

Students' use of English during internships in the Brussels area

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The Master in multilingual communication (MULT) was first offered by the Université catholique de Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium) in 2004-2005. The major objectives of this two-year multidisciplinary programme (120 credits), which was born out of a one-year diploma in multilingual business communication, are (1) to help students develop business communication skills in two languages (Dutch, English, French or German) and (2) to provide students with a multi-faceted understanding of the business world (with e.g. courses in communication, economics and management) and of the economic, legal, social and political aspects of the countries where the two languages chosen are spoken. The programme has a strong professional focus and students are required to complete a three-month internship in a company/organisation where at least one of the two major languages chosen is spoken (in Belgium or abroad).

This paper sets out to present the findings of an exploratory study of the students' use of English during their internship at companies/organisations in the Brussels area. Using information from the students' internship proposals and internship reports and from the evaluation sheets filled in by the internship supervisors, the study examines (1) the type of company/organisation where the students worked (e.g. big multinational companies, Brussels-based SMEs), (2) whether English is the official language of the company/organisation, (3) which other language(s) the students also used, (4) whether English was used with native speakers of the language or as a lingua franca (Jenkins 2007, Seidelhofer 2001), (5) whether English was mainly used in written and/or spoken communication tasks, (6) the actual tasks that had to be completed in English, and (7) whether English was used essentially for internal (e.g. with the other employees) and/or for external communication (e.g. with suppliers, clients) purposes.

Jenkins, J. (2007) *English as a Lingua Franca: attitude and identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Seidelhofer, B. (2001) Closing a conceptual gap: the case for a description of English as a lingua franca. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 11(2): 133-158.