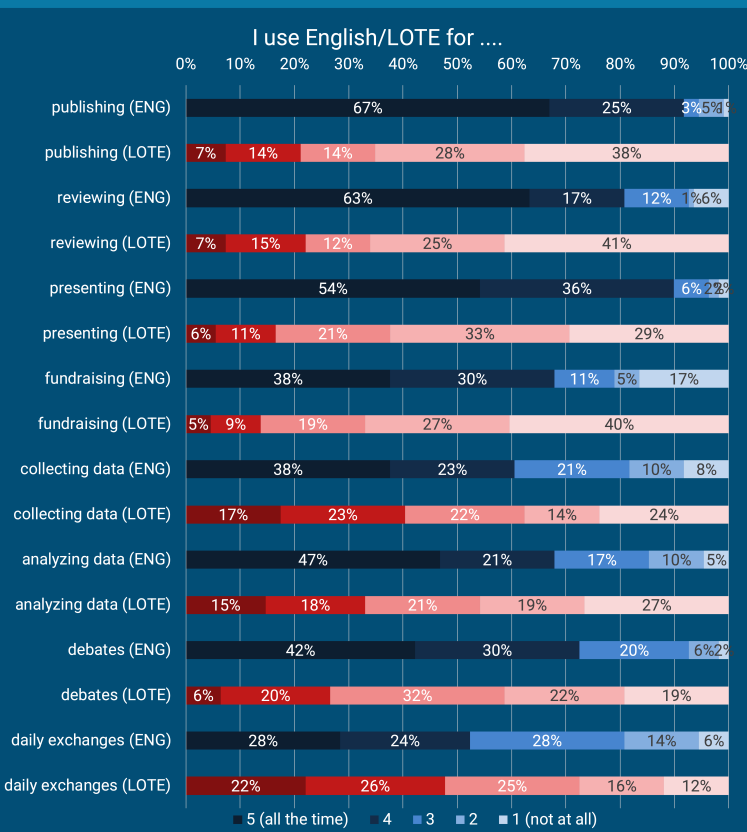
Research Questions:

- What are the language uses/practices and needs of academic staff working at Circle U. universities?
 - What languages do Circle U. academics use regularly?
 - What do they use English and other languages (LOTE) for in their professional lives as researchers?
 - What are their language-related needs (both professional and private)? / What language-related needs do they experience?

Respondents

- non-probabilistic, purposive and snowball sampling. 112 responses, 109 valid.
- Areas of expertise indicated by 72 different noun phrases
- Then grouped into 3 broader areas:
 - Language/Linguistics (n=22)
 - Social sciences (n=41)
 - STEM (n=46).

Participants per Member Institution



Next Steps

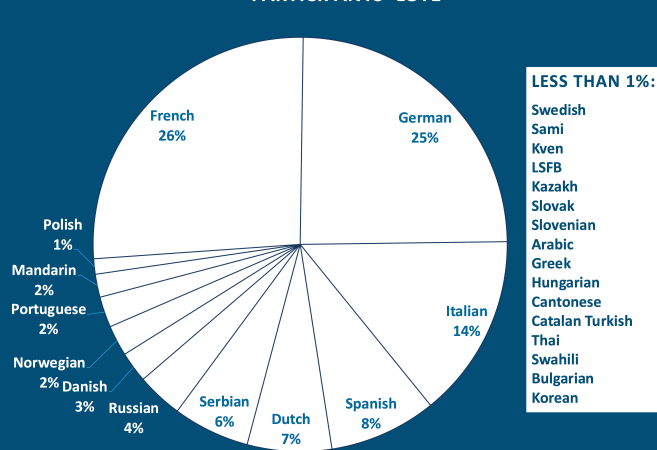
- Organize a conference with other university alliances in 2026/2027
- Qualitative interviews to learn more about the language uses and needs especially of STEM and Social Sciences colleagues on. In particular, we are aiming to learn more about:
 - What do participants consider "data collection" to be?
 - What's the role of English / LOTE for other functions not included in our items (e.g. science communication)?
 - Has Circle U. had any effect on what language/s are used in research/how they interact with languages in research?
 - What do they imagine when talking broadly about "improving language skills"?
 - What is the impact of Machine translation and AI?

Survey Design

25 questions total, 5-7 mins long, four sections:

- Background Information
 - Institutional affiliation
 - Field of expertise
 - Which languages do you engage with in a meaningful way (at home and at work)?
- Research-related use of English in terms of functions and frequency
 - Publishing
 - Reviewing
 - Collecting data
 - Analysing data
 - Presenting at conferences
 - Debating in research groups
 - Fundraising
 - Please specify further research-related activities for which you use English (if any):
- Research-related use of LOTE in terms of functions and frequency
 - Following the same structure as 2.
 - Please specify further research-related activities for which you use other languages:
- Linguistic Needs
 - Language related needs in research
 - Language related needs private life
 - Further contact

PARTICIPANTS' LOTE



Findings & Implications

What languages do Circle U. academics use regularly?

- 10 participants monolingual (1 German, 3 English, 6 Italians)
- 44 use two languages regularly, including English
- 55 use three or more languages.

What do they use English and other languages (LOTE) for in their professional lives as researchers?

- English is used more frequently for research dissemination (publishing, reviewing, presenting, fundraising; $p=.001$; Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test).
- English closely followed by LOTE for developing research (research debates, collecting and analysing data): more than half of respondents indicate they use LOTE at least sometimes.
- Significant differences between the three areas of expertise across all activities except daily exchanges in English ($p=.103$), fundraising (English: $p=.185$; LOTE: $p=.994$), and debating (English: $p=.232$; LOTE: $p=.461$; Kruskal-Wallis test);
- STEM and Social Sciences align in most categories, contrast to Language/Linguistics

Which activities are done in English or LOTE within each area of expertise? (Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test)

Language/Linguistics:

- English and LOTE usage similar in aspects of developing research and daily exchanges.
- English used more frequently for disseminating research.

Social Sciences

- English and LOTE same for collecting data ($p=.174$) and daily exchanges ($p=.329$).
- English significantly more frequent for all other activities ($p<.001$; analysing data: $p=.008$).

STEM:

- English dominant language for all activities ($p<.001$; daily exchanges: $p=.006$).

What are their private language-related needs?

- Learning new languages and broadening existing language knowledge (no field difference)

What are their professional language-related needs?

- Learning new languages and broadening existing language knowledge;
- Need for publishing support voiced 38 times (translation and proofreading)